

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY  
IN THE UK VOLUNTARY SECTOR:  
“ENABLING NEW WAYS TO USE EXISTING  
ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES”

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Having as point of departure the increasing presence of the non-profit sector in the socio-economic life everywhere in the world, the thesis proposes a perspective on the importance of the information and communications technology (ICT) for the non-profit organizations. It aims at contributing to a better understanding of the ways and means to use existing organizational resources in this respect. In so doing, key literature is reviewed regarding the role attributed to and the implementation of ICT by NPOs as well as the experiences in various Anglophone countries. As to the theoretical approach and methodology used in the study, the originality of the research work is given by a survey conducted across 213 UK third-sector organizations, as well as in-depth interviews with five randomly chosen NPOs' staff members. The results indicate the existence of a large majority of positive opinions regarding NPOs' endowment in ICT. At the same time, they tend to reflect NPO managements' relative lack of confidence in the ICT's actual benefits. In the end, on the basis of conclusions drawn, several policy recommendations are formulated, for both governmental authorities and NPOs' managers. This thesis represents an attempt to bring an original contribution to the study of ICT impact on NPOs. By combining theoretical analysis and factual findings using survey/interview techniques, the thesis tries to offer a new approach in the field.

Keywords: Non-Profit Organizations, ICT, Organizational Resources, Civil Society Organizations, Voluntary Sector

İNGİLTERE’DEKİ GÖNÜLLÜ SEKTÖRÜNDE BİLGİ VE İLETİŞİM  
TEKNOLOJİLERİ: MEVCUT KURUMSAL KAYNAKLARI KULLANMAK  
İÇİN YENİ YOLLARIN ETKİNLEŞTİRİLMESİ

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Bu tez, üçüncü sektörün dünyanın her yerinde sosyoekonomik yaşamda giderek artan varlığından yola çıkarak kar amacı gütmeyen kuruluşlar (STK) için bilgi ve iletişim teknolojilerinin (BİT) önemine dair bir bakış açısı sunmaktadır. Bu itibarla, mevcut kurumsal kaynakların kullanımı için yolların ve yöntemlerin daha iyi anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bunu yaparken, STK'ların BİT uygulamaları ve BİT'ye atfettikleri rolle ilgili literatür ve İngilizce konuşan ülkelerdeki deneyimler gözden geçirilmiştir. Çalışmada kullanılan teorik yaklaşım ve metodoloji ile ilgili olarak, araştırmanın özgünlüğü İngiltere'deki 213 üçüncü sektör kuruluşu arasında yapılan bir anketten ve rastgele seçilmiş beş STK çalışanıyla yapılan derinlemesine görüşmelerden ileri gelmektedir. Sonuçlar STK'ların BİT donatımına dair çoğunlukla olumlu görüşlerin varlığını göstermektedir. Aynı zamanda, STK yöneticilerinin BİT'lerin esas faydalarına duydukları göreceli güven eksikliğini yansıtmak eğilimindedir. Çalışma sonunda, çıkarılan sonuçlar temelinde, hem devlet yetkilileri hem de STK yöneticileri için çeşitli politika önerileri formüle edilmiştir. Bu tez, BİT'lerin STK'lar üzerindeki etkisiyle ilgili çalışmalara özgün bir katkı sağlama girişimini temsil eder; anket / mülakat teknikleri kullanılmasıyla teorik analizleri ve somut bulguları birleştirerek, alanında yeni bir yaklaşım sunmak için çalışır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kâr Amacı Gütmeyen Kuruluşlar, BİT, Kurumsal Kaynaklar, Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları, Gönüllü Sektörü

To My Parents and To My Beloved Grandfather *Ahmet Dede*

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Preliminary Remarks

In today's global world, the non-profit sector, including a broad array of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and faith-based initiatives, is an increasingly important participant in the economies of both emerging and post-industrial countries (Anheier and List, 2005). It has also been referred to as an integral part of national economies, particularly in the absence of government services resulting in the inadequate provision of welfare services (Sanders et al., 2008). Anheier and List (2005:14) argue for the rise in philanthropy as a "major economic and social force" in the quest for a balance between the public sector and the private sector. Philanthropic organizations may often allow themselves the luxury of pursuing their objectives free of market forces' influences, as well as of the need to please their stakeholders (as distinct from shareholders).

It is to be noted that, besides the trend of increasing reliance upon non-profit organizations (NPOs) for social welfare, which has a genuine transformative potential for the society, we are witnesses of another similarly salient trend: the expansion of information and communications technology (ICT). The extremely rapid advances registered in this field constitute an important phenomenon, worth exploring (Adams and Perlmutter, 1995). While this may be true in almost all fields, it is particularly vital for NPOs because such technology can be a "game-changer" - allowing them to serve their stakeholders in new and better ways, and to reconfigure distant relationships.

Obviously, the use of ICT may determine structural changes within NPOs, enhancing mission-related outcomes and boosting organizational performance. At the same time, though, it can also enable wider changes in the way such

organizations interact with and influence society (Hackler and Saxton, 2007). Numerous scholars have discussed the importance of using the ICT in order for the NPOs to successfully compete with one another for grants and donations, fulfill their missions, and meet the requirements for increased transparency and accountability. However, in the third sector investment in ICT is significantly smaller than that made by profit-motivated businesses (Schneider, 2003). Evidently, due to the financial constraints under which NPOs must generally operate, they have been slow to implement ICT. Lack of competitive technological tools, in turn, decreases their productivity, which leads to a cycle where low productivity leads to further strains on their finances (Heye, 2009). In addition to financial constraints of implementing ICT, most NPOs have difficulties in coping with challenges in obtaining the technical proficiency they need. Such difficulties may also come from the unwillingness or inability of their management and/or staff to adapt to change in a timely manner (Ticher et al., 2002).

Irrespective, though, of such hurdles, adopting, training their staff and properly using ICT constitute nowadays a prime necessity for all NPOs.

## **1.2. Scope and Structure of the Thesis**

Starting from this axiomatic reality, the purpose of this thesis is to contribute to a better understanding of what Hackler and Saxton (2007) term “bridging the gap between current and potential uses of ICT” in NPOs. Because funds are usually limited in an NPO when compared with a for-profit business, maximizing available financial resources to incorporate an effective technology management strategy is particularly vital for the sustained growth of the respective NPO (Hatten, 1982). Bourdieu (1986) considers that unused resources, such as goodwill, skills or other non-material capital, are also of special significance for the third sector. In other words, to put it simply, the present thesis aims at answering the following broad question: **could an NPO enhance and manage**

**more effectively its financial, as well as other, non-material resources by using more extensively the ICT?**

The research and analytical work starts with *Chapter 2*, where definitions and literature on key studies regarding the implementation of ICT by NPOs in various Anglophone countries are thoroughly reviewed. While obviously not an exhaustive examination, an overview of the field was judged to be useful for NPOs seeking a more comprehensive understanding of their ICT environment. Literature dealing with the growing network economy is also investigated, as a background for the adoption and utilization of ICT.

*Chapter 3* presents the theoretical approach and methodology used to conduct the study. The main tool was a survey conducted across UK third-sector organizations. In addition to the survey, in-depth interviews with five randomly chosen people working in NPOs were also conducted, in order to get an insight view on their attitude towards ICT. The survey also aimed to be practical for NPOs managers.

The same chapter reviews four categories of limitations that should be kept in mind while interpreting the results of the study.

*Chapter 4* includes and critically interprets the results of the survey already mentioned above. Although they reflect the quasi-unanimity of views with respect to the necessity to do more – in terms of financial and human investment – for ICT endowments, they also tend to indicate a relative lack of awareness of NPOs' managements as regards the ICT's actual benefits. Hence, the survey aims to provide “food for thought” to NPOs managements, as well as a better understanding of the importance to bridge the gap between actual and potential uses of ICT by their organizations. To supplement the findings of the survey with further qualitative data, a series of five in-depth interviews was conducted with persons willing to share their personal feelings about ICT in their charities.

Finally, in *Chapter 5* we endeavor to draw a series of conclusions derived from the study as a whole, as well as to formulate some suggestions for future action by the interested parties. Having as point of departure the growing number and role of NPOs in today's global world both at local/national and international levels, more and more NPO managers recognize the imperative necessity to have recourse to ICT in their day-to-day activity. Despite sometimes conflicting attitudes – mostly related to higher costs initially incurred –, they generally agree that in the longer run acquiring and putting to work ICT is the only way to face economic and social competition challenges.

The thesis represents an attempt to bring an original contribution to the study of ICT impact upon NPOs' activity. It is our humble opinion that, by combining theoretical analysis and factual findings using survey/interview techniques, the thesis offers a new approach in the field.

## CHAPTER 2

### DEFINITIONS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter addresses the key definitions and the broad setting for this study, namely the simultaneous growth of the network economy and the third sector. ICT studies of the Anglophone NPOs, especially those conducted in the UK, Canada, Australia and the US, will be reviewed. References will be reviewed regarding the creation and management of intangible assets through ICT in today's environment of increasing complexity, competitiveness, and demand for services provided by NPOs. Socio-centric organizational resource theory is to be examined, as the optimum premise for this study. It will be used to construct the survey questions and interviews set out in Chapter 4.

#### **2.1. Defining Non-Profit Organizations**

Non-profit organizations (NPOs) are such a diverse group of bodies that discussing issues related to their information management, as well as to the lines along which they could be defined may prove to be challenging. They include such entities as: credit unions, civic leagues, sports and youth clubs, soup kitchens, fraternal orders, professional societies, churches and their associated groups, labor, agricultural and horticultural organizations, animal rescue, legal advocacy groups, colleges, universities, hospitals, museums, art societies, co-ops, veterans' organizations, schools, disaster relief organizations, and many more. The very definitions of NPO and the civil society are not entirely settled, and can be vague or overlap with other terms, such as non-governmental organizations, commonly called NGOs (Anheier and List, 2005).

It has taken several years to the pioneering scholars and experts participating in the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project to classify NPOs in

what has become known as the International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations (ICNPO) (Salamon and Anheier, 1996).

In accordance with the determinations set out in the ICNPO, the five elements that distinguish an NPO from other organizations are: (i) it is, to a greater or lesser degree, organized; (ii) it is separate from the government; (iii) it is self-governing, that is, it has a meaningful level of autonomy; (iv) profits are directed to fulfilling the objectives of the organization, and not distributed to shareholders or directors; (v) it is voluntary, engaging volunteer staff or donors or both (Salamon and Anheier, 1996).

This study uses the above guidelines, as they are flexible enough to embrace organizations as diverse as mutual insurance groups, rural healthcare providers, art history societies, animal rescue groups, and many more in the varied and complex landscape of the voluntary sector.

NPOs may be loosely organized, as in the case of a youth club (as for example the myriad of neighborhood youth centers in the UK), or be heavily structured, as in the case of a large foundation (e.g. *Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation*, the wealthiest NPO in the US, or *British Welcome Trust*, the largest such organization in the UK). Thus, it is not merely the variety of NPOs' aims, values, customs, and geographic locations, which renders discussion of their ICT management complex and overwhelming, but also their wide range of organizational structures and management styles. Anheier and List (2005:12) point out that, "The field of philanthropy, civil society, non-profit organizations and NGOs is far from unified. It is a conglomerate of separate intellectual approaches and traditions..." This is as it should be. The situations and difficulties NPOs are faced with being so diverse, there is no wonder there is not a unique, consolidated principal approach to them. This is why the present study makes no attempt to provide a comprehensive answer to the problems relating to ICT management for NPOs.

When referring to NPOs not being government-related, but playing an important role in the day-to-day life of a society, it is interesting to note that Sanders, O'Brien, Tennant, Sokolowski, and Salamon (2008) focus on NPOs as an essential part of national economies, predominantly in the absence of government services resulting in the inadequate delivery of welfare services. In the same vein, Rankin (2002) points out that a little-known and scarcely-studied aspect of the end of the Cold War is the associated rise of NPOs. As obsolete government services broke down – triggering widespread joblessness, the devastation of domestic banks and depletion of people's savings, the lack of medical care for elderly and young and other vulnerable members of the population and so on – the role of NPOs increased in importance. Gunn (2004) also highlights the fact that many charitable, voluntary organizations have been established to deliver services as the result of governmental delegation of providing certain public services to the non-profit sector.

While the delivery of health, educational and social services may dominate the socio-economic specific weight achieved by NPOs, there are also a myriad of small and medium-sized volunteer organizations in a wide range of fields, from crafts co-operatives to sports leagues, which contribute more than ever to wellbeing and social cohesion in today's societies. Although the increasing political role played by the NPOs exceeds the scope of our analysis, there is no doubt that it was one of the main motivational factors that stand for the present study.

Summing up – and in the light of the above -, if we were to draw the lines of a definition of an NPO, we would say that it is **an organized, private** (as opposed to governmental – n.n.), **self-governing, voluntary entity set up for serving a public interest, or a mutual benefit** (other than making profits and distributing them to owners and/or investors – n.n.).

## **2.2. Defining Information and Communications Technology**

For the purpose of the present study, information and communications technology (ICT) essentially means **merging of computer networks with telephone networks and audio-visual devices**. The term refers to the devices, as well as the services, software and applications associated with them. Thus, issues related to computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems, and mobile telephones, tablets, and other mobile devices are included in this study.

The transformative power of ICT for NPOs can be a double-edged sword (Hackler and Saxton, 2007). ICT can level the playing field between organizations with quite different resources, but it also raises the bar for NPO performance, rendering the adoption of ICT by NPOs with very limited resources a critically important, yet complex and difficult undertaking (Schneider 2003; Turner 1998; McNutt and Boland, 1999). Having in mind the purpose of this study, we think it unnecessary to focus on the technology itself, but rather, to examine its adoption as a working tool by NPOs in order to achieve their goals.

