

# **Public – private partnership: A critical discussion**

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## Abstract

*Public-private partnerships have long been highly valued in Western welfare states, and the valuation of such cooperation has become even stronger in light of last year's economic turbulence, particularly with voluntary non-profit organizations (VNPOs). At the same time, the voluntary sector is changing. The broad popular movements have generally declined in favour of more individual interests as the basis for forming VNPOs, and those organisations still involved in the provision of social services are becoming more and more similar to public service, due to requirements placed on them by the public sector. This is believed to have consequences for the value of such cooperation. If voluntary organisations in public services – or other private organisations for the matter – are becoming copies of public services, there is not much value to be gained from such cooperation, except for some financial gain.*

*In this article, we argue that this conclusion is based on a rather narrow perception of public-voluntary cooperation. Research and debate on such cooperation are mainly preoccupied by what we call supplementary relations, in which voluntary organizations are assessed according to whether they can deliver cheaper or better services than the public sector. Based on an example of public-voluntary cooperation in preventive social work among young adults in Norway, the article shows that public-voluntary collaboration can be truly valuable when it is based on a complimentary relation, in which parties collaborate because they command different resources equally important to the task at hand.*

## Introduction

Cooperation between the public sector and voluntary non-profit organizations (VNPOs)<sup>1</sup> in the delivery of welfare services is high on the political agenda in contemporary Western societies, not that such cooperation is new. VNPOs played a profound role in the advent of European welfare state development, and have continued to play an important though varying role in most Western countries. What we may call the more recent renaissance of VNPOs can be traced back at least to the right-wing wave called forth by the fiscal crises of the mid-1970s, but has probably grown even stronger in light of the recent years of crises (NPQ, 2008). Even in the Scandinavian countries, which are usually regarded as bastions of the public sector (Esping-Andersen, 1990), the role of VNPOs in public social services is quite strong (Sivesind, 2008) and has gained increasing political recognition over the recent years. The driving force behind this increasing valorisation of voluntarism is at least partly economic in nature. Many welfare states today are under enormous pressure to cut public spending, and a closer cooperation with the voluntary sector is seen as a means to that end. But it is not only the cost side of the cost-benefit calculation that makes politicians cast their eyes on VNPOs. It is also assumed that VNPOs encompass attributes which have the potential to enhance the vitality and effectiveness of welfare services. Voluntarism is expected to have an intrinsic value that the public sector will benefit from, be it innovativeness, receptiveness to changing demands or flexibility to individual needs (Salamon, 1995; Kingsley et al., 1997; Osborne, 2002).

At the same time, an increasing body of research suggests that the voluntary sector has changed rather dramatically over the last decades in ways which are not necessarily in congruence with the popular perception of voluntary organisations (Austin, 2003). First, popular movements dedicated to working for the common good have generally declined in late modern Western societies, as collective values have given way to more individual interests as the basis for forming voluntary organizations (Gulbrandsen & Ødegård, 2011). While grandmother was knitting rag socks for the missionary bazaar in her youth, her grandson joins the hiking organisation in order to obtain access to the organisation's

<sup>1</sup> VNPO will be used as shorthand for organized voluntary effort, a choice which will be further justified later on.

facilities and discounts at the local sports dealer. Second, even the VNPOs that are involved in social service delivery are about to transform into something quite different from the image portrayed in political rhetoric. In an interview with *Symphony Magazine* in 2009,<sup>2</sup> Salomon says that, “the public has retained a very nineteenth-century, romantic image of nonprofits—that these are quaint, do-good shops staffed mostly by volunteers. Soup kitchens, I think, is the image that people have in mind”. Instead, most VNPOs engaged in social service work today are becoming more and more similar to the public agencies that they collaborate with, primarily due to the requirements demanded of them by their public counterpart. While the similarities may make collaboration easier, it undermines the manifest argument for public-voluntary cooperation: the added value of voluntarism.

The picture drawn here may seem quite critical with respect to the prospects for public-voluntary cooperation: Voluntarism is being directed towards activity and interest-based organizations, while the VNPOs with sufficient capacity and motivation to involve themselves in collaboration with public social services are more or less dispossessed of all qualities associated with voluntarism. The question is if it has to be this way. Do VNPOs have to become copies of public agencies in order to be interesting partners to public services? In this article, we will argue that much of the research and debate on public-voluntary cooperation is based on a too narrow understanding of such cooperation. We will try to show that an evaluation of the prospects of public-voluntary cooperation is based too much on the individual attributes of VNPOs, and neglects issues of the relation between public and voluntary organisations. Drawing on experiences from a development project in Norway, the article discusses in what ways voluntary organisations can be useful partners to public social services, and what the conditions are for such collaboration.

