Organisations that facilitate volunteering

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ITSSOIN

ITSSOIN is a research project funded under the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme responding to a call to investigate "The impact of the third sector on socio-economic development in Europe". The project is a research collaboration between 11 European institutions led by the University of Heidelberg and runs from 2014-2017.

Content

1. Introduction

As argued in the theoretical introduction of the ITSSOIN project (Anheier et al., 2014a), third sector organisations have certain strengths that enhance social innovations. One of the defining characteristics is the presence of volunteers, who may bring openness and produce new ideas. Earlier work in the ITSSOIN project suggests that volunteering has an impact on social innovation in motives, organisational forms or outcomes, taking place at the micro-, meso or macro-level.

In the light of the central role of civic engagement in this line of reasoning it is important to have a better insight in the role of volunteers in organisations. Therefore we seek answers to the question how the breadth and impact of third sector activities can be enhanced. In the current contribution we approach this question from an organisational perspective. By removing obstacles for participation and making participation more attractive, organisations can expand the pool of volunteers and broaden the scope of volunteering.

The focus here is on formal volunteering, meaning volunteering within third sector organisations. More loosely organised grass-roots initiatives and informal activities are only in the analysis when they are adopted by third sector organisations. Informal initiatives will get more attention in other parts of the ITSSOIN project.

In D3.1 (Bekkers & De Wit, 2014) we summarized the literature on what helps and hinders participation in third sector organisations. Third sector organisations have different means to facilitate volunteering, and there might be organisational characteristics that hinder and facilitate the recruitment, retention and productivity of participants in third sector organisations. We seek to investigate which incentives organisations use and which ones they have found effective, answering the following research questions:

- How do third sector organisations attract, retain, mobilize and motivate volunteers?
- How do volunteers in third sector organisations contribute to achieving the objectives of the organisation?
- To what extent do professionals in third sector organisations see the work of their organisation, and specifically the activities of volunteers, as socially innovative?
- How do third sector organisations try to influence the contributions of volunteers to social innovation? To what extent have these attempts to influence innovation worked and why?
- What factors hinder social innovation by volunteers?

We aim to examine the organisational-level conditions that influence the impact of third sector activities. More specifically, with the findings in this contribution we explore two hypotheses from the ITSSOIN project which are more extensively introduced and discussed in Anheier et al. (2014b) and briefly summarised below.

The first expectation is that a higher degree of voluntary engagement increases an organisation's social innovativeness, since volunteers bring new ideas, a higher ability to identify problems in society, organisational openness and connectivity with the rest of society.

Hypothesis: The higher the degree of voluntary engagement in an organisation, the higher its social innovativeness.

Some forms of volunteering are more beneficial towards producing social innovation than others. Forms of work with a more critical level of voluntariness and commitment, like compulsory community service and episodic volunteering, are expected to contribute less to the organisation's social innovativeness because 'the compulsory character can crowd out the creative impulses that are a necessity for innovation or that episodes prevent the degree of actor dedication and steadiness that is needed to push through innovations against the odds' (Anheier et al., 2014b).

Hypothesis: The higher the level of 'unengaged' forms of voluntary engagement in an organisation, the lower its social innovativeness.

2.   Sampling and methodology

We conducted 26 semi-structured interviews with 5 volunteers, 1 former volunteer, 17 volunteer managers and 6 professionals with another kind of job in six different countries (for a complete list see appendix 1).

We selected respondents across different sectors and different types of organisations. The roles that volunteers play differ between organisations. For example, the large number of people that volunteer in football clubs are likely to have different motivations and incentives than volunteers who participate in campaigns to reduce food waste. Table 1 provides an overview of the organisations in our sample, being both service provision and advocacy organisations in the fields of social services, environment, sports and refugees. This covers three fields of the ITSSOIN project (social services, environmental sustainability and community development for refugees) as well as sports, which gives a broad picture of voluntary engagement in the third sector. We interviewed people in similar organisations across different countries and did additional in-depth analyses of two sectors in the Netherlands and Sweden.

Because of time constraints and a lack of positive responses from organisation representatives, not all ITSSOIN-countries are part of the analyses. Italy does not appear in the sample, and in the United Kingdom we were only able to include an interview with a volunteer manager from the British Red Cross.

2.1. Cross-country

2.1.1. Social services

For each ITSSOIN-country we interviewed one organisation representative from a large service provision organisation in the field of social services, either the Red Cross or the Salvation Army. The respondent is someone responsible for the organisation's volunteer policy, a volunteer manager, at the national headquarters or at a regional or local branch of the organisation.

2.1.2. Environmental sustainability

We additionally interviewed volunteer managers in the field of environmental sustainability in each ITSSOIN-country. The organisations (either Greenpeace, a branch of Friends of the Earth or a large foundation in the case of Spain) are all organisations that do mainly advocacy activities, promoting nature conservation and the protection of the environment. Again, we interviewed someone who is responsible for volunteer management at the national, regional or local level.

2.2. In-depth exploration

2.2.1. Sports

Being the largest sector in terms of the number of volunteers, sports is a relevant field to include even though it is not one of the sectors ITSSOIN is focussing on. We selected one of the largest athletics associations in Sweden, IFK Lidingö Friidrott. This association has grown substantially over the past decade by having invested in 'sports for all'. In addition they organise Lidingöloppet, which is the world's largest cross-country race with 45,000 runners and 2,500 volunteers in 2014. The association also arranges a number of other relatively large events. We interviewed three volunteers, a former volunteer and a manager.

2.2.2. Refugees

Finally, we conducted interviews in a number of refugee organisations, deploying a mix of service provision and advocacy tasks. Refugee organisations are also the focus in the empirical field work on community development in Work Package 7 of the ITSSOIN project. Besides volunteers we interviewed six professionals with different tasks in order to get a full overview of the role of volunteering in different aspects of third sector organisations.

