Translating Popular Education

Civil Society Cooperation between Sweden and Estonia

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Stockholm, March 2008
### Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>ABF</td>
<td>Arbetarnas bildningsförbund (Workers’ Educational Association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHL</td>
<td>Avatud Hariduse Liit (Open Education Association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>Arbetarrörelsens internationella centrum (the Labour Movement’s International Center)</td>
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<td>EHL</td>
<td>Eesti Harrastusteatrite Liit (Estonian Amateur Theatres Association)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EKK</td>
<td>Eesti Kodaniike Komiteed (Estonian Citizens’ Committees)</td>
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<td>ERR</td>
<td>Eestimaa Rahvarinne (the Popular Front of Estonia)</td>
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<td>ETKA Andras</td>
<td>Eesti Täiskasvanute Koolitajate Assotsiatsioon Andras (Association of Estonian Adult Educators Andras)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EVHL</td>
<td>Eesti Vabaharidusliit (Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBF</td>
<td>Folkbildningsförbundet (the National Federation of Study Associations)</td>
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<td>FBR</td>
<td>Folkbildningsrådet (the Swedish National Council of Adult Education)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFWEA</td>
<td>International Federation of Workers’ Education Associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JMK</td>
<td>Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus (Johannes Mihkelson Centre)</td>
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<tr>
<td>KF</td>
<td>Kooperativa Förbundet (the Swedish Cooperative Union)</td>
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<td>LO</td>
<td>Landsorganisationen i Sverige (the Swedish Trade Union Confederation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NFA</td>
<td>Nordens folkliga akademi (Nordic Folk Academy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NMR</td>
<td>Nordiska ministerrådet (the Nordic Council of Ministers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NVL</td>
<td>Nordiskt nätverk för vuxnas lärande (Nordic Network for Adult Learning)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPC</td>
<td>Olof Palmes internationella centrum (the Olof Palme International Center)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RIO</td>
<td>Rörelsefolkhögskolornas intresseorganisation (the Interest Organization for Popular Movement Folk)</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Socialdemokratiska arbetarförening (the Swedish Social Democratic Party)</td>
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<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Styrelsen för internationellt utvecklingssamarbete (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SKL</td>
<td>Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting (the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSL</td>
<td>Työväen Sivistysliitto/Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund (Workers’ Educational Association)</td>
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1. Introduction

Cooperation and contacts transcending borders of nation states are parts of the reality of governments as well as of various organizations and individuals across the globe today. Transnational cooperation has become a fashionable idea in these times, claimed to be the age of globalization, democracy and popular participation through global, international or transnational social movements and a range of different civil society organizations. Transnational cooperation may not be anything new but it is often claimed that globalization and increased transnational communication have led to an increase in these kinds of contacts. There has also been a sharper focus on democracy and democratization in connection with much of the cooperation, aid and developmental assistance given by Western countries. Thus, many project activities, including assistance to civil society organizations, have been seen as a way of encouraging democratization processes. Various donor agencies providing “democratic aid” have found a belief in the benefits of supporting civil society organizations in recent years (Carothers 2003, Mathews 2000: vii, Ottaway & Carothers 2000a, Van Rooy 1998a: 1, Van Rooy & Robinson 1998: 33, Whaites 1996: 240). Frequently, the implementation of these pro-democracy activities has rested with NGOs in the donor country, thus bringing in questions of transnational civil society cooperation (Mendelson & Glenn 2002: 4).

An abundance of cooperation projects have existed and still exist between countries and organizations in different parts of the world. Many of these aspire to disseminate knowledge, skills and other items and ideas, not least of democracy, between the partners. How ideas and skills developed in one country and its civil society can influence and spread to civil society organizations in other countries is, however, not so obvious.

This thesis will focus on cooperation between organizations in Western and Eastern Europe and, more specifically, in Sweden and Estonia. An analysis is made of how civil society activities, in particular adult or popular education, and their ideas, practices, methods and organizational forms, are disseminated between organizations in different countries. For the empirical sections, the focus is on the Estonian context, the Estonian organization AHL (Avatud Hariduse Liit or Open Education Association) and the foreign contacts this umbrella organization and its members have had, especially with Swedish partners. Mainly this involves an investigation into a number of projects between AHL and the Swedish organization ABF (Arbetarnas
bildningsförbund or Workers’ Educational Association) even though other Swedish actors, like the NFA (Nordens folkliga akademi or Nordic Folk Academy), who have been important for the development of AHL will also be studied.

The reasons for choosing projects involving the two umbrella organizations of AHL and ABF will be developed below but one reason can be mentioned here: ABF is the organization with which AHL has cooperated most closely, especially during the process of building up the Estonian organization during the 1990s.

As noted above, the dissemination of knowledge, ideas and practices is often an important part of transnational cooperation projects. In this study the interest lies not only in how ideas and practices are spread\(^1\) but also in how they are adapted to the new context by receiving parties. This interest in what happens after an idea or practice has reached a new context has recently been discussed as a process of translation. An aim of this study is to contribute to the theoretical development of translation studies by systematizing the field of research concerned with processes of dissemination although only with regard to the concepts of diffusion, socialization and translation. The theoretical tools developed here will aid the understanding of the joint ABF/AHL projects. An in-depth empirical investigation of the cooperation between these two umbrella organizations will show what expressions a process of translation takes in transnational civil society cooperation. Thus, this thesis seeks to understand translation processes in this kind of cooperation.

With the aims presented here, the overarching issue to be investigated can be expressed as: *How are ideas and practices disseminated and translated in transnational civil society cooperation?* In Chapter 1.2 this will be further discussed and I will also chisel out the research questions that are to be answered by this study.

The interest in this area comes from a general curiosity concerning transnational civil society and cooperation across national borders between civil society organizations. The projects under scrutiny can be seen as examples of transnational cooperation between civil society organizations and this study is therefore positioned in this context. The study also connects with discussions concerning democracy promotion or democratic aid since the ABF/AHL projects were largely funded through the Olof Palme International Center (OPC) with money originally coming from SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). In these contexts, the dissemination of ideas and practices is an interesting object of study since the transfer of knowledge, ideas and practices is frequently an

\(^1\) It should be noted that dissemination and spreading are used interchangeably in this thesis. These words are meant to denote this process without connecting to a specific theoretical perspective.
expressed focus of these kinds of projects. The study is also connected to the wider context of Swedish-Estonian relations and issues of dissemination between Western and Eastern Europe.

1.1 Background

The concept of civil society has featured in many different discussions in recent decades including those concerning democratization, the quality of democracy, remedies to problems facing existing democracies, public participation, active citizenship, etc. It is also a somewhat tricky concept since there is no consensus in the research community regarding how it should be defined, how it relates to, for instance, the state and the market and so on. However, I will not dwell on these conceptual issues here.

In this study, the focus is on civil society organizations involved in transnational cooperation in the field of adult education. However, what must be noted even here is that adult education is not an easy concept either. The true focus in this study is what in Swedish is termed *folkbildning*, a concept not easily translated into English nor into many other languages. It will in this study be translated as “popular education” and I will return to it in Chapter Three.

The choice of looking at this kind of organization as a subject for study is based on the view that popular education organizations are parts of civil society and thus constitute cases of civil society organizations. In the decision to treat them as parts of civil society I rely on previous research that has reached this conclusion (see for instance Bron A. 1995: 19, Bron A. 2001a: 19, Larsson 2001, Milner 2002, SOU 1996: 47). This will also be further discussed in later chapters. However, there are additional reasons for finding this type of organization interesting. Firstly, many take the view that education and an educated citizenry are important both at the individual level but also for society and especially a democratic society (see for instance Dahl 2003, Dalton 1988: 18f, Dewey 1999, Hadenius 1992, Lipset 1963). The education received from formal schooling in childhood falls outside the scope of this study, whose interest lies with civil society activities and how these are disseminated between organizations. Formal schooling is usually provided by the state and, thus, is not what is normally construed as a civil society activity. Less research has also been done on educational activities outside formal schooling (Bron, A. 2001a: 22, Field & Bron, M. 2001: 14, Milner 2002: 117). There are, however, also theoretically based reasons why popular education associations are of interest to study:

A function of civil society organizations in a democracy or in democratic development that is sometimes proposed is their potential role as “schools of democracy” (de Tocqueville 1997, Diamond 1994, cf. Diamond 1999). A part of this line of reasoning is the argument that activity in civil society can
help foster democratic values, civic virtues and a civic spirit and, in a way, educate citizens in and for democracy by participation, among other things by providing meeting places for people who would not otherwise get together. This role for civil society exists on both an indirect and a more direct level and here adult and popular education associations might play a part in the processes since their main activity is to educate citizens, albeit often not in subjects with a strong civic education content. However, apart from the role as a citizens’ training ground that these organizations, along with many other civil society organizations, are seen as able to play, adult and popular education organizations may also provide citizens with more theoretical knowledge.

For states that are amongst the newcomers in the democratic family, education for citizenship, or civic education, is important in order to get people accustomed to the democratic system and how it works as well as to the rights and obligations it entails for the individual citizen. For states that have been democracies for a longer time, education offers hopes of reducing some of the problems facing democracies in Western Europe and other parts of the world.

Following the breakdown of the Soviet Union, many new and/or renewed states have emerged on the European map and both democracy-promoting activities and transnational cooperation between organizations and institutions on different levels have frequently been on the agenda. This has been the case for governments, foundations, and civil society organizations in general as well as for adult and popular education organizations. This was also the case for ABF in Sweden and AHL in Estonia. The kind of project in which they have engaged can also be seen as part of the larger context of Swedish-Estonian relations, which have been quite extensive throughout history. In the context of a country that has recently undergone a process of democratization that will continue to be a challenge, these activities – not least with the funding coming from aid agencies – can also be seen as a study of a sub-section of democratization processes from a bottom-up perspective. In this context it is interesting to see how the part of civil society focused on educational activities has developed in Estonia. Herein also lies an interest in the various conditions and actors that may have influenced the development. When looking at these issues it should be seen as vital to take international aspects into consideration. The focus in this study is also on international factors as one of the points of departure but it is possible to understand the choice of rather extensive discussions concerning the development of adult education at large in Estonia as well as some historically informed retrospects as following from the line of argument advanced by Flockhart (2005b: 1) when noting the importance of taking international aspects into account in studies of democratization processes:
…we cannot separate the ‘international’ from the ‘domestic’….both form a mutually constitutive relationship. As a result, we must direct our attention at both the ‘international’ and the ‘domestic’

This quotation demonstrates the view that it is important to both take international and domestic developments and actors into consideration. The fact that I here study the development of an Estonian organization through its international contacts also means that both contexts (international and domestic) are important for this study. Even more so since I will investigate the issues from both the Swedish and the Estonian side of the process. Thus, the perspective described above is one of the points of departure for the study. Indeed, the quotation only underlines the fruitfulness of choosing this approach and also motivates the methodological choice of a case study, which will be further discussed in Chapter 1.4.

1.2 Aims, Questions and Theoretical Points of Departure

How are ideas and practices disseminated and translated in transnational civil society cooperation?

This has been presented above as the general problem formulation of this thesis. It is an issue that has also been studied to some extent previously but most of this research has not concerned civil society organizations or projects that are connected to democracy-promoting activities. Thus, the choice of empirical cases in this study differs from much previous research. Also the focus on dissemination between Western Europe and a post-communist context may bring interesting knowledge and insights.

In the analysis, three different perspectives on processes of dissemination – diffusion, socialization and translation – will be used to elucidate these processes. Out of these I will primarily examine translation.

The concept of diffusion has been used in many studies of processes of dissemination, as will be shown in Chapter 5.1. It will also be used to some extent here. However, traditional diffusion research has not paid much attention to how a process of dissemination can also affect what is being disseminated. Nor has it focused simultaneously on both “transmitting” and “receiving” actors to the extent that this study does.

Recent socialization research, especially in the field of international relations, has dealt with the dissemination of norms (see for instance Flockhart 2005a, Risse et al 1999). In particular much socialization research has dealt with how actors are affected by the dissemination of ideas and it can, through this, contribute to this study.

Translation is an attractive concept in that it concerns organizational change, which is also essential for this study. Previous studies have,
however, not paid much attention to organizational activities that are connected to democracy promotion. I find it interesting to examine how the findings of previous studies of translation are manifested when the objects of study are parts of civil society and also are connected to democracy promotion. Hence, this is a gap in previous research that this study attempts to fill.

Studies of translation processes are interested in what happens after an idea or practice has been spread to a new context. Thus, the questions asked frequently revolve around how the idea or practice concerned has been adjusted (or in the vocabulary used in translation: edited or translated) to better fit the new context. The translation perspective therefore assigns to the actors on the receiving end of a process of dissemination a very active role since they are the ones who are supposed to perform these adjustments (see for instance Latour 1986). In this study these are the Estonian actors. Thus, the translation perspective views processes of dissemination as being actor-driven.

Several previous studies of diffusion processes as well as of democracy-promoting activities have concentrated on either the expected transmitter or receiver. It should, however, be noted here that I believe that also the Swedish actors may learn something from the cooperation and the translation process and, thus, that some degree of reciprocity can exist. Pure material support is one thing but when it comes to the dissemination of ideas, methods and organizational forms an open-minded donor or transmitter can gain valuable knowledge and experience from the cooperation. The perceptions of the projects, their goals, outcomes and the process leading from the former to the latter may also differ between the actors. So for more than one reason it is beneficial to look at actors on, in this case, both the Estonian and the Swedish side. This study will therefore investigate the processes from both sides, i.e. actors on both sides of the projects will have their say.

As has already been noted, translation is the primary concept considered in this study. It has, however, not yet been theorized to any greater extent. Diffusion and socialization are addressed since they approach this kind of research problem from somewhat different angles and both have also been extensively used in previous studies of processes of dissemination. Translation has also been developed as a reaction against diffusion theory (Czarniawska & Sevón 2005b, Johnson 2003, Latour 1986). However, the concepts of diffusion and socialization are also part of the study since lessons from previous research in these fields may help to develop the concept of translation theoretically as well as to illuminate the processes studied. Thus, on a theoretical level, the aim of the study is to develop the translation perspective by systematizing and synthesizing the field of research concerning the dissemination of items and ideas (although this is restricted to the theories mentioned above). Empirically, it is the in-depth
empirical investigation of cooperation between Swedish and Estonian adult education organizations and ABF and AHL that is the main contribution. The empirical studies will be used to provide illustrations of the translation process and this will further assist the development of theory. A number of important aspects of a translation process will be identified, illustrated and discussed. The choice of cases also makes it possible to contribute to the fields of study concerning transnational civil society cooperation as well as democracy promotion. Thus, apart from the empirical contribution, this study will contribute theoretically by theorizing translation and enriching this perspective with knowledge gained in previous diffusion and socialization studies as well as offering an innovative approach to the study of transnational civil society cooperation and democracy-promoting efforts.

To reach an understanding of translation processes, different phases in such a process will be identified. This identification of phases will be based on previous research but will also be developed to the extent needed and possible with the empirical studies performed in mind. I will return to this shortly.

Following the above stated problem, questions of how ideas, practices and organizational forms can be disseminated between different societal contexts and how this process may also lead to adjustments in what is disseminated become important. The cases studied here shed light on the question of how the content, as well as the form, ideas and ideals of popular education activities, is/has been/can be transferred from one context to another as well as what aspects influence this kind of process. Questions relating to what is disseminated are of interest since the start of this kind of project and part of the reason for it can be seen from the giving side as attempting to spread something to the partner and from the “receiving” side as learning from previous experiences and thus not having to reinvent the wheel. To approach an understanding of the processes implied by the problem formulation above it is necessary to further specify the questions asked in this study. Many questions are relevant when chasing after the contents of these processes but to help further unravel these issues, the following research questions are posed:

*What ideas and practices have travelled between the contexts?*

*How have the ideas and practices been translated to fit the new context?*

*How have the cooperation and contacts affected the actors and organizations involved?*

In this study the above questions of course concern the context of the empirical case, i.e. what has travelled between Sweden and Estonia, how this has been translated to fit the Estonian context and how the processes have
affected ABF, AHL and those who have been involved from the different member organizations.

As already stated, the translation perspective focuses on the adjustments made in ideas and practices being spread. Thus, question number two above is directly related to this. However, if it is to be possible to answer a question of how ideas and practices have been edited through the process of being disseminated between contexts it is first necessary to know what ideas and practices have been spread. If there is no clear idea of this, it is not possible to say anything about how their expression in a new context differs from the original. Hence, the first question is a prerequisite for the others. It is also primarily concerning the first question that lessons from previous research in the field of diffusion may assist the analysis and the development of a theory of translation. Questions concerning what is spread between contexts and how this takes place have been the subject of much diffusion research (cf. Rogers 1983). Hence, lessons learned in this field may assist the understanding of this part of the process. The third research question posed concerns how the process of dissemination has affected the people involved in the projects, i.e. people active in AHL and ABF, as well as how this cooperation has affected the organizations and the activities they are involved in. This is also something that previous translation studies have taken an interest in but to understand this part of the process, the socialization perspective may also have something to offer. It is also in relation to this research question that potential reciprocity is of interest and thus how the cooperation has affected the Swedish actors.

Before I refer to the projects investigated as well as the material and methods used in the study, the phases of a translation process mentioned above should be briefly commented upon. Three phases of a translation process are identified by Johnson and Hagström (2005). The first is the disembedding from their original context of the ideas that are to travel and their transformation into more concrete models in order for them to become travelling ideas, i.e. ideas that can be communicated and disseminated to another context. This is discussed here since I argue that in the case of Swedish popular education part of this disembedding took place long before the cooperation with Estonia started. Hence, potential travelling ideas will be encountered before the main analysis itself is reached. To answer the first of the research questions presented above it is necessary to locate these. The travelling ideas are subsequently translated or edited by receiving actors to fit into a new context and, finally, they are institutionalized, i.e. they become a “taken-for-granted” part of the new context. This division into phases, along with the three theoretical perspectives, will be elaborated on in Chapter Five and will subsequently be used in the analysis of this study.
1.3 The Projects in Focus

The projects considered in the empirical investigations will also be briefly introduced in this first chapter. Between 1991 (when AHL was founded) and 2004 more than twenty projects have existed involving various local chapters of ABF and different member organizations of AHL. The project activities took off after Estonian independence was regained and ended in 2004, much as a result of Estonia’s entry into the EU. The dependency on funding from aid agencies was a contributory reason for this since the engagement of the Swedish funding agencies was phased out as Estonia became a member of the EU (Edwards 2004).

AHL has cooperated with a number of organizations and countries. Various foreign actors have been important in the build-up and development of this organization and in adult education in Estonia. One of these is ABF, with which AHL has had the most cooperation. In this thesis a number of the projects between different ABF organizations and various members of AHL will be scrutinized. Another Swedish actor, namely the Nordic Folk Academy (NFA) will also be discussed. Estonian respondents see this organization as an important actor in the development of Estonian organizations and an emerging system of adult and popular education in Estonia. I will come back to the activities taking place at the NFA in Chapter Three and subsequently in the analysis. For now, however, I will focus on the joint projects of ABF and AHL.

The projects undertaken by local chapters of ABF with member organizations of AHL have concerned different things. Initially, the provision of material support, for example, was an important part of the cooperation and concerned things like giving copying and fax machines, computers, etc. However I will leave that aside for now and instead state the goals of the different projects.

Some of the projects can be more or less directly connected to democratic ideas having as their proclaimed goal “democracy development” or an increase in the internal democracy of AHL member organizations. The official project reports name developing democracy in the partner organization as the explicit primary goal of three out of 21 projects. However, actual civic education courses are but a small part of the activities. The projects have also dealt with, for instance, meeting techniques, i.e. how to manage a meeting efficiently and democratically, and other associational skills (such as filling various offices such as chairman, treasurer, etc., in a voluntary organization). In other words, projects of this kind deal with the issues of organizational democracy.

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2 OPC Project 94 626 Ö (ABF Blekinge – AHL Tartu), 98 604 Ö (ABF Karlshamn and ABF Ronneby – AHL Tartu), 21 606 Ö (ABF Skara – AHL).
In projects designed to train study circle leaders, which have been the most frequent area of cooperation between ABF and AHL (seven projects have stated this as their project goal), the connection with democracy and a fostering of democratic attitudes, here in the context of a classroom, is regarded as rather clear, following the ideals, goals and methods in Swedish popular education, to which I will return in Chapter Three. It should also be noted that training study circle leaders and improving organizational democracy often go hand-in-hand. The study circle is viewed as a method of improving democracy. Thus, in projects focusing on democracy development, the study circle is used to accomplish this and in projects aiming to increase the competence of both existing and potential study circle leaders this is seen as a step towards also improving democracy. This kind of “mix” is explicitly stated as a dual ambition in three projects.

Two projects focused on building up community centres and exchange in the field of cultural activities and two on parental training courses. In all these four projects, democratic aspects were also emphasized and the study circle method was used. However, in these projects the links to democratic thought and ideals may be less explicit, even though part of them is aimed at what were perceived as groups potentially risking marginalization in society such as single mothers and by education improving their capacity for participating as active citizens or at least their awareness of their rights and possibilities. Hence, in these projects, it is necessary to look more at the form of the education than the contents of the courses or projects. The pedagogics and methods in the notion of popular education used by ABF focus on creating a democratic environment in the classroom and the study group. This should be an environment based on the equal value of all people and their opinions and on freedom of speech, where everyone has the chance

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3 The study circle is a method which has been claimed to be the trademark of Swedish popular education. For more extensive discussion of this see Chapter 3.1, especially 3.1.1.


6 OPC Project 95 638 Ö (ABF Södertälje-Nykvarn – AHL Pärnu), 97 612 Ö (ABF Mellanorrland – AHL Haapsalu).

7 OPC Project 95 637 Ö (ABF Skara and Axevalla Folk High School – AHL Saaremaa), 23 613 Ö (ABF Norra Storstockholm – AHL Tartu).

8 There are also projects that have targeted people with disabilities and where the main ambition has been to assist their organizations in developing the capacity to manage educational activities by training study circle leaders. Examples of this are two projects involving ABF Värmland and AHL Tartu (OPC Project 23 634 Ö, OPC Project 21 600 Ö). These projects have here been placed alongside other projects focused on training study circle leaders.

9 This was at least part of the reason why ABF organizations initiated this kind of project (Puolle, interview, 2005).
to be heard and respected for what they have to say, where everyone’s contributions are considered essential for the learning of everyone and where group decisions are made on democratic principles. These parts are something that people involved from the Swedish side attempt to spread no matter whether the subject is civics or handicraft (Johansson, interview, 2005; Lundgren, interview, 2005; Puolle, interview, 2005). Thus, the fact that the methods and the views of participants are pivotal points in Swedish popular education is a central item being spread whatever the specific contents of the projects.

Finally, out of the last four projects, one focused on increasing the competence in social work of various professional groups\(^\text{10}\), and one on building up a folk high school\(^\text{11}\), one was an evaluation project involving the two central umbrella organizations\(^\text{12}\) and one attempted to build up a network of popular education organizations around the Baltic Sea\(^\text{13}\).

In the analysis I will study the relations between partner organizations and give more information regarding the projects, but I first turn to how they are to be studied.

### 1.4 Material and Methodological Considerations

In the search for answers to the research questions posed above, primary empirical material has been gathered. This mainly consists of interviews with organizers and other individuals involved in the project activities as well as documentation from and about the organizations and projects. It also includes documentation from the donor agency, i.e. OPC. That material consists of policy documents, project proposals, reports and evaluations. The interviews and the documentation from the organizations make up the main empirical material of the thesis.

Before discussing the material in more detail, how it was selected and collected as well as how it will be analyzed, some remarks on the epistemological and ontological assumptions are needed.

This study leans towards the constructivist or social constructivist school of thought. In recent studies of international relations and cooperation as well as many other issues, a constructivist approach has been extensively used (see for instance Adler 1997, Aggestam 1999, cf. Smith et al 1996). Constructivism has been claimed to be what “occupies the middle ground between rationalist approaches…and interpretive approaches” (Adler 1997: 319, cf. Christiansen et al 2001b: 8f, Risse & Wiener 2001). By taking this

\(^{10}\) OPC Project 94 624 Ö (ABF Södra Värmland – AHL Vöru).

\(^{11}\) OPC Project 98 611 Ö (ABF Skara and Axevalla Folk High School – AHL).

\(^{12}\) OPC Project 98 639 Ö (OPC and ABF – AHL).

\(^{13}\) OPC Project 97 973 Ö (ABF Bohus-Álvsborg – AHL, this project also included partners from other countries around the Baltic Sea).
“midfield position”, constructivism attempts to bring some degree of reconciliation between two opposing camps, the positivist or materialist philosophy of science on the one hand and the idealist or interpretive counterpart on the other (Adler 1997: 23).

The constructivist view emphasizes the interaction between structures and agents as well as the importance of contextual conditions. Actors are always situated in a specific context that we cannot neglect (cf. Aggestam 1999: 8). That contextual factors matter is an important starting point for this study. The contextualization of problems and actors is of great importance since different contexts will bring different preconditions and pose different challenges. This discussion also connects to the debate concerning contextualization versus generalization and I will return to the possibilities of generalizing from the design employed here below.

The thesis will not directly address the issues being studied at the individual level. Instead the focus will be on an organizational level and the contacts and relations between the “sending” and “receiving” organizations. Hence, the individuals interviewed should be seen as representatives of their organizations as well as being able to portray projects and developments from the point of view of their own personal experience. Naturally, the cooperation and contacts may have influenced the personal views of the respondents and in this way individual aspects come in.

The processes of dissemination and translation are studied with the aid of both (1) subjective statements where the individuals involved have identified items and ideas that they perceive as having been spread by the cooperation and, (2) more “objective” measurements through reports, evaluations and comparisons between activities, statements, etc. in ABF and AHL.

“Ideas” have already been presented as part of what might be disseminated. I do not wish to go into any lengthy philosophical discussion of what an idea is but will here in the most general sense view ideas as beliefs held by individuals. This is also the way Goldstein and Keohane (1993: 3) define an idea. The same authors make a distinction between three types of ideas: world views, principled beliefs and causal beliefs. World views concern some of the most basic, deeply held and general beliefs (Goldstein and Keohane take the example of world religions). Principled beliefs are also deeply held beliefs but can function as a mediator between world views and “particular policy conclusions”. An example of principled beliefs is human rights. Participation in the uprisings against the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe is also viewed as evidence that principled beliefs are still important in politics (Goldstein & Keohane 1993: 8ff). In the cases of this study, the principled beliefs may very well concern human rights, freedom of association and the right of citizens to participate in the public and political

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14 For more discussions concerning where to place constructivism regarding epistemological and ontological assumptions, see for instance Christiansen et al 2001a.
life of the society in which they live. Finally, causal beliefs “imply strategies for the attainment of goals, themselves valued because of shared principled beliefs, and understandable only within the context of broader world views” (Goldstein & Keohane 1993: 10). In this study this concerns the connection made between popular education and the development of democracy and active citizenship. Thus, the goal may be to improve democracy and this can then be facilitated through popular education.

The research design employed in this thesis is one of a case study. The case here is cooperation between Swedish and Estonian civil society organizations. Thus it concerns transnational civil society cooperation. Within this case a number of joint projects of member organizations of ABF and AHL are investigated, i.e. there are several cases within the larger case. This gives both a greater amount and wider scope of material and creates the possibility of making comparisons within the larger case (cf. George & Bennett 2005). Thus, the study starts with these cooperative projects, which are to be seen as the point of entrance into the area and also the main focus of the study along with the development of the Estonian organizations.

The choice of AHL as the main setting for the empirical study, as well as their cooperative projects, is partly based on the relative success of the Estonian organization. In many cases, the organizations and activities that have been built up through a cooperation or aid project vanish once the project and, with it the funding, ends (Quigley 2000). The case of AHL, however, does not display this “dying-out” tendency. It should here be pointed out again that the project activities between ABF and AHL ended following Estonian EU accession in 2004. This leads partly to a problematic issue, namely concerning memory. Many projects took place, or at least started, more than a decade ago. Thus, informants may, as a result of time, have less clear recollections, which provides an obstacle to a researcher in getting a complete and accurate picture. This is also a reason why, when possible, interviews are corroborated with various kinds of documentation. The choice of looking at finished projects is, however, a conscious one since it reduces one of the problems that might arise when studying projects that are connected to aid agencies and democracy-promoting efforts. When one of the organizations involved in the cooperation is dependent on the other for financing its activities this may influence how it evaluates the activities and what it dare say about the projects and their partners. Being financially dependent may lead people not to speak their mind, either in the project or to a researcher, for fear of losing the support. Since this kind of dependency no longer exists in the cases investigated here, this source of error is minimized. However, this would not have been possible had not AHL survived the retreat of foreign donor agencies.

Apart from Estonia and AHL, Sweden and the Swedish organization ABF come in as other significant parties in the inquiry for more than one reason. The main reason is naturally that there have been many projects and much
cooperation between AHL and ABF, which makes ABF an important actor in the development of AHL. Apart from this, however, Sweden is an interesting context for closer examination in the field of adult and popular education. Sweden is a country with a long and extensive history of this kind of education (Arvidsson 1985, SOU 1974: 54), and has, in several contexts, been claimed to be a world leader (Wallin 2000: 12f). The long and strong tradition of its educational institutions lays a foundation for the possibility of transferring these activities to other contexts. This tradition has also been frequently used in political rhetoric. For instance, the former Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme referred to Sweden as “study-circle democracy” (Gougoulakis 2001: 17, Larsson 2001: 137)\(^{15}\) and Göran Persson, who was Swedish Prime Minister from 1996-2006, was himself active in ABF for several years. He describes this time as formative for his political career and he claims to have kept an identity as a popular educator (Persson 2007: 42-45). A strong civil society, a long tradition of popular movements, and popular education at the core of these, have also played an important part in Swedish democracy promotion, something that will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

Member organizations within ABF have worked with many organizations in many different countries over the years and AHL organizations have also been involved in cooperation with other organizations and countries apart from ABF and Sweden. However, focusing on projects embracing members of these two umbrella organizations gives the study more contextual similarities between the cases within the larger case. This is particularly beneficial since actors and organizations are “embedded” (Granovetter 1985) in specific contexts and traditions. The translation perspective discusses, as will be further elaborated on in Chapter Five, the point that ideas that are to be disseminated have to be disembedded from this context before they can travel. In the cases here, this would primarily concern the Swedish context and the traditions of popular movements and popular education. However, the Estonian actors and organizations are also embedded in a specific context. This may very well be coloured by the past, many years under Soviet dominion, the quite recent transitions and the challenges these have brought.

There were extensive contacts between ABF and AHL from the early 1990s until 2004, which means that the cooperation has not only been close but also long-lasting. This increases the possibility of observing long-term results as well as developments within the cooperation. Thus, translation that may be needed as a result of changes over time can also be observed.

\(^{15}\)This statement by the late Swedish Prime Minister was originally made in a speech given at the congress of the Swedish Social Democratic Party in 1969 when he was elected party chairman (Gougoulakis 2001: 17).
In scholarly literature there is often argument over the potential for generalizations that case studies hold. Seeing that at least single-case studies focus on a specific context and do not make the kind of comparisons over a broader range of cases that, for instance, large-n studies attempt, it is questioned to what extent “useful” or more general knowledge can be gathered from a case study (see for instance Andersen 1997, George & Bennett 2005, Yin 1993). However, it can be argued that, even though there may be merits to the claim that case studies are more limited in making generalizations, these studies can still contribute valuable empirical as well as theoretical knowledge that is also relevant for studies of other cases in other contexts. This proposition finds support in previous writings on methods and case studies. For instance, George and Bennett argue that case studies may have implications both for theory-testing and for theory development on several levels and that it is possible to generalize to other cases within the same class of cases (2005: 110, cf. Andersen 1997: 73, Flyvbjerg 2003/04), here transnational civil society cooperation. The projects studied here belong to this class of cases, especially when those cases are funded through aid agencies. Naturally, there is a risk of overgeneralization since it may be that cases differ in a number of ways that have been omitted from the theoretical framework. That is also why any possible generalizations made towards other cases should be viewed as contingent ones. This is in line with the caveats put forward in existing literature concerning the possibilities of generalizing from case studies (George & Bennett 2005: 30f).

It could be said that case studies are often focused on, and beneficial for, the study of processes (George & Bennett 2005). Since the focus in this study is very much on processes (processes of translation as well as a developmental process of Estonian civil society, popular education and democracy), using a case study is a relevant approach. This could also be seen as somewhat related to the method of process tracing, which is one way of using the potential of case studies to investigate causal complexity and multiple causation (George & Bennett 2005: 205f). In this kind of studies, researchers search for a pattern among different aspects that may influence the process (Johansson 1997: 26, Jungar 2000: 76).16

The statements above concerning the importance of taking contextual conditions into account and the problem of differentiating between domestic and international factors make a case study seem even more relevant, since this method allows us to take many different aspects into consideration and go in depth into the chosen cases to an extent that is more difficult to achieve in more statistically oriented or “large-n” studies. In this respect, case studies are claimed to hold a comparative advantage (Eckstein 1975: 104f, Flyvbjerg

2003/04: 203, George & Bennett 2005: 19, cf. Aggestam 1999: 9f). With the use of smaller and more focused case studies and the use of qualitative methods, the possibility of coming close enough to the process itself to be able really to say something about it is greater than if a more quantitative approach were employed.

There is yet another point to be made in order to understand the perspective of this study. In studying a process of dissemination, an assumption is made that ideas do not float around freely to such an extent that it is impossible to study the processes by which actors may actively engage in the dissemination of certain ideas or norms. In this I rely on the rather widespread consensus on this issue among social constructivist scholars (Flockhart 2005c: 43, see also Risse-Kappen 1994). The reasoning behind this assumption is that ideas and norms have to be promoted by some actor and that the success or failure of these processes is determined by a number of elements that can be beneficial or detrimental to efforts to disseminate. This also lies close to the assumptions made in previous studies using the translation perspective. I will come back to what these elements might be, both in Chapter Five and in the analysis.

Regarding the interviews and the collection of these, a conscious effort has been made to mix the process so that not all material was first gathered from, for instance, the Swedish side in order then to move on to investigating the Estonian organizations. Instead, the interviews have been collected from the different actors concurrently. This has been done in order to limit the risk of the researcher becoming biased as a result of initially being influenced by the actors on just one side of the process. Limiting this is even more important since this study is interested in finding out if there has been any kind of reciprocity in the processes and how the different actors view this.

It should be noted that interviews have not been conducted with individuals involved in every project that has been run by ABF and AHL. However, several of the interviewees have been involved in more than one project and have worked with more than one partner on the opposite side. Thus, the number of respondents does not equal the number of projects studied through interviews. Interviews have been conducted with individuals directly involved in fifteen out of the twenty-one ABF/AHL projects that have been identified. Apart from written information in the form of project reports and evaluations, people from the central umbrella organization have also been able to give information regarding additional projects in the interviews conducted with them. Thus, the remaining projects have also been addressed in interviews although in a less direct manner.

The interviewees have been individuals who are active in AHL and ABF or who were active during the times of the project activities. Among these

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17 This has been the case for various reasons, among which are that it has not been possible to reach some individuals, others have died, etc.
individuals, people active in both the central umbrella organizations as well as various local organizations can be found. Interviewees were first chosen through contact information given in project reports from OPC. The first interviews made, both in Sweden and Estonia, yielded additional names of people who had been involved in the projects. In November 2005, for instance, interviews were held in Estonia with the main bulk of the board of AHL’s central organization and from this, several names came up. Thus, apart from the guidance from reports indicating who had been responsible for the projects, a degree of “snowballing” also added to the number of interviewees.

Apart from people in ABF and AHL, an interview has also been held with a representative of NFA, an organization that has been mentioned above. This person is now also active in NVL (Nordic Network for Adult Learning) – the structure that took over when NFA was closed in 2004. Representatives of additional Estonian organizations have also been interviewed. This includes two other large umbrella organizations, namely EVHL (Eesti Vabaharidusliit or Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association) and ETKA Andras (Eesti Täiskasvanute Koolitajate Assotsiatsioon Andras or Association of Estonian Adult Educators Andras). This has been done to get a picture and understanding of the system and actors in adult education in Estonia today. This is important if it is to be possible to understand the general situation and context in which AHL organizations live and operate.

The interviews conducted during the course of this research project have been of an exploratory and qualitative nature and have taken the form of open-ended discussions. This is not to say that the interviews have not been structured. Indeed, they have been semi-structured in that a number of thematic general questions were prepared before the interview.

Apart from specific questions that could vary depending on who the respondent was and what, if any, additional information, apart from the more general themes, was needed as well as background information, i.e. the respondent’s position in the organization, how long he/she had been involved in popular education and whether the respondent had been involved in other voluntary associations, the questions asked concerned the current situation and activities of the organization and the aims of these activities. Follow-up questions concerned whether this was connected to work-related education, personal development and/or the development of social and/or democratic skills – as well as how the respondent defined these. Issues of how the activities were funded as well as broader questions of how the respondents define adult and popular education and what roles they believe these activities can play in society were addressed. Here, the relation between popular education and democracy was also discussed. Naturally,

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18 ETKA Andras will from here on be referred to simply as “Andras” since that is the name normally used in Estonia.
questions concerning international projects were important parts of the interviews and these questions concerned the organizations (including ABF/AHL) and countries with which the respondent had been involved in cooperation as well as, when applicable, differences and similarities in working with different organizations and countries. The ABF/AHL projects were discussed in detail, with regard to both project administration, activities undertaken, and outcomes as well as how the cooperation had affected the respondents and organizations. With these questions as a base, the respondents were free to speak on the issues, which also showed what meaning they attached to concepts. Thus, the interviews fill the function of both gathering information concerning practical and external conditions and events and capturing the respondents’ subjective opinions. Interviews with these dual aims are also a common phenomenon in research (Teorell & Svensson 2007: 89, cf. Esaiasson et al 2007: 284).

The interviews were not standardized to any great extent. A lack of standardization implies that the interviewer adapts to the interviewee and his/her linguistic usage, allowing the respondent to direct the order of the questions, etc. (Trost 2005: 19).

All interviews were conducted by the author. The language used in the interviews depended on the linguistic skills of both the interviewer and the respondent. Interviews with respondents from various parts of ABF as well as from NFA were conducted in Swedish. Also a few of the interviews with representatives of AHL were done in Swedish since they were proficient in Swedish. The remaining interviews with Estonian respondents were conducted in English when possible or in Estonian with the assistance of an interpreter.

All interviews except one, which was conducted over the phone, were recorded and subsequently transcribed. None of the respondents objected to this. Recording the interviews is rewarding since it provides an opportunity to verify the initial impressions from the interview, to make as sure as possible that no significant misunderstandings have taken place and to go back and “relive” the interview at a later time. Having the information “word-for-word” on tape also facilitates the use of quotations, which is important in this study since quotations can illuminate perceptions of the processes that are in focus. It is also easier for the interviewer to take an active part during the interview situation and give the respondents his or her full attention instead of having to concentrate on writing notes. Sometimes it is claimed that recording the interview may make the interviewee nervous and more cautious about what he or she says. However, an interviewer who relies on notes taken during the interview could suffer from a similar bias in

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19 The interview technique used in this study is connected to what has been called the interview guide approach (see for instance Johnson & Turner 2003: 305f, cf. Esaiasson et al 2007: 298-301).
that the interviewee may notice when the interviewer is and is not taking
notes and from this infer what is interesting and what is not (Krag Jacobsen

In the text, I refer to the interviews by providing the name of the
respondent. Some literature stresses the importance of anonymity and
confidentiality for the respondents (Trost 2005: 40ff) but it can also be
argued, as is done by for instance Johansson (1997: 33), that it may be
important for the reader to get information on who said what and in what
context. In this study it can, for instance, be important to know whether it is
an actor from a central umbrella organization or a project manager or similar
actor from a smaller local organization. Naturally, it is for ethical reasons
crucial to maintain the level of confidentiality requested by the respondents.
Thus, all respondents have been asked whether or not they mind being
quoted and listed by name in this study. None have objected.

1.5 Outline of the Study

The general context of this book has already been presented. This also partly
guides the disposition of the book. Hence, in Chapter Two civil society as
well as transnational aspects of the organizations and activities will be
discussed, as will the relation between civil society and democracy. Chapter
Two will also introduce the background to democracy-promoting activities
as well as how these and civil society are intertwined. Swedish democracy
promotion and development assistance, along with the aid agencies of
greatest interest for this study, will also be discussed.

In Chapter Three and Chapter Four, I move one step down on the ladder
of abstraction and focus on the more general level of the empirical contexts.
Chapter Three is devoted to clarifying what adult or popular education is
in a Swedish context and what relations these educational activities and
organizations have with civil society, democracy and the state. Swedish
popular education and its organizations (both ABF and NFA will also be
introduced in this chapter) will be positioned in a historical context and the
ideals and ideas behind them will be studied. This is done not least in order
to take the first step in studying a process of translation through identifying
potential “travelling ideas”.

Chapter Four will turn to the Estonian context and the system of adult
education that exists there as well as the current situation for organizations
working in this field. Developments that have taken place during recent
decades will be discussed, based to a significant extent on the interviews
done for this study. Previous traditions of this kind of educational activity
both before and during the era under Soviet dominion will also be discussed
since historical legacies may be relevant to both the current situation and
transnational contacts. Finally, AHL as an organization will be introduced before the chapter comes to an end.

After these chapters, the reader will hopefully have sufficient knowledge of both the theoretical and the empirical context to join the author in the more explicit framework-building for the analysis. In Chapter Five, the concepts of diffusion, socialization and translation are reviewed and dissected. From this, tools to be used in the empirical analysis are extrapolated. Thus this is the chapter in which the theoretical systematization mentioned previously will be performed and this will bring the theoretical field concerning processes of dissemination closer to a synthesis. The different phases that were mentioned in Chapter 1.2 will also be further developed and will subsequently guide the analysis.

Before undertaking the more detailed empirical analysis, Chapter Six will give a background to the context in which the projects have been undertaken. The transformations that Estonia has been going through in recent years as well as previous relations between Sweden and Estonia will therefore be discussed.

Chapters Seven to Ten are devoted to tracing processes of translation in the various ABF/AHL projects. These chapters are, thus, where the detailed case study is undertaken. Chapter Seven will begin by discussing how the project activities between ABF and AHL took off and, thus, the starting point of the cooperation. Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten are organized around the phases identified in Chapter Five. Here the investigation concerns the cooperation between the different organizations and the theoretical notions delineated in previous chapters will be used to increase the understanding of the projects and put them in a more general and theoretically relevant context. The investigations conducted in these chapters will also close in on the research questions posed above in Chapter 1.2. All the chapters hold relevance for answering each of the questions. However, Chapter Eight can be seen as primarily related to the first question, Chapter Nine to the second and Chapter Ten to the third. Thus, Chapter Eight will focus on the question of what has been disseminated through the projects; Chapter Nine will turn the attention to how that has been edited by Estonian actors as well as how the relations between the organizations have developed, potential conflicts, etc.; Chapter Ten will mainly look into the developments taking place after the main bulk of the cooperation had been terminated as well as more coherently discussing the issue of potential reciprocity.

Finally in Chapter Eleven I return to the main research questions in a more explicit manner and extrapolate the knowledge gained concerning these in the previous chapters. The main findings of the study will be discussed and related back to the theories and general contexts to which this investigation is relevant.
2. Civil Society and Democracy Promotion

Following the introduction in Chapter One, this chapter will elaborate on the concept of civil society as well as *transnational* civil society. The projects to be investigated are of a transnational nature and I regard them as cases of transnational civil society cooperation, as stated in the previous chapter. Thus, this chapter will contextualize the cooperation in available theoretical debates as well as assist the understanding of what kind of “animal” is investigated.

Democracy promotion will also be discussed here since actors and efforts in this field have increasingly targeted civil society organizations. This kind of funding is also what has made the ABF/AHL projects possible. Funding is naturally of great importance for this kind of cooperation. Without the funding from donor agencies, most of the projects under scrutiny in this study would most likely never have existed. Hence, this context needs to be addressed as well.

2.1 Civil Society

Discussion of civil society as defined in this thesis and its roles in society has a long history, going back as far as ancient Greece and the first expressions of democratic theory. However, the concept in its current form can trace much of its origin to the Scottish enlightenment and scholars such as Adam Ferguson, Francis Hutcheson and Adam Smith (Angeles & Gurstein 2007: 3, Bernhard 1993: 308, Carothers 1999: 18).

The importance of the role ascribed to civil society has varied over time but the most recent breakthrough for civil society theories came at the end of the 1970s when the ideas were picked up by Eastern European intellectuals opposing the Soviet system, perhaps most significantly in Poland and the Solidarity movement (Carothers 1999: 18, Miller 1992: 1, 5, Seligman 1995: 7, Sztompka 1998: 191, Walzer 1995: 153). During the 1980s and 1990s Western European and American researchers also started becoming interested in the area again and after the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the transitions in Eastern Europe, the debate really started up once more (Carothers 1999: 18, Fine & Rai 1997: 1, Rothstein 2003: 165).
2.1.1 Defining Civil Society

One problem of theories concerning civil society, and also of the concept itself, is that it is difficult to find any generally accepted definition. There are, however, some basic characteristics that are endorsed in most research on the subject. Something that is widely acknowledged is that the concept includes associations and organizations that are non-governmental, more or less free, autonomous and voluntary and that are also self-regulatory (Cohen & Arato 1995: 81, Diamond 1999: 221, Gill 2000: 5ff, Keane 1988: xi).

To me, civil society can be defined as a public sphere consisting of voluntary organizations and associations that are non-governmental and possess some degree of autonomy from other societal spheres such as the political and the economic society. The different spheres are, however, not completely separated – instead they are in more or less constant interaction, albeit to varying degrees. This definition does not portray civil society as a static entity but instead emphasizes the fluidity and flexibility of both civil society and society at large. It should thus be seen as a process-oriented view of civil society.

In the research community there are those who limit civil society to associations that are political or “civic” in the sense that they try to foster democratic norms. Civil society is thus seen as by definition good for democracy. Others, however, count more or less all voluntary associations as parts of civil society. In this latter view, everything taking place outside the state realm is a part of civil society (Hydén 1997: 30f). These issues will be further discussed in Chapter 2.1.2. Suffice to say here that I do not include in the definition any criteria relating to the internal structure (whether it is democratic or not) nor regarding the aims of the organizations. These are best viewed as empirical questions (cf. Boussard 2003: 86ff).

There is debate over whether civil society is a purely normative concept or whether it also possesses empirical qualities. Some are of the opinion that the concept only has merit when used in a purely normative way (Ahme 1998: 284, Edwards & Foley 1998: 125), whereas others challenge this and consider that the concept has both empirical and normative qualities (Barber 1999). In this study, civil society is regarded as a concept with empirical qualities, able to assist the understanding of many different cases. The main focus of this study lies in an empirical investigation of actual civil society organizations, which makes the positioning here important. This is, however, not intended to disqualify more normative discussions of civil society and, as will be shown, normatively oriented ideas of civil society also influence areas of interest for this study such as the rhetoric used in democracy-promoting activities.

Normatively oriented studies tend to use a more minimalist approach to civil society whereas those trying to study civil society empirically often end up with a broader definition (cf. Heinrich 2005: 213). This is logical since it
can be assumed that different countries and contexts will portray different variants of civil society structures. This then requires quite a flexible definition. The definition suggested above comes closer to this broader view even though it may not stand at the extreme end of this line of reasoning.

As was noted above, civil society organizations are generally seen as non-governmental, i.e. as separated from the state. However, there is no real consensus concerning what the relationship between the state and civil society is, or should be. Some researchers see civil society and the state as separate but mutually complementary. They do not stand against or exclude each other but can further each other’s development. Many agree that a civil society cannot develop in isolation from the state and the market since the spheres influence one another. It is a matter of cooperation and co-existence (Diamond 1999: 221–260, Evans Jr. 2002: 333f, Keane 1988: 15, Linz & Stepan 1996a: 7). Some take a more conflict-oriented approach, emphasizing the function civil society can fill in challenging the state when this is necessary. This more confrontational view has its roots partly in the fact that civil society came into prominence again in the context of the oppositional movements in Eastern Europe. Here, the relationship was very much construed as civil society against the state (Howard 2003: 38), a view that has also lived on through the transitional years from the end of the 1980s onward. Thus, even though there is a widespread consensus in the research community about the distinction between civil society and the state as two separate societal spheres there is disagreement concerning how they are related to each other and whether this relationship is dominated by conflict or cooperation and compromise. I argue that, first of all, it is important to recognize that the state and civil society are not completely separated from each other. It is the interaction between the spheres that is of the greatest interest and they also tend to overlap (Åberg 2003). It should also be stressed that the relationship between the state and civil society should be seen as depending on the context studied. Thus, I argue that this is an empirical question that is influenced by contextual conditions.

Whether civil society should be viewed as separate from the market and the economic arena of society or not is an important divider between researchers concerned with civil society. Many are of the opinion that there are good reasons for separating civil society from the economic sphere and the market (Alexander 1998: 96f, Cohen & Arato 1995: 299f, Diamond 1999: 221, Walzer 1995: 165). Others, such as Hegel in his time and a number of contemporary researchers, claim that the market economy is so integrated with civil society and that civil society is so dependent on the market structures that it is not possible to talk about civil society as detached from or an alternative to the commercial society (Hunt 1999: 28f, Roniger 1998: 67). The state of the economy can also influence civil society’s ability to develop. If resources are scarce, civil society does not always grow strong. One reason is that if people are preoccupied with trying to make a living
they may not have much time or energy to act in pursuit of, for instance, a better environment (Howard 2003: 17f). The possibility of civil society organizations getting funding also decreases in times of economic difficulty. However, the high unemployment rates that normally accompany this kind of situation have also been claimed to make it easier for organizations to find volunteers (Bron, M. 2001: 171). In other words, the picture is not clear and the complex of problems surrounding funding is also an issue that has an impact on the potential influence of foreign funding agencies. Hence, this is also relevant for other sections of this book.

Another important issue in discussions on civil society concerns whether or not an organization can be placed entirely and definitely in civil society or if one instead should focus on the activities of the organization. What some researchers have argued is that some of the functions of an organization might fit into civil society whereas other activities of the same organization might fall outside the scope of this societal sphere. This again depends on how broadly civil society is defined but what is suggested here is, for instance, that a bird-watching society (that some would not include in civil society since it does not have anything to do with politics or “the public good”) could become politicized in acting to save an important habitat from exploitation or pollution. In that case this organization would all of a sudden act within civil society (Diamond 1999: 224). It is also difficult to make this kind of distinction between the economic and civil society. Should, for instance, an organization that is conducting some sort of profit-oriented activity be perceived as a part of the economic or the civil society? For instance, it is not uncommon for organizations working for human rights also to publish and sell literature, etc. The distinction that can be made here is that if the organization is conducting economic activities in order to finance the part of their activities that is a part of civil society, and this latter part is its main activity, then the organization should be acknowledged as a part of civil society (Boussard 2003: 82). The organizations this study focuses on can also be discussed in this context. Swedish popular education organizations, for instance, receive substantial funding from the state. To what extent can these organizations then be regarded as autonomous? Here it is necessary to make a judgement on whether the organization is still free to set its own agenda, choose what activities to engage in, etc. and depart from the decision made regarding this. The Swedish state does not, for instance, guide what subjects are to be part of the activities of popular education organizations (Bron, A. 2001b: 130, Larsson 2001: 142, cf. Wallin 2000: 22). Thus, they are in that sense autonomous.

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20 These issues will be further specified in Chapter Three.
21 It has also been noted in Chapter One that previous research has come to the same conclusion and, thus, considers Swedish popular education organizations as parts of civil society.
What has been discussed here, I claim, supports the correctness of using a process-oriented definition of civil society. It is neither easy nor desirable to draw too sharp lines between different spheres. Instead it is the grey areas between them that are of interest. It is also of less importance to focus on sharp distinctions if civil society is to be an empirically valuable concept. A definition of civil society has to be sufficiently flexible to be able to account for the diversity that may exist when studying civil society in different contexts.

It is reasonable to assume that civil society will take on different guises depending on the context in which it develops. Both time and space provide important contextual constraints and advantages for civil society development (Heinrich 2005: 222, Åberg 2005). Thus, if civil society is to be used as an empirical concept, it has to be able to take this into consideration. Without going into detail and attempting to exemplify to any greater extent how contextual conditions can affect civil society development, it can be claimed that, for instance, the conflictive approach to the relation between the state and civil society that has been prevalent in many countries in Eastern Europe may be a result of the history of an omnipotent state where civil society had to develop and exist more or less in hiding. In Sweden the situation has been quite different. The state has generally taken a positive attitude to the organizations of civil society. They have been seen as important for the democratic process and the state has in various ways encouraged these activities (Wijkström & Lundström 2002: 202f). This is not least true concerning popular education organizations (Wallin 2000: 81). In Sweden, many civil society organizations have their origins in popular movements and this background has been a source both of organizational identity and external legitimacy (Wijkström & Lundström 2002: 72). These movements, such as the labour movement, the temperance movement and the free church movement, have in Sweden played an important part in the relation between state and civil society (Rothstein 2003: 123). I will not go into the spectrum of different civil societies in different countries but it can be assumed that the structure and perceived roles of civil society organizations can vary between contexts.

2.1.2 Civil Society, Democracy, Citizens and Civic Competence

Those who most strongly advocate civil society are keen to bring out the positive effects this societal sphere can have on democracy and the idea that it can enhance the possibility of a change of the form of government in a democratic direction. According to many researchers, civil society organizations can play an important part in transitions to democracy, for instance by acting as negotiating partners for reform-friendly, moderate forces within the old regime. Civil society is seen as able to affect all phases in a process of democratization (Beetham 1993: 66, Diamond 1994: 4f,
Diamond 1999, Gill 2000: 241f, Linz & Stepan 1996a: 9, Linz & Stepan 1996b: 17f) even though this is not undisputed and neither is the potential extent of the impact.

The last phase in a process of democratization, often called the consolidation phase, is where many researchers believe civil society can play its most important role.\textsuperscript{22} It is in this phase that it is seen as possible for civil society organizations to really influence the process by supporting democratic development, and assisting in the creation of a democratic political culture and what, several decades ago, was termed “civic culture” (Almond & Verba 1963).\textsuperscript{23} The consolidation of this civic culture and of civil society itself can be seen as the part of a democratization process that takes the longest time to complete. Since it concerns changing attitudes, not least citizens’ attitudes towards politics and the government, it may take generations to accomplish (Badersten 1995, Merkel 1998: 40, Sztompka 1998: 191). Here, civil society may have an important part to play, not least by providing an arena where citizens can “practice” active democratic citizenship, something I will come back to below.

Both in old and more newly developed democracies, civil society is seen as a resource to increase and deepen democracy beyond its formal structures (Diamond 1999: 219). The development of democracy can hardly ever be viewed as complete – there will always come new challenges to societies and their systems of government. Problems facing long-standing and apparently stable democracies that are often advanced include, for instance, greater alienation of citizens with increasing apathy, disinterest and feelings of helplessness as a consequence, declining trust in politicians, loss of familiarity with political parties, etc. Many of these issues also come up in the context of discussing globalization, whether it be blamed for these problems or not. The section on transnational civil society (Chapter 2.1.3) will also connect to this.

One common way of addressing possible solutions to many of these issues is to turn the attention towards the potential of civil society.

Without organization, structure, and principles, the public may not matter for democracy, or its impact may be negative. Certainly, a politically active public is not all that matters. Democracy…also requires a public that is organized for democracy, socialized to its norms and values, and committed not just to its myriad narrow interests but to larger, common, “civic” ends. Such civic public is only possible with a vibrant “civil society.” (Diamond 1999: 221)

\textsuperscript{22} The consolidation phase involves fending off threats to the stability of a newly developed democratic system of government and also fully developing this democracy (Diamond 1999: 70f, Huntington 1996: 8ff, Schedler 1998, Schmitter 1994).\textsuperscript{23} For further discussions on the growth of civic cultures, see Almond and Verba (1963) and Huntington (1993).
If civil society is dominated by forces that produce and enhance civic norms and structures that can, in turn, promote trust and cooperation, such a spirit can be spread to the rest of society (Diamond 1999: 227). A well functioning civil society can mediate in conflicts and enhance the quality of citizenship instead of overwhelming decision-makers with increasing demands and altogether making the system impossible to govern (Schmitter & Karl 1993: 44). Other functions that civil society is believed to have the potential for filling in a democracy include checking the state and the government and holding actors accountable for how they use their power as well as providing alternative ways of articulating interests. Civil society can also be a training and recruiting ground for the next generation of political leaders (cf. Diamond 1999). Democracy requires some activity on the part of the citizens and this is something that can be bred through civil society.

