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A new spirit across sectors: Constructing a common justification for corporate volunteering

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ABSTRACT
Corporate volunteering is an activity located at the intersection of the corporate and nonprofit spheres. Its coordination and implementation create interesting encounters between professionals from both sectors. This article adopts a pragmatic sociological approach to analysing the discursive processes that nurture or hinder these encounters and the corporate volunteering activities they aim to produce. It brings to the fore the nonprofit perspective by analysing 39 semi-structured interviews with Dutch and Belgian nonprofit professionals who were engaged in corporate volunteering coordination. The study shows that a flexible and project-oriented justification regime, which is mainly promoted by nonprofits that match companies with other nonprofits, creates a common discursive terrain that nurtures cross-sectoral collaboration. Other justification regimes, particularly the civic one, are increasingly marginalised, as they are perceived as hindering collaboration rather than enabling it. Thus the proliferation of corporate volunteering, and the dominance of the project-oriented justification that is intertwined with it, together challenge classical identifications of the nonprofit sector with civic action.

Introduction

Corporate volunteering activities have emerged during the past two decades as a central component in companies' corporate social responsibility (CSR) schemes.[1] Employers make increasing efforts to engage their employees in activities such as mentoring disadvantaged students, holding

recreational activities for groups of vulnerable or disabled individuals, renovating and gardening at welfare institutions or impoverished communities, or cleaning up litter in nature reserves – to name a few typical examples. Corporate volunteering blurs traditional distinctions between 'volunteering' and 'work', as employers often enable their employees to conduct such volunteering activities fully or partially during working hours. These activities often take place in and/or mediated by nonprofit organisations (NPOs), and thus also challenge classical depictions of the third or the nonprofit sector as a sphere of non-commercial associations which are autonomous from the state (e.g. Corry, 2010), where civic action is supposed to proliferate (for a critical review of these perspectives, see Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014). Staff members in these NPOs increasingly interact not only with corporate volunteers, but also with corporate officers who are responsible for planning and coordinating these activities. Our study deciphers what occurs in these encounters between actors who are classically perceived as affiliated with distinctive institutional logics. By revealing a common logic that is gaining dominance in these encounters and that facilitates this cross-sectoral collaboration, we contribute to explaining the emergence and proliferation of the hybrid terrain of corporate volunteering.

As the perspective of nonprofit actors on their partnerships with the corporate world is much less explored in comparison with the corporate perspective (Harris, 2012; Roza, Shachar, Hustinx, & Meijs, 2017), we chose to conduct 39 semi-structured interviews with professionals affiliated with 39 NPOs, who were involved in the coordination of corporate volunteering activities. We explore how the respondents describe their encounters with the corporate world and their role in the coordination of corporate volunteering projects, and we examine how they justify their organisations' engagement in corporate volunteering. We adopt a pragmatic sociological stance based on the theoretical foundations laid by Boltanski and Thévenot (1991/2006), situating the discursive patterns our study traces within their typology of justification regimes (in combination with the later work of Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999/2005). The article begins by presenting this theoretical context, followed by an overview of our research methods, and then turns to a pragmatic-inspired analysis of the empirical materials gathered in our study.

The prominent justification regime that can be discerned in our respondents' accounts is the regime identified by Boltanski and Chiapello (1999/2005) as 'the projective city', which will be characterised in the following section. It is not, of course, a literal city; our analysis shows that it

constitutes *a common logic* that enables cooperation between nonprofit and corporate actors, and that its widening influence is intertwined with the expansion of corporate volunteering. It is mainly promoted by match-making organisations whose main aim is to facilitate partnerships between companies and nonprofits, but it is also gaining a dominant role among other nonprofits, especially nationwide and large organisations, as their engagement in corporate volunteering projects is becoming more intensive. Furthermore, our analysis shows that this project-oriented logic is achieving dominance over other justifications; in particular, it is overshadowing the civic justification which was traditionally associated with the nonprofit sector.

Theoretical framework: Justifying corporate volunteering

In the encounters between actors affiliated with different sectors that create the hybrid enterprise of corporate volunteering, one might expect a substantial diffusion of logics between the corporate world and the third sector. Since the corporate world has been perceived as more dominant, such diffusion has often been described as the 'commercialisation' (Åberg, 2012) or 'marketisation' (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004) of the nonprofit sector: the spread and increasing dominance of an economic logic onto the nonprofit sphere. Sandberg (2013) criticises the assumption that the nonprofit sector could be restored to its 'pure' or 'civic' essence by resisting marketisation, demonstrating how 'marketised' or 'neoliberal' governance forms have always been prevalent in the nonprofit sector, and were disseminated and 'disguised' by a discourse of professionalisation. This article adopts Sandberg's plea to expand the empirical and theoretical understanding of nonprofit-corporate relations, but proposes as an alternative to her Foucauldian approach a pragmatic analysis, which takes as its starting point how nonprofit employees themselves justify their engagement in 'marketised' forms of activity such as corporate volunteering.

