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Sustaining spontaneous venturing in response to the global refugee crisis

Mohamed Farhoud^{a, b, *}, Trenton Alma Williams^c, Manuel Aires de Matos^d, Katharina Scheidgen^e, Kurian George^f, Muhammad Sufyan^g, Anas Alakkad^h

^a University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg

^b University of Turku, Finland

^c Brigham Young University, USA

^d University of Porto, Portugal

^e Georg-August University Göttingen, Germany

^f Tilburg University, Netherlands

^g Jyväskylä University, Finland

^h Pontem Pro, Germany

ABSTRACT

Spontaneous venturing plays a prominent role in alleviating suffering in limited-term crises. Yet, when crises endure over time, it may become necessary to transition spontaneous ventures into sustained ventures to effectively address persistent needs. In this rapid response paper, we collaborated with a problem owner to investigate five sub-problems associated with the core problem of transitioning from spontaneous to sustained venturing in the context of the global refugee crisis. Using a translational research approach in entrepreneurship, we suggest answers to the five identified sub-problems grounded in existing evidence from perspectives in the entrepreneurship literature (contextualization, volunteering, community-based organizing, and venture legitimacy). We further synthesize the solutions that can help motivate and structure sustained collective efforts to address endured crises and highlight key implications for the broader community that aspires to address persistent crises.

1. Introduction

Crises are rare, often-surprising situations that significantly threaten high-priority values and resources of an entity (e.g., individual, organization, community, etc.) and inhibit an affected entity's ability to mobilize a mitigating response (Hermann, 1963; Pearson and Clair, 1998; Turner, 1976; Williams et al., 2017). As such, entrepreneurial venturing often plays a prominent role in providing aid and support during crises (Williams, 2022; Williams and Shepherd, 2016). Specifically, when crises occur, loosely connected and pro-socially motivated groups of actors (Drabek and McEntire, 2003) 'emerge' and cohere to meet the needs of crisis-affected entities by alleviating their suffering (Dutton et al