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Could Interdisciplinary Research be a Way to Re-think the Organization of Volunteers?

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Abstract: *Volunteering is a global phenomenon and different type of volunteers can be found in different types of organizations. Societal changes in how people volunteer and in how organizations use volunteers have made researchers call for a re-examining of organizing of volunteers. Therefore, this study aims to explore how different types of volunteering are organized in different types of organizations. The study uses an interdisciplinary research (IDR) approach with two perspectives, which in this paper are called Volunteer management (VM) and Volunteer coordination (VC). Four different Swedish organizations with different type of volunteers, two different types of sports organizations, one social organization and an entrepreneurial network are used as cases. The data consists of 18 interviews with project managers and volunteers. The data is analyzed in three IDR-inspired steps using both qualitative and quantitative analyses. This study reveals that understanding how to organize volunteering benefits from viewing volunteer organization in a proposed two-dimensional model. This model includes management strategies in different phases as well as relational perspectives and strikes a balance between organizational structure and climate. Merging research traditions can contribute to new knowledge in a changing society. Voluntary organizations need to work with everyday structures that allow them the flexibility to develop a sustainable volunteer organization by both managing and coordinating their volunteers.*

Keywords: Volunteering; interdisciplinary research; sports clubs; NGO´s; management and administration; organizations

Introduction

Engaging in volunteer work is a global phenomenon. Access to volunteers is important for the survival of many different organizations (Randle et al., 2013; Schlesinger et al., 2015; van der Roest et al., 2017). Some organizations rely on large groups of volunteers for major events, such as the Summer Olympics, which can engage 70,000 volunteers (Costa et al., 2006).

Volunteerism is changing, however (Enjolras & Strømsnes, 2018; Macduff et al., 2009). Societal changes like individualization, digitalization and immigration are some global

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challenges that influence volunteering (ex. Enjolras & Strømsnes, 2018; Macduff et al., 2009. People are not members of the same organization for a long time as before, but instead get involved in shorter initiatives (Enjolras & Strømsnes, 2018). The increase in flexible, short-term initiatives has been explained by people's more tightly scheduled lives, as well as by the need for volunteers to assist in dealing with global crises like large migrant flows and natural disasters (Dunn et al., 2016; Schlesinger et al., 2013). On the other hand, recruiting volunteers has always been considered a challenge (Kim & Bang, 2013; Østerlund, 2013).

Some organizations that use volunteers have also been professionalized and are now run more like companies (Macduff et al., 2009; Svensson, 2019), though they usually lack the greater financial framework that this requires and continue to rely heavily on volunteers. To some extent, this has changed the expectations placed on volunteers and the tasks assigned to them (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Ibsen et al., 2019; Schlesinger et al., 2013). Because of these changes in how people engage in volunteer work, the organizing of volunteers must also be re-examined (Macduff et al., 2009).

Earlier, researchers find that studies of volunteers have been conducted from an individual perspective, for example stressing their motives and experiences, more than from an organizational perspective (Einolf, 2018; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013; Wicker, 2017). There have also been calls for a methodological triangulation, for example using data from both management and volunteers (Einolf, 2018; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013) and data from different types of organizations and volunteers (Einolf, 2018; Wicker, 2017). There is added value of comparing volunteers in different organizations to get a broader perspective on strategies for organizing volunteers in a changing world of volunteering. There is also a need to study the how-to question in volunteer management (Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013).

Therefore, this study adopts an organizational perspective, using interdisciplinary research to explore different types of organizations, as well as different types of volunteers and different data sources. Using an IDR-inspired analysis, this study will combine the two perspectives of Volunteer Management (VM) and Volunteer Coordination (VC), with the aim of exploring how different types of volunteering are organized in different types of organizations.

Literature reviews

In a study on organizing volunteering, a brief overview must be made to define the concept of volunteering and introduce who volunteer and why, because these factors have an impact on how to organize volunteers. There is no single, clear-cut definition of volunteering (Petriwskyj & Warburton, 2007). This study focuses formal volunteering, i.e organized volunteering. The voluntary sector in different parts of the world differ. In Scandinavian countries voluntary organizations are an important actor characterized by for ex. being membership-based, democratic with a close relationship to the state (Enjolras & Strømsnes, 2018). In Sweden also the sports movement is a part of the voluntary sector (Fahlén 2015). In Sweden, the context of this study, around 50 % of all adults do some volunteering, which has

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been quite stable over time (von Essen & Svedberg, 2020).

The designation of specific kinds of volunteers and their tasks can also differ greatly. Sometimes the various terms refer to the length of the assignment, for instance episodic volunteering (Hyde et al., 2014), long-term volunteering (Schlesinger et al., 2013) and sporadic volunteering (Wicker, 2017). Other designations have to do with the characteristics of the undertaking, and include clients, volunteers, text-message activists, supporters, mentors, sponsors (Robertsson & Hvenmark, 2015), administrative volunteers, voluntary coaches and voluntary referees (Swierzy et al., 2019).

An organization working with female mentors has chosen to call their volunteers big sisters, because of its more friendly, gender-specific and less professional tone (Larsson et al., 2016). Some terms have to do with the form of participation as a volunteer, for instance member-based (Hyde et al., 2014), formal positions and ad-hoc positions (Østerlund, 2013). In the project (Author, 2019) of which this study is a part, 22 different designations occur among 181 organizations.