Civil society and its organizations have often been seen as important for democracy in their function as “mediating institutions” and as a link that can facilitate communication between individuals and the state (Gill 2000: 6f, Janoski 1998, Micheletti 1995: 5, Saunders 1993). This points to the significance of interaction between state and civil society. However, not only can civil society be a good thing for democracy but democracy is also a good, if not necessary, condition for a vibrant civil society. As described by Walzer (1995: 170): “Only a democratic state can create a democratic civil society; only a democratic civil society can sustain a democratic state”.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of civil society, pointing to its potential positive impact on democracy, concerns the possible function as “schools of democracy” (Diamond 1994). This refers to the fact that in this kind of association people get a chance to meet and discuss with people outside their family and close friends and to learn skills that are good for democracy, such as trust, toleration, knowledge of the system, what rights and obligations democratic citizenship entails, etc. In discussions of Swedish democracy this is also a role that is frequently ascribed to voluntary associations (Ammâ 2007: 166). Not least is this the case regarding “popular movement organizations” (Hvenmark & Wijkström 2004: 5), which is the concept often used to denote the Swedish organizations that are connected to the popular movements that arose in Sweden in the later parts of the 19th century. ABF is one of these organizations, rising out of the labour movement. I will come back to ABF and the development of this organization in Chapter 3.1.2.

Many of the aspects put forward in this context also coincide with what are sometimes construed as civic virtues.24 The views taken on the

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24 It is not easy to briefly account for what is meant by civic virtues and the aspects stressed also vary but include abiding by the law, toleration, a willingness and ability to identify personal and common interests, to act in the common interest, to participate in public debate, to trust, etc. (see for instance Galston 1991, Kymlicka & Norman 1995: 297, Milner 2002, Sundgren 2000).
importance of citizen activity as well as on what kind of activity is desirable and how civic virtues are developed and learned differ between researchers. Some claim that participating politically in itself breeds responsible participation and toleration in the citizens. Others take this participatory view one step further, following the civic republican idea of political participation as the “highest form of human living-together” (Kymlicka & Norman 1995: 292f). In comparison to these views as well as those claiming the market to be the place where the necessary knowledge for citizenship can be acquired, theorists looking into civil society have a somewhat different view on the development of civic virtues and the competence needed for becoming an active citizen. For them, neither the market nor political participation is in itself enough. Instead, it is something that is seen as being taught in the “associational networks of civil society” (Walzer 1995: 164, cf. Kymlicka & Norman 1995: 295). In this view, activities in civil society organizations can produce greater interest in social and political issues and can therefore encourage social participation. Following this, active participation in public debate is seen as bringing forth greater social and political commitment as well as civic virtues (Brubaker 1992, Walzer 1983). This perspective assumes that man is a social being. What is important is the social interaction with other people. This is an attempt to reconcile ideas of citizenship with the reality of the contemporary world. There is neither time nor are other preconditions satisfied for every citizen to participate in the daily rule of a polity and, thus, to be as active as some notions of citizenship envisage. The “civil society argument”, however, means that in civil society, citizens get a chance to take many smaller decisions and in this more limited way behave as citizens (Walzer 1995: 164). It is, in other words, much about practicing the skills of democratic citizenship as well as getting the information and knowledge needed (Heater 1999: 172f).\footnote{That participating in civil society activities can teach individuals about active citizenship and democracy can also be connected to the theories about social capital advanced by, among others, Putnam (1992, 2000).} This is also what is stressed by Diamond when referring to civil society as “schools of democracy”.

These are, however, not unproblematic claims either, since fostering norms such as civility and toleration may not be the primary goal of a civil society organization. Perhaps civil society theorists expect too much from these voluntary associations since, to most of them, the main aim is not to foster civic virtues but to advance the interests that are expressed in that particular organization (Kymlicka & Norman 1995: 296). The emphasis put on civil society and its potential for advancing and improving democratic citizenship should thus be used with vigilance since it is easy to put too much hope into the voluntary associations of civil society.
The idea that civil society can help foster civic virtues like trust and toleration does not stand undisputed. Civil society is a two-sided coin. Partly it can fulfil the purpose of organizing plurality in society and letting diversity and the many different groups that exist in most societies today come up and flourish, following their own agenda and pursuing their own goals. However, there is another side to this as well. Civil society in just this capacity also thrives on particularism. We protect the group we belong to and, thus, our identities. Many organizations may be conducting themselves civilly enough but still maintaining their own group identity and, thus, shunning others. In many ways civil society may help produce attitudes, values and behaviour based on trust, toleration and respect for diversity and pluralism, but this is not a given. This may be the case within a group but it might be a different story in relation to other groups. Kymlicka and Norman (1995: 295) take the example of neighbourhood associations that may very well foster trust, tolerance, debating skills, and so on within the group without necessarily showing the same kind of toleration when a proposal for a group home or public works in the neighbourhood comes up. Civil society can thus be seen as partly based on a body of shared values but, at the same time, promoting difference in, for instance, the development of different cultural identities (Turner & Ridden 2001: 30, cf. Rothstein 2003: 166ff).

Even though, as has been shown above, several scholars tend to emphasize the positive effects a well functioning civil society can have for democracy this is not a view that is uncontested. Too strong and powerful a civil society can also be a problem for society if the state is too weak to deal with the powerful interests (Diamond, 1994: 14). There are also researchers who claim that disputes within civil society can lead to a degeneration of the democratic institutions and that, in a process of democratization, civil society groups can possibly lead back towards an authoritarian rule or at least weaken the political institutions (Di Palma 1993: 36, Merkel 1998: 58f, O’Donnell & Schmitter 1991: 65). In other words, civil society can complicate just as well as facilitate things for democracy (Lewis 1993: 302). Also, if antidemocratic groups win great influence this can affect democracy negatively. These kinds of objections to the glorified picture of the relationship between civil society and democracy have been noted in recent work where the question of “the dark side of civil society” (Albrow & Anheier 2007) or “bad civil society” has been discussed, and terms such as antidemocratic or uncivil society have sometimes been used (see for instance Bermeo 2000: 238, Chambers & Kopstein 2001, Kopecký & Mudde 2003, cf. Rothstein 2003).

However, a number of scholars exclude, to a greater or lesser extent, nondemocratic or antidemocratic organizations, violent groups, etc. from the definition of civil society (Angeles & Gurstein 2007: 8, Diamond 1994, Howard 2003, Hydén 1997). This restriction on what organizations are included in civil society is based on the argument that an organization has to
work democratically and act civilly to be part of civil society. Other scholars do not make this distinction (Boussard 2003, Dryzek 1996, Uhlin 2006, Åberg 2003) but claim that it is the autonomy from other societal spheres that decides whether an organization is part of civil society or not – not its internal structure nor its methods or goals. As noted in Chapter 2.1.1, I do not include criteria concerning “how democratic” an organization is in the definition of civil society.

Above, the potential ability of civil society organizations to function as “schools of democracy” and foster democratic norms has been discussed. But what about groups that are not at all founded on these kind of principles (if they are now to be included, following the discussions above)? Could they not lead to a fostering of completely different norms based on exclusion, hate and intolerance? These are issues that are not readily answered. I will not develop these arguments further here since the cases under scrutiny in the empirical investigation of this study do not fall within this category of organizations. Hence, I leave this and the issue of whether or not non-democratic or antidemocratic organizations should be seen as parts of civil society for others to continue debating.

There are also other challenges to civil society and the exercise of active citizenship. What is often stressed is the changing quality of the competence and skills citizens need. That different demands are placed on citizens today if they are to participate actively in society is a natural consequence of the globalizing tendencies in the world. In this context this includes the fact that many decisions that affect citizens today are made further away from them, in larger political entities. The complexity of political issues is also claimed to have increased. The spreading of worldwide and world-covering media such as the Internet and other communication technologies is also believed to have put additional demands on civic competence (Crossley 2001: 38ff, Dahl 1992). Even if it is vital to obtain and process information in order to make informed decisions as citizens, the result can also be information overload. Hence, it is necessary to possess, for instance, the competence to sort the information. The changing qualities and skills needed to be an active citizen mean that civic competence is something that constantly needs to be nourished and also questioned (Crossley 2001: 45). In countries that have recently undergone a transition to democracy this may seem fairly obvious, but the same is probably true of more or less every democratic country in the world. This partly follows from the challenges of new demands and possibilities and previous studies have revealed “grave limits to citizen competence” (Dahl 1992: 45). Being a citizen has also been claimed to have become an increasingly passive role, with many citizens’ activity in public affairs being limited to voting every few years, if even that (Dahl 1992, Walzer 1995: 164).

It can be argued that knowledge of what rights and obligations a citizen possesses in a democratic society is important, not just for democracy and
citizenship, but also for civil society. This is because a citizen who does not know what rights and obligations he/she possesses also does not know what possibilities there are of becoming active and influencing society and the position of the individual himself/herself. The kind of organizations that civil society consists of depends, to a large extent, upon individuals becoming active. And, if citizens cannot or will not become active because they do not know what they can do, it may be difficult for civil society to grow strong. This, I argue, shows the importance of education in the different kinds of rights and obligations that come with citizenship. Apart from the indirect effects of participating in civil society activities, perhaps adult and popular education associations are the subgroup of civil society that can most directly address these issues, especially since the kind of activity desired from citizens has to be based on their voluntary participation and activity. This kind of activity cannot be imposed on people by the state if it is to have the effect claimed by some researchers, namely, the creation of a common sense of belonging: “We cannot create active citizenship or a moral social order, but can only ensure that the conditions are present by means of which these things can develop” (Saunders 1993: 87, see also Shotter 1993).

2.1.3 Transnational Civil Society

The discussions above have mainly concerned what may be called domestic civil society. At least that is a prefix often used in current debates since there has been a trend towards discussing global, transnational and/or regional civil society.

Transnational civil society can be said, in a way, to add a requisite to the definition of civil society in that, to be called “transnational”, organizations should not only be located outside of the state and the market but also work beyond or across national borders, political territories, etc. (Uhlin 2006). This definition clearly demonstrates that the projects involving ABF and AHL fall within this category since it is precisely the “work beyond or across national borders” that is the focus of this study.

Issues relating to the transnational character of many civil society organizations are often discussed under the heading of global civil society. However, it should be noted that the concept of transnational civil society is what will be used in this study. This follows from observations made in previous research. Transnational civil society is advanced since it is claimed that much of the interaction between civil society organizations from different countries is more regional than global in scope. In other words, much of the interaction is more limited than the term “global” civil society implies (Florini & Simmons 2000: 7, Piper & Uhlin 2004: 5, Uhlin 2006). Thus, it is not the geographical scope but the “cross-border interactions” of the organizations and activities that should, from this perspective, be in focus
(Reuter 2007: 99). In this chapter however, global civil society will also be used, since much of the debate uses this concept.

Even though the debates concerning global civil society in previous research have frequently circled around movements and organizations that are globally based or that exist in several countries, such as Amnesty International, global civil society can also concern networking and cooperation between different organizations interested in the same issues. Networks are a concept often used in this field, along with network theory (Chandler 2005: 35), and the cooperation and campaigns many researchers study are labelled “transnational advocacy networks” (Jordan & Van Tuijl 2000, Keck & Sikkink 1998). The cooperation and projects that are to be further investigated in this study may not concern transnational or global organizations but they still concern transnational activities (even if these are not aimed at a global arena), which means that the notions developed in the strand of theory focusing on global civil society are still of interest. Piper and Uhlin (2004) have also claimed that there are various ways in which activities can be transnational. Naturally, one way is that the focus of the organization or activities is directed at transnational or global issues and another that an organization is not confined to the territory of one nation-state but operates in several states or incorporates citizens from several states. However, activities are also seen as transnational if the actors are “concerned with issues in a country other than where the activists are citizens” and/or “the targets of activism [are] based in one or several countries other than where the activists themselves are located” (Piper & Uhlin 2004: 5). These criteria fit nicely with a description of the activities investigated empirically in this study.

In the cooperation between civil society organizations in different countries, an opportunity for dissemination of ideas, practices, methods, strategies and organizational forms also opens that, under the right circumstances, may be beneficial for the development and growth of civil society and possibly also democracy. This kind of process will also be considered in the analysis of the cases in this study, and I will return to it in later chapters.

The debate on global civil society is related to the field of research on international relations. Some scholars, however, prefer to avoid “international” relations and speak of “transnational” or “global” relations instead, arguing that traditional international relations research has focused much on the state as the significant actor and on power relations between states. Today it is argued that non-state actors play an increasingly important role in international relations and that these actors have to be taken into account when studying this field. Avoiding the term international relations is then an attempt to make this new direction more obvious (Chandler 2005: 31, cf. Keohane & Nye 1977, Chapter Two). Transnational relations are defined as “regular interactions across national boundaries when at least one actor is a
non-state agent or does not operate on behalf of a national government or an intergovernmental organization” (Risse-Kappen 1995: 3). One way of phrasing the difference that transnational civil society is sometimes said to have brought to the field of international relations is expressed by Risse (2000: 204): “Transnational civil society has established the power of norms against the norms of power”. Thus, the hope many put in the emergence of a global civil society is the introduction of international governance based on morality as opposed to power politics.

An increased interest in transnational links and transnational activism in recent years is easily spotted. These issues have also been approached from various perspectives and disciplines – transnational activities are clearly a fashionable topic (for an overview of the various perspectives and scholarly work in the area, see Piper & Uhlin 2004). Recent research has claimed that living in a time of increasing globalization and interdependence between states where global, or at least regional, issues are at the forefront of popular as well as academic debate makes a reconceptualization of existing concepts like democratic citizenship and civil society something of a necessity. Global citizenship and global civil society are issues that have been increasingly discussed over the last few years (see for instance Delanty 2000, Diamond & Plattner 1996, Habermas 1995, Heater 1999, Schechter 1999, Turner 1993a, Turner 1993b: 15, Turner 1996: 156ff, Walzer 1998, Zoninsein 1999), though ideas concerning this have been around for a much longer time (see for instance Dahrendorf 1996: 17 about Immanuel Kant’s vision of a world civil society). In this context, ideas concerning whether or not citizenship has to be limited to the context of the nation-state have also been advanced.26

Globalization is often seen as a challenge, to various institutions and practices as well as to concepts such as citizenship. This stems from an idea that globalization leads to fuzzier boundaries between cultures and nations which, according to writers with this inclination, must lead to a questioning of citizenship since it provides new threats to contemporary perceptions (Crossley 2001, Elliott 2001: 59, Stevenson 2001, Turner 1993b: 15, Turner 2001).

Potential connections between civil society and active citizenship have been discussed above and this debate is also very much alive when it comes to the global arena. Global civil society is seen as able to increase the space and possibilities for individuals to exercise active citizenship (Chandler 2005: 12). Globalization, including tendencies towards increased interdependence and cooperation between different areas of the world as well as increased access to information about and communication with faraway regions, has led to a fragmentation of national cultures that have previously been regarded as homogenous. Global issues, such as human rights, environmental issues, etc., have come to the forefront of many movements and

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26 See for instance Gerard Delanty’s notion of “civic cosmopolitanism” (Delanty 2000).
organizations and the kind of “citizenship” here is less concerned with belonging to a particular nation-state than with the social identity of being a human being. Norms and ideas concerning, for instance, human rights are frequently in focus here and there are those who connect this to a process of socialization (Chandler 2005: 32, Risse & Sikkink 1999: 5). As will also be discussed in Chapter Five, the dissemination of norms, ideas and practices through this kind of process is often seen to be dependent on some “transmitter” or socializing agent, i.e. some actor who works as the bearer of the ideas and who can project them into a setting at an appropriate time when a window of opportunity has been opened in the policy debate. This is for instance discussed in studies dealing with the dissemination of human rights norms through transnational activities of non-state actors (see Keck & Sikkink 1998: 119, Risse et al 1999).

When studying the ongoing debate about global civil society, it is easy to detect a quite extensive normative emphasis (cf. Reuter 2007). Just as has been the case regarding domestic civil societies, there is discussion of whether or not global civil society is a concept that has empirical qualities or if it is a more or less purely “normative project” (Chandler 2005). As already mentioned, civil society is seen in this study to be a concept that holds empirical qualities even though it is acknowledged that much normative content also flourishes in discussions of the subject. The same is true of the view taken on transnational civil society. This study attempts to empirically study transnational activities of actually existing civil society organizations.

In discussions of global civil society, a concept more and more frequently used by academic scholars as well as activists in non-governmental organizations, international institutions such as the UN, etc., one prominent notion has been that non-state actors within a global civil society can help relieve the democratic deficit that is often seen to exist in the international or global political arena and make international institutions of various kinds more accountable than has been the case till now (cf. Scholte 2004). This brings some degree of accountability to an arena that has previously been seen as more or less anarchic in character. In a way this also resembles the hopes and wants expressed by some scholars concerning domestic civil society.

That increased accountability is a main advantage claimed in favour of increased influence from and support for global civil society actors is interesting but also problematic. It is presumably true, according to previous writers in the field, that civil society organizations have played a part in making global governance structures and other global actors more accountable for their actions (Scholte 2004). However, a question that is reasonable to ask is how accountable the civil society actors (global as well

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27 This also connects with the assumption discussed in Chapter 1.4 that ideas do not simply float around freely but that they need someone to promote them in order for them to spread.
as national) themselves are? If these actors are defined as, by definition, good for democracy, which I find problematic, it must be seen as a vital issue whether these organizations themselves can be held accountable, if they are representative and of whom, and whether they work in a democratic manner (see Chandler 2005: 185, Scholte 2004: 230f). This also connects with what has already been discussed in this chapter concerning the tension between openness, pluralism and tolerance on the one hand and the often quite narrow self-interests that civil society organizations are set up to defend on the other. It should be noted that there are those who believe that questions of accountability and representation do not really constitute problems since transnational NGOs are not about formal representation in the way a democratic system in a state works and therefore accountability is less of an issue (Jordan & Van Tuijl 2000: 2053). However, these are issues that have to be regarded as quite troublesome for theorists advocating global civil society.

As noted, in the debate on global civil society the “civil” part of the concept is heavily stressed, meaning that global civil society frequently is seen as pro-democratic by default and as something that is inherently positive for democracy. Remembering the discussion in Chapter 2.1.1, this would come close to a minimalist view of civil society. Just as in the case of domestic civil society, this may be in need of problematization. The notion, however, comes from the frequent focus on such objects of study as, for instance, human rights networks and other advocacy networks that are trying to promote issues that are seen to be closely related to spreading or creation of global “civic” or “moral” politics. Some also see “civility” and non-violence as crucial defining features of global civil society (Keane 2003: 12).

There are several ways in which it is believed that global civil society can have an impact and different “weapons” can be used to achieve this. Through global civil society it can be possible for individuals to put pressure on “their” state’s government through transnational contacts and by making the international community aware of unsatisfactory states of affairs (cf. Keck & Sikkink 1998: 24). This is often discussed in terms of the potential non-state actors’ hold on “achieving change through mobilising international pressure” (Chandler 2005: 36).

One of the most important parts of the arsenal concerns the gathering and distribution of information. This may be, for instance, information regarding sub-standard conditions in a specific context among many other things and is also connected to the mobilization of international pressure mentioned above. Thus, an important role for these actors is to provide alternative and independent information. The importance of information is also regarded as crucial in cooperation between NGOs in different countries and in transnational advocacy networks (Jordan & Van Tuijl 2000, Keck & Sikkink 1998, Scholte 2004: 216f). Domestically or globally I would argue that educational organizations such as the ones in focus in the empirical
investigation of this study could be seen as well equipped to handle this role since their main mission is to educate and spread information among citizens. This informative role of civil society organizations is seen as contributing to public education and “countering widespread ignorance about global governance” (Scholte 2004: 216).

Finally, there seems to be an important divider between different approaches to global civil society in how distinct different spheres, like states, markets and the social sphere of global civil society, are perceived. Some see them as clearly separated whereas others consider that they continuously overlap and interact with each other (Chandler 2005: 126f, cf. Chandhoke 2001, Keck & Sikkink 1998: 216). The latter has also been argued for as crucial for studying domestic civil societies in Chapter 2.1.1. Many issues being fought over in debates about global civil society are thus similar to those being discussed concerning domestic civil society.

Global civil society as a normative project, which has been discussed previously in this section, seems to have influenced the view of aid agencies, foundations, etc. working in the field of democracy promotion, which will be discussed in the next section. There it will be argued that civil society has become an increasingly important arena for these efforts, which also can be connected to the discussions that have taken place here. If civil society is seen to be able to contribute to a furthering of democracy and human rights and the actors concerned are perceived to be gaining power internationally this will affect the donors’ willingness to support non-state actors. The normative assumptions that may partly guide the hopes and beliefs of donor agencies also have repercussions on an empirical level since decisions made on this basis can decide the fate of many organizations in, for instance, Eastern Europe, which is part of the larger context of this study.

2.2 Democracy Promotion

The promotion of democracy or democratic aid has been a central theme of much debate over recent decades, going hand in hand with what is generally referred to as “the third wave” of democratization. The pros and cons of different techniques and also whether or not it is at all possible or appropriate to “export” democracy and its institutions from one context to another have been extensively debated and opinions on this vary between actors and also to some extent between practitioners and theorists (Di Palma 1990: 14-17, Mendelson & Glenn 2002: 6).

28 The concept of “third wave” democracies was coined by Samuel P. Huntington (1991, 1993) to signify the wave of democratization starting with the process of democratization in Portugal in 1974.
Democracy promotion will here be discussed generally but particularly with regard to a context of civil society. The second part of this chapter will discuss Swedish democracy promotion and the Swedish agencies working in this field, especially the one that has been most directly involved with the ABF/AHL projects, namely the Olof Palme International Center.

2.2.1 Democracy Promotion and Civil Society

Two main factors have prompted the democracy aid boom. The first is the global democratic trend itself. As democratic openings spread through Latin America and parts of Asia in the 1980s and then surged in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and sub-Saharan Africa at the start of the 1990s, the established democracies have sought to respond positively...The second factor is the end of the Cold War (Carothers & Ottaway 2000: 5).

In the development of this “aid boom”, civil society was initially not among the main beneficiaries. Instead, the emphasis was on supporting institutions and especially the development of democratically organized elections. This focus on elections was most pronounced in the first period of extensive democratic aid activities that, roughly, lasted from the mid-1980s until the early 1990s. During the first half of the 1990s, the activities of the aid industry broadened somewhat to include support for reforms in a number of different state institutions such as the judiciary and legal system (Carothers & Ottaway 2000: 6). Here I will not go deeper into this kind of assistance but instead turn to what is most interesting for this study, namely democracy-promoting activities aimed at civil society.

With the increasing popularity of the concept of civil society since the end of the 1970s, a new, modified approach to the techniques or methods of promoting democracy has taken over as the catchword of the day. This is civil society. Increasingly, (democratic) aid directed at civil society has been the form taken by many of the democracy-promoting activities of various states, aid agencies, private foundations and international NGOs (Angeles & Gurstein 2007: 7, Henderson 2003, Mathews 2000: vii, Van Rooy 1998a: 1, Van Rooy & Robinson 1998: 33, Whaites 1996: 240). “Democracy promotion”, alongside human rights, has also become an increasingly important part of foreign aid and development cooperation from the late 1980s onwards, following the generally increased insistence on democracy as a way of promoting development as such. This has not least been evident in Swedish foreign aid policies (Brodin 2000: 39f).

The arguments for this shift of focus, away from state institutions and towards civil society organizations of different kinds, reflect the way in which civil society itself has been promoted as an essentially good arena for democratic development from the time of the reawakening of the concept at
the end of the 1970s and onwards through the democratization processes of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (Carothers 2003).

A reasonable assumption, which has also been mentioned previously, is that civil society will not look the same in all countries, just as views of democracy will differ. In Eastern Europe, for instance, it has been claimed that people view democracy as more closely connected with material well-being and that support for democracy as a form of government is more closely connected to economic progress than in many other countries that have not undergone the same multiple transitions as this region (Lewis 1993: 296, Quigley 2000: 196). That views on these aspects as well as the development and shape of civil society differ is not surprising since historical traditions, differences in culture, legal framework, etc. provide different preconditions that will influence what civil society develops into as well as fostering views of civil society among Eastern Europeans different from those of Western European or American donors (Carothers & Ottaway 2000: 14f, Quigley 2000: 194). Indeed, civil society itself takes on different guises depending on the context. Thus, it is questionable whether it is fruitful for democracy promoters to attempt to “export” a ready-made model of civil society and democracy from their respective home countries, as has been tried with, for instance, much American aid (Mendelson 2002: 245, Quigley 2000: 195, Van Rooy 1998b: 15, Van Rooy 1998c: 198-211).

An influential aspect of the discussion of means to pursue activities and actually organize a civil society association has been the possibility of getting funding as well as the impact of foreign actors assisting NGOs in East European countries and other contexts. This is a factor that cannot be neglected. Much of this work has been placed under the heading of “democracy promotion”. Naturally, this also has an impact on the activities as well as the activists within domestic civil society organizations. The financial and material contributions from foreign funding agencies are frequently the only thing sustaining the groups even though a goal of these projects is often that they should be long-lasting in the sense that the recipients should be able to take over, and continue with, the operation after

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29 By multiple transitions is here meant a process of democratization where both a transition from a totalitarian or authoritarian political system of government and a transition from a planned to a market economy have been part of the development. A heavy strain is put on a country that is undergoing even one of these transformations and, naturally, doubling the process increases the strain on the society. Some also include an additional transition concerning state-building and nation-building (Kopecký & Mudde 2000: 528, see also Linz & Stepan 1996a, Offe 1996). This has especially been the case in studies of post-communist transitions. Some scholars also wish to divide this transition into two separate issues, one concerning stateness and the other dealing with nationhood (Kuzio 2001). Thus, some argue that many post-communist countries undergo quadruple transitions. The fourth dimension, dealing with nationality and nation-building, has especially been seen as an issue in the former Soviet Union (thus, including Estonia), the former Yugoslavia and Slovakia (Kuzio 2001: 174).
the project itself is completed (see for instance OPC internet30, Wallin 2000: 95, Van Rooy 1998c: 218f). However, in many cases foreign partners see that the organizations and their activities crumble and disappear when the cooperation project, and with it the project money, ends (Henderson 2003, Quigley 2000; Lundgren, interview, 2005). It should be stated that this does not only concern, for instance, state-governed funding directly distributed to various NGOs in the receiving country. Much of this work is also delegated to NGOs in the country that is providing the assistance. It may still concern money from the state, given to domestic civil society organizations, sometimes called “intermediary organizations” so that they can get involved in transnational cooperation (see for instance Van Rooy & Robinson 1998: 62f). This is also how the cases featured in this study, i.e. the ABF/AHL projects, came about.

It seems that many donors view civil society as such as something inherently positive for democracy in its potential functions as both the force that can check the way governments use their power and the basis for the spreading and enhancement of democratic values and beliefs and, thus, the creation of a democratic political culture (Carothers & Ottaway 2000: 3f). As noted previously in this chapter, these are roles frequently presented as showing the benefits of a strong and vibrant civil society. It is common in the developmental debate to define civil society in a quite minimalist way, only including organizations that are aimed specifically at fostering democracy (Carothers & Ottaway 2000: 10f, Henderson 2003, Van Rooy 1998b: 16-19).31 However, this is too simplistic a picture. Civil society should be recognized as a wider concept and its connections to democracy need to be problematized to a greater extent.

The fact that much money and resources from foreign democracy promoters have been directed at civil society groups over the last decade has also encountered problems, often because of this idealistic view of civil society that is common in Western countries and among donors (Quigley 2000: 211f). It has also lead to aid projects being confined to a rather small group of organizations and there has also been an overwhelming preference for organizations that take on the guise of professionalized, and, if you will, more “Westernized” NGOs, even if this has started to change somewhat in recent years (Mathews 2000: viii, Quigley 2000: 211, Van Rooy 1998b: 27, Van Rooy 1998c: 206). The fact that aid money tends to go to quite professionalized NGOs also encourages an increased professionalization of the civil society groups themselves. So, aid agencies tend to disregard many other types of groups that should be considered important parts of civil society, such as cultural and religious groups or more informal community associations that may very well be able to fill a significant role in fostering

31 This minimalist view of civil society was also discussed in chapter 2.1.1.
democracy indirectly. This brings to mind the notion of civil society organizations as “schools of democracy” that was discussed in Chapter 2.1.2.

The limitation imposed by this preference for professionalized organizations comes partly from a belief that it is the civic groups that can influence democratic development but also from the fact that it is easier for donors to work with these more professional organizations (Ottaway & Carothers 2000b: 295, Van Rooy & Robinson 1998: 48). I will here focus on two issues that arise out of this. The first is that some individuals have specialized in grant-seeking and thus turned the activities into more of a “regular business” than it is often perceived to be domestically in the West where the free and voluntary character of civil society is more emphasized. Even though it is far from unusual for civil society organizations to employ people in Western Europe and the USA, too, the voluntary, idealistic, open and non-profit aspects tend to come first, at least in theory. Being active in a civil society organization in Eastern Europe, Africa or elsewhere, has, for many, been a career path (Van Rooy & Robinson 1998).

It is not unusual for civil society elites eventually to move over to the political or the economic society and engage in political parties or in companies, where more lucrative positions can be found. This may drain the resources of civil society (Evans Jr 2002: 327). However, civil society as a training ground for new democratic leadership has also been mentioned as a possibly important function. Thus movement is not purely negative even though some consequences may be detrimental to the continued strength of civil society. Civil society’s role as a training ground as well as a school in democracy is also stressed by, for instance, Swedish donor agencies (SIDA 2004: 13), which will be discussed shortly.

The financial incentives discussed above also tend to take the spotlight off the activities the organization is supposed to engage in and shift it towards fund-raising, a situation that also arises out of the fact that many organizations are so heavily dependent on foreign contributions. The kind of development that has been described here can also lead to another problem, namely that the organizations are so preoccupied with fund-raising and the foreign partners that they lose contact with those whose interest they are supposed to represent (Henderson 2003). These problematic issues have also been acknowledged by some donor agencies (SIDA 2004: 21ff).

The second issue that influences the professionalization of civil society groups is that foreign contributors place often rather harsh and specific demands on the receiving organization. These may include strict criteria for how the money is to be used as well as bureaucratic requirements for how it is to be reported. Working with professionalized staffs in NGOs increases the chances of their being able to meet these administrative demands (Carothers & Ottaway 2000: 13, Ottaway & Carothers 2000b: 305). Combined with how dependent many organizations are on the funding, this can have certain effects on the organizations: they may have to put a lot of
time and effort into administrative work, time and money that could be spent on the activities in which the organization is supposed to be engaged. It also leads to a tendency for the organizations not always to dare to challenge the aims, methods, etc. presented by their foreign partners. Even if they have a different opinion, often they will not speak up since they fear that this could lead to their losing the support (Wallin 2000: 96f, Van Rooy 1998c: 217).

2.2.2 Swedish Democracy Promotion and the Olof Palme International Center

Sweden as a country has aspired to devote one percent of its gross national income to development assistance. This goal was reached in 2006. It should be noted that the fashionable term used today is “development assistance” or “development cooperation” as opposed to “aid”. This change of vocabulary is meant to emphasize a long-term perspective, increased equality and partnership in this work (SIDA internet\(^{32}\)). This text will not discuss this choice of terminology. The decision mainly to use “democracy promotion” has been made since it is that kind of process that is of greatest interest here. “Development assistance” will, however, also be used where appropriate. This is a wider concept than democracy promotion and can include many different efforts, some of them not very closely related to promoting democracy or any kind of political change.

Democracy promotion is a part of the more general development assistance, and indeed a part that has become increasingly important in Swedish development assistance from the 1990s onwards (for further discussion of the course of Swedish development assistance and democracy promotion, see for instance Brodin 2000, Wallin 2000).

In 2007 Sweden is giving approximately SEK 30 billion in development assistance (Regeringskansliet internet\(^{33}\)). Of this, SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) distributes more than half.\(^{34}\) SIDA was created in 1965 when Swedish development assistance or development cooperation was starting to become important. Even then, popular education was one of the areas in which “Sweden believed it had a special competence to provide” (Brodin 2000: 28). This indicates a partial reason for supporting projects such as the ones involving ABF and AHL. SIDA works on a mandate from the Swedish parliament and government with the main objective of reducing poverty around the world. This is not translated only into dealing with financial assistance or promoting economic growth but is seen in a larger context of improving the living conditions of

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\(^{33}\) Full details: http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/4759/a/34355/34355.

\(^{34}\) In 2005, the total expenditure on development assistance and emergency relief from the Swedish state amounted to SEK 25.2 billion, of which SIDA distributed fourteen billion, or just over 55 % (SIDA internet: http://www.sida.se/sida/jsp/sida.jsp?=109&a=1844).
people in the countries with which SIDA works. This can then also include promoting a democratic development, assisting the protection of human rights, etc. (SIDA 2005).

SIDA is also an organization that has become increasingly interested in civil society. A SIDA Civil Society Center was founded in 2002 and its policy for civil society includes many of the potentially positive ways in which civil society may contribute to the extension and quality of democracy that have been discussed in Chapter 2.1.2 (see SIDA 2004). The strengthening of civil society is seen as an important weapon in the struggle against poverty. SIDA proclaims that the possibility of organizing is often a precondition if individuals living in poverty are to be able to improve their situation. Besides, the right to get organized is also seen as a human right that should be protected (SIDA 2004: 1, 21).

The staff of SIDA rarely works directly with the programmes or projects. Instead much is done through various organizations and other bodies with which SIDA cooperates (SIDA internet35). Those most relevant in the context of this study are the organizations with which SIDA has general agreements. One of them is the Olof Palme International Center (OPC). The remainder of this chapter will be used to discuss this organization since, as noted earlier, this is the donor agency that has helped fund the ABF/AHL projects.

OPC is the Swedish labour movement’s organization for international development cooperation and was established in 1992 (OPC 2002: 4). OPC is the successor to the Labour Movement’s International Center (AIC), which initiated many of the contacts and started the development of projects with Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, including the Baltic states (Gundhäll Wood 2004: 4). The three founding organizations of OPC were the Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP), the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) and the Swedish Cooperative Union (KF) (OPC 2002: 4). Today, OPC has 28 member organizations from within the Swedish labour movement (OPC 2006). One of these is ABF (OPC 2005: 3). So, what is important to recognize is the fact that OPC, as well as ABF, is part of the labour movement and has strong links with both trade unions and SAP, which can have an impact on what partner organizations they look for and choose. This does not impede the choice of cases in this study but it is part of the microcosmos I seek to investigate.

OPC participates in, or assists in funding, close to 300 different projects around the world each year (OPC internet36). The procedure is that member organizations of OPC write project applications that are sent to OPC. These are then coordinated and sent on to SIDA. In most projects, the organizations

36 Full details: http://www.palmecenter.se/Projektverksamhet.aspx.
applying contribute at least 10% of the funds while SIDA stands for the remaining 90% (OPC 2006).

AIC, the predecessor of OPC, obtained the first general agreement with SIDA in January 1991. At that time it concerned 40 projects, of which 15 concerned the Baltic states and more than half of them Estonia. Already here a focus on education as an important part of developmental assistance and democracy promotion is obvious since folkbildning, or popular education, was one of the programme areas along with, for instance, local democracy development and trade union education (Gundhäll Wood 2004: 8). Swedish popular education will also be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

The main areas in which OPC attempts to make a difference in the world fall into the broad categories of (1) democracy, (2) human rights, (3) peace, and, (4) global issues (such as poverty, fair trade, HIV/Aids, etc.). Of these broad topics, number one – democracy – is of greatest interest to this study since areas of interest listed under that heading for OPC include both civil society and popular education (OPC internet37). However, it is neither easy nor relevant for this study to attempt to divide the areas rigorously. Many issues and also projects may, naturally, concern more than one area and also move between areas. For instance, there are ABF/AHL projects concerned with development of trade unions and education in trade union issues as well as negotiation techniques (Hallberg 2000a, OPC Project Report 98 604 Ö). These projects would, according to the division made by OPC, fall under the heading of human rights. There may be nothing wrong in that division but it is not relevant to the discussion advanced in this study.

In the geographical area mainly concerned in this study, i.e. Estonia and Swedish-Estonian relations, OPC has been involved in many different kinds of project with various organizations. Between 1988 and 2004, OPC, and AIC before that, took part in hundreds of projects in the Baltic states on topics such as cooperative activities, trade unions, children’s rights and equality.38 The prime target, which also follows from the overarching aim of the Centre itself, has been to improve democracy and increase the opportunities of individual citizens to take part in decision-making, etc. and also to instil the idea of everyone’s equal value as a guiding principle (Gundhäll Wood 2004: 3).

38 Development assistance to political parties has also been a part of projects and cooperation with the Baltic states and other countries in the region, not only from Sweden but also from countries around the world. SAP’s activities in this field have been administered by OPC (Gundhäll Wood 2004: 22).
2.3 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, the concept of civil society has been defined and related both to democracy and democracy-promoting activities. The most essential aspect of civil society is that it consists of voluntary organizations that are non-governmental even though they may still have contacts and even cooperate with the state. It has also been demonstrated that it has become a fashionable concept in many discussions, not least concerning globalization and the transnationalization of civil society. As argued above, the cases studied here are examples of transnational civil society cooperation and transnational civil society activities.

What should be especially remembered is the notion of civil society as “schools of democracy” and the role civil society can fill through providing a meeting place and a learning arena where citizens can practise active citizenship. These are important functions that may also have a bearing on the empirical analysis of this study. Not least since the organizations in focus can fill this function not only indirectly but also in a more direct way. As discussed in this chapter, civil society organizations in general are believed to contribute to the development of civic virtues and civic competence by letting citizens practice making decisions, etc. and working in a democratic manner. Educational associations may, however, also contribute with more theoretical knowledge than normally emanates from other civil society organizations.

In these closing remarks the need to problematize the one-track view of civil society as something positive for democracy should also be emphasized. The belief in civil society as by default being good for democracy is widely held concerning both domestic and transnational or global civil society as well as in the rhetoric of donors in the field of democracy promotion.

Funding is of course an important issue for civil society organizations. As noted in the introduction, AHL has survived the withdrawal of support from OPC and ABF. However, this will most likely have affected the Estonian organizations and their fund-raising. An interesting point that emerges from the investigation into democracy-promoting activities is that donors may put strain on partner organizations (or recipients of the aid money) by requiring specific reporting procedures and stipulating how the money is to be used, which may limit the resources and options of these organizations. This can lead to organizations having to put much time into administration and other activities that are not their main task as well as restricting the activities in which they can participate. Finally, it has been mentioned that dependence on foreign support may mean that organizations dare not speak up for themselves or express concerns regarding the activities of the partner supplying the funding for fear of losing the support.
3. Education, Democracy and Swedish

Folkbildning

Education has a twofold purpose: to develop individuals for their own sakes and to fit them for life in the society into which they were born (Heater 1999: 164).

Education as a concept and practice can be used in numerous ways and it would be easy to get lost in debating them. Therefore, I will abstain from theorizing about education as such and generally confine the discussion to the parameters of this thesis. Hence, most of the discussions here are focused on the notion of adult education and, more specifically, folkbildning as understood in Sweden and ABF.

Adult education is also a concept that can cover many things, which is evident from the fact that EAEA (European Association for the Education of Adults) has composed a report called “Glossary of Adult Learning in Europe” (Federighi 1998) to provide an overview of concepts in this field. Adult education is perceived to cover a wider array of activities than what in Swedish is referred to as folkbildning, including vocational training and supplementary secondary education as well as the kind of non-formal adult education that folkbildning stands for (cf. Eurydice 2007).

What is to be investigated empirically in this study is the dissemination of ideas in the field of folkbildning. One problem with this concept is that it is difficult to find a correct translation, especially for the word bildning, which does not exist in English (in German, however, the word is Bildung). For translation into English, education with a prefix is the available choice. A problem with this is that the different alternatives evoke different connotations depending on where you are. This is a problem that it does not seem possible to circumvent.

Folkbildning will in this study be translated as “popular education”. This is a term often used when describing folkbildning and relating it to or separating it from other sections of adult education (see for instance Carlsen, Arne 1998, Gustavsson 2003). There are, however, a number of other suggestions. “Liberal adult education” is for instance used by the Swedish National Council of Adult Education (Folkbildningsrådet or FBR in Swedish). ABF itself is not consistent in its English terminology –
sometimes it presents its activities as “popular education” and sometimes as “liberal adult education”. In this study, however, “popular education” will be used. This is done simply because a choice has to be made and “popular education” has the pragmatic justification that it seems to be the term most commonly used by ABF and also by many Estonian organizations and actors when discussing this kind of non-formal adult education.

Even though it is difficult to find a good translation for *folkbildning*, this does not mean that the activities are completely alien to other countries or that it is a purely Swedish or perhaps Nordic phenomenon. There are, however, certain aspects that make Swedish *folkbildning* just that – Swedish (Gustavsson 2003: 2f). The main traits of this tradition will be further discussed below. As has been pointed out in previous research, activities that are referred to as *folkbildning* in Sweden often fall under the general heading of “adult education” in many countries. Often there are, however, similarities in this with the Swedish notion of *folkbildning* (Gustavsson 1996: 217). As mentioned above, the term “popular education” will be used in this study to denote Swedish *folkbildning* but “adult education” will to some extent be used interchangeably, especially when the discussions also concern other aspects of the adult education field. Since this distinction is not made in much international research or debate, differences are frequently not possible to spot. However, Swedish usage does make a distinction between popular and adult education. Hence, even though many of the different kinds of educational activities are also mixed in Sweden today, the distinction is of importance for this study since it still influences the way Swedish adult, or popular, educators think and speak of their activities and ideals.

The first section of this chapter will look at the history, origin and characteristics of Swedish *folkbildning* as well as its methods and pedagogics. The most prominent of these is the study circle. It has even been claimed that “true” popular education in Sweden is often defined by the use of study circles (Gustavsson 1996: 219). The Swedish organizations of greatest interest to this study will also be introduced. Following this, Chapter 3.2 will briefly discuss the present system and situation of popular education in Sweden. Chapter 3.3 will focus on the relation between democracy and popular education. Finally, in the concluding section, some of the central traits of Swedish popular education will be summarized. If it is to be possible to investigate whether anything, and if so what, has been spread in the cooperation between ABF and AHL, it is necessary to have an understanding of what norms and ideas are important for the Swedish organizations, since these ideas may have the potential for travel. Before starting it should be stated that in these discussions the folk high schools, which are large and important parts of Swedish popular education, will be little mentioned and the emphasis will be on study associations for the simple reason that it is one of the study associations, ABF, that is one of the main players in this particular study.
3.1 History and Ideology of Swedish Adult Education and *Folkbildning*

This section summarizes the historical developments that led up to the growth of popular education and its associations in Sweden. Since ABF is the organization studied on the Swedish side and its origins lie in the labour movement, the focus of this chapter will also be primarily on this movement even though others will be touched upon since the different movements are somewhat connected.

*Folkbildning* or “popular education”, has been claimed to be originally a Nordic cultural phenomenon but the idea and ideals surrounding the education or *Bildung* of the people (“the people” in some sense of a nation or perhaps class to which I come back below) have been expressed and discussed somewhat differently in the different Nordic countries as well (Gustavsson 1992: 17). The main spotlight here will, however, be on the Swedish origins, history and ideals since ABF is a Swedish organization.

Historically, the connection between the development of Swedish popular education and the development of democracy in Sweden has been seen as quite clear (Sjöman 2002: 3). The development of popular education accompanied large popular movements that grew strong in Sweden during the 19th century. To help further the goals, and the societal changes these movements sought, education was regarded as a crucial element. This of course raises the question of the view of education and its importance for democracy that will be discussed below in Chapter 3.3. Assertion of the right of adults to have access to education (whether it is called adult or popular) has in many countries been connected to the activities of social movements (Gustavsson 1996: 222). In Sweden, the movements seeking societal change wanted to increase their strength and influence and saw a need for more educated people who could assist in this. It was a way for the people active in popular movements to increase their competence and skills in everything from forms of democratic action to personal and moral development. Knowledge and education were to provide the powerless people with the resources needed to strive for expanded freedom and democracy (Gougoulakis 2006: 20, Johansson 2002: 169f, Sjöman 2002: 3, cf. Micheletti 1995: 18f, 56f). In ABF’s case this meant empowering the working class.

What can be seen as the common institution in the field of popular education that the Nordic countries share is the folk high school, where the Danish priest N.F.S. Grundtvig was the front figure. His ideas left a legacy that has influenced popular education in the Nordic countries. However, in Sweden, even though there have existed Grundtvig-inspired folk high schools, this tradition never took a firm hold. In the Swedish context there has been more of a utilitarian and perhaps rationalistic approach (Gustavsson 1992: 17ff).
When folk high schools started developing in Sweden in the second half of the 19th century, they were not open to workers. Instead they were for the peasantry, and in all honesty, “peasant high school” would have been a more descriptive name for these establishments from the late 1860s until near the end of the century, when the first Swedish folk high school opened its doors to workers. During the first decades of the 1900s some additional folk high schools also opened up for workers but this was neither a given nor a swift development (Johansson 2002: 200-206).

The roots of ideas of the need to educate the people can be traced back to the Reformation and the break with the Catholic Church, a process that in Sweden took place in the 16th century. In the wake of the Reformation everyone was to learn basic reading skills in order to be able to read the holy texts and learn about the religion. This was of course a restricted education and took a very different view of the learners from that inherent in the ideas and ideals of popular education that have taken such firm root in Sweden. The kind of education that came out of the Reformation was a top-down attempt to discipline the people where the people was viewed as neither able nor willing to learn and develop on their own (Gougoulakis 2006: 30f, Sundgren 2000: 12ff).

As will be discussed further below, popular education as it has developed in Sweden has been a tool in the hands of forces seeking societal change. The kind of education for the people described in the preceding paragraph – originating from the higher classes and the state – was, however, almost the opposite of this. It was a way for the state to keep control of the people, who were punished if they did not follow the norm and the “curriculum” that existed. Thus, the “people’s education” that developed through this top-down approach was designed to reproduce and reinforce the existing system. Religious education had to some extent existed before but from the early 1800s it also concerned more worldly things. However, the emphasis was on “duty” and civic obligations, whereas rights were hardly spoken of. The needs of the individual were not of interest in these activities (Johansson 2002: 18f). So, the view of how and why the people should be educated expressed in this tradition differs much from the kind of ideas that later developed into what is meant by popular education today.

Even though what is described above is not close to what is normally perceived as popular education, these latter notions also started gaining ground among some groups at around the same time. In the early 1800s, noblemen motioned for the introduction of a kind of general civic education.

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39 In the early 1800s neither the temperance movement nor the labour movement had started developing educational activities of their own to any great extent and the first steps towards a different view of the learners appeared in the free church movement. By the beginning of the 1800s they were engaged in educational activities where the participants were seen as learning subjects who had to take responsibility for their own lives to an extent that had not been emphasized in the kind of people’s education that existed previously (Gougoulakis 2006: 33).
This was part of the movement towards a more democratic society and already the importance of an educated citizenry for a well-functioning democracy was put forward as a main argument (Gougoulakis 2006: 23). Not least was this the case after the new Swedish Instrument of Government of 1809, which turned Sweden into a constitutional monarchy and ended the king’s role as an absolute ruler. At that time voices were raised for a more general civic education, which was seen as a protective measure for the new constitution and democracy (Johansson 2002: 19f). This was meant to broaden the ranks of the educated but it concerned more state-governed education and thus falls closer to the field of formal education. However, nothing really came out of the ideas advanced during the first decade of the 19th century and instead the approach taken by the state was that there was no need for any greater reforms; thus education remained a resource available only to a small segment of the citizenry (cf. Johansson 2002: 20-24).

During the 1800s ideas of broadening the availability of education were increasingly put forward by the higher classes in society, partly as a way of dealing with the social problems brought about by the start of industrialization, such as unemployment and poverty, and thereby reducing the risk of a revolution (Gougoulakis 2006: 30, Johansson 2002: 30). This is not to say that the development of popular education in Sweden was altogether some form of top-down project. On the contrary, at about the same time similar ideas flourished among other groups who saw in this education a potential for change and improvement of society. Individuals from more literary circles attempted to spread reading material to the working class even though care was taken to ensure that the magazines created and distributed were politically correct and did not address any “unsafe” or “disturbing” topics such as social issues that could evoke the anger of the Swedish state (Johansson 2002: 37-40).

Bottom-up initiatives in popular education started emerging more towards the middle of the 19th century when educational circles (bildningscirklar in Swedish) popped up, the participants mainly being craftsmen of various trades (Johansson 2002: 51ff). A number of these associations appeared around the country but most of them were not active for very long and by the end of the 1880s they had more or less disappeared again (Johansson 2002: 59). It should be noted that the examples of these educational circles described by Johansson were not democratically run. It was a clearly hierarchical environment where the “more enlightened” middle-class would guide the workers towards the education and skills deemed necessary. The workers’ own influence over the activities was thus restricted and the outcome was far from what the workers who were part of the start-up had envisaged. They had sought more civic education dealing with social problems, knowledge of society, etc. but this was still regarded as “dangerous” knowledge for workers, both by the state and by several of the leading figures within the circles (Johansson 2002: 55-61). This also led to
the creation of other educational associations that were more directly oriented towards the interests of the working class. The people active in those organizations also became part of the movement towards a reformation of the rules concerning suffrage and representation that surfaced in the mid-19th century (Johansson 2002: 60-69). Different organizations where workers could get together to read and discuss were created; some vanished and others took their place, always watched and sometimes more or less persecuted by the authorities (Johansson 2002: 73-76). The various educational activities and associations created during the first half of the 19th century hardly ever took a more active political stance and never developed into political movements. Apparently the time for that was not yet ripe.

During the 1840s the labour movement was more or less a purely educational movement (bildningsrörelse) – “A movement with dreams of citizenship rights, of equality and justice” (Johansson 2002: 86, author’s translation). Here, an expression of one of the most central features of Swedish popular education, the equality principle, is shown and this is expressed as just as central today (Sjöman 2002: 10). A belief that every man and woman is equal to everyone else is a necessity if inclusiveness and pluralism are to be two of the cornerstones, as they are frequently stated to be in discussions concerning Swedish popular education. The Swedish notion of popular education takes a very positive view of mankind. Every human being is seen as able to develop and be educated and everyone is seen as possessing dormant talents (Gustavsson 1996: 27, cf. Pettersson 1994: 6).

At this time many of the more radical and active advocates of the educational activities were influenced by socialist and communist ideas that flourished around Europe. This made the authorities even more suspicious of the activities even though many associations did not officially proclaim this adherence (Johansson 2002).

However, elites exist in popular education just as in most sections of and institutions and organizations in society. The contradictory element of this in popular education is that even though inclusiveness is supposed to be one of the characteristics, elites are still created, perhaps not so much in the target groups but in the organizations. The people active in the organizations may become an elite themselves instead of having the totally free process where everyone, including the leader or teacher, enters on the same level, which is an important part of how a study circle is meant to work and to which I will return later on.

This contradiction or the tug-of-war and tension between pluralism and diversity or inclusiveness and exclusiveness are also debated in civil society theory, which has been discussed in Chapter Two. It also connects with another essential attribute of Swedish popular education, namely that it

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40 At this time many of the more radical and active advocates of the educational activities were influenced by socialist and communist ideas that flourished around Europe. This made the authorities even more suspicious of the activities even though many associations did not officially proclaim this adherence (Johansson 2002).
should be free and voluntary, meaning that people attend the activities of their own free will and that everyone has the opportunity to participate, i.e. the organizations are inclusive (Magnusson 1998, Sjöman 2002: 11). The importance of a meeting of people with varying backgrounds, experiences and knowledge is stressed in the ideal of popular education where “schooling in democracy and active citizenship is an important part” (Carlsen, Arne 1998) and is consistent with the notion of civil society as “schools of democracy” discussed in Chapter Two. Crucial in this context is that popular education is not necessarily or primarily about increasing one’s competence but about learning for personal development or for the sake and joy of learning. A consequence of this ideal is also that in Swedish popular education there is normally no formal examination in the sense of a test or grading at the end of the educational activity (cf. Blid 2000: 51f, FBR 2007: 10). Thus, this is one way in which this type of non-formal education differs from the formal educational system. Yet another essential trait of Swedish popular education is the methods used, primarily the study circle. This will also be discussed in Chapter 3.1.1.

In the 19th century, when the activities and topics were controlled and guided by individuals from the middle-class, the authorities deemed these activities to be rather “safe” and harmless. It was when workers pursued their own goals and activities, looking into social and political issues, that the authorities took action and stopped these ambitions towards the middle of the 19th century (Johansson 2002: 90). At first, parts of the middle class and the working class worked together on popular education but after a while, the labour movement started organizing its own educational activities. Libraries for workers and meeting places for educational and cultural activities were being created during the latter part of the 1800s. These libraries were also essential parts of the educational activities (Johansson 2002: 306). When study circles were being developed and became an increasingly important part of popular education, their activities were also connected to the workers’ libraries in that the books bought for the study circles were subsequently to be handed in to these libraries.

At the end of the 19th and the early 20th century, the importance of education for the workers’ continued struggle for improved conditions, regarding both standard of living and citizenship rights and political influence, was increasingly emphasized, which is also evident in the development of the social democratic movement and subsequent political party (Johansson 2002). The importance to society and the labour movement of having workers acquire greater civic competence was a frequent point of discussion and popular education was advanced as the answer to how this was to be accomplished. In this context, social and political topics, which

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41 The first libraries aimed specifically at workers started up in the middle of the 1800s (Johansson 2002: 195).
had so far played only a small part in the emerging popular education activities, received greater prominence (Johansson 2002: 244f).

As already mentioned, in the context of the history and ideology of Swedish popular education it must be noted that movements other than the labour movement were also very much involved in this, for example the temperance movement. The connections with workers still exist, since many of this movement’s activities were directed at this group of people, but this is also a movement that played an important part in the development of popular education along with the free churches (Gougoulakis 2006: 25). In Swedish popular education in general it seems that civic education has been seen as an essential element since the early 20th century. Thus stress is laid simultaneously on the personal development of the individual as well as his or her development into a citizen who participates and takes responsibility for the common interest and for society as such (Sundgren 2000: 57).

As this discussion indicates, the development of popular education in Sweden was associated with social classes and the striving of, for instance, the working class to improve their situation, their material well-being and their influence in society. This is one difference in comparison with the development in Denmark and the Grundtvig tradition since the base there was more firmly rooted in the concept of the nation (Gustavsson 1996: 219).

All in all, the popular movements that existed in Sweden were instrumental in the development of popular education. This was seen by them as a way to help change society and alter the balance of power. In this sense, popular education was seen as a means to challenge the power structures in society (Gougoulakis 2006: 26). It is thus often claimed that popular education in Sweden has been a “vehicle of social change” but it is also possible for popular or adult education rather to reproduce the existing system and power structures (Boggs 1991: 34ff, Bron, A. 2001b: 123ff, Larsson 2001: 139f). This could, for instance, be illustrated in the top-down attempts at adult education and state-governed initiatives that have been mentioned above. These notions will be further developed in Chapter 3.3.

3.1.1 The Study Circle

The study circle has been mentioned above as being intertwined with the development of popular education in Sweden. It has also been central both to this tradition as well as to many of the projects that are examined in this study. The subject therefore merits a section of its own. The method and pedagogics of the study circle have, as will be shown, come about as a way of embodying the ideals of popular education as developed through the historical process described above.

What “study circle” actually means is not as clear-cut as one might initially think. The term can be used in different ways and can include various activities (Larsson 2001: 138). For the purposes of this study it will
be used as a description of a form of pedagogy and activities organized by popular education organizations.

The study circle has been asserted to be a special technique and as the most typical form of Swedish popular education. In other words, the method is considered characteristic of this kind of education (Gustavsson 1992: 19). However, there are also those who claim that the kind of activity associated with the study circle can be found in many places around the world. Hence, the method itself may exist elsewhere but the extent of its penetration of Swedish society is unique (Blid 1990: 11).