Table 1 Organisations in the sample

	Mainly service provision	**Mainly advocacy**
Social services	Red Cross (DE, DK, ES, FR, SE, UK) Salvation Army (CZ, NL)	
Environment		Biodiversity Foundation (ES) Friends of the Earth (CZ, DE, SE) Greenpeace (DK, FR, NL)
Sports	IFK Lidingö Friidrott (SE)	
Community development	UAF (NL) Vluchtelingenwerk (NL)	LOS (NL)

2.3. Methodology

The semi-structured interviews took about an hour and were conducted either face-to-face or by telephone. All interviews were guided by a topic list (see appendices 2 and 3).

The interviews among volunteer managers consisted of two parts. The first part focussed on the volunteer policy of the organisation. After a few introductory questions about the general characteristics of the organisation and the respondent's work, the interview continued on strategies to attract, retain, mobilise and motivate volunteers, the attrition of volunteers and the roles volunteers play in the organisation. The second part contained questions on social innovation. After asking the respondent to define social innovation, the interviewer introduced the concept in the way it is defined in the ITSSOIN project (Anheier et al., 2014a). Then, interviewees were asked about the innovativeness of the organisation's mission and the roles that volunteers play in initiating and fostering social innovations.[1]

The interviews among (former) volunteers consisted of three parts. The first part contained general questions on the volunteer's work as well as questions about organisational characteristics that helped or hindered the respondent to do voluntary work. The second part focussed on what helped or hindered in producing social

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[1] Because our respondent of the British Red Cross did not feel confident to answer questions about social innovation, this organisation does not appear in the second part of the analysis.

innovations. The final part encouraged the respondent to provide tips for a better volunteer management.

As part of the in-depth explorations in Sweden and the Netherlands we also interviewed professionals with other occupations. These interviews were more loosely structured, mainly covering the same topics in volunteer management and social innovation but providing interviewer and interviewee with the option to further elaborate on specific projects and activities.

The responses to the questions were recorded in the local language and a summary report of the interview was written in English, after which the findings were collected and analysed.

Although we examine similar organisations in different countries, our goal is not to provide a comparative analysis of organisational practices across Europe or across different fields. We do not have a decent sampling frame for organisations nor enough cases at the level of countries or fields to say much with certainty about these differences.

The aim is to provide in-depth insights from third sector organisations in different fields across Europe. The current analysis explores the validity of theoretical insights and expectations about volunteering in third sector organisations (Anheier et al., 2014a, 2014b; Bekkers & De Wit, 2014) with qualitative interview data. This analysis adds to the existing literature by examining a broad range of organisational strategies in a diverse set of organisations across countries, and by empirically assessing the relationship between voluntary engagement and social innovation.

3. Empirical findings

In this section we discuss the findings that emerge from the interviews with volunteers, former volunteers, volunteer managers and other professionals.

3.1. Volunteer policies

Many third sector organisations have a written or unwritten volunteer policy for the organisation as a whole. In this respect, respondents state that volunteering "is one of the pillars the organisation is based on" (volunteer manager, Red Cross ES) and that "volunteers *own* the organisation" (volunteer manager, Red Cross DK). For decades, organisations that work with a lot of volunteers like the Red Cross have been developing volunteering strategies that include social management measures, support structures and minimum standards for the conditions under which volunteers work. The management model of the Spanish Red Cross is reported to be well-established and implemented by other Red Cross branches. This model is subjected to an internal

quality assurance process, providing guidelines from the entrance of the volunteer in the organisation and including services schedules and penalisation procedures. The British Red Cross was currently developing a new volunteering strategy which will link with the main organisational strategy. The volunteer manager talks about strategy rather than policy. This might indicate a stronger focus on future planning rather than capturing status quo.

As a part of these policies there is often full-time occupation for staff assigned with volunteer management.

Advocacy organisations make use of many people that participate in specific campaigns by signing petitions, spreading information or writing e-mails to politicians. There might be different policies for such 'external' volunteers and 'internal' volunteers who collaborate with the programs of the organisation more intensively.

Even large third sector organisations do not always have an explicit volunteer policy. Three reasons occur for not having a written volunteer policy for the organisation as a whole. The first reason is that there is a need to have strategies but that there is a lack of time to formulate a structured policy. The approach is rather informal and strategies are mainly the result of past experiences.

A second reason is that the organisation is not actively working to increase volunteer contributions to its goals, mainly because there is a good reason not to have a large share of volunteers. A Dutch advocacy organisation in the field of refugees deliberately does not work with volunteers:

> "As an expertise centre, you need certain abilities that volunteers cannot offer. We do work with interns and research students. They commit for a longer period and can really add value in terms of generating knowledge. Interns often manage our projects." (Professional, LOS NL.)

A respondent at another refugee organisation sees a similar tension between volunteers' motivations and the goals of his organisation:

> "Many volunteers enrol with a charitable mind set. This often goes along with a somewhat paternalist attitude toward refugees. This is not what we have in mind; we particularly want to foster empowerment, trying to make refugees self-reliant at a certain point. Volunteers often have different expectations of the relation than an independent refugee has. Volunteers often want to develop a personal relation, and expect some sort of gratitude. We receive many phone calls from our volunteers, complaining about 'their' refugee's conduct. Considering that many volunteers are also donors, we may also loose funding if they are dissatisfied. We need to do a good cost-benefit analysis of such cases. [...] In that regard, we prefer working with volunteer-mentors from the corporate sector, considering that they are more likely to have a professional attitude toward mentoring." (Professional, UAF NL.)

The Czech branch of the Salvation Army hardly works with volunteers either because the target group is so complicated:

> "So they [the volunteers] either they fear the target groups or they do not feel well with it. So we have them for few days and they just do not show up again or they write an e-mail that they just won't be here anymore. Although these are for example people who originally… who want to do a research so they want to meet with the target group and then do some research but this … at least

what I saw here… never happened. […] This enthusiasm disappears somehow, always. So any long-term volunteers… we do not have any." (Volunteer manager, Salvation Army CZ.)

