

# *Volunteering as a support tool for navigating life transitions*

# *Master's thesis*

*Volunteering as a support tool for navigating  
life transitions.*

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# Abstract

This thesis examines the influence of volunteering in GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums) institutions as a way to assist individuals throughout significant life transitions, such as retirement, career transfers, relocation to a new city, or changes in relationships. The project involves the cooperation of two organisations: the Rotterdam Central Library and the National Museum of Scotland, with the active involvement of volunteers from both institutions. The study utilises a human-centred approach, employing a combination of literature review, interviews, and generative sessions to uncover the underlying motivations and thoughts of the volunteers who choose to engage in volunteering, and it aims to define the reasons why volunteering can be considered an effective emotional support tool for individuals who are going through life transitions. This study demonstrates how engaging in volunteer work at GLAM institutions can provide individuals with a revitalised sense of purpose and interpersonal connection throughout significant life transitions.

The design aspect of the project focuses on discovering a proficient method of advocating for volunteering in GLAM institutions by dispelling misunderstandings associated with the subject and increasing awareness of the advantages it can provide to those undergoing emotional upheaval due to a significant life transition. During the ideation phase, the research utilised participatory design methodologies to include the viewpoints of both present and possible future volunteers. This approach ensures that the final design solutions are customised to fit the varied demands of these groups.

The project provides a holistic intervention involving collaborating with different GLAM institutions in a city. It aims to showcase the activities and environment provided by these institutions to help individuals navigate the emotional challenges that come with life transitions. The program features three main touchpoints for promotion: a physical exhibit located within institutions, as well as a digital promotion strategy that includes a social media campaign and a website.

This thesis offers an alternative viewpoint on volunteering by challenging the conventional notion that it solely benefits the community. Instead, it emphasises the positive impact it has on individuals' emotional well-being, underscoring the notion that engaging in activities for the improvement of society can also yield personal benefits.

*Introduction*

This project explores the impact of volunteering for cultural heritage institutions, specifically GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives, museums), as a support tool for wellbeing during life transitions.

## *Why life transitions?*

The focus on life transitions emerged from a generative session conducted with the volunteers of the Rotterdam Central Library. A generative session is a group session that uses generative techniques to uncover the latent and tacit needs of users. Participants in studies involving generative tools are requested to create artifacts that represent more abstract parts of their personal lives, aspirations, and overall ambitions. By enabling individuals to produce these artifacts and subsequently elucidate them to a group of colleagues, participants assume control in shaping the trajectory of the user study, thus compensating for any limitations or oversights on the part of the researcher or designer (Stappers, Sleeswijk-Visscher, Keller, 2003). It emerged that all the volunteers embarked on their volunteering journey during a period of life transition was intriguing; in this case, following the loss of a partner, termination of employment, or voluntary resignation from a job. This feature of life transitions is not exclusive to older people, but it also manifested during the initial generative session held with the volunteers of the National Museum of Scotland. The participants in this case were considerably younger, but their reason for embarking on a volunteering adventure still stemmed from a period of life transition, specifically their desire to change careers.

## *Why GLAM Institutions?*

The focus of GLAM institutions comes from the fact that the interviewees and participants in the generative sessions are volunteers from museums and libraries. Specifically, the volunteers participating in the first generative session are part of the National Museum of Scotland, while the ones who participated in the second generative session are involved in the Erasmus Project Experience exhibition, which focused on the museum context, even though the exhibition

belonged to a library institution. As a consequence, to encompass both libraries and museums, the definition of GLAM institutions was used, although the project does not delve into cases concerning galleries and archives. Nevertheless, the study examines how volunteering in environments related to cultural heritage can benefit individuals. Following the definition of the University of British Columbia<sup>1</sup>, "GLAM institutions are mainly cultural heritage institutions and form a sector of the industry that has access to information, knowledge keeping, knowledge dissemination, cultural heritage, and preservation as some broad values."

## *The Impact of volunteers.*

The study focuses on GLAM volunteers in two countries, the UK, Scotland in particular, and the Netherlands. The decision to concentrate on these two countries is based on two distinct factors: the inclusion of case studies in The Netherlands was influenced by their geographical proximity. It was convenient to access local locations for conducting interviews and sessions. The National Museum of Scotland was the source of the project initiative that led to the exploration of the UK context regarding volunteering in cultural institutions. Furthermore, as was stated before, for a matter of proximity, the research was also expanded to include The Netherlands, allowing for the session to be done in person.

However, the impact of volunteer contributions on cultural heritage institutions is crucial for both countries. For instance, according to a study by the Museums Association, forty-five percent of heritage organizations in the UK rely on volunteer work<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, in the Netherlands, as of 2020, the museum industry employed a total of 39,500 individuals, of which over 26,000 (or 66 percent) were unpaid interns or volunteers. Approximately 19% of museums operate solely with volunteers and apprentices, without any paid staff<sup>3</sup>. Due to this, the use of voluntary work has become an important component of the cultural sector's business model in recent years. Therefore, the project's findings will have a positive effect on the countries involved in the study but can apply to other countries as well. This is mostly due to the study's emphasis on life transitions, which allows for easy identification and applicability among individuals,

regardless of their nationality.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary definition<sup>4</sup>, a volunteer is “a person who does something, especially helping other people, willingly and without being forced or paid to do it”. While this definition acknowledges the altruistic aspect of volunteering, it fails to include the potential benefits that volunteering can bring to individuals who engage in it, aside from the positive effects it has on society.

This design project employs a human-centered approach to explore how volunteering can support individuals during life changes, providing them with a renewed sense of purpose and, as a result, encouraging greater participation in the world of volunteering.

# *Chapter 1.*

# *Methodology*

This chapter presents all the methodologies employed for the research and ideation phase. The research phase followed an iterative process that employed different techniques based on the insights that were emerging throughout the project. The choice of research methods was based on which tool was more suitable for evaluating that kind of insight (e.g. surveys that are suitable for reaching out to a large number of people were used to validate assumptions based on which misconceptions individuals could have about volunteering). The goal of the research evolved during the whole research phase: in the first explorative part, literature review and interviews were used to define the concept of volunteering in a broad way; then thanks to generative tools, it was possible to define the deep thoughts and feelings of the first target group (volunteers) that inspired the following research with the goal of understanding in which way volunteering for GLAM institutions could turn as a support tool for individuals who are navigating life transitions. Regarding the ideation phase participatory design techniques were chosen to design a solution that could result in a solution targeted more specifically to users' needs.



## *Research process and iterations.*

The research began with the objective of defining the concept of volunteering and clarifying the responsibilities and contributions of volunteers inside institutions. The primary objective was to comprehend the underlying motivations that prompted their decision to embark on their volunteer activity and assess the influence that volunteering had on their lives to establish its potential connection to their aspirations. Additionally, the study aimed to determine their overall expectations regarding volunteering as a whole, to see if they were matching the goals defined for them by the institutions.

The first half of the research phase also considered the possibility of investigating the impact of technology on the work of the volunteers and if they could feel threatened by that, but after investigating it with the volunteers themselves it was decided to leave it out since the participants expressed a lack of anxiety regarding the possibility of being replaced by technological advancements. As previously stated in the introduction, thanks to the second generative session in Rotterdam, new insights and design directions were discovered highlighting the pattern that all volunteers decided to volunteer during life transitions, helping to discard the previous design direction assumed. As a consequence, an additional literature review was conducted to deepen the insights discovered, and two kinds of surveys (onsite and online) were run to validate the assumptions made by participants during the session with a larger pool of individuals. The following research questions were used in the second main research phase to validate the insights that emerged from the generative session.

Q1. What's the outside perception of volunteers for cultural heritage institutions?

Q2. How do cultural environments (such as museums and libraries) contribute to well-being?

Q3. For which aspects does volunteering contribute to the well-being of individuals?

Q4. How can volunteering contribute to giving a new purpose during life transitions?

Overall, the research phase followed an iterative process that combined literature review and user research simultaneously (See Figure 1). The iterative process contributed to gathering feedback and validating assumptions that emerged from all the activities performed so that it could mitigate the risk of taking a design direction that wouldn't meet user needs and expectations. It fostered flexibility in adapting to new insights and adjusting gradually to a context that was changing as it went more into detail. The literature review was primarily used to explore the context and both confirm and deepen insights gained from interviews and two generative sessions. In fact, other than the generative research conducted with the volunteers of the Rotterdam Central Library, prior extra research including an online generative session with two volunteers of The National Museum of Scotland was conducted to set a base for the research before the project started officially.

Regarding the ideation phase, it was decided to use participatory design techniques to craft a solution that would better meet the needs of the users. Since the main goal takes into consideration users of different ages, it was decided to involve users of different ages and backgrounds in the ideation phase so that it was easier to understand their different perceptions.

The following chapter introduces both the methods used for collecting data and validating the insights, and the method used for ideation. In the following chapters, the insights presented will both come from desk research and user research.

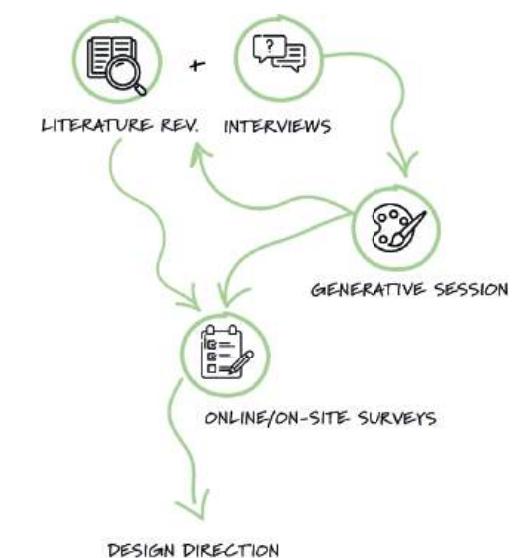


Figure 1: visualization of the process

## *Interviews: exploring the context.*

During the research phase, a total of six interviews were conducted. The initial four interviews were conducted as a means to comprehend the structure of volunteering for museums in The Netherlands. In light of this, it was determined that conducting interviews with two young volunteers and two volunteer supervisors would be beneficial in order to get insight from both perspectives and identify potential areas for intervention.

The interviews conducted in the initial phase had a primary focus on exploring the context of volunteering for GLAM institutions. They followed the first potential design direction, which involved researching the function of volunteering as either leisure or work. The aim was to determine if volunteering could meet the expectations of the volunteers. It also examined the views they held about the other volunteers, particularly the elderly ones. Concerning the volunteers' supervisors, an investigation was conducted to find out how committed and responsible the volunteers are, particularly when it comes to delicate duties like handling valuable and breakable items. The research also included questions about how the team managed different kinds of expectations and the dynamics between older and younger volunteers within the group. The last two interviews were carried out with two distinct museum volunteers.

The purpose of these interviews was to gather additional feedback regarding the new project direction, after the generative session. The initial questions mirrored the questions posed in the second generative session, focusing on the reasons behind their decision to volunteer and the effects it had on their life. Additionally, participants were asked to elaborate on their roles within the institution. Furthermore, the interviews were utilized to further explore the subject of the volunteer's perception, questioning how they think they are perceived by others.

## *Context Mapping.*

Contextmapping is a term coined by Sleeswijk-Visser et al. (2005), that refers to a method that uses generative research to bring a human-centered approach to the fuzzy phase of the design process. The users are involved in the project from the early stages since they are the main experts of their own experience. By asking the participants to answer questions by physically creating something themselves instead of communicating only verbally, they are able to reach levels of knowledge that normally they wouldn't be able to express. Participants are immersed in their context to gain experiential data, and thanks to the use of physical artifacts, they are able to share their motivations, values, fears, hopes, and dreams.

This design approach used a framework called the path of expression (Sanders, Stappers, 2012) that allows the researcher to investigate the present, past, and future experiences of the participants. It functions as a tool for enabling participants to conceptualise and articulate their aspirations, ambitions, and worries regarding the future.

The sessions include the simultaneous participation of the participants, in which they exhibit their artefacts to each other. This leads to discussion and reflection and provides an opportunity for them to enhance each other's presentations, so generating new potential insights. Given that the primary objective of the initial research was to comprehend the deeper reasons that drive individuals to volunteer and how this impacts on them emotionally, employing generative sessions proved to be the most appropriate approach for obtaining profound insights on the subject.

## *Generative sessions.*

Two types of generative sessions were carried out to gain a profound comprehension of the motivations behind persons volunteering for cultural institutions, as well as the impact that volunteering has on their lives.

The initial session was performed virtually due to the geographical distance of two volunteers from The National Museum of Scotland. The participants were informed and sensitized through a sensitizing booklet on Miro (Figure 2), distributed one week prior to the event (See Appendix A). A sensitizing booklet involves small exercises distributed to each team member a few days before the first meeting. These assignments can be completed in your own surroundings and time, which makes people feel more at ease and allows them to express themselves more freely (Sanders, Stappers, 2012).

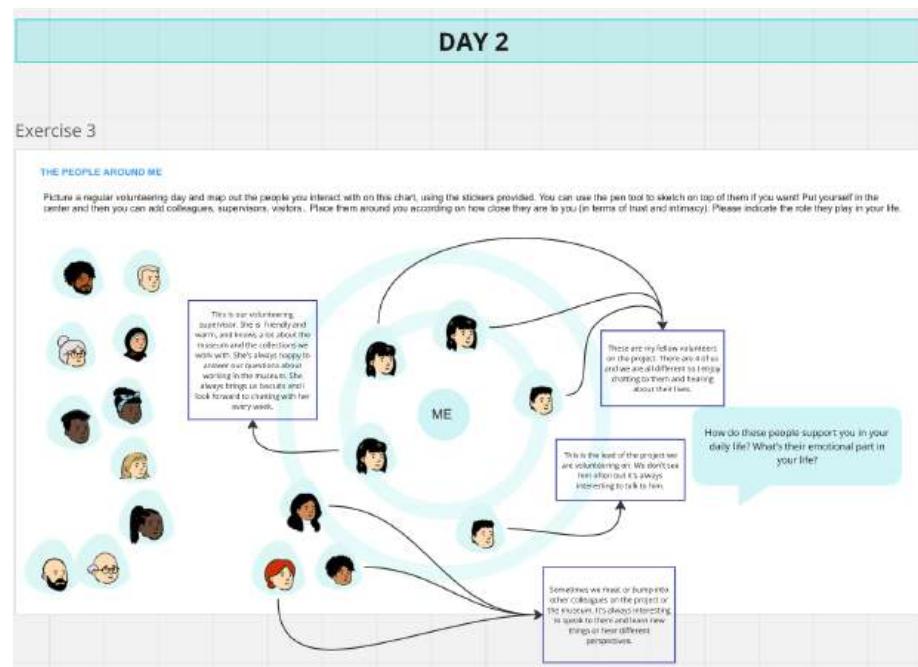


Figure 2: Example of one page of the sensitising booklet

In addition to familiarising participants with the session's material, the purpose of the sensitising booklet was to obtain significant information regarding their daily lives as it relates to volunteer work and their plans for the future.

Participants were able to engage in the generative session after being sensitised. The workshop was conducted on Miro as well and lasted on a duration of two hours. It primarily involved two exercises centred around the creation of collages. The questions provided for the participants to respond to using a collage were as follows:

1. Create a collage using the images provided that reflects your journey as a volunteer at the museum. What thoughts or feelings do these images evoke about your experience?
2. Use these images to craft a collage illustrating the impact you hope to make through your volunteer work at the museum. How do these images symbolize the kind of contribution you aspire to achieve?

The participants were presented with a collection of one hundred ambiguous images and one hundred words as triggers to assist them in making the collage. (See Appendix B). The selection of images and words was based on previous assumptions derived from the literature research. The purpose was dual: to provide participants with familiar and closely related information about the world of volunteering, and to stimulate profound reflections through more abstract inputs. Following the production phase, the participants were encouraged to share their work with one another, allowing for more feedback to arise through the process of building upon and being inspired by each other's contributions during a conversation.

The second session was conducted on-site, supported by the collaboration of the Rotterdam Central Library. The activity consisted of five participants who took part in a two-hour session. The session's original agenda had three activities. The initial one resembled the primary undertaking of the preceding generating session. By observing that the participants were experiencing confusion when faced with an empty page to be filled with text and images, it emerged that a structure should be provided to assist them in placing the trigger set. The structure consisted of a tree that symbolized the volunteers' journey.

They were instructed to place pictures and words on the tree's roots, representing their motivations for embarking on their volunteer experience. As for the branches, they were encouraged to provide inputs describing how volunteering was influencing their lives (Figure 3).

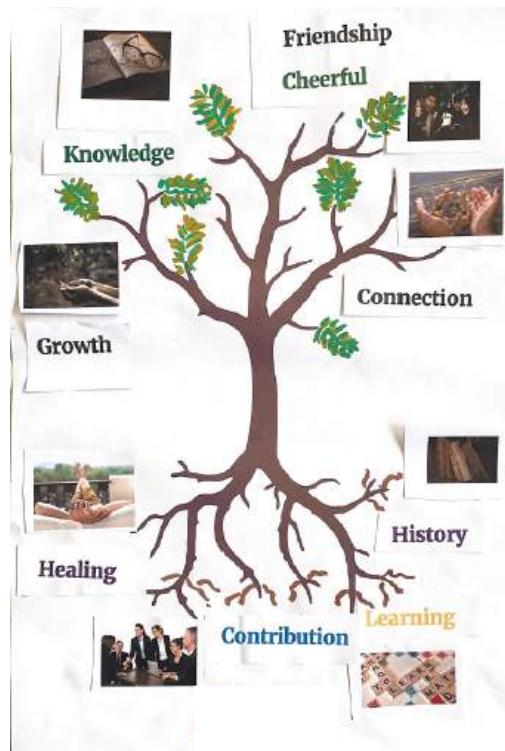


Figure 3: Example of one collage made by a participant.

depicting the current condition of the library to the participants, along with the use of translucent paper. The activity sought to depict through drawings the participants' vision of how technology could transform the library, with the use of stickers symbolising artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR) features. The two main questions were: are the volunteers worried about the possibility

that technology and AI could take their place? What is their relationship with the use of technological devices? In spite of this, during the first two sessions, participants proved to be quite communicative and offered insightful suggestions for new possible design directions. Meanwhile, the participants displayed a lack of interest in technology. Furthermore, they expressed a lack of anxiety regarding the possibility of being replaced by technological advancements. So, it was decided during the session not to cut off their talks on the first activity in order to also carry out the third one (See appendix B for the detailed plan).

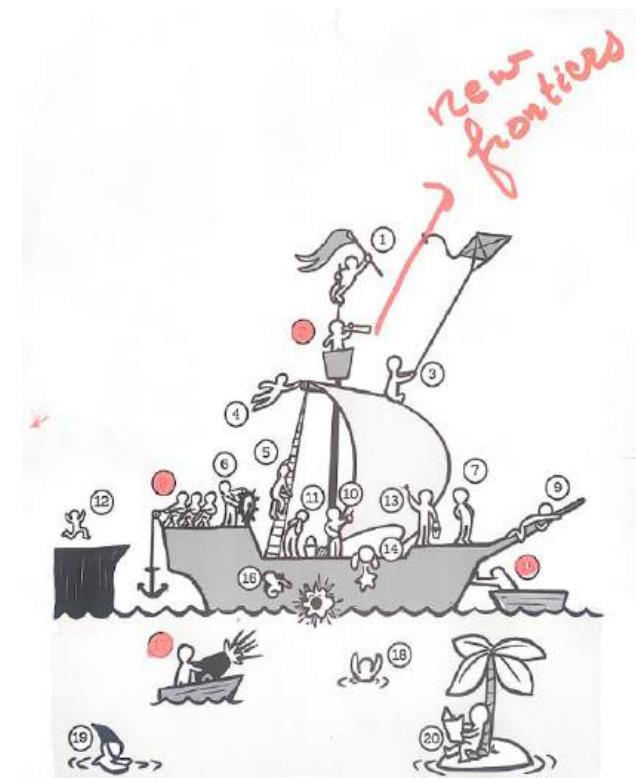


Figure 4: The boat exercise

## *Surveys: exploring misconceptions.*

An interesting aspect that arose throughout the session was a hypothesis that required validation with a substantial sample size (in this case 38 individuals) to determine its value as a potential issue to address for the project. In order to gather the perspectives of non-volunteers, it was decided to conduct a preliminary investigation using a Google Form shared in the university group chat. The purpose of this investigation was to explore the students' opinions regarding their perception of volunteers and volunteering in cultural heritage institutions. 18 people completed the survey (questions and results can be found in the Appendix C).

Subsequently, it was suggested to examine these viewpoints with a different demographic that might as well receive benefits from engaging in volunteer work to navigate life transitions, specifically individuals near retirement age or those who had recently retired (questions and results can be found in the Appendix C). Due to the potential difficulty of reaching this aim through online surveys, it was determined that printing the questionnaires and distributing them in person would be more effective. In order to engage with individuals more effortlessly and avoid causing any concern, it was preferred to request assistance from the Rotterdam Central Library again. This arrangement granted permission to approach guests inside the building by wearing a staff badge. A total of 20 surveys were distributed over a single afternoon. The survey was designed to be completed quickly, taking no more than 3 minutes of the visitors' time. As a result, it included a reduced number of questions compared to the prior online edition. In Chapter 3 the insights that emerged from the surveys in the section will be presented in the section 'The perception of volunteering'.

## *Participatory design.*

Participatory design was used as a tool for the phase of ideation. In this way, users are not only given a voice but also empowered to actively participate in the decision-making process, such as determining the problem and its solution (Bjerknes, Bratteteig, 1988).

The project involves as a core theme creating awareness around the power of volunteering for cultural heritage institutions as a supporting tool for individuals who are passing through life transitions. Therefore, it involves two main voices that need to be heard and part of the final design solution, two voices that need to create a conversation as the final outcome: the voice of the direct experience of the volunteers (involved as stakeholders), and the voice of the perception of the individuals that are not part of any volunteer program, also defined as the project's users.

Participatory design offers a systematic approach to include users and other stakeholders in the decision-making processes of design. It is presumed that their knowledge and skills are applicable to both significant and minor decision-making processes. Sharing decision-making power about the scope and design of the solution is essential to participatory design, as it ensures that individuals who will utilise the solution are involved in shaping it (Bratteteig, Wagner, 2012).

Sharing different fields of expertise, resources and backgrounds represents a challenging but promising area to work in, since as Bossen (2002) discusses, the concept of design occurs at a boundary zone where diverse approaches converge to generate something new, highlighting its collaborative and diverse nature. By promoting a sense of ownership over the outcomes, the method contributes in the later implementation.

## *Co-Creation sessions.*

The ideation stage involved two co-creation sessions to include users in the making process. In fact, as it is stated at the base of the Convivial Toolbox (Sanders, Stappers, 2012) all individuals are creative and are capable of producing ideas to improve the quality of their own lives and the lives of others. So, since all individuals are experts in their own experiences, they should be considered co-creators in the design process. Participatory design transforms users from passive sources to active participants in the design process.

The co-creation sessions were not only designed to delve deeper into the perspectives, needs, and experiences of the users in order to determine the most effective approach to promoting volunteering for cultural heritage institutions, but also to further investigate the potential misconceptions that users may have regarding volunteering that had already been identified in the surveys. In fact, the insights gained from the surveys regarding the possible misconceptions of individuals about volunteering, were too succinct, mostly due to the only possibility of answering close questions. For this reason, a workshop enabled a more thorough examination of the thoughts behind these misconceptions.

The initial plan for the pilot session included three main parts: problem definition, generation of ideas, and identification of solutions (See Appendix D for the detailed plan). The pilot session is a session used to test the methods and the timing of the main group session. In this case, the goal was also to delve more into the opinions of individuals regarding volunteering and the ways that they found more efficient to promote these benefits, so the results of the pilot session were also taken into consideration for the ideation phase.