The article is organised as follows. First, we need to clarify some of the concepts used, and make clear what we mean by voluntary and non-profit organisation (VNPOs). We also need to be more specific about what we mean by public social services, what scope for collaboration our discussion relates to, and finally, what we mean by collaboration. Thereafter, we will present some of the research on collaborations between VNPOs and public services, with a special focus being paid to the perceived prospects and limitations of such collaborations. Lastly, we describe the Norwegian development project as an example and basis for discussing the possibilities and conditions for active collaboration.

## Preparing the framework

As stated in the introduction, we have chosen to use the concept of voluntary and non-profit organizations (VNPOs). Many researchers have contributed to the discussion and understanding of organised voluntary effort, with the definition of voluntary organizations gaining the most acceptance being the one given by Salomon and Anheier (1994) and their colleagues in the John Hopkins Comparative Non-profit Sector Project. They suggest that voluntary non-profit organisations have five characteristics: (1) they are organisations (i.e. they are formally structured), (2) they are not part of the government (but can receive public sector support), (3) they are non-profit (they can earn profits, but they cannot distribute them to their owners or directors), (4) they are self-governing, and (5) they have some meaningful voluntary content. The first four characteristics should be quite clear and relatively easy to define, but the fifth is more complex and subject to discretion in that it seems to contain two rather different criteria, the presence of both a voluntary component and a meaningful purpose. The latter must be understood in relation to American tax law. In the aforementioned interview with *Symphony Magazine*, Salomon (2009: 15) elaborates on the fifth criterion in this way:

<sup>2</sup> Reality Testing. Interview with Lester Salomon, *Symphony Magazine*, January 2009.

(VNPOs) serve a public purpose that the Congress has deemed to be “charitable” in the broadest sense, which makes them eligible for both tax exemption and receipt of tax-deductible gifts under a particular provision of the federal tax code, Section 501(c) (3). Included are universities, non-profit hospitals, daycare centers, nursing homes, social-service agencies, and many more.

As we see, even if the definition is quite clear, it is also very wide and inclusive. The word “meaningful” or the phrase “public purpose” covers a huge scope of different activities. Attempts have been made to differentiate and categorise the different types of activities of VNPOs, from a small number of broad categories (Bennett, 1983) to the 145 types of activities listed by the John Hopkins’ project (Salamon & Anheier, 1994). In this context it is sufficient to conclude that a VNPO, as it is understood in this article, and, we believe, in the majority of voluntary research, is a wide but still theoretically manageable category. Another category already introduced is that of public social services. Since we will discuss the voluntary-public collaboration, it is only fair to clarify both sides of the collaboration. As we will make extensive reference to Osborne’s (2002) study of VNPOs’ capacity for innovations in public services, we will delimit our conception of public social services to what Osborne calls *personal social services* (PSS), which includes “support services to children and families, the care for adults with special needs (such as elderly people and people with learning disabilities), and services that span both these groups” (p.1). The main point here is that we are talking about social services to individuals. This includes, for instance, public outreach work among young people at risk such as the project we will describe later.

As the reader may have noticed, we have talked both about cooperation and collaboration, and it may seem as if they are regarded as being interchangeable, but that is not quite the case. Cooperation is understood here as a quite general concept, and will therefore refer to more general (including political) notions and expectations of public-voluntary relations and efforts. Collaboration, on the other hand, is understood as being more specific. According to Bardach (1998:8), collaboration involves a “joint activity by (...) agencies that is intended to increase public value by their working together”. Based on an international literature review, Majumdar (2006: 184) also concludes that collaboration first and foremost “is a service-related concept, focusing principally on service delivery to individuals, families and community groups”. Thus, collaboration will be used here to denote concrete projects or efforts made by public and voluntary actors to accomplish something together.