It is central in Swedish popular education, in the study circle and in ABF that the learning process and the educational activities start with the individual and the participants. In Swedish popular education, the focus is on the individual and the teacher does not have as central a position as is the case in much formal education. The study circle thus constitutes a less hierarchical form of education. In a study circle, at least in its ideal form, there is not really a need for a teacher in the sense of a lecturer. Instead every participant goes into the study circle on an equal basis, including the study circle leader, and the idea is that the participants then learn from each other (Blid 1990: 24). Naturally, to what extent this happens in practice depends on for instance the subject concerned. The kind of pedagogics used in a study circle is then in many ways more important than the actual content. Thus, the form of the education is stressed and this is something that it has also been attempted to spread to Estonia, as will be discussed later.

The learning process and the development of knowledge in popular education and the study circle is seen to build on the participants’ own experiences and abilities and thus the education is to a large extent directed by the participants themselves as a group. The study circle takes as one of its points of departure the experiences of each participant. Having a diverse group is in this context seen as positive. Participants shape and develop themselves by communication and interaction with each other (Blid 1990, Gougoulakis 2006: 19, Magnusson 1998, Pettersson 1994: 5). One of the foundations for making a study circle work is that every participant not only attends but also takes an active part in the activities (Blid 1990: 26).

The fact that a study circle is to be shaped by the participants themselves also means that there is no single “true” study circle to be found. It is a way of working but it is the participants who have power over the details – they

\[\text{footnote}{42} \text{ However, some trace the origin of the study circle to the USA during the late 19th century. This method is then claimed to have been “imported” to the Swedish labour movement where the first European versions started and took hold (Bjerkaker & Summers 2006: 113, Blid 2000). This would then point to a process of dissemination to Sweden preceding the “export” from Sweden to Estonia studied here. I will not attempt here to clarify the origins of the study circle in detail. That is outside the scope of this study since the focus here is on the Swedish tradition of popular education, the study circle and how this may travel to a new context.}\]
are the ones who decide what a specific circle becomes. This is a view that was already expressed early in the 20th century (Johansson 2002: 303).

Equality is one of the central concepts of the study circle. An implication of the previous paragraphs is that every participant, including the study circle leader, is seen as equal – thus, horizontal relations are claimed to rule in a study circle. This is viewed as important for building confidence among participants and enabling them to speak more freely, thus promoting open debate. The lack of any formal examinations mentioned earlier is also a part of the study circle. The informality of this method as well as the lack of any kind of formal demand to “perform” in the sense of, for instance, doing well in a test has in previous studies been seen as a potential explanation of why people are more at ease in “daring” to enter these activities (Gougoulakis 2001: 194f, see also Borgström et al 1998). So, the lack of an examination is yet another trait of the study circle as is the fact that participation is voluntary (Larsson 2001: 138).

Study circles can also be initiated in different ways. They can be problem-based, with a group of individuals identifying a problem that a study circle is then created around in order to learn more about the problem and possibly find a remedy for it. A study circle can also be supply-based. This refers to the various study circles that the study associations create and then offer to the general public; those interested then sign up. This is a very common type of circle today but previous studies indicate that this does not mean that the ability of participants to influence the work done in the study circle is eliminated (Gougoulakis 2001: 199ff).

The study circle is seen as a democratic form of learning where the learning environment itself is claimed to be democratic. The participants are supposed to have influence over the curriculum and the circles as such are run in a democratic fashion (Larsson 2001: 156). The group should together decide what the goal of the activities should be and what methods should be used to achieve the goal. This kind of democratic and self-guided learning is something that Larsson (2001: 156) claims distinguishes the study circle from other forms of education.

A distinction is frequently made between the study circle and classic course activities by which is here meant more classical pedagogical forms that are part of the formal educational system such as lectures, etc. Some differences are summarized by Blid (1990: 40f): it is claimed that the study circle is more equal than “regular classes” in that the teacher is not seen to be superior or the one holding the “true” answers. The study circle participants as a group are also the ones who decide on the plan of studies. In formal education they would have to adhere to a given curriculum. Active participation in the classroom is more important and encouraged in a study circle. A class in the formal educational system also tends to have more participants in one group – a study circle should not consist of more than around ten to twelve individuals (cf. Larsson 2001: 138).
The study circle is not only believed to bring knowledge, experiences and skills regarding the actual subject studied but also seen as providing, by its very form, a way of learning democracy in practice. This relates to what has been discussed previously regarding the opportunity for participants to practise democratic citizenship in civil society and also in this kind of educational activities.

Sometimes study circles are put forward as a place where social capital is generated, because study circles are meeting places where people get together and engage in joint activities (Larsson 2001: 147f). The study circle as a meeting place has been stressed by advocates of this method since the early 20th century (Gougoulakis 2001: 20). In this way, study circles can create the horizontal relations that theorists like Robert D. Putnam argue are the foundation for building social capital (Larsson 2001: 147f).

That the study circle functions as a meeting place for people may be interesting from a social capital perspective and also when discussing the idea of civil society organizations as “schools of democracy” as mentioned in Chapter Two but in this context the social function should be stressed in general. In Swedish popular education, the social function of the activities is very much emphasized and the study circle is seen as an excellent method to provide the right environment for this. This relates to what was stated above about the fact that a study circle is supposed to be run in a democratic fashion and that the group together decides on what is to take place by processes of democratic decision-making. In a study circle that works in this way, the personal contacts and human relations created are seen as essential parts of the activities (Blid 1990: 25, Gougoulakis 2001: 227).

3.1.2 ABF

ABF or the Workers’ Educational Association (Arbetarnas bildningsförbund) is the largest of the current (in 2007) eight study associations in Sweden (FBR 2007). ABF was founded on 16 November 1912. One of the main reasons for the creation of this umbrella organization was the parliamentary decision to support libraries. As mentioned previously in this chapter, these libraries and their activities were closely connected with the educational strivings of the labour movement. When the state decided to support these libraries this created new opportunities for the popular movements. However, certain demands regarding the size and scope of the organizations and activities were to be met in order to be eligible for the state support and hardly any organizations (apart from the Order of Good Templars) were able to meet them. For this reason, it was seen as important to create a common organizational structure for the various small study groups that existed around the country and were involved with the labour movement. Through the creation of ABF it was possible to receive state support (Johansson 2002: 284f, Wallin 2000: 85). It is important to note in
this context that a common ideological programme or value base was not a prime source of the creation of ABF. The start was much more pragmatic and the creation purely concerned an organizational form. Naturally, it concerned activities and groups that strove for similar things, such as the emancipation of the working class, but these were not ambitions created on the initiative of ABF. As noted above, the belief in the importance of education for these strivings had existed since the middle of the 19th century. This is not to say that ABF was not created with the intention of also being a political organization, since this was very much the case and the ideology of the labour movement was to be a common denominator and common value base of the organizations involved (Johansson 2002: 289ff).

ABF’s first few years of existence showed a rather slow development even though the number of study circles and other activities increased from year to year. Eventually, the increase accelerated, especially from 1919 onwards. One important reason for this was the implementation of a law regulating working hours, which were limited to eight hours by law in 1919. This contributed to the growth of ABF by giving workers more leisure time that, among other things, could be used for participating in educational activities (Johansson 2002: 298, Micheletti 1995: 57).

During the first decade of ABF’s existence, the struggle for universal suffrage was the prime task of the labour movement. In the work of trying to organize this struggle and educate people for this goal, the study circle was the method most frequently used (Johansson 2002: 313). When universal suffrage was granted in Sweden in 1921, it also became more accepted for workers to engage in political activities (Johansson 2002: 317) and this naturally facilitated the progress of ABF. Over the following decades ABF continued to develop. The strong position of the Social Democratic Party (SAP) in Swedish politics, being in a governing position for most of the 20th century, must surely have facilitated things for ABF given the close connections between these two organizations. Today ABF is a strong organization and has, along with other study associations, become an institution in Swedish society.

As mentioned earlier, there were other popular movements in Sweden that were involved in the development of popular education. These had their specific focus that they attempted to promote through their educational activities. For ABF and the labour movement, political issues were at the forefront, namely how to empower the working class, change society and make workers’ more active and competent citizens and, in general, strive for a more inclusive and participatory democracy (Johansson 2002: 300, 316f). In this struggle and also in the development of ABF at large, trade unions were important. They have been involved in the process from the start and this is still evident today. Among the member organizations of ABF are several trade unions and education in trade-union-related questions and for trade union members is an important part of ABF’s activities. Trade union
oriented study circles, focusing on issues arising in the workplace, how they can be tackled, laws and regulations, etc. have also increased in recent years (ABF 2007b). As will be discussed in the analysis, these issues have also been part of ABF’s international work, not least with AHL.

In this study, the international activities of different local chapters of ABF are investigated. From the beginning this was not the organizational form used but quite soon a need was acknowledged for further organization on a local level and from this the local ABF organizations developed. How this has been organized has varied over the years but in 2007 there were 86 local ABF chapters all over Sweden (ABF 2007b) and ABF offered popular education in every municipality. The organization of ABF can be seen as divided on three levels, one of which then is the local. The second is the district level where nineteen districts frequently organize education for study circle leaders and courses for organizers. Finally there is the national level where the National Secretariat (located in Stockholm) manages the contacts with member organizations and different kinds of cooperation as well as doing strategic work (ABF 2007b).

Apart from the local ABF chapters, ABF also has 60 member organizations. Among them there are trade unions, immigrant associations, various organizations for people with disabilities, etc. ABF also has cooperation agreements with another 49 organizations (ABF 2007b: 41f).

What makes ABF an organization of interest to this study is that it and its different local chapters are involved in international cooperation and various international activities. ABF is also a member of IFWEA (International Federation of Workers’ Education Associations), ABF Norden (for the workers’ educational associations in the Nordic countries) and Euro-WEA (for the European countries) (ABF 2007b).

The long tradition and strong position of ABF and other study associations in Sweden does not mean that new challenges to the organizations do not continue to present themselves. In the middle of the 1990s, ABF had among the highest number of participants in the history of the organization. Since then, however, a sharp decline in interest in popular education has been experienced, not only by ABF but also by other Swedish study associations. This naturally leads to the question of why this has happened and what can be done to regain the interest of the Swedish citizenry, whether popular education in its existing form has played out its role, etc. I will return to this in Chapter 3.2.

Before finishing off this presentation of ABF I should emphasize that the organization has clear roots in a popular movement and adheres to the values

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43 In the year 1994/1995 more than one million participants were enlisted in the study circles and other educational activities organized by ABF. In 2006, the same number was 714 882 (ABF 2007b: 63), which represents a total decrease of more than 25 % over the course of a decade. The decline has however not been as large in the last few years as it was during the late 1990s.
of the labour movement and also displays several of what can be seen as characteristics of Swedish popular education that have already been encountered in this chapter. This is clearly stated in the “ideological platform” that ABF recently developed (ABF 2007a), as a part of a response to the challenges facing the organization in the 21st century. This document stresses equality, the free and voluntary aspect of popular education, the goal of developing democracy and the strong connection between democracy and popular education. Pedagogics such as the study circle, even though this is not the only method discussed (or used in ABF), are brought up and so is the social function of this kind of education and activities as well as cultural activities as important parts of popular education. The education is portrayed here as filling one of its most important roles by providing a meeting place for people (again resembling the idea of civil society as “schools of democracy” discussed in Chapter Two). Most of this has been mentioned earlier in this chapter. The rhetoric used clearly reaffirms the ideas of the labour movement not only from the aspects mentioned in the previous sentences, but also in using concepts such as class and solidarity. However, where the old ideological platform focused more exclusively on class differences the new one takes in a multitude of equality aspects such as gender, ethnicity, disabilities and sexual orientation (ABF 2007b: 7). It is stressed that it is still important today for ABF to reach the groups that risk marginalization. Even if they may not be exactly the same groups as when ABF was founded, it is claimed that these groups still exist and that a main ambition of ABF is to relieve the inequalities in society. The goal of creating and encouraging active citizens is also stressed, along with the importance of popular education for popular movements and civil society (ABF 2007a).

From what has been stated here and previously in this chapter concerning active citizenship, participatory democracy can be seen as the ideal form of democracy sought.44 There is also an integrational aim in this education in that many organizations, not least in ABF, try to target marginalized groups in an effort to bring them into society and thus help them to become active and included citizens. What comes through strongly in this is that the equality of the educational form can help people to be seen and heard. As expressed in a presentation of ABF: “ABF wants to give each human being confidence and power to change both his/her own situation and society as a whole” (ABF internet45, author’s translation). The democracy aspect, democratic ideas and democratic goals have thus been and still are important parts of the Swedish popular education tradition and of ABF. The

44 The participatory ideal and the role civic, adult and popular education can or perhaps should play in striving for this by educating citizens, not only by breeding tolerance and communicative skills that civil society is seen to be able to contribute to but also by providing information on citizenship rights and obligations, has been advocated by several scholars (see for instance Boggs 1991: 4f, cf. Barber 1984).

connections between democracy and popular education will also be further discussed in Chapter 3.3.

Swedish popular education and its associations are closely related to, or embedded in, the tradition of Swedish popular movements. Previous research has demonstrated that these movements (like the labour movement, the temperance movement and the free church movement) have coloured Swedish political culture and society to a significant extent, not least since the labour movement, especially, has often been connected with the build-up of the modern Swedish democratic state (cf. Trägårdh 2007b: 22). It should also be noted that democracy is a core concept for the organizational culture of these movements and organizations. The organizations should be governed democratically, which means that what can be called organizational democracy is an important trait. In studies of Swedish civil society and its relation to the state the contribution to participatory and deliberative democracy is also stressed (see for instance Trägårdh 2007a: 2).

ABF’s background in the labour movement demonstrates the embeddedness in the tradition mentioned here, which is essential for an understanding of ABF. That study associations have a unified ideological profile, which is connected to their origin in various popular movements, is also seen as one of the characteristics of Swedish popular education (Magnusson 1998: 2, Sjöman 2002: 10). Ek (2006) notes that the image of Swedish popular movements has faced challenges and undergone changes from the 1990s onwards due to, for instance, changes in the perception of both these movements and the state. The alterations taking place in the larger context of Swedish popular movements and the organizations linked to them, however, falls outside the scope of this study. This is in itself a large subject and it is therefore not possible to dwell on it here (for further discussion of this topic, see for instance Ek 2006). In the context of this study it is important to note that, even if some of the views of the movements have changed, ABF as an organization is still clearly embedded in this “popular movement marinade” (Hvenmark & Wijkström 2004).

In Chapter One it was mentioned that a process of translation requires that ideas that are to travel have first to be disembedded from the local context in which they exist (this will be further discussed in Chapter Five). Thus, the tradition or “marinade” of popular movements is what Swedish popular education has to be disembedded from in order to disseminate these methods, ideas and ideals to a new context, in this case – Estonia. Of course, Estonian organizations and actors are also embedded in a specific context. Part of that context would be the communist past and the transformations Estonia has been going through in recent years. The situation and history of Estonian adult education will be further discussed in Chapter Four.
3.1.3 NFA and NVL

The Nordic Folk Academy or NFA has, as already mentioned in the introduction, played an important role in the development of adult and popular education in Estonia, which has also affected AHL. Hence, even though it is the projects involving both ABF and AHL that are the prime concern of this study, I will here present in outline this organization and discuss the activities aimed at the Baltic countries and especially Estonia. It is necessary to have an understanding of this in order to understand the general context of Swedish-Baltic and Swedish-Estonian relations in this field. I will also return to NFA in the analysis.

NFA was an organization founded in 1968 although the establishing of a Nordic educational academy had been discussed for several years prior to that. The decision to start up NFA in Gothenburg was officially taken at a meeting between the Nordic ministers in 1961, based on a suggestion from the Danish Minister of Education 46 but it took until 1968 for the activities to start and NFA was officially opened by the then Swedish Minister of Education, Olof Palme (Bergstedt 1998: 14f, Klontieg 1989). I write that NFA was an organization because it was wound up in 2004.

In the beginning, an important role of NFA was to provide opportunities for further education of adult educators. At the time there was a great demand for this and hardly anyone but the NFA offered this kind of training. This however changed during the 1980s. During these years most of the Nordic countries acquired organizations of their own that offered short courses in this field. This led to a development in NFA towards targeting even more specific groups and developing activities in cooperation with them and according to their needs (Bergstedt 1998: 16).

The NFA was created to further cooperation between the Nordic countries in the field of adult education but also cooperation between Nordic countries and neighbouring societies as well as Europe at large. Apart from courses and other educational activities, researchers in the field of popular education also met regularly at the NFA in the context of conferences. Researchers have also had the opportunity to come and stay at the NFA, use the library, do their research and network with other researchers as well as practitioners (Bergstedt 1998: 21). This prolonged stay at the NFA was also frequently used by Estonian adult educators when that cooperation had started up and this will be discussed further in the analysis.

After the Baltic states gained independence from the Soviet Union, the Nordic Council of Ministers (NMR) decided to start up cooperation in different spheres with these three countries. Connected to the NMR are several organizations or institutions in many different fields of activity, of

46 I do not here write about the Nordic Council of Ministers since this body was not formally constituted until 1971. However, this in no way means that there was not extensive cooperation between the Nordic countries before that.
which NFA was the one designated to deal with issues in the field of adult
and popular education (Carlsen, interview, 2006). Activities involving NFA
and actors from the Baltic states started in the early 1990s. These activities
will be elaborated on in the empirical chapters when studying what role NFA
played in the development of Estonian adult education and AHL. It should,
however, be noted that this international direction was a new development in
NFA’s activities. Previously the focus had been on the Nordic countries but
following the turbulent developments on the other side of the Baltic Sea, the
scope of NFA’s activities was widened (cf. Bergstedt 1998: 19).

During the 1990s, the NFA was involved in much work directed at NGO
leaders from various countries around the Baltic Sea who were active in the
field of adult and popular education. This work consisted in giving courses
in how to organize their organizations and activities, arranging teacher
training courses, organizing study visits to Nordic folk high schools, creating
networks for study associations and folk high schools in the Baltic area, etc.
The activities organized by the NFA are of interest to this study not only
because people in AHL took part and saw these activities as significant but
also since the main goal of the work done in NFA is said to have been “to
foster the democratic development of the Baltic societies” (Carlsen, Antra
2000: 3). The idea was that as many as possible of the courses and activities
were to take place in cooperation with the participants and that the activities
should be based on the needs of the specific target groups (Bergstedt 1998:
16), following the developmental trend of NFA itself as noted above. This
also led to a more project-based reality for NFA in later years. It is also fully
consistent with the ideas of the study circle methodology, as presented above
in Chapter 3.1.1.

In 2004 the NFA was closed down. Today NVL (Nordic Network for
Adult Learning) exists instead. This is described as a less organizational
structure, more based on the idea of a network. In this, the Baltic countries
are not yet included and they are not in a position to gain support in the way
they did before entering the EU. However, NVL is involved in projects that
also include Baltic organizations and individuals. The NVL is a Nordic
project that was created in 2005 and is supposed to last for four years – if
there will be a continuation after that remains to be seen (Carlsen, interview,
2006). It is primarily run by coordinators in each of the Nordic countries
with the head coordinator situated in Sweden. NVL has as one of its aims to
be a meeting place for Nordic networks, projects and adult educators. Other
important tasks include gathering and distributing information on what is
going on in the field in the different countries (NVL 2007). As already
stated, NVL was started in 2005, which means that it has never been
involved in the projects that are the main focus for this study. I will therefore
leave the discussion of NVL at this.

More details regarding the activities of NFA will be addressed when they
become relevant in the empirical analysis in order to understand the context
and the development of AHL as well as the cooperation with ABF. However, what must be noted is that many Estonians who are active in adult education organizations on different levels today are of the opinion that the NFA played an important and perhaps even critical role in the formation of a modern and functioning adult education system in Estonia (Eesmaa & Jääger 2002; Jääger, interview, 2005; Valgmaa, interview, 2005b).

3.2 The Present Situation

In Sweden today the field of adult education comprises various enterprises. The state and the municipalities organize adult education that is to make up for schooling that has not been completed for one reason or another. There is also adult education aimed more specifically at vocational training. As noted previously, adult education can incorporate many different things. Here I will, however, focus explicitly, and briefly, on the Swedish system of popular education.

Folkbildningsrådet (FBR), in English the Swedish National Council of Adult Education, is the umbrella organization for the Swedish study associations and folk high schools, which are the organizations involved in popular education. These organizations are represented in FBR through their own large umbrella organizations. This does not refer to, for instance, ABF but to the National Federation of Study Associations (FBF) and the Interest Organization for Popular Movement Folk High Schools (RIO) (FBR 2007: 21). In the FBF, which is the organization for the Swedish study associations, ABF is one of the members. So it is no exaggeration to state that there are many levels in the Swedish popular education system.

FBR is the organization handling the distribution of the funds allocated by the state to support popular education and gives this money out to study associations and folk high schools. Apart from this, FBR is also responsible for evaluating the activities of these organizations (FBR 2007: 21, Lindgren 1996). It is a non-profit association that was founded in 1991 by the two organizations mentioned in the previous paragraph together with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL). These are also currently the three members of FBR (FBR 2007: 21). The Swedish parliament then gave FBR the responsibility of handling the tasks mentioned above (SOU 2004: 30, p.65).

FBR was created as a result of the changes made in the government bill on popular education in 1991. It was through this that the responsibility for distributing the state grants was transferred to the popular education sphere itself and at the same time the directives accompanying the support emphasized that overall goals were to guide the organizations and activities to a greater extent. Evaluations of the activities were also increasingly stressed (SOU 2004: 30, p.29, Svensson 1996: 98f). Thus, the popular
education activities were to be guided more in accordance with the notion of “management by objectives”, which is a management concept that has been widely used during the last few decades (Røvik 1998: 51).47

Looking at the more direct providers of popular education, there were 148 folk high schools and eight study associations in Sweden in 2007. The study associations themselves provide around 300 000 study circles each year with a total of 2.3 million participants. Since some participate in more than one circle during the year it is estimated that it concerns around 1.5 million individuals (FBR 2007: 12).48

The state support is given out since in Sweden there is a strong belief in the potential of popular education for contributing to democratic development and a deepening of the existing democracy. This is a view not only taken by those active in the field but also clearly expressed by the government, for instance in a recent government bill (Prop. 2005/06: 192). The contributions given by the state must be regarded as substantial. In 2007, FBR distributes more than SEK 1.5 billion or roughly 160 million euros (FBR 2007: 11). However, even with the large amount of money being poured into popular education in Sweden, the support actually decreased in real terms between 1991 and 2003 when inflation, etc. is taken into account (SOU 2004: 30, p. 103-107). Naturally, reduced financial support creates difficulties for organizations working with popular education in Sweden.

The developments in the world and in Swedish society are seen to pose new challenges to the institutions of popular education, as has already been mentioned. These are partly connected to globalizing tendencies as well as an increasingly pluralistic society. Questions regarding how to keep the interest of the older generation without losing touch with younger people and how to reach the groups in society that today may risk marginalization are issues that have been extensively debated in Swedish popular education forums over recent years. Challenges and changes have also come from changes in the formal educational system, most of which took place during the 1990s (SOU 2004: 30, p.34-37).

The challenges arising led to an investigation or debate initiated by FBR on how popular educators and their organizations view their role in the future. In this they involved large segments of the sphere of Swedish popular educators: 7 – 8 000 people participated in 117 deliberations and conferences (FBR 2007: 6).49 Much of what is stressed in the final report of this project has already been discussed in this chapter. The report was produced for the

47 “Management by objectives” emphasizes that organizations should develop clearly formulated and specific goals as well as strategies to pursue these. The goals and strategies also need to be operationalized so that the results can be measured and evaluated (Røvik 1998: 51).
48 These figures are calculated from the activities in 2006.
49 This initiative also led to a number of reports where the debate continued and various study associations and other institutions and actors put forward their views.
government as a basis for their work with the above-mentioned bill. In the
report the potential of popular education organizations to function as
“schools of democracy” is explicitly stated and other issues concern the
importance of being able to handle the needs of an increasingly pluralistic
society – decreasing the risk of marginalizing any groups, among other
things (FBR 2004). To develop democracy is here identified as the overall
mission of popular education. How then is popular education believed to be
able to contribute to this? In summary it concerns giving citizens the tools
needed to function in the world of today:

Through popular education people can capture the tools to function with
confidence in the democratic society and help strengthen it (FBR 2004: 13,
author’s translation).

3.3 Democracy and Popular Education

Education and democracy have been seen by many as intimately linked.
There is ample evidence that a higher degree of education and literacy
improves the conditions for establishing and maintaining a democratic
system of government and many scholars over the years have emphasized
the importance of education for democracy and the possibility of leading a
Lipset 1963). According to Lipset, this is shown even more clearly to be so
by surveys within one country than by cross-national comparisons. He
claims that the one factor that stands out when analyzing differences in
responses to questions regarding tolerance for opposition, ethnic groups and
other questions relating to what may be called civic virtues is the level of
education. The more educated an individual is, the more likely he or she is to
believe in democratic values (Lipset 1963: 56f). Education is of course not
the only factor explaining whether or not a country will be a democracy, but
it does seem to improve the prospects. However, the topic here has to be
somewhat limited, so the discussions will focus on a context closer to the
main topic of this thesis.

As has been discussed previously in this chapter, democracy has been
important as a goal, norm and ideal of Swedish popular education right from
the initiation of the Swedish study associations (like ABF). Some claim that
democracy can be seen as the main goal of adult and popular education. This
is based on contributions made by this kind of education to existing
democracies in many Western countries (cases mentioned include Sweden,
Denmark and Great Britain), as well as to the processes of democratization
in, for instance, Poland (Bron, A. 2001b: 109f). The kind of free adult and
popular education agencies referred to can be seen as parts of civil society
and this kind of education can be seen as a way to come to terms with
passivity on the part of the citizens (Bron, A. 1995: 19, Bron, A. 2001a: 19). In the context of newly democratized states in Eastern Europe, the characteristic traits of citizens have been claimed to be passivity, apathy, lack of confidence when it comes to participating in social and public life, low trust in politicians and the political system, a feeling of helplessness when it comes to trying to force societal change and a lack of ability to critically analyze and evaluate authority (or at least to do something about the situation). Here it has been claimed that education and adult education may play a role in trying to remedy these difficulties (Bron, M. & Malewski 1995: 10). In the democracies of Western Europe there are also signs of the same kind of traits among citizens. Perhaps then it is feasible to see education and adult education as a possible aid in Western societies as well?

In this context it is common to speak of the importance of civic education, which is not something that, by definition, falls under the heading of adult education. The opposite, however, is a different issue. That there is, or perhaps should be, a connection between adult education and civic education is something many agree upon. Milner (2002: 117) writes: “In a sense, whatever the specific content, adult education is civic education; that is, it is education aimed at citizens, qua citizens”. Something that has been noted in previously conducted research is adult education as a necessary way of adding to the civic education a citizen is supposed to receive through formal schooling. Some even claim that adult education has a more important function to fill regarding the development of civic knowledge than formal schooling (Boggs 1991, Milner 2002: 8, 117f). Of course, in a situation such as that in Estonia, the civic education to which large sections of the population have been exposed is not of any use in a democratic society but simply concerned Soviet propaganda. Thus, adult education is even more important in such a context when many citizens need resocialization and several new skills in order to handle both the transformation and the new Estonian society.

Habits, more than knowledge, are claimed to live on after completion of schooling (for instance reading newspapers, participating in voluntary organizations, etc.). There are some research results that indicate that “civics courses” taken in school at a young age have some effect on political participation later in life but it is not clear if the information gathered from “civics courses” truly lives on to any greater extent into the adult years. The knowledge gathered in these courses can, like most other knowledge, be expected to fade with time if it is not reinforced through, for instance, adult education or political activities (Milner 2002: 118, 121). This is also a reason for why the form of the education may be even more interesting to investigate than the contents of the courses or study circles. The importance of the form or the method of the education is stressed in Swedish popular education, as has been mentioned previously in this chapter.
Adult and civic education are also connected to what knowledge and skills a citizen needs in order to function as an active democratic citizen. This civic competence was also discussed in Chapter 2.1.2. Citizens need knowledge of the system they live in, and the rights and duties that come with citizenship as well as skills in using that knowledge (Heater 1999: 164). It is important here for education to be seen as one of the factors that can influence this competence. Naturally, there are other factors, apart from adult, civic and popular education, that can influence this as well, both positively and negatively.50 However, to bring out and develop this knowledge and the skills needed for active citizenship can be seen as one of the tasks of adult and popular educators (Bron, A. 1995: 20). Education can fill the function of informing the citizens and teaching them about these crucial aspects even though Milner (2002) claims that it is not clear what knowledge is needed to exercise citizenship in our time.

In the deliberative context that many study circles provide, some of the attributes advanced as democratic traits, such as discussion, argumentation, decision-making practices and respect for different opinions, can be practised (Larsson 2001). This can also be seen to tie into what has been discussed earlier concerning civil society as schools of democracy.

It has, however, been claimed that the various goals of adult and popular education can come in conflict with one another. These goals may include trying to assist individuals in becoming included and therefore able to participate to a greater extent in their respective societies, but also trying to accommodate the cultural diversity existing in a society. By supporting different cultural values and identities (instead of, as in the first instance, trying rather to create a sense of solidarity and national identity), adult education can help the various groups to take part in national debate and decision-making (Turner & Ridden 2001: 29). These issues are the same as those raised concerning civil society that were discussed in Chapter 2.1.2 and demonstrate the tensions that seem to be inherent in both these areas.

Adult education and its possible role as a vehicle for social change, which was mentioned in Chapter 3.1, is also debated. The debate is between those who think it can play this role and those who think that it instead perpetuates the existing system (Boggs 1991: 34ff, Bron, A. 2001b: 123ff). This is also connected with the view of the relation between adult education and the development of civic virtues. Some see a clear connection between the two whereas those who tend to see adult education as something that shores up an existing, possibly authoritarian or totalitarian system, have a more negative view on this (Bron, M. & Malewski 1995: 11, Turner & Ridden.

50Examples are the consumption of different kinds of media (Milner 2002). Regular reading of newspapers and following the news are said to affect the knowledge and level of activity of citizens since these citizens will be more up to date on current events. On the other hand, watching TV has been described as something that affects social capital and the level of activity among the citizens negatively (Putnam 2000).
2001: 35). Especially in a situation like a post-communist context where the major part of, at least state-sanctioned, adult education activities were used to promote communist propaganda, adult education is rightfully questioned and not seen as, by default, positive for democracy. With the Swedish history in mind it can hardly surprise anyone if the assumptions are somewhat different.

As noted above, education is seen as something that can help overcome passivity among the citizenry, at least in an ideal world (Bron, A. 1995: 19f). How this is to be achieved is less clear. In this view, adult education can serve as a vehicle of empowerment of the citizens by giving them the necessary knowledge to participate fully in a democratic society. These ideas are cited to argue the potential for promoting active citizenship through adult education activities. This kind of belief also constituted much of the background to the initiation of many popular education activities in Sweden as shown in Chapter 3.1. Sweden is sometimes put forward as an example of a country with extensive non-formal adult education where these institutions also have played a role as promoters of social change. The way popular education has been used in the different Swedish popular movements, discussed previously in this chapter, should here be remembered.

The way education has been used to reinforce the existing system or produce the kind of social change desired by political leaders can most likely be seen in most countries in the world (Boggs 1991). This kind of reproduction cannot be seen as something negative per definition. In a democratic society an important role of education should be to promote democratic values, etc. In this, both formal schooling and adult education could possibly, at least in theory, be important institutions. However, both formal schooling and adult education have been used by authoritarian and totalitarian regimes to disseminate their propaganda or ideology (Avis 1990, Bron, M. 2004, Currie Lee 1988, White 1980). The top-down attempts of “people’s education” initiated by the Swedish state in the 19th century have also been discussed previously in this chapter. So, education and adult education can be tools for democratic, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes even though the goals and the way in which it is used may differ. It should therefore be noted that the link between education and (improved) democracy is not automatic.

As described in Chapter Two, civil society is often seen as important for a well-functioning democracy. Adult education has been asserted to be potentially important for democracy but it is also important for civil society. At least in Sweden, study circles and associations working with this kind of education are presented as important for movements and civil society organizations as a training ground where individuals gain knowledge and skills that they bring with them to other activities they take part in. So, study circles can be said to increase the possibilities and resources of civil society (Larsson 2001: 143f).
3.4 Travelling Ideas?

This chapter has been devoted to Swedish popular education, its history and organizations. It is important to understand the organizations and their history and development if it is to be possible to pinpoint what may have been spread in transnational projects and possibly edited through the translation process.

In this final section I will summarize some of the essential findings of this chapter, focusing especially on ideas that are central characteristics of Swedish popular education. These characteristics are also ideas embodied in the pedagogics and methods of these organizations (for instance the study circle) and thus constitute potential “travelling ideas”, i.e. ideas which may be spread by the processes of translation studied here. In this section, I will primarily take an interest in those aspects that may travel in the cooperation between ABF and AHL. Therefore, having an origin in a popular movement, which is regarded as one characteristic of Swedish popular education and its organizations (Magnusson 1998, Sjöman 2002: 10f, Sundgren 2003) is not addressed here since this is something that can hardly travel (it concerns the past). However, it is still a trait of Swedish popular education that is important to keep in mind when analysing the ABF/AHL projects since this kind of background may influence the cooperation. That is, however, an issue that will be left for the analysis.

The characteristics of Swedish popular education with a potential for travel can be summarized as:

*Free, voluntary and inclusive*

Swedish popular education organizations emphasize the importance of “being there” for all citizens. No one should be forced into participation. Thus, those participating do so by their own free choice. Not only are they free to choose not to participate but participation should also be made possible for all groups and individuals. This is closely connected to another goal, namely that of reaching potentially marginalized groups in society. Thus, popular education should also provide educational opportunities for people less well endowed with certain resources (here the lack of formal examinations in this kind of activities, which was mentioned above, should also be remembered). Even though Swedish study associations commonly adhere to some form of ideological profile (in the case of ABF that of the labour movement and Swedish social democracy), the activities are to be open for everyone interested.

*Equality and participant-oriented education*

Equality is a keystone of Swedish popular education. This embodies the ideal that every man and woman should be seen as equal and have equal opportunities. This is also connected to the efforts of Swedish popular
education organizations to target marginalized groups or groups and individuals risking marginalization in society.

Equality is not only expressed as a general, perhaps moral, principle but is also seen to bear implications for the more concrete educational activities. This is not least reflected in the method of the study circle that has been discussed in Chapter 3.1.1. The view that everyone is equal also means that in Swedish popular education the teacher is not seen as an omnipotent ruler of the classroom environment. Instead equality should also prevail here; participants should be able to influence the contents and activities, the teacher or study circle leader learns together with the participants and functions more as a guide than as someone lecturing in a top-down fashion. The activities are therefore determined by the needs and wants of the participants.

Social function and personal development
That Swedish popular education is believed to fill an important social function has been stressed throughout this chapter. The educational activities, for instance in the form of study circles, are seen to provide opportunities for people to gather, especially people with varying backgrounds. This may also be connected to the idea of civil society in general constituting “schools of democracy”. It has been argued that the democratic environment that popular educators attempt to create in their classrooms teaches people not only about a specific subject but also how to work together in a democratic manner and that everyone’s opinion matters. This is then also related to the issue of form versus content that is addressed below. Thus these activities are believed to bring people together who would not otherwise come in contact with each other or each other’s opinions. Therefore it is argued that attitudes such as tolerance and respect for others can be bred through these activities. The focus on the experiences of participants is also believed to develop the individual and not least increase the self-confidence of the participants.

Democracy
Democracy is something that is frequently discussed in connection with popular education. The adherence to democratic ideals, participation and the promotion and strengthening of these is emphasized in the popular education tradition. Working for improved democracy and encouraging active democratic citizenship have also been major aims of study associations, not least ABF. The aim of the educational activities is thus, to improve not only
the skills of participants in the field of study but also their civic competence.51

As has been elaborated on above, democracy should, according to the ideas of Swedish popular education and ABF, also rule in the classroom, in study circles and so on. Thus, democracy should permeate the educational activities themselves as well as the relations between teacher and student (or study circle leader and participant), between participants and also within the educational organizations. Democracy is thus viewed as a guiding principle both for society and the organizations, and learning is to be a democratic exercise.

**Form vs content**

Previously in this chapter it has been discussed that the outcome of popular education activities is potentially more than knowledge of the subject of a particular study circle, course or other form of activity. The importance of the form of the educational activity is stressed in Swedish popular education. This means here that through the use of, for instance, the study circle methodology it is possible and should be an ambition to promote lessons wider than just the subject at hand. These concern several aspects that can be connected with civic virtues, such as how to become a more active citizen, tolerance, and respect for others. The subject does not have to concern civic education per se but the civic part is still believed to be part of it on account of the methods used and the environment created. This represents the social function of popular education as well as the ambition to promote personal development.

**Pedagogics and methods**

Finally, methods and pedagogics, most prominently the study circle, have been developed to embody and propagate the ideas presented above. Thus, it is with these ideas in mind that these methods have been developed and this, I argue, is a step in the process towards disembedding the ideas that translation studies see as essential for an idea to be able to travel, which was also mentioned in the first chapter. Thus, through this development the more or less abstract ideas presented above have been used as cornerstones of the methods and pedagogics, thus letting them become encapsulated in more concrete models. Developing these more concrete models has given the ideas a form that may allow them to be spread. However, they are still embedded

51 As discussed in Chapter 3.3 the connection between adult or popular education and democracy is ambiguous. Educational activities may also function as a tool for keeping a non-democratic system of governance in place.

In Sweden, the growth of popular education organizations has been closely connected with the establishment of a democratic state. In Estonia, however, there may be fresh memories of Soviet adult education that most likely did not have democratization as an ambition. This is something that will be discussed further in coming chapters.
in a Swedish tradition and context. Whether or not they have been sufficiently disembedded from this context will be further discussed in the empirical analysis of the ABF/AHL projects. If the models and not least the actors attempting to disseminate them are too firmly embedded in the Swedish tradition of popular education this may lead to problems in the cooperation. However, if and how this has been expressed in the cases studied here remains to be seen.

The characteristics of Swedish popular education that have been outlined in this section will be brought into the analysis and I will show whether and then how these have come through in the different ABF/AHL projects as well as how Estonian actors have perceived and possibly made use of them.

After this elaboration on Swedish popular education and the context in which ABF exists, I now turn to an analysis of the Estonian context and the traditions of adult education there.
4. Adult Education in Estonia

A detailed understanding of AHL and its development, including its transnational contacts and projects, requires an awareness of the more general system of adult education activities in Estonia yesterday and today. This is also the topic of this chapter, which will start with a historical retrospect before moving on to discuss the present situation and, finally, narrowing the focus and dealing more explicitly with AHL.

4.1 Estonian Adult Education and its Associations in Historical Perspective

The description in Chapter Three of Swedish developments in the field of adult and popular education started with the 19th century and that is where this chapter starts as well. The second half of the 19th century has been identified as the period of national awakening in Estonia and also as the beginning of adult education in this context (Eurybase 2007: 6, 128, Jansen 1993: 115).

During the latter half of the 19th century, educational activities for people of various ages and often taking the form of cultural activities of different sorts are said to have played a significant role in Estonian society and in the development of shared attitudes and knowledge of a common history (Vihalemm, interview, 2005b), essential in processes of national awakening and the creation of a feeling of nationality and belonging.

Until the end of the First World War, Estonia was under tsarist rule as a part of the Russian empire. During this time and much more so during the first period of Estonian independence (1918-1940), before Soviet times, there seems to have existed quite a strong adult education movement and an active civil society in Estonia (Bennich-Björkman 2007, Jansen 1993, Ruutsoo 2002; Jääger, interview, 2005; Vihalemm, interview, 2005a). This was at the beginning of the 20th century and in regards to adult education, much inspiration was gathered at this time from the Nordic countries. Some of the influence came from Jaan Tõnisson, who was an Estonian politician and head of government for three different periods during the first Estonian
independence (Nationalencyklopedin 1995: 583). While travelling in the Nordic countries he saw the popular education system that was already working or developing there. Tõnisson brought this knowledge and inspiration back home with him to Estonia. In Estonia, he stressed the importance of education of the lower classes in society as a way to strengthen the people (Eellend 2007: 115).

In the early 20th century adult education was important to Estonians, not least in their subsequent struggle for independence. In these activities it was not only cultural components that helped to create a feeling of Estonian nationality but, just as importantly, language courses. In the Russian empire, only very basic schooling (three years) was given in Estonian. All other education was given only in Russian. This made education in the Estonian language essential for people of all ages (Jääger, interview, 2005; cf. Bennich-Björkman 2007: 323).

After the First World War, Estonia found itself to be an independent state for the first time. Even though independence did not last much more than 20 years (1918-1940), several things happened during these years that have a bearing on the focus of this study. During Estonia’s first period of independence, adult education activities continued to develop and became quite widespread in the country. During these years, the cultural part of the activities of the adult education institutions was still very important and this continued to be so throughout Soviet times and still predominates today (Jääger, interview, 2005). Before Estonia was incorporated with the Soviet Union, two educational institutions of the boarding school type, similar to folk high schools and called folk universities, developed and educational activities of various kinds are said to have been popular in the interwar era in Estonia (Eurybase 2007: 128).

After Estonia was incorporated with the Soviet Union in 1940, many things changed, including the system of adult education that developed and was still developing. Popular education institutions were closed, although more hobby-oriented activities managed to continue (Eurybase 2007: 128). Many of the cultural activities were tolerated by the Soviet regime, which called it “folk culture activities” and used it to show the outside world that the communists supported national activities and also as a way to keep the people calm (Jääger, interview, 2005). This actually led to these activities, such as dancing, singing and handicraft, being quite well supported by the Soviet state. This is also seen to have been one route by which Estonians managed to remain close to their national culture for the 50 years they were under Soviet domination (Aarelaid-Tart & Siisiäinen 1993: 218, Bennich-

Tõnisson also worked as a newspaper editor for the paper “Postimees”, which during his editorship developed a “distinct nationalist profile” (Eellend 2007: 60). He has been presented as an important civic leader who opposed the Russian domination and thus played a prominent role in the Estonian liberation movement in the times before the first period of Estonian independence (cf. Eellend 2007).
Even though some see the legacy of Soviet times as more or less exclusively negative there are more nuanced views as well. Some are of the opinion that at least the money supplied by the Soviet state, for example in support of folk culture activities, was essential to the survival of Estonian culture. Without these financial sources (and most likely also the toleration of these activities by the communist regime) the weakening of the national culture might have been much greater (Mikk, interview, 2005). However, most of the educational activities that remained after the Soviet takeover, perhaps apart from some of these culturally oriented activities, were strictly controlled by the Party and the Soviet regime. Instead of the adult education system that had existed earlier, there came the Soviet kind, with “People’s Universities” (Narodnye Universitety). People’s Universities were parts of the adult education industry in the Soviet Union, gave courses and performed an array of different activities (see Currie Lee 1988).

During Soviet times, adult education was used as a way of promoting the proposed identity that has been called Homo Sovieticus. So, in the Soviet era, education was to a large extent used as a way of accomplishing societal and political change, even though this ambition was a step in the direction of consolidating and fortifying communist rule. Thus, it can also be perceived as a way of reproducing this system. During this time a huge amount of people were involved in adult education around the Soviet Union (Zajda 1999: 151f), although perhaps not entirely on a voluntary basis. There is of course also a question of reliability in these numbers. For example, if we are to believe official statistics on how many people participated in adult education in Estonia during Soviet times it shows that roughly half the Estonian population participated in these activities, something that people who have studied it find hard to believe (Jääger, interview, 2005).

The fact that the cultural activities and with them one part of the adult education system that did exist found themselves in a lot of trouble at the

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53 In the Soviet Union adult education included the so-called non-formal voluntary sector (Zajda 1999: 152f). This consisted, among other things, of People’s Universities and the “Knowledge Society” (Znanie). The origin of these organizations can be traced back to Russia before the revolution and a kind of network of adult education that already existed at that time. The People’s Universities became increasingly popular and grew significantly from 1968 and onwards. The Znanie Society, or Knowledge Society, was founded in 1947 and attempted to popularize knowledge and increase peoples’ general knowledge in a variety of areas such as technology, science, the arts, humanities and social science (Zajda 1999: 153).

54 I will not go into detail on what is meant by Homo Sovieticus since that is outside the scope of this study but it may briefly be said to concern the attempt on the state’s part to promote and develop a type of citizen that was to be seen as the model citizen in the Soviet communist system – a kind of model socialist personality. For further discussion concerning this kind of Soviet personality see for instance Avis (1990), Heller (1988), Smirnov (1973).

55 How effective the propaganda and the education was in promoting the objectives of the Soviet state has been debated but I will not go deeper into this here (cf. White 1980).
end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s followed partly from the fact that they had previously received financial support from the Soviet state and when this funding stopped it of course led to strain. In this context, many of the cultural associations and centres started to change into outright adult education centres (Jääger, interview, 2005).

4.2 The Present Situation

To describe the current state of adult and popular education in Estonia it may be beneficial to start out by looking at the attitudes the Estonian state and government holds towards this kind of activity. One way of doing this is to look at legislation and policy discussions.

In 1993 an Adult Education Act was adopted in Estonia.\textsuperscript{56} This act defines adult education institutions, regulates the financing of adult education and classifies activities based on its objectives (Eurybase 2007: 131, Eurydice 2003: 32). Three different kinds of adult education were defined: general adult education, labour-market-oriented education and popular adult education (Märja & Jõgi 2000: 103).

General (or formal) adult education enables a person to acquire some level of education, equivalent to that given in the formal education system, which he or she does not possess previously. This may concern basic or secondary levels of education and the studies normally take the form of evening schools or correspondence courses. On completion, the participant will take part in an examination and receive a diploma or certificate (Eurydice 2003: 36).

Labour-market-oriented education, or “work-related training” as it is also called, gives the individual the opportunity to develop his or her professional competence and obtain knowledge and skills that are beneficial to his or her profession. This kind of adult education includes various kinds of vocational training and it, too, involves examination and the awarding of a certificate after completion (Eurydice 2003: 36).

Finally, popular adult education, or “non-formal training”, is said to promote an individual’s personal development and may stimulate creativity or talent, develop a feeling of social responsibility, etc. Apart from this, one of its main functions is to help individuals gain knowledge and acquire skills that assist them in coping with their lives and the society in which they live. This kind of education may use different methods and there is no examination or certificate involved. This is also the kind of adult education investigated here and the organizations to be explored fall under this

\textsuperscript{56} In the process of preparing this, Andras, which is an organization that will be discussed shortly, was involved (Jõgi 2004: 288, Märja 1996: 18), as was AHL in the person of its then chairman (Vihalemm, interview, 2005b).
heading. It also resembles the notion of popular education that has been identified in Sweden, as discussed in Chapter Three. Study circles are also explicitly mentioned as one of the methods used in this part of the Estonian adult education system, again demonstrating similarities with Sweden. (Eurydice 2003: 36)

At the end of the 1990s, there existed almost 1,000 adult education centres of various types in Estonia. Most of them worked on a commercial basis and focused mainly on job-related education and skills enhancement (Vihalemm 2000: 6). These organizations will, however, not be closely investigated in this study. AHL also differs to some extent from these in that its focus is more on popular education, civic education and social skills, i.e. education for fields other than working life, even though the latter type of education also exists in AHL’s activities.

The Adult Education Act has been said to have been of significant importance in the continued development of Estonian adult education, for instance by establishing the legal right of adults to take part in educational activities throughout their lifetime and also putting in print some of the obligations from the state to adult education (such as partial state support, at least for certain areas of adult education) (Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus 2005b). However, it has also been criticized for the division made between different forms of adult education. The main points in this criticism are, firstly, that it is difficult to place education in separate boxes since “they are so combined in real life” and, secondly, that it suggests that popular adult education is concerned mostly with hobbies and “less important” issues, which can also be observed in other documents describing the system of adult education in Estonia (Jääger, interview, 2005; cf. Eurydice 2003: 35). This criticism has also led to the people involved working to form a new law that is better adapted to the situation and to the role of popular education.

In 2004, the government also approved a set of “National Priorities of Adult Education for 2004-2006” where different fields in which adult education may fill a purpose were mentioned. On 3 November 2005 the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy for the years 2005-2008 was also approved by the Estonian government (Eurybase 2007: 129). The main aim of this strategy is:

- to increase the opportunities and motivation of the people in Estonia to participate in formal, non-formal and informal education, in order to improve one’s knowledge and skills according to one’s own needs, the needs of the civil society, the society and the labour market (Eurybase 2007: 129).

In more than one way the Estonian system of adult education differs from the practice and organizational principles that can be found in Sweden and other Nordic countries. For instance, there is more than one nation-wide umbrella organization that in some ways resembles the Swedish
Folkbildningsrådet (FBR) that was discussed in Chapter 3.2.\footnote{In Denmark the equivalent structure to FBR is called Dansk Folkeoplysnings Samråd or “Danish Adult Education Association”, in Norway Voksenopplingsforbundet or “Norwegian Association for Adult Education” and in Finland Vapaan Sivistystyön Yhteisjärjestö or “Finnish Adult Education Association”.} In Estonia there is EVHL (Eesti Vabaharidusliit or Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association) and Andras (Eesti Täiskasvanute Koolitajate Assotsiatsioon Andras or Association of Estonian Adult Educators Andras). Andras is an umbrella organization dealing with adult education activities even though the kind of education primarily in focus for this organization is said to be more directed towards professional training, job training and more formal competence, at least in comparison to AHL. That the focus of Andras, or of the majority of their members is on work-related education, is also acknowledged by those working for Andras (Lao, interview, 2006). There is also a difference in that Andras is said to have been more influenced by and involved with German organizations whereas the Nordic countries are more central to AHL and EVHL, an organization that will be further discussed shortly (Kiik, interview, 2006; Vaino, interview, 2006; cf. Ek 2006: 88). Thus, several interviewees have suggested that the work done in Andras may not be as closely related to popular education as that of the other organizations and that it is an organization directed more towards formal education and qualifications than AHL (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b). Thus, even though Andras may fill an important role, its focus is somewhat different according to this information, which would also make it somewhat less interesting in this study. Even so, Andras is part of the Estonian adult education system and, hence, deserves some attention.

Andras was founded on 11 February 1991, which means that it was actually established before Estonia became independent. It traces its origins to the mid-1980s, when people, many from the universities, got together with the notion that promoting adult education was essential to political progress towards independence and democratization that was a main ambition at the time. In a sense, Andras grew out of the adult training department that existed at Tallinn University from the middle of the 80s. Once it became legal for NGOs and this kind of organization to exist, Andras was registered. In the beginning activities are described as having been much based on a form of “learning-café” style of operation where people met, discussed and learned from each other (Lao, interview, 2006). A series of seminars and workshops taking place from 1983 onwards between people interested in adult education was what led up to the creation of Andras (Märja 1996: 18). Since its foundation, Andras has grown and in 2006 it had almost 60 member organizations with various interests, values and forms of activities. They included adult upper secondary schools, open universities, vocational educational centres, private adult-training providers
as well as a few individual members. This umbrella organization is thus quite heterogeneous and inclusive in character. In 2006 they had three people working full-time plus a few project-based employees (Lao, interview, 2006).

As mentioned above, Andras is perceived by other organizations as being more directed towards formal adult education, which their membership structure may also to some extent bear out, even though this is not their sole focus. Apart from more commercially oriented member organizations, Andras has also been active in developing more formal criteria and qualification standards for adult education and adult educators (Lao, interview, 2006; Mikk, interview, 2006), together with training and courses for adult educators. In Estonia there is a system of national qualifications embracing different professions, whereby individuals can validate their competences. For a specific profession there is a council that evaluates individuals that apply and then provides them with a qualification that reflects their skills. Andras and others have now established a similar scheme for adult educators (see Professional Standard 2003). Andras runs the scheme and is represented in the council that evaluates the applicants. It should also be noted that applying for these qualifications is as yet voluntary, not obligatory, but it is a way for an experienced adult educator to show that “I am a qualified trainer, thus I can bring extra value to the course if I am the teacher” (Lao, interview, 2006).

Apart from Andras there is also EVHL, which was mentioned above, of which AHL is also a member. In some ways, both Andras and EVHL can claim to perform the kind of function that the Swedish National Council of Adult Education (FBR) fulfils in Sweden. However, EVHL is the organization that comes closest also to the ideals normally portrayed in discussions concerning popular education in a Nordic sense and is also, just like FBR, the organization that now has responsibility for distributing state support to various adult education associations. EVHL and Andras are also presented as the most important umbrella organizations in the field of adult education in Estonia today (Eurybase 2007: 133).

EVHL was established in 1994. Actually, it can be described as a re-establishment since it is said to be the successor of an organization that existed in Estonia during the country’s first period of independence or more precisely between 1924 and 1940 (Eurybase 2007: 133, EVHL internet59, Vihalemm 1998; Jääger, interview, 2005). The current organization (EVHL) was, thus, founded 70 years after its predecessor. In 1994, 33 organizations that decided they were in need of an umbrella organization came together and started up EVHL. In 2005 the association had 73 member organizations (Jääger, interview, 2005).

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58 Some members of AHL are or have also been members of Andras.
EVHL, however, differs in some ways from the organizational structure of the Swedish FBR in that its membership is not confined to a few large umbrella organizations (the constituent parts of FBR have been discussed in Chapter 3.2). Instead, there are, as the then Secretary General of EVHL described, different kinds of membership where some of the members are larger study associations that are umbrella organizations themselves (like AHL). However, there are also in EVHL smaller, individual organizations, among them organizations that are also members of AHL (for instance AHL Tartu and AHL Saaremaa60) (Jääger, interview, 2005). That smaller, more local organizations of this kind are members of EVHL has been perceived as somewhat problematic. EVHL’s ambition is to have a similar structure to that of FBR since in many ways they fulfil the same kind of functions. It is, for instance, in contact with the Ministry of Education and has the responsibility for distributing state support to the different study associations that exist in Estonia and they also work with the Ministry of Education in forming adult education policy. For instance, the strategy/development plan (the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy) for 2005-2008 that was mentioned earlier in this chapter is something supported by EVHL, which has also assisted in its development (Jääger, interview, 2005). One of the reasons for the founding of EVHL was also that there is a need for the state to have one partner to deal with instead of allowing every single smaller organization direct access to the ministry, which would make the system much more difficult to manage efficiently (Jääger, interview, 2005).

For EVHL the state is the main or, practically, only source of funding for the day-to-day activities and, since it receives funding from the state, it claims that it is not in need of any additional financial sources for its survival – this is guaranteed by the state support. In 2005 the money from the state made it possible for EVHL to have an office with three people working full-time and a few more working part-time (Jääger, interview, 2005). However, it also has some project money from time to time. It applies to be involved in projects in what it defines as current priority areas. So this money is used in specific areas to advance and develop what is deemed to be of high priority (Jääger, interview, 2005). That the state supports the main bulk of the organization and its everyday activities has also made it easier for EVHL to take part in Nordic cooperative projects since many of these in recent years have only provided funding for meetings and apart from this “you have to work by your own resources”, which is not then a major problem for EVHL (Jääger, interview, 2005).

60 AHL Saaremaa is known in Estonian as MTÜ Saaremaa Õppekeskus or Saaremaa Educational Centre but is referred to in this text as AHL Saaremaa since this is the name used in, for instance, project reports on the cooperation with ABF organizations (see for instance OPC Project Report 95 637 Ô).
As mentioned above, there has been and still is, state support available for adult education associations. However, closer examination suggests that the situation, and the trend, may not be as positive as this might suggest. State support is of course valued by the organizations that receive it, not least because it does not come with significant restrictions on what activities the organizations can engage in.

An adult education institution is independent in the organization of its study activities, choosing study forms, curricula and methods (Eurydice 2003: 33).

In this sense, it is possible to talk about free and autonomous popular education associations in Estonia just as much as has been done regarding the Swedish context. The amounts given out as state support are another matter. In Estonia this amount is significantly less than the SEK 1.5 billion that FBR distributes to study associations and folk high schools in Sweden in 2007. Estonian respondents claim that the state support has in reality been heavily reduced since its initiation in 1995 or rather that it has not increased with inflation, etc. The result is of course that the organizations who do receive state support, which is not all of them, are experiencing a difficult decline in their resources, which were not abundant in the first place (Mikk, interview, 2005; Vihelemm, interview, 2005b).61

Since Estonia joined the EU, the situation seems to have become even more troublesome for the local organizations in this regard. Since Estonia has been a full member of the EU since 2004, it is possible for Estonian adult education organizations to apply for grants from the social funds. This, however, seems to have led to more problems than “just” the EU bureaucracy, which is described as difficult to handle. Apart from this, the Estonian state now wants the organizations to use the support granted for co-financing potential EU projects – a common demand from the EU. It is also seen as difficult to get money from the EU funds and, since it takes time for the organization to be notified of EU-funding decisions, it does not dare use the state support for other things. This means that the small funds that they get are “locked”. This, naturally, constitutes a major problem for, among others, local organizations that are members of AHL (Mikk, interview, 2005).

