

Progression & Motivation – Working through challenges in sustainability focused project organizations

A qualitative study on what challenges organizational members and keeps them working through them

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ABSTRACT

As the [Brundtland \(1987\)](#) described, the ability of future generations to meet their needs will depend on how sustainable we can make our economy today. Now more than 20 years later we can observe initiatives aimed at sustainability across industries and borders. Sustainable development aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability for future generations to meet needs. Understanding how organizational members thrive or stagnate in work related to sustainability can give us understanding needed for enabling such organizations to improve and prosper. Hence by researching what practices makes organizational members motivated to endure challenges in sustainability-focused organizations, beneficial insights can be contributed for the continuity of such organizations. This qualitative study with (participant) observation and interviews, aims to provide a deep comprehension and map aspects related to the motivation factors in mentioned work settings. The outcome of the research is related to theory on research that has the key words: sustainability, motivation and volunteering. The significance of the research is to discuss and propose what beneficial solutions can be derived out of the observed scenarios to contribute to sustainability focused organizational project work.

Keywords: Motivation, sustainability-focused organizations, volunteering, impact, learning, group goals, group commitment, management, volunteer organizations

Objectives of the research

- To examine the use of activities and practices that influence motivation.
- To determine factors which are relevant to increase or decrease motivation.
- To gather reflections on the practices of leadership in sustainability-focused organizations.

1. Introduction

As the [Brundtland](#) report described (1987), the ability of future generations to meet their needs depends on how sustainable we can make our economy today. Sustainable development is a way forward of organizing our economy and consumption that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Today sustainability is a term of importance you face regularly from choosing what to buy in the supermarket to how you want to use transport options to get where you need to be. Sustainability-focused organizations are emerging in innovative cities around the world. Sustainability is definitely one of the buzzwords of 2018 and 2019 that will drive actions across sectors and borders for the coming years ([Power, 2018](#)).

A challenge that many so-called green organizations face in their initial stages is related to how their organization model can gain success competing with already established models focused on convenience, consumerism and capitalism, factors that generally are more viable economically if looked at in the short term. To explore fur-

ther, research was conducted on practices of sustainable focused organizations that drive performance and make people involved in the mission endure through challenges and obstacles. What makes people thrive in working for this futuristic goal of “saving the planet”? How working on sustainability as a benefit for the individuals rather than as an obligation caused by lifestyles is a question raised from a organizational science and psychological point of view here. This topic was studied from the perspective of getting insight on what drives the motivation of people in sustainable focused organizations and what drives people to them.

In and around Amsterdam, Netherlands a vast scene of organizations focused on solving issues related to improving our environment has been started in recent years. The organizations researched, Enactus VU and Green Office VU, are chosen because they both aim to deliver solutions and alternatives focused on sustainability. These organizations mainly get members through volunteering, while some members of the management are employed with a salary. The hypothesis is that these volunteers have a

special intrinsic motivation that makes them attracted to this work. Hence it was researched to explore this motivation, observe patterns and derive what practices promotes it.

1.1 Research question

What motivational practices and obstacles influence the will to endure for members of sustainability focused project organizations?

Central questions, topics and concepts related to research question

- What is the motivation behind starting and continuing working for sustainable focused organizations?
- Why and how do people directly and indirectly involved trust the organization to deliver on their individual aspirations?
- How does sustainability work motivation emerge and develop into future aspirations for the organizational members?

Lack of continuity of projects is an issue Enactus VU and Green Office VU are facing, as expressed by coordination and board members in late 2018. Organizational members, employed managers and volunteers, come in eager and energetic to work upon starting a project, then progress gets low and drop out is common. This can be linked to the concept of organizational belief, common views of the organization shared between the members, as the reason for continuing as a member (Neyland, 2008). A difference was observed in result orientation and satisfaction of results between people who had or did not have work experience. The tendency was that those with more work experience reacted to the actual progress being made differently than those with little to no work experience. Another factor of importance was that the projects and work is time-pressured, being bound by the scenario that student volunteers are graduating and then potentially finishing the volunteer work. How this affected the motivation and commitment especially among the students related to whether they plan to continue living in Amsterdam or not is thus an area reviewed.

By elaborating, this research aims to provide beneficial insights and advice to organizations like Enactus VU, Green Office VU and others in the field to use in their management strategy, with recommendations regarding recruitment and leadership of volunteers.

The methods used in the research is qualitative, this to get a deep understanding and view of the research organization and members. Interviews were used to supplement information that was observed and to reveal topics and areas that had not been exposed through observations.

- Participatory observation: The researcher as an active organizational member with concrete tasks and responsibilities
- Observation: "Fly on the wall", unobtrusive, not interacting
- Interviews: open, semi-structured
Research setting: Sustainability focused organizations.
- Enactus VU
- Green Office VU
In their "natural" environment, meetings, workshops and general work

2. Context

Through innovation the projects in Enactus VU and Green Office VU create solutions to what they define as societal sustainability problems. By looking towards the future, they involve students with an aspiration towards sustainable behavior. As changing to be more sustainable involves a wide range of aspects related to our lifestyle these organizations scope out projects that can have a positive impact in society. They both aim to make it appealing to the VU community, but also further to the city of Amsterdam to act sustainably with small initiatives from the bottom up.

2.1 Enactus VU

Enactus is a global non-profit and community of student, academic and business leaders committed to using the power of entrepreneurial action to transform lives. By finding opportunities in society and working together with academics and businesspeople to create value, Enactus start projects that aim to become self-sustaining businesses. Enactus is present in 36 countries and over 1700 campuses around the world.

Enactus VU is an incubator for social entrepreneurship in Amsterdam focused on bringing together people connected to the Vrije University to create projects with sustainability that can be developed in to businesses (Enactus, 2019a, 2019c). The project Hey Sprout aims to create an educational program start up that teaches children 10-11 years old about growing vegetables while gaining awareness about climate related issues (Hey Sprout website, 2019). Edible Spoons aims to introduce cutlery made from leftover produce, they are trying out whether it is feasible

to use malt from breweries, stale bread and coffee from cafes. Edible Spoons plans to hire underprivileged individuals to work with them in the process. Another project is Waste:full which aims at linking waste givers with waste takers turning waste into something useful, at this stage they are figuring out what waste can be used as fertilizer, researching who has such waste and how is willing to pay to receive it.

Around the world Enactus creates benefits for the environment and local communities. In Zimbabwe where plastic waste is usually burned, a project managed to turn plastic waste into a liquid that could be used as fuel. They developed a machine and hired local women to work with them (Enactus, 2019b). In India a project collected used paper from shops, offices and schools and turned it into new notebooks. They employed hearing impaired women, recovering drug addicts and victims of trafficking who struggle to find steady jobs in the community. Then the notebooks was sold at a low cost to college students (Enactus, 2019d).

At national and global events, teams of Enactus collaborate, drive innovation, prove impact and connect with world leaders. Enactus believes competition encourages motivation and that change happens within the individuals and teams by networking and collaborating. Annually Enactus holds a national competition to declare the best project from the country and this project is further taken to the World Cup held in United States (Enactus, 2019a). Based on this it was researched what such events really provides to the individual motivation of the members of Enactus VU.

The 17 'Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) of the United Nations that aims to put an end to poverty, inequality and climate change in 2030 are the framework within which Enactus initiatives move worldwide. Bringing such wide large global goals into a small project of students in Amsterdam is exactly what the UN and other actors aim for, localization is the recipe to make the goals happen (*Localizing The SDGs*, 2019; Mohieldin, 2017).

