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On Think Tanks

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Governance and Management of Volunteer-Based Organisations

Lukas Hupfer & Maria Isabelle Wieser

Introduction

That’s us!

Lukas Hupfer, Director

Before: Head of Regional Group Bern

Maria Isabelle Wieser, Deputy Director - Head of Romandie & Think Tank Hub

Before: Head of Regional Group Lucerne & Head of Thematic Group Gender

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foraus - A «Grassroots» Volunteer-Based Model

Why a particular session on volunteers?

- Lessons learned from volunteers → similar challenges & opportunities
- Public Engagement

Today's programme

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Assignment

You will hear some questions about your own engagement. Keep your camera on if the statement applies to you, switch it off if it doesn't.

Camera on = YES

Camera off = NO

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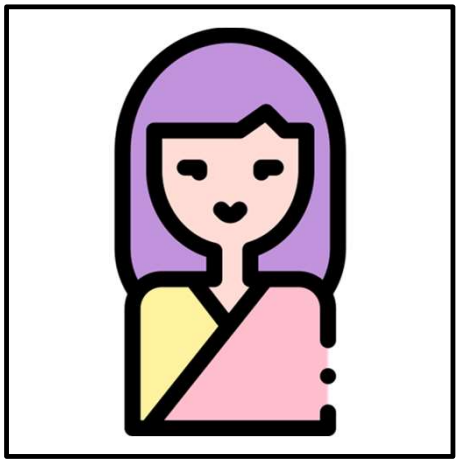
foraus - A «Grassroots» Volunteer-Based Model

Assignment

What is the persona of a volunteer?

→ We will split you in groups of 4. Discuss how you would describe a typical volunteer.



Name: Rosalia **Role:** Co-Lead of foraus-Programme on Europe

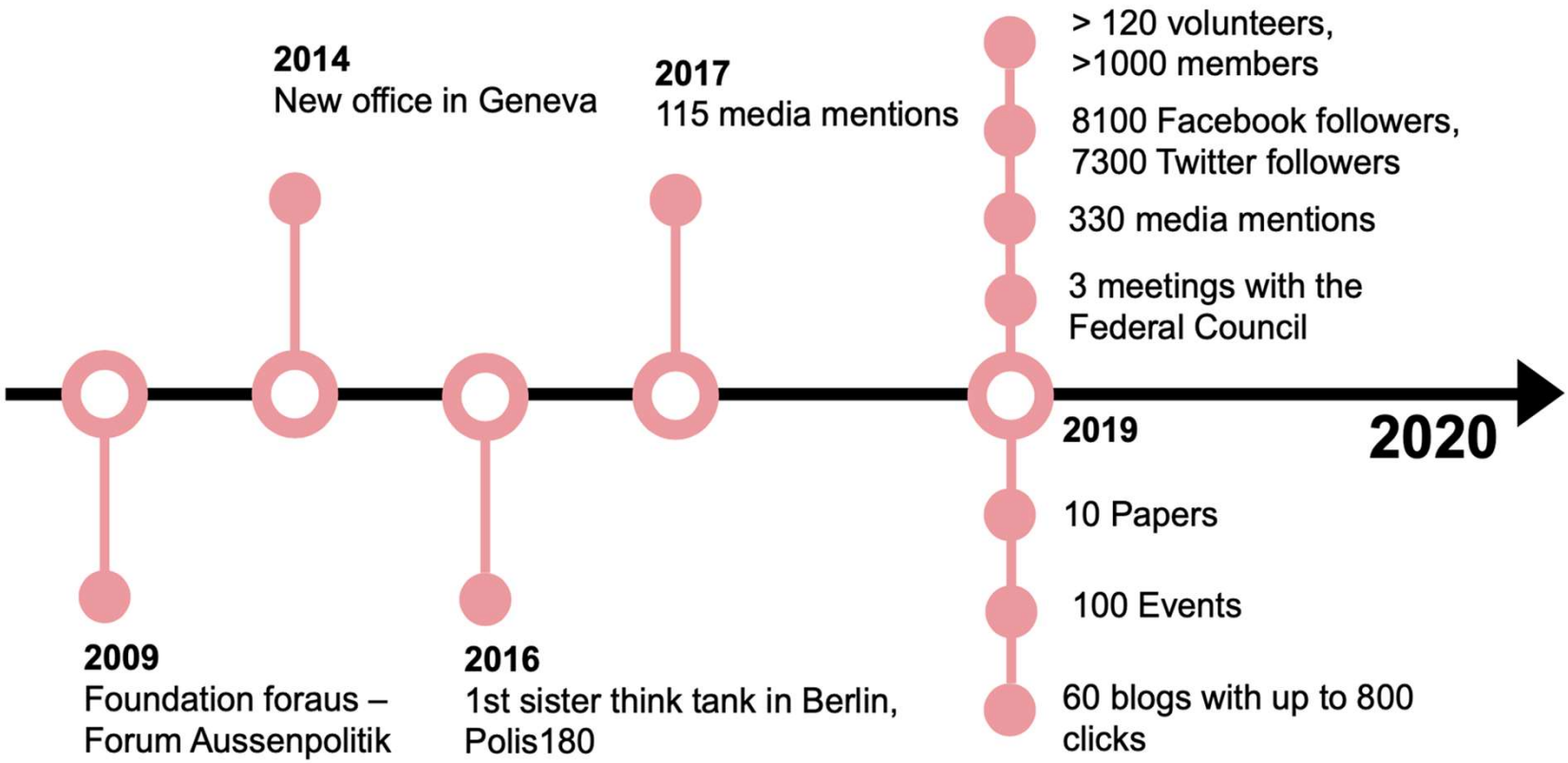
Behaviours
Career focus and ambitious
She goes running every morning
Very consistent and strict
She likes statuses and titles