Since the pilot was conducted with four design students and no volunteer was involved, it was decided to leave more space for the first part of the session, the problem definition. Considering that there were no volunteers or other targets that were not design students involved in the session, it was still decided to give two personas to two of the participants to roleplay to have multiple points of view during the session: one was tasked with portraying an elderly volunteer, while the other had to assume the identity of a 35-year-old person who recently relocated to a new city for employment at a major corporation, lacking any social connections

in the area. In this way, it was still partially possible to have the point of view of a volunteer, and the point of view of someone with a different life transition.

The main goal was to make all the participants familiar with the topic of volunteering for cultural institutions and its benefits for well-being. The techniques mentioned are taken from the Road Map for Creative Problem Solving Techniques (Heijne, & van der Meer, 2019). The first activity used for the first part of the session was the Flower Association Technique to get the participants more familiar with the key concepts of the statement: volunteering, cultural heritage institutions, emotional support, and life transitions. The main goal of the activity is to associate everything that comes to their mind with the key concepts provided to free their mind from stereotypes and think creatively. The second activity was then to re-phrase the Problem as Given to the Problem as Perceived (Heijne, & van der Meer, 2019) by formulating a series of different how-tos. The Problem as Given was the following: How can we promote volunteering for GLAM institutions as an emotional support tool for navigating life transitions? After generating several alternatives, a few minutes were planned to be used to discuss how to converge all of these into a shared problem as perceived, so that all the participants are on the same page before starting brainstorming.

In the ideation phase, it was chosen to provide evocative visuals to the participants to drive the brainstorming process (Figure 5). Participants were required to derive inspiration from the images in order to generate as many ideas as possible, starting from the restated problem description.



Figure 5: Ideation phase triggered by evocative visuals

Finally, during the third and last part of the session, it was planned to initially categorize all the ideas on a matrix based on two axes: feasibility (ranging from least to most feasible) and impact (ranging from least to most impacted). By doing so, participants were able to eliminate concepts with lower implementation potential and facilitate the voting process for the preferred ones.



*Figure 6: an example of solution created by one participant.*

the solution directly (Figure 6). Thus, they felt driven to reconcile seemingly nonsensical concepts with reality (See Appendix D for the detailed plan).

Following that, the voting consisted of putting a dot to the ideas they found most appealing, with a total of five dots at their disposal. The amount of dots was determined by considering the remaining time for the session but also allowing participants enough freedom without imposing an excessively challenging decision. By doing so, participants would be able to rely more on their intuition while making decisions instead of feeling constricted by a too small number of dots available. Ultimately, the four concepts that received the highest number of votes were selected, and the participants were required to construct their respective solutions. The participants were presented with the option to either develop a storyboard to convey their concept or construct

The main co-creation session that took place at the Rotterdam Central Library had a revised plan, based on the results of the pilot. Two volunteers (who had already participated in the generative session), as well as four non-volunteers—two from diverse backgrounds and ages—and two students in their 20s, were to attend the session. Mostly, the first and second phases of this session's plan changed. Since the initial plan proved to take too long, it was decided to exclude some of the first exercises meant to acquaint non-volunteers with the subject by allowing the volunteers, who are the subject matter experts, to introduce it. Since volunteers and non-volunteers would have collaborated later, this sought to build empathy and a relationship already. To better help participants turn their ideas into reality, it was also decided to let them work in groups so that each could have the assistance of a designer during the creative exercises. The plan for the problem definition space included a fifteen-minute discussion to address the following subjects: who are the volunteers and what they do inside the Library, how the non-volunteers see them, when the volunteers began their journey, and what recent life transition the non-volunteers had gone through recently and how volunteering could have helped them deal with it. Participants were to put down keywords on post-its to describe these benefits after talking about how volunteering would have assisted the non-volunteers in navigating their life transition. The keywords stood for the initial stage of the ideation process. Since it was discovered during the pilot that the participants—all designers—already struggled to generate ideas from images, it was decided to drive the idea generation of the participants by the keywords they had previously identified rather than by being inspired by evocative images. It could have been even more difficult for non-designers. They got to work with something they knew well by focusing on the important terms. Then, as in the original design, the third section of the session proceeded with the construction and the exhibition-style presentation of their finished answer (See Appendix E for the detailed plan).

## *Conclusions.*

The study phase resulted in an iterative process that required returning numerous times to test new methodologies and ideas. The research goals had to be adjusted to account for new discoveries as they emerged until the focus was clear.

These are the main takeaways that contributed to the project.

### *Primary Insights Driven by User Engagement.*

The literature review was used to validate what was discovered by users. It was an efficient tool for exploration and validation but all the main insights were triggered by conversations with users (generative sessions and interviews).

### *Adaptive Iteration for User-Centric Research*

Iterating and coming back to review previous results and change direction was important for making sure that research remains aligned with the needs and perspectives of those it is intended to benefit.

### *Tailored Research Methods for Targeted Validation*

Methods of research are tailored to the insights that need to be validated. For example, generative tools have been crucial to understanding the whys, while surveys have been important to assess the impact of the hypothesis. For this reason, it is important to adapt methodologies to the research process.

Chapter 2.

The Contest

*This chapter introduces the project's study context: volunteering in GLAM institutions. It begins by providing an overview of the many types of volunteers that work in cultural heritage settings, as well as the primary motivators for these individuals to begin their volunteer journey. Following that, it presents new definitions of volunteering based on the categories and their associated motivations; these new definitions lay the foundation for the research project's core theme, which is volunteering for personal well-being.*



## *Volunteering in The Netherlands and in the UK.*

The context of volunteering in The Netherlands shows that 5 percent of the population engaged in volunteer work for cultural heritage institutions from the CBS study<sup>5</sup>. It also reports that individuals with higher education levels, such as completing a bachelor's or master's degree are more inclined to volunteer. From the Boekman Foundation's study<sup>6</sup>, it is also reported that age also plays a role, with the highest percentage of volunteers being in the 65 to 75 group of people. Regarding the UK, the data are not so different. From the CASE study, 7% of all volunteers are volunteering for arts and cultural heritage institutions<sup>7</sup>. Also in this case, volunteering is higher among women and older people. The individuals who are less likely to participate in this kind of volunteer are again young people and those with lower academic backgrounds. It is also that individuals identified by the Cabinet Office as being at risk of social exclusion, such as those who are unemployed, have disabilities, or belong to ethnic minority groups, exhibit lower rates of participation in voluntary activities. Regarding their roles, usually libraries volunteers usually assist with language teaching and book delivery, while in museums it can depend if they prefer to work behind the scenes by taking care of the collection management and archives, or with the public by welcoming visitors and answering their questions in the exhibition space. This research, interviews, and generative session undertaken before the project have proven that the obtained results are comparable in both nations. Therefore, it is feasible to generalize a solution that might be beneficial in both settings (UK and The Netherlands).

## *The main motivations for volunteering.*

To better analyze the context to find a direction for the project, it is crucial to understand what drives people to volunteer for cultural heritage institutions. This categorization identified two main categories of volunteers, based on the motivations that drove them there: young volunteers (age defined in the range from 20-35) and older volunteers (age defined in the range between 65-75 years old). These categorizations define also the kind of volunteering performed in the institution. The insights presented that define the categories come from the

four initial interviews and the two generative sessions. In the first two interviews with the young volunteers, it was investigated firstly mainly the reasons that drove them to volunteer and which were the reasons that drove their colleagues (retired or close to the age of retirement). Similar questions were asked to the two volunteer supervisors, but mostly focusing again on the motivations of the older volunteers and the group dynamics and ways of coordination. Regarding the two generative sessions, the first one was conducted with two young volunteers from the National Museum of Scotland, so it focused on understanding their motivations. Part of the second session, conducted only with older volunteers of the Rotterdam Central Library, had the same scope.

Regarding the young volunteers, their main motivations were career-related. As it is also reported in the Boekman Foundation's study<sup>6</sup> about volunteering in cultural heritage institutions in the Netherlands, most of the young volunteers start a volunteering journey to improve their job prospects, due to the difficulty of finding a paid job in the cultural sector. It has been reported that most of the available positions are for a senior level and need a level of experience, so this leads to collecting experience in the sector through volunteering. Based on the interviews conducted, it was found that young volunteers typically spend a few months to a maximum of two years volunteering for the same institution. After this period, they often leave their volunteering position due to the demands of their busy routines, as they usually find employment opportunities. Moreover, the percentage of young volunteers in museums is very low compared to older ones. Usually, there are about one to four young volunteers out of a majority of forty/fifty volunteers, according to the interviewees. *"It's very interesting to see how many people arrive and very fast leave, but the ones who stay, stay here for years"* reported a participant of the main generative session of the Rotterdam Central Library.

On the other side, the older volunteers usually remain for years at the same institution, interviewees reported that some of them have been in the same institution for fifteen years. The main motivations that drive the elderly to volunteer are their need for socialization. By assisting guests with their queries, guiding them through the exhibitions, and facilitating their interactions with other volunteers, the cultural institution provides a structured environment for

socialization. Typically, retired individuals often had a profession in the cultural heritage sector or have a deep interest in museum-related topics. Undertaking this journey could provide them with a new occupation during their retirement. The elderly volunteers showed more attachment to the institution itself, the amount of experience that they collected in working for it enhanced the dynamic for which they were able to coordinate the other volunteers.

This insight was helpful to understand the group dynamic that can emerge from that. In fact, the young interviewees reported having felt a feeling of mistrust at the beginning coming from the older volunteers. At the same time, the tone of voice used by the participants of the generative session indicated a feeling of resignation about the fact that young volunteers would have left after just a few months. Quoting a discussion that emerged from the session: "*At first they think it's nice here, and then they are like no it's not nice here anymore*", "*People think it's boring as hell, but it's normal*". So generally, possible friction between the two age groups is mainly caused by a feeling of distrust of genuine attachment to the institution and hierarchy concerning the way of executing tasks. In general, the group of volunteers consists primarily of older and retired individuals who remain consistent for extended periods, while a smaller portion includes younger volunteers who display more frequent turnover.

## *The main motivations for volunteering.*

This categorization helped to define the two kinds of volunteering, based on the motivations and the expectations of the two main categories. Regarding the young volunteers, their career-driven ambitions took some aspects of the definition created by Stebbins (1996) of "serious leisure". Stebbins describes volunteering for cultural institutions as "the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting in nature for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of a combination of special skills, knowledge, and experience". The concept of serious leisure focuses on pursuing volunteer work for personal ambitions, in this case, career-related purposes. In the study of Stebbins (2000), several participants

expressed the belief that whether volunteering is considered work or not depends on the level of responsibility required. They argued that the more responsibility involved in an activity, the more it resembles labor. But volunteering could not be considered work, because the level of responsibility could be managed by the volunteers, as it was investigated during interviews and generative sessions. At the same time, following the point of several participants from the study of Stebbins (2000) volunteering could not also be categorized as leisure mainly because they viewed leisure as a relaxed and loose activity. In fact, how can the act of volunteering, which is complex, important, and fulfilling, be grouped along with activities like sunbathing on the beach, watching a TV show, and socializing with friends over a beer? For this reason, etymologic research was conducted to replace the word "leisure" in the definition with a more suitable term. The volunteering carried on by young volunteers with career purposes was then defined as "self-investment".

On the other side, the definition of "serious leisure" could still be used for older volunteers. This demographic lacks employment aspirations as they are typically already retired or nearing the age of retirement. Their desire for social interaction and search for other activities during unemployment can be more accurately described as leisure. Additionally, their work at the museum enhances their knowledge through educational programs, so as Orr states (2006), museum volunteering provides 'the opportunity to study and engage in the social realm related with their chosen topic of interest'. This adds another level of depthness to the kind of leisure considered, that again could not be compared to chatting at a bar or going for a walk. Considering these reasons, the definition of "serious leisure" appears more suitable for the older volunteers target.

What these two kinds of volunteering have in common is the ground motivation that stands in the area of self-interest rather than altruism. So, to describe this kind of volunteering, Stebbins (1996) claims that "the pursuit of serious leisure volunteering is frequently motivated by self-interest rather than altruism, even when an individual initially entered the field out of altruistic intentions." This concept promotes self-interest, focusing on the individual and what they receive out of helping rather than the service that they provide to the larger community (Edwards, 2005). This is a shift in the point of view of volunteering from seeing it as contributing to a cause for a community to seeing it as a tool for self-growth. It represented a starting point to create a perception of volunteering as a support tool for wellbeing.

## *Conclusions.*

Defining volunteering based on the types of volunteers employed by cultural heritage institutions provides a foundation for future investigation and ideation that revolves around the concept of volunteering for ourselves rather than solely for the benefit of society.

### *Socialization Needs of Older Volunteers.*

The majority of volunteers are older adults, often retired or nearing retirement, who volunteer primarily to fulfill their need for social interaction.

### *Structured Social Interaction in Volunteering.*

Volunteering provides a structured environment for social interaction, where roles such as tour guides or information providers facilitate conversations and connections.

### *Career-Driven Young Volunteers.*

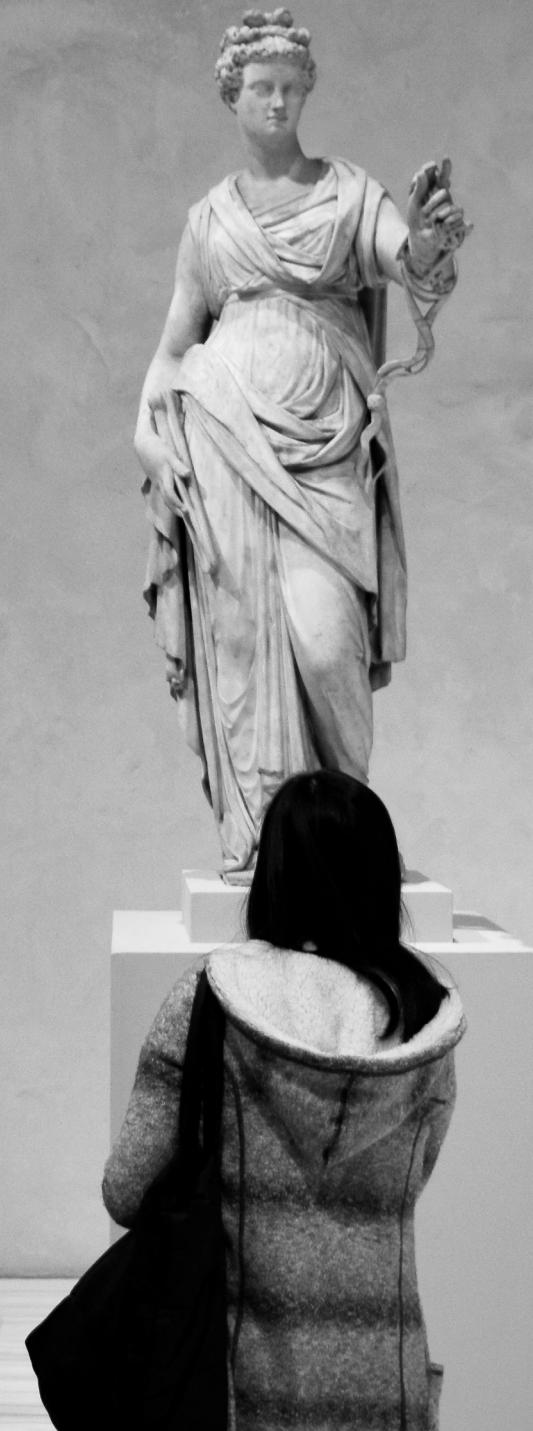
Young volunteers represent a small percentage, typically motivated by career prospects. They tend to leave once they secure employment or their schedules become too demanding.

### *Self-Interest as Motivation for Volunteering*

For young volunteers, the experience can be seen as "self-investment," aimed at gaining skills and knowledge. For older volunteers, it aligns with "serious leisure," focused on socialization. In both cases, the underlying motivation is self-interest rather than altruism, positioning volunteering as a tool for personal well-being.

# Chapter 3. Exploring the space of opportunities

This chapter examines the potential of promoting volunteering for cultural heritage institutions as a means of enhancing well-being. The power of volunteering in enhancing well-being, especially during life transitions, was found a recurring theme during the generative session conducted with the volunteers of the Rotterdam Central Library. For this reason, as stated previously in the Introduction, it was decided to investigate more in this direction. Engaging in volunteering activities can have various positive effects on health and well-being. These include enhanced self-esteem, increased life satisfaction, improved socialization, healthier behaviours, better-coping skills (Casiday et al., 2008), and better mental health (Jenkinson et al., 2013). For this reason, it considers the impact that such volunteering could have on supporting individuals during significant life events, focusing in particular on life transitions. This potentiality arose during the second generative session through the examination of the patterns found in the responses provided by the participants. During the collage-making activity (see Chapter 1), it was interesting to discover that the most used word connected to the motivations of the volunteers was "healing". This was explained by the participants by the fact that they discovered volunteering to be a valuable resource during challenging periods in their lives, which served as a pivotal event (such as experiencing the loss of a loved one, being laid off from employment, or resigning from a job). Volunteering for a cultural institution can be seen not only as something to employ time as a hobby, but it represents a meaningful experience that has a strong impact on the self. As it is claimed by Tierney et al. (2021) volunteering can enhance health and well-being by shaping one's identity and fostering a positive self-perception. This chapter will explore not only all the possible benefits that volunteering can bring but also why cultural heritage institutions could contribute to well-being. The insights will be based on literature review, generative sessions results, and surveys' answers. It will then examine the perception that individuals who are not familiar with volunteering may have towards starting a volunteering journey for a cultural heritage institution. This section sets the theoretical background for introducing the final design direction.



## *Cultural landscapes as a therapeutic place.*

According to Turk et al. (2020), libraries, and museums have been characterized as therapeutic environments. Therapeutic landscapes are settings that provide an environment that promotes healing by combining physical and built surroundings, social conditions, and human perspectives. These landscapes can be categorized as either “natural” or man-made. They can fulfill the human desire for a sense of belonging and serve as places for social interactions and healing experiences (Gesler, 1992). The participants of the study by Turk et al. (2022) reported that libraries and museums were characterized as environments where they belonged and felt accepted. Quoting a participant of the generative session *“Here the people accept me for who I am because I accept the people for who they are. I want to be accepted for who I am and not have to play some kind of role that I don’t like.”*

Another key concept that values libraries and museums as a therapeutic place is learning. Learning is a fundamental component of various activities in libraries, and museums. From various sources in the literature (O’Brien et al., 2011; Brewster 2014), it is widely recognized as having a crucial role in enhancing health and well-being. Individuals developed a feeling of empowerment and self-reliance through the development of information and skills. Education has the ability to enhance cultural awareness and foster a connection with personal values, hence enhancing one’s self-esteem (Krause, 1995). Gaining new abilities or acquiring knowledge is regarded as empowering and facilitates personal and professional growth. The participants indicated words like “curiosity”, “learning”, and “knowledge” all referring to the fact that to guide the exhibition of the Erasmus Project Experience, they had to learn more details about Erasmus from Rotterdam. A participant remarked that the power of knowledge can serve as a means of diversion from life circumstances, quoting her statement *“For someone it’s boring and for others is discovery, it’s like a paradise. And for me, this is how it is, discovering. Not only for the books, I mean those ideas, I feel them”*.

Moreover, referring again to the study by Turk et al. (2022), its participants deliberated on the sense of pride they derived from their affiliation with a prestigious and esteemed organization, namely the association of libraries, and museums from which they were recruited. The feeling of belonging to a place that they estimated before they applied to volunteer for was a recurring pattern analyzed from the second generative session’s results. All the participants were already loyal visitors to the Library and they respected the institution even before starting to work for it. Referring to the words of a participant, *“The first time I’ve been to this library I was in love. I didn’t know much about Erasmus but when the opportunity came I took it. I still have the paid subscription, I want to support the library. It brought me education”*.

The library itself could be described a therapeutic place for three main reasons identified by Brewster (2014): its familiar and inviting environment, its peaceful and tranquil atmosphere, and the sense of empowerment derived from making non-commercial and unpressured choices about reading material.

On the other side, in the study of Todd et al. (2017), it is reported that for individuals who do not frequently visit museums or do not visit them at all, museums can initially appear intimidating or be perceived as exclusive spaces for highly educated individuals. These attitudes present obstacles for everyone, but particularly for socially isolated individuals. This is a challenge that must be confronted, as the potential positive impacts of museums and other cultural heritage organizations on individuals should not be diminished due to a bias resulting from an incorrect perception. This misconception that emerged from the literature review will be later investigated through surveys (see the section *The Perception of Volunteering*).

## *Volunteering for self-growth*

Self-growth, also known as self-actualization, is positioned at the highest level of Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" pyramid (Maslow, 1943) and has been recognized as a primary incentive for participating in volunteer activities (Same et al., 2020). Self-growth can be defined as the aspiration to continuously improve and evolve into a more refined and enhanced version of oneself on a daily basis (Jain, 2015). Volunteering can provide individuals with transformative experiences that go beyond their existing knowledge and circumstances, allowing them to cultivate a fresh feeling of purpose and accomplishment. This, in turn, positively impacts their impression of well-being (Turk et al., 2022).

It is interesting to highlight how the concept of self-growth in volunteering comes from the idea of 'stretch'. The research of Stocks-Rankin et al. (2018) showed that individuals like both stability and the introduction of new challenges and experiences. Stretch can be defined as the equilibrium point between stability and growth, where basic needs are met while still providing opportunities for advancement. Based on this notion, the study of Turk et al. (2022), focuses on how volunteering contributes to the idea of stretch. Volunteering activities frequently use individuals' pre-existing experiences or interests acquired from work or hobbies, while also offering chances to explore fresh topics and acquire new abilities. Volunteers were able to utilize their existing expertise to contribute to the larger community while simultaneously learning something new, therefore improving and evolving themselves. Consequently, this boost in their self-assurance and the perception of their worth was a result of this.

A popular choice among the session participants to place the branches of the provided tree image, which represented the influence volunteering is having on their lives, was self-growth or other related words (e.g., self-discovery, exploration, empowerment). When asked to clarify their selections, the participants also used the other words in brackets to refer to other processes of self-growth. The factors contributing to the personal development experienced by volunteers vary significantly from one individual to another. For instance, a prevalent kind of personal development is engaging with guests. Interacting with the public facilitated their own growth; referring to the words of one participant:

*"Oh with knowledge definitely, but growth also for example as interacting with people better because I have always been a slightly impatient person. But I had to learn to be patient, especially with school groups. So I had to learn patience and that was a form of growth."*

Another participant mentioned *"I can't say that from the first sight I liked the behaviour of the visitors so acceptance is also very important (...) It's also self-discovery, to see how other people reflect you."*

In addition to personal development through social connections, there was also an observed growth in knowledge, particularly in relation to Erasmus from Rotterdam, as previously mentioned. Self-growth is derived from education, and cultural heritage sites serve as educational resources (refer to the previous sub-chapter). Referring to the words of a participant, *"I got a lot of knowledge about Erasmus because, during my journey as a volunteer, I had to learn because a lot of times people ask and I was embarrassed because I didn't know. I also made it up a little bit and of course, during the process, there has been growth."*

## *The benefits of community in volunteering.*

The primary motivations and advantages that led the majority of volunteers to embark on their volunteering adventure were the sense of community, belonging, and the desire for social interaction. According to the interviews, the primary motivation for elder volunteers to engage in volunteering is their need for social contact. During the second generative session, it was recognized by all that this benefit had a substantial and positive impact on the lives of the volunteers. Opportunities for socializing and making new connections were one of the main motivations for taking up volunteering and one of the main contributors to health and wellbeing.

From interviewees of the study by Turk et al. (2022), volunteering was described as a structured method for establishing new contacts. The efficacy of this systematic approach to establishing connections was corroborated by the final interview conducted as part of this study. The interviewee, a volunteer at the Linlithgow Museum in Scotland, confirmed that individuals in that setting felt more at ease initiating conversations and creating connections with strangers due to their status as volunteers and staff members. This dynamic proved to be less awkward than initiating talks with individuals on the streets or in any public social setting.