2.2 Green Office VU

The Green Office VU is the sustainability platform of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. The goal of the Green Office VU is to create awareness about sustainability among the stakeholders of the VU; students, staff, businesses and Zuidas, the south district of Amsterdam. It is concerned with sustainability projects within four portfolios; campus, community, education and research. The Green Office

VU organizes events, campaigns, lectures and information days. Green Teams of volunteers work on projects aimed at increasing sustainability (Green Office, 2019).

The GO campus project is working on reducing single use items at the VU. The team in 2018/2019 was focusing on reducing the amount of single use cups at the VU, through finding sustainable alternatives and substitutes, hence the team name became Cups. The project was as well aimed at raising the awareness of the stakeholders mentioned around the topic of single use versus reusable.

2.3 Observations prior to conducting field work and research Enactus

The role of the team coordinator or manager was a point of discussion and uncertainty for the volunteer members of the projects of both Enactus VU and Green Office VU. The team coordinator in both organizations had what can be described as a facilitator role to book and bring the team together for meetings and discussion related to the specific project or organizational common events. The team coordinator is not actually making sure the team members do any tasks, this formed an unclarity on what needed to be done as the team members relied on the coordinator for guidance. The coordinator did not set a clear agenda, delegate tasks or followed up the progression with the members of the projects, but rather acted as a facilitator and advisor.

Throughout 2018 and 2019 a change was happening in Hey Sprout – Enactus VU in ways of how the collective identity talk changed. In August 2018 the tendency was inclusive talking about how the project was similar with other projects around Amsterdam working on education and farming. Throughout September–December 2018 this shifted to being exclusive self-praise where the project made efforts to distance itself from other similar projects and make claims to why it is better than those, this effected in group-building and motivation for work can be said to have become higher. Then in January 2019 the first signs of exclusive self-criticism started happening in the initial meetings of the group, it was highlighted that existing projects that taught children and already had a farm had an advantage the start up might not be able to compete with, the competitors were seen as better (Ybema, 2010, 2014).

Green Office

The Cups project team of the Green Office VU started up fresh and excited to work in September 2018 with new members who all applied formally to join in, then the team coordinator suddenly left the Green Office VU in Octo-

ber on unclear circumstances, this was communicated by the management after weeks of no communication and responses from the team coordinator. The team was without a clear leader until January 2019 which resulted in lack of vision for what to engage in. Meetings were held eventually, but without a clear person to organize, these became sporadic and random in agenda.

Another factor that played in on the team was the relation with the catering provider at the VU. When the team launched a survey to see and understand the patterns of how single cups is being used and perceived regards to sustainability among customers, the catering provider was reluctant to allowing such questioning to happen. This affected the team, as the team was without a coordinator that could clearly take charge and engage with the VU and the catering provider. As it is set in VU's Vision and Environmental Barometer, waste and sustainable catering is something the institution focus on, hence a dialogue on single-use cups was a topic GO saw as possible to discuss (VU - *Science for Sustainability*, 2019).

2.4 Vrije University - Amsterdam, Netherlands

The research was mostly be done in various meeting rooms and offices at Vrije University - Amsterdam, Netherlands as this where the organizations of study usually work and meet. The VU is focused on sustainability and supports the activities of Enactus and Green Office by facilitating meeting rooms and offices for them to work. The VU aims to maintain its position amongst the top 10 most sustainable universities worldwide. This is done through development of the environmental performance on the themes like energy and CO₂, transportation and mobility, waste water and waste, procurement and social return, and food, sustainable catering and fair trade (VU - *Science for Sustainability*, 2019).

How well the VU's role in helping and working with the organizations is of course also a factor that could affect the motivation of the organizational members, hence this is also a part of the area of research connected to how those organizational members that engage with the VU experience this.

3. Theoretical concepts

To make sense of the origins of actions and practices in organizational life following theory serves to inform and ground the research questions to a frame in academia. The use of theory forms a dialectical relationship with how the research is done, hence the theoretical concepts guides on areas of observation and interview topics. However as experiences and knowledge gathered in the field when

doing research can be unforeseen and unrelated to what has been prepared, it is important to allow the unpredictable to be noted and reviewed for potential research, as is the position of grounded theory (van der Waal, 2009). With this in mind the research was organized to reflect on whether the areas and theme initially framed could be adjusted in the process. The theoretical framework acted as a guidance for figuring out what to look for in the field and how to relate to other academic research, rather than being used as direct comparison to what was found during the research phase.

3.1 Sustainability

Sustainability has multiple meanings and in the research the participants was asked what it meant to them to be engaged in initiatives that promote this, to understand motivational factors they have towards the topic. Sustainability can be explained as ensuring that peoples present actions does not interfere negatively with the future of the world (Guillén & Ontiveros, 2012). Keeping in mind the fact that natural resources is finite, sustainability can be said to aim at driving practices that contribute to making our resources last longer and potentially to reuse them eternally. As the population around the world increases while many is continually striving to improve their material living standards, the need for natural resources increases. Meeting human needs while maintaining the life systems of the planet is thus a way to perceive sustainability as a concept (Leiserowitz, Kates, & Parris, 2006). Motives that people have around engaging in such maintenance combined while considering their own needs is of focus in the research.

3.2 Motivation

Motivation to start working for an idealistic topic like sustainability is often personal and can be related to what is called intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is linked to personal values, and one such personal value can be to live sustainably and to volunteer for the cause. The phase of life the organizational member is currently in can be a factor that play in. Engaging in activity for the pleasure of partaking in it and getting an internal satisfying enjoyable experience is what intrinsic motivation refers to (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Frey Bruno & Osterloh, 2001). It differs from extrinsic motivation that is focused on an external reward or payment, like getting graded, awarded or receive material goods for the activity done. Mixing the two forms of motivation can be the case in the organizational life variety. In the case of volunteer-based organizations like the ones researched both forms of motivation was present, even though organizational members are not paid any-

thing or just a small sum monetarily they might get fame and praise for the work they do, this can be considered rewards related to extrinsic motivation. Nonprofit organizations can be said to generally attract a higher amount of intrinsically motivated workers than for-profit organizations. Both forms of motivation influence the willingness to work, however if the extrinsic motivation increases in form of say higher reward for performance this might lead to a drop in the supply of volunteers. On the other side intrinsic motivation increases labor supply according to Cappellari and Turati (2004). Based on this the research focus is to find out what intrinsic and extrinsic motives the members of the organizations studied had and to figure out what these motivations did regarding the will to supply labor from the volunteers.

Initial motives for volunteering may be different than the factors that influence a person to continue to volunteer (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991). The initial motives of long-term volunteers are interesting for managers to know if long term volunteers are of need for the organization. Direct causes of volunteering can be considered psychological and altruistic (Hibbert, Piacentini, & Dajani, 2003). Some of the motivations for volunteering in human services can be seen generalized below. The research aimed to reveal if similar factors of motivation apply for the people volunteering in sustainable focused organization. With this it can be observed whether volunteering motivation can be generalized across sectors and working areas.

- To fill time and vary weekly activities.
- Escape loneliness by developing relationships with others.
- Gain practical experience towards career.
- Broaden horizon (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991).

3.2.1 Identity building as motivation

The initial motivation for joining as an organizational members can be linked to what is called dreambuilding (Pratt, 2000). Current identities appear lacking personally for the organizational members and filling them with new aspirations (dreambuilding), seems reasonable for the organizational members. They are encouraged to seek the dreams either themselves or by others. Enactus VU and Green Office VU engages in sensebreaking for the students that end up as organizational members, a process used in describing human change that involves the destruction or breaking down of meaning (Pratt, 2000). By giving the organizational members a role and a purpose, sensegiving practices that provide meaning frame the identity and motivation for the organizational members. Through interviewing members of both organizations it was unraveled if

the dream building was present when the organizational members joined and what the status is of it now, as will be seen in the analysis chapter.