61 The state support that was distributed in 1998, for instance, was around 2 million Estonian Kroon and was given to 58 adult education centres (“News from the Baltics” 1998). For each organization, the state support has been equivalent to about one average salary for 10 months per year which means that it was hardly even enough for one director or the equivalent (Mikk, interview, 2005; Vihelemm, interview, 2005b). This cannot be verified by this study but, perhaps part of the dissatisfaction with the amount of state support that Estonian respondents show is due to the close relations with Swedish organizations, which may make them compare with the Swedish situation, consciously or unconsciously. This is, of course, apart from the fact that many organizations struggle economically and for that simple reason wish for more support.
In the early 21st century it was still claimed that the Estonian adult education system continued to be in a formative phase and that it was a rather fragmented field (Märja & Jõgi 2000: 104). An indication of that may also be the different large umbrella organizations that exist parallel to each other. The opportunity to participate in educational activities also varies greatly depending on the part of the country in which a person resides (Märja & Jõgi 2000: 104) and it is claimed that adult education has become to some extent, perhaps too much, commercialized:

Adult education has become a product that is successfully sold to those who are able to pay for it, whose social position is advantageous for learning (Jõgi 2004: 290).

The quotation that closes this section indicates that there is a problem of reaching potentially marginalized groups and that the market structures and mechanisms also pose challenges for the development of adult and popular education and the efforts to increase the activity among the Estonian citizenry.

4.3 AHL

This last part of the chapter will introduce AHL and its development and situation. However, since this is closely intertwined with its transnational cooperation and the joint projects with ABF, the analysis will include more details of this organization.

AHL (Avatud Hariduse Liit or Open Education Association) was founded on 11 November 1991. The founders of this umbrella organization were three different Estonian organizations: the Estonian Social Democratic Party, the Estonian Cultural Workers’ Union and the Estonian Amateur Theatres Association (Vihalemm 2001).

Firstly, it has to be recognized that the organization has now existed for more than fifteen years, which indicates a certain stability and vitality, even though it naturally may have changed over time in a country that has gone through great changes. The extent to which it is still the same kind of organization and the nature of the change, possibly partly a result of transnational cooperation, will be investigated and analysed in this study.

The organizational structure of AHL was made similar to that of ABF in the sense that there was a central umbrella organization with different local chapters. In this there were also influences from the central organization of ABF (cf. Ek 2006: 88). Concerning the members of the Estonian umbrella organization a few things can be said. First of all, there have been members of AHL that existed as organizations prior to the creation of the AHL
umbrella (Eduards & Adelstål 1997). These then came together in this organizational structure, perhaps as a form of cooperation and not least to increase the possibility of getting involved in international projects and cooperation. These are also issues that will be discussed in more detail in the analysis of the cooperation between ABF and AHL.

It is clear when looking at the different elements and organizations that have made up the umbrella organization of AHL that they are very disparate organizations that may have somewhat different views and goals. Over the years, AHL has been a heterogeneous organization encompassing amateur theatre associations, study centres, trade unions, etc. (Vihalemm & Seelmann 1996). Here also it differs from ABF, which is seen as a more homogenous structure (Eduards & Adelstål 1997: 8). Differences and similarities between the organizations will also be further discussed in the analysis, especially in Chapter 9.2.

Initially, the AHL umbrella organization grew rapidly, with 21 members in 1994 (Vihalemm et al 1994: 16f) and 32 in 1995 (Vihalemm & Seelmann 1996: 15ff). However, in recent years the number of member organizations has dropped (from 32 in 1995 to 15 in 2008). It should not, however, be taken for granted that this is a sign of weakness or that the organization is disintegrating, since it may also be a part of the process whereby the organization is finding its place and identity, and perhaps also a consequence of changing circumstances such as decreased state support, which is believed to be a main reason for why some organizations became members of AHL in the first place. If these opportunities decrease, organizations may be less interested in remaining members of AHL (Puolle, interview, 2005). This will also be further discussed in subsequent chapters.

AHL has links to the Estonian Social Democratic Party even though, originally, AHL had support both from there and from the conservative party Pro Patria (Vihalemm, interview, 2005a). In other words, it seems that the value base or ideology of the organization is not as coherent or clear as is the case with ABF. What can already be said here is that in recent years, the incidence of trade unions and also of civic education in AHL has grown and there are stronger connections with the Estonian Social Democratic Party. The focus on civic education, on the development of social and democratic skills and on trade union development is also something that distinguishes AHL from many other adult education organizations in Estonia.

The question is about people’s ability to participate in political life as citizens. This means, that civic education has become a focal point of our programs of popular education. (Vihalemm 2000: 7)

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62 Examples of this are, for instance, Tartu Folk High School and the Estonian Amateur Theatres Association, both of which have now left AHL.
These activities include development of social and communicative skills, public speaking, civic education, legislation, trade union courses and courses on the European Union (Vihalemm 2001). Connected to this is what has been described as “the leading principle of AHL”, namely “Development through learning” or “Development through studies” (Vihalemm 1998, 2001). What is pronounced through this is that:

AHL aims to make people active, encourage them by giving social support and developing better understanding of the surrounding world as well as their own life (Vihalemm 1998).

So, the focus on civic education and the development of democratic skills among the Estonian citizenry is one of the main characteristics of the organization – at least from the perspective of the central organization. I would argue that this is similar to what is emphasized in ABF. The empirical analysis will also consider whether this development in AHL has been influenced by the cooperation with Sweden and ABF.

As mentioned previously, there have been and still are several commercial actors involved in adult education in Estonia. Many of these offer courses similar to some of the educational activities given by AHL (languages and computer skills, for instance, constitute important parts of the activities many AHL organizations provide). However, there is a difference in that AHL also attempts to make its activities available to groups in society with limited or poor resources (Eduards & Adelstål 1997: 5) and thus tries to target marginalized or potentially marginalized groups which, as has been shown, means that its aims are close to those of ABF. Many more things can of course be said about AHL but that would be to anticipate the analysis. I therefore leave further discussion of this organization until later chapters.

4.4 Concluding Remarks

As has been shown in this chapter, there has been a tradition of adult and popular education in Estonia since at least the 19th century. This developed further during the first Estonian independence between the world wars. The decades under Soviet dominion constituted a break in this tradition since many of the organizations that had developed were closed down. However, there were also adult education activities during Soviet times. Most of these may not have been built on the same principles of voluntarism, inclusiveness and equality that have been essential ingredients in the organizations involved in Swedish popular education, discussed in Chapter Three, but many culturally oriented activities survived and were also supported by the Soviet state, which was important for the maintenance of an Estonian national identity.
Since the 1990s, adult education taking the form of vocational training, etc. has been a part of the educational system. However, the situation for popular education has been a bit more sketchy. Even though it has become more recognized in recent years, there are still issues concerning how seriously these activities are taken. But, as has been shown in this chapter, popular education is today covered by the legislative framework and policy work in the Estonian educational field.

Apart from AHL, two umbrella organizations – Andras and EVHL – have been discussed. Andras has concentrated on more formal parts of the adult education area whereas EVHL has addressed popular education to a greater extent. Adult and popular education in Estonia have also received state support since 1995, which may assist further development even though the level of support may be so low as to restrict the possibilities.

Finally, AHL was also introduced. This is naturally an organization that will be further analyzed in later chapters but from the presentation here it may be noted that AHL has existed for more than fifteen years and also survived the withdrawal of the main bulk of foreign support. Just like ABF, this organization has had support from the social democrats but it has also been a more heterogeneous organization. With this, I leave the discussions of the Estonian context for now and turn to the theories primarily used in the empirical analysis. Thus, the focus will shift towards theories of the dissemination of ideas and practices.
5. Dissemination of Ideas and Organizational Forms

The dissemination of mental and cognitive as well as more physically visible material between actors and contexts is the main object of study for this investigation. Previous scholarly work in this field has used a number of different approaches and concepts to deal with these processes. As noted already in the introductory chapter, this study concerns itself primarily with the concept of translation. However, two other strands of theory will also be investigated here.

*Diffusion* is a commonly used concept to denote the dissemination of items and ideas. Translation was also partly developed following criticism of the diffusion “paradigm”.

*Socialization* is also a concept relating to these issues but often focusing on deeper, cognitive processes than is generally the case in the other two approaches.

Positioning these concepts in relation to each other and making use of lessons learned in the different traditions may lead to gains in the overall understanding of processes of dissemination. For this particular study, this positioning is also necessary in order to clarify the choice of translation as the primary concept. Differences and similarities between the concepts will thus be discussed here. Hence, part of this chapter consists of an attempt to systematize this theoretical field.

Extrapolating and developing an analytical framework or toolbox is essential for the forthcoming empirical investigations. The search for this platform will be conducted in this chapter, which will assist in clarifying this field and bringing it closer to a theoretical synthesis. The chapter will start with a closer look at the diffusion concept. Then socialization will be scrutinized and, finally, translation will be considered. The concluding section sums up similarities and differences between the concepts and elaborates on how the theoretical insights are to be used in this study.
5.1 Diffusion

The idea that items and ideas can spread between contexts around the world is hardly anything new. This is also the kind of process that the concept of diffusion has been designed to investigate. Over the years, many disciplines have used the concept of diffusion in studies of various phenomena. It is possible to find a diffusion perspective in anthropology, geography, history, sociology, etc. as well as in political science, where much research has focused on policy diffusion (Jönsson 2002: 25, Karvonen 1981, cf. Meseguer 2006, Mintrom & Vergari 1998, Mintrom 1997).

Diffusion can be seen as, perhaps, the widest concept to describe a process of dissemination. It includes or connects to many different terms, such as contagion, mimicry, imitation, emulation, role modelling, external imposition, societal fission (Eyestone 1977, Jacoby 2004, Most & Starr 1990: 396, Ross & Homer 1976: 5, Strang & Soule 1998: 266), political learning (Bermeo 1992, Kinnvall 1995) as well as lesson-drawing (Rose 1993, Uhlin 1995), policy transfer (Dolowitz & Marsh 2000, Holzinger & Knill 2005, Radaelli 2000) and linkage politics (Rosenau 1959) that can be found in many different bodies of literature. This text has no ambition to portray them all but it is important to note that diffusion is a general concept that connects with various strategies and perspectives.

Diffusion can be described as the process of if, how and why an item or idea is transferred from one context, organization, or the like to another. A frequently cited definition introduced by Rogers, in the more traditional school of diffusion research, is a good starting point for discussions of this concept. Rogers defines diffusion as “the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.” (Rogers 1983: 5). To elaborate on this, for the purposes of this study, diffusion can be seen as a process of communication with a transmitter (which can be, for instance, an individual or an organization), a receiver (which, again can be an individual or an organization), an object of diffusion (consisting of, for instance, material goods, information, skills or ideas) and channels of communication that link the actors (which can incorporate both interpersonal contacts and non-relational channels, for instance, the mass media) (McAdam & Rucht 1993: 59, Uhlin 1995: 33, see also Katz 1999: 147, Strang & Soule 1998).

Traditionally, many theorists elaborating on the concept of diffusion have defined it as a way in which innovations are spread, which can also be seen in the definition by Rogers presented above, so “innovations” has been claimed to be the “home territory” of diffusion (Strang &Soule 1998: 267). An “innovation”, however, may include various things, such as techniques in

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63 For examples of this traditional way of using diffusion, see for instance Coleman et al 1966, Rogers & Shoemaker 1971.
medicine, industrial technology, different kinds of goods, etc. (McAdam & Rucht 1993: 58).

The channels of communication that link the transmitter and the receiver are essential parts of a diffusion process. Two different kinds of channels have been identified in previous research. The first is a form of two-way communication, embodied in interpersonal contacts and the second concerns things like the mass media, which is then a form of one-way communication (Uhlin 1995: 42). Interpersonal contacts are the channel normally looked at in diffusion research and this “diffusion by interaction” (Uhlin 1995: 44) also comes closest to the focus of the study undertaken here. How sharp a line can, or should, be drawn between the different kinds of channels can also be discussed. In many ways they can be seen as complementing each other (McAdam & Rucht 1993: 59f) and, thus, it is more a matter of which one is most significant in the case(s) under investigation.

One phenomenon that has been viewed as related to diffusion is “demonstration effects”. By this is meant that events taking place in one country can be observed in another and then used as an example (positive or negative) (Di Palma 1990). In the context of diffusion of democratic ideas, for example, demonstration effects can fill a function in providing encouragement for pro-democratic actors in a country with an authoritarian or totalitarian regime. These actors can gain courage from seeing similar actors succeed in another country, managing to get a process of democratization underway and making a mark on events. Naturally, if these actors fail, this will instead lead to discouragement among actors in other countries. The benefit of positive demonstration effects is that they provide proof that change is possible (Uhlin 1995: 38). In this process, so called reference states are of especially great importance. By reference states is meant states that are perceived as especially close in some regard, be it as a result of geographical proximity or similarities in culture, history or perhaps a little of each (Bermeo 1992: 283). Sweden has a reputation for a long and strong tradition of adult and popular education filling a large role in society as well as in the lives of many citizens. This may then make Sweden a potential example that actors in other countries see as encouraging and thus connect to a process similar to demonstration effects.

Demonstration effects are closely related to a learning process, where influences from other cases, perceived to be somewhat similar, teach actors a lesson. It has also been argued that the kind of process involved in demonstration effects as well as in other forms of diffusion has grown in importance as global communication, transportation and new forms of media have expanded (Uhlin 1997: 17). So it seems that issues related to aspects investigated here may increase in importance as a result of processes of globalization, internationalization and transnationalization. Diffusion has also become increasingly important in discussions concerning democratic development (Di Palma 1990: 18) following the increased and more direct
exportation of democracy by existing democratic powers. This connects to the discussion of democracy promotion and democratic aid that was expanded upon in Chapter 2.2. In that context, the diffusion of ideas related to democracy can be seen as the result of a conscious effort from the transmitters' point of view. Actors who actively promote the adoption of some idea or item are sometimes called “agents of diffusion” (Karvonen 1981: 8, Uhlin 1995: 41).

The whole idea of democracy-promoting activities is just that – to promote democracy. This can then be done by various means such as providing material assistance to pro-democracy actors but also by the dissemination of ideas about democracy, what it is and how it can be achieved. It should be stated, though, that there is debate over what is actually spread in processes of this kind. Some claim that practical skills, tactics and concrete ideas are usually involved, whereas others see a potential for also disseminating more abstract conceptions of democracy, personal liberty, etc. (Uhlin 1995: 39, cf. Mörth 1996: 77).

As noted by McAdam and Rucht (1993: 58), diffusion has not previously been much considered in studies of social movements or civil society. Several researchers have, however, taken a broader approach to diffusion in recent years and made clearer its use for purposes such as the one discussed here (see for instance Campbell 2005, McAdam & Rucht 1993, Minkoff 1997, Uhlin 1995). The lack of studies with a focus on social movements and civil society organizations has thus been somewhat redressed over the last decade or so and in these studies an attempt has also been made to clarify the importance of the concept of diffusion in a broader range of fields (see for instance Benford & Snow 2000, Della Porta & Diani 2001, Strang & Soule 1998).

In studies of diffusion processes among social movements and organizations, there is a somewhat different perspective on what is being diffused in comparison with classical diffusion theory where, as noted above, the emphasis was on innovations and also technological advances. In the works of researchers who study social movements and organizations, the focus tends to lie more with the diffusion of ideas, strategies and tactics (McAdam & Rucht 1993: 59, Strang & Soule 1998: 268). This could also be seen to incorporate methods, organizational forms and various new ideas from actors elsewhere. The emphasis in this kind of studies also drifts more towards psychological aspects and political learning (Uhlin 1995: 34). Taken together, it indicates that this kind of perspective lies closer to the study undertaken here. In these studies there is a greater emphasis on the importance of activity among at least one of the actors – either the transmitter or the receiver (Benford & Snow 2000: 627). Traditional diffusion research has focused on the power and attractiveness of the item or idea itself and, thus, viewed inherent properties of the item or idea as crucial for whether or not it will spread. Actors can of course have an influence but
they are not decisive. However, recent developments in diffusion studies have, as the above discussion shows, altered the approach somewhat and brought more flexibility in how the diffusion process is perceived.

It should be noted that traditional diffusion research has not left much room for possible adjustments in the ideas or innovations being spread. In these studies, the possible responses to an innovation and a process of diffusion are limited to either adoption (where adopters make full use of the new idea) or rejection (when the idea is disregarded and, thus, not adopted). A third option is discontinuance, in which the innovation is adopted at first but later rejected (Rogers & Shoemaker 1971: 39). There is in other words no mention of the possibility of adopting certain elements of an idea or adjusting the ideas to better fit the new context. The necessity of a more flexible approach to the innovations studied as well as the possible adjustments of these by adopters has, however, been acknowledged in recent diffusion studies. This kind of adjustment is called “re-invention” (Rogers 2003: 17). However, it is acknowledged that this has been understudied in the field of diffusion research. This is also identified as one of the weaknesses of the field (Rogers 2003: 106f). The present study may also bring insight into this field even though I will not delve deeper into this since the emphasis of this study is on the translation perspective.

There are a number of factors that may influence the probability of diffusion occurring. These include the intensity of the interaction between source and recipient. The more the actors interact with each other, the greater the chance of successful diffusion since the higher the degree of interaction the more exposure and possibly also the greater trustworthiness (cf. Mintrom & Vergari 1998). But it may also concern factors like geographical, or spatial, proximity which means that successful diffusion is more likely to be accomplished between actors that are situated close to each other (Strang & Soule 1998: 268, Uhlin 1995: 48). Normally, diffusion also starts between neighbours and then, perhaps, the ideas continue to spread (Uhlin 1995: 49).

An important aspect of the possibility of successful diffusion is what is termed institutional equivalence (McAdam & Rucht 1993: 64, Uhlin 1995: 49, see also Strang & Meyer 1993). In essence this means that the prospects of diffusion taking place increase the more similar two organizations are. Thus, to take examples from this study, an adult education organization would tend to borrow ideas, strategies and organizational forms from other adult education organizations in other countries. I suspect that this can be seen the other way around as well: adult education organizations attempting to transfer ideas and other things will tend to turn to adult education organizations in the receiving country. Embedded in this is the idea that it is important for the adopter to be able to identify with the transmitter on some level and, I suppose, vice versa. This is called “subjective identification” (Uhlin 1995: 49). According to McAdam and Rucht we should not, however,
make too much out of this since this identification does not have to be very complex, to take their example: “In the case of social movements, it may involve only a shared identification with the role of activist. Activists in one movement may thereby borrow tactics from their ideological opponents in another” (McAdam & Rucht 1993: 63). Perhaps then sharing the adult education focus or social democratic values in the cases investigated here is not necessary? This question will have to await the empirical analysis.

Finally, it has been claimed that there are three essential factors that a researcher needs to be able to account for if the existence of a process of diffusion is to be believable: (1) the temporal setting should coincide with the expectations for a process of diffusion, meaning that it should be proved that the transmitter possessed the item of diffusion (an idea, method, tactic, etc.) before the receiver; (2) there should be common elements in the two organizations or their activities in the sense that the item of diffusion can be proved to exist with both the transmitter and the receiver; (3) empirical proof has to be advanced as to how the item or idea has been diffused between the organizations including relational and/or non-relational links between the organizations and, thus, how the two actors are linked (McAdam & Rucht 1993: 66).

5.2 Socialization

Socialization is a concept that has been extensively used in recent years, for instance in studies of international relations. It has been used to study the dissemination of norms and ideas as well as changes in attitudes, beliefs and behaviour.

In some socialization research, the view of political beliefs and basic attitudes has been that these hardly ever change. If they change at all, this happens over a very long period of time. Change in these attitudes and beliefs has been viewed as almost of an evolutionary kind. From this perspective, important actors (or socializing agents as they are sometimes called) influencing development are primarily family and schools since the perceived formative period is an individual’s childhood and adolescence (Bermeo 1992: 274, Parsons 1978, Rocher 1975: 111-119). So, socialization, as it is understood in some previous research, sees many of our basic beliefs as being more or less institutionalized in childhood and then undergoing very little change. This shows a quite fixed view of the way the basic beliefs and attitudes of individuals are shaped. Any kind of learning process takes time

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64 As discussed in Chapter Three, these values are strong in ABF with the connections between this organization and the Swedish Social Democratic Party, trade unions and the labour movement.
but changing deeply held beliefs or the kind of assumptions that may even be part of an individual’s identity is an exceptionally difficult process.

Depending on whether a researcher focuses on socialization as a process or as outcomes, the definition takes on somewhat different guises (Renshon 1977: 4f). The second variant has been frequently used and is also what comes closest to the rather rigid view mentioned above. The first type, focusing on socialization as a process, defines socialization more flexibly, arguing that the process is not completed after childhood but that it continues throughout an individual’s lifetime. It may still be difficult to change these beliefs, which is certainly true since we are talking about attitudinal change that will take considerable time. With this approach, socialization is connected to social learning and other more “learning-oriented” concepts. Here, socialization is seen as a learning process by which actors change beliefs and norms and it is also this meaning that is attributed to socialization in this study.66

One interesting definition of socialization, proposed in 1980 but used in several more recent studies (for instance Flockhart 2005a, Risse et al 1999), views socialization as the “induction of new members…into the ways of behavior that are preferred in a society” (Barnes quoted in Risse & Sikkink 1999: 11). It is possible to see this “society” not as a society in the sense of a state, nation-state or otherwise, but possibly as a larger international society.67 Generally, it can be claimed that socialization, in several definitions and within different disciplines dealing with this concept and these processes, is about gaining “membership in a society where the intersubjective understandings of the society become taken for granted” (Johnston 2001: 494). A definition that takes in several of these points has been advanced by Charon (1987: 50):

Socialization is the process by which the society, community, formal organization, or group teaches its members. The family and school socialize the child, the fraternity socializes its freshmen recruits, and society, in many direct and indirect ways, socializes its citizens. A socialized person is one who has been successfully made into a member of his or her group, formal organization, community, or society.

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65 Social learning, in the sense used here, is what happens or how the socializees respond to the process of socialization (Flockhart 2005b: 16).
66 This study borrows much of the view on socialization from what is claimed to be the “growing literature within international relations on socialization and social learning” (Flockhart 2004: 366).
67 For instance the study by Risse et al investigates how international human rights norms become internalized on a domestic level as well as how transnational non-state actors can affect domestic structures (Risse et al 1999). It should however be noted that “international society” here does not mean every state in the international system but rather a smaller group of states. This seems to suggest that the international system, and the members of it, is based on states agreeing on some form of basic norm-set (Risse & Sikkink 1999: 11, see also Bull 1977).
This definition connects processes of socialization to the development of identity and, more specifically, social identity.

Apart from the assumption about an existing society, Barnes’ definition presented above also assumes, as is acknowledged by Flockhart, that “the socializer either has, or believes itself to have, a greater knowledge or understanding of the norm set than those that are being socialized” (2005b: 15). This is an intriguing, although perhaps at a first glance rather self-evident, assumption. What should be stressed, I believe, are the words “or believes itself to have”. That agents who are active in socializing efforts, for example democracy-promoting agencies, often have greater resources at their disposal than the actors to which they are attempting to spread certain norms, values and knowledge is certainly true in most cases and they may very well possess greater knowledge regarding specifics in the schemes they are spreading. However, it is not evident whether or not they actually possess enough knowledge. Also, the question that comes up, not from this definition per se but when transnational socialization processes are to be studied empirically, is the importance of contextual knowledge on the part of the socializing agents and in this, the socializees normally hold much greater competence. So, it not only concerns how much knowledge the respective actors possess but also what kind of knowledge they possess that may influence the processes and outcomes.

Taking the existing discussions into consideration, socialization will here be viewed as a learning process through which individuals develop and conform to the behavioural patterns of a society and, thus, gain membership of that society. Socialization is thus essential for the development of social identity.

In the cases on which this study focuses, the “society” could be a society of adult or popular educators. However, the projects also relate to a question of disseminating democratic forms of education. As discussed in Chapter Three, democratic ideals and norms are important building blocks in the Swedish popular education tradition. Hence, an attempt to disseminate this can also be viewed as a part of efforts to socialize new members into a society based on a specific norm set, in this case a norm set based on a Western notion of democracy (and even more so, participatory democracy). In this way it can be argued that the activities studied here are parts of or examples of socialization processes in the sense implied by the definition above. The approach taken to socialization here is thus connected with the (wish for) inclusion in an existing society. This has also been linked with theories and ideas from social psychology. The focus is on the social group.

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68 Civic education and the importance of education as such and adult and popular education in particular (following the aims of this study) were further discussed in Chapter Three. There the possible contributions these activities can make to the socialization of citizens into a, in this case democratic, society were discussed, as well as the connections between education and citizen development.
A social group that is ranked high\textsuperscript{69} is believed to increase the self-esteem of members. The group of which others want to become members is here termed the “in-group” (Flockhart 2005c: 46f). In this line of thought, comparisons are important. Individuals compare themselves to others – this is how individuals define themselves, both concerning which group they belong to and those who do not belong in that group (Flockhart 2004: 364).

To some extent there is a similarity between socialization, at least in studies of norm socialization where a set of norms is what is supposed to spread, and diffusion in that the power of the idea or norm is seen to be important (cf. Flockhart 2005c). With the topic of this study in mind, it should also be noted that a strong civil society and an active citizenry are viewed as very important to the possibility of socializing a mass public into a democratic norm set (Flockhart 2005c: 54). This is because an “interested audience” is crucial if promoters of a norm set or idea are to be successful at the mass level. These promoters, sometimes called norm entrepreneurs (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998), in studies of norm socialization, are also crucial since an idea (or norm) does not disseminate by itself.

In previous research, scholars have identified different strategies for socialization, including (1) \textit{social influence} – in which social rewards and punishments are used by the socializing agent to make the socializee comply with the norm set that is being disseminated; and (2) \textit{persuasion} – “which encourages norm-consistent behaviour through a social process of interaction that involves changing attitudes without use of either material or mental coercion” (Flockhart 2005c: 48, see also Johnston 2001). Persuasion is described as a strategy that goes deeper than the use of social influence and the difference between the two in this regard is said to be that “the proclaimed aim of persuasion as opposed to social influence strategies is that it aims at changing beliefs and attitudes in the persuadee, rather than simply changing behavior.” (Flockhart 2005c: 49).\textsuperscript{70} Social influence and persuasion are, however, likely to be mixed in many instances and proclaiming which strategy is at work to the greatest extent may be difficult.

In previous research, a number of conditions have been argued to constitute elements conducive to successful socialization or learning processes through persuasion. For instance, the idea of some form of \textit{crisis} in the background finds its way into this list of conditions. If the socializees reside in an uncertain environment as a result of a crisis or of the novelty of an issue, they are believed to be more receptive to new information.\textsuperscript{71} The use of persuasion is also believed to be more efficient when the socializing

\textsuperscript{69} How “high” a group is “ranked” can here depend on how those wishing to become members view the group as well as on how successful it is and is perceived to be.

\textsuperscript{70} It should be noted that the concept of persuasion has been used in different ways, sometimes implying some form of coercive means as well (Johnston 2001: 493).

\textsuperscript{71} This is also referred to by some researchers as a critical juncture or a destabilizing ideational shock (Flockhart 2005c: 43).
agents deliberate with the socializee than when they “lecture or demand” (Checkel 2001: 562f).

It has also been suggested that conditions are more favourable if the socializing agent is part of, and deemed to be an authority within, a group to which the socializee wishes to belong (Johnston 2001: 497ff). Flockhart (2005c: 50) has also added that “successful outcome is much more likely in cases where there is a small ideational distance between in-group and out-group”. This is also related to what has been discussed previously in this chapter concerning institutional equivalence and subjective identification in the context of diffusion theory. These aspects all, to a certain extent and perhaps in somewhat different ways, express the need for similarities between the actors and that it should be possible for them to find common ground. This is also similar to the discussion above concerning “in-groups” and the wish to become included in a society (or in a specific social group). All the above-mentioned conditions have been claimed to be nothing more than indicators of a more general precondition summarized as meaning, “that the persuadee believes the persuader to be knowledgeable about an issue and that his or her intentions are trustworthy” (Johnston 2001: 498).

5.3 Translation

Many difficulties can arise when actors are attempting to disseminate ideas, methods and so on from a context in which they have worked well to a context with very different preconditions. The concept of translation has in recent years been used in studying these issues. In this field one issue can of course concern linguistically translating a concept, or rather the meaning of a concept, into another language, since many words and concepts evoke different connotations in different contexts. One example of this is democracy, which can mean very different things to different people. Another example of great relevance to this study is of course the Swedish concept of folkbildning. The difficulties in translating this concept into English have also been mentioned in Chapter Three. This also creates problems when trying to explain the ideals incorporated in this concept and how it differs from formal education as well as adult education in general. Translation is, however, also a concept that has been used in several studies of processes of dissemination, especially in studies focused on organizational change (Czarniawska & Sevón 1996a).

The concept of translation is well-known with regard to translation between languages but it has not been on the map concerning the dissemination of ideas for more than a few decades. Translation has also recently been used in studies of Europeanization (see for instance Jacobsson et al 2004, Mörh 2003), which can be seen as part of the larger context in
which the projects between ABF and AHL reside. I will also come back to
issues of Europeanization and Westernization in Chapter Six.

As stated in the introduction (Chapter One), translation will be the
primary concept used in this study. Diffusion was introduced first in this
chapter since the translation perspective to some extent was developed as a
reaction against previous diffusion research. These two concepts are claimed
to differ from each other even in very fundamental assumptions. Researchers
choosing to work with the concept of translation disregard the diffusion
perspective partly because they claim that it focuses too strongly on a
physical process, and is not suited for the study of societal phenomena and
also that this perspective misses important aspects of a process of
dissemination (Czarniawska & Sevón 1996b, 2005b, Jacobsson et al 2004:

Bruno Latour was one of the researchers who raised this criticism and
advocated the use of translation in its place. To Latour, the often quite
technological and physical language used in diffusion led social scientists to
use a concept in which important underlying assumptions rested on
metaphors from the natural sciences that may not be best equipped to deal
arguments concern that in diffusion the object or item itself is believed to
possess a level of energy that allows it to spread. It is this initial force of the
item that decides whether or not it will travel whereas subsequent actions of
various actors are of less importance (Latour 1986: 266). It should be
acknowledged that the criticism by Latour does not take into account the
great variety of approaches existing in diffusion research, which means that
to some extent he misses the target. Here the more recent developments in
diffusion research mentioned in Chapter 5.1 should be remembered. Thus,
some of the criticism may be exaggerated, which has also been noted in
previous research using the concept of translation (Johnson 2003: 23). This
does not, however, mean that there are not important differences between the
concepts nor that the criticism is completely misguided.

Connected to the importance attributed to actors is that in much diffusion
research actors are seen to react to the item whereas the concept of
translation attributes to the potential adopters a much more active and free
role in also modifying the items or ideas being spread (Latour 1986: 266f, cf.
2003: 252). In the translation perspective the “receivers” are the actors who
make it possible for an idea or item to be incorporated into a new context.
Without this it does not matter how much a “transmitter” attempts to spread
something. I will also return to this shortly.

One of the main differences between diffusion and translation thus
concerns the fundamental view of how something is spread. In diffusion, the
dissemination is seen as taking place through an inherent energy in the item
or idea and in translation through the adjustment or translation made by
various actors. In diffusion research it is the power of the idea itself that allows it to spread whereas translation views this as dependent not on “inherent properties of ideas, but in the success of their presentation” (Czarniawska & Joerges 1996: 25).

In a process of translation the item, idea, practice, organizational form or whatever is being disseminated is seen to be changed all through the process. That the idea is altered to some extent is seen as the “normal” outcome of this process since it is adjusted by the handling of various agents working with the translation of the ideas as well as by various contextual aspects when the idea is to be implemented by a new organization, by new actors and in a new context (Czarniawska & Joerges 1996). So, it is one of the fundamental assumptions underlying the very notion of translation that the idea is changed through the process of dissemination. In traditional diffusion studies the item is perceived as being more constant and static and, thus, more of a pure copying process is implied. To some extent it is viewed as a more “mechanical transfer of information from one place to another” (Campbell 2005: 55, cf. Røvik 1998: 150).

More recent developments in diffusion research towards studying civil society organizations and social movements as well as addressing issues of adjustments in what is being spread, mentioned above, challenge the criticism presented here. However, the underlying assumptions of diffusion that have already been discussed beg the question of how much it is possible to alter the direction of this research tradition without ending up in a case of “conceptual stretching”. In essence conceptual stretching refers to a situation when a concept is made so wide, in order to cover more and more, that it eventually loses a precise meaning. Thus, by attempting to say something about more phenomena, we say less about each and say it less precisely (Sartori 1970). Possible adjustment processes have also received less attention in diffusion research and the focus can still be claimed to rest with what is being spread and how. Since this study is concerned primarily with the concept of translation, however, I will not dwell longer on this here but will return to the discussion of translation.

The adjustments performed by receiving actors are sometimes referred to as an editing process (Sahlin-Andersson 1996). This should, however, not be understood as a completely free process. On the contrary, the editing process is bound by various “editing rules”. These concern for instance the way the ideas and models are formulated. It is possible to describe the same thing in various ways, making them more or less appealing. This can be a problematic issue in the cooperation between ABF and AHL following the problem of linguistically translating folkbildning that has been discussed earlier. Editing rules also apply concerning the provision of a logic. In the cases here this could concern clarifying the relation between Swedish popular education and the development of democracy. One more editing rule that may influence the process is the local context. Previous traditions,
The translation perspective emphasizes how important the local context is to the potential for successful dissemination (Johnson 2003: 27). Contextual conditions should be seen as crucial for a process of dissemination since these conditions and the actual situation may limit possibilities and they also provide a cultural context that may be essential for understanding why something is disseminated or not. Translation can be seen as a process of reconciling new ideas with traditions already in existence in a specific context.

In this study I will use the definition of translation proposed by Campbell (2005: 55). He views translation as “the process by which practices that travel from one site to another are modified and implemented by adopters in different ways so that they will blend into and fit the local social and institutional context” (author’s italics). However, I believe that apart from practices, ideas can be a central part of a process of translation. Hence, my understanding is that translation is a process by which practices and/or ideas travel and are modified.

This definition should also make differences from diffusion obvious. Classical diffusion studies focus on what items and ideas travel from point A to point B and how this takes place. This tradition is interested in pinpointing conditions and mechanisms that influence this process. Translation studies focus on what happens after what is being disseminated has reached point B. Thus, the main interest in translation studies is what happens once an idea has reached a new context (Campbell 2005: 53f). It is, however, necessary to have an understanding of what has travelled and what there has been an attempt to disseminate when studying a process of translation. If this is not known, one cannot say anything about how these ideas and practices have subsequently been edited. Hence, to reach an understanding of a translation process it is not possible to focus solely on the process of adjustment or modification mentioned in Campbell’s definition above. It is also necessary to investigate the ideas and practices that are travelling. This should not be viewed as contradicting the discussions of translation advanced above but as a consequence of this and also of the definition presented. This is also a contributory reason for discussing diffusion to some extent in this study. Even though this tradition starts from quite different assumptions than research using the concept of translation, the findings from diffusion studies should not be disregarded by default. It is beneficial to be aware of the aspects believed to be important in diffusion when investigating the travel of ideas and practices from point A to point B.

In the translation perspective there is a focus on both how actors involved are affected by and possibly adjust to new ideas but also on how this process affects the ideas that travel (Czarniawska & Joerges 1996: 24, Czarniawska & Sevón 2005b: 10). The tradition of socialization research described in
Chapter 5.2 focuses more exclusively on how the process affects the actors and can through this bring input to that part of translation studies. Studies of socialization and social learning often focus on changes in beliefs of individuals at a cognitive level (cf. Flockhart 2004: 366). However, studying this level is not the prime or exclusive concern here. Hence, just as is the case with diffusion, there may be valuable knowledge to be taken into account but it is still the concept of translation that will guide this study. This is also why this study attempts a form of synthesis of the different approaches to a process of dissemination.

In this study, the interest lies not only in what happens in the stage of the process where the editing and adjustment takes place. Thus, the interest here is both in what travels from point A to point B and in what happens after something has reached point B. The empirical investigations performed in this study will provide material for a discussion of both parts of this process. This study thus attempts to provide a more detailed and in-depth empirical description and analysis of the whole process than has often been the case in previous studies.

Previous studies of translation have discussed the fact that there are different phases in this kind of process (Czarniawska & Joerges 1996, Johnson & Hagström 2005). Here, based on this previous work, three phases are identified and will subsequently be used in the analysis. First of all the ideas and methods that are to be disseminated and subsequently translated have to be disembedded from the context in which they exist and objectified in order to be able to travel. This is because “models that are “packaged” so they can “be transported” are more easily imitated” (Sahlin-Andersson & Sevón 2003: 260). Through this part of the process the ideas become more object-like or, as Czarniawska and Joerges (1996: 32) call it: “quasi-objects”. This is frequently accomplished by labelling ideas, trying to create a fashionable concept, object and idea as well as promoting positive connotations. Thus, by this disembedding, the ideas and practices are packaged into more concrete models that are less embedded in a specific local context. Through this process the ideas and practices about to travel become more distant from their original time-and-space context (Sahlin-Andersson & Sevón 2003: 262). After this objectification, the models that are constructed in order to disseminate the ideas in question are translated into the new context by actors on the receiving side.

However, the travelling itself of the ideas and models is not addressed to any greater extent by, for instance, Johnson & Hagström (2005), but I would claim that this can be seen as part of the first phase since the disembedding and packaging is a way of making the ideas available to potential recipients. That this is not explicitly dealt with points to the fact that previous studies of translation have not paid any great attention to the part of the process when the ideas travel, even though recent studies have also taken up this challenge (see for instance Czarniawska & Sevón 2005a). This study will, as noted
above, add to the knowledge of this part of the process and this will also be discussed further in Chapter 5.4.

The phase where the actual translation is in focus, which in this study will be called editing, is where actors on the receiving side translate the ideas that have been “packaged and sent” in the previous phase to fit into the new context. This may enable the ideas and practices to become reembedded in their new time-and-space context (Sahlin-Andersson & Sevón 2003: 262). In this, the different editing rules mentioned above should be remembered.

The final phase that has been discussed as part of the translation process has been called the institutionalization phase (Czarniawska & Joerges 1996, Johnson & Hagström 2005: 372). This is where the ideas that have been disseminated become “normal” or perhaps the norm in the new context. I will also come back to how it is possible to think about this process in terms of phases and how this can be used in the analysis of this thesis in Chapter 5.4 below. I will therefore leave these phases for now and continue the discussion of essential elements in a process of translation.

Imitation is a frequently used concept among scholars working with the translation perspective. It is seen as “a process in which something is created and transformed by chains of translators… It is a way of learning from others’ experience of having done and achieved something” (Sevón 1996: 51f). This view makes it clear that imitation here is different from simple copying or adoption (cf. Damm Scheuer 2006: 21). Thus, it differs from the traditional view of imitation in diffusion research where the innovative idea or item is seen as a given and imitation is then a process that facilitates the dissemination of this innovation (Sahlin-Andersson & Sevón 2003: 251ff).

In the view on imitation used in translation studies, receivers or those who are about to take in the idea are assigned a very active role. However, the focus on receiving actors should not be taken to mean that actors trying to promote the acceptance and implementation of ideas in a new context are not important. It more concerns the fact that ideas do not in themselves possess a strong enough intrinsic energy to impose themselves on new organizations. Actors enforcing them are necessary (cf. Sevón 1996: 51). What it does state is that the existence of actors trying to disseminate certain ideas and models is not enough even though they must be seen as important in providing access to and disseminating knowledge and experience of the ideas being spread. In the cases in this study, this would be the role of the Swedish organizations and in the more general context of democracy promotion, this is the part that donor agencies and other agents in this field can play. However, in order for implementation to occur, it is vital that there are actors on the “receiving” end of the cooperation who are willing and able to translate the ideas into the new context. It is even stated that “translation ought to be seen as an activity primarily taking place at the receiving end” (Johnson & Hagström 2005: 371). The focus on the receiving actors also
follows quite naturally from the importance ascribed to the local context and its conditions.

The process of change within the receiving organization may mostly be an internal process but I believe that it is often continuous – in the cases this study focuses on a process taking part alongside continued cooperation with the promoting agent, i.e. the Swedish organizations. Translation is also a process that is not regarded as having a clear end (Sahlin-Andersson & Sevón 2003: 254, cf. Johnson & Hagström 2005: 372). Actors continuously rearrange, refit and redistribute knowledge, ideas and organizational forms to suit the current situation and context.

What is rarely discussed to any greater extent in translation studies is how this process may influence the “transmitting” agent. Translation assumes that the receiving actors, here the Estonian organizations, are likely to change through this process but I argue that the Swedish organizations may also face a process of change as a result of the translation process and the transnational projects they are and have been involved in. This does not seem to be completely forgotten in translation studies either, even if it is not always explicitly discussed since most previous studies have focused more on what happens solely in the new context where the ideas are to be implemented and less on what happens in the context from which the ideas came. But, a process of translation is seen as also being able to provide a learning opportunity for those being imitated since this process reinterprets the ideas and experiences of this context or organization (cf. Sahlin-Andersson 1996: 82). This relates to how reciprocal the process is and this can depend on a number of aspects such as how open-minded the transmitting organization is with regard to change in the idea being spread, and how aware they are of the editing process, which can depend on, for instance, whether the cooperation continues during the process of translation.

In general it can be said that it is not possible to disregard the actor-dependency for translation. Without actors/individuals willing to take on the tasks of spreading as well as adjusting and implementing, nothing will spread or take hold in a new context (cf. Forsell & Jansson 2000: 109, Johnson 2003: 26).

It is clear that there are differences but also similarities between translation and other concepts used in the study of processes of dissemination. Some of the elements and aspects emphasized as important for a successful process of dissemination in literature using concepts other than translation are also perceived as conducive in this tradition. For instance, subjective identification, i.e. the ability of the different actors to identify with each other, is something that has previously been presented as conducive to a successful process of diffusion. Identity is also seen as a crucial element for a process of translation (Sahlin-Andersson & Sevón 2003: 249). In the review of socialization above, the wish to be included in an existing “society” was stressed. Part of what has been said here
concerning translation expresses the same ideas. Reasons for why a translation process is initiated can partly be found in a wish to become similar to other actors or reach the same kind of results, i.e. become more successful. Signalling adherence to similar values and ideas to those of a successful organization (and in the cases in this study also a potential financer) is also a way of achieving legitimacy, which is believed to be important for organizations of today (Røvik 1998: 46, cf. Parsons 1956). Incorporating new ideas and practices believed to be important in the field to which an organization belongs or wishes to belong can increase this legitimacy. This is the case for new organizations as well as ones already established (cf. Meyer & Rowan 1977: 340). However, even though a wish to become similar may be a reason for starting this kind of process, the outcome of the translation may be something different (Czarniawska & Sevón 2005b: 8, Latour 1986: 267, Sahlin-Andersson & Sevón 2003: 256ff, cf. Callon 1980: 211).

Related to these issues of identification is a comparison made by the actors between themselves and the other actor(s). Without making comparisons it is hardly possible to evaluate whether or not you are similar or wish to be similar to anyone else. Thus, comparisons are essential to the construction of identity (Røvik 1998: 131). In the translation perspective this is seen as important and it is also similar to the notions advanced above in the discussion of socialization. Organizations tend to compare themselves to other organizations in the same field with whom they can identify and that are perceived as more successful or in a more favourable position (Czarniawska & Sevón 1996b: 9, Sahlin-Andersson 1996: 70f, 78).

When a change process is initiated this is problem-based from the local actors’ point of view. That a problem is defined also comes from comparisons made with other actors, organizations and situations. The gap between the organizations is then what opens up the possibility of a process of translation. This can be seen as looking for “role models” and attempting to decrease the perceived difference between one’s own organization and the role model (Sahlin-Andersson & Sevón 2003: 255, cf. Røvik 1998: 48, 135ff). This also connects it to imitation that was discussed above. Imitation is, in essence, about learning from others’ experiences and imitating them (selectively as that may be) to reach the same kind of success (cf. Sevón 1996: 52f). To some extent it seems that the identification mentioned demands the existence of a certain amount of similarity already between the organizations, which then resembles the notion of institutional equivalence discussed above in connection with diffusion theory. In this context the idea of “institutional isomorphism” should also be noted. DiMaggio & Powell (1983) use this to help explain the (increasing) homogeneity among organizations in a specific field. In brief it discusses that organizations that are in contact with each other and working within the same field of activities tend to become increasingly similar.
Previous translation studies also emphasize that when actors are in an uncertain situation and/or their identities and previous frames of reference are challenged, the likelihood of translation increases (Sahlin-Andersson 1996: 76). From this perspective, the challenge to the “taken-for-granted social reality” seems to be an element conducive to a translation process (cf. Czarniawska & Joerges 1996: 29). This can concern various phenomena and degrees of challenge such as major societal and/or political transformations, basic alterations in the conditions of the activities, etc. (cf. Røvik 1998: 118f). These challenges then demand new solutions. This kind of argument is quite similar to the conducive element of a crisis in the background to a socialization process that was discussed above in Chapter 5.2.

That adult education associations in Estonia tend to look at Sweden and other Nordic countries is from this perspective logical since organizations in this field and in these countries hold a strong image of being successful. The recent Estonian experience of a transition from an authoritarian to a democratic system of government as well as from a planned to a market economy would also seem to constitute enough of a crisis to challenge existing identities and make actors search for new frames and role models.

5.4 Studying Processes of Dissemination

As should be evident, many of the discussions of diffusion, socialization and translation proceed along similar lines. The same conditions are seen to be conducive to successful outcomes and the types of processes described are not wholly dissimilar. However, the focus also shifts between the different strands of theory and therefore it may be wise to elaborate on the perspective that is taken in this study.

As has been discussed previously, translation is the concept primarily used in analyzing the empirical material. From the research questions posed in Chapter 1.2 it should be evident that the focus of translation studies on what happens after an idea has arrived in a new context and how local actors adjust, edit or translate this idea is of great relevance to this study.

As has been noted in Chapter 5.3, translation studies focus much on the receiving actors. However, this study is interested in both sides of the cooperation and in the cases under scrutiny here, the Swedish organizations have also been active promoters of the ideas. Thus, their reasons for getting involved, their perceptions and their points of view cannot be neglected. This does not seem to have been entirely forgotten in research, since what is spread as well as how has been addressed in recent studies of translation (see for instance Czarniawska & Sevón 2005a). Indeed, the adjustments made by the recipients could hardly be studied without taking some account of this. In this context there are lessons to be learned from and concepts invented in, for instance, diffusion theory that may assist this study in understanding
these processes, although diffusion studies deal less extensively with questions of what happens after an idea has reached a new context than does the translation perspective nor is the diffusion tradition designed for the study of organizations. Hence, translation still seems a beneficial perspective to focus on. Classical diffusion research concentrates on the item or idea being spread and sees the strength and attractiveness of the idea itself as a sufficient determinant for dissemination whereas translation sees this as being in the hands of receiving actors. Diffusion theory views the potential outcome of the process more as an act of copying and, thus, receivers are to adopt the ideas, rather than adjust them as envisaged from the translation perspective. Socialization, finally, as used above, also implies a more flexible process than diffusion. Here it may involve adjustment or, as it is sometimes termed, adaptation (cf. Börzel & Risse 2003). This refers to an adaptation to the norms and values central to the group or society to which the actors wish to belong and, thus, this reaction is a way for the actors to come closer to this group.

Socialization theory may assist this study by increasing knowledge of how these processes affect actors. This strand of theory can also improve the analytical toolbox with the strategies that have been identified. Socialization literature discusses the importance of deliberation and defines persuasion and social influence as two possible strategies. In this lies an acknowledgement that the relation between socializing agents and socializees is an asymmetrical one (cf. Flockhart 2004: 366). I argue that this partly depends on how open-minded the transmitters are or how much of a “big-brother” mentality is present. This is particularly relevant in the context of the projects under study here and democracy promotion, aid agencies, etc. However, just like diffusion theory, the socialization perspective is less concerned with an organizational level, more with a cognitive level and individuals. Translation is therefore still the most appropriate choice for this study, although reference to the other two perspectives may assist the analysis and improve the understanding of the processes and projects.

Reasons for using translation as the concept of choice are briefly, as mentioned previously, (a) it implies a flexible view of the idea or practice being disseminated meaning that there is no problem with possible alterations in the idea or practice as a result of it being spread – indeed, this is seen as a natural part of the process and the one that is truly interesting; (b) it is a concept that is actor-oriented, i.e. actors are central if something is to be successfully disseminated (both actors willing to spread the ideas and

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72 However, it should be remembered that recent diffusion studies as well as, for instance, social movement scholars have attempted to modify the concept of diffusion and have used it more flexibly as discussed in Chapter 5.1.

73 Since, for instance, diffusion and translation start from quite different assumptions and use different logics to understand and explain the processes, however, it may not be wise to mix them too casually.
actors willing to take, adopt, and fit them into the new context and implement them are important); (c) translation has developed an organizational focus and organizations are also central to this study; (d) translation is more focused than, for instance, diffusion on what happens after an idea has “arrived” at a new destination (for instance an organization). This “black box” (Campbell 2005: 55) is also what this study attempts to open regarding the projects under scrutiny.

In studying processes of dissemination what is essential is that they consist of a process of communication followed by a learning process. Without communication no knowledge of the object, idea or whatever the item may be would reach the potential recipient. Without learning, the process of communication would yield no result. Even if the items are rejected, a learning process can still have taken place. A rejection may involve a conscious weighing where actors reach a conclusion that the items are not appropriate for them or their context.

For a process of translation to be possible, potential translators, which in the cooperation between ABF and AHL means primarily the people active in various AHL organizations, have to have access to the norms, ideals, ideas and models that are to be translated and implemented. Providing this access is, in the cases here, the role of the Swedish organizations that in diffusion terms would be called the “agents of diffusion” and in socialization literature, the “socializers” or “socializing agents”. However, if there is to be a translation process, the “receivers” have to take in these new elements and edit them in a way that fits the specific context. In order to edit them, I argue that they need also to learn about these new ideas and gain an understanding of them, i.e. to go through a learning process.

In the context of transnational cooperation between civil society organizations in projects that are also parts of the field of democracy promotion, one difference between diffusion and translation can be described as a difference between teaching and learning. By this I mean that classical diffusion research views the process as a kind of export of certain ideas and models that are to be adopted in the new context. Thus, the receiving actors have to be taught for this to happen. The translation perspective, on the other hand, sees this as a much more dynamic process where the main bulk of the work is to be done by the receiving actors. These are the actors who are to shape the ideas and models presented to them in a way that is appropriate for, in the cases in this study, the Estonian context. What approach is taken to this among the actors involved may probably also differ between projects and individuals, which is also something that will be looked at more closely in the analysis.

So far in this chapter three different concepts have been studied and Figure 5.4 below offers a summary of conceptual definitions as well as some of the more prominent aspects stressed by the various perspectives.
The three concepts investigated here are, as has been hinted at previously, in some ways related even though there are some fundamental differences – some of them have also been discussed previously, such as the different assumptions on which diffusion and translation are based.

Certain differences can be found among epistemological and ontological assumptions. Diffusion is based on a rationalistic approach and “dominated by a realist-objectivist ontology” (Johnson & Hagström 2005: 369) whereas translation is labelled a constructivist or social constructivist perspective (Damm Scheuer 2006). Socialization also falls within the “constructivist family”. It is claimed to be one of the central concepts in social

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74 The text within brackets has been added by this author and, thus, modifies the definition by Campbell.
constructivist literature on “identity construction processes” (Flockhart 2005b: 12).

As noted already, translation leads one to expect and focus on activity on the part of actors. Partly since the projects investigated in this study concern active promotion by some actors and the dynamics between Swedish and Estonian actors, a more dynamic perspective than that of traditional diffusion research is needed. Translation assumes a “freer” view of the potential adopters or translators than diffusion. The translators are of course also constrained by, for instance, local circumstances (various constraints have been discussed previously as “editing rules”) but still have a very active role in the process. They also seem to be expected to be rather independent from the source(s) providing the inspiration. What should not be forgotten here, however, is that translation studies also emphasize that the existence of actors willing to spread information and make it available is of importance if any process of translation is to get underway.

Another major difference between diffusion and translation is the importance ascribed to the social context of the actors. As noted previously, the context into which an idea is to be translated is seen as a crucial aspect influencing the process. This aspect is not stressed to the same extent in the diffusion perspective advanced by Rogers as described above (cf. Johnson & Hagström 2005: 370). Contextual knowledge is an important aspect that will be discussed in the analysis since it may affect the possibility of fruitful communication. When contextual knowledge is lacking this may hamper the dialogue that should be seen as essential to a process of translation.

Some ideas from traditions other than that of translation research that may be useful in the analysis have already been noted. However, a few more should be pointed out. From socialization literature the notion of acquiring membership of an existing “society” is interesting. In the cases here this may mean becoming a part of a greater community of adult educators but history and the recent transition of Estonia from an authoritarian rule to democracy and market economy leaves other aspects open. Even though the empirical study focuses on organizations in the field of adult education, this may be part of a larger process and a wish to become part of Europe and, not least, the EU. Reaching out to Northern Europe and Sweden is not illogical since there is a history of Swedish-Estonian relations and there is no reason to believe that this legacy and wish would be different in the world of adult educators. On the contrary, with Sweden holding a strong position in this field, cooperation would be even more desirable. Another aspect of this that is seen as potent by researchers working in either of the fields discussed above is that the actors should be able to find common ground, thus being able to identify with the partner organization, and that the organizations should not be too dissimilar. This is also something that will be studied in the analysis.
Finally, we should remember the demands found in diffusion literature that research should meet to prove that this kind of process has indeed taken place. This may concern diffusion, which is not the central concept in this study, but still serves as a useful structure or tool to show that something has been spread. Then translation is used to go beyond this and also study the processes taking place within and after dissemination. These demands include that (1) it should be proven that the transmitter possessed the item or idea before the receiver; (2) there should be common elements in the two organizations or their activities, proving that the item of diffusion exists with both the transmitter and the receiver; (3) empirical proof has to be advanced as to how the item of diffusion has been diffused between the organizations.

With translation having been made the concept of choice, it is appropriate to use this final section of the chapter to discuss how this process is understood to proceed. As discussed in Chapter 5.3, previous research has identified different phases in a translation process that, however, are difficult to distinguish clearly from one another (Johnson & Hagström 2005: 372). It is to be expected that the phases may to some extent take place simultaneously and that the process may involve alternating between them. The ways in which previous studies have attempted to demonstrate different phases in a translation process will be kept in mind in the empirical analysis. This analysis will be structured according to different phases that I consider parts of a translation process. Within these, the projects in focus will be studied with the aid of the ideas and tools discussed in this chapter. These phases will therefore be used to structure the empirical material and the analysis even though there are also aspects to be discussed that precede the first of the phases. This will be elaborated on below. This division into phases is an important part of the analytical framework and can, as well as providing a structure for the empirical analysis, provide a frame for theoretical discussions of translation processes. This can also be a way of studying both transnational civil society cooperation and democracy-promoting efforts.

What are these phases then, and how do they relate to the analysis of this study? I will come to this shortly and the phases will subsequently be connected to the empirical analysis in Chapters Eight to Ten. First, however, there are two chapters that will help set the stage for the analysis of the phases.

Chapter Six will give a brief outline of the transformation that Estonia has been going through in recent times. As noted previously in this chapter, some form of crisis or challenge to existing identities and the “taken-for-granted social reality” is regarded as conducive to the dissemination of ideas and practices between different contexts. In the cases investigated here, this kind of challenge consists of the transformation of Estonian society following the breakdown of the Soviet Union, the regaining of independence and the transitions from authoritarian to democratic rule as well as from
centrally planned to market economy. It also concerns the various effects this major societal transformation has had on other sections of Estonian society. In the context studied here, this transformation and the legacy of several decades under communist rule is part of the process of defining the problem, to which I will come back below. It is not possible, in this study, to say whether or not a crisis or similar kind of challenge is conducive to a process of translation since we have no cases where a crisis has been absent. In theory the proposition makes sense and this aspect will here be included as an important contextual condition. This legacy and the challenges and/or opportunities it provides will thus be discussed in Chapter Six where a brief account of the history of Swedish–Estonian relations also will be given. This is done for the same reason – it is an important contextual aspect. A history of close relations may make it more likely that actors will look in the same direction again since an affiliation is perceived to exist already.