It was mentioned the possibility of meeting people who weren't in their usual social circle—those who were different from them (for example, in terms of age or cultural background)—through their work with other volunteers, staff, and the general public (Turk et al., 2022). Referring again to the second generative session of the Rotterdam Central Library, one participant quoted "*I knew that I love people, I didn't know that I love them so much! especially the first year I came here on Friday and Saturday because there were visitors from all over the world and I wanted to practice English. From my personal record, the most distant was from Brazil.*" Another participant chose the image of two hands with the world reflected on and she justified her choice in this way: "*This is for me the world, the hands of the world because there are so*

*many different people working here: young, old, every kind of country and it is so interesting*". In this scenario, the volunteers would not have had the opportunity to encounter individuals distant from their social circle if it were not for the contact with their colleagues and the visitors who attended the exhibition. This also contributes to enriching their well-being.

Working alongside other volunteers and members of staff helped to develop a sense of community and belonging through working towards a common goal. Volunteering helps individuals feel part of something bigger than themselves and feel a sense of value through giving back to society (Turk et al., 2022). Referring to the words of volunteers during the generative session: "*I discovered the connection with my colleagues, so that's why there's also the hands for the connection. I discovered friendship and cheerfulness because we have a lot of laughs together*", or "*So the connection with other people is the main reason I like it here, I get a lot of energy out of it. And now it's one year that I'm working here, time flies. And time flies because of the people who are working here, they are so inviting*".

Community and connection are the fundamental ratio that determines the well-being of individuals, especially considering that humans are social animals. For this reason, the need for community could be extended to all sort of ages but especially the elderly, considering that according to the CBS of The Netherlands, one-third of all people over 75 years of age feel 'somewhat lonely', and 1 in 10 of those aged over 75 feel 'extremely lonely'<sup>8</sup>. Then introducing the community in their lives becomes crucial to enhance their well-being. Moreover, belonging is considered an essential aspect of successful aging, since it indicates the extent to which individuals feel connected and integrated into their society (Nolan 2011: 318).

## *Volunteering in Life Transitions.*

The term “life transitions” is broad and has roots in numerous sociological research. The concept is derived from Linton’s (1936) “role theory,” which defines status as a place within the social structure and role as the required behaviors associated with that position. Role allocation pertains to the procedures by which roles are assigned to persons and the associated dynamics of entering and exiting positions (e.g. Biddle 1979, Brim 1966). The connection between role theory and life transitions is simple: role entry and exit are inherently considered transitions (Allen & van de Vliert 1984, George 1980). In addition to the biological process of ageing, persons often undergo many transitions as they move through different stages of life, such as transitioning from being single to being married, or from not having children to being parents (see Nye, 1976). Role adjustments in these circumstances result in alterations to activity patterns, social interaction, and the general quality of life (Thoits 1983, 1992). Rotolo (2000: 1136) defines role as a social position inside a structure and the corresponding behaviours. Individuals commonly assume multiple roles at different stages of their lives, including marriage, parenthood, and retirement. The range of possible life transitions is very broad: from reaching a significant age (18, 30, 50..), moving to another city, changing careers, going to university, losing a dear one, getting laid off, retiring, and many other examples. Some transitions are normatively regulated and, therefore, can be anticipated in terms of both their frequency and time (George, 1993).

Several prior research has also discovered that volunteering offers significant chances for involvement throughout periods of change in one’s life (Rotolo, 2000; Russell et al., 2019). Engaging in volunteer work can provide individuals with a profound feeling of purpose and motivation to engage in novel activities. It facilitated their exploration of previously unknown facets of their identity, through the acquisition of knowledge and the experimentation with new tasks, while fostering a sense of significance as an active part of a team. This allowed volunteers to enhance their self-worth, thus aiding in the development of their own identity. This can be especially crucial during significant life changes such as retirement, job loss or change, and divorce, when confidence may decrease and established daily routines may be disrupted (Turk et al., 2022).

Moreover, according to Smith (2004), there is a correlation between maintaining social roles and well-being. Smith says that participating in volunteer work can assist persons in effectively managing various transitional stages. Also, volunteering provides various opportunities for socialization and according to George (1993), socialization equips individuals with the necessary abilities to proficiently navigate transitions and properly fulfill new responsibilities.

The issue of preserving the well-being of individuals who are facing transitions is also considered by public health policies, especially on how to safeguard individuals with low self-esteem from facing problems, particularly among older adults who may be more vulnerable to psychological stress due to the various social and physical changes that often occur in old age, such as retirement or health issues (Morrow-Howell 2010; Musick and Wilson 2003; Moen 1996). Regarding this, it is commonly believed that older persons are more inclined to take on a “volunteer role” as a replacement for the social responsibilities they had in earlier stages of life, such as being an employee, parent, or spouse (Sherman and Shavit 2012).

It was found during both the generative sessions conducted, that all the volunteers, regardless of their age, began their voluntary work during a period of life transition. Concerning the second generative session, the individuals’ involvement in volunteering commences with significant life changes such as unemployment, bereavement, and resignation from employment. To quote one participant: *“I started volunteering when I became a widow after years and years of marriage. I had no family in Holland and more or less two friends here. So I needed to have a healing of some kind. So to be kind of frank, I started volunteering for a selfish thing, to help myself rather to help others. I wanted to give a sort of contribution to the others because I needed to be needed. I was no longer necessary to anybody because that person was gone and I had no children, no pets, so I needed to be needed again.”*

Or to quote another participant: “I have also healing (as a word) because before I came here I was in the middle of a kind of battle with my boss because of my health, and I couldn’t do my job anymore and he wanted me to stay for another year. And I said nope. So the volunteer association got me here and this is my healing place not only for my hands but for my mind”.

And from another participant: “My roots, as you can see it’s kind of dark. I lost my job after 36 years of working (...) I was really offended and I thought I had it on my forehead that I was laid off (...) then I saw that for me if I was volunteering it was considered an activity. The first time I’ve been to this library I was in love (...) It brought me education, and the empathy that you learn from the people around you to the visitors, and the friendship. For me as well it was healing also.”

On the other hand, also to young volunteers participating in the first generative session happened to start volunteering during a life transition: “I was starting to feel a bit isolated not in the sense of lonely but in the sense of not seeing the purpose in my job anymore, as not as I used to. So this is what led me to look for volunteering positions”. The advantage of engaging in volunteer work during periods of life transitions is driven by the information presented in the preceding paragraphs. The common pattern seen among all participants was their involvement in volunteering throughout life’s transitions, which serves as the basis for a potential project opportunity.

## *The perception of volunteering.*

During the second creative session, the discussion touched on the external perception of volunteering for a cultural association. Volunteers believed that there could be a somewhat unfavorable perception of their efforts. These are some of the quotes that emerged during the conversation:

- “We still have the perception that only if you are working you are a valuable person in society. But I had the same thing. I was like all of these working people are getting money. I’m doing work as well I’m not getting any money”.
- “I also don’t like the perception that people who do volunteer work are wealthy, they don’t need any money. People are like -oh yeah you can afford it-like it was some sort of luxury good.”
- “Then you realize what the effect of volunteering does on your surroundings, are the people looking down on you because you do the volunteering? If you work you have to get paid for that. People are like -oh you are a retired person now, you are going to stop- But I’m like no.”

Given that these assumptions were derived from the participants and also had the potential to directly impact individuals, it was determined that two types of surveys would be employed to assess whether these assumptions were validated or not, using a larger sample size (see Chapter 1 - Surveys). Multiple insights emerged from the surveys. Considering the insights regarding the online survey shared with the TU Delft students, this is what emerged:

- A total of 8 participants out of 18 expressed their interest in engaging in volunteer work. This indicates that the other 10 individuals are either uncertain (4 out of 10) or have a negative view (6 out of 10) on the matter. This gives an opportunity to take action in order to persuade them to reconsider their position.
- Only 4 individuals out of 18 are aware that a large number of tasks are carried out by volunteers. However, there is still a lack of knowledge regarding the significant impact that volunteers have on GLAM institutions.
- Given the question: if you would not choose to volunteer in your free time at a cultural institution, what reasons would most likely influence your decision? Among the multiple choices provided, the most popular answer was “concerns about the time commitment”, which seems reasonable considering the commitment that the university duties require but also confirms the assumption

that volunteering is perceived as a time-consuming effort instead of something that could be managed as any other leisure time activity. On the other hand, another interesting insight coming from this question was provided in the open space where participants could insert their own answers. Two answers quoted: "I believe the time is spent better helping people who need it. E.g. elderly, handicapped, lonely people, etc", "If I dedicate a part of my time to volunteer, I'd prefer to volunteer for other kind of associations (like ongs, or for social/health relevant issues)". This highlights how the hierarchy of the kind of volunteering exists and for this reason, some kinds of volunteering are perceived as more valuable than others. This observation was further validated during the interview with the volunteer at the Linlithgow Museum, who also dedicated his time to volunteering for the ambulance service and the food bank. He expressed that he considered these other forms of volunteering to be more fulfilling compared to his work at the museum.

- Volunteers are often stereotyped as primarily elderly individuals. However, it is worth noting that the stereotype of the volunteers being "less skilled" and less reliable than the paid staff is still prevalent. As a consequence, the perception that volunteering is not as serious as paid employment remains widespread.

Considering the answers coming from the survey spread on-site at the Rotterdam Central Library these are the main insights:

- Also here, only 8 visitors out of 20 are aware that a lot of cultural institutions mostly or only rely on volunteers. This confirms the previous statement regarding the lack of knowledge that is present regarding the volunteer job in the GLAM institutions.
- Only 4 respondents out of 20 expressed a strong inclination to initiate volunteering. This insight builds upon the last one discussed earlier, expanding the number of possible individuals that the initiative can reach.
- To answer the question "in which situations do you think volunteering for a cultural institution could be most appealing to you?" the most popular answers were: "If I find a cause I care about to contribute" and "during time of personal growth and self-discovery". The first answer confirms the previous insight of the willingness to volunteer only to make an impact on society, as was previously stated in the other questionnaire. The second answer remarks on one of the initial assumptions of starting a volunteering journey for "selfish"

reasons, so to improve ourselves.

- Regarding the most common misconceptions that people could have about volunteers, it was interesting to discover that one of the most popular is that volunteering is only suitable for individuals with a certain level of education and socioeconomic status. This confirms one of the findings mentioned in Chapter 3.1. which highlights how many individuals think that cultural institution environments are only suitable for highly educated people. Similarly, the misconception about the fact that "volunteering is not an inclusive activity and certain demographics or groups may feel unwelcome or excluded" was highly popular, confirming the prejudice that cultural heritage environments could be perceived as elitist. Finally, there is still the misconception that "volunteering is only for people who have no other responsibilities, such as family or work obligations", confirming the assumption that emerged during the second generative session about the fact that volunteering is considered an activity only for who doesn't have to work and don't need money from that, as a luxury good.

The surveys served to validate some assumptions identified during the literature research and the generative session, while also uncovering additional factors to be taken into account throughout the design process.

# Conclusions.

These insights highlight the transformative power of volunteering within cultural institutions. The knowledge coming from literature review, interviews and generative sessions serves as a ground base to build the concept.

## Opportunity for creating Impact.

Less than half of respondents expressed interest in volunteering, and even fewer are aware of the presence of volunteers in institutions. This highlights a significant opportunity for the project to make an impactful difference by raising awareness and engagement.

## Personal Growth through Volunteering

Volunteering activities enhance well-being by leveraging individuals' existing skills and interests while offering opportunities to explore new topics and develop new abilities. This growth contributes to personal fulfillment.

## Building Community through Collaborative Efforts

Volunteering alongside others fosters a sense of community and belonging, as volunteers and staff work together toward a common goal. This collaborative spirit is essential for cultivating a supportive environment.

## Enhancing Well-being through Knowledge.

Cultural institutions like museums and libraries offer knowledge and skill-building opportunities that boost well-being by enhancing self-esteem and self-reliance. This valuable aspect should be emphasized in the project.

## Socialization through Structured Engagement

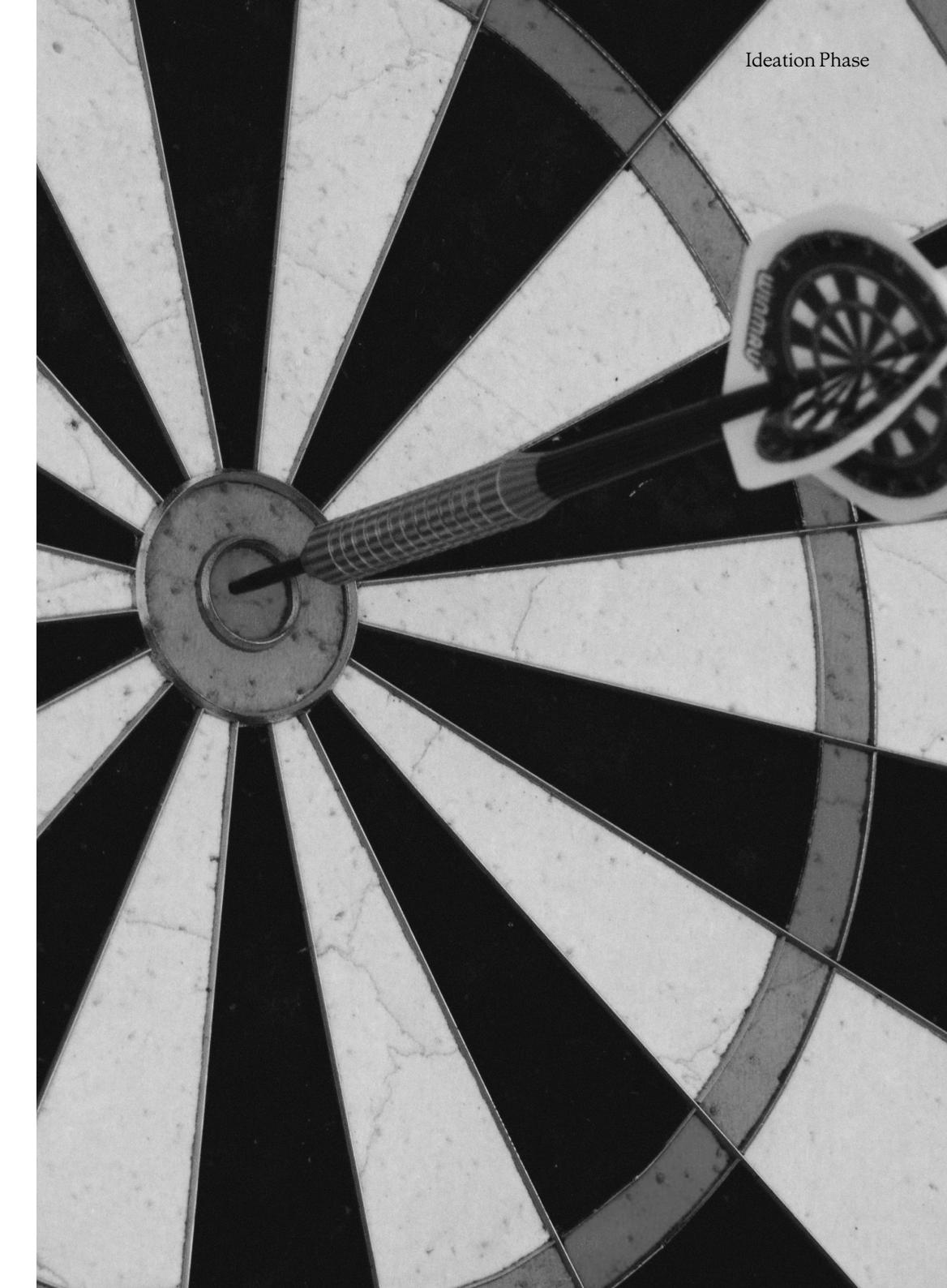
Volunteering offers a structured environment for socialization, enabling individuals to engage in conversations with people they might never have met otherwise, strengthening their social networks.

## Source of Purpose during Life Transitions

During life transitions, volunteering provides a strong sense of purpose and encourages individuals to try new things. It fosters a sense of belonging and boosts self-esteem as individuals contribute as active team members.

# Chapter 4. Design Direction

*This chapter outlines the design direction developed to promote volunteering in GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) institutions as a key tool for emotional support during life transitions. The design focuses on leveraging the unique environment of cultural institutions to enhance well-being by facilitating social connections, fostering community, and providing individuals with a renewed sense of purpose. Building on insights from interviews, literature analysis, and generative sessions, this chapter will detail how the proposed design seeks to make volunteering a universally accessible resource for navigating life changes,*



All the insights previously set out in the previous chapters led to the following design direction:

*I want to design an intervention to promote volunteering for GLAM institutions as an emotional support tool for individuals who are navigating life transitions.*

Volunteering is a valuable means of enhancing well-being since it facilitates social interaction, fosters community building, and provides individuals with a fresh sense of purpose, enabling them to discover new roles or alternative roles in life.

The design solution is targeting all individuals. Through interviews, literature analysis, and two generative sessions, it was shown that life transitions occur in every stage of life, regardless of their predictability. The universal experience of confusion, stress, and discomfort is generally recognized. It is well-established that the presence of a community of support and the sense of being valued by others are useful for individuals seeking to rediscover their sense of self. For this reason, different categories of individuals will be involved in co-creation to target a solution that could be applicable to many.

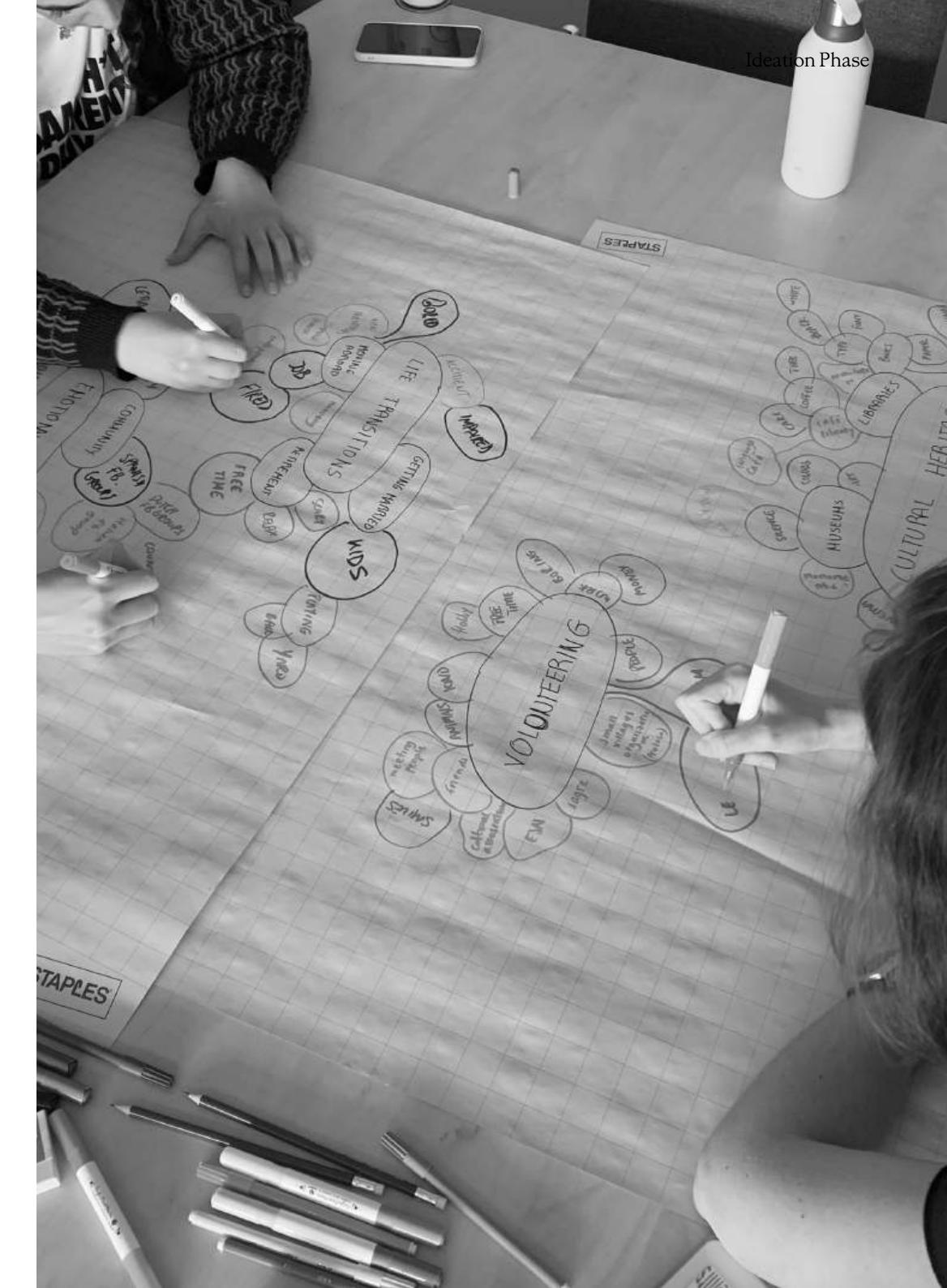
When following the directions given, it is crucial to consider all the prejudices that have already been mentioned. The perception of cultural institutions as exclusive spaces for highly educated individuals must be considered. Cultural heritage institutions, as described in Chapter 3, might have therapeutic benefits for several reasons. Therefore, it is important for these institutions to project an image of being inclusive and welcoming, rather than exclusive or elitist.

Furthermore, the influence will have an effect on both the well-being of individuals and the functioning of organisations. The assistance of volunteers greatly benefits cultural heritage organisations, hence encouraging more individuals to embark on a volunteer adventure would be advantageous for all parties concerned. Simultaneously, given the limited number of volunteers

in their 20s/30s currently involved in these institutions, it would be beneficial to alter their perspective, which is currently focused solely on embarking on a volunteer journey for career-related reasons, and instead introduce the concept of volunteering for cultural institutions as a means to navigate life transitions, such as relocating to a different city.

# Chapter 5. Co-Creation sessions with users.

This chapter delineates the first part of the process that resulted in the development of the ultimate concept. The outcomes and insights that emerged from the two co-creation sessions will be presented and it will be discussed how these insights contributed to the ideation phase of the project.



## *Co-creation sessions results.*

Both sessions presented results that helped to define the final direction of the project. The results presented don't concern only the solutions ideated during the sessions but also the thoughts and insights that emerged during the conversations during the workshop. The methodology in which the sessions were conducted is presented in Chapter 1. Then the session was analyzed by examining the physical outcomes generated and how they related to the behaviors and opinions of the participants during the session. The results come from a qualitative analysis of the notes taken during the session.

### *Main insights from the Pilot session.*

- Some words in the given opening statement have to be modified because the audience misinterpreted them. This revealed that if the issue is not clearly stated for the audience, it will not be interpreted as intended and the solutions may be applied to something unrelated to the ultimate scope. "How can we make volunteering in museums/libraries appealing as a support during life changes?" replaced "How can we promote volunteering for GLAM institutions as an emotional support tool for navigating life transitions?" First of all, "make volunteering appealing" was the replacement term for "promoting," which was seen as a means of profiting from users' volunteering. A factor that needed to improve in the final solution to include younger people as well was the shift in perception of volunteering from something seen as only targeting the elderly to something "cool," according to a participant. Furthermore, it was discovered that calling it "life changes" was a more direct term to grasp than "life transitions." Because "transition" is better suitable for academic research, it will only be used there; in the final design, the word "changes" will be used.
- The second insight that came up during the session supported the conclusion that volunteers are not seen inside the institutions. One participant said, "Well, I didn't know anything about what volunteers are doing" and another said, "Like if I go to the Rijksmuseum, I'm expecting people to get paid there." This second comment was largely meant to express their amazement that some of the persons they had observed working there were genuinely volunteers, rather than to be taken negatively about the potential exploitation of the volunteers. This insight contributed to emphasize in the final solution the volunteers' visibility.