3.2.2 Control

A free-spirited nature of engaging in initiatives was observed in the organizations of study, as they went on about ideas and initiatives without limits or pressure to perform it is interesting to look at how control plays in on the motivation of the organizational members. The impression from the start of engaging with the organization was that of seeing an open structure in the projects, where you could come with ideas and progress on those with other team members without any clear limit to what you can or cannot do, this also applied to how much or little you actually do. Such a post bureaucratic organizational structure with non-standard work processes, no fixed rules & procedures, can be said to exercise soft control through culture and symbolic management. The culture of innovation was kept alive through workshops where we learned about business modelling and management theories and concepts like Lean Management. These team building rituals might motivate the organizational members to embrace their role and so the organization thus uses normative control (Kunda, 2006). The perceived common set of belief and values can be what attracts volunteers to engage in the organizational work for the sustainability cause.

3.3 Volunteering

Volunteer work is an important contribution to society, both in sense of what it provides of services to the public and in sense of what it provides to the volunteer. Volunteering can be described as unpaid work that is productive or a leisure activity that brings satisfaction to people (Smith, Stebbins, & Grotz, 2016). Volunteers can be said to have an intention to create value for others and themselves, hereby distinguishing from leisure activities where focus is rather pure enjoyment. Volunteer work is supposed to produce results, but this does not resemble results of paid work according to Smith et al. (2016).

In this research volunteering is used as social phenomenon that binds people into an organization for a common cause. Because it is unpaid and voluntarily, volunteering creates a special bond between people engaged, different from that of paid work. University students motivations to volunteer is shaped by structural conditions, where it is seen to provide an entry to the labor market together with their academic performance (Ghose & Kasam, 2012). Simultaneously motivations to do volunteering can be based out of altruistic aspirations, where the actual

impact of the work is set in focus. Compassion and social responsibility are factors that contribute to this altruistic aspiration.

4. Methodology and Research outline

To derive meaning from the research question a qualitative ethnographic research was done in projects and working groups of Enactus VU and Green Office VU. It was both observed and participated in general work and meetings of the project groups with an aim to get an in-depth picture to help me answer questions. The strengths of such method is as [Neyland \(2008\)](#) claims that it promotes the ability to understand social and cultural issues, and be strongly participative allowing to comment on the data and data gathering along the way. Further to get deeper information 11 organizational members was interviewed for a duration of 45min to 1h30min, this to capture the stories about their initial motives for joining and asking them to compare their motivation throughout the time of organizational membership. As certain aspects and feelings was not easily accessible through observation the interviews supplemented grey literature ([Ybema, Yanow, Wels, & Kamsteeg, 2009](#)). It was both conducted semi structured interviews planned and set with participants, and unstructured informal interviews after observing meetings. The planned interviews were conducted away from the organizational work setting in separate rooms to make sure it focused on the topics and to ease recording. The interviews were kept free and open for the participants to talk without continually being guided. A topic guide was produced with themes to ensure a focus was held throughout the interviews and information needed was given by the participants in similar manner.

4.1 The research participants

The 11 research participants came from four different working projects each containing 5-10 members or is a board member, manager and/or coordinator. Each research participant carried a distinct role within their team, formalized for the manager and board roles, however in the project team these roles were fluctuating and did not come with a specific role description set by the organization, rather it was made based on the project groups need and the individuals request. All participants where given the chance to object or not participate in the research indicating so directly or via their project coordinator. No such objections or request not to participate occurred. Because the organizations supported the research from the start, and it has been presented thoroughly to relevant organizational members, the access to get deep real answers was seen as possible.

The research participants were all students current or former students at VU. They were between 20-30 years of age and came from various countries and study fields at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. They all went through a process of change in their project or role from starting it to potentially launching it or changing it.

4.1.1 Research setting and Interview overview

Most meetings and work of the organizations of study happens at the Vrije Universiteit in various meetings rooms. Few workshops set up by the board and meetings with external partners was organized at other locations. The interviews took place in a meeting room familiar to the research participant at Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, Netherlands. The format of the interviews was non-standardized and in-depth, and the participants were probed for information when certain interesting topics came up.

#	Role	Project - Organization	Date
3	Project member	Hey Sprout - Enactus	April 2019
1	Project- and Board member	Hey Sprout - Enactus	
2	Project member	Waste:Full - Enactus	
1	Project member	Cups – Green Office	
1	Education Manager	Green Office	
1	Research Manager	Green Office	
1	Project member	Cups – Green Office	May 2019

5. Social situations for observation

To grasp why organizational members endure through challenges in the organizations of study following social events was used to study the practices that occurred here and how these activities potentially influence motivation. Each of the following social situations carried and develop meaning for the organizational members. Through participating there is an element of learning as well as many points of interaction between actors that do and do not regularly socialize with each other. Opportunities for forming new connections is abundant in the organization wide events, while the weekly meetings rather presented observation of how regular interaction form sensemaking patterns.

<p>Enactus VU</p> <p>The Weekly meeting - Hey Sprout In this regular meeting at the VU the project members discuss to progress on their start up, setting the agenda and figuring out who will have what kind of responsibilities</p> <p>The Monthly Startup Workshop Social Selling: In this workshop Enactus teams developed and practiced scripted and unscripted selling for their projects in order to overcome fear or inexperience.</p> <p>Enactus VU</p> <p>The Bimonthly Feedback evening In this workshop the different teams of start-ups presented their progress in the last weeks and months, and got feedback from both Enactus VU members from other projects as well as business advisors among the participants</p>	<p>Green Office</p> <p>The Weekly meeting - Cups In this regular meeting at the VU the project members discuss to progress on their project, setting the agenda and figuring out who will have what kind of responsibilities.</p> <p>The Monthly Green Office event Every month the Green Office VU hosts an event related to climate and environment open for everyone. In these events members of the Green Office VU and sometimes partners organize activities to raise awareness and inspire action initiatives.</p> <p>Green Office</p> <p>9. April - Let's talk about Geoengineering.</p>
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6. Empirical findings

"I do not really know the motivations the other people have. And it would be super interesting to know what those motivations are. I feel like there could be so many other motivators except the sustainable and social aspects"
- Project member, Waste:full – Enactus VU.

A wide range of factors can influence the motivations as the research participant tells above. Acting sustainably, engaging socially and gaining experience are motivators, as derived from Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen (1991). In the following chapter the focus is to explain the variety of factors that influence motivation, and how these factors either turn motivation in positive or negative directions depending on other factors. By looking into the experiences the organizational members had in their work and how they describe how they deal with them, we gain an understanding of how their related motivations is connected. The experiences have been different as there has been different organizations, projects and roles, hence this led to varying motivations depending on the organizational members role and placement in the organization. To get insight into the daily life in one of the organizations a description of a social event follows before describing the findings, this to give a glimpse of reality inside Enactus VU.

6.1 A social situation - The Feedback evening

Most members of Enactus VU startups met on a Wednesday evening in March 2019 in Startdock, a coworking space in Amsterdam. Initially everyone familiarly greeted each other, as people at this point were starting to know each other, as they had met a couple of times

at various Enactus events. The room was decorated in a classical way with high ceiling and a lavish chandelier, and seemed to be more than 50 years old since construction. It differed from the space where the previous Feedback evening was held, which was a bright open modern minimalist space seemingly decorated in the last 10 years. The gloomy lighted room of the present workshop seemed to subdue the participants and the chatter was kept at a low tone during the first half hour. The workshop started with information from Marketing Manager about the opportunity to apply to become a board member for the next period, August 2019–August 2020. Once asking if anyone was interested or had any questions the room fell silent while everyone looked around at each other. The questions going through the mind of everyone might have been different, but it seemed like everyone seemed interested if anyone wanted to do such and who it would be.