Who volunteers also has to do with the different forms of volunteering. Volunteers are an extremely diverse group but can also be quite homogeneous within specific kinds of volunteering (Bussell & Forbes, 2002). Very briefly and generally speaking, as a group volunteers tend to be more highly educated than average, and also include more women than men, except in politics and sports where men predominate (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Randle et al., 2013; Wicker, 2017). Women are also more prevalent in humanitarian volunteering (Randle et al., 2013). Some studies conclude that volunteering choices can be inherited (Bussell & Forbes, 2002) and some that people who formerly were involved or participants in an activity come back (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Fredriksson et al., 2015; Fröding et al., 2013).

Why people volunteer has been studied extensively from an individual perspective. People's motives can differ, for example by gender, age and background. Traditionally, altruistic motives have been emphasized (Bussell & Forbes, 2002) but later studies have also added benefits like having meaningful leisure-time, making friends, gaining experience and learning (Dunn et al., 2016). A common reason why people volunteer in sports is to do something for their children (Schlesinger et al., 2013). It is also probably common for people to have more than one motive for volunteering (von Essen & Svedberg, 2020).

Who volunteers and why is studied more than how volunteering is organized, but it is important to keep in mind that the 'who's' and 'why's' of volunteering affect how best to organize it. Changing organizational-level factors can lead to increased volunteering, while individual characteristics for the most cannot be changed by the organization itself (Swierzy et al., 2019).

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Organizing and administering towards volunteering

In the literature on how to organize volunteers, different areas are emphasized. Here I will briefly present research on the relations between different types of volunteers and organizations and how to organize volunteering. Then follows a section on the different phases of organizing volunteers, such as recruiting, training and retaining them. Finally, I will end the overview by presenting research covering overall strategies for organizing volunteers, in particular with regard to the two perspectives Volunteer Management (VM) and Volunteer Coordination (VC).

Understanding the target group, for example knowing what motivates them, can be key to successfully recruiting and retaining volunteers (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Hager & Brudney, 2011). Younger people, for example, can be easier to recruit but harder to retain (Hager & Brudney, 2011). Motives for volunteering change over time in different phases of life (Kragt & Holtrop, 2019). The size of an organization also can affect how to organize volunteering; for instance, a small organization could allow volunteers to be very close to the decision-making, but perhaps have no paid staff. A larger organization may have paid staff and a well-organized strategy for organizing volunteers (Hager & Brudney, 2011), but have problems making the volunteers feel a sense of belonging (Ibsen et al., 2019).

The relationship between paid staff and volunteers is also mentioned, for example in terms of a constructive cooperation (Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013) or volunteers being more interested in doing core business than administrative tasks (Stirling et al., 2011). On the other hand, Nagel et al. (2019) found that size of the organization and having paid staff were not important for volunteer satisfaction.

The literature on how to organize volunteering also includes research on specific phases such as recruiting (Randle et al., 2013; Schlesinger et al., 2015; Østerlund, 2013), supporting (Costa et al., 2006; Schneider et al., 2007) and retaining volunteers (Schlesinger et al., 2013). In brief, this literature covers the difference between recruiting volunteers from within an organization (most common in sports) or from outside of it (most common in humanitarian NGOs). For example, internal communication is a key factor for recruiting within an organization (Geidne et al., 2013; Østerlund, 2013). Support for volunteering differs between different tasks and is done for different reasons ranging from getting qualified volunteers (Schneider et al., 2007) to creating a sense of belonging (Costa et al., 2006).

Retention can be an outcome of well-planned strategies for recruiting and support (Cuskelly et al., 2006) but also includes factors like social climate (Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013) and recognition, which can take the form of a pat on the shoulder, being invited to social events or material incentives (Fredriksson et al., 2015; Geidne et al., 2013; Stirling et al., 2011). Reimbursing out-of-pocket expenses is mentioned as a prerequisite for recruiting volunteers with different economic situations (Petriwskyj & Warburton, 2007; Stirling et al., 2011). In addition, having a reasonable workload and a fixed time limit for the volunteering task is regarded as a factor for sustainable volunteering (Larsson et al., 2016). Another retention

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factor can be offering activities that are a natural next step forward, for example allowing people to advance from a young participant to an older participant, and then to a young volunteer (Fredriksson et al., 2018).

There is also research emphasizing overall strategies for organizing volunteers, however this literature seems to be scattered across journals and disciplines (Einolf, 2018; Kragt & Holtrop, 2019). In my review, I found two types of perspectives: the volunteer-management perspective (Cuskelly et al., 2006) which I in this study will call VM and a perspective that I here will call the volunteer-coordination (VC) perspective (e.g. Einolf, 2018; Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013). These terms are sometimes used as synonyms however, even though they refer to different perspectives. VM has its origin in Human Resource Management (HRM). Bartram et al., (2017) mention that some scholars argue that paid staff and volunteers are fundamentally different, making HRM approaches less relevant, while others argue that the components of HRM can be useful for volunteers as well (Cuskelly et al., 2006). In this study the Volunteer Management Inventory (VMI), developed for community sports organizations in Australia (Cuskelly et al., 2006), was used as an analytical tool.

Volunteer coordination is the perspective described in literature reviews by Einolf (2018) and Studer and von Schnurbein (2013) as separate from what is emerging from the HRM perspective. This term is used less in the research literature than VM. One way of using it is to refer to the specific task of coordinating volunteers (Macduff et al., 2009), though in Studer and von Schnurbein's (2013) review it is used as an umbrella term that also includes VM. However, both Studer (2016) and Einolf (2018) use VM as the umbrella term for a combination of the two perspectives. VC comprises the components of organizing volunteering that are not included among the traditional components of HRM. The analytical tool developed for this study is described in detail in the method section.

