

CHAPTER 4

GETTING TO KNOW AND COLLABORATING WITH SOCIETY IN VOLUNTEERISM

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DOI: 10.26650/B/SS49.2022.007.04

This section focuses on the principles, methods, and techniques volunteer actors (people and institutions) need to consider regarding “getting to know” and “collaborating with society”. Volunteer activities are carried out over three basic stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. Whether explicitly stated or not, these stages are unique to a society possessing certain characteristics. In this situation, the volunteer actors cannot soundly conduct the pertinent activities if they fail to make preparations with regard to getting to know the society/community. For example, an activity for fighting addiction cannot be soundly conducted by remaining unfamiliar with the phenomenon of addiction or the characteristics of the addicted individuals being addressed. Volunteers’ experiences in the field and volunteer organizations’ institutional memory are clearly able to contribute to how activities are planned and implemented. Due to the unique characteristics of each situation and community, however, volunteer actors’ past experiences do not eliminate the need to get to know the community. Moreover, the activity should be stated as being limited to providing the conditions necessary for getting to know the community, this condition being to collaborate with the community. When considering our example on addiction, no matter how well prepared the volunteer actors are, the addicted individuals must clearly be persuaded and supported by the relevant activity. In short, a two-way dynamism is essential in volunteering: While volunteer actors’ efforts to “get to know the community” increase the effectiveness of the activities to be performed, the community’s “collaborative” practices have the potential to allow these activities to produce a permanent solution for the community. In this context, the two sections “Methods and Techniques in Getting to Know Society” and “The Principles of Collaboration and the Process of Cooperation” located in this chapter will be respectively discussed.

Methods and Techniques in Getting to Know the Society

Getting to know the community has a practical purpose in volunteerism. This purpose is fundamentally related to the community's issues and needs. In line with this purpose, the two main goals are to identify and solve these issues and needs. To do this, the methods and techniques for getting to know the society are expected to be used effectively in accordance with the purpose and objective. However, mentioning any particular material that can guide volunteer actors in getting to know the society is difficult in the Turkish literature. The case in this regard involves using materials that have mostly been accumulated within the scope of the social sciences which requires relative expertise.

While having volunteer organizations benefit from this accumulation through the support of experts is a positive thing, this accumulation needs to be integrated or adapted to the field experience unique to volunteering. These days, NGOs that take getting to know the community seriously generally receive expert support in their planning, implementation, and evaluation processes, which is necessary. However, the relevant accumulation cannot be expected to function effectively enough when it has not been adapted to the purposes of volunteering. The methods and techniques that can be functionalized in regard to getting to know the society should additionally be emphasized as not being completely neutral but to be related to various assumptions and approaches to an extent of 200 years of developments within the social sciences.

In brief, the current accumulation of getting to know the society needs to be reconsidered and adapted from the perspective of volunteerism. Establishing a partnership between expert opinion and volunteer experience is needed, as well as developing a specific accumulation in the short term by means of this collaboration. The pertinent methods and techniques will be generally discussed from the perspective of volunteerism; however, the relevant assumptions and approaches will be mentioned first.

The Volunteerism Perspective in Getting to Know Society: Approaches and Assumptions

Volunteer activities have a dual function for society. The first is short-term and is in regard to identifying and solving issues and needs; the second is long-term and relates to community capacity building. The second function is viewed as necessary for permanent and sustainable social change. To fulfill these two functions, a specific institutional policy should be implemented in terms of getting to know society. When considering the various macro and micro cultures, the need to operate the process of getting to know the society anew and not evaluating different communities according to the same template can be better realized (Dekker & Halman, 2003).

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Purpose and Objectives in Getting to Know Society

Getting to know society has a practical purpose in volunteering. This purpose is essentially related to the community's problems and needs. The two main objectives in line with this purpose are to determine and solve the problems and needs. The methods and techniques needed for this are expected to be used effectively in regard to getting to know society in accordance with the purpose and objectives.

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Due to the rules governing how our minds work, we attempt to first define a new subject (event, phenomenon, object, or person) through our previously prepared conceptual schema. This first definition may actually be considered a prerequisite for identifying. However, concretizing the data on identifying as terminative information can become an obstacle to identification. The problems of this normal working order of the mind can be better noticed by adding the peace of mind that analogy-based thinking provides. Again, however, the mind has the capacity to transcend its normal working order. The mind maintains its same working order in regard to getting to know society. This operational format of the mind is natural and functional. However, one should always keep alive the assumption that each community can possess unique characteristics in order not to impede getting to know it.

