

# The donation potential of value-driven youth and non-formal education organisations: the case of the Scout Movement

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## Introduction

“NAPLES, Italy - One azure morning in December, Laura Cozzolino arrived at her corner cafe in central Naples and ordered her usual: a dense espresso, which arrived steaming hot on the dark marble counter.

She lingered over the aroma, then knocked it back in two quick sips. But instead of paying for one coffee, she paid for two, leaving the receipt for the other -a caffè sospeso, or suspended coffee-with the bartender for a stranger to enjoy”<sup>(20)</sup>.

The “caffè sospeso” (Italian for a suspended or unaccomplished coffee), is a Neapolitan tradition that boomed during World War II and has found a revival in recent years during hard economic times. According to that tradition in Naples someone who had experienced good luck would order a “caffè sospeso” paying the price of two coffees but receiving and consuming only one. A poor person enquiring later whether there was a “sospeso” available would then be served a coffee for free. What motivates such a simple, anonymous act of generosity?

Open-source initiatives are another example of attitude toward donation. Open source initiatives appear in many forms, however two primary types can be identified: open source software and open source content: i.e. the creation of a body of knowledge, such as online discussion forums, consumers’ reviews, collaborative website tagging, online encyclopaedias, and others<sup>(18)</sup>. Both open-source software and content projects are a collaborative endeavour of individuals, mostly young people, who volunteer their time, effort and skills to produce a product that is available to all. What is the vision they share leading to offer their time and expertise for free?

In London in 1909 a “Scout offered to show the way to a gentleman as his good turn for the day. When the stranger offered to pay for his trouble, of course the Scout said: No, thank you, sir. I am a Scout” (Baden-Powell<sup>(4)</sup>).

A surprising answer to the foreigner; in that situation he would have rather considered normal for the young boy to accept the proposed reward for the service. What does it mean “I am a Scout”?

The choice of generously donating, without an evident and immediate return characterises the three above referred experiences, and many more examples of similar individual and collective behaviours could be proposed.

However, those practices contrast strongly with the characteristics of contemporary society which is predominantly based on exchange, and where giving is based on reciprocity - “*do ut des*”- and search for personal advantage, individualism and narcissistic consumption.

Indeed, the acceleration of the process of globalisation has pushed a process of cultural homogenisation, along with the adoption of a Western, neoliberal development model, based on the dogma of economic growth, competition and maximisation of profit, which in turn requires indefinite and unsustainable consumption of resources and production of waste.

Zygmunt Bauman's "I consume, thus I am" well synthesises this contemporary way of recognising the existence of the human being. Indeed, the networks of human relations have been colonised by the devotion to consumption. The traditional sense of responsibility of ethical duty and moral concern for others, are transferred toward oneself, personal success and forecast of possible risks. "Responsible choices" today are associated with decisions that respond to the interests of the Self and answer to its wishes <sup>(5)</sup>.

In contrast, increasingly young people spontaneously join to actively work for alternative structures and functioning of modern society, networking and organising around shared principles of cooperation and solidarity.

The Neapolitan tradition of the *caffè sospeso* inspires today many groups of people and lead to similar practice and more or less organised initiatives and solidarity networks in many countries around the world <sup>(26)</sup>. Although the participation in the Open-source movement is often an individual choice, hundreds of organised groups have been established on that principle.

In the case of the Scout movement, today possibly the largest transnational youth-targeted non-formal education movement worldwide \*, its growth over more than hundred years is based on a well defined, values-driven educational method for "Good citizenship" <sup>(4)</sup> putting strong emphasis on helping others.

Several studies have explored the determinants of individual generosity and propensity to donation, and specifically blood donation, including the effect of people's pro-social motivation.

However, the potential propensity to blood donation of groups of specifically organised around principles of solidarity and cooperation is still to be further explored. If we assume a high donation potential for people in this kind of organisations, the propensity to donate is probably much higher for young adults who spent many years of their childhood and adolescence in values-driven organisations whose objective is the education to social commitment, such as those belonging to the Scout Movement.

The objective of this paper is to preliminarily reflect on the donation potential of youth in value-driven non-formal education organisations, using the Scout Movement as a specific case.

## **What fosters a pro-social attitude?**

In the above mentioned examples, whether from popular tradition, from the open-source world or from the specific pedagogical experience of scouting, the concept and sense of giving is associated with total freedom and autonomy of choice, anonymity and gratuity. The link is evident with some kind of a prosocial motivation: an act of pure altruism, i.e. a general desire to help or increase the welfare of other people with no explicit benefit to oneself, possibly deriving from a felt obligation, a moral belief that one ought to help others.