Using different models from different disciplines to understand how to organize volunteers is needed for future advancement and creation of a knowledge base (Einolf, 2018; Kragt & Holtrop, 2019). Two earlier studies (Stirling et al., 2011; Studer, 2016) have also made attempts to merge different perspectives, the first using the theory of psychological contracts, the second by creating new measures and methods of statistical analysis to broaden the classical HRM constructs. This study aims to explore how different types of volunteering are organized in different types of organizations.

Research Method

This study will use an analysis inspired by the Interdisciplinary Research (IDR) approach (Repko & Szostak, 2017), since this approach is relevant to solve complex phenomena in research (Doherty, 2013). First to identify how the organization of volunteering appears from the two different perspectives of VM and VC, and secondly to create a new and more comprehensive understanding by identifying conflicts and finding common ground. This method section will first describe the analytical tools used for the analysis, then the sample, interviews and finally the steps of the analyses.

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Analytical tools

For the VM perspective, Cuskelly's et al.'s (2006) Volunteer Management Inventory (VMI) has been used an analytical tool (Table 1). VMI is based on seven HRM constructs – recruitment, selection, orientation, training, support, performance management and recognition – comprising 36 items.

Table 1. Volunteer management inventory (VMI) from Cuskelly et al. (2006) in this study used as VM analytical tool

VM Constructs	**Items (n)**	**Item content**
Planning	6	Identify potential volunteers before season, target volunteers based on their skills, engage in succession planning for replacement, provide role descriptions, encourage turnover in key positions, maintain a database of volunteers
Recruitment	7	Match recruits with specific roles, fill positions prior to annual meetings, develop positions to meet needs of volunteers, actively recruit from diverse backgrounds, use advertising, use "word-of-mouth", actively recruit outside organization
Screening	2	Verify accreditation, conduct suitability checks
Orientation	4	Introduce new volunteers, hold induction sessions, encourage acceptable behaviour, hold induction meetings
Training and support	9	Provide mentoring, provide support, maintain sufficient resources, manage workload, assist with access to training outside the organization, cover costs for training or accreditation outside organization, reimburse for out-of-pocket expenses, supply with food, provide clothing
Performance management	3	Monitor performance, provide feedback about performance, address performance problems
Recognition	5	Recognize outstanding work, plan for recognition, thank volunteers, publicly recognize volunteers, provide special awards

An analytical tool for the VC perspective was developed with inspiration from issues not included in the VM constructs from the literature reviews conducted by Studer and von Schnurbein (2013) and Einolf (2018) (Table 2).

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Table 2. Analytical tool for VC developed with inspiration from Studer, and von Schnurbein (2013) and Einolf (2018)

VC component	**Analytical examples**
Relations between volunteers and paid staff	Different tasks, volunteers' part in decision-making, power balance, conflicts, constructive collaboration
Volunteer roles, identification and socialization (The volunteers)	Role expectations, clear definition of roles, specific person responsible for VC, Identity as a volunteer, use of role models, active socialization among volunteers, representing the organization, role flexibility, how to designate the volunteer
Values and organizational identity (The organization)	The organization's values and identity, volunteer-friendly climate, organizational culture, encouraging supportive environment, encouraging reflection
Communication strategies (Between organization and volunteer)	Matching with organization, information sharing
Organizational features that can be influenced	The task types, flexibility in schedule, size of organization, type of funding

Sample

A larger sample of 181 projects were initially collected in an evaluation study for the Swedish Inheritance Fund (Geidne, 2019). . From these, four projects were then selected as cases to be used in this study.

The first inclusion criteria were having substantial volunteering activities described in their applications, annual reports and in the questionnaire used in the evaluation study. From the twenty projects that met this inclusion criteria, four different organizations that had different types of volunteers in relation to the aim of this study, were selected. These different types of volunteers were (as called by the organizations themselves), episodic volunteers, youth assistant coaches, parent coaches, and action guides.

Individuell Människohjälp (IM) - Swedish development partner is an organization with no religious or political affiliation that sees and reacts to injustice in the world. The specific project in this study 'Active Leisure' was a collaboration with a mid-sized city municipality to identify newly arrived refugee children and accompany them to leisure-time activities,

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which in almost all cases are sports activities, but also could be cultural activities. The project works with episodic volunteers.

Cityidrott (CI) - City sports is an organization that arranges different types of sports activities for 6–12 year-olds in a smaller town with a highly multi-cultural population. This particular project aimed to educate adolescents to be voluntary youth assistant coaches.

Habo Wolley (Habo) is a traditional sports club in a smaller city offering volleyball practice to children up to national top-level. The specific project concerned activities for the youngest children in the club (3–5 years old) together with their parents and voluntary parent coaches.

Forza of Sweden (Forza) describe themselves an innovative education company, and are a type of network for entrepreneurs. The specific project in this study aimed to help newly arrived immigrants enter Swedish society more quickly by matching them with volunteer mentors, who were called action guides.

Interviews

An interview guide was created on how to organize volunteering in a broad sense. There were questions related to planning of how to organize volunteers in the project, who participated and what sources of knowledge was used. The different phases of volunteer organizing such as recruiting, introduction, support and maintaining also if something was changed during the project in how volunteering was organized. The questions only concerned the organizing of volunteering, and therefore did not include any sensitive topics concerning respondents' personal lives.

After obtaining informed consent, all interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews by the author, and then ten were transcribed verbatim by the author and two by an assistant. The interviews were between 13 and 75 minutes long and were conducted in a place of the organization's choosing, three at premises of the organizations, and one in a quiet corner of a local café.

The project manager chose the respondents for the sample based on the sampling criteria to speak with 2–3 volunteers from the project (differing in tasks, gender, and age, if possible). The study comprises 12 interviews with 18 project managers and volunteers (Table 3). Most of the interviews were individual, but two were conducted as group interviews at the volunteers' own request.

