

Chapter Four

Citizen participation and local public spheres: an agency and identity focussed approach to the Tampere postal services conflict

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Introduction

Today, citizenship still generally evokes the notion of a subjectivity positioned publicly – even if a ‘public’ context can be very small-scale. Yet, with the public and private having become intertwined, citizenship as an identity becomes interlaced with our dimensions of the self. However, if citizenship is a dimension of the self, this does not mean that people necessarily give the word ‘citizen’ a meaning that resonates with them; they may have other vocabularies (Dahlgren, 2000: 318).

Is citizenship an identity and if so, what kind of identity is it? Do people experience themselves as being citizens when they engage in public performances? Peter Dahlgren states that seeing citizenship as part of one’s identity allows us to avoid viewing citizenship in a mono-dimensional way, as something that shapes us into one single form when it comes to acting as citizens (Dahlgren, 2000: 318). Hence, identity is an important concept in regard to citizenship since it creates a connection between people’s everyday lives and their public activity as citizens.

This position is very different from the more traditional definitions of citizenship. Traditionally, when citizens get involved in politics, as voters or as participants in public discussions, they are expected to detach their private matters, interests, and commitments from their public performances. They are expected to adopt a particular form of social agency and act as a citizen.

This dichotomized ways of thinking about citizenship is problematic. The boundaries between the public and the private are actually debated in the public sphere, and they cannot be considered settled before the actors enter the public sphere. This implies that there is a need for all actors that operate within the public sphere to recognize and include the diversity of identities that connect to people’s activities and forms of involvement. The public sphere should not only be a place for rational discussion à la Habermas but also a place for achieving social solidarity. According to Craig Calhoun (2002), bracketing identity-related

issues carries a heavy price, as it causes the exclusion of some of the most important citizens' concerns. In order to avoid this exclusion, individual life histories need to be related to the public sphere and public policies.

In this chapter, I first want to explore the concept of the 'citizen' and the connections between citizenship and the public sphere. Second, I want to ask whether the identity dimension of social agency and participation has been taken into account thoroughly enough when theorizing the notion of citizenship. I then want to look at other forms of social agency, such as consumerhood, and discuss their potential relationship with citizenship. Finally, the relation of citizenship and journalism will be linked to this discussion. The case study of a conflict of the Finnish postal service and local residents will be used as a case study. This case study is based on the analysis of newspaper articles and letters to the editor of a local newspaper *Aamulehti* and interviews with the active members of local neighborhood organizations.

The conflict over mail deliveries took place in the city of Tampere in a few old neighborhoods in the spring 2003 and was initiated by the postal service's ambition to rationalize its mail delivery system. Because of this business strategy, the residents were ordered to group their mailboxes in their home street instead of keeping the mailboxes in close proximity of each house. The residents, with the help of local neighborhood organizations [1] opposed the order. The issue was not a big social problem, it did not affect all the citizens of the town, but it still caused a considerable local public debate that was frequently covered by the local newspaper and other local media. Further discussions between the representatives of the postal service and the heads of the neighborhood organizations were carried out behind closed doors. The public debate faded away during the summer 2003, and the negotiations resulted in 91 per cent of the households moving their mailboxes according to the orders of the postal service in October 2003.

However, the debate changed the traditional ways of action of the neighborhood organizations when they took the lead of the residents' opposition against the postal service. Also the residents' way of getting local media's attention in the beginning of the conflict showed that these 'ordinary people' were aware of the importance of publicity. Furthermore, the conflict made the residents momentarily cross the borders between audiences and publics.

My basic claim is that studying local civic action and citizens' views on participation is important for understanding contemporary forms of citizenship – for understanding how people take part in the public sphere as agents whose private selves, emotions, experiences and interests inform, stimulate and contribute to their political/civil activities.

Citizenship and identity

The notion of citizenship is a key concept when exploring local civic action. Sociologically, 'citizenship' can be defined as a set of practices that make people competent members of a community (Turner, 1994: 159). Citizenship can also

be defined as the status of an individual within a polity, where a citizen has both rights and obligations. The more sociological definition has the advantage that it allows incorporating civic action, citizens' attitudes and their commitment to their communities (Turner, 1994: 159; Dahlgren, 2000: 317; Heikkilä, 2001: 23–28; Rättilä, 2001: 195).