Being content with previously prepared patterns based on theory or experience in volunteering can result in not being able to see the community's actual problems and needs. As is known, the social sciences comprise a field where knowledge is produced by way of analogy and generalization, which can provide significant guidance for volunteerism. However, the approach in which the problems and the solutions to these problems will be the same based on the similarities between communities A and B may not always yield good results. In that case, while the stage of “identifying” does not neglect the function of providing a preliminary framework for getting to know the community, this is not enough for volunteerism. Otherwise, communities would be perceived simply as objects, which is clearly in contradiction with the definition of volunteerism (see the section “Defining Volunteerism”). The most significant negative impact of the problem in terms of volunteerism is the inability to provide harmony, communication, or collaboration between the activity and the community (see the sections “Volunteering Projects” and “Social Ethics”).

Therefore, getting to know society in volunteerism should aim to create a new schema for each community in the volunteer actors' minds, one that is unique to that community. However, the literature that volunteer actors must implement in regard to getting to know

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The Basic Functions of Getting to Know Society

Volunteer activities have a dual function for society. The first is short-term and involves identifying and solving the determined problems and needs, and the second is long-term and involves community capacity building. The second function is seen to be necessary for a permanent sustainable social change. To fulfill these two functions, a specific institutional policy should be implemented in terms of getting to know society.

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a society cannot be easily said to have a historical or theoretical background suitable for this purpose. For example, a contradiction is found in the history of sociology between “explaining society” and “understanding society”. The positivist approaches assume society to be examinable and explainable as an object of passive research with predictions being able to be made about society based on the obtained data (Benton & Craib, 2008). In fact, criticisms are found that envisage this as a type of social engineering and positivist sociology to have actually been developed for just such a purpose. Meanwhile, the competing approaches assume each society to have been structured in the center of a unique world of meaning; these approaches emphasize “recognition/understanding” instead of “definition/explanation” (Özlem, 1999). The literature contains distinctions such as naturalist/hermeneutic to express the two poles of these approaches (Poloma, 1993).

Accordingly, the two main types of approaches are naturally more related to different types of research methods and techniques. This is the point of distinction that interests us because these methods and techniques are inevitably applied in volunteerism for getting to know society. Yet we take into account the possibility that the historical chance encounter between the methods and techniques through these approaches did not establish a compulsory relationship between them. Indeed, when tracing the positivist and hermeneutic approaches, two different secularization stories are seen to have been intertwined in Western Europe between the 17th and 19th centuries. Thus, even the accumulation itself that is expected to guide getting to know society has developed in relation to certain social characters. In this case, legitimacy is had in demanding to get to know each community through one general aspect using a special scheme. Methods and techniques for this are thought to be adaptable to volunteerism through the guidance of certain specific assumptions. Based on this background, a very fundamental distinction needs to be pointed out in the approaches: A distinction must be made between society and community.

Society is an abstract and controversial concept. On the other hand, community refers to the concrete association of individuals who share specific values, situations, or

characteristics. Volunteerism is clearly aimed not at society but the community. In this case, defining/explaining an individual, group, or community under the concept of society is only meaningful as an initial hypothesis. Therefore, individuals can be considered as members of a community based on the characteristics they have in common, whether or not they have a common physical space. For instance, certain types of communities can be distinguished based on variables such as physical conditions (e.g., people with disabilities), developmental characteristics (e.g., children), age (e.g., the elderly), health (e.g., addicts), values (e.g., religious communities), culture (e.g., ethnic communities), and legal status (e.g., refugees; see the section “Fields of Volunteering”). For example, the volunteer actors in an activity addressing a specific refugee community necessarily have a prepared concept of refugee in their minds; however, the aim should be to create a new scheme in the mind specific to the relevant community by processing this concept through this community’s unique needs, experiences, characteristics, and skills. As a consequence, these scientific and experiential data, both of which have value, will get integrated rather than have a contradiction established between them.

In short, sensitivity with regard to approaches may, for example, develop a sensitivity that can take into account even non-living variables. This is because volunteerism is not a univariate field of experience based only on volunteer actors. Volunteerism is the active involvement of human and non-human variables in the process. In terms of people, the active involvement of both volunteers and the community in the process makes a loop based on many variables such as needs, resources, activities, and skills. In terms of non-human variables, one should take into account that the activity or tools used in the activity process have a nature independent from the implementing actors and from those on the receiving end and that they will have an impact on the process. For example, because a charity drive by its nature envisages a distinction between the one helping and the one being helped, it contains a hierarchy in its structure (i.e., benevolence and indebtedness).



Image 1. Beings with heart¹.

Regarding approaches, the necessity of adjusting in accordance with the perspective of volunteerism may be better understood when expressed from another angle, as each approach naturally contains some basic assumptions about human beings. These sets of assumptions also oscillate between two extremes. At one end is the set of assumptions that operate in the model of the natural sciences and reduces humans to the status of a physical object. This assumption will clearly eliminate the concept of “human as a benevolent being”. In response to this, approaches are found at the other end that overemphasize each individual’s uniqueness. This assumption will clearly have a similar result as it rejects the concept of any type of human nature. Volunteerism clearly fits neither through these assumptions nor through the relativist approaches. Some items from the set of assumptions volunteer organizations must have may be expressed as follows:

- Humans are beings possessing feelings; barring external obstacles, humans spare time and effort for other people, living things, and nature.
- Each individual wants what’s best, first for their own community, then for others’.
- The world cannot be perfect, collaboration is needed for the world to be at its best.
- A strong community is built through strong community relationships.
- People work for the things they see as possible.