Adopting a pragmatic approach also undermines the theoretical divide between two main approaches within the growing body of literature on corporate volunteering. Most studies in this thematic domain have been concerned with the individual and organisational antecedents and effects of the phenomenon (Rodell, Breitsohl, Schröder, & Keating, 2016); they have mostly implemented (neo-)classical-managerial theories to analyse the (intra-)organisational implications of corporate volunteering for the company (Grant, 2012; Muthuri, Matten, & Moon, 2009;

Peloza, Hudson, & Hassay, 2009; Rodell, 2013) and sometimes also for the NPO (Samuel, Roza, & Meijs, 2016; Samuel, Wolf, & Schilling, 2013; Schiller & Almog-Bar, 2013). Fewer critical analyses have linked the increasing significance of corporate volunteering with a tremendous growth in corporate power, and showed how corporate volunteering affects workplace relations and processes of subject formation that are compatible with corporate needs (Baillie Smith & Laurie, 2011; Barkay, 2012; Bory, 2013). This article joins these critical studies by contextualising the encounters around corporate volunteering coordination in the socio-political reality of late capitalism and increasing corporate power, but through the analytical tools of pragmatic sociology it deepens sociological understanding of these encounters and highlights the mundane dynamics and discursive formations that make corporate volunteering possible.

'Justification regime(s)' (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991/2006) form the main pragmatic conceptualisation that serves these aims. A 'justification regime' is an ideal, discursive and normative framework through which individuals and organisations justify their actions. The main feature of these frameworks are 'common superior principles' according to which 'acts, things and persons are judged' (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999/2005, p. 108). These principles are assembled to create a 'city'[2] or a 'common world' (cf. Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999) in which the worthiness of actors is determined, classifying them as either 'great persons' who follow the city's 'common superior principle(s)' or 'small persons' who are not able or willing to follow these principles. Boltanski and Thévenot (1991/2006) discern six common worlds that are prevalent in contemporary Western societies: (1) the inspired city, where a relation to the divine is the most valued characteristic of individuals; (2) the domestic city, where seniority, tradition, and proximity are valued; (3) the city of fame, where trust and appraisal by others constitutes the main worthy characteristic; (4) the civic city, identified with the social contract ideal of a common good that transcends private interests; (5) the market city, where competition and material transactions are the main activity; and (6) the industrial city, where means-ends efficiency and professionalism are highly valued. The reach and influence of these 'cities' change according to the socio-historical context. Some of them challenge each other while others can co-exist, and actors can manage and justify their actions according to changing blends and compromises within and between these various logics. Likewise, organisations, according to this approach, are not 'unified entities characterized in terms of spheres of activity', but are 'composite assemblages that include arrangements deriving from different worlds' (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991/2006, p. 18).

In a later work, Boltanski and Chiapello (1999/2005) introduced a seventh justification regime – the 'connectionist' order of worth or the 'projective city', which appeared as the most prevalent in our domain of investigation. In terms of what these authors identify as a project-oriented logic, actors are valued according to their ability to establish new projects, to create new connections and networks and to flexibly navigate between them. Old traditions, hierarchies, and commitments, but also expectations of direct benefits and efficiency, give way to more fluid, flexible and open-ended forms of exchange and connection. Boltanski and Chiapello trace the origin of this justification regime to the enduring need of capitalism to maintain its ideological dominance and successfully stimulate individuals to engage in work aimed at profit accumulation.[3] This addresses a new form of critique of capitalism that they term 'artistic' due to its demands for a greater sense of expressiveness and autonomy in various spheres of life. The artistic critique emerged and gained popularity during the events of May 1968 and their aftermath, along with an intensification of more traditional forms of anti-capitalist critique and labour activism. While trying to pacify this tremendous unrest, and seeking ways to avert the demands of unionised labour for greater distribution of profits, advocates of the capitalist ideology opted for increasing workers' satisfaction by addressing the artistic demand for more flexible and creative labour arrangements. These early attempts were intensified and consolidated into a new justification regime during the neoliberal political-economic restructuring of the 1980s, when undermining work stability and welfare arrangements – which created discontent among Western workers – had to be justified. These justification processes were cultivated by 'organic intellectuals' (Gramsci, 1971) affiliated with the corporate world, and then transformed and disseminated according to the needs of specific corporations by corporate 'internal experts' (Kunda, 1992/2006).

However, the principles of project-oriented justification are not found only in profit-driven entities such as companies. Eliasoph (2011) describes how hybrid empowerment programmes emerged in the US as a response to the artistic critique of the 1960s and 1970s, emphasising flexibility and creativity. Her ethnographic work depicts how coordinators of such programmes navigate between project-based sources of funding, insecure employment, and episodic volunteers with a limited organisational engagement, and further demonstrates how political interactions and imaginaries are re-designed in this context. Other scholars have used Boltanski and Chiapello's work to analyse social-movement organisations

(Ötsch, Pasqualoni, & Scott, 2014) and management texts discussing CSR (Kazmi, Leca, & Naccache, 2016). Boltanski and Thévenot's (1991/2006) theoretical concept of 'orders of worth' has been implemented to classify organisational models and practices in the field of social entrepreneurship (Mair, Battilana, & Cardenas, 2012); also, Boltanski and Chiapello's (1999/2005; cf. Chiapello, 2003) conceptualisation of ideology has been used to explore professional engagement on the parts of staff members and volunteers in social enterprises (Dey, 2011). Our article conjoins these earlier attempts to utilise pragmatic sociology for understanding hybrid terrains that intermingle corporate and third-sector rationalities. We explore the phenomenon of corporate volunteering, one that has not yet been analysed, using these tools, although its hybrid character requires constant deliberation and justification.

Methods

The article is based on 39 semi-structured, in-depth interviews in 39 NPOs located in the Netherlands and in Belgium (in Flanders and Brussels). The selection of nonprofits was intended to achieve a maximum-variation sampling (Patton, 2005). They are characterised by varying sizes, organisational structures, funding sources, target groups, and missions. The nonprofits are active on local, regional or national levels, and four are active mainly in the global south while recruiting corporate volunteers from the Netherlands and Belgium. Four nonprofits are national sections of international organisations. Eight organisations (four in Belgium and four in the Netherlands) can be classified as 'matchmakers' – NPOs that facilitate 'matchings' between other NPOs and companies, and sometimes between an employee volunteer and a volunteering placement.