○ The participants identified the major impact that volunteering can bring to well-being in the power of the community. Most of the how-tos generated related to how volunteering can be an experience of bonding for individuals and how it can connect different people, as well as how the concept of community could become a support for individuals. The human connection as a tool of support in life transitions was also integrated into one of the final solutions presented at the end of the session. The concept of community came out during the brainstorming phase several times, suggesting promotion by buddy activities, coffee talks, and being paired by similar stories to help to get through life changes. For this reason, the aspect of human connection was decided to be implemented in the later phase of ideation.

○ Two other clusters of ideas were identified during the analysis of the session. One cluster comprehended all the ideas that were about giving a reward to everyone who would have started to volunteer. These ideas were too out of the scope of promoting this perception of volunteering for an individual's own emotional well-being since all the rewards were physical rewards. Regarding the other cluster, it was mainly focusing on the self-growth opportunities that volunteering could offer and this aspect was implemented in the later phase of ideation.



Figure 7: A picture from the solution-making phase of the pilot session

## Main Insights from the Co-Creation session.

- The primary insight that complemented the previous session is that the most effective method of communicating the benefits of volunteering on well-being during life transitions is through the direct experience of the volunteers. In comparison to the initial session, during which the facilitator was required to elucidate the benefits of volunteering during life transitions due to the absence of volunteers, the non-volunteers were significantly less convinced than they were during the second main session, during which the volunteers themselves presented the same themes. This facilitated the pursuit of a method to directly engage the volunteers in the final concept.
- As the previous co-creation session revealed, the participants are not perceived by the visitors in the institutions. Additionally, the volunteers expressed their desire to be prominently featured within the institution and to be recognised by the audience.
- It was discovered that a session participant had a misunderstanding of the project's scope, which was to promote volunteers as an emotional tool to navigate life transitions. She was opposed to this idea, stating, "I'm not miserable," which meant that she did not believe she needed to begin volunteering because she was not experiencing a particularly difficult life situation. Consequently, she did not believe she would require it.
- The participant failed to recognise that life transitions are not always dramatic; rather, they may induce emotional turmoil that can be alleviated through volunteer work. However, this provided a valuable perspective on the significance of tone of voice. Although providing emotional support is the primary objective, it's crucial to speak positively and avoid making volunteering seem burdensome.
- It was determined that fliers and posters are not well-received by the general public. This would be an incorrect method of communicating the message, as there is an abundance of posters advertising any type of activity. All participants indicated that they would be interested in learning more about the topic only if it was presented in a manner that would captivate their attention.



Figure 8: The solution-making phase of the session



Figure 9: The solution-making phase of the session

## *Conclusions and main takeaways for the ideation phase.*

The co-design phase of the project was essential for the advancement of the concept. Interacting with users was crucial for gaining insight into their perception of the chosen design direction. It was helpful to understand the demands of the user on the subject as well as to sort of assess the concept before ideating it, since through confrontation it was already feasible to determine whether the audience thought this project's decision to encourage volunteering for life transitions was promising. Confirmation was obtained on two key aspects: firstly, the majority of users found the perspective of viewing volunteering as something they could do for their own benefit to be innovative and surprising; secondly, they positively welcomed the idea of considering this direction for their future lives.

The main takeaways that were used as starting points for the ideation phase are the following:

## *The Power of Volunteer Testimonies.*

Nothing is more powerful than the actual testimonies of volunteers to support the notion of volunteering for mental health, nor is it more influential than their voices when they narrate these tales and select the language to convey them. It is essential to include the volunteers themselves in the concept, as research has shown that they are the most effective technique for disseminating knowledge on the topic in an appropriate manner.

## *Highlighting Volunteers for Engagement.*

It is important for the audience to see that there are volunteers working at the institution in order to inform guests about the opportunity to volunteer there.

## *Innovative Volunteer Promotion*

The promotion needs to stand out in a way that is different from the typical paper-based way of spreading the voice.

## *Emotional Connection in Volunteering*

The value of human connection and creating emotional connections with the audience is fundamental to include in the final solution considering the goal of lighting the emotional turmoil of individuals who are facing life transitions.

## *Cheerful Tone for Youth Appeal*

The tone of voice for the final concept should be cheerful, positive, and appealing, and it should also be suited for a younger audience.

# Chapter 6. Ideation phase and concept iteration.

Considering the main insights generated from the co-creation sessions previously presented, the ideation phase had the goal of exploring various possibilities that could provide an answer to the design goal by including these takeaways. This phase included two iterations of concept development, during which storyboard and low-fidelity versions of the concept prototype were created and tested with four participants. The first iteration involved evaluating the pros and cons of four different concepts, while the second iteration focused on refining and testing a single, more cohesive concept.



## *Methodology: what to keep in mind when designing an intervention.*

To ideate the design solution it was decided to first define the design challenges that emerged from the insights collected during the co-creation sessions to further define three layers of intervention to tackle.

The three challenges were the following:

**Invisibility of the volunteering opportunities**: as previously stated, many people are unaware of the possibility of volunteering at cultural heritage institutions. So, the concept tries to answer the question of how can we make it stand out and bring popularity to this type of volunteering as other kinds of already popular volunteering (e.g. community services, environmental volunteering, health and social care volunteering..).

**Lack of awareness of the possibilities**: Volunteering is often viewed, particularly by younger individuals, as an activity suited only for the elderly or as boring, unpaid labor. So, after creating awareness of the possibility of volunteering for cultural heritage institutions, it is needed to create awareness about the diversity and the engagement of activities that these institutions provide for the volunteers, which often do not only consist of scanning tickets at the entrance.

**Lack of recognition of Personal Benefits**: Volunteering is typically seen only as a way to help others rather than a beneficial activity for the volunteers themselves. The challenge stands then in finding a way to increase awareness on how the diversity of activity provided and the environment itself can impact the emotional well-being of individuals, especially during life transitions.

In order to address these challenges, the design intervention functions at three distinct levels, represented by a pyramid (See Figure 10). This approach is intended to address the challenges in a systematic manner, starting with the most fundamental and progressing towards the more specialised. For example, the

first step is to ensure that volunteering is visible before attempting to alter public perception of it. These are the three challenges:

**Increasing Visibility**: Raising awareness about the opportunities for volunteering within cultural heritage institutions.

**Breaking Down Stereotypes**: Challenging existing misconceptions about who volunteers and what volunteering entails.

**Changing Perceptions**: Highlighting the personal benefits of volunteering, particularly as a tool for emotional support during life transitions.

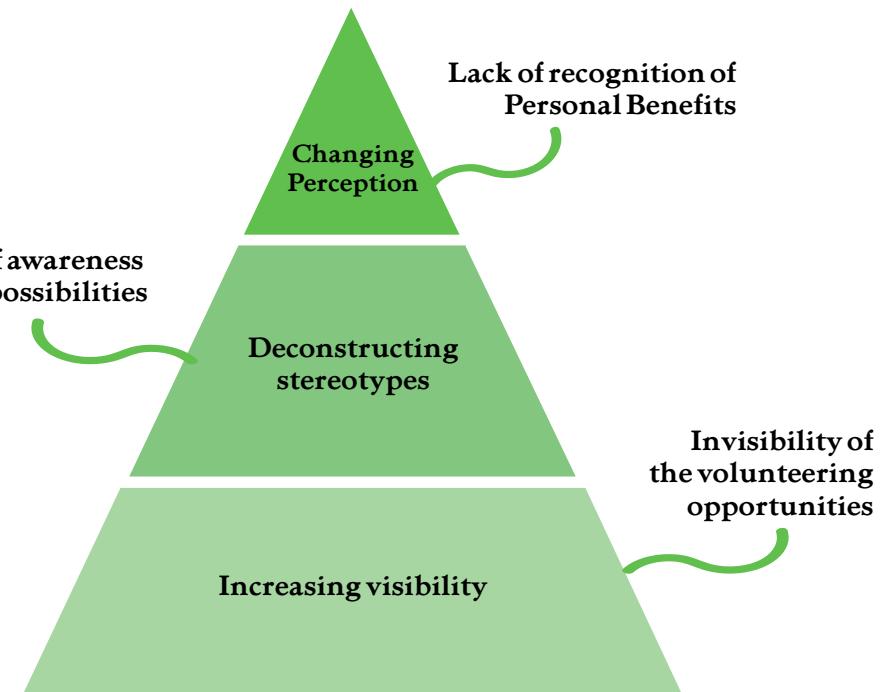


Figure 10: Scheme of the three challenges correlated to their three levels of intervention

## First iteration.

Following the initial phase of brainstorming, four concepts were generated. The number of concepts is a balance between selecting only the most intriguing ideas generated during brainstorming and having a substantial range of alternatives to examine. Storyboards of the concepts were shown to the participants and then a few questions were asked (See Appendix F for the questions).

**The first concept:** it combined a social media campaign with a website to promote a joint initiative of all the cultural institutions of a city, in this case, Rotterdam. The website featured several key elements, including a map displaying institutions participating in the initiative, dedicated pages for each institution detailing their characteristics and volunteer opportunities, and a digital exhibition showcasing volunteers' artworks that express how volunteering impacted their life transitions. Additionally, there was an option for users to contact the volunteers. The social media campaign had its own Instagram profile sharing videos of volunteers discussing the positive effects of volunteering on their life changes. The initiative has the goal to promote the message that everyone is going through the same type of life transition, but everyone has their own needs to cope with that and needs to choose the institution accordingly. The concept aims to disseminate knowledge about how volunteering can enhance personal well-being via digital means, with the goal of reaching a large number of individuals with minimal practical effort from institutions (See figure 11).

The **feedback** for this concept highlighted several points:

- Social media effectively spreads the message to a broad audience, but might not reach older demographics, who constitute a significant portion of volunteers.
- Instagram's crowded advertisement space necessitates engaging and attention-grabbing content, possibly promoted by the institutions themselves. Moreover, the profile must be appealing and interesting, with light and ironic content to engage users.
- The digital exhibition concept was fun but deemed unnecessary; a physical component was suggested for better impact because users would feel tired of clicking to move around the exhibition and lose interest.

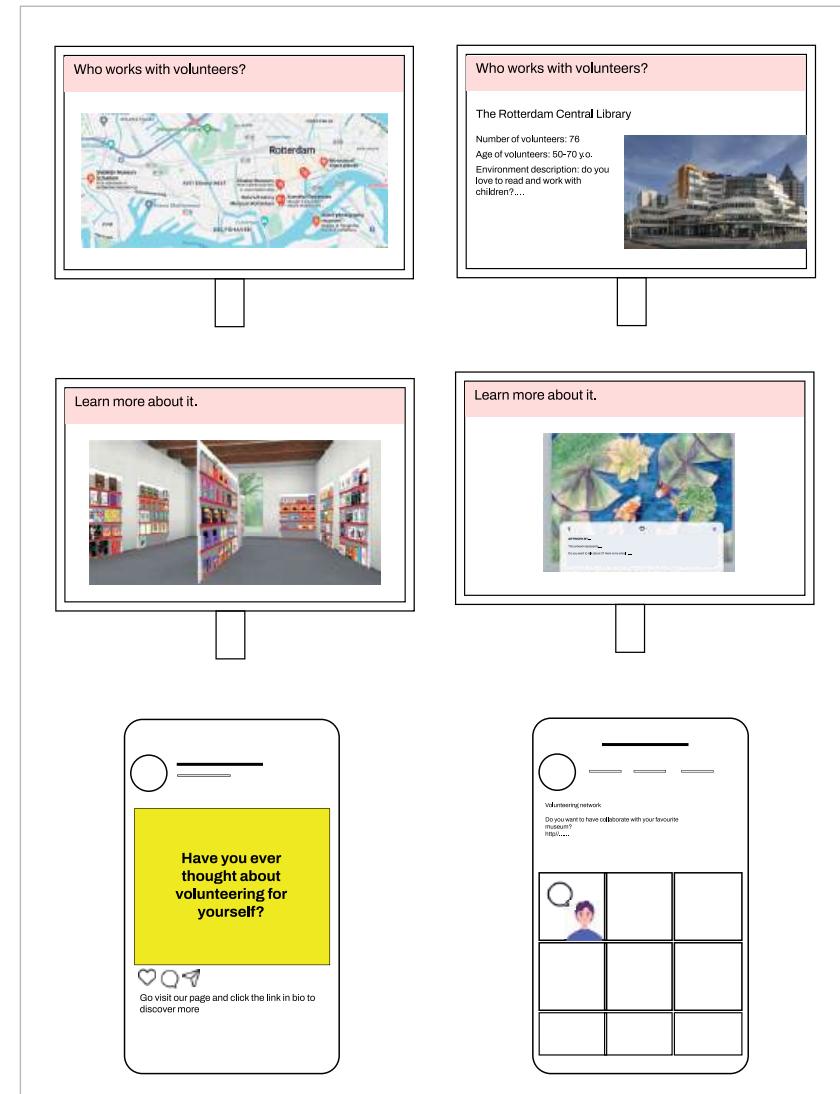


Figure 11: Lo-fi representation of the concept showed to the participants.

The second concept: it involved a booth with digital interaction. The booth had a box shape with external prompts like "How is your life going?" Inside, users are asked about how is their life going and to pick a type of life transition that may have happened recently to them. Once they chose their life transition they would get assigned a puzzle piece representing them. Then they will be paired with another puzzle piece, representing a volunteer with a similar experience. Then a video would show a story from that volunteer explaining how volunteering has impacted on their lives in that specific life transition and their contact information. The booth would display the initiative's symbol, also worn by volunteers to get recognized inside the institution. In this instance, the objective is to inform people about the advantages of volunteering during periods of life change by establishing a profound emotional effect through human connections. The objective was to determine whether a physical solution might elicit a more robust response compared to an information-based digital solution, and if it was perceived as more persuasive (See figure 12).

The feedback for this concept highlighted several points:

- Personal connections created a powerful emotional impact but might deter some users. In fact, some participants reported that would feel uncomfortable to be paired with a stranger and feel forced to contact that person.
- The interaction is easy and it's not overwhelming. On the other side, the outside call to action of "How is your life going?" promises an experience that does not match what you have inside, so it was suggested to either make the outside more explicative about the content or make the experience on the inside more engaging and more active.
- While the booth's shape ensured privacy, it could also cause discomfort. A participant reported that entering something closed as a box would cause her anxiety.
- The volunteers' privacy is not protected and they may feel uncomfortable sharing their identity with strangers while talking about sensitive personal facts.
- The design and tone of the interaction needed to be more inviting and positive. Participants reported that they would be discouraged from starting their journey as volunteers if it was presented only as a remedy for difficult life moments because it would show only a negative and heavy connotation.

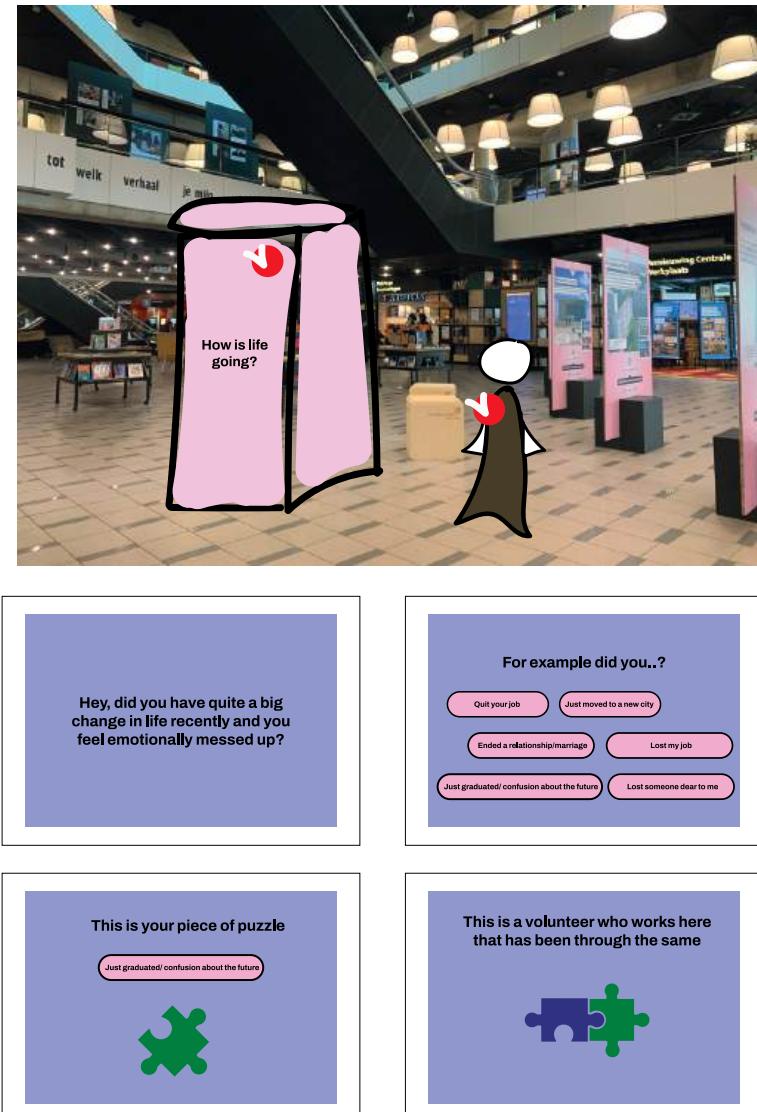


Figure 12: Lo-fi rappresentation of the concept showed to the participants.

*The third concept:* it involved the integration of the first and second concepts by installing a digital totem in institutions. This totem would display a map of institutions that collaborate in the joint initiative to locate volunteer opportunities. Additionally, the totem would display the initiative's symbol, which would be worn by volunteers. In this scenario, the call to action would be more straightforward, with the prompt: "Have you ever considered volunteering for yourself?". This direct call to action attempted to determine whether individuals would actually pause in front of an installation that explicitly prompts them to think about volunteering, or if their misconceptions would be more influential and lower the number of people visiting the totem (See figure 13).

The *feedback* for this concept highlighted several points:

- Visitors will not pause in front of a map if the general layout and appearance are not engaging and entertaining.
- The amount of information that is presented must be reduced to prevent individuals from feeling inundated. Prolonged periods of time spent in front of a screen may induce anxiety.
- Visitors indicated that they would likely be deterred from stopping because they may not be inclined to further explore the volunteering topic, as they would already disregard the possibility of joining.
- Visitors may abandon the site after clicking for a brief period.
- The symbol that identifies the volunteers is greatly valued in both this instance and the second concept.

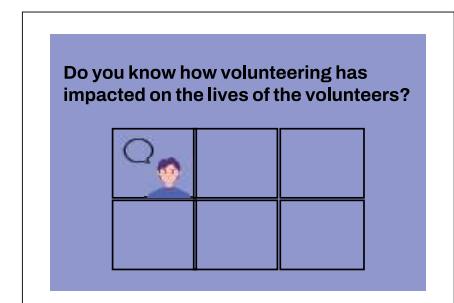
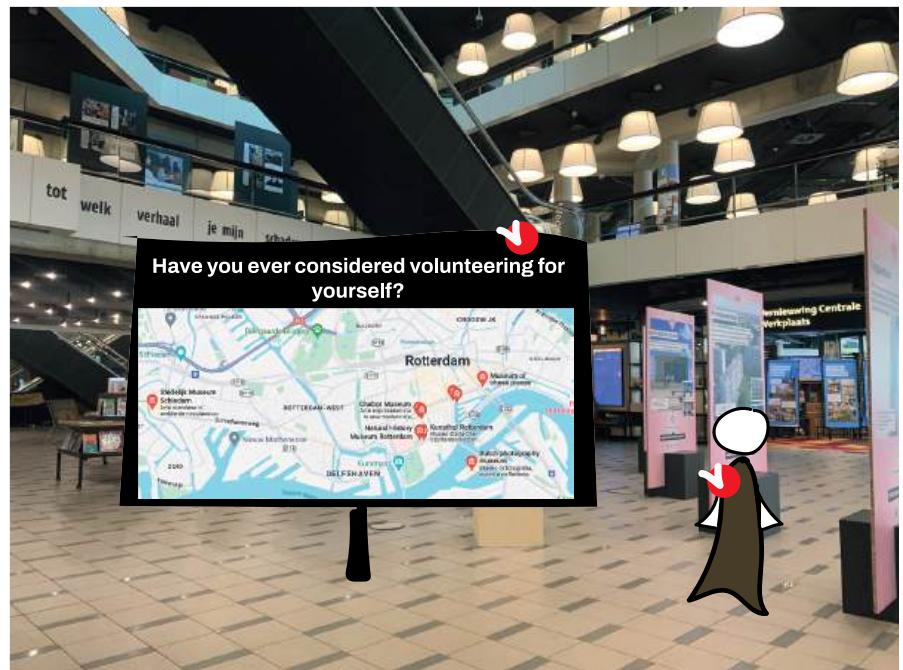


Figure 13: Lo-fi representation of the concept showed to the participants.

*The fourth concept:* it involved a small physical exhibition of volunteers' artworks. Each artwork is meant to communicate how volunteering impacted the life transition of the volunteer. Each artwork is accompanied by the volunteer's name and a QR code linking to volunteer application information. This concept aims to highlight the visibility of the volunteers in the institution by displaying something created by them. The primary objective in this context is to establish a link between the volunteers and the visitors, while also enhancing their visibility inside the institution. This aims to build awareness among the audience about the potential for volunteering. Additionally, it is advantageous for fostering a sense of recognition among the volunteers within the organisation (See image 14).

The *feedback* for this concept highlighted several points:

- Artworks fostered a strong personal connection between visitors and volunteers.
- Visitors might not spend much time at the exhibition, making it less effective for initiating a volunteer journey, but it provided high recognition for volunteers.



Figure 14: Lo-fi representation of the concept showed to the participants.

## *Second iteration.*

Based on the previous feedback, a novel concept was developed that integrated the most promising elements of the initial iteration. Key aspects retained include the concept of a joint initiative of multiple institutions, which participants highly valued for its ability to offer environments suited to different personalities.

The website was maintained as it provided a convenient way to collect and disseminate information about the initiative. Concerning the social campaign, it was acknowledged that it is the most efficient method for reaching a significant number of individuals, despite the fact that many users may not delve deeper into learning more about it. On the other hand, interacting with a physical installation could have a greater impact and be more persuasive, but the target audience reached would be more limited. For this reason, it was decided to keep both aspects in the novel concept.

The booth installation, while engaging, required a complete redesign to create a more welcoming space, enhance interaction, and protect volunteer privacy. Finally, the decision to allow volunteers to wear the initiative's logo was retained to ensure they were easily recognizable. This revised concept aims to build on the positive aspects of the initial iteration while addressing areas for improvement.

The concept that was tested involving the presentation of a joint initiative that included the GLAM institution of a specific city or country, in this instance, Rotterdam, as the Rotterdam Central Library was the setting used for the concept creation. Consequently, the participants were informed of the initiative's ability to offer users the opportunity to select the institution that is most compatible with their personality and needs. Subsequently, they were presented with an illustration of the booth and instructed to envision themselves entering and starting their interaction with the screen. The interaction was entirely redesigned from the previous iteration. In order to enhance the privacy of the volunteers, it was determined to employ soap bubbles as a metaphor (see Chapter 7 for an explanation of the soap bubbles metaphor). The decision was also made to convey the human connection without designating a specific match to each individual, as this was frequently perceived as too straightforward and intimidating. The interaction

for the user test was analog rather than digital. The users were presented with cardboard bubbles to drag on a black background (See Figure 15). Whenever they touched the bubbles, the users could hear the voices of the volunteers discussing the effect of volunteering on their lives. The transcript of the primary generative session was used to extract the narratives of the volunteers, which were then recorded using AI voices. The user would be presented with additional bubbles that depict the activities offered by the institution after the interaction with the bubbles. Lastly, the visitor may choose to go talk to the volunteers—who could be identified by the emblem they wear—or scan a QR code to explore the website for further details. Then, the website was presented to the participants for browsing. They were required to navigate the map, select The Rotterdam Central Library as an institution, and inquire about the activities it offers. A prototype of the website was developed using Figma (See Appendix F for the questions and See Appendix X for the link to the prototype).