1 Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYIV0AnUcJE> (Le Gouffre)

The set of exemplified assumptions can be said to be unrealistic. Yet without such assumptions, only two possibilities remain for explaining the presence of people who already carry out volunteer activities. According to the first possibility, volunteer institutions and individuals who volunteer conduct volunteer activities for various outcomes or with expectations. However, this possibility first and foremost contradicts the definition of volunteerism. According to the second possibility, two types of humans have been created: those who do volunteer and those who do not. This possibility is a philosophical assumption like the ones above; it is both lacking in scientific justification as well as full of devastating consequences. However, the exemplified assumptions regarding volunteerism provide people with a broad vision, as can clearly be seen in the first item. In fact, when we assume that people will volunteer as long as they encounter no external obstacles, we gain a sensitivity toward these obstacles in addition to all our gains. In this way, we possess a broad horizon for establishing widespread and sustainable volunteerism by eliminating the external factors that prevent volunteer opportunities from getting activated.



Image 2. Activating volunteerism².

As a result, although the methods and techniques below are skills that require relative specialization, volunteer institutions and organizations can make these skills a part of their institutional capacities by developing a comprehensive policy regarding getting to know society.

2 Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLGNj-xrgvY> (Mr. Indifferent)

The Process of Getting to Know Society: Methods and Techniques

Getting to know society can be carried out in a four-step process.

- Make an analysis of the problems (or needs),
- Determine a thematic model to be able to classify the data to be obtained,
- Gather data based on research methods and techniques,
- Develop the project.

Stage 1: Problem (Need) Analysis

Expecting volunteering to provide a long-term structural or medium-term institutional contribution that will directly and collectively solve the problems of a particular community is incorrect. Even though volunteerism ultimately aims to empower the capacity of the community, this can either be achieved using individual activities aimed at solving specific problems and needs or by supporting structural or institutional solutions as a stakeholder. Therefore, the problem (need) analysis should be considered for special cases; however, the relevant data should be positioned in a general context. Otherwise, volunteer activities may fall into the analogy of “chasing flies instead of draining the swamp.”

The elements of problem analysis can be expressed as follows:

- **The heart of the matter:** The nature of the problem corresponds to identifying the situation the community experiences as a problem. In this case, having the volunteer actors clearly and distinctly express this situation involves taking community members’ experiences into account. A causal analysis of the problem is at the heart of the matter because understanding something becomes possible by knowing its causes.
- **Scope:** Scope relates to how widespread the problem is among community members in terms of direct and indirect effects. This element is also clearly able to expose inequalities within the community. Issues that are environmental, structural, or institutional are usually broad. Therefore, the data obtained in the process of getting to know the community need to be classified at the level of specific scales.
- **Frequency:** Frequency is related to whether the identified problem is acute or chronic. The problem may be a one-time temporary situation or intermittently ongoing. In either case, the source of the problem must be accurately identified. In this case, the problem analysis is expected to be process-oriented, with transparent collaborations being established between the volunteers and the community.

- **Duration:** Duration refers to how long the problem has had an effect. While long- and medium-term issues are generally environmental, structural, or institutional, issues that do not involve all community members may be short-term. The experiences of the community need to be taken into account to clearly and distinctly understand exceptional situations.
- **Severity:** Severity is about fundamental rights at the primary level and the disruption of daily life at the secondary level. The severity of problems that may result in loss of life is different from the severity of problems that cause the suspension of public life for a time. Classifying problems in terms of priorities is necessary in this respect, and special measurement tools are required for this.

Stage 2: Developing the Data Classification Model

The data classification model is a conceptual framework that may be used for functional usage of data obtained by means of the method and techniques of getting to know society. Because the aim here is function, many different models may be involved in and applied to the conceptual framework. A sample model that can be worked in harmony with common data collection methods and techniques is given below.

- **Geographic Analysis**
 - **Demographics:** This involves data regarding population structure and percentages. Things such as population censuses, population records, demographic biographies, generational follow-up surveys, birth rates, and death rates can be considered in a broad context.
 - **Settlement:** Experiences in urban and regional planning in particular can be used to identify opportunities in the residential area such as weather, natural resources, water, and soil productivity. Settlement can be considered to involve identifying the state of services such as housing, drinking water, domestic water, electricity, sewage, trash, and heating.
 - **Infrastructure:** This involves data regarding infrastructure opportunities based on the population's settlement density.
- **Historical Analysis**
 - **Community history:** This involves data about the historical narrative the community has.
 - **Community values:** This includes data on the values the community shares and the prevalence and strength these values have among community members.
 - **Community ties:** This involves data regarding relations among community members.

