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► **To cite this version:**

Thibaut Dubois. Cooperation of employees and volunteers within NPOs - a case study in a French humanitarian NPO. Innovating for the future, Academy of Management, Aug 2024, Chicago, France. hal-04683443

**HAL Id: hal-04683443**

**<https://hal.science/hal-04683443v1>**

Submitted on 24 Sep 2024

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**Cooperation of employees and volunteers within NPOs - a case study in a French  
humanitarian NPO**

**ABSTRACT**

Non-profit organizations are the only ones to employ both volunteers and salaried staff. Many of them structure their operations by adapting management practices according to the status of the actors involved. However, this compartmentalization makes cooperation between actors more delicate, and thus undermines the associations' performance.

The aim of this paper is to present the results of a four-month research-intervention with an association, carried out as part of the preparation of a doctoral thesis. The first part (1.) presents the associative sector and our problematic, the second (2.) explains the theoretical and methodological frameworks, and the third (3.) presents our results.

**Keywords:**

Associations; cooperation; volunteers; status; research-intervention

## **Cooperation of employees and volunteers within NPOs - a case study in a French humanitarian NPO**

### **1 ASSOCIATIONS & COMBINING EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS**

The specific characteristics of associations are linked to their history (1.1), the result of a legislative battle in favor of intermediary bodies banned since the French Revolution. They are also undergoing transformations (1.2) that are changing their social positioning and internal functioning.

#### **1.1 HISTORY AND WEIGHT**

The law of July 1<sup>er</sup> 1901 encourages initiative and the freedom to create in an entrepreneurial spirit. French legislation adopts a hollow definition of the associative act. It is a place devoid of all determination, to which the members give the content they have freely chosen. The latest estimates put the number of associations in France at 1.5 million (Tchernonog & Prouteau, 2019) with an average annual increase of 33,000 since 2011.

The associative sector is made up of a large number of small structures. Three quarters of them have a budget of less than 10,000 euros, and account for just 4% of the sector's budget. In contrast, 1.3% of associations manage a budget in excess of 500,000 euros, equivalent to 71% of the sector's budget. The 2017 budget for the voluntary sector is estimated at 113 billion euros, contributing 3.3% to GDP. The number of employing associations is tending to stabilize: only 10.6% resorted to salaried employment in 2017. That same year, more than 31 million people living in mainland France declared that they had volunteered with at least one association, representing a volume of work of around 1.4 million full-time equivalent jobs, all the more considerable when compared

with the volume of associative salaried employment, of around 1.6 million. In France, over 140,000 volunteers sign up to a civic service contract every year.

## **1.2 ONGOING TRANSFORMATIONS**

The changes to which associations are subject and/or which they help to create are both external (1.2.1) and internal (1.2.2).

### ***1.2.1 EXTERNAL TRANSFERS***

Associations, in their relationship with society, are undergoing transformations linked to a desire for standardization (1.2.1.1), in particular to gain access to funding (1.2.1.2), which is tending to diversify (1.2.1.3).

#### ***1.2.1.1 STANDARDIZATION***

The ARC scandal in 1996, followed by the economic crisis of 2007, led to a crisis of confidence affecting the entire associative sector (Busson-Villa & Gallopel-Morvan, 2012). A new field of legislation, designed to restore this confidence, has been added to a wide variety of legislative frameworks and approvals, depending on the sector of activity. (Dauvin & Siméant, 2002; Davister, 2008; Valéau, 2013) Charter Committee, IDEAS label, IE001/6 certification, etc. (Busson-Villa & Gallopel-Morvan, 2012).

These standards are part of the tetranormalization conceptualized by Savall and Zardet (2005), and tend to encourage, on the one hand, the blocking of innovations by fear of normative disrespect, and on the other, competition between associations based on logics that are not necessarily at the service of the final beneficiary.

### **1.2.1.2 FINANCING**

Revenue from activities - public orders and user participation - together account for a growing share of associations' resources, rising from 49% in 2005 to 66% in 2017. Over the same period, the share of public subsidies continues to fall sharply: from 34% to 20% (Tchernonog & Prouteau, 2019). Donations and sponsorships have remained stable at 5%, while membership fees have tended to decrease to remain accessible to as many people as possible. The balance between private and public resources has gradually shifted, with the private share now in the majority at 56% in 2017, compared with 49% in 2005. Within the public share, there has been a decrease in the weight of the State and an increase in the share of local authorities.

### **1.2.1.3 INTER-ASSOCIATION COMPETITION**

Two types of "*market*" exist for a non-profit organization: the "*customers*" to whom it provides goods or services (otherwise known as "*beneficiaries*") and the "*donors*" from whom it draws its resources. Associations compete to attract both, in terms of geography, beneficiaries and products. (Haddad, 2000). On the other hand, "*associative businesses* (Hély, 2009), *paralucratives* (Mayaux, 2012) are gradually entering the economic arena, bringing them into competition with for-profit actors (Kaltenbach & Séguin, 1996).

## **1.2.2 INTERNAL TRANSFERS**

### **1.2.2.1 ACTORS WITH MULTIPLE STATUSES**

Many people are involved in the associative project: members, activists, volunteers, salaried staff. In this communication, we deal only with volunteer and salaried status.

The practice of volunteering is highly heterogeneous, ranging from a tool for professional integration to develop employability, to a militant practice for transforming society. It can be

ephemeral, ad hoc and utilitarian (Demoustier, 2002; Ospital & Templier, 2018). While volunteers can be productive actors, they are also statutorily the sole leaders of associations.

