

# The Roles and Tasks of Nordic User Organizations

Taru Kekoni

## Background of the study

This study examines Nordic user organizations' understandings of their roles and tasks on the basis of textual material produced by organizations. Aim of the study is to have a glance to the field of Nordic user organizations and to compare organizations. Interests of the study are qualitative and analysis is based on textual analysis and concept of subject position, by which it is meant the diversity of the identities or roles that organizations give to themselves and other actors in the social field of their action.

This article is part of NAD's co-work project "User participation in Nordic countries and Netherlands" and it aims to meet project's demands of the study, in which many Nordic user organizations are examined in the same study and where they are compared. Even though there are organizations selected for valuation from different Nordic countries, comparison is not done between countries but between organization. In other articles of NAD's co work project mentioned above, user organizations are examined in context of their own country and its drug policy. Context (country) of operation naturally has a great impact to organizations, but interests of this study lie more in *differences in operation* between organizations.

By user organization it is meant here organizations established by users or former users of illegal or, in some case, legal drugs. Most often substances used are opiates or cannabis, but there are also former alcohol users among members of organizations. Opiate users' organizations appear in Denmark, Sweden and Norway but not in Finland. Organizations of cannabis users appear in all of countries, even though their roles vary from discussion forums to well-formed associations. Two opiate users organizations, one organization of former substance users (containing also alcohol users) and two organizations of cannabis users (or people other ways interested in legalizing use or cultivation of cannabis) are selected to the study. All of these organizations are understood here as user organizations. Material of the study are texts produced by user organizations, picked up from web-pages of organizations. The study is carried out in the beginning of the year 2005 and it reflects organizations' situation of that time.

By “user” in context of user organizations, is meant not only a drug user but also a user of social services (Asmussen 2002, 15-15, see also Asmussen & Jöhncke 2004, 13-14) By user of social services, it is meant the same as an active subject in relation to the welfare system, replacing the role of a patient or a client. Aims of organizations of cannabis users are different and often more abstract than concrete aims of other user organization. When opiate users organizations very often aim to improve social and health care services connected to drug use, cannabis organizations' aim is to change *legal system* and moral position of cannabis in the society. Also social positions of cannabis users are often less marginalized than positions of other drug users. Organized cannabis and other drug users can be seen as active subjects in relation to welfare system. From that bases, organizations of cannabis users and users of other substances (in this examination more commonly opiates) can be seen as user organizations. Especially in this kind of comparing study, it is interesting to examine cannabis organizations in relationship to other user organizations.

### Recent research

Some research has been made about user organizations in Nordic countries. Asmussen (2002) has reviewed rise of user organizations in her article about user participation in Denmark. According to Asmussen (2002, 20) the very first drug user organization was set up in Holland in 1980 (van de Wijngaart 1991). Since then, similar organizations have sprung up in England, Canada, Australia and Denmark. Quoting Asmussen (2002, 20), this phenomenon relates to the extraordinary growth of self-help groups and consumer organizations, in the 1970's and 1980's among people, who shared in common important living conditions, and who therefore had special claims on welfare services. These organizations are NGOs (non governmental organizations) although they may get some funding from public sources. Within the drug field, these kinds of self-help groups are called user organizations.

AA is probably the oldest and best known type of alcohol- or drug user's organization. Even though it differs quite a lot from modern user organizations, it's role as a mutual-help movement has probably been the first model of organization based on mutual-help, for many of user organizations. Mäkelä et al. (1996) have studied Alcoholic Anonymous as a mutual-help movement in eight societies. They quote Room (1992) when arguing that AA-movement has undergone a big change in it's lifetime. According tot them, AA began as an organization *sui generis*, but it has become the prototype of a burgeoning category of mutual-help organizations (Mäkelä et al. 1996, 10). It is important to see when studying organizations like AA or other user organizations, that they are not

stable but go through many changes in their lifetime. Not only organizations' role and meanings change, but also the surrounding society.

Jepsen (2004) has studied user organizations and their background in Netherlands and in Denmark. He focuses on Danish user organization, “*Bruger foreningen for aktive Stofbrugere*” (BF), constructed in 1993 in Copenhagen. Jepsen (2004, 180-183) argues that as an user organization BF has got a diverse role: it oversees user interests with politicians, authorities and care taking system and participates in public debate, and on the other hand, produces activities and meeting place for it's members. He moreover denotes, that BF resigns the claim that drug users can't be active and live normal life in spite of their drug use. This doesn't meet some mutual help organizations' demands of abstinence (into which for example activity of AA grounds on). According Jepsen (2004, 183) BF, because of its friendly and co-operative character, has been effectively heard and has managed to represent interests of it's members well.

Proper study about cannabis organizations has not been done in Nordic countries, even though they have been touched on in some researches about drug use more generally (see for example Heinonen 1989, Larmela & Laine 1992). In studies about user organization in general, organizations of cannabis users have not been evaluated earlier. Sarvanti (1997, 198-199) has divided organizations working in the field of Finnish drug policy to human right organizations, moralistic organizations and social and health organizations. For example Finnish cannabis association, examined in this study, is seen from bases on this division as a human right association. On the other hand, there is quite strong field of parental organizations associated to drug use in Finland. These organizations, based on Sarvanti's (1997, 199-200) examination, do most commonly have moralistic characteristics or characteristics of social and health care organizations. These “anti-drug organizations” have had quite a strong role in defining drug problem in Finland during the couple of last decades (Hakkarainen 1992; Majava 2003).

### Short presentation of user organizations

***BrugerForeningen*** (BF), the Danish drug users union for active drug users, was established in 1993 by a group of drug users and a few supporters in Copenhagen. The general idea was to create a place where the main intention was to self-help and to work for needs and rights of drug users and against personal isolation, of both illegal drug users and clients of methadone treatment.

BF was established with economical assistance from Danish Social Ministry, which had some funds especially for groups of minorities. The first funding was directed for a three years period, and the institution "Dag- og Døgncenteret" who was directed to administrating the funds for the project, was elected to continue to administer the funds given to the union. BF is a local organization in Copenhagen, but has served, as the first established Nordic user organization (for opiate or methadone users), as an example and adviser for many later born user organizations, both in Denmark and in other Nordic countries.

BrugerForeningen arranges different kinds of activities for drug users. It maintains a network for isolated and marginalized drug users and serves as a contact place for drug users in difficult situations. It also arranges lectures and other kinds of educative happenings for students and experts or other groups interested in drug related themes. It controls the project "Sprøjte Patruljen", which takes care of cleaning up used syringes from streets of Copenhagen. One of it's most visible activities is the yearly "User Friend Prize" given from year 1996, to a person who has distinctly improved situation of Danish drug users. During more than a decade of it's operation, BF has achieved a role of meaningful actor in the field of Danish drug policy. It has been heard and taken into many cooperative projects related to drug use and drug policy.

Swedish user organization *Svenska BrukarFöreningen* (SBF) was established in Stockholm in 2002 by patients in substitution treatment. SBF's main task is to look after and make visible the needs of the drug addicted and people in, or willing to be in the substitution treatment. SBF's head office is located in Stockholm and it has five local offices. In addition, it has association for relatives of drug users or people in substitution treatment. SBF estimates to have 1200 members by the end of year 2004.

SBF's operation is very distinctly associated with interests of improving availability and quality of substitute treatment in Sweden. It works in many cooperative organs for that aim and is actively in contact with politicians and experts of the field of drug policy. SBF wants to underline rights of drug users and clients of substitute treatment. It wants to decrease powerlessness of drug users in decisions concerning their own lives. It's operation bases on idea of solidarity: those who have survived better through difficulties of drug use and/or substitute treatment, help those having bigger problems. Improving drug users' situation in the society plays big role in operation of SBF.