### **What do VNPOs have to offer to public-voluntary collaboration?**

It is customary to assume that VNPOs have much to contribute in the design and delivery of public services. Unfortunately, there are not very many rigorous studies that can help to support or reject such an assumption, though one attempt was carried out in the 1990s by Stephen P. Osborne (2002). The purpose of his study was to test the capacity of VNPOs for innovation in public services, more specifically in the field of personal social services (PSS). The conception of *innovation* is based on a typology of organisational change that contains two dimensions: discontinuity of the services and/or the beneficiary group of an organisation, and developmental activity, which improves an existing service to an existing beneficiary group of an organisation (p. 105).

On the basis of a thorough literature review and a broad empirical mapping of the nature and extent of innovation by VNPOs in PSS in three localities in the UK, Osborne developed four theoretical hypotheses about the innovative capacity of VNPOs and their possible causal explanations. These hypotheses were then tested using a cross-sectional analysis of three groupings of organisations categorised as being innovative, developmental or traditional.

The hypotheses were that the innovative capacity of VNPOs was a product of: (a) their organisational characteristics, (b) their internal culture, (c) their external environment, or (d) their institutional context, also discussed as the organisational, cultural, environmental and institutional hypotheses.

Little was found to support the organisational and cultural hypotheses. There was nothing about the organisations' internal structures or culture that clearly distinguished the innovative from the less innovative (developmental and traditional) VNPOs. With respect to external environments, some support was found: "Not only were innovative organizations found to inhabit more complex environments (...), they also exhibited a greater receptivity and responsiveness to their environments" (ibid.: 178). Changes in the environment were perceived by these VNPOs as opportunities for development rather than, as was the case for not so innovative VNPOs, as a threat. The institutional hypothesis gained even stronger support. This was found both on the macro level, where the legitimacy and support (financial or otherwise) from local government and other key resource holders were found to have a powerful effect on the innovative capacities of VNPOs, and on the micro level, where the institutional forces were reinforced by the organisation and its members.

The issue of reinforcement could perhaps have been further explored in the analysis. As with the environmental hypothesis, it may not (only) be the external or internal properties as such that are of importance, but rather the interplay or the relation between the organisation and its environment, an environment which would include the public agencies with which they collaborate, or at least to which they relate. There is a lot of research on interagency collaboration that points to the importance of relational factors for success such as the degree of trust among parties, mutual understanding and respect, informal and personal relationships, open and frequent communication and the degree of consensus on actions and solutions (Mattessich et al., 2001; Gray, 2002). Bardach (1998) points at the stability in fiscal and political environments and the ability to maintain the infrastructure of collaboration as crucial to the development of what he calls inter-organisational collaborative capacity, which supports what Osborne (2002) finds with respect to institutional factors. Even if these studies encompass both "public-public" and "public-private" collaboration (Prefontaine et al., 2000), it points to relational factors that may be important regardless of organisational characteristics. The problem with Osborn's study, which is in most respects very solid, is that the innovative capacity of VNPOs is regarded almost solely as an attribute of the organisation. Even if the only hypotheses that acquire support are those concerning external environments and institutional contexts, and even in such a way as to clearly indicate relational factors, such factors are either left out or treated as contexts. To be involved in the delivery of personal social services, as are the inclusion criteria of the study in question, will mean to collaborate, or at least cooperate to a certain extent, with public social services. It is likely that the degree of such cooperation varies quite substantially among the 376 projects included in the study, and it seems quite obvious that VNPOs' *capacity for innovation in public services* will depend heavily on the degree and character of this cooperation, which is unfortunately not taken into consideration. This may reflect a more general problem in the research and debate on public-voluntary cooperation. The potential contributions of such cooperation are assessed on the basis of the attributes and capacities of VNPOs instead of on the two parties' capacity to cooperate. One reason for this may be that such cooperation is quite narrowly understood, which may be because even much of the practical cooperation is rather one-sided. The most common form of cooperation is that a VNPO performs services on behalf of the public sector, and on the premises of the public sector. In such circumstances it is not unreasonable to ask about the capacities of VNPOs to perform such services, and whether they could do better than the public authority. But if the goal really was innovation – to develop new or better services – the relevant question to a potential cooperation would be what one could achieve together, which was the point of departure in the project we will describe below.

## Collaborative efforts in preventive work among youth at risk

Over the past three-four years, the authors of this article were involved in a development project in a small town in Norway where the public outreach service collaborated with local VNPOs in order to improve the preventive work among young people at risk.<sup>3</sup> The project, which we will call here the public-voluntary collaboration project (or the PVC project), was part of a large county-based programme (2007-2010) funded by the regional state office aimed at developing, performing and assessing new and innovative practices in social work, particularly directed towards youth and young adults at risk. A more specific aim of the PVC project was to assess the potential of a closer collaboration between public social services and community-based voluntary organisations with respect to preventive social work among youth. Such cooperation is quite rare in Norway, and is perceived with a certain scepticism among social workers (Klyve & Pedersen, 2006).