The rise of the voluntary sector is primarily due to the failure of the State to curb unemployment following the first oil crisis, and the call by certain authors for the creation of a *"third sector"* (Delors & Gaudin, 1979) to bring in voluntary *"hidden work"* (Gaudin & Schiray, 1984) into the economy as *"formalized work"*. The State has largely encouraged the growth of associative employment through a continuum of voluntary and salaried work: community service jobs in 1979, community service work, solidarity employment contracts, youth employment, right up to the creation of the Local Accompaniment Scheme ("Dispositif Local d'Accompagnement") in 2002.

The development of voluntary work, another status not covered in this paper, was initially the result of a legal vacuum: *"it's a hybrid status halfway between voluntary work and salaried employment"*. (Valéau, 1998). Its use by associations, and by the volunteers themselves, can reflect very different realities, depending on the contractual form: civic service in France, European service, international solidarity, etc. (Retière, 1994; Valéau, 1998; Dauvin & Siméant, 2002; Merchez, 2002; Chevreuil, 2010). In France, volunteers benefit from a status recognized by the public authorities, as well as a living allowance. Volunteering is a reciprocal, formalized commitment of limited duration and permanence. Volunteers have no official status, and their intervention takes place outside their working hours. (Merchez, 2002).

These variable-geometry statutes, whose representatives often occupy multiple (member and director, employee and volunteer, etc.) or successive roles (Cottin-Marx, 2020) are indicative of a variety of commitments that intersect and work together to ensure the success of the associative project, despite sometimes complex professional relationships.

### **1.2.2.2 ERODING INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**

Volunteering is at the very heart of the associative movement: it is what makes social democracy possible within associations. Hiring employees only comes later, and in a way that seems to be dictated by circumstances (Dussuet & Flahault, 2010). Two figures emerge: on the one hand, the leader-volunteer, and on the other, subordinate to the first, the employee. This representation makes the volunteer an employer in his or her own right, more from a theoretical than a practical point of view.

In the first instance, this is due to the conflicting relationship that volunteers may have with employees, making the latter essentially representatives of a centralized technostructure that potentially weakens volunteerism. Opposition is therefore based primarily on notions of power: employees with the availability and skills tend to supplant volunteers in their role of representation, guidance and strategic decision-making (Demoustier, 2002). Secondly, with the relationship that volunteer managers have with being employers. For many of them, it's an unexpected responsibility, and they *"don't feel like looking after the staff. They're project activists, and they don't generally care about the burdens that fall to them."* (Russo, 2020).

Salaried employees have long been regarded as volunteers (Devetter et al., 2019). They are sometimes isolated, unaware of their rights and suffer from a lack of recognition, with degraded working conditions and low pay that can lead one to think of a *"voluntaryization of work"*. (Simonet, 2010). Yet some of them develop a kind of Stockholm syndrome: despite these conditions, they support *"the cause"*; the *"committed"* dimension of associations can be pointed out as an obstacle to salary awareness (Cottin-Marx, 2015).

It's worth pointing out that the figure of the volunteer is generally ignored in all matters relating to industrial relations, despite being represented in numerous associations.

### 1.3 ISSUES & HYPOTHESIS

The contextual elements presented lead us to question the conditions of cooperation between salaried and volunteer associative actors. We therefore pose the following problem for this paper:

**What organizational structures can associations put in place to foster cooperation between salaried staff and volunteers?**

Our hypothesis is that the implementation of **structures enabling actors to work together within common operational processes helps to foster their cooperation.**

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS & RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, we present the theoretical framework of our research and the model of cooperation analysis we will be using (2.1), as well as intervention research, the methodology used for our research (2.2).

### 2.1 COOPERATION

Cooperation, understood as the distribution of work towards a common goal, is the very condition for the existence of organizations (2.1.1). It is part of a dialectic with the concept of conflict (2.1.2), for which negotiation is the moderating variable (2.1.3).

#### 2.1.1 *CONDITION FOR THE EXISTENCE OF ORGANIZATIONS*

Cooperation is at the heart of organizational research (Chalmeau & Gallo, 1995). Its study cuts across many disciplines: anthropology, ethology, sociology, psychology, economics and management. Management sciences focus on cooperation within companies and organizations. The



construction of cooperation "*constitutes the central and fundamental problem to be solved by any organization or collective enterprise*". (Friedberg, 1993).

Taylor (1911) made this one of the principles of the Scientific Organization of Work between managers and workers. Mayo (1945) emphasized the need for cooperation between the different strata of the organization. For Simon (1945), consensus and cooperation enable cohesion and coherence. Romelaer (1998) presents it as "*the minimum degree of goodwill that everyone in any organization shows or must show for the organization to function*". (Romelaer, 1998)

It can arise from a constraint (Reynaud, 1989; Schelling, 1980) or intentionality (Boyer & Orléan, 1997) and a need for reciprocity in relations between the individuals concerned (Gouldner, 1960; Piaget, 1967; Hatchuel, 1996). Cooperation requires the sharing of a common task, and is intimately linked to the question of the division of labor and the distribution of each person's tasks. There are differences of opinion as to the causality between cooperation and division of labor. For Durkheim, the division of labor gives rise to cooperation, since the complementarity between men leads them to cooperate in meeting their needs (Durkheim, 1911). Hatchuel (1996) reverses this logic: "*the division of labor is not a prerequisite for cooperation, and we must think that cooperation is a necessary process for the division of labor*". (Hatchuel, 1996).