- Institutional Analysis

- Political Status: This involves data on the management style adopted and applied within the community. Two main issues are found here: The first involves how the political structure works, and the second is whether this structure reflects the values of the community.

- Economic status: This includes data regarding the community's income sources and income distribution. Data such as labor force, unemployment rates, income distribution, and household budget status are usually prepared by public statistics institutions at certain periods. However, the field of economics is quite advanced at working with complex variables and big data compared to other social science disciplines. Professional support can be obtained in the processes of identifying, analyzing, and interpreting these types of data.

- Leadership: This involves data on professional, ethnic, or religious authority within the community. Despite long-term methods requiring expertise, qualitative methods on ethnography in particular may contribute to a better understanding of the fields of micro-leadership and organization within the community compared to quantitative methods.

- Groups and Individuals

- Groups: This involves data on significant groupings within the community. This information can prevent volunteer activities from being manipulated due to inter-group competition, especially during the implementation process.

- Profiles: This involves data on key typologies in the community. Profile surveys aim to gain in-depth knowledge about a select group of community members (e.g., students, seniors, workers).

- Attitudes: This involves data on community members' general attitudes toward issues related to the specific activity or project determined specifically for the community.

Stage 3: Data Collection Methods and Techniques

A rather extensive literature has been created on research designs (models), methods, and techniques in the social sciences. For this reason, the most frequently used methods and techniques will be described below. Volunteer organizations may receive professional support in this regard or can establish various internal units (see the section “Data-Based Policy Development”).

- **Quantitative Methods:** Quantitative research methods are associated with two types of research designs. These are the scanning and trial designs, which are separated phenomenologically describing a situation as it is or producing one through experimentation. Some of the quantitative research techniques can be briefly stated as follows (Aslan, 2019):
 - Questionnaire: This is the most common data collection technique in which the researcher applies a prepared questionnaire face to face or on different platforms. It usually contains multiple-choice questions. Questionnaires are often created with short codable/measurable questions that directly seek concrete information.
 - Observation: This is a research technique in which the researcher observes the determined phenomenon or event externally. The observation process is completely structured and the researcher is expected to operate the procedure.
 - Experiment: Being a research technique compatible with the experimental design, the goal of the experiment is to determine the cause-and-effect relationship among the variables using experimental and control groups in order to test the given hypotheses. Social experiments can be considered in this context.
 - Content Analysis: This is a technique used to analyze formal or informal written and visual documents. The purpose is to collect data about the characteristics of those being addressed based on the contents of the document. The material in the contents is generally digitized.
- **Qualitative Methods:** Qualitative research designs are more often associated with the research topic as they aim to identify/understand rather than describe/explain and are therefore quite diverse. Qualitative research designs involve ethnography, phenomenology, case analysis, embedded theory, and case study (Creswell, 2021).
 - Observation: Unlike the quantitative method, observations in qualitative research are unstructured; namely, no supervised observations occur. Participatory observation is when researchers observe internally as a member of the community, usually by living together for a period of time.
 - Interview: Unlike the quantitative method, interviews in qualitative research are unstructured; namely, no interview schedule is involved. This type of interview is one the researcher conducts with a semi-structured questionnaire that can guide the interview or provide depth to the conversation.

- Focus Group: This is a discussion technique the researcher conducts with a certain number of participants. The aim is to reveal the diversity of ideas regarding the question/topic of the discussion meeting with participants who've been brought together homogeneously by considering certain criteria.

- Discourse Analysis: Although similar technique to the content analysis method, discourse analysis is not quantitative. While this involves the digitalization of the material in the content at first, discourse analysis attempts to determine the subtext not directly included in the content.

Mixed research methods work using the differences between the quantitative and qualitative methods and related techniques by using both groups of methods and techniques together (Aslan, 2019).

Stage 4: Project Development

After placing the data obtained through the various research or data collection methods and techniques when getting to know society into a classification model and understanding the underlying or likely problem in detail, the process of performing the volunteer activity can be started. Assuming all the variables are known at this stage, a concrete activity/project will need to be developed for a concrete problem or need (see the section “Project Development”; management tools such as SWOT analysis, Q-sort analysis, scenario analysis, and the Delphi technique can be looked at in this respect).



Image 3. Combining practice with theory³.