Donation as an act of altruism is an asymmetric relation where the objective is the good of the other; thus not the gift that is given is relevant, but the act of giving in itself <sup>(12)</sup>.

Altruistic giving also excludes any situation in which the donation could be motivated by immediate material or immaterial reward (such as recognition, reputation, etc.), although in practice it is inevitably associated with the partly selfish anticipation of positive emotions such feeling good about oneself or pride following donation, also described as "benevolence" <sup>(13)</sup>.

For example, different motivations appear to lay behind volunteering for the production of freely accessible products. It has been shown that in open source software developers self-development and reputation-building motivations rank higher than in individuals contributing to open-source content, which gave higher ratings to altruistic motivations. Nevertheless reputation-gaining was the weakest motivation in both contexts; indeed, whatever their involvement in the open-source movement, individuals share an inclination to provide socially desirable responses <sup>(18)</sup>.

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\* The Scout Movement cannot be strictly defined as a "youth movement" due to the peculiar educational role of adults serving as "older brothers", thus sharing experience as peers -and not as instructors, teachers, etc.- to the younger generations. The way the Movement organised and led throughout the world varies considerably. In many national organisations, for example, "older brothers" serving as leaders-educators tend to be themselves young adults, whereby in other organisations older adults prevail in that role. This is why one should rather refer to the Scout Movement as intergenerational.

Blood donation, especially when the person who donates blood does not know the person who will receive it and cannot benefit from any form of compensation, certainly represents a gesture of “pure altruism”<sup>(14)</sup>.

What leads to altruism and propensity to selfless giving to others?

Most religions put love to others at the centre of their vision and propose love that does not expect anything in exchange, unconditional and absolute as the purest manifestation of divinity or path to enlightenment. Thus, a pro-social motivation may derive from religiosity and it is not surprising that many authors have put forward the hypothesis that religiosity coincides with generosity.

A number of studies claim quantitative support to the traditional hypothesis that religious participation generates social capital; or that it boosts volunteering and charitable giving; or that it makes people more generous.

Sablosky<sup>(22)</sup> has highlighted serious conceptual (ill-definition of dependent and independent variables) and methodological (self-reporting, selection bias, measure of religiosity, etc.) shortcomings of those studies and vigorously argued that they do not provide serious quantitative evidence for the traditional hypothesis.

Besides religiosity, it has been shown that individuals with higher levels of moral reasoning are more likely to act pro-socially than individuals with lower levels of moral reasoning. In addition, a number of studies have found that individuals with a greater sense of moral and civic obligations are more likely to volunteer than individuals who feel less obligated to take moral or civic action<sup>(16)</sup>.

Discussing the pro-social tendency of Putnam and Campbell's<sup>(21)</sup> “religious social networks”, Sablosky<sup>(22)</sup> argues that those effects are probably not due to anyone's religion but rather to the well-known positive effects of voluntary association which characterises any network. The importance of social networks, rather than beliefs, as dominant mechanism leading to volunteering is supported also by the work of Becker and Dhingra<sup>(6)</sup>. Indeed, as Sablosky<sup>(22)</sup> highlights in his review of literature on the subject, Putnam himself finds non-religious organisations more effective than religious organisations in promoting all types of volunteerism.

Similarly, Vaidyanathan et al.<sup>(24)</sup>, who explored the motivation behind charitable donations in relation to political ideology and religiosity, conclude that giving is more an effect of active participation in religious, political, and community organisations, than of ideology.

Indeed, social networks generate opportunities for volunteering. Volunteering is typically a public form of altruism and much volunteering is done within the context of social organisations, and individuals who belong to clubs and religious organisations are more likely to volunteer than individuals without these social affiliations<sup>(16)</sup>.

## **The potential of pro-social organisations for blood donation**

Since the 1950s hundreds of studies have investigated factors that motivate blood donation, yet with mixed findings.

Altruism and felt obligation have been investigated as possible pro-social motivation, in that they represent a desire to have a positive impact on other people or social collectives through blood donation.