Figure 15: A participant during the user test. The participant is interacting with a wall display of cardboard bubbles. The display includes cards with text like 'HAVE YOU EVER... VOLUNTEERED OUT OF 100% BUBBLE?' and a QR code. The participant is holding a bubble and seems to be placing it on the wall.

### Main Insights from the second iteration:

- Booth Design: The booth's bubble shape and textile material were well-received for being aesthetically pleasing and inviting. However, the call to action "do something for yourself" was deemed misleading in relation to the interaction's content.
- Bubble Interaction: While engaging and playful, the interaction faced issues with too many bubbles appearing simultaneously, distracting users from the volunteers' stories. Additionally, starting the interaction with bubbles made it difficult for users to connect with the real people behind them, leading to insufficient identification.
- Volunteers' Stories: The brief duration of the volunteers' stories was appreciated, as it helped maintain user focus.
- Website: The website was appreciated for its practicality, engaging design, and smooth navigation, effectively serving as a tool for information collection and fulfilling its intended purpose.

## *Conclusions and main takeaways.*

The ultimate concept's design is established by the iterations. Considering that the first two concepts had both strong pros and cons to take into consideration, it was decided to articulate a solution that could combine them even though the nature of one concept was very different from the other and vice versa, resulting in a complex combination. It must be considered also that the starting point challenge was very complex as well because it addresses three different challenges that require a system of different components to be addressed in the most effective way.

## *Engaging Design in physical installation.*

It was determined that the final version would be more effective for the interaction within the installation, as it was the most difficult to design but also the most engaging and captivating for the users.

## *Personalized Experience for Lasting Impact*

Each individual has their own unique approach to coping with events, which is influenced by their personality. Therefore, it was determined that providing individuals with the option to select was more effective in attracting individuals who are more likely to remain in the institution for an extended period of time, as they may be more conducive to the environment.

## *Connecting Participants with Volunteers*

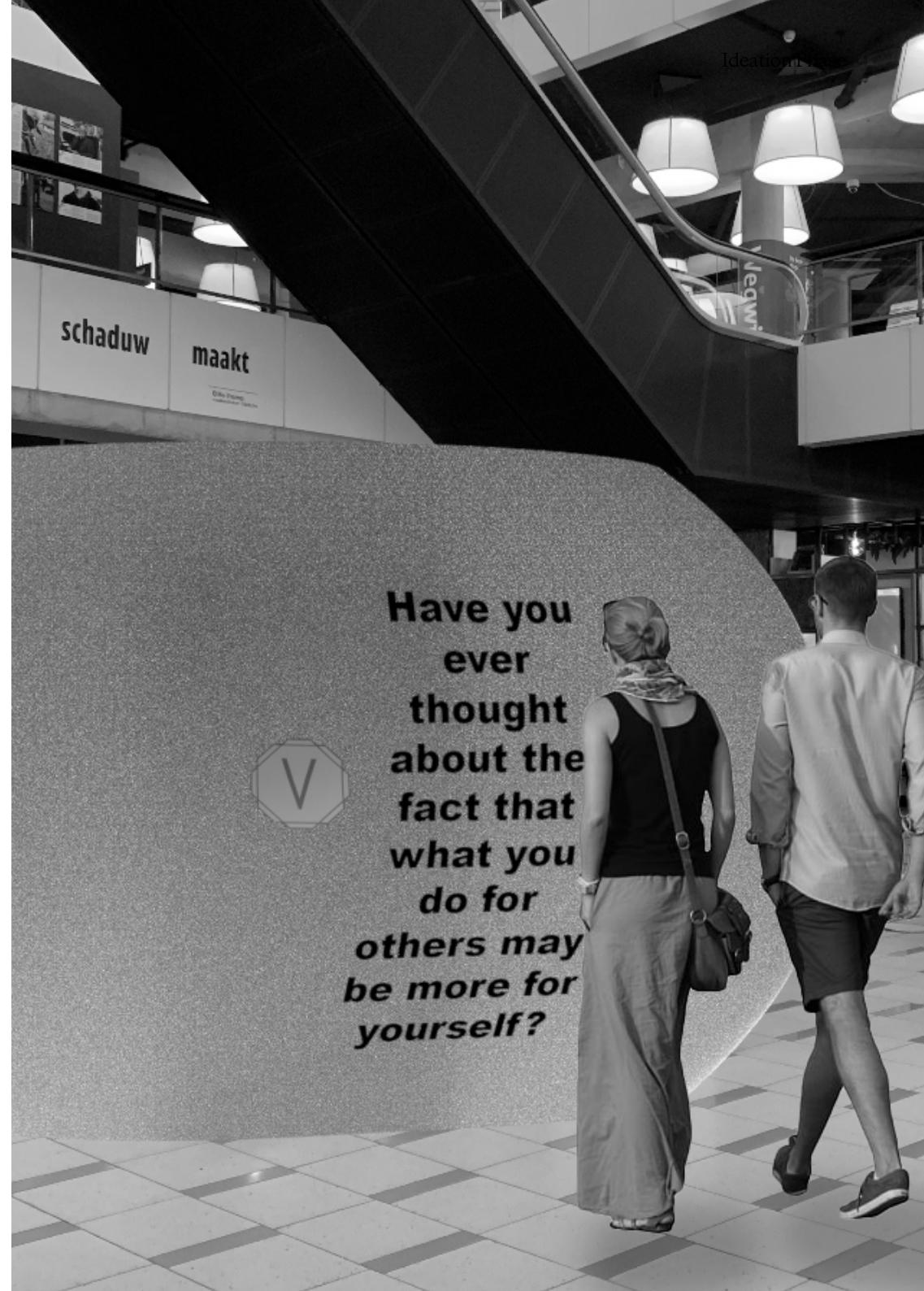
The primary objective to include in the final concept is to establish a connection between the participant and the volunteers, particularly by providing the opportunity to identify them within the environment and engage in conversation.

# Chapter 7. Final concepts

This chapter introduces a comprehensive design intervention to tackle the design direction previously mentioned, namely to promote volunteering for GLAM institutions as an emotional support tool for individuals who are navigating life transitions.

The ideation of the concept comes from the results obtained from the two co-creative sessions and the two concept iterations presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

The final solution is multifaceted, and since it incorporates multiple components that need each other to create the desired effect, it can be defined as a holistic intervention. The whole concept consists of an initiative that revolves around three main touchpoints: a website, a social campaign, and a physical installation. All the aspects of the concept will be detailed in this chapter.



## *The initiative: collaboration among institutions to offer the most suitable environment for everyone.*

The concept pivots around the creation of a joint initiative that uses the collaboration between institutions as a beneficial situation for both the users and the institutions.

The joint initiative brings together all the GLAM institutions within a city or country, leveraging their collective resources to create a unified campaign. This initiative is built on the understanding that while everyone experiences life transitions, the type of support needed can vary based on individual personality and circumstances. For this reason, the offers and the environment of one institution could be more suitable for someone rather than for someone else. Therefore, a joint campaign can provide the possibility to increase awareness of the opportunity of volunteering for a cultural heritage institution, so facilitating the procedure for the user who does not have to search for every institution but can locate all the required information in one place.

Since most of the research done for this graduation project saw the cooperation of the Rotterdam Central Library, the example of a collaborative campaign is specifically suited for the city of Rotterdam; yet, however, the principles offered might be adapted to other cities or even a whole country.

Given what presently exists, certain platforms in The Netherlands highlight all the current volunteer possibilities like for example UVV<sup>10</sup> or NLvoorelkaar<sup>9</sup>. On the other hand, none of these platforms is exclusively designed for volunteering at GLAM institutions; however, it is necessary to filter all available options in order to identify opportunities in this field. In the United Kingdom, there are some platforms that encourage volunteering for cultural heritage institutions (like Cultural Connections Volunteering<sup>11</sup>), sometimes linked to a single city (e.g. Volunteering Culture MCR<sup>12</sup> connected to the city of Manchester), but in both cases, none of these platforms presents a focus on how volunteering for cultural

heritage institutions can be beneficial for the people who decide to volunteer, especially during periods of life transition. For this reason, the joint initiative represents an opportunity for the GLAM institutions, that can benefit from the mutual collaboration.

At the same time, it is beneficial for individuals who are not aware of this opportunity that would impact beneficially on their lives. The initiative should be promoted and presented either by the municipality of the city, in case it will be adapted to one particular city, or by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (the Netherlands) or the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (UK) in case it will involve the whole country. The initiative's increased impact and the flexibility of the user offer make it highly recommended that the entire country be involved, rather than a single city. In reality, it is imperative to consider the possibility that an individual may become aware of the initiative at one institution while living in a different city. Therefore, it would be advantageous for the initiative to encompass a greater number of locations in order to prevent obstacles such as this.

The initiative presents three touchpoints: a website, a social media campaign, and a physical installation positioned inside the institutions. All the touchpoints have the common goal of spreading awareness about the initiative but in different ways. In the following, the main features of each type of touchpoint will be described and the relevant design guidelines will be presented. The touchpoint that will be presented more in detail will be the physical installation. In fact, the other touchpoints are relevant to present and convey the message but the physical installation has the main goal of grabbing the attention of the user and convincing them to discover more after the interaction with the installation. As it emerged also during the iteration, the physical part of the concept is the most remarkable one in the concept, the one that involved the users the most and convinced them about the power of volunteering for themselves.

## *The touchpoints of the initiative: how to get to know about it.*

In the following sections, the main features of each type of touchpoint will be described, and the relevant design guidelines will be presented. The touchpoint that will be detailed more extensively is the physical installation. While the other touchpoints, such as the website and social media campaign, are crucial for presenting and conveying the message, the physical installation plays a unique and pivotal role in the overall concept.

The physical installation is designed to provide an immersive and engaging experience for users. Unlike digital touchpoints, which can be accessed remotely and passively, the installation requires active participation. This direct interaction proved to be crucial for grabbing the attention of the user and making a memorable impact during the iterations' testing. The physical installation allows for a tangible and multisensory experience that can evoke stronger emotional responses. It offers a unique opportunity to create a space where users can physically interact with the concept, fostering a deeper understanding and connection to the message. This type of experiential design is essential for creating lasting impressions and motivating users to take further action.

As it emerged during the iteration phase, the physical part of the concept is the most remarkable and impactful element. It is the feature that most effectively involved users and convinced them of the power of volunteering for personal well-being. By focusing on this aspect, the design can leverage its unique selling point to maximize its influence and effectiveness. In conclusion, the physical installation is the focal point of this design intervention due to its unique ability to engage, immerse, and impact users.

Developing a high-quality website and managing a successful social media campaign requires web developers, content creators, and digital marketers who can create effective and engaging digital platforms. By leaving the development of the website and the management of the social media campaign to specialized suppliers, the project can leverage its expertise and resources to achieve a high-

quality, impactful digital presence. This strategy, which relies on specialized suppliers, can only be implemented if it receives strong support from government funding. It is advisable to propose to institutions that solely rely on their own funds to incorporate content related to the benefits of volunteering for personal well-being during life transitions, as well as the opportunities it presents. As

was quoted by one participant during the first iteration: "*I would consider starting volunteering if I would see something like that posted by one of my favorite museums*".

## *The metaphor.*

The whole project uses the metaphor of the soap bubbles to give a stronger identity to the initiative and to create empathy with the users, sparking their curiosity and becoming more remarkable than just having a textual explanation of the benefits. The inspiration for using the soap bubble as a fil rouge for the concept came out from a sentence of a participant during the second co-creation session who affirmed "*it would be good for me [volunteering] because I realized that I'm always in my bubble, I should go out of my bubble*". So it was found that each soap bubble could be a representation of an individual's life, including their daily routines, experiences, and friends. Similar to soap bubbles, human beings are also beautiful yet fragile.

In our daily lives, we frequently find ourselves enclosed in our own bubbles, surrounded by familiar faces and rituals. Nevertheless, true magic occurs when these bubbles intersect. A bubble can merge only with another bubble, representing the enriching experience of connecting with someone who is going through something similar and also navigating a life transition. This union symbolizes the enhancement and refinement of our personal lives by means of mutual support and shared experiences. The goal of the initiative is to encourage individuals to expand and fortify their own bubbles by joining with others. In fact, as stated in the previous chapter, multiple ideas revolved around the concept of mutual support and human connection, so it was decided to keep this aspect in the final solution.

# The website.

The website has the goal to inform the user about the benefits previously stated regarding volunteering for yourself. It also shows all the institutions that decided to collaborate on the project. It presents a map that displays the institutions that you can filter based on what kind of GLAM institution you would like to work for (archives, museums, libraries, or galleries). Each institution presents a description of the offered activities and the possibility to directly apply from the website to start volunteering for it. The users have the possibility to browse all the opportunities by being comfortable at home, to see to which environment they belong the most, and choose accordingly. The distinguishing feature of this website, compared to other existing platforms that showcase volunteering opportunities, is its focus on highlighting the personal benefits that these opportunities can bring. Rather than solely describing the projects offered, the website emphasizes how these opportunities can positively impact your overall well-being. One part of the website is dedicated to discussing the importance of well-being throughout significant life changes. This area presents the research findings in a direct and positive tone of voice (See Images 16,17).

The website acts on the level of breaking down stereotypes associated with the volunteering experience and providing information. It aims to dispel misconceptions about volunteering, such as how time-consuming it is, how dull it could be, who the people are who volunteer, and so on, by thoroughly outlining the options it gives and depicting the setting. The only way to dismantle stereotypes is to provide information about subjects that are typically lacking in clarity and explanation.

**Joint volunteers for culture**

"Joint volunteers for culture" is joint initiative that reunites all the cultural heritage institutions of Rotterdam: museums, galleries, libraries and archives. The initiative promotes the benefits that volunteering for these institutions can have on all individuals, no matter in which period of their life they are and what they need at the moment.

By exploring all the opportunities, you can find the one that fits you best! Discover the way that you can use to enrich yourself or get support if you need it.

Explore the map and click on the institutions that you like the most to discover their offer.

**why volunteering for cultural institutions**

**therapeutic landscapes**

**tool for self-growth**

Figure 16: Home page of the website

**Joint volunteers for culture**

**How creating a community may impact on your life**

Do you feel like you are always hanging out with the same people? Or would you like to enlarge your circle of friends?

If you feel like that you are in a period of your life in which you need the support of a strong network of people, then you should join volunteering for cultural institutions. Here you will find interesting people that share the same interests as you and that probably are there for the same reason.

Volunteering offers you a structure for socialization. What do we mean with that? It means that you have the chance to talk to many people and establish connections because we are offering you situations for that. Imagine that you would really like talking to that person because they look interesting to you but you are not feeling comfortable to start a conversation with a stranger. Then imagine that you have a common friend who introduces you to that person. This is how volunteering feels like for creating new connections.

Figure 17: Section of the website that presents benefits of volunteering on well-being

A few guidelines will be presented to create a website that could be more engaging and convincing.

○ The communication should be engaging and positive in tone. It is ineffective to promote volunteering as a solution to the temporary emotional instability of the targeted individuals, regardless of the severity of their condition. The initiative would be more enthusiastically received if the benefits of volunteering were indirectly presented as a means of enriching their lives during these periods of transition, while also ensuring that the users do not feel "miserable," as one participant in the co-creation session expressed it. The primary idea is to communicate that they are not experiencing a problem; rather, they are simply living a life that is universally experienced. However, volunteering can enhance their quality of life. Consequently, the focus is on establishing a positive intervention rather than resolving a problem.

○ The website's graphics should be aesthetically appealing, engaging, and modern. It is strongly advised to incorporate a significant number of images to provide a sense of the working environment. It is advisable to display a diverse array of volunteers in order to encourage users to identify with themselves and become more inclined to join the organization (See Figure 18).

### Joint volunteers for culture

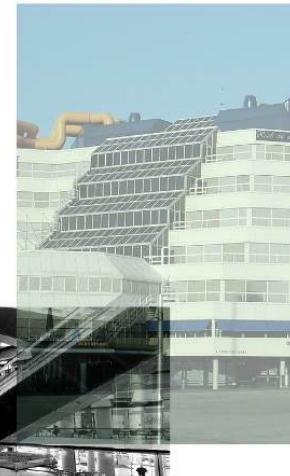
#### Rotterdam Central Library

Are you the kind of person who likes to be in a stimulating environment full of different volunteers and visitors? You could meet so many people from different nationalities, ages, backgrounds.

The Library is a perfect balance between the energy of the people that fill it up everyday and the quietness and silence that only a Library can give.

Working here will allow you to interact with a lot of different people but also will give you your personal space to enjoy how many books you want.

Do you think it could be the place for you?  
Scroll down and look at what it offers!



Do you get energized by the joy and the funny stories of kids? Do you want to find a way to challenge and enhance your creativity? Then join the reading activities for children!

[discover more](#)

Do you love the Dutch language and would you like to meet many international people who would like to learn your language? Then join the Taalcafe!

[discover more](#)

Have you ever wondered how it feels like being a tour guide? Are you passionate about Erasmus from Rotterdam or would you like to learn more about it? If you join the team of the tour guides you will have the chance to talk to so many different people every time and challenge your public speaking skills!

[discover more](#)

If you are looking for boosting your communication and problem-solving skills, then join the information team! You'll assist visitors, answer questions, and help them find what they need.

[discover more](#)

[Apply here](#)

Figure 18: Section of the website that presents the characteristics of a specific institution

## *The Social Campaign.*

The initiative should be promoted through advertisement content on social media platforms, such as Instagram. On the one hand, the increasing number of advertisements in general has resulted in a feeling of overwhelm among users, resulting in the ignoring of numerous advertisements. Conversely, the most efficient approach to reaching the majority of individuals, particularly the younger demographic, is to promote through a social campaign, as they presently do not consider volunteering for museums unless it is associated with their professional careers. Older demographics are already more prompt to start volunteering, so the social media campaign is highly suggested to spread the voice among the younger ones as well. To attract the attention of these users, it is highly advisable to implement brief calls to action that evoke the soap bubble metaphor. Additionally, it is advisable to employ the same type of communication as that prescribed for the website, such as a light and positive tone of voice and a focus on the graphics.

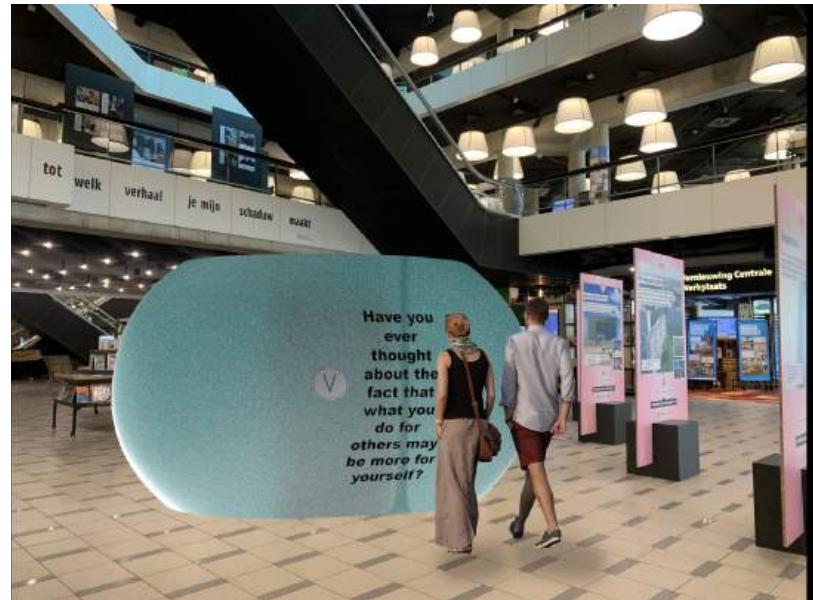
## *Physical Installation.*

To complement the digital and social media strategies, a physical installation is placed at the entrances of GLAM institutions. This installation serves as an attention-grabbing and informative touchpoint. The installation has the goal of informing visitors about the possibility of volunteering for any cultural institution. It was determined that there is no necessity to attract individuals who are not interested in cultural heritage. Therefore, the installation will be placed in cultural heritage institutions to attract the target audience that is potentially more interested. The installation has the capacity to establish a connection between the audience and the volunteers. After both co-creation sessions, it was determined that the most effective method of encouraging individuals to engage in volunteer work is to listen to the personal narratives of these volunteers. The installation's objective is to complement the social media campaign's promotion of the initiative. While it is certain that social media can reach a much larger audience, it is also true that numerous advertisements are either ignored or lack the ability to establish a connection with the narrative that needs to be conveyed.

Therefore, the installation aims to raise awareness by generating an experience that is more remarkable than an advertisement.

Considering the three levels mentioned in the previous chapter, the goal of the installation is to change the public's perception of volunteering by offering concrete examples from actual individuals that demonstrate how volunteering can be conducted for purposes other than solely contributing to the community. The installation consists of a booth that presents on the inside a screen to interact with that will communicate the stories of the volunteers. The installation will feature on the outside the initiative's logos, which will also be worn by the volunteers. This will result in the volunteers being more prominently recognized in the environment, a shift from their typical lack of visibility.

**Interactive Booth:** the booth is designed with a bubble-shaped structure made of textiles, inviting users to step inside and interact with a central screen (See Figure 19). The bubble shape is intended to serve as both a reference to the initiative's central theme and a source of protection and comfort during the experience, particularly in light of the potential for personal and sensitive stories that will be shared. The textile selected as the material will enable the hiding of the individuals who are experiencing the interaction while simultaneously displaying their silhouettes from the outside, thereby indicating that there is an individual inside. It is possible to get inside the booth through a curtain that presents a call to action written on top. The call to action states: Have you ever thought about the fact that what you do for others may be more for yourself?



Figures 19: the outside of the physical installation.

what you do for others may be more for yourself? The objective of the call to action is to captivate the attention of its audience, encouraging them to investigate its meaning. Simultaneously, it provides users with hints regarding the project's motif to prevent them from being disappointed when they discover that the content is entirely different from their expectations. Direct information about volunteering in the call to action would likely turn off some audience members who still harbor strong prejudices about it, so they will probably decide to not enter the installation. On the other side, if information about volunteering is shared while people interact and

hear the volunteer's stories inside, there's a greater chance that it will alter their opinions. The booth presents the entrance separated from the exit, the entrance of the booth faces the entrance of the institution and it is highlighted by the call to action. This prevents users who may feel emotional after hearing some of the stories of the volunteers could cross a stranger by exiting the installation.

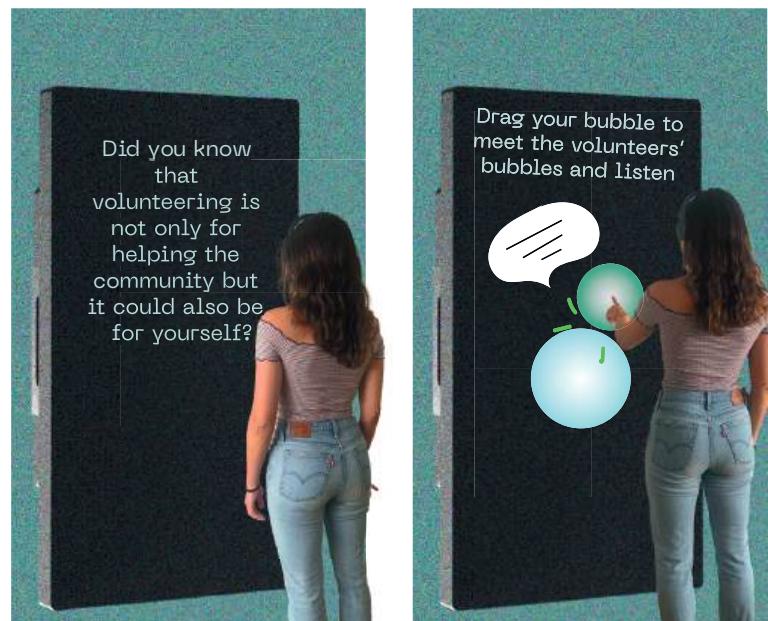
**The screen interaction:** the main interaction happens inside the booth through a big screen. The user has the goal of dragging his bubble to meet the volunteer's bubbles that will tell their stories (See Figures 20-25).