It can be understood exclusively in its vertical dimension. It can also be broadened to include all dimensions of the organization, including interactions between actors at the same hierarchical level (horizontal), in the same team or in different departments (transversal). (Rabardel et al., 1996).

For Crozier and Friedberg (1977), organizations are "*solutions that are always specific, that relatively autonomous actors [...] have created [...] to solve the problems posed by collective action and, in particular, the most fundamental of these, that of cooperation in achieving common goals, despite their divergent orientations*". (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977).

### **2.1.2 CONFLICT AND COOPERATION DIALECTIC**

Game theory contrasts two types of strategy: conflictual and cooperative. (Morgenstern & Von Neumann, 1944). In conflict, both parties seek to maximize their gains: one wins, the other loses. In cooperation, each party takes the other's needs into account, with a view to achieving a common gain. We move from enemy to partner. The dilemma is to choose between cooperative or conflictual strategies (Rojot, 2003).

Conflict would not be good or bad a priori, but "*a normal process by which socially useful differences are declared, for the enrichment of all involved*" (Follett, 1924). Weber (1971) adds that it is not possible to exclude conflict from social life. Strategic analysis (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977) positions conflict as an element in the development of organizations, through the meeting of two different nationalities.

For Savall and Vallée (2000), the alternation between conflict and cooperation is a dynamic of development and growth. The transition from one to the other is possible through negotiation. Negotiation is at the heart of both conflict and cooperation, linking the two.

### **2.1.3 NEGOTIATION: THE LINK BETWEEN COOPERATION AND CONFLICT**

Negotiation is "*the process through which two or more parties attempt to establish what each will give and take, or accomplish and receive, through a transaction between them*" (Rubin & Brown, 2013). For Savall and Zardet (1995), it is "*a contradictory dialogue between actors to reach an agreement integrating the compatible interests of the parties involved, in a positive-sum dialectical game*" (Savall & Zardet, 1995).. Actors are interdependent, and "*one party's negotiating power is based on the other's dependence on it*". (Rojot, 2003)..

Negotiation can be formal, implicit, individual or collective (Reynaud, 1979). It is not an end in itself, but an ongoing process: each actor is constantly adapting to and regulating his or her relevant environment. (Savall & Zardet, 1987). The durability of negotiation lies in the alternation between conflict and cooperation (Savall & Vallée, 2000) the latter being a source of energy, and distinct from consensus, "*which is equivalent to not operating and remaining as it is*". (Savall & Vallée, 2000).

#### **2.1.4 COOPERATION ANALYSIS NOMENCLATURE**

To analyze cooperation, we use the model constructed by Khenniche (2010):

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 Insert Table 1 about here  
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Three dimensions of cooperation are identified:

- The vertical dimension encompasses all the hierarchical relationships linking the organization's actors.
- The cross-functional dimension relates to relationships that cut across groups, to "inter-" relationships, whether between entities, departments or even work teams. In this paper, we'll consider this to be the inter-departmental dimension.
- Horizontal dimension: The adjective horizontal describes what "concerns individuals, elements belonging to the same level. The horizontal dimension corresponds to relationships between actors without hierarchical links and belonging to the same group; "intra-" relationships. In this communication, we'll consider it to be the internal dimension of a team or department.

Each of these dimensions is made up of three sub-themes, defined as fundamental to cooperation: communication, coordination and consultation practices, cohesion of actors, and division of labor.

Hierarchical structures, HRM policy and work resources and methods are the cross-cutting themes of the cooperation dimensions. They are structured in a similar way.

## **2.2 INTERVENTION RESEARCH**

The results we present in this paper are drawn from a research-intervention (Savall & Zardet, 1996; David, 2000; Plane, 2000). Research-intervention methods are based on a threefold perspective: describing, explaining and transforming the research object in order to gain a better understanding of it.

Research-intervention is based on the idea that a concrete apprehension of an organization can *only* be achieved "*by penetrating it, intervening in it and, consequently, modifying it.*" (Moisdon, 2010). The aim is to create knowledge simultaneously for and by the organization and the researchers, in a transformative logic. (Krief & Zardet, 2013).. Knowledge and change are co-produced by the company's actors and the contributor through a process of cognitive interactivity (Savall & Zardet, 1996).

In this type of research, the researcher is present in the scientific field of observation constituted by the association, interacting with the actors, with the aim of implementing measures to ensure the survival and development of the organization. Research-intervention also alternates between periods of immersion in the research field and periods of distancing.

## **3 THE CASE STUDY: PRESENTATION & RESEARCH RESULTS**

In this section, we present the field and the conditions in which the research was carried out (3.1), followed by the research results (3.2) and a discussion of these results (3.3).

### **3.1 THE FIELD: A SOCIAL LANDLORD**

The association within which the research was carried out is developing a project built around a specific organization (3.1.1), in which we drew up a research project looking at the conditions under which volunteering is carried out, based on a diagnosis followed by the presentation of a transformation project which was not implemented (3.1.2).

