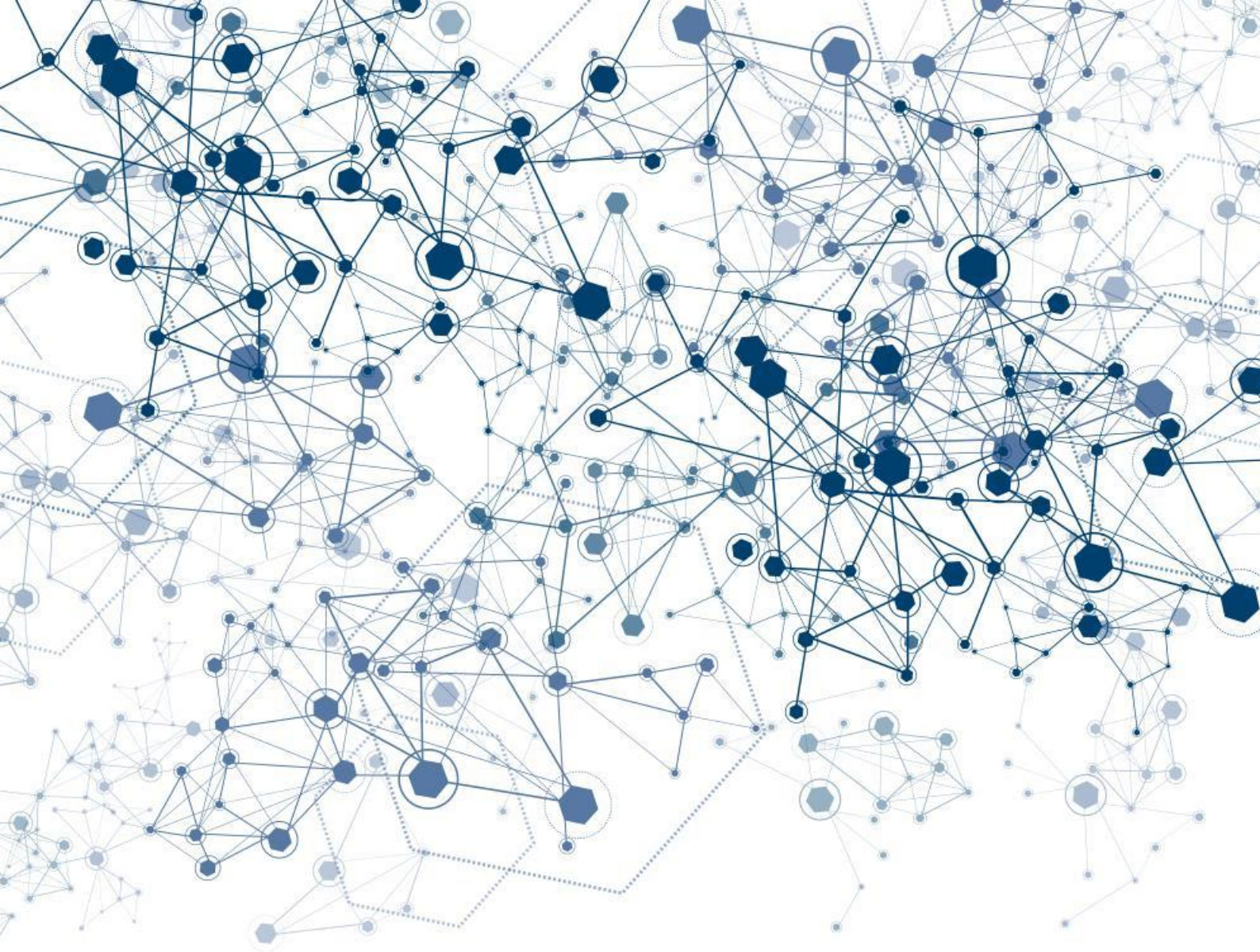


STAYING SMALL IMPACTING BIG

SCALING-UP ORGANISATIONAL EFFORTS THROUGH
SELF-MANAGED VOLUNTEERING NETWORKS:
AN INTRODUCTION FOR THIRD SECTOR ORGANISATIONS



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DECEMBER 2020



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This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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INTRODUCTION



In today's society, doing something on a voluntary base is not uncommon. By calling 2001 the International Year of Volunteering, the United Nations emphasised the growing international interest in volunteering and the civic engagement that comes with it. In 2017, an estimate of 970 million people were involved in voluntary activities worldwide (John Hopkins University, 2017). Socially oriented organisations and volunteers are nowadays by many regarded as 'the third way' – also known as the 'the third sector', the first two being state and market. In Europe, third sector organisations (TSO's) are particularly relevant when it comes to the provision of social welfare.¹ However, in the current economic, political and social climate, fulfilling this task is not without challenges. Current trends show growing difficulties for TSO's including reduction of state funding and infrastructure, changes in the access to resources based on market-type logics, and increased bureaucratization, among others.²

Many TSO's manage to successfully overcome these and many other challenges, and they find themselves wanting to do more. These organisations usually work through impactful and resilient models and methods to provide basic services and foster community building, but their reach is usually limited by their size. However, these models and methods work well in many cases given the small size of the organisation, which is optimal to surpass the many obstacles and particularities of the third sector. This results in a paradox: to do more the organisation needs to grow, but to

¹ Milligan, C. & Conradson, D. (Editors). (2006). *Landscapes of Voluntarism: new spaces of health, welfare and governance*. The Policy Press, Bristol.

² Enjolras, B. et al. (2017). *The Third Sector, a Renewable Resource for Europe: Summary of Main Findings of 'The Third Sector Impact' Project*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/third_sector_impact-findings.pdf.



grow the organisation will face increased barriers that will disarticulate the methods it wants to spread in the first place.

In the face of this paradox, how can TSO's scale-up impact while keeping their optimal (small) sizes? In this introductory guide we introduce a method we believe could support TSO's achieve this task: self-managed volunteering networks (SMVN's). These can help multiply organisational efforts, while avoiding the complications inherent in increasing structural needs in terms of staff, volunteer management, resources, capabilities, infrastructure, among other aspects needed for organisational growth.

We will bring together information about different third sector organisations (TSO's) and how increased impact can be achieved through self-managed volunteering networks. To do so, in Chapter 1, we begin by conceptualizing TSO's, their relationship to volunteering and the different challenges the sector is currently facing.

In Chapter 2, we focus on self-managed volunteering networks (SMVN's). We initially discuss different types of volunteering, what motivates people to do voluntary work, the impact of voluntary work on individuals and societies, and how volunteering can be organised. Then, we narrow down our attention to self-managed volunteering, also called self-organised or self-directed volunteering: how it can be defined and how it can be interesting for organisations, for individuals, and for society, its various models, and its structuring as a network. We also discuss possible motivations for TSO's to set-up an SMVN.

Finally, we analyse different cases of TSO's (and one for-profit) that either promote SMVN's or who give their volunteers the opportunity to self-organise or self-manage. We provide cues on how these examples could shed



light on how to set-up and organise an SMVN. The different cases are based on desk research as well as interviews carried out in France, Hungary, the Netherlands and Spain.

This introduction to self-managed volunteering networks offers some background information and, hopefully, inspiration for third sector organisations who wish to increase their impact while keeping their small size.





1. THIRD SECTOR ORGANISATIONS (TSO'S) IN EUROPE



We will base our approach to third sector organisations (TSO's) on the definition, scope and challenges outlined by Enjolras et al. (2017)³ in the EU-funded project “The Contribution of the Third Sector to Europe’s Socio-economic Development”.⁴

1.1. CONCEPT AND SCOPE OF TSO'S

According to Enjolras et al., a third sector organization (TSO) is: “An institutional unit—whether a non-profit organization, an association, a cooperative, a mutual, a social enterprise, or any other type of institutional entity” that meets all of the following five criteria:

- » “Organizations, whether formal or informal;
- » Private;
- » Self-governed;
- » Non-compulsory; and
- » Totally or significantly limited from distributing any surplus they earn to investors, members, or other stakeholders.”

The summary report on “The third sector impact project” explain that the European third sector is “an enormous economic force” and the third most important workforce ‘industry’, “trailing only trade and manufacturing, but outdistancing the construction and transportation industries by 2:1, and the financial services industry by 5:1”:⁵

“Taken together, as of 2014... the European third sector engages an estimated 28.3 million full-time equivalent (FTE) workers (paid and volunteer) in the 28 EU countries

³ Enjolras, B. et al. (2017). *The Third Sector, a Renewable Resource for Europe: Summary of Main Findings of ‘The Third Sector Impact’ Project*. Available at:

https://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/third_sector_impact-findings.pdf.

⁴ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/613034>

⁵ Enjolras, B. et al. (2017).



and Norway. The European TS thus accounts for nearly 13 percent of the European workforce. This is a significant contribution because any industry that accounts for 5 percent of the employment of a country is considered to be a major industry.”

1.2. THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERING FOR TSO'S

Volunteering has a significant role for the third sector: “over 15 million full-time equivalent workers in the civil society sector in Europe are volunteers, which is 55 percent of the workforce.”⁶ Enjolras et al consider volunteer work that which complies with the following criteria:⁷

- » “They produce benefits for others and not just, or chiefly, for the person performing it.
- » They are not casual or episodic.
- » They are unpaid.
- » The activity is not aimed at benefiting members of one's household or their close family or families (e.g., next of kin—brothers, sisters, parents, grandparents, and respective children).
- » The activity is non-compulsory, which means it involves a meaningful element of individual choice.”

Volunteers can undertake a wide range of tasks within organisations. Actually, one of the difficulties that TSO's face is the management of volunteers and the relationship and task division between volunteers and paid staff.⁸ Regardless of the complexity of volunteer management,

⁶ Enjolras, B. et al. (2017).

⁷ Enjolras, B. et al use the definition of volunteering provided by the International Labour Organization's 2011 *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work*.

⁸ Netting, F. Ellen et al. (2004) Volunteer and Paid Staff Relationships: Implications for Social Work Administration. *Administration in Social Work*, 28(3-4), 69-89.

https://doi.org/10.1300/J147v28n03_04



volunteers provide invaluable contributions to the mission of third sector organisations which would be very difficult to access otherwise: from costly and highly in-demand skills to deep community ties. In return, volunteers obtain experience, social ties, self-satisfaction and a sense of belonging, among other benefits we will explore in the chapters ahead.

1.3. CURRENT CHALLENGES

Enjolras et al outlined in their research a number of obstacles that third sector organisations are currently facing in the European context. One of the main barriers is the reduction of state budgets for the third sector due to austerity measures, as well as the changes in financing structures due to⁹:

“...the rise of neoliberal approaches to address socio-economic challenges, which favours market solutions for public problems... These reforms are interrelated with a general cultural shift from a trust-me to a prove-me-culture for the third sector. The relationship with public administration changed from a partnership at eye level to a customer– supplier relationship. TSOs have to demonstrate their effectiveness and efficiency... Extensive reporting obligations force TSOs under stricter scrutiny of public authorities. High transparency and accountability requirements lead to a bureaucratic burden for TSOs.”

This increased market-based logic to access funding (competing for users, marketing-based approaches, impact measured through return indexes, etc.) has led to an increased complexity in the management and accounting, particularly as organisations grow and different sources of funding have to be taken into account. Additionally, TSO's face lack of access to public infrastructure together with increased cost to access spaces required to do

⁹ Enjolras, B. et al. (2017).



their work (i.e. office space or access to a large facility to hold an event are many times unaffordable for TSO's).

Management of staff and volunteers are not a lesser challenge. In the case of paid staff¹⁰:

“Personnel costs loom particularly large in third sector Organizations. Hence, the cost and efficiency pressures and the financial instability outlined before have been translated into precarious employments patterns. Personnel per service unit is downsized, the workload of employees intensified, the salaries are lowered and atypical employment patterns like fixed term contracts, part time and marginal part time jobs are on the rise. Except in Spain, where unemployment is high and working conditions have worsened, working in the sector becomes increasingly unattractive. Particularly in areas where the mental and physical stress is high TSOs face serious problems to recruit personnel. These circumstances carry the risk that the quality of service delivery will deteriorate as TSOs might have to employ less professionally competent personnel and further engage in reducing personnel costs per service unit in order to fill a growing staffing gap.”

Regarding volunteers, challenges include:

- » Increased need for active search, recruitment and retention of volunteers, which requires an important logistics and resource availability.
- » Increased mobility of individuals who volunteer, implying a shift in focus on “personal goals... rather than commitment to an organisation”.¹¹
- » Increased rotation of volunteers with the subsequent task of integration of volunteers into the workflow.

¹⁰ Enjolras, B. et al. (2017).

¹¹ Idem



Enjolras et al explain¹²:

"In a nutshell, volunteer work is reported to be more flexible, informal, project based and not directly linked to organizations. Long term commitment is on the retreat which is best exemplified by the difficulty of recruiting board members while episodic volunteering, which is of temporary nature, enjoys a high popularity, e.g. organizing single events. The dominant organizational model, which is built on a governance structure with a high volunteer involvement, is losing its base, which forces TSOs to reconstruct their *modus operandi*."

Regardless of all of these difficulties, many organisations manage to not only survive, but are actually the most adequate agents to perform many of the tasks that hold a society together, such as the provision of many basic social services, advocacy, community-building, and awareness-raising, among other tasks of utmost importance for the well-being of individuals and entire communities.

These organisations, who find ways of fostering successful models and methods, many times are at a cross-roads: growing in size would help them increase their impact, but it would also exponentially escalate the risk of all the aforementioned complications. As we will see in the next sections, self-managed volunteering networks can provide a way to broaden an organisation's reach and scope, while avoiding many of the risks associated to the complexity of organisational growth.

¹² Idem





2. SELF-MANAGED VOLUNTEERING NETWORKS (SMVN'S) FOR TSO'S



2.1. VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering comes in many different ways; the reasons why people want to volunteer vary, as do the benefits and beneficiaries of volunteering. What all volunteers do have in common is that they offer their time and energy to help organisations or individuals who they are not related to, without receiving financial compensation. In this section, we describe different types of volunteering, motives people might have to volunteer, who might benefit from it, and how they benefit. We also make a distinction between ways in which volunteering is organised.