Norwegian user organization *Rusmisbrukernes interesseorganisasjon* (RIO), established in 1996,

is directed for former substance users. RIO's aim is to make substance users visible as an resource in the society. By that it means, that through education, working and new network, former substance users can become an important resource to the society. RIO wants specifically to concentrate on the care of users after they leave the institution or treatment program. It also wants to be an instance of hearing when it comes to interests of users themselves. RIO differs from two organizations presented above in the way, that it's actors are former drug or alcohol users, not active drug users.

RIO has six offices in different parts of Norway. RIO's most important tasks are to work for all substance users interests in Norway, serve as an contact place for users with care systems and other authors and inform and help users to take part into society. It also arranges seminars and conferences about substance use, works for to influence different authors to improve substance users situation in the society and actively seeks for cooperation with other actors in the field of drug policy. Rio campaigns very visibly against legalizing drugs, and this differs from many other user organizations. It wants to be taken seriously in the field of Norwegian drug policy and seeks for cooperation only with actors with same opinions. It has been visible in working in a project "Iddrett MOT rus" in cooperation with Norway's sports alliance and "Civitan Norge". It also takes actively part to open debate about drug related issues and works with 13 other actors in cooperative organ dealing with drug policy in Norway (Alcohol and narcotics forum) created by RIO.

In Finland, there have been few small and quite short lived user organizations established by opiate users or clients of substitute treatments. ***Finnish cannabis association*** (FCA) is the only exception among Finnish user organizations. FCA started operating in 1990 and was officially established in 1991. It is the oldest user organization examined in this study. FCA's purpose is to influence the Finnish legislation so that adults could legally use, obtain and cultivate cannabis for personal use. FCA also studies the use of cannabis in different cultures during different times. Association has it's office in Helsinki and it estimates it's number of membership in 2005 to be 300-400 members.

According to association itself, FCA has managed to some extent to get a foothold in the Finnish discussion about recreational drugs, which has formerly been dominated by policemen and parental "pro-criminalization organizations". Opinions of the FCA are nowadays more commonly requested and members of the association are invited to many kinds of events. Besides taking part in the discussion, FCA also publishes in it's web pages a magazine called "Hamppu" ("Hemp"), arranges parties, excursions and social events for its members and arranges and takes part to panel discussions and other kinds of events for people interested in themes of drug policy. FCA organises

the yearly demonstration “Million Marijuana March” in Helsinki. It also carries out research and publishing activities in cannabis-related matters.

Norwegian *NORMAL* was established in 1995. It is an organization for all Norwegian people wishing to decriminalize or legalize cannabis from bases of medical, individual, societal or environmental interests. *NORMAL* has 3600 members, of which 400 are paying the membership fee. Majority of members are of age 18-33. *NORMAL*'s head quarter is located in Oslo and it has four local offices. *NORMAL* works for to put an end to the punishing of cannabis users by the society. It aims to get cannabis use legal for medical, industrial and personal use. It sees that legal markets are easier to regulate for example by specifying age limits and giving more exact information about cannabis use, than illegal markets.

*NORMAL* arranges Million Marijuana March yearly in Norway. It also publishes a magazine called “Høy tid” which is the biggest hemp magazine in Nordic countries. *NORMAL* is active in media and underlines the importance of open debate. It wants to stay in contact with politicians and tries from that bases to affect the negative development of cannabis related matters in Norway.

*NORMAL* differs from other user organizations examined here in that sense, that it is not an independent organization, but one of four under groups of an organization “*NORML*” that was established in USA in 1970's. *NORML* had an affect on decriminalizing small amounts of cannabis in 11 states and visibly reduced punishments in other states, and has continued working on international bases ever since. The *NORML* foundation was established in 1997 and it sponsors enlightenment campaigns, gives juridical help to victims of cannabis prohibition laws and supports cannabis related research.

There are various organizations of both opiate users (and people in substitute treatments) and cannabis users in many Nordic countries. To this study, I have tried to select the biggest (on bases of membership and visibility of the organization) and/or most established organizations. Preferably national than local organizations were selected. Organizations comparable on basis of their membership, meanings and action were chosen to the study rather than very different kinds of organizations. By that I mean, that for example organizations operating as political parties were not selected, neither were very small and non-established organizations selected or, on the other hand, very large head organizations. Because of the demands put to the material of the study, also the quality of web pages of the organization played partly a role in the selection of organizations.

## Research material

Material of the analysis of the study are web pages of organizations chosen to the study. Web page material is chosen because of interests to study material produced *by organizations themselves*, not for example reactions towards organizations in the press. That kind of material also meets demands of timetable and fluency of material supply to the study.

From organizations web pages all kind of relevant information considering the organization itself were chosen to the research material. Most common type of material are presentations of the organizations, that were found from web pages of all organizations. Next commonly there were found annual reports or minutes from the yearly meetings of organizations and presentations of different kinds of activities produced or taken part by organizations. Also goal settings and rules of organizations were quite often presented in web pages. Official resolutions of organizations presented to different kinds of authorities or announcements presented to wider audiences were found quite commonly. Especially FCA had great amounts of these kinds of “publications” and oldest ones were left outside of examination, as was acted with other sources of information, when found out that information they included was not serving interests of this study. Press releases were presented only by couple of organizations but they got notable amounts of them. Only press releases concerning organizations themselves were taken into examination. Project presentations and news letters were presented only by one or couple of organization, but they were taken into account because of their importance for those organizations. Amounts of research material varied a lot between organizations, but from all organizations chosen to the study, relevant amount of material was produced in their web pages. The selection and printing of research material was done during February and March 2005. All types of material chosen to the research and amounts of those types are stated in the table 1.

Table 1. Amounts of types of research material chosen to the study from web pages of the organizations.

	<i>BF</i>	<i>SBF</i>	<i>RIO</i>	<i>NORMAL</i>	<i>FCA</i>
Presentation or short history	2	2	2	1	2
Goal setting	1	1	1	1	
Activity presentation	4	2	1	2	2
Rules			1	1	1
Annual report or minute	1	2	1	1	3
Project presentation	2		1		
Press release or article		8	12		
Newsletter		7			
Resolution or announcement	1	7	1	2	32
all	11	29	20	8	40

### Analysis

Roles and tasks of Nordic user organizations are in interests of this study from perspective of organizations themselves. In the analysis of textual material produced by organizations, analytical approach of textual analysis is used to search for organizations' roles and tasks. An important concept in the analysis is a concept of *subject position*. By that concept it is meant processes taking place in different contexts, that construct roles to producer of the text and for the other actors in the text (Jokinen et. al. 1993, 37-38) . By using concept of subject position, answers are looked for to the question, how are user organizations as actors constructed in the texts? In other words, there will be asked, what kind of subject positions do user organizations construct to themselves in texts, and what kinds of tasks and aims of action are associated to these subject positions? It is important to understand, that in qualitative textual analysis, interests lie in constructive analysis (Jokinen et al. 1993, 18). It means, that what is said about organizations in the analysis, are constructions appearing from the text, and can't be seen as direct reflection of reality, even though these levels

may partly have same contests (Glassner & Loughlin 1987, 34-35).

By using concept of subject position, it is wanted to expand the way of understanding phenomenon of identity and static concepts like “personality”, “role” or “type” connected to it earlier. Concept of subject position allows one actor to have *many changing role positions* instead of one, constant role. Interests of the analysis lie not in studying the most genuine role of actor, but in the diversity of roles. (Davies & Harré 1990; Laclau & Mouffe 1985, 115; Jokinen et al. 1993, 38.)