The word citizen is a modern concept. It was introduced during the fourteenth century, referring only to the inhabitant of a city. Later, the concept was first linked to the rights that originated from state membership. After that, it also came to include the obligations and duties attributed to the individual [2]. In the eighteenth century, the term became connected with modern notions of individualism. But altogether, 'citizen' still referred to 'an individual with the ability to act – an agent – in a political community' (McAfee, 2000: 13; see also Habermas, 1996: 496–497).

Traditionally, the individual's political role in a democracy was limited to the functioning of governments, whether by voting, demonstrating, or writing letters to their (elected) representatives. The government claimed the public realm and the leftovers – the private sphere – belonged to its citizens (McAfee, 2000: 83). The notion of citizenship thus involved the idea of a shared national political structure and culture.

The understanding of politics has changed in the twentieth century, and the earlier described modernist version of citizenship now finds itself in contradiction with the postmodern aspects of our contemporary cultures (Turner, 1994: 165–166). Giddens' notion of life politics describes this change: the questions that move people now relate to their everyday life, self-conception, and their worldviews. People's engagement in politics is becoming less institutionalized. Instead of engaging in long-term and stable relationships with traditional political organizations, they form temporary alliances around diverse issues (Giddens, 1991: 214–217; Melucci, 1996: 8; Dahlgren, 2000: 312). When 'the private' enters into the public sphere, this move also changes the way that people define political actors. When the gates of politics are opened for the politicization of everyday life, this actually (at least potentially) increases the presence of politics in people's lives. They become potential political actors. From this perspective, identities can be seen as a resource for civic action.

Against the grain of democratic theory, I argue that the democratic citizen is not a species apart from the subject, from the welfare recipient, the bureaucratic client, the exploited worker, or the therapeutic patient. Being 'just another number,' 'dependent,' or 'in need of help' is not the antithesis of being an active citizen. Rather it is to be in a tangled field of power and knowledge that both enables and constraints the possibilities of citizenship (Cruicshank, 1999: 20).

Barbara Cruicshank continues to argue that separating subjectivity, agency, and citizenship from subjection, domination, and powerlessness is misleading.

She suggests that a person can be both an active citizen and the subject of government. Even as a subject of bureaucratic control, one still has the opportunity to resist definitions and regulations (Cruikshank, 1999: 23).

How do you become a citizen in contemporary societies then? For example, do active residents recognize that their actions are based on notions of citizenship? Do they consider themselves as citizens when acting on behalf or against some issue? It is more likely that they would call themselves parents, or consumers, or members of a local community – depending on the issue in question.

The concept of identity illuminates the existence of aspects in citizenship that relate to ‘private’ emotions and experiences. Citizenship as an identity includes the idea of belonging to a community, which can be a locality as a neighborhood or a city, or a larger collectivity, a society and so forth (Calabrese, 1999: 268–269; Dahlgren, 2000: 317–318). However, a collective identity not necessarily depends on geographical proximity. It is merely a system of relations and representations. A communal, cultural identity can be born for instance in a process where people engage in urban movements or other community organizations, through which common interests are discovered and defended (Castells, 1997: 60–62; Carpentier *et al.*, 2003: 53–54).

In the case of the mail delivery conflict, the residents involved in the debate identified themselves strongly with the neighborhood community and its neighborhood organization. However, the conflict made the traditional neighborhood organizations to change at least momentarily their ways of action from traditional cooperation to opposition, showing that in conflicts the identity of a collective actor is challenged (Melucci, 1996: 75). This brought along the need of public attention for their case, although seeking media publicity was not a common part of the ‘toolkit’ of these organizations. Through this process, the organizations not only politicized their mailbox issue but also themselves as collective actors.

A key question then becomes is there a place for different and contingent forms of citizenship? Is there a place for a voter, and for an active member of a neighborhood community, and for an activist belonging to a social movement? And are there participatory means and practices available for those who actually find these new civic identities more appealing than the traditional forms of citizenship?

Different forms of agency in civic action

There are, of course, many other subject positions available in society apart from citizenship. One interesting other subject position is consumerhood. Citizens and consumers are often positioned in opposition, linking it to an active/passive dimension. Consumption has been considered a merely reactive action. In contrast to this perspective, consumers can also be seen as active users, who modify and change products to meet their own needs and purposes (Turner, 1994: 164). For example, fan culture can be easily associated with

consumerism because of the vast media production (tv series, movies, artists, etc.) that is marketed for them. However, opposing elements can be found in fan cultures, when fans are seen ‘poaching’ (Jenkins, 1992), modifying, and recycling media products (Nikunen, 2005).