2.1.1. CONCEPTS AND TYPES OF VOLUNTEERING

When searching the internet for 'types of volunteering' the amount of hits is almost endless as are the various ways in which volunteering has been categorised. Also, the fields in which voluntary activities take place are numerous. Think of development, humanitarian and philanthropic activities, political activism, social justice movements, welfare and healthcare provision, just to mention a few. To give you an idea of the variety of types of volunteering, we'll describe a few examples:

- » 'Traditional' volunteering: voluntarily offering time and energy to organisations or individuals within one's community, not for a financial reward, but for the sake of helping others. Here, the tasks can be easily carried out by many people without the need for much training, and the focus is on the beneficiaries. These activities are defined by the organisations/individuals who look for volunteers (as they don't have the time or other resources to carry them out themselves).
- » Volunteering within an educational context or 'service learning': this type of volunteering combines learning objectives with community



service in order to provide a pragmatic, progressive learning experience while meeting societal needs. This form of volunteerism, whether it is called community service, internships, or field education tends to focus on ensuring that the volunteer not only serves, but learns something, whether it is interpersonal skills, work experience in his or her future field, or a change in how the volunteer views her- or himself and others.

- » Skills-based volunteering: this is the case when someone voluntarily puts his or her skills or talents to work for the benefit of another person or an organisation. Skills-based volunteering provides access to specialized knowledge, talent and skills that one may otherwise not be able to afford. One could think of a volunteer that sets up a bookkeeping system that helps an organisation to reduce administrative work by several hours a week. Skills-based volunteering is growingly part of corporate programmes (in that case also called 'employer supported volunteering'). This growth is attributed, among other things, to the increase in social awareness of the millennial employees whom companies are eager to recruit.¹³
- » Volunteering on an as-needed basis: for instance in an emergency like a natural disaster or pandemic like Covid, or - completely different - in election times to support one's favourite candidate. This form of volunteering is also called 'spontaneous volunteering', which starts as a bottom-up approach targeting a well-defined, urgent cause, usually lasting for a limited time.

¹³ Eyler, Janet; Giles Jr., Dwight E. (23 April 1999). *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Available at <https://archive.org/details/whereslearningin00eyle>.



Sometimes the different types of volunteering are combined. Think for instance of a trained nurse who voluntarily offers her skills to the victims of an earthquake, or of a retired professor in art history who chooses to volunteer in a museum, offering free guided tours two afternoons a week.

2.1.2. MOTIVES TO VOLUNTEER

People choose to volunteer for different reasons, varying from wanting to give something back to the community to developing one's skills. Someone who likes to do something that is completely different from his or her profession is not likely to choose skills-based activities, unless they wish to develop new skills.

Some possible motives for doing voluntary work could be:

- » altruism;
- » the opportunity to build or expand connections with likeminded people, e.g. peer to peer communities;
- » the option to be amongst people instead of home alone;
- » the option to get to know new people and/or to integrate in new surroundings;
- » the option to share knowledge and expertise;
- » the chance to make a difference for the people one is surrounded by;
- » the option to work on areas of interest which align with one's passion or values;
- » the prospect of being able to do something well, commensurate with one's skills;
- » the idea of improving oneself by developing a new skill or gaining new knowledge;
- » the feedback one might get that can help develop one's skills.



Aspects like available time, energy, location, or willingness to commit also have an impact on the type of voluntary activity one chooses. In some countries, volunteers might also be motivated by some form of compensation such as cash or vouchers. In the Netherlands for example, volunteers working for organisations may be eligible for an allowance free of taxes or social security contributions. An organisation is not obliged to pay this allowance, but it is a possibility which is subjected to a maximum (e.g. for 22+ year olds in 2020: € 170/month; € 1700/year).

The literature on volunteering often distinguishes between other-oriented (altruism) and self-oriented motives. Research has indicated that more often than not people are motivated by a combination of both and that a person's age influences the extent to which other-oriented motives prevail. The older the volunteer, the more likely the person is to be driven by other-oriented or altruistic motives.

*“Some people do voluntary work to **socialize**, to **meet people**, others for their **CVs**, for a **certificate of voluntary work** (more professional aspect). Also, when you're in retraining, to **build a network**, to discover a sector that interests you.”*

Extracted from the interview with Benenova (FR).

It is valuable for organisations to be aware of the many different motivations of volunteers as it helps them to better recruit and engage volunteers.



2.1.3. BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

According to the United Nations, a voluntary activity is that which benefits another person or other people, which does not imply that the volunteer should not benefit from it. There is substantial evidence that volunteering positively affects the social and psychological well-being of those who volunteer, and that it enhances their skills and capacities. It also has a positive impact on the health and longevity of the volunteer, especially if the person is older.

For the volunteer

The benefits for the volunteer are often related to his or her motives for volunteering. In general, one can state that helping others out of one's own free will provides a sense of purpose, a natural sense of accomplishment and makes one feel good. In other words: one's self-esteem, self-confidence and even life-satisfaction get a boost. It helps to satisfy the need for esteem that all human beings share. The act to do something for another person is connected with the fact that we are satisfying our own needs, like reaching out for self-actualization and the desire to become our best self. In the hierarchy of needs defined by the psychologist Abraham Maslow, these are the highest needs.¹⁴ Recent research shows that volunteering not only makes one feel good, brings fun and fulfilment, but it is believed to also have a positive effect on one's mental and physical health.

¹⁴ Maslow, A.H. (1943). "A theory of human motivation". *Psychological Review*. 50 (4): 370–96.



*“...the time you invest as a cook is also nice, because without a profit you also get a lot of **compliments and that gives you a good feeling**, which is also a good reason for participating in Thuisgekookt.”*

Extracted from the interview with Thuisgekookt (NL).

Furthermore, the fact that you meet others through voluntary activities could be experienced as a benefit: one's network grows, and interpersonal skills like empathic abilities, communication skills, leadership qualities and/or problem-solving skills are addressed and developed. If the activity is about sharing one's skills and experience, one will most likely get satisfaction of being able to do so, meanwhile addressing one's communication and maybe also leadership skills. Skill-based volunteering might encourage reflection on one's career and thus promote greater self-awareness and the urge to strengthen one's capabilities.

In the case of older adults, volunteering is proving to be an excellent way of staying healthy and involved in social life, of (re)integrating into society as well as giving an opportunity to disseminate their knowledge to members of younger age groups. Research indicates that people belonging to this age group (especially after retirement or the loss of their partner) tend to engage less with society and to become lonely.¹⁵ On the other hand, in our aging

¹⁵ Fischer, L., and Schaffer, K. (1993). *Older Volunteers*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage; Wilson, J., and Musick, M. (1999). The Effects of Volunteering on the Volunteer. *Law Contemp. Probl.* 62, 141–168; Russell, A. R., Nyame-Mensah, A., de Wit, A., and Handy, F. (2019). Volunteering and Wellbeing among Ageing Adults: A Longitudinal Analysis. *Voluntas* 30, 115–128. doi: 10.1007/s11266-018-0041-8.



societies the willingness of the older adults to volunteer plays a vital role in meeting the challenges of demographic change.

Service learning and volunteering in general might contribute to the building of one's CV, and through volunteering one can also gain new experiences and skills. Think of people who volunteer to cook in a soup kitchen without ever having cooked for large groups of people. They not only learn to cook meals for more people than they've ever cooked for, but also experience how it is to do this in a team, and maybe also what it is like to cook tasty meals on a tight budget. If they wish to do so, an experience like this might help them find a job in the kitchen of a restaurant (helps to build up the right CV for that kind of work).

For the beneficiaries of voluntary activities

The beneficiaries of the voluntary activities benefit from the fact that volunteers dedicate time, effort and knowledge into creating and maintaining community structures that are needed or requested on behalf of other community members. The level of satisfaction of beneficiaries, or the community members in need, will depend on the extent to which the volunteering-based structure is able to meet the needs it is meant to address. But besides addressing the explicit needs, there are more benefits for beneficiaries than the obvious, though the beneficiaries of voluntary activities might not always be aware of these.

For an individual beneficiary, say a person who needs home care, the volunteer is not just somebody who offers that care, but also someone to talk to, to share thoughts and ideas with, someone who offers a bridge to the world outside the house. Another example could be the senior volunteer who offers his services as a homework supervisor to young people. For the young



person he might be way more than just the homework supervisor; he could also be a confidant, a mentor, a source of inspiration, or a person the youngster can trust. Numerous examples are conceivable and, generally speaking, additional benefits of the volunteering activity almost always occur within the social domain; loneliness and social isolation being two of the most severe epidemics in the world today, combating these two realities as side benefits of volunteering is a significant aspect to take into account.

For organisations who work with volunteers

Involving volunteers can help an organisation to achieve its mission and strategic objectives. The benefits might be practical. Involving volunteers offers an organisation for instance the possibility, without extra costs,

- » to increase its capacity
- » to improve the quality of its service
- » to enable staff to focus on other tasks.

But besides these practical benefits of involving volunteers, there are more:

- » volunteers can help reflect and build a bridge between the organisation and the community it serves;
- » they bring diversity which enriches the organisation;
- » they bring a range of qualities, skills and expertise that you may not get from the staff in a team, eg. languages, cultural understanding, specialist skills, personal experiences, or that the organisation may not financially be able to hire;
- » they can demonstrate that you value your community or user-base and their experiences.



The benefits for an organisation can be offset by disadvantages, such as the time and energy required to recruit, train and supervise volunteers. In that case, developing a self-managed volunteering network, could provide an alternative for an organisation to access most or all of the advantages of involving volunteers, yet avoid most of the volunteer management complications.

For the community

Volunteering brings people together who otherwise might not get into contact with one another. It bridges socio-economic divides and thus strengthens the social fabric of a community, helps foster greater trust amongst citizens and develop norms of solidarity and reciprocity that are essential for stability.¹⁶ Communities with high levels of volunteering are associated with a better quality of life for individuals in terms of better health, lower crime rates, higher school grades and higher life satisfaction.

Betsy Megas, an American long-time volunteer in various capacities, gave the following answer to the question of how a community benefits from volunteering:¹⁷

“The first thing the community gets from its volunteers is whatever the direct outcome of the volunteering may be: less litter, fewer weeds, a community garden, a soup kitchen, a way for people to get help fixing their bicycles, a guide to the local historical museum, and so on. The more important thing that the community gets out of volunteering is a stronger community. Volunteers make friends with other volunteers and with the people they help. These relationships may transcend ethnic, class, and geographic lines which otherwise divide communities. In the process, people become more involved in exactly the parts of their worlds they have the most knowledge and influence over. They might recognize what nice

¹⁶ See also Wu, H. (2011). *Social impact of volunteerism*. Atlanta, GA: Points of Light Institute.

¹⁷ <https://www.quora.com/profile/Betsy-Megas>



people most of their neighbors are, and trust them more, maybe even enough to reach out when they need help.”

A result of volunteering can be that the volunteer’s connection to his or her community may prompt the volunteer to want to get involved with other aspects of the community, such as local politics and advocacy for programs the person believes are important. In other words: it might promote “civic engagement and concerned citizenship”.¹⁸

2.1.4. ORGANISATIONAL MODELS OF VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

How does a volunteer find voluntary work? How does an organisation that wants to involve volunteers find the right people? Who manages the volunteers and how? For every question there are various answers. But it all starts with an organisation defining the sort of help they’d like to get from the volunteer while taking into consideration the sort of work or activity the volunteer is motivated to do and the time the person would prefer to spend on it. And the better both are able to define what they want, the bigger the chance that for both the volunteering will be a satisfying experience.

In almost every country there are organisations that offer a platform, digital or in print, through which volunteers and initiatives or organisations in need of volunteers can find each other. Think of the Volunteer Centre Amsterdam (VCA) in the Netherlands, the European Voluntary Service (EVS), the Spanish Fundación Hazlo posible, and so on. Many of these organisations also offer information, guidance and support, some even training and toolkits, to organisations and/or volunteers. Of course not all matches between volunteers are made through platforms; word of mouth, ads in (local)

¹⁸ Wu, H. (2011). *Social impact of volunteerism*. Atlanta, GA: Points of Light Institute. (p.18)



newspapers, or a handwritten notice in the local shop are other ways of finding each other.

Once the match is made, it depends on the organisation who involves the volunteers how it wants to manage their engagement. This management of volunteers is the subject of various studies, and opinions are divided. On the one side of the spectrum, you will find researchers who equate all volunteers regardless of mission, organizational culture, and volunteer characteristics; the so called 'universalists'. On the other side you will find researchers who take a conditional approach to volunteer management and consider factors specific for the organization or its volunteers, or both.¹⁹ The universalists are of the opinion that there is one best way of managing volunteers which is the same everywhere, regardless of context (one size fits all). They base the best practice on indicators for achieving quality and on whether or not basic requirements for the successful involvement of volunteers have been met. According to conditionalists there is no best way of organizing volunteers. "Volunteering, volunteers and the way they are organized and managed differs from context to context."²⁰ The conditionalists work with different models that take into account the volunteer's role within the organisation, or his/her available time. The way in which the management of the volunteer takes place is linked to that role and can vary from hierarchical to teamwork and/or personal leadership. This last model occurs, for instance, in small organisations with no paid staff (volunteer led and run).

¹⁹ Brudney, J.L. and Meijs, L.C.P.M. (2014). Models of Volunteer Management: Professional Volunteer Program Management in Social Work in Human Service Organizations. *Management, Leadership & Governance*, 38, 297–309.

²⁰ Meijs, L., & Ten Hoorn E. (2008). No "one best" volunteer management and organizing: Two fundamentally different approaches. In M. Liao-Troth (Ed.), *Challenges in volunteer management* (pp. 29–50). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.



Over the years, volunteer management has been undergoing a process of formalisation and professionalisation in which much has been copied from the 'workplace' model. Evidence suggests that this has resulted in the improvement of the volunteers' experience. But there is also concern that the formalisation and professionalisation of volunteer management has gone too far; that it takes too much time of organisations and runs counter to the - by many valued - informal nature of volunteering. Furthermore, though from a different nature, many NGO's and other third sector organisations are facing problems: they do not have enough human and financial capacity to fill the need that arises in the fields they're working in. Expanding their human capacity by involving volunteers would imply they would have to spend more time on managing them which would be to the detriment of their already limited resources. All together reasons enough for organisations to explore other ways of involving volunteers and their management. One such way, which is getting more and more attention, could be the practice of volunteers managing volunteers. Another option could be to not involve volunteers in the organisation, but rather to work in collaboration with self-managed volunteer groups that are active in the same field.