Even though actors have many kinds of positions in their social practices, not all roles are possible for all actors (Wetherell & Potter 1992, 78). These limits are one subject of studying subject positions. For example, doctors and patients usually stick in their roles as expert and one of taken care. In these kinds of situations, it is interesting to examine, how this stability is produced in these social practices (Jokinen et al. 1993, 39). Also Foucault (1972) has been interested in studying discourses as claims that are always expert's talk in his/her social position. From these bases, he sees that discourses have always something to do with power and positions of power. When analyzing texts produced by user organizations, it is interesting to examine positions of power, that are used in texts when organizations legitimize their claims. Very often members of user organizations are users or former users of drugs and their expertise lies in personal experience and life history.

### Research questions

Above there were already stated some questions interested in this study, but here they will be put into more clear form. There will be asked, *what kinds of different roles (subject positions) organizations produce to themselves in texts generated by themselves?* Interests lie also in *tasks and methods of action being produced to the organization in texts*. When examining those two matters, there will also be answered to the question, what kinds of roles and tasks wont be produced to organizations in the texts. Both actor (organization) and it's tasks come into essence only when they are defined in the societal context they are acting and acted. There will also be asked from the texts, *how are other actors than the organization itself generated in texts and how are relations to other actors produced there?*

## Roles and tasks of user organizations

When examining roles produced to user organizations in the textual material picked up from organizations' web pages, it soon will be found out, that many different kinds of roles and tasks are produced to individual organizations. Even though I use concept of subject position in the analysis, here I speak about different roles, just to make the text more understandable. The concept "role" is normally understood as something stable and very characteristic for something/someone. Here it will be claimed that many different kinds of roles are produced for all organizations in texts produced by themselves. The most characteristic role for every organization is not looked for, but interests lie in diversity of roles produced in texts analyzed.

### Mutual-help organizations

Many of organizations examined here present themselves as mutual-help organizations. Meanings of mutual-help in this context may vary from organization to organization, but the main idea behind it is the same: one role of organizations as an actors in field of drug policy is to gather (former) drug users, that have their lives now in order, together to help the others not doing so well.

Role of mutual help -actor is produced in different ways in texts analyzed. It may be presented very clearly in the first paragraphs of presentation of organization or it may be touched on very shortly somewhere in the text. Mutual help as operation may also have different meanings for different organizations. It can be seen as an important task where drug users to be helped are actively searched for. Drug users may for example be actively motivated for treatment by members of organization. On the other hand, organization may offer help or assistance only for users who themselves turn to the organization.

Bruger Foreningen (BF) constructs its role as a mutual help -actor very clearly in the first paragraphs of organization's presentation:

*"BrugerForeningen er en forening som drives af stofbrugere for stofbrugere. Foreningen arrangerer en række forskellige aktiviteter og ugdor netværk for isolerede og udsatte stofbrugere, er kontaksted for mennesker i svære situationer med ondt i livet..." etc.*

In the first paragraph BF presents itself as a mutual help organization in its most original meaning:

it is an organization of people with some experiences or problems, for people suffering from same kinds of problems. In this sense all user organizations can be seen as mutual help organizations because they, with no exception, are established by (former) drug users. That is something that every user organization also states in their web pages. Presentation of actual acts connected to this role varies more between organizations. BF, for example, presents its acts quite clearly and puts a lot of weight to its mutual-help role. It for example presents in its web pages a project called “Gade Patruljen”, where active members of BF go to streets of Copenhagen and search for substance users in aims to get into contact with them and tell them about treatment or other care systems available and motivate them to get out from streets and scenes of illegal drug use.

Also Svenskabrugerforeningen (SBF) constructs its role as mutual-help organization in the presentation of organization. In the English version of presentation, SBF focuses a lot to issues connected to methadone and buprenorphine treatments, and from these bases it also forms its role as an offer of mutual-help:

*“We have experienced that, time after time, people have been discharged from the programs treated too lightly and that people have become victims of arbitrary discrimination and have suffered from repressive measures against them. Most often it seems to strike people with particular difficulties. The very basic idea of SBF is that those who without any major problems have adjusted to the demands of the program should be loyal to those of us who have difficulties.”*

Loyalty or solidarity towards drug users who have difficulties in treatment (SBF) or also other ways in their lives (BF) seems to be a connecting theme behind the idea of mutual-help for user organizations. Those who have managed better with their problems, help those who haven't yet get their lives in order. This loyalty is also based on free-willing people's work: active members of organizations work there without paying and this work bases on their personal willingness to help others or affect issues by operating in organizations.

Organizations role as mutual-help -actor may be presented also from more basic level.

“Rusmisbrukerenes interesseorganisasjon” (RIO) constructs itself as a mutual-help organization from the perspective of *mediator* between social services and the client (drug user). Organization's active members give assistance and help users to get into touch with social services and other authorities. This action is not defined from the perspective of loyalty, but from the perspective of official help and motivating user's to treatment. RIO constructs its role as that kind of mediator as follows:

*“Vi formidler kontakt med hjelpeapparatet. Da tenker vi på prosessen fra å motivere seg till å ville inn till behandling og till slut få plass der klienten selv mener at han eller hennes behov dekkes best. Som eksempel følger vi klienten på sosialkontor der den sosiale garantien skal innhentes.”*

RIO does not state in it's presentation any moral or more personal reasons for it's action as a mediator between official help-system and the user. It only presents itself as an official actor in this process. It's role as a mutual-help actor constructs on the bases that it's members are former substance users themselves. In that sense, they help people with same kinds of problems they used to have earlier but this is not stated out loud in RIO's presentation.

Cannabis organizations role as mutual-help actors don't seem to construct as strongly as they do with other organizations. Neither of cannabis organization examined here (FCA and NORMAL) presents it's actors as (former) cannabis users. They present actors of organization in more general way, for example as *“people who wish to de-criminalize or legalize cannabis”* (in NORMALS's presentation). In that sense, they are not as clearly user organizations or mutual-help organizations as are other organizations examined here. Cannabis organizations don't in generally focus that much on users' personal situations than in the societal situation and society's stance towards cannabis use. Even though assistance of separate users getting in conflicts with legal system is not the main theme of either of cannabis organizations, the theme of mutual-help is touched on in texts of both organizations. In FCA's rules, where it also presents it's main tasks, subject is touched on as follows:

*“Association takes part into political discussions in fields of substance use, criminality etc. in media. Association organizes discussions, happenings, exhibitions and study-activities, makes resolutions to authors and decision makers and gives help and support to persons who have been discriminated, infringemented or harassed due to cannabis prohibition law.”*

As stated here, FCA sees that individual persons do suffer from societal discrimination and harassment, and organization offers assistance for those people. In an annual plan for year 2005 FCA states that association continues this kind of assistance as far as it's possible: for example legal help is possible to give in ways of assistance and recommendations of legal aid. NORMAL states it's role as mutual-help -actor in very similar kinds of discourses. Mutual-help as a term does not appear in cannabis organizations' texts, but hints towards that kind of role are given.

## Cooperative organizations

In texts of user organizations *cooperation* with other actors in the field of drug policy, is a subject that very often springs up. Cooperation is seen, for user organizations, as a means to get drug users' own experiences to the use of authorities and other actors in the field of drug policy and, to some extent, to make drug users more visible in the society. Cooperation is underlined as an important task for many organizations examined here. Usually organization's cooperative role is stated in presentation or goal setting of organization. SvenskaBrugerforeningen (SBF) states it's cooperative role and task as one of it's goal as follows:

*“To work active to make the user’s experiences available to public authorities, the health care sector and so on, through cooperation, seminars and culture activities.”*

SBF sees that it is important to make user's experiences visible and *available* to health care sector and other actors in the drug field. For user organizations cooperation is, among other things, a means to influence better to the development of treatment system and improve it's availability. Organizations don't want to be left alone but they seek cooperation with other actors, to be able to influence better on these systems affecting notably to users' lives. Improving treatment system is listed one of main interests of all BF, SBF and RIO. Cooperation with other organizations, authors and other actors in the field of drug policy, plays an important role in organizations' operation for that goal.