Moreover, Liesbet van Zoonen has shown similarities in the activities of fans and citizens participating in political practices and ceremonies. She pointed to the fan behavior of citizens who supported a political candidate or celebrated her/his victory. She argued that these practices do not differ vastly from the emotions and admirations that a group of fans exhibit for a movie star or a sports athlete (van Zoonen, 2004).

Acts of consumption can also become highly political as they have direct relevance concerning, for example, the quality of the lived environment. Citizens’ joint efforts, boycotts, and demonstrations – often led by non-governmental organizations – to make companies change their ways can be considered as private experiences, worries, and feelings of responsibility becoming politicized through action.

The mail delivery conflict offers an illustrative example of different subject positions actualized in civic activity. The resistance of the residents could be seen merely as an expression of the Not in My Back Yard (NIMBY) [3] phenomenon, but actually the worries of the residents extended from their houses to aspects related to the development of the welfare society and to the citizens’ abilities to have a say in the demands posed to them. The residents not only felt they were treated unfairly as citizens and clients by the postal service but also expressed their frustration over structural societal changes such as the ongoing process of commodification, the decrease of public service provisions, and the lack of control on their own daily lives. The debate was also remarkably well covered in the local media (see later). This example shows how politicized everyday-life issues may have social connections that move beyond the implications of Giddens’ notion of life-style politics.

The residents were occupying many different positions during the debate. They saw themselves simultaneously as neighbors, members of the local community, citizens, clients, elderly people, activists defending ‘the rights of ordinary people’, etc. A multiplicity of identities and interests informed and structured their activities. In the conflict with the postal service the residents’ private interests became politicized. At the same time, the political became personal for the residents (see also McAfee, 2000: 159–160).

Identities that work as resources actually strengthen people’s ability to act in public. In case of local civic action, these identities collide with the views of local power holders, revealing an important paradox. Politicians and other governmental actors often publicly express the need for citizen participation in localities, but the so-desired ‘active citizen’ actually remains framed in the traditional restrictive interpretation of citizenship, in which private experiences and interests are still bracketed (or chained).

This is combined with the tendency in Finnish municipalities to increasingly address local citizens as clients. People are first and foremost seen by the local administration as individual users of the services that the municipality is offering. One of the consequences of this is that the channels that residents can use to have a say about the services are constructed as feedback channels and not as participatory channels (Harju, 2002: 160; see also Eliasoph, 1998: 213).

Since the 1990s, Finnish municipalities have also introduced new participatory tools for local planning and decision-making in order to get citizens more involved. It still remains to be seen how these different forms of involvement are linked together and how they are used. Moreover, despite the labelling of these new tools as participatory, they still in many cases construct a client-oriented relation between the city and its residents. When local residents become aware of these new participatory opportunities, they often react by claiming more participation also in areas that are considered by the administration as their prerogative. Slightly increasing participation thus only exposes the structural lack of participation.

In everyday life, different subject positions become intertwined and citizens are shifting fluently from one position to other. In contrast, the practices of municipalities structurally constraint participation, as they tend to define citizens still in more traditional ways, or as they revert to other (less threatening) models such as consumer-oriented identities. The civic positions they are willing to offer show a structural scarcity, only strengthening the conflicts with citizens' expectations that want to move beyond this narrow and rigid path.

However, in the case of the conflict with the postal service, even the adopted practices of local cooperation did not work, since the opposite side was not the city but a company. Finnish Postal Service has been traditionally a public service, state-owned, non-profit company, but it has moved increasingly (during recent years) into the field of private markets, for instance, by addressing people more as customers or clients in selling their services. Even though the practices of the postal service may seem to belong to private profit-oriented business sector, there still remains one difference in its relation to the customers in comparison to private companies: people do not have the option to choose from different companies in the field of postal services, as Finland Post Group still holds the monopoly as a public service to deliver 'ordinary' mail to Finnish people.

A similar kind of shift between the public and private can be seen in the residents' ways of opposing the changes demanded by the postal service. The first reaction against the postal service's orders originated from residents' earlier experiences in cooperating with city officials and the notion of how they should – and should not – be treated as local citizens. The most crucial mistake the postal service made was that they did not follow the protocol for organizing a 'planning meeting' to both 'inform' people and invite them to 'discuss' the matter. In city governance, this has become a routine practice in local planning.

Instead the postal service ‘ordered’ the residents to change the places of their mailboxes and announced a ‘briefing’ that was planned to take place within short notice. The letter announcing the informational meeting came only a couple of days before the actual meeting was scheduled in the middle of the summer holiday season.