#### **3.1.1 ASSOCIATIVE PROJECT & ORGANIZATION**

Association H is a social landlord, operating in the Lyon region and belonging to a federation of associations working throughout mainland France, as well as in Belgium and Luxembourg. It was founded in 1985, in response to the exclusion and isolation of people in precarious situations. Its mission is to

- Enable people on low incomes who are at risk due to their social situation, age, disability or health, to access decent housing, adapted to their situation and resources.
- To contribute to a city open to all, by giving priority to housing located in "*balanced neighbourhoods*".
- Offering personalized or group support to encourage the recreation of links and social integration

Association H currently manages 2,560 homes for 12,000 families. It is managed by a team of 155 salaried employees, 698 volunteers and numerous civic service volunteers (number unspecified). In 2020, the volume of volunteer work represented more than 32,000 hours.

H is structured on a pyramid structure, with general management relying on five departments to manage the business, four so-called "*support*" departments and an operations department. The

operations department is divided into several business units, including the LC unit where we carried out our research between January and May 2021.

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Insert Figure 1 about here  
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The LC division is responsible for managing and coordinating housing and residents in the area covered by the association. It is managed by a division manager, and its activities are divided into three territories, each headed by a team coordinator. Territory 1 comprises seven residences, territory 2 eight, and territory 3 seven. Each residence is managed by a residence manager. Rental managers and social workers are assigned to each territory. The division manager, team coordinators and residence managers are salaried employees. Within each residence, they are supported by a volunteer team whose size varies and whose management is co-assured, where possible, by a volunteer referent. Our research focused on territories 2 and 3, within 4 residences.

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Insert Figure 2 about here  
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### ***3.1.2 PROCEDURE***

Our encounter with the H association came about through an offer of volunteer work on our part in January 2021. On January 8, 2021, we met with an HR volunteer referent, for a presentation of the association's operations and an initial exchange on the missions that could be carried out. This exchange identified a need for H to develop certain dynamics in this area. This led to a meeting with the Human Resources Department at the beginning of February 2021 to work out the framework of a possible assignment.

The meeting resulted in a mission to assess the perception of HR systems for volunteers and volunteer referents, by their manager (employee or volunteer) and themselves.

We proposed to carry out this mission, on a voluntary basis, under the responsibility of the HR Department, in four successive phases according to the following schedule:

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Insert Figure 3 about here  
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A set of specifications detailing the terms and objectives of the assignment was validated by the Human Resources Department prior to the start of the assignment. The HR Department then validated with the actors concerned their consent to take part in the assignment. Due to internal difficulties, the mission could only start in March 2021.

A logbook was kept from the first interview until the end of the mission. However, it remains unrepresentative given the short time we were able to spend in the field: given the health situation, all interviews were conducted by videoconference, and we did not have the opportunity to observe practices in situ.

Documentary research enabled us to collect and study the following materials:

- Organization chart
- Tracking table for volunteer assignments
- Training catalog for volunteers
- Volunteer referents booklet
- A booklet detailing the association's strategic ambitions
- Minutes of internal meetings

Thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted over a period of twenty days, distributed as follows:

- Four employees: Territory 1 team coordinator, Territory 2 team coordinator, Territory 1 residence manager, Territory 2 residence manager

- Five volunteer referents: two volunteer referents from territory 1, two volunteer referents from territory 2, one HR volunteer referent
- Four volunteers: one volunteer from each volunteer referent team

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 Insert Figure 4 about here  
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Each interview lasted one hour, and focused on the association's managerial practices with regard to volunteers.

The following themes were addressed during the interviews: working conditions (layout and design of premises, equipment and supplies, nuisances, etc.), work organization (distribution of tasks, missions, regulation of absenteeism, interest in the work, etc.), time management (meeting deadlines, planning, scheduling of activities, tasks not taken on properly, etc.), communication-coordination-cooperation - 3C (3Cs of the management team, relations with other employees, etc.), job training (training-job matching, training needs, available skills, etc.), implementation of the strategy. Fieldnote quotes were taken for each interview.

The interviewees' expressions were then analyzed to isolate "*fieldnote quotes* (Savall & Zardet, 2004) of dysfunctions evoked by them. We identified 77 fieldnote quotes, distributed as follows:

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 Insert Table 2 about here  
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The fieldnote quotes were anonymized and then grouped together in the form of key ideas, the formulation of which is intended to represent the generic meaning behind the fieldnote quotes. We identified 17 key ideas.

The key ideas and fieldnote quotes were presented in the form of a "Part 1" diagnosis, on several occasions: to the HRD, then to the territories involved in the interviews. Each key idea is presented independently of the others, as follows:



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Insert Figure 5 about here  
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For each key idea, we read aloud the entire text presented to the actors. The aim of this restitution was to act as a "*mirror effect* (Savall & Zardet, 2004) for the actors interviewed. The key ideas and observations made during the restitution, together with the documentation (materials) collected and the observations recorded in our logbook, enabled us to construct a "Part 2" diagnosis. This diagnosis is based on "*force ideas*":

- The key ideas are, as mentioned above
- The unvoiced comments, ideas formulated by us on the basis of observations from our logbook and the documentation we consulted

We came up with 5 force ideas. The "Part 2" diagnosis was presented to the HR Department on May 6, 2021.

These various elements have enabled us to construct a proposed structure for a change project. This proposal is based on "*dysfunctions baskets*", each designed to improve operations in response to one or more key ideas. We identified 4 dysfunctions baskets.