Following each start up presented their accomplishments and their challenges. There was applause for special achievements like securing income, partnerships and conducting pilots of the project idea. The feedback activities started with 1 person from each start up sitting at a designated area, and then groups of people from other startups approached with questions and inspirational tips for how to progress. During this activity the atmosphere of the room shifted, and the buzzing chatter filled the room with energy. There was talks about how startups could collaborate as their planned initiatives and activities was relatable to each other. Finally there was a short wrap up where everyone could share their insights and outcome of the session.

6.2 Characteristics: The structure of the organizations and projects

To understand the structure an overview of the organization follows to draw a map on how people are connected and where to place them.



Figure 1: Illustration made by the author

The coordinators and manager are part-time employed and paid employees of Enactus Netherlands. Each of the teams consist of 5-10 project members who are all volunteers with a manager that is part of their project, but not directly managing them, rather facilitating.

Green Office VU has the following structure:

The coordinators and manager are part-time employed and paid employees of the VU. Each of the teams consists of 5-10 project members who are all volunteers, with the coordinator managing them. The manager of the coordinators also works part-time, though more hours than the coordinators, and is reporting and being supervised by members of the VU administration. However, at many instances one of the coordinators stepped in to act on behalf of the manager in relation with the VU administration. At only a few times throughout the year there was a full team of coordinators, as people left their position without completing their term and new coordinators had to be recruited, which left a gap of weeks to several months.

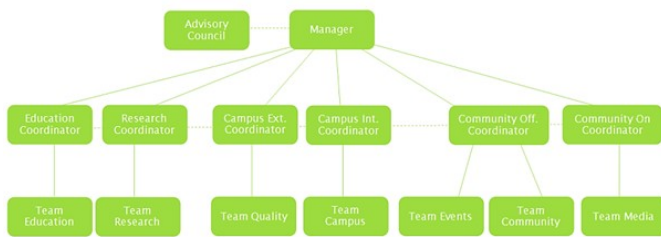


Figure 2: Illustration from website (“Green Office,” 2019)
6.3 Motivation and demotivation factors

The following section is focused on showcasing factors that the organizational members explicitly mentioned as related to their motivation. It will show what the organizational members defines as practices and obstacles that influenced their motivation.

6.3.1 Goals

The goals of the organizations and projects implies what result the team want from working there, hence its contents gives an indication of what the workday is focused towards. Following goals is stated in writing on commonly created documents shared across the organization. This presentation serves to present and compare formalized goals with individual goals, to look for similarities and differences that affected the motivation of the organizational members.

Green Office VU

The Green Office VU aspires to become the central sustainability platform at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, where students, faculty and staff come together to implement joint initiatives, exchange ideas and create alliances

Cups

Problem definition: Disposable cups are bad for the environment. They are coated with wax or plastic which makes it hard to recycle and the cover of the cups is made from plastic.

Intervention proposal: The Green Office VU has created a project plan to reduce the use of disposable cups that are being used at the VU Campus. As an alternative, we will make sure sustainable reusable cups will become more accessible.

Enactus VU

Engage the next generation of entrepreneurial leaders to use innovation and business principles to improve the world. Starting projects that become self-sustaining businesses.

Hey Sprout

Increase environmental awareness of children so they can make sustainable choices in the future and influence their families and community. We clarify the importance of keeping green spaces and choosing sustainable as a mean to improve the environment in the neighborhoods and in the world.

Short term goals

- Create interesting and unique curriculum (lessons)
- Plant 16 different seeds successfully and follow their growth
- Pilot lesson and planting workshop with kids

Long term goals:

- Find one school to pilot the program
- Find volunteer teachers

Waste:full

Short-term: Put in place a worm hotel at Uilenstede and engage a group of students living there to be using it for composting their waste

Long-term: Scale and scope up the green practices executed by students by providing more easy green solutions

Edible Spoons

Produce and sell edible spoons made of environmentally friendly materials, engaging underprivileged individuals in their work.

Aspirations and goals: Individual vs group

The research observations showcased some differences between the commonly defined goals and individual responses to the what their aspirations is with the project, following some of these differences is shown pointing to what influence this has. The aspiration of the individual can in many cases be directly translated to be their motivation for choosing to do the work.

Group goals

When asking the research participants about their current goals for engagement with the organization, a manager at the Green Office VU pointed her aspiration directly towards the Green Office goal of empowering the VU community.

"To make students and young people really go into the streets and getting involved in sustainability. Green officers can foster that for the people who are less interested in it, to put it on their radar."

She speaks of engaging the unengaged and building the sustainability group further, which is directly linked to the formalized goal of the Green Office VU. Impacting people externally was a recurring goal that motivated several of the organizational members.

"I hope for having at least one day of a campaign where we influence people. That is something that I would love to see" – Project member, Cups – Green Office VU

"I chose this because I actually want to do something with kids and teach them something meaningful. Teach them about climate change." – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU

"It's a good method to influence the children. So that is one of my reasons, to have an effect. Another reason is that I want to learn myself to be more sustainable because of course I have my own method, maybe there are more ways." – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU

However, several of the organizational members did not mention external impact when asked about their goals for engagement with the organization, but rather focused on internally making sure the project could continue without them. The research period and interviews occurred in a time when the organizational members were questioned by the organization whether they would continue working for another period or leave. It became clear that the group goals were influenced individually by commitment and time constraint in sense of duration of the individuals engagement in the organization. Since most of the organizational members decided not to continue in their work for the organization beyond 1 academic year, they focused on delivering something that other new organizational members could pick up after them.

"We all know that this is something we are not going to continue with because none of us are going to be here next year. I know I am going to do it for a specific amount of time, it is kind of like following through on your commitment as well. I want to see something happen because it is essentially something I have been working on. Leaving something behind like a legacy of having done something

and then also have a brand to hand over to next year so they can take that and run with it." – Project member, Waste:full – Enactus VU.

The aspirations here is set to following through with a commitment that was made in common to the project group, based on the group goals. Showcasing what work was done based on these goals, is the aspiration. There is a disconnect to the goal formalized by the project, where a worm hotel was to be put in place, and a shift towards delivering an idea and a plan on how this goal can be implemented to the next organizational members, this kept the current organizational members motivated to work.

"I would love to see Hey Sprout being picked up by the next year members and hit the ground running." – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

"Having one or two schools to be in contact with, so the next year team will not have any struggles, because then they have one or two schools contacts from last year." – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

The focus on how the project can continue and being further taken by new members is seen in several similar quotes from research participants about goals. The sense of delivering a plan to the group whether it be the current or future is a recurring theme, rather than producing something tangible that was the formalized goal.

"It could have a major impact. Not with the four of us, but like a big company that feels like something. I think it's a big goal for all of us. And then people next year can deliver it." – Project member, Waste:full – Enactus VU.

This way of transferring the goal and aspiration can make the organizational members motivated to deliver, without having to face the consequences of what might happen with the tangible product or service they planned to deliver.

Personal goals

A few project members mention that the internal impact is of importance to them for engaging in the organizational work.