Principles of Collaboration

Collaboration is a very broad topic in volunteerism. Working with volunteers independently or within an organization, volunteer organizations working with public institutions, volunteer

3 Source: <https://www.commit.works/work-management/>

organizations working with one another, and volunteer organizations working with the community can be evaluated in this context. In that case, this scope can be categorized in terms of institution-institution, institution-society, and institution-individual relations. This section will consider the institution-society relation in terms of volunteer organizations working together with the community. The basic issues in collaborating will first be discussed for this, then the principles of collaboration and the collaborative process will be examined.

Key Issues in Collaboration

Collaboration and cooperation in volunteerism can basically be addressed under the headings of participation/collaboration issues and management issues (Arslan, 2018; Erdoğan & Uyan-Semerci, 2020). These issues should be evaluated separately in terms of institution-institution, institution-society, and institution-individual relations. For instance, the issues of participation and management for an NGO organized for the purpose of volunteering can be comprehensively considered through the following relationship network:

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Key Issues in Collaborating

The problems related to collaboration and cooperation in volunteerism can basically be addressed under the headings of “participation/collaboration issues” and “management issues”. These problems should be evaluated separately in terms of institution-institution, institution-society, and institution-individual relations. Of course, solutions should be sought for these problems by evaluating them within their own context. When looked at in general, knowing the motivating and demotivating factors can provide preventive support.

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- **Institution-Institution Relations:** An NGO’s relations with public institutions and organizations, other non-governmental organizations, and the private sector at the national or international level can be considered in this context. Coding participation issues at this level as collaboration issues is more reasonable. Management issues are related to the sustainability of the said collaboration. Institution-institution relations’ critical importance and ability to play a leading role in the support society provides to volunteering should not be forgotten in terms of collaboration and cooperation with society.
- **Institution-Society Relations:** The NGO’s relationship with the society from which it emerged especially as well as with the community it addresses in terms of certain activities and projects can be considered in this context. Participation and

cooperation issues at this level are related to the communication and collaboration practices between the NGO and the society and require a two-way dynamism. Management issues, however, depend on the NGO's ability to healthily conduct relations with society. Unfortunately, the literature is lacking in terms of collaboration and cooperation opportunities between NGOs and society. This literature needs to be developed on a practical basis in collaboration with NGOs. For now, however, community capacity-building approaches can be benefitted from in NGO-society relations (Aspen Institute, 1996; Atkinson & Willis, 2006).

- **Institution-Individual Relations:** Both institution-institution and institution-society relations are ultimately conducted by individuals who have the authority or ability to represent institution. NGOs should additionally have relations with individuals who act on behalf of the NGO, such as donors, members, professional workers, and volunteers. A large portion of the responsibility in ensuring qualified participation and cooperation in institution-individual relations and maintaining healthy relations with participating individuals belongs to the NGO. Therefore, eliminating the participation and management issues in institution-individual relations has a serious impact on collaborating and cooperating with society (the individual-individual relation is not discussed in terms of volunteer organizations because the emergence of such a relationship indicates a management issue where certain individuals are identified with the NGO).

These issues should of course be evaluated and solutions sought in their own contexts. When looked at in general, knowing the motivating and demotivating factors can provide preventative support. Some of the factors that motivate other institutions, communities, and individuals in terms of participation and collaboration with volunteer institutions can be stated as follows:

- **Institution-Institution Relations**
 - Realizing the corporate mission more quickly and efficiently,
 - Producing permanent long-term solutions to social problems instead of temporary short-term solutions,
 - Mutually sharing corporate memories, knowledge, and skills,
- **Institution-Society Relations**
 - Announcing community issues and attracting public attention,
 - Accessing the necessary facilities to immediately resolve emergency issues,

- Finding resources and support for solving chronic issues,
- Institution-Individual Relations
 - Achieving personal and moral gains such as dignity, self-confidence, sense of belonging, and socialization,
 - Fulfilling the need for personal knowledge and skills, such as getting to know society and oneself, teamwork, and dealing with issues,
 - Developing values such as altruism, self-sacrifice, and sharing knowledge and skills.

Some of the factors that demotivate institutions, communities, and individuals in terms of participation/collaboration can be stated as follows:

- Institution-Institution Relations
 - Inconsistencies between corporate values and approaches that prevent well-founded approaches, regardless of whether they occur in the vision and mission statements or not,
 - Inter-institutional project-level differentiations regarding solving social problems,
 - The disputes between individuals representing institutions taking precedence over the institutions.
- Institution-Society Relations
 - Efforts at publicizing community issues are ineffective or unsustainable,
 - The public or local government disrupting or not supporting institution-society relations,
 - Past experiences that cause negative attitudes to develop toward volunteer organizations or activities (e.g., care needs to be taken regarding behaviors and attitudes being able to develop in which a very negative experience could occur or cause the community to perceive it this way, such as objectifying the community by not considering its values or the fabric of the community, in particular by establishing a malicious relationship through the use of information and resources).
- Institution-Individual Relations
 - Personal indulgences such as feeling bored, thinking that additional costs will emerge, and not being able to disrupt the daily routine,

- Lack of personal knowledge and skills and time issues arising from work life such as unsuccessful volunteering experiences, not believing one can contribute, and self-confidence issues,
- Negative attitudes toward volunteer organizations and activities (e.g., not seeing volunteering as a solution because one was a volunteer who'd been victimized by management issues or knows such a person; adopting perfectionist or rash attitudes about social change).