A prime concern for the programme as a whole was the relatively large number of high school dropouts in the county. These youngsters, with few job opportunities and most often with a low participation in other organised activities, are traditionally perceived as the prototype of young people at risk and are hence the subject of concern to public agencies and the community at large. During the planning of the project, the leading outreach worker and the project manager, who together were responsible for the project,<sup>4</sup> found themselves confronted with some basic questions concerning the target group of the project such as: Do these youngsters consider themselves to be at risk? If not, how do we help people who do not consider themselves to be in need of help? How can we act to ensure the youngsters' integrity and freedom of choice and to empower them, instead of contributing to stigmatisation and dependency?

The project and its results are described in more detail elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> In this context, the project is used as an example of a particular type of collaboration. For this purpose, it is important to point out some of the considerations made that led to this collaboration. In order to respect the youngsters' integrity, the project workers decided not to think of the target group in terms of risk. They realised that the prevailing social work discourse on risk could fasten their attention on negative factors or have them develop a *concerning glance* (Henningesen & Gotaas, 2008) that could block out other perspectives. Instead, the project workers decided to focus on key characteristics of these youngsters, particularly the lack of participation, not only in formal arenas such as school, work and organised leisure activities, but also to a large extent in more informal networks. Thus, rather than focusing on removing risks, the project workers asked themselves how they could contribute to the inclusion of these youngsters in activities and networks. They made the assumption that one reason for low participation could be a general lack of competence or skills. It is most often activity skills, acquired in the family or in stimulating environments, which provide the motivation and ticket to participation and social networks. But the project workers had neither the competence nor the time and resources to organise activity training, and did not consider it to be compatible with their role. This is where the voluntary organisations came in. The project workers decided to invite a number of activity-based VNPOs in the community to collaborate, but not as simple providers contracted by a public agency, which is most often the case. Instead of seeing them as instruments to an end, the VNPOs were invited to take part in an active collaboration in which each party would contribute according to their special capabilities and roles. Consequently, a major part of the strategy

<sup>3</sup> The authors of the article include the leading outreach worker, the project manager and two researchers who have followed the project almost from its inception.

<sup>4</sup> In the following referred to as the project workers.

<sup>5</sup> See Hutchinson et al., 2011.

became *joint courses* in which the VNPOs took care of the course content and the project workers took care of the individual follow-up. The courses were also seen as a first step to a potential membership in the respective VNPO, which would be considered a success and a benefit both to the VNPOs and to the project. As a result, VNPOs were not only collaborative partners in a concrete, time limited project, they were also potential arenas for participation and inclusion far beyond the scope of the project.

Second, in order to avoid the stigmatisation of singling out a certain group of youngsters for *special measures*, the project decided to have open invitations to courses, while at the same time actively motivating and recruiting youngsters belonging to the initial target group. The latter was achieved in cooperation with the child care office, the outreach workers and the local asylum centre. This yielded quite a mixed group of participants in the courses, which is considered to be favourable with respect to group dynamics (Andreassen, 2003; Dodge, Lansford, & Dishion, 2006). In order to develop certain activity skills, the youngsters had to cooperate and interact, verbally and physically, which was probably valuable to all participants, particularly to those with the least experience of such interaction. The project also deliberately chose activities in which most youngsters had little or no skills if they were not already active members, meaning that most of the participants were on an equal footing from the beginning. All of the courses were free of charge to avoid economic considerations being a threshold for participation (Friberg, 2005).

Five VNPOs responded positively to the invitation from the project. These were the local Red Cross, the hunting and fishing association, the local hiking association, the local coastal association and a theatre workshop called the Lighthouse. To make the story very brief, the collaboration with the first three of these VNPOs stopped at an early stage. Despite the will and a positive attitude from all the parties involved, the cooperation never materialised into concrete courses, due to organisational features which restricted the intended division of roles among the parties. Two of the organisations had little or no experience in working with youngsters, and the third (Red Cross) lacked the capacity. They all wanted to participate, both because they sympathised with the aims of the project and because of the expected benefits in terms of resources and potential members. But that would require the public authority to take responsibility for what was supposed to be the voluntary part in the cooperation. Thus, apart from arranging an excursion to a mountain cabin, which was a trip that generated new members to the local Red Cross, the joint cooperation came to nothing.