Chapter Seven will study how the cooperation between ABF and AHL started. This chapter will thus be called Making Contact, and will include consideration of a number of the notions already presented in this chapter. During this initial stage of the cooperation (and possibly even before it) a problem is or has been defined that demands a solution that is difficult to find in the domestic context. As discussed in Chapter 5.3, the fact that a problem is defined may partly arise from a previous crisis but may also have its origin in comparisons made with other actors, contexts and situations. These comparisons may reveal a deficit, which is then construed as a problem. When a deficit is acknowledged, for instance when comparing the democratic system of government and/or popular education in Estonia and Sweden, Swedish actors may be of interest as role models and contact with them may be a way of trying to narrow this gap by learning from previous experiences. Comparisons are made continuously in the translation process, which is also why it is difficult to place this in a specific phase. The focus of Chapter Seven will, however, be on identifying some of the problems that actors have defined and that led up to the initiation of the cooperation between ABF and AHL. The chapter will also discuss the start-up of the project activities, how contact was made and what took place during this initial stage. Finally, it will introduce the activities at the NFA.

Now, let us return to the phases in a process of translation, the first of which will be analyzed in Chapter Eight. To recapitulate, previous research has discussed the fact that the first phase involves disembedding the ideas that are to be spread from the local context in which they already are in practice. This is to be done through “packaging” them as more concrete models, as mentioned above in Chapter 5.3. An example of how ideas can be labelled and objectified as an aid for helping them travel could here be the study circle. This has, as noted in Chapter Three, been seen as the trademark method of Swedish popular education. The study circle as a concept has become widely familiar, even outside Sweden and the Nordic countries
In Chapter Three, a number of potential travelling ideas were also identified (see Chapter 3.4). The study circle has partly developed as a way of embodying these in a more concrete model. This connects to the contents of the first phase of a translation process. ABF also has a long tradition of transnational cooperation and international activities, which means that this packaging has already been part of the work for many years. Some of this part of the process was most likely started back in the early 20th century when popular education (including the study circle) was disseminated over all of Sweden. New contexts will, however, pose new challenges. As described by Czarniawska and Joerges (1996: 41):

Sooner or later, a river valley project has to encounter the concrete river, the specific valley, the given groups of people and interests, the available machines and resources. Inevitably, it will turn into something different than expected and planned.

This emphasizes that disembedding ideas is also affected by the context into which they are to travel. Even though, for instance, the study circle may have become quite a concrete model, incorporating many of the ideas and ideals of Swedish popular education, new challenges will arise when these notions, ideas and models come in contact with the Estonian context and Estonian actors.

This phase is where the ideas and practices to be disseminated come in contact with the context into which they may be “imported”. Here the contacts between the actors are developed. The ABF/AHL projects have taken off, i.e. the first contacts have been made and a working relationship is being established. In this phase, the potential recipients or translators are being exposed to the items or ideas that are supposed to be disseminated. Naturally, in the cases here, the Swedish actors are also being exposed to information in this phase concerning the Estonian context, what the partner organization desires, etc. Thus, this phase concerns the ideas and practices that are relevant to the process of dissemination and their **travelling**, which is also what I will call this phase. What it is attempted to spread and how these activities are perceived by the potential recipients are issues that will be dealt with. This concerns both the more material side of the projects but also the ideas and practices that the Swedish actors have attempted to convey to their Estonian partners. Thus, I will here come back to the ideas identified in Chapter 3.4 as potential travelling ideas. This part of the analysis is also directly connected to the first research question posed in Chapter 1.2: **What ideas and practices have travelled between the contexts?**

What will be discussed in Chapter Eight is, to some extent, a deepening of this part of the analysis of a translation process. I believe this is a rewarding expansion of the phase model of translation since before it is possible to look at how the receiving actors have altered the ideas and
practices it is necessary to have an understanding of what information they have been exposed to. This may then actually resemble the view taken in the diffusion perspective that was discussed in Chapter 5.1. However, this does not only concern the information being spread but also the way this is perceived by the receiving actors. Thus, this part of the analysis, too, has a strong focus on the actors involved. In Chapter Eight I will enlarge on this, and on the relationships that develop as the cooperation grows deeper. What is initially perceived by the Estonian partners as the benefits and what problematic issues may arise at this stage of the cooperation will also be discussed.

The second phase of a translation process identified in previous research concerns the editing of ideas, practices and models. This is where the receiving actors are working with the models and attempting to reconcile them with existing conditions and traditions. Thus, I am interested in the ideas and practices that travel but also in how this has influenced what has travelled as well as the actors involved. So, change is one of the things being looked for. This phase will be called editing and this is when the receiving actors reflect over the information gathered in the previous phase, develop strategies for implementing the lessons in their own context and, subsequently, attempt to do so.

In a way, this phase may also potentially involve problem definition since if there were no problems with the original idea there would be no need to actively translate it. However, even if such a situation arose there would still be some degree of editing since actors interpret ideas in different ways, which would mean that in cooperation between actors from different contexts the result would still differ to some extent from the original. This is also an underlying assumption in the translation perspective. This phase may also partly overlap with the third phase – institutionalization. The continuation of this last phase is also further dealt with in Chapter Ten, which discusses what has happened after the projects have been terminated.

Chapter Nine will be devoted to issues related to the phase of editing. Here I will investigate the later stages of ABF/AHL cooperation projects. Issues here concern whether a need to alter the Swedish ideas and methods to fit the Estonian context was identified, and thus concern some of the most central aspects of the concept of translation. Thus, this chapter is obviously connected to answering the second research question presented in Chapter 1.2: *How have the ideas and practices been translated to fit the new context?*

This phase also concerns issues relating to identification between actors, which have been discussed previously in this chapter as an important aspect of a translation process. The possibility of identifying with the partner organization is important in this editing process since it can affect the understanding of the ideas as well as the understanding of the need to alter them and the reasons for this editing. Since this part of the study discusses the most intensive stage of cooperation between ABF and AHL it is here that
these issues are noticed. It is when actors have closer contacts with each other that differences and similarities become obvious. Thus, organizational differences and similarities constitute an important part of this chapter. Possible conflicts that a process of change may cause between partner organizations will also be discussed. In this context the strategies previously discussed, such as persuasion or social influence, may also be of interest.

Finally, Chapter Ten will turn to what has happened after the project activities involving ABF and AHL ended. What is taking place here may then be part of the institutionalization phase where the new ideas and practices are becoming part of everyday routines and taking root in the organizations as such and gaining a general level of acceptance. Whether or not this has taken, and is taking, place in Estonia regarding the ideas and methods that the contacts between ABF and AHL have been designed to spread is the focus of this chapter. Potential benefits from the development of the ideas taking place in Estonia for the Swedish organizations, i.e. what possible reciprocity there has been concerning what has been disseminated, will also be discussed here. This concerns possible outcomes of the cooperation that has become part of the everyday activities of ABF organizations. This therefore relates to the phase discussed in this chapter. This can of course involve some editing on the Swedish side but it primarily concerns how the lessons drawn from the cooperation with AHL have been institutionalized in Sweden. There is also an interest in what is happening in the Estonian organizations after the projects. As noted in Chapter Two, it is not uncommon for organizations not to survive when foreign funders withdraw their support. This may not have taken place in the case of AHL but for a more long-term perspective it is interesting to look closer at the developments following the termination of the projects. Here, too, room must be found for continued translation in the projects and context looked at in this study. This is also connected with the withdrawal of Swedish donor resources. When the financial situation changes, an organization may have to modify its strategies to find new ways of surviving. As mentioned earlier, these kinds of discussions are valid not only in this chapter but also in those preceding it.

Chapter Ten thus concerns the third research question posed in Chapter 1.2: How have the cooperation and contacts affected the actors and organizations involved? However, this is naturally a question just as relevant in the preceding chapters since the process itself, with its different phases, may influence the actors taking part.

After working through these different theoretical perspectives I will now use them to investigate the empirical context of the cooperation projects between member organizations in ABF and AHL as well as the development of AHL as such. This investigation will be structured around the phases that have been identified here. It should, however, be stressed again that the phases are probably far from completely separate. The process can move
back and forth through the different phases. This will most definitely be the case when talking about the general cooperation between ABF and AHL, but also when looking more at a micro-level, i.e. the various individual projects. The interdependence of the different phases will be evident and several discussions could belong in more than one place. As an overarching framework or structure it may however still help to bring the relevant aspects out into the light and contribute to theoretical development in the field of translation studies. I do not want to imply that this structure is “watertight” but it does provide a framework for the detailed empirical description that is part of the analysis.

Throughout the following chapters I will tap into aspects that are relevant for understanding the cooperation and the dynamics of the projects. The discussions here are also directly relevant to the research questions posed in Chapter 1.2. I will also return to the research questions more specifically in Chapter Eleven since there are issues worth addressing in different phases of the processes and it is necessary to bring them all together in order to provide clearer answers to the questions posed. Firstly, contextual issues and preconditions that are of importance to the project activities as well as for our understanding of the cooperation will be elaborated upon.
6. The Estonian Transformation and Swedish Connections

Before going in depth into the specifics of the ABF/AHL projects I will here provide a short background to the context in which the projects have taken place and the larger context of Swedish – Estonian relations. This is also connected to the possibilities of and conditions for cooperation on a micro-level. For instance it affects issues relating to possibilities of identification that were put forward in the previous chapter as important for processes of dissemination. It also contextualizes the cooperation, which is of importance if one accepts the claim made in Chapter Five that contextual aspects are essential to an understanding of the processes taking place within the projects. This chapter also provides a glimpse of the context in which the Estonian organizations and actors are embedded that goes beyond what has already been discussed in previous chapters.

As was discussed in Chapter Five, it is often assumed that a previous crisis or, in translation terms, a challenge to the “taken-for-granted social reality” is conducive to successful dissemination. The transition from Soviet dominion to independent state as well as from a centrally planned to a market economy that Estonia has been experiencing can be seen as such a challenge. I therefore start this chapter with a brief résumé of the most recent history that may set the stage for the cooperation investigated in this study. Actually, the struggle for independence and the subsequent transitions were important factors in making available the funds that have been devoted to cooperation with Estonia. This will not be an attempt to go in depth into the process of democratization taking place in Estonia, the actors involved or the success or otherwise of this process, nor into where Estonia is at today in terms of democracy. That topic is too broad to tackle here. But an effort will be made to put this study in the right context and this also leads to a discussion of civil society actors since these groups are of primary interest here. This should not be seen as a verdict on which actors were most essential to the transformation but is a choice of focus made for the purposes of this study.

Swedish-Estonian relations in general will also be discussed since previous contacts may influence a decision to start working together. For instance, if the views on Sweden held by Estonians are mainly positive it would make sense to look in that direction for comparisons, which has
already been discussed as important for a translation process. These comparisons may also show differences and areas where Sweden can be seen as an example to follow. The converse may be equally true: if Swedish actors feel an affiliation with Estonia this may lead them to look in that direction and wish to assist the transition to democracy, possibly Europeanization, etc.

### 6.1 The Estonian Transition

Estonia experienced a brief first period of independence during the interwar years. It was an independent state from 1918 until 1940 when it was annexed and incorporated into the Soviet Union. The time of the first independence is seen as important for the building of national and political identity by scholars who have studied Estonia. This subsequently became important in the struggle to regain independence that took place during *perestroika* in the second half of the 1980s. National identity and the “collective memory of an alternative system” has been regarded as a crucial part of the explanation of why the Baltic states were the ones who started off a movement that subsequently led to the dismantling of the Soviet Union (Nørgaard 1994: 235). The last years of the 1980s are sometimes described as a mythological stage in the development of Estonian political culture, signifying the importance at this time of emotional connections and devotion to a shared history and common goals as well as the expression of this through mass movements (Vihalemm et al 1997). Estonia’s road to independence is interesting from the point of view of civil society and its role for democracy, because organized mass movements are claimed to have been important in the Estonian transition process (Ruutsoo 2002: 15).

The Baltic countries are sometimes viewed as having been the actors within the Soviet Union who “pried open the cracks in the Soviet Empire” (Lauristin & Vihalemm P. 1997: 73). However, there were several steps on the road towards this and the restoration of an independent Estonian state. Gorbachev’s *perestroika* that took off after his accession to power in 1985 presented opportunities for action among dissident groups around the Soviet Union and its satellite states. Early in 1987 this opportunity was taken in popular protests against plans from Moscow to initiate phosphate-mining in Northeast Estonia. A large number of people demonstrated against these plans and this grew into a large national movement not only concerned with environmental issues but also demonstrating discontent with the rule

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75 The Soviet Union occupied the independent Estonian state (by that time quite an authoritarian state) in 1940. However, Nazi Germany took over and occupied Estonia in September 1941 and Estonia was then re-occupied by the Soviet Union in September 1944 (Ruus 1994: 33).

76 The years 1985 to 1991 are sometimes referred to as the “perestroika era” (White 1999).
imposed by Moscow. The protests were successful in the sense that the mining plans were not implemented (Lauristin & Vihalemm P. 1997: 73, 84, Ruus 1994: 32f). The success of this demonstration seems to have encouraged the Estonian people and on 23 August 1987 “the first public post-war demonstrations against Soviet occupation took place” (Lauristin & Vihalemm P. 1997: 73).

Previous work by Lauristin and Vihalemm has divided the Estonian transition into three phases. The first (1987-1991) was the period of political breakthrough, the second (1991-1994) concerned “laying the foundations of the Estonian state and launching radical economic reforms” and, finally, the third (1994-1999) was the period of stabilization. These three phases contained various elements, the first most definitely had an important element of mass mobilization to it, starting with the “phosphate war” (Lauristin & Vihalemm P. 2002: 17-20), mentioned in the previous paragraph.

In 1988 Eestimaa Rahvarinne (ERR), or the Popular Front of Estonia, was established (Bennich-Björkman 2007: 332, Lagerspetz & Vogt 2004: 61, Ruus 1994: 33). This may perhaps be seen as the serious start of the independence movement and this kind of initiative was also echoed in other parts of the Soviet Union (Lauristin & Vihalemm P. 1997: 73). During its first months of existence, the ERR did not take a radical position against the Soviet Union but challenged the communist government in Estonia for its failure to implement the reforms made possible by perestroika. The ERR lobbied for reforms in various ways, the most famous being the mass demonstrations that were organized in the old song-festival grounds in Tallinn (Ruus 1994: 34).77 These activities were most frequent in 1988 and 1989 and the largest gatherings attracted around 30 000 participants. It should be noted that this was not only the work of ERR. There were also other movements that were active and to some extent competed with ERR (Lauristin & Vihalemm P. 1997: 88).

The fact that many of the rallies were held at the same location as the traditional song festival had significant symbolic value. The Song Festival has a long tradition. It has been organized regularly every four years since 1869 (Vihalemm 1998) and was also allowed during Soviet times (as noted in Chapter 4.1, supporting cultural activities was a way for the communist regime to demonstrate that it endorsed national cultures). The aim of holding the demonstrations at this traditional site was to awaken national feelings surrounding an Estonian national identity and, by blending the political “uprising” with traditional cultural elements such as choral singing, to

77 The term “the singing revolution”, which is frequently heard in accounts of the Estonian transition, also comes from the setting in which these large-scale demonstrations took place (Ruus 1994: 34).
remind the people of their common identity and history (cf. Lauristin & Vihalemm P. 1997: 88).

In 1989 another movement, Eesti Kodanike Komiteed (EKK), or the Estonian Citizens’ Committees,78 arose, founded by dissidents (Lagerspetz & Vogt 2004: 62, cf. Ruutsoo 2002). Its approach contrasted with that of the quite moderate ERR. While the ERR was initially in favour of perestroika, at least to the extent that it wished to implement reforms under this umbrella, it is claimed that during 1989 this movement became increasingly opposed to Gorbachev and more clearly embraced the goal of full independence for Estonia. Still, the ERR organized itself in a quite inclusive manner, for instance by also leaving the door open to Russians living in the country and to the possibility of achieving independence through a referendum in which locally residing Russians could also participate. The EKK on the other hand, viewed a return to the Estonian republic as it had been before the Second World War as the only way to independence. In other words it envisaged a more radical break with the Soviet Union as the only way to go and did not accept the right of Russians living in the country to take part in the process – only those with Estonian citizenship, originating in the pre-war republic, were seen as eligible (Lagerspetz & Vogt 2004, Lauristin & Vihalemm P. 1997: 89f). The way forward as the EKK saw it was “factual restoration of the independent Republic of Estonia, as it was before occupation by the Soviets in June 1940” (Lauristin & Vihalemm P. 2002: 21).

Moving ahead in history, a few events were especially important in the finalization of full independence for Estonia. The first was the events taking place in Latvia and Lithuania in January 1991, when the Soviet Union attempted to take the wind out of the opposition in these countries by military force. These actions also led to some fatalities.79 This kind of unrest did not reach Estonia but it led to support for the Baltic cause from the West as well as from Russian democratic forces. The second event was the coup in Moscow in August the same year (Lauristin & Vihalemm P. 1997: 97f).

By March 1991, referendums had been held in all three Baltic countries and all of them expressed overwhelming support for independence. It should be noted that support in Estonia did not come entirely from ethnic Estonians even if around two-thirds of the non-ethnic Estonian population voted for staying within the Soviet Union (Lagerspetz & Vogt 2004: 62).

It was on the night of 20 August 1991 that a domestic compromise was reached between the different movements and Estonia was declared an independent state (Lauristin & Vihalemm P. 2002: 22). During the first week following the declaration of independence, twenty-eight states recognized Estonia and many other countries in the international community soon

78 Other translations of the Estonian name of the movement, such as the Estonian Citizens’ Movement, may also be found. (Lauristin & Vihalemm P. 1997, 2002).
79 For more details on these events, see Lieven 1994: 244-255.

The movements that had been so active in the quest for independence subsequently became fragmented and a number of political parties emerged from them, many of which subsequently merged or created alliances. One of the fractions that emerged from the ERR was the People’s Centre Party (from 1993 only “Centre Party”), which established itself with quite significant and stable support under the leadership of former ERR leader Edgar Savisaar (Lagerspetz & Vogt 2004: 64). Also the social and the liberal democrats emerged from the ERR. Even before independence the ERR and the EKK had held different political beliefs, with the ERR aligning itself with a social democratic ideology whereas the EKK was more conservative (Lauristin & Vihalem P. 2002: 23).

Following the regaining of independence much work was done on installing the structures and institutions necessary for a democratic state and a market economy. Between June and September 1992 a new constitution was approved (on 28 June), the Estonian currency was introduced and the first parliamentary elections were held (on 20 September). The elected government chose a path oriented towards Westernization (Lauristin & Vihalem P. 2002: 27). By “Westernization” is here meant an ambition to approach the West European countries and, thus, distance Estonia from Russia. This ambition could and did lead to changes in a number of areas such as trade and investments and choice of political models and institutions as well as adjustments of legislation in accordance with EU legislation. The drive towards Westernization has also been discussed as potentially “the most important systemic aspect of the transition processes” (Lauristin 1997: 30f). During the first half of the 1990s scholars also viewed the possible alternative choices of the Baltic states as virtually non-existent.

From one perspective one could say that there is practically no choice at all for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Either they become integrated into the world economy (through the EC or otherwise), subjecting themselves to the rules of the game and sticking to the traditional Western values, or they are doomed to exist in isolation, outside the mainstream of Western civilization (Järve 1994: 7).

During the years following the first elections strict economic reforms put strain on the newborn state and its citizenry (Lauristin & Vihalem P. 2002: 27, cf. Bennich-Björkman 2007: 318). In general the transition is considered to have claimed a high social price from the Estonian citizens. Rapid transformation and the challenges this poses in the shape of large changes in the former way-of-life are sometimes called transitional stress or transitional

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80 It should however be noted that the military presence of Russian troops did not end until August 1994 (Lauristin & Vihalem P. 2002: 29).
shock, which not least leads to a questioning of existing identities. The new situation also left many with difficulties in coping with their everyday lives (Jõgi 2004: 286, cf. Lagerspetz 2000). New knowledge and skills were needed and this is where adult and popular education could have a part to play. A number of issues and challenges have of course arisen since independence was regained. Among these may be mentioned the issue of citizenship and how to deal with the large group of Russians residing in Estonia. This was also closely observed by West European countries and was an issue in the debate over Estonia’s potential EU membership. Several changes of government also took place in Estonia during the first few years. However, these issues, especially the citizenship issue, are too complex to deal with in more detail in this context.

Obtaining membership of the EU and NATO were important steps in the Westernizing agenda and following the elections in 1999 the preparations for achieving this were intensified. Inclusion in these cooperative bodies has been a high priority of every Estonian government (Lagerspetz & Vogt 2004: 77f). By the beginning of the 21st century, however, there were signs that the Estonian citizenry was getting tired of the numerous reforms, especially in the economic sphere of life, and that since much political rhetoric explained the need for these reforms by referring to the EU, scepticism towards both domestic political institutions and the EU grew. This also meant that the Estonian EU accession was, or at least became, to quite a large extent an elite project (Lagerspetz & Vogt 2004: 78). Estonia became a member of the EU in May 2004.

The questioning of the path towards Westernization that had been a goal uniting Estonia led to a crisis of legitimacy that seemed to escalate when the former communist Arnold Rüütel was elected president in September 2001. However, this crisis was settled and recognized as the kind of peaceful transition and transfer of power that is an essential attribute of a democratic system of government. Some scholars see the resolution of the crisis in 2001 as signifying the end of the transition period for Estonia (Lauristin & Vihalemm P. 2002: 43-47).

The process of consolidating a democratic regime is an ongoing project. For a democracy to stay lively and functioning well, actors need to work continuously on the system of government and its responsiveness to the will of the citizens and this work is never finished. Democracy can always be improved in any given country and is, thus, not a static condition but a developmental phenomenon:

Even when a country is above the threshold of electoral (or even liberal) democracy, democratic institutions can be improved and deepened or may

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81 In general most of the applicant countries from Central and Eastern Europe were positive to EU membership. The average public support in the applicant countries in June 2002 was 61 %. In Estonia however, the same number was only 32 % (Lagerspetz & Vogt 2004: 77).
need to be consolidated; political competition can be made fairer and more open; participation can become more inclusive and vigorous; citizens’ knowledge, resources, and competence can grow; elected (and appointed) officials can be made more responsive and accountable; civil liberties can be better protected; and the rule of law can become more efficient and secure (Diamond 1999: 18).

For the continued development and deepening of democracy, trust is often seen as a crucial aspect, not least trust in various political institutions and organizations. An interest in politics among the citizenry is naturally also important as is the civic competence that has been discussed in previous chapters and that is also mentioned in the quotation above. In Estonia this has turned out to pose some problems. Previous studies show that scepticism towards party politics has become a strong aspect of Estonian politics and society. One important reason for this is the socio-economic development and the financial hardships to which the reform packages and the transition as such have exposed many people. There is perceived to have been a growing gap between politicians and citizens, which can also be seen as a contributory reason for the decrease in trust in political institutions, politicians and parties. This gap has been noted and by some described as portraying a picture of “two Estonias” where the cleavage between “winners” and “losers” from the transition has increased over the years (Lagerspetz & Vogt 2004, cf. Kalmus & Vihalemm 2006: 99f).

In general it seems that regaining independence not only meant a fragmentation of the mass movements important in the initiation of this process, but also a gradual disenchantment with politics by citizens in general (Lagerspetz & Vogt 2004). The years following the breakdown of the Soviet Union are claimed to have seen a consolidation of this “indifference towards the world of politics” (Lagerspetz & Vogt 2004: 60). This shunning of politics and participation is a phenomenon that can be found in several post-communist countries and is also discussed as one of the problems encountered in building a strong and vibrant civil society in these contexts (Howard 2003, Lagerspetz & Vogt 2004: 73.). In Estonia, however, there has been a trend in recent years towards significant growth in the civil society sector (Lagerspetz & Vogt 2004: 74f).

6.2 Swedish – Estonian Relations

Against the background of transformations outlined in the previous section, the division between Eastern and Western Europe is an important aspect of contacts between these two areas. I will not go into any general discussion of relations between Eastern and Western Europe before, during or after the
breakdown of the Soviet Union but for the contacts relevant to this study, more general contacts between Sweden and Estonia are of interest.

A common history and contacts between Sweden and what today is Estonia can be traced back a long way. Archaeological research has revealed that contacts between current Swedish and Estonian territories existed as far back as the neolithic period, which occurred before the Bronze Age and that these contacts were not a one-time event but persisted through the Bronze Age and onwards (Piirimäe 1997: 43). Over the centuries that followed contacts were maintained but it is especially when we come to the “Swedish period” that the closeness between the areas increases. The “Swedish period”, starting in the sixteenth century and continuing until the early 1700s, is here used to designate the time when current Estonian territory was part of the Swedish Kingdom. During this time economic ties between the countries grew closer, Tartu University was set up (becoming the second oldest university in the kingdom of Sweden) and other developments also took place (Piirimäe 1997: 51-62). The period of being a part of the Swedish Kingdom, especially the developments during the seventeenth century, is still often claimed to be one of the good times of Estonian history (Lieven 1994: 46; Vaino, interview, 2006). If that is so, it may well be partly because when Estonia was annexed by the Russian empire in the first two decades of the eighteenth century, harsh serfdom became part of the new living conditions on Estonian territory (Piirimäe 1997: 62).

In the Estonian struggle that led up to the first independence there was some support from Swedish actors but it took time before Sweden recognized the first Republic of Estonia. This did not happen de jure until February 1921. Estonia had then been proclaimed an independent state since 1918. However, there were a number of connections between Sweden and Estonia during the time of Estonia’s first independence, not least in the form of trade relations. Political representatives from Estonia were also welcomed in Sweden, as in the case with Jaan Tõnisson mentioned in Chapter Four. The then Swedish king (Gustaf V) also visited Estonia in 1929 (Piirimäe 1997: 64-67) so there were definitely political and diplomatic relations between the wars. This does not mean, however, that the relations were uncomplicated. Not least for the sake of its relations with the Soviet Union, Sweden was careful in relations regarding the Baltic states (cf. Kangeris 1998). When Estonia was occupied by Soviet troops in 1940 Sweden was actually one of the few countries that acknowledged Estonia’s incorporation into the Soviet Union, which also led Sweden to hand over the Estonian gold reserve that was kept in Sweden to the Soviet Union (Kangeris 1998: 191ff, Piirimäe 1997: 68).

Before the Second World War was over many Estonians had fled to Sweden. This led to political debate in Sweden but public opinion was clearly in favour of helping the refugees from the Baltic states (Piirimäe 1997: 69). This group of refugees also became the subject of discussion
between the Soviet Union and Sweden in the years after the war and became a difficult and sensitive question that is too complex to discuss in detail here (for further discussions of this issue, see for instance Kangeris 1998, Küng 2002). What should be noted however is that in January 1946, 146 Baltic refugees were sent back to the Soviet Union by the Swedish government. The decision to deport this group of refugees met with popular protests in Sweden but the decision stood and remained an open wound in the conscience of many Swedes (Küng 2002, Piirimäe 1997: 69). However, the majority of the Estonian refugees (around 25 000-30 000 people) that came to Sweden around the time of the Second World War stayed in the country and this group is said to have preserved the culture and national identity of independent Estonia (Piirimäe 1997: 69f).

When the Estonian independence movements started to make a mark on events during the second half of the 1980s, as discussed in Chapter 6.1, they met with support from the Swedish public, but government representatives were less enthusiastic. The prime example of this was the statements by the then Swedish Foreign Minister Sten Andersson during a visit to the Baltic states in 1989. During that trip he did not acknowledge the Baltic states as being occupied and also claimed that the groups seeking independence were but a small minority (Fredén 2004: 51-56). At the same time, support for the independence struggle grew in Sweden. This, for instance, took its expression through the so called “Monday Movement”. As the name indicates, meetings took place every Monday, starting at Norrmalmstorg in Stockholm but spreading across the country. At the peak of these gatherings, Monday meetings were held in around 50 cities and towns around Sweden in support of the Baltic cause. During these public meetings information concerning the situation in the Baltic states was disseminated, and individual citizens took part along with politicians, journalists and artists. Also many people who travelled to and from the Baltic states via Stockholm participated. The greatest turnout followed the violent events in January 1991, mentioned in Chapter 6.1. In Stockholm around 7 000 people attended the Monday meeting the week afterwards (Küng 2002: 235-244).

Since an independent Estonia once again became established in 1991, the relations between Sweden and Estonia have continued in several fields. Swedish companies have invested in Estonia and there are many social and cultural ties (Piirimäe 1997: 71). During the transition period and until Estonian EU accession Sweden has also attempted to assist the development in Estonia in various ways, one of which is the kind of project that is under scrutiny in this study.

In certain areas it can be argued that relations between Estonia and Western European countries have been asymmetrical and in this case that Sweden held a comparative advantage when it comes to developed democracy, market economy, etc. when the transformations took place. The asymmetry of the relations may also be important, not least as an area of
potential conflict, in the projects studied more closely in this thesis. The ABF/AHL cooperation projects come with a significant asymmetry built into the processes. This concerns financial and other material resources, since the Swedish partners were the ones coming in with funding from Swedish aid agencies. Naturally, the asymmetry concerned not only material resources but also the amount of knowledge possessed by the organizations. This is however something that, unlike the financial side of the projects, may have changed over the years with ABF losing some of its advantage in knowledge and skills compared to AHL. This should also be seen as a desired outcome of the cooperation since dissemination of knowledge has been one of the explicit ambitions of the projects. The asymmetry of relations in this kind of transnational cooperation will be further discussed later but this not only concerns asymmetrical relations or the differences between the organizations in focus. The fact that relations between Estonia and the Nordic countries have been asymmetrical in general is acknowledged in studies of areas other than adult or popular education and civil society (Vihalemm 1997: 161f).

Scholars have argued that a cultural and civilizational break has been a major part of post-communist transitions (Sztompka 1996). Estonia has chosen a path aimed at integration or re-integration with Western Europe. This is discussed in terms of a process of re-Westernization (Lauristin 1997: 26). To facilitate the following of this path it is reasonable to assume that contacts and cooperation with existing Western European democracies would be of great interest. This Westernization or Europeanization process can be connected to demonstration effects that were discussed in the context of diffusion theory. It can also be connected to socialization in that this process very much concerns the induction of new members into an existing society but translation has also been used in attempts to understand processes of Europeanization and transnationalization (see for instance Jacobsson et al 2004). The wish to “belong” has been strong in Estonia and the Nordic countries, as long-standing and established democratic states, would then be seen as authorities on how to get into this society. With a wish to find a place for Estonia in new circumstances and to make it a part of Europe, identifying and searching for common ground with their Nordic neighbours is a reasonable and logical course of action.

Finding a common history is an important part of this identification and when tracing the European roots, Sweden has been one of the most influential states for Estonia (Lauristin 1997: 35). This statement would reasonably exclude the connections with Russia. However, the Russian contacts are part of what Estonia, through the Westernization process, has attempted to distance itself from.

In the discussion of diffusion presented above, reference states were mentioned as especially important when it comes to demonstration effects. To recapitulate, reference states are states that are regarded as especially close concerning geography, culture, history, etc. That Sweden is regarded
as a reference state by many Estonians is obvious in the way they define themselves and their relationship to Sweden and also other Nordic countries, especially Finland (cf. Lagerspetz 2003: 53). The notion of reference states may be connected mainly to diffusion studies but it concerns similar arguments to those advanced in the field of translation. There, as described in Chapter Five, it is argued that comparisons with other actors are important parts of these processes. These comparisons are made with actors perceived as more successful but it is also important for them to be actors with whom the potential translators can identify and feel a kinship. These actors are viewed as “significant others” in this context. Thus, the kind of proximity discussed here would also be conducive to this kind of comparison and a subsequent process of translation. Previous research shows that Estonians even define themselves as culturally closer to the Nordic countries than to the other Baltic states (Vihalemm 1997: 161). This is then not only connected with geographical proximity but very much to what can be called cultural proximity and is in other words related to matters of identification. By presenting Estonia as a Nordic instead of a Baltic country, Estonian foreign-policy makers have also tried to show that Estonia is a Western country ready to be part of the EU and NATO (Lagerspetz 2003).

What I mean by cultural proximity is a perceived closeness that may also have historical origins. It concerns the perception of a shared history (cf. Della Porta & Diani 2001: 247f). This may help explain Estonian actors’ perceptions of a closeness to the Nordic countries and especially Finland and Sweden. As has been discussed previously in this chapter, a few hundred years ago Estonia was part of the Swedish realm. The close connections to Finland may partly be linguistic, since Finnish and Estonian come from the same linguistic family and are quite close to each other. This is a resource that Estonia alone among the three Baltic states possesses and this further increases both their sense of and potential for being regarded as a “Nordic” country (Lagerspetz 2003: 58).

6.3 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has provided an overview of the transformation processes in Estonia and the social movements that took part in this. As discussed in the theoretical part, both translation and socialization point to the existence of a previous crisis, which these transformations may be considered to be, as conducive to dissemination. When actors are forced to abandon the frames they have previously lived by, they go out in search of new role models that

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82 Many Estonians are also claimed to have identified themselves as part of the West all through the Soviet era (Vihalemm 1997: 132).
83 Of course, geographical and cultural proximity are often connected.
they perceive as having been successful in their area of interest. The cooperation between ABF and AHL can be viewed as part of this context. As has been discussed in this chapter, the Estonian ambition of becoming integrated or re-integrated with Western Europe and acquiring membership of organizations like the EU and NATO has been influential in the period after independence was regained. Making contact with their Nordic neighbours is from this perspective a hardly surprising approach since attempting to show close affinity with existing members of this community can improve their prospects of being accepted as a member themselves.

The chapter has also revisited the history of Swedish-Estonian relations, which have a bearing on what was mentioned in the previous paragraph. There is no doubt that contacts have existed but the connections with the Soviet Union and the political situation of the region during Soviet times have meant that these have not been uncomplicated. However, the fact that Sweden and the other Nordic countries have been important for Estonia as reference states and as a basis for comparison has been discussed and not least that this is connected to a perceived closeness or proximity between the countries. These are all issues that should be remembered when we take a closer look at the contacts between ABF and AHL and the cooperation taking place between these organizations.
7. Making Contact

In this chapter the more direct investigation into the cooperation between and different projects involving Swedish and Estonian popular education organizations will start. I will study the cooperation between ABF and AHL but also the activities undertaken at the NFA. The chapter will consider issues that are important when a project is starting up, the first being the matter of problem definition. As noted in Chapter 5.3, from the perspective of local actors, the initiation of a process of change is frequently problem-based. This chapter will therefore start out with a discussion of what the problems may be in the cases examined in this study. How the projects began, i.e. the nature of the first contacts between partner organizations, and the beginning of project activities between Sweden and Estonia, will be elaborated on in Chapter 7.2. Finally, I will also introduce the NFA and its activities as these started up in the first half of the 1990s, i.e. simultaneously with the start of the cooperation between ABF and AHL.

7.1 What Is the Problem?

As discussed in Chapter Five, defining the problem to be solved involves comparing your own situation to that of other actors who are perceived to be more successful. The discrepancy then constitutes a problem. Therefore defining a problem also involves issues of identification since actors’ perceptions of a problem may be influenced by how those they are striving to resemble define the problem. Here there are differences between the Swedish and Estonian organizations, not only concerning external conditions but also in how the organizations are made up, their ideological and other orientations and other aspects of their identity. These aspects also influence the need to alter, i.e. translate and edit, what comes from Sweden to fit the Estonian context. Hence, these issues will be discussed in Chapter Nine with relation to the editing performed.

Naturally, there is rarely only one single problem identified, at least in the cases considered in this study. The problems may exist on different levels of abstraction and may therefore concern different things and require different solutions. The overarching problem found in the cases in this study could be said to concern the consolidation and development of Estonian democracy. That Estonian actors, such as AHL’s first chairperson, believed in the
potential of popular education to assist in alleviating some of the challenges following the transitions has been clearly expressed:

Large-scale popular education can diminish negative effects of rapid economic and political changes...The role of civic education can not be [overestimated] as one of the important means against political alienation and delegitimation of political institutions which unfortunately characterizes the political situation in many post-Communist countries including Estonia (Vihalemm 1998: 4).

Naturally, this can be part of a more pragmatic and utility-oriented rhetoric, where Estonian actors try to reinforce the impression that they are progressing towards the same orientation as those providing project money in order to encourage the continuation of their support. Pragmatic reasons may involve a window of opportunity for making a living from participation in the projects (which does not necessarily lead to poor project results or indifference to the more idealistic aspects).

Professing allegiance to values that resemble those advocated by Western organizations can be a way of securing continued support. However, interviews conducted in this study show that the same connections between popular education, active citizenship and the development of democracy are still emphasized in descriptions of the activities undertaken in several AHL member organizations after the termination of projects financed through Swedish aid agencies (Jääger, interview, 2005; Kül, interview, 2006; Mikk, interview, 2005). That demonstrates that there has been more to this than pure rhetoric calculated to obtain continued support.

The history of close contacts between Estonia and Sweden that was discussed in the previous chapter makes Sweden a likely object of comparison for Estonian actors, particularly in view of the closeness to the Nordic countries felt by many Estonians, as discussed in Chapter 6.2. When making these comparisons around the time when Estonia regained independence Estonians may have recognized a democratic deficit in comparison to Sweden, especially since Estonian democracy was in the process of developing more or less from scratch and Sweden had been an established democracy for many years. Even though Swedish democracy has its flaws, it may still have been perceived as a role model for a newly formed democratic state. This perception may have existed not only on the Estonian but also on the Swedish side. This is not to say that Sweden was the only country Estonian actors looked to, but when comparisons were made with Sweden and the build-up of Swedish democracy is considered, popular education would come into the picture. As noted in Chapter Three, this sphere of activities was important in, among other things, the labour movement and, thus, also in Swedish social democracy. Given this connection and an interest in education already shown by many of the
Estonian actors (as will be shown in Chapter Nine, several actors in AHL are or have been involved also in the formal educational system), the next deficit identified in a comparison of Estonia and Sweden would be in the field of popular education.

Connected to these relations between popular education, democracy and active citizenship is a perceived need for education among the adult population after Estonia regained independence. This naturally concerned developing skills for surviving in a market economy but it also included civic competence in order for the citizenry to be able to take the role of active democratic citizens (Kiik, interview, 2006; Vihalemm, interview, 2005a). In Sweden this role has historically been filled to a large extent by voluntary associations. Thus, for Estonian actors to turn to Sweden as a role model and study how the connections between popular education and the development of democracy were and are seen in the Swedish context seems a reasonable course of action. Naturally, this also leads to issues of what the Estonian citizenry demands and expects, what opportunities exist for implementing the activities, etc. This then leads to a need to edit the Swedish models and experiences and thus we come to issues regarding a process of translation.

Apart from this perceived need for development the issue of legitimacy is also a potent reason for engaging in cooperation and attempting to introduce ideas and practices that are part of popular education activities in other countries. As noted by Røvik (1998: 46), legitimacy is something that modern organizations need, as has also been discussed in Chapter 5.3. This may partly be connected to the wish to become more similar to actors perceived to be more successful that has been discussed in Chapter Five. Literature on socialization discusses this in terms of an ambition to become included in a society but previous studies, more oriented towards the concept of translation, also emphasize the importance of these issues. If Estonian actors embrace ideas and practices heralded by, in this case, Swedish popular education organizations, this could increase their external legitimacy (cf. Røvik 1998: 146). However, they have also to take into account the context in which they are to perform their activities. This would then lead to a need to adjust, or edit, the ideas in a way that is appropriate to the Estonian context. This need for adjustment and, hence, the inappropriateness of simply importing a whole model from a different context is something that will also be discussed later. A search for legitimacy can thus be seen as an additional reason for wishing to become involved in projects with Swedish organizations. The importance of this is also expressed in an interview with the former chairperson of AHL where he stressed that Swedish actors had encouraged and legitimized the developments and the path chosen by AHL (Vihalemm, interview, 2005a).

From the Swedish side, idealistic or ideological reasons are important. The issue of assisting a democratic development in Estonia was thus in
focus. This is not least the case since the funding came from agencies in the field of democracy promotion. That a need to develop Estonian democracy and society was perceived is something that several Swedish actors have noted. This also led to a wish to assist this development (Hallberg, interview, 2006; Mousell, interview, 2006; Nilsson, B-C, interview, 2006; Nilsson, N, interview, 2006). However, from the Swedish perspective there could also of course be pragmatic reasons contributing to the decision to get involved with AHL such as the opportunity to travel, to contribute and to feel that you make a difference. Previous research has also discussed the fact that apart from ideological reasons and a tradition of international work, the opportunity for Swedish organizations to obtain financial resources by engaging these kinds of projects has been important in the decision to get involved in democracy promotion in Eastern Europe (Ek 2006: 79).

The “problem” here has been quite simplistically defined but on an overarching and abstract, or perhaps systemic, level these can be seen as the issues central to these projects. Going in depth into the different projects between ABF and AHL, naturally, reveals various sub-goals in the projects and, thus, it can be argued that the partners have identified different sub-problems that they wish to solve. Increasing the competence of study circle leaders and spreading knowledge of teaching and learning methods in the field of popular education is of course one example. Following the discussions in Chapter Three this may also be seen as closely related to the more overarching goals of improving democracy and activating citizens, not least in the eyes of the Swedish actors. There have also been projects, for instance during the first half of the 1990s between ABF Blekinge and AHL Tartu, where the target group was organizations for disabled people and the goal was to assist these organizations in their development as well as make it easier for them to run educational activities themselves (OPC Project Report 94 626 Ö). Again the emphasis on pedagogics and training study circle leaders shines through but it also coincides with the ambition of ABF to target groups potentially risking marginalization. Thus, the project focused not solely on pedagogics or the study circle but also on issues such as how to make people, in this case disabled people, more active citizens, how adult and popular education may contribute to democratic development, etc. (ABF Blekinge 1994). A similar project was launched by ABF Värmland and AHL Tartu in 2001 (OPC Project Report 21 600 Ö). In this project one of the big gains as seen by people active on the Estonian side was its role in bringing people together, providing meeting places and thus also encouraging activity on the part of the participants (Mikk, interview, 2006). This also comes close to the role civil society organizations are seen to be able to play, as has been discussed in Chapter Two. The importance of social meetings is also stressed in other projects that were actually focused on spreading knowledge of meeting techniques, etc. Here too the chance of getting together (through being able to meet due to Swedish money) has been important also to the
project participants themselves (Vaino, interview, 2006). The lack of opportunity for this kind of meetings could thus also be a problem defined, or perhaps a problem that was not evident until relief was already found. More details of these issues and the projects mentioned will be given in the next chapter.

These are but a few examples of the problems that have been defined, or perhaps operationalized, and the approaches on how to deal with them have varied, but popular education and the study circle have always played an important part and this is also something to which I will return in later sections. First, however, how the cooperation started and how the different projects were initiated will be discussed. Before any contacts have been made it would seem difficult to make the kind of comparison needed to form an opinion on similarities and differences apart from the more general comparisons between Estonia and Sweden that have been discussed both here and in the previous chapter. Hence, from a chronological perspective, this order seems logical.

7.2 First Contacts

ABF has been greatly involved in the build-up of AHL and the development of this organization, especially during its first decade of existence. Contacts that subsequently influenced the creation of AHL as well as the start-up of the cooperation with ABF came in several instances informally from other contexts. To take a few examples: two of the prominent figures in the umbrella organization of AHL met people from ABF Blekinge via an Estonian woman working with that ABF organization and living in Sweden (Kiik, interview, 2006). The initiation of contacts between ABF and the future AHL also came via meetings at theatre festivals (Urvet, interview, 2006) and, not least, through cooperation between social democrats in Sweden and Estonia, since some of the people who have been very active in AHL have also been members of the Social Democratic Party in Estonia, which has given them contacts with SAP in Sweden (Vihalemm, interview, 2005a; cf. FBR 2000). As has already been discussed, ABF has been, and still is, closely connected to the labour movement and has much in common and many contacts with SAP as well as the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO). Thus, people met both other people and also ideas through this more politically oriented cooperation. As will be further discussed later, this does not mean that AHL as an organization officially took the same kind of political stance as ABF. But, personal networks already created or in the making led to many of the initial contacts when AHL was about to be created.

Previous research (Ek 2006: 84) has argued that in many of the projects between ABF and AHL it was the ABF organization that took the initiative,
at least in the early 1990s. However, it also seems that, on an overarching level concerning for instance EVHL, Estonian actors went out in search of new models and frames (cf. Eesmaa 1997: 10). This may be connected to the notion in translation studies that making comparisons and finding role models are important when actors are in a situation that challenges existing ways of life and frames of reference.

When contacts were being established, before any greater cooperation or more extensive project activity had begun, the goal from ABF’s side was to build an Estonian equivalent to ABF (Lundgren, interview, 2005). At least this seems to have been the case at the national level of the ABF umbrella. In some ways this centrally organized project differs from the way ABF’s international projects are normally conducted. The centralization of the efforts stands out since projects normally remain organized on a local basis. Most of the projects between ABF and AHL were also conducted between different local organizations on both sides but the central organizations were still involved, perhaps not in all of the projects directly, but with the overall development. The idea was that the central organization would help to coordinate the activities (Lundgren, interview, 2005).

When cooperation between the organizations started in the early 1990s, there was no shortage of people in Sweden and ABF who were willing to assist (this is also true of other actors and organizations). On the contrary, there were, in a way, perhaps too many “helping hands”. The enthusiasm that was found among people in ABF organizations in many parts of Sweden was unmistakable. But, looking back, some organizers (also from the Swedish organizations) reflect on the fact that this enthusiasm was not solely a positive thing although, naturally, there could have been no projects at all without it. The question is, however, whether or not, in some instances, there was more enthusiasm than real knowledge and skills that could provide the assistance needed (Lundgren, interview, 2005; Puolle, interview, 2005).

The interest in helping out and being a part of the development in Estonia also led to practical problems for the Estonian organizations, including AHL members. So many people came, and wanted to come, to the organizations that it impeded their activities. The activists in AHL had to spend considerable time organizing trips and visits to their organization instead of using that time to develop their activities, arrange study circles, give courses or run other activities of a popular education association (Lundgren, interview, 2005; Puolle, interview, 2005). Time-consuming activities not directly related to the main activities of the organization may of course also be a result of the funding coming from aid agencies. As discussed in Chapter Two, this is not an uncommon situation either and it has also been acknowledged by Swedish aid agencies (SIDA 2004: 21ff). Sometimes the funding agencies themselves want to visit the final recipient to see where the money eventually ends up. Visits of this kind mean that the donor agencies are involved, but people from ABF and AHL agree that neither SIDA nor
OPC had any influence on the activities themselves (Hååg, interview, 2006; Kessa, interview, 2006; Magnusson, interview, 2006; Nilsson, N, interview, 2006; Viilemm, interview, 2005a). Potential input was already given at the time for the project applications – if OPC or SIDA did not like the project idea they would naturally not fund it (Nilsson, B-C, interview, 2006; Nilsson, N, interview, 2006). Donors may also exert an influence by putting specific demands on how the money is to be used, accounted for and reported, etc., which may further add to the time that has to be spent on activities other than the main activities of an organization. This has also been noted in previous research on democratic aid and democracy promotion as well as in Chapter 2.2.1 (see for instance also Carothers & Ottaway 2000, Ottaway & Carothers 2000b).

As was mentioned above, the idea of creating a central umbrella in AHL was to ease the coordination of the activities but the coordination of the projects on the Swedish side can be, and has been, questioned, since, as discussed previously, there were perhaps too many people involved at times and one hand did not necessarily know what the other hand was doing.

...Estonia is a quite small country and it should have been possible to coordinate it in some way...You met a lot of ABF people at the airport on your way home. They had also been to some place [in Estonia] and sometimes I realized that they [people from different ABF organizations] had given courses for study circle leaders in two towns very close to each other. (Puolle, interview, 2005, author’s translation)

This leads to the conclusion that better coordination of the efforts could have made the cooperation more efficient for both the Estonian and the Swedish organizations. That increased coordination between different projects and actors would have improved the cumulative development (building on the knowledge gained instead of repeating the same things) as well as using the resources more effectively is acknowledged both here and in other interviews (Mousell, interview, 2006).

As mentioned above, a lot of people came to the Estonian organizations. Naturally, many different countries and organizations were interested and involved in various aspects of society and its development during the time of transformation. This did not only concern AHL. Other Estonian organizations like EVHL and Andras also worked with various Western countries and organizations. Although this study concentrates on ABF/AHL projects and cooperation where ABF was one of the partners involved, it should be noted that many other foreign actors have been involved in the sphere of adult and popular education. For example, Finnish organizations
like TSL (*Työväen Sivistysliitto* or Workers’ Educational Association)\(^{84}\) have been involved with members of AHL. The Tartu Folk High School (which is no longer a member of AHL) has had and still maintains close contacts with a folk high school in Turku (Breede, interview, 2006) and a trade union that is now a member of AHL has cooperated closely with Finnish trade unions and also with TSL (Arukask, interview, 2005; Vihalemm, interview, 2005a). There are other AHL organizations that have also been involved with Finnish study associations (Kraus, interview, 2006) but the cooperation with ABF is still the most extensive and most consistent one.

### 7.3 NFA and the Baltic States

The focus in this study may be on the cooperation between member organizations of ABF and AHL and the various projects in which they have been involved but, as noted previously, the Nordic Folk Academy (NFA) has also influenced the development and the views and competence of Estonian adult educators, including some of those active within the AHL umbrella.\(^{85}\) I will therefore also look at the activities of this organization since they took place simultaneously with many of the ABF/AHL projects and the experiences at NFA seem to have been a great influence on those people active in AHL that took part in them. To some extent these have been parallel activities but one of the differences lies in the fact that the activities at, and with, NFA for people in AHL were organized and offered through EVHL (the Estonian umbrella organization resembling the Swedish National Council of Adult Education, FBR). The projects with ABF on the other hand were projects arranged *directly* with AHL (Kiik, interview, 2006).

As discussed in Chapter 3.1.3, the cooperation between the NFA and the Baltic countries started in the early 1990s and began with an evaluation of the needs of the Baltic states. This was an important part of making comparisons and defining problems, which was also discussed in Chapter 7.1. What took place at the NFA may also have influenced, consciously or unconsciously, the problem formulations of the Estonian actors.

At that time, people from the Nordic countries travelled to the Baltic states and talked to ministries of education, civil servants, etc. about whether cooperation in the field of adult education would be of interest. An interest did exist and the next step was to decide what the activities should include. Naturally, the needs and wants differed between different actors. People from the ministries wished for greater knowledge and insight into how the

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\(^{84}\) TSL is a bilingual educational association that is part of the Finnish adult education system and consists of 36 member organizations. It was started in 1919 and has, just like ABF in Sweden, strong connections with the labour movement (http://www.tsl.fi).

\(^{85}\) The NFA, its history, goals and structure have also been discussed in Chapter 3.1.3.
system of adult education worked in the Nordic countries, what legislation existed, how these activities and organizations were financed and so on (Carlsen, interview, 2006). Teachers were more concerned with pedagogics and methods. These two groups, i.e. people from the ministries and then teachers, were the first two groups that took part in the “summer academy” organized by NFA. Civil servants from Baltic ministries of education went to the summer academy in 1992 and in 1993 the focus was on adult education teachers; thus the second year of the academy was primarily for practitioners in the field. In the third and last year that the summer academy was held, 1994, it focused on another group that had been identified by previous participants as essential for development in this field in the Baltic countries, namely the local authorities with their civil servants and politicians (Carlsen, interview, 2006).

The summer academy consisted of individuals from the three Baltic countries staying at the NFA in Gothenburg for one month where they studied things like the structure of the adult education system in the Nordic countries, pedagogics, etc. (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b). Following the month at the NFA, two weeks were devoted to study trips and visits to various organizations, study associations and folk high schools in the Nordic countries (Jääger, interview, 2005). In these activities, people from AHL also participated (Kiik, interview, 2006; Valgmaa, interview, 2005b), which demonstrates a clear connection between the activities at NFA and the organizations considered in this study. Before the closing of NFA in 2004, many Estonian adult educators took part in different courses and activities there. The time spent at NFA is described as having left the participants with great enthusiasm and a feeling of empowerment so that, once they returned to Estonia, they had contacts not only with Sweden but also with each other and the inspiration collected also led to things happening fast (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b).

So, the last summer academy was held in 1994 but that was far from being the end of NFA’s involvement with Baltic adult educators. However, the summer academies were part of the first stage. The continuation of this cooperation will be further discussed in the next chapter.

7.4 Concluding Remarks

As has been discussed and exemplified in this chapter, the issue of problem definition involves comparisons with other actors. A problem may perhaps be found also without comparisons being made but in the cases referred to here, comparisons seem to have been of importance. The problems identified may then concern the level and quality of democracy, organizational success and also material well-being. Thus, both a wish to improve democracy and more pragmatic reasons may be part of this. When Estonian actors attempt to
find solutions to the problems identified, not least concerning democracy and active citizenship, a comparison as well as contacts with Sweden may lead to an interest in popular education because of the tradition of these activities in the Swedish context. An existing interest in this field may also lead to Sweden being seen as a good role model. Apart from this, a quest for legitimacy and to become accepted as a member of an eligible society or a social group that the actors hold in high esteem may also be part of the reason for cooperation as well as for introducing and using concepts familiar to the role models.

This chapter has also presented the start-up of the cooperation between ABF and AHL. Many Swedish and other foreign actors became involved in cooperation with Estonia at the beginning of the 1990s. However, this was not unquestionably positive for the Estonian actors since the contacts demanded a lot of time that could have been spent on the main activities of the organizations. Finally, NFA and its activities were introduced. As noted there, these activities took place parallel with those of the projects involving ABF and AHL – in time and to some extent regarding the contents of the activities.
8. The Travels of Swedish Popular Education

Many different things may be spread between civil society organizations by transnational projects. Such projects may involve material assistance, which will be discussed in Chapter 8.1. They may concern techniques or methods – here for instance pedagogics in the field of popular education. They may also concern more abstract ideas such as what popular education is or should be, what its role in society can be and so on. As well as project content, personal contacts and networks that have been established will be discussed here and the investigation into the activities at the NFA that started in the last chapter will continue.

The ABF/AHL projects have had different aims even though they have all at least partly used the study circle method to “teach” or disseminate the knowledge and ideas with which they have been concerned. This is hardly strange in view of the central position of the study circle in Swedish popular education. Several projects have been explicitly designed to educate study circle leaders but there have also been projects where the main goal has concerned other things such as organizational democracy, parental training courses and cultural activities. These will all be discussed in this chapter and used as examples and illustrations. It should be noted that many of the projects have several goals and that, in many instances, the ideas and methods are mixed.

When individuals who have been involved in projects are interviewed, certain items emerge as significant to the individuals and organizations. However, it seems that much of what has been spread has also been adjusted to fit an Estonian context. This will be further discussed in Chapter Nine and the present chapter will focus on identifying the ideas and practices that have been spread. This concerns what the Swedish actors have attempted to disseminate, and what Estonian actors identify as having come from the projects, as well as similarities between the ideas that were presented as essential in Swedish popular education in Chapter Three (especially Chapter 3.4) and Estonian organizations, actors and activities. This will primarily be elaborated on in Chapter 8.4. This chapter thus focuses on the travelling phase of a translation process that has been discussed in Chapter 5.4 and, following this, the question of what has travelled between the contexts.

86 The number of projects and their various goals have been discussed previously in Chapter 1.3.
8.1 The Materialistic Side of the Projects

As mentioned previously, AHL was founded in November 1991 and the central organization initially set up its office in Tallinn, where it resided until 1999 when the office was moved to Tartu. It has now been in the same building in Tartu since May 2000. From the very inception of the central organization and its office foreign partners were present, more specifically ABF, which assisted AHL financially in buying the building in Tallinn that became its headquarters. The subsequent sale of this building made it possible to buy the building in Tartu that is now used (Puolle, interview, 2005; Vihalemm, interview, 2005a). This is one example of material aid from which the receiving organization still benefits.