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Table 3: Information of the interviews and respondents (PM=project manager and V=volunteer)

Organization	Role	Respondents	Length of interview
IM	PM	Project manager and at the beginning also an earlier PM	65 minutes
	V	One volunteer	16 minutes
	V	Two volunteers	44 minutes
CI	PM	Project manager	60 minutes
	V	Youth coach	20 minutes
	V	New youth coach	13 minutes
	V	Coach/youth coach	16 minutes
Habo	PM	Project manager	29 minutes
	V	Youth coach	30 minutes
	V	Parent coach	20 minutes
Forza	PM	Project manager	60 minutes
	V	A group of 5 action guides	75 minutes

Analysis

The analysis of this data was divided into three main parts inspired by the main steps of IDR: first, in Steps 1a and 1b, two separate analyses identifying insights from the perspectives of VM and VC respectively; and then, in Step 2, integrating these results into a comprehensive understanding.

The analytical steps taken in the study were as follows. Each interview was read in its entirety. The parts of the interviews that were relevant to the aim of the study were used as units of analysis. (The interviews also dealt with prerequisites for organizing that affect the organization but are outside of its control.) In Step 1a, these units were coded deductively using Cuskelly et al.'s (2006) Volunteer Management Inventory (VMI). In Step 1b, parts that did not fit into any category of VMI were categorized

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into the VC analytical tool. In Step 2, the findings were integrated, taking inspiration from the interdisciplinary research approach (Repko & Szostak, 2017).

First, I identified conflicting findings, such as what aspects of how to organize volunteers that are found in either VM or VC, but not in both. Secondly, I identified common ground by looking at what aspects were identified in both, though they might be named differently. This was done through an iterative process, going back and forth between the literature and the findings, to search for common ground between concepts and assumptions using the IDR techniques of redefinition, extension, transformation and organization. This comprehensive understanding was constructed to identify the added value of using both perspectives. The analyses comprised both deductive quantitative content analysis with some descriptive and bivariate non-parametric statistics, as well as qualitative content analysis.

Results

The result section is divided in three parts (in accordance with the three IDR-steps), first the results of the VM analysis, then the VC analysis and finally the integration of the findings

Volunteer management

The VM perspective was visible in some way in all four organizations, all seven VM constructs were identified although not all items (Figure 1).

VM constructs	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**Total**
Planning	2	4	6	25	14	1				52
Recruitment	9	0	10	1	9	27	11			67
Screening	0	13								13
Orientation	10	14	11	2						37
Training and support	5	21	17	10	2	3	1	6	11	76
Performance management	0	5	3							8
Recognition	6	0	29	2	0					37

Figure 1. Distribution of statements within the VM constructs and their items (n=290 statements). (All constructs did not have the same number of items, i.e. black shadowed cells in some constructs.)

Recruitment and training-and-support were the constructs most mentioned, while screening and performance management were mentioned least often. There was no statistically significant difference between the numbers of statements made by the project managers (n=141) and the volunteers (n=149) between constructs (p=0.11), indicating that paid staff

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and volunteers in the four organizations reported using the same strategies when organizing volunteers.

All constructs are present in all organizations' work with organizing volunteers. Eight of the 36 items were mentioned by all four organizations. These included having a role description, using word-of-mouth recruitment, conducting some sort of suitability check, providing support and sufficient resources for their volunteers, and thanking them for their efforts.

The different organizations state that the role description and planning can affect other constructs of organizing. Providing support could take different forms ranging from brief, informal everyday contacts like mentoring, accompanying, supervising and text-message contact, to more formal monthly meetings. Accompanying new volunteers could also be a way to introduce them to their volunteering tasks. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that none of the organizations require their volunteers to undergo training before they begin working; the tasks are not of such a nature that they require it. Making sure volunteers know who to contact, encouraging them to ask questions and being available are important aspects of support.

Five of the VM items were not mentioned by any of the organizations. None of the organizations are explicitly monitoring the performance of their individual volunteers, using accreditation systems or providing special awards, and they do not use filling positions before annual meetings as a strategy.

Differences between organizations and volunteers

The organization that had statements touching on the most items was IM, which mentioned 25 out of 36 items, followed by Forza with 20 items, and CI and Habo with 18 each. However, the difference was not significant ($p=0.35$). Nevertheless, some variations were discovered between different organizations as well as having children or adults as participants. In addition, there could also be variations in whether the volunteers were adults or youth or were episodic or long-term.

Concerning recruitment, the organizations that recruited from within the organization and those that recruited from outside of the organization differed. In, for example a traditional sports club, people who are being recruited are already present, and going from identifying to recruiting can occur very quickly. Actively recruiting from outside the organization is not even considered in this type of organization. Personal relationships can also have been built up over the course of years, since the volunteers themselves were participants as young children. Word-of-mouth is used in both internal and external recruiting and is considered a better method than using social media, as it is thought to be too difficult to get through the social media noise. For the organizations that actively recruit outside their organization, it is important to retain existing volunteers/participants by listening to them and developing tasks for them. For adult volunteers living busy lives, this could imply a need for the organization to be flexible, but for young participants who are getting too old for the ordinary activities it

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meant developing volunteering tasks that allow them to stay in the environment where they have been participants and felt safe for years.

Having adult or youth volunteers seems to affect the way of communicating, where the organizations with only adult volunteers have written role descriptions, but also provide verbal information, while the other organizations only provide information verbally.