Most of our requests to conduct an interview evoked positive responses. When approaching nonprofits, we asked to meet the staff member most involved in coordinating corporate volunteering projects. In four nonprofits (two in the Netherlands and two in Belgium), it was suggested that we should conduct the interviews with two respondents together. In all other nonprofits, we interviewed individual respondents. In total, our 39 interviews included 43 respondents affiliated with 39 nonprofits. The respondents were mainly general directors, project managers, corporate relations managers or volunteer coordinators (Table 1). Among the respondents, 15 were men (most of whom were general directors or corporate relations managers) and 28 were women (more equally divided among the various position types).

Table 1. Respondents' characterisation according to organisational position.

	General directors	Regional or project managers	Volunteer coordinators	Corporate relations managers	Fundraising coordinators
The Netherlands	7	3	3	9	1
Belgium	11	6	2	–	1
In total	18	9	5	9	2

The interviews were semi-structured: interview guides were prepared by the research team, but interviewers encouraged respondents to elaborate when interesting points emerged. Themes in the interview guide included patterns of corporate volunteering in the respondents' organisations, their motivation for engaging in corporate volunteering, the planning and implementation of corporate volunteering activities, the management of corporate volunteers, and the perceptions of staff members and beneficiaries regarding the involvement of corporate volunteers.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim. The coding process was initially based on prominent themes that were repeated in the interviews. For the purposes of this article, we mainly focused on the coding clusters that could help us understand the processes of coordinating and managing corporate volunteering: motivations for engaging in corporate volunteering; the history and frequency of partnerships; selection of partners; first contact; planning and working relations; interactions and relations (nonprofit employees–corporate coordinators; nonprofit employees–corporate volunteers; corporate volunteers–beneficiaries;); working with matchmakers; reactions and evaluations; future plans and ideal partnership. In parallel with this first coding phase, we consulted the literature to find relevant theoretical frameworks. When we decided to adopt a pragmatic approach, we set out on a second coding phase, based on the typology of justification regimes depicted by Boltanski, Thévenot and Chiapello (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999/2005; Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991/2006), examining which of them appear significant in the interviews and to what extent.

Interview quotes were translated into English from Dutch (in the quotations, words uttered in English during Dutch interviews are italicised). Three interviews were conducted in English. We used pseudonyms to refer to the NPOs quoted, which reflect their main domains of activity.

The projective consensus in corporate volunteering

A project-oriented logic appeared from our respondents' narratives to constitute a consensual terrain between the different actors involved in

the coordination of corporate volunteering, which made this coordination possible and successful. This section shows how the 'common superior principles' of the projective city that were depicted by Boltanski and Chiapello (1999/2005) were manifested during the coordination of corporate volunteering as recounted by our respondents, and how they helped facilitate a smooth collaboration. We arranged our findings in four sub-sections that focus on:

(a) the role of matchmakers in connecting actors and generating trust;
(b) the independent engagement of actors in pro-active networking to facilitate corporate volunteering;
(c) the blurred character of the superior principle of 'activity' and how it contours corporate volunteering;
(d) the importance of a project-oriented and flexible approach for enhancing collaboration.

While exploring the manifestations of each principle, we also demonstrate the ways in which respondents implicitly engage in classifying actors into 'great persons' and 'small persons', according to their adherence to this principle. Our analysis also shows that matchmaking organisations are the most active promoters of this project logic among the actors involved in corporate volunteering. They were often engaged in classifying other nonprofits according to their adherence to projective principles and thus their perceived contribution to the realisation of corporate volunteering projects. Other adherents to project logic could mainly be found in nationwide NPOs that were more intensively involved in corporate volunteering.

Making a 'good match': Connecting actors and generating trust

In the domain of corporate volunteering, 'two worlds' – a metaphor repeatedly used by several respondents to illustrate the gap between the corporate and nonprofit sectors – 'are coming together' (Supporting People). Bringing these two different worlds together is a highly appreciated activity in the terms of a 'common superior principle' of the projective city: connecting and facilitating collaboration between two sets of phenomena that have not been in touch before. According to this project-oriented logic, a new connection is highly valued when it is original and surprising, that is to say created between spheres that are usually distant and without shared contacts, such as the corporate and nonprofit

worlds. The creation of such connections must be conducted in an attentive and professional manner in order to become what several respondents called a 'right match' or a 'good match': 'You don't make a match like this every single minute, you really have to think' (Young Spirit). Therefore, the 'great persons' in the domain of corporate volunteering are those who are specialised in creating new connections and partnerships, primarily the matchmaking organisations which are specialised in matching companies and nonprofits.

To facilitate a successful match, matchmakers need to create an atmosphere of trust between nonprofits and companies that will encourage them to connect with each other:

> I took the decision to try to help both communities. Because what has happened over recent years is that the social profit community doesn't always trust the companies, and the companies say: Yeah, we'd like to help, but, uhh, it's not always professionally handled. [...] There was like a mistrust between both communities for different reasons (Match4Good).

As trust is established, the matchmaker seeks to build connections between nonprofits and companies for short-term projects. In this sense, matchmakers can be seen as advocates of project logic among nonprofits and companies: they facilitate the conditions for actors from both sectors to create project-based connections, and actively encourage them to do so.