Facts & Demographics
27
Swiss
Manages the foraus-programme on Europe with 15 volunteers
Hates zoom

Needs & Goals
Under pressure due to her PhD at the University of Zurich
Get visibility within the organization and reach out to a lot of people.
Engage people without being a pain for them
Sign-up for the diplomatic exam at the Swiss Foreign Ministry

foraus - the Swiss Think Tank on Foreign Policy

The story in numbers



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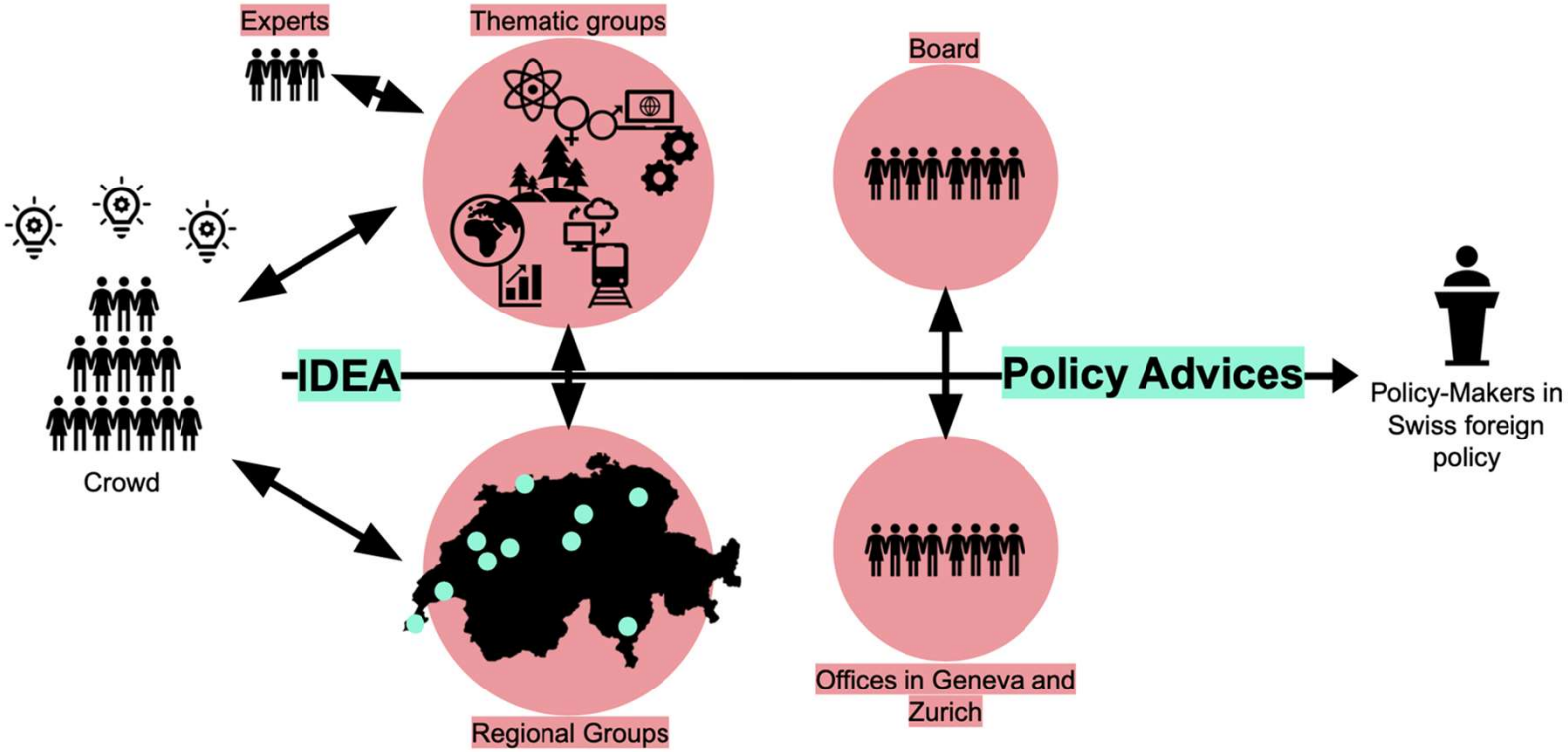
The foraus model