A third reason for not having a formal policy is a rather decentralised organisation where local associations have a lot of autonomy and people at the headquarters are reluctant to make one-size-fits-all regulations.

"No, we don't have a formal written volunteer policy. We had that once, but we turned away from that because we didn't think it should be formalized too much, but we have a lot of supporting tools and documents on how the volunteers should be working. […] The basic legal platform is our statutes. They have been redesigned from containing a lot of clauses to be more clear and tangible, focusing on what people are allowed to and not rule-tyranny and all the things people are not allowed to. This has been a very conscious choice by our national board". (Volunteer manager, Red Cross DK.)

In such a large, decentralised organisation the national headquarter has a more strategic role, providing suggestions for activities and trainings that regional and local groups, where volunteer coordinators can use those guidelines at their own insights.

3.2.   Recruitment and mobilisation

Strategies to recruit, retain, mobilise and motivate volunteers are as diverse as the third sector itself. All organisational strategies that were identified in the literature review on this topic (Bekkers & De Wit, 2014) also emerged from the interview findings.

In highly decentralised organisations, strategies are different for different regional or local groups. At BUND, the German organisation that is under the umbrella of Friends of the Earth,

"each local group is different, each subject is different and each place is different. […] This results in the question how groups can be addressed concretely. And this is really depends always from the place, the group and the subject" (volunteer manager, Friends of the Earth DE).

Personal contacts are an important way of recruitment. People are often drawn into voluntary engagement because they know the organisation and want to give something back to society. A former refugee started as a volunteer for the Dutch refugee council "considering that I received unemployment benefit and was looking for something that I could do for society in return" (volunteer, Vluchtelingenwerk NL). Donors and members provide a good pool to recruit people who are already involved. In a large athletics association, "members and parents from the associations that organise the races volunteer. Most of them volunteer because they think it's fun" (volunteer manager, IFK Lidingö Friidrott SE). While sports clubs often can rely on members and their relatives, other organisations have to find volunteers with different motives to be attracted to the organisation and its goals.

"We know that it is the personal request that works [...] This is something our local branches are really good at and therefore it is a huge strength that we are not only 98 branches following the municipality structures, but more than 200, because the closer you are, the better a feeling you have of the local community and the more precisely you can ask". (Volunteer manager, Red Cross DK.)

There might also be a disadvantage about leaving recruitment up to local networks. A Red Cross representative emphasises that

> "recruiting peers often means other women in the age of 60 to 70. This leads to a homogenous type of volunteer who is not always the most suitable for the job. The best way to overcome this is to describe the mission as carefully as when you are looking for paid staff, develop a desirable profile and think about which channels are suitable for finding this profile. There might also already be volunteers in other activities that would fit and it is wise to not only look at the immediate circle of friends." (Volunteer manager, Red Cross SE.)

In that sense, searching into personal networks also may enable finding a suitable candidate for a specific vacancy.

Organisations may not let everyone in and select people in order to find the right volunteers for their activities.

> "Some psychologists sometimes advice their patients to become volunteers, when they have work problems, burn-out. […] It was difficult to manage a team with some of those persons, because they have strange behaviour. Now I select the volunteers in a face to face meeting, to identify their motivation. Sometimes I have also to detect a possible 'spy' who could infiltrate our organisation." (Volunteer manager, Greenpeace FR.)

Besides personal requests, third sector organisations have many contacts with other actors like schools, student associations and businesses. With a mission based on Christianity, the Salvation Army often collaborates with churches to recruit volunteers. For the Red Cross, schools are important places to attract volunteers. Here first aid education improves the visibility of the Red Cross and the opportunity for volunteering for children and youth.

> "What developed well in the past is the school medical service. There pupils receive an extended first aid training and become approachable in breaks or in case something happens, because they are defined as responsible. This is very popular and is spread more and more. And following from this some teachers prepare lessons on subjects of the Red Cross; at least since 25 to 30 years." (Volunteer manager, Red Cross DE.)

Although it does not seem to be the most effective way of attracting volunteers, more traditional recruitment campaigns are also used. Some third sector organisations report placing advertisements in (local) media as well as using leaflets, signs and posters. Specific vacancies may be posted on the organisation's own website and/or websites that mediate between the supply and demand of (voluntary) work. Volunteer centres may also mediate between the organisation and possible volunteers, although this does not seem to be a popular channel for recruitment.

Social media might help but, from the perceptions of volunteer managers on national and local levels in our sample, they do not seem to play a large role in recruiting and mobilising volunteers in general. Only the experience from the UK was different: The volunteer manager of the British Red Cross reported that targeted social media campaigns had worked very well for recruiting volunteers; this referred to specific volunteering opportunities at a regional level. Organisations and its local groups often have a Twitter account and/or a Facebook page. An example of a successful campaign

comes from Sweden, where the Red Cross posted a simple volunteer matching tool on Facebook that was shared over 100,000 times. This led to a few hundred signed up as interested, but the test then was shut down since the organisation was not prepared to handle so many applications. "The big problem here was to match all those prospective volunteers with activities managed by the local associations" (volunteer manager, Red Cross SE).

Another example of a successful use of the internet comes from Spain, where the Fundación Biodiversidad coordinates a large project on the conservation of coastal and drainage areas through a volunteering network with more than 5.000 participants annually. The foundation spreads information through the program website about the different volunteering activities. Those interested in being involved as volunteer can check out the offers inserted in an interactive map with the name and contact data of the entity in charge of the realisation of the activity.

Corporate volunteering may incidentally help organisations. As noted before, a refugee organisation prefers working with corporate volunteers because those people are more likely to have a professional attitude. The Dutch branch of the Salvation Army reports receiving some support from companies in the yearly national volunteering day NLdoet.

The volunteer manager at BUND in Germany mentions a change in the subjects on which people are interested to engage, which is also related to a generational change.