Cooperative role of user organization is often presented in the shape of presentation of cooperative partners or projects and other activities taken part by organization, and operated together with other actors in drug policy field. RIO presents it's cooperative role in it's presentation below the title “Samhandling” as follows:

*“RIO er en organisasjon som søker samhandling med andre organisasjoner i og utenfor rusfeltet. Vi mener selv at vi er en pådriver i arbeidet for å samle de frivillige organisasjonene i feltet for sammen å påvirke bedre.*

*Vi har skjønnet at RIO ikke kan gjøre jobben alene. I den sammenhengen startet vi Alkohol og Narkotikaforum for to år siden. I dag er det samlet 13 organisasjoner i dette forumet. Dette er et diskusjonsforum der vi kan enes om fellessaker. Vi er selvfølgelig ikke enig om alt, men lærer og ser ting i et større perspektiv. Vårt engasjement har basis i at vi vet at det nytter å komme seg ut av et*

*rusmisbruk.*”

RIO presents cooperation not only as it's task, but an important role for the organization. It sees, that it can not work alone but must seek cooperation with other free-willing actors in the field of substance abuse, to be taken more seriously. Cooperation is a means to get substance users' view more visible in the society. That goal can be better reached by working towards it together with other actors with same interests.

BF mentions for one of it's goal to be a “*contact with substitute treatments, authors, media and politicians*”. Even though it doesn't in it's goals exactly talk about *cooperation*, importance of it comes through texts produced by the organization. In organization's annual report 2002 BF lists 8 projects it has been a participator in that year and 15 other contacts (meetings, seminars, visits etc.) it has had with different cooperative partners in the field of drug policy.

Cannabis organizations differ a little from other user organizations when constructing importance of cooperation in their texts. Neither of cannabis organizations examined here rise their cooperative activities or roles very clearly into the discussion. They both talk about cooperation only in means of being active in political discussions, especially in media. For example NORMAL states it's cooperative role in it's presentation like this:

*“NORMAL er aktive i mediebildet og fremmer viktigheten av en offentlig debatt. Vi konfronterer politikerne med deres manglende kompetanse og vilje til å snu dagens negative utvikling.”*

Here NORMAL limits it's cooperative role only to contacts with media and politicians. Contacts with other authors or organizations are mentioned very limitedly: in it's annual minute 2003 only a visiting foreign activist Elvy Musikka, is mentioned as a cooperative partner outside the organization. FCA, on the other hand, mentions in it's annual report 2003, that it has had cooperation with three other Finnish cannabis organizations (Green Panthers, Hemp village and Hemp Forum) and one drug political organization (Human Drug Policy). It also mentions to have been in touch with parliament presenters by producing resolutions, other authors by attending in meetings and discussions, media and researches by giving interviews and other material for their purposes, and with some educative groups by giving lectures and hosting visits. Even though there is listed some cooperative action also by cannabis organizations, their cooperative role is not high lined to same extent than it is by other user organizations examined here. Of course, especially

with FCA the problem has been that it has for a long time been the only user organization organized in Finland. Also aims of cannabis organizations vary from aims of other user organizations, and from these bases cooperation for example with different authors is not seen that important for them as for other organizations.

### Mouthpiece of drug users

Being a mouthpiece of drug or substance users, is mentioned to be the goal of every examined organization to some extent. It means, that organizations want to talk for drug users rights, situations and problems in the society and make them more understandable for the people without personal experiences of those problems. As it was with cooperation, it is partly the same goal with being a mouthpiece of drug users: to make drug users viewpoints and experiences more visible in the society and by doing that, to improve the treatment system and other societal systems and stances directed to drug users.

BrugerForeningen defines it's role as a mouthpiece of drug users in it's presentation as follows:

*“De fleste af os har tilbage i tiden selv levet kaotiske liv. Med BrugerForeningen har vi skabt en organisation, et talerør, som vi selv kunne have ønsket os det, dengang vi havde allermest brug for at nogle talte vores sag.”*

BF's motivation of being a mouthpiece of drug users rises from life history of organization's members. They wish to be representatives of those who can not work for their rights because of their contemporary situation of life. From the bases of their own experiences, active members of BF know, how to operate for those people. From chosen organizations, BF in generally most clearly states it's role as “User organization” in sense of being organization established and operated by *active drug users*. BF's active members don't want to deny their drug use, was it illegal drug or drug based on maintenance treatment, they are using. And they don't demand BF's members not to use drugs: it only has to be done in free time. It seem to be the same with the SBF, even though they don't state that as clearly. Cannabis organizations don't take stance on it's actors cannabis use (did it happen in free time or when acting in the organization), but they quite clearly claim that they don't accept use of any other drugs from their members.

RIO, on the other hand, has got a totally different view towards drug use, than do other

organizations here. It doesn't allow its active members to use any kinds of drugs. It doesn't as clearly as other organizations examined above, construct either its role as a mouthpiece of substance users. In its rules it says that it operates for "*å ivareta rusmisbrukernes interesser med bakgrund i medlemmernes erfaringer som tidligere rusmisbrukere*" and in its presentation that it "*påvirker offentlige myndigheder for bedre tilrettelegging for rusmisbrukere*", but it doesn't talk about being an actual mouthpiece of substance users. RIO's role is constructed from more official bases and its operation is directed more distinctly to cooperation with different authors and other actors in the field of drug policy, than substance users themselves. RIO can be seen as an official actor seeking cooperation with other "serious actors", when BF and SBF want to keep on their close relationship with drug users, and their role as "up speakers" for weaker ones.

Some of the organizations talk more strongly about user's rights and organization's role as a fighter for user's rights. Especially cannabis organizations do that, but also SvenskaBrukarFöreningen. SBF's slogans, being very visible in organization's web pages, manifest this organization's fight for rights of drug users. In Swedish it writes: "*Nu är det nog SvenskaBrukarFöreningen kämpar för dina rättigheter tillsammans för förändringen*" and in English: "*Enough is enough. SvenskaBrukarFöreningen fighting for your rights. Together we can make a difference*".

From bases of these slogans it can be claimed, that SBF constructs quite strong role for itself, as a fighter for user's rights. It wants to be seen as a fighter for weaker ones (drug users) against the stronger (society). It also uses terms like "alienation" and "powerlessness" to describe user's position in the society and in the treatment system, much more than other organizations do (except from cannabis organizations). That draws a picture of drug users being more marginalized and alienated group in the Swedish society, than in the other society's examined. Of course, these kinds of characteristics of organizations do have a connection with their country's societal stance towards drug use and users. Sweden, besides of Finland, has the strictest societal and political stance towards drug use and drug users in the Nordic countries.

Also elsewhere in SBF's texts this role as "fighter for user's rights" is produced. SBF lists for one of its goals "*To fight for our rights to individually adapted treatments in Sweden, to make sure that the user is allowed to participate in designing the treatment to make this optimal*". Here user's rights are connected clearly to treatment and individual's rights to affect his/her own treatment. SBF uses the exact term of "mouthpiece" when listing its goals later on: "*To act as a user's mouthpiece and establish contacts with authorities, politicians, media and the health care sector*".