2.2. SELF-MANAGED VOLUNTEERING NETWORKS (SMVN'S)

In this section we explore how self-managed volunteer teams could be beneficial for third sector organisations (TSO's), individuals and society, what such a team could look like and how it could operate.

2.2.1. CONCEPT OF SELF-MANAGED VOLUNTEERING

The idea of self-managed volunteering can be appealing to:

- » NGO's and other third sector organisations who would like to reach more beneficiaries while avoiding many complications of traditional volunteer management;
- » individuals who are aware of their own needs, but don't find organisations that offer what they need;²¹
- » individuals who would like to volunteer, but don't find volunteering opportunities which allow them to put their skills and previous experiences to good use;
- » individuals who would like to volunteer while holding control and autonomy over what they do and how they do it, more than they would have in a traditional setting in which they would be engaged in well-defined tasks, often according to rules/instructions given by NGO's).

What self-managed volunteers offer – besides their time and energy, that are important in traditional volunteering as well – are the abilities to assess what

²¹ These needs could be, for example, the need to belong to others, to share interests and/or experiences with others, and to learn from each other.



is missing, to come up with initiatives on their own and to turn these into action.

In the case of TSO's, leaders and staff of non-profit organisations are frequently frustrated by the fact that while they play an essential role in society by tackling important social issues and while they also have a range of tested and effective methods to deal with these issues, their impact is limited due to the lack of financial and human resources to reach a wider audience. They can involve volunteers to help them in this, but the training and the ongoing management of volunteers also consumes part of their already limited resources. A possible solution to this problem could be the creation of "self-managed" volunteer groups, which, having been trained in carrying out tasks contributing to the extension of a programme defined by the NGO - can act more or less autonomously and independently from the NGO.

Before discussing the benefits of such volunteer teams in more detail, whether or not they are linked to formalized organisations such as NGO's and other similar institutions, we explore how we can define what "self-management" or "self-organisation" can mean in this context.

Richard Hackman, an American psychologist who studied team dynamics, distinguishes four levels of self-management, based on the way authority is divided between the manager/leader and the team, when it comes to the following:²²

- » setting the direction of the team: defining team goals and creating the vision for the team

²² Hackman, J. R. (2002). *Leading teams: Setting the stage for great performances*. Harvard Business Press.



- » designing the team: setting up its structure, composition (who is in it), the role members can play, how work is distributed, defining norms and rules of the team, selecting the methods to reach the goals
- » managing and monitoring the processes of the team: collecting feedback and modify processes if needed
- » carrying out the tasks necessary to achieve the team's objectives.

Depending on how these functions are distributed between the manager and the team one can distinguish four levels of team authority (in ascending order):

- » In the case of a **manager-led team**, team members are responsible only for executing the tasks that are assigned to them; all other functions are linked to the management.
- » In a **self-managing team**, team members have the additional authority to manage and monitor their activities.
- » **Self-designing teams** have even more authority, as the members also choose who is in the team, what methods/tools they use to achieve their goals, what norms they should follow, etc.
- » **Self-governing teams** act completely autonomously as they decide even on their main goals, their reason for existence and on the path they will follow to reach these goals.



Authority matrix based on the level of team authority

Setting overall direction	Management Responsibility			
Designing the team and its organisational context				
Monitoring and managing work process and progress		Team's Own Responsibility		
Executing the team task				
	Manager-led teams	Self-managing teams	Self-designing teams	Self-governing teams

Source: Hackman, J. R. (2002). *Leading teams: Setting the stage for great performances*. Harvard Business Press.

Let's try to apply this theory for the self-managed/self-organised volunteer teams we started to talk about in the beginning of this section. To be able to do so, we can think about an NGO who supports the set-up of such teams as "the manager", and the self-organised volunteer group as "the team" in Hackman's model.

Those volunteer groups that are created to help to scale up an NGO's initiative, execute team tasks themselves, manage their own processes, and can also have some say in designing the team (maybe they have freedom in deciding how they adopt work methods, whom to target and who can join their volunteer group). These would be considered self-designing and self-managing teams.



Those volunteer teams that define the need they wish to address and the goal of their activity as well, could be seen as self-governing teams.

In our interpretation, irrespective of the level of team authority it possesses, a self-managed volunteer team's structure can be horizontal or hierarchical, depending on what the members decide.

2.2.2. BENEFITS OF SELF-MANAGED VOLUNTEERING

Above we briefly mentioned possible motivations for NGO's and individuals to be interested in setting up, or being involved in self-managed volunteer teams. Here we explore these motivations in greater detail and also the benefits of self-managed volunteering for organisations and society as a whole.

For individual volunteers

In a way, volunteers who lead a group of volunteers have a more difficult task than group leaders within budgeted initiatives. Since they cannot attract or motivate the group members by financial rewards, they need to trigger their intrinsic motivations. These intrinsic motivations could vary.

In the case of individuals who wish to self-manage under an already existing initiative, why would people want to form a volunteer group to help an NGO upscale a tested programme? There are many reasons, which are likely to gain relevance the more autonomy the group has. Some of these reasons could be to:

- » Find purpose (by being engaged in an activity that aligns with their passion or values)



- » Learn new methods and skills, gain knowledge, learn new things that help to improve oneself
- » Work with autonomy about how they organize themselves, how they solve problems that might arise during their activities (they are not left alone though, as they most likely have access to initial training and could probably count on supervision, if needed)
- » Develop leadership/entrepreneurial skills
- » Do not have to build an entire action plan and structure from scratch, but can rather take advantage of already functioning and consolidated bases and processes
- » Develop self-awareness (to be able to set up a group, one needs to identify their motivations, passions, interest areas and to assess their strengths and weaknesses first)
- » Get a chance to be creative
- » Feel valued (they are not replaceable as without them the team's project would probably not exist).

Volunteers can also satisfy their need to belong (by sharing interests/passions with others, by being part of a team), can build/expand social connections with likeminded people and can experience a rise in their self-esteem, self-efficacy, and sense of competence.

The experience of being able to set something up and having something valuable to offer is particularly precious for people who are not normally in a power position (e.g. seniors, migrants, disadvantaged people) and are generally the recipients of aid. Having the opportunity to do something for other people is important to build their confidence and dignity and put into value their knowledge and experience as significant contributions to the community.



For NGO's and other third sector organisations

In the case organisations train volunteers to scale up their already tested activities/programmes, they might:

- » Reach more people in their target groups in a time/cost efficient way (as the self-managed volunteers – after an initial training – don't require constant active management)
- » Learn from their volunteers (in case TSO's give permission to the self-managed volunteer team to use their tested methods in new ways, applying them to new areas).

In the case TSO's train volunteers to come up with their own ideas and realise them, they might:

- » Learn a new method to develop the social emotional skills and entrepreneurial/leaderships skills of their target groups,
- » Learn a new method to empower their target groups to be able to find out and address their own needs.

For society

When volunteering teams learn and provide support to upscale selected activities/programmes of TSO's:

- » A wider target group is reached with already tested methods in a more cost-efficient/human resource efficient way
- » Communities gain tools to tackle problems that neither civil society nor governmental organisations could solve themselves (due to lack of human and financial resources and perhaps due to lack of information about needs of smaller communities).



- » Promotion of social inclusion is achieved by creating social links and reinforcing communities by bringing them together.

“Real change happens when the people who **need it, lead it**”

2.2.3. THE ROLE OF NETWORKS IN SELF-MANAGED VOLUNTEERING

We have already seen how both organisations and volunteers can benefit from self-managed volunteering teams. However, we believe that if these teams were to organize in a network set-up by the organisation, these benefits would be easier to achieve. Although we could not find formal research findings on self-managed volunteering networks²³ (SMVN's), the research undertaken lead us to feel certain about the potential these networks could have for TSO's that wish to expand their reach without the resource and logistic burden of traditional volunteering management, on the one hand, and the increased satisfaction and skill-building experience that the autonomy of self-management could provide volunteers.

Given the lack of research on SMVN's, and for the sake of clarity, we provide the following definition: a TSO linked self-managed volunteering network is a group of at least two teams of self-managed volunteers who:

- » are linked to a TSO to a lesser extent (i.e. received initial training) or to a greater extent (i.e. receive permanent support)

²³ A search on Google Scholar on 30/12/2020 for the exact term “self-managed volunteering” returned 3 hits, and “self-directed volunteering” returned 14 hits. We have already consulted the most relevant of these results in the drafting of this guide, but there is barely any mention of organizing the volunteering teams in networks. When searching on the same date for “self-managed volunteering network” and “self-directed volunteering network”, Google Scholar returned zero hits.



- » operate autonomously from each other (each team can be clearly set apart from one another)
- » operate autonomously from the TSO (although degrees of autonomy may vary depending on the case)
- » share a common goal which has been previously agreed-upon with the TSO.

This definition can help us better organise our ideas on how such a network can be set-up when exploring the different cases exposed in the following sections.

2.3. ORGANISATIONAL MOTIVATIONS TO SET-UP AN SMVN

In this section we interviewed the four organisations that make up the consortium of the project “COBU: Community building through self-managed volunteer groups”, which is behind the creation of this guide. We interviewed Képes Alapítvány (HU), Elan Interculturel (FR), La Xixa Teatre (SP) and Storytelling Centre (NL) to understand their motivations to set-up self-managed volunteering networks (SMVN's) – task which is currently under development – and how they envision such a network in relation to the mission of each organisation. We believe this information could be of use and inspiration to other TSO's that might either see themselves reflected, or might get ideas on how SMVN's could provide a useful tool for their organisations.

2.3.1. THE CASE OF KÉPES ALAPÍTVÁNY (HUNGARY)

1. Describe your organisation: mission, main activities, scope of work, and structure.



We are a small organisation, with 2 full-time staff members and a network of other professionals (psychologists, researchers, economists, sociologists, social workers) who work with us in specific fields. We experiment with and develop methods that could be used to develop social emotional skills (self-awareness, emotion regulation, stress management, perspective taking, relationship skills, problem-solving, critical thinking). We mostly use Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) techniques and personal storytelling, but we also experiment with other methods as well, such as theatre.

We develop social emotional skills of different target groups such as seniors, unemployed people, social workers, youth workers, adult trainers, teachers, or adult learners directly – who are mostly from disadvantaged backgrounds.

We find it important to develop tools that can be spread widely, with the least possible help from us, by offering freely downloadable materials, step by step toolkits, self-help tools, and/or by setting up self-managed networks.

2. What is your current motivation to set-up a network of self-managed volunteering groups?

We started an initiative (intergenerational storytelling groups, led by senior volunteers) that was tested and gave great satisfaction for participants, and we would like to reach a wider audience with that. For this to happen, we need to train more senior volunteers who can organise and carry out such workshops and we need to provide them with a platform so that they are more visible for the outside world.

The second motivation is to help to set up self-managed groups where the activities of the group are based on the exchange of knowledge/skills/experience of the partners and where there is little need for a professional trainer. We saw in the project “SELFEE: Digital Literacy and



Social Emotional Learning for Engagement and Employment”²⁴, for example, how, based on some well formulated questions and instructions, participants can exchange a lot of valuable information with each other, they can learn a lot from each other and can encourage each other; the group format has this potential and power. Here the set-up of the group needs help, but we can imagine that this type of job search group can exist with very little outside help.

Third, we were inspired by the example of the U3A movement in the UK. They show that it is possible to empower volunteers (in their case, senior volunteers) to organise the type of activities and learning opportunities they need – they discover their own needs, they find their own roles in these initiatives and with some initial training they set up and manage their own groups. This process is an excellent way to develop SEL skills of the participants, which is the mission of KÉPES.

3. Imagine you have successfully set-up a network of self-managed volunteering groups: what does this network look like? What is your role in relation to the network?

We imagine an online platform, where interested people can choose among different events every week. See, as an example just the list of groups of U3A: <https://u3asites.org.uk/trustu3a/groups>. There would be a calendar as well, to see what events are happening each day. There would be a limit to the number of groups we invite to this platform – we will see how many of them we can supervise with our limited time dedicated to this task. Let’s say that we would want to spend no more than 1 day a week in managing this

²⁴<https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/2017-1-NL01-KA204-035270>



network. If needed and possible, we can attract traditional volunteers to help us to manage this platform and the requests of the group leaders.

We would know personally all the group leaders, as they need to take part in our training workshops to be able to join our network. This way we can ensure that trusted leaders would lead the groups. This process also helps us to keep the network size manageable and under our control.

We can also offer workshops for other organisations who would set-up a similar network around themselves (to further their mission), if this turns out to be a good practice.

Our role in the network would be:

- » To provide an online platform where the groups can promote themselves
- » To provide online forum/channel, where group leaders can exchange their experiences with each other and can communicate with each other
- » To provide a website, where we offer all downloadable materials that are developed by us during the COBU project (how to identify interest/dreams/motivation, how to turn an idea into reality, how to manage a group, how to carry out some specific useful activities, useful links, websites for further inspiration, etc.)
- » To offer workshops for future group leaders to prepare them to launch and manage their groups.

2.3.2. THE CASE OF ELAN (FRANCE)

1. Describe your organisation: mission, main activities, scope of work, and structure.



Nowadays we (Élan) think of ourselves as so big, and have so many projects, that we describe ourselves through 3 different axes of actions, or “poles”: intercultural training for professionals in the social, educational, and health sectors; intercultural empowerment to accompany people with less opportunities or in difficult situations to mobilise internal and external resources and find ways of integration and social recognition; and Élan Créatif, the “pole” involved in COBU, which is dedicated to raising awareness of diversity and its connections with power through artistic methods.