> "Those who built up groups with classical subjects like nuclear energy or agriculture or care for habitats and now become old and wish to finalise their engagement and search for new [volunteers]. And often the subjects of these new ones are different; for example vegan nutrition or urban gardening or others. Sometimes the subjects are the same. […] If it concerns the assumed new subjects, in quotation marks, this is sometimes only a question of wording, because urban gardening existed already 30 years ago in groups of the BUND. It has only be called differently. And this is sometimes the gap." (Volunteer manager, BUND DE.)

Although a wide range of strategies is used across the third sector, some organisations do not actively recruit even though they are quite dependent on volunteers. This is an interesting and somewhat surprising finding, which seems to be the case for organisations that have a well-known and popular name. As a Greenpeace representative puts it: "People who want to participate will probably find their way" (volunteer manager, Greenpeace NL). One of her colleagues says:

> "We are fortunate to have a really big brand recognition. The Greenpeace name has been around since 1972 or something like this. [...] We do things that make it on the front cover on newspapers and cause huge controversies and change corporate policy, and we use non-violent civil disobedience and actions, which we think speaks loader than words. That kind of high public image... we are lucky enough to have that... that's what attract people to us." (Volunteer manager, Greenpeace DK.)

It is important to have a good fit between volunteer motivations and the goals of the organisation. The representative of Hnutí Duha, the Czech organisation that is under the umbrella of Friends of the Earth, states that "there is no point in motivating someone who does not see any meaning in what the organisation is doing" (volunteer manager, Friends of the Earth CZ). The organisational output attracts people. As an example,

Hnutí Duha organised a blockade against lumbering the forest – not a very frequent type of repertoire in the Czech context – which raised the number of volunteers after having a great media impact (even if some quit because of the 'too radical' strategy).

Another reason for not recruiting volunteers is the incidental nature of the work that has to be done. Advocacy organisations run different campaigns with different levels of work load, and at one point in time there might be more work than at another point in time. The *supply* of volunteers may also change throughout the year. In Spain, Fundación Biodiversidad, coordinating a large nature conservation project, spreads the different activities performed mostly during the summer, since "this is the period when more volunteers are willing to work" (volunteer manager, Fundación Biodiversidad).

3.3.   Retention and motivation

Once people agreed to volunteer, organisations may try to retain them. In different ways organisations try to make volunteers feel that they are part of the organisation. "Volunteers should feel that they are part of something bigger" (volunteer manager, Friends of the Earth SE). Asking about tips for volunteer management, a sports volunteer says that "it is […] very important to explain what the volunteer gives to the organisation and the society; why it is important and what the results are" (volunteer, FK Lidingö Friidrott).

Ways to make volunteers feel part of the organisation range from organise meetings for volunteers, send out newsletters, invite volunteers for team meetings, provide training, hand out certificates and give volunteers the same Christmas box as employees.

Volunteer managers may help to help people finding their way in the organisation. Different respondents stress that it is important to stay in touch through e-mail, telephone or face to face. This does however not always work as planned. An attempt at the Swedish Red Cross to try volunteer work for a short period with a mentor did not work out too well because local groups were not sufficiently committed.

Greenpeace uses software to create an online community in which volunteers can share ideas and experiences, Greenwire, which runs in many countries and regions.

> "It [the online community] is a place where they [the volunteers] can connect with each other, so we try to go more in the direction of a network structure, that they can inspire each other, with each other can look for… hey, I am looking for these skills to get this project started, I'll look who I can find. Or: I live in Utrecht, who else is here? Instead of that everything has to go through us. So there is much more ownership possible from volunteers. That is more a feeling of community and our role is rather developing that." (Volunteer manager, Greenpeace NL.)

The sense of ownership of the organisation and its goals seems indispensable in keeping volunteers motivated. Volunteers want to stay informed about the activities. This is especially true in advocacy organisations with sometimes controversial campaigns:

> "They [the volunteers] are on the streets or at a festival or wherever they are, or during a presentation, and they hear first-hand how people react on a campaign. […] That is very essential in

a way. […] And it also works reversely, when it concerns more difficult things causing much media controversy, you hear back from volunteers that they are confronted with this in their own personal environment, 'because you are with Greenpeace, right?' So that is a strong part of their identity. That's why they find it important to be well-informed about what happens, because they think like: I can defend myself better and fulfil a kind of ambassador's role." (Volunteer manager, Greenpeace NL.)

The feeling of ownership can be further enhanced by leaving room for developing own activities. Greenpeace representatives from different countries emphasise a shift towards more do-it-yourself projects instead of top-down campaigns in order to prevent volunteers from feeling 'used' by the organisation. "Our organization establish a relationship of trust instead of a relationship of power with these people, and as a counterpart we receive a strong commitment" (volunteer manager, Greenpeace FR).

Organisations with a decentralised structure, like Red Cross Denmark and BUND in Germany, report that the autonomy of local groups are encouraging because volunteers feel that they have the freedom to start new projects.

Material rewards are limited to reimbursing expenses like travel costs. Some organisations provide volunteers with larger financial compensations.

Large voluntary organisations like the Red Cross grant pins or other rewards for staying at the organisation for certain numbers of years. Probably more important are non-material incentives, as people want their contributions to be recognized. This can be as simple as a manager giving a call to volunteers after activities or as far reaching as incorporating volunteers into management decisions and providing them with additional corporate responsibility. For example, the British Red Cross used

"a range of channels such as ongoing support from managers, development opportunities for volunteers to take on more responsibility, opportunities to feed into organisational developments, volunteer forums, the option of joining a volunteer council and awards and recognition for volunteer's commitment. Each area runs two forums a year and all volunteers within the locality are invited. The purpose of a forum is to recognise volunteers for their support, update them on organisational news and give them an opportunity to meet volunteers from other services." (Volunteer manager, Red Cross UK.)