Organization's role as users' mouthpiece is here constructed from more general aspect: it is defined from perspective of contacts with other actors in the field of drug policy and social and health care sector.

Also cannabis organizations quite clearly manifest their role as fighters for user's rights. They blame society to cause “*enormous social problems and costs*” (in NORMAL's goal setting) by keeping to the cannabis prohibition law, and define themselves as fighters against this practice especially for those cannabis users, who have suffered because of the prohibition law. FCA constructs itself not only a fighter of user's rights, but also a fighter for it's own rights as an organization. In it's presentation, FCA lists many different assaults towards it's operation from authors and other quarters (individual politicians, the Association Register Office, a local Internet domain office, Police and The Ministry of the Interior). FCA has, among other things, complained of it's rejection to association register first to the Supreme Administrative Court and after their denying decision, for Organs of European human rights. No other user organization constructs it's role that clearly as fighter for it's own rights. Maybe that, in addition to small number of user organizations in Finland, reflects the strict political stance towards cannabis (and other drug) use in Finland.

#### Supplier of activities

Many of user organizations examined here construct their role quite strongly from viewpoint of *activities*. Activities may be organized for drug users by the organization or they may be only taken part by active members of organization. Most clearly activities are constructed for an important task for BF and SBF, in means of producing meaningful activities for isolated drug users, who otherwise are not approved to the field of social action in the society.

In it's presentation, BF lists for it's first task to “*arrangere række forskellige aktiviteter og ugdor netværk for isolerede og udsatte stofbrugere*” (as quoted already earlier). In it's web pages, BF has a separated section for presentation of activities produced in organization's premises: rooms for different kinds of sports, film watching and lectures, computing and other sorts of living. In BF's texts in generally, activities play bigger role than in texts of other organizations. BF presents itself as a motivator and supporter of drug users in difficult situations, and this role is constructed in great deal in means of producing “*sociale og kulturelle aktiviteter*” and just to offer premises and to be there for users being in need of support.

Of course, BF's situation as producer of activities differs from some other organizations also in that sense, that it has good premises (or at least has had when putting information to its web page). From these bases, it has good chances to offer different kinds of activities for its members and drug users in general. Many organizations don't have premises supplying their needs, or can't afford for activities, they would be willing to produce. These things seem to connect with country's political stance towards drug use and economical bases and establishment of organization. SBF, for example, also lists "*starting social and cultural activities*" for one of its goals, but from the bases of its economics and premises, haven't been able to do that in larger scale in first years of its operation. Here can be seen, that organization's age and establishment affects distinctly to its operation: SBF, being almost ten years younger than BF, hasn't yet accomplished such a role in the field of drug policy of its country, as has BF through 11 years of its operating.

Both of cannabis organizations examined here, tell in a larger scale about couple of activities produced by them. One activity, they yearly produce for their members and other people interested, is the "Million Marijuana March", arranged for decriminalizing or legalizing cannabis through out the world from year 1999. NORMAL has arranged march in Oslo from that year and nowadays arranges it also in Kristianstad, Stavanger, Bergen and Trondheim. In Finland, first Marijuana march was arranged in 2000 (in Turku in association with Green Panthers -organization) and this year, FCA believes it will be arranged also in Helsinki by FCA and in Tampere, Oulu, Jyväskylä and Rovaniemi by local activists.

An other activity, produced by both of cannabis organizations but not from other organizations examined here, is publishing a magazine about issues important to organization. NORMAL is more active here: its magazine "Høy Tid" is the biggest hemp magazine in Nordic countries and is published regularly. In NORMAL's aims in publishing "Høy Tid" is to make cannabis culture more visible ("*Å gjenspeile cannabiskultur, -forskning og -politikk i bredde og helehet*", from NORMAL's goal setting). "Høy Tid" is sold in newsstands in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. FCA's Finnish magazine "Hamppu" (Hemp) hasn't been published in paper since year 1999. Its news section (having separated sections for domestic news and news from abroad) still continues being published in FCA' web pages and on an separated e-mail list, and is very informative forum for hemp news in Finland.

Other activities produced by organizations are different kinds of excursions or other happenings directed mainly for its members. All of organizations list some these kinds of activities, varying

from official excursions or meetings with other organizations or authorities to more relaxed picnics or club-happenings arranged or taken part by the organization.

### Victim of social exclusion

From texts of some organizations, there can be constructed a role of victim of social exclusion. In that case, organization presents itself forced in a way or an other outside of the society. That bases on action of authorities or other organizations, that don't accept organization (or drug users working in it) into the field of social action, they are willing to take part to. Organization most often constructs it's role as a victim of social exclusion by telling about it's (or it's members) discrimination by other actors in the field of drug policy.

FCA's experiences of discrimination were already touched on when examining it's role as fighter of it's own rights. Also SBF constructs, to some extent, a role of victim of social exclusion to itself. It presents it's goal group (drug addicts or people in maintenance treatment) as very marginalized and alienated group in the Swedish society and presents as one of it's main goals ”*att bekämpa diskriminering gentemot dom grupper vi företräder. Svenska Brukarföreningen skall stärka och ha de Opiatberoendes och / eller de som har substitutionspreparat (metadon el subutex) sociala och samhällliga intressen i första hand som dess intresseorganisation.* ”. In presentation of it's goals, it also writes: “*Vi kräver samma valfrihet som andra grupper i samhället. Vi motsätter oss därmed och ämnar aktivt arbeta mot varje form av tvång och repression där sådant förekommer i samband med behandling eller annorstädes och vi betonar att samhället och de ansvariga för vår behandling skall göra en sträng åtskillnad mellan vård och narkotikabekämpning. Narkomanvård får ej avvika från de andra former av hälsovård som samhället erbjuder.*”

From bases of these quotes, SBF constructs drug users' social situation different and with different kinds of rights than other groups in the Swedish society. One of it's main tasks is to fight against this alienation. SBF contacts users' social situation very strongly to their situation in maintenance treatments (as seen in the later quote) but it is also interested in users' situation wider in the society. It often claims, that attitudes toward drug users shouldn't be adopted from the bases of Swedish drug policy, based more in ideological than factual views. Drug users should be seen as same kinds of people as others, and about accomplishments of this goal SBF tells in it's latest newsletter dated 14.9. 2004: “*Vi är en mycket utsatt grupp i samhället som tidigare haft svårigheter att göra oss gällande i olika sammanhang. Behoven av en fungerande förening är mycket stort. (...) Efter två års*

*arbete konstaterar vi att vår förening kommer att utgöra en ny representationsform för de narkotikaberoende och då i synnerhet de Heroinberoende i Sverige.”*

In the same newsletter, SBF tells also about discriminative attitudes it still encounters, even though it has obtained some results in its fight for its own and its members' situation in the society. It tells about a police officer, organization's representatives met in a conference, coming to say to them that *“jag anser det skulle vara förbjudet för heroinister att organisera sig! Jag kommer aktivt att kämpa emot er”*.

These kinds of attitudes encountered by user organizations are mostly told about by user organizations in Finland (FCA) and in Sweden (SBF). As claimed already earlier, it may have something to do with the stricter societal and political stances towards drug use in these countries than in other Nordic countries.