The most important working tool for NPOs is, evidently, the **Internet**. Nowadays, it has become an integral part of our lives and has profoundly changed the way people from different backgrounds contact one another, and form relationships and groups. This common communication platform has greatly contributed to the economic and cultural globalization phenomenon in the world. With the growth of e-commerce and e-government and greater public familiarity with and the use of personal computers, mobile devices and applications, such as mobile phones and tablets, geospatial information systems and social media, ICT has emerged as a diverse field worthy of empirical investigation.

The well-known Moore's Law, which posits that the number of transistors on integrated circuits doubles approximately every two years, has been accurately predicting progress since Gordon E. Moore, the famous co-founder of Intel. Corp., first described the phenomenon in 1965. Advances in ICT have been

largely predicated upon adding transistors at a highly accelerated pace. While some believe this trend will continue until 2020 even if transistors themselves become obsolete (Kanellos, 2005), some believe that the rate of progress will slow markedly by 2013 (Gargini, 2000). In 1954, the average price of a transistor cost \$5.52 USD. In 2004, the average cost was 191 nanodollars<sup>1</sup>. Over the last decade, similar trends have been maintained regarding electronic storage capacity, processor speed and network capacity: increased performance at decreased cost. Thus, a significant number of people today – from nearly all age groups, and social and economic strata – have access to the Internet as a part of their daily lives.

Schneider (2003) explored the ability of the Internet to open doors and break barriers, bridge socio-economic, racial, religious, and gender divides, and overcome cultural differences. Because of the relative ubiquity of the Internet, even small organizations that are restricted by modest budgets, insufficient manpower, and limited exposure outside their immediate district now have many opportunities for growth and progress regardless of their size and actual resources. As Jones (1998) highlights, the socio-economic consequences are far greater than most could have foreseen; computer mediated communication “is at once technology, medium and engine of social relations....” The Internet has radically reconfigured distant relationships.

### **2.3. Use of ICT in Non-Profit Organizations**

Technology management in NPOs affects many aspects of an organization’s successful operation and growth. The continuous rise of the network economy, in which information takes on increasing importance as a strategic resource for NPOs with missions aimed at assisting the poor and marginalized (Grimwood-Jones and Simmons, 1998) serves to underline the necessity for using ICT wisely. Because funds are usually limited in an NPO compared with a for-profit business,

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<sup>1</sup> A nanodollar is worth 1/1,000,000,000 USD (one billionth of a USD). This means that in 50 years, between 1954 and 2004, the price of a transistor diminished almost 29 million times!

maximizing available financial resources to incorporate an effective technology management strategy is especially vital for the sustained growth of NPOs (Hatten, 1982).

Generally, in an organization ICT can be used internally and externally in three different areas. *First*, it can be used to facilitate transactions and communications. *Second*, it can assist with the storage, processing, distribution and presentation of data. *Finally*, it can be extremely useful as a marketing tool to improve the process of reaching into communities and attracting volunteers and donors. The National Council for Voluntary Organizations in the United Kingdom emphasizes the importance of using the Internet for connecting, both for the beneficiaries (to stay in touch) and for volunteers (to manage their work), as well as the relative ease-of-access for NPOs through open-source software (NCVO, 2012).

The role ICT can play in an NPO's activity is many-fold. It includes making genuine cash savings possible, maintaining organizational infrastructure, conducting field research, and responding to emergencies. A telling example in this sense is the use of geospatial tools for humanitarian purposes: they have helped to make it possible for NPOs such as the United Nations World Food Program and other emergency response organizations to arrange transportation, supplies and personnel rapidly, and to timely share information on the local conditions with relief workers in their own and/or other organizations. This is all the more important if we take into consideration that the first people to enter a disaster area do not know what they will find there; thanks to geospatial and other mobile applications, their ability to share vital information with government authorities and NGOs can streamline response operations (WFP Spatial Data Infrastructure, 2012).

It is our view that, as more NPOs have recourse to the digitalization of their record-keeping and management, as well as use ICT in their core operations, it gradually becomes imperative for their managements not only to open themselves

to immediate, short-term ICT implementation, but also to develop long-term strategies in the field.

At the same time, evidence indicate that the use of ICT allows NPOs to easily communicate among themselves, thus being able to learn from others' experiences and eventually to find common grounds for establishing alliances between local, national and international entities. Broadly speaking, this inter-organizational networking is a salient feature of our modern, on-the-move world, that is largely discussed in the specialized literature. It is to be noted that, when it comes to organizations in the voluntary sector, many of them use the new technology to reach out to fellow organizations, rather than to the public. This may indicate something unique about the third sector, or at least, sharply different from the commercial market sector, which uses ICT to reach new customers, as a high priority.

Another benefit of ICT is that now an NPO can publish its work online, make new contacts and associations, obtain feedback on its efforts, and maintain communication with its stakeholders without significant financial expenses. The well-known American wit H.L. Mencken<sup>2</sup> once said that "freedom of the press belongs to those who own the press". In a sense, with the advent of widespread Internet access, almost anyone can own a press, and voluntary organizations are probably among the ones that can get the most out of it.

In addition to changing the ways NPOs interact with and serve their communities, the extension of information technology to nearly all components of the nonprofit sector has brought significant potential for internal organizational change. Woods (2004) asserts that this is one area of untapped potential; thus, while NPOs use electronic communication and the Internet for work purposes, "many do not rely heavily on them for organizational effectiveness." A notable

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Louis Mencken (1880-1956), famous American journalist, essayist, satirist and critic, mainly known for his strong criticism of the actions taken at the government level, was a mentor of the American Libertarian Movement.

organizational feature of ICT is the potential for creating horizontal rather than hierarchical power structures and sub-structures (Hulme and Wright, 2006).

In *The Future of Work*, MIT management professor Thomas Malone makes important points about how ICT is changing the structure and function of organizations. He foresees a revolution from the customary “command and control” hierarchy to one he describes as “coordinate and cultivate” (2004; 178). Thus, the potential for organizational change as a result of greater use of ICT is the democratization of control, communication and knowledge, which may have far-reaching effects.

Peer-to-peer sharing may include not only disseminating important data, but it also enables a wide range of interactions both internally and externally to an NPO. An example is low-cost microcredit programs, as in online social lending organizations are essentially peer-to-peer in structure (Hulme and Wright, 2006).

In the case of organizations such as labor unions and cooperatives, the successful application of ICT has been the driving force behind widespread increases in administrative efficiency. This, in turn, has increased the potential for regulatory changes in such contexts (Burt and Taylor, 2000). Thus, ICT may trigger both structural changes within NPOs – by enhancing mission-related outcomes and boosting organizational performance –, and enable wide changes in the way NPOs interact with and influence society (Hackler and Saxton, 2007).

A result of the high-speed and low-cost communications is that ICT has also led to a change in the expectations of NPOs’ stakeholders. Such individuals and groups expect a greater degree of professionalism from NPOs, coupled with smooth-running and fast-growing operations. Most NPOs have begun trying to adopt information technology and advanced forms of communication in recent years (Finn, Maher and Forster, 2006) largely due to competitive pressures and in pursuit of perceived credibility or legitimacy (Burt and Taylor, 2003; Noir and Walsham, 2007).

New technologies routinely benefit NPOs with large budgets, which are able to purchase and implement sophisticated ICT systems and train their employees appropriately (Schneider, 2003). But those NPOs that fail to implement ICT quickly and effectively may find that the gap between them and other NPOs is widening and that they may be regarded as less and less competitive. The gap between them and private sector companies is likely to become even greater, continuous delays raising problems increasingly difficult to overcome. Under such circumstances, management changes are of critical importance for the third sector, and the fact that many workers are volunteers cannot serve as excuse for lack of professionalism.

In today's modern environment, it is particularly important for NPO managers to stay tuned to new developments and shifting trends in order to ensure the ICT implementation in response to technological, organizational and social changes. In this age of revolutionary technological changes, lack of interest is considered regressive. Hence, consistent updates of information to maintain the websites, as well as implementation of new technologies and methodologies as they emerge may be critical to maintaining the usefulness of ICT. For this to occur, qualified staff needs to be recruited and management needs to carefully monitor their ICT-related activities. However, previous studies suggest that, in many cases, management is resistant to change, and slow and reluctant to make effective use of ICT. Perhaps the best way to deal with the uneasiness associated with the rapid changes brought by ICT in the third sector is to support reflexivity on the part of managers. There are numerous conflicting data, however, this study posits that, overall, making use of ICT enables new and better ways to put to work existing organizational resources.

Another point is that while ICT implementation has become prevalent in most businesses, the high costs of hardware and software may render it difficult for many NPOs to use new technology in order to capture otherwise unused organizational resources. Indeed, insufficient financial resources turn out to be

the primary reason for many NPOs not to purchase and adopt up-to-date ICT. Funds are needed not only to cover the initial capital expenditures for equipment and software acquisition, but also for maintaining the equipment and training the staff to use it. Numerous scholars have discussed the importance of bridging the gap between current ICT utilization and what is really needed in order that NPOs be able to successfully compete with the public and private sectors and other NPOs, fulfill their missions, and meet the requirements for increased transparency and accountability. Even though NPOs have been relatively slow about embracing appropriate ICT programs, ICT can play an important part in meeting all of these challenges (Burt and Taylor 2000, 2003; Berlinger and Te'eni 1999; Gordon 1998; Elliott, Katsiolouides, and Weldon 1998; Kolleck 1993; Te'eni and Speltz 1992).

Experiences offered by quite a number of NPOs back our opinion, too, according to which the earlier the ICT adopted and implemented, the higher their competitive capacity to attract funds and volunteers and the better the opportunities to develop their overall activity.

#### **2.4. Utilization of ICT by NPOs: Influential Factors**

In the next paragraphs we will venture on briefly examining two factors that may play a role in the adoption and utilization of ICT by NPOs. The first is perceived competitiveness: there are a number of dimensions to competitiveness, which will be briefly discussed here. The second is perceived credibility.

Any discussion about **perceived competitiveness** should start from the fact that, while there has been relatively little systematic research on the environmental characteristics that may influence NPOs' adoption of ICT, the increasingly common assumption is that the nonprofit sector is "competitive". This assumption supports much of the research on what factors affect the manner and success of NPOs' adoption of ICT. The concept that the pressure for NPOs to be competitive had motivated their implementation of ICT is fairly accepted. Burt

and Taylor (2003; 115) highlighted this premise when setting out the underlying principle for their research: “Heightened competition for both funding and volunteers, accompanied by acute pressures to deliver performance improvements, bring strong imperatives for organizational transformation.” Other scholars we will briefly overview in this chapter demonstrate the same or similar belief in competitiveness as a foundation for their studies, as exemplified by Hackler & Saxton (2007), Schneider (2003), Ticher, Maison and Jones (2002), and Corder (2001).

Another dimension to greater NPO competitiveness was set out earlier by the Canadian Government’s Panel on Accountability and Governance in the Voluntary Sector. Their findings, from the 1999 report on the Voluntary Sector Initiative, are still relevant to the general environment of and reasons for increased competitiveness:

In recent years, the voluntary sector’s infrastructure has been significantly weakened for a number of reasons. As a result of government cuts to funding, often combined with downloading onto the sector of services once provided by governments, there is intense competition for funds, not only within the sector but often with governments directly. The pressure to deliver more and more sophisticated services has stretched the financial and human resources of many organisations. Information technology has become an essential tool for effective communication and management in the modern organisation, yet voluntary organisations lag badly behind the other sectors in this regard (Voluntary Sector Initiative 1999; 14).

A number of scholars have observed a trend towards increasing professionalism in the voluntary sector as a competitive response. Heightened competition for service contracts, accompanied by increased demand for accountability, has been recognized in the United Kingdom (Burt and Taylor, 2003), Australia (Randle and Dolnicar, 2009), in the United States (Hackler and Saxton, 2007), India (Ramanath, 2009), and other places around the globe (Ebrahim, 2003).

We are in complete agreement with the above observation on increasing professionalism. Indeed, only NPOs whose managements are permanently in tune with and open to developments in ICT are able to have – and to follow – a clear vision, in the long run, to the benefit of their service users.

The rather broad category of competitiveness may be examined more minutely and precisely by segregating its different dimensions. This discussion of the different types of competitiveness that an organization may exhibit is not intended to be exhaustive; the purpose is to shed light on the reasons for or pressures that result in third sector acceptance of ICT. Institutional pressure may be felt as an externally-generated social competitiveness, to which the voluntary sector is peculiarly subject. NPOs are, by their nature, very social and strongly influenced by the actions of other NPOs. They tend to model their own activities after those of others. Their taking up ICT may be a reaction or “response to a larger social—that is, institutional—environment (Zorn, Flanagan, and Shoham, 2011; 6). Thus, there is a trend towards organizational homogeneity and conformity. In this sense, institutional pressure may overlap with the second type of influence we will examine here, namely, credibility. NPOs wishing to be perceived as legitimate and credible members of their organizational field will adapt to the norms of that field (Scott & Meyer, 1991. Also see Powell & Dimaggio, 1991; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996).

Frumkin and Galaskiewicz (2004) argue that, because of the uncertainty in measuring NPO performance, NPOs are more likely to be influenced by institutional pressures than organizations in the market sector. A concern raised by Zorn, et al., (2011) is whether such pressure may be coercive rather than normative, resulting in organizations adopting new technologies inefficiently or non-optimally—that is, where the perceived and actual benefits are at variance, or where the technology is not a good fit for NPO operations. Thus, competitiveness may be formal (for example, as a result of legislature) or informal, coercive or normative, and even internal (as when an NPO regards itself as a leader in its

field). Both Zorn, et al., (2011) and Flanagin (2000) discuss perceived leadership as a type of mimetic competitive pressure that results in early adoption of ICT. For example, in order to maintain its status as a leader, an organization will be one of the first to establish their website. While Zorn, et al., separately, “perceived leadership in the field, professionalism, expected practice, competitor scanning, accountability, and marketization” (2011; 7) for the purposes of analysis of different types of competitiveness, they recognized that in practice, these types overlap and are difficult to distinguish. Therefore, the original research set forth in this study will not attempt to divide “competitiveness” into smaller categories.