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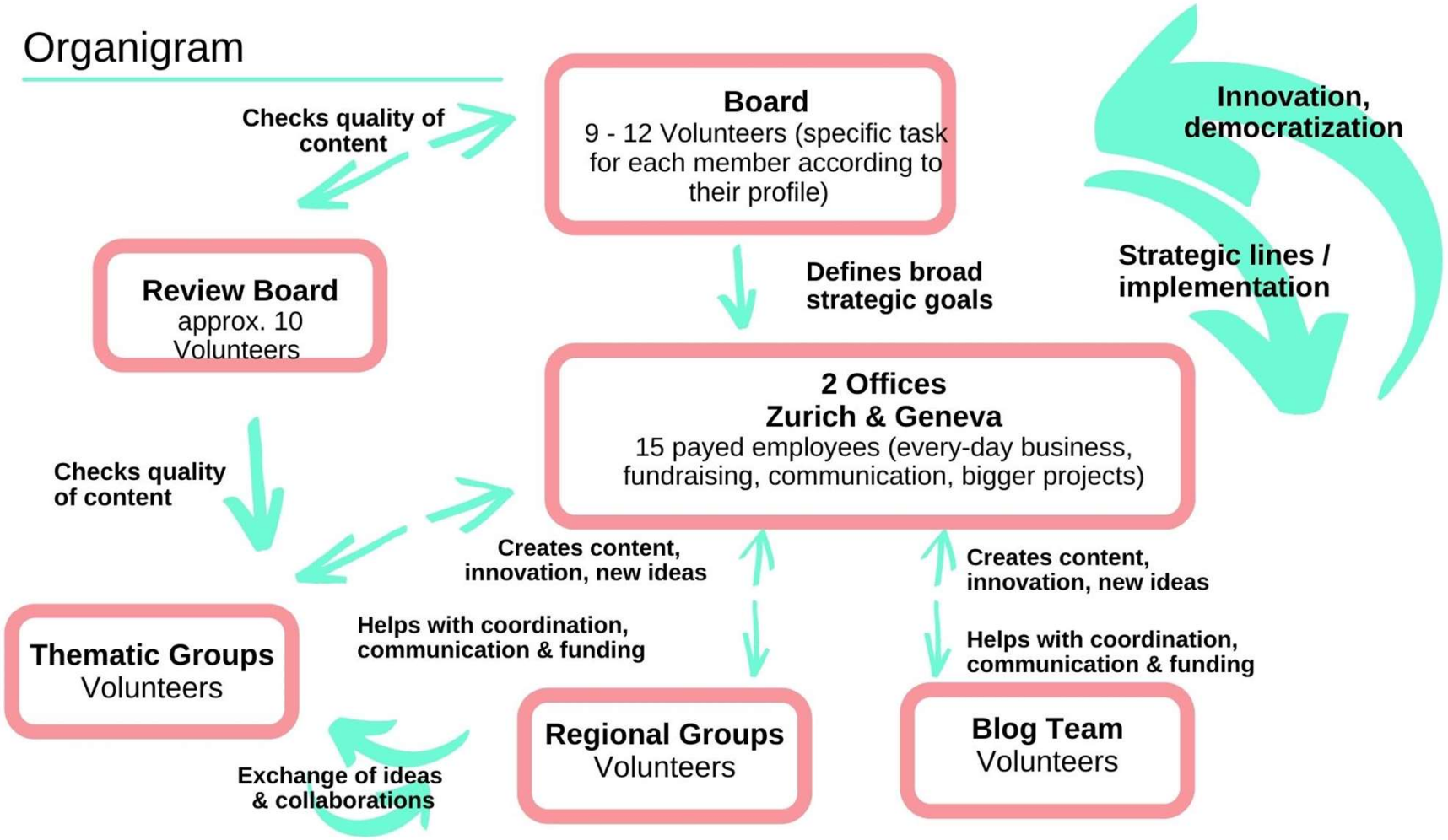
Organigram