The two organizations that work with youth participants emphasize the importance of a club uniform, 'the hoodie' and a coach t-shirt, which is regarded as having pedagogical value and strengthening club identity. These two organizations also offer sports activities. Adult volunteers, both parents and other adults, could describe the joy of seeing the children having a good time as recognition. Young volunteers talked about the feeling of recognition they felt when adults believed in their ability to perform tasks. Only the organizations that have children as participants talk about encouraging acceptable behaviour; and CI in particular, which also works with younger volunteers, talk a lot about showing respect, being nice to each other and being a role model.

The episodic volunteers in this study do not seem to be interested in receiving recognition through social gatherings such as kick-offs and end-of-season activities. Another specific characteristic of this organization is that they work more with encouraging turnover in various volunteer tasks, there is an opportunity to rotate between different tasks within the organization. This also relates to the managing of workload, regarding which the other organizations speak more about managing workload within each task, while IM speaks more about rotating between different tasks in the organization.

Differences between contexts

Some findings can be related to the context of the specific neighbourhood or of being an organization in Sweden. Conducting suitability checks on recruits or requiring them to supply information from police records when volunteering to work with children are a quite recent development for organizations in Sweden. When these interviews were conducted, the matter was being discussed but a decision had not yet been taken. At IM it was mandatory to conduct such checks, as well as for volunteers to be over 18 years of age and have sufficient command of Swedish to meet the needs of the project.

Another Swedish context-related finding is the important and Swedish phenomenon of having 'fika' (which means meeting up to have a coffee and a chit-chat and is also sometimes described as an important part of Swedish culture). This was seen as an almost mandatory ingredient in any of the different phases of organizing volunteering, such as recruiting, introduction, training, support and recognition.

Another finding is that the type of neighbourhood where the organization is located can make a difference for how to organize volunteers. CI, for example, has chosen to pay their youth coaches a modest hourly wage. They do this as a way to show this group of young persons

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with immigrant background the job-like importance and seriousness of their assignment, and because they can see the positive effect of the coaches' pride in getting their first real job.

Volunteer coordination

In accordance with the analytical tool developed for this study, VC is divided into five components presented in this section (Table 4).

Table 4. Categories and subcategories of VC

Category	Subcategories
Relations between volunteers and paid staff	Support before, during and after an activity
	Structuring the relations between volunteers and paid staff
	Openness and responsiveness to ideas
Volunteer roles, identification and socialization	The role of fellowship, socialization and giving back
	The content and structure of the volunteering task
	Expectations about volunteering
	What the volunteer is titled
Organizational identity and values	An open, safe and welcoming climate
	Having the right competence and volunteers
	An undemanding and flexible climate
	A relational, empathic and familiar climate
Communication between organization and volunteers	Adapt the communication to the volunteers
	Ask the volunteers
	Structures for regular communication
	Change communication style to match phase of organization's development
"Changeable" organizational features	Size matters
	Lowering the thresholds
	The quality of activities
	Coordination within and outside of the organization

Relations between volunteers and paid staff

Paid staff can provide support before, during and after an activity in finding ways of organizing the volunteers from the beginning, performing administrative or 'boring' tasks, and making sure tasks have not been left unfinished. Contacts with other organizations during normal working hours can also be easier for paid staff to deal with than for volunteers. Support from paid staff is especially important in the start-up phase of a project.

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> I think it helped a lot that we had... a coach who isn't here anymore, he was employed by the project and did a lot of things and made sure that, well, helped get these things started, but once it was started his work was done (Habo, V)

Strategies for 'how to structure the relations between volunteers and paid staff' to provide more sustained support to volunteers are emphasized, for example having regular meetings and making sure the volunteers know who they can ask if they have questions. It is also important when distributing tasks within the projects to strike a balance between having enough volunteer participation to make them feel involved and achieving adequate speed or quality in the activities. At both CI and Habo, having a hierarchy of leaders is emphasized as positive, i.e. recognizing that responsibilities are shared and that some have more responsibility than others.

Openness and responsiveness to ideas, however, is important in the relations between paid staff and volunteers. The volunteers need to feel that they are listened to and that they are involved in decisions and changes in the organization, at least as much as they want to be.

> I understand how some of the process works anyhow. Right now I don't need to be more active. It's about right. (IM, V)

> All viewpoints count... (CI, V)

Volunteer roles, identification and socialization

The long-term volunteers emphasize the importance of the role of fellowship, socialization and giving back. Participants and parents return to the organization and volunteer in it, with a feeling of belonging to the organization.

> many of the children have seen that I've participated in CI, and now they see that I'm a youth coach, so maybe they also want to become one, so that's the best way, that they've made children into youth coaches so they can see that you can always become something. (CI, V)

At IM, on the other hand, this is not something that the volunteers in this specific project are looking for.

> ... and right now they don't seem to want to have any other kind of fellowship with each other (IM, PM)

The content of the volunteering task must fit the volunteer; words that are mentioned are a sense of ownership, flexible and adaptable content, and content that gives something to the volunteer, for example enabling the volunteer to learn something.

> And that's something I'm happy about, that they don't dictate what you should do and say, and what you should contribute. (Forza, V)

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The structure of the volunteering task has to do with time spent, commitment and flexible participation. A structural issue could also transform into content when parents were included in the activities.