A second factor that researchers believe motivates the adoption of ICT is as a method to establish or assert **credibility**. This view encompasses the amplified need for timely and accurate reporting, in order to satisfy stakeholders, as well as the perception of the donors that NPOs looking for support will use reasonably advanced technology as a matter of course. As Zorn, et al., (2011; 5) state, “Thus, NPOs must be concerned about their organizational reputations in the eyes of stakeholders and adopt and use ICTs in part to appear legitimate.” The argument summarized by Zorn, et al., is supported by findings of numerous studies, including the one of Thatcher, Brower and Mason (2006), which gives the example of a US agency that used early adoption of ICT as a benchmark for selecting NPOs. Schneider (2003) also found that NPOs that could not or did not implement ICT in an effective and timely manner, failing to meet the expectations of their potential donors, have lost important funding opportunities. Moreover, Noir and Walsham (2007; 314), who name ICT “the great legitimizer”, state that in India, “Initiatives gain legitimacy and increase the likelihood of future resource allocations by making ICT a prerequisite.”

Setting ICT as a benchmark for the competitiveness and credibility of NPOs is undoubtedly an incentive for the latter to stay alert and absorb the developments in the ICT field. However, absorbing is not enough; without implementation it

would mean wasting valuable and already scarce material resources. Consequently, when designing and adopting medium and long-term strategies related to ICT NPOs' managers should also take into consideration the human resources needed for the utilization of those tools.

The original research set forth in Chapter 4 is based on findings concerning exactly the two potentially influential factors—competitiveness and credibility—mentioned above.

## **2.5. Effects of ICT on NPOs Operating in Anglophone Countries**

An early but relevant study on NPOs taking up ICT was performed by Zwielfo (1998), in which a survey of 135 non-profit environmental organizations across 10 countries was conducted. Of the 68% that had obtained Internet access, only 71% were using it to provide information and services. The study established the main barriers were capital cost, lack of know-how, and unwillingness on the part of senior management to implement ICT. As we shall see, this theme is common to most of the literature on the subject.

Yet, when NPOs do embrace ICT, the results generally justify the cost and effort. The return on the initial investment is usually rapid and may take either a material, or immaterial (qualitative) form. A study of 203 NPOs cited by Agard (2011) revealed that 84% of organizations reported positive changes in their efficiency and 83% of the executives believed that the quality of their NPOs' services had improved with the implementation of ICT. With efficient infrastructure and sophisticated technology, the research capabilities of the organizations noticeably improved, enabling them to interact and share information with other NPOs. This, in turn, led to a successful marketing strategy for their services. Not merely PR or marketing, but their strategic and tactical ICT approaches were the ones that attracted more publicity, support and funds, while actually improving the quality of their service delivery. By reducing paperwork and bureaucracy, and facilitating operations with better coordination and fewer

errors, the ICT system was felt to have significantly reduced costs in the long run. Additionally, good social media practices should be part of an NPO's ICT strategy. Social media can be powerful, and any organization wishing to raise its profile must take advantage of its benefits in order to get noticed (Agard, 2011).

Executives from approximately thirty voluntary and community sector organizations were interviewed by Ticher, et al., (2002) in their study about barriers to adopting ICT by NPOs in the **United Kingdom**. Their findings suggest that the most significant barriers were largely internal, although environmental stresses, such as donors' unrealistic expectations about ICT, also contributed. Perhaps the largest single factor influencing the uptake of ICT was the attitude of management towards technology, specifically the willingness and ability to adapt to change in a timely manner. The number of short-sighted managers, who are not able to grasp the positive effects of adopting ICT on their activity, having in mind solely the initially high costs of hardware and software, remains rather high.

NPOs also cited challenges in obtaining affordable, trustworthy technical proficiency and lack of sound project management as key barriers. Numerous NPO executives believed that others in their organizations, including the frontline caregivers, were opposed to change, which made them reluctant to adopt technology.

Burt and Taylor (1999) and Wyatt (2001) also conducted studies of community organizations in the UK with a view to understanding their adoption of ICT for networking and income-generating purposes. Wyatt analyzed the results of 1,860 surveys, while Burt and Taylor gathered 436 responses. The TBC Research (2001) surveyed only those NPOs already using at least some ICT. All three studies found widespread access to computers and the Internet, yet generally with lower-than-expected ICT uptake. Wyatt (2001) encountered a level of ICT adoption as much as 42.4% lower than for-profit enterprises. TBC Research

(2001) reported that 82% of their third sector respondents had websites, which was the highest number; however it must be kept in mind that they pre-selected respondents who had implemented ICT. By contrast, Wyatt found that a mere 53% of NPOs planned to have a web presence, compared to 80% of commercial companies. However, even at this early stage, the third sector in the UK was discovering the benefits of delivering services via ICT “in new and more effective ways, especially those which deal with people with disabilities and job seekers. He found that some organizations were improving their inter-organizational networking—developing new ways of working together and exchanging experiences of best practice, which previously had been excessively costly and time-consuming” (cited by Zorn, et al., 2011; 4). Despite such success, Wyatt also uncovered a widespread failure of third sector organizations to use technology strategically, for example, by not sharing and not planning to share vital information with stakeholders. It is our opinion that such a strategic failure may be traced to lack of managerial awareness of the potential of ICT and reluctance to change.

As with the Ticher, et al, study (2002), the above five surveys (Agard, 2011; Wyatt, 2001; Burt and Taylor, 1999; TBC Research, 2001, and Zwiello, 1998) tend to confirm that internal barriers such as lack of a clear vision formed by management for ICT, and unsatisfactory project management skills, significantly contribute to the lagging adoption of ICT. Additional findings include barriers due to capital costs for equipment, inability to hire people with the necessary expertise, and an almost universal complaint—budgetary constraints.

In **Canada**, some government and private research has been directed towards understanding the acceptance and utilization of ICT by the non-profit sector, indicating the importance of the sector in community welfare. To give an idea of the size of the sector, Statistics Canada (2006) estimates that, in 2004, the work equivalent of 1 million fulltime jobs in Canada was provided through volunteers. Early on, Pargmegiani and Sachdeva (2000) suggested that Canada was a “world

leader in Internet usage”, although lack of adoption by NPOs remained a concern. One purpose of the Canadian Voluntary Sector Initiative (1999) has been to improve the function of the sector as a whole, because the government understands that it plays a “central role in building vibrant communities, providing services and engaging citizens in the democratic life of the country” (3). Thus, there has been increasing attention to NPOs effective use of ICT and their role in reducing the digital divide by supplying training, goods and services to the disadvantaged (Craig, Dashfield, and Thomson, 2003), and the government has actively encouraged the acceptance of ICT (Voluntary Sector Initiative 1999, Voluntary Sector Initiative 2002).

Murray and Harrison (2002) conducted a survey of Canadian NPOs using technology to manage volunteers, finding that most organizations believed that they could utilize ICT more effectively. They chiefly used technology to communicate and coordinate within their organization, without attempting to improve inter-organizational networks. The study indicates that newer managers are more likely to accept rapid changes within the organization than those who had longer tenure. We can vouch for the fact that this is mostly the case for NPOs in countries where the voluntary sector is underdeveloped (for example Central and Eastern European ones, where this sector embarked only recently on an upward trend).

Another important study in the field was the surveys of 163 voluntary sector organizations conducted by Leverus – a well-known Canadian company offering ICT services to the third sector (2001; 2002; 2004). In their most recent survey, 17% of the respondents were large organizations with over 30 employees. At the other extreme, 14% had two or fewer staff. 78% of the NPOs were from Canada and 22% from the United States. Their survey represented a broad range of NPOs, comprised of: about 35% charitable groups; 25% professional associations; 18% industry associations; 2% public interest and social awareness groups; nearly 20% described themselves as “other.” We will examine the

Leverus study in some detail, because it had a remarkable degree of consistency from year to year, and the issues that arose may have distinct relevance to this study. The allocation of time and money towards website development and maintenance was not much changed over the years of the survey, perhaps suggesting little change either in attitude or resources. The percentage of NPOs that had devoted more than 1% of their financial budget to ICT in 2002, for example, was repeated in 2003. Many other statistics were substantially unchanged.

Leverus notes that, “Non-profit organizations are typically resource challenged and need to carefully manage their funds. It remains difficult to assess whether nonprofit organizations are optimizing their investments in Internet technology in order to receive their highest value returns” (2004; 12). Their conclusion was that, with more than 50% of respondents allocating less than 1% and 32% allocating between 1% and 3% of their overall budget to ICT-related costs, it was probable higher investment would support operational, fundraising and other objectives. As for time allocation, almost 33% of NPOs were spending only 5 hours or even fewer each month to update their website. At the other end of the spectrum, 20% were giving more than an hour a day to maintaining the content on their websites up. In the medium range, 24% were spending 6 to 10 hours per month keeping their website content up-to-date.

In 2004, Leverus found that while 74% NPOs continued to view their websites as important to the success of their mission, 46% believed that their websites were only somewhat effective or not at all effective, suggesting that a greater allocation of both time and money would be desirable. However, Leverus also endeavored to discover NPOs’ attitudes and beliefs about “important uses for the website related to achieving particular organizational objectives” (2004; 17), which suggested that greater use of formal guidelines to posting information on websites and adopting well-advised strategies could be as rewarding as spending more time and money on ICT. About 40% of organizations provided operational

activities and performed administration through their websites, a high priority for NPOs. Other strong organizational priorities for adopting ICT included making their organization a key resource for information in their field, reducing the cost of communications, adding to the credibility of the organization, and providing value-added member services. Some of these priorities reflect the motivations for adopting ICT discussed earlier: competitiveness (whether institutional pressure or otherwise) and the desire for credibility. In conclusion, the Leverus surveys were largely consistent with other studies discussed in this section, indicating that a want of clear management vision and guidelines, reluctance to change, and lack of technical and financial resources were significant barriers for NPOs.

Surman's (2001; 3) study for the government of Ontario seems to have been somewhat more optimistic, concluding that NPOs in Canada were self-assured for the "transformation of the voluntary sector into a connected co-operative network." Interestingly, Surman found that few voluntary organizations were using ICT in a systematic way to concentrate on core non-profit business needs such as volunteer recruitment, fundraising, and reporting to stakeholders, despite the widely acknowledged need to do so. A meta-study prepared by Kerr (2002) for the Information Management/Information Technology Joint Table of the Voluntary Sector Initiative took into account the findings of Surman and numerous others who conducted structured or open-ended surveys of the voluntary sector, and conducted an original study based on 495 completed surveys. The Kerr study posits that, "four overarching needs of the voluntary sector emerged from the literature review, supported by the interviews" (9-10), with a fifth being cooperation or collaboration respecting each of the other four. The four key technological needs were for: funding; efficient funding processes; training; and information technology resources.

As funding is such an important concern in this study (and the majority of other such studies), we think it may be worthwhile to note the special problems encountered by NPOs that are not an issue for nearly any other type of

organization respecting finance, which are remarked upon by Kerr (2002; 10-11). The first is the fact that many donations or grants are earmarked and cannot be used for any other purpose than the stated mission objective. The mandate of the donor rarely permits such funds to cover operating or administrative expenses. Additionally, the fact that many funding arrangements are short term renders NPO income significantly unstable—impeding long-term planning and prediction. Greater awareness amongst funders of the need for ICT was seen as very desirable. Kerr's study also included environmental reasons for chronic lack of funding being such a critical issue. That is, government funding of NPOs had dropped by 11%, and the overall number of donors declined. During the same time, more NPOs were registered, resulting in a marked increase in competition for a smaller donor base. Kerr cited the 2000 study, *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* to point out a further factor increasing competition, as well the need for credibility: "Aggravating this concern is the finding that more Canadians are questioning charitable fundraising. A large percentage reported 'not liking the way in which requests are made,' and 'thinking that the money will not be used efficiently,' as reasons for not giving more money to charitable and nonprofit organizations" (74). Thus, the original research undertaken as a part of this study includes perceptions of competitiveness and credibility as factors in the uptake of ICT.

In **Australia**, the CCNR ICT Index (2002), confirmed the trend in two major earlier studies (ACOSS, 1996; VCOSS, 1997) towards relatively rapid uptake of ICT by NPOs. The 2002 study found that 90% of community-based organizations had Internet access and 61% had websites. Urban organizations seemed to take better advantage of the new technical facilities than those in rural areas to gather and share information, perform administrative tasks, and obtain donations. CCNR ICT Index also found high approval amongst NPOs as regards ICT performance, although only 56% felt that their websites were adequately fulfilling their needs. This was further broken down to illustrate the difference between city and rural-based NPOs: 44% of those organizations located in large cities were satisfied that

their websites met their objectives, while only half that number, 22%, of regional organizations felt the same. Resistance to change amongst third-sector staff was not the significant problem in Australia that it was in similar studies in the UK. Otherwise, findings about barriers correlated significantly with previously discussed studies in the UK: lack of funding and lack of relevant skills were amongst the most serious issues, with small regional volunteer-based organizations suffering the most from these problems.

The Technology Affinity Group (2003) studied ICT from the other end, so to speak, of the voluntary and non-profit sector—from the perspective of funders in the **United States**. Perhaps unsurprisingly, only 5% of large foundations failed to thoroughly utilize the ICT in all or nearly all aspects of their operations and administration. Without the funding barriers NPOs so often suffer, 95% of the respondents “described themselves as leading-edge or fast followers” (2003; 12), suggesting that not only adequate resources but also managerial attitude favored rapid adoption of ICT. Such a high degree of organizational homogeneity also tends to support the institutional theory described earlier in this chapter, in which organizations are influenced by each other and conform in order to achieve competitiveness and perceived legitimacy. Studies of ICT utilization by the US non-profit sector were similar in many respects to those in the UK, with one notable exception. Reluctance on the part of management or staff, or resistance to change, was not a significant factor impeding ICT deployment. Similarly to the UK and Canada, costs and expertise have been barriers in the US, although the advent of useful and valuable open source software has somewhat eased budget restraints (Zhang, Gutierrez, and Mathieson, 2010; Finn, Maher, and Forster, 2006; Fitzgerald and Kenny, 2004).