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Opportunities

In your opinion, what are the chances and opportunities of a volunteer-based organisation?

Governance

1) Who takes the decisions?
    a) Flat hierarchy
    b) Democratic decision-shaping and making process
2) Where do the ideas for content and agenda-setting come from?
    a) Diversity in content
    b) Creativity
    c) Recognising emerging topics
3) How can we create impact?
    a) Spread the ideas through a big network → local impact & size and reach of network
    b) Young talents → they stay faithful to the organisation throughout their career
    c) Voice of civil society

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Management

1) What are the advantages of a volunteer-based network for managing such an organisation?
   a) «Young» & agile team → ideas, flexibility, open to new ways of work/innovation
   b) Ressources! Volunteers organising lots of activities, bringing in broad network of expertise (content & skills)
   c) Entry-point for young people → easily accessible and possibility to develop within the system

Challenges

Governance: Top-down “versus” Bottom-up

1) Who defines the vision and the strategy?
   a) Method: volunteers part of the process
   b) Content: common understanding, values and identity?
   c) What if you don’t agree?

1) How much self-organization by volunteers?
   a) Legal status of sub-groups
   b) Budget
   c) Corporate identity: titles, communications etc.

1) How much “professionalism”?

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Management: How much “Professionalism”?

1) Professionals “versus” volunteers
   a) different speeds, different expectations, different skills
   b) Who manages?

1) Quality control and knowledge management

1) Profil of volunteers
   a) What kind of volunteer profile(s)?

Tools for Voluntary- and Public Engagement

1) Community and Engagement Manager
   a) Go to person, Regular check-ins
   b) Information management
   c) Professional recruitments and Coachings