Having your own bubble to drag to meet the others, increases the personification from the user side. The choice of putting bubbles to represent the volunteers is meant to protect their privacy. Since some of the stories could be about sensitive periods of their lives, it was decided that showing their faces while telling these stories could have been too violent, especially for being exposed to so many strangers without building a real connection with them. The bubble representing the user would be subtly different in colour and dimension from the bubbles of the volunteers. The user must drag his bubble to a bubble that will appear on the screen. After the two spheres collide, the user will be told by the volunteer of the specific period of lifetime during which volunteering had a positive impact on that person. Then, the two bubbles merge and need to be dragged to another bubble to hear the story of another individual, and so forth. This will gradually result in the formation of a large group of soap bubbles that will become increasingly intricate and visually appealing as they merge.

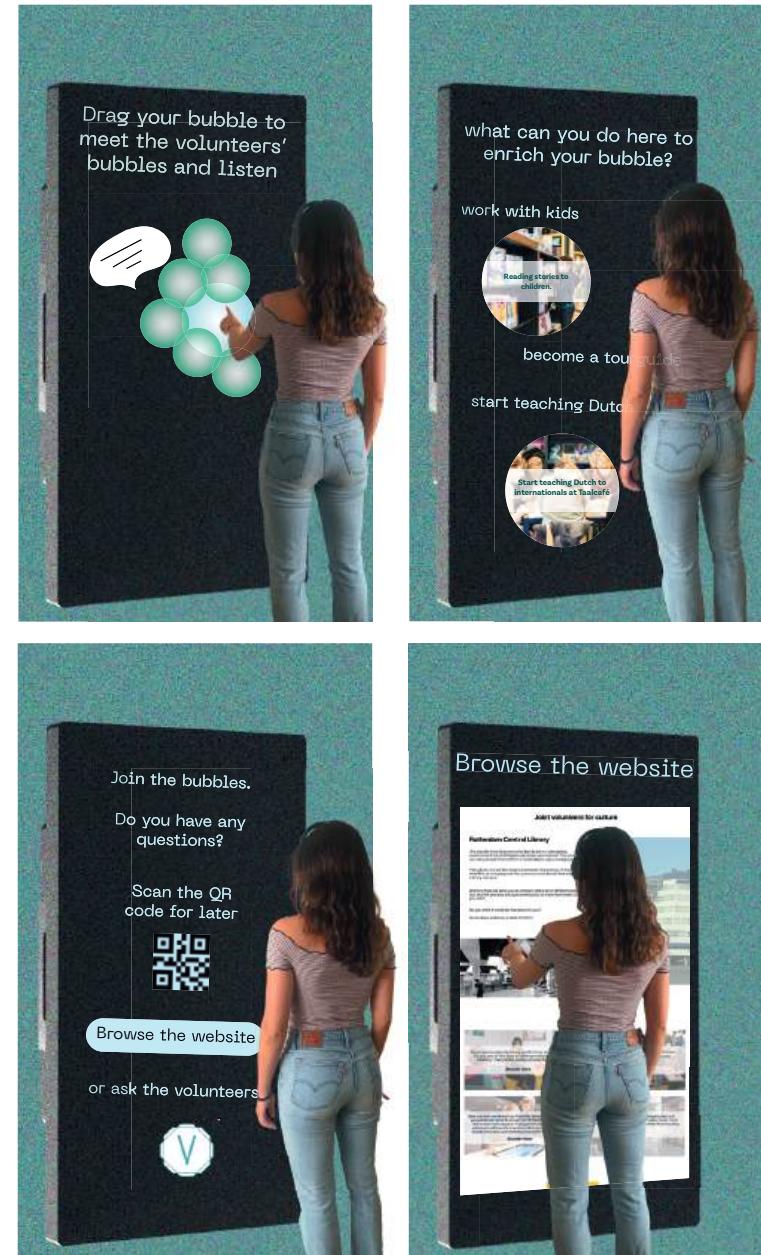
This metaphor aims to convey the intimate connection that can be established with others and how the presence of others can enrich your bubble and provide support. The bubbles will appear sequentially after a specific volunteer has completed sharing their story, allowing the user to concentrate on the content and avoid being overstimulated by the appearance of other bubbles on the screen. Simultaneously, the maximum duration of a volunteer's narrative will be thirty seconds, as the entire interaction is limited to a maximum of five minutes. This approach ensures that the user remains attentive and gets the key points that are intended to be communicated. The volunteers should record the message that will be integrated into the interface by providing a short answer to the question: why did you start volunteering and how did volunteering impact

on yourself? The outcomes should communicate the benefits of volunteering by providing real examples of real-life experiences, turning out to be more impactful and remarkable than providing academic and scientific reasons to support the idea of volunteering for yourself.

The user needs to wear headphones to hear the stories of the volunteers, both to make the experience more immersive and to keep the mystery of what is hidden inside the booth. After the interaction is completed, some more bubbles will appear on the screen showing the activities offered by that institution. Finally, it will show the possibility of navigating the website directly on the screen, to offer the possibility to explore if other institutions could be more suitable for that person. It also offers the possibility to scan a QR code, in case the user prefers to check out the possibilities later in time. Overall, the interaction with the interface creates an intimate connection with the volunteers while still preserving their privacy.



Figures 20-25: storyboard of the digital interaction.



## *Conclusions and main takeaways.*

This chapter outlines the intervention that was developed to address the difficult design objective of promoting volunteering for GLAM institutions as a tool to assist individuals in navigating life transitions. The concept led to the adoption of a holistic approach to effectively reach various target groups, with the ultimate objective of disseminating the message to as many people as possible in a compelling and influential manner.

The key insights that arose from the understanding of the notion are as follows:

### *Engaging Promotion through Memorable Experiences*

In order to effectively promote the idea of volunteering and influence people's opinions, it was deemed necessary to create a lasting memory and experience. This can be achieved through a compelling call to action or slogan on Instagram, or through a multi-sensory experience provided by a physical installation.

### *Employing Metaphors for Powerful Storytelling*

A metaphor serves two purposes: enhancing the effect of a narration and facilitating the storytelling of a difficult message by the designer.

### *Targeted Solutions for Holistic Design*

Not all components of the concepts need to address all levels and challenges mentioned in the previous chapter. Holistic solutions exist because each component is designed to address one or two specific challenges. This allows the system to efficiently tackle the design goal at all levels.

# *Chapter 8. Evaluation and Recommendations*

*This chapter introduces how the final concept was evaluated. Two kinds of evaluations with two different target groups were conducted to test two aspects of the final concept: its user experience and its feasibility. In this chapter, the design criteria used to evaluate the concept will be first introduced. Then it will be presented how the concept was evaluated and the limitations of this plan. Finally, the outcomes of the evaluation will define recommendations for the possible further development of the concept.*



# *Design Criteria and Testable Targets*

The following design criteria and testable targets introduced were used to assess the concept and write possible changes to develop for the future. They were all assessed by a mix of observations of the users during the evaluation phase and by some open questions asked at the end of the test, the list of the questions asked can be found in the Appendix G. These design criteria are focused on the user experience of the concept and its effectiveness in raising awareness for the possibility of volunteering for cultural heritage institutions, as well as how efficiently it conveys information and emotional inputs to users to possibly change their perception regarding volunteering.

## *1. Design Criteria.*

1. The concept raises awareness regarding the possibility of volunteering for cultural heritage institutions.

## *Testable targets.*

1. -The physical installation grabs attention and enhances visibility.  
-The social media campaign increases visibility and reaches out to more potential targets.  
-The logo that identifies the campaign also worn by the volunteers raises awareness of the amount of individuals who work in cultural heritage institutions as volunteers.

## *2.*

2. The experience of the physical installation creates an emotional impact on the user.

## *2.*

2. -The digital interaction is perceived as immersive and engaging  
-Users can establish a human connection with the volunteers by hearing their voices  
-The stories of the volunteers have an emotional impact on the users  
-The experience inside the booth make the users feel protected.

Regarding the feasibility evaluation, specific design criteria and testable targets were not formulated because the test's mode had to be based on an informal conversation with experts due to limitations that will be presented in the next subchapter. Despite this, it still followed a structure of questions that were formulated around these three main areas of investigation: cost feasibility, time feasibility, and collaboration feasibility. The questions related to cost feasibility investigated how much institutions would be prone to invest part of the annual budget in this initiative, as well as understanding from their expertise if they could receive funding to support this initiative. The questions related to time feasibility focused on how much time an installation like that could be part of the exhibitions of that museum/library and if it was generally viable to have a similar installation in a main hall considering its dimensions and features. Finally, the questions related to collaboration aimed to understand if generally, institutions collaborate and if they would like to join this initiative to help each other.

## *3. Design Criteria.*

3. The level of knowledge provided is effective in changing the perception of volunteering of the users.

## *Testable targets.*

3. -The website gives enough information to the users to understand what kind of environment would help them to deal with their life-transition.  
-The stories presented through the digital interaction are effective in informing the users on the benefits of volunteering for well-being  
-The message of volunteering for individual well-being is perceived and understood by the users.  
-The users are prompted to learn more about volunteering.

## *4.*

4. The level of knowledge provided is effective in changing the perception of volunteering of the users.

## *4.*

4. -The users have a different conception of volunteering for cultural heritage institutions thanks to the information gained from the website and the social media campaign.  
The emotional response of the interaction inside the physical installation contributes to changing the perception of the volunteering activity for the users.  
-The users are prompted to start a volunteering experience in cultural heritage institutions.

## *Limitations: how the concept was evaluated*

The way the concept was evaluated presented various limitations that influenced the outcomes of the test and consequently the final discussion. This section will briefly present how the concept was evaluated and the limitations connected to the setting and the chosen target.



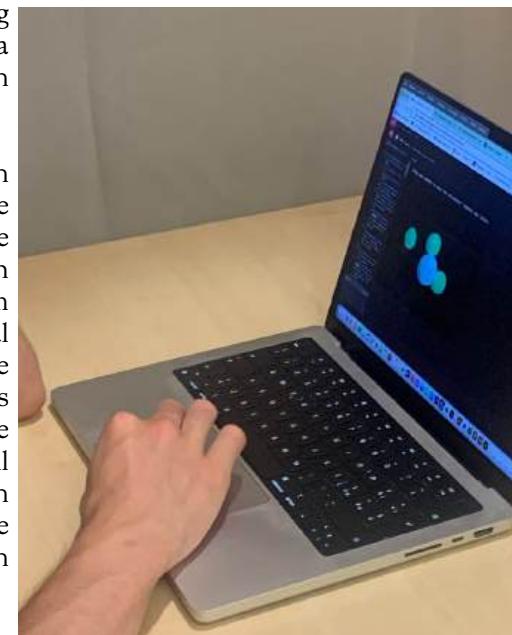
Figures 26: The space recreated to simulate the booth.

That particular sitting space was chosen for its convenience and its shape. In fact, it was easy to stick curtains around, and its little table was convenient to support the laptop used for digital interaction. Moreover, since its location was at IDE faculty, it was an easy spot to reach for all the participants. It was also decided to show the renderings of the original booth to the participants as well to help them imagine the concept experience.

Regarding the digital interaction, it was all prototyped by writing the code on p5.js (See Appendix H for the code). The digital interaction was very close to the concept, the main differences were in the mode of interaction, in the content of the stories of the volunteers, and their voices. In fact, the quotes used in the prototype were taken from the quotes from the first generative session, chosen by the level of emotional impact they could have on the participants and how much they were related to the theme of the concept. AI voices were used to record the stories. The voices were chosen to represent various kinds of individuals, but the final result was still not fully representing the effect of a human voice (See Figure 27).

Regarding the mode of the interaction, since a tablet or a similar screen was not available for the test, it was decided to use a laptop but then the dragging interaction had to happen through a mouse and not by touching a screen as it is designed.

Regarding the feasibility evaluation test, it was decided to test the concept with representatives of the two institutions I collaborated with during this project: the Rotterdam Central Library and the National Museum of Scotland, to get the point of view of a Library as well as the point of view of a museum. The project was presented during a call through a 20-minute presentation and then a few questions were asked related to the three main areas presented in Chapter 6.



Figures 27: The digital interaction prototype.

### List of limitations.

- The chosen target group was not heterogeneous enough to guarantee more precise outcomes for the research. The concept was tested with four design students and one working person in her twenties. Variety was kept regarding the gender of the group of participants, but not for their age (all of them in their twenties) and their profession. The young age and the creative profession may have partially biased the results since all the participants still haven't been through many life transitions due to their young age and are already prompt to spend more time than other individuals in cultural heritage spaces because of their inclination to art.
- Regarding the feasibility test, it was not possible to build a true-to-life prototype to place inside the institutions or to have the institution's representatives come to the faculty to try it. Consequently, the representatives had to rely on verbal descriptions and visual aids to understand the concept. Representatives might struggle to fully grasp the interactive and emotional aspects without experiencing the installation firsthand. Since descriptions alone cannot replicate the emotional impact and sense of immersion that the physical installation aims to create, this way of testing may have affected the depth and accuracy of the feedback from the institution's representatives.
- Regarding the modality of the user experience evaluation test, several limitations impacted the fidelity of the interaction compared to the designed concept. Due to constraints in time and technical resources, the booth used for testing could not accurately resemble the one intended for placement in institutions. Consequently, the physical environment differed significantly from the envisioned installation, which may have affected participants' immersion and overall experience. Furthermore, the interaction occurred with users seated rather than standing, which likely altered their engagement levels and the natural flow of interaction. It is possible to hypothesize that participants spent more time exploring the website because they felt more at ease sitting down, even if the website is created for a standing concept version. In addition, the participants had the freedom to thoroughly investigate the digital interaction because they were aware that they were in a solitary environment and were not bound by any time

constraints imposed by the surroundings. Several participants indicated that their interaction time would have been reduced if they had been aware of the potential queue outside the booth. The screen used for testing was smaller than the one designed for the concept, potentially impacting the visibility and accessibility of the interactive elements. Additionally, users had to navigate the interface using a mouse instead of a touch screen, which changed the intended tactile and intuitive interaction. These discrepancies mean that the feedback collected might not fully capture the user experience as intended, potentially overlooking issues related to ergonomics, user flow, and engagement that would arise in the actual setup.

- The use of AI voices to tell the stories of the volunteers limited the possibility of empathizing with the stories and creating a connection with the volunteers from the users. AI voices were chosen to have the possibility of displaying a wide range of kinds of voices: from male to female, and from young to old. The intention was to communicate how various the group of volunteers of an institution can be, offering the possibility to all the individuals to familiarize themselves with one of them at least. On the other hand, it was still slightly noticeable the fact that these voices were not human, and this challenged the human connection that was aimed to create.

## *Outcomes and recommendations.*

The two kinds of evaluation tests brought several insights that provide a series of recommendations to enrich the understanding and practical application of the concept ideated, setting the stage for further research and innovation within this topic. The initiative's concept and its promotional approach embody a recommended aesthetic and form that were intentionally crafted to materialize the notion into something that could potentially be implemented by institutions. However, it is essential to comprehend that the form and the proposed visual appeal are not rigid; rather, they serve as principles that can be customized to meet the requirements of each institution. For this reason, the following recommendations are focused on how the initiative may be implemented in the future and how its promotional approach could better meet the user's needs.

### *Recommendations on the guidelines for the physical installation.*

The evaluation test of the prototype has provided valuable insights that should guide the future development of the physical installation. Firstly, the booth design adds significant value in terms of visibility and engagement. It successfully triggers the curiosity of participants and captures their attention among a sea of flyers. The booth offers an intimate and protective environment, making it more intriguing than a simple screen positioned in the middle of a hall. However, its enclosed nature can appear intimidating to some visitors, potentially deterring their participation. As a participant quoted, "*I think if I was in the booth, I would feel comfortable and protected and like a solitary experience. But since it is totally closed off from the outside, I would feel a higher threshold to enter*". Future designs should aim to balance these protective qualities with a more open appearance to ensure it is welcoming to all potential users.

The interactive element involving bubbles is highly engaging, involving multiple senses simultaneously—hearing, seeing, and touching—which enhances user immersion. Participants enjoyed the playful nature of interacting with the bubbles. However, this interaction can sometimes distract from the core messages delivered by the volunteers' voices. Referring to a comment of one of the participants,

*"I would like to have also the text while they speak just to understand more where they are saying, and also because like I was playing around and maybe with the text I would like actually listen more to what they are saying"*. For this reason, it is suggested that incorporating supporting text alongside the voices can help focus attention and reduce distractions. Additionally, providing a clear introduction to the bubble interaction will guide participants more effectively, ensuring they do not miss the initial messages while they adjust to the experience, since according

to another participant: *"I started actually actively listening to them at the third story. Like during the first and the second I was still understanding how the interface worked"*.

Moreover, the existing introduction on the website prototype assisted the participants in better understanding the metaphor of soap bubbles reflecting individuals' lives. During the discussion, it was revealed that participants found the metaphor beautiful. However, they also expressed the opinion that it does not require elaborate explanation, allowing anyone to interpret it according to their own understanding.

The volunteers' voices were all valued as a potent medium for storytelling. The brevity of the stories was positively appreciated, as it helped to keep participants focused. The diverse range of narratives was also appreciated for enabling participants to relate to at least one of the events, thus enhancing their level of involvement and belief. Several participants indicated a wish to acquire further information on the volunteers behind the voices in order to strengthen their connection. Although it is important to prioritize privacy protection, it is worth considering methods to enhance the user experience by sharing additional information about the volunteers' identities and stories, maybe adding another

section of anonymized personal facts connected to the voices following the main bubble interaction.

## *Recommendation on conveying time commitment in a reassuring way.*

The evaluation test of the prototype revealed that going through the interaction of the physical installation significantly increased participants' curiosity about volunteering opportunities. The digital interaction, combined with the website exploration, effectively informed participants about volunteering possibilities that they had not previously considered. However, a notable limitation emerged regarding participants' perceptions of time commitment. Many individuals expressed that while they might consider volunteering if they were free and had no other obligations, their current busy schedules with university or work made volunteering seem impractical. The message that volunteering can be integrated into everyday life with flexible time commitments did not resonate. For future development, it is crucial to address this perception by emphasizing the flexible and manageable nature of volunteering, ensuring that it is seen as an accessible and feasible option for those with busy schedules. As a participant quoted, "*The reason itself is quite convincing like if I think about it maybe when I graduate, then yes, since for some months I don't have that much to do. But if I put myself in that situation right now, I wouldn't because I am too busy working 8 hours per day.*" However, individuals continue to maintain their hobbies alongside their work schedule. Volunteering, on the other hand, is seen as a more serious commitment rather than a leisure activity to supplement their routine. It may only require a few hours of their time occasionally. Therefore, it is crucial to emphasize the significant influence that individuals have in making decisions about the amount of time they dedicate to volunteering and the enjoyment they derive from it, rather than focusing solely on the level of effort required.

## *Recommendation on digital promotion.*

The evaluation of social media promotion revealed mixed responses. Most participants found Instagram advertising to be inefficient, stating they tend to ignore the majority of ads due to feeling overwhelmed by their frequency. They expressed that they would be more likely to engage with the topic through the physical installation rather than through Instagram posts, considering that the physical installation was perceived as a more immersive and engaging experience, effectively capturing curiosity.

Conversely, one participant provided a different perspective, noting that her busy schedule limits her ability to visit museums. This individual indicated a preference for engaging with the topic through Instagram, as she uses the platform daily. Quoting the participant: "*Considering how my daily life is right now, I would mostly like gain knowledge from the social rather than through the physical installation, just because I'm not going to the museums and other institutions so frequently.*" Considering that only one person out of five showed this preference, it may be estimated to be 20% of the sample, even with the small test group. Therefore, it is recommended that the institution should not totally discard this method of promotion, as it still has the potential to reach a significant number of people proportionally to a larger audience.

Additionally, social media promotion requires less effort and resources from institutions compared to building and maintaining a physical installation. This strategy will maximize the initiative's reach and impact, especially if the posts present catchy and intriguing calls to action to capture attention.

The website showcased as a demonstration of its functionality, was positively regarded as a platform for organizing information on volunteering. However, users found it text-heavy. To improve usability and engagement, the following suggestions were made: add more visuals and videos to reduce text reliance, work on the hierarchy of information to facilitate easier navigation and highlight keywords to improve readability. These enhancements will make the website more user-friendly, engaging, and effective in conveying necessary information.

## *General feedback from the users regarding the initiative concept.*

The evaluation of the prototype has provided insightful feedback for refining the initiative's touchpoints. Participants welcomed the option to choose an environment that suits their personal preferences in a very positive way. They appreciated discovering various volunteering opportunities in one place without having to browse each institution individually. "*I think it's nice to know what is possible rather than having to spend a lot of energy to find out what's possible*", quoted one participant. Many of them stated that maybe they wouldn't volunteer for the place in which they discover the opportunity but they would like to know if the same opportunities are offered by a museum that they like more. For this reason, the initiative that groups multiple institutions was found very convenient for all the participants.

The perspective of volunteering as a self-beneficial activity resonated with all participants. They found the idea of learning new skills and forming new connections through volunteering appealing, which was a shift from the traditional view of volunteer work. Quoting one participant, "*What is really nice is that it emphasizes also what it gives you sort of rather than what you could mean for them*".

However, one participant noted that while it is important to communicate the personal benefits, it is equally essential to highlight the societal impact of their volunteer work. Balancing the focus on self-improvement with the broader impact on society could enhance the overall appeal of the initiative.

## *Possible future development for institutions.*

As previously stated, the concept was displayed to two representatives of the National Museum of Scotland and one representative of the Rotterdam Central Library to evaluate its feasibility and also to reflect together on the possibilities for future implementation. In this section, the three main areas of discussion will be presented.

### *Impact of cost feasibility: who should fund the project?*

The project was proposed to be funded by the Government or by the Municipality of the city that would like to join the initiative. What the state funding should cover and what is part of the responsibility of that specific institution is not defined because it is out of the area of knowledge of the designer. Despite this, it was still decided to discuss this aspect to ground the project to a realistic dimension.

Regarding the Rotterdam Central Library, it was agreed that institutions might secure government or municipal funding to cover part of the expenses. However, the amount of funding required from the institution itself would depend on factors such as the current need for volunteers in various departments and the ease of integrating the physical installation into the library's setting. Key considerations included how easily the installation could be reprogrammed to adapt specific activities and volunteer voice messages for each institution, which are expensive for the structure cost of the booth, as well as the simplicity of recording volunteer stories.

The National Museum of Scotland indicated that securing funding from organizations like Museum Gallery Scotland<sup>13</sup> would be more feasible than from the government or the National Lottery<sup>14</sup>, which have been cutting funds recently. Museum Gallery Scotland, an independent charity receiving core funding from the Scottish Government, distributes grants directly to the museums and galleries sector. To obtain these funds, the initiative must convincingly demonstrate how it can benefit a wide audience, thereby increasing its appeal to potential funders.

These insights suggest that while external funding is attainable, success hinges on tailoring the initiative to meet specific institutional needs and highlighting its broad community benefits.

## *Impact of permanence of a physical installation: how long can an installation stay in a main hall?*

The concept relies significantly on a physical installation as a way of promotion for creating more impact on visitors as it was already previously mentioned in detail. On the other hand, even though having the installation permanently in the main hall would be more effective in attracting a higher number of people to volunteer, it wouldn't be feasible for institutions considering the space that needs to be allocated to host the installation.