A number of the projects, especially among the earlier ones, involved material assistance to AHL. The importance of these more aid-directed efforts in the initial stages of Estonian independence in the early 1990s should not be underestimated. Many Estonian respondents agree that without the assistance of foreign partners many of the AHL organizations would most likely not have existed (Urvet, interview 2006; Vaino, interview, 2006). Of possible partners, Sweden and ABF was the most significant contributor (Vihalemm & Seelmann 1996: 5).

Several of the projects taking place during the first half of the 1990s, i.e. shortly after Estonia gained independence from the Soviet Union, were quite aid-directed and were nearer to assistance than true cooperation on an equal basis (Månsson-Wallin 2002: 8). This may have reflected both beliefs about the Estonian situation and needs held in Sweden and, naturally, also the true needs that existed in this period. Therefore, material support was a very important part of many of the earlier projects. Copying and fax machines, computers and many other things were supplied (Johansson, interview, 2005; Puolle, interview, 2005). One such example is provided by the activities of Axevalla Folk High School, sometimes in cooperation with ABF Skara. For several years students at Axevalla who were studying computer science made a practice of asking companies in the vicinity for old computers when they were about to upgrade their computer fleet. Then the students checked, repaired and possibly improved these and eventually gave them to organizations in Estonia. During the 1990s a number of AHL organizations benefited from these activities (Puolle 1998: 33). In this way, the Estonian organizations acquired computer rooms for use both in educational activities and in the administration of the organization. There have also been occasions when unemployed construction workers in Sweden, while receiving some

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87 One of the reasons for the move from Tallinn to Tartu was that while the headquarters were in Tallinn, the chairman and the majority of the board were in Tartu. Thus, the stronghold of AHL was already in Tartu before the move.

88 Nowadays ABF Skara is ABF Skaraborg. In this text, however, ABF Skara will be used since that was the name during the time under investigation.
sort of popular education training, have, as part of that training, assisted in restoring buildings for AHL organizations (Puolle 1998: 34; Puolle, interview, 2005).

The kind of cooperation described above is a good example of how the cooperation between Swedish and Estonian organizations has also been integrated in the “normal” activities of the Swedish partners. This shows how projects of this kind can be used in, hopefully, a rewarding way in educational activities on the “donors” side as well. This support was of course, at least on the surface, of a very material kind. However, giving this support and also the trips made by students and staff from Axevalla Folk High School have also had the pedagogical effect of personal development by broadening the intellectual horizon of the students. Other aspects indicating a certain reciprocity in the activities and the cooperation will be discussed in coming chapters and especially in Chapter 10.2.

8.2 Networks, Encouragement and Learning from Experience

When talking about what has been disseminated and the outcomes of the projects, what should not be forgotten are the personal contacts and the networks that have been created. Today, after the termination of the projects, this is what lives on. Even if joint projects of the organizations no longer exist in the way they used to, many people still keep in touch (Karlsson, interview, 2006; Magnusson, interview, 2006; Mikk, interview, 2006; Vaino, interview, 2006). This may not “only” be a social contact; it is also a forum for discussing issues related to popular education. So the exchange or dissemination of ideas may still continue but on a more informal basis.

The personal contacts have thus been perceived as valuable outcomes of the projects by the people involved and this demonstrates that interpersonal contacts and personal communication have been the primary channel linking “transmitter” and “receiver”, thus implying how the dissemination has occurred.

One thing that is frequently proclaimed as an essential outcome of the cooperation is the encouragement factor. What is meant here is that many of the Estonian respondents see the belief in them and the positive reinforcement from Swedish actors as an important encouragement for them to carry on and continue developing themselves, and their organization and activities. Some say that this feeling of support from well-established organizations in Sweden has also raised their own confidence. This is valid both for those active in various functions in AHL and their member

89 For example both AHL’s former premises in Tallinn as well as the organization in Pärnu have benefitted from these activities (Puolle, interview, 2005).
organizations, and also other participants in the project and educational activities (Kiik, interview, 2006; Vaino, interview, 2006). This can also be connected to the discussion concerning legitimacy described in Chapter 7.1. Estonian actors also mentioned the importance of this confidence enhancement for the further development of their organizations directly to their partners in some of the projects (OPC project database). Many are described as having become aware of how important encouragement and recognition of positive attributes and achievements is to an individual. This is something close to the heart of the Swedish popular education ideal – the central position of the individual and his/her development, including a belief in himself/herself, which was also discussed in Chapter Three.

What the Swedes succeeded in and were very good at was to see the person and believe in the individual and lift him/her up...They [the people from ABF] got the people there [the Estonian participants] to believe in themselves – they got so much praise and so on – and their confidence went up. (Vaino, interview, 2006, author’s translation)

The positive reinforcement and encouragement can to some extent be related back to diffusion theory and demonstration effects. It may not be that Swedish actors have recently undergone the same kind of process as their Estonian partners but they still provide a reference as an example of an established adult education system that has become an integral part of society. Thus, they can show people active in AHL how it could be and that change is possible. This can also be related to ideas presented in socialization theory (see Chapter 5.2) where it is seen as important that the socializing agent is an authority in the group to which the socializees wish to belong. Even more interesting from the perspective taken in this study is the connection with previous ideas presented in translation studies. A wish to become similar is sometimes discussed there as a reason for initiating a process of translation (see for instance Callon 1980). Making comparisons with actors that are perceived as successful is an important part of defining the problem to be solved by new ideas and models, something that has also been discussed both in Chapter 5.3 and in Chapter Seven. The idea of role models presented in that context is of interest since it can be argued that receiving praise from a role model would be of significant importance to an actor.

Even though some described the support received by popular education organizations in Sweden from the state as utopian, they still found inspiration in aspiring to a similar situation. Impulses from Swedish role models, good advice and, not least, acknowledgement and confirmation are presented as essential for the further development of AHL organizations: “it works in Sweden, why not in Estonia then? It will work!” (AHL Tartu 2001: 3, author’s translation).
In the specific case of the project undertaken by ABF Ronneby and AHL Tartu (OPC Project 98 604 Ö) the focus was on trade unions and on, (1) increasing the competence of those active in the trade unions and, (2) increasing the membership of the trade unions. I will return to the activities in more detail in Chapter 8.4 but the project seems to have been a success since the number of members did go up during the project years (Arukask, interview, 2005; Nilsson, N, interview, 2006). In this project, the opportunity to learn how Swedish trade unions are organized and to learn from their experiences was seen as one of the benefits (AHL Tartu 2000: 4). Given the focus on trade unions, essential parts of this project concerned disseminating knowledge of their work, what their role in society is or should be as perceived by the Swedish actors, etc. It also concerned teaching the Estonian participants about the history, organizational forms, ideas and developments of Swedish trade unions and popular movements, this very much in order to give the Estonians a chance to learn and get inspiration from Swedish experiences. Thus, this is an example of how Estonian organizations had a chance to benefit from interaction with organizations and actors perceived as role models.

Achieving this kind of demonstration effect was actually also one of the main aims of the work done in the NFA. The way this is expressed by Arne Carlsen, the director of the NFA between 1992 and 1999, also shows the ambition to assist democracy and, not least, the belief in participatory democracy that has been discussed previously as an important part of Nordic and Swedish popular education.

The ambition was already from the start to strengthen the democratic development in the whole of the Nordic region, including the Baltic Sea area. And this could be done by showing the Baltic countries how the Nordic countries have anchored their participatory democracy in the work and activities of NGOs and in popular adult education – to show what we have done and to inspire Baltic people to create their own model and then support them in their choice. (quoted in Vallgårda 1999a: 3)

As mentioned in Chapter Six, actors search for new frames of reference when they are forced to abandon previous ones and even if they do not adopt someone else’s without modifications, they will look for new role models and pick up inspiration from other contexts that they perceive as having been successful in the area of interest. In this context, the previous discussion of historical connections between Sweden and Estonia should also be remembered. The various political connections that have existed over the years are most likely also of importance here. The connections between the countries considered in this study and the perceived closeness between them that was also discussed in Chapter 6.2 also shines through in the interviews done in this study. Some Estonian respondents even claim that they feel more closely related to the Nordic countries, especially to Finland and
Sweden, than to the other Baltic states. This opinion is also expressed with reference to the way they view adult and popular education:

I remember 15 years ago when we first visited Axevalla\(^{90}\), we didn’t understand anything. But now it is very normal when I am going in some classroom and meet people, that they can communicate and all our verbal systems are very similar I think. But it is very strange, when I have discussion with Latvian or Lithuanian people, our opinions are much more different than with people from Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. (Urvet, interview, 2006)

The kind of identification that is expressed in statements such as this is not least interesting when recalling the earlier theoretical discussions of socialization that to a large extent concerned the process of inclusion in a society to which an individual wishes to belong (see Chapter 5.2).

When examining issues of identification and perceived closeness in the light of cooperative projects between AHL and other Estonian adult education organizations (like EVHL) and similar organizations in the Nordic countries, many respondents from the Estonian organizations assert that it is possible to relate the success or perhaps even more so the ease with which the projects have worked to the country from which the partner comes. Those who have been involved in projects with organizations originating in different Nordic countries generally rank them as follows: first, and those whom Estonians find it easiest to cooperate with, are Finnish organizations, second are Swedish organizations and then come Norwegian and Danish partners. Why is this? An answer that is frequently heard is that the Estonian respondents experience that people from Finnish organizations have a better understanding of the Estonian situation and greater empathy with the preconditions they have to work with than do, for instance, Danish organizations (Vihalemm, interview, 2005a). With the latter there are greater difficulties in understanding each other and agreeing on how to work together. Many respondents relate this to Finland’s greater closeness to Estonia, not only geographically but also culturally. Estonia and Finland are perceived as especially close, not least linguistically, the importance of which should not be underestimated. Thus, what is expressed here further demonstrates the importance of what in Chapter 6.2 was called cultural proximity. It should be noted that some rank the cooperation with Sweden even ahead of that with Finland (Kraus, interview, 2006). A note should also be made of a point which has been brought up by some respondents: many of the most active people from, for instance, Swedish ABF and those with whom they feel they have had the best and closest cooperation are Finland-Swedish (Vihalemm, interview, 2005a).

\(^{90}\) Axevalla is a Swedish folk high school that has been involved in much cooperation with Estonia and AHL, often in close cooperation with ABF Skara.
8.3 NFA and the Baltic States

As the NFA is perceived, as mentioned, as an essential actor in the developments by several of the people active in AHL, the discussion of its activities that was started in Chapter Seven needs to continue here.

Following the summer academies that were mentioned in Chapter 7.3 and that ended in 1994, two conferences were organized the following year. One took place in Estonia and one in Latvia (Carlsen, interview, 2006). Many of those who had participated in the summer academies attended but participation was not restricted only to those groups.

One of the aims of the conferences was to agree on the kind of cooperation, project and assistance that was desired and needed and on how to proceed from the activities at the summer academies. The need to reach an understanding of this was acknowledged and addressed by Estonian actors as well as by the NFA (Carlsen, interview, 2006). As a result, three areas for further cooperation were identified. The first concerned methods and pedagogics in the field of adult education, the second organizational development for NGOs and the third sustainable development (Carlsen, interview, 2006). At least the first two are also areas in which much cooperation between ABF and AHL, and many of the projects, took place.

As already stated, many of the activities of the NFA took place simultaneously with the ABF/AHL projects and I do not claim to be able to tell exactly what details in the understanding and developments in Estonia have come from ABF and what has come from NFA. However, this is not the main aim and I believe it to be important to look also at what happened at the NFA since Estonian respondents have pointed to this as influential. What these respondents have said should not be taken to mean that ABF is seen as a less important actor; the great importance for AHL of the organizations within this umbrella is not questioned by the respondents.

The identification of the three areas mentioned above led to a series of courses that took place over four years (1996-1999). The NFA took it upon themselves to apply for money for the activities and work towards the interests identified by the Baltic actors along with the academy itself (Carlsen, interview, 2006).

The first two areas identified, methods and pedagogics and NGO development, led to a number of courses and other activities taking place over several years. In the case of NGO development, Baltic actors leading or being active in an NGO also wanted more practical experience – learning by observing and doing, thus, the academy managed to create a kind of “trainee” position in Nordic organizations. The first attempts to bring this into the activities were made in 1997 and included a two-day stay at a Nordic organization (Carlsen, Antra 1998: 8). This was, however, subsequently lengthened to a stay of between one and two weeks at the Nordic organizations (Carlsen, interview, 2006).
Through this the Baltic NGO leaders got a chance to spend time at established Nordic organizations, participating in their daily work, gaining experience and knowledge of most of the things that take place there. Everything from accounting to contacts with local municipalities and daily meetings was part of this (Carlsen, interview, 2006). After their time at an organization, the people gathered at NFA to analyze and share the various experiences (NFA 2002a), after which the NGO leaders returned home to continue their work, with new knowledge and experiences. This also opened up channels of communication and personal networks and helped actors locate new potential platforms of cooperation (cf. NFA 2002b: 8).

Apart from, or in combination with, the activities for NGO leaders and adult educators described here, a network for people active in NGOs in the Baltic area was also created. Rather, two networks were actually created: one for the different, more locally based organizations and NGOs – i.e. the practitioners, and one for the larger umbrella organizations like the EVHL in the Estonian case, which can perhaps be described as more policy-oriented.

The networks held at least one meeting each year, in fact there were seven between 1997 and 2001. The network for the umbrella organizations has also continued this cooperation and still exists and continues to meet once a year (Carlsen, interview, 2006; Jääger, interview, 2005). The network more focused on NGO leaders and other individuals active in NGOs, practitioners, etc. dealt with several different things during the meetings. Continued cooperation and common projects were of course discussed and also what channels of communication could be opened up and how. There was a wish to intensify networking between organizations in the Baltic and Nordic countries. Another important topic for discussion and development during the time of the networks was the creation of an internet database on Nordic-Baltic cooperation projects in the field (NFA 1998, NFA 1999a). This, too, was a means to promote continued cooperation and to facilitate the networking and contact-seeking processes.

Other important parts of the agenda concerned increasing cooperation between Nordic and Baltic folk high schools and developing a Baltic-Nordic education for adult educators (NFA 1999a, NFA 1999b, cf. NFA 2001). The latter was seen as an important step towards developing and strengthening the independence and sustainability of Baltic adult education. This education was to be more of a Baltic one although with Nordic participation as well, and discussion of this started at the 4th Nordic – Baltic network meeting at the NFA in February 1999 (NFA 1999a, NFA 1999b). It was seen as important to continue building on the teacher-training courses that had previously taken place in cooperation with NFA. Subsequently this work led to a large three-year project called “Learning 4 Sharing”. It was during the 4th and 5th Nordic – Baltic NGO network meetings (both taking place in 1999) that the need for continued courses and other activities aimed at increasing the competence of adult educators was discussed. Through the
“Learning 4 Sharing” project that lasted from 2000-2002, Nordic and Baltic adult educators cooperated to develop training modules to be used in the Baltic countries. The ideas and methods that resulted from the project activities were subsequently tested in the three Baltic states and the development continued through that process as well (Carlsen, Antra 2003: 11; Jääger, interview, 2005). Other outcomes of this project, as well as of the cooperation between ABF and AHL, that were claimed to be important include an emphasis on the creation of networks and the importance of every actor being well informed of the process and progress\(^9\). In reports of the “Learning 4 Sharing” project, the reciprocal potential is also mentioned and the value of the combined experiences and knowledge of Nordic and Baltic adult educators is stressed (Carlsen, Antra 2001: 3).

Overall, the meetings of the networks have had various different general themes, often containing a democracy aspect and touching upon many of the areas covered by this study. The third network meeting, for instance, had as its theme “Democracy and adult learning” focusing on the role of adult education in the processes taking place in the Baltic and Nordic countries at that time (NFA 1998). The fourth meeting focused on “Competence development”. Competence was here understood as including both professional, social as well as civic competence (NFA 1999a) and was also an area discussed at other NGO network meetings (NFA 2001). A final example in this context is that the last two meetings dealt with subjects that may be characterized as study of the role NGOs can play in a “learning society” and how NGOs, as a “learning arena”, can help strengthen the promotion of a view of learning as a lifelong process (NFA 2000, NFA 2001). In Chapter Two, the potential of civil society organizations as training and recruiting grounds was also mentioned (see Chapter 2.1.2) and the above themes clearly connect with this.

The third area identified, “sustainable development”, has also worked on the issues in similar ways to the other two. A number of courses were organized and here, too, a network was created. Apart from this they have organized conferences (see for instance NFA 2003a), started up a web page, etc. (Carlsen, interview, 2006).

After ten years of cooperation between NFA and the Baltic countries, a major conference was held in Riga in 2003, signalling the approaching end of the era of cooperation in the form it had taken during the previous decade. The Baltic states’ imminent membership of the EU was one reason for the termination of the cooperation, as was the case with the ABF/AHL projects. The conference in Riga attempted to analyze the decade of cooperation, looking at what effects it had had on development in the different countries.

\(^9\) In the “Learning 4 Sharing” project this was partly achieved by using the internet and databases and partly by distributing a number of newsletters concerning the project, among other things (see for instance NFA 2002c).
as well as what strategies could be implemented in the future (Carlsen, interview, 2006). During this conference, where more than 200 people participated, the main results of the previous cooperation were summarized and it was stressed that it had been a meeting place for those active in the field of non-formal learning and had contributed in various ways to civil society development in the Baltic countries. One way of taking cooperation between the Nordic and Baltic countries forward in the field of adult and popular education that was discussed in this context was by developing cooperation including Northwest Russia (NFA 2003b). This has subsequently also taken place and will be further discussed in Chapter Ten.

8.4 Pedagogics, Methods and Idea(l)s

Many ABF/AHL projects have been intended to train people in study circle methodology and popular education pedagogics. In these cases the aim has been to develop study circle leaders and increase the competence of adult educators (both existing and potential) so that they in turn can help increase the competence of Estonian citizens. There are also projects that have focused on other things such as organizational democracy and this will also be discussed here.

With the centrality of the study circle to Swedish popular education, to ABF and to the transnational projects considered in this study in mind, I will in this section discuss issues relating to these activities. As argued in Chapter Three, the study circle permeates Swedish popular education and is meant to embody more or less all its ideals and traits. As was discussed there, the methods and pedagogics of Swedish popular education also incorporate certain more or less inherent ideas or ideals, which may also influence the process and/or its outcome when attempts are made to disseminate these features to a new context. Thus, this chapter will look into some of the potential travelling ideas that were identified in Chapter Three and especially Chapter 3.4. Naturally, projects focused on educating study circle leaders have also concerned more practical aspects of how to run a study circle. In this, the importance of focusing on the participant and allowing democratic decision-making is stressed. It also concerns ways of activating participants and encouraging both the individuals themselves and communication, openness and discussion between them. The projects have devoted much attention to how to create a good learning environment in the study circle as well as to what can be expected from the study circle leader. Thus, leadership issues have also been on the agenda (cf. ABF Norra Halland 2000/2001).

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92 As noted in Chapter 1.3, the study circle still holds a prominent position in project activities even where the projects do not have this as the explicitly stated primary goal.
ABF has also developed material for use in international cooperation, for instance in the form of a pamphlet that describes the essence of the study circle. In this, the role of study circles as an exercise in practical democracy is clearly stressed (ABF 2005). So in international projects, too, the connection between the methods and the ideals guiding Swedish popular education is expressly stated. Also, the importance of the form more than the contents of the education and/or study circle comes through clearly. This will also be further discussed below.

It is important to note that even if the project goals concern things other than the study circle methodology per se, this is frequently still the method used by the Swedish actors. Hence, the ideas behind the study circle may still be prevalent in other projects. The same can be said in regard to organizational democracy. In, for instance, projects intended to spread knowledge of the study circle methodology, this is seen as a way of also improving democratic governance in the organizations.93

8.4.1 Equality, Democracy and the Social Function of Popular Education

According to people who have been involved in the activities in Estonia, the different Swedish methods and traditions have been so new in the Estonian context as to run into some difficulties. The absence of a “lecturer” or teacher managing the activities to the extent that most have been used to has been problematic (AHL Tartu 2004; Vaino, interview, 2006). This naturally concerns the study circle methodology, since this is one of the characteristics of the Swedish approach. Swedish respondents also noticed that even to experienced Estonian teachers some of the teaching principles were new. One respondent recalls:

The first years that we had this kind of study circle leader course…it was an aha experience for me when they were doing group work. A professor of education said that “this is the first time I have done group work”. So this is also one aspect in this transfer of Swedish popular education work that [we] think so differently about pedagogy (Puolle, interview, 2005, author’s translation).

On a general level, the equality principle, which is central to Swedish popular education and ABF (see Chapter Three), and the importance of including everyone and providing them with educational opportunity seem to

93 An example of this can for instance be found in a project between ABF Värmland and AHL Tartu that aimed to train people in organizations for disabled people in the study circle methodology (OPC Project Report 21 600 Ō). However, much of the actual focus, according to people in AHL who were involved, was on how to build and develop an organization and how to run it democratically (Mikk, interview, 2006).
have been disseminated by the cooperation between ABF and AHL. Estonian respondents now point to this as an essential ingredient of their approach and their activities and say that much of this has come from Sweden and the cooperation with ABF (Kraus, interview, 2006; Vaino, interview, 2006). It therefore seems that some of the ideas that attempts have been made to spread to Estonia have indeed taken root.\footnote{94}

The equality principle that permeates the whole popular education tradition in Sweden is perceived as essentially new to the Estonian context, at least outside of the fields of cultural subjects. The unfamiliarity of this has also led to some adjustments in the methods and I will come back to that in Chapter Nine, but here it should be noted that the educational principles and the less hierarchical teaching environment are something new that has been brought in by the transnational projects with Sweden and ABF (Mikk, interview, 2005; Valgmaa, interview, 2005b). The fact that Estonian education has a more hierarchical tradition is also clearly expressed by representatives of EVHL along with the fact that there has been a change in this perception over the last decades:

In ENAEA\footnote{95}...the learner is central and the education provider is “flexible” to adjust the study programme and methods to the learner...Traditionally the Estonian Education system has been quite the opposite – the learner was the one to adjust to the educator and the subject (Jääger 2005: 17).

When discussing the methods used in AHL and their adult education activities today it is clear that the projects run with ABF have been very influential. The focus on the individual and the use of positive reinforcement in the education, are things that have been absorbed by many of those who were involved in the projects with ABF and they now follow these principles in their own teaching. This belief in the individual and the aim to give individuals faith in themselves are an important part of creating active citizens. If you do not believe in yourself, your capabilities and the merit of your opinions, you will hardly take an active part in society, politically or otherwise. These connections have also been discussed in Chapter Two. This is something that seems to have influenced perceptions in Estonia and, at least for some, altered their view of the form of the education (Mikk, interview, 2006; Urvet, interview, 2006).

Along with actual methods and various techniques disseminated by the projects and taking root, albeit with alterations, in AHL, the view of popular education, and its role in society, has also been much influenced by the Swedish input, according to Estonian respondents. The potential as a

\footnote{94} The importance of the equality principle is not only emphasized by ABF but also by Swedish funding agencies like OPC, which was mentioned in Chapter 2.2.2. Thus, also the funding agency see this as important.

\footnote{95} ENAEA is the English abbreviation for EVHL.
meeting place and the fact that *folkbildning* is based on a less hierarchical notion of education where the central ingredients include equality and that learning is based on the experiences of the participants has been underlined in Chapter Three as essential in the Swedish view. The following quotation makes plain the similarity of how this is perceived in Estonia.

Through education people meet, people talk with each other. They not only learn from [the] teacher but they learn from each other – this is *folkbildning*, not formal education. [In] formal education, professionals come and talk [of] what you must think, what you must do but here people even learn from each other and this is [a] very specific method (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b).

This quotation not least acknowledges the social function of popular education and the role of the classroom as a meeting place where people with varying backgrounds can get together, as is also stressed in interviews with representatives of different AHL organizations (Mikk, interview, 2006; Valgmaa, interview, 2005b). Both of these aspects are also stressed in the traditional Swedish view as discussed in Chapter Three. There would therefore seem to exist clear similarities between actors in ABF and AHL concerning the view on this general role of popular education. This also connects with the civil society discussion in Chapter Two and the notion of civil society as “schools of democracy”.

The importance of including everyone and working with marginalized groups as well as the significance of active citizens who may need both confidence and education before becoming active is a view that may have existed among some of the Estonian respondents before the projects. However, several assert that parts of this, and especially the connections between active citizenship and popular education, have come through the projects with ABF. That *folkbildning* is connected to the development of democracy, civil society and active citizenship is a view clearly taken by Estonian respondents (Kiik, interview, 2006). The importance of these aspects and connections has been expressed by leaders of the central umbrella organization:

> The task of popular education is to teach people to articulate their ideas, to discuss important matters, to co-operate with others, to formulate their common problems and to find solutions. Thus, it forms capacity for public participation among people who otherwise feel themselves marginalized and alienated. Through the organisational structure of the centres for popular education, we help to create a network for democratic participation. (Vihalemm 2000: 7)

... *folkbildning* is... connected to civil society... precisely that you can educate people into becoming active, active citizens... all those things that enable me to act as a better citizen, better person and be active and take responsibility
for my own life and also for the lives of others (Kiik, interview, 2006, author’s translation).

Here there are clear similarities with the ideas fostered in popular education organizations in Sweden and their view that popular education is a way to empower people and give them the tools to change both their own situation and the society in which they live. The participatory ideal of democracy and the importance of developing democracy that have previously been described as important parts of Swedish popular education also appear to have taken root, at least among some of the Estonian actors. Again, it may be that these actors have held these ideals before their cooperation with ABF but it seems that these project activities made the connection with popular education apparent. It is also something that has taken root among people active on the local level in Estonia:

…democracy…well, you learned, perhaps not directly but somehow indirectly, because I notice it in N.N. [a manager of one AHL organization]. For instance, when N.N creates a project, N.N. also writes projects for those who are not so well off. It would also be much easier to get those who can pay but N.N. works it out…and then I think that I have also become much more democratic because I have dealt so much with Sweden and so on [with] that way of thinking – that all are equal and so on (Vaino, interview, 2006, author’s translation)

I myself got to understand the idea of this kind of democracy development through the project(s). So I have developed a lot myself, my own opinions. Then I understood why it is important to have this kind of projects. (Mikk, interview, 2005, author’s translation)

The participatory ideal of democracy that guides ABF’s work thus seems to have been spread with the methods, as shown by the fact that the way this is discussed and how people in AHL pinpoint the role of popular education is very similar to what is expressed by their counterparts in ABF. This is, for instance, evident in how the classroom is to be seen as a democratic environment. There is thus much of what may be called practical democracy or learning how to practice democracy both in relation to state institutions but also in relation to an individual’s fellow citizens. As mentioned in Chapter Three, in a study circle (and also in other parts of Swedish popular education) the educational activities themselves are to be run in a democratic manner. This I argue can also be seen as a way of socializing citizens into the democratic game. This is also expressed in interviews with representatives from ABF. For instance:

…experience democracy, don’t talk about how it should work but experience democracy. (Mousell, interview, 2006, author’s translation)
People in AHL also discuss the same thing in related ways:

Democracy in everyday life I think is a very important part of civic education. (Vihalemm, interview, 2005a)

…usually what people want, what they need, they need know-how but even [more] they need [to know] what to do with this know-how and that is why all our programmes, what we do, we do it very practical – even these theoretical things. (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b)

What comes out in discussions with people from AHL is that what is seen as essential is to teach and learn “democracy in everyday life”, meaning to learn both about democracy in principle but also practical things about democracy as part of every citizen’s life. This may then concern things like how to organize meetings, how to speak in public and how to behave democratically in the smaller “society” of a classroom. It may also concern education in law, ”everyday law”, since there has been an upsurge in new legislation since independence in Estonia and it is viewed as essential for citizens to be familiar with this on some basic level. All of this is seen as an important part of civic education (Vihalemm, interview, 2005a). Efforts are made to spread this in a more practice-oriented way – not only giving participants know-how, but teaching them how to use this know-how and, in a way, providing them with a “handbook” (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b), which also comes through clearly in the quotations above. This is related to the issue of civic competence that was discussed in Chapter 2.1.2. In that context it was acknowledged that it is necessary to possess tools to handle the information coming in as well as knowledge and skills to know what to do with that information. What is stressed by AHL representatives shows that assisting in this is perceived as an important role of AHL organizations.

That for instance the study circle is to work in a democratic fashion and constitute a democratic environment is a strong belief in the Swedish popular education tradition, which has already been referred to. That this is a potential that Estonian actors have also taken to heart is expressed in the following quotation:

…adult education is actually a very good place to practice democracy. For example, the study circle, it is a very democratic body…you can’t learn democracy when just sitting in a classroom…democracy is something you have to live, you have to practice it so to say everyday (Jääger, interview, 2005).

Swedish popular education has seen the task of increasing what may be called civic competence as one of its important roles. Giving individuals the tools necessary to function as active democratic citizens and teaching them to take the responsibility necessary for this should be seen as a main
ambition of popular education. This demonstrates clear similarities between the views held in ABF and those of AHL. These attitudes, like those expressed in the quotations above, are consistent with much previous literature dealing with civil society. As discussed in Chapter Two, one possible important way in which civil society organizations can contribute to a well-functioning democratic society is by giving citizens an arena or environment where they get the chance to practice being active democratic citizens. Civil society may thus provide both theoretical and practical knowledge of active democratic citizenship (see for instance Heater 1999: 172f, cf. Diamond 1999). It seems that this role of civil society is something ABF wishes to live up to and representatives of AHL also see this potential.

One way to improve democratic skills among the citizens participating in the educational activities may of course be what is often referred to as civic education. This is, as mentioned earlier, also seen as an important part of AHL’s activities, at least from the point of view of the central umbrella organization. The local member organizations are not unquestioningly positive about this and point to problems that arise when attempting to implement it on a local level. This will also be further discussed in Chapters 8.4.3 and 9.2.1. It is, however, also the case that the content of the education is not the only matter of importance here. As has been mentioned previously, the form of the education may be just as important and this is also something that seems to have taken root in Estonia and AHL. This insight is expressed as a result of the transnational cooperation with ABF and other Nordic organizations and I will come back to this in Chapter 8.4.3.

8.4.2 Organizational Democracy

Examples of projects that addressed issues related to the development of democratic skills, also on an organizational level, include those dealing with meeting techniques and associational skills. Meeting techniques in this context refers to issues such as how to host a meeting and keep it both democratic and efficient. By associational skills I refer to, apart from meeting techniques, for instance learning about the roles of different representatives in a voluntary organization (such as the chairman and the treasurer) and several other things that I will come back to below.96

96 The focus on things like meeting techniques and overall organizational development may be a quite natural aspect to address when attempting to assist the build-up of civil society. However, remembering the Swedish history of popular education and popular movements, there are also some significant historical links that make these aims even more natural to the Swedish organizations. As discussed in Chapter 3.1, issues of civic as well as organizational competence – also including things like meeting techniques and organizational democracy – were important in the build-up of Swedish popular education and its associations. It was then a step towards getting organized in order to challenge the state to achieve a more participatory democracy, and not least universal suffrage.
By looking more closely at one of the projects that took place between ABF Ronneby and AHL Tartu and focused on trade union organizations I will paint a picture of this type of project designed to foster organizational democracy. This project (OPC Project 98 604 Ö), which was also used as an example in Chapter 8.2, aimed to increase competence and knowledge among trade union representatives and members and thus to assist the development of democratic organizations and in the long run, a democratic Estonian society. This was to be done by educational efforts. So, one aim was to increase the internal democracy of Estonian trade unions as well as to make them more powerful and effective. A more direct ambition was for the trade unions to increase their memberships (AHL Tartu 1998, AHL Tartu 1999, Hallberg 2000a, OPC Project Report 98 604 Ö). However, it should be said that ABF Ronneby’s partner was AHL Tartu, which also took part in the activities, and not the trade unions directly. This means that the project still falls within the group of cases covered by this study.

As discussed in Chapter 3.1.2, ABF has been and still is in close cooperation with Swedish trade unions. In many instances activities overlap in that educational activities may focus on issues relevant to those active in trade unions and this is also something that has been used in project activities with AHL and Estonia. Some of the material used in these courses or study circles was material used by Swedish trade unions in their internal educational activities (Hallberg, interview, 2006). However, for this particular transnational project, much of the material had also been translated into Estonian (Nilsson, N, interview, 2006).

During the project years (1998-2000) several courses were given for trade unionists by means of a cooperative effort by ABF Ronneby and AHL Tartu. Significant parts of these sessions dealt with meeting techniques, how to create and follow a plan of activities, what the roles of different representatives are, collective agreements, negotiation techniques, laws relevant for trade unions and the workplace, etc. (Hallberg 2000a, Hallberg 2000b; Hallberg, interview, 2006; Nilsson, B-C, interview, 2006). One of the aims of this project was explicitly to assist the development of a democratic folkrörelse, i.e. popular movement, for trade unions (Hallberg 2000a), which demonstrates the embeddedness of the actors from ABF in the Swedish context. This is particularly so since, as explained in Chapter Three, the origin in this kind of movement is one of the characteristics of Swedish popular education.

Apart from more factual knowledge regarding laws, etc. an important aspect concerned creating a democratic environment in the micro-community constituted by an organization and also how to behave, work and lead in a democratic fashion. It should be mentioned that the importance of

97 The planning of the project, with the first meetings between ABF Ronneby and AHL Tartu for this particular project started in 1997.
communicative skills that can be seen as fundamental for tasks such as hosting meetings is emphasized and a part of the activities of a number of AHL organizations today. Also meeting techniques in the same sense as they are discussed in ABF, i.e. how to hold a *democratic* meeting, are now parts of the educational activities of some organizations in AHL (Leinus, interview, 2006).

What is important to note here is that much of the work done in these “courses” took the form of study circles and substantial segments of the activities took the form of group work. For instance regarding meeting techniques: preparing a meeting was given as an assignment to smaller groups and this was to be followed by leading a meeting in the larger group. Role-playing was also used to deal with negotiation techniques. So, just as is the case in many study circles, these activities adopted the principle of “learning-by-doing” (Hallberg, interview, 2006; Nilsson, B-C, interview, 2006). Again, this is also what is expressed in the quotations on pages 160 and 161 and it demonstrates that these ideas can be prevalent no matter whether or not there is a specific subject in focus for the activities. So, again, this concerns very much the *form* more than the contents, which will be discussed in the next section.

The new pedagogics were also clearly appreciated by the Estonian participants, which is apparent in evaluations of the activities (Hallberg 2000a). The confidence-enhancement of becoming accustomed to voicing one’s opinion, speaking before a larger group of people and leading a meeting that taps into what was discussed above in Chapter 8.2 is also apparent in these activities, as is also shown in interviews done for the evaluations of the project. (Hallberg 2000a, Hallberg 2000b).

Evaluations made after each of the courses also show whether any change has taken place among the participants. And it is clear that it has, with regard to things like confidence in speaking publicly, leading meetings, etc. (see especially Hallberg 2000a, Hallberg 2000b, but also: AHL Tartu 2000, AHL Tartu 2001).

Partly because of the way this project set about achieving the goals, this also led to a dissemination of more than pure factual knowledge of labour legislation, etc. The use of study circle methodology and activation of the participants is also something that many of the union representatives took to heart and after the project ended several of them continued with this when training their members (Vaino, interview, 2006; Arukask, interview, 2005). The fact that AHL was involved and that its efforts were appreciated also led to continued close contact between trade unions and AHL. These contacts have, as discussed previously, also become very important for AHL and the cooperation between the educational organizations and the trade unions has
grown closer. This may indicate an isomorphic process where AHL has grown more similar to ABF.

So, after this project ended, the close contacts between AHL and trade unions continued (AHL Tartu 1998). Together they have developed a multi-level educational programme for people active in trade unions and there are board members in the central organization of AHL who are also heads of trade unions (Arukask, interview, 2005). Attempts are now being made to spread the educational programme and thus some of the lessons drawn from the project activities, after some adjustment to Estonian conditions, to other parts of Estonia. This could then be seen as the next stage in the process of translation where actors try to communicate the lessons to other actors. From a translation perspective this could be interpreted as a part of the institutionalization phase, where actors attempt to make the new ideas part of the normal routines in the new context. This is also one piece of evidence that what was disseminated really caught on in Estonia, since otherwise there would be no point in trying to spread it further, especially since it does not earn the people or the organizations any money, quite the contrary. The courses are generally free for participants, which means that the trade unions or study centres have to find funding (Arukask, interview, 2005). Thus, it seems that similarities pointed out in this chapter are evidence that the Estonian organizations not only “talk the talk” but also “walk the walk”. The kind of continued dissemination mentioned here is also part of the continued work in AHL after the termination of the projects with ABF. This will be further discussed in Chapter Ten.

During the project years the number of trade union members in the southern part of Estonia grew significantly (Nilsson, interview, 2006), which was also one of the aims of the projects. If this was mainly a result of the project or whether other factors may have played a part is difficult to say but to some of the Estonians actors who have had an insight into both the project and the further developments it is obvious that there are direct connections between the project activities with ABF Ronneby and the increased membership of the trade unions in Southern Estonia (Kiik, interview, 2006). Also at the time of this study, the number of trade union members in the Tartu area is significantly higher than around Tallinn, which people involved attribute to the good cooperation between trade unions and AHL (Arukask, interview, 2005; Valgmaa, interview, 2005a).

8.4.3 Form Versus Content and Historical Legacies

The importance has already been noted of not only looking at the contents of the education or the projects to find out what is actually being spread, whether it is on the level of transnational projects between organizations that

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98 The central organization of AHL also shares its headquarters in Tartu with trade unions.
are the empirical focus in this study or on the level of individual citizens, i.e. those participating in AHL’s activities and then, possibly, reaping the fruits – bitter or sweet – of the cooperation. The form of the education, for instance the use of study circles, has been central to the Swedish notion of popular education throughout history and with the ideals that are part of this, the content is not seen as the single most important attribute of popular education. This is also in line with the ideas of civil society as “schools of democracy” that were mentioned already in the introduction (for a more detailed discussion of this and civil society in general, see Chapter Two).

That this focus on the form of the education is very much alive in the way Swedish popular educators think in the context of entering into transnational cooperation is evident when talking to these individuals (Johansson, interview, 2005; Lundgren, interview, 2005; Nilsson, B-C, interview, 2006; Puolle, interview, 2005). It is also something that is expressed by Estonian respondents and something that can be seen as “new” and brought to the forefront in the projects with ABF and also in the contacts with NFA (Mikk, interview, 2005; Valgmaa, interview, 2005b).

In the field of civic education and the promotion of active citizenship, the importance of the form of the education is stressed by Estonian respondents (Mikk, interview, 2005). People in AHL have described it as difficult to give a “civic education course”, not least because people active in AHL have noticed that giving a “civics course” seldom attracts many participants. The view expressed is not that popular education should not deal with civic education – on the contrary, these things are seen as essential to the Estonian organizations. Popular education is seen as something that can improve people’s life by giving them knowledge and skills concerning how they are able to affect their life and their communities. However, what it does say is that, when working “in the field” so to speak or being directly involved in the courses given, they have come to the conclusion that it is difficult to present this as civic education or civics courses. Because of this, they themselves now stress the importance of working with the form more than the content of the courses (Breede, interview, 2006; Mikk, interview, 2005; Urvet, interview, 2006). A civics course has to be renamed and perhaps the knowledge supposed to be spread in such a course has to be incorporated in other subjects instead. In this situation, the form of the education becomes essential and so do the topics chosen within a subject. Take the example of a language course. It is possible to give this course and teach people, for instance, a foreign language, but by using contemporary issues, citizenship matters, questions about democracy or other subjects relevant to the furthering of democratic skills as discussion topics or literature in the language course, much civic education can be given in a course dealing at first glance with a very different subject. This is also portrayed as a reason for the belief that popular education teachers need to be more educated themselves than is implied in the Nordic or Swedish ideal of popular
education. It is necessary because they have to be aware of, and able to use, the fact that their role goes beyond speaking about their respective subjects (Mikk, interview, 2005).

Even courses that could be seen as civic education in content do not have to be labelled civic education. If they are, the experience of people working within the field of adult and popular education in Estonia is that this hampers recruitment (Mikk, interview, 2005). The problem is partly said to be that there is an aversion to politics in general (cf. OPC Internet99). This expresses itself in the shunning of politics and participation as well as in distrust of politics and organizations100, which is regarded as a common phenomenon in many countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. This also relates to what has been discussed in previous research about the difficulty in many parts of this region of getting citizens to participate in public life and not least in civil society organizations. When, for instance, making a swift comparison of organizational membership, i.e. how many organizations an individual is a member of, based on the numbers presented by Howard (2003: 69) we find that Swedes on average are members of 2.62 organizations whereas the number for Estonia is 0.64.

Issues of distrust and withdrawal from politics may, however, be something that is far from unique to Estonia or even to former Soviet republics or East European countries but may rather concern the gap between politics/politicians and citizens in many countries. Of course, scepticism towards civic education may partly also be a result of the political education that existed during Soviet times. Discussing political education or the like today may still make people think of the kind of propaganda teachings that were part of the old system (Mikk, interview, 2005; cf. White 1980). Whether this is the case, however, is not clear-cut and the opinions regarding this also differ among respondents, with some saying that it probably does not have that much effect today.

Even though the absolute majority of Soviet education is believed to have been propagandistic, there still remained openings for less controlled education even during Soviet times (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b; Vihalem, interview, 2005a). There does not seem to be any real consensus regarding

100 In a study by Rose in 2002 it is shown that Estonians have quite significant support for the current form of government and also hold a belief in continued improvements. However, only 9 % said that they trust political parties whereas 71 % did not. Concerning members of parliament 10 % claimed to trust them and 67 % voiced distrust. 16 % trusted the Prime Minister, 69 % did not. The president, however, had the trust of 63 % and only 19 % said they did not trust him. The final figure I wish to draw attention to here is that 24 % trusted trade unions whereas 57 % did not. It must be noted that the study made a distinction between Estonians and the Russian minority and the numbers presented here are representative of the ethnic Estonians. However, the numbers do not demonstrate any larger divergence between the two groups apart from trust of the president. Among the Russian minority the president was trusted by 49 % whereas 32 % distrusted him (Rose 2002).
the possible influence of previous experience in Soviet times of the politicized education that existed in those days. Some mean that the problems that this might have led to for organizations trying to establish themselves in the field of adult education after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, in the form of distrust of these activities, etc., has not been evident (Jääger, interview, 2005; Puolle, interview, 2005). Others, however, think that this historical legacy has indeed affected the situation, not least in the way it is possible to present the organization and the activities. Previous research has also pointed out that the way education, including adult education, was used to promote the Party’s propaganda in Soviet times might give rise to distrust and suspicion of organizations involved in adult education today (Bron, M. 2001: 172). A legacy of distrust is something that many parts of society and organizations in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have had, and still have, to struggle with. It could be said that organizations in this context did not have the luxury of starting with a blank sheet after the transformations. Instead they have had to struggle with existing opinions and attitudes dating from communist times.

It is interesting that Estonian respondents working at the local level, i.e. those actually implementing the activities among the Estonian citizenry, believe that the past has provided obstacles, whereas Swedish respondents as well as some representatives of the more central level in Estonia do not seem to have noticed these issues, so this may very well be a result of how close they have been to the true implementation phase.

When discussing these issues with representatives of AHL, what stands out is that the legacy of the past is heterogeneous. In part, it may lead to problems and negative attitudes towards anything to do with politics but the other part is positive and relates to the strong tradition of various cultural activities that also existed during Soviet times. What is reflected in discussions of this is that it has been an issue for organizations like AHL to come to terms with the choice people now have of not participating since, previously, many of the activities they are now attempting to spread were not truly voluntary (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b). This is also pointed out in previous research, regarding both popular education and the low membership of trade unions (Ek 2006: 92ff).

As noted in Chapter Four, there is a tradition of adult education in Estonia going back to the first period of independence. In those times Nordic and Swedish models also provided inspiration. However, pedagogics, methods and ideas in this field of activities used today are expressed as having taken root as a result of the cooperation with Nordic countries after the second independence.

101 The different sides to the Soviet experience have also been touched upon in Chapter Four.
Estonian society now is moving very quickly and these ideas [from the first independence] are not anymore functioning in our day. Now we need to find new methods (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b).

It is possible that a shift in focus is the appropriate way to describe the change, a new way of thinking about the role, methods, aims of and opportunities for adult education, and a broadening of possible areas to which adult and popular education can be applied. Much of the inspiration for these developments and broadening of the potential perspective of adult and popular education in Estonia is claimed to have come from transnational cooperation and this is perhaps best described as a way to broaden the minds of those wanting to get involved in organizing these activities.

The proposition that proclaiming a civic education course would be a problem is an opinion that, however, does not find consensus among Estonian respondents. Part of the explanation for this diversity may also be an issue of time. Attitudes may change over time, which could lead to new opinions in the general public or the citizenry.

Many of the possibly more explicit civic education courses that have taken place over the years have been free of charge. The experience of some local organizations is that many people feel that it is something good and needed but they are not willing to pay for it, perhaps because it does not seem to give them direct rewards in the way that increasing their competence by means of for instance courses in language or computer skills may do (Breede, interview, 2006; Leinus, interview, 2006). This is also pointed to as one of the practical things about having a lot of cooperation with trade unions and giving education in this area. Participants from various trade unions are believed to see more direct importance in the course contents when applied to this specific area and they are also more willing to pay the (small) fees entailed. At least this is the view of AHL’s central organization (Vihalem, interview, 2005a).

As has been mentioned previously, there are a number of projects including members of ABF and AHL that have concerned things that may be less explicitly connected to democratic ideas. However, a closer look at these projects seems to reveal connections, since all use the method of the study circle in the activities. I will here take a few examples in order to demonstrate the wider influence that seemingly rather pragmatic project activities might have.

One project involving cooperation between ABF Södertälje-Nykvarn and AHL Pärnu stated as its goal to jointly “build a school for music and culture that is to be a centre for cultural activities in the municipality of Pärnu” (OPC Project Report 95 638 Ö, author’s translation). This was meant to give

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102 The connections between democracy, Swedish popular education and the study circle has been elaborated upon in previous chapters.
the young people of Pärnu something to gather in and around. For this purpose, the Swedish organization assisted in the repair and re-equipment of a community centre in Pärnu. However, this project also involved training in methods and pedagogics of popular education with the local AHL organization. Also, both Russian-speaking and Estonian-speaking adolescents participated in the activities, which could point to an integrational aim of the project. This shows that much can be “hidden” in a project that at a first glance does not seem to be connected with the matters in which this study is interested. The first project (there was more than one project involving these two organizations) lasted for two years (1992-1993) and this was followed by subsequent projects from 1995 until the final account was written in 2002 (OPC Project Report 95 638 Ö). When discussing the projects with the people involved on the Swedish side it is stated that one of the reasons for starting the project was the low participation in the preceding municipal election (below 50 %). The turnout was especially low among those below the age of 25. For this reason an attempt was made to spread knowledge of study circles and it was hoped that this would encourage participation and a sense of community. The reason for the choice of music as a subject was that this was seen as something that united the younger population in Pärnu and, thus, a good way of reaching them (Johansson, interview, 2005). This demonstrates the belief in the educational value of the form as opposed to the content of the education.

There has also been more than one project concerning parenthood. For instance one project between ABF Norra Stor-Stockholm and AHL Tartu that took place in 2003 and 2004 targeted current and potential foster-parents in Tartu (OPC Project Report 23 613 Ö). However, this project was extended to include other parents because of a greater interest than anticipated. This may not seem to concern democratic ideas very closely but the main idea was claimed to be to teach the participants how to use study circles and as part of the project it was intended that, after an introductory course, the participants would start study circles of their own in an attempt to help them build networks and strengthen their identity and self-esteem. The building of self-esteem and giving participants faith in themselves, especially when dealing with marginalized groups, have as noted earlier, also been essential aims of adult education in other contexts, not least in Sweden. This was also done and it is interesting to note that wishes were then expressed for more education in the form of training in being a study circle leader (AHL Tartu 2004). The organizations also tried to provide for these needs. These requests may of course be one of the reasons why many projects involving different ABF and AHL organizations have given training in being a study circle leader.

A similar project to the one between ABF Norra Stor-Stockholm and AHL Tartu was undertaken between ABF Skara, in cooperation with Axevalla Folk High School, and AHL Saaremaa in 1997, when the target
group was young families and single mothers on Saaremaa. The purpose was to, “through the use of study circles and general meetings, give information about how Estonian society works; what rights and obligations the citizens have” (OPC Project Report 95 637 Ö, author’s translation). However, when the outcome of this project was discussed with Swedish representatives who were actively involved, it turned out that the participants were much more interested in learning what they perceived as more practical and useful skills, such as languages, etc. (Puolle, interview, 2005). This may not be strange or bad, but it is an interesting development and attitude, showing a rather pragmatic view on the part of many participants. This project and the target group identified there have also left an imprint on the activities of AHL Saaremaa: they have since been involved in a European project for single mothers and female entrepreneurs (Kraus, interview, 2006).

8.5 Concluding Remarks

For some of the Estonian participants, the “ideology” of Swedish popular education and ABF appears initially to have been difficult to grasp, which is explained partly by the historical legacy of having grown up during the authoritarian system in Soviet times where, first of all, speaking your mind was not a self-evident part of life and secondly where education and adult education were to a large extent influenced by and disseminated Soviet propaganda. Naturally, adult education, propagandistic or not, was governed by the state, which also constitutes a difference in relation both to the Swedish and to the current Estonian situation. As one respondent described the first contacts with people from ABF:

They tried to explain to me what adult education in modern life means. Of course in the Soviet period we had lots of different kinds of universities but they were all involved with Soviet ideology, marxism-leninism evening lessons and so on. So of course we didn’t understand so much about this Scandinavian system but they came here to Estonia again and again (Urvet, interview, 2006).

This quotation and the experience of having to be exposed to the ideas several times to give them some time to “sink in” before it is possible to truly process and evaluate what is relevant for a particular context and situation is also reasonable from a theoretical point of view. In the literature on translation the fact that unfamiliar ideas take a long time to catch on in a new context is seen as natural because “we cannot perceive something unless

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103 This refers to, for instance, “Peoples’ Universities” which were an adult education institution in the Soviet system (Zajda 1999: 152f).
it somehow relates to what we already know…we cannot translate what is wholly unrecognizable” (Czarniawska & Joerges 1996: 27f).

Even though it is described as having been difficult at first to see what the Swedish perspective on adult and popular education meant and what the underlying ideals were, an understanding developed. The contacts and projects with ABF are claimed to have fostered the conceptualization of popular education for several of the Estonian respondents.

This chapter has demonstrated a number of examples of items, ideas and practices that have spread from Sweden to Estonia. This is also connected with the ideas that were extracted in Chapter 3.4.

Educating study circle leaders has been a focus of many projects and, attempts have clearly been made to spread this methodology. Estonian actors also show a familiarity with this method, which indicates that it has travelled.

Equality, a more participant-oriented and less hierarchical environment are things that also seem to have been taken in. That this was something new to the Estonian educational field and that it came from transnational cooperation has also been demonstrated by the interviews done for this study. This is then also connected with the democratic ideas of Swedish popular education. However, the fact that Estonian respondents have noted this does not necessarily mean that it has been incorporated into their activities to the extent that it is in Swedish popular education, but that is a discussion that will surface in the next chapter. Also the social function of popular education, i.e. the role these activities fill as a meeting place for people, is emphasized by Estonian respondents, as is a belief that it is a task of popular education to reach marginalized groups in society. To what extent this task is fulfilled may be another issue (both in Estonia and in Sweden) but it is viewed as important and seen as connected with encouraging active citizens. This is also connected to the free, voluntary and inclusive character of Swedish popular education, which has not been extensively treated here. What can be said is that AHL does not restrict participation, but exclusion may still result from the financial situation and the need to charge fees for participation. However, the same can be said of Swedish study associations and their activities.

Concerning the ambition of encouraging citizens to become active, AHL has frequently chosen to adopt a hands-on approach by attempting to provide participants with a kind of “handbook” on how to be an active democratic citizen in their everyday lives. Finally, the primacy of the form of the education as opposed to the content that is stressed in Swedish popular education is something that has clearly been picked up by members of AHL. This may be of even greater importance for Estonian organizations, given the sensitivity surrounding politics as such in this country. Hence, that the form of the education is essential if the activities are to promote civic
competence is stressed by Estonian respondents, as has also been shown in this chapter.

In conclusion, it seems that the ideas discussed in Chapter 3.4 as potential travelling ideas have indeed travelled. At least it is clear that these are what Swedish actors have attempted to disseminate. Some of the ideas, such as the importance of the form of the education, have also clearly been adopted by Estonian organizations. However, to what extent the ideas being promoted by ABF have been taken in by AHL organizations and incorporated in their activities will be further discussed in the next chapter. There the focus will be on how the ideas were received and edited to fit the Estonian context.
This chapter will consider how the items and ideas delineated above have been handled by the Estonian actors. I will investigate whether or not what was disseminated, which was discussed in Chapter Eight, has been “simply” imported into Estonia or whether it has also been adjusted, translated or edited in some way to better fit the needs and wants of Estonian actors and Estonian citizens. Thus, the focus of this chapter is the second phase in a translation process, which is where this editing takes place. Differences and similarities between the Swedish and Estonian organizations will also be addressed in this chapter. This concerns issues of identification that previous translation studies have noted as important, which were also discussed in Chapter Five. Finally, a number of areas of conflict that came up during the cooperation will be discussed, partly since these may influence the co-operation as such, but partly also since the translation and editing attempted by Estonian actors may be a contributory reason for some of the conflicts.

9.1 Translation in Transnational Cooperation

In Chapter Eight a number of ideas, methods and other items that have been disseminated through the contacts between ABF and AHL were identified. However, this does not mean that the Swedish popular education system or all its methods and organizational forms have been simply transported to Estonia. Several things have been adjusted to fit the local context, both in the thinking about popular education but much more in its implementation:

[the] Swedish model does not really work in Estonia – not all things (Vaino, interview, 2006, author’s translation).

This would then seem to fit well with how scholars using the concept of translation view the development of a process of dissemination. Before actors can translate anything they have to be exposed or gain access to the idea or practice that is to be spread. Here this took place through the contacts with partners in ABF. After this, the actors have to reflect over how they are to incorporate the ideas and practices into their own environment, organization and activities, a process known as editing (Sahlin-Andersson 1996: 82-88).
That frequent attempts have been made to spread the pedagogics of the study circle is hardly surprising since it is central to Swedish popular education and ABF. It may be that the focus on this ideal and the very concept of study circles have become an almost too prominent feature of Swedish popular education or rather how those active think about it. This might cause problems in transnational cooperation since the terminology of study circles is not as self-evident in other contexts and some measure the “success” of projects or organizations by the amount of study circles they produce (Magnusson, interview, 2006). As discussed in Chapter Three, the study circle is often seen as the defining feature of “true” Swedish popular education and, hence, part of the potential travelling ideas that were identified in Chapter 3.4. Evidently this is something that also comes through in transnational activities.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the concept of *folkbildning* is not easily translated into English nor into many other languages and the difference between a study circle and a course may not be as great in other contexts as some Swedish popular educators believe. What should be seen as essential is the use of the study circle method and the perspective on the participants inherent in it. To take an example from one of the projects in focus for this study where there was a clash between perceptions of this kind:

The Swedish ABF partner criticized the partner organization from AHL for not having started any study circles. The AHL partner was very surprised since a lot of course activities had begun during the project. To solve the problem the “courses” were rewritten as “study circles” in the description and a lot of praise was given for the number of study circles created (Vaino, interview, 2006).

At a first glance this may seem as nothing more than a matter of labelling, designed to please the partner and the donor. However, the terminology does actually raise a more serious question. The Estonian project manager is of the opinion that the study circle, in the shape it has in Sweden, does not really work as well in Estonia – at least not without modifications. It is described as difficult to recruit participants for this kind of education, at least in anything other than purely cultural activities (Mikk, interview, 2005). This may indicate a difference in how much distance exists and is desired between popular and formal education in the two countries, which will be further discussed below. However, it may also at least to some extent concern the very terminology. Some regard the pedagogics in many of AHL’s courses as very similar to those of a study circle and therefore see it as more relevant to look at the actual activities instead of the concepts used. The difference can then be mostly explained by the fact that the organizations use the vocabulary that is familiar to the general public (Kiik, interview, 2006; Vaino, interview, 2006). Some respondents also believe that how well the study circle, as a specific method, has taken hold and worked in Estonia varies according to where in the country you are. The current (in
chairperson of the central AHL umbrella organization claims that the study circle works especially well in the countryside. In for instance the north of Estonia, and in the islands, the study circle is seen as a good way of activating people. In Tallinn it is described as more problematic. This applies not only to the study circle but to popular education activities in general. The AHL chairperson sees part of the explanation for this in the fact that activities in Tallinn are distinctly commercial. Most people are claimed to go to Tallinn to make money, not to learn or take part in educational activities (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b). No attempt has been made in this study to obtain more objective information about this but it is reasonable to assume that if this is the case a contributing reason may also be that in a city like Tallinn, the competition is tougher. This would most likely hold true also in the educational field. AHL has a member organization in Tallinn but it is argued that this is small and not very active or visible (Mikk, interview, 2005). Thus, the presence of AHL in the capital is limited.