Pro-social motivations were cited frequently by first-time, repeat, and apheresis donors, but less often by lapsed donors<sup>(7)</sup>. However, according to a recent systematic review and meta-analysis of past literature personal moral norms showed a small positive association with donation behaviour, while altruism was non-significant. Regarding antecedents of blood donation intention, personal moral norm showed a medium positive association and altruism a small positive association<sup>(8)</sup>. Indeed, the authors consider that focussing donation campaigns on a benevolent, rather than a pro-social message, highlighting the personal benefits of donating, would be most effective<sup>(13)</sup>. Interestingly, ethical values and religious beliefs seem to be more effective than economic incentive for blood donation<sup>(19)</sup>.

Some evidence exists that if you are a motivated blood donor you probably are more prone to social engagement. An Australian study has shown that blood donors -at least in that country- are more likely than non-donors and past donors to volunteer, participate in civic engagement activities and political activism<sup>(1)</sup>.

However, few studies have studied the propensity of people otherwise engaged in volunteer organisations to become blood donors, but the donation potential of that experience may be inferred from more general considerations.

Recalling that a parent or another significant role model engaged in the same activity (a coach, a leader, a trusted peer, etc.) is associated with greater commitment to helping others (for example through blood donation). Regular on-going blood donation has been shown to increase as a function of the positive expectations of other people in the donor's social network. In their organised groups people share problems and the opportunities to solve them. They develop shared interests and concerns, and become part of a community that shares beliefs and norms about the importance of contributing to the public good. The extent to which volunteers perceive a congruence between their own values and the mission of any organisation to which they contribute their time and energy, is considered a predictor of continued helping. Indeed, the respect that an organisation shows to its volunteers and the pride that volunteers feel in being part of the organisation can contribute to the continued commitment by volunteers<sup>(23)</sup>.

Thus, participation in organisations that highly value social engagement and the practice of helping others may provide a fertile environment for the promotion of blood donation.

## **Non-formal education and its functionality**

Non-formal education distinguishes itself from formal education for being less focused on the general and overall public needs of large groups in a society. It is often seen as a complementary educational activity, which happens in an organised and structured way, outside the formal system to provide learning to particular subgroups in the population. It also differs from informal education, which refers to all knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights acquired throughout life from any kind of experience. Within the overall functionality of non-formal education Willems<sup>(27)</sup> makes a twofold distinction: an inward or participant functionality and an outward or societal functionality. The former focuses on benefits for the individuals such as internalisation of pro-social norms, identity formation, skills and experience acquisition. In contrast, the societal functionality regards the goals and benefits for the community or society in which a non-formal educational programme is deployed. According to the same author, the relevance of non-formal education's functionality significantly varies according to country and its human development index (HDI). Willems<sup>(27)</sup> has shown that the societal functionality of non-formal education (based on a world-wide survey among member of scout organisations) may decrease with the increasing of a country's HDI, but such a crowding-out relation is not found for participant functionality. In other words, non-formal education's contribution to the development of pro-social motivation in participants is equally relevant for poor and rich countries.

For our purpose, organisations of non-formal education that are driven by altruistic and pro-social values are of special interest. Indeed learning to share time with people in need, learning to value diversity and sharing experiences without any type of discrimination, learning to decide autonomously and responsibly, and all in a joyful environment are some elements of an educational experience that will facilitate future donation attitude. In that sense the Scout Movement represents a significant example.

## **The pro-social characteristics of the Scout Movement**

The scouts and guides Movement is possibly the most wide-spread and embedded social movement based on non-formal education across the world<sup>(25)</sup>. Besides the wide territorial distribution of scout groups in many countries, and their availability to volunteer, there are additional strengths deriving from the educational objective of the Scout Movement.

Scouting is unique among non-formal education organisations to be based, not only on a solid pedagogy, but also on a life-long commitment (through the Scout Promise), which is developed through childhood (starting at about 7-8 years of age, so called cub-scouts and brownies) and adolescence (scouts and guides), to young (Rover scouts), and even mature adulthood (educators, leaders)<sup>(28)</sup>.