Part of valuing volunteers is ensuring that their voices get heard. The British Red Cross carries out a bi-annual 'People Survey' which asks volunteers about their experiences of volunteering. The results are then used to inform future developments and look at improving ways of working with volunteers.

Furthermore, volunteers flourish when the management is good and there are no unnecessary conflicts between people within the organisation. "Conflict resolution should not be the main job; then it is not fun anymore" (volunteer, FK Lidingö Friidrott).

The work load should not be too high. When there is a lot of attrition the remaining small group of volunteers are left with a disproportionate share of the work, which is demotivating while people are trying hard to accomplish the goals they care about. One of the respondents reported about an episode when a volunteer after a massive workload

in a large weekend event was forced to take a day sick leave from the ordinary work on Monday in order to recover. This further emphasise the need of a good communication between different actors who are involved in an organisation.

Respondents state that there should be enough encouraging work to do and the tasks should fit people's capabilities and ambitions. "If the task is designed in the right way it is motivating in itself" (volunteer manager, Red Cross DK). That is what is emphasised in different interviews: people want to do activities that fit their capabilities and their motivations to be engaged. Finding the right place for everyone in an organisation is one of the main challenges for volunteer managers, especially since many people do not want to commit themselves to regular and time-consuming voluntary activities.

Although there is tough competition between organisations in recruiting volunteers, some third sector organisations do not seem to need specific strategies to recruit and motivate volunteers. Volunteers care about the organisation and its goals in some way, and the most important condition for productive engagement a good fit between the volunteer and his or her activity. This emerges from our findings in multiple ways: volunteers are attracted to organisations that just do the relevant work that contributes something to society.

3.4.   Social innovation

In the organisations we spoke to, social innovation is not a commonly used term. Respondents had some difficulty defining the concept and felt that they were not explicitly working on social innovations in their daily work.

Still, almost all respondents were able to come up with examples of changes that they defined as being social innovations. Those are mainly specific new projects or improvements in existing activities. A few illustrating examples are a telephone service in a non-native language (Swedish Red Cross), a School of Civic Initiative where people are educated to make them more active in public life (Hnutí Duha, Czech Republic), first aid education for partially sighted and blind people (German Red Cross), a bicycle campaign (Greenpeace Denmark) and a shelter for illegal male immigrants (Salvation Army Netherlands).

Rare examples of innovations in the current data that occur on a larger scale and aim at system-level changes are the lobby for new government policies (Czech branch of the Salvation Army) and a network to connect entrepreneurs in the field of environment in touch with investors, publish their innovative work and promote a financing network (Fundación Biodiversidad, Spain).

The social services organisations in our sample mainly aim for stable service provision and the examples of novel initiatives are typically located on local levels. For the Salvation Army,

"the slogan is 'helping people without helping'. [...] We try to stick to our goals and mission: for whom are we here, how do we try to help, that we just do it, not too complicated, work with people in a practical way." (volunteer manager, Salvation Army NL.)

Social innovations play in this context only a minor role, according to representatives of the Red Cross. "There is a lot of constraints, the law frame our activities, and the history of the organization has produced a lot of tacit rules and habits" (volunteer manager, Red Cross FR). One of his colleagues says: "Perhaps 20 percent of the activities are innovative while 80 percent are traditional; there is, however, constantly ongoing improvements and changes, even in the traditional activities" (volunteer manager, Red Cross SE). The changes in activities of social service organisations are incremental innovations rather than radical innovations.

Advocacy organisations in the field of environment can be identified as innovative by definition because they fight for alternative solutions that contribute to the social need of living in a healthier environment. In the words of a Greenpeace representative: "I think we are innovative in what we do, in the way we do it. [...] Because our brand is so known I think that people expect us to do the unexpected" (volunteer manager, Greenpeace DK). Traditional ways of campaigning might still work but sometimes new types of action are needed to draw attention. "Innovation should serve a function" (volunteer manager, Greenpeace NL).

In a similar way, refugee organisations can be seen as innovative per definition when they are working on better solutions for "bottlenecks in the integration of (highly educated) refugees" (volunteer manager, UAF NL).

"Grassroots initiatives are probably examples of social innovation, dealing with the 'software' of society, rather than with the 'hardware'. People perceive things they find deplorable, or find gaps in service provision, and decide to organise something to address the issue. We might think of starting a small shop in an asylum centre, where asylum seekers can earn some money, or of educational campaigns about discrimination in schools. But is that a social innovation? Should there be a foundation to support it? I would say that as soon as more than three people address a problem, we could call it a social innovation." (Professional, Vluchtelingenwerk NL.)

Social innovations are often a reaction to changes in society. Innovation implies "a better way to do what we do" (volunteer manager, Red Cross ES) for the staff of the organisation, especially with the significant reduction of access to traditional fundraising sources due to the current recession. As a result, innovation is mainly perceived as a reactive tool which is "almost indispensable" (volunteer manager, Red Cross ES).

Other relevant developments are the changing media landscape in which it is harder for advocacy organisations to gain attention, governmental budget cuts, and an increasingly heterogeneous population to draw donors and volunteers from. Because third sector organisations work on social needs, innovations are often the result of changes in those needs. For example, an increase in the number of homeless people may urge the Salvation Army to find innovative solutions. Refugee organisations are very much affected by changes in immigration and integration policies.

3.5. Volunteer involvement in social innovation

While volunteers come up with many new ideas, it is often professionals at the organisation who initiate and channel innovations.

In examples like a new shelter for male asylum seekers in the Netherlands, a School of Civic Initiative in the Czech Republic and sports competitions for wheelchairs and mentally handicapped in Sweden, professionals took the initiative after which the organisation mobilised volunteers to support the new activities.

Volunteers are a source of new ideas and there are many innovations that are initiated by volunteers on a local level. Examples in our sample are a bicycle campaign in Denmark, a 'Week in the Wilderness' targeted at socially excluded people in the Czech Republic, and providing first aid education for partially sighted and blind people in Germany.