Returning to the area of conflict and the solution that were mentioned above: In their view AHL uses techniques and pedagogics (even if under a different name) and expresses basic perceptions of the role of participants and of study circle leaders or teachers very similar to those of ABF personnel. Individuals from ABF also describe the “courses” (a “course” then being perceived as more hierarchical and less participant-oriented) given by this AHL organization as similar to study circles in the Swedish sense or as a combination of a study circle and a course (Karlsson, interview, 2006). This combination has also been noted by actors in other projects (Nilsson, B-C, interview, 2006), and it coincides with the view that some of the Estonian actors have expressed (Kiik, interview, 2006). So the educational activities show similarities to what in Sweden would be described as a study circle. This is then one kind of editing or translation. The ideas and methods are still recognizable – similarities with the Swedish tradition are evident – but alterations have been made when implementing them in the Estonian context. There are also differences in the methods that have developed when Estonian actors have translated the ideas and methods into something that fits the Estonian context. In this way, the projects may very well have developed the methods further or into something slightly different, which is also what is expected to happen in a process of translation. For instance, the methods used in Estonia and AHL are described as partly course-like with lectures, etc. and partly discussion-oriented, as in a Swedish study circle. They also use cultural and creative elements and methods. However, it is clearly stated that the central ingredient in these Estonian “courses” is that the individual participant stands in focus (Karlsson, interview, 2006), which can be described as perhaps the most central characteristic of a Swedish study circle.

Perceptions of people active on both the Estonian and the Swedish side point to the fact that many of the methods used in popular education in
Sweden have been successfully spread to Estonia, although with some
adjustments. This is also shown by the fact that organizations in AHL now
hold courses of their own for adult education teachers and would-be study
circle leaders. These courses reinforce much of the pedagogics and ideas that
people in AHL themselves came into contact with through the cooperation
with Sweden and ABF. Some of the study materials used are also
translations of Swedish material, which shows that there are obvious
connections. This, I argue, strongly supports the contention that the methods
being disseminated have taken root in Estonia. If they had simply been
adopted for the sake of continued support there would be no incentive to
continue after the projects ended. However, it is more appropriate to talk
about adjustment as opposed to adoption. AHL has also started to produce
books on methods and pedagogics and has developed its own study material
for teachers’ courses; its activities also employ additional and somewhat new
methods that have also caught the eye of people in ABF.

As has been stated here, a lot of items and ideas have been transferred
from Sweden to Estonia through the projects but AHL has developed its own
variations. Again, the editing process that is discussed in translation studies
and that was presented in Chapter 5.3 shines through. One of the Swedish
project managers describes his view on this as:

AHL has not surrendered to this Swedish model of popular education but
they have found their own model that is in between our way of looking at
popular education in Sweden [and something else/new]...They [Estonia and
AHL] have found the golden mean where you develop methods within the
framework of a more teacher-controlled educational situation. (Karlsson,
interview, 2006, author’s translation)

When it comes to organizing meetings, courses and activities of various
kinds, there was something of a clash between the Swedish and Estonian
traditions that has roots in the ABF focus on the social function of education.
This was especially evident in the first joint projects of two organizations.
Estonians expected a tight schedule with much information, effective work
and little discussion. It was more a matter of absorbing information –
reflecting on it could be done later and perhaps alone. This is not the way the
Swedish organizations work. The focus is very much on discussion, on
people meeting and on the social function of the educational environment,
and less on the pure gathering of information. This sometimes led Estonian
participants to feel that progress was very slow and that the methods and
styles were inefficient (Vallgårda 1999b: 5; Urvet, interview, 2006; Vaino,
interview, 2006). However, many of them gained an understanding of the
importance of the discussions and the techniques as a counterweight to the
content of a course or meeting. This reflects what was discussed in the
previous chapter regarding form versus content.
Estonians want to do things very very fast, very quickly. I remember the first meetings in Sweden: oh, the discussions! I asked myself: oh my god, I know this, it is so clear. Why does the teacher have to explain again and again. But now I understand! Now I teach also for Estonians that discussion is most important. (Urvet, interview, 2006)

The social role of popular education activities is, however, not at all foreign to many of the Estonian organizers and they also stress this part of it themselves. Several see the need in people to get together, to be part of a group and through this develop themselves – perhaps more than the actual contents of the course would (Breede, interview, 2006; Kessa, interview, 2006; Leinus, interview, 2006).

What was stated above also relates to what has been previously discussed regarding the similarities in the ways in which Swedish and Estonian adult educators understand adult and popular education and its role in society. The different conditions and needs may however also lead here to certain differences in the way this is developed and implemented.

I believe that the idea of *folkbildning* is to help people develop themselves. To do better by themselves and in society and people are different in what they need. Some need to sing…some need a computer course…I believe that *folkbildning* in Estonia must exist for ordinary people…The idea of *folkbildning* is to gather people, let them talk to each other, communicate to support communication and through this you may get knowledge to become a better citizen and you can understand how society works. (Mikk, interview, 2005, author’s translation)

This points to the potential role of popular education in Estonia as perceived by this AHL representative as well as the social role of popular education that is so much emphasized in the Swedish ideal. It also points to the importance of the form of the education, and stresses that no matter what the content, popular education can still contribute to the development of social and civic skills. This could also have been considered in Chapter Eight when the discussion more concerned similarities between ABF and AHL and attempted to identify what has been disseminated. However, what is needed and desired content-wise may differ between countries.

That it is necessary to take contextual conditions into consideration is something that is also clearly expressed when emphasizing how important the opportunity to make study visits to the Nordic countries has been and perhaps continues to be for the people in AHL.

If we go there [to the Nordic countries], we look at it, we hear, and then we discuss: what is possible, what is not possible? We cannot take all this over because this is different social and cultural background. But we can take “this” idea and put “this” in our culture and society (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b).
This quotation clearly expresses central ideas discussed in translation literature. It demonstrates an awareness among Estonian actors that the ideas, models, methods and organizational forms coming from Sweden are not a gospel. They have to be modified to fit the Estonian context and preconditions. The quotation nicely demonstrates how some actors view the items and ideas being spread as a smörgåsbord to choose from.

It seems that Estonians participating in popular education activities often seek something closer to formal education than the Swedish ideology would suggest. This may, in a way, be seen as a more pragmatic view – seeing education for how it benefits you as an individual, for instance practically by increasing the likelihood of securing a well-paid job, thus differing somewhat from the view of education and learning for its own sake and for an individual’s personal development that is a central ingredient in the philosophy of Swedish popular education (cf. Chapter Three).

It is also stated that it is quite common for Estonian popular education organizations to provide more formal adult education in the sense of, for instance, job training, etc. as well as the kind of education more similar to popular education. Estonian interviewees make a clear difference between these two types of education (Mikk, interview, 2005), which seems to indicate that they have acknowledged the peculiarities of the kind of adult education and the goals and methods incorporated in the ideal of popular education. However, they are involved in both types of education, which is explained with reference to the economic situation and the need to find funding for the activities (Breede, interview, 2006; Leinus, interview, 2006), where Estonian respondents point to the fact that they do not have at all the same support from the state that Swedish popular education associations do. This means that many have also to offer more commercial courses in order to finance the rest of their activities. This then leads to a somewhat more “flexible” approach to popular education:

…we [in Estonia] have a very, you could say, open approach towards adult education…they [adult education organizations and institutions] pretty much cover the whole sector of adult training in the sense that it is nonformal, it can be popular education, it can be work-related education, so you can’t say for example that those kinds of institutions provide only one type of education or training (Lao, interview, 2006).

Much of the state support dispensed by the Estonian government, at least in 2005, targeted more formal adult education or vocational training designed to increase the formal competence or qualifications of the participants (Mikk, interview, 2005). This meant that in order to be eligible for the small but much needed state support (not only from the state administration but also to get endorsement from local municipalities), it has frequently been necessary for the organizations in AHL who profess allegiance to the more
informal adult education imbued with the Swedish notion of popular education to become involved with this kind of activities as well. Respondents here also claim that for many organizations this is a means to an end and that their main ambition is to work with the kind of adult education that folkbildning stands for. This is their ideal, the rest is a matter of survival (Kessa, interview, 2006; Kraus, interview, 2006; Mikk, interview, 2005). If this is the case, this is one kind of adjustment, or translation, to the conditions in contemporary Estonia. Some attribute this in part to Estonia’s entry into the EU. As discussed in Chapter 4.2, Estonia’s full membership in the European Union has prompted the state to point at EU funds (such as the social funds), arguing that the state support should be used for co-financing when applying for these. This has led to problems for local organizations since they do not know whether or not they will receive any money from the EU and while waiting for a decision they dare not touch the money some of them do get from the Estonian state (Mikk, interview, 2005). Another problem is that the money for these projects often comes afterwards, which means that the organizations have to finance the activities and then wait to get the money back. One former member organization of AHL, the Tartu Folk High School, for instance, has experienced these problems. It was involved in a project financed by the European Union but it was reported by the manager of this folk high school in May 2006 that they had been waiting for reimbursement for the activities already implemented in this project since December 2005, which of course is a problem for the organization (Breede, interview, 2006).

9.2 Organizational Differences and Similarities

Several circumstances that could influence a process of dissemination were mentioned in the theoretical review in Chapter Five. One of them concerned similarities between the partner organizations, i.e. that successful dissemination is more likely the more similar the organizations are, which is seen as a potentially important aspect in translation studies. In diffusion terms this is called institutional equivalence and it is also similar to what the socialization perspective calls ideational distance (to put it simply, the smaller this distance the better for a process of dissemination). It is also stressed in previous studies of translation that it is important for the actors to be able to find common ground and identify with each other (diffusion research calls this “subjective identification”). A number of aspects of the cases investigated illustrate these theoretical notions and that is what will be further discussed below.
9.2.1 Identification and Ideological Connections

Several issues in the ABF/AHL projects may complicate the possibility of finding common ground and being able to identify with each other. There are, for instance, differences in structure and personnel between AHL and ABF.

The view presented by people working as popular educators in Estonia is that the first question many Estonians ask when joining popular education activities is what education the teacher has. They want the teacher to be, educationally, on a significantly higher level than themselves. This may demonstrate a difference between Estonians and Swedes (Mikk, interview, 2005). Representatives of ABF who worked with AHL in the early 1990s perceived Estonian society as quite hierarchical (Johansson, interview, 2005; Puolle, interview, 2005). On the other hand, several Estonian representatives have described the Estonian people as very individualistic, which is also backed up by research done in the area (see for instance Ruutsoo 2002). Studies of values also indicate that a more pragmatic orientation is prevalent among Estonians than among Swedes. It is argued that this difference indicates a stronger recognition of and dependence on hierarchies among Estonians (Lauristin & Vihalett T. 1997: 253), which would then partly explain the wish for a more formal and teacher-controlled situation than prevails in traditional Swedish popular education. Perhaps this can also be partly attributed to historical legacies. Popular education, the study circle methodology, etc. are deeply ingrained traditions in Sweden whereas Estonia does not have the same extensive tradition of this kind of education or public participation and voicing an opinion that may be seen as central ingredients in this kind of pedagogics or andragogics.  

In Estonia, adult educators express the view that the ideals inherent in Swedish popular education with its informal structure and the lack of a need for a teacher with formal qualifications, etc., do not really work in the Estonian context. ABF and AHL differ in that many of the “leading figures” and the people active in AHL are academics, holding positions as professors or the like at universities or at least highly educated and, thus, involved also in the formal educational system. This is not the same in ABF where not being related to academia has been one of the attributes of the popular education movement. This difference may reflect the demands of the Estonian citizenry, with their wish for formally educated teachers also in popular education. It can also be seen as reflecting the fact that Swedish popular education is more distant from the more hierarchical structures of the formal educational system.

It is interesting to note that the reaction to the fact that many of the people in AHL are academics differs between respondents from the two

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104 Andragogics is a term that is sometimes used to denote the specific task (and possibly methods, strategies and techniques) of teaching adults.
organizations. Swedish representatives see this as a problem or at the very least as “strange” and unorthodox (Hallberg, interview, 2006; Johansson, interview, 2005; Nilsson, B-C, interview, 2006; Nilsson, N, interview, 2006), whereas Estonian respondents do not perceive this as a problem, although they have taken note of the Swedish reactions (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b). This could be seen as a more ideology-driven perspective on the Swedish part, bound by tradition, whereas AHL has a more pragmatic view (it can also be seen as a certain inflexibility on the Swedish part to which I will come back later). Part of the perceived problem from the Swedish side may have its roots in the close connections between Swedish popular education organizations and the Swedish popular movements (in ABF’s case, the labour movement), as described in Chapter Three – a background that AHL does not share. It may also be influenced by the fact that people in ABF perceive a more hierarchical structure as inherent in the academic culture, and therefore something less desirable in popular education. This is thus an aspect that is affected by and demonstrates the embeddedness of Swedish popular education and civil society organizations in the popular movement tradition that has been mentioned previously. The differences between Swedish and Estonian actors in how these issues are perceived may thus be attributed to their being embedded in different contexts.

The Swedish organizations have more of a common value base, and strong traditions and roots in social democracy, than is the case in Estonia, where more of a “fresh start” has been made, with less reference to an underlying political ideology. Even though several of the leading figures in the central organization of AHL are and have been involved with the Estonian Social Democratic Party, the member organizations are very diverse. So, as an association of organizations, it is difficult to claim that AHL has held a political or other kind of position as uniform as that of ABF. Perhaps then the ideals are of more importance, for better or worse, in the Swedish organizations whereas the Estonian organizations look more exclusively at the possible benefits to be gained by possessing more extensive and formal qualifications. So, in a sense this can be seen as a difference between idealism and pragmatism.

Yet another factor that can be put under the heading of issues relating to identification and similarities between the actors is the existence or non-existence of a common value base, which also has a relationship with what has been discussed in previous paragraphs. Both ABF and AHL have been constructed as umbrella organizations with a number of member

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105 It should here also be noted that this difference was acknowledged by studies done in Sweden in the mid-1990s where AHL’s lack of a foundation in a popular movement was believed to be something that would lead Estonia to develop a kind of popular education that is different from that in Sweden (SOU 1996: 159, p. 105f).
106 The same is true in comparison to other Swedish study associations as well even if these stand for other political values or common issues than that of Swedish social democracy.
organizations. However, they differ in structure, with AHL being more heterogeneous.

Actually, one of the things seen as a problem by ABF organizations doing project work with organizations within AHL was that they (AHL) did not have a strong enough common ideological base (OPC Project Report 98 611 Ö; Puolle, interview, 2005). Swedish respondents also relate this to the different origins of the two organizations – ABF rising from the labour movement whereas AHL does not have this connection with a social or popular movement. The lack of this is also seen to imply less of a connection between the organization and the general public (Magnusson, interview, 2006).

I saw rather clearly that these 30 members [the member organizations of AHL]: what was it really that united them? There were not many ideological reasons. Here, if you think of ABF’s activities, those organizations [the member organizations of ABF] are nevertheless members of ABF and there is something that unites them…but these 30 [the member organizations of AHL]…in the beginning, many of them were schools that already existed before, during Soviet times, as some form of adult education institutes. They had their way of working, they became members of AHL, but why were they really members? Because they could function in their places also without AHL (Puolle, interview, 2005, author’s translation)

In this interview it was also discussed that some of these members eventually left AHL, which was partly assumed to be because they were members simply for the opportunity of securing funding through the AHL umbrella (Puolle, interview, 2005). These are issues that will be further discussed in the next section.

That AHL has weaker ideological connections than ABF has also been acknowledged previously by representatives of AHL (OPC internet107) and in previous evaluations of the cooperation between the organizations (Eduards & Adelstål 1997: 8). What this implies is that people active in ABF see it as important for a more homogenous organization to develop in Estonia, the reason for which most likely is that it is easier to work and cooperate if “everyone pulls in the same direction”. This may partly also be connected with the way in which ABF has developed108 and relates back to the origin in popular movements that is perceived as one of the characteristics of Swedish study associations as discussed in Chapter Three. This can also be seen as a sign of a wish for a smaller ideational distance between the organizations,

107 Full details: http://www.palmecenter.se/article.asp?article_id=571.
108 In a web-based survey on the home page of ABF where the question: “Should ABF have a clear ideological profile?” was posed, 92 % answered yes and 8 % no (ABF internet: http://www.abf.se/). At the time when the page was accessed, 384 people had answered the question. This perhaps also demonstrates what people expect from the study association in a Swedish context.
mentioned previously as one of the factors conducive to successful socialization.

People active in member or former member organizations of AHL have also noted the differences between the organizations, but have somewhat different opinions on the path that should be chosen. Representatives of some AHL organizations are of the opinion that it would be unwise to focus on values in the sense of political beliefs in the way that ABF is connected to Swedish social democracy, since this would make people hesitant to become involved with the organization or its activities (Mikk, interview, 2005). That is something that is believed to arouse suspicion (OPC internet\(^{109}\)). One view expressed is a feeling that in recent years AHL as an umbrella organization, while perhaps not taking a political role, has tended more to meet the needs of political organizations (supposedly also including trade unions) and to provide explicit civic education. As noted in Chapter 4.3, civic education is today seen as an essential part of the activities of AHL. Even though this has supposedly been a focus throughout AHL’s existence, it is regarded as something of a change in direction or at least in emphasis\(^{110}\) and there is some scepticism towards politicizing this kind of education among some member organizations (Mikk, interview, 2005). What is said in this context is that previously, even though the Estonian Social Democratic Party was one of the founders of the organization, AHL has not followed the politics of this party or taken explicit account of the social democrats in its activities. However, even though AHL today may have a more homogenous ideological base, member organizations do not claim to see AHL as portraying itself as any kind of strongly politically oriented organization and what has been stated here should not be taken to imply any decreased autonomy from state or political parties on the part of AHL. However, the politicization mentioned above is still seen as a problem for local organizations since it is expressed that:

> In a small AHL organization, in a small village, you cannot say that you are part of, or have, a social democratic organization…or that you are giving a civic education course…if you do, you will not get any participants. You can lose trust among the inhabitants and therefore we do not emphasize any direct political point of view. (Mikk, interview, 2005, author’s translation)

What can be seen to be expressed here may be that not everyone shares the ideology or value base but more certainly it points to problems that arise when mixing any political idea explicitly with educational activities in Estonia (at least this is the way it is perceived by some people who are active

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\(^{109}\) Full details: http://www.palmecenter.se/article.asp?article_id=571.

\(^{110}\) The study by Ek, where interviews with AHL representatives were conducted in 2002, also demonstrates that at that time AHL perceived itself as a politically independent organization (2006: 85f).
in AHL). The same kind of issues have also led to debates in the case of one project aimed at developing a network in the field of adult education around the Baltic Sea (OPC Project Report 97 973 Ō). The main coordinator for this project was based in ABF and AHL also took part, along with organizations from many other countries around the Baltic, for instance Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Belarus and Finland (Mousell 2006). This project organized, among other things, a number of “spring schools”, where participants from the different countries got together to exchange experiences and participate in educational activities. One of the themes the project participants wanted to work on was democracy development, coupled with organizational development. During the first of these “spring schools”, a lecture was given dealing with political issues and social democracy as a political direction and ideology. Some of the participants are described as having been quite upset by this, since they were not interested in getting involved with politics (Mousell, interview, 2006), which can be referred back to the discussions above concerning the problems of taking on a political profile and focusing on politics in the Estonian post-transitional context.

The view of an increased emphasis on a common value base as something that may complicate matters is, however, not an undisputed or consensual opinion. Others mean that a more outspoken stand also on political values may be better for the umbrella organization even though it may mean that they lose some of their member organizations (this does not mean that they should play any specific political role but more that they should be clear about what values they stand for).

...we have talked about this, to be more social democratic, and I think it is a mistake to be...how to say...for everyone, too broad. Because now we really don’t understand why we are there [in AHL] because we have not any common projects. We haven’t anything in common. (Kessa, interview, 2006)

9.2.2 “Drop-Outs” and Organizational Development

The benefit of a common value base is that it helps to keep the organizations together. As mentioned in Chapter 4.3, a number of AHL members have dropped out in recent years111, partly because there is not much keeping them together. What originally kept many of the organizations in AHL was the possibility of obtaining project money. Nowadays, when there is little project money to be found within the AHL umbrella, member organizations have dropped out. This can partly be described as a process of decentralization whereby less is guided from the umbrella organization and the individual member organizations stand more on their own (Vihalemm, interview, 2005a). The central organization no longer initiates and organizes

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111 The number of member organizations has dropped from 32 in the middle of the 1990s to 15 in 2008.
as much for the member organizations but instead wants them to take more of the initiative themselves. AHL is no longer engaged in large centralized projects. Instead various local organizations that are still part of this umbrella may have international contacts but the activities that were integrated and handled on a central level no longer exist. The lack of this kind of centralized joint efforts may then be one of the reasons for the declining membership (Vihalemm, interview, 2005a).

After the funding through projects with ABF stopped, the differences between the member organizations of AHL, and also purely practical reasons, led many of them to search for other opportunities. Most of the life of adult and popular education organizations in Estonia is project-based, which means that the organizations move with the money in order to survive. Thus, some organizations left AHL simply because the time of the big projects was over and project money was to be found elsewhere (Breede, interview, 2006). This was, for instance, the case with Tartu Folk High School. This organization was established in 1987\textsuperscript{112}, i.e. four years before AHL was created. During that time Tartu Folk High School was a member of Andras since that organization had project money to distribute, but when AHL was established it also joined this umbrella organization (Breede, interview, 2006). However, the organization eventually left AHL.\textsuperscript{113}

We joined AHL because they had big projects where we could participate...And later, they didn’t have any big projects any more so it wasn’t worth [it] (Breede, interview, 2006).

Another reason for the decreasing number of member organizations is that, as already discussed, AHL has become more focused and perhaps also “narrower”. Much emphasis has been placed on the advancement of civic education and enhancing social skills among the Estonian citizenry. This may lead to a distancing from many of the things that are the main ambitions of, for instance, more culturally motivated organizations such as the Amateur Theatres Association, which was originally one of the founding fathers of AHL but which has now left it. Another, possibly related, factor may be one mentioned by several respondents, namely that the activities of trade unions and education within these fields have taken on an increasingly important role for AHL (Arukask, interview, 2005; Ints, interview, 2005; Mikk, interview, 2005; Mikk, interview, 2006; Puolle, interview, 2005; Vihalemm, interview, 2005a; Vihalemm, interview, 2005b). The involvement of trade unions in AHL was also to some extent a goal of the Swedish actors. In this they also experienced a lot of difficulties that they

\textsuperscript{112} However, it was not until 2001 that the name was changed to include “folk high school”. From 1987 until 2001 the organization was called Tartu Cultural University (Breede 1997).

\textsuperscript{113} Tartu Folk High School was a member of AHL as late as in 2005 (Tartu Folk High School 2005).
perceived as partly due to the attitudes concerning trade unions and politics following the time under Soviet domination (Puolle, interview, 2005). The goal of forming connections with trade unions may be a result of the experiences and ideology of ABF. As noted in Chapter Three, trade unions, ABF, Swedish social democracy and the labour movement are closely connected and have a long common history. In these circumstances, and given the wish of some in ABF to build an equivalent organization in Estonia, the focus on trade unions in this cooperation is hardly surprising.

Perhaps what have been discussed here are tendencies indicating a move in AHL not towards an ideology, but towards a more uniform value base. In a way, this shift of focus may actually show a move towards a structure more similar to that of ABF. This increased similarity between AHL and ABF in the form of increased closeness between the popular education organization and its activities and trade unions has also been noted by those active in AHL (Arukask, interview, 2005). Whether or not this works as well in Estonia as it has in Sweden remains to be seen. It may, however, be part of an isomorphic process (DiMaggio & Powell 1983) where the actors in the field of popular education who are in contact with each other become more similar. These isomorphic tendencies have also been noted in Chapter 8.4.2.

Some member organizations of AHL have chosen to also be individual members of the larger umbrella of EVHL that was discussed in Chapter 4.2, i.e. not to rely solely on the central organization of AHL as their representative there. Perhaps the shift, narrowing, or increased homogeneity in the central organization of AHL has left them in doubt concerning whether they can rely on the central AHL for this representation.

Why smaller, local organizations that are already members of the AHL umbrella organization choose to remain individual members of EVHL instead of just being represented by the central organization of AHL is not completely clear. However, as expressed by one respondent who belongs to an organization with this kind of double membership, it is about being represented “on your own” as well – about being a separate organization (Mikk, interview, 2005). There are also other reasons for this “double belonging”, one of the primary ones being the hope of obtaining project money. By being members of EVHL, organizations can participate in EVHL projects from which money may come either through EVHL’s contacts or through EVHL itself. This also seems often to have been the reason for joining AHL to start with (Breede, interview, 2006; Kraus, interview, 2006). Since it is now EVHL that has projects and also state support, that is where the money is and therefore the organizations are in need of stronger affiliation with that organization in order to survive (Kraus, interview, 2006).

The development of AHL towards closer links with trade unions and an attempt to find common values could be partly due to changes in the local context. It could also reflect greater sophistication of the actors with regard to seeing where their thoughts, values and activities could advantageously be
positioned. But, from a theoretical perspective, it could also be due to a process of socialization. As has been mentioned, socialization denotes the process by which individuals and other actors conform to patterns of a society to which they wish to belong and thus gain membership in this society. The developments in AHL could from this standpoint be regarded as a desire for conformity and a wish to reduce the ideational distance between AHL and ABF and to be accepted as part of the community of Nordic popular educators. This kind of conformism can also be related to translation. Even though the very notion of translation focuses on the changes taking place in the ideas and actors as a result of the dissemination, a wish to become similar to the actors who are perceived as more successful and with whom comparisons are made is at least important for initiating this kind of process. This has also been discussed in Chapter 5.3.

It has been noted in both the theoretical sections and here in the empirical part that it is important for actors on both sides of a transnational cooperation project to identify and find common ground and also to ensure that there is not too great an ideational distance between them. It is possible that this is just as important on the domestic level and between different parts of the perceived receiving partner organization in the projects. May withdrawal from the AHL umbrella be in part due to decreased feeling of togetherness and, thus, common identity? Could we not argue that once the benefits of staying together for the sake of finding project money disappeared, the ideational distance became apparent and also caused some of the defections? And would it not be reasonable to assume that the lack of a strong common identity within the umbrella organization in combination with reduced economic resources led members who felt little sympathy with developments in AHL to search for new structures within which they could work? I would have to answer yes to all these questions. Thus being able to identify and find common ground with organizations within the same umbrella organization is also important. If there is no common denominator (and no pragmatic reason in the form of financial incentives), an organization will leave and search for other organizations that better match its own values (and that may possibly offer greater possibilities of additional funding). This may indicate that new problems have been defined concerning the internal identity of AHL. Following this, actors will attempt to find ways of coping with these problems. One way may then be to leave AHL and find new ways, either alone or in cooperation with other actors, that better fit the schematics of the organization concerned. This shows that the concepts and notions from the theoretical framework or toolbox may be useful at the domestic level as well.
9.3 Flexibility and Asymmetry in Transnational Cooperation

When discussing the projects with ABF Estonian respondents sometimes report a certain inflexibility from the Swedish side. Naturally, these perceptions differ between projects depending partly on the types of project but also on the individuals involved (Mikk, interview, 2005). As one of the respondents puts it:

Estonians are more tolerant I think personally...we can accept that and that and that but Swedes cannot: if it is not the Swedish way then it can’t be so because it is not like that in Sweden. (Vaino, interview, 2006, author’s translation)

This is said in the context of discussing how they have perceived their own possibilities to influence the projects and also refers to how the partners have been able to adapt to each other (it may also partially explain why people from ABF are critical of the prominent position of academics in AHL discussed in Chapter 9.2.1 – it constitutes a break with Swedish tradition). This kind of attitude could then also stem from what has been mentioned previously, namely the deep embeddedness of ABF and similar organizations in the Swedish “popular movement marinade” (Hvenmark & Wijkström 2004). These strong roots could then lead to a more rigid view of what is expected from other organizations in the same field, in this case the field of popular education. This embeddedness may lead Swedish actors to expect certain things, like roots in a popular movement and possibly stronger connections with the political sphere, similar to those that exist between ABF and the labour movement as well as the SAP. This is seen as so natural in the Swedish tradition that it has become more or less taken for granted, as has been discussed in Chapter Three. In a new context this is not the case, which may lead to conflicts and not least surprises in the contacts between the actors. On the other hand, the embeddedness of Estonian actors in a legacy of Soviet times and in a transitional or post-transitional context is also part of what leads them not to want to get involved in politics – an attitude that, as mentioned previously, is not uncommon in post-communist countries.

Estonian respondents are mainly very positive when reflecting on the project activities and the cooperation with ABF. They have also been positive earlier, according to previous evaluations (Eduards & Adelstål 1997: 10), but that does not mean that they are uncritical. In Estonia things have happened very fast, which is what they want; they work with what they can and what seems to be effective but sometimes they have noticed that people from ABF have had a vision of transferring the Swedish model of popular education in its entirety to the Estonian context, without adjustment.
to Estonian conditions. This inflexibility may also partly be due to a lack of contextual knowledge and understanding.

In Chapter 7.2 it was mentioned that Swedes and other foreign actors went enthusiastically into the Estonian context to promote a democratic development there and that this also led to certain problems (practical problems such as the number of people visiting, etc. have already been discussed). There are however other problematic issues that are raised by both Swedish and Estonian actors. The first is that sometimes enthusiasts were indeed overenthusiastic about the Swedish model of popular education, and went into the projects with AHL and travelled to Estonia with an idealistic image of Sweden and the ambition to “simply” copy this tradition with everything in it and export it to Estonia. For some it may be a belief in the superiority of their own knowledge of democracy as well as adult and popular education. However, another aspect that has been seen as important in explaining this wish to export the Swedish model is a desire to be “pioneers once more” (Østergaard Knudsen 1999: 4). Participation in international projects and in the build-up of a system for adult and popular education has been seen as a chance to relive a process that was completed in Sweden and the other Nordic countries many years ago (Østergaard Knudsen 1999: 4). This concerns whether or not it is appropriate to try to “export” ready-made models, be they ideas, methods, organizational forms or something else, to a different context. This question has arisen in connection with many aid-directed projects in the field of democracy promotion (Mendelson 2002: 245, Quigley 2000: 195, Van Rooy 1998b: 15, Van Rooy 1998c: 198-211) and also leads on to the question of whether it is possible to “export” democracy – whether this system of government, its values and norms, etc. can be seen as a “hothouse plant” (Di Palma 1990: 14-17). This should not, however, be taken as the norm or the rule in the project activities. What approach was taken in this respect differed widely between projects and individuals involved. Several Swedish respondents clearly believe the Swedish model should be seen as inspiration and a resource, not as something that should be implemented unaltered in Estonia and this is also something that the Estonian side, in several of the projects, has perceived (Lundgren, interview, 2005; Urvet, interview, 2006; Vallgårda 1999b: 5, Vallgårda 1999c: 10f).

To me it was never a question of directly transferring our Nordic models or wanting our Baltic colleagues to implement them as such. What we had done might inspire our Baltic neighbours to build something out of their own potentials so that we together could be part of an even bigger international

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114 See also Wallin (2000: 157) on problems that arise when volunteers travel to foreign organizations with a perception of themselves as teachers instead of as participants in a joint process.
movement and give the whole region a chance to develop. (Carlsen, Arne, quoted in Vallgårda, 1999a: 3).

You shouldn’t force the transfer of any system from one country to another. It is they [in this case AHL] that should have the freedom to create a system that works in their conditions. (Puolle, interview, 2005, author’s translation)

The need for enough freedom to develop an Estonian model instead of “importing” a Swedish or Nordic one is also something that has been expressed by Estonian respondents:

We have learned very much from the Nordic countries, from Finland, Sweden. But we have to live in Estonia…and build our own model (Breede, interview, 2006).

The quotations here are closely related to the ideas of translation in that they stress the importance of the local context and that it is the receiving actors who have to edit and adjust the models in a way consistent with local customs, culture and conditions. The input from actors based on their previous experiences elsewhere (i.e. in this case Swedish actors) thus fills the function of providing information, knowledge and models that can be used as starting points and inspiration. In this more flexible view is also among some incorporated an understanding that the Swedish organizations need to develop as well in order to keep up:

we cannot stay the way it was when [ABF] was founded in 1912 but we have to change…The main thing is to keep the goal, then we have to learn how to reach people (Hååg, interview, 2006, author’s translation).

The kind of input needed in order to help the organization keep up to date is something that the respondents claim partly to have obtained from the cooperation with Estonia and AHL. Perhaps partly in the form of organizational and methodological development but definitely in the form of inspiration. This also points to a reciprocal process, which is something to which I will return in Chapter 10.2. Whether or not it works in that manner in the field or whether all local organizations and the people involved think in this way is of course another matter.

As was observed in Chapter 5.2 with regard to socialization, the socializer needs to have or believe himself/herself to have greater knowledge than the socializee of the specific subject about to be disseminated (or the item of diffusion if we are to use that vocabulary). When investigating this empirically in the case of ABF/AHL cooperation projects, it seems that believing oneself to have greater knowledge is not enough. This also concerns what the socializing agent is supposed to possess knowledge about. For a successful diffusion or socialization, it may not be enough for the
socializer to possess knowledge of what is supposed to be spread. It seems that contextual knowledge, i.e. knowledge of local circumstances, traditions, culture, etc., may be just as important. Without such knowledge, communication of the “message” may be hampered and identification between the actors, deemed important by previous research (Uhlin 1995: 49), may also suffer. Individuals who have been involved in projects of a transnational character note that this is often neglected (Lundgren, interview, 2005). Without contextual knowledge, even though the socializees, or the potential translators – i.e. the actors on the receiving end of the process of dissemination, also have a responsibility for adjusting the ideas if needed, it may be difficult to present the ideas in a way that is comprehensible to them.

Contextual knowledge is also stressed in the translation perspective that was discussed in Chapter 5.3. There it relates to the perceived recipients and their role in fitting the ideas and practices to the local context (which very much resembles what was just said in the context of socialization – that the socializee carries some of the responsibility for adjusting the ideas). However, if the transmitters have a reasonable amount of contextual knowledge or at least are open to the changes in the items or ideas being spread that may be necessary if they are to work in a new context, this is likely to be beneficial for the outcome of the process. I therefore argue that opinions expressed by several interviewees show that, in order to spread an idea or socialize people into a new way of thinking, it is not enough to have great knowledge of the idea that is to be disseminated; knowledge of the local context and situation is essential as well.

If Nordic liberal adult educators\footnote{As mentioned in Chapter Three, liberal adult education is used by some actors instead of popular education to designate the kind of adult education that in Sweden falls under the heading of \textit{folkbildning}.} come with their good ideas without listening to these local needs, activities will sooner or later grind to a halt, or changes become necessary. (Carlsen, Antra, quoted in Vallgårda 1999b: 7)

This relates to the asymmetrical relations in the contacts and projects. More than one of the Estonian respondents have said that they felt frustrated when a “big-brother mentality” was evident, i.e. where the Swedish side directed the projects and the activities without enough consideration of what the Estonian side wanted, the competence that existed there, and how AHL perceived the situation and how the goals could be pursued. That this kind of attitude constitutes a problem is also confirmed by both Swedes and Estonians who have been involved in various projects (Kiik, interview, 2006; Lundgren, interview, 2005; Mikk, interview, 2005; Mousell, interview, 2006; Puolle, interview, 2005; Vaino, interview, 2006).
This kind of attitudinal difference between actors and projects occurs not only in various parts of ABF and its project activities with AHL but in assistance to Estonian adult education at large.

There were many who offered their assistance at the beginning of the 1990s. They were different. Many of them tried to help mainly themselves. There were others who were not interested in our cultural context and attempted to introduce their truths directly into our situation. But there were also those who really tried to help us find our own way. Without any selfishness. Only serving the cause. (Eesmaa & Jääger 2002: 12)

This relates once more to the perceived inflexibility of some of the actors coming into Estonia intending to assist development and also to what has been discussed previously regarding the direct “export” of models as a form of democracy promotion. Some also perceive a difference between cooperating with Sweden and with other Nordic countries. As discussed previously, the cooperation with Sweden and also with Finland is often seen as having been easiest, possibly because of a perceived closeness. However, there are also those who have a somewhat different opinion on this especially in the context of the kind of “big-brother” mentality mentioned above. It is sometimes expressed that Norwegian and Danish organizations who mostly came into the picture during the later part of the 1990s, were looking more to create partnerships than bringing in aid or assistance of a more one-sided nature. What the Estonian respondents here reflect over is whether this was a result of different approaches to this kind of cooperation or if it was more due to the differences between the periods at which they became involved. The different preconditions at the time of the projects may well have had an influence and also the fact that the Swedish organizations had been involved in the cooperation for so long and that some new input was desired are seen as reasons for the difference in attitude (Kiik, interview, 2006). However, it should be noted that even in the late 1990s there were some ABF/AHL projects where this “big-brother” mentality caused frustration (Mikk, interview, 2005). This may also be connected to the different strategies that have been discussed in Chapter Five in the context of socialization theory. There, persuasion and social influence were mentioned as two possible strategies as well as a proposition that deliberation was more efficient than lecturing and demanding as a strategy if the “socializing agents” were to obtain good results. What is discussed here by people from the ABF/AHL projects points in the same direction. The frustration caused among people in AHL by a “big-brother” mentality may be seen as an

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116 Even though this particular quotation is not concerned solely with cooperation with Swedish actors, it summarizes how several of those involved in the projects considered in this study have perceived these issues.
expression of dissatisfaction with an attitude of lecturing and demanding displayed by partners from ABF.

Previously (in Chapter Two) it has been noted that recipients may not always dare speak their mind or criticize the donors and their activities for fear of losing material and other kinds of support (cf. Lundgren, interview, 2005). When criticism was advanced and alterations were suggested by AHL organizations these were not always addressed since it was not “right” according to the Swedish model.

[Sometimes] they asked: what are you interested in learning? Then many things came up that we want to learn this and that and the other but it never came up [in the project activities] since they [the people from ABF] did not know those parts so they returned again and again to study circle leader education and courses in meeting technique – they knew that so that was what they did. (Vaino, interview, 2006, author’s translation)

Some think this wish on the Estonian side for something new in the projects may also be part of the reason for the fall in the number of projects from the later parts of the 1990s and onwards, along with the fact that Estonia was no longer a prioritized area to the same extent as it was in the early 90s (Kiik, interview, 2006). However, this was not solely because of lack of flexibility or knowledge from ABF, it was also a matter of recruitment in Estonia. Many were interested but recruitment was still not always easy, which meant that sometimes it was the same group of people that took part in the educational activities (Kiik, interview, 2006). If that is the case it is even more reasonable to assume that new content is needed in the projects.

There are, however, also examples where the Swedish organizations feel that they have indeed tried to involve the Estonian side as more active partners in the projects. Sometimes they themselves felt frustrated at realizing that they were expected to be “aid-givers” and that it was expected that the process would be one-sided. This, to some, was in contrast with what they believe popular education is all about, with its focus on activating the participants, equality and so on (Hååg, interview, 2006). In this situation these actors tried hard to encourage their partners to bring out knowledgeable people on their side (Magnusson, interview, 2006), which is exactly what Estonian respondents asked for in other projects. Again remembering the different strategies from socialization literature, this implies that there may be tensions or differences of opinion regarding which strategy has been employed. It seems that “socializing agents” may believe themselves to be using persuasion techniques whereas the “socializees” experience the means as much more coercive.

There are also those who believe that certain problems could have been avoided or alleviated had the Swedish partners taken a firmer grip on activities and been firmer with the people from AHL. Note also that these
opinions are expressed by Estonian respondents who themselves have been involved in AHL and projects with ABF (Urvet, interview, 2006). Here reference is once again made to the historical legacy of Soviet times and it is said that people were used to being told what to do without too much questioning. When this did not happen, they found themselves in uncharted territory. Thus, the evaluation of these aspects differs greatly between the projects and, as has just been shown, the benefits of greater freedom in the projects is also something that can be problematized.

Some of the ABF/AHL projects, however, also changed in character and took a turn towards more of a partnership model as time went by, which could actually be seen as a translation process in the very structure and administration of the projects themselves. At first most things were very new to the people in AHL and, thus, they had a lot to learn from the Swedish partner, just as ABF had a lot of knowledge to share. One reason for the more one-sided, or aid-directed, projects that were prevalent during the early 1990s was thus the context and level of knowledge at that time. That this was probably a correct approach at that time does not seem to be disputed by Estonians either (Kiik, interview, 2006). However, when a greater understanding was reached in Estonia, the type of assistance needed and the type of project wanted changed. Estonian actors in AHL felt themselves able to be more equal partners who could themselves contribute knowledge as well (Urvet, interview, 2006; FBR 2000). This kind of alteration in the power relations of the projects was also discussed and worked on in the activities with NFA. Here it is also possible to see the more flexible approach that is prevalent among several of the ABF/AHL projects, namely that they should indeed concern “true” partnerships much more than mere aid efforts. “To move from giving [and receiving, author’s note] help to real cooperation” (NFA 2000: 4) was put forward as one of the the reasons for creating new partnerships during one of the Nordic – Baltic NGO network meetings that have been discussed in previous chapters.

What is sometimes criticized from the Estonian side is that the projects (and the partner organizations in Sweden) did not evolve in the same way or at the same pace as the knowledge structures and society as such did in Estonia. After a few years, the Estonian actors had developed their competence to a level where they wanted to take a more active part in the projects including everything from planning to being equal partners during the educational activities.

I believe that at the beginning of the 90s it was pretty okay [that the projects were directed in a more one-sided manner from the Swedish side] because at that time the level of attainment in Estonia was such that one could not demand anything else. But I believe there was a turning point around [the middle/the later half of the 1990s]. By that time people had got insights into what it [adult and popular education] was, we had started our own activities and so on (Kiik, interview, 2006, author’s translation).
So, by the middle of the 1990s the people in more than one AHL organization wanted to take a more active part in the projects, developing the programmes, having Estonian lecturers along with Swedish, etc. (Kiik, interview, 2006). This desire to take a more active part in all parts of the projects has also been mentioned in previous evaluations of the cooperation between ABF and AHL (Eduards & Adelstål 1997: 2, 17). This could cause conflict about who was to “own” the project. In some instances it also led to conflicts regarding both how to set up the activities and also more purely financial matters (Kiik, interview, 2006; Mikk, interview, 2005; Nilsson, N, interview, 2006).

Regarding how much the Estonian side could actually affect the projects and activities there does not seem to be any real consensus, which is perhaps not surprising since it is a matter of perceptions as well as “facts”. What is clear is that it was the Swedish actors who had the money so it was to a large extent up to them how the financial assets were distributed. How this power over the money was used differed between projects and there is also a difference between the financial part and the activities. Even if the Swedish partner controlled the money, the Estonian partner could still be very much involved in designing the activities. The extent to which this happened varied between projects.

In the activities at NFA, too, the development of the Baltic adult educators taking part and their wish for something new and more ambitious can be seen. The “Learning 4 Sharing” project that was discussed in Chapter 8.3, for instance, came about when the participants expressed such wishes. The competence that had been developed and increased during the activities at NFA led to the participants wanting to develop their own education for adult educators, suited for the Baltic contexts.

To some extent, the planning of the “Learning 4 Sharing” project can be seen to resemble or perhaps follow the logic of a translation process and also of the different phases of cooperation illustrated by the empirical chapters in this study. From this perspective it would at least seem to have been a project that was structured in a reasonable way. The progress of the project also follows the pattern of the phases of this process and of transnational civil society cooperation as presented in this study. First there was a “pre-course” where the information distributed mainly outlined the project as a whole to the participants as well as discussing the different needs, wants and competences that existed in the group. Following this, the project consisted of meetings between Nordic and Baltic participants where, among other things, course activities were an important part. This part is described as having been “an intensive accumulation of information and knowledge” (Carlsen, Antra 2003: 13), which would then resemble what this study focused on in Chapter Eight. Finally, the training modules were applied in the Baltic countries, the results were assessed and the process of making it work in a specific context began (Carlsen, Antra 2003). This could then very
well be seen as the editing process that makes up the phase discussed in this chapter. Assumptions that methods, practices and solutions have to be developed and adjusted to fit a specific context and that contextual knowledge is crucial seem to have been essential parts and, possibly, points of departure for this project (cf. Carlsen & Irons 2003).

9.4 Concluding Remarks

Several differences between the Swedish and Estonian organizations have been discussed in this chapter. These concern the possibilities of identifying with the partners but also the content of what has been disseminated. It appears that being connected to a political ideology and party is much more natural to ABF organizations. Even if there are also connections between AHL and Estonian social democracy, these are not something that can be as clearly stated for practical reasons (i.e. it would hamper the recruitment of participants) even though it should be noted that the views on what path should be chosen — assuming a clearer political identity or not — differ between AHL respondents. There are, however, signs that AHL has become a more homogenous organization in recent years, following the defection of a number of organizations and also increased cooperation with trade unions, and thus become somewhat more similar to ABF.

There is also a difference in the background of the people involved. Many of the Estonian actors have been or still are involved in higher formal education whereas this is not the case in ABF. To have highly educated teachers seems to be important to Estonian participants, so this difference may be part of the process of meeting the demands of the Estonian citizenry. However, the lack of a common value base and clear allegiance to a political ideology in AHL, which also follows from the fact that AHL has been a more heterogeneous organization than ABF, is viewed as problematic by actors from ABF. In AHL there seems to be a more pragmatic view of these things, emphasizing that what is important is to make the activities accessible to and interesting to the citizenry. This also demonstrates how embedded actors from ABF are in the Swedish “popular movement marinade”.

In Chapter Eight a number of ideas and practices that have travelled between the contexts as a result of the cooperation were identified and discussed. This chapter has taken the investigation into these one step further by also looking at what alterations that have been made when these ideas and practices have been implemented in a new context. This has here been demonstrated by, for instance, examples concerning the methods and pedagogics that have been part of the dissemination, not least the study circle. In Estonia, this has been mixed with other methods and sometimes different names have been used to denote the activities. The view of
participants, the participant-oriented approach, etc. has been accepted but this has been applied in a more teacher-controlled situation, which people in AHL believe works better in an Estonian context. What is also obvious is that this process of editing has in some instances met with suspicion from ABF and conflicts have arisen concerning the translation of the Swedish ideas and practices. These issues have been seen in this chapter as connected to an inflexible approach to the process of dissemination among some actors, where the expected outcome was more a matter of AHL copying what Swedish actors “taught” them. Where this attitude has been prevalent, not enough consideration has been given to the local context, and there has been an asymmetrical relation and a “big-brother mentality”. This also calls to mind a process resembling the way classical diffusion research has been described. However, it is important to point out that many stress the importance of providing inspiration and assistance from which Estonian actors can then take the bits and pieces that fit their context – thus encouraging a process of translation.
10. Institutionalizing the Lessons Learned

What does the future hold for the organizations in focus in this study? This chapter will be devoted to expanding on what has happened after the projects had ended or at least in the phasing out of this cooperation. It will also hark back to what has already come up in previous chapters regarding these issues. An important part of this is how the organizations have continued working, both in Estonia/Sweden and internationally. Thus, activities they have undertaken, both domestically and internationally, will be touched upon. This will of course not be exhaustive. Instead the focus will be on activities that can also be connected to the cooperation between Sweden and Estonia that has been investigated in the previous chapters. This chapter concerns the institutionalization phase of a translation process but also more generally the developments taking place during the last few years.

The chapter will also address the issue of what, if anything, the perceived “transmitting” side, i.e. the Swedish organizations, may have gained from the cooperation. Thus, potential reciprocity will be discussed. This is a feature of the phase of institutionalization since it involves Swedish actors incorporating lessons and outcomes from the cooperation into their organization and activities even though it may also involve some editing by these actors.

10.1 Continued Transnational Cooperation

As has been stated earlier, the central organization of AHL does not have any major projects underway at the present time, something that is attributed to various factors. One explanation is that the different member organizations are trying to figure out for themselves which way to go and how to relate themselves and their activities to the contemporary situation (Estonia’s EU membership, etc). Therefore the central organization has said that perhaps it is better at present to wait and see what ideas the different organizations come up with. If a need for a more centralized effort is then identified, it might be appropriate to resume these activities (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b; Vihalemm, interview, 2005a). So, in some ways it is possible to say that AHL has become more decentralized in recent years, which may perhaps be a fairly normal and healthy development for an umbrella organization once the member organizations have gained
experience and are more capable of fending for themselves. This is not meant to imply that umbrella organizations and the kind of structure that AHL has is not a good one, but rather to suggest what might be appropriate in the Estonian context. Thus, we are here actually back to similar discussions to those in translation literature where this kind of adjustment is considered. Large umbrella organizations embracing certain ideologies, which is how the field of popular education and study associations is structured in Sweden, may not be the best path for continued development in Estonia. However, only time will tell. It is also related to how many umbrella organizations can coexist in a country like Estonia. As discussed previously in this book, there are several large umbrella organizations active in the field of adult education in Estonia. They have cooperated with different countries and actors and the potential for finding funding for various projects during the 1990s may turn out to have led to an over-establishment. Perhaps a smaller number of large umbrellas will turn out to be more appropriate for the Estonian context and the coordination of activities in this area.

On the local level there are somewhat different opinions on the outlook for AHL and the development of the organization. The fact that AHL as an umbrella organization no longer has any big international projects with substantial funding is partly why many organizations have dropped out. Something many agree upon is that the project activities were what kept the disparate organizations together and not least that since the termination of the international projects, many of the member organizations of AHL no longer cooperate with each other either. This is however not entirely true, but according to several respondents those that still do cooperate with each other account for but a small part of the AHL members (Kessa, interview, 2006; Kraus, interview, 2006; Mikk, interview, 2006; Urvet, interview, 2006).

One reason for the decrease in the part played by larger international projects in AHL activities is, of course, the possibility of finding funding. Once Estonia fully entered into the European Community by becoming a member of the EU, much of the funding that was previously available through organizations like SIDA and OPC dried up. Nowadays it is possible to apply to different EU funds but this is described by more than one respondent as much more difficult, both the process itself and the probability of actually being granted money (Mikk, interview, 2005). Some of the Estonian organizations have, however, managed to find new ways, forums and partners for cooperation. There are examples of organizations that have been successful in getting involved in EU-funded projects. One example is the AHL organization on Saaremaa that in 2006 was involved in two
“Equal” projects\textsuperscript{117}, one concerning disabled people and one for single mothers. It should be noted that single mothers were actually first brought forward as a potential target group for this organization in a project with Axevalla Folk High School and ABF Skara (OPC Project Report 95 637 Ö; Kraus, interview, 2006; Puolle, interview, 2005). Tartu Folk High School, an organization that was a member of AHL but that has now left it, has also been involved in Equal projects (Leinus, interview, 2006).

There are, thus, some organizations within the AHL umbrella that continue to work internationally. Some of their projects could be argued to derive to some extent from what has previously been spread to the Estonian organizations by Nordic-Baltic cooperation. To take the example of one member organization of AHL, Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus (JMK) – in English the Johannes Mihkelson Centre; this has in recent years been involved in projects with Northwestern Russia designed to spread further the popular education ideals often seen as parts of the Nordic tradition discussed in Chapter Three. These ideas also seem to lie close to the heart of this organization. For instance, it stresses the goal of reaching marginalized groups in society and providing them with educational opportunities, and also the aim of developing democracy (Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus 2005a).

JMK was founded in 1992 and is closely connected to the Estonian Social Democratic Party and affiliated organizations. This is not least demonstrated by the fact that all the organizations that founded JMK were social democratic ones (for instance the Estonian Social Democratic Party and Estonian Social Democratic Youth). The goals proclaimed by JMK closely resemble the ones portrayed as key aspects for ABF (for instance the emphasis on democracy and marginalized groups as well as an interest in strengthening trade unions, see Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus 2005a) and so do their ideological background and their relations with the social democratic party organizations. The goals of JMK are said to be “to develop democracy and social justice in Estonia and abroad in co-operation with state, NGOs and international partners. Our aim is to provide more opportunities for marginalized segments of the society” (Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus 2005a). The aim of developing democracy and working internationally to assist like-minded forces in other countries as well as the focus on marginalized groups, is also central to ABF, as discussed in Chapter Three. Thus, the similarities are obvious.

Ideas and methods that JMK attempts to spread to Russia concern, for instance, meeting techniques (which have been a focus of some ABF/AHL projects), i.e. how to hold a meeting efficiently \textit{and} democratically. JMK

\textsuperscript{117} “Equal” may briefly be described as a EU programme designed to tackle issues of discrimination and exclusion (European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/index_en.cfm). One of the ways this is done is by encouraging transnational project activities between organizations in different countries.
also deals with active citizenship and how to become an active citizen (Katsuba, interview, 2005). Furthermore representatives of this organization also emphasize the importance of improving not only the knowledge and competence of citizens but also their self-esteem and confidence (Ints, interview, 2005), which has also been stressed several times in this book.

Naturally, it is possible to argue over what was actually picked up from the Nordic-Baltic cooperation and what ideas are “floating free” but the comments of respondents, not only from JMK, suggest a close connection between the traditions since the connections drawn between, for instance, popular education and democracy, the terminology employed, and the democratic ideals described show many similarities with the views expressed by Swedish popular educators. Also, the theoretical perspective used here does not see ideas as simply floating around. Instead ideas have to be actively promoted and translated, as delineated in previous chapters.

It is not only JMK that is working with Russia or on other international projects where the Estonian organizations are taking on the role of transmitter instead of receiver. This kind of activity has also come about as a continuation from the cooperation with ABF and NFA.

Once most of the cooperative projects with Estonia had ended or were in the process of being phased out, more than one of the Swedish organizations turned their attention to Russia instead. There, the success rate or the ease with which the work has progressed has been perceived as more modest and Swedish organizations have turned to their previous Estonian partners in AHL for assistance in disseminating the ideas and methods further afield (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b). Examples of this are the projects and activities that NFA undertook in order to involve Northwest Russia in cooperation. In these, the networks created with Baltic NGOs and adult educators, also significantly involving members of AHL, became a resource. These contacts were in part established through the NGO networks that were discussed in Chapter 8.3. In the case of the activities involving NFA and member organizations of AHL mentioned above, the previous experiences and established contacts led to a kind of three-part cooperation.

The NMR also began at the beginning of the 21st century to focus more on Northwest Russia, which led Russian NGOs to become involved in the previously Baltic-Nordic cooperation. Russian NGOs entered into the Baltic-Nordic cooperation with NFA to learn from previous Baltic experience of

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118 Some of the cooperation between ABF organizations and NGOs in Russia also started before the projects with AHL and Estonia were terminated. Examples of organizations that are or have been involved with both AHL and Russian organizations include ABF Ronneby (Hallberg, interview, 2006; Nilsson, B-C, interview, 2006; Nilsson, N, interview, 2006) and Axevalla Folk High School (Puolle, interview, 2005). As discussed in previous chapters, this folk high school has been involved in much cooperation with different AHL organizations, often in cooperation with ABF Skara.

119 This was also mentioned in Chapter 8.3 as one of the possible directions for future cooperation that was identified when much of the Nordic-Baltic cooperation was phased out.
how to use the *Nordic experiences*. Here those perceived to be among the stronger Baltic organizations, including EVHL but also AHL – or at least organizations that are members of this umbrella organization, took on the role of teaching the Russian NGOs instead of themselves being “students” in the activities. Over a few years from 2002 onwards, several Russian organizations attended courses in Estonia and Latvia funded by the Nordic countries (Carlsen, interview, 2006). The NMR and NFA apparently saw the potential benefits of this kind of three-way cooperation and so supported them, not least financially, as a part of their efforts to reach, develop and cooperate with Northwestern Russia. This indicates a positive evaluation of the Estonian organizations and a sign that they are perceived to stand for the same ideas as have been professed in Swedish popular education. This could then also be seen as a closer identification between the organizations.