"It was something that I chose to do out of the ordinary. It was kind of something that still was in line with what I wanted to do professionally. I am very strategic when it comes to my education and my career, so my plan is to continue on this road so I might want to do a master in sustainability leadership." – Project member, Waste:full – Enactus VU.

The aspiration here follows a future individual plan, again not referring to the project goals, but rather to personal influence. Similarly, a manager at Enactus VU focus on the potential for personal development.

"Because of my background in business administration I was really looking for a new opportunity, where I can challenge myself, but also learn about managing your own organization".

This personal development as an aspiration is questioned by a project member of both Enactus VU and Green Office VU:

"I think their motivation to really take action is just different and I have the feeling that many people are just waiting to have something on their CV, and don't engage because they really care about sustainability."

This point represents a major difference between organizational members aspirations for the work and shows that impacting sustainability is of different priority. To manage the different focus in aspirations and goals, the management and cooperation factors can show further how organizational members endured despite the differences.

6.3.2 Management: Organization & Cooperation – Constructing a sustainable team

How the management and cooperation between the organizational members were experienced gives an insight to factors that bound people across focus areas in their desire to impact. Throughout the research it became clear that the management of both organizations put a focus on sustaining the organization in itself, rather than focusing on the projects delivering sustainability initiatives. This focus is linked to the group goals of continuation of the organization. Making sure that the organization could continue operating after their term and on to the next years acted as motivation that eventually ended up as viewed to be acting sustainably from a different perspective than that of keeping natural resources and life systems.

"Sustainability is just the topic of the work, but the work is rather focused on that you have to sustain the Green Office as an organization. To make the office sustain, you have to consider a lot of factors not related to green sustainability. From the outside the Green Office exists to promote green sustainability, for the VU and the community. From the inside a lot of work is done that is not related directly to sustainability in a green sense. We must make the organization work. This is the duality of sustainability in the Green Office" – Manager, Green Office VU

The commitment to the group and the team acted as a motivation factor that bound organizational members.

"There is a need to keep up appearance of the office externally even though internally it is deteriorating, that gives a social push to continue. The organizational push from VU, and internal motivation, you started something,

and you want to continue with that. Knowledge gets lost if you just quit. The team is the most important reason why I stay. I know what I can contribute. It is partly altruistic why I do this." – Manager, Green Office VU

With the team being a reason to stay, connecting the people as is done by a manager is crucial. Hence when a connection point is lost a whole team progress can be halted. This happened without clear communication or plan around it in the Cups team.

"What definitely influenced me was that our coordinator left very early so then the guidance was not there anymore. We did not have one contact person anymore, no one held responsibility for us. We were not informed about anything going on in the Green Office in general, and I think that was the main challenge to pursue anything because we just did not know how. And I had hoped for being more active, I of course wanted to be engaged in something and give awareness to other people. We did not have the chance to do a lot there then, because of lacking guidance." – Project member, Cups – Green Office VU

The manager is a gatekeeper in a network perspective, you can only contact the rest of the organization and get work done through this person. And everything stops when that person is not there. Relying on one person for progress and then losing that person proved to be difficult for the Cups team as there was an uncertainty connected to the other managers in the organization and what their role was.

"I was confused about the responsibilities of the different coordinators, who is really taking care of what." – Project member, Cups – Green Office VU

Group dynamic and relationships

How the organization members worked together as a group becoming communalized proved to be a factor that increased motivation for everyone. The social aspect of coming together and getting work done based on the same goals was shared by the research participants.

"I really get energetic if I see other people passionate about the same goal or the same thing we are trying to achieve." – Manager, Enactus VU.

"Team interactions motivate me quite a lot, when I come to the office and I talk to my colleagues and we see what everybody is up to." – Manager, Green Office VU.

"I do believe that we are doing something good. I do not think we are saving the world, but we are contributing to making the world a better place. Working with likeminded people towards that goal is nice. I get my energy from

being around like-minded people and people who believe that what I am doing is good work keeps me coming back.

– Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU

“Even though we had problems and some people left the group and there were still people who were motivated in doing something and that actually cared. I had the feeling that people are on the same level when we talked about issues, so I think that is probably the main reason why I stayed there. The community that was gathered. My motivation of staying is very closely connected to the people and my personal relationship to those people within the teams.” – Project member, Cups – Green Office VU.

On the other side of it if the organizational members were not able to work as a group this potential scenario acted demotivational.

“If people did not get along, I think I would have left, if there would have been no one in the team that I got along with.” – Project member, Cups – Green Office VU.

The management boards of both organizations experienced a silo mentality where people were not focused on helping each other, but rather on their individual tasks, this gradually developed and acted demotivational.

“We were trying to help each other out in a way, there was an effort made especially the first three months. In company life if you are marketing manager it does not mean you only need to do marketing. I mean you can also try to help other people. That is a bit missing now.” – Manager, Enactus VU.

In the management of Green Office VU the lack of opportunity for time to work together had implications on the overall output, where people became frustrated as they did not communicate and ended up working simultaneously on the same tasks.

“It is not possible to have time to work together, when we have to keep open 5 days a week and only work 1 day each, we then need 6 people full time” – Manager, Green Office VU.

“Everybody just tries to do their job and working as a unit becomes a second priority. Being a unit makes your work so much easier, but I always feel like I should get my work done first and then we will do that. Mistakes happen in terms of communication. Since our hours here are so limited, we do not want to waste time just meeting and talking to each other. But in the end a lot of information gets lost and people work on the same thing at the same time without realizing it just because they have not talked to each other. It happened to me and my manager once that we were busy with the same thing for a few weeks and then found out we were both doing the same work, doubled up.” – Manager, Green Office VU.

Share of workload – equality

It was expressed that organizational members put different time and effort into their work. Priority of the work in the projects was different, where most people has school as their first priority, several organizational members mention that employed work comes second, and then project work related to the organizations of research comes third.

“Not all people are equally involved. I realize that some have different ambitions to do the work.” – Project member, Cups – Green Office VU.

“I thought about it several weeks now and still I am thinking about leaving because I do not see that anyone is doing anything. I am the only one doing something.” – Project member, Edible Spoons – Enactus VU.

“Unequal level of commitment of group members causes frustrations and resentment. Chaos in things being done and things being said. We overestimate our abilities, talk about things we potentially can do, but end up not doing them. Ok to have different expectations of ourselves within the project, but we need to be upfront and honest about how much time we can commit. People have expectations from people that do not deliver, we need to settle that.” – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

Unequal level of distribution of tasks with the board of Enactus VU demotivated a manager to a level of thinking that the work output had less value. *“So, it is not in balance, the things I do are a lot compared to other functions. If I am the only one passionate then I have a feeling that my efforts are lost.”* Feelings of putting more effort than others and that others do not prioritize, *“Do not have time”*, caused several members demotivation.

A central board member and manager of Green Office VU expressed that the VU administration lays a too heavy burden on the Green Office VU by expecting it to make the campus and organization more sustainable, with too little resources devoted to it. This can be solved by employing more people in the Green Office VU, or increasing the manhours per already part-time employees, which then points to increasing the budget.