The emphasis on connecting and mediating creates a network structure that ideally lacks any rigid hierarchies. Corporate volunteering projects are regularly depicted as equalising terrains of this type, where formal statuses are left behind:

> Once they come here, it's all the same, voilà, everyone is a volunteer. If he is a director [...] it doesn't matter, it's really nice but ok, everyone puts on the same shirt [...] and then we divide up the tasks. We just look for where there is a need (Help Refugees).

In such a structure, there is no marked appreciation of formal types of status and the authoritative entitlements derived from them. The actors who are highly valued in the projective city are those who regularly shift between projects and organisations; their status is not formally defined through any clear organisational structure, but through the manner in which they contribute to the project and according to their networking and mediating capabilities.[4]

Among the actors, the 'small person' typically resents the pluralistic approach and trust promoted by the 'great person', and is perceived by

the great person as being suspicious, intolerant or clinging to rigid hierarchies. Such characteristics are perceived as hindering opportunities to create new connections and partnerships:

> There is huge suspicion from the *social profit* side towards the *profit* side, all the time … 'What is the agenda, what are they coming to sell, do they really want to do this, what is their motive?' This is where you [as a matchmaker] are being constantly attacked, and this is very offensive. And on the other hand the companies are snobbish, like, 'We are going to do good, and we are going to help them, because they don't know anything about all this.' Talking like that you cannot get much sympathy from the social profit side … (Companies4communities)

One of the matchmakers' main tasks, acting as 'great persons' who are advocating the use of project-oriented logic, is to overcome these tensions by generating trust between nonprofits and companies regarding the advantages of corporate volunteering and also regarding the matchmaking process itself.

Pro-active networking

Alongside the matchmakers' work, corporate volunteering is also facilitated by nonprofits and companies without external mediation, but they are also more successful in this task if they adhere to projective principles. Recounting the coordination processes of corporate volunteering, our respondents often described them as operating through networks that enable two actors to start a collaboration through a common connection.

Connections often begin when a person from a company contacts a nonprofit, thus demonstrating their 'greatness' through this pro-active engagement. Some NPOs are actively approached by corporations due to their nationwide reputation and appealing cause: 'Companies come to us and say "We would like to help," "We would like to do something," "We absolutely want to work with you!"' (Kids First). In less-renowned organisations, a request from companies might come because of geographic or thematic affinity to the NPO area of activity, or because of a personal familiarity or connection:

> The daughter of the director [in a large construction material company], of one of the directors […] said to her father, like: 'Shouldn't you do something too? I'll look out for something.' She then scanned the internet, some websites, then arrived at our website and saw that we were busy with construction work [on our premises], and she thought: 'This is ideal!' By chance she had a friend who

was once a stagier here, and this way various pieces of the puzzle eventually came together at a particular moment (Power2Community).

To be further valued in the projective city, an actor is expected to conduct her/himself within the networked structure by extending her/his networks independently, on her/his own initiative; s/he risks being perceived as a 'small person' if s/he passively waits for others' initiative. Also, when actively reaching out to specific persons in a company who might open the door to a partnership, most nonprofit coordinators preferred to do so through a common contact, someone personally acquainted with the two sides of the potential partnership (for example, a board member, a volunteer, a personal friend, or a family member who works at the targeted company).

The actors who most often played a passive role in the partnerships, maybe due to their less-frequent contact with companies, were community-based organisations, often located in smaller towns. Other nonprofit employees gradually adopted a more project-oriented approach, by connecting with potential corporate partners through 'putting in a lot of time in networking to approach those companies' (Job Success). Such employees were often working in larger, nationwide nonprofits who were able to officially dedicate a position to facilitating corporate partnerships. Such specialised employees often adopted a project-oriented logic as the main framework for their professional activity. Their pro-active networking practices are valued in the projective city, and indeed make facilitating corporate volunteering easier.

The superior principle of 'activity'

Another major principle within the projective city, one whose acceptance facilitates smoother collaboration among actors engaged in coordinating corporate volunteering, is the notion of 'activity'. 'Activity', in the projective city, 'surmounts the oppositions between work and non-work, the stable and the unstable, wage-earning class and non-wage-earning class, paid work and voluntary work' (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999/2005, p. 109). Indeed, corporate volunteering was characterised by our respondents as an activity that blurs the boundaries between 'volunteering' and 'work', and occupies an ambiguous position within the spectrum of monetised and non-monetised labour practices (following Taylor, 2004; Williams & Nadin, 2012):

> You have projects which are handled through a company, and here you have *fifty-fifty* within working hours and outside working hours [...]. Something

> that companies often do [is …] they recognise personal volunteering […].
> There is also a big discussion whether companies should do this or not. Is
> this volunteering, or is it not volunteering? Should it happen during personal
> time, does that make it more like volunteering? (Companies4communities).

In its blurred position between 'work' and 'volunteering', corporate volunteering contributes significantly to the blurring of boundaries that gives rise to the notion of 'activity' as a dominant principle of contemporary capitalism.[5]

As 'activity' does not necessarily generate direct material remuneration, the traditional differentiation of particular domains of activity according to criteria of evaluation and remuneration, such as the differentiation between paid 'work' and unpaid 'volunteering', loses its robustness in the projective city. Indeed, this differentiation no longer reflects the contemporary experience of many volunteers, who feel increasingly required to juggle between paid and unpaid work, for nonprofit and profit-oriented organisations (Fuller, Kershaw, & Pulkingham, 2008; Simonet, 2005; Taylor, 2004; Tomlinson, 2010). The notion of 'activity' appears increasingly useful for describing contemporary forms of engagement, and the willingness of an individual to engage in such 'activity' indicates her/his worthiness in the project-oriented justification regime.