Even the residents resisting the change admitted that they could have accepted it but:

Nobody asked us anything beforehand. There was only this letter from the Post Office that ordered us to implement the new rules of mail delivery. And this wasn't even the first time that the postal services worsened during last ten years. (Interview with local resident 1).

Thus, in the beginning, the postal service acted as an old-fashioned state enterprise and subjected residents to the authority of the enterprise. But the residents, having lived the changes in the attitudes of city administrations in the 1990s that took on more open attitudes towards civic participation and cooperation with local citizens, did not approve of the way that the postal service approached them.

Another notable difference between the postal service’s first contact and the way the residents expected to be addressed was that the residents were used to act in matters related to their neighborhood using the neighborhood organization as a representative tool, but the postal service approached ‘individuals’ by sending the new orders of mail delivery to each house of the area instead of immediately involving the neighborhood organization.

Journalism and active citizens

Media are unavoidably bound to the development of citizenship. Hence, the relation between media and the different forms of agencies people occupy needs be further explored (see also Ridell, 1999a) as the earlier mentioned political sciences and sociological approaches to civic action do not spend enough attention to the public sphere and the media.

Apart from the categories of the informed citizen or the passive audience, there are other agencies and subject positions through which people are addressed in different media contents and genres. Media not only raise issues that have considerable importance in people’s everyday life, but they also take part in forming our understanding of the potential sites and means of civic participation. Moreover, new technologies, such as the Internet, instant messaging services, mobile phones, etc., are broadening citizen’s media practices and are diversifying their entries and activities in the public sphere.

Through the blurring of the boundaries between different genres, issues that are traditionally considered private are brought out together with topics related to conventional politics. Media features that are usually labelled as ‘popularization’

can make links to people's everyday life and maybe even serve as mobilizing force in society (Dahlgren, 2000: 314).

Media pretend to know their audiences through marketing technologies generating institutional knowledge (Ang, 1991). But what is the ability of media to address us as citizens? Politics has been – and still is – the key focal point for journalism. One of the traditional and modernist tasks of journalism is to inform the citizenry, facilitating their informed choice at election times. Traditional journalism does also (exceptionally) side with citizens when it takes on its watchdog role, but more often this becomes part of the power struggle between media and politics, waged over the heads of audiences and citizens.

Although local journalism usually focuses on local issues that are important to local audiences, its ability to help citizens making connections between their everyday life and politics, as well as its capacity to encourage local people to participate in political debates, or even provide them with the skills needed in local politics, are rarely used to its maximum (Eliasoph, 1998: 210).

Both administrative actors and journalists have difficulties in facing and engaging with active citizens. Active citizens are 'useful' for journalists when these citizens are defending or opposing positions in local matters. These conflicts produce highly dramatic material, which is considered very suitable for news stories, guaranteeing wide attention among dispersed audiences. At the same time these journalists tend to be careful not to associate themselves too closely with the active citizens they present in their stories, as professional journalistic principles do not allow them to breach the imaginary line between reporting and advocacy.

A central part of journalism's self-understanding as a profession is based on the ideas of autonomy and independence (Carpentier, 2005; Kunelius, 2006 (forthcoming)). Following the principles of their professional code, journalists tend to see active citizens from the perspective of the uninvolved, detached, and distant spectator in order to protect their impartiality. This prevents them from providing a structural space for citizens' arguments in the public discussion. It especially prevents them from presenting citizens as actors that are to be taken seriously (Harju, 2005). Citizens are not treated as experts of everyday-life issues, in the same sense as economic experts are considered knowledgeable on economic matters, or as parliamentary representatives are allowed to make their arguments known in relations to the state of affairs of the nation.

In Seija Ridell's (1999b: 24–25) research on readers' relations to their local newspaper, one of the key findings was that the questions people wanted to put to decision-makers or other authorities remain absent from the newspaper pages. The readers that were interviewed by Ridell even suspected that journalists do not ask questions 'difficult enough' for those in power. The absence of these questions deemed relevant by citizens has partly to do with the journalistic style of writing: the news story is written in a way that it forms a consistent whole, offering thought-through information, which is easy to read.

Journalistically produced and represented information is never neutral. It always includes specific viewpoints of actors. Journalism tends to universalize the information it presents, and at the same time it reproduces the legitimacy of elite actors, while excluding access to others. If the interests behind the facts presented by journalism were acknowledged and made visible, the constructedness of information would be better understood and opened up for criticism. In that way, instead of focusing on ‘facts’ and ‘truths’ and on the journalism’s ability to pass them on to their audiences, attention could be paid to the epistemological questions: whose knowledges, and ways of knowing, is journalism supporting. That would also reveal the active role journalism is playing in the production of social subjectivities as well as the potential role it might play facilitating citizens’ participation (Ridell, 2000: 147–148; Kunelius, 2006 (forthcoming)).