This completes our literature review regarding the relatively recently established relationship between the NPOs rise in number and efficiency, on one hand and their ICT absorption degree, on the other hand. Practically all studies reviewed reveal the globally positive effects of ICT use in NPOs’ activity.

By undertaking this brief, far from being exhaustive literature review we aimed to offer the reader a concise, but meaningful overview of recent scientific debates on this subject. In doing so, we tried to put together a genuine selection of studies and other research works. We have further undertaken to systematically and critically highlight the ICT *pros* and *cons*, especially at the NPOs' managerial level.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

#### 3.1 Theoretical Framework for the Survey

In addition to taking into account the previous studies discussed, the concepts of organizational resource theory inform the survey set out in Chapter 4. The survey, done on UK NPOs registered with the Charity Commission, was designed to provoke psychometric data regarding the concepts reviewed here.

This study uses a socio-centric view towards understanding the management of ICT, which emphasizes sociability—frequency of interaction, trust, harmony, coordination and cooperation—in the establishment and maintenance of sophisticated organizational structures. This view, which seeks to understand the whole organization and its interactions with other organizations, is divergent from the strictly economic view. Managers of NPOs, recognizing the important role sociability plays in their sector, may wish to embrace the sociological view to enhance the economic view. For example, Williamson (1981), as well as well-known managers such as Drucker (1988) have highlighted that not all relationships or even work incentives are based on the rationale of economic efficiency. Trust, responsibility, power, and loyalty may play strong roles in maintaining seemingly “inefficient” relationships. Further, as organizational structures become less hierarchical, and more organic in shape and function, they achieve new levels of complexity (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Quinn, 1992; Drucker, 1988).

As we have seen, the transfer and diffusion of knowledge, as well as cooperative action, between organizations in the voluntary sector seems to play an important role in their survival and success. As with intra-organizational relationships,

inter-organizational relationships have been subjected to analysis principally along two distinct approaches: the economic and the sociological. The economic view stresses efficiency resulting from market forces. Inter-organizational structures are often formed through connections that create vertical integration: repetitive patterns of communication, long-term contracts, and what is known as “knowledge specificity”—all predicated on market forces (Jones, 1999; Oliver and Ebers, 1998; Collier, 1998). While NPOs are undergoing increasing competitiveness, they are not subject to the same market forces as organizations within the market sector. Therefore, the strictly economic approach has been rejected for the purposes of this research. The sociological line of thought emphasizes that inter-organizational relationships cannot be understood solely by market rationale or considerations of efficiency. In particular, ICT has resulted in greater ease of knowledge transfer, increasing the complexity and degree of interdependence between organizations in a non-vertical, informal structure (Grant, 1997; Baker, 1990; Fligstein and Dauber, 1989).

The socio-centric view towards understanding the third sector’s use of ICT must be narrowed still further in order to form a specific framework for this study, and in order to develop appropriate hypotheses. Although originally developed with the market sector in mind, the resource theory of organizations may be best suited to the investigation proposed in this study for the reasons outlined below.

Pitelis (2009) points out that, while Edith Penrose’s seminal book, *The Theory of the Growth of the Firm* (TGF), has been largely overlooked by mainstream economists, “Over the past 25 years or so, TGF has become a canonical reference to the currently dominant resource, knowledge, and (dynamic) capabilities-based approaches to business strategy, and to a lesser extent to the theory of the multinational enterprise (MNE) and International Business (IB) scholarship” (3). The resource theory understands organizations as bundles of resources for the production of endogenous growth—therefore the organization is both economic and sociological (Ravix, 2002; Penrose, 1980). Viewing an NPO and its use of

ICT in terms of resources, rather than the goods and services it provides, renders the conceptual framework elastic and scalable; in a sense, the tools for growth may already be in the hands of an NPO that is apparently starved for resources. Unused resources—whether ICT or managerial skill or other non-material capital—are of special importance to the third sector. Penrose’s observations about unused resources were made regarding for-profit organizations; however, they are relevant to this research, too. She states, “most productive services ... are capable of being used in many different ways and for many different purposes. Hence a firm in acquiring resources for particular purposes - to render particular services, also acquires a range of potential productive services, most of which will remain unused” (1955: 534). A voluntary sector that must make the most out of what it has may find it rewarding to try to re-evaluate and review its resources regularly to discover innovative ways to deploy those resources. ICT may facilitate many new means of utilizing such unused resources. Thus, this study adopts the resource theory with a sociological approach with respect to NPO’s adoption and employment of ICT.

The importance of the voluntary sector alone to development, national economies and well-being around the globe should guarantee sufficient research on the management of ICT for non-profit organizations. In fact, however, despite the number of excellent studies that have been conducted, this field does not garner the attention that is bestowed upon the market sector, nor—in this researcher’s opinion—quite the attention it deserves. For this reason, it is believed that not only this study, but further research should be undertaken in order to best deploy the relatively scarce resources available to the non-profit sector.

### **3.2. Methodology**

This chapter explains the methodology used for the research conducted across a wide range of third-sector organizations of varying sizes in the UK, as well as the limitations that should be kept in mind while interpreting the results of the study.

As mentioned in the previous section, organizational resource theory was used to frame the survey questions in an attempt to understand better the attitudes of non-profit staff towards ICT in their organizations. NPOs in UK were chosen partly because charitable culture is well established there, and partly because previous surveys found the greatest resistance to innovation and technology amongst this group, rendering it a rich field for study. They were randomly chosen out of the registered organizations list in the Charity Commission register of charities, which covers England and Wales.

### **3.2.1 Survey**

The proposed hypothesis could be described as the conceptual framework for the design of the research questions to derive data which tends to support (or which fails to support) the hypothesis that is: ICT is enabling new ways to use existing organizational resources.

In order to operationalize the concepts of organizational resource theory, questions were developed to elicit respondents' attitudes, beliefs and feelings towards indicators of various organizational resources, such as managerial strategies and guidance, and time, money and connections. Thus, survey questions aim to understand participants' experience of ICT as it relates to trustworthiness, shared norms and values, reciprocity and relationships with the public, other NPOs and sources of funding.

This research is intended to be practical for non-profit practitioners. It is qualitative in nature because this methodology has the potential to provide richer insight, and a deeper picture of the subject under inquiry, while fostering reflexivity in the reader. Grady and Wallston suggest that such research requires a flexible approach with its own coherent and inclusive, but non-sequential logic and "an entirely different model of the research process than the traditional one offered in most textbooks" (1988; 10). Their study cites Reason's use of the term "critical subjectivity" (1988) in qualitative research to indicate both its reflexive

nature and its holistic nature, in which we knowingly and carefully use our consciousness as part of the inquiry process.

While qualitative research is verifiable, the methodology diverges widely from that of quantitative one. Maxwell (2008; 214) points out that quantitative models, “do not adequately represent the logic and process of qualitative research.” Importantly, Hammersley & Atkinson (1995; 24) state that in qualitative studies, “research design should be a reflexive process operating through every stage of a project.” Thus, this study is intended not only to be reflexive, but to evoke reflexivity in the managers and staff of NPOs who read it.

The choice of qualitative methodology is in part driven by the desire to reveal connections and contextual unity in a subject that has psychological implications for NPO management. The questions essentially elicit feelings, attitudes and perceptions about the effect of ICT on NPO performance, frequency and effectiveness of interaction, cooperation, and other indicators of sociability and the utilization of unused resources. Questions about knowledge sharing, commitment to using ICT, awareness of ICT strategies, networks of engagement, influence and reach, internal coordination, external communications, and changes in staff turnover since using ICT were asked.

The questions were inserted into a well-known online survey hosting website (surveymonkey.com). Radio buttons were used so that only one answer per question could be clicked by participants, along a 5-point scale indicating relative agreement or disagreement with the statement. Statements were occasionally reversed, that is, framed in such a way that acquiescence bias would be minimized.

The findings obtained by the survey are “soft” – that is, they delve into the experiences and attitudes (or prejudices) of NPO personnel, rather than “hard” data, such as what hardware and software they use. The findings will be analyzed in respect to previous research and in terms of the hypothesis.

This study targets a sample of registered organizations from the voluntary sector using the Charity Commission register of charities, which covers England and Wales. Housing associations and independent schools, and NPOs owned by the government or the National Health Service are excluded. Faith groups, trade associations, mutual societies, and all other organizations covered by the definition of NPO are included, with the important limitations noted above. There are approximately 180,000 registered charitable organizations in England and Wales (excluding Northern Ireland) and the Charity Commission does not provide a single, comprehensive electronic file of all such NPOs. However, the Charity Commission's database is fully accessible and searchable and Charity Library, OpenlyLocal and other directories include lists of charities with their email addresses.

An email was sent to 1,000 non-profit organizations chosen randomly, containing an explanation of the research, asking them to help by participating, with a link to the survey, which was hosted on a well-known survey site. The first page of the survey outlined the policy of confidentiality and anonymity of all personally identifiable information. Participants were informed that: "Information obtained in the course of this research project is privileged information and will under no circumstances be publicly disclosed in a fashion that would identify any individual or organization (except if compelled by a court). You may withdraw at any time by simply exiting from this site. Your participation helps to advance our understanding of the use of information and communications technologies in the voluntary sector and is greatly appreciated." No inducement, such as payment of any kind, was offered or given for participation in the survey. Further, the researcher's name and email address was provided in the event that any questions or concerns arose about the research.

Snowball sampling was used in order to increase the rate of completed surveys, that is, recipients were asked to forward the email to their friends and colleagues who work in an NPO, whether as volunteer or paid staff. The final response rate –

of approximately 1:4.7 – was situated within the normal parameters for this type of research.

After obtaining some personal and organizational demographic data, a symmetrical five-point Likert scale was used to gauge attitudes towards key indicators regarding social capital. While there are numerous arguments for and against the five-point scale, including the suggestion that it produces a higher mean than a seven-point scale, the five-level response was chosen for its simplicity, familiarity, and ease of use for participants.

It is important to note that while the responses obtained in a Likert-type questionnaire are ordered, they should not be regarded as intervals, because the values cannot be presumed to be equal (Blaikie, 2003). For example, one may assign numbers to verbal statements as follows: strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, neutral = 3, agree = 4, strongly agree = 5. Thus, an average calculated between these numbers is meaningless. Methodological studies tend to affirm that for such ordinal data, it is good practice to utilize the median or mode to measure the central tendency. The arithmetical operations required to calculate the mean and standard deviation are not suitable for this type of ordinal data, in which the numbers represent verbal statements. In contrast, frequencies and percentages of a given response may be appropriate (Blaikie, 2003; Clegg, 1998). For these reasons, this study will not treat the data obtained through the use of the Likert scale as interval data and will analyze frequencies, percentages, and present predominant tendencies.

### **3.2.2 In-depth Interviews**

In addition to the survey conducted, in-depth interviews with 5 randomly chosen people working in NPOs were also done to give insight specifically into feelings towards ICT. 20 e-mail addresses were chosen randomly from the same e-mail address list used for the survey and an e-mail requesting a 10-minutes long on-line interview about the use of ICT in NPOs were sent. 7 people accepted to be

interviewed, 2 of which did not respond again. Thus, 5 people were interviewed and used for this study.

In this classic mode of gathering qualitative data, interviewers must avoid asking questions slanted in such a way as to suggest bias. One reason electronic surveys may be considered more objective than interviews is that the human element, as far as possible, is removed—there is no opportunity to influence the respondent through the interviewer’s tone of voice, for example. Nonetheless, for collecting answers to open-ended questions, the personal interview would be difficult to replace. In this case, the participants were called on the telephone via Skype and had agreed to speak with the interviewer for about 10 minutes.

The interviews presented in Appendix B were granted to the researcher in order to provide a further in-depth understanding of attitudes and feelings towards ICT as it related to bridging the gap between actuality and potential. The respondents are all involved in NPOs in the UK, either in paid or unpaid positions. They were assured of confidentiality and as far as possible, no leading questions were asked; where necessary, small “prompting” sounds were made instead, such as “yes?” or “hmm” in order to encourage the speaker to continue. The questions are set out below. The first question is a “warm-up” question, perhaps of no special importance, but to gain some degree of bond between interviewer and interviewee. The second question sets the tone and subject for the remainder of the interview: ICT, attaining the mission of the NPO, and bridging the gap, as previously described. The third and fourth questions also emphasize feelings and attitudes about the subject under discussion.

- a) How long have you been involved with the charity for which you work?
- b) What are your feelings about using computers, smart phones, and similar devices to achieve the aims of the charity for which you work?
- c) How do you feel personally about the potential of information and communications technology, as opposed to the actuality, in your charity?

- d) Is there anything else you would like me to know about how you view information and communications technology in your charity?

### **3.3. Limitations of the Study**

A number of forewarnings must be applied to this study, both with respect to the methodology and the findings. Four key categories of limitations should be kept in mind. *Firstly*, amongst the most important limitations are those inherent in the use of the Likert scale itself. The unequal character of the ordered ranks, that is, the qualitative nature of the intensity of feeling noted at each end of the scale (Strongly Agree/Strongly Disagree) is not easily quantified. The distance between “agree” and “strongly agree” is not, for example, quantifiable in the sense that “strongly agree” could be considered as having twice the value of “agree.” The points on the scale cannot be equidistant; even in the event that the items on the scale were theoretically equidistant, it is not possible to ensure that respondent would interpret it in the same way as the researcher who designed the survey. Hence, the data here is presented simply, and as a measure of attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of ICT users in the British non-profit sector. Further, people may avoid making a strong statement, despite the assurance of confidentiality, which can distort the results. This is known as the central tendency bias, and, in general, this study shows a small frequency of strong responses, suggesting that the central tendency bias may be in play as a limiting factor. Occasional reverse questions were inserted in order to reduce the likelihood of acquiescence bias; nonetheless, the normal human tendency to agree with a reasonable-sounding statement has been noted by statistical researchers. Therefore, acquiescence bias cannot be ruled out as a limiting factor. Social desirability bias occurs when respondents give answers that depict themselves (or their organization) in a favorable light, and it may be an unconscious desire. The social desirability bias should be lessened by the promise of complete confidentiality; however, statistical research suggests that this bias may remain a challenge in spite of such assurances.