As direct material value is no longer the governing principle, individuals and organisations are expected not to insist on tangible results from each activity. Several matchmakers explicitly disparaged nonprofits that they perceived as engaging in corporate volunteering projects mainly in order to receive future funding from the companies involved. They described nonprofits as 'seeing the companies first and foremost as *cash cows*, more than a volunteer *cow* … and there is sometimes misuse in this, like – can you also sponsor the computers, or can you do also this, or can you …' (Companies4communities). The nonprofits are nevertheless expected to conduct this vaguely remunerated activity in an enthusiastic and emotionally engaged manner. One respondent used the term 'passion' five times during the interview to construct it as a key expectation from the corporate volunteers and the beneficiaries, but also used passion as a leading principle in managing her own organisation: 'Of course you will not do this to get rich and there will be no bonuses at the end of the year. Just like in a company, you really have to do it because you're passionate about it' (Young Spirit). In this way, this respondent intertwined glorifying emotional dimensions with delegitimising material concerns.

These expectations blur boundaries that were delineated in earlier phases of capitalism between work and the private sphere. In the earlier industrial city, a person was valued as a 'great person' according to his ability to demonstrate professionalism and efficiency, which were ideally neutral with regard to any emotional involvement. This modern separation between intimate feelings and professional commitments is re-blurred in the projective city, where enthusiasm and passion are introduced as intrinsic for any project or activity.[6]

While 'activity' may not yield direct material value, in the project order of worth it is expected to create new connections, extend networks, develop new skills and lead to new projects. An activity might thus prove beneficial in the longer run: 'They were only two volunteers, so the win situation for us was somewhat smaller. But it was very significant in terms of contacts' (Safe Home). Many respondents acknowledged the value of this kind of project-oriented principle for their organisational needs, claiming that 'it is good to think much more in [terms of] networking and making connections' (Path2Success).

Enhancing collaboration through a project-oriented and flexible approach

A final prominent common principle that facilitates collaboration between companies and nonprofits is agreement on the project-oriented character of corporate volunteering. The interviews we conducted indicate that corporate volunteering is almost always realised through projects, whether it is a one-shot activity (most common), a defined activity that is repeated every defined period (for example on a yearly basis) or a project that stretches over several weeks or months (less often; for instance, a mentoring activity lasting over a semester).[7] In cases of continuing partnerships too, the commitment is for a defined period of time and its prolongation is dependent on a positive evaluation. Changing partners and projects is considered by many organisations to be an unavoidable and sometimes even desirable characteristic of corporate volunteering, and one director of a matchmaking organisation even declared that she recommends companies to constantly change their non-profit partners and the projects in which they are engaged. This temporality typical of corporate volunteering reinforces the 'project' as a rising constitutive model for the arrangement of social life:[8] It is always limited in time, and therefore does not facilitate the creation of durable relationships or changes in institutional arrangements.

In this sense, the upsurge in corporate volunteering exemplifies the increasing popularity of episodic, plug-in (Lichterman, 2006, 2009) or reflexive (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003) patterns of volunteering compared to more traditional, long-term, and collective engagements. Only six respondents (three in Belgium and three in the Netherlands) reported that one or more corporate volunteers have kept in touch with the organisation on a private basis. These were usually mentioned as exceptional cases, but were highly appreciated by the respondents: '[In this company] someone who worked in the warehouse still comes here every year to bring Sinterklaas[9] presents […] He is a really good man' (Path2Success). In the rare cases in which corporate volunteers committed themselves to long-term engagement with the nonprofit, NPO professionals described them as becoming 'independent' (Community Talent) or as completing a 'transformation' (Companies4communities). They expressed the view that when volunteering is no longer limited as to time it becomes something different from corporate volunteering.

In accordance with the principle of 'activity', the project is mostly valued not necessarily for yielding tangible benefits but for yielding new connections and extensions of networks that might serve as a basis for future projects. Hence a 'great person' is expected to develop the necessary skills to utilise the short-term and limited engagement that actors are able to offer: 'Again, we are flexible. If someone can do it only once a year, we are happy, we can accommodate that. Then we have succeeded in our mission' (Opportunity2Give). Indeed, as project-oriented temporality requires flexible movement from one project to another, another characteristic of the 'great person' in the projective city is flexibility and adaptability to such constant transitions and to new and changing situations.[10]

Actors who do not adapt to the flexibility expected from a project partner are depicted as rigid and unadaptable and thus classified as 'small persons'. Rigidity, which is often associated with state bureaucracy, is perceived as one of the greatest threats to project-oriented practice, as 'the fear of the formal' is becoming prevalent among both public- and private-sector organisations (Du Gay & Lopdrup-Hjorth, 2016). Accordingly, it is also perceived as a hindrance to the coordination of corporate volunteering, as described by a matchmaker who coordinates volunteering activities for both private and public employers:

The public [employers], […] how would I say this … they are more … they are a little bit more difficult […] [For one public employer] we had to find eight associations, seven or eight within a radius of two kilometres from the office […] for one specific day. […] We ended up almost saying we wouldn't do it (Match4Good).

Eliasoph (2011) describes the strong prevalence in American political culture of a degraded image of public services, showing how 'the grey shadow of the bureaucrat' has led coordinators of volunteer-based empowerment projects to insist on a flexible and optional image for these projects, clearly distinguishing them from rigid state structures. Some respondents deliberately emphasise that their organisation is 'totally independent of government' (Young Spirit), distinguishing themselves from state rigidity and demonstrating adherence to project-oriented principles.