Today more than ever we have access to the diversity of colours, convictions, ideas etc. in short to cultural diversity. This diversity is not free or equal: some colours, beliefs, ideas are more recognized, have more status, more power than others. Access to this diversity does not automatically come with more understanding, more acceptance and more dialogue. On the contrary, it sometimes leads to oppositions that can become rigid and make the other distant, inaccessible, fundamentally different or inferior. The pole invites us to overcome these obstacles in order to rediscover dialogue by calling upon the potential of art to illustrate both what unites us and what differentiates us. We engage in artistic creativity to stimulate our ability to meet the stranger in ourselves and elsewhere. The cluster's actions therefore explore topics such as gender, sexuality, social ties through artistic mediation tools. We take works of art as a partner in dialogue to question how our society creates and envisions "the other". We develop social and intercultural creativity through the encounter with works of art or immersion in artistic creation. In short, our preoccupations and activities revolve around:

- » Introduction of a critical approach of interculturality through art
- » raising awareness about cultural diversity in gender and sexuality
- » working on narratives of / and about oppressed groups



- » experimenting the potential of “gentle strategies” to change attitudes towards difference / otherness
- » tackling, trying to go beyond polarising debate on diversity and interculturality through art and cultural heritage

The work of Élan Créatif is carried out by 3-4 employees and 2-3 volunteers and interns. A good part of our work happens through European collaborations dedicated to the creation and testing of new approaches and methods.

2. What is your current motivation to set-up a network of self-managed volunteering groups?

We think that people could benefit from a little bit more art and a little bit more interculturality in everyday life. And we believe art and interculturality to be good allies: using the medium of art can help tackle sensitive issues with a necessary distance for not feeling threatened yet allowing to feel the importance of the subject matter. Joint creation can give an experience of safe and fruitful collaboration, which goes beyond the potentially polarised debates.

Why do we need self-managed volunteers for this? Élan is a relatively small organisation and it is located in Paris. Our professional training activities have occasionally taken us to other regions of France, but only in the training for professionals, and only when we have specific grants / clients that cover the costs of our trainers. This implies that we rarely, almost never, have a chance to offer workshops to people merely interested in interculturality or motivated to explore the overlap of art and interculturality. It seems to us that by training a core group of motivated people who are interested in



carrying on the mission in their surroundings we could indirectly reach people who otherwise would not have had access to such workshops.

3. Imagine you have successfully set-up a network of self-managed volunteering groups: what does this network look like? What is your role in relation to the network?

Our dreamt network would be composed of people committed to values of interculturality and somewhat seduced by the potential of artistic expression. A network committed to introduce art and interculturality to everyday life, in small scale, but through real contacts. It would be lovely to serve as a fix point for such a network, an institutional base where members could meet each other, share their experiences and support each other in their challenges.

What would members of the network do? In the ideal constellation, members of “Élan Créatif” could organise workshops in their own regions. The workshops can focus on artistic creativity and include an intercultural approach or have a primary focus on interculturality and include art in their process.

What do we mean concretely with being “an institutional base where members could meet each other, share their experiences and support each other in their challenges”?

This will depend most of all on what the members need. We anticipate that they would benefit from *follow-up workshops*, where they can share their experiences, support each-other in their challenges, possibly share and together further develop some activities that they tried out and found useful. We would also further develop *our resource centre* with the results of new projects we have carried out and new methods we have cooked up. The *Élan Créatif platform* could be useful to give visibility to self-managed groups and



their profiles, but maybe as we are working together quite different needs would emerge. We feel the success of our becoming a “fix point” will precisely depend on not trying to invent in advance what they *should* need but being very attentive what they will actually express as needed, and focus on that.

2.3.3. THE CASE OF LA XIXA TEATRE (SPAIN)

1. Describe your organisation: mission, main activities, scope of work, and structure.

La Xixa Teatre Association is a non-profit organization founded in 2010 that aims to research, develop and multiply educational and theatrical tools as a means for social transformation. We believe that education at all ages is the key for social change towards a world with equal opportunities. The scope of our activities are aimed towards the following topics:

- » School education, early school leaving, and prevention of risk behaviour among youth.
- » Intercultural communication, social inclusion, integration and cultural heritage as means to prevent racism and xenophobia.
- » Gender, equality policies, and sexual diversity.
- » Peace culture and co-existence, active citizenship, civic engagement, and local development.
- » Sustainable development and environmental justice.

The mission of La Xixa is to facilitate the creation of spaces for empowerment through Participatory Methodologies, Process Oriented Psychology and Theatre of the Oppressed to generate processes of individual and collective transformation in contexts of social vulnerability. Participatory Methodologies allow a group with diverse interests to acquire an ever greater



role in the analysis of their own reality and decision-making, thus all agents become crucial actors in their own development. Process Oriented Psychology focuses on developing a state of consciousness; i.e. helping individuals and groups to create awareness on how they perceive and live their experiences, and gives them tools to learn to change their approach. Theatre of the Oppressed Theatre (TO) puts theatre at the service of education. TO is a methodology consisting of a set of games and theatrical exercises that promote observation, critical action and pro-positive behaviours among participants. "What we do on stage is not reality, but it is a rehearsal of how to transform it."

The main objectives of La Xixa are:

To achieve its aims, La Xixa performs the following activities:

1. Creating, editing, disseminating and multiplying Participatory Methodologies, Process Oriented Psychology and Theatre of the Oppressed plays, tools and techniques with groups and communities for positive intercultural and diversity-based interactions, conflict resolution, social inclusion and peaceful co-existence.
2. Training courses and workshops for professionals interested in the techniques of Participatory Methodologies, Process Oriented Psychology and Theatre of the Oppressed to apply it in their fields of activity.
3. Continuous training of the members of the association.
4. Investigation of new forms to tackle discrimination, and foster diversity, equal opportunities and peaceful coexistence.
5. Systematization, research, documentation and dissemination of creative processes and experiences with groups and communities to promote new knowledge in the field of Participatory Methodologies,



Process Oriented Psychology and Theatre and the Oppressed in relation to the topic areas relevant to the groups and communities.

6. Support to individuals and group facilitation.

As an association we are formed by a multi-disciplinary group of 4 full-time staff and more than 15 collaborators trained in different fields of social sciences and the arts. La Xixa has a team of over 60 volunteers involved in the organization in an on-and-off basis.

2. What is your current motivation to set-up a network of self-managed volunteering groups?

Since 2013, we have been delivering a yearly training for professionals in different fields to become Theatre of the Oppressed facilitators, also called Curingas. We have managed to train over 300 Curingas in the region of Catalunya, who have been able to take the methodology back to their communities. We are aware that many Curingas simply apply the learnt method in their everyday practice but do not create a self-managed Theatre of the Oppressed groups. Other Curingas take the method to its full extent and go on to create Theatre of the Oppressed groups that function autonomously. However, we are aware that many of those groups lose momentum along the way, and cease to be. In either case, the trained participant takes the method back to his or her community, and multiplies the methodology.

We believe that a) if we provide more concrete tools to the Curingas on how to organize and maintain a self-managed group, b) we provide a platform for the different groups to be connected to us as an organisation and to each other, and c) we provide a permanent channel to support them, we could significantly foster the creation and maintenance of autonomous Theatre of



the Oppressed groups, increase our impact as an organisation and further achieve the multiplication of the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology, which is at the core of our mission.

3. Imagine you have successfully set-up a network of self-managed volunteering groups: what does this network look like? What is your role in relation to the network?

Ideally, we want to create a network of Theatre of the Oppressed groups. This way, we would be able to encourage any participant that attends our Curinga trainings to create a group in the communities, and provide the tools to support him or her, and the network would also provide a space for Curingas to support each other.

We would use an online platform with materials to support Curingas to be able to lead the group (theatrical games and exercises, guides on how to present forum theatre pieces, etc.), and to keep in touch with us and with each other. Our role in the network would be to provide updated information on the methodology, and provide support as requested by the Curingas. We are still not certain what would be asked of us on a permanent basis, but we are happy to explore the possibilities of our organisation to keep this network going.

2.3.4. THE CASE OF STORYTELLING CENTRE (THE NETHERLANDS)

1. Describe your organisation: mission, main activities, scope of work, and structure.

The Storytelling Centre has divided its activities into three pillars: theatrical storytelling performances in our Storytelling\Theatre Lab; the yearly



Storytelling Festival; and applied storytelling in which storytelling is used to bring about personal growth, connection and social impact.

Though the activities within each pillar differ, as do their goals, they have one aspect in common: our conviction that for a well-balanced society it is vital to offer space to everybody's story. We therefore consider it a necessity to provide such space.

Our activities in the field of *theatrical storytelling* include the initiation and production of storytelling performances and in (frequent) cases also coaching the storytellers in constructing and presenting their story. In this we work with (semi-) professional storytellers and use the full diversity of means theatre has to offer. The goal of these activities is to contribute to the development and visibility of storytelling in the Netherlands.

The *Storytelling Festival* was initiated by the director of the Storytelling Centre, Arjen Barel, together with Marlies ter Haar in 2008. This festival, with which we also contribute to the development and visibility of storytelling in the Netherlands, offers its visitors performances, expert meetings and lectures. In 2018 the artistic direction was handed over to Sahand Sahebdivani and Raphael Rodan. The Storytelling Centre is still the producer of the festival.

Our activities within the *applied storytelling* pillar are aimed at peoples' personal growth and at connecting people in order to improve social cohesion. To this end, we have developed our 'share to connect' method and various training courses. These training courses focus, for example, on bringing together people who live at odds with each other in a certain neighbourhood or area, or on bridging generation gaps or cultural differences between people, on language acquisition and social inclusion of newcomers and others who have not (yet) found a connection with the



community they live in, on (young) people experiencing difficulties in finding their place in the labour market. The training courses are given by experienced trainers, trained by Storytelling Centre in the use of tools often developed by the Centre, whether or not within the scope of European partnerships.

Storytelling Centre is a small and flexible organisation. By establishing one work-organization with Bureau Barel and Stichting DW-RS producties it can keep the overhead costs low. The office currently counts 4 full-time staff and works with approximately 15 professional trainers and project managers on a freelance/contractor base.

2. What is your current motivation to set-up a network of self-managed volunteering groups?

In its various training courses, Storytelling Centre provides participants with tools that enable them to develop in such a way that they are better able to connect with others, find their way in society, bridge differences (including cultural and generational differences) and/or to find work. We know from experience that for many participants to our training courses finding a job, for different reasons (like age or psychological problems) is not an option, but they do want to partake in society, stay connected and bring the skills they acquired through the training course(s) into practice. These people motivate us to set up a network of self-managed volunteering groups in which they can be active as volunteers in activities of their choice. These activities can be cooking for people in their neighbourhood, doing small jobs or running errands for those who are not capable of doing so themselves, but also participating in a chess club, walking group or storytelling circle. We will offer the tools that enable them to become self-managed volunteers, they decide on the type of activity.



Setting-up self-managed volunteering groups as described above links up with our mission in the sense that it offers participants in our applied storytelling courses a follow-up in which they can put into practice what they have learned and to develop further as participants in society.

3. Imagine you have successfully set-up a network of self-managed volunteering groups: what does this network look like? What is your role in relation to the network?

The network consists of former participants to our applied storytelling training courses, who have set up groups which offer different activities and/or services at a local level. (Not all participants in these groups need to have followed our training.)

Storytelling Centre first of all and most importantly offers a special applied storytelling training course within the context of the COBU project, that focuses on helping participants become self-managed volunteers and a platform that the groups in the network can use to make themselves and their activities visible so people know they exist and how to contact them. It should also be possible to add a link to their own website or Facebook group.





3. IDEAS FOR TSO'S TO SET-UP AN SMVN



3.1. LARGE-SCALE PLATFORMS THAT PROMOTE SMVN'S

In this subchapter, we describe three models that build on the concept and power of self-managed volunteering in some way: the University of the Third Age movement (U3A), a community building project called “Every One Every Day” in London Barking and Dagenham, and an event based social network originated in the US, MeetUp.com. The first two, both found in the UK, are volunteer projects in the sense that individuals who take part in them do not get paid for the time, energy, and contributions that they offer. They create projects and activities for themselves and for others. Participants are on an equal footing (everyone is an equal member in their group, they are not divided into helpers and helped). Because of this, Every One Every Day does not even consider itself a volunteering program, but more as a community building one.

We explore what these initiatives are about, how they started, how they are organised, and what they have to offer. It is also worthwhile to take a look at their scope and the way they are financed. Finally, we explore how the described models – all of which coordinate a vast number of groups of people – can serve as inspiration for TSO's who are thinking about setting up a small scale volunteer network.

3.1.1. THE CASE OF UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE IN THE UK (U3A)

The University of the Third Age (U3A) was launched in the UK by a group of leading educationalists in 1981. It was based on a French model in which universities offered learning opportunities and courses for retired people, but was soon modified and became a self-help network of local groups whose members share their own experience and knowledge with others and



learn from each other using peer-learning. The members are retired or semi-retired (mostly 55+) people in the UK who have enough free time to learn something new for the pleasure of it, or to engage in activities with others. The types of activities cover a wide range of topics such as bird watching, language learning, art appreciation, walking/sports, zoology, magician tricks. As of September 2020 there were over 1,000 local U3A organisations, over 430,000 members and approximately 30,000 U3A interest groups and events organized weekly.

The local groups are set up and managed by their members (so they are self-managed volunteer groups), who choose the topics and organise events together. Although all members are equal, they can take up different roles like leader of a group, organizer of the venue, recruiter of speakers, greeter of new members, etc. One usually becomes a member of a local group by filling in its form and by paying an annual membership fee (15-30 BP) that covers the basic costs of organising the events (e.g. renting places, costs of refreshments, etc.).

Local charities coordinate local U3A's, while the whole network is overseen by a national body, called the Third Age Trust. This Trust – that has 16 full-time employees and about 350 volunteers - offer services to the local groups such as:

- » A central online platform with a description of the movement and events that could be available for everyone (like podcasts), with links to all the local websites, with guidebooks and resources that local groups can use;
- » Support to develop local websites where local groups can promote their weekly events;



- » Trainings and guidebooks about how to start and manage a group, how to attract and keep members, how to deal with legal issues (among others they published a Group Leaders handbook and a new U3A Start Up pack in 2018-2019);
- » Summer schools, national learning events, conferences to raise the profile of the movement, and to promote the mission and activities of the national, regional, and local U3A's;
- » A regular newsletter and publishes a magazine (U3A Magazine);
- » An advice line which is open from Monday to Friday (in 2019 it handled more than 750 enquiries per month).