On May 20, 2021, the "Part 2" diagnosis and the proposed continuation of the assignment were presented to the head of the LC division, as well as to the HRD. Several meetings were subsequently held with the head of the division in May and June 2021, to discuss the structuring of the project in greater depth, which he ultimately decided not to pursue. Several factors may have contributed to this. Firstly, the Director of Operations, the division manager's N+1, had just announced her resignation, and her replacement necessarily entailed new orientations not necessarily compatible with the spirit or pace of the change project. On the other hand, an ISO 9001 certification process was already underway. The change project didn't seem relevant, since its positioning in relation to certification was tricky to find. Lastly, our hybrid and unusual

positioning within the structure - volunteer-researcher-consultant - undoubtedly made it harder to understand our action.

The mission thus came to an end. We did not carry out any new missions, under any status whatsoever, in collaboration with the H association.

## **3.2 RESEARCH RESULTS**

In this section, we present the methodology used to construct the results (3.2.1), followed by the final results, classified by cooperation theme (3.2.2 to 3.2.7).

### **3.2.1 BUILDING RESULTS**

To construct the results we present in this paper, we imputed the fieldnote quotes that have a link with the concept of cooperation to the themes and sub-themes of the cooperation analysis model previously presented:

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 Insert Table 3 about here  
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### **3.2.2 TRANSVERSAL DIMENSION OF COOPERATION**

A lack of interdepartmental cooperation can be identified between residences with the same mission. The activities offered in one residence do not extend to the others. The following fieldnote quote illustrates this idea:

*"We don't know what's being done on other boarding houses."*

On the other hand, we note that there are few mechanisms for nurturing interpersonal relationships between residences, and as such, cooperation is hard to emerge. We can quote the following fieldnote quotes:

*"I find that it lacks the times that once existed, when volunteers get together [...]. There are volunteer meetings, but they're held within each site, whereas they should be held between territories. There should also be exchanges between referent volunteers."*

Practice analysis groups could provide an opportunity to exchange views on the activities and methods implemented within the various residences. Beyond cooperation between residences, one idea suggests that volunteers show little interest in issues concerning the overall running of the structure.

*"The difficulty is that volunteers are tied to their activity team, but find it hard to take an interest in the overall running of the association."*

It seems that local relational networks within the residences are more powerful for volunteers than for salaried staff. They base their activity on the relationship with the "helped", and not with the association, which is more a means than an end.

Finally, the "Support" departments seem to be out of touch with needs in the field:

*"When HR management sends me volunteer candidates who want to do school workshops, they fall head over heels when they see the reality of the mission."*

### **3.2.3 HORIZONTAL DIMENSION OF COOPERATION**

Conflicts can arise within work teams, particularly over the distribution of activities. Volunteers are sometimes perceived as reducing the volume of activity of salaried staff.

*"The employees with whom we have difficulties are those who think we're going to try to reduce their missions, their activities with the volunteers."*

This illustration goes against the grain of the literature, which suggests that it is volunteers who see salaried staff as a counterweight to the association's mission. This may be explained by the fact

that H has an exclusively salaried management structure, where volunteer activity is necessarily carried out under the responsibility of a salaried actor. In addition, we can extend the previous illustration with this one:

*"There are a lot of volunteers who in their professional careers have held positions of responsibility, and find it hard to understand that they have to work with salaried staff: they take control."*

Volunteers, because they have the skills and availability, may be tempted to occupy a larger organizational space than their mission confers a priori. In so doing, they come up against the association's organizational rules. In all cases, clarification of the distribution of activities seems necessary. However, should this distribution be based on status, in a generic way, or within each team and with each individual, taking contingencies into account?

### **3.2.4 VERTICAL DIMENSION OF COOPERATION & HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURES**

Conflicts are also played out over the power and level of responsibility of the actors:

*"Either we're in a broad-based operation where the volunteer does a bit of what he wants, or the opposite: we need to find an in-between."*

*"Volunteers sometimes take the employee for an impediment to going round in circles: 'I'm already nice enough to come, if I can't do what I want then I'll leave.'"*

These fieldnote quotes seem to imply that it is necessary to place volunteer activity within a work team, even though volunteers position themselves outside, free and in direct relationship with the otherness to be helped. The framework for action is not determined, or too determined.

This raises the question of the subordination of volunteers within associations: who's the boss? In this sense, some volunteers recognize subordination only at the statutory level, and go beyond the hierarchical organization of salaried employees:

*"The fact that volunteers speak directly to the president or general manager, sometimes they know more than us salaried staff."*

*"Sometimes we learn from a volunteer that they were allowed to do such and such because they asked the president directly."*

From a statutory point of view, the president is the association's decision-maker. However, tools (internal regulations, organization chart, etc.) and mechanisms (executive committee, etc.) are put in place to support operational functioning. Some volunteers consciously opt out of these, and the chairman authorizes them to do so, thereby undermining cohesion between hierarchical levels and reducing the legitimacy of managerial authority. As a result, it is sometimes difficult for managers to exercise their authority over volunteers:

*"Salaried staff sometimes find it a little hard to deal with dissatisfaction with volunteers, to say 'No' or if the activity isn't carried out properly."*

For the manager, the question may be: what's the point of exercising an authority that is not recognized and exceeded? On the other hand, if the issue of product and/or service/activity quality has not been negotiated and validated, through a contract and indicators for example, it is impossible for the manager to legitimize dissatisfaction.