While the prevailing perception among most nonprofit professionals is that 'a lot of companies are working much more efficiently [than us]' (Loving Spaces), some have discovered that in spite of the dominant discourse of pluralism, tolerance, and flexibility, some companies can be rigid, inefficient or not sufficiently accommodating to beneficiaries' needs, as this director describes:

The people who were responsible for the registration for [the project] were from [company's name]. The [employees] did these neat lists and divided everything and this and that, but in the last days another huge number of young people wanted to register […] and then I get this phone call with 'We cannot do all this job, eh? We prepared our lists two weeks ago and now you are asking us to make new lists'. [I responded:] 'So what, change the names and it is half an hour of work and that's it.' They were like – 'Yeah, we work with planning and we cannot change this at the last minute,' while we [the nonprofit employees] are used to it as we work with this type of target group (Community Talent).

This account also demonstrates that the diffusion of project-oriented logic does not necessarily come from the corporate world into the nonprofit sector, but also the other way around.

Yet matchmakers often criticised nonprofits, rather than companies, for rigidity, for example when they were perceived as having excessively strong attachments to political positions and ideological values:

It is typically the rather politically involved [NGOs], very active with politics around the world, who would be the most suspicious against the companies. […] There are two types: there is one group that says 'We don't want to work with companies because in one way or another we will be manipulated, image-wise.' Then you have those who say 'Yeah, we want to work with

companies, but we refuse to work with this company and this company and this company because of what they do.' […] Associations need to - in fact to become more professional. And companies need to behave more associational-wise. That would be the thing where they can each give to each other (Match4Good).

The perception of political ideology as an 'unprofessional' rigidity, impeding engagement in projects and hindering the network's smooth management, is sometimes used by matchmakers to advocate for more flexible adaptations of nonprofits to potential matches and projects. It is in such cases that a significant conflict arises between the project and the civic orders of worth. Attempts by advocates of project-oriented logic to marginalise civic considerations as too rigid neglect the possibility that such political ideology can be one of the core justifications for the organisation's activity and existence.

Competing cities in the nonprofit world: The civic, industrial and domestic logics

Alongside the dominant projective city, two other logics have also appeared as playing a significant role in the accounts of some respondents. In this section, we analyse the relationship of these alternative logics to the projective dominance in the coordination of corporate volunteering. Somewhat surprisingly, the civic city was even less significant in the respondents' accounts than the other logics, and we discuss this observation briefly before turning to discuss the role of the industrial and domestic logics.

The marginalised civic city

The growing acceptance of project-oriented logic in the realm of corporate volunteering often leads, as demonstrated above, to delegitimising civic logic. Civic concerns, which value contribution to a common, disinterested good, are increasingly perceived as a 'rigid' and 'unprofessional' stance that hampers efforts to successfully facilitate corporate volunteering activities. Boltanski and Chiapello (1999/2005) showed that the presence of civic forms of justification in managerial texts has significantly declined from the 1960s to the 1990s, and yet it was somewhat surprising to become aware of the limited role of civic logic in our respondents' accounts. The civic city was dominant in the overall ethos of some of the nonprofits represented by our respondents, and could most often be discerned when they provided a general description of the organisation, a retrospective account of its establishment, or a broad overview of its

activity. However, when the interviews moved into more detailed discussions of the decision to engage in corporate volunteering and regarding the planning and coordination of partnerships with companies, civic logic played a rather marginal role, particularly in comparison to project-oriented logic. It might be claimed that the initial framing and focus of our interviews led to downplaying civic logic while conversing with our interviewees, but it is still surprising that civic logic did not emerge naturally more often during interviews revolving around organisations which are often perceived to achieve legitimacy mainly through their contribution to the common, civic good.

The industrial city

Our various respondents frequently deliberated whether the benefits of a proposed corporate volunteering project to the NPO would outweigh the investment they needed to make in terms of human and material resources. In this way, they justified their practical determinations in accordance with the industrial justification regime depicted by Boltanski and Thévenot (1991/2006; especially pp. 203–211), in which the superior principle is a form of productivity that is achieved through connecting means to ends in the most efficient manner, that is, by investing minimal resources. The investment-result ratio could be a crucial factor in the decision whether the NPO should engage in a proposed corporate volunteering project:

> I invest time in receiving them [the corporate volunteers], but I also want to get something back for my organisation. And I think this is the correct way to do it because … they want corporate social responsibility and I give them the opportunity to do that, so I want in return a strengthening of our organisation. […] As an NGO we need this from a company, we can use this. And what we cannot use, well ok – we actually don't free up time for that (Community Talent).

This industrial logic thus does not consistently facilitate corporate volunteering initiatives, but enables some and blocks others according to their expected direct contributions to the organisation's interests. When refusal to work with a company occurred, it was mainly justified by respondents through an industrially inspired means-ends calculation, and not by civic considerations, rendering the industrial logic somewhat more legitimate than the civic one.

While the director of 'Community Talent' often spoke in terms of a project discourse (see quotation above), we see that she also subjugated project-oriented enthusiasm to an industrial calculation. Many other

respondents did the same, despite the contrast between the projective principle of activity and the calculative-industrial logic that values predictable relations between inputs and outputs. However, among our respondents, it appeared that industrial calculations are increasingly conducted implicitly, while project-oriented logic appears as a legitimate form of justification. As NPOs are increasingly interested in collaborating with corporations (and matchmakers), they emphasise their project-oriented tendencies and veil industrial calculations. These calculations are sometimes 'unveiled' (cf. Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991/2006, pp. 215–219) by other actors, such as the matchmakers who criticised some NPOs for seeking immediate material benefits (see above), and thus diminished their value as potential partners in a terrain where the projective city prevails.