A *second* category of limitations is in the selection of participants. While the selection of email addresses was randomized throughout England and Wales, only charities which are registered with the Charity Commission and have a published email address were included. This is potentially an enormous limitation in parameters, in light of the vast number of small voluntary organizations which operate in the UK. *Third Sector Foresight*, published by the National Council for Voluntary Organizations in the UK estimated that there may be “as many as 600,000 further ‘below the radar’ small local groups and associations that are not registered charities” (n. pag) however, by their very nature, they are not accessible for the purposes of this research. Alison Benjamin of Guardian Society says that, “grassroots voluntary organisations that make up the majority of charities” (2012; n.pag.). These grassroots organizations may be under-represented in this study. Yet they are an important part of civil society—even in a post-industrial economy, we find a significant number of informal, unregulated, unofficial voluntary groups. Research that includes such groups could be valuable, yet they are omitted from this study. Benjamin cites Professor Peter Beresford: “There seems to be a growing divide between small charitable organisations – with little profile but high energy, real street credibility and beneficiary involvement – and the traditional large organisations – with big reserves, highly paid chief executives and expensive central London headquarters” (2012, n. pag.). This phenomenon may be an important turning point in the non-profit sector. ICT has the potential to level the playing field to some extent between the larger and smaller organizations, but this aspect is not explored in this study.

The *third* category of limitation to this study is the sample size (213 surveys). While this is chiefly true of quantitative studies, it can be mentioned here as a point to consider. As Anderson explains, quantitative and qualitative methodologies each provide different sightlines or ranges of vision, each valid and each valuable. As this is neither a medical study nor a Six Sigma study—and for the above reasons, cannot pretend to be definitive in its field—but the results

of a modest qualitative study such as this may prove of some value to managers and students of the voluntary sector. Caution must be used when extrapolating the results from any small study to a sector embracing a large variety of organizations, with extremely variant resources such as management skills, money, and expertise, and a wide range in their fields of operation. As Maxwell (2008; 32) points out, Qualitative studies, “rarely make explicit claims about the generalizability of their accounts,” because they use theoretical or purposeful rather than probability sampling. He advocates that, “Indeed, the value of a qualitative study may depend on its *lack* of generalizability in the sense of being representative of a larger population” (32). The number of interviewees is commonly quite small, for in-depth interviews to discover some of the attitudes and feelings about a subject—the number can be as few as three or as many as eight or ten. Five were chosen for this study. Thus, this researcher believes that the number of participants was sufficient for this study.

The *fourth* major category of limitation is reactivity. From physicists such as Heisenberg to modern sociologists, attempts have been made to understand the effects of the observer, and to control for all such effects. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) maintain that it is impossible to eliminate the actual influence of the researcher, therefore, the goal is not to try to suppress that influence, but to “understand it and use it productively” (30). In this study, reactivity through direct influence on the participants was kept to a minimum by the majority of responses having been elicited electronically and impersonally, however, the manner in which the questions were framed and the answers interpreted cannot be entirely free of socio-cultural context. As for the interviews, they were done over the telephone and had the potential for voice inflections to influence participants.

Although rather complex and quite strenuous to read and absorb, this mostly theoretical chapter could not be missing from the present study. This is because it is here that this researcher fixes and explains in detail both the conceptual/theoretical framework, and the methodology used for the

applicative/practical part of the study: a survey and several interviews (the results of which are presented and discussed in Chapter 4). They are meant to substantiate the final conclusions of this research project.

## CHAPTER 4

### SURVEY ON UK NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND ICT

#### 4.1. Preliminary Remarks

Mention was already made about the sociological tools put to work in order to establish the existence and analyze the particular aspects of the relationship between NPOs and ICT. More specifically, it is about a survey and several interviews conducted by this researcher across a wide range of third-sector organizations of varying sizes in the UK. This research focuses on enabling new ways to use existing organizational resources through ICT. A particular attention is attached to both to theoretical and practical implications of this ongoing process.

An email requesting participation in the survey was sent to 1,000 organizations randomly selected from the Charity Commission's list of organizations registered in England and Wales. 241 responses were received, of which 213 were deemed complete and used for this study. Only those surveys where 95% or more of the questions were answered were considered complete.

The survey consisted of 33 questions. The first four questions that were asked at the beginning of the survey aimed to have a snapshot idea about the organizations and respondents with the intention that they may help to interpret the results (*See Appendix A*). The remaining statements were the ones to be used as the core of this study.

#### 4.2. Survey Results

With the survey statements tabulated below, the researcher intended to reveal how ICT is perceived by the NPO staff working for different organizations in the UK and whether they could integrate ICT into their daily operations accordingly,

so that unused resources and existing financial resources were more effectively managed. We are of the opinion that responses received are meaningful, enabling us to draw a series of conclusions generally valid for technological developments in third-sector organizations in terms of ICT.

The statements and the actual results of the survey are shown in *Table 1*.

**Table 1: Survey Results (%)**

| No | Statement  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree | Total |
|----|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|-------|
| 1  | Senior managers are highly committed to using ICT throughout the organization. | 11%               | 23%      | 30%     | 19%   | 17%            | 100%  |
| 2  | I am aware of clear guidelines and strategies regarding ICT.                   | 14%               | 27%      | 22%     | 20%   | 17%            | 100%  |
| 3  | The organization easily and quickly adopts new technologies.                   | 9%                | 43%      | 8%      | 35%   | 5%             | 100%  |
| 4  | Staff members are resistant to changes in technology.                          | 4%                | 42%      | 17%     | 31%   | 5%             | 99%   |
| 5  | We electronically share valuable information with other NPOs.                  | 6%                | 28%      | 13%     | 46%   | 6%             | 99%   |
| 6  | Electronically, we receive valuable information from other NPOs.               | 3%                | 15%      | 7%      | 66%   | 8%             | 99%   |

**Table 1: Survey Results (%) (continued)**

| No | Statement  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree | Total |
|----|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|-------|
| 7  | We are able to maintain good communication with our service users via ICT.                             | 5%                | 36%      | 10%     | 41%   | 7%             | 100%  |
| 8  | I would like to use ICT better or more often with our service users.                                   | 3%                | 28%      | 10%     | 52%   | 7%             | 100%  |
| 9  | I am satisfied with our use of ICT to advance our mission.   | 4%                | 37%      | 19%     | 35%   | 5%             | 100%  |
| 10 | ICT has failed to deliver on its promise to make administration faster and easier in our organization. | 5%                | 31%      | 17%     | 39%   | 8%             | 100%  |
| 11 | ICT has made our recordkeeping more accurate.  | 6%                | 33%      | 12%     | 39%   | 10%            | 100%  |
| 12 | Our internal coordination is better through using ICT.   | 2%                | 35%      | 10%     | 48%   | 5%             | 100%  |
| 13 | In general, management provides good ICT strategy and planning to achieve our mission.                 | 4%                | 23%      | 8%      | 53%   | 12%            | 100%  |
| 14 | I am concerned that ICT may erode public trust in our organization.                                    | 9%                | 37%      | 15%     | 29%   | 10%            | 100%  |
| 15 | Our use of ICT has improved our cooperation with other organizations.                                  | 6%                | 33%      | 11%     | 39%   | 10%            | 100%  |
| 16 | ICT is improving the goodwill or esteem of the public and other organizations towards us.              | 3%                | 35%      | 9%      | 47%   | 6%             | 100%  |

**Table 1: Survey Results (%) (continued)**

| No | Statement  | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree | Total |
|----|--|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|-------|
| 17 | Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Pinterest, Instagram, and the like) is a waste of time for our organization. | 13%               | 18%      | 20%     | 39%   | 10%            | 100%  |
| 18 | Mobile ICT is useful for our organization.   | 2%                | 40%      | 19%     | 30%   | 8%             | 99%   |
| 19 | We have considered or are considering developing our own mobile app.   | 7%                | 62%      | 14%     | 15%   | 1%             | 99%   |
| 20 | Using open source software helps us deliver services.  | 3%                | 35%      | 9%      | 47%   | 6%             | 100%  |
| 21 | We have considered or are considering using crowd-sourced data or materials.   | 6%                | 33%      | 11%     | 39%   | 10%            | 100%  |
| 22 | ICT has smoothed the transition during volunteer and staff turnover.   | 2%                | 40%      | 19%     | 27%   | 8%             | 99%   |
| 23 | I believe that I am accomplishing more as a result of using ICT.   | 9%                | 19%      | 17%     | 38%   | 17%            | 100%  |
| 24 | ICT enables us to take on projects we would not otherwise have been able to do.  | 3%                | 26%      | 23%     | 43%   | 5%             | 99%   |

**Table 1: Survey Results (%) (continued)**

| No | Statement   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree | Total |
|----|---|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|-------|
| 25 | We are able to use our time, contacts, knowledge, and other resources more because of our use of ICT. | 4%                | 22%      | 9%      | 53%   | 12%            | 100%  |
| 26 | Our use of ICT has helped us to identify more funding sources.  | 3%                | 20%      | 23%     | 44%   | 10%            | 100%  |
| 27 | ICT is not as helpful in relationship-building as personal contact.                                   | 8%                | 29%      | 17%     | 32%   | 14%            | 100%  |
| 28 | Using ICT has increased our financial sustainability.   | 1%                | 27%      | 10%     | 53%   | 8%             | 99%   |
| 29 | I have noticed that our public outreach is greater from using ICT.                                    | 4%                | 22%      | 9%      | 53%   | 12%            | 100%  |

For purposes of an as systematic as possible presentation and analysis, we have grouped the survey's statements and results obtained into five categories, function of the issues covered by the statements, namely:

- A. General awareness of ICT importance (statements 1 – 4);
- B. Actual use of ICT (5 – 8);
- C. Opinions on ICT inward effects (9 – 13);
- D. Opinions on ICT outward effects (14 – 16);
- E. Use of social media and other ICT means and sources (17 – 21);
- F. ICT and the “sentiment of belonging” (22 – 29).

We will briefly comment on the results in this logical order.

## A. General awareness of ICT importance

This first set of statements aims at evaluating the openness of NPOs and their management and staff towards the adoption and utilization of ICT. Here, findings are quite disappointing: those who seem to be generally aware of the importance of ICT for the activity of their organizations – and consequently of the necessity to adopt comprehensive strategies in the field – are heavily in minority, being barely over one third of the respondents. Thus:

- Only a little more than one third of respondents (36%) recognize the senior managers' firm commitment to ICT enhanced utilization in their organizations, with the rest having opposite opinions (34%) or being neutral (30%). This situation is rather worrisome in so far as it reflects NPOs managements' low appetite for modernizing their activity and hence lack of vision for facing future challenges.
- With 41% of respondents being unaware of ICT guidelines and strategies, the findings are generally in keeping with those of previous studies, which indicated that insufficient managerial support, procedures and strategies are barriers to the optimum use of ICT to maximize organizational resources. This may constitute an ongoing hurdle to the efficient use of organizational resources.
- While more than half (52%) of the respondents are of the opinion that their organizations are slow in adopting and adapting to new ICT, a relative majority (46% of them, as against 36%, with 17% neutral) definitely considers that NPOs' staff members are *not* resistant to changes brought about by modern ICT, on the contrary. If true, this puzzling situation would confirm the already mentioned opinion on NPO leaderships' insufficient commitment to using ICT.

## B. Actual use of ICT

When it comes to statements covering the actual use of ICT – mainly for purposes of communication -, the majority of respondents underline the benefits brought about by modern ICT.

- Since the exchange of information holds an important (and most visible) part in the NPOs' activity, it is no wonder that the majority of respondents agree upon the positive role played by the electronic communication in sharing valuable information with fellow NPOs (52%) and especially in receiving such inputs from them (74%). Mention should be made, however, that such clear-cut opinions are due to a large extent to the fact that the Internet is the best known and widest used carrier of such information.
- As for communication with their service users - in fact the beneficiaries of the services provided by NPOs -, the situation is more nuanced: while those who think such communication is good are slightly in minority (41% agree and 7% strongly agree with this implicit evaluation), there is a high percentage of disagreement (41%). Hence, a clear majority (59%) of those who would like to better and more often use the ICT in communicating with their service users. A deeper understanding of why respondents are (or are not) satisfied with their use of ICT as it relates to their mission is suggested as a point for future research through personal interviews to solicit details about these experiences.

## C. Opinions on ICT inward effects

The statements under this heading were formulated in order to inquire about staff's views on ICT's impact upon their activity inside NPOs. More specifically, they were meant to evince ICT influence on the organization and administration

of material and immaterial resources. The findings are somewhat mixed, meaning by this that views differ quite significantly.

- The results tend to indicate less than optimum use of ICT for the management of internal resources. *Statements 9 and 10* show what may be a surprisingly high level of dissatisfaction with ICT. First, there is a 60% rate of dissatisfaction related to ICT's contribution to the advancement of NPO missions. The rate is even higher for ICT as an administrative tool, with 8% expressing strong disappointment, and nearly 50% some level of unhappiness.
- On the other hand, ICT seems to have brought together members of the organization markedly and, to some extent, to have improved the accuracy of records.
- A question about management's ability clearly to articulate and make known their overall strategies and planning to staff was added in order to provide comparison with management ability respecting ICT in particular. While 65% were satisfied with mission-related planning and strategization, only 35% were aware of ICT strategies, a marked contrast that points to room for considerable managerial improvement.