Representatives from both the Rotterdam Central Library and the National Museum of Scotland highlighted significant challenges in accommodating the physical installation. The Rotterdam Central Library proposed that the exhibit should not be placed in the main hall due to practical reasons. Instead, they suggested placing it on the third floor. However, it was noted that the foot circulation on the third floor is significantly lower, which would result in reduced visibility and impact. Additionally, it was pointed out that for security concerns, the booth's material needs to be translucent enough to allow external monitoring, especially given the presence of expensive equipment inside.

A proposed solution from the Rotterdam Central Library involved making the installation an iterative exhibition, moving it between different institutions. This idea was positively received by the National Museum of Scotland as well. The National Museum of Scotland further suggested integrating the installation into existing events such as Volunteers Week or other themed festivals, to enhance its exposure and relevance. As they quoted: *"Usually these kinds of things would be associated with an event or associated with a push for something. Or a festival of that, you know, a Science*

*Festival here, or a volunteering festival or something like that."*

To accommodate these insights, the physical installation should be designed to be portable and adaptable to various settings and events. This flexibility will not only address security and space constraints but also maximize the installation's reach and effectiveness by leveraging established events and collaborative opportunities among institutions.

## *Reflections on the possibility of collaborating with other institutions.*

The evaluation of collaboration feasibility between cultural institutions revealed promising potential. The Rotterdam Central Library already engages in collaborative activities, such as annual volunteer events organized by UVV and exhibitions highlighting volunteer contributions. They expressed openness to further collaboration with other institutions for this project.

Similarly, the National Museum of Scotland did not exclude the possibility of collaboration, suggesting that it would be more manageable if coordinated by the Museum Gallery Scotland. This organization, which already supports collaboration among museums and galleries, could facilitate the partnership and streamline efforts to adapt the strategy across various institutions.

These insights indicate that while both institutions are open to collaborative efforts, leveraging existing networks and coordinating bodies will be key to successfully implementing the initiative across multiple cultural institutions.

*conclusions.*

## *Conclusions regarding the project.*

Regarding this Project, it is crucial to highlight that the solution created should not be interpreted literally, but rather be seen as a source of inspiration for both cultural institutions and individuals. GLAM institutions must consider people's views about volunteering. Given the significant influence and significance of volunteers in the majority of cultural organisations, many of which heavily rely on volunteers for their staff, it is essential for these organisations to effectively communicate how the volunteering experience can diverge from common stereotypes in order to attract individuals. Furthermore, the incentives focused on emotional well-being presented by this research can be sufficiently compelling to encourage individuals to remain, which is a prevalent concern at present. It is essential to offer GLAM institutions a clear understanding of volunteering that emphasises personal growth and emotional support in order to challenge the common perception that volunteering is solely about unpaid labour.

Therefore, while the proposed design solutions were evaluated and found to be emotionally engaging and impactful to individuals, institutions may find it challenging to execute them. The findings of this project should be considered in relation to the research results and the core idea of the design solution. They can serve as inspiration and a framework for the execution of similar projects. Regarding individuals, it was tested during the Project evaluation and co-creation phases with the volunteers, on how individuals can change their minds if informed about it. The fundamental premise of the project is that knowledge is a potent force, and the failure of projects may frequently be attributed to persons lacking awareness of the potential or receiving insufficient information. The research's findings, which demonstrate how volunteering may be a potent emotional support tool during times of transition, are helpful to those who may not be aware of this option and have advantages for both individuals and organisations.

## *Personal reflections.*

The project was captivating and intriguing in numerous aspects. Primarily, I have a deep involvement in the context of cultural heritage institutions, as it is a subject that has always sparked my interest. Hence, investigating the potential of art as a means of emotional support was intriguing, especially to understand why I have always seen it as a therapeutic landscape, but without a rational justification. Moreover, this investigation on transitional periods coincided with a significant era of change in my life, marking the conclusion of my studies and the uncertainty of what lies next. Hence, engaging in introspective self-reflection and seeking answers through study proved beneficial during a period of emotional turmoil.

Regarding the methodology employed, I have come to appreciate even more the significance of an approach such as participatory design. Initially driven by a need to acquire a certain working technique, I discovered that it offered far more than only the ability to produce outcomes tailored to the users' requirements. The discussions I engaged in with the volunteers deeply impacted me and served as a reminder of the significance of human worth in the field of design. In the future, I will have acquired not just essential skills in facilitating sessions, even with challenging participants, but also a deep grasp of empathy and the significance of perceiving unspoken cues when engaging with users. This initiative has been created by individuals for individuals, and I firmly believe that we possess the most comprehensive understanding of the benefits that well-being can provide us during periods of life transitions.

*Reverences.*

1. Source: <https://guides.library.ubc.ca/Indiglibrarianship/GLAMinstitutions>
  2. Source: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2021/06/forty-percent-of-heritage-organisations-have-no-volunteering-strategy/>  
<https://www.boekman.nl/algemeen/vijf-vragen-over-cultureel-vrijwilligerswerk-beantwoord/>
  3. Source: <https://www.museumvereniging.nl/musea-en-vrijwilligers>
  4. Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/volunteer>
  5. Source: <https://cbs.nl/nl-nl/longread/rapportages/2023/vrijwilligerswerk-2022?onepage=true#:text=Vijf%20procent%20van%20de%20bevolking,voor%20arbeids-%20en%20politieke%20organisaties.>
  6. Source: <https://www.boekman.nl/algemeen/vijf-vragen-over-cultureel-vrijwilligerswerk-beantwoord/>
  7. Source: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a79660aed915d07d35b52db/CASE-value-summary-report-July10.pdf>
  8. Source: <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2020/13/nearly-1-in-10-dutch-people-frequently-lonely-in-2019>
  9. Source: <https://www.nlvoorelkaar.nl/>
  10. Source: <https://urn.nl/>
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*Appendix.*



# IDE Master Graduation Project

## Project team, procedural checks and Personal Project Brief

In this document the agreements made between student and supervisory team about the student's IDE Master Graduation Project are set out. This document may also include involvement of an external client, however does not cover any legal matters student and client (might) agree upon. Next to that, this document facilitates the required procedural checks:

- Student defines the team, what the student is going to do/deliver and how that will come about
- Chair of the supervisory team signs, to formally approve the project's setup / Project brief
- SSC E&SA (Shared Service Centre, Education & Student Affairs) report on the student's registration and study progress
- IDE's Board of Examiners confirms the proposed supervisory team on their eligibility, and whether the student is allowed to start the Graduation Project

### STUDENT DATA & MASTER PROGRAMME

Complete all fields and indicate which master(s) you are in

Family name	Tonelli
Initials	E
Given name	Elena
Student number	5848946

IDE master(s)	IPD <input type="checkbox"/>	DfI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	SPD <input type="checkbox"/>
2 <sup>nd</sup> non-IDE master			
Individual programme (date of approval)			
Medisign	<input type="checkbox"/>		
HPM	<input type="checkbox"/>		

### SUPERVISORY TEAM

Fill in the required information of supervisory team members. If applicable, company mentor is added as 2<sup>nd</sup> mentor

Chair	Dr. Love, J.S.	dept./section	SDE
mentor	Prof. dr. Stappers, P.J.	dept./section	DCC
2 <sup>nd</sup> mentor	Prof. dr. Naldini, S.		
client:			
city:		country:	
optional comments	The expertise of Jeff and Silvia in cultural heritage can support my design direction while the expertise of Pieter Jan in contextmapping will support my research method.		

- ! Ensure a heterogeneous team. In case you wish to include team members from the same section, explain why.
- ! Chair should request the IDE Board of Examiners for approval when a non-IDE mentor is proposed. Include CV and motivation letter.
- ! 2<sup>nd</sup> mentor only applies when a client is involved.

### APPROVAL OF CHAIR ON PROJECT PROPOSAL / PROJECT BRIEF -> to be filled in by the Chair of the supervisory team

Sign for approval (Chair)



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

### CHECK ON STUDY PROGRESS

To be filled in by SSC E&SA (Shared Service Centre, Education & Student Affairs), after approval of the project brief by the chair. The study progress will be checked for a 2<sup>nd</sup> time just before the green light meeting.

Master electives no. of EC accumulated in total	150	EC
Of which, taking conditional requirements into account, can be part of the exam programme		EC

	YES	all 1 <sup>st</sup> year master courses passed
	NO	missing 1 <sup>st</sup> year courses

Comments:

Sign for approval (SSC E&SA)



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

### APPROVAL OF BOARD OF EXAMINERS IDE ON SUPERVISORY TEAM -> to be checked and filled in by IDE's Board of Examiners

Does the composition of the Supervisory Team comply with regulations?

Comments:

YES	Supervisory Team approved
NO	Supervisory Team not approved

Based on study progress, student is ...

Comments:

ALLOWED to start the graduation project
NOT allowed to start the graduation project

Sign for approval (BoEx)



Name J.S. Love

Date 18 Mar 2024

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

Name student Elena TonelliStudent number 5,848,946**PROJECT TITLE, INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM DEFINITION and ASSIGNMENT**

Complete all fields, keep information clear, specific and concise

**Project title** Empowering Museum Volunteers: Fostering Belonging and Connection through Individual Role Recognition

Please state the title of your graduation project (above). Keep the title compact and simple. Do not use abbreviations. The remainder of this document allows you to define and clarify your graduation project.

**Introduction**

Describe the context of your project here; What is the domain in which your project takes place? Who are the main stakeholders and what interests are at stake? Describe the opportunities (and limitations) in this domain to better serve the stakeholder interests. (max 250 words)

Volunteer work plays a crucial role in the management of many organizations, particularly those related to cultural heritage. In today's climate of funding restrictions and intense competition with other tourist attractions, the contributions of volunteers to the museum market are crucial (Edwards, 2005). For example, data from 2020 shows that in the Netherlands, 66% of employment in museums consisted of unpaid volunteers or interns<sup>1</sup>, while in the UK, it's the 45% of cultural organisations that rely on volunteer work, essential to their survival. Volunteers are an indispensable resource for the museum due to their fierce commitment. They serve as an essential conduit between museums and society. Alternatively stated, the volunteer introduces the general public to the domain of museums (Naldini, Clarke, 2023, p.17). They typically perform tasks assigned by the organization's professional or administrative personnel to help achieve the organization's goals. On the other hand, the challenge that volunteers face in defining their motivations, whether it's a job, personal enjoyment, or something else, demonstrates the difficulty of establishing and maintaining an individual's self-identity (Orr, 2006).

The scope of the project is to investigate the motivations, needs, and visions of the volunteers to clarify their roles and highlight their personalities and contributions to the organizations.

The project aims to utilise participatory design methodologies in order to discover their latent needs and involve the target from the early stages of the project to enhance their feeling of participation in the project and to include their ideas in crafting a design solution that is tailored to their exigencies.

1. <https://www.museumvereniging.nl/musea-en-vrijwilligers> accessed November 2022 (Accessed March 2023).

2. <https://teamkinetic.co.uk/blog/2023/03/the-future-of-heritage-volunteering/> (Accessed in 2019).

introduction (continued): space for images



image / figure 1 **Volunteers working in the archives** <https://www.nms.ac.uk/about-us/jobs-and-volunteering/volunteering/>



image / figure 2 **Volunteer working as a tour guide** <https://www.nms.ac.uk/about-us/jobs-and-volunteering/volunteering/meet-our-volunteers/>

## Personal Project Brief – IDE Master Graduation Project

### Problem Definition

What problem do you want to solve in the context described in the introduction, and within the available time frame of 100 working days? (= Master Graduation Project of 30 EC). What opportunities do you see to create added value for the described stakeholders? Substantiate your choice.

(max 200 words)

According to Stebbins (2013), often volunteering leads to "an ambiguity, a lack of clarity, as to who they really are and what they really do." This not only affects how volunteers shape their identities but also influences their interactions and connections with professionals, which in turn impacts the meanings they develop about themselves. By guiding the volunteers to find a way to express their view on the museum, and the ways in which their individuality is intertwined with their work there, the museum system will gain an opportunity to better understand its volunteers and incorporate their viewpoints into system management, thereby fostering a greater sense of mutual responsibility. The project aims to investigate if and how the process of clarifying their roles in the institutions and the highlighting of their personalities can enhance the volunteers' feeling of belonging to the museum itself.

### Assignment

This is the most important part of the project brief because it will give a clear direction of what you are heading for. Formulate an assignment to yourself regarding what you expect to deliver as result at the end of your project. (1 sentence) As you graduate as an industrial design engineer, your assignment will start with a verb (Design/Investigate/Validate/Create), and you may use the green text format:

I want to design an intervention to highlight volunteers' individual roles, and perspectives in the museum environment to foster a stronger feeling of belonging and mutual connection between them and the museum system itself.

Then explain your project approach to carrying out your graduation project and what research and design methods you plan to use to generate your design solution (max 150 words)

The project will use participatory design and context mapping techniques as the main research and ideation method. Generative sessions will be used to investigate the personalities of the volunteers that will come out through the workshops' activities. At the same time, the sessions aim to comprehend the volunteers' perspectives and visions regarding the museum. Gaining insight into the perspectives and identities of the volunteers employed by the various museums serves as an initial step towards developing a design solution that can simultaneously accentuate their unique qualities within the museums and function universally across all the institutions. Following the research phase, which aims to investigate and diverge, the context mapping analysis aims to converge on the problem definition and then the previously mentioned design direction. During the design phase, ideation will be facilitated through co-creation sessions involving the participants. Engaging the target audience during the ideation phase will foster a sense of ownership among the volunteers and result in a more customised, end-product that better meets their needs. Following the co-creation sessions, I will iteratively develop various prototypes and solutions based on their feedback until a definitive design solution is reached. The final concept will be evaluated with the target.

### Project planning and key moments

To make visible how you plan to spend your time, you must make a planning for the full project. You are advised to use a Gantt chart format to show the different phases of your project, deliverables you have in mind, meetings and in-between deadlines. Keep in mind that all activities should fit within the given run time of 100 working days. Your planning should include a kick-off meeting, mid-term evaluation meeting, green light meeting and graduation ceremony. Please indicate periods of part-time activities and/or periods of not spending time on your graduation project, if any (for instance because of holidays or parallel course activities).

Make sure to attach the full plan to this project brief.  
The four key moment dates must be filled in below

Kick off meeting 8 Mar 2024

Mid-term evaluation 13 Mag 2024

Green light meeting 12 Lug 2024

Graduation ceremony 23 Ago 2024

In exceptional cases (part of) the Graduation Project may need to be scheduled part-time. Indicate here if such applies to your project

Part of project scheduled part-time	
For how many project weeks	
Number of project days per week	

Comments:

### Motivation and personal ambitions

Explain why you wish to start this project, what competencies you want to prove or develop (e.g. competencies acquired in your MSc programme, electives, extra-curricular activities or other).

Optionally, describe whether you have some personal learning ambitions which you explicitly want to address in this project, on top of the learning objectives of the Graduation Project itself. You might think of e.g. acquiring in depth knowledge on a specific subject, broadening your competencies or experimenting with a specific tool or methodology. Personal learning ambitions are limited to a maximum number of five.  
(200 words max)

Regarding my graduation project, I aim to acquire knowledge and skills related to the implementation of participatory design methodologies. The C&C course has provided me with an understanding of the method's foundation, and the influence that can be achieved by involving the target audience in the project from its earliest stages captured my interest. My objective for my graduation project is to transition from its theoretical understanding to its practical application, as it will mark my initial experience undertaking a comprehensive project utilising the participatory design approach. I have gained valuable insights and strategies for effective facilitation throughout the Creative Facilitation block course, and I have thoroughly enjoyed leading sessions. I am therefore enthusiastic about facilitating once more, as well as demonstrating my proficiency in public speaking and venturing beyond my comfort zone. On the other hand, it gives me great pleasure to be employed in the field of cultural heritage. My enduring aspiration is to pursue a career in the exhibition and art sector, which has been my deepest passion since childhood. I am thus eager to acquire further knowledge regarding the functioning of the museum system. In preparation for a potential academic career, I intend to utilise this final project as an opportunity to develop my skills as a researcher while also advancing a comprehensive project that I hope will have an impact on the museum's system.

# Appendix C

# *Sensitizing booklet content.*

## **MY LIFE BEFORE BECOMING A VOLUNTEER**

Write down on the lower part of the timeline the activities you do on a typical day in your life **before** starting to volunteer, from the moment you wake up to the moment you go to sleep.

use emoji to communicate your emotions during the day and place them on the upper part of the timeline.



## **MY LIFE AFTER BECOMING A VOLUNTEER**

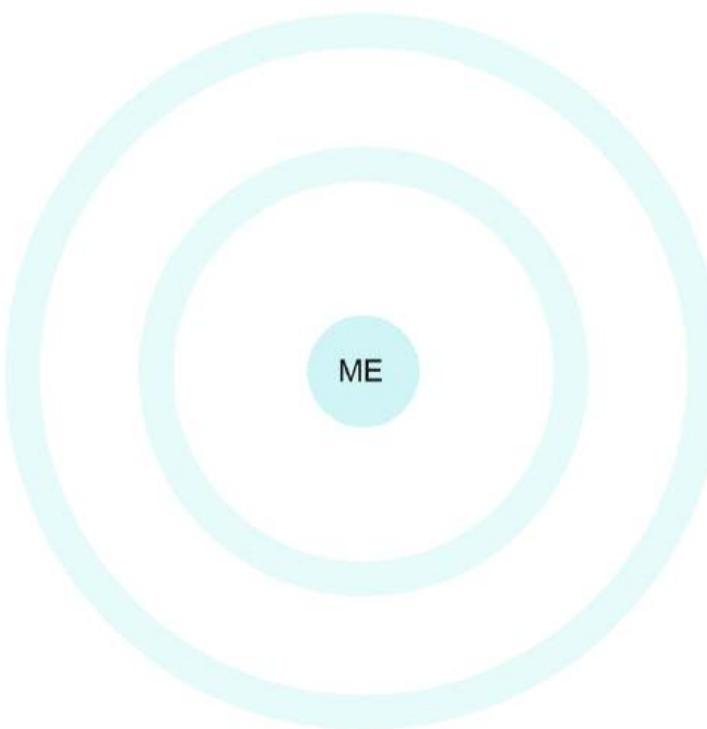
Write down on the upper part of the timeline the activities you do on a **typical volunteering day**, from the moment you wake up to the moment you go to sleep.

use emoji to communicate your emotions during the day and place them on the upper part of the timeline.



### THE PEOPLE AROUND ME

Picture a regular volunteering day and map out the people you interact with on this chart, using the stickers provided. You can use the pen tool to sketch on top of them if you want! Put yourself in the center and then you can add colleagues, supervisors, visitors.. Place them around you according to how close they are to you (in terms of trust and intimacy). Please indicate the role they play in your life.



How do these people support you in your daily life? What's their emotional part in your life?

## THE DAY I STARTED

Remember the day that you made the decision of starting to volunteer for the museum.

Which were your thoughts? Were you concerned about something that you have never done? Were you excited to meet new people?

Try to remember your feelings of that day, you can write everything here or you can draw on a paper and then paste here the picture of your drawing!

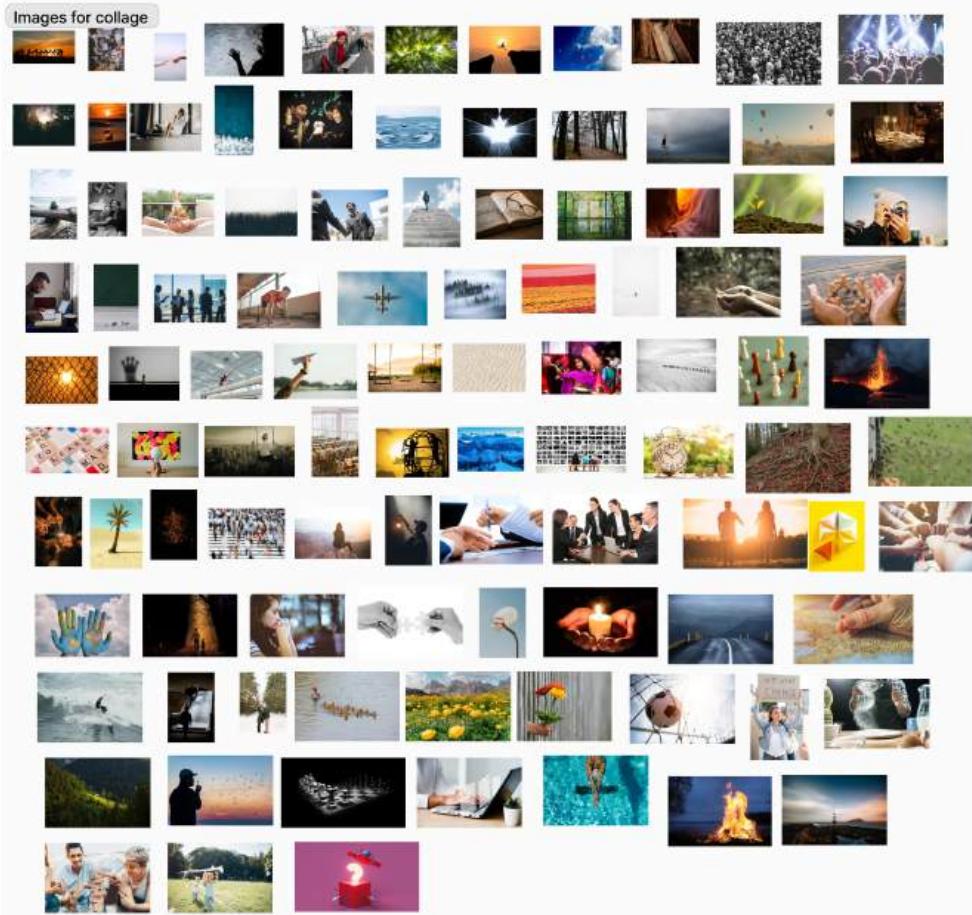
## ME IN THE FUTURE

Picture yourself in the future. How do you imagine your life in five years?

Express your desires, aspirations and plans. You can either write, or draw! If you decide to draw remember to paste the picture of your drawing here.

*Appendix B.*

## *Generative session trigger set.*



# *Generative session plan.*

## **Schedule:**

(10 minutes) Welcome & Icebreaker

Welcome participants + short introduction icebreaker

(25 minutes) Activity 1: The tree of your journey as a volunteer

Explain the activity: Volunteers will need to pick images and words that I will provide to place either on the roots or on the branches of the tree.

The inputs placed on the roots symbolize the motivations/reasons that connect them to the choice of volunteering in that museum, while what is positioned on the branches symbolizes how their volunteering journey is impacting of their lives.

Distribute tree illustrations and materials.

Give the volunteers the time to complete their collages.

Discuss about the results with the group.



(5 minutes break)

(15 minutes) Activity 2: The boat

Present the picture of a ship with various crew members.

Explain the activity: The participants will choose the crew member who best represents their role and why.

Discuss the different roles on the ship related to museum volunteer roles.



(10 minute break) -

(10 minutes) Energizer

(40 minutes) Activity 3: Visualize the future

Recap the session's goals and introduce the future vision activity.

Explain the task: The participants will be provided both with museum pictures, and translucent paper, stickers, and drawing materials to represent on top of the pictures their vision for the museum's future with technology. The goal is to create physically visualize how they think the museum will look in the future regarding the impact of technology.

Remind them to consider how technology could enhance visitor experience, accessibility, exhibits, and more.

Give them time to work on their creations.

Discuss about it

(5 minutes) Group Discussion & Wrap-Up

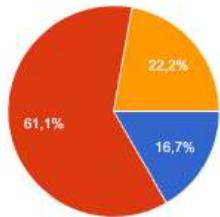
# Appendix C.