Role of “victim of social exclusion” is very interesting in that sense, that it is a role which some organizations very strongly deny from themselves. BF writes in its presentation: *“Vi har forsøgt at rejse os og vil fortsat bestræbe os på at være og gøre os nyttige, at frigøre os for stigmatisering og udstødelse. Vi er stofbrugere. Det er vi og har da heller aldrig lagt skjul på dette. Den enkeltes brug af stof har imidlertid ikke det mindste med foreningens virke at gøre, men hører – som al anden anvendelse af rusmidler – privatsfæren til.”*

Also BF talks about discrimination and exclusion of drug users in its texts, but it doesn't present these as its operations' social context, but social situation, BF as an organization doesn't want to be attached to. Organization's members don't deny their drug use, but they don't see that it has to have anything to do with organization's social situation. Everywhere in BF's texts it can be seen, that organization constructs its role as a *fully authorized and legally competent* actor in the society and in the field of drug policy. From bases of BF's texts, it can be claimed that it has been constructing this role for itself from very beginning of its operation, and this has actually affected to BF's acceptance to an authorized actor in the field of its action. Of course, once again, this has to be examined in context of BF's long life history and Denmark's societal and political stance towards drug use (and for example maintenance treatments), which varies a great deal from for example Sweden's situation.

## Serious actor

Also RIO can be seen as denier of the role of social exclusion. This denying can be seen throughout texts produced by RIO and it can be looked at, through examination of role of *serious actor*, that RIO quite strongly constructs to itself. RIO writes in its presentation under title “Vår kompetanse” that: *“Noen er også redd for den kompetansen vi besitter. Vi ønsker ikke å overta rollene til noen. Det vi ønsker er å bli tatt seriøst. Vi søker samhandling med alle seriøse organisasjoner.”*

RIO doesn't present itself to be worried about its authority in the field of Norwegian drug policy, but it brings up some other actors' worry about RIO's competence in that scene. RIO presents itself as an actor, that wants to be taken seriously in the field of its action. The role it constructs to itself as a serious actor, is in many ways more official and more based on cooperation with other serious organizations and authorities, than a role based on solidarity and mutual-help of drug users, that many other user organizations in that examination construct to themselves. RIO also underlines the fact, that its members are **former** substance users and that their experiences rise from their past, not the contemporary situation of their life. RIO seems to be very strict in that matter, and from that bases, comes more near to NA or other organizations, based on demands of abstinence, than other user organizations.

RIO presents itself as a serious actor also from bases of its strict attitudes towards legalizing drugs and towards some harm reducing acts taking place in Norway quite rapidly. One example is the “Sprøyterommet” opened recently in Oslo. RIO resisted it very strictly before its opening and afterwards it writes: *“En tragisk dag for rusomsorgen! At sprøyterommet er åpnet er en tragedie i kampen for å gi rusmisbrukerne et verdig liv, og et feilgrep i kampen mot overdoser. Sprøyterommene vil ikke redde liv.”*

RIO's attitudes towards harm reducing and in larger scale, decriminalizing or even legalizing drug use, differs distinctly from opinions of all other user organizations examined here. Both of cannabis organizations take quite clear role as supporters of decriminalizing cannabis and even have it as the main goal of their action. Also other user organizations examined here, take quite positive attitudes towards decriminalizing drug use, or at least helping the progress of harm reduction policy. RIO, on the other hand, lists for one of its main tasks, to resist legalizing as it denotes in its presentation under the title “Mot legalisering”:

*“Vi er også mot all form for legalisering, og kjemper sterkt i mot de som har motsatte holdninger.”*

*Vi mener at samfunnet vil spare mye penger på sikt hvis politikerne klarer å se nødvendigheten av å investere i de menneskelige ressursene som bor hos den enkelte.”*

Here, RIO quite distinctly marks boundaries between itself and many other user organizations, at least cannabis organizations, by announcing that it campaigns against all actors with different opinions about legalizing drugs. From that bases, it doesn't only construct itself a role of “serious actor against legalizing” but also puts itself into a social situation, where it is opposed to all actors having contradictory opinions. In the next chapter, relationships of user organizations to other actors in the field of drug policy, will be examined more accurate.

### Relations to other actors

In analysis of subject positions, interests lie in examining all actors appearing in the text. In this case it means, that relations of user organizations to other actors appearing in the texts of organizations, are also in interests of the study. Mainly three kinds of actors are mentioned in the texts: other organizations (user organizations and parental- or other organizations working in the field of drug policy or drug treatments); different kinds of organs of cooperation; and authorities, experts and researchers of the field of drug policy. In this chapter, relations of user organizations to these actors are looked at more closely.

### Other organizations

Relationship between user organizations examined here and other user organizations were already touched on to some extent above. BF's relationship with other user organizations very clearly bases on it's pioneering role as a Nordic user organization: it has given assistance and guided many other organizations planning to get organized, as well in it's own country as abroad. For example, SBF has been established from bases of this cooperation. Both SBF and BF claim to be very open and willing to cooperate with other user organizations. BF, for example, mentions in it's texts that it has had cooperation with “Hemp partiet” and other cannabis and other user organizations in Denmark. SBF lists fewer cooperative partners in it's own country than BF but has ,on the other hand, been quite active in cooperation with international partners.

RIO, as mentioned above, seeks cooperation with all other serious actors and organizations in the field of drug policy. It also seeks cooperation only with organizations that have similar goals with

itself. For example, cannabis organizations don't fit into this group because of their aim to decriminalize cannabis use.

Cannabis organizations have, to some extent, contacts with other cannabis organizations but at least two of those examined here, don't tell about relationships to other user organizations. From unofficial discussions with representatives of FCA, there can be reached a conclusion, that FCA feels that it hasn't fully been accepted to the group of official "user organizations" or otherwise for a serious actor in the field of harm reduction policy in its own country. On the other hand, cannabis organizations may feel other user organization a bit distant for their action and that is why they haven't been actively searching for cooperation with these quarters. Also strict stances of cannabis organizations towards use of other drugs than cannabis, may have something to do with this distance.

Relationships to other organizations, mainly parental organizations in drug scene, vary a lot between organizations examined. BF, for example, tells about its long and good cooperation with a parent and relative association "LFHN" in its annual report 2002 as follows:

*Our cooperation with (...) the association for next-of-kin, the "LFHN" is still around and going as strong as ever, not least benefiting us, here at Brugerforeningen, offering telephone-counseling, personal next-of-kin-counseling, in-person, physical outreach-support in terms of for instance standing-by activities with regards to following-up on issues of social importance and frequent next-of-kin-meetings in our offices.*

From bases of this quote, it can be claimed that BF has got very friendly and good relations with at least this one parental association. It has taken cooperation with this quarter a matter of course and hasn't either been despised by these quarters. In its texts, parental associations are nowhere constructed for its opponents or enemies, as they are in texts of SBF and FCA, for example. SBF's stances towards parental associations, from bases of organizations web pages, seem to change in course of its operation. In newsletter number 2 (from beginning of year 2003) it writes:

*SBF is a new member of a European network called ENCOD (European NGO Council on Drugs and Development). March 3-6 Ferne will go to Brussels to participate in a meeting with some 20 other activist groups and EU-parliamentarian. The meeting is held in the EU-parliament. It is the first time that a user from Sweden speaks before EU about the reality for people with drug*

*problems in our country. Some of our opponents, for instance RNS, FMN will be there too. So far, only their word has been heard in the European Parliament EU.*

Here, among other organizations FMN, a Swedish parental association “Parent Union Against Drugs”, is mentioned as SBF's opponent. Later on, in the newsletter 3 (dated 12 05 03) SBF tells about new parental association established in connection with itself, being a “*great demanded counterweight to the FMN*”. Later in the same newsletter, SBF tells about new cooperative organ “*Brukarråd*” in field of Swedish drug policy, in where SBF operates in cooperation with some authorities and experts and also representatives of FMN. An opponent has become here a cooperative partner in an organ, that may have a great impact to the care on and stances towards drug users in Sweden.