One of the reasons for the extensive public attention the mailbox conflict gained was the residents’ activeness in contacting the local media. They directly called journalists of the local newspapers, radio stations, and even the small local television company. PR work has for long been included in the daily work of social movements who need media publicity to get public attention for their issues (Rentschler, 2003: 538–539). In the case of the mailbox debate, the determined, instant, and systematic aim of the residents to get their issue in the local media also shows how ‘ordinary citizens’ are becoming media-savvy, knowing the importance of gaining public attention to their issue.

In conflict situations, media can however hinder the potential emergence of a productive public dialogue between the participants by maintaining the distinction between citizens and administration or other power holders. In my case study, exploring the newspaper articles clearly showed the difference between the residents and the postal service as news sources. The representatives of the postal service had their views presented in the main news pages of *Aamulehti*, as facts presented by an authoritative source, whereas the residents mainly got to present their arguments in the local news part of the newspaper, with big pictures showing them standing next to their mailboxes, in stories written in a popular, colorful style. It seemed that a dialogue between the participants was more often prevented than encouraged by the newspaper, since it kept the participants separated in the different corners of its pages. Furthermore, journalism’s emphasis on the conflictuous aspects of the problem was potentially bringing the different parties even further apart (see also Ridell 2003, 14):

The atmosphere was intense, angry, almost aggressive. When it started to be somewhat difficult to get one’s voice heard, everybody shouted. Those who had the loudest voices got to represent all the others, and the crowd was apparently unanimous. You could notice that when the public started to laugh at the questions posed or the answers given. (News article in *Aamulehti*, May 23, 2003).

Is the ‘ideal citizen’ of journalism, thus, a loud and angry person, who rises up against the ones in power supported by fellow citizens, and so provides material for colorful stories and dynamic pictures to spice up the more serious assortment of daily news? The way journalism presented the voices of the participants in the debate can be seen a formative for citizens’ ideas of what are their possibilities to act. By dividing the voices of the residents and the representatives of the postal service, and by placing them in different articles and even in different news pages *Aamulehti* may have reinforced the residents’ impression that their attempts to have any effect were hopeless. The decisions were firmly in the hands of the postal service, whose representatives got to present their ‘facts’ in the official news segment, separated from the residents’ ‘opinions’.

In the arguments of the residents, the debate over their mailboxes was intrinsically linked with large social questions. However, the connections to these larger questions were mainly made by the residents in the letters to the editor segment. The journalists did not use these questions to develop the debate any further, although it could have resulted in a more in-depth discussion, fulfilling the newspaper’s function of stimulating public discussions about socially relevant matters (See also Eliasoph, 1998: 226–228).

The residents themselves were quite happy with the publicity the debate received in *Aamulehti*. They needed the publicity to improve their position to resist the postal service’s orders and *Aamulehti* fulfilled this need. However, the residents did not see the local newspaper as a participant or a resource that could have offered more than only access to a larger audience. The residents even felt that the journalists were alternately working for both parties of the conflict:

Q: *How did the news articles in Aamulehti present your opinions and the opinions of the postal service?*

A: *Well, it somewhat depended on who had ordered the story, did it originate from us or from the postal service, there was a clear difference in that. The postal service defended their opinions and we defended ours. And you really could tell, who had ordered the story. (Interview with local resident 2).*

Despite the way journalism often presents citizens’ arguments, there are also positive effects resulting from the media’s publicity for local civic actions. For instance, in the Tampere region *Aamulehti* has been paying a lot of attention to issues that citizens have been trying to bring into the public discussion, such as land-use questions, controversies over construction plans and projects, the destruction of old buildings and so forth. Although citizens have mainly been positioned as described earlier in this chapter, disconnected from the decisions, they are still presented in an active role, trying to make a difference, acting together, arguing on behalf of their issues. And even though the mail delivery

debate turned out to be not so successful for the residents, there have been at least some other processes where the opposition of local citizens has resulted in changes in the plans of the city administration, which can be seen as encouraging people to act out in public as citizens.

