

The virtuous circle of volunteering

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Volunteering also has other positive consequences, perhaps not as easy to measure, but **no** less important. The more volunteering, the more civic behaviour and democratic health develop in a society.

Civic behaviour is the set of attitudes we can usually observe in people's daily lives. It is fundamental to assure **co-existence** in society, because it is the sum of little everyday-actions that allow us to live together respectfully and to help each other. **Civic actions** are not programmed nor planned, they simply consist of habits we carry with us and that we put into practice during the course of our day. To greet the neighbour, to throw the rubbish in the appropriate bin, to help a stranger on the street, to give a hand to somebody, to keep silence when it is required or to make sure that the most needful have a seat in the bus. We get to learn these habits most of all in the frame of our families and our closest circle, but they also have a very important collective dimension. We put them into practice because we believe the whole society will benefit if everybody adheres to them. We are aware that our actions make it possible to live in a **respectful society**. That is, each of us is a single link of a chain that can't be broken.

While civic behaviour consists of our ordinary **day-to-day** actions, **volunteering** is practiced on an organized basis and bearing conscious aims in mind. If civic behaviour is so to say the first level, volunteering means going a step further. The decision to practice volunteering is a personal choice. But in fact it is an action that is carried out **collectively**, that is part of a **shared strategy**. Even when volunteering is put into practice individually (e.g. somebody who is supporting an ill person, or those who manage the social networking of an NGO from their home), that action is part of a project that has been agreed upon by a large group of people. What is known as "**Catalan model of volunteering**" emphasizes the necessity that volunteering is kept in the frame of non-profit organizations, no matter if these are associations or foundations. The one who becomes a volunteer makes a personal decision that requires to align collective efforts in one direction. It is an individual effort made to achieve a collective success.

People who have been volunteers and have participated in associations have developed **multiple skills** that improve the **democratic quality** of society as a whole. They know how to listen and to respect other's opinions, they understand that there might be complex situations whose solution requires taking into account different views and reaching agreements. They are patient and know that debate and negotiation allow better solutions. The vital experience in any kind of volunteering association improves clearly so the habits of democratic quality in any country. People who have had **volunteering experiences** and got involved in associations are often able to carry out projects in the future, whose beneficiary turns out to be society as a whole.

We are talking of a very **valuable** virtuous circle, that we should take care of: the more civic behaviour, the more sense of community and the more confidence in **collectivity**. The more confidence and trust, the more people feel like getting involved and practicing volunteering. The more volunteering, the more civic habits we will **incorporate** to our daily life and the more skills we will have to improve the **global democratic health** of our society. Volunteering is this great school of collective trust we must continuously grow!

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Resum:

Roger Buch, of Xarxanet.org, explains that volunteering has a lot of positive societal effects because of how it impacts its beneficiaries' well-being. This means that the situation of children, aged people or even rivers and forests that benefit from volunteering clearly improves.



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