#### D. Opinions on ICT outward effects

Statements under this heading illustrate the concerns and interests with respect to NPOs' external image and perception. ICT can be very instrumental in this respect.

- Respondents are clearly of the opinion that adopting advanced, modern ICT does not – and will not – erode public trust in their NPOs. According to the findings, though, there are still 39% of the responding staff who are afraid this might happen. We presume that most of those are elderly people, who try to resist changes in their life, in general and professional

activity, in particular. Their fear also encompass cooperation with other organizations: the same percentage (39%) does not believe in ICT's contribution to improving inter-institutional relations.

- In exchange, a more optimistic view is related to improvements of public perceptions and esteem towards the NPOs, generated by the use of ICT: 53% of the respondents are in agreement with the respective statement.

#### E. Use of social media and other ICT means and sources

We have grouped under this heading several apparently unrelated statements. In reality, there is an implicit working link between new developments in social media and applications meant to access it.

- Apparently, the relative novelty of such networking sites as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. still intimidates to a certain extent NPOs' people. Thus, despite the fact that they have built-in interactivity and are free of charge, quite a number of NPOs continue to be reluctant to use them for building their own networks of service users or followers. This probably explains the high proportion (49%) of respondents for whom resorting to social media would be a waste of time. It is also to be noted that as many as 20% of them preferred to stay in the neutral zone, they being not familiar with networking facilities offered by social media.
- The same is true with respect to the respondents' attitude towards modern ICT mobile applications: only 38% of them think that mobile ICT is useful for their organizations, and as little as 16% of them would consider developing their NPOs' own applications.
- On the contrary, when they are asked about their attitude related to more classical ways to get software and data, the respondents react more positively: 53% agree with the assertion that using open source software

helps to deliver their services, while those considering using crowd-sourced data or materials nears half of the total (49%).

#### F. ICT and the “sentiment of belonging”

Finally, under this sixth heading we have included statements mostly requiring subjective responses, expressing the more or less personal feelings of the respondents with respect to ICT influences on their work with the NPOs, as well as on the latter’s activity.

- ICT has been compared with the “memory” of an organization, allowing for less disruptive changeovers between staff. This potential seems to be underutilized, with only one third of respondents believing that their organization has benefited in this manner. A slight majority of 55% feels an improvement in their productivity, which again suggests an underutilization of ICT in comparison with its potential. (*Statements 22-23*)
- *Statements 24 and 25* reveal strong perception of advantages gained. 48% believe that, due to their use of ICT, their organization has taken on projects that it would not otherwise have done, with a higher than usual degree of uncertainty (23% were undecided), and a negative feeling expressed by only 29% of respondents. In a marked consensus, 65% feels that as an organization, they are able to harness resources that might have gone unused. While there are ambiguities and lack of clear leadership and strategy in this field, it appears that the UK voluntary sector is at last accepting ICT to a greater extent than ever before, and putting it to better use.
- The exploitation of technology for mission-related purposes (*Statements 26-29*) must be a key objective for managers, however, the response provides insight into somewhat mixed opinions: 54% believe that ICT has

assisted their organization to locate more sources of funding, which seems lukewarm compared with the 61% who feel that ICT has increased their financial stability. One interpretation of this data is that, while ICT theoretically provides far more information concerning private foundations, government grant-giving bodies, local government service contracts that are available for bids from the voluntary sector, and even international donors, the increased range of donors is compensated for, (i.e., effectively nullified) by increased competition. More competition within the sector, and increased competition for financial support, due to changes in amounts and sources of income are all noted by *Third Sector Foresight (2012, n. pag.)*. A remarkably high 65% of respondents are reaching more of their public, but the response was divided over the value of ICT for genuine relationship-building: 46% preferred personal contact to develop relationships. Taken with the 48% who believed that they were able to take on projects that they would not otherwise have been able to take on, and an even more lukewarm 38% who were satisfied with their use of ICT to forward mission-related endeavors, the mixed responses are telling. Indicative of a conflicted view of ICT, this study underlines the growth of awareness in the voluntary sector regarding the potential of ICT to harness within and outside the organization, even while worries and resistance to change are still prevalent.

### **4.3. In-depth Interviews**

#### **4.3.1. Content of Responses**

The five people interviewed were asked to answer four questions. Rough responses to these questions (*see Appendix B*) are summarized below.

*How long have you been involved with the charity for which you work?*  
Interviewees were working with the respective NPOs for periods between 3 and 10 years. Some were working only part-time.

*What are your feelings about using computers, smart phones, and similar devices to achieve the aims of the charity for which you work?* Two of the respondents were very enthusiastic about ICT : « absolutely vital » in establishing links with similar organizations ; or « very positive » - great way to let people know what we are doing”. The other three were also positive, stressing ICT’s role in facilitating communication, and mentioning the use of social media (Facebook and Twitter).

*How do you feel personally about the potential of information and communications technology in your field?* All respondents were generally positive. Among other things they were mentioning the importance of ICT in making their NPOs better known, as well as in locating new partners.

*Is there anything else you would like me to know about how you view information and communications technology in your charity?* The common theme of all responses was the insufficient or lack of funds needed for ICT endowment.

#### **4.3.2. Brief Interpretation of Responses**

The interviews conducted with five randomly chosen people working in NPOs reflect much of mixed feelings and ambiguousness found in the survey. The overall feeling toward ICT is positive, but in respect to their own organization, verging on despair, hopelessness, failure and frustration. The negative emotions are chiefly brought about by lack of resources, but also by unwillingness on the part of staff to contribute to the implementation of ICT. Lack of manpower and money are the primary reasons for not bridging the gap between actuality and the potential uses of ICT in NPOs. This conclusion may seem shallow and obvious, and indeed, redundant, since so many previous studies have encountered the same barriers. However, this researcher urges readers to look beyond the obvious and to observe the emotions connected with those barriers. Words suggestive of resignation, disappointment, anger, dissatisfaction, and gloom were expressed, indicating that NPO management has genuine attitudinal obstacles to overcome.

The ICT slate is not a tabula rasa; it comes with a bundle of emotions. At the same time, understanding that there may be strong feelings attached to the use of ICT (or failure to implement it in accord with expectations and desires) may give NPO managers a way forward. Approaching ICT planning and implementation with an eye to previous failures, and previous pressures to conform to new standards, to seek legitimacy, and to compete, may provide a way for managers to talk about ICT with staff, and obtain their genuine agreement on strategic plans to “bridge the gap.” Most NPO staff agree that ICT offers benefits to NPOs in general; there is less consensus on the concept that the return on investment is worthwhile in their particular case. The interviews suggest that those who tried very hard to implement ICT broadly in their charities were discouraged by the resistance they met, while others perceived bridging the gap between actuality and potential as impossible for them. No ICT strategy, however well-planned, can afford to ignore the attitudes of the staff who will implement or maintain it. Thus, it is hoped that these five interviews give food for thought to managers when they devise their ICT tactics and strategies, and help such managers to enlist the sympathies and enthusiasms of their staff so they can more fully understand what their NPO has to gain.

#### **4.4. Discussion**

Although NPOs are technologically lagging behind conventional, market-driven businesses, many are striving to attain the benefits technology seems to offer. Most NPOs have begun trying to adopt modern information technology and advanced forms of communication in recent years (Finn, Maher and Forster, 2006) largely due to competitive pressures and in pursuit of perceived credibility or legitimacy (Burt and Taylor, 2003; Noir and Walsham, 2007). Yet, to what degree they can manage and exploit ICT as a strategic tool is vague.

With the intention of questioning whether unused resources and existing financial resources are enhanced and more effectively managed through more extensive

use of ICT, questions about the opinions of the respondents on ICT were asked in the survey under the light of socio-centric organizational resource theory. To determine if there is a gap between the actual and potential ICT use, questions about the ICT usage were also asked.

One of the major points that this survey has indicated is the high degree of cooperation between NPOs in terms of sharing information. Inter-organizational networks are strategic relationships where all the groups can benefit more from working with one another than working individually. Though, these relationships encompass many types of collaborations ranging from forming temporary alliances for specific service areas to joint ventures; this study mainly focuses on learning from each other by sharing valuable information as it forms the very basic of all inter-organizational relationships. The perceived value of sharing and receiving information with and from other NPOs is clear: 74% of respondents believe that they have been given valuable information by others in their sector, and 52% believe that their organization has provided helpful information to other NPOs via ICT. 49% of the respondents think that their use of ICT has improved their cooperation with other organizations. Putnam (1995) referred to this type of behavior as a feature of social organization, involving trust, reciprocity, and networks of engagement, which improves the utilization of organizational resources by joining different strengths, and facilitating coordination.

NPOs and their communities play a critical role in transforming general information into local and specific knowledge. Such a network of knowledge sharing requires both vertical and horizontal transfer of knowledge, and interactive learning processes with all concerned. This function is valuable in itself, and can further expand an NPO's influence and reach to the public. Much non-profit management literature is devoted to capacity-building, which has been defined as a long-term process to develop skills or competence to enable individuals or organizations to perform effectively. Thus, information and knowledge management is an important part of building capacity. This study

indicates that greater knowledge sharing is taking place between organizations in the third sector supporting our hypothesis.

Another result derived from the survey is that although the perception of the NPO staff is generally positive towards ICT, they cannot put it into practice. They think that ICT enabled them to take on projects they would not otherwise have been able to take on, and improved their utilization of resources and that we can well interpret as hopeful indicators. Yet, we can clearly see that there is a considerable gap between what they have in mind and what they do in reality. For instance, 38% of the respondents agree that mobile ICT is helpful for their organizations; but only 16% of the respondents agree that they have considered or are considering developing their own mobile applications. It can be interpreted as a sign of the gap between the actual and potential uses of ICT. We can also see it from the 59% of the respondents who stated that they would like to use ICT better or more often with their service users. In-depth interviews support these results as well. All of the interviewees reflected similar feelings, frustration to name it, on the current and potential use of ICT. Here the question we should ask is why there is such a gap. In this regard, the interview records are similar to what the previous studies have found: insufficient financial resources, lack of time and know-how (*See Appendix B for further details*).

An additional matter worth to discuss is that the role that ICT plays in improving the goodwill and esteem of the public towards organizations is accepted by the staff to a certain degree but not widely. This, we take, is an obstacle to fully making use of the resources at the hands of NPOs - as ICT can be a very powerful PR tool when used wisely. Statements 14-17 present some conflicting psychometric data regarding ICT perception. For example, 39% reported concern about the erosion of public trust, but more than half—53%—perceived ICT as increasing the esteem in which their organization is held. While 13% were strongly in favor of social media, the overall perception of the value of social media for their NPO was tepid, with only 31% definitely supporting it. The 49%

who attribute improved external cooperation to the use of ICT is suggestive of substantial increase in efficient use of organizational resources. The attitudes are somewhat contradictory but not actually mutually exclusive, and may reflect the uncertainties inherent in new technology.

Nah and Saxton (2012) performed a study on the instrumental use of social media by 100 of the largest US non-profits by revenue. They noted pressures to adopt new technologies, due to social and institutional forces (also noted previously in Corder, 2001 and Zorn et al., 2011). Nah and Saxton (2012) also hypothesized that more efficient NPOs would be more likely to adopt and use social media. While they found support for this hypothesis, their results were more mixed than one might have expected. They did find that, “organizational strategies, capacities, governance features, and external pressures all play a part in these social media adoption and utilization outcomes” (28). The large US organizations involved in the Nah and Saxton study have far greater resources at their disposal than the small and very small UK organizations which make up the majority of those surveyed in this study. Despite the enthusiasm that suggests that social media ushers in a new era and, “The ability for any organization – no matter how small – to adopt cutting-edge social media technologies presents substantial opportunities for a more level playing field” (2), it appears that in the UK, amongst a sample of widely divergent organizations, attitudes are very mixed about the value of investing time in social media, with a perhaps surprising 10% strongly against it.

The 2012 Social Charity Index has been described as, “the biggest and most comprehensive study of the state of social business in charities conducted in the UK.” Involving the study of 300 charities in the UK, the study claims clear links between charity income, supporter engagement and fundraising impact, stating that they are, “becoming increasingly intertwined”. Despite such a study having been broadly publicized in the non-profit sector by its publisher, JustGiving,

many NPOs staff seem to remain skeptical about the value of social media as compared to the investment in time it requires.

Previous studies have shown that UK charities tend to be less oriented towards early adoption of ICT innovations than those of other countries cited in the literature review, such as Canada. Resistance to change and the digital dilemma at a fundamental level seemed to affect the UK voluntary sector far more deeply. The so-called “digital dilemma” is in itself ambiguous, since the term can refer variously to thorny issues arising from intellectual property rights, the technological transformation of scholarly discourse, and even fundamental questions such as “to tweet or not to tweet?” Judging by the number of NPOs now on Twitter and Facebook, many have made that decision. Does ICT really seem to lower trust? More than two-thirds express concern about the erosion of trust in their sector because of ICT. Despite the strength of that concern, it could be a mistake to automatically link lowered trust directly with a specific NPO’s use of ICT, however.

There are two macro-trends to be taken into account in this respect. The rise in ICT may be eroding trust in general; a broad social trend towards more frequent but more superficial communication has already been noted in the literature reviewed, although such conclusions are contested. The combination of lessened trust of charities amongst higher competition for funding has been noted by the Charity Commission’s third survey of Public Trust and Confidence (2010) and the National Council on Voluntary Organizations (2012). Therefore, an individual NPO’s use of ICT may not, in fact, be the cause of the concern.