What's more, these managers seem to lack guidelines for supervising the actions of volunteers, as this illustration highlights:

*"Volunteers will give out their telephone numbers, and can be called in the middle of the night by a resident. It's complicated for us employees, we can't stop it, we have no guidelines."*

Finally, the H association has decided to set up a specific line of authority: the volunteer referents. Necessarily volunteers, these actors act as a link between the salaried manager and the volunteer team. The association finds it hard to recruit volunteers for these missions.

*"There's no rush at the door to take on the role of volunteer referent."*

This can be attributed to the opaqueness of its intention: is it to reward a commitment? Recognize skills? Make it easier for the employee to carry out his or her managerial mission? In all cases, this lack of clarity is noted by volunteers, who see little point in it.

*"I've become a volunteer referent, but the volunteer mission is the most important. I don't want the volunteer referent role to encroach on being a volunteer."*

### **3.2.5 HR POLICY**

Salaried managers feel they lack the training to work with volunteers:

*"We're not trained to work with volunteers."*

This illustration highlights the representation of the volunteer as a persona, distinct from the employee. The individual is invisibilized behind his or her status. We don't have an explicit illustration of a volunteer expressing a similar idea with regard to employees, but the previous illustrations may suggest that it exists. Our analysis leads us to believe that the supposed lack of management training is not linked to the relationship with volunteering, but to a general lack of quality in management.

Finally, it seems that volunteers are not very interested in the training courses offered to them:

*"There are a lot of volunteers who haven't done the accompanying training."*

This illustration feeds into previous ideas about the volunteer's positioning outside the work team and the association, but in favor of the relationship with the otherness to be helped. In this logic, training offered by the association makes little sense, even if it focuses directly on the relationship.

### **3.2.6 WORKING METHODS AND RESOURCES**

Association H is highly professionalized, in the sense that most of its human resources are salaried and trained, but also in terms of work tools and internal communication. The same applies to e-mail, with each employee and volunteer given an individual address as soon as they join the organization:

*"I never log on to email."*

*"When you become an active volunteer, you get lots of emails and that can be scary."*

Once again, the volunteer withdraws from the operational side of things to concentrate on his or her mission: the relationship. In so doing, they leave a significant part of the association behind, even though this has and/or will necessarily have a short- or long-term impact on the conditions in which the relationship exists:

*"The 2025 ambitions are typically for professionals."*

*"Volunteers are resistant when it comes to the institutional and political life of the association."*

"Ambitions 2025" is the name of the strategic plan of association H. Although this plan includes volunteers in its reflection, it seems to have little impact on them. There's too much distance between the "Ambitions" and the operational consequences on the volunteer's mission, for them to pay attention and invest in it.

### **3.3 CONCLUSION**

Association H, within the LC division, has set up a number of structures and systems to foster cooperation between employees and volunteers. Mixed teams within the same residence, a common HR team, training courses for all actors, access to the same information and a similar e-mail address for volunteers and employees. On the other hand, there is a real political and operational will to bring the actors closer together. Nonetheless, our research has revealed a number of shortcomings in this cooperation.

Volunteers seem to have little interest in the collective dimension and the overall associative project, but rather in the relationship they create with the action's beneficiaries. The "professional" and strategic discourse is far removed from their reality, and there is little interest in training and sharing practices.

An important issue is the distribution of activities. Association H has chosen to clearly separate the activities and tasks that can be carried out by volunteers and salaried staff. Within the work teams, this does not seem to foster cooperation, since there is tension on this point. This point is highlighted by the position/mission of volunteer referent, which is neglected by volunteers because it is little understood, even though it is potentially very useful.

A final analysis reveals a tension between subordination and power. Although integrated into a work team, the legitimacy of power is sometimes given by volunteers exclusively to governance.

### **3.4 HYPOTHESIS VALIDATION & DISCUSSION**

Our research results do not allow us to validate our hypothesis that the implementation of structures enabling actors to work together within common operational processes will foster their



cooperation. This is a prerequisite, but our analyses lead us to believe that structuring must be accompanied by tools to mobilize actors.

The question of the distribution of activities could, for example, be addressed through the creation of mixed job descriptions, i.e. positions that could be assigned to both volunteers and salaried staff. On the other hand, the implementation of objective contracts for all actors, negotiated and evaluated with their manager, would reposition the question of subordination and give legitimacy to operational management.

On the other hand, we feel it is essential, in order to encourage cooperation between salaried and voluntary actors, to shift the focus from status and its specific features to the notion of organizational player, of which status is only one component, not necessarily indicative of competence or commitment.

### ***3.4.1 THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL INPUT***

From a theoretical point of view, our findings are in line with Simonet-Cusset's (2002) analysis that it is necessary to consider volunteering as "work". They also resonate with the theory of human potential (Savall & Zardet, 1995) regarding the personalization of management practices. The absence of a transformative phase in our research meant that we were unable to observe the alternation between conflict and cooperation.

At managerial level, this work emphasizes the need to support structures by implementing tools negotiated with all organizational actors.

### ***3.4.2 LIMITS***

The main limitation was that we were unable to complete the research-intervention. In addition, the health situation at the time prevented us from gaining access to the field and observing behavior

in a satisfactory manner. We would remind you that we carried out this mission on a voluntary basis. It seems to us that this did not contribute to our observations and recommendations being taken seriously by the human resources department. In this context, the voluntary nature of our work represents a limitation of our research. Finally, our research does not take into account voluntary actors, the third status of actors at work within associations.