At the Dutch Refugee Council we spoke to a volunteer who initiated a new project after she did an internship at the organisation.

> "There is currently a large stream of refugees coming to Holland. Considering that we do not have enough volunteers to work as a supporter for every new arrival, we decided to start organizing group support sessions. […] I started off with topics that seemed interesting, and about which I received questions during our speaking hours, for example relating to health insurance. I created a PowerPoint to present these issues." (Volunteer, Vluchtelingenwerk NL.)

This is one of the examples of an initiative from volunteers that we encountered during our in-depth exploration of Dutch refugee organisations. Another example is the human library, where people can 'borrow a person' in order to foster meetings between people who are often unlikely to meet. This initiative was adopted by the Dutch Refugee Council, making it an example of a 'spin-in' where an established third sector organisation adopts a grass-roots voluntary initiative.

It is not always easy to pin down where a social innovation exactly started. New ideas are often the result of incidental interactions rather than deliberate policies.

> "It is not a top-down cycle. There is not a vested structure to receive signals and suggestions from the workfield, the interactions between management and local professionals to develop new projects are ad hoc." (Professional, Vluchtelingenwerk NL.)

Since the work of third sector organisations is mostly carried out by volunteers, they are almost always involved in the implementation of social innovations in the organisations that we examined here.

> "The campaign targets are defined at a central level. Our volunteers are not contributors. […] But they have a great autonomy in deciding how to organize their actions in the frame of our campaigns." (Volunteer manager, Greenpeace FR.)

Besides that, they may serve as the 'eyes and ears' of an organisation.

"Volunteers signal problems and lacunae in services. [...] In innovative projects, we always involve volunteers, as they are the ones executing the work we do. In those projects, volunteers report the successful and less successful elements. The organisation takes notice of these reports. [...] Volunteers work within the framework of tasks and projects that we set as an organisation. But within this framework, volunteers can carry and take the lead in specific activities or initiatives." (Professional, Vluchtelingenwerk NL.)

Finding solutions with multiple stakeholders instead of coming from a single organisation is an important part of the innovativeness of third sector organisations. In this context, the term ownership is used again.

"I think that it [social innovation] is underlying to the trend that people want to take ownership themselves and that you open yourself to that as an organisation, so that the solution does not necessarily comes from one actor but you shape it together." (Volunteer manager, Greenpeace NL).

Therefore, an organisation like Greenpeace increasingly leaves room for voluntary initiatives. At the same time, multi-stakeholder solutions practically always means that there is a role for professionals who have the time, network and knowledge to create collaborations with (local) governments, businesses, foundations and other organisations.

Although new projects are often initiated and channelled by professionals, civic engagement and social innovation in the third sector are always intertwined. Social innovation may also be a source of motivation, as is shown by a French volunteer who quit his work at Greenpeace. "He had proposed a lot of new good ideas but none were applied, so he was bored and left" (volunteer manager, Greenpeace FR).

3.6.   What helps and hinders volunteer contributions to social innovation?

Whether voluntary initiatives are successfully established seem to depend on the organisational structure. A decentralised organisation and the absence of strict rules helps to create room for local initiatives. Local groups in the Danish Red Cross have financial autonomy– although they are not allowed to accumulate money over multiple years – so they have the autonomy to start new projects. By their internal structures and cultures, third sector organisations can stimulate a feeling that there are plenty of opportunities to initiate and enrol new ideas.

At the Spanish Red Cross, innovations that stem from the daily activity of volunteers are normally channelled through a good practices management system application that allows volunteers or any assembly member to record practices that are considered innovative and exportable within the organisation. After validation, these practices become checked in a national level, being implemented by all the assemblies interested. In this sense, the interviewee underlines the importance of promoting the celebration of local based volunteering gathering activities from which numerous novel initiatives start to spread across the organisation.

While bottom-up ideas and initiatives are generally very much appreciated, many organisations want to keep some level of control over the activities. The volunteer

manager of the Dutch branch of Greenpeace emphasised that campaigns should fit in one of the five core topics the organisation is working on. Hnutí Duha in the Czech Republic organises a 'Big Ask' lobby project in which citizens are engaged in order to communicate with political representatives in relation to green energy policies. Here the employees had to become the initiators of the project, because without proper know-how the whole activity could end up just "screaming in the squares" (volunteer manager, Friends of the Earth CZ).

Collaborations between professionals and volunteers can help to produce and channel new ideas. "I currently try to mix the volunteers and the professionals, because it's a source of enrichment for both. I hope this will contribute to better take into account volunteers' new ideas" (volunteer manager, Greenpeace FR).

New initiatives can become successful innovations when they are taken over by the organisation. A sports volunteer states: "The board often discusses how new ideas could be implemented and who could be responsible for it. It is very important to find a dedicated project manager" (volunteer, FK Lidingö Friidrott).

Providing training and handing out certificates are possible ways to foster innovative ideas. The Dutch refugee council Vluchtelingenwerk started the Euro-Wijzer project, in which volunteers receive training in budget counselling to better assist refugees in handling financial issues. From the part of the Red Cross Germany an internal award has been developed for engagement to motivate volunteers to develop new ideas. The online community software Greenwire at Greenpeace might serve as a platform to exchange ideas and inspire each other.

Barriers for novel ideas to become successful social innovations are mainly the result of a lack of resources. Some new initiatives require money, time and effort from the organisation, which is not always easy to provide.

> "Local volunteers are already very busy with the organization's 'core business': volunteer support. They may not always have time to develop nice new projects, like a fair, a music project for refugee children, a festival or a community garden. There often matters of life and death that require immediate attention. There might be a tension between a focus on new projects and the main work that we have to do." (Professional, Vluchtelingenwerk NL.)

In the words of a Red Cross representative, there is "a lack of super qualified people" (volunteer manager, Red Cross ES) available to optimize the innovations.