The last major point for discussion is the difference of this survey from earlier studies showing that UK-based NPOs were significantly demotivated towards embracing ICT innovations. With only 36% agreeing that staff are resistant to technological changes, this study indicates decreased perception of resistance amongst staff, as compared with earlier studies conducted in the UK non-profit

sector, which consistently found such attitudes to be a significant obstruction in the adoption and use of ICT. A two thirds majority is still a considerable barrier and still higher compared with other Anglophone countries, but any reduction of such an impediment that this sample may represent could be encouraging.

**Table 2: Survey Results (%) – Resistance to Change**

| No | Statement   | Negative | Neutral | Positive | Total |
|----|---|----------|---------|----------|-------|
| 8  | I would like to use ICT better or more often with our service users.                                  | 31%      | 10%     | 59%      | 100%  |
| 23 | I believe that I am accomplishing more as a result of using ICT.                                      | 28%      | 17%     | 55%      | 100%  |
| 25 | We are able to use our time, contacts, knowledge, and other resources more because of our use of ICT. | 26%      | 9%      | 65%      | 100%  |
| 26 | Our use of ICT has helped us to identify more funding sources.  | 23%      | 23%     | 54%      | 100%  |
| 28 | Using ICT has increased our financial sustainability.   | 27%      | 10%     | 61%      | 99%   |
| 29 | I have noticed that our public outreach is greater from using ICT.                                    | 26%      | 9%      | 65%      | 100%  |

As shown by *Table 2*, respondents' attitude towards ICT is considerably positive. Interviews support this judgment as well. It is hoped, assuming this finding accurately reflects an increased willingness to embrace ICT amongst NPO staff and volunteers, that managers have observed the change and are promoting ICT more freely and with full forethought and strategizing.

One of the purposes of a study such as this is to promote reflexivity amongst management practitioners in the voluntary sector as to effectiveness in harnessing otherwise unused organizational resources. It is exactly what this researcher hopes to have accomplished by the present study: to offer the reader some grains of “food for thought” on how best to encourage the adoption and utilization of ICT by the NPOs.

This is the reason why in the 5<sup>th</sup> – and final – chapter we shall venture several suggestions of policy measures for the kind attention of those potentially interested.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1. Conclusions

It is a matter of evidence that in the world of today the societal third sector registers an upward trend. Based on charity and philanthropy, as well as the work of an increasing number of volunteers, non-profit organizations (NPOs) – understood as **organized, private, self-governing, voluntary entities set up for serving public interests, or mutual benefits** (other than making profits and distributing them to owners and/or investors – n.n.) – are proliferating, practically in all domains. They are rightfully perceived as major economic and social vectors for the welfare of nations. They bring a valuable contribution to the economic and social life of the society without seeking any profit out of it.

Mention should be made, however, that despite their huge potential as a transformative force of the society NPOs lag behind the conventional businesses when it comes to effectively use available resources. Due to constraints deriving from their operational environment – such as insufficient financial support and lack of technical proficiency – it becomes even more important for NPOs to make the best of what they have as resources.

One of the important (if not the most important) ways of achieving this desideratum is the use of up-to-date information and communication technology (ICT). Using ICT – which, for the purpose of the present study, essentially means **merging computer networks with telephone networks and audio-visual devices** – undoubtedly helps NPOs to successfully compete with entities from the public and private sectors, as well as with other NPOs, to fulfill their missions, and meet the requirements of increased transparency and accountability.

Because funds are usually limited in an NPO compared with a for-profit business, maximizing available financial resources to incorporate an effective technology management strategy is especially vital for the sustained growth of NPOs. In this line of thinking, ICT can be instrumental in harnessing otherwise unused organizational resources. ICT can be used internally and externally in **three main different areas**: to facilitate transactions and communications; to assist with the storage, processing, distribution and presentation of data; as a marketing tool, to improve the process of reaching into communities and attracting volunteers and donors.

Other benefits brought about by ICT are: easiness in communications among NPOs; possibility to publish online information on NPOs activities and the results obtained; potential to create horizontal, rather than hierarchical, structures and sub-structures.

The intellectual and practical process of adopting, adapting and using the ICT is motivated by two main factors: **perceived competitiveness** (a mostly objective factor, but starting from the subjective assumption that the non-profit sector is by definition ‘competitive’); and **credibility** (a mostly subjective one, meant to attract the donors and to satisfy the stakeholders).

Both literature reviewed, and information on experiences in several Anglophone countries presented in Chapter 2 broadly confirm the same general tendencies: the growing number and greater diversity of NPOs which are competing for funds and volunteers that are not increasing at the same pace; in this context, a more pronounced inclination of most of NPOs towards accepting and implementing ICT (which could make a difference when applying for funds or looking for human resources).

This researcher wanted to go a bit further in analyzing the relationship between NPOs and ICT, and, in addition to taking into account the studies previously discussed, chose to construct and conduct **a survey and several separate**

**interviews centered on the concepts of organizational resource theory.** By this study we intended not only to be reflexive, but to evoke reflexivity in the managers and staff of NPOs who read it. This is why the choice of **qualitative methodology** was in part driven by the desire to reveal connections and contextual unity in a subject that has psychological implications for NPO management.

Charities in England and Wales were chosen in part for practical reasons, and in part because charitable culture is strongly established in the UK after more than 150 years of an active voluntary sector, and in part because UK non-profits have, in previous studies, shown the greatest psychological resistance to change. It is understood that the British voluntary sector has more or less the same financial constraints as those in other Anglophone countries. However, none of those have demonstrated the same degree of fear and distaste for new technology noted in previous studies, which in some cases made management reluctant to push technology on older, long-standing staff who might leave if forced to implement ICT. In other cases, both management and staff displayed unwillingness to invest the necessary time and effort into optimizing ICT. This extraordinarily conservative mindset seems in some ways retrogressive or opposed to the often liberal and inclusive view that many non-profit groups embrace.

In this study, a survey and five in-depth interviews were conducted among 1,000 non-profit organizations operating in the UK in order to understand whether unused resources such as goodwill, skills or other non-material capital and existing financial resources are enhanced and more effectively managed through more extensive use of ICT. 213 responses were deemed complete and used for this study.

Main important points derived from the survey are as follows:

- The survey indicates a **high degree of cooperation** between NPOs that can well result in advances of the NPO's mission, and greater competence.
- NPO staff perception that ICT enabled them to **take on projects they would not otherwise have been able to take on**, and improved their utilization of resources, seem to be hopeful indicators. However, from the responses to the survey statements it is understood that although the perception of the staff is generally positive towards ICT, they cannot put it into practice.
- The role that ICT plays in **improving the goodwill and esteem** of the public towards organizations is not widely accepted by the staff. There is still a considerable amount of people who might prefer the old ways.
- This study tends to support earlier studies showing that **UK-based NPOs** are significantly **less inclined towards embracing ICT innovations** than those based in other English-speaking countries, such as Canada or the US. However, different from previous studies, this study indicates decreased perception of resistance amongst staff.

The survey also indicates **increased cooperation with other organizations**, sometimes resulting in advances of the NPO's mission, and greater competence. Where will this lead? Just as mergers are common in the private sector, so they may become the norm in the third sector; NPOs working in close collaboration may take advantage of economy of scale and other benefits of mergers. However this may occur in the future, there is no indication of such a trend in the study.

The **interviews** largely supported the findings of the survey, but **revealed more about the emotions of the participants**, ranging from hopelessness to frustration. Some were pleased with the results of ICT so far, but concerned about

keeping it up. Interest in and concern about competitiveness, reaching out to the public, as well as other NPOs and potential donors, was strong. These results may not be representative and are not presented as such; they do, however, offer a glimpse of the variety and diversity of attitudes that NPO management may encounter in their quest to realize more of the benefits from appropriate implementation of ICT. It is suggested that management attempt to identify and deal with emotions and views about ICT, rather than try to brush them aside with the proposal of new plans.

NPO staff perception that ICT enabled them to take on projects they would not otherwise have been able to take on, and improved their utilization of resources, seem to be **hopeful indicators**. Further, the fact that nearly half of respondents have considered crowd-sourcing, common in e-government, seems a tacit recognition of the democratization and collaboration offered by the use of ICT. It may indicate growing acceptance of less hierarchical organizational structures. However, these results should be interpreted in caution. It is first because there is still a considerable amount of people who reported concern about the erosion of public trust and didn't recognize ICT as a tool increasing the esteem of their organizations. Second, although the resistance against ICT employment seems somewhat relaxed and the perception of the NPO staff is generally positive towards ICT, they cannot put it into practice due to insufficient financial resources, lack of time and know-how.

## **5.2. Policy Recommendations**

As a continuation of the reflection process stimulated by the findings of the present study, we are going to formulate some recommendations, potentially interesting for the policy makers in the field of NPOs, as well as for the NPOs proper.

### 5.2.1. Recommendations for Governmental Bodies

In the first part of this study mention was made of governmental support extended to NPOs in specific fields of public interest, e.g. medicine and public health, education, etc. At the same time, throughout the study the ICT's increasingly important role in NPOs' activity was underlined.

We are of the opinion that the **government – NPOs relationship is a win – win one**. That is why we think that a structured governmental support for NPOs (avoiding, of course, potential discriminations) might be beneficial for both parties. Having in mind the topic of the study, we suggest that such support be explicitly linked to the ICT adoption and utilization by the respective NPOs.

#### A. Financial support

Insufficient or lack of financial resources are by far the most invoked reasons by NPOs for lagging behind in terms of ICT adoption and utilization. In order to disperse this motivation (which sometimes serves as cover-up for managers' and/or staff's fear or reluctance in front of new technologies), governmental bodies may consider the following policy tools:

- A **Special Fund for grants** to be used by NPOs exclusively for procuring ICT items and/or staff training; the Special Fund could be set up, for example, by deducting 0.25% to 0.50% from the total VAT paid at the national level for ICT hardware and software; the grants earmarked for ICT should be awarded on a qualitative/competitive basis.
- **Free or low interest micro-credits** (i.e. up to 10,000 Euros) extended to NPOs for ICT acquisitions; such micro-credits could be granted by a state bank (or in the absence of such a bank by a designated existing or new governmental agency).

Besides these direct formulas of support, there could also be several indirect ones, i.e.:

- **Earmarking** population’s **non-budgetary fiscal contributions** for NPOs’ ICT endowment.
- **Stimulating** – through market economy fiscal incentives – private banks and other credit institutions to grant NPOs **micro-credits and concessional loans** for ICT acquisitions and implementation.

#### B. Non-Financial Support

Financial support, although extremely important, is not all NPOs need from governmental bodies. Experience shows – and it was also confirmed by the survey and interviews conducted by the author of this thesis – that in most NPOs there are also **non-material, moral incentives** that count. Hence, the suggestion is to institute annual prizes to be attributed to the best ICT-endowed NPO, by categories (function of dimensions and/or object of activity).

Government authorities could also explore opportunities for including NPOs in partnerships of the type “public- private” set up for ICT-related activities.

#### 5.2.2. Recommendations for NPOs

As already mentioned, one of the important conclusions of the survey and interviews that serve as basis for this study was the propensity of most NPOs for mutual cooperation in order to advance their common goals. This prompts us to formulate the following suggestions:

- Building up local, national and international **NPOs alliances** (preferably on the basis of their object of activity); this would streamline exchanges of experiences related to ICT utilization and, most important, enhance their collective bargaining power when it comes to funds and human resources.
- Setting up a cooperative-type **ICT mutual fund**, to be accessible to member NPOs only for urgent ICT-related needs.

This study aimed at facilitating a better understanding of the creation and management of invisible assets as it relates to ICT—particularly the employment of unused resources—and to offer some further awareness and insight to NPO managers. It may be said that leaders in NPOs can play a key role in the socio-economic development of emerging countries and the well-being of developed nations. Acting as intermediaries between the private and public sectors, the third sector can negotiate the difficult land of equitable development in ways that differ in important ways from those of the market and government sectors. ICT can enhance this role through enabling the formation of inter-organizational alliances, facilitating two-way communication between the disadvantaged and government or business bodies, and allowing NPOs to act as trusted providers of information.

It is hoped that managers and staff in the third sector will be encouraged to reflect on their importance in the economic and social networks on a national, as well as on a local, basis. Further, it is hoped that negotiating the difficult landscape of innovation in a highly institutionalized, traditional field may be rendered less challenging through the understandings which can be extracted from this study. Reflexivity engendered by this study may also be a good starting point for adopting further self-assessment protocols, addressing strategic planning, capacity management, governance, cooperative relationships, and the gap between projections and reality.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### SURVEY CONDUCTED ON NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS REGISTERED WITH THE CHARITY COMMISSION, UNITED KINGDOM

The first task, to compile a list of email addresses of charities registered with the Charities Commission in England and Wales, was made possible by some directory websites. A complete online register is maintained by [www.charity-commission.gov.uk](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk) ; however, it requires clicking on charities one-by-one in order to locate their contact information. Directory websites, such as [www.charitylibrary.co.uk](http://www.charitylibrary.co.uk), [www.charityportal.org.uk](http://www.charityportal.org.uk) , [www.ukcharities.org](http://www.ukcharities.org), and [www.charitiesdirect.com](http://www.charitiesdirect.com) aim to provide an easily searchable and complete database of UK charities. However, examination of these such sites shows that many charities do not have websites or email contact information, and all but [www.charitylibrary.co.uk](http://www.charitylibrary.co.uk) were extremely unwieldy for the purposes of this study, as their website design required several clicks per charity to discover their email address (or lack of same). In itself, the process of compiling email addresses for charities was instructive. Nearly all charities provided phone numbers. Relatively few provided their email addresses, and sites such as [www.charityportal.org.uk](http://www.charityportal.org.uk) did not seem even to offer “email address” as a field in their database. As a matter of comparison, one firm offering contact information for charities (for sale) states that they have 65,000 email addresses, 153,000 phone numbers and 191,000 postal addresses; physical addresses were over 300% more available than email addresses.