The domestic city

While most respondents conformed to the project-oriented character of corporate volunteering, we noticed that some expressed hopes that corporate volunteering could become an open-ended engagement: 'Actually it will be good if they come back every year, if we are allowed to dream [laughing]' (Nature Protectors). Through this hope, they affiliated themselves with the domestic city, where bonds among beings are expected to be continuous and intimate, often seen as analogous to familial and communal bonds (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991/2006; especially pp. 90–98), while risking being undervalued in the projective city. Another domestic aspiration was expressed in the disappointed tone of nonprofit coordinators as they discovered that individual corporate volunteers are reluctant to commit themselves beyond the project's limited boundaries: 'We also invite the [corporate] volunteers to our neighbourhood festival every year, but actually no one has ever showed up. [...] Yeah, it strikes me like this that the connection with us is still not big enough ... ' (Community Talent).

Domestic logic appeared as particularly prevalent among respondents from NPOs that were working with a rather specified community, such as neighbourhood-based nonprofits or institutions for residents with special needs. Coordinators of such NPOs often indicated that companies are highly interested in facilitating direct contact between their employees and the beneficiaries, but claimed that one-shot activities are not beneficial to vulnerable beneficiaries, such as those who have special needs or experienced social exclusion. Such coordinators proposed alternative activities, such as renovating or cleaning, to corporate coordinators, or insisted

that the company should commit itself to a continuous partnership as a condition for facilitating volunteering activities that directly involve the organisation's beneficiaries:

> [Corporate volunteering] has to be logistic, but not in the activities. We are clear about it. […] It is also not what our clients need. They say: give me my thing every week. So, with such one-shot activity, they get more confused than otherwise. […] If there is a proposition for something structural, then it is something else. […] Then we will think first, could we think of a reciprocal activity with the residents, but then we must be really able to count on it (Peaceful Shelter).

However, some NPOs supporting beneficiaries with special needs did enable episodic corporate volunteers to hold joint activities with the beneficiaries, justifying this in terms of the projective city as an opportunity to extend the beneficiaries' social networks and enhance their ability to connect with strangers. This flexible orientation and adoption of a connectionist justification made these nonprofits valued partners for companies.

Generally, NPOs that enabled more direct connections with beneficiaries and had lower expectations for domestic engagements were often working across wide regions or nationwide, through multiple offices or a network of institutions. The lowest level of domestic expectations existed among matchmakers, who often preferred to maintain an optional and flexible character to the partnerships they created (as demonstrated above). The matchmakers' rejection of domestic logic aligned well with the preferences of the companies, who according to most respondents preferred to maintain project-based and non-intimate relationships. Nonprofit coordinators who were interested in facilitating partnerships with corporations therefore had to suspend their domestic aspirations and adjust to the project-oriented approach of the matchmakers and the companies. It does not mean that domestic aspirations were completely abandoned, but that they were somewhat neglected in particular contexts in order to facilitate agreement and cooperation, in line with Boltanski and Thévenot's claim that 'Persons must have the ability to ignore or to forget, when they are in a given situation, the principles on which they have grounded their justifications in the other situations in which they have been involved' (1999, p. 365).

Discussion and conclusion

We opened this article with the classical identification of the nonprofit or third sector as a domain autonomous from state or corporate intervention.

Scholars have often adopted a 'neo-Tocquevillian' perspective that 'imagine[s] civic activity [as] residing in' this type of 'institutional realm' (Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014, p. 803). Therefore, this sector appears as a main institutional instantiation of the civic city that was described by Boltanski and Thévenot (1991/2006), in which actors are valued according to their contribution to what is perceived as the common good. Indeed, the civic justification regime has been identified as central in narratives of individual philanthropists (Silber, 2011) and in the organisational rationales of social enterprises (Mair et al., 2012), and as dominant alongside other justification regimes in governmental calls for volunteering (Tonkens, Verhoeven, van Gemert, & van der Ent, 2013). While we expected that a civic logic would also play a main role in our domain of study, our interviews with nonprofit professionals showed that at least in what pertains to the coordination and management of corporate volunteering projects, the civic city has only a modest influence and it is sometimes even explicitly marginalised. As a result, the classical sociological identification of the nonprofit sector with a civic logic appears to lose some of its validity as corporate volunteering gains importance in the sector's activities.

The dominant logic that emerged from our analysis as guiding the coordination of corporate volunteering was the projective city that was described by Boltanski and Chiapello (1999/2005). The growing dominance of this logic among the various actors involved in these coordination processes facilitated collaborative, cross-sectoral work between actors who are affiliated with allegedly separate spheres and rationales. Boltanski and Thévenot (1991/2006) have noted that actors often blend various cities or shift between them to comprehend and justify their actions in changing contexts, and indeed we could trace in our respondents' narratives the persistence of industrial, domestic, and civic logics. However, while these logics have the potential to obstruct the agreement and cooperation needed to facilitate corporate volunteering projects, the projective city nurtures it. This explains why the projective city has gained dominance among the matchmakers who were actively promoting corporate volunteering, and also among professionals in nationwide nonprofits who were intensively engaged in corporate volunteering.