GO = Green Office VU

“We do way more than we get paid for. They say they do not expect us to work full time. But with all the things they expect us to do this translates to working full time. The VU management has set limits to how many hours each board member can work and get paid for, hence implying that this should be the maximum number of hours to be worked. However, the workload expected with the tasks and responsibilities is not possible to deliver on according to the set hours. Officially I only work on Fridays,

but I get emails all week, emails that should be answered and people get upset when they do not get a reply within a decent amount of time, once per week is not frequent enough. Even though the VU explains that we should not work more than 12 hours per week, they expect you to respond and be available 40 hours per week. One the one hand they are polite and accommodating telling us not to work too much, on the other there are so many projects they want GO to do, and in several instances the GO board has to say no because of time constraints, then this is not well taken by the VU management. It is hard because you want to work on these projects and help, but you cannot. Then the VU management proposes ways for how these projects can be done despite the time constraints. The budget setup of the GO is like how it was 5 years ago, since then the project portfolio and the involvement of GO in the VU campus increased significantly. However when trying to discuss budget the VU department that transfer the funding to the GO tells that actually the budget administration does not belong under them, it has just been put under their authority for years, thus they are requesting some other administrative department to handle the GO and it is budget, further which department this should be is not clear for anyone, hence the discussion comes to a standstill. It has been said it is going to be sorted by the VU administration, the person just told us "I will look into it" and then nothing happened." – Manager, Green Office VU.

6.3.3 Roles and responsibilities

The organizational members got their functional roles in the organization in different ways, either applying, being assigned or creating the role themselves. Several of the project members mention that the role they do was either created in a meeting where they discussed potential roles, or they just mentioned what they wanted to do out of personal interest and created a role based on that. Whereas the central board and coordinators applied for existing roles that was set in the defined structure.

"One of the first meetings we decided all our roles. We just asked everyone what they would like to do." – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

"The role came natural to me, we agreed on what we wanted to do, and kept a free space within even though roles were distributed" – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

"It is free on workload, how many hours per week you want to spend on it. Freedom to choose engagement. If I wanted to do more I could apply for a paid job as a coordinator." – Project member, Cups – Green Office VU.

The impact this had was that project members was content with their role and happy for the freedom that came with it in sense of responsibilities. It was observed that project members took on tasks as they pleased rather than being assigned. This freedom acted like a great motivator as no one felt obliged to perform, they worked rather out of will when they had time for it. The other side of this was then that work did not progress as the project members expressed they wanted it to.

"We all are doing our own thing. No definition of who is manager and not, it is more collaborative, and that is why I think we should be stricter, even though we talked about having not so strict roles" – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

The mentioned unclarity of who is to have decision responsibilities in the projects, is not mentioned about or among the central board and coordinators, there it is rather focused on who is to take over responsibilities if another member is absent or need assistance. In general the boards got positive remarks from the project members for their structure and division of responsibilities.

"The Enactus VU board, they are very organized, you see it in how they manage workshops and events. Everybody in the board has distinct roles with responsibilities, that helps them, they focus on one thing and they do that well." – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

Continuation of role

As the projects progressed and changed throughout the year, certain roles became less important, but motivation did not change as the motivation was connected to what was done as a team, for the bigger picture. Some organizational members experienced that their role shifted in relevance through time.

"I was going to do external relations and then later I found out that it is not needed now. So, my motivation to continue was not really connected to the external relations role, but rather to the things we were doing as a team." – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

This project member continued working with the project, without specific responsibilities, and was helping other project members and partaking in meetings where the project future was discussed. A fascinating example of the role and engagement freedom experienced by the project members was one member who formalized the project manager role into an idea holder role. And when the idea was in place the engagement could as well fade out accordingly to her. This was not clearly communicated to the rest of the group, but it was seen in the sense of absence from engagement.

"I am the project manager. Which means I'm along to keep things under one roof. All the ideas together. I did not have a clear idea of what exactly we were doing. So, I sort of asserted myself as being the one to hold on to the big picture and then people can come back to me if they have questions on that big picture. I have tried to make sure that the idea is consistent in everything that we do. It is consistent in your head it is consistent in my head it is consistent on the website, consistent in our business plan. It is consistent in our workshop that we deliver. I think the workshop we conducted with the children sort of declared for everyone including myself that we were a legitimate thing that we were no longer just an idea. Now that is also part of the reason why I am no longer as necessary because it is a real thing and I am the idea person. I do not need to remind everyone what it is we are trying to do because people have seen it. So, my role as idea manager project manager is less necessary" – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

6.3.4 Impact

How and what their work had of impact came to be a frequently mentioned reason for continuation or speculating to leave the organization. The effect of feeling impact externally on people not connected to the organization proved to be a motivation booster.

"I manage to encourage people to write their thesis about a sustainable topic. They have so much potential to make a difference because they are possibly going to end up being the leaders of the world. So, I think it makes a difference." – Manager, Green Office VU.

"We did a workshop and it was a good one as well. We did not make a lot of impact, as those are just children, it was all about changing the mindset and we did that. So that is a motivating part" – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

"Because climate change is happening now and you have to teach the next generation about that and make them aware, you get some level satisfaction when you are actually being able to teach them something that is useful" – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

"It is an amazing idea and I think it's really important to pursue it further. On the one side it is a huge market for the startup to make money so they could employ people to do that. You could scale up fast. And on the other side a huge environmental impact. We would also influence people and we would raise awareness" – Project Member, Edible Spoons – Enactus VU.

Personal

Several mention that by being part of the project they experienced an impact on sustainability in their personal daily life. And that this encourages them to continue as they learn to change how to act in their daily life.

"I think the project really helped me and motivated me to be more sustainable. Now I think like what kind of ways can I be more aware of the environment" – Project member, Waste:full – Enactus VU.

The learning experiences was continually highlighted of importance, as was mentioned in the goals professional skills for organizational life is an important motivator for some of the organizational members. A Green Office VU central board member and coordinator expressed that he realized further his capabilities and gained faith in the qualities he possesses. While also retrospectively seeing the struggle and difficulties as positive for the learning.

"Every mistake is just a learning experience. And every frustration is also a learning experience. And that is something that has really helped me through the difficult parts." – Manager, Green Office VU.

When the organizational members did not feel impact of the work however this turned out to demotivate them, as not everyone expressed that struggles and mistakes are positive learning experiences.

Lack of impact

"I think that is where a lot of the lack of commitment happens, you do not see anything changing especially" – Project member, Waste:full – Enactus VU.

"What does not motivate me at the moment is that I do not see the value of what we are doing now. I had hoped for being more active because even though the main motivation was learning something for myself, I of course want to engage in something and raise awareness in other people." – Project Member, Cups – Green Office VU.

"What would make me continue: a better business model, now it is too vague, we are not reaching the level of impact we would like, the workshops we produce are incomplete, we need to maximize the impact, our project is lacking something that makes me not want to continue. If the project goes well, I am happy, not well, not worth the time." – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

The lack of impact splits the view of the organizational members of projects as it was only mentioned by some of the research participants. This was never discussed in plural and the project meetings always focused on moving forward with initiatives. But deep emotions lingered in

some of people's head especially when they had expectations of impact that did not happen, because people just did not come.

"People from the university did not show up for the event. So we wondered whether that was kind of an active protest or whether they forgot. That was quite hard for me." – Manager, Green Office VU.

A recurring occurrence in the Green Office VU events was that there were expectations for high participation of people connected to the VU that could be influenced sustainably and partake in discussions. The managers reached out to university staff and students to attract them to come and based on the efforts done, the expectations were always high. At one event 50 chairs was placed out, food and drinks ordered, but in the end only a few people external of the Green Office showed up. When talking to the organizing managers it became clear that this was a surprise for them, and they felt their efforts was lost in trying to impact.

Enactus VU only organized events for the project members to upskill and inspire them in the project work, and similar outcome demotivated the managers here as well.

"When I see that attendance is quite low on our events then then I have a feeling that demotivates me a bit because you do put a lot of effort in planning. And the event speaker last time is a partner of us in Enactus. He has been working with us for a couple of years now. He was also a bit shocked, expecting at least 20 people, but only 5 came." – Manager, Enactus VU.