By contrast, the **theatre workshop** was established for children and youngsters in the first place. They had already established a successful cooperation with the municipal "culture school". Their main activity is to put on plays in which children and youngsters (sometimes even adults) in the community play most of the roles. The activity also includes choreography, costume making and scenery work. It was decided that instead of arranging courses in acting, for which some youngsters would be far better prepared than others, the courses should concentrate on practical skills relevant to the theatre so that the potential participants could start on a more equal footing. Two such courses were organised by the theatre workshop, one on sound and light setting and one on costume making. The course leaders were professionals or semi-professionals in their respective fields. The participants were openly recruited through local newspapers by posters put up at schools and youth clubs, and as previously described, some were encouraged to sign up by the childrens office, the outreach workers and the asylum centre. The courses had 14 participants in total, of which four belonged to the primary group.

The course arranged in collaboration with the local **coastal association** focused on navigation and life at sea, aiming at providing participants with the certificate of boatmanship now required to operate a boat that is longer than eight metres or has an engine power equivalent

or greater than 25 hp. The course had 14 participants, of which six belonged to the primary group. Having discovered that a few of the participants had trouble with dyslexia, the project workers managed to get the Norwegian Library of Talking Books and Braille to produce a talking book version of the text book used for the course. All of the participants passed the test and obtained their certificate of boatmanship, even though two needed a second attempt.

The collaboration had a clear division of roles. The role of the course leaders was mainly to teach and to supervise the participants, but also to monitor the group dynamics and pay some extra attention to those with the least experience at such participation. When courses took place, the project workers acted as a kind of backroom resource that could be activated on request. They also spent a lot of time on follow-up outside the courses, and even phoned up to remind the participants or collect them at home.

Both courses were highly valued, not only by the participants and parents, but also by the community, and they were written about several times in the local newspaper. The collaboration was a success, both in the sense that they were actually carried through as planned with mixed groups of participants, and because it provided the participants with a real competence that could serve as a ticket to further participation. Most of the youngsters who were particularly encouraged to participate completed the courses and have extended their networks. The collaboration between the outreach service and the VNPOs continues, even though the project is formally over. New courses were arranged this year and the long-term effects will be evaluated.

### **Contracting or collaboration?**

So, what can we learn from this example? In the introduction, we said that the example should be used to discuss the ways in which voluntary organisations can be fruitful partners for social services, as there are probably many ways in which voluntary organizations can contribute to public services. They can deliver services on behalf of the public sector, or they can provide services outside the public sector's responsibility, but which are considered important. They can also contribute to extending the scope or coverage of services beyond what the public sector defines as the necessary minimum. The question is whether this should be called partnership. The former may be called partnership in that it is based on a negotiated agreement and contract between the parties. Such contracting may be useful to the extent that the voluntary organisation can deliver better and/or cheaper services than the public sector. There may also be other issues at stake here such as working conditions, sustainability, supervision, etc., but we will leave that to another discussion. We accept that voluntary organisations can be a useful partner in many different ways, although all the ways described here would require voluntary organisations to match themselves with public services, be it with respect to cost efficiency, innovativeness or quality. The same would be true for private for-profit organisations. What is it with voluntary non-profit organisations or VNPOs that make them better than other private service providers assessed by these criteria? What is this *extra* something that VNPOs bring to the table? They are non-profit, but so are public services. They are non-governmental, but so are commercial enterprises. They contain some meaningful voluntary content, but as we have seen, the meaningful and the voluntary have been separated; meaningful could be anything of public value such as social services, whereas voluntariness can be limited to the executive committee. It may still be useful to contract services to VNPOs, but not necessarily because they are voluntary. It may be difficult to distinguish the practice of a VNPO from the practice of other types of organisations within social services, as it has increasingly become (Selle, 1998). This is much due to the requirements placed on private organisations by the public contractors in order to accept them as partners.