Interestingly, societal and individual ignorance regarding volunteering and being unaware of opportunities for working with volunteer organizations have remarkable effects in terms of participation issues. Many other participation issues are predictably able to be substantially resolved by solving management issues.

Various parts of the book mention the topics of how volunteer organizations can encourage society, other institutions, and individuals to participate/cooperate as well as how they need to manage the collaboration process. One should remember here that calls for volunteering, volunteer activity announcements, and transformation of perceptions toward volunteering can be made in many ways such as press releases, press conferences, posters, banners, brochures, contests, advertising, films, clips, public spots, and social media usage (see the section "The Media in Volunteer Efforts"). Similarly, mutual respect, healthy communication, and trust can be established with volunteers using techniques such as orientations, in-service trainings, information sharing, measurements and evaluations, and feedback (see the section "Volunteers and Schedules"). What one should not forget is that, despite all institutional and social mediation, the main actors in volunteering are individuals and, in particular, volunteers.

The Principles of Collaboration and the Process of Cooperation

Getting to know the community has been said to be a necessary condition in volunteering and collaborating with the community to be a sufficient condition. In fact, the ultimate purpose of volunteer activities can be considered as contributing to activating the community's potential for volunteering, because volunteering has an essential characteristic of its own. Certainly, various activities exist through which we can experience volunteering on our own, such as advocacy, cooperation, or solidarity. However, these activities should be noted as being a means, not the ends. Otherwise, volunteer organizations would as an example need to wish for poverty to continue to maintain their cash or in-kind assistance activities. In that case, the feature fundamentally essential to volunteerism is not valid for intermediary activities. So then, what is this feature?

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The Nature of Volunteerism as the Founding Principle of Collaboration

What we experience through volunteering itself involves activities such as advocacy, assistance, and solidarity. However, these activities should be noted as being the means, not the ends. Otherwise, volunteer organizations would for example have to desire the continuance of poverty to maintain their cash or in-kind aid activities. This means that in a world where poverty has ceased, the phenomenon of in-kind or cash aid loses its context; however, volunteerism does not vanish when imagining a world where everyone is a volunteer. This is because each volunteer activity is related to an external context, whereas volunteerism itself is related to the internal conditions of our existence.

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When imagining a case where poverty doesn't exist in the world, the phenomenon of cash aid predictably would make no sense, nor the need to drill water wells when everyone has access to clean drinking water. But volunteerism does not disappear when imagining a world in which everyone volunteers because each particular volunteer activity is related to external conditions, whereas volunteering itself is (in our assumption) related to our internal conditions of existence. Moreover, the activities in which volunteering can be carried out are open-ended in both human-human and human-nature relations. Consequently, the ultimate goal of volunteerism is to activate people's potential for volunteering as a result of the meaningful changes aimed through volunteer activities. In other words, making a meaningful change or difference is an inherent feature of volunteering and is the founding principle of collaboration. We can recognize the importance of this in our everyday experiences because people develop artificial preoccupations with the internal dissatisfaction of not being able to make a meaningful difference through labor.

When considering these determinations in terms of the institution-society relations in volunteering, “the principles of collaborating with the community” are seen to ultimately be related to “community capacity building”. For example, a community without a self-sufficient health system becoming fully dependent on voluntary health support actually means this community gets coded as “the patient” in the volunteers' eyes. Moreover, this attitude is unfamiliar with the environmental, structural, and institutional causes of the health problems; namely, it is unable to contribute to a permanent solution. In such a situation, voluntary health support is unable to be sustained, nor is the community able to become self-sufficient. In short, due to the weakness of the literature regarding collaboration, capacity-building approaches can be used by tailoring them to the basic assumptions, despite certain legitimate criticisms.