4.   Conclusions

While many large third sector organisations have a written or unwritten volunteer policy, some organisations do not have a central policy because (1) they do not have the time to write policy documents, (2) they do not aim to work with many volunteers, or (3) they deliberately choose to leave autonomy to regional or local groups.

In previous studies in different contexts, recruitment and retention of volunteers has been shown to be associated with management practices like human resource management planning, balance of interest and persuasion, strategic commitment, coordination across organizational boundaries, role clarity, team spirit of paid staff, respect and informal recognition, providing training and professional development, the screening of volunteers and matching volunteers to organizational tasks (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Hager & Brudney, 2004; Studer, 2015). In the current study we found many different strategies, adding to the literature by using broad qualitative data across organisations and countries.

Examples of practices are summarised in the first column of Table 2. Besides well-known ways of recruiting and motivating, like personal requests, collaborating with other organisations and providing material and non-material rewards, an important strategy is to do relevant work with activities that suit (potential) volunteers.

Some organisations indicate that they recruit and motivate volunteers just by doing their work. The brand recognition and appealing campaigns of Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth are examples of activities that attract volunteers without this being a primary goal.

Table 1 Examples of practices that help voluntary engagement and volunteer contributions to social innovation

Helps voluntary engagement	Helps contributions to social innovation
Recruit through personal networks	Channel innovations through a good practices management system application
Recruit and mobilise through organisation's website	Find dedicated project manager
Recruit through other organisations (schools, churches, student associations, businesses)	Discuss novel ideas in board
Signs and posters	Provide training and give certificates
Mediating websites	Reward volunteers for developing new ideas
Recruit through (local) media	Create online community where volunteers can exchange experiences and ideas
Recruit and mobilise through social media	Give volunteers ownership in activities
Use corporate volunteers	Decentralise organisation and give room for local initiatives
Use different framing for older and younger volunteers	Mix employees and volunteers
Help volunteers to find their way in organisation	
Good management, avoid unnecessary conflicts	
Keep track of people who volunteered	
Organise team meetings for (employees and) volunteers	
Provide training and give certificates	

Recognise contributions	
Give Christmas box	
Reimburse (travel) expenses	
Reward people for volunteering a number of years	
Design activities in the right way	
Make sure that there is enough work	
Avoid that small group does most of the work	
Create online community where volunteers can exchange experiences and ideas	
Keep volunteers informed	
Make volunteers feel that they own the organisation and its mission	
Create room for own activities	
Do not make strict rules	
Just do relevant and attractive activities	

Social innovation is not explicitly part of the routines and terminology in the third sector. Especially service organisations like the Salvation Army or the Red Cross mostly care about delivering stable service provision to their target groups. However, as summarised in the first column of Table 3, almost all third sector organisations see examples of social innovation in their work. We might argue that advocacy is innovative per definition as it means proposing alternative solutions for social needs like humane asylum policies and a healthy environment.

Innovations are often a reaction on developments in society that induce changes in the social needs organisations are working on. Economic crises and government policies affect the target groups of third sector organisations, requiring novel solutions. The second column in Table 3 shows the organisations that describe their social innovations as mostly responses to external developments.

Innovations are mostly initiated by professionals. They have the time and the network to start new projects, often in collaboration with other public and private actors. In organisations where local groups have a higher degree of autonomy, like different branches of the Red Cross, volunteers have more possibilities to come up with new ideas that are taken over to become successful social innovations. The third column of Table 3 shows the organisations where volunteers initiate most social innovations.

Whoever initiates innovations, volunteers are almost always involved. This is inescapable in organisations where volunteers do a large part of the work. However, the coordination of new projects mostly remains at (the headquarters of) the organisation.

The ways in which volunteer contributions to social innovations can be stimulated are summarised in the second column of Table 2.

Table 3 How do volunteer managers in third sector organisations perceive social innovation

	Sees work as innovative	Social innovations mostly responses to external dev'ts	Volunteers initiate most social innovations	Volunteers involved in most social innovations
Red Cross DE		✔	✔	✔
Red Cross DK	✔	✔	✔	✔
Red Cross ES	✔	✔	✔	✔
Red Cross FR				
Red Cross SE	✔	✔		✔
Salvation Army CZ	✔	✔		
Salvation Army NL		✔		✔
Fundación Biodiversidad ES	✔	✔		✔
Friends of the Earth CZ	✔	✔	✔	✔
Friends of the Earth DE	✔	✔	✔	✔
Friends of the Earth SE	✔			✔
Greenpeace DK	✔			✔
Greenpeace FR	✔			✔
Greenpeace NL	✔	✔		✔
IFK Lidingö Friidrott SE	✔		✔	✔
LOS NL	✔	✔		
UAF NL	✔	✔		✔
Vluchtelingenwerk NL	✔	✔		✔

Besides providing general insights in organisational strategies in volunteer policy and volunteer contributions to social innovation, we explored two hypotheses that are formulated in another ITSSOIN publication (Anheier et al., 2014b).

The first hypothesis was that an organisation is more socially innovative when it has a higher degree of voluntary engagement. The findings in the current sample seems to point in a different direction. Third sector organisations who rely on relatively large shares of volunteers like the Red Cross mainly care about producing stable service provision and definitely do not see social innovation as a goal per se. The responsibility

for many innovations lies at the professional organisation, where new ideas are initiated or at least coordinated. Having said that, volunteers are indispensable in implementing social innovations.

The second hypothesis states that organisations with a higher level of 'unengaged' forms of voluntary engagement, like incidental volunteering or mandatory community work, are less innovative. Although volunteer managers generally prefer regular volunteers to work with, 'unengaged' forms of volunteering are not mentioned as barriers for social innovation. What *does* hinder social innovation is a too high work load for existing volunteers. When volunteers are busy with their daily work there is little time to think about alternative solutions.