1) Monitoring Mechanisms
   a) Review Board
   b) Impact Measurement

1) Platforms
   a) Physical meetings: retreats, workshops
   b) Policy Kitchen

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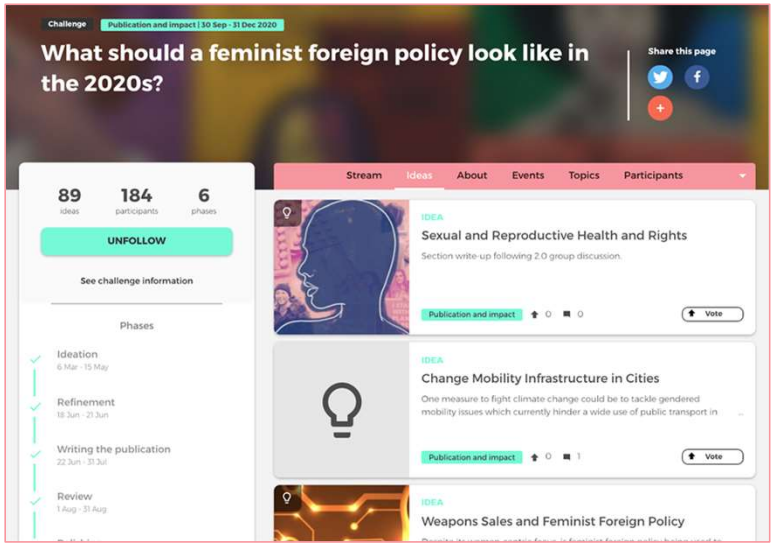
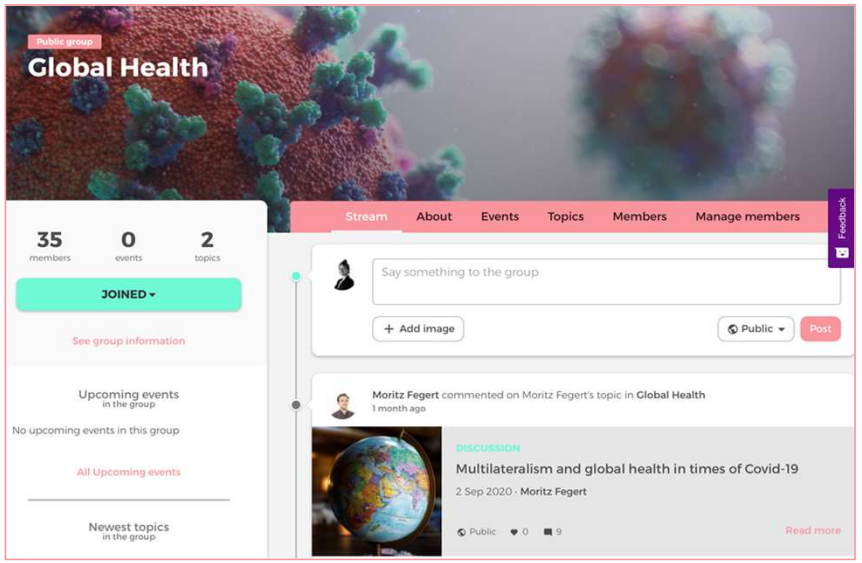
Concrete Tool: www.policykitchen.com

Challenges



Groups



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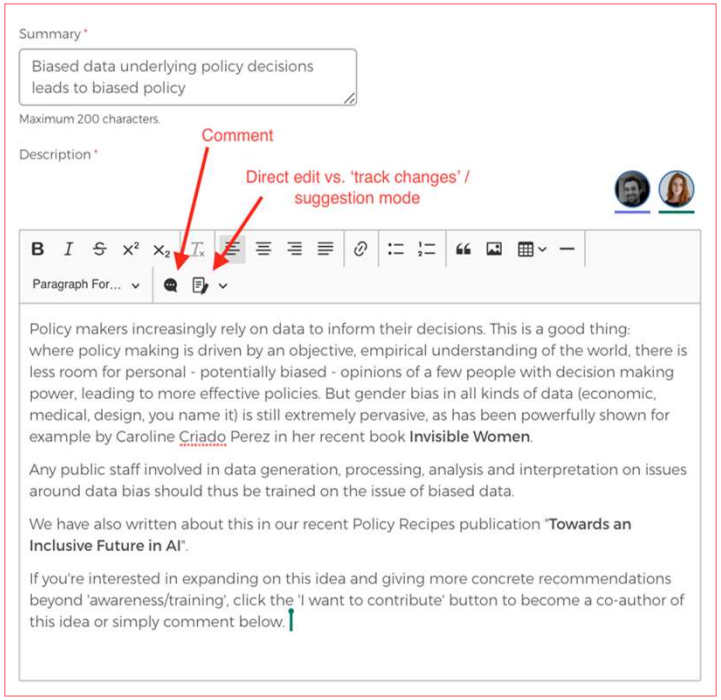
Collaborative Text



App

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COVID-19: A Challenge for Volunteering and Volunteer-Based Organizations?

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Sources

Websites

- www.foraus.ch
- www.policykitchen.com
- www.openthinktank.org
- www.thinktankhubgeneva.org

Articles

- Lukas Hupfer, Collective intelligence: Is the grassroots think tank model only possible in Switzerland? (Presentation at the OTT Conference 2019, also on OTT-TV)
- Lukas Hupfer, Empowering the Public (OTT Annual Review 2018)

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