Lastly, by recalling the importance of what has been said regarding getting to know society for collaboration and cooperation in volunteer activities, the following principles can be taken

into account during the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of activities and projects (Atkinson & Willis, 2006; Craig, 2005):

- **Making Plans Based on Collaboration and Cooperation:** All work items must be identified during the planning phase based on collaboration between the volunteer organization and the community. Who will perform which tasks at each stage should be included in the planning based on the compiled data. The volunteer organization should be enabled to work as a coordination center between the volunteers and the members of the community; no planning should come to pass in which the organization carries out the entire project. Many applications can be included in the planning phase for this, such as coordinating with community leaders on an ongoing basis, being a stakeholder with local public and civil institutions, enabling the community to manage its own work by establishing vertical and horizontal workgroups within the community, developing instant reporting and feedback opportunities throughout the activity, and setting up a crisis management desk.
- **Developing Community-Based Facilities Quantitatively and Qualitatively:** All steps in the implementation process should be planned in a way that will be able to develop the core strengths or capacities of the community. In this way, the aim of the practice should be to increase existing skills and enable potential ones. Planning should not be done in a way that will take limited support from the community through the available skills; this is because the community should be deployed not toward reducing the workload but for learning the work. If necessary, this practice should be developed throughout the activity by revising flexible portions in the planning stage. To do this, support should be given to not randomly distributing community members to different lines of work and to recording in the community's memory all the knowledge and skills the activity requires.
- **Supporting Community Members in Sharing Knowledge and Skills:** Planning should be done toward developing community members' knowledge and skills during the implementation, having these circulate among members, and having individuals with various types of skills and knowledge gain a collaborative culture. Community capacity is not simply the sum of community members' capacities. Therefore, collaborations among members should on one hand be supported while developing members' skills and knowledge on the other. One of the most effective ways to do this is to supervise within pre-appointed master-apprentice relationships the work of community members who've been spread out in such a way that they'll be employed in all lines of work.

- **Measuring and Assessing Change Within the Community:** Ultimately, the short- and long-term goals of volunteer activities are to make meaningful change for the sake of the community. Therefore, the activity should be planned from the start in a way that can measure and evaluate change. For this reason, mechanisms should be considered with regard to measuring the problematic. Clearly, most of the data collected during the stage of getting to know the society must be recollected for this, at least the data related to the tangible problem or need aiming to be solved. A team may also need to collect data throughout the activity to analyze the process and understand how community members perceive it.
- **Making and Sharing Reports with the Community and Relevant Institutions:** Measuring and assessing change is insufficient. Soundly conducted reports can guide future activities. Conversely, feedback needs to be provided to the community, stakeholders, and relevant institutions and organizations.

A Brief Literature Review

Mentioning a specific study on getting to know society regarding volunteering is difficult. However, some studies can be mentioned that are relatable to the subject in some way. The literature on this topic consists of studies in the field of social sciences as well as the research methods and techniques in the social sciences. We know social scientists have developed procedures related to the reliability of data collection tools regarding these methods and techniques. Therefore, the data collection processes in volunteering should be considered alongside information verification mechanisms, and these studies need to be adapted.

Compared to getting to know society, the topic of collaboration is weaker in both the domestic and foreign literature. When relating this subject with building/developing community capacity, apart from a few exceptions in the Turkish literature, the subject has been handled as strengthening NGOs' capacities, and these studies generally consist of some sections from works in the field of social services. When restrictedly considering this through community capacity building, the English literature has a relatively rich yet scattered and unsettled literature regarding the subject of collaboration.

However, the Community Tool Box (CTB; <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents>), which was constructed as an open-access public service within the University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development, has compiled and classified thousands of pages of data regarding the field. The service has content on almost every topic that can be said regarding this subject, and in this respect has naturally been very functional in this section's writing. Due to the CTB's general guidance over this text, specific references to the relevant website have not been provided in the text. We recommend readers examine the site. Due to the perspective/approach/assumption issues, as mentioned in the text, however, taking a critical approach to the literature on capacity building is important. The permanent solution would be for volunteer organizations in Türkiye to bring together their institutional experience with experts in order to create specific literature and guidance on the topic of getting to know society and collaboration.

Summary and Evaluation

Getting to know the community has a practical purpose in volunteering. This purpose basically relates to the community's problems and needs and aims to determine these from one aspect and solve them from another. In this regard, materials need to be used that have been accumulated mostly within the social sciences and require relative expertise. However, the methods and techniques for identifying and solving the problems and needs are not neutral but related to specific approaches. For this reason, the current knowledge regarding getting to know society needs to be reconsidered and adapted from the perspective of volunteerism.

As is known, the social sciences are a field in which knowledge is produced through analogy and generalization and can provide important guidance for volunteering. However, the approach that assumes the problems and solutions based on the similarities between community A and community B to be the same may not always yield decent results. In this case, a tension exists between "explaining society" and "understanding society". For example, positivist approaches assume society to be examinable and explainable as a passive research object and predictions to be able to be made about a society based on the data obtained. Competing approaches, however, assume each society to be structured in the center of a unique world of meaning and emphasize recognition/understanding over definition/explanation.

Each of these types of approaches naturally involves some basic human assumptions. However, volunteers must be expected to have specific assumptions to at least explain their own attitudes. These assumptions will also enable volunteer actors to critically and deliberately consider and adaptively use the support they will receive from the outside (e.g., the social sciences) in regard to getting to know and collaborating with society. Based on this background, getting to know society can be said to involve a four-stage process: analyzing the problem (or need), determining a thematic model for classifying the data to be obtained, collecting data based on research methods and techniques, and developing a project.