> it's flexible, at 'Active Leisure' that is, so you put in very little time, you don't have to be tied up, you can leave when you want, for it to be flexible (IM, V)

> the parents stayed and watched, no one thought of going away for an hour, so everyone sat to the side. So then we started getting the parents involved, and then it became more of a requirement that parents should be there, it came kind of automatically, so that finally it was an activity for parents and children together. (Habo, PM)

Expectations about volunteering are mentioned implicitly in three organizations, but in Forza it all comes back to the concept of 'expectation management', which is mentioned over and over again regarding various constellations of staff, volunteers, participants and tasks. It's important that everyone involved has the same expectations. This even includes how the *volunteer is titled.*

> when you give something a new name people have to ask a few more questions than if you just call it mentoring, because people have certain expectations and preconceptions about what mentoring ought to be like, and then it doesn't matter what we say as an organization, because they already have an image of what mentoring means to them (Forza, PM)

Organizational identity and values

An open, safe and welcoming climate is emphasized as a component that influences how to organize volunteers. It is described as important that volunteers feel welcome and that the climate is responsive; the sense of commitment is even described as infectious.

> And at these meetings there's no such thing as a dumb question (Forza, PM)

Having the right competence in the organization and having volunteers who share the same values and experiences, even though some are new and some have been there from the start, shapes the organizational identity. Then the climate becomes a part of the organization and spreads among the participants by itself.

> now almost a whole new generation is starting out, and these simple rules that we've had the whole time, the children explain them, such as you can't do that here, because you're not allowed to do that here (CI, PM)

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An undemanding and flexible climate in an organization is one that respects the fact that volunteers' lives change and therefore their volunteering also changes. It should be ok, and even easy, to say no, if one needs to, without explaining why.

> and it's just been very undemanding, if you want to then you want to, and they don't keep on at you, they check up on how things are going (IM, V)

A relational, empathic and familiar climate is highlighted in all organizations; three of them mention a familiar climate more, and one stresses an empathic climate more.

> they're standing there when we come in and give us a hug and ask us right away how we're feeling and if we're looking forward to the meeting. (Forza, V)
> it's also a friendly, well-meaning organization, and it feels safe to be here too (IM, V)

Communication between organization and volunteers

The first two categories focus on the communication from organization to volunteer and the last two on communication from volunteer to organization. The organization needs to adapt the communication to the volunteers, for example by using interviews when recruiting, which young volunteers perceive as professional and grown-up. Regular evaluations to find out what to change are also performed, often by asking the volunteers what they want their communication to be like.

> how things should work for us volunteers, can you text, should you send email, which is best, what suits you (IM, V)

It is important to have built up structures for regular communication, so communication becomes an ongoing feature of the organization, and not something that depends on people getting around to it or being real enthusiasts. However it is also important – after listening to volunteers and conducting evaluations – to be able to change communication style to match the phase of the organization's development. Many interviewees mentioned that the communication changes when the project gets bigger or more well-known.

> more people get in touch, hardly a week goes by without you getting an email or a telephone call, or people wondering when the next application period opens, and things like that, so it's more spread out now (CI, PM)

Changeable organizational features

These categories might require more time and effort to change, but they are still 'changeable' at the management level of an organization. While it can be more difficult to influence how many or how few volunteers an organization has, management can influence how many they train or take in at the same time. This is because size matters for such things as how intimate

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and safe the group climate will be. The number of volunteers, at least if the organization exceeds some critical mass, also affects the possibility for volunteers to say no and the quality of activities.

> Somewhere along the way we stopped being a club where a few people did a whole lot, then we became a club where many people did a little, and now we're a club where many people do a lot (Habo, PM)

In the planning phase, the organization can also develop volunteering tasks that lower the threshold for people to start volunteering.

> We know that Swedish conversation practice [called language fika] and homework tutoring are popular areas for people to get involved, the threshold for getting started as a volunteer is very low with those things, and there's always a need (IM, PM)

The last finding has to do with coordination within and outside of the organization. An example could be that the organization actually coordinates and schedules the activities in a way that enables people to both participate in sports practice and be a coach. Another is offering a volunteer who is thinking of quitting a chance to take on another task in the same organization; one volunteer even raises the possibility of organizations helping each other with the coordination of volunteers.

> I think that scheduling is extremely important... you might think that people with a lot of time would volunteer as coaches, but that's not necessarily the case, instead people who do a lot often do more (Habo, V)

Integrating the findings

Findings from the earlier steps are here integrated by analysing conflicting findings, looking for common ground, and thereby developing a more comprehensive understanding.

The conflicts between the VM and VC approaches that emerged when exploring how volunteering can be organized can be analysed with regard to what aspects are found in one but not both approaches. Overall, VM focuses explicitly on the different phases of organizing volunteers. Volunteer coordination focuses instead on the relations, roles and climate of volunteering.

Specifically, VM's constructs do not include issues of bottom-up participation in decision-making, power-balance or sense of ownership, and have nothing to say about the relations between paid staff and volunteers or how volunteers are designated. In VC, there is no specific focus on training or economic support, such as reimbursing out-of-pocket expenses or providing food and clothing.