The total income of the Third Age Trust (from March 2018 to 2019 March) was 3,271 million BP. Revenues come from

- » membership subscriptions (45%)
- » revenues from the selling of Third Age Magazine (36%)
- » fees of summer schools, study days and the national conference (7%)
- » donations (1%)
- » other trading activities (U3A product, license fees) (4%)
- » other income (7%).

The main expenses (total: 2,991 million BP) consist of costs for:

- » Staff salaries and employers' national insurance and pension costs
- » National Office overhead and committee costs
- » Insurance costs
- » Start-up grants, other grants for specific purposes to U3As
- » Costs of volunteer training and workshops, exhibitions, conferences, study days
- » Costs related to promoting the movement



- » Production of the magazine and other resources.

In 2019, the Third Age Trust commissioned research on the impact of being a member of the movement. This research involved 801 members and showed that members:

- » Make new friendships and feel supported (91%)
- » Learn new skills (84%)
- » Feel healthier (55%)
- » Become engaged with their community (50%)
- » Manage life changes, retirement, illness or bereavement (50%)
- » Build confidence 59%.

The U3A movement does face some challenges. One of these is that its concept is not widely understood outside the movement. Some people think it is an academic institution, or a political or religious group, or a group for frail older people. Also, the members are ageing and the number of people in the age group 55-65 that become a member is declining. Furthermore, the movement attracts relatively few members of minority groups.

For further reading we refer to the movement's website: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>. Also, in the appendix you will find more detailed information about U3A.

*"I always liked photography but it was difficult while working. Now I can **learn** photography **with like-minded people**. Whether a beginner or very competent, you can learn together".*



3.1.2. THE CASE OF EVERY ONE EVERY DAY

Every One Every Day is an initiative in Barking and Dagenham, one of London's poorest boroughs, that supports the creation of a series of projects initiated by the residents to improve their lives and the lives of their family, friends and neighbours. Every One Every Day started in November 2017 and was set up by the Participatory City Foundation (which was created for this purpose) and the Barking and Dagenham Council. The initiative is built on 2 pillars:

- » a 'Support Platform' that can be used for all projects offering elements such as an online platform, design team, functional spaces, trainings for the team and for residents, health and safety procedures and other general processes, etc.;
- » a 'Participatory Ecosystem' which includes co-designing, testing and developing concrete projects together with local people with the aim to involve a large number of people and the set-up of mini-hubs that help in spreading successful project ideas that were developed and tested previously.

Every One Every Day is coordinated by the Participatory City Foundation. Besides the coordination, this foundation:

- » Offers useful spaces for the projects (kitchens, warehouses, public growing spaces, spaces for workshops, etc.)
- » Provides community spaces ("shops") where people can pop in and get into contact with the organisers and with other people from the neighbourhood and where activities can take place
- » Supplies materials and equipment for practical activities
- » Arranges insurances and health and safety procedures



- » Offers an online platform for the promotion of local projects (<https://members.weareeveryone.org/feed>)
- » Offers trainings for participants (through the design team), involving them as co-creators
- » Organises festivals, workshops and business programmes
- » Organises so-called Discovery Days (approximately 4 times a year) to promote the initiative.

The amount of staff members involved in carrying out the tasks of the Participatory City Foundation grew from 20 people in 2018 to 32 people (17 of which are project designers) in 2019. The initiative is funded by several private and public institutions for a total amount of 1,425 million pounds in 2018 and 1,825 million pounds in 2019.

Individuals can join the initiative by registering through the website, filling out a form with some basic questions (about areas the individual is good at and/or topics the person is interested in), or by contacting the organisers in person. Joining is free of costs, participating in activities also costs nothing or just a small amount.

In two years (2018-2019) the number of registered participants grew from 1200 to 3200; the number of people that participated in projects and activities grew from 2000 to 4750 and the number of neighbourhood projects increased from 70 to 131. In 2019, a Business Incubator Programme started which supports the set-up of local businesses. The goal is to create more than 250 neighbourhood projects and 100 local collaborative businesses within 5 years (2018-2022).

Anyone can initiate a group, activity or local project and people can adopt multiple roles in supporting and delivering each project. Projects can be



ongoing activities or one-off sessions and may vary from sharing skills, spaces and resources to cooking for the community or growing food. One has to keep in mind the initiative's values/principles/community guidelines according to which each project should promote equality, mutual benefit and the peer-to-peer principle, as well as being accessible for all. The project is not affiliated with any political party. Only those ideas that are loved by the local residents and that they want to develop themselves will be designed and tested in the neighbourhood.

According to Every One Every Day, which mapped the impact of its initiative on participants, they:

- » feel welcome, included and accepted
- » become active
- » feel happy and optimistic
- » experience improved levels of health and wellbeing
- » experience increased self-confidence
- » learn new things and feel excited
- » experience creativity and idea sharing.

The initiative is facing a few challenges. Because the number of projects, sessions and participants grew much more dynamically than the size of the support team, the staff was facing organizational problems. And because the complexity of the initiative grew, decision making had to be distributed more effectively throughout the team and the residents. Furthermore, finding funds for long term sustainability is not easy.

For further reading we refer to the movement's website: <https://www.weareeveryone.org/>. Also, in the appendix you will find more information and the sources of information we used.



*“Here I have freedom to decide, they might obviously say we can’t do this or that, so you need to adjust things, but they give you freedom on deciding what activities you want to do for other residents, which is great. **That’s what we need, freedom with our ideas.**”*

Extracted from an interview with Everyone Everyday member (UK).

3.1.3. THE CASE OF MEETUP.COM

Here we describe MeetUp, a for profit organisation, which has a mission similar to that of U3A in the UK and to the Every One Every Day project.

MeetUp is an event-based social network that helps individuals find others with similar interests online and encourages them to meet offline through events, activities and workshops which are initiated, organised and carried out by the users of the platform themselves.

It was initiated and launched in New York in 2002 by Scott Heiferman as a reaction to the 9/11 attack. As the twin towers collapsed he ran to the roof of his building and met many of his neighbours for the first time.



*"I never thought I was interested in community, but that experience led me to the basic questions of **'What brings people together? What gets them to talk to each other? How do people form powerful groups that can do good things?'**"*

Extracted from <https://observer.com/2016/09/how-911-inspired-one-of-the-internets-first-social-networks/>.

The organisation has changed hands since. As of September 2020, its main shareholder (besides other smaller investors) is AlleyCorp, an early stage venture fund and incubator.

MeetUp's target groups are individuals (18+) all over the world who would like to meet new people, find friends, learn new things, and share their hobby. Though the meetings are offline, members of the network need to be somewhat digitally competent to find and use the platform. The network is also used by organisations, businesses for professional goals like promoting their services and gathering feedback and for professional networking.

Members of the network can be part of or can start "social groups", "creativity groups" or "career groups". Social groups are about hanging out together (go to a café together), doing activities together (playing sports, playing board games, visiting museums/cinemas), learning something together (develop skills, for example learning a new language, or learning about a topic and discuss it with others). Creativity groups create something together (e.g. creating a podcast, or a screenplay, or design something). Career groups are



for testing a prototype, getting feedback for a sales pitch, discussing strategies, etc.

An individual can join MeetUp by registering on the website. A registered member can participate in various groups. If someone wants to organise a group or multiple groups, one needs to register and to buy a subscription. There are two types of membership for organisers: a basic (up to 3 groups) and MeetUp pro (an unlimited number of groups). As of October 2020, for organisers in Europe, a subscription to organise up to 3 groups costs 9,99 USD/month (for 6 months or more, otherwise 14,99 USD/month). Subscription to MeetUp pro costs 30 USD/month (for 6 months or more, otherwise 35 USD/month). To be able to participate in groups, individuals don't have to pay at all or just a small fee that covers the costs of the host. This fee is collected through the site and a fraction of it goes to the company.

MeetUp (the company) organises the network. It created and maintains the online platform that allows members to get into contact with each other. An individual, business or organisation can set up and manage one or more groups, decide on the topics of a group, on who to accept as members, which rules and norms are applicable (appropriate within the values and guidelines of MeetUp), etc. MeetUp offers its members:

- » An online platform, through which groups/events can be created and attendee lists can be managed
- » A recommendation system – it advertises groups to registered users based on profile and specified interest data
- » Educational materials that help organisers set up a group
- » Support from community experts 7 days a week
- » The opportunity to charge ticket fees or dues for the organised events to help cover the organiser's costs



- » Articles (for example about the experiences and tips of other organisers)

In March 2020, MeetUp had more than 49 million registered members, over 230,000 group organizers were involved and offered an average of 15,000 in-person events per day. It was also used by over 1,500 businesses, including Adobe, Google, Microsoft, IBM, Twitter. The numbers will have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic since then, but do give an idea of the initiative's popularity.

A study carried out by ImpactEd at the University of Pennsylvania (2020) shows the impact of MeetUp on group organisers and on group participants:

Impact on group organisers:

- » increased ability to impact the lives of others
- » it made their life better
- » increased self-confidence
- » increased leaderships skills.

Impact on group participants:

- » increased sense of community
- » feeling more connected to others
- » increased knowledge and/or skills
- » increased number of friendships.

Among the challenges MeetUp is facing there are a decreased trust in social media and the sum of the monthly organiser subscription fee, which is too high for some. As a consequence, some organizers only register for a short



time during which they attract as many people as possible, and then drive them off the MeetUp platform to, e.g., some platform of their own.

MeetUp generates income from, a.o.:

- » membership fees
- » event fees (they take a few percent of every event fee from the organiser as transaction fee)
- » donations.

In 2019 the annual revenue of MeetUp was reported to be more than 35 million USD. For further reading we refer to MeetUp's website: <https://www.meetup.com/>

3.1.4. CUES FROM THE CASES STUDIED

The three models described in the previous sections are examples of large scale initiatives. What can we learn from them if we consider setting up a self-managed volunteering network on a small(er) scale?

The way they started

The Every One Every Day project started ambitiously, with a huge budget. MeetUp started with the help of friends and family who invested in it and soon after angel investors got involved. The example of U3A could be more relevant for small scale initiatives, as it was launched without money by a couple of groups which were supported by some experts in the field of education. The design of a coordinating charity came later. Also, the growth of U3A was slower compared to the other two initiatives.

Funding



The Every One Every Day project relies on big donations. For organisations that think on a smaller scale, it might be better to follow the examples of MeetUp and U3A. These initiatives also get revenues from the fees members pay for the use of the online platforms they offer (both), to cover the basic costs of participating in group activities (both), to take part in summer camps and conferences (U3A) and for personal consultation (MeetUp). U3A also earns some money with the sale of products that are linked to the projects, like a magazine, and receives small donations.

Structure of the network and services provided by the coordinator

All three initiatives have a central coordinator. In the case of U3A, this coordinator is supported by regional and local coordinators. Services, provided by the coordinators of each initiative are, e.g., to set up a network, help people design and launch their projects/groups, offer advice and an online platform people can use to promote their events. Every One Every Day also offers physical space and materials for group leaders. U3A sometimes offers small financial or material help.

Target groups and how they are approached/involved/join

All three initiatives make us aware of the fact that people from all walks of life and from all ages (above 18) who like to socialize and have a topic or cause that interests or motivates them can be involved in projects like these. In the case of MeetUp all groups start online, which implies that (aspirant) members do need to have at least a basic level of digital competence. Every One Every Day and U3A sometimes approach their target groups through in-person events (such as info days or national days) or through flyers or newspapers. Because in all three cases most support is given online, members need to be able to handle online platforms.



How members organise groups

All three models allow anyone to start or be part of one or multiple groups. Every One Every Day provides a design team which offers help to people who want to launch a project. Members of U3A can participate in training sessions in setting up a group, they can make use of in-person consultancy (online, by phone or in person), or just start a group. In the case of MeetUp group organizers usually start their projects on their own (they can find articles and basic info online), but they have access to personal consultation whenever they need it.

Topics/methods of the groups

All three models offer individuals the opportunity to start groups related to a topic or a method of their choice as long as the topic or method does not violate the principles, values or community guidelines of the network.

Values and principles, rules and regulations

Besides acting in line with the networks' values and principles, groups within the three models need to follow rules like safety rules and legal requirements e.g. linked to managing data on group members, or copyrights.

The groups are also expected to contribute to a sense of community and to encourage people to meet in person. Since the outbreak of the Corona pandemic in early 2020 all three models provide guidelines, advice and support for members about how to set up online groups and keep these alive.



U3A and Every One Every Day do not allow groups or activities linked to a political parties nor groups or activities aimed at the group organiser's financial gain. Meetup does not impose such restrictions.

Level of self-management (based on Hackman's model)

U3A and MeetUp support the set-up of self-governing teams as long as they adhere to the basic principles and rules of the network. In the case of Every One Every Day the aforementioned design team plays quite a big part in the design of a team. All three models have a say in the composition of a group (who to accept as members), the distribution of roles within the group, the monitoring and management of the processes.

Impact on participants

All three models report positive impact on the participants, like increased sense of community, increased self-esteem/self-competence and the development of various skills.

Challenges

All three models face challenges. One could relate these to:

- » The characteristics of the target group (U3A: members are ageing, lack of younger newcomers)
- » Difficulty in attracting certain populations (like men or people from disadvantaged groups)
- » Size of the group (meetings of groups that are too big become more like services offered by the organizer, less personal and it is less likely that a sense of community can develop)



- » Uncertainty about who will show up (MeetUp: many people report their interest in an activity/event, but only few show up, which makes it difficult for the organizer to prepare an activity)
- » Coronavirus pandemic makes it risky (or forbidden by national regulations) for people to meet in person.



3.2. INTERVIEWS WITH ORGANISATIONS THAT WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS AND USE ELEMENTS OF SELF-ORGANISATION

In this last section we summarize interviews with organisations working with or for volunteers in the countries of the consortium of the COBU project (Hungary, Spain, France and the Netherlands). We chose these organisations to get an idea about the different ways in which volunteering is organised. Some of them might serve as a source of inspiration for those interested in self-managed volunteering.