In Enactus a very interesting mismatch proved to potentially be the reason why the events had low participation as some project members did not feel the impact of the events as particularly beneficial except for the social aspect.

"It's nice to meet the others. But the events itself like the feedback evenings, the feedback was less valuable, I just did not see that that it brought our team any further, did not bring the team and our group goals and our actions any further. So I did not see any value added." – Project member, Edible Spoons – Enactus VU.

However also meeting the others struggling with impact motivated other organizational members.

"In the feedback evenings it is nice to see progress of everyone, see others struggling, brings you to reality, because you can too focused within your group. Go out of the state of group thinking. As it happens that internally in our start up our thinking becomes more and more the same, which is not good. Feedback always helps, to have different perspective." – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

6.3.5 An unanticipated motivation theme: The mandatory in the voluntarily

A few volunteer organizational members mentioned that the element of mandatory work and attendance had a negative influence on their motivation. And one mentioned that this was the reason why a friend of hers left the organization.

"People see it as a voluntary contract, but then they're being forced because it's like mandatory participation. So that's kind of where it goes wrong." – Project member, Waste:full – Enactus VU.

The organizational member is referring to how Enactus has events and workshops where the organizational members must actively notify and give a reason for not attending to the board member responsible. This way of nudging to ensure participation proves to influence certain organizational members to rather want to opt out of participating, it has a demotivational effect. The organizational member explains further through a comparison with organ donation: "Here you sign up to donate organs voluntary, so if you pass away you donate your organs as part of this contract. A government turned it the other way around and made so that everyone in the country is an organ donor, and that you have to sign out to not be an organ donor. Then what happened was that more people opted out, than earlier had opted in, because people felt forced by the government, because they made it mandatory."

We see here an inclination towards maintaining freedom as essential for the volunteer, essentially to be allowed to work in and attend organizational activities as they please out of intrinsic motivating factor, rather than to comply with organizational standards. This is exemplified further in a quote about the competition aspect of Enactus where the organization requires that projects present numbers on their achievements in events where the projects meet.

"I felt a lot of pressure and felt like there was this monetary goal we needed to reach with these big numbers. I just felt like I was part of a growth machine. I did not want to be a part of it if it is more about capitalism and the man and less about like making the world a better place." – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU

Here it becomes clear that mandatory reporting on standardized measurements that organizations may use, acted demotivational. Measuring quantitatively as is the way imposed by the organization proved to mismatch with the aspiration of how to review impact.

"It's not about the amount money and not about the amount of people you impact, it's about the content and quality of every individual conversations with people that is impact" – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

Another organizational member diverted it to towards priorities, pointing towards how the organizational work was of down the line in her priority, hence justifying absence and what could be perceived as lack of work engagement seen from the organization's management point of view.

"This a voluntary setup so for people like me, my private work and school comes first, which is obvious and logical, because that's more important I think right now in my life" – Project member, Waste:full – Enactus VU.

Commitment to the group may be why the management imposes mandatory events however an organizational member explains group commitment cannot happen when people do not feel part of the group.

"I think like we have not really ever as a big group formed like a working out functional group. And that's why maybe commitment among certain people are lower because you don't feel that sense of commitment like I feel in my smaller team. It is because they do not feel the same kind of obligation towards the other people in the group and to the point and identity with the group".

With the quotes in this section it becomes clear that the volunteers do not want to be imposed to follow a rigorous way of being in engaged in organizational work. The freedom aspect of commitment to work is connected to the individual sense of belonging, where organizational members can be said to engaged based on personal relationships within the group, but when these relationships do not stretch out in the bigger organization wide group, the commitment also does not happen.

7. Conclusion – Key motivation factors

Throughout the research period it became clear there is a great variety of motivational practices and obstacles that influence the will to endure for members of the sustainability focused organizations of study. The social aspect of working while developing relationships with others as well as the gaining practical experience towards career proved to be motivation factors valid for all organizational members as similar to the research of [Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen \(1991\)](#).

Based a review of occurrence and emphasis from organizational members the most prominent and frequently mentioned motivation factors is seen as these five:

1. Commitment to the group

To deliver work and being motivated for it out of the concern for the other people working together on the same was a factor expressed by all organizational members. The sense of community of likeminded people

acted binding. To deliver something to the other people in the group because of the relationship you have with them, brought organizational members to work.

2. Commitment to group goals

Aspiration to ensure continuation of organization and project, and showcase what was started working on, acted binding for all organizational members. This transformed from being tangible formalized group goals to transferring the ideas and knowledge to the next group of organizational members, so they could continue the process of realizing them.

3. Impacting external people

Seeing value and impact of what is being done, influencing people to be more sustainable, provided a boost in motivation whenever this was accomplished. And similarly acted demotivational when the feeling of not reaching people was present.

4. Freedom to choose engagement

The project members all emphasized that choosing how much they would work and what tasks they would be concerned motivated them. Similarly, the management of both organizations aspired for having this freedom, but rather felt overwhelmed with tasks and responsibilities, which acted demotivational.

5. Learning

Even though of different emphasis among the organizational members, learning practical skill for future use through being challenged in the organizational work, is a motivator to endure.

8. Analysis and reflections

Structure strikes as an element that both contributes positively and negatively to motivation when reviewing the data collected and the key motivation factors. The structure of how the office needs to be open in the Green Office inhibits the managers from developing good teamwork among each other, because of their time constraint. The emphasis on distinct responsibilities within roles inhibit the teamwork for the managers in Enactus VU. Among the project members however the free structure motivates them and eases their cooperation and dynamic with each other. But here this free structure rather acts as inhibiting for progress which again demotivates as impact is not reached. The role of the volunteer project members was constructed in symbolic interactionism as the shared system created between them through interaction, enabled

them to define roles in a commonly free way (Spradley, 1980). They acquired meaning to the role through engaging with each other and sharing their perceptions of what seemed relevant for them to do. In the projects an authority or manager was largely absent to set the course and bring the team together to progress, and for some organizational members this was expressed as needed to be dealt with by having more structure.

“As the main difficulty is getting people to do something, I think it is necessary that someone takes a lead and says what needs to be done to achieve a certain goal.” – Project member, Edible Spoons – Enactus VU.

Meetings in project teams was arranged sporadically and at different time almost every week, based on provided availability week to week. Which caused continual compromises for time schedule, and rarely the whole project team was present.

“Some things need to be arranged clearer. Planning meetings is difficult. We need more face to face meetings.” – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

Another factor observed was that motivation for continuing in the organizations is not directly connected to what inspired the organizational members to join. The social interactions, group connection and freedom of engagement is factors most organizational members was unaware of when joining, they all expressed a will to impact sustainability and learn organizational professional skills when joining. However, the motivation experienced differed between the organizational members depending on the context they experienced.

8.1 Differences and similarities

The difference and similarities between the experiences and responses to motivation factors is influenced by the structure of the organization and the social environment around it. The mix of the individual life situation and aspiration, and the organization setting forms the basis for what the especially the volunteer acts and thinks related to enduring the work (Hustinx, 2003). The organizational reality is both individual and institutional, agency and structure, and this interplay forms how the members experience it (Ybema et al., 2009).