Scouting was born from the desire of its Founder -Lord Robert Baden-Powell- to improve society, a goal he believed could only be achieved by improving the individuals in society. Scouting's purpose is to contribute to the development of autonomous (able to make his/her own decisions and to manage his/her life),

supportive (actively cares about and for others), responsible (able to assume the consequences of his/her decisions), and committed individual, who seeks to live according to his/her values and supports the ideals which he/she finds are important. The development of an awareness of and concern for others, the sense of belonging to a community and being part of its history and evolution, are among the goals of the development of the individual as a member of society. The Scout method includes all four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be, the last two requiring a particular emphasis. Group life is a fundamental aspect of the scout experience. The attitudes and values which group life stimulates are both of a personal nature (such as a constructive and pro-active attitude to life, self-confidence, a spirit of enterprise, goal-setting, etc.), and of a social nature (such as a team spirit, seeking a consensus, acknowledging differences and interdependence, experiencing solidarity, etc.). Group life provides a useful way to put into practice, and develop individual capacities for autonomy, supportiveness, responsibility and commitment. The Scout method also implies a rich learning partnership between young people and adults, in their multifaceted role of educators, leaders and facilitators, based on mutual respect, trust and acceptance of each other as persons <sup>(28)</sup>. This allows to describe it as an intergenerational movement.

In the words of Lord Robert Baden-Powell being useful to others and, in general act for the common good is a fundamental element of the social and personal ethics proposed through the Scout method <sup>(10)</sup>.

To be useful and to help others at all times is a principle enshrined in the Scout Promise and Law, the pillars of the methods. The Promise is a voluntary personal commitment (the Scout promise) to do one's best to adhere to an ethical code of behaviour (the Scout law). Together Promise and Law constitute the essential ethical framework within which Scouting functions, and without which the Movement would no longer be Scouting <sup>(28)</sup>.

In his Last Message to Scouts Baden-Powell <sup>(2)</sup> recommends:  
"The real way to get happiness is by giving out happiness to other people".

The "daily good turn" is a well known icon of the Scout Movement, a good turn -however- that should not be motivated by possible reward.

"When you have done a good thing, don't hang about to be thanked or to be made a hero of, get away quietly and unnoticed" (Baden-Powell <sup>(2)</sup>).

Also non-discrimination is set in the Scout law ("a Scout is a friend to all") and permeates and the thought of the Founder throughout his writings.

## **The blood donation potential of the Scout Movement**

There are historical examples of the involvement of the Scout Movement in the promotion of blood donation, as for example in South Africa in the 1930s when Rover Scouts (young adults in the Scout Movement) participated with other community services groups, such as the Red Cross Society and the Medical Students' Council, in the establishment of the South African Blood Transfusion Service <sup>(9)</sup> and in Denmark where the volunteer donor organisation was founded in 1932 when a boy-scout movement established a corps of young adult boy-scouts who on a voluntary non-remunerated basis were willing to be called to hospitals to donate blood <sup>(15)</sup>. In 1932 approximately one fourth of the donors of the London Blood Transfusion Service, were Rover scouts <sup>(11)</sup>. The opportunity to involve scouts, among other community groups and associations, as stakeholders in the establishment of a local donor-association is also a recommendation resulting from a 2003 Danish donor-survey <sup>(17)</sup>. Several blood-donation initiatives are individually repeatedly reported from local groups and national scout organisations from many countries around the world, mostly developing countries (such as Burundi, Bangladesh, Croatia, Egypt, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Pakistan, and others), but systematic information is lacking ([www.scout.org](http://www.scout.org)).

Indeed these past experiences and recent recommendations recognise the well-rooted presence of the Scout Movement in those countries and its reputation at community level. Scouting's strong focus on the development of altruistic values and moral commitment to others ("benevolence"), makes of it an excellent example of pro-social organisation, the two elements concurring in motivating donation <sup>(8)</sup>. The peculiar progression from childhood to the transition to adulthood, allows those values to become a solid reference and provides young adults with a very strong motivation to serve their community and readiness to help others. Group life at the basis of the method and an exceptionally strong sense of identity are the perfect

environment for positive expectations from peers and leaders to act as incentive to donate and maintain the commitment for blood donation on a long-term basis <sup>(23)</sup>.

The donation experience of Rover scouts may in return strengthen the motivation and the sense of belonging to the scout group and Movement and, in general, social engagement <sup>(1)</sup>.

## Conclusions

Values-driven pro-social organisations may represent an important asset for the recruitment and maintenance of volunteer blood donors. Among them non-formal education organisations offer the additional possible advantage to associate blood donation to their educational program. Being configured as a life-long experience, and being based on a formal commitment, the Scout Movement may have an even greater potential.

Unfortunately, besides some historical reference and sporadic information about blood donation experiences among scout groups, an in depth quali-quantitative research validating this hypothesis is still lacking and could offer valuable insight for new paths in the promotion of blood donation, the recruitment and maintaining of volunteers, the organisation of specific initiatives, and partnership with appropriate institutions.

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