3.2.1. BENENOVA (FRANCE)

Interviewer: Morgane Boidin (Elan Interculturel)

Interviewee: Alice Medec (Benenova)

Date of the interview: January 21, 2020

Website: <https://www.benenova.fr/>

Key idea

Assure a proper welcome for volunteers to create a sense of belonging to the organisation.

What is it about?

Benenova is an associative project created 6 years ago in Paris. Today it has two additional branches, one in Nantes and one in Lille. Benenova offers a wide range of short, one-off, non-committal volunteer assignments through an online platform. It meets a need, as many NGO's lack the necessary means



and time to federate volunteers. Before, individuals who wanted to get involved in volunteering did not know where to start (lack of information, dense associative sector, no answers to emails, etc.). Benevona created an accessible and easy-to-use volunteering platform.

On this platform the majority of volunteering missions in Paris, Nantes and Lille are listed. Benenova connects the association and the potential volunteers and promotes volunteering in an easy manner. It has some 100 associative partners and offers about 300 voluntary actions per month.

In spite of the short term focus, based on their own evaluation, 60% of the volunteers become long term volunteers as soon as they have found the initiative that really suits them.

Target groups

Benenova attracts volunteers from all ages: students, active and retired people as well. Young people with disabilities and migrant families with children are also involved. They try to organise volunteering events where they mix the several target groups so that people who would not otherwise meet each other, meet and do volunteer work together.

The Supernova role

Benenova believes in the self-management of volunteers, but thinks they need a lot of support in order to become more autonomous. Volunteers have to understand the values and the needs of the project in which they are involved, as well as the way of working, and this takes time.

One of the challenges in organizing teams of volunteers is setting up a quality welcoming process for people who are new to a volunteer position.



Benenova has been able to commit volunteers to this important task: they started by creating "Supernovas". A Supernova is a regular volunteer who supervises newcomers and represents Benenova. As Alice Medec points out "there is a work of accompaniment of the organisations about how to welcome volunteers, to train them in a short time" and here is where the Supernova acts. She or he ensures the welcoming process that is key afterwards in the volunteer career in the organisation. The Supernova role has become key in the process. It has been proved that poorly welcoming new members normally result in an inadequate inclusion into the organization later on. So Supernovas ensure that everything runs smoothly. To help the Supernova figure, some elements have been set: "There is a website that has been worked on with associations and volunteers. [...] We have a whole process with referents, we want to [...] ensure that everything is organized. There is at least one collective training session at the heart of the host organization".

The challenge is to professionalize Supernova's role since many are struggling to find a job: "translate their actions in terms of skills so that they can take ownership of the project and bring it to life on a local level. This would also allow them to put into words the life skills and know-how they are developing with a view to professionalization (many of them are looking for a job or are re-training)".

Another element highlighted by Benenova is the importance to create a sense of identity. "To nourish this feeling of belonging to the Benenova community, we organize events. We bring together our partner associations, we value them and also try to convey an atmosphere that is their own. And it's not incompatible to feel part of both the Benenova community and the association, because we co-construct a lot with our partners."



Benenova makes a difference with other entities that work with volunteers because here people can easily commit themselves for a "one shot" intervention and take action on very concrete missions that do not require any particular skills - to be open to as many people as possible. "We stay close to our partners. We connect volunteers and associations. We create the best matches by trying to be as concrete as possible in the mission descriptions so as to avoid disappointment. To show the meaning of what we do, we also value that even 2 hours of action counts. We also always put forward the specificity and values of the associations by editing the mission sheets".

3.2.2. MAKE SENSE (FRANCE)

Interviewer: Anna Delenne (Elan Interculturel)

Interviewee: Loan Cong (Make Sense)

Date of the interview: February 2020

Website: www.makesense.org

Key idea

Identity, regular events, continuous learning and assuring everyone finds their place are key for volunteer engagement.

What is it about?

Make sense is a community that brings together citizens, social entrepreneurs, and corporate employees who ask themselves vital questions like: "What can I do today to be useful to society? What is the meaning of my life? What is the meaning of my work?" says Loan, Training and Incubation Program Manager.



Make Sense works to foster civic engagement, not only by involving people with the association, but also by other ways such as fostering radical change in consumption, promoting the action of others, making one's skills available to help other projects, among other tasks.

Make Sense has identified four pillars to engage volunteers and assure the different initiatives grow and flourish.

1. The first pillar is identity; participants need to feel that they belong to a specific culture and values linked to the organisation.
2. The second pillar is hosting events/activities on a regular basis and making sure these are easy to get involved with.
3. The third pillar is learning; participants need to feel that they are learning and enriching themselves through their volunteering process.
4. The fourth pillar is valorization, ensuring that everyone finds their place and is valued for their different actions and contributions.

When Make Sense started, it was the time of the rise of social entrepreneurship. It was about how engaged citizens (volunteers) could help social entrepreneurs. As Loan explains: "It was comments from internet users on social entrepreneurs' videos, giving advice and contacts that encouraged the birth of Make Sense."

Make Sense offers spaces to think, exchange and discuss on how to undertake meaningful actions in life, in consumption, and in work; to find ways to become a support for others. All this can be concretized in different actions: information and awareness-raising events, organizing workshops to help social entrepreneurs, following a training in collective intelligence



methodologies and then facilitating workshops, it can be creating your own project etc. All this is Make Sense.

3.2.3. SETEM CATALUNYA (SPAIN)

Interviewer: Meritxell Martínez (La Xixa Teatre)

Interviewee: Anna Morales

Date of the interview: 27 February 2020

Website: www.setem.org

Key idea

Long-term volunteers help engage new volunteers.

What is it about?

SETEM Catalonia is an NGO whose aim is to raise awareness about the inequalities between developed and developing countries in the world. They promote critical thinking and the idea of global citizenship, alternative courses of action (such as fair trade or responsible tourism) and social mobilisation (through reporting, advocacy, etc.). They collaborate with a large number of organisations from all around the world, and have more than 2,000 members and hundreds of volunteers.

Solidarity Camps

SETEM's programme of Solidarity Camps aims to educate about the growing inequalities in the North-South world relationships, its goal is to generate a critical and reflective view of the world, and to promote activities in Catalonia in favour of social models that are fairer and more respectful.



More than 8,000 people have participated in the Solidarity Camp since 1991. The program offers the possibility to be trained, to live with and to collaborate with organizations from Asia, Latin America and Africa in areas such as education, fair trade, immigration and human rights.

The experience is developed in three phases: 1st phase) Preparation and training; 2nd phase) Traveling and staying in a country of the South during a month, knowing the local organisations, meeting the people who are linked to them and sharing workshops and daily activities; 3rd phase) Dissemination and actions in the country of origin in the North to contribute to raise public awareness about inequalities in the world.

Engaging volunteers

SETEM Catalunya is an organisation that has existed since 1991. Their long trajectory provides an opportunity to get to know the challenges and rewards related to working with volunteers in the long term.

One aspect that Anna Morales (board member of SETEM) recalls is how communication has changed a great deal in the last 18 years: “people do not answer emails any more, everything is through WhatsApp, not even Facebook, or Instagram”. Also, she highlights the key elements to attract volunteers who participate in the program nowadays: “If you want volunteers to come, you need to offer them something, they need to feel they are getting something out of the experience”. She explains the transformation she has witnessed during the last years around the engagement of volunteers. For instance, although the training is compulsory to join in, not everyone attends; now-a-days it is difficult for volunteers to fully commit.

The main way to engage volunteers is through the recommendation from long-standing volunteers to the new ones (even from parents to children!).



As Anna Morales explains: “Some people come from social movements or feminist movements, others come because someone who had the experience recommended it, and some are sons or daughters of participants from some years ago.” Therefore, in SETEM’s experience, long-term volunteering helps bring new volunteers through word of mouth.

In addition to word of mouth, Anna Morales also explains how they also promote their programmes in meetings and events in order to engage volunteers: “Some volunteers come because they attend one of our meetings and they feel attracted by the fact that we want to address the root of social inequity.” Through this meetings many volunteers find motivation to commit to the mission of the organisation.

Self-management in SETEM’s volunteering

One of the strong points of this project regarding self-management is the fact that “every year the training offered to volunteers is self-managed by another group of volunteers who already had the experience. Also, our board members are all volunteers.” But this has brought apprehensions between the volunteers and the professional staff, as Anna Morales declares: “In our case we need the professional staff working in the association to believe in the benefits of volunteers, otherwise problems arise linked to issues related to volunteers’ participation, for instance when volunteers need insurance, when they need a space in the office, etc.” This is an important aspect that needs to be taken into account if you are part of an organisation that is thinking to incorporate professional staff in a volunteer organisation.



3.2.4. SUN CIRCLE FOUNDATION (HUNGARY)

Interviewer: Anna Rácz (Képes Alapítvány)

Interviewee: Tengelics Helga

Date of the interview: 27 February 2020

Website: <https://www.nap-kor.hu/>

Key idea

The volunteering experience offers clear opportunities for personal and professional development outside the initiative.

What is it about?

The Sun Circle Foundation operates as a training place for psychologists, psychiatrists and mental health professionals, it offers individual and group therapies for mental health clients, develop educational materials and support the set-up of self-help groups.

Self-help group for battling anxiety

Sun Circle offers space for a self-help group of people struggling with anxieties, including phobias, and panic disorder. This group is organised and facilitated by a volunteer psychologist. Meetings take place once a week (early evening, on a weekday) and last 90 minutes (without a break).

This self-help group is an open group; everyone can join and leave at any time. The process is based on free discussion, there are no pre-defined



topics, and there is no knowledge sharing by the psychologist. It is about sharing personal experiences related to anxiety and giving feedback to each other. A regular meeting happens as follows: the facilitator greets the group but afterwards, the facilitator remains in the background and only intervenes if there is serious conflict, or the group is stuck. If there is some misinformation raised by a participant, the facilitator corrects it at the end of the group session (so that no misinformation stays unchallenged).

The initiative started in 2015 and has evolved since then. At first there was no psychologist, then a psychologist facilitator became involved upon the request of the participants. Initially, the psychologist participated once a month, then every second week, and finally the facilitator started to participate weekly. Participants donate a small amount of money so that they have something to drink (non-alcoholic drink, tea, etc.). It is an open group, everyone can join and leave at any time. The number of participants fluctuates from week to week: from 4 up to 15 participants. There are minimal rules: couples (or people who have strong relationships outside of the group) cannot participate together, participants cannot be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they need to keep group secrets and need to listen to each other respectfully.

The experience of Sun Circle Foundation is an example of success in groups that promote self-management with very little external help. There is free discussion within the group, participants can manage their own participation in the group related with mental health issues, and also, they can manage feedback they receive from others without external intervention. It is also interesting to highlight the areas where external participation is a key element needed in this case: the selection process for participants and its promotion.



Sun Circle Foundation selects the applicants in order to exclude applicants with serious mental health problems (e.g. acute psychosis) and relocate people with minor or specific issues to other, more fitting groups (e.g. borderline group, ACA – adult children of alcoholics – group, etc.). The Foundation also intervenes in the promotion of the groups through its website, which is well known among psychologists, psychiatrists and psychiatric patients in Budapest.

This recipe of self-management with external key elements can be an inspiration for volunteers' groups.

The facilitator is a volunteer psychologist. She or he gets no payment for participating in the group, but is motivated by the opportunity it offers to develop contacts with possible future clients and to gain experience in working with groups.

3.2.5. ABRAZOS CULTURALES (SPAIN)

Interviewer: Adrián Crescini (La Xixa Teatre)

Interviewee: Elena Mosso

Date of the interview: 26 February 2020

Website: <https://abrazocultural.com/>

Key idea

Breaking stereotypes by switching traditional volunteering roles: the beneficiary as the teacher of the volunteer.



What is it about?

Abrazos Culturales is an association which is active in different countries. It started in Brazil in 2014 and is also active in Barcelona since October 2017. The organizations in the different countries operate independently, but all pursue the same goal: to offer language courses and cultural workshops taught by refugees or migrants from stigmatized countries. Abrazos Culturales promotes this learning experience through the own culture of each teacher, creating an intercultural participation where all voices have their place, the teacher and the students, migrant and local citizens in a common learning. Its mission is to enhance people's talents, create connections with local people and break prejudices and stereotypes, contributing to an education based on empathy and interculturality.

Abrazos Culturales offers various activities, like cultural events, cooking classes, music and dance workshops.

Involving refugee teachers

Refugees who are part of Abrazos Culturales are the real entrepreneurs in the project: they create their courses and workshops and they teach it. There are 16 teachers from 8 different countries. Every member teaches what they know or like about their own culture.

People who participate are very different, even though they all live in Barcelona, they come from very different cultural backgrounds. The idea is that people who attend a course or a workshop get the contents and also learn about the culture of the teacher, so the attendee can be in touch with another culture beyond what is seen on the media to widen their vision of that culture.



People who attend the workshops and courses pay for them. All activities have a fee except some talks that are free.

Self-management of refugee teachers

Refugees do not only teach, but also coordinate the academic part of the school and also the management of it. "In our case here in Spain three founders started the association, all of us migrants. For me this is important, because we are in touch with what is going on in society and although we might not be displaced people, we went through similar difficulties". Regarding governance and decision making all teachers in the school participate, although some teachers are more involved than others. "This project is our project, I do not just hire the refugees as teachers, we create the project and programme together. They are entrepreneurs. At some point we thought of becoming a cooperative, but I think now is not the moment. In a way we already function in a similar manner".

Engaging volunteers

They have 6 volunteers who help with the social networks and in specific management tasks or organizing events, and, in return, they can all participate in the courses for free. They volunteer as a way to get involved in providing support to refugees; it is a topic that gets a lot of attention from the public, as it is very present in the media. "Being a refugee is associated with suffering, and I think people empathise a lot with this, but on the other hand, there are also a lot of stereotypes. The way we work avoids giving the simplistic image of refugees as helpless. In our case, refugees are the teachers, they are protagonists and this gets attention". Generally speaking volunteers who approach us are very young, many are at university studying degrees linked to social work, so they see it as an opportunity to gain



experience in their field. We also engage students linked to design or communication studies. They want to develop their competences participating in a project that inspires them.