On the other hand, collaboration in volunteering is a very comprehensive subject that gains meaning based on getting to know society. Volunteers collaborating independently or within an organization, volunteer organizations working with public institutions, volunteer organizations collaborating with one another, and volunteer organizations collaborating with the community can be considered in this context. This context can in this case be classified in terms of institution-institution, institution-society, and institution-individual relations. "Participation/collaboration issues" and "management issues" regarding collaboration

and cooperation in volunteering are also subject to this same classification. These issues should certainly be evaluated and solutions sought within their own contexts. When looked at in general, knowing motivating and demotivating factors can also provide preventive support. Many participation issues can also predictably be resolved on their own by solving management issues.

Getting to know society is a necessary condition in volunteering, and collaborating with the community is a sufficient one. This is because the ultimate purpose of volunteer activities can be considered as contributing to activating the community's volunteer potential. In other words, "the principles of collaborating with the community in volunteering" are ultimately related to "building community capacity." In short, capacity-building approaches can be used (with caution due to the weakness of the literature despite relevant criticisms) by adapting them using the core assumptions of volunteerism.

Basic Reading Recommendations

- Akbaş, E. *Toplum ve sosyal hizmet* [Society and social services]. (available online)
- Arslan, M. L. (2018). *Sivil toplum kuruluşlarında gönüllülük: Sorunlar ve çözüm yolları* [Volunteerism in civil society organizations: Problems and solution pathways]. (available online)
- Aslan, Ş. (2019). *Sosyal bilimlerde araştırma yöntemleri* [Research methods in the social sciences]. Eğitim Kitabevi.
- Birleşmiş Milletler Gönüllüleri. (2013). *Türkiye’de gönüllülük: Gönüllülüğün rolünün ve katkılarının keşfedilmesi* [Volunteerism in Türkiye: Discovering volunteering’s role and contributions]. (available online)
- Creswell, J. W. (2021). *Nitel araştırma yöntemleri* [Qualitative research methods] (S. B. Demir & M. Bütün, Trans.). Siyasal Kitabevi.
- Erdoğan, E., Uyan-Semerci, P., Yentürk, N. & Yurttagüler, L. (Ed.). (2020). *Türkiye’de gönüllülük: Deneyimler, sınırlılıklar, yeni açılımlar* [Volunteerism in Türkiye: Experiences, limitations, and new developments]. Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları. (available online)
- İstanbul Sismik Riskin Azaltılması ve Acil Durum Hazırlık Kapasitesinin Artırılması Projesi (İSMEP). (2014). *Toplumsal kapasitenin geliştirilmesi ve toplum eğitimleri*. (available online)

Advanced-Level Reading Recommendations

- Aspen Institute. (1996). *Measuring community capacity building* (available online)
- Atkinson, R., & Willis, P. (2006). *Community capacity building: A practical guide*. (available online)
- Dekker, P., & Halman, L. (2003). *The values of volunteering: Cross-cultural perspective*. Springer.
- Craig, G. (2005). *Community capacity building: Definitions, scope, measurement, and critiques*. (available online)
- Community Tool Box. (available online)

Activity Recommendations

- Examine the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases by selecting a volunteer activity that has concluded in its entirety. During the activity, discuss the “methods and techniques used in getting to know society” and “practices on collaborating with the community”.
- Construct an activity about one of the different forms of volunteering (e.g., advocacy, helping one another, solidarity) using what you’ve learned in this section.
- Watch the short film titled *Le Gouffre*. (available online)
- Watch the short film titled *Mr. Indifferent*. (available online)

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- Arslan, M. L. (2018). *Sivil toplum kuruluşlarında gönüllülük: Sorunlar ve çözüm yolları*. <https://ilke.org.tr/sivil-toplum-kuruluslarinda-gonulluluk-sorunlar-ve-cozum-yollari>
- Aslan, Ş. (2019). *Sosyal bilimlerde araştırma yöntemleri*. Eğitim Kitabevi.
- Aspen Institute. (1996). *Measuring community capacity building*. https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/files/content/docs/csg/Measuring_Community_Capacity_Building.pdf
- Atkinson, R., & Willis, P. (2006). *Community capacity building: A practical guide*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237434535_Community_Capacity_Building_-_A_Practical_Guide
- Benton, T., & Craib, I. (2008). *Sosyal bilim felsefesi* (Ü. Tatlıcan & B. Binay, çev.). Sentez Yayıncılık.
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- Özlem, D. (1999). *Max Weber'de bilim ve sosyoloji*. Küyerel Yayınları.
- Poloma, M. M. (1993). *Çağdaş sosyoloji kuramları* (H. Erbaş, çev.). Gündoğan Yayınları.