These are important points in relation to the often simplistic and one-dimensional acclaim given to public-private partnerships, reflected both in public policies and in the central policies of voluntary organisations. Despite expectations of value adding, when talking about partnership voluntary work is almost always discussed in terms of a supplement to public services, or as a substitute in areas where public services do not have sufficient capacity. Such cooperation may perhaps be economically profitable, but the more the voluntary work is a supplement to or replaces public work, the less different from public services they become and the less value they will add. It all then boils down to a question of cost-benefit; how, and by whom, can services be delivered with the best quality at the lowest costs? At that point, there are no values left to add apart, perhaps, from the personal and moral dedication to do it voluntarily. But charity is something very few want to return to since it places a heavy burden on the receiver as much as on the provider. So, if voluntary work has nothing to add except for being cheaper, then there is not very much to be gained from cooperation. But maybe there are things other than cost that could justify cooperation with VNPOs, things which are even related to their voluntary nature, but not to whether they can deliver cheaper or better services than the public. That is what our example speaks about. The collaboration between the public outreach service and the VNPOs described above was never the goal in itself. Nor was it a way to reduce public costs. It was an answer to a problem, the problem of how to reach young people perceived to be at risk in a way that maintained the integrity and freedom of choice of the youngsters in question, and which avoided the possible stigmatisation of being subject to public concern. To achieve this, the outreach service needed the assistance of VNPOs, not as a *supplement* to relieve the public services of some of their work, but as a *complement*. This is a type of collaboration often left out of the debate on public-voluntary cooperation, as well as on of research on the benefits of such cooperation. Instead, the benefit of public-voluntary cooperation is judged on the basis of the perceived attributes or capacities of voluntary organisations alone, as demonstrated by Osborne (2002). What we have attempted to show with the example above is that such research gives an incomplete picture of the potential of public-voluntary collaboration, or in inter-organisational collaboration in general. The question is not so much the capacity of the other party, but whether it commands complementary resources or competences. And with respect to public-private collaboration, the capacities (and abilities) of public agencies are just as critical as those of the private.

Referring back to our initial question, we do believe that voluntary organisations cannot only be useful partners to public social services, they can also be useful *collaborative* partners, sometimes perhaps even *necessary* collaborative partners. With respect to preventive social work among young people at risk, the PVC project realised that activity-based VNPOs are better suited than public agencies to carry out activity training and courses for several reasons. First, to these voluntary organisations the activities in question are *goals in themselves*, while to public social services they are *instruments* for other purposes. Second, this has consequences for how the target group is defined. To voluntary organisations, these youngsters are potential *members*. This is a quite different status to being *users* of a public service who are subject to public concern. Focusing on activity as a goal in its own right pulls the attention away from risks and concerns. Hence, the youngsters are less subject to surveillance and control. They are assessed in relation to *what they do*, rather than to *whom they are perceived to be*. Finally, voluntary organisations represent ordinary arenas for participation and for meeting new friends, something which public agencies do not. To the public sector, activity-based interventions (that is what they are called in preventive social work literature (Kelly, 2011)) to keep or pull youngsters away from the street would typically be time-limited measures with strong limitations, both because of the time limit and because of its instrumental purpose. They may be very important as such, especially if there are no other alternatives. But we believe that collaborating with activity-based VNPOs can be an alternative under certain conditions. The benefit of this alternative is already described, so what are the conditions?

With respect to organisational requirements, the example described above indicates that the VNPOs should have the willingness and also a certain capacity to actively work with young people, in addition to a readiness to include new members. But that is not sufficient. It also requires that the public party has the flexibility and willingness to actively collaborate with organisations quite different from itself. And it requires that both parties respect the other's unique role and mandate. Activity-based VNPOs are not providers of preventive social service. They may have that as an outcome, even without any cooperation with public services, but that is not why they are formed. They have a different mandate, which (in this case) is exactly why they are useful collaborative partners, and represent a complement to public social services. With respect to Osborn's *innovative capacities in public services*, we believe that such capacities are best assessed as the dynamic feature of collaboration, instead of being a property of the individual organisation.

Hence, for cooperation between public and voluntary organisations to be truly valuable, the cooperation must be based on a *complimentary* relationship rather than a supplementary one. By acknowledging that voluntary organisations possess certain qualities which public organisations lack, collaboration could add something qualitatively new, as we have seen with respect to preventive social work among youth. As for the qualities crucial to the PVC project, the voluntary organisations were inclusive rather than concerned, they were activity-oriented instead of being problem-oriented, activities were goals in themselves, not instruments for other purposes, and they represented natural social arenas, not bureaucratic organisations. This does not expel the need for professional social work, but extends its reach.

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