3.2.6. THUISGEKOOKT (THE NETHERLANDS)

Interviewer: Luuk van der Vaart (Storytelling Centre)
Interviewee: Maike van Heuven van Staereling-de Louw
Date of the interview: 11 March 2020
Website: www.thuisgekookt.nl

Key idea

Be explicit on how the project can fulfil multiple motivations: from waste reduction to meeting new people, from building community ties in your neighbourhood, to promoting yourself professionally.

What is it about?

Thuisgekookt, formerly known as "Thuisafgehaald", is a non-profit organisation that provides a platform for home-cooks to cook for people in the neighbourhood. The cook has his or her own page on the platform. Through the website neighbours can contact the cook to see when and what he or she is cooking. It started as a private initiative out of a desire to share and help.



For instance: When Martha is making pasta on Thursday for her family, she adds "Pasta on Thursday" on her menu on the Thuisgekookt website. Three neighbours, mostly elderly who are not capable of cooking everyday, sign up for Martha's pasta on the website. Thursday, Martha cooks for her own family and prepares three take-away packages, which are then picked-up by the neighbours. The meals are not for free. The neighbours do pay Martha, but just for the ingredients, her time and energy. A big one-person meal, for instance, should cost no more than 4 to 5 euros.

The project was initiated by Marieke Hart in 2012. She always cooked too much food for her family and started giving meals away to neighbours. In 2019 'Thuisgekookt' facilitated more than 40.000 face-to-face meetings, and provided 40.000 meals. Thuisgekookt is active in eleven Dutch cities.

"It is about connecting with people who hardly get out of their house. At least, that is what it is about for me. To offer those people a healthy meal and a chat when they come to pick up their food. And it is about cooking for people, neighbours in the community, who don't have time to cook a healthy meal for themselves."

Maike van Heuven van Staereling-de Louw (Home Cook & Cook Buddy) points out that in order to attract people into the project, she tries to play on people's feelings by asking for example: "Do you regularly throw a lot of food in the trash? You're actually throwing money away". And also reminds them about their ecological responsibilities. Using triggers like, "Do you know how many food people throw away a year?" She emphasizes the benefits of getting to know new people through the project: "You have got people who like cooking but are quite solitary. It can also be a nice way to meet new people." Additionally she adds, "It is also about fresh and healthy food for an affordable price".



Elements of self-management

People promote their own dishes on the website and connect it to Facebook; cooks share information about meals of other cooks.

People can make a home restaurant through the website. Where cooks invite others to come eat at their own house. "You could make your own event, and post that on the website. I am working on a workshop place and when that's done it will fit a large table for 10 people and I can put that as an event on the website. And promote it on Facebook."

Thuisgekookt shows how a domestic activity such as cooking becomes a seed for the growth of relationships between neighbours, reinforcing community life and creating sustainable practices such as saving meals and reducing family's budget. Thuisgekookt brings the strength of a bottom-up experience, from local neighbours organizing for other neighbours and in some cases, it happens to become a new organization: "It started with Marieke Hart [...] to share food with the community. Then she opened an office. And now there are 5-6 people in the organization. I heard they are looking for a new office." The key idea of this initiative is that every member of the team can arrange assistance for fellow neighbours at any time and in this way they become active and committed with the network. Sometimes, "experienced cooks from Thuisgekookt visit new cooks and help them to set up a shop online, make an account, take a picture, make a menu, and so on". There are many ways of being helpful and contribute with the project.



3.2.7. VOLUNTEER CENTRE AMSTERDAM (THE NETHERLANDS)

Interviewer: Hester Tammes (Storytelling Centre)

Interviewee: Dasha van Amsterdam

Date of the interview: 30 March 2020

Website: <https://www.vca.nu/>

Key idea

Successful volunteering depends on assuring a match between the soft skills of the volunteer and their task, and being clear that “voluntary” is not the same as “noncommittal”.

What is it about?

Volunteer Centre Amsterdam (VCA) offers services to organisations that work with volunteers (advises them on insurance matters, social safety, fees, etcetera); they also redirect Amsterdammers wishing to do voluntary work to organisations that have vacancies (via their website); and they promote voluntary work. VCA uses a website, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, to reach their target group, which is diverse and located in Amsterdam and beyond.

VCA “is the most comprehensive platform for volunteer vacancies”, says Dasha van Amsterdam, advisor in Amsterdam Zuid. Their slogan gives a glance of their added value: “We you happy, in being able to respond better to the demand, in more attention for people's safety and – in this regard - the importance of soft skills for both the volunteer and the person(s) he or she is



working with. Evaluation makes the difference between reaching the set goals and having a real impact. The emphasis is now on the latter”.

VCA has identified the key factors for getting a “match” and the success of the volunteer experience, especially the role that soft skills play in the relationship between volunteers and people in the community. It is a relationship where everybody wins: “In short: we are advisors and mediators, so everyone meets their goals: volunteers as well as organisations.” VCA also reinforces the idea of what commitment means for volunteering at VCA: “doing something you like, with which you contribute to another person's or the community's well-being, on a voluntary basis, which does not mean it is noncommittal. For our organization voluntary means unpaid, or a volunteer reimbursement”, since in the Netherlands volunteers can be paid small amounts to cover expenses.





4. THE COBU PROJECT: RESOURCES FOR TSO'S TO SET-UP SMVN'S



The project “COBU: Community building through self-managed volunteer groups” is a 30 month Erasmus+ KA2 strategic partnership which began in November 2019. The project consortium is made up of four organisations:

- » Képes Alapítvány (Hungary – project coordinator),
<http://www.kepesalapitvany.hu>
- » Elan Interculturel (France), <http://elaninterculturel.com>
- » La Asociación La Xixa Teatre (Spain), <http://www.laxixateatre.org>
- » Storytelling Centre (The Netherlands), <https://storytelling-centre.nl>

The COBU project focuses on developing resources for third sector organisations (TSO's) to facilitate the creation of self-managed volunteering networks (SMVN's), that can act more or less autonomously but still contribute to furthering the organisations mission and reach. To be able to do so, organisations need to prepare volunteers adequately, offer them supervision and mentoring – at least in the early stages, and to create a platform for them where they can connect to the organisation and to each other. The intention is to keep only a minimal level of control over these self-organised volunteer groups – only to ensure that their activities are in line with the organisation's values and missions.

Concretely, the COBU project will provide:

- » an introductory guide to self-managed volunteering networks (i.e. this document)
- » local online platforms for self-organised volunteers with the help of which they could get access to resources, share experiences with each



other, support each other and promote their own projects and events²⁵

- » a piloted methodology by which volunteers are able to assess their own skills, strengths, experiences, and based on their interest and motivations can come up with their own initiatives to be able to turn their ideas into a reality
- » local case studies documenting the whole piloting processes (by using written analyses and short video reports) that can help others (persons and organisations) to adapt this model by presenting the different steps/activities in context and by describing the journey of all involved parties (partner organisations and their volunteers).

All material developed within the COBU project will be made available for free under a Creative Commons Licences as soon as it is completed on the project's website: <http://www.cobuplatform.eu/>. We are hopeful this material can provide useful tools for the creation of self-managed volunteering networks for any third sector organisation who wishes to expand their reach while staying small.

²⁵ You can access the local platforms to either participate on them, or to see an example of what these platforms look like in the following links: <http://cobugroups.com> (HU), <https://laxixafemcomunitat.eu> (SP), <https://voorelkaar.eu> (NL), and <http://elancreatif.eu> (FR).





APPENDIX



Name of the initiative	University of the Third Age
Website	https://www.u3a.org.uk/
What is it about?	The U3A movement in the UK is a network of local interest/learning groups, the members of which are people in their "third age" (meaning retired or semi-retired people). The groups are self-funded and self-managed.
Its target group	Retired or semi-retired (usually 55+) people in the UK who have enough free time to learn something new for the pleasure of it (not for acquiring any qualifications), or engage in activities (e.g. walking, hiking) with others.
Types of activities	U3A interest/activity groups cover a wide range of topics such as bird watching, language learning, art appreciation, walking/sports, zoology, magician tricks.
Link to existing groups:	<p>Examples of activities, events (such as online events, podcasts, online exhibitions) that can be attended to by a wide range of people are displayed on the front-page: https://www.u3a.org.uk/</p> <p>Local groups can be found through local websites: https://www.u3a.org.uk/regional-u3a-websites</p>
Its scale (number of users, groups, people involved)	<p>As of September 2020 there are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over 1000 local U3A organisations - Over 430,000 members - Approx. 30,000 U3A interest groups in the UK per week



	<p>https://www.u3a.org.uk/about</p> <p>The Third Age Trust – that is the coordinator of the whole movement - has more than 300 volunteers who offer services for the local groups. They also have about 13 employees (CEO and senior management team). (Source: Annual Report, 2018-2019).</p>
Who initiated it and when?	<p>The U3A was launched in 1981, by a group of leading educationalists. They wanted to adapt the French U3A model (where universities offered learning opportunities and courses for retired people).</p> <p>In the UK it started based on the French model but was soon modified and became organised as a self-help network, based on peer-learning,</p> <p>Several U3As were launched in 1982, which was followed by the set-up of a charity, the Third Age Trust, in 1983.</p> <p>http://westwiltu3a.org.uk/history-of-the-u3a/</p> <p>The movement grew quickly, by the early 1990s a U3A was opening every fortnight. By 2010 the number of its members reached 250.000.</p>
Organizer and structure of the network	<p>Local charities support the set-up of local groups, while the movement is overseen by a national body, called the Third Age Trust. All the U3As in the UK are members of the Third Age Trust.</p>
How groups are organised	<p>The groups are set up and managed by their members. They use a peer-to-peer learning model: members share their own experience/knowledge with others and learn from each other. They choose the topics and organise the events together (everyone</p>



	<p>contributes to this process in whatever way she/he can).</p> <p>Although all members are equal, they can take up different roles: they can organise/lead a group, set up venues, recruit speakers, organise refreshments, greet new members, manage the finances, etc.</p> <p>Any member can start a learning/interest group. Only full members can participate in the interest groups.</p>
Promoted values/principles/community guidelines	<p>The U3A movement is non-religious and non-political and has three main principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Third Age Principle (e.g. it is open for people who are no longer in full-time employment who are interested in life-long learning) - The Self-help Learning Principle (e.g. the groups are set up by the members for members; there are no distinction between learners and teachers; learning is pursued for its own sake) - The Mutual Aid Principle (e.g. local groups act independently of the Third Age Trust but adhere to its principles; they are self-funded; participants don't get paid for their contributions) <p>More information can be found here:</p> <p>https://www.u3a.org.uk/about/vision</p>
Services provided by the co-ordinator organisation	<p>The Third Age Trust offers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A central online platform with a description of the movement and with links to all the local websites



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support to develop local websites where local groups can promote their weekly events - Trainings and guidebooks for people who want to start and manage a group in topics such as how to: set up groups, attract volunteers, manage groups and keep them alive, manage finance, deal with legal issues (the Third Age Trust published a Group Leaders handbook and a new U3A Start Up pack in 2018-2019) - Summer schools, national learning events, conferences to raise the profile of the movement, to promote the mission and activities of the national, regional, local U3A-s - Regular newsletter and publishes a magazine (U3A Magazine) - An advice line which is open from Monday to Friday (in 2019 it handled more than 750 enquiries per month)
How can individuals join?	Those who are interested in participating in the movement should contact the local U3A that is the nearest for them. They are usually asked to fill out a form and send it through email or post.
Costs of participating for individuals	There is a minimal amount of annual membership fee (between 15-30 pounds per year, in average) that covers the basic costs of organising the events (e.g. renting places)
Impact on participants	<p>Based on a research (organised by the Third Age Trust) involving 801 members in 2019, members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make new friendships and feel supported 91% • Learn new skills 84%



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel healthier 55% • Become engaged with their community 50% • Manage life changes, retirement, illness or bereavement 50% • Build confidence 59%
Testimonial 1	<p>"I didn't have to get up and there were no bells and duties. I took my dog for walks, redecorated, cleaned, more walks, shopping, and then looked objectively at what was I was doing... I missed the daily exchanges, a good chat, a bit of a laugh"</p>
Testimonial 2	<p>"It provides opportunities to use skills acquired earlier in life in ways that are useful, and that does wonders for one's self-esteem"</p>
Testimonial 3	<p>"I always liked photography but it was difficult while working. Now I can learn photography with like-minded people. Whether a beginner or very competent, you can learn together"</p>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The U3A concept is not widely understood outside of the movement. Prior to joining some participants think it is an academic institution, or a political or religious group, or a group for frail older people. • Few participants come from minority groups • People in their late 50s and early 60s represent only a minority of the membership (which means that the movement is at risk of getting too old? HESTER, what is the expression here, when people get too old and younger people don't arrive, average age is going up) • Sometimes participants think that this is a service – it is not, every member needs to contribute with something



Funding of the initiation	<p>Total income (From March 2018 to 2019 March): 3,271 million pounds</p> <p>Revenues come from (2019 March) (% of yearly income)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • membership subscriptions (45%) • revenues from the selling of Third Age Magazine (36%) • fees of summer schools, study days and the national conference (7%) • donations (1%) • other trading activities (U3A product, license fees) (4%) • other income (7%) <p>Total expenditure (From March 2018 to March 2019): 2,991 million pounds</p> <p>Major types of expenditures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff salaries and employers' national insurance and pension costs • National Office overheads and committee costs. • Insurance costs • Start-up grants, other grants for specific purposes to U3As, • Costs of volunteer training and workshops, exhibitions, conferences, study days • Costs related to promoting the movement • Production of the magazine and other resources
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Sources of information used in this description:	<p>The Third Age Trust, Annual Report & Accounts 2018-2019</p> <p>University of the Third Age Impact Report: 'Learning not Lonely' (2018)</p> <p>Personal interview by Anna Racz (in May 2020)</p> <p>www.u3a.org.uk</p> <p>https://www.u3a.org.uk/about</p> <p>https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/u3a-day/u3a-day-about</p> <p>http://westwiltu3a.org.uk/history-of-the-u3a/</p> <p>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_the_Third_Age</p>
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Name of the initiative	Everyone everyday
Website	https://www.weareeveryone.org/
What is it about?	<p>Every One Every Day is an initiative in Barking and Dagenham (one of London's poorest borough) that supports the creation of a series of projects initiated by the locals to improve</p>