This kind of development may be common when finding ways and means of cooperation among different kinds of actors in the field of drug policy. Access of user organizations to this kind of cooperation probably has a lot to do with their role and visibility in the public debate and also their establishment and unionizing as an organization. If the organization does not manage to create a role as a notable actor in that field, it is very easily left outside of these cooperative forums, and vice versa.

This has happened to some extent with FCA. It hasn't been approved to cooperation with large variety of parental organizations working in the field of Finnish drug policy. It has been seen as an enemy by them and same counts with FCA's stances towards these associations. For the main “enemy” of it's action by FCA there is constructed a parental association “*Irti huumeista ry*” (“*Rid of drugs*”) which has constantly (from bases of FCA's texts) attacked towards FCA's operation and for example, had a counter demonstration during Million Marijuana March 2003 in Turku (FCA domestic news 2003). In the news release about the march, published in the web pages of the FCA, it is written:

*About 150 persons gathered together in Saturday afternoon to march for legalizing cannabis in city center of Turku. March was carried out in Turku for fourth time. Peacefully down the Art museum hill moving parade, demanded allowing cannabis use and commutating penalties in it plaques.*

*Hemp is wanted to put under taxation and into quality monitoring. (...)*

*Exactly the same way didn't think representatives of parental association “Irti huumeista ry” who had gathered into counter demonstration along the market place.*

*- We have freedom of speech but it is still quite sad, that you can march for such a purpose and*

*even supervised by police, comments a representative of the association.*

It can be reached a conclusion from bases of FCA's texts, that it's own willingness to cooperate with parental associations, in the field of Finnish drug policy has increased, but parental associations don't seemingly feel the same way. FCA and other cannabis organizations in Finland want to get rid of their marginalized position in drug debate, but it is easier said than done at least in the field of Finnish drug policy.

### Cooperative organs

Many of user organizations tell about cooperative organs, operating in the field of drug policy, as their most important quarters of cooperation. These organs are actors, that user organizations seem to lay most weight to, when talking about organization's competence and accomplishments.

BF has been a member of many cooperative organs, of which some have already finished their work (see BF Annual report 2002). BF doesn't highlight it's role in these kinds of organs: it seems to be taken granted for it to be a member of cooperative organs. Of course, it has a long history and lots of experiences in this field. For RIO and SBF cooperative organs seem to be more current topics.

In it's presentation, RIO tells about “*Alkohol og Narkotikaforum*” established in 2002 by RIO for a forum of discussion about drug related issues in Norway. It has currently 13 member organizations. In RIO's texts, this organ is constructed for an important cooperative quarter for RIO and for field of Norwegian drug policy in general. RIO has established this organ from bases of it's own needs and finds it seriously taken and well heard organ of cooperation in the field of it's interests.

Also SBF is a member of couple of cooperative organs working in the field of substitute treatment in Stockholm. It tells about this cooperation in it's web side under the title “SvenskaBrukarFöreningen – en möjlighet till dialog”:

*SvenskaBrukarFöreningen har lyckats bidra till att brukarråd både på Beroendecentrum och Maria bildats. Syftet är att optimera substitutionsbehandlingarna. Naturligtvis kommer föreningen att var mycket aktiv i rådets arbete. Samtal har inletts med beställarkontoret ”Vård” och vi skall här representera patientperspektivet.*

These cooperative organs seem to be important and high valued quarters of cooperation for SBF. They are exact means for users themselves to affect the treatment of opiate users, which is the main purpose of SBF. In its latest annual report (2004) SBF still opens its role in these organs to question. It sees that in these cooperative organs, it has an opportunity to state its opinions, but it won't necessarily be heard, because of the distance between viewpoints of itself and other actors in the field: *“Det är som vi lever i två olika verkligheter. Vi får konstant höra att “det inte är så” med det vi uttrycker. Politikerna har tidigare bara hört verksamhetschefernas sida av saken och finner därför det vi säger är förvånande. Dessutom finns det en risk att teamen legitimerar sina beslut med “Ja men Brukarföreningen är ju med i rådet”. Av den anledningen är vi osäkra på hur vi ska fortsätta arbetet i dessa råd har idag eller med de resultat som vi uppnått hittills.”*

Here, as in many parts of SBF's texts, there can be constructed a somehow marginalized social position, even though SBF has already during its short existence gained a role of notable actor in the field of Swedish drug policy. SBF still feels it difficult to try to get authorities and politicians to understand the reality and viewpoints of drug users, that differ a lot from a viewpoint of others. Also here, when talking about its action in cooperative organs, SBF constructs a diverse role to itself, as a serious actor in the field of Swedish drug policy and sector of substitute treatments and, on the other hand, a marginalized actor with great difficulties in getting its voice heard and affecting treatment and positions of drug users in the Swedish society.

For the problem of getting poorly heard in organs mentioned above, SBF has a solution. In its annual report 2004 it tells about its plans to ground a function called “NARKO” or “Narkomanombundsmannen” (“a drug addict representative”) as an independent institution of SBF. This institution, SBF believes, would help users rights and viewpoints to become more visible, in the Swedish society.

As well organizations of opiate and other substance users and cannabis users, tell about their memberships in large international organizations or networks. For example, from the organizations examined here, BF, SBF and NORMAL are members of ENCOD, The European Coalition for Just and Effective Drug Policies. It is a network of European Civil Society Organizations and citizens concerned by current drug policies and wishing to replace it with a balanced and rational approach. Other than kinds of international organizations or networks, mentioned as cooperative quarters of organizations are NAMA (National Alliance of Methadone Advocates) and International Drug Users Information Exchange (Glitzzy), a cooperative forum for drug users, working in 22 countries.

RIO and FCA seem to be less looking for international contacts than other organizations examined here, either from basis of their purposes and goals, or other reasons.

NORMAL is the only organization from ones examined here, that is clearly a under group of an other organization (NORML established in the United States in 1970's). Otherwise, cannabis organizations don't tell about being members of same kinds of local or national cooperative organs, that other organizations tell about. This is probably because these organs very often deal with issues related to treatment or other issues not in agenda of cannabis organizations. Cannabis organizations still tell about being heard in different kinds of formal or informal occasions. For example, based on stance published in 1996 by FCA, FCA was consulted about their opinions by the National Drug Policy Committee in 1997, when the first national strategy on drug policy was drafted in Finland.

#### Authorities, experts and researchers of the field

Except of other organizations and cooperative organs, also separate authorities, experts and researchers of the field of drug policy appear as actors in texts of user organizations. These actors may be seen as cooperative partners, supporters or opponents of the organization or otherwise actors worth mentioning.

BF, as told already earlier, has started a function called “user friend prize”. It means a yearly prize given by the user organization to an individual person, for his/her accomplishments in the area of drug policy, from viewpoint of users themselves. By that action, BF has made it's operating more visible and constructed it's relationships to other actors more effectively. Also SBF has started giving this prize. BF and SBF have very similar attitudes in general towards cooperation with authorities, experts and, to some extent, researches of the field. They both see, that all kind of cooperation is valued and helps the progress of the organization.

RIO, on the other hand, describes it's cooperative interests from much more discriminating point of view. It wants to cooperate with all other serious actors in the field of drug policy. Most often authorities and experts, probably also researchers of the field, fit into this category. Some authorities are mentioned by RIO, for example Norway's sports alliance, together with which RIO runs the project “Iddret mot rus”. Experts of especially social and health care sector are operated together with when arranging “nettverksmøter “ for users and experts helping being involved in treatment. This action is high valued and characteristic for RIO and organizations relationships to experts of

the field of treatment of substance users are constructed in large scale from bases of this operation.

Research sector is touched in texts of BF by telling about conferences and meetings taken part or arranged by BF. In these kinds of gatherings, BF seems to have got many contacts with researchers and other experts of the field of drug policy. BF, being a well established and long lived organization, is well known and easily reached also by researchers.