8.1.1 Similarities across organizations

A theme all research participants answered similarly towards was their aspiration to continue their working career in sustainability focused organizations, and that experiences they had in the organization contributed to this. We can point this to identification management, where the organizational membership has framed the research

participants current and future identity to be exclusively within the organizational field of work (Pratt, 2000). Even though none of the research participants expressed a will to continue with the organizations for many years to come, they all express a will to continue in the same field, hence the organizations can be said to have exercised normative control (Kunda, 2006). They embrace this field based on their experiences with the work, the events and the social engagement. Several of the organizational members had this as their first work experience within the sustainability field and has because of the organizational membership developed a shared value system influenced by the norms in the organization. This value system motivated them both to continue working there, but also to engage more sustainably in their personal life as expressed by several organization members. Coercive and utilitarian control was mostly absent in the organization, but responding timely on availability for meeting in Hey Sprout – Enactus was at the end punished by having to bring snacks to the meetings. This proved to be very effectful in the few instances it occurred, but it was quickly abandoned as a practice without any discussion around it. Pointing to norms that existed with the project team not conforming with having such coercive control.

8.1.2 Differences

As the management structure and activities differ between the organizations, motivation differed based on this difference in how the organization operate, mostly this was observed in the management layer. Enactus VU managers expressed they were motivated by their managers and advisors at Enactus Netherland as they gave tips, followed progress and expressed positive enthusiasm for the what was happening in the organization and in the projects. Green Office VU managers was rather demotivated by their superiors at the VU administration, by how they imposed opening hours of the office, set unreasonably high expectations for output considering the work hours limitation and did not show up for Green Office events. This difference can be pointed to Enactus aim to impact on sustainability, but higher focus on developing leaders that can contribute further in their professional career, hence they are being sponsored and connected to major companies that absorb their members when finishing their time at the VU. Further the board of Enactus Netherlands is composed of former project members of Enactus, so they share the culture and norms of the local Enactus organizations. The social relationship between Enactus VU board members and Enactus Netherlands board is shaped by commonalities, which can be said to foster a mutual trust and ease in cooperation.

With the Green Office and the VU administration the story is different where the VU itself aims at being one of the top 10 sustainable universities world, the Green Office VU acts as a tool for this goal. The direct responsibility is pushed towards the Green Office to actively produce initiatives accordingly, but the expectations does not match with the allocation of resources. The relationship between the Green Office and the VU administration that is aimed at similarly being motivated by sustainable actions, turns to act demotivational because of the dependency of delivering impactful results.

The difference between an employed paid managers and non-manager project volunteers comes as the next point of division. When given a structure and assuming a role people can distance them from their individual opinion and get fixed on what they need to do for the organization. This was shown in the difference between employed paid managers and non-manager volunteers, where either sustaining the organization or creating sustainability externally was of top priority. Central board members and coordinators mention that it has been more important for them to focus on ensuring that the organization is able to continue working rather than being directly involved in sustainability initiatives, as the projects are producing this. The project members emphasize the focus on producing initiatives for sustainability, and the lack of organizing their project management wisely was never prioritized just exclaimed as needed eventually as the project and organizational participation came to an end.

Another factor is how managers in Enactus VU want to win the national competition staged internally in Enactus, whereas some nonmanager project volunteers see this competition as a hassle and irrelevant. This can be dragged to that the commitment of managers here is connected to the organization hence they are even more normatively controlled by the organization than the volunteer project members that has their commitment more centered towards the cause of sustainability, and can distinguish when an organizational initiative crashes with their personal values and aspiration.

“Hopefully one time we Enactus VU can win the national competition with a startup” – Manager, Enactus VU.

“My motivation for national competition was inhibited just because of the verbiage that was given, that you can meet these CEOs from these really big companies. I do not want to work these enormous companies. That is not sustainable. It is conflicting with my values because here we are praising these gross capitalistic organizations that are

all about money and profit and all about churn and burn. So that was a daunting. And unfortunately demotivating so.” – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

8.2 Reflections

By positioning the research as an subjective observer that partook in the construction of meaning in the research setting, the focus was to be doing what [Ybema et al. \(2009\)](#) refers to as interpretivist organizational ethnography. The focus came to be exploring and finding practices, activities and factors that influence motivation in sustainability-focused organizations, and how leadership and structure played a role in turning the motivation either way. Engaging in the work out of the pleasure of the experience, having teamwork and a social connection with likeminded, as how [Deci and Ryan \(1985\)](#) and [Frey Bruno and Osterloh \(2001\)](#) refers to intrinsic motivation proved to be a valid reason for working in the sustainability focused organizations of study. The output of the work in the projects was both a cause of motivation when there was impact, and demotivation, when impact seemed to lack, and correlates with [Smith et al. \(2016\)](#) on how volunteer work is supposed to produce results, but does not resemble paid work. The motivation was clearly for every organizational member to provide skills that would be transferable and provide entry to the labor market as [Ghose and Kassam \(2012\)](#) highlights.

If ever to expand the research it would have been to reach out and interview those organizational members that did not endure and left the organization during the year, before planned. Given the limit in timeframe for the research and the accessibility of those former members it was decided not to engage in this. One former organizational member was scheduled to be interviewed via Skype as he was in another country, but when the time of the interview was there, he no longer responded or logged on.

9. Recommendations

Finally, a recommendation follows to the management of Enactus and Green Office, or any organization that has similar vision, structure or problems. Here making sure to incorporate the key motivation factors into the process is crucial and need to be considered, not compromised.

To battle lack of progress, attendance in meetings and keep up the motivation in projects with volunteers:

- Set a meeting and working times days early in the project process and stick with it. Potentially only changing it after agreeing commonly for a new day and time. This will ensure that organizational members fit their schedule depending on this.

- Focus on division of tasks as a unit where people can work together on tasks, and be physically in the same location. This proved to be greatly beneficial in the instances it happened.
- Set 1 person from the start to have a clear manager role for each project all through its existence, including organizing the meeting and following up to make sure people meet, progress on tasks and is generally always onboard with the project. A manager from the board acting as a project member, advisor and facilitator confuses the team around the role of project management, and should be avoided.

"Appoint one person as a manager. Check whether we have done everything we should. Whether it is done accordingly. Register any problems. I say before the group even got together the first time I would have elected a person to be a project manager." – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

"I think management can be stricter and a bit more pushing members to do something, like: Hey, you did not do that task. I would be perfectly fine with that." – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

"We need to be disciplined, we all have our ideas and we all listen to each other, but we are a bit lenient with deadlines" – Project member, Hey Sprout – Enactus VU.

- Ensure to communicate to project members when a manager or person the project is dependent on, is absent. Potentially place the project members in other projects or temporarily find someone that can act as their manager until a new manager is in place. *"Communicating on what's going on. Try to get people involved in some activity so they do not lose motivation."* – Project member, Cups – Green Office VU. To battle lack of communication, feelings of pressure and inequality, and keep up the motivation in management:
- Ensure that the management and coordinator team meet and share responsibilities and work together being physically present around each other when working. This to battle the silo mentality and promote group dynamic. *"Being a unit makes your work so much easier, but I felt like I should get my own role responsibility work done first and so did others."* – Manager, Green Office VU.
- Ensure a proper handover and overlap between managers taking over roles, transfer the knowledge of what is being done and should be focused on.

"We are existing for five years already. And if you think about all the knowledge that got lost in that time it is not efficient at all. I have seen that throughout all the positions that we have." – Manager, Green Office VU.

"When I started this I was completely blank, because for two years there was no marketing manager there so there was also no transition. I did not know what I should do. I did not know how to work on the website. I was completely lost." – Manager, Enactus VU.

- Realign the responsibilities to your capabilities with your superiors, be straight forward and blow the whistle loud and clearly when times are rough, and you do not have capacity.

"We have to do something; we cannot stretch out anymore. We just should say we cannot do it; we have to close operations. Then they their alarm bells start ringing." – Manager, Green Office VU.

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