	<p>their lives and the lives of their family, friends and neighbours.</p> <p>The goal is to create more than 250 neighbourhood projects and 100 local collaborative businesses within 5 years (during 2018-2022). The set-up of businesses is supported by a Business Incubator Programme (started in 2019).</p>
Its target group	Residents or frequent visitors of Barking and Dagenham, coming from all walks of life.
Types of activities	<p>Projects include (among others):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing skills, spaces and resources. • Families working and playing together. • Cooking for the community. • Food growing and tree planting. • Trading, making and repairing. <p>Project ideas can come from everywhere (even from organisations from other cities or countries), but only those that local people love and want to develop themselves get designed and tested in the neighbourhood.</p> <p>Projects can be ongoing activities or single sessions.</p>
Link to existing groups:	<p>https://members.weareeveryone.org/feed</p> <p>https://members.weareeveryone.org/topics</p> <p>https://www.facebook.com/weareeveryone.org/events/</p>



Its scale (number of users, groups, people involved)	<p>2018 (Year 1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of registered participants: 1200 - Number of estimated participants in different activities, projects: 2000 (incl. those who did not sign up) - Number of neighbourhood projects: 70 <p>2019 (Year 2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of registered participants: 3200 - Number of estimated participants in different activities, projects: 4750 - Number of neighbourhood projects: 131
Who initiated it and when?	<p>The project was started in November 2017 and set up by the Participatory City Foundation (which was created for this purpose) and the Barking and Dagenham Council</p>
Organizer and structure of the network	<p>The project is coordinated by the Participatory City Foundation.</p> <p>The initiation is built around 2 systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Support Platform – structures that could be used by all projects (elements of it: online platform, design team, functional spaces, trainings for the team and for residents, health and safety procedures and other general processes, etc) - The Participatory Ecosystem – co-design, test and develop concrete projects with the involvement of locals, to involve a large number of people into the network; set-up of mini-hubs that help in spreading successful



	<p>project ideas that were developed and tested previously</p> <p>Number of staff members in coordinating team: 20 persons (2018), 32 persons (17 of them are project designers) (2019)</p>
How projects are organised	<p>Anyone can initiate to start a group/activity/local project.</p> <p>People can adopt multiple roles in supporting and delivering each project.</p> <p>Process of developing a project idea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An idea come up that local want to develop with the help of the design team - The idea is developed (designed) and is ready to be launched/promoted - The project is tested (in the framework of some upcoming events) - The project is promoted regularly, becomes regular - The project can be replicated in other places within the borough <p>In 2018-19 development of ideas usually took about 4 weeks, preparation to launch the project took about 2 weeks.</p> <p>Project status can be active, paused or dormant (stopped).</p>
Promoted values/principles/community guidelines	<p>Projects promote the values of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality – attracting a diverse range of participants (e.g. by ensuring that there is a wide range of roles, activities, purposes; provides small inclusion acts, such as making space at tables,



	<p>translating etc.; can engage a range of skills - from beginner to expert; invitation is open to all, rather than targeted to demographic groups or needs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutual benefit – involves people contributing and benefiting in a single action. • Peer-to-peer – involves people working peer-to-peer on an equal footing • Productive activity – produces tangible things, they have immediate visible results • Open accessibility – involving as many people as possible, through working to reduce all types of participation barriers (e.g the activities require low commitment, are of short duration, people can drop in; have no or low cost different times of day/week; are simple and straightforward; meetings are easily accessible; encouragement/ introduction/ accompaniment are given where necessary) • People are advised to design projects that avoid to promote specific political agendas.
Services provided by the co-ordinator organisation	<p>Participatory City Foundation offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Useful spaces for the projects (kitchens, warehouses, public growing spaces, spaces for workshops, etc.) - Providing community spaces (“shops”) where people can pop in and get into contact with the organisers and with other people from the neighbourhood and where activities can take place - Supplying materials and equipment for practical activities



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By arranging insurances and health and safety - Offering an online platform for the promotion of local projects (https://members.weareeveryone.org/feed) - Offering trainings for participants (through the design team), involving them as co-creators <p>They also organise festivals, workshops and business programmes.</p> <p>They organise so called Discovery Days (approx. 4 times a year) to promote the initiation.</p>
How can individuals join?	By registering through the website, filling out a form with some basic questions (about areas the individual is good at and/or topics they are interested in), or by contacting the organisers in person, at one of their designated meeting places.
Costs of participating for individuals	<p>Individuals can join the network for free.</p> <p>Fee of participating in activities costs nothing or only a small amount.</p>
Impact on participants	<p>Based on the impact report in "Y2 Tools to act" report (2019), participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feel welcome, included and accepted - become active - feel happy and optimistic - experience improved levels of health and wellbeing; - experience increased self-confidence



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - learn new things and feel excited - experience creativity and idea sharing
Testimonial 1	<p>"You learn a lot of things from people that actually have certain skills in the area. Everyone has skills, everyone. It's just for you to bring it out, you need confidence, sometimes you need a boost from others"</p>
Testimonial 2	<p>"Here I have freedom to decide, they might obviously say we can't do this or that, so you need to adjust things, but they give you freedom on deciding what activities you want to do for other residents, which is great. That's what we need, freedom with our ideas."</p>
Testimonial 3	<p>"My confidence to be honest was the major thing that I notice, my confidence and not being afraid to mix with people that don't look like me, don't cook like me, don't speak the same language as me, don't believe the same faith and breaking down those barriers and being able to communicate and get to know each other"</p>
Challenges	<p>In Year 2 the number of projects, sessions and participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grew much more dynamically than the size of the support team, which lead to organizational problems, increased stress among the staff. The lack of breaks for team members from intense periods of personal interactions can lead to their early burnout. • As the complexity of the project grew, decision making had to be distributed more effectively throughout the team and the residents. The Community Advisory Group – which was set up in Year 1 and which connected the project to resident priorities – was unsuccessful



	<p>due to meetings being poorly attended and ineffective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding funds for long term sustainability will be a challenge.
Funders of the initiative	<p>London Borough of Barking & Dagenham</p> <p>Esmee Fairbairn Foundation</p> <p>The National Lottery Community Fund</p> <p>City Bridge Trust</p> <p>Greater London Authority, Good Growth</p> <p>Bloomberg Philanthropies</p> <p>McConnel Foundation</p> <p>Total funding for 2018: 1,425 million pounds</p> <p>Total funding for 2019: 1,825 million pounds</p>
Sources of information used in this description	<p>Y2 Tools to act - Building a Participatory Ecosystem in Barking and Dagenham through the Every One Every Day initiative (2019)</p> <p>Link: http://www.participatorycity.org/tools-to-act</p> <p>http://www.participatorycity.org/cities-programme-events/2018/1/10/discovery-day</p>

Name of the initiative	Meetup
Website	https://www.meetup.com/
What is it about?	It is an event-based social network that help individuals to find others with similar interests online and encourages them to meet offline through events, activities,



	<p>workshops that the users of the platform themselves initiate, organise and carry out.</p> <p>It helps finding and building local communities.</p>
Its target group	<p>Individuals all over the world, above the age of 18, who are digitally competent enough to find and to be able to use the platform. Their main motivations are to meet new people, find friends, learn new things, share a hobby.</p> <p>Children can only attend events with a supervisor.</p> <p>Organisations, businesses who want to connect with their customers, to test their solutions, to gather feedbacks, to promote their services, to use the platform for professional networking.</p>
Types of activities	<p>There are social groups, creativity and career groups set up and promoted through the platform.</p> <p>Social groups are about hanging out together (go to a café together), doing activities together (playing sports, playing board games, visiting museums/cinemas), learning something together (develop a skill, for example learning a new language, or learning about a topic and discuss it with others).</p> <p>Creativity groups create something together (e.g. creating a podcast, or a screenplay, or design something)</p> <p>Career groups are for testing a prototype, getting feedbacks for a sales pitch, discuss strategies.</p>
Link to existing groups:	https://www.meetup.com/find/groups/



	https://www.meetup.com/topics/ https://www.meetup.com/find/social/ https://www.meetup.com/find/career-business/ https://www.meetup.com/find/arts-culture/
Its scale (number of users, groups, people involved)	<p>In March 2020, Meetup had more than 49 million registered members, more than 230,000 group organizers and offered an average of 15,000 in-person events per day. These numbers might have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic since then.</p> <p>It also used by over 1,500 businesses, including Adobe, Google, Microsoft, IBM, Twitter.</p> <p>https://techcrunch.com/2020/03/30/wework-sells-off-social-network-meetup-to-alleycorp-and-other-investors/</p> <p>https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/meetup-was-darling-tech-industry-can-it-survive-wework-n1106676</p>
Who initiated it and when?	<p>Meetup was launched in 2002. It was initiated by Scott Heiferman (who became its first CEO) who was joined by 5 co-founders.</p> <p>The goal was to launch an initiation that helps people to be closer to each other, to help to build local communities. The need for this was heightened after the 9/11 attack but was already described in the book "Bowling alone" (Putnam, 2000) that presented how communities collapsed in the US since the 1960s.</p> <p>Since its start in 2002, changes in ownership took place and as of September 2020, its majority owner (besides other smaller</p>



	investors) is AlleyCorp, an early stage venture fund and incubator.
Organiser and structure of the network	<p>Meetup (the company) organises the network. They created and maintain the online platform where members can get into contact with each other. They create the rules and norms for members as well.</p> <p>Individuals and businesses/organisations are the ones who set and manage up the concrete groups, decide on their topics, decide on who they accept as members, etc.</p>
How groups are organised	<p>Groups (that offer offline events/activities) are organised online, through meetup.com, by individuals or by organisations/businesses who registered to the website.</p> <p>Participants also need to register to be able to book their place in a group event.</p> <p>A registered member can participate in many groups and can organise multiple groups as well. There are two types of membership for organisers: a basic and Meetup pro (users in the former category can start up to 3 groups, and the ones in the latter can start and unlimited number of groups, can manage a wide network of groups).</p> <p>Meetups are usually quite informal and fun.</p>
Promoted values/principles/community guidelines	<p>Principles for group organisers (based on Meetup groups and events policies):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups should offer the opportunity to grow for its members in some way • Members should meet in person • There should be a host in every event who greets members and help them to feel welcome and comfortable



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group organisers should be transparent about the topic of the group, about requirements for joining a group, about the costs of participation, about group affiliations (its link to any third party) • Meetups can be organised around commercial interests. <p><i>Groups must not contain content or promote events that involve regulated services provided by licensed medical or legal professionals.</i></p>
Services provided by the co-ordinator organisation	<p>Meetup offers for its members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An online platform, through which groups/events can be created, attendee lists can be managed • A recommendation system – it advertises groups to registered users based on profile and specified interest data • Educational materials that help organisers to set up a group • Support from community experts 7 days a week • The opportunity to charge ticket fees or dues for the organised events to help cover the organiser's costs • Articles (for example about the experiences and tips of other organisers) • The number of groups organisers can start depends on the type of registration they have.
How can individuals join?	<p>By registering to the site.</p> <p>If they want to organise groups, they also need to buy a subscription.</p>



Costs of participating for individuals	<p>To be able to participate in groups, individuals don't have to pay at all, or only a small amount of event fee that covers the costs if the host. It is collected through the site.</p> <p>For organisers in Europe, a subscription to organise up to 3 groups costs 9,99 USD/month (if they subscribe for 6 months, otherwise it costs 14,99 USD for a month). Subscription to start an unlimited amount of groups costs 30 USD/month (if they subscribe for 6 months, otherwise it costs 35 USD for a month).</p>
Impact on individuals	<p>Based on a study carried out by ImpactEd at the University of Pennsylvania (2020):</p> <p><i>Impact on group organisers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased ability to impact the lives of others • it made their life better • increased self-confidence • increased leaderships skills <p><i>Impact on group participants:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased sense of community • feeling more connected to others • increased knowledge and/or skills • increased number of friendships
Testimonial 1 (Organiser)	<p>Make an impact: "<i>Hosting oyster tasting events on Meetup allows me to create a larger impact beyond my blog and get more people interested in and involved with sustainable seafood.</i>"</p> <p>https://www.meetup.com/start/organizing</p>
Testimonial 2 (Organiser)	<p>Find your people: "<i>I couldn't find people from Japan or people who wanted to learn about Japanese startups and technology. I discovered through creating a Meetup group that many</i></p>



	<p><i>others were also looking for connections like this."</i></p> <p>https://www.meetup.com/start/organizing</p>
Testimonial 3 (Organiser)	<p>Grow a network: "<i>Meetup allows me to reach people I wouldn't otherwise meet and invite them to be a part of something I love.</i>"</p> <p>https://www.meetup.com/start/organizing</p>
Challenges	<p>COVID-19 Pandemic is a recent challenge as it makes in-person meetings difficult (since 2020 March).</p> <p>Decreased trust in social media</p> <p>Monthly organiser subscription fee can be too high for some, and as a consequence, organizers can be motivated to only register for a short time and after they attracted their people, drive them away from the Meetup platform.</p>
Funding of the initiative	<p>Among other resources, they generate income from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • member fees • event fees (they take a few percent of the event fee from the organiser as transaction fee) • donations <p>Their annual revenue was reported to be more than 35 million USD in 2019 (Source: Forbes).</p>
Sources of information used in this description	<p>https://www.meetup.com/about/</p> <p>Meetup groups and events policies,</p>



<https://help.meetup.com/hc/en-us/articles/360002897712-Meetup-groups-and-events-policies>

<https://www.meetup.com/start/organizing>

Meetup Member Study (By ImpactEd, University of Pennsylvania):

<https://web.sas.upenn.edu/impact-ed/featured-projects/meetup-member-study/>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidjeans/2020/03/30/shed-by-wework-meetups-new-owners-recast-a-social-platform-for-a-world-without-gatherings/#604f40931d27>

Ricken, S., Barkhuus, L., & Jones, Q. (2017). Going online to meet offline: Organizational practices of social activities through meetup. In Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Communities and Technologies (pp. 139-148).





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