Also SBF has actively taken part into these kinds of meetings with experts and research sectors. It also tells about a bit different kind of relationship to research sector in it' s presentation:

*En medlem som är intresserad av källhistoria har påbörjat ett arbete med att katalogisera vad som under åren diskuterats i facktidskrifter, dagspress och media angående läkemedelsassisterade missbruksbehandlingar. Resultatet skall bli ett artikelarkiv och en bibliografi som kan erbjudas forskare, journalister och andra intresserade.*

This kind of operation is one way of creating relations to research sector by user organizations. It is quite obvious way of keeping on to these relations, when organizations often gather a lot of information attached to their interests. This information is not wanted to be kept only to itself, but wished to be shared with other interested actors. Organizations may in this way serve researchers, and researchers, by their work, serve organizations by creating new information about drug related issues.

Also FCA tells about these kinds of relations to research sector. In it's annual plan for year 2005 there is a chapter "Research activities" where FCA tells about it's own research activities (which is listed also as one aim of it's action as stated earlier) and about relations to researchers of the field. It writes:

*The cannabis data bank of the association in the Internet is further developed. Web pages of the association have already become Finland's leading cannabis information center which can be used -and is used – by normal people, journalists and researchers.*

NORMAL states for one of it's goal "Å gjenspeile cannabiskultur, -forskning og -politikk i bredde og helehet, både på Internett og i magasinet På Høy Tid". For cannabis organizations in general, it seems to be more important to help the progress of research of the field of drug policy, than for other organizations examined here. At least from bases of this study it could be said, that other user organizations focus on more concrete questions about care and treatment of drug users, and research

sector from those bases appears not that important for them. Cannabis organizations, on the other hand, do not have that concrete and topical issues to deal with and from that bases, they may focus more on collecting and spreading information about issues in their interests. That is quite often done by publishing and spreading news attached to cannabis related issues and serving from these bases as “data banks” of those matters. FCA's action of this field is mostly based on Internet and directed for Finnish people, when NORMAL communicates most seemingly by it's magazine “*Høy Tid*” in many Nordic Countries. Relationships to authorities and experts of the field of drug policy seem, in general, to be more distant for cannabis organizations than for other user organizations examined here.

## Conclusions

Aim of this study was to have a glance at the field of Nordic user organizations and to compare organizations with each other. Roles and tasks of user organizations were positioned to the focus of their interests. Five user organizations were selected to the study containing organizations of opiate and other substance users and organizations of cannabis users.

From bases of the analysis it can be said, that there are many various roles that user organizations construct to themselves. These roles constructed from bases of analyzes of textual material produced by organizations, were role of “mutual-help organization”, “cooperative organization”, “mouthpiece of drug users”, “supplier of activities”, “victim of social exclusion” and “serious actor”. Main tasks of organizations were connected to these roles. Supporting and counseling drug users from the bases of members' own experiences; cooperating with other actors in the field of drug policy to help the progress of position of drug users in the society and/or drug treatments; making viewpoints of drug users more visible in the society and supplying activities for more or less marginalized drug users were tasks, that every organization examined here stated for one of their main tasks. Roles of “victim of social exclusion” and “serious actor” differ from others in a way, that they don't fit for all organizations. Role of victim of societal stances were produced mainly by examined organizations in Finland and Sweden, which may have something to do with stricter stances and policy related to drug use in these countries than in other Nordic countries. Role of serious actor was produced mainly by one Norwegian organization. This organization differs from others also from it's bases of membership, which is based on demands of abstinence. It's members constitute also of former alcoholics, not only users of illegal drugs. Organizations roots are not that strongly in the members' experiences of scene of illegal drug use and, in that sense, not so distinctly

outside of the organized society, than it is with other organizations.

What can be said about comparing organizations with each other? Even though many of roles and tasks presented above are shared by organizations, also personal characteristics for organizations can be drawn from bases of this analysis.

Role of serious actor is characteristic for RIO, but from bases of other subject positions it constructs to itself, it can be seen also as an official actor, having it's interests more clearly in the official field of drug policy, than in being a supporter of individual drug users. Even though it's name "Rusmisbrukernes Intresseorganisasjon" may give a hint about organization based strongly on mutual-help, RIO still seems to be more focused on being a mediator between user and social and health care sector and/or other officers. It's strict opinions against legalizing drugs and against some harm reducing acts places it more near to moralistic organizations and social and health organizations than human right organizations, as which many other user organizations can be seen (see Sarvanti 1997, 198).

SBF is one of the organizations constructing a role of "victim of social exclusion" to itself. Besides that role, SBF also very distinctly creates a role as a fighter of user's rights to itself, and in that sense, a notable offer of mutual-help as well as a supplier of activities for the marginalized and alienated drug users in Sweden. For SBF's action, the societal stance towards drug use in Sweden seems to have a great impact and it is also constantly criticized by SBF. SBF is the youngest organization in this valuation and it also gives a distinct mark to it's action. It has started some projects and activities but is, in some sense, still creating it's own means of operation.

BF's action, on the other hand, is characterized by it's long history and well established role as a notable actor in the field of drug policy in it's own country and internationally. As a pioneering user organization of opiate users in the Nordic countries, it has had great impact to other organizations appearing in it's own country and in other Nordic Countries, too. As SBF, also BF constructs itself a strong role of mutual-help organization and supplier of activities. Except of having warm and close relations with drug users, it also has been able to maintain good relations with more official societal actors. It's action is characterized by long lived and established projects, run together with officers of municipality of Copenhagen or other organs. It has gained confidence of both people and authorities in the field of it's action.

Also FCA is a long lived organization with some well established forms of action. In contrary to BF, it hasn't gained same kind of confidence in the field of it's action. FCA has been taken into account in some occasions dealing with drug users opinions, but mostly it has been left outside from the cooperation of organizations and authorities working in the field of Finnish drug policy. Related to that, FCA produces it's role quite distinctly as a victim of social exclusion and as a fighter of it's own and cannabis users' rights. On the other hand, it also wants to be seen as a supplier of activities for people interested in it's action. As an cannabis association, interests of it's action are in spreading information and getting in touch with media and politicians in order to get societal stances towards cannabis use into less condemning direction.

NORMAL is an organization, of which characteristics are most difficult to draw together from bases of the analysis. There were also less textual material available about NORMAL than about other organizations examined. NORMAL is an under group of an American organization but still has it's interests mainly in domestic issues in Norway. It constructs itself clearly as a supplier of couple of big activities: it publishes the biggest cannabis magazine in Nordic countries and organizes Million Marijuana March in Norway . It also wants to be seen active in media and cooperation with politicians with same aims than FCA: to get societal stances towards cannabis use into less condemning direction in it's own country and in Nordic countries in general. NORMAL doesn't construct it's role as a fighter for it's own and cannabis users rights as clearly as FCA. This may have roots in Norwegian drug policy which doesn't have as condemning and moralistic characteristics as the Finnish policy.

As stated above, establishment of the organization may have something to do with position of the organization in the field of drug policy of the country in question. The better the organization has managed to create relations to other actors and constructed it's own role as an important actor in the field, the better it is taken into account and the higher it is valued from the viewpoint of other actors and authorities. Also country's political stances towards drug use affect to this, and gaining a position of relevant actor may be harder in some countries than in others. Distinctly, from bases of analysis, power in scene of drug policy lies in good relations with other actors and capability to make the organization itself worthy and meaningful in the eyes of others. From these bases, roles that user organizations construct to themselves are actually very significant. They direct not only organization's own operation but also opinions and viewpoints of other actors about the organization.

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