User-sourced information was helpful, such as [www.wikigiving.org.uk](http://www.wikigiving.org.uk) , which has been built up over a period of years by charities and the people who are aware of them spending a few minutes to enter information about a charity into the directory. In short, a combination of different directory websites was used to gather email addresses of charities. What was theoretically a quick and simple task was, in fact, simple but time-consuming. Since such directory websites would tend to include only those charities which were reasonably Internet-savvy, the method of gathering information carries limitations.

Even a cursory look at some of the email addresses collected demonstrates the tremendous variety and breadth of activities engaged in by the potential participants in the survey: NPOs specializing in medical conditions nationally or locally, NPOs dealing with issues related to poverty, disease and development in Africa, Afghanistan, and other places overseas, elder care, children care, support for veterans, the homeless, animal rights and NPOs that only help other NPOs.

A survey was devised along similar lines to those performed previously on charities registered in England and Wales, but for this research with an emphasis on utilizing unused organizational resources.

The first categories of questions consist of simple demographic questions that do not require subjectivity (age, sex; size of charity; duration of time working for the charity). These fast and easy questions were followed by progressively longer and slightly more complex questions.

## Non-Profits in the UK

### 1. What is your age?

- Under 30
- 30-49 years
- 40-50 years
- Above 50 years

### 2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

### 3. How many people work in your organization? (both full-time and part-time)

- 3 or fewer staff
- 4 to 15 staff
- 16 to 25 staff
- 26 to 35 staff
- 36 or more staff

### 4. How long have you worked there?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 3 years
- 4 to 6 years
- 7 years and over

**5. Senior managers are highly committed to using ICT throughout the organization.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**6. I am aware of clear guidelines and strategies regarding ICT.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**7. The organization easily and quickly adopts new technologies.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**8. Electronically, we receive valuable information from other NPOs.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**9. ICT has made our recordkeeping more accurate.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**10. In general, management provides good ICT strategy and planning to achieve our mission.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**11. I would like to use ICT better or more often with our service users.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**12. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Pinterest, Instagram, and the like) is a waste of time for our organization.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**13. ICT is not as helpful in relationship-building as personal contact.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**14. We have considered or are considering using crowd-sourced data or materials.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**15. I believe that I am accomplishing more as a result of using ICT.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**16. Staff members are resistant to changes in technology.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**17. ICT has failed to deliver on its promise to make administration faster and easier in our organization.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**18. We have considered or are considering developing our own mobile app.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**19. We are able to use our time, contacts, knowledge, and other resources more because of our use of ICT.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**20. I have noticed that our public outreach is greater from using ICT.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**21. We electronically share valuable information with other NPOs.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**22. Our internal coordination is better through using ICT.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**23. Our use of ICT has improved our cooperation with other organizations.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**24. ICT has smoothed the transition during volunteer and staff turnover.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**25. Using ICT has increased our financial sustainability.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**26. Using open source software helps us deliver services.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**27. I am concerned that ICT may erode public trust in our organization.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**28. Our use of ICT has helped us to identify more funding sources.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**29. ICT is improving the goodwill or esteem of the public and other organizations towards us.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**30. ICT enables us to take on projects we would not otherwise have been able to do.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**31. We are able to maintain good communication with our service users via ICT.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**32. I am satisfied with our use of ICT to advance our mission.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**33. Mobile ICT is useful for our organization.**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Done

Powered by **SurveyMonkey**  
Check out our [sample surveys](#) and create your own now!

There are numerous resources for learning the procedures to set out a survey on [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com), including video tutorials from the company and university resources, such as videos and documents. The two superior levels of subscription offer advanced features such as the ability to cross-tabulate and analyze answers and export them in Microsoft Excel. However, they require annual payments that may well be out of reach to the usual student budget. The two basic levels of subscription offer limited options; hence, the survey responses were not exported and were tabulated manually in this research. In the event that larger sample groups are surveyed, the manual method would be unmanageable. “Skip logic” was not needed for this research, but in any event is available only to annual subscribers. This author suggests that the cost of one of the more expensive annual subscriptions might be shared amongst students for future research projects on larger population samples, for quantitative analysis, to be able to export the results, and other features not offered to basic users of the surveymonkey site.

The surveymonkey software allows one to set out questions to which only one answer may be selected, which was done here. The researcher must decide: whether respondents can go back and change an answer they have already given (in this case, yes); if the respondent can omit answering a question and still continue the survey (in this case, yes); whether or not respondents from the same IP address can submit answers (since snowball sampling was used, yes). The survey had to be completed in one sitting—there was no facility for saving one’s answers and returning to the survey later. No personally identifying information about respondents was gathered, including names and IP addresses, so there are

few relevant concerns about the Data Protection Act or other germane legislation, however SurveyMonkey promises that their data is securely stored in caged servers requiring biometric identification for physical access, and offer SSL encryption at extra cost (which was not used for this research). The researcher had neither access to respondents' IP addresses nor the facility to export and save the information gathered on SurveyMonkey servers to the researcher's own computer, which an advanced subscription ("Gold" or "Platinum" annual subscription) would have allowed.

The researcher believed that the questions and layout of the survey were as simple as possible in order to refrain from discouraging or confusing the participants, and ultimately approximately 92% completed most of the questions (when only 1 or 2 questions were skipped or not answered, the survey was counted as being complete). No choice of "not applicable" or "unknown" was given, which may explain the fact that some respondents elected not to answer questions; however, it was believed that "neutral" would suffice to capture the undecided.

Overall, this researcher would suggest that while SurveyMonkey may be relatively simple software to use, the most valuable and time-saving features are available only to annual subscribers, therefore, student researchers may find it rewarding either to identify a more cost effective option, or to share the costs of an annual subscription amongst a group of researchers.

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW RECORDS

#### 1. Jackie B.

- a) *How long have you been involved with the charity for which you work?* I have been running this charity for more than 4 years, but involved in similar activities and teaching for many years before that.
- b) *What are your feelings about using computers, smart phones, and similar devices to achieve the aims of the charity for which you work?* We use computers to keep in touch and also to teach. We take children who are having a rough time in school, usually through losing a parent, abuse or some other family catastrophe, and we tutor them. So we need more computers than we have. The actual tutoring and activities that we do with the kids are not totally dependent on computers—we took them ice skating last winter, for example, as a special treat that they could not otherwise afford. But they need compute skills. Mostly, they're teens by the time we get them, and they don't have computers at home. So computers are absolutely necessary. For ourselves, we do admin and accounting, but for the kids, we use various teaching software plus some Office programs for them to learn the basics.
- c) *How do you feel personally about the potential of information and communications technology in your field?* I can't live without my phone now, as I need to check my email often and keep in touch with the parents mainly via text. We don't really do much beyond that, although I believe

there is more for us to be doing. We don't have the time or the money to even think about doing more right now.

- d) *Is there anything else you would like me to know about how you view information and communications technology in your charity?* The reality is, 2 years ago, I was already looking for another job because we lost our funding and if we hadn't got a grant through the Mayo's office, we would not be here now. Then last year, we lost our premises at M. School, so it has been really unsettling. We cannot think too much about the future, since we are busy just getting by, just coping with what we have got to do. In theory, it would be interesting to look into how we could be doing better, or what we could do more efficiently, but in practice, we've had the same website for years and we are unlikely to do anything more than what we are doing. So overall, I view it as a plus for those charities with more manpower than we have, but for us, it is not possible to make changes. It is just something we have to face. We can't compete with those who have the money and the know-how, so we do the best we can with what we've got, which is more personal relationships built up through the years.

## **2. Zaina M.**

- a) *How long have you been involved with the charity for which you work?* About 6 years, part-time. I do the filing, some of the out-reach and some work with the young people.
- b) *What are your feelings about using computers, smart phones, and similar devices to achieve the aims of the charity for which you work?* They make us greatly more efficient, even just to text the young people and let them know we're on the way to pick them up for boxercise, or to confirm times and dates, has been really good. We also use Facebook to let them know, because that is what the young people rely on more than anything. They

don't use email so much as Facebook. So we post it once and we're done with it. That's it. It saves a lot of time.

- c) *How do you feel personally about the potential of information and communications technology in your field?* It seems very positive. We got a new website about 4 years ago, replacing an earlier one that I don't remember anymore. That was really good. We also got a blog around that time. I personally don't use Facebook or anything like that, but it seems like a really good way to reach out to young people and to find more people, to let people know. We got a number of new people showing up for our classes just because they'd heard about it through their friends on Facebook so it's been good. I'm sure it could be better, but I don't know how, because I don't know about these things myself.
- d) *Is there anything else you would like me to know about how you view information and communications technology in your charity?* I think we could be doing better, but again, it's not something I know very much about. I try to focus on keeping the papers organized and, when I go to the classes, keeping an eye on the kids so that they are safe, doing what they're supposed to be doing, and in the case of the disabled ones, that they're OK and their needs are being met. The records are half on paper and half on the computer, we need to get that all on computer. So I know we have a long way to go. But it will be much easier to find things and stay organized when we're totally on the computer.

### **3. Daniel L.**

- a) *How long have you been involved with the charity for which you work?*  
Last year was our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. But I have gone back to school now so I've cut back.

- b) *What are your feelings about using computers, smart phones, and similar devices to achieve the aims of the charity for which you work?* It's been amazing. I really noticed it after one of our trustees put us on some different websites, and we got various people from London and even abroad contacting us wanting to volunteer, which we never had before. We also partnered with a disability sport group, which we wouldn't have done, either. We are in local directories and non-profit listings, I'm not sure which ones, but it made a difference. She also set us up on Facebook, Twitter, and a blog, which we try to all take turns to keep it up. I'd say it's been helpful to make us more known to the community.
- c) *How do you feel personally about the potential of information and communications technology in your field?* For us, I think we are getting out there a lot more, people can find us, and other charities can find us. We have about 5,000 followers on Twitter, a lot of them seem to be local to us in Hackney. We got an interview broadcast by university students, got an event aired on BBC and Sky, which was great exposure for the charity. We were on the FreeSports website. If we can keep it up, I think it will be very good. People have approached us out of the blue because of these things.
- d) *Is there anything else you would like me to know about how you view information and communications technology in your charity?* I know we have to keep it up, and it's hard to do that with all the limitations we have now. We don't get one of the grants we were depending on, and it's getting harder and harder to continue.

#### **4. Elizabeth C.**

- a) *How long have you been involved with the charity for which you work?*  
Nearly 10 years.

- b) *What are your feelings about using computers, smart phones, and similar devices to achieve the aims of the charity for which you work? It's absolutely vital and the only way forward for us. In what ways?* To gain recognition, to make new alliances, to get more participants in our activities. We have a small charity with only so much capacity. Sometimes we've reached our maximum, and we cannot deal with more, but other times we're under capacity. Partnering with other charities with similar aims is our goal now, to widen our expertise, and to perhaps get a more regular, reliable stream of disabled participants.
- c) *How do you feel personally about the potential of information and communications technology in your field?* For locating new potential partners, there is no substitute for it. We still have to meet people in person, but we've been able to find people to meet and make initial contact through having more of an internet presence ourselves and by doing searches in our area. Our connection with the NDCS was made possible by being more visible, more connected. There is no option but to push forward in this direction.
- d) *Is there anything else you would like me to know about how you view information and communications technology in your charity?* I'm frustrated by the fact that no one else in the group is willing to spend the time and effort on it, but I feel we will not get the funding we need without it. We have the bare minimum—website, blog, flickr, youtube, twitter, Facebook accounts. It's all "low tech" but it's all we've got. We are barely interacting with others, really just beginning, and already we've seen benefits. Imagine what would happen if we all pulled together as a team and contributed to the effort—we might really make a difference. But after 2 ½ or 3 years of frustratingly small progress, I don't see that happening. I don't see us taking a strong role at all, even though we have great personal contacts in the Ugandan diaspora in East London, as well

as amongst communities in Uganda and Kenya, we are not using those contacts beyond an occasional bare minimum to survive, we are random rather than systematic. We need to think differently in order to achieve our grander aims, but I don't think we will. Through providing information, we could become a central clearing house for the communities here and in Africa, but it would take a great effort to do that. Someone else will hopefully be able to realize the potential that we are not.

## **5. Miranda H.**

- a) *How long have you been involved with the charity for which you work?* It's been about 3 years now, first on a very part-time basis and now on a regular basis.
- b) *What are your feelings about using computers, smart phones, and similar devices to achieve the aims of the charity for which you work?* They are a godsend for us. We apply for grants online, people can see what we've done online, we post photos and successes, and they can get an idea about us before they call or visit. It's a great way to reach out to people, to let everyone know what we're doing.
- c) *How do you feel personally about the potential of information and communications technology in your field?* We're just a small, simple group, but for the bigger groups, the potential is much more. For us, it's been a great low-cost way to make ourselves known. If we were a large charity, we could do fundraising online and things we can't seriously consider. We can't afford the platforms, the software, we would spend more on that than we would raise, most likely. We've looked into the text-donation scheme, but how would we afford to advertise it? All of the grants we get are for projects and programs, they are for specific activities and we must account for every penny

we spend on those projects. The grants do not cover our operating expenses, such as the phone bill, the internet or anything like that. Literally, we don't get a penny for the things that could, potentially, make us more sustainable, more able to do fundraising. It's an impossible situation for small charities. But the potential is there to link up with other people like never before.

- d) *Is there anything else you would like me to know about how you view information and communications technology in your charity?* It's got the limitations that I told you about, and we really don't have a way around them for the time being.

## APPENDIX C

### TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

#### ENSTİTÜ

|                                |                                     |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü        | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Enformatik Enstitüsü           | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü      | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

#### YAZARIN

Soyadı : Dönmez  
Adı : Pınar  
Bölümü : Bilim ve Teknoloji Politika Çalışmaları

**TEZİN ADI** (İngilizce) : Information and communication technology in the UK voluntary sector: “Enabling new ways to use existing organizational resources”

**TEZİN TÜRÜ** : Yüksek Lisans  Doktora

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
3. Tezimden bir bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz.

**TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ:**