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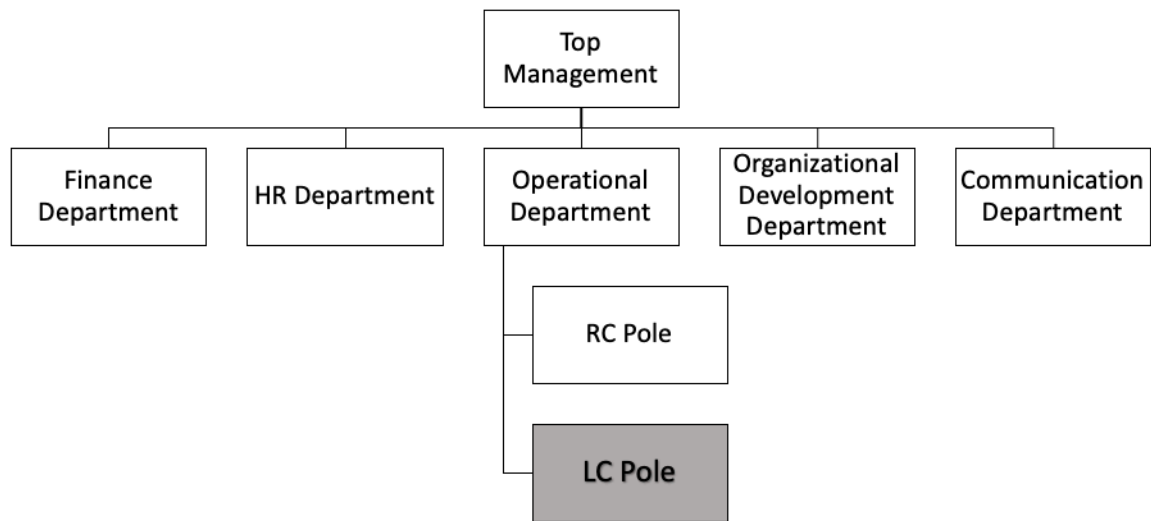
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## APPENDIXES

FIGURE 1

## H organization chart



**FIGURE 2**  
**Territorial organization model**

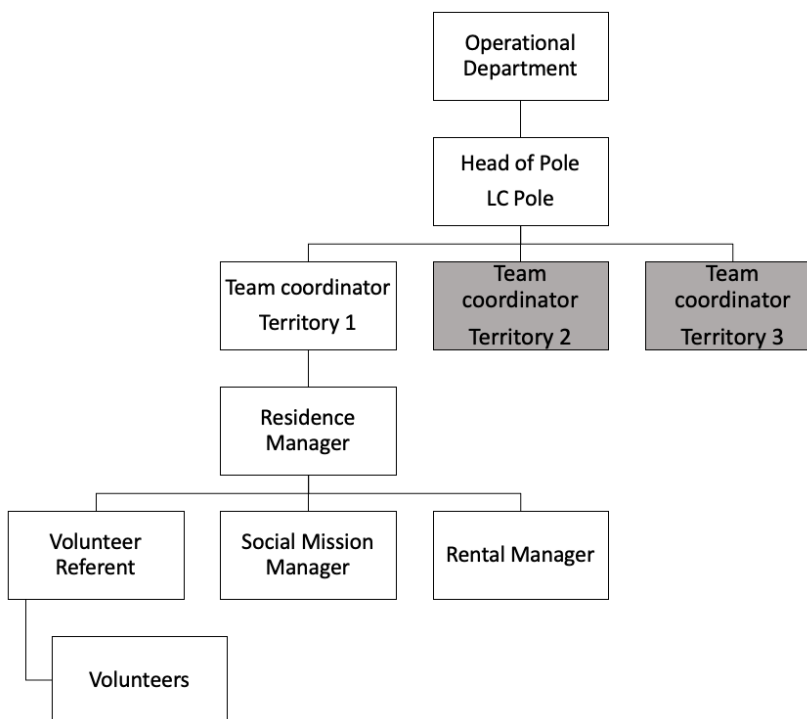
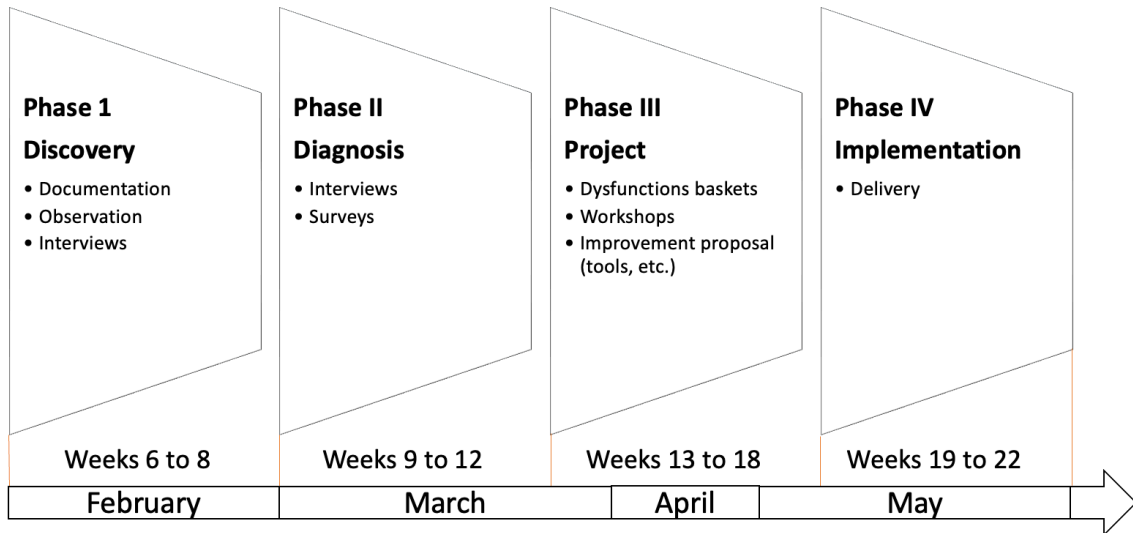