Rather than the degree of voluntary engagement and the level of 'unengaged' forms of volunteering, the organisational structure seems to be important in fostering social innovations. Decentralised structures where local groups have organisational and financial autonomy report lower barriers for novel ideas to be initiated, developed and incorporated in the work of the organisation. A shared sense of ownership of the organisation and its mission stimulates bottom-up innovations.

5.   Appendices

Appendix 1 List of interviews

	Country	Organisation	No. of interviewees	Role(s)	Conducted
1	Czech Republic	Friends of the Earth	1	Volunteer manager	June 2015
2	Czech Republic	Salvation Army	1	Volunteer manager	June 2015
3	Denmark	Greenpeace	1	Volunteer manager	June 2015
4	Denmark	Red Cross	1	Volunteer manager	June 2015
5	France	Greenpeace	2	Volunteer manager	May 2015
6	France	Red Cross	1	Volunteer manager	May 2015
7	Germany	Friends of the Earth	1	Volunteer manager	May 2015
8	Germany	Red Cross	1	Volunteer manager	July 2015
9	Netherlands	Greenpeace	1	Volunteer manager	June 2015
10	Netherlands	LOS	1	Coordinator	March 2015
11	Netherlands	Salvation Army	2	Volunteer managers	May 2015
12	Netherlands	UAF	1	Head student counselling	July 2015
13	Netherlands	Vluchtelingenwerk	2	Strategic adviser; policy advisor	March 2015
14	Netherlands	Vluchtelingenwerk	1	Manager	July 2015
15	Netherlands	Vluchtelingenwerk	1	Volunteer	July 2015
16	Netherlands	Vluchtelingenwerk	1	Volunteer	August 2015
17	Spain	Fundacion Biodiversidad	1	Volunteer manager	July 2015
18	Spain	Red Cross	1	Volunteer manager	June 2015
19	Sweden	IFK Lidingö Friidrott	1	Manager	June 2015
20	Sweden	IFK Lidingö Friidrott	1	Volunteer	June 2015
21	Sweden	IFK Lidingö Friidrott	1	Volunteer	June 2015
22	Sweden	IFK Lidingö Friidrott	1	Volunteer	June 2015
23	Sweden	IFK Lidingö Friidrott	1	Former volunteer	June 2015

24	Sweden	Friends of the Earth	1	Volunteer manager	June 2015
25	Sweden	Red Cross	1	Volunteer manager	June 2015
26	United Kingdom	Red Cross	1	Volunteer manager	August 2015

Appendix 2 Topic list volunteer managers

Topic list
Organisation in general
• Could you please briefly describe the core tasks your organisation is working on?
• What does your own work looks like?
• For how long have you been working for the organisation? And before that?
Volunteer policy in general
• Does your organisation have a written or unwritten policy to attract, retain, mobilise and motivate volunteers? If yes, what does this policy look like?
• In which ways do you try to attract, retain, mobilise and motivate volunteers in your own work? Could you give a few examples of attempts that were successful or less successful? [INTERVIEWER after the respondent's answer, name the most popular strategies: advertisements on media or social media; through informal networks; via schools, companies or other organisations; via databases, matching sites etc.; rewards, presents or trips for volunteers.]
• How did the numbers of volunteers in your organisation changed during the last few years? How many volunteers have entered or left the organisation? To what extent do you try to prevent attrition? Do you use incidental volunteers?
• What roles do volunteers have in your organisation? Also take into account roles outside their official tasks. [INTERVIEWER ask further: think about volunteers who serve as the eyes and ears to detect social problems and for possibilities to work on these problems; who are a source of creative ideas; who have networks where the organisation can benefit from; who represent the organisation to the outside world, etc.]
Social innovation
• Could you describe your organisation's mission?
• Do you perceive your organisation's work as innovative? In other words, to what extent does your organisation contribute to new and better solutions for social problems? [INTERVIEWER if necessary elaborate based on the elements from the definition we use: novel solutions for social needs 1. that are preferably better (more effective, more efficient) than existing solutions; 2. that provide the organisation's target population with more power and resources; 3. that thus establish new relations or other power relations.]
• Is this social innovation important for your organisation, or do you merely care about stable and reliable service provision or advocacy?
• To what extent are the social innovations where your organisation contributes to reactions to changes in society like economic downturn, budget cuts from governments and ageing?
• Do you try to stimulate volunteers to contribute to novel solutions?

• Could you provide examples of social innovations where your organisation contributes to or contributed to? Who took the initiative here (professionals or volunteers)?
• [INTERVIEWER eventually make two lists for each type of initiator]
Innovations initiated by professionals
• Do volunteers play a role by innovations initiated by professionals within your organisation (based on examples in previous question)? If yes, in what way? [INTERVIEWER if necessary refer to comments about volunteer contributions]
• Do you considerably try to involve volunteers in these innovations? How successful were these attempts?
• Were there any things that did withhold volunteers to be involved with these innovations?
Innovations initiated by volunteers
• How do you from your organisation react on novel initiatives by volunteers? Could you provide some examples?
• Can you provide some examples of things that work better or worse in this respect?

Appendix 3 Topic list (former) volunteers

Topic list
Voluntary work in general
• What do/did you do when you volunteer for the organisation?
• Please describe how you started to volunteer. [INTERVIEWER eventually help with possible answers: someone asked you, you found the organisation, a friend volunteered, you saw a social problem etc.]
Role of organisation
• Did the organisation do anything to motivate you to start/continue to volunteer? [INTERVIEWER after the respondent's answer, name the most popular strategies: information about the needs, material incentives, education etc.]
• Did the organisation do anything that lowered your motivation to volunteer? [INTERVIEWER after the respondent's answer, name the most important barriers: hard to find information, no meaningful tasks, bad working hours, poor supervision, need for better education]
Social innovation
• Did the organisation encourage volunteers to suggest, test or invent new ways of work or to work with new social needs?
• Did the organisation do anything that hindered volunteers to "think outside of the box"?
Volunteer management
• If you were responsible for volunteer management, what would you do in order to facilitate recruitment and retention of volunteers?

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