The activities discussed in the previous paragraphs led up to and subsequently took place in the form of a project called “ALLA”, which is an abbreviation for “Adult Learning for Local Action”. This project was implemented from 2003 to 2005, with assessments and follow-up activities taking place during 2006. The goal of the project was to assist the development of local civil society in the Russian regions that took part. One of the strategies for accomplishing the goal was to disseminate knowledge and outcomes of the previous ten years of cooperation between Baltic and Nordic NGOs (Sevón 2006), a cooperation that was an important part of the activities at NFA and has been further discussed in Chapter 8.3. Previous experiences, not least Baltic experiences of Nordic models of adult and popular education and of how this can be edited to fit a post-communist context, were taken advantage of through study visits to organizations, seminars with various topics, etc. (Sevón 2006). Thus, the belief in the importance and benefits of networking between civil society organizations that has been mentioned previously, both in Chapter Two and earlier in this analysis, is something that has apparently been carried over to current activities involving other actors and potential network partners.

What this “ALLA” project attempted to spread seems similar to what was highlighted in the earlier cooperation between Nordic and Baltic organizations, both at the NFA and also in many of the ABF/AHL projects. The methodology of popular education (not least the study circle), democracy and participation, as well as organizational development, were on the agenda (Sevón 2006). Here, too, the influence from Baltic experiences is obvious. Previously, in Chapter 9.1, it was noted that AHL has both translated Swedish literature in the field of popular education and also started producing its own books on methods and pedagogics. This kind of material was also used in the cooperation with Russia through the “ALLA”

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120 For instance, in the summer of 2005, 25 Russian adult educators went to Estonia for a 10-day course (Jääger, interview, 2005).
project (Sevón 2006). During the project much of this material, as well as
textual content that was previously extracted for it.

I will not go further into the activities taking place during this project since its focus was on Russia, a context that will have to be left for future research. However, the way Baltic NGOs were incorporated points to a perception on the part of Nordic actors that there are similarities between the views and competence of NGOs in the Nordic and the Baltic countries. It also shows a belief that the Baltic NGOs possess knowledge and experience that Nordic organizations do not and that this is essential for disseminating the items and ideas onwards to Russia.

People active in ABF organizations who were involved in the cooperation with AHL also seem to have benefited from that cooperation, not least from the experience gained but also through the building of the networks that have been discussed previously and that can come in handy in continued international cooperation. The benefit of these contacts and experiences will also be discussed in Chapter 10.2.

Those active in Swedish popular education organizations seem to believe in the advantages of working with or through people in the closest possible proximity to the receiving organizations, which may probably also be seen as their drawing lessons from their previous cooperative projects. All of this can of course also be related to the importance of the local context and its preconditions that is stressed in translation literature. This is shown by the initiation of the kinds of projects discussed above. The importance of a perceived (and/or “real”) closeness between partners is also pointed out by several Estonian as well as Swedish respondents (Mikk, interview, 2005; Puolle, interview, 2005). In the context of the above-mentioned three-part cooperation, one Estonian respondent explained why it seems easier for Estonians to handle projects and translate ideas to Russians than it is for Swedish organizations:

Now Swedish organizations make projects with Russia and they try to spread the same thing to Russia that they spread to us. And they have done it, I think for four or five years and they are not successful. Now they ask us: will you take these Russian people, let them come to Estonia and teach them? It is a Swedish project but they come to Estonia and you teach them. And we teach them in Russian language, not in English. Russian people come here, they look: it really works! Because we [Estonia and Russia] start from the same level. When they [Russians] look at us, they understand better. (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b)

121 The “ease” or “success” that underlies this should not be taken to imply any factual evaluation of the projects. It concerns success in the eye of the beholders (both Swedish and Estonian).
What is expressed here and even more in subsequent discussions in more than one interview is that it is much easier for Russians to identify with Estonians as a result of their shared history. Similar conditions may also make it easier to understand and see that the development and ideas that are taught or spread can be implemented in a context similar to their own. Similarities make them more real and feasible. This is more difficult when comparison is made with the Swedish system, where the preconditions are very different (Jääger, interview, 2005; Valgmaa, interview, 2005b). This notion, expressed in the quotation above, has also been noted by people active on the Swedish side. What was noted was that the strongest and most developed of the Russian organizations were the ones who had had the opportunity to learn from both the Nordic countries and the Baltic experiences (Carlsen, interview, 2006). This may result from the geographical proximity that has been described in diffusion theory (see Chapter 5.1) but it also concerns the sense of a shared history. Thus, what has previously been discussed as cultural proximity (see Chapter 6.2) seems also to be of importance in this context and what is expressed here is also similar to the way people from AHL have viewed their cooperation with the Nordic countries. As discussed in Chapter 8.2, most rank Sweden and Finland as the easiest to cooperate with among the Nordic countries, something they attribute to the close connections, not least cultural ones.

That contextual conditions are important is backed up by this study. The continued dissemination of popular education ideas and methods to Russia and the chain of translators involved in this, Sweden – Estonia – Russia, are interesting from a theoretical point of view. As noted in translation literature, ideas that are to be disseminated need to be packaged as models in order to travel. It is then up to the receiving actors to fit them into the new context. The three-way cooperation described here illustrates this in two ways. Firstly, involving the Baltic NGOs was, as noted here, a way of making it possible for Russian NGOs to learn about the translation process itself that took place when the Baltic NGOs were to use and translate the Nordic models. Secondly, it is possible that the editing processes in the Baltic countries led them to adjust the models to be spread to Russia. That some alterations in the ideas, models and practices coming from Sweden took place as a result of the work of Estonian actors has already been discussed in Chapter Nine. Thus, when attempting to disseminate this onwards to Russia (and also inside Estonia) the outcomes of that translation process would be incorporated in the models.

This is also a reminder of how important it is for the actors on different sides of the cooperation to be able to identify with one another. This is stressed in diffusion, socialization and not least translation literature. It seems that this identification may need to work on more than one level. Partly, it may concern sharing the role of being popular educators but it also seems that similarities in current situation, history, context and preconditions
are of importance. If we go back to this in the context of ABF it could also concern a common value base grounded in the labour movement and social democracy. Issues relating to this in the context of cooperation between ABF and AHL have been extensively discussed in Chapter 9.2, and I will not go into that again here. However, it seems not only that this identification may concern the area within which the actors’ work but also that contextual similarities may facilitate or hinder the communication. This leads to the conclusion that it is beneficial to see the two factors, identification and proximity, as closely related.

That AHL and also, for instance, EVHL now try to “spread the word” onwards is shown, not only by their trying to assist Russian organizations in their development and understanding of, among other things, popular education, democracy, civil society, and active citizenship, but also in that the Töru Study Centre (another of AHL’s member organizations) as well as EVHL and others have started to translate Nordic literature on adult and popular education and also to write method books of their own in this field. This has also been mentioned above. Swedish organizations have also been involved in these activities by giving financial assistance (Jääger, interview, 2005; Puolle, interview, 2005; Valgmaa, interview, 2005b). That these kinds of development and activities are taking place can be taken as a sign of that many of the ideas behind a Nordic understanding of popular education have been assimilated by Estonian adult educators and that they are now attempting to (1) spread these ideas and methods all over Estonia and (2) spread them onwards to neighbouring states. These ambitions are also clearly stated by people who are active in AHL (Arukask, interview, 2005; Ints, interview, 2005; Katsuba, interview, 2005; Valgmaa, interview, 2005b). This demonstrates that something has indeed been disseminated between Nordic organizations and AHL since, in order to be both willing and able to spread the ideas and practices onwards, actors have to understand the contents clearly and also to believe in the value of the exercise. If this is not the case – why try to go further? Of course, the specific content of what is spread may differ to some degree (just as it may between projects with different ABF chapters), following the adjustment to local conditions brought about by the process of translation, but this does not seem to imply any greater divergence from the main ideals in the cases under investigation in this study.

What has been discussed above is part of the institutionalization phase of a translation process (for further discussions of this, see Chapters 5.3 and 5.4). Before the ideas of popular education can travel onwards from Estonia, with the help of Estonian actors, they will have become a part of that context. That this has happened to many of the ideas and models that have come from Sweden through the cooperation since Estonia regained independence has been extensively discussed in previous chapters. When cooperation between Estonia and Russia begins, the ideas again need to be
made into more object-like models that can travel. That these will differ somewhat from what came from Sweden to Estonia is reasonable to assume, since the local context will have put its mark on them. As discussed in Chapter Nine, there are also aspects that have been modified in order to better fit the Estonian context. Thus, the ideas, and subsequently models, that are to be transferred from Estonia to Russia may still have the Nordic understanding of popular education at their heart, although with an Estonian twist. To what extent this is the case and what expression this takes will have to be left for future research, since any detailed account of the cooperation between Estonia and Russia and of developments taking place after the cooperation with Sweden and ABF was phased out are outside the focus and scope of this study.

As noted above, there are several examples of lessons drawn by Estonian adult educators that can be seen to come from the cooperation with Nordic partners. This argument is not only strengthened by the fact that AHL organizations now attempt to spread these ideas and practices to other countries but also by the way people active in AHL are trying to spread them within Estonia. For instance, AHL members have started giving courses for teachers where they teach much of the pedagogics and ideas that they themselves came in contact with in the sessions they attended at the NFA. These courses are described by organizers as similar to what the NFA used to provide but also with much added influence from cooperative projects that have existed with ABF (Valgmaa, interview, 2005b). As discussed previously, many of the projects organized in cooperation with ABF dealt with training study circle leaders and the pedagogics of running a study circle and this is a clear example of what is now being spread onwards by teachers within AHL.

There are other examples of this kind of continuation of what came out of the project activities. I will not retell the details of these here but in Chapter 8.4.2 I elaborated on how trade unions who became involved in ABF/AHL projects have also used the results after the projects ended. Among other things, educational activities have been arranged for trade union members as a step towards increasing the number of members in these organizations in Estonia. Thus, efforts have been made to spread all across Estonia the knowledge gained from cooperation with ABF (Arukask, interview, 2005). This is yet another example of how the outcomes of the projects have had and continue to have influence on the Estonian actors. Again, if the actors did not have faith in the benefit of the activities there would be no reason to continue with them after the projects ended.
10.2 Reciprocity in the Cooperation between ABF and AHL?

Before the end of the analysis, I want also to address whether the dissemination in the cooperation has been mostly one-way traffic or whether the perceived “transmitters” or senders (i.e. ABF organizations) have also benefited from the projects and, thus, received something in return. Certain benefits to the Swedish actors and organizations have in fact already been encountered in previous chapters, such as the inspiration and the opportunity to be “pioneers once more”, but I will here concentrate these discussions.

I will not go in detail into things like an increased interest in Estonia or the fact that many perceive that they have gained knowledge of Estonian culture and contexts. I will confine myself to stating that this kind of result is something to which both Estonian and Swedish respondents point. Instead, I will look at outcomes that have a greater effect on things like the view of methods, of popular education and of themselves as Swedish popular educators. However, the increased knowledge and interest in Estonia has led to some practical developments in the Swedish organizations, which will also be discussed.

I think it is very much because of the co-operation with the Baltic states that we from Nordic non-formal adult education have rediscovered the democracy aspect. We realised somewhere in the mid 90’s that this is a particularly important part of the non-formal adult education, it’s power to foster democracy [author’s italics]. (Carlsen, Arne, quoted in Vallgårda 1999a: 5)

The above quotation is from an interview with the then director of NFA, Arne Carlsen. Even if he is not one of the people in ABF who have been involved in the projects under closest scrutiny here, it nicely summarizes what many have reflected on. It also points to, for this study, essential aspects. What it demonstrates is that activities instigated as a way to help a democratic development in another country, in this case Estonia, may lead the “transmitters” to reevaluate their own positions and their role in their own country. The statement by Carlsen thus demonstrates what I argue to be an essential reward for the Swedish side of the cooperation, making the process a reciprocal one, at least to some extent.

The networks and personal contacts that have been established in the course of cooperation should be noted here, just as they were in Chapter Eight. Several Swedish respondents point to these as crucial outcomes of the projects. Even though the organized project activities have now been terminated, many contacts and informal networks are still alive and well, which may also continue to bring benefits by creating new interfaces in different areas between the two countries (Lundgren, interview, 2005; Magnusson, interview, 2006).
Previously (in Chapter 8.2), the importance of encouragement and the building of confidence and self-esteem have been discussed as important parts of what individuals in AHL think has been gained from the cooperation. This is also true for the Swedish partners. Many of the people involved on ABF’s side have acquired confidence and also an interest in pursuing other international projects, often attributed to the successful experience of working with Estonia and AHL (Nilsson, B-C, interview, 2006; Nilsson, N, interview, 2006; Puolle, interview, 2005). Having seen how well the cooperation worked with AHL, several Swedish actors have continued working with, for instance, Russia. In these projects some have used a very similar approach to that used in Estonia, “It worked well there [with AHL in Estonia] so we have continued working with this” (Nilsson, B-C, interview, 2006, author’s translation).

Just as the pedagogics spread through the projects emphasize the importance of an individual being seen, heard and appreciated, those participating in the projects on the Swedish side have the same basic needs. Through the projects they were widely noticed and appreciated and they felt that they made a difference. Since Swedish popular education has a long and strong tradition and has become quite institutionalized, this was a chance to do something concrete that was actually noticed and not mere routine. Apart from encouraging the continuation of international projects in other countries, this also provided inspiration to continue with day-to-day activities in Sweden (Nilsson, N, interview, 2006).

How reciprocal the relationship between two organizations has become depends to a large extent on the individuals involved. People from AHL who have worked on more than one project have also noted differences in how receptive the ABF partner has been to the idea that the Estonian side may also have a lot to offer and teach (Mikk, interview, 2005). This is part of the flexibility/inflexibility among the actors that was discussed in Chapter 9.3.

The contacts between the Swedish and Estonian actors have also lead to an increased understanding of the other country and culture, which respondents from both sides think has reduced prejudice and made for more tolerant and enlightened individuals/citizens (Hååg, interview, 2006; Kessa, interview, 2006; Kiik, interview, 2006; Magnusson, interview, 2006; Puolle, interview, 2005; Vaino, interview, 2006). These are also seen as important attributes of a well-functioning democratic society. There are Estonians who have participated in projects who have themselves learnt Swedish following this, perhaps because their interest in Sweden has grown but also for pragmatic reasons and to facilitate continued cooperation. It is regarded as important to have a common language between the partners for the

122 As noted above in Chapter 10.1, how well this kind of effort has worked in a Russian context has been questioned concerning some projects. However, this study has not focused on Swedish-Russian cooperation. Hence, it is not possible to evaluate this cooperation here.

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cooperation to work smoothly (Mikk, interview, 2005). There are also Swedish people from ABF who have learnt Estonian, possibly for similar reasons. One individual from ABF Norra Halland who was involved in cooperation with AHL Räpina\(^{123}\) (an organization that is no longer a member of AHL but still exists in another guise) learned Estonian. Even though he acknowledges that he is not proficient enough to, for instance, give a lecture in Estonian, he still sees the effort of learning the language of the partner as important, not least symbolically. To make the effort of learning the local language can be seen as a clear expression of interest in the partner organization and the context (Magnusson, interview, 2006).

Another side of this is a somewhat changed perception of Sweden and the conditions under which people live and popular education exists. All the problems, and financial and other issues that are debated in Sweden were put in perspective by the situation in Estonia, especially during the early 1990s. What several respondents point out is that taking part in activities in Estonia and other countries has made them realize how well off Swedish popular education is anyway (Mousell, interview, 2006; Nilsson, N, interview, 2006).

In more than one case the interest in and acquired knowledge of Estonia has led Swedish organizations to try to incorporate this in their day-to-day activities. For instance, one Swedish folk high school (Axevalla) that was involved in projects with AHL together with ABF Skara has made Estonia a big part of its activities through courses, lectures and study circles about various aspects of Estonia, by making study trips to Estonia and not least during the project years by integrating the collection of material to send to AHL with their educational activities. For instance, students at the folk high school who were studying computer science collected old computers donated by local companies, restored them as part of their education and then delivered them to AHL (Puolle, interview, 2005). This has also been discussed in Chapter Seven but should be noted again here as an example of how the projects have also influenced the activities of Swedish organizations.

In ABF Norra Halland, Estonia has also become a focus for study circles; they organize trips to Estonia, learn Estonian and so on (Hååg, interview, 2006; Magnusson, interview, 2006; Vaino, interview, 2006). So attempts are made to spread the cultural and country-specific knowledge more widely in Sweden. One Estonian respondent even believes that in the case of the projects between ABF Norra Halland and AHL Räpina the outcome may have been more significant on the Swedish side (Vaino, interview, 2006).

\(^{123}\) AHL Räpina is known in Estonian as Räpina Vabahariduse Ühendus or Räpina Voluntary Educational Society but is referred to in this text as AHL Räpina since this is the name used in, for instance, project reports on the cooperation with ABF organizations (see for instance OPC Project Report 95 637 Õ).
This is seen as something positive and should not be taken to mean that AHL Räpina was passive. There is appreciation for the fact that the Swedish partners could see benefits for themselves and, thus, move away from the more aid-directed and one-sided type of cooperation.

As mentioned in previous sections, AHL has mixed the methods and tried to fit them better into the Estonian context and there are people in ABF who have noted valuable aspects of this continuing methodological development that they have themselves been able to apply to their activities in ABF and Sweden. For instance, some AHL activities include a mix of creativity and elements of other cultural segments, no matter what the subject is. AHL makes use of role play, games and other additional methods (Breede, interview, 2006; Leinus, interview, 2006; Urvet, interview, 2006), some of which are now used by ABF as well (Hååg, interview, 2006; Karlsson, interview, 2006). Thus it seems that the process of translation and the editing of the ideas and models coming from Sweden may also benefit those perceived as the “transmitters” or role models. As discussed in previous studies of translation, this process may also provide a learning opportunity for those being imitated, in this case the Swedish organizations, since the reinterpretation of the ideas and experiences may bring new perspectives and new knowledge (cf. Sahlin-Andersson 1996: 82). If this is to take place, it is of course important for those being imitated to be open for these reinterpretations and able to see beyond the context and tradition in which they are embedded.

The cooperation through the NFA has also been seen as beneficial for various Swedish organizations. As discussed in Chapter 8.3, the activities to support NGO development during the second half of the 1990s also included providing “trainee” positions for Baltic NGO leaders in the field of adult and popular education. At first this was apparently seen as mostly one-sided. Evaluation of the experiences at the NFA after completing the practice, for instance, focused more or less exclusively on what the people from the Baltic countries had learnt. However, these activities, too, seem to have changed over the course of time. What has been noticed is that after the cooperation had been going on for some time, the Nordic organizations frequently realized that they too were benefiting from this and wanted to continue. Thus, these organizations themselves took the initiative in maintaining the contacts with those from the Baltic countries who had been at their organization in an effort to continue cooperation in certain areas. This quite clearly shows a realization that this is also beneficial for the Nordic organizations (Carlsen, interview, 2006). This kind of result is also expressed in reports on these activities:

The situation in adult learning organisations is constantly changing in the Baltic as well as the Nordic countries, and the practice week provide good learning and development opportunities for both parts. (NFA 2002b: 3).
This section has demonstrated that there are plenty of examples where the Swedish actors, i.e. those perceived to be the transmitters, socializing agents or those providing access to the ideas and models to be translated, have themselves also benefited from the cooperation. The projects with AHL may have been situated in a context of development assistance and democracy promotion, but that clearly does not prevent those being imitated from taking advantage of the learning opportunity provided by these contacts and the Estonian editing process.

### 10.3 Future Prospects of AHL

The AHL umbrella no longer organizes the kind of large international projects that it did, especially during the 1990s. This part of its activities has died out, whether temporarily or not remains to be seen. This, however, does not mean that the different member organizations are no longer active, also in transnational cooperation. Estonian actors have also been involved in the transnational activities that ABF and NFA have continued with after leaving the Baltic states. This also shows that Swedish actors have learned things from the cooperation as well. It demonstrates not least an appreciation of the importance of contextual knowledge and identification between actors. As argued in this chapter, it is found easier for Russian actors to find common ground with Estonians than with people from the Nordic countries. This also relates to issues of proximity – geographical and cultural.

That Estonian actors attempt to spread the ideas and models further shows that outcomes of the cooperation studied here have been institutionalized in the Estonian organizations. This needs to take place before anything is passed on. However, that involves a whole new process of dissemination and translation that cannot be dealt with here.

For the Swedish organizations, collaboration in new projects with Estonian actors demonstrates that contacts and networks were other important outcomes of the cooperation with Estonia and AHL, along with the new Swedish perspective on the Swedes’ own situation. Methodological developments arising from the editing process in Estonia have also brought insights to Swedish actors. Thus there are projects where the process can indeed be seen as reciprocal.

What will happen to AHL as an umbrella organization in the future? This is of course a question on which the jury is still out. However, in 2006 the discussions among more than one of the member organizations concerned whether or not to leave AHL and there are those who see a rather bleak future for the umbrella organization (Kiik, interview, 2006; Vaino, interview, 2006). In previous chapters it has been mentioned that the lack of project money within the AHL umbrella is one of the reasons why several members have left the organization. There may be yet another pragmatic
reason for this. The central organization of AHL does not receive any state funding for itself or any support at a central level (Kiik, interview, 2006). This means that the membership fees become higher than those of, for instance, EVHL, which does receive state funding. This is another possible reason for why membership in AHL is questioned (Kraus, interview, 2006).

Several respondents believe that the umbrella organization will die out since there are no projects, nor project money available and not much else to hold the organization together.

If we [the AHL member organizations] have projects, we are together but there is no project – nothing happens. (Kraus, interview, 2006)

This is possibly the result not only of the lack of project money but also in general of the amount of voluntary work these activities require. Respondents say that there is very little money to be found in this area of activities in Estonia and there may be a limit to how long those active are willing to make sacrifices in order to carry on these educational activities (Mikk, interview, 2006; Vaino, interview, 2006).

This may not be the most encouraging end to this chapter but it must be noted that even if a weakening and possibly even the demise of AHL as an umbrella organization takes place, this does not necessarily mean that the organizations incorporated in the umbrella, their activities or indeed the results and lessons from their cooperation with Sweden and ABF will die out or be wasted. It can also be part of the continued transformation process that the whole of Estonia has been and in several respects is still going through. Thus, even if many of the outcomes of the cooperation with Sweden have become institutionalized, this does not mean that the process of translation, or at least the process of change, is over. This should be seen as an ongoing process and continued translation and change is a natural part of a dynamic environment.

The most essential question when evaluating the long-term success, apart from taking into account various contextual aspects and conditions that the organizations cannot influence, is whether or not the gist of the cooperation remains and how the local organizations are faring in Estonia today. Here the picture is brighter since, as has been shown, many of them are still able to survive and continue with their activities and also take part in other transnational projects.
11. Conclusions

After the analysis in previous chapters of the transnational cooperation that AHL and its member organizations have been involved in with Sweden, I will end this thesis with a summary of what has emerged from this study and return to the research questions that were presented in Chapter 1.2 as well as discuss the implications for the theories used. Thus, the first section will deal primarily with empirical results and answers to the research questions and the second will draw out the more general lessons learned from these investigations that may benefit theories and future research.

11.1 Returning to the Questions

The first question posed at the beginning of this study was: *What ideas and practices have travelled between the contexts?* This question has primarily been answered in Chapter Eight, which has identified what has been disseminated as well as demonstrated that dissemination indeed has taken place. This concerned the first phase of a translation process that has here been called *travelling*. To investigate this in the projects under scrutiny, potential travelling ideas were identified in Chapter Three, especially 3.4; the ideas were based on central characteristics of Swedish popular education. Naturally, other aspects have also been found in the empirical studies to be results of the cooperation and this will also be discussed below.

The most easily identified part of what has been disseminated concerns the material items that ABF organizations have given to AHL members, such as copying machines, computers, etc. However, even this material support has had some long-term benefits for the Estonian organizations, primarily in the form of the building in Tallinn that was bought for AHL with Swedish money. As noted in Chapter 8.1, the money realized by selling this property provided the central umbrella organization with its current office premises in Tartu.

When discussing what has been disseminated and especially when demonstrating that dissemination has occurred, the propositions advanced in diffusion theory are useful. There are said to be three conditions that have to be met in order to claim that this kind of process actually has taken place.\(^\text{124}\)

\(^{124}\) This has also been discussed in Chapter 5.1.
Even though diffusion is not the main perspective used in this study this can help demonstrate that dissemination has occurred, which is important since otherwise there can be no translation or editing of ideas and practices either. This is also in line with the synthesizing ambition of this thesis and the argument that cross-fertilization between different traditions interested in processes of dissemination can be rewarding.

The conditions advanced in diffusion theory are: (1) the temporal setting should coincide with the expectations for a process of diffusion; (2) there should be common elements in the two organizations or their activities, and; (3) empirical proof has to be advanced as to how the items and ideas have been diffused between the organizations. I will here start with the first and the last of these criteria, following this with a more detailed discussion of the second criterion. This is done since the discussions of similarities between the organizations and their activities also leads to the second of the research questions (how have the ideas and practices been translated to fit the new context?), which was primarily analyzed in Chapter Nine.

Firstly, the temporal setting should coincide with the expectations for a process of diffusion meaning that it should be proven that the transmitter possessed the item of diffusion (an idea, method, tactic, etc.) before the adopter. Ideas and practices that have been spread in the cooperation between ABF and AHL include, for instance, the method of the study circle as well as a knowledge of meeting techniques and other associational skills related to the improvement of organizational democracy. The ideas and practices that have been spread will be discussed further when the second criterion is addressed. However, the ideas and practices mentioned here are things that can rather easily be claimed to have existed in Sweden and ABF before they took hold in Estonia and AHL. This is not least apparent from the retrospect presented in Chapter Three. The long, strong tradition of these methods and the underlying ideals in Sweden clearly show the sequence. ABF has existed and worked since 1912, and these ideas and methods are firmly established parts of this tradition. AHL was initiated in 1991 and the kind of adult education that popular education stands for has clearly brought new insights to the Estonian organizations. However, as has been discussed in Chapter 4.1, there existed adult education traditions in Estonia before independence was regained but these have developed and been reformulated after the second independence. The previous traditions have, however, most likely influenced the way the various ideas and items have been edited to fit the Estonian context. Regarding meeting techniques and democratic leadership these have also been features of Swedish society before it entered the Estonian stage. For the “simple” reason that Sweden has been an independent democratic state for much longer than Estonia the timeline is also clear here. Regarding organizational democracy this has been particularly true since this has been an important part of Swedish popular movements and popular movement organizations since they started growing.
strong during the second half of the 19th century. To sum up, the temporal setting does indeed coincide with what is expected in previous research.

Before I turn to a more elaborate discussion of what has been disseminated through the projects, the issue of how these items, ideas and practices have been spread between the actors, i.e. what channels of communication have been used and, thus, how the actors are linked, should be addressed. The descriptions of the projects given throughout the analysis have also demonstrated the interfaces between the organizations.

Contacts and networks that were established through the various projects have been and continue to be of great importance to the actors, as does what has previously been discussed in terms of encouragement (for instance in Chapter 8.2). Thus, respondents view the contacts that were developed as essential outcomes of the projects. When making comparisons between their own situation and success and that of Swedish organizations, Estonian actors have striven for similar results and in this used the Swedish organizations as role models. One approach is to try to imitate the more successful actors, i.e. ABF, to translate their “prescription” to fit the Estonian context and to attempt by these means to improve the Estonian situation. Getting in touch with the actors to whom you wish to become more similar, and obtaining encouragement and the recognition that you are “on the right path” to accomplish this should be seen as a boost to continued development and not least as a legitimation of the activities.

The obvious and simplistic answer to the question of how different ideas and practices identified in the analysis have been disseminated is of course that they have been spread through the contacts between the organizations. The projects have included meetings, discussions and not least education, which must be seen as an obvious way of trying to spread knowledge, no matter whether we are talking about these socializing efforts or formal education where a state attempts to educate and, thus, spread knowledge to the younger generation of its citizenry. It has already been argued (in Chapter 8.2) that the personal networks and long-lasting contacts, some of which survived the termination of the project activities, demonstrate that interpersonal contacts constituted the primary channel of communication. But, as has been touched upon before, these contacts varied between different projects, both in quantity and quality. This relates to the “big-brother mentality” and inflexibility that existed in some projects and that will also be discussed below.

Apart from the educational activities organized in Estonia where people from ABF came to disseminate or “teach” AHL members pedagogics, methods and ideas, something that was important in the early stages of developing AHL and adult education in Estonia was the opportunity to make study trips to Sweden, both to visit partner organizations from ABF and also in connection with the activities at NFA. Even though not all adult and popular educators in AHL, Estonia or the other Baltic countries got the
chance to visit NFA, several of them still did. As discussed in Chapter 7.3, NFA organized a “summer academy” for three years (1992-94) as well as a number of different activities during the rest of the 1990s and the first years of the 21st century. When discussing this with those who participated, it is clearly stated that this was very important both to the participants themselves and to the general development of adult and popular education in the Baltic countries. As has also been noted in the analysis, the kind of activities taking place at the NFA concentrated strongly on networking aspects. That it was important to make new contacts, not only between Nordic and Baltic countries but also within Estonia has also been repeated by people from AHL. The transnational networking that has been part of these contacts and also of ABF/AHL projects is thus an example of the building of transnational civil society networks, as discussed in Chapter 2.1.3.

The time spent at NFA’s offices in Gothenburg and on study visits to various organizations, folk high schools and study associations around Sweden and also in other Nordic countries gave an opportunity to experience first-hand how the system of adult and popular education works there and not least that it does work as well as to find out and discuss with like-minded people how it would be possible to reproduce that situation in their own context. Thus, these visits and meetings were a way of providing actors with the information and knowledge needed to draw lessons and learn from experiences elsewhere as well as to achieve more initiated comparisons. This discussion of how ideas and practices were disseminated can be summarized by saying that interpersonal contacts have been the most important channel of communication. The importance of physical meetings and of being able to visit the partner organization cannot be emphasized enough in this context.

Now it is time to return to the second criterion advanced in diffusion theory in more detail. This is at the centre of the first research question posed in this study and stretches over to the second. It concerns the fact that there should be common elements in the two organizations or their activities in the sense that the item, idea or practice can be proved to exist with both the “transmitter” and the “receiver”. This has been considered in the discussions throughout the analysis and especially in Chapter Eight. It should be stressed that with the perspective taken in this study, I mean to imply that there should be similarities in various elements that can be recognized in Estonia; thus there is no need to find a carbon copy of a Swedish original.

The items and ideas extracted in previous chapters clearly show that there now are common, or at least similar, elements in the organizations that have come from the cooperation and the projects. Many of the educational ideas and methods may not take exactly the same form in Estonia and AHL as in Sweden and ABF but they are still recognizable. So it is not unreasonable to claim that this criterion has also been met.

Popular education methods and pedagogics formed the essential part of many projects and were a part of more or less all of them. More specifically,
the study circle has been part of virtually every single project. Many have explicitly focused on increasing the competence of Estonian adult and popular educators by giving them the opportunity to learn about this central feature of Swedish popular education. It should be noted here that many of the different project goals are interrelated. Projects involving the training of study circle leaders also have the intention of developing the organizations and making them more democratic. Conversely, when the focus is on organizational development, improving the internal democracy, etc., this is to be done by the use of study circles. Projects that focus on seemingly unrelated issues, such as cultural activities and parental training, also make use of the study circle. As has been noted both in Chapter Three when discussing the background and ideas of Swedish popular education and the study circle and in Chapter 8.4.3, the form is seen as more important than the contents of the education. Thus, using the study circle is perceived by Swedish actors as a way of contributing to a democratic society, no matter what the subject is. The analysis has also shown that today this is a part of how people in AHL view the activities and their possible contribution. In particular this has been shown in the discussion of the fact that it is difficult to give a civic education course in Estonia since many people do not want to become involved with politics or are more interested in activities that give them qualifications that can be used in their professions. In this context, AHL representatives stress the importance of the form of the education and the methods used as also providing opportunities to develop civic competence in activities directed at more pragmatic topics (see Chapter 8.4.3). Methods and pedagogics and the focus on the form of the education were also identified as defining characteristics of Swedish popular education and as potential travelling ideas in Chapter 3.4.

The discussion on form versus content also demonstrates the idea that more indirect effects of the educational activities are important in the Swedish tradition of popular education. These include the importance of the social function of participating in these activities, which is something that is stressed in many of the writings on Swedish popular education and that has also come through clearly in the interviews held for this study. This was also presented as a third characteristic in Chapter 3.4. The way this is discussed by respondents from AHL shows a similar understanding and they themselves regard it as a development influenced by the cooperation with Sweden and ABF. This has been demonstrated in Chapter 8.4.1. It has also been mentioned in Chapter Nine as something partly new to the Estonian context since it has a much sharper focus on the social aspect than on the efficient use of time and more individualistic education that many Estonian actors have been used to. The analysis in this study shows that there appears to have been a partial shift in the classroom ethos in Estonia.

The reasoning behind the emphasis on the social function of popular education is that these organizations believe they can fill an important
function by providing a meeting place for people with varying backgrounds – people who might otherwise never encounter each other. The focus on creating a democratic environment in the classroom and thus together learning to make decisions in a democratic fashion has been discussed in Chapter Three and is also closely related to the notions of civil society as “schools of democracy” that was elaborated on in Chapter Two. In civil society theory, it is proposed that one important function of civil society organizations can be to provide the meeting place that is emphasized in ABF and now also in AHL. It is also proposed that these organizations can provide citizens with situations where they can practice democratic skills (such as democratic decision-making, etc.). From this perspective civil society is believed to contribute to the development of civic competence, both by disseminating information and more theoretical knowledge but also by giving citizens the opportunity to use these kinds of skills in practice. Hence, this is a role of civil society organizations that both ABF and AHL take seriously and it connects to the emphasis on democracy that was advanced as a trait of Swedish popular education in Chapter 3.4. This also includes the equality principle that is seen as central to ABF and Swedish popular education and embraces the last of the characteristics advanced in Chapter 3.4, namely that the activities should be free, voluntary and inclusive. Regarding AHL it can be said that their activities are open to everyone, although the financial situation may restrict the participation of groups with limited resources. This is, however, not very different from the Swedish situation either.

This investigation makes it possible to argue that some things have indeed been disseminated from Sweden to Estonia and from ABF to AHL. The argument that something has been spread is based on similarities in the activities and how the actors on both sides of the cooperation express this and describe the ideas, methods and practices. It is also further strengthened by the fact that different AHL organizations today attempt to pass on the knowledge and models gained through the cooperation. Examples of this concern both the pedagogics of the study circle as well as meeting techniques and associational skills, which were parts of the projects designed to develop organizational democracy. These continued activities will not be exact replicas of what came from Sweden and ABF but will also incorporate the editing done in order to translate the Swedish model of popular education to an Estonian context. That this is the case can also be seen in the fact that Swedish actors today see the benefits of getting assistance from, for instance, Estonia and AHL in their cooperation with Russia.

As has been demonstrated in the analysis, actors on both the Swedish and the Estonian side emphasize how important it is for the Estonian actors and organizations to be able and free enough to alter the models and fit them into their own context. That this has also been done has, for instance, been exemplified by the study circle. This then concerns the second phase of a
translation process, called *editing* in this study. In Chapter Nine it was mentioned that actors in AHL use a somewhat different approach where the study circle becomes more of a mixture of a Swedish study circle and a course and the situation is claimed to be more teacher-controlled than is common in ABF. Partly, this could be a result of giving participant-oriented classes in Estonia. As has been discussed in the analysis, the view of people in AHL is that Estonians wish for this more teacher-controlled education even if they themselves maintain an influence over the activities. AHL organizations have also blended in additional methods and pedagogics. Following this they have started developing study material and methodological material of their own. In other words, the activities in AHL resemble the model used by ABF but they have been edited to fit Estonian circumstances. That something has been changed in the model when it has been implemented in an Estonian setting is not least shown by the fact that there are people from ABF who have subsequently taken back new features for use in Sweden and ABF. If nothing had been changed, there would be nothing for them to bring back!

The translation process has thus led to certain adjustments of the original ideas and models. It has also influenced the actors involved, on both the Estonian and the Swedish side. This concerns not only new pedagogical inputs that were mentioned in the previous paragraph but also how the cooperation and the projects themselves influenced the actors. Much is claimed to have been learned, on both sides, concerning the other country, the people, the situation, etc. The cooperation is also claimed to have led to personal development of the people involved, which is also relevant to the third research question posed in this study: *How have the cooperation and contacts affected the actors and organizations involved?*

AHL and the Estonians involved have gained new knowledge of methods in the field of popular education and also of organizational development and democracy. They have also been given insights into the situation in Sweden and the system of adult education there. The same can also be said of the Swedish actors. They have gained knowledge of Estonia, the situation there and the challenges they face. For several actors this is described as having been an eye-opener, which has shown the situation in Sweden in a different light. Several of the organizations have also been influenced by the cooperation. This is of course true of the Estonian organizations but as has been shown in Chapter 10.2, the projects have also left a mark on organizations from ABF, some of which have started offering new study circles, focused in different ways on Estonia.

Previous studies of translation processes have not discussed the side of the “transmitter” or the “sender” as extensively as they have the recipients. However, the learning opportunity for the transmitters to which some of these studies have pointed has apparently been utilized by some of the Swedish organizations. The analysis has provided several examples of how
in various ways Estonia has continued to be an integral part of the activities of Swedish organizations after the termination of the project activities with AHL. This study has been able to show this reciprocity (not least concerning the fruits of the methodological development taking place in Estonia and AHL as part of the editing process) and that projects taking place as a part of democracy-promoting activities can be more rewarding to the “donors’” side than merely gaining a feeling of satisfaction from helping those in need. This is something that should be given more attention in future research. What has been stated in this paragraph is then connected to the third phase of a translation process, institutionalization, in which the ideas and practices that have been disseminated and edited become institutionalized in the new context. This part of the process has been discussed in Chapter Ten. That Estonian actors and organizations today are involved in projects where they attempt to spread popular education ideas and methods onwards both to other countries and to other parts of and organizations in Estonia demonstrates that what was disseminated through the projects with ABF was assimilated and has also become institutionalized. Efforts to spread ideas and practices further, using the same concepts to describe issues, and the fact that organizations (both Swedish and Estonian) continue to use the (edited) methods are aspects of the previous cooperation that have now become a part of the day-to-day activities of the organizations and show that there are outcomes that have survived the termination of the projects.

It should here be noted that it is important to study the kind of relations that have characterized the cooperation since these can influence both the evaluation and the results of the projects. In some of the projects investigated in this study a mutual interest, respect and a belief that both sides have something to gain from the cooperation has been prevalent. On the other hand, there are examples where AHL has hardly been involved at all in the planning or even the implementation of the projects, i.e. where they have truly been seen as “receivers” and less as partners. The “big-brother mentality” this implies has also been further discussed in Chapter 9.3. As discussed there, this attitude that Estonians perceived to exist from the Swedish side in some projects was not appreciated by the Estonian partners, and this has affected how successful the projects are perceived to have been. The difference between various projects in this respect can also be related to the different strategies that can be used in an effort at socialization. In Chapter 5.2 persuasion as opposed to social influence was discussed. This study hardly provides the kind of material needed for in-depth discussions concerning which of these has been most extensively used. However, in the same context, it was noticed that lecturing and demanding (which can be seen as more closely related to social influence than to persuasion) was not a very fruitful approach from the socializing agents. What has been stated here concerning how Estonians perceived a project when it was strongly guided from the Swedish side indicates that these projects show the same tendencies.
and that deliberation is a better path to take. These notions thus seem to hold true for the contacts investigated in this study. When comparing the projects it comes through that those that have worked best and that have been most appreciated are those where the “socializing agent”, i.e. the ABF organization, has been responsive and not only listened, but understood and learned about the contextual conditions under which they are to work and under which the people in AHL are to work. With a lack of understanding of the contextual preconditions, the situation and the perspective of the partner organization, it is difficult to see how a fruitful dialogue can arise. This is also part of the matter of identification and of escaping the embeddedness of the different actors.

Many of the issues discussed here also have a bearing on the third question posed in Chapter 1.2, which was mentioned above. This question has been part of the entire analysis. The project activities, the experiences of cultural exchange and not least the new knowledge brought by the contacts to both sides are important parts of the answer to this question. Naturally, for the Estonian organizations the financial contributions from Sweden have clearly affected them by making it possible to start up and sustain their activities. As has been demonstrated in the analysis, the cooperation is also described as having altered the perceptions and beliefs of Estonian actors, for example their view of how democratic a learning environment should be as well as the importance of reaching marginalized groups in society and promoting active citizenship. This is also related to issues of identification between the actors, which have been discussed in previous studies of dissemination, whether the concept used has been diffusion, socialization or translation. Connected to this is the perceived distance between actors regarding values, etc. Actors need to some extent to be similar in order for a process of dissemination to occur and function well. In diffusion theory this has been developed into the concepts of institutional equivalence and subjective identification. In this tradition it has been claimed that not too much should be made of this identification since it does not have to be very complex or “deep”: “In the case of social movements, it may involve only a shared identification with the role of activist. Activists in one movement may thereby borrow tactics from their ideological opponents in another” (McAdam & Rucht 1993: 63).

As has been demonstrated in this thesis, ABF is strongly embedded in the traditions of a popular movement (the labour movement) and has a political-ideological backbone that AHL does not share. What must be remembered is that the two organizations have developed in different times and under different circumstances. AHL has a more flexible and pragmatic view on certain things, which is not surprising, especially when it is remembered that popular education has become quite institutionalized in Sweden due to its long history and strong position in society. Disembedding the ideas from the “popular movement marinade” (Hvenmark & Wijkström 2004) has not been
easy and this together with the context in which the Estonian actors are embedded, as well as the issue of a common value base, has led to certain problems during the cooperation. This has been shown in Chapter Nine concerning organizational differences and the power relations between the organizations and actors in the projects. There is, for instance, a difference between those who are active, there being many academics or highly educated individuals in AHL, which is not as frequent in ABF; and there is also a difference in the strong common value base and political (social democratic) identity of ABF, which has not existed in AHL. These differences have also been perceived as problematic by respondents, which demonstrates that similarities between the actors and organizations and the possibility of identifying with each other indeed are important. In the cases investigated here and in the context of issues concerning identification, differences in background, organizational structure and political identity matter. That ABF and AHL differ in these respects is hardly strange but the different backgrounds and traditions have led to certain problems. Thus, the conducive aspects of this kind of identification are helped by a further identification than discussed in diffusion theory.

Identification and finding a common value base have not only been an issue in relations between ABF and AHL but also within the AHL umbrella. In recent years there has been a shift inside AHL that has taken the central organization in a homogenizing direction. It has been demonstrated (in Chapter 8.4.2) that in some respects AHL is tending to become more similar to ABF in terms of a more specified political orientation and a more pronounced common value base, which is then connected to isomorphic processes (see DiMaggio & Powell 1983). It can also be seen as a wish for a smaller ideational distance discussed in socialization literature as well as a wish to belong to the same group as the “transmitter”, and as a continuation of the editing part of the translation process. Whether or not this is for better or worse for the organization as such remains to be seen.

A number of member organizations have left the AHL umbrella in the last few years. This may partly be because of the more distinctive image that is developing. However, it may also be the other way around. It is possible that once organizations started leaving AHL, partly as a result of the increased difficulty of getting project money, there was a need to find something that would keep at least some organizations in AHL so that the organization would not die out. The increased focus on trade unions and a more developed common value base may be one way of trying to accomplish this. However, this is speculation; it may be that this development has taken place simply because a number of the leading actors do adhere to a common, political, ideology. As noted earlier, many of the leading actors of AHL are and have been active social democrats. What should be noted here is that the importance of a common value base not only concerns the relations between, in these cases, ABF and AHL, but also relations within the AHL umbrella.
Thus, these aspects are also significant at the domestic level and for its continued development, which has also been discussed in Chapter 9.2.2. The more sharply defined value base of AHL may have led to some defections from the organization but possibly also been a step towards a stronger common identity. Whether this is enough to keep the organization alive remains to be seen.

The reasons for getting involved in these kinds of projects and in international activities are manifold and I will not attempt any extensive speculations regarding this. Briefly, however, it seems that there are a number of contributory reasons. From the Estonian side, the material side of the projects was naturally of importance, especially during the first half of the 1990s. In the context of identification I have also discussed the tension between idealism and pragmatism (see Chapter Nine). This division may to some extent apply to the reasons of the different actors for getting involved in the projects. Simplistically put it may be argued that several Estonian actors, at least on the local level, take a quite pragmatic view of why to become a partner in transnational civil society cooperation. The Swedish side, on the other hand, frequently sees the benefits more in terms of assisting a democratic development and getting the chance to be “pioneers once more” in a field with a long history in Sweden. However, another aspect that may influence the willingness of Swedish organizations and individuals to delve into these kinds of projects is that it was possible to get funding for them. This pragmatic reason has played its part for both Estonians and Swedes. This should not be taken as any kind of ethical judgement of this reason or these activities but simply as a reflection of the fact that the funding opportunities are a central ingredient – it is not possible to do these kinds of projects without any money, thus, “money rules”. However, there are also other grounds for the enthusiasm shown in and for the projects from both sides of the Baltic Sea.

On the Swedish side, one of the main reasons can be found in the ideology or traditions of Swedish popular education and of ABF. As an organization, ABF has been firmly embedded in the Swedish labour movement and is also closely connected to the values of Swedish social democracy, where “solidarity” has been a key word. This is not least the case on an international level. Thus, engaging in various aid-directed projects and attempting to further a democratic development emphasizing catchwords such as “equality”, “tolerance” and “participation” lie close to heart of many people working in popular education for ABF. A genuine interest in helping others and a view of this as a way of also developing and helping oneself is at the core for several people. The belief in education as a vehicle of social change is strong and it is seen as valuable in other contexts as well. This may sound idealistic and perhaps it is but it is still very real as a reason for wanting to get involved with these kinds of international projects.
For AHL, the money and other material advantages were of course an essential inducement to start the cooperation but also a willingness to learn as well as the insight that development was necessary played an important role for the Estonian actors. Engaging in transnational cooperation was a way of assisting and speeding up the country’s development. Taking the hands outstretched from other countries was a way of not having to reinvent the wheel and gave the opportunity to learn from the experiences and mistakes of others.

11.2 Theoretical Implications and Avenues for Future Research

For an in-depth investigation of processes of the kind investigated in this study it is beneficial to use a concept that is better able to account for changes on the “micro-level” than traditional diffusion theory is able to do. The detailed description provided in this study has allowed an investigation into the nitty-gritty of transnational civil society cooperation and required the necessary investigative tools. This is also one of the benefits of the translation concept, which focuses sharply on the actors involved and on the small steps and changes taking place along the way. That changes are necessary or inherent in processes surrounding the travel of ideas between contexts is not stated only in previous translation studies. This is also confirmed by those who have been involved in cooperation between Sweden and Estonia in the field of popular education. The study performed here has also been an innovative way of approaching transnational civil society cooperation and democracy-promoting efforts. The concept of translation and the elements of this kind of process as discussed here can be a rewarding approach for studies of these fields in the future.

The analysis in this study has been structured according to the different phases that were extrapolated in Chapter 5.4. This has been a fruitful way of structuring the complex and dynamic empirical material of this case study and this analytical framework can also be used on other cases, not least in other studies of translation processes, transnational civil society cooperation and efforts to promote democracy. Thus, the division into phases (and the illustrations of these by the in-depth empirical investigations) is the first more theoretical contribution of this study.

Regarding the division into phases in previous translation studies, this study has focused more on not only the receiving partner but also those transmitting new ideas and making them accessible. The first phase, here called *travelling*, deals with the separation of ideas to be spread from the context in which they have existed previously, which is an important aspect for actors wishing to promote democracy abroad. It also concerns the fact
that these ideas, practices and models have to be made accessible for potential translators. Chapter Eight also focused in detail on the issue of what has been disseminated between the contexts. Thus, a matching was made here between the potential travelling ideas identified in Chapter 3.4 that were discussed above, what was disseminated in the projects, and what was subsequently picked up by Estonian actors. Thus, this was partly an expansion on the first phase of a translation process or, rather, it addressed the ideas being spread and the activities of the promoting actors in greater detail. Once ideas have been disembedded and objectified into models (which is what takes place during the first phase in previous research), these have to be made accessible to the potential recipients before they can start to edit and translate them. This is of course rather obvious but with the research design of this study it also becomes an important part of the analysis. As has been argued previously, it is not possible to say anything about how ideas have been altered by the translation process nor to understand what aspects may have influenced this if there is no understanding of the original idea or message. The second phase where the editing of the receiving actors is taking place mainly concerns that side of the cooperation. The fact that something has been edited by the Estonian actors has already been discussed in the analysis as well as in the previous section of this chapter and a number of aspects have influenced this editing phase. This phase thus mainly concerns the “receiving” side of the cooperation. However, it is important for democracy-promoting actors or other “senders” to allow their partners enough freedom to develop their own variations of the ideas and practices that are spread in order for these to fit the new context. Here issues of asymmetry and identification have to be taken into consideration and I will come back to these below. Lastly, if the new ideas and practices, after some editing, are institutionalized, this may demonstrate long-term effects of the efforts. Here, if the ideas and practices become part of the everyday activities of the organizations and, potentially, even part of the organizational identity and if, as in the cases of this study, originally receiving organizations also attempt to spread the ideas and practices further, these are indicators of institutionalization of the ideas and practices in a specific translation process.

Naturally, as was also stressed in Chapter 5.4, the phases are not clearly distinguishable and the process involves going back and forth between them. Thus this structure should not be seen as a linear model of how a process of translation proceeds. However, thinking in terms of phases is a rewarding approach to the study of translation processes and of transnational civil society cooperation and democracy-promoting efforts. As already demonstrated, there are a number of elements of a translation process that give these phases a content and contribute to the construction of a useful analytical framework. This leads to the remaining contributions of this study.
A number of important elements of the kind of process studied here have come through in the investigation. Firstly: contextual knowledge and also flexibility in relation to the ideal model being disseminated is apparently important to the successful outcomes of projects of this kind. This and the strategies advanced in previous studies of socialization, which were also discussed in Chapter 11.1, can be used to develop the concept of translation even though these ideas may then need some editing or translation of their own. The importance of contextual knowledge, flexibility and appreciation of the different strategies that can be used should also be borne in mind in studies of democracy-promoting efforts. The study has demonstrated that actors attempting to disseminate ideas and practices need to possess knowledge of the context being targeted and not only knowledge of the ideas and practices being disseminated. If this kind of cooperation is to work smoothly, contextual knowledge is important, as is an open mind towards the changes that may follow when the receiving actors edit the ideas and practices to fit them into the new context. Whether actors are open to new information, and to changes in the ideas and practices that are spread, as well as whether offence is taken if there is too much of a “big-brother” mentality, will influence the cooperation as well as the translation process and the nature and result of the editing.

Secondly, and linked to this, potential asymmetry in the power relations between the actors is important. This may circumscribe actors and may also drain resources from the main activities of organizations. This is closely related to the importance of actors and partners being able to identify with each other. These issues have also been discussed extensively in the analysis and in Chapter 11.1. The study has demonstrated that it is beneficial to the smooth operation of a cooperation project if this identification concerns more than the basic similarities proposed in previous diffusion studies. This conclusion comes from an investigation in greater depth than has been conducted in many studies of diffusion as well as of translation processes. These are issues that need to be further addressed in studies of translation processes, transnational civil society cooperation as well as democracy promotion. Just like several other aspects, issues of asymmetry and identification may influence more than one phase of a translation process. However, these are primarily relevant to the editing phase since this is where receiving actors may come into conflict with their partners concerning if and how ideas and practices are to be edited.

As noted above in Chapter 11.1, the strategies used by “transmitting” agents can influence the projects. Without going into these strategies in depth, it is clear that the approach taken to the partner organizations influences how successful and how smooth the process of dissemination will be. As has been noted in Chapter 9.3, there may also be different views of what strategy has actually been employed by the “socializing agent”. Receivers may experience much more pressure and be afraid to voice
criticism for fear of losing support while “transmitters” believe they are using more deliberative and partnership-oriented methods. Studies of democracy-promoting efforts can also benefit from a realization that the perceptions of what strategies have actually been used in a project may differ between sender and receiver, which means that it is important to check the experiences of both sides of this kind of cooperation. In the systematization presented in Chapter Five and especially 5.4, it was argued that it may be useful to absorb lessons from research using theories and concepts other than translation to assist the understanding of these processes. Socialization seems to be particularly able to contribute and to some extent to work alongside translation with regard to an emphasis on the importance of identification, contextual conditions and also the different strategies that can be used in socialization efforts.

Thirdly, and in the context of what was discussed in the above paragraphs, the proximity aspect that was discussed in Chapter Five and that has also been brought up in the analysis should be remembered. Previous research has claimed that actors tend to turn to those situated close to them when attempting to disseminate or receive something. Geographical proximity, discussed in diffusion studies, may very well be important, not least for practical reasons. Nothing contradicts this in the cases studied here. In this context the notion of the importance of “reference states” should also be mentioned. As has been argued previously, Sweden is regarded as a reference state by many Estonian actors. This is certainly the case in the field of adult and popular education, where Sweden is widely seen as an authority. This may also be connected to translation and the importance of comparisons, role models and imitation discussed in that context. It also links with issues of identification and ideas presented in socialization theory. There it has been advanced that it is conducive to a successful process of dissemination if the receiver wishes to belong to the same group as the transmitter and the transmitter is perceived to be an authority within this group. The cases here concern the group of adult and popular educators within which it is not too presumptuous to claim that Sweden is an authority. Thus, it is logical for Estonian actors to want contact with Swedish organizations in this field of activity.

It should be noted that proximity is not only a geographical matter. In Chapter 6.2, I have argued for the concept of cultural proximity, emphasizing that apart from geography, perceived cultural and/or historical closeness is also of importance. Even though these aspects are frequently interrelated, this is not necessarily the situation in all cases. This has not only been discussed in connection with the cooperation and projects involving ABF and AHL, or Sweden and Estonia, but its importance has also been seen in Chapter Ten when the continued activities of the organizations were in focus. There the importance of this perceived closeness appears in the cooperation currently taking place with Russian organizations. This is also
something that both Swedish and Estonian actors have recognized. When relating the notion of cultural proximity back to the theories and concepts used in this study it seems that emphasizing the importance of not only geographical proximity but a number of issues relating to the possibilities of identifying with the actors on the other side of the fence fits well with the concept of translation. In previous translation studies, the importance of contextual knowledge as well as of the ability of actors to identify with each other has been stressed and now cultural proximity can also be added to the concepts used to assist studies of translation processes. This is important for the choice of role models and for the start-up of cooperation. Thus, it can be seen as most important for the first phase of a translation process as well as the time preceding it.

With its in-depth empirical investigation of the extensive cooperation between ABF and AHL as well as the influence of NFA in the development of the Estonian organizations, this study has demonstrated how transnational civil society cooperation can take place. It has also illustrated the process taking place when information, knowledge and experiences are disseminated through these contacts. In the cases that have been under scrutiny here, this also happens in the context of democracy promotion where foreign actors attempt to assist a democratic development. Since the “donors”, “transmitters” or “socializing agents” in this study come from Sweden, the focus on popular education offers lessons to a big part of Swedish democracy promotion and development assistance, since popular education is an area that has traditionally been an important part of these activities in Sweden. This comes not least from the traditions of the Swedish context where the popular movements have been celebrated as crucial to the development of the modern Swedish democratic state and popular education has been an important activity of these movements.

As has been shown, many items, methods and ideas have been disseminated through the contacts but it is also clear that Estonian actors have edited the Swedish models to fit better into the local context. Thus, the translation perspective has been beneficial for investigating these complex processes. This study has approached an answer to or, more correctly, an understanding of how the process of translation has affected the actors on both sides of the cooperation. It should be evident that many interesting developments have taken place after the Swedish ideas and models have reached the Estonian actors and thus that it is valuable to take the analysis further than a mere specification of similarities between countries and organizations. The findings of the empirical analysis demonstrate that concepts, ideas, methods and practices have been absorbed by Estonian actors but that, in the process of incorporating them into their own activities and their own context, actors in AHL have also edited these ideas and models. Change does seem to be an essential ingredient when ideas travel.
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