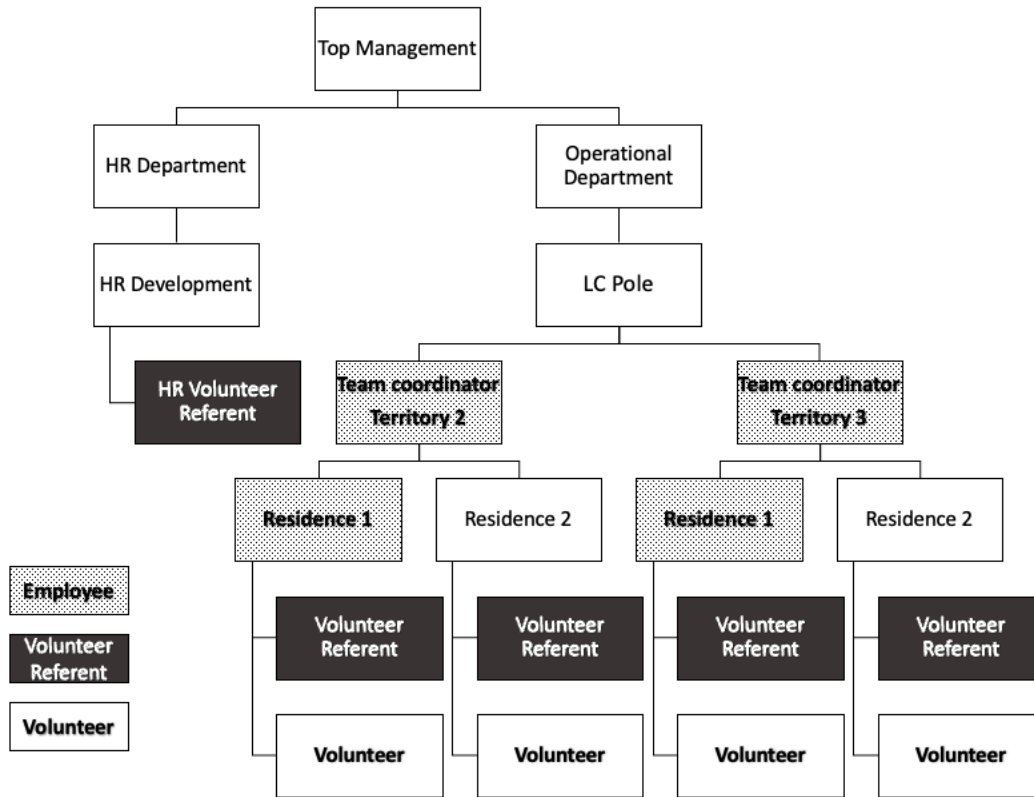


FIGURE 3

## Intervention schedule



**FIGURE 4**  
**Details of interviews conducted**



**FIGURE 5****Template for presenting key ideas****THEME*****SUB-THEME******KEY IDEA***

"Fieldnote quote 1"

"Fieldnote quote 2"

**TABLE 1**  
**Cooperation analysis model (Khenniche, 2010)**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-Themes</b>
1. Transversal dimension of cooperation	1.1 Cross-functional communication, coordination and consultation practices
	1.2 Cohesion of players between entities
	1.3 Cross-functional distribution of work
2. Horizontal dimension of cooperation	2.1 Horizontal communication, coordination and cooperation practices
	2.2 Cohesion of players within an entity
	2.3 Horizontal distribution of work
3. Vertical dimension of cooperation	3.1 Vertical communication, coordination and cooperation practices
	3.2 Cohesion between hierarchical levels
	3.3 Vertical distribution of work
4. Hierarchical structures	4.1 Supervisory powers
	4.2 Reporting lines
	4.3 Role of the hierarchy
	4.4 Exercise of authority
	4.5 Management mode
	4.6 Degree of control/autonomy
5. HR Policy	5.1 Training policy
	5.2 Valuation and remuneration
	5.3 Rotation of players
	5.4 Social integration
6. Working methods and resources	6.1 Physical working structures
	6.2 Communication, coordination and cooperation mechanisms
	6.3 Working rules and procedures
	6.4 Activity management (systems - tools)

**TABLE 2****Volume of fieldnote quotes by theme**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Volume</b>
Work conditions	/
Work organization	30
Time management	/
Communication-Coordination-Cooperation	15
Job training	16
Implementation of the strategy	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>

**TABLE 3****Imputation of fieldnote quotes to cooperation themes (Khenniche, 2010)**

	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Volume</b>
1.	Transversal dimension of cooperation	12
2.	Horizontal dimension of cooperation	9
3.	Vertical dimension of cooperation	10
	4. Hierarchical structures	12
	5. HR Policy	19
6.	Working methods and resources	12
	<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>