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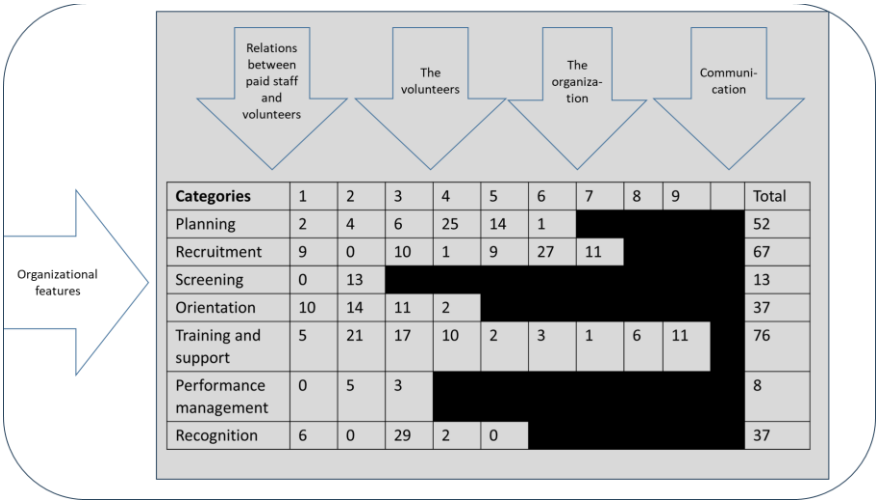
Nevertheless, many aspects overlap and are covered by both approaches, but are labelled differently or could be included in some construct or component. Some examples are that VM mentions the item 'provide role descriptions', while VC emphasizes the importance of role expectations and clear definitions. The VM approach includes actively encouraging turnover in key positions, while VC specifies the prerequisites for being able to encourage task rotation, like flexibility in roles and scheduled turnover in key positions, while also stressing that there must be different tasks to be transferred to. If VM concerns itself with the organization's development of positions based on needs, the VC approach emphasizes possible needs, like role flexibility and task types. Another perspective that is covered by VM is to encourage acceptable behaviour; this can be a component of creating an open, safe and welcoming organizational climate. Strategies for managing workload are looked for in the VM perspective, while from the VC perspective, flexible scheduling can be a solution.

So, what comprehensive understanding of how to organize volunteering can be extracted from the two approaches used in this study? I would say that the use of different perspectives results in a two-dimensional understanding (Figure 3).



Categories	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		Total
Planning	2	4	6	25	14	1					52
Recruitment	9	0	10	1	9	27	11				67
Screening	0	13									13
Orientation	10	14	11	2							37
Training and support	5	21	17	10	2	3	1	6	11		76
Performance management	0	5	3								8
Recognition	6	0	29	2	0						37

Figure 2. The two-dimensional understanding of how to organize volunteering.

Here the VM constructs are used horizontally as phases that must all be covered in managing volunteers, though not necessarily in order, while from a VC perspective an organization goes through all the aspects of VC vertically to think about what the issues of roles, relations and climate can add to those distinct phases. Viewed from 'outside' of both the horizontal constructs and the vertical aspects, the organizational features have an effect, but can be dealt with through both the VM and VC approaches.

The concepts used here, management and coordination, are interesting in themselves because they say something about the relation between the organization and the volunteers. Do the volunteers need to be managed or coordinated, or a bit of both? If Bartram et al. (2017) are correct that paid staff and volunteers are different, how can VM constructs be important for

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volunteers? One answer could be that the tasks the volunteers perform must be managed, but the volunteers themselves must be coordinated. Using the techniques of integrating insights (Repko & Szostak, 2017), one can redefine and expand the VM and VC perspectives as Volunteer Organization, which could be a more neutral and comprehensive term that includes both perspectives in the same concept, as well as the overall relations between organizational phases and culture.

Discussion

Organizing volunteering is too complex a phenomenon to be understood from one single perspective. This study reveals that understanding how to organize volunteering benefits from viewing VM and VC as combined in the proposed two-dimensional concept of Volunteer Organization. This model includes management strategies in different phases as well as relational and organizational perspectives and strikes a balance between organizational structure and climate.

Is re-thinking volunteer organization needed and what does an IDR-approach contribute with?

The changes in the conditions for volunteering that many scholars (e.g. Kragt & Holtrop, 2019; Macduff et al., 2009; Enjolras & Strømsnes, 2018) discuss necessitate ideas of re-thinking of how to organize volunteering. Many of these changes, which include volunteers' requests for more flexible, short-time assignments, people's increasingly scheduled lives, and society's need for volunteers to handle global crises, are apparent in the four organizations in this study, and ways of rethinking how to organize volunteering in response to these changes can be discerned in all four of them. A structure is needed that allows people with busy schedules both to take part in for ex. own sports practice and to help coach younger participants, and that allows parents to use their time to both assist their children and simply be with them at the same time. Having a large number of volunteers also supports flexibility, because not all volunteers need to be present all the time.

Nagel et al. (2019) found that the size of the organization was not important for volunteer satisfaction, but that workload was. This can be interpreted as indicating that the organizing of volunteers benefits from exceeding a critical mass of volunteers to at least make it possible to reduce their workload. Having paid staff in addition to volunteers was seen as beneficial when developing and starting a project but was sometimes not seen as important afterwards. Nagel et al. (2019) found that having paid staff was not important for volunteer satisfaction. The explanation of this might be that paid staff are more important for the quality and feasibility of the activities than for volunteer satisfaction, or that having paid staff is not enough to ensure volunteer satisfaction unless relations between paid staff and volunteers are properly handled. The role of a volunteer coordinator is mentioned in VC, but this did not explicitly come up in the findings of this study. However, the relations between paid staff and volunteers are probably coordinated by some form of volunteer coordinator, who could be either a paid member of staff or a volunteer.

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Earlier research (Østerlund, 2013) shows that recruiting has always been a challenge. Two different solutions among these organizations are having low-threshold, entry-level volunteer tasks and encouraging turnover in key tasks, on the one hand, and recruiting former participants and enabling them to continue in new roles within the organization, on the other. This way of working has previously been observed in a comparable neighbourhood, also when working with younger volunteers (Fredriksson et al., 2018).

The designation of the volunteer, in this study the 'action guide', is based on well thought-through reasons connected to the changes in organizing volunteering through many different phases: finding the right volunteers, getting through the social media noise, and making the expectations clear to both participants and action guides. Using a specific title of the volunteers as a strategy has previously been used, for example by the organization studied by Larsson et al. (2016).