# Results from the survey spread among students.

Do you believe cultural heritage institutions rely on volunteers?

18 risposte

Copia

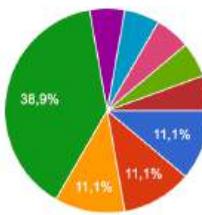


- Yes, I believe many tasks are performed by volunteers.
- I'm aware of some volunteers, but I'm unsure of their roles.
- No, I assume all staff are paid employees.

If you would **not** choose to volunteer in your free time at a cultural institution, what reasons would most likely influence your decision?

18 risposte

Copia



- Preference for spending free time on personal hobbies or interests.
- Lack of interest in cultural activities.
- Prior commitments or obligations.
- Concerns about the time commitment.
- Financial constraints prevent me from volunteering.
- Not wanting to be part of a system.
- almost all the above
- If I dedicate a part of my time to volunteering, I will have less time for other activities.
- I believe the time is spent better elsewhere.

In your opinion, what motivates people to volunteer in cultural heritage institutions?

18 risposte

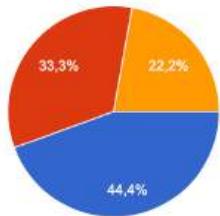
Copia



Would you consider volunteering your free time for a cultural institution?

18 risposte

Copia

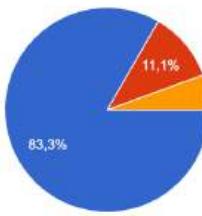


- Yes, I would be interested.
- No, I wouldn't.
- I'm uncertain.

If you decided to start volunteering for a cultural institution, what factors would influence your decision to do that?

18 risposte

Copia



- Personal interest in the institution's mission.
- Availability of meaningful volunteer opportunities.
- Perception of how volunteering might impact social or professional image.

What stereotypes or misconceptions do you think exist about volunteers in cultural institutions, if any?

18 risposte

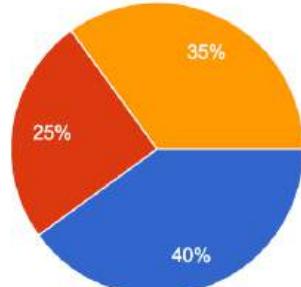
Copia



# *Results from the survey spread among library's visitors.*

Do you think cultural heritage institutions rely on volunteers?

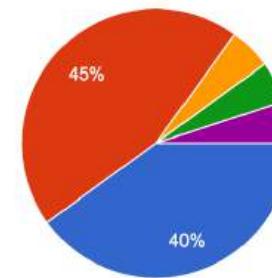
20 risposte



Copia

In which situations do you think volunteering for a cultural institution could be most appealing to you?

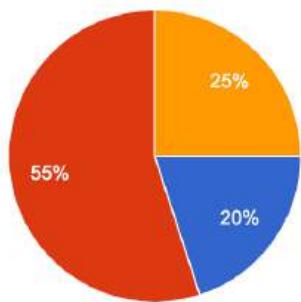
20 risposte



Copia

Would you consider volunteering your free time for a cultural institution?

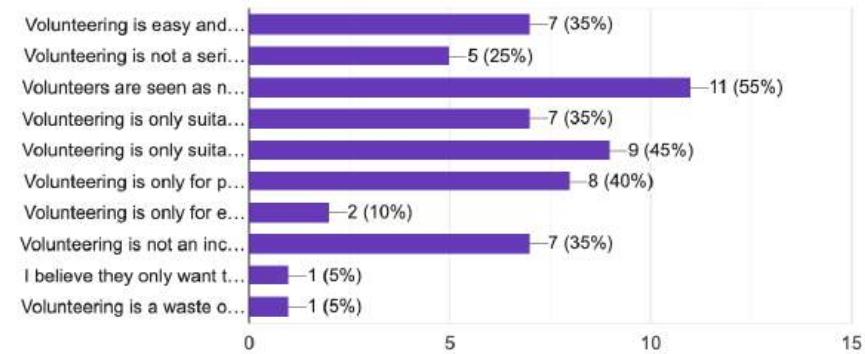
20 risposte



Copia

What stereotypes or misconceptions do you think exist about volunteers in cultural institutions, if any?

20 risposte



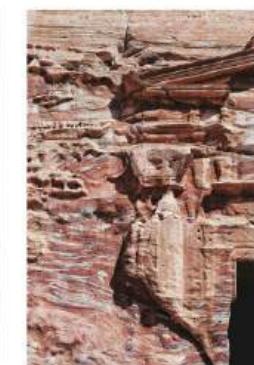
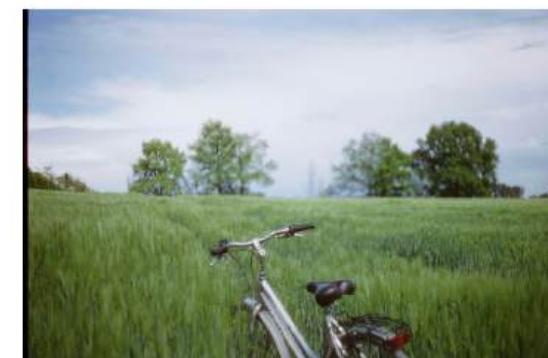
Copia

*Appendix D.*

# Pilot co-creation session plan.

Time	What	Aim	Materials	Notes			IDEATION		
17:00	Introduction and welcome	Explain to the participants the main direction of the project + a bit of research context	//						
17:10	Small intro of myself + let participants introduce themselves								
17:12	Explanation of the PaG	Bring back the attention of the participants to the goal of the session	Flip-over	Write the PaG underlining the main key-words: volunteering, GLAM, life transitions, emotional support					
PROBLEM FINDING									
17:15	Purge - Flower associations	Write on a flip-over the key words: volunteering, GLAM, emotional support, life transitions and ask the participants to create a flower around them by placing the words that come to their mind connected to those keywords.	Flip-overs Markers	Provide different papers to the participants and move them every two minutes so that they can brainstorm on each word.					
17:25	H2's	Ask the participants to reformulate the PaG in PaP through different how to's, they can be inspired from the associations found before	Post-its						
17:35	Re-state the problem	Ask the RG to restate the question based on their perception of the problem, then make sure it is clear for everyone.	Flip-over						
17:40		Visual Stimuli		Provide 15 images to the participants and ask them to brainstorm ideas that can solve the PaP by being inspired from the images.			Printed images, post-its.		Ask the participants to choose one image and then to stick post-its on that image. After two minutes ask them to move the image to the participant on the left.
18:00		C-Box					Flip-overs.		
SOLUTION FINDING									
18:10		Hits and Dots		Ask the participants to vote for the ideas they like the most by placing a dot. Then choose the four ideas that have the most dots.			Stickers		Provide them around 10 stickers per person so that they can vote intuitively.
18:20		Exhibition creation.		Ask the participant to choose one idea each and create a small exhibition, a poster or to model their idea (depending on the outcome) to show them.			Craft materials: cardboard, markers, glitters, glue, scissors, clay, pieces of textiles...		
18:50		Elevator pitch		Ask the participants to present their ideas to the others in three minutes max.					
19:00		Conclusion		Thank the group for their ideas.					

## *Pilot co-creation session trigger set.*



*Appendix E.*

# Main co-creation session plan.

## Session Overview (120 Minutes Total)

17:00 Introduction: Introduce myself, my graduation project.  
The themes of the session.

17:05. Ask the participants to say out loud their name and briefly who they are.

17:10

### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- Brief introduction to the session's goals and structure.
  - Quick participant introductions.
2. 17:15: Small Group Discussions (15 minutes)
- Divide participants into two groups (one volunteer and two non-volunteers per group).
  - Provide clear instructions and discussion prompts.
  - Use timeboxes to ensure each topic is covered efficiently.

3. 17:30 ask the participants to write down key words to summarize the main points of their discussion, for example the main benefits they could get from volunteering.

### 4. 17:40: Group Sharing and Reflection (10 minutes)

- Each group present what they discussed about by taking inspiration from the post-its on which they have written their key-words.

## 17:50 Introduction and Instructions (5 minutes)

- Explain the goal of the brainstorming activity.
- Provide guidelines and the brainstorming process.

## 17:55 Brainstorming Phase (20 minutes)

- Encourage free flow of ideas using structured techniques.
- Document all ideas visibly to stimulate further creativity.

## 18:20/25 Voting ideas (5 minutes)

- Tell the participants they can place 4 dots on their four fav ideas. Then choose the two most voted ideas.

## 18:30: Exhibition Making.

## 18:50 Project Presentations and discussion.

### Detailed Plan for Small Group Discussions

#### Group Composition:

- Group 1: One volunteer, the old lady, and one student.
- Group 2: One volunteer, the working girl, and one student.

#### Discussion Prompts:

(Timeboxed to ensure coverage of all questions)

Awareness of Volunteers (7 minutes total, 3.5 minutes per question)

#### 1. For Non-Volunteers:

- Are you aware of the presence of volunteers in GLAM institutions?
- Do you know what kind of tasks they perform and their impact?

#### 2. For Volunteers:

- Share a brief overview of your role and its impact.

Benefits of Volunteering in Life Transitions (8 minutes total, 4 minutes per question)

#### 1. For Volunteers:

- What life transition were you experiencing when you started volunteering?
- How has volunteering helped you navigate this transition?

#### 2. For Non-Volunteers:

- Have you experienced any significant life transitions recently?
- How do you think volunteering could help during such transitions?

*Appendix F.*

## *Evaluation questions for the first iteration.*

Question related to the first concept:

1. How much this kind of communication is grabbing your attention?
2. Do you think this communication will be efficient to spread out the message to many people as possible?

Question related to the second concept:

1. Does this solution grab your attention?
2. Would you feel comfortable to enter the booth?

Question related to the third concept:

1. Would you stop there?
2. Would you read all of this information?
3. Are you feeling more comfortable in approaching this totem instead of the booth?

Questions related to the fourth concept:

1. Would you notice the small artworks?
2. Would you scan the QR or would you just pass on?

General comparative questions:

1. Which of these concepts do you think it would convince you more to learn deeper about these benefits of volunteering for yourself?
2. Which of these concepts do you think it is more able to spread the voice?
3. What would you keep or leave from each concept?

## *Evaluation questions for the second iteration.*

Questions related to the interface:

1. Do you feel involved in the interaction? Are you prompt to discover more?
2. Do you feel a connection with these volunteers?
3. Do you think that their privacy is protected?
4. Which idea of volunteering did you get from this experience? Did it change your preconceptions?
5. Are you prompt to discover more on the website?

Questions related to the initiative:

1. Do you think that being able to choose your environment would prompt you more to start volunteering?
2. Do you think that this benefit of emotional support tool for life transitions would convince you to start volunteering?
3. Would the increased knowledge about the topic convince you about volunteering?

Questions related to the booth:

1. Would the booth grab your attention in a museum?
2. Would you feel comfortable in entering the booth?
3. Did you feel that the experience of interacting with the booth was immersive and engaging?

Questions related to the website and the social media campaign:

1. How was the overall experience with the website? Did you find it informative enough?
2. If you had this initiative promoted on a social media or with this installation, which of the two would prompt you more to discover about it?
3. Do you think you would browse the website if you would get to know it from an adv instagram post?

*Appendix G*

# *User Experience Evaluation Questions.*

Questions related to the booth:

1. Did you feel comfortable in entering?
2. Did you feel protected in your experience?
3. Do you think that the booth added value to the experience in terms of visibility and user experience?

Questions related to the digital interaction:

1. Did you feel that the experience of interacting with the booth was immersive and engaging?
2. Would the stories of the volunteers help to change your idea of volunteering for cultural heritage institutions?
3. Did you feel a connection with the volunteers through the digital interaction?
4. Are you prompted to learn more about it?
5. Did you have a positive perception of the volunteering environment in cultural heritage institutions?
6. Would you either scan the QR code or browse the website after your experience?
7. Would you interact with the volunteers knowing that they are recognizable and agree to be approached?

Questions related to the website + joint initiative topic:

1. Do you think that being able to choose your environment would prompt you more to start volunteering?
2. Do you think that this benefit of emotional support tool for life transitions would convince you to start volunteering?
3. Would the increased knowledge about the topic convince you about volunteering?
4. How was the overall experience with the website? Did you find it informative enough?

Questions related to visibility

1. If you had this initiative promoted on a social media or with this installation, which of the two would prompt you more to discover about it?
2. Do you think you would browse the website if you would get to know it from an adv instagram post?

# *Feasibility Evaluation Questions.*

First questions to ask after presentation

1. How well does this initiative align with the library's current strategic goals and priorities?
2. What additional support or resources would be needed to integrate this project into the library's existing programs?

Questions related to cost.

3. Cost feasibility: Would the concept be feasible and worthy to allocate into the business plan of the Library initiatives?

Questions related to impact

4. How would you measure the success and impact of this initiative in terms of increasing volunteer engagement and community involvement?

Questions related to time

5. Is there an available space within the library that could house the booth on a long-term basis?
6. If a long-term installation isn't feasible, what would be the ideal duration for a temporary setup to make an impact?

Questions related to cooperativeness

1. What existing partnerships does the library have with other cultural institutions that could support this initiative?
2. What challenges do you foresee in coordinating with multiple GLAM institutions for a joint campaign?
3. How flexible is the concept in terms of adapting to the unique needs and goals of different cultural institutions?

# Appendix A.

# Digital Prototypes.

The following screens show the p5.js code of the digital interaction.

```
let blueBubble;
let greenBubbles = [];
let dragging = null;
let bubblesStuckTogether = 0;
let maxGreenBubbles = 5; // Maximum number of green bubbles
let totalBubblesStuck = 0; // Keep track of the number of bubbles stuck together
let bubbleAppearanceDelay = 12000; // Delay for new bubble appearance in milliseconds (12 seconds)
let lastBubbleReleaseTime = 0; // Timestamp when the last bubble was released

let showIntro = true; // Flag to show the intro screen
let introDuration = 10000; // Duration to show the intro screen in milliseconds (10 seconds)
let introStartTime;

let showFinalScreen = false; // Flag to show the final screen
let finalScreenStartTime = 0;
let activityImg1; // Variable to store the first activity image
let activityImg2; // Variable to store the second activity image
let activityImg3; // Variable to store the third activity image
let currentActivity = 1; // Variable to track the current activity image
let activityImgStartTime; // Timestamp for when the activity image starts displaying
let finalScreening; // Variable to store the final screen image

let collisionSound1; // Variable to store the first collision sound
let collisionSound2; // Variable to store the second collision sound
let collisionSound3; // Variable to store the third collision sound
let collisionSound4; // Variable to store the fourth collision sound
let collisionSound5; // Variable to store the fifth collision sound
let collisionPlayed1 = false; // Flag to track if the first collision sound has been played
let collisionPlayed2 = false; // Flag to track if the second collision sound has been played
let collisionPlayed3 = false; // Flag to track if the third collision sound has been played
let collisionPlayed4 = false; // Flag to track if the fourth collision sound has been played
let collisionPlayed5 = false; // Flag to track if the fifth collision sound has been played

let dissolveStartTime = 0; // Timestamp for when the dissolve effect should start

function preload() {
  // Load the collision sounds
  collisionSound1 = loadSound('collision1.mp3');
  collisionSound2 = loadSound('collision2.mp3');
  collisionSound3 = loadSound('collision3.mp3');
  collisionSound4 = loadSound('collision4.mp3');
  collisionSound5 = loadSound('collision5.mp3');

  // Load the activity images
  activityImg1 = loadImage('activity1.png');
  activityImg2 = loadImage('activity2.png');
  activityImg3 = loadImage('activity3.png');

  // Load the final screen image
  finalScreening = loadImage('finalscreen.png');
}

function setup() {
  createCanvas(800, 600, WEBGL); // Enable WEBGL renderer
  textFont('monospace');
  textAlign(CENTER, CENTER);

  // Initialize the intro start time
  introStartTime = millis();

  // Create the blue bubble
  blueBubble = new Bubble(100, 300, 70, color(173, 216, 230)); // Bigger light blue bubble
  bubblesStuckTogether.push(blueBubble);
  createGreenBubble(); // Start by creating the first green bubble
  lastBubbleReleaseTime = millis(); // Set the initial timestamp
}

function draw() {
  background(0); // Black background
  if (showIntro) {
    fill(255); // White font color
    textSize(24);
    text("Did you know that volunteering\nis not only for helping the community\nbut it could also be fo
    // Check if the intro duration has passed
    if (millis() - introStartTime >= introDuration) {
      showIntro = false; // Hide the intro screen
      lastBubbleReleaseTime = millis(); // Reset the bubble release timer
    } else if (showFinalScreen) {
      let elapsedTime = millis() - finalScreenStartTime;
      let alpha = map(elapsedTime, 0, 1000, 0, 255);
      background(0, alpha); // Fade to black background

      if (elapsedTime >= 1000) {
        fill(255); // White font color
        textSize(28); // Slightly bigger than the previous text
        text("What can you do here to enrich your bubble?", width / 2 - 200, -250);

        if (currentActivity === 1 || currentActivity === 2 || currentActivity === 3) {
          print(currentActivity)
          print(elapsedTime)
          let activityImg;
          if (currentActivity === 1) {
            activityImg = activityImg1;
          } else if (currentActivity === 2) {
            activityImg = activityImg2;
          } else if (currentActivity === 3) {
            activityImg = activityImg3;
          }

          if (elapsedTime < 6000) {
            // Make the activity image bounce slightly
            let bounce = sin((elapsedTime - 1000) * 0.003) * 5;
            imageMode(CENTER);
            image(activityImg, 0, bounce);
          } else {
            // Make the activity image dissolve after 4 seconds
            let alpha = map(elapsedTime - 6000, 0, 1000, 255, 0);
            tint(255, alpha);
            image(activityImg, 0, 0);
          }

          if (elapsedTime >= 7000) {
            currentActivity++; // Move to the next activity image
            activityImgStartTime = millis();
            finalScreenStartTime = millis();
            tint(255, 255);
            elapsedTime = 0
          }
        }
      }
      if (currentActivity > 3) {
        image(finalScreening, 0, 0, width, height); // Display final screen image
      } else {
        background(0, 0, 0, 20); // Black background
        // Display the instruction text at the top of the screen
        fill(255); // White font color
        textSize(20); // Slightly smaller than the intro text
        text("Drag your bubble to meet the volunteers' bubbles and listen.", width / 2 - 200, -height / 2 + 100);
      }
    }
  }
  // Update and display the blue bubble and stuck bubbles
  for (let bubble of bubblesStuckTogether) {
    bubble.update();
    bubble.display();
  }

  // Update and display all green bubbles
  for (let bubble of greenBubbles) {
    bubble.update();
    bubble.display();
  }

  // Check for bubble collisions and stick them together
  for (let greenBubble of greenBubbles) {
    if (blueBubble.isColliding(greenBubble)) {
      stickBubbles(greenBubble);
      lastBubbleReleaseTime = millis(); // Reset the timer when a collision occurs
    }
  }

  // Play the collision sounds based on the number of bubbles stuck together
}
```

```

if (!collisionPlayed1 && totalBubblesStuck === 1) {
  collisionSound1.play();
  collisionPlayed1 = true; // Mark the first collision sound as played
} else if (!collisionPlayed2 && totalBubblesStuck === 2) {
  collisionSound2.play();
  collisionPlayed2 = true; // Mark the second collision sound as played
} else if (!collisionPlayed3 && totalBubblesStuck === 3) {
  collisionSound3.play();
  collisionPlayed3 = true; // Mark the third collision sound as played
} else if (!collisionPlayed4 && totalBubblesStuck === 4) {
  collisionSound4.play();
  collisionPlayed4 = true; // Mark the fourth collision sound as played
} else if (!collisionPlayed5 && totalBubblesStuck === 5) {
  collisionSound5.play();
  collisionPlayed5 = true; // Mark the fifth collision sound as played
  dissolveStartTime = millis() + collisionSound5.duration() * 1000; // Set the time for starting
}
break; // Only handle one collision per frame
}

// Create a new green bubble if the delay has passed and we haven't reached the maximum number of gr
if (totalBubblesStuck < maxGreenBubbles && millis() - lastBubbleReleaseTime >= bubbleAppearanceDelay
  createGreenBubble();
lastBubbleReleaseTime = millis(); // Reset the timestamp for the next bubble
}

// Handle dissolve effect after collision5.mp4 finishes playing
if (dissolveStartTime > 0 && millis() >= dissolveStartTime) {
  showFinalScreen = true;
  finalScreenStartTime = millis();
  dissolveStartTime = 0; // Reset dissolveStartTime
  currentActivity = 1; // Reset currentActivity for next interaction
}

function mousePressed() {
  for (let bubble of bubblesStuckTogether) {
    if (bubble.isMouseInside()) {
      dragging = bubble;
      break;
    }
  }
}

function mouseDragged() {
  if (dragging) {
    let dx = mouseX - dragging.x;
    let dy = mouseY - dragging.y;
    for (let bubble of bubblesStuckTogether) {
      bubble.x += dx;
      bubble.y += dy;
    }
  }
}

function mouseReleased() {
  dragging = null;
}

class Bubble {
  constructor(x, y, r, col) {
    this.x = x;
    this.y = y;
    this.r = r;
    this.col = col;
    this.stuckTo = null;
    this.velocity = createVector(0, 0);
    this.damping = 0.95; // Damping factor to slow down movements
  }

  update() {
    if (!this.stuckTo) {
      // Smooth and slow bouncing effect
      this.velocity.x += random(-0.05, 0.05); // Adjusted velocity for slower bouncing
      this.velocity.y += random(-0.05, 0.05); // Adjusted velocity for slower bouncing
      this.velocity.mult(this.damping); // Apply damping
      this.x += this.velocity.x;
      this.y += this.velocity.y;
    } else {
      // Follow the stuck-to bubble
      this.x = this.stuckTo.x + this.stuckToOffset.x;
      this.y = this.stuckTo.y + this.stuckToOffset.y;
    }
  }

  display() {
    fill(this.col);
    noStroke();
    push();
    translate(this.x - width / 2, this.y - height / 2, 0);
    sphere(this.r); // Draw the bubble as a sphere
    pop();
  }

  isMouseInside() {
    return dist(mouseX - width / 2, mouseY - height / 2, this.x - width / 2, this.y - height / 2) < this.r;
  }

  isColliding(other) {
    return dist(this.x, this.y, other.x, other.y) < this.r + other.r;
  }

  stick(other) {
    if (!this.stuckTo) {
      this.stuckTo = other;
      this.stuckToOffset = createVector(this.x - other.x, this.y - other.y);
    }
  }

  function stickBubbles(newBubble) {
    for (let bubble of bubblesStuckTogether) {
      bubble.stick(newBubble);
    }
    bubblesStuckTogether.push(newBubble);
    greenBubbles = greenBubbles.filter(bubble => bubble !== newBubble);
    // Update the number of bubbles stuck together
    totalBubblesStuck++;
  }

  function createGreenBubble() {
    let newBubble;
    let isSafeDistance;
    do {
      let x = random(100, width - 100);
      let y = random(100, height - 100);
      newBubble = new Bubble(x, y, 50, color(144, 238, 144)); // Smaller light green bubble
      isSafeDistance = true;
      // Check if the new bubble is at a safe distance from all stuck bubbles
      for (let stuckBubble of bubblesStuckTogether) {
        if (dist(newBubble.x, newBubble.y, stuckBubble.x, stuckBubble.y) < stuckBubble.r + newBubble.r + 5) {
          isSafeDistance = false;
          break;
        }
      }
    } while (!isSafeDistance || newBubble.y < 50); // Ensure the new bubble doesn't appear over the instru
    greenBubbles.push(newBubble);
  }
}

```

The following link leads to the Figma prototype of the website:

<https://www.figma.com/proto/1fhsjYv7pxlrcJHFuX5O/Graduation-prototype?node-id=1-4&starting-point-node-id=68%3A202&t=U451-DkFed81mu8YE-1>