Whatever the result has been in different cases of local civic action, *Aamulehti* has presented its readers with a model of the active citizen, who is not satisfied with merely voting or using other tools of a representative democracy, but who enters the public sphere with his or her demands and arguments. In the case of mail delivery debate, the residents' unwillingness to accept the subjection to the orders of the postal service can be seen as an echo of this active citizen's identity.

Conclusions

In order to study civic action and its relation to local media, one should explore the local cases in which people take the initiative to act. The postal service debate analyzed in this chapter gave a possibility to take a look at a spontaneous process of civic action and local journalism's way of reacting to that action. Studying local cases also reveals how people shift between different subject positions and on which agencies they base their activities and arguments. For instance, in the case of the residents' disagreement with the postal service, the residents felt they were wrongfully treated, not just as postal service clients, but also as citizens. As clients, they felt the continuous reduction of the postal services' provisions unfair. As citizens, they were worried about the dominant profit-making mentality and about the inability to have a say in issues that affected their lives.

It also became clear that when citizens take action, they consider local media extremely important, and so media are actively drawn into the process. The residents' use of local media was active, but it was limited to seeking public attention. The other resources journalism could have offered – creating and maintaining a dialogue between participants and so forth – were not perceived or demanded by the residents. More than showing the lack in political imagination of the residents, this shows how intensely the media's detachment has been normalized.

Despite the fact that the debate was well covered in the news pages of *Aamulehti* and the residents got quite extensive publicity, local journalism still failed to take the active citizens seriously. In the news stories the residents were presented as 'an angry and irrationally acting crowd'. The local journalism recognized and supported the activism of the residents but did not manage to overcome their categorization through the standardized formula of 'little people [that] have had enough' (Eliasoph, 1998: 214).

The journalists did not grasp the existing potential of the mail delivery debate to be widened as a discussion about citizens' possibilities to have some effect on the issues close to their everyday lives or about the ongoing problematic tendencies in the society. The residents, trying actively and publicly to arouse discussion about the postal service's action, though not believing their true

possibilities to change the course of events, did not get much support from the local newspaper for their attempts to act as active citizens, since the paper presented their opposition mainly as a brave but hopeless struggle.

In relation to the cases of local civic action, media's and especially journalism's role needs to be brought into the picture. In today's mediated society, media can represent citizens actively and show their opinions and interests. This matter needs further and concrete exploration, not only at the level of textual analysis but also in studying existing professional journalistic practices. The blurring boundaries between citizenship and consumerhood should be attributed equal importance – avoiding a binary relation between them (see also Couldry, 2004). It is more fruitful to look at situations where they intertwine, at the point where consumption becomes politicized. To give another example, the Finnish branch of Amnesty International asked a Finnish designer to design a collection for their campaign – clothes and accessories printed with images related to human rights. They also asked Finnish actors and musicians to act as a campaign model and wear the clothes. This example again shows the politicization of consumer culture (more specifically of design) or to put it differently, the use of consumer culture to make civic statements.

Popular culture and political culture have also become intertwined. For instance, the campaigns of the Finnish presidential candidates have utilized popular culture imaginaries. A supporter of the President Tarja Halonen can be seen wearing a red t-shirt with the presidential face printed in black, which resembles the pictures of Che Guevara or Lenin that in turn have been commercially exploited to a very high degree. Although the shifting between the imaginaries of the political and the cultural is not a new phenomenon, these examples and my postal service analysis show that the frontiers between politics and consumption have continued to blur. Understanding that the political transcends a representative system of institutionalized political practices, parties and voters, and seeing the presence of the political in people's everyday life activities becomes a crucial step in understanding contemporary politics, cultures, and civic identities.

Notes for Chapter Four

- [1] In Finland, neighborhood organizations (or so-called home owners' associations) are a traditional way to form a (kind of) representative organization for people living in the same small neighborhoods. These organizations have also been recognized by local administrations as legitimized partners in planning and decision-making that concern these neighborhoods. Neighborhood organizations have, thus, become a link between city administrations and neighborhood residents.
- [2] It should be noted that the full membership in the community as a definition for citizenship has throughout history implied the exclusion of certain groups,

for instance women and other marginalized members of a state who have not gained full member status (Tupper, 2002).

- [3] The often made connection of NIMBY phenomenon with selfishness suggests that local protest is less important if it is not based on wider social or environmental concerns. However, there has also been argued that actions based on individuals' self-interest should actually be considered rational within a capitalist system. Furthermore, several studies have shown how the opposition of local people is not only aimed at defending their own interest but is based on concerns of the impact of new developments. (Burningham, 2000: 57; Peltonen, 2004; Ridell, 2005: 37–38).

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