Starting from my suggestion of a new concept of Volunteer Organization and returning to the literature, I find support for my two-dimensional suggestion. Studer and von Schnurbein (2013) emphasize striking a balance between 'flexibility and organization', 'informality and efficiency' and 'personal and professional support', and Stirling et al. (2011) conclude that administrators must filter formal management practices to meet volunteers' relational expectations. Hager and Brudney (2011) argue that remaking the organizational culture can be an additional task for volunteer management. Finally, Meyer and Simsa (2018) conclude that structural changes mainly occurred where the structure allowed for flexibility.

Earlier I asked if the volunteers need to be managed or coordinated, or a bit of both. This can be related to the classic dichotomy in working with settings-based health promotion, where a balance is strived for between top-down management and bottom-up engagement and empowerment (Dooris, 2004). This dichotomy has also been found to be present in the process of developing policy in sports clubs (Geidne et al., 2013).

Another interesting aspect that is lacking in both VM and VC, as well as in the findings of this study, is the presence or absence of research on organizing volunteers in the organizations' strategic planning. Also, earlier research finds that 'the use of knowledge-based methods in the sports clubs was on the whole conspicuous by its absence" (Geidne et al., 2013).

Different types of organizations and volunteers

This study comprises different organizations, as well as different types of volunteers. Are there any differences between them, and what can different organizations learn from each other? Two of the organizations in this study have volunteers that conduct sports activities for children. The similarities between these organizations were the importance of a familiar climate, being a role model, a club identity with uniforms, continuity in participation from participant to volunteer, and managing workload so that the volunteers could also manage for ex. their schoolwork and own practice. The big difference between them was the presence of

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parents, which was mandatory for the children's activities in one organization and a natural ingredient as the children got older. In the other organization, the parents were not present at all as coaches; here it was the adolescents who coached the children with support from older youth. Maybe the different contexts of the organizations can explain this difference more than the types of organizations.

In the other two organizations, two important characteristics can be mentioned as things for other organizations to learn from. For the entrepreneurial network, expectation management was a common theme in everything they did. The goals and expectations were clear for everyone involved, and the management was quite business-like. Even so, it was just as important to have a familiar climate as in the two sports organizations. The fourth organization, working with humanitarian support, was also the organization that had episodic volunteers. However, it was its active way of encouraging turnover in key positions that really stood out. The differences between types of volunteers seem to be more important for organizing volunteers than the type of organization or its activity.

Given the challenges faced by voluntary organizations in Sweden and internationally, organizations can benefit from defining volunteer tasks more explicitly, not only in terms of the skills they require, but also how people can participate as volunteers, and how the tasks can fit together with their other duties in life. It could be that most people in different life phases can and will contribute to different volunteering tasks if the tasks and how they are organized fit who they are and why they volunteer.

How about a sustainable model for Volunteer Organization?

In the literature as well as in the findings of this study, the final message, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly conveyed, is that volunteering must be organized in a more sustainable way, i.e. organizations must attempt to solve the challenges of recruiting and retaining volunteers in a way that follows the changing structure of volunteering in a changing society. Kragt and Holtrop (2019) call for 'an integrative approach', one that views "volunteering as an ongoing process, rather than distinct stages". On the one hand, it can be harder to change organizational features (Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013), but on the other hand I argue that it may be more important to work with creating sustainable forms of Volunteer Organization, and that this would be interesting for researchers to study in the future.

Method discussion

It can be asked whether using an IDR-inspired analysis was a relevant approach. Are the perspectives used in this study different disciplines or not? Is the difference more methodological than a matter of different perspectives. Could both quantitative and qualitative methodologies be used by both VM and VC?

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I argue that the two perspectives are different enough, even though there are some overlaps between VM and VC. The perspectives are consistently published in different types of journals, namely management/sports management journals as opposed to voluntary sector journals. It may be the case that disciplines are sometimes overly stubborn when it comes to only using one type of methodology to study their phenomena, and that these different perspectives can be investigated using several methodologies, but that is another discussion. The use of different concepts for what sometimes is the same thing is a reason for investigating this more closely. When different concepts are used in different types of research there is a possibility of missing things. Here the IDR approach is a relevant way of looking at this from more than one perspective. Other researchers might find another perspective in the literature, maybe in another discipline that could be used to investigate this phenomenon, because organizing volunteers is a broad topic that can be affected by many factors.

Conducting the analysis by first deductively coding in VM and then using the 'left-overs' to analyse the VC perspective may have caused me to miss some parts of VC that overlap with VM, but it also helped with identifying the similarities and differences between them. To manage or coordinate something can be the same activity, but from different perspectives. With this extensive data, it was reasonable to choose to do it like this, A strength of this study is its use of triangulation with both different sources and different analysis, even though triangulation sometimes could gain more broad knowledge than deep. The findings also showed that both project managers and volunteers in the four organizations experienced the strategies in similar ways. The VM was originally created for sports organizations, but in this study it seemed to work equally well for the other organizations.

Conclusion

Strategies for how to organize volunteers can develop and strengthen the quality of organizations that rely on volunteers. Merging research traditions can contribute to new knowledge. Meyer and Simsa (2018) conclude that in organizing the unexpected, structural changes occurred mainly where the structure allowed for flexibility. I argue that everything that occurs in a society can more or less count as unexpected (written during the Covid pandemic) and therefore organizations need to work with everyday structures that allow them the flexibility to develop a sustainable volunteer organization. Or as a volunteer so nicely put it: 'how tightly controlled it is, but also how unpretentious it is' (Forza, V).

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Declaration of conflicting Interests

No potential conflict of interest.

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