The projective consensus between corporate and nonprofit actors, fostered through the coordination of corporate volunteering projects, delineates the characteristics of the collaboration between the actors and their expectations from it. However, it also affects the actors' overall activity outside the boundaries of their collaborative project(s). Nonprofit activity,

for example, is increasingly thought of in terms of projects rather than as a continuing process that requires long-term planning. On the other hand, the blurred character of volunteering activity has the potential to affect corporate employees' everyday working experiences. While previous classical-managerial and critical studies have depicted some effects of corporate volunteering on the overall conduct of the actors involved, future studies could deepen sociological understanding of these effects by relating them to the projective influence that is intertwined with corporate volunteering.

Our observations regarding the complex arrangement of logics that operate in the terrain of corporate volunteering provide evidence of the analytical potency of the pragmatic approach. In particular, our case shows how new collaborative practices are intertwined with the rise of particular logics and the overshadowing of actors' traditional identifications with other logics. Both classical-managerial and some critical approaches to corporate volunteering share, in a way, an institutionalist approach that associates organisations with sectors 'in which legitimacy is discursively maintained through stakeholders' compliance with a dominant logic' (Patriotta, Gond, & Schultz, 2011, p. 1806). The critical decrying of the 'marketisation' of the nonprofit sector represents a perception, as Sandberg (2013) skilfully notes, that it should be returned to its foundational civic logic. A pragmatic analysis, on the other hand, starts from the recognition that 'institutional environments are fragmented in a plurality of orders of worth', and that 'the social order is negotiated on an ongoing basis' (Patriotta et al., 2011, p. 1806). And indeed, our pragmatic analysis shows how actors are gradually adhering to a new logic promoted by other actors through negotiation, compromise, and cooperation, which overshadows or marginalises earlier logics that more institutional approaches have identified with them. The pragmatic approach thus assists us to perceive logics as changing and negotiated traits rather than fixed characteristics or pertaining to particular actors or sectors.

While adopting a pragmatic approach to analysing our interviews had the aforementioned advantages, it also has some limitations, as it mainly reflects the ways in which actors choose to represent themselves and justify their actions. Future studies, based on a deeper ethnographic engagement, could assist in understanding how these justifications are practised in various settings. Such an ethnographic study could go beyond the perspective presented by nonprofit actors to include the perspective of corporate actors, and analyse how these perspectives intersect through common coordination work around corporate volunteering

projects. This extension of the empirical focus would also shed light on contemporary trends and discursive transformations in the corporate world. Additional empirical studies would assist in examining whether project-oriented logic plays a dominant role in guiding business-nonprofit partnerships in other national contexts than the two European countries to which this study was limited, as well as examining its role in transnational constellations of partnerships.

This article also raises some additional problems for future reflection. The project order of worth to which both nonprofit and for-profit actors increasingly adhere has historically evolved in order to maintain the ideological dominance of capitalism. This common working language and the transformations it creates make both types of actors susceptible to contemporary capitalism, and also contributes to the overall dominance of its new spirit. In this way, the increasing spread of corporate volunteering assists in the ongoing attempts of capitalism to enhance its image and overcome its critiques. Thus nonprofits that strive to challenge socio-economic hierarchies or the ideological dominance of capitalism might need to re-consider an over-enthusiastic adoption of a project-oriented form of justification.

Indeed, Boltanski and Chiapello (1999/2005) have shown that in the projective city the network is not only a coordination mechanism or an organising principle, but it also serves as a normative principle and a metaphor for ideal social relations, in line with the tradition of pragmatic sociology that emphasises how normative and moral discourses are entangled with concrete social relations (Wagner, 1999). Our exploration demonstrates how the centrality of networks, connections, and projects is not only an organising principle of corporate volunteering but also aimed at valuing actors and their activity, classifying them into 'great' and 'small' persons. However, our study also shows that the projective city has not yet attained a hegemonic stance in the third sector, and that there is still space for other logics to emerge and to compete with project-oriented logic. This may result in the emergence of an alternative justification regime that will have a different ideological aim, which is not inherently connected with the endurance of capitalism; in such a regime, those who are viewed as 'small' in the projective city might be able to become 'great persons'.

Notes

1. In the UK and the US, for example, the number of companies that offer corporate volunteering schemes significantly grew between the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s (Brudney & Gazley, 2006; Low, Butt, Paine, & Smith, 2007). In the US,

the number of volunteering hours given by employee volunteers has nearly doubled between 1997 and 2002, and employers serve as one of the main sources of volunteers' supply and volunteering promotion (Brudney & Gazley, 2006).

2. The translation is of the French term *Cité*.
3. Cf. the concept of ideology as developed by Chiapello (2003).
4. Kunda (1992/2006) describes in detail how this flat organisational structure was institutionalised in an American high-tech corporation during the mid-1980s.
5. In addition to its discursive effects, corporate volunteering as a form of labour can also be utilised in neoliberal political-economic restructurings of the labour market, alongside other types of 'activity' such as regular volunteering, workfare, and interim work (Simonet & Krinsky, 2012).
6. Hochschild (1983/2003) describes earlier manifestations of this transition.
7. There is additional evidence for the projective character of corporate volunteering. For example, Low et al. (2007) report that 76% of all corporate volunteering activities in the UK were occasional or one-shot activities.
8. See, for example, Büttner and Leopold (2016) for an account of the 'projectification' of public policy.
9. A Dutch-Flemish version of the Anglo-Saxon Santa Claus.
10. This characteristic of late capitalist working environments was also documented by Sennett (1998), who explored its effects on individual lives, family relations, and community attachments. Boltanski and Chiapello were more interested in how and why flexibility became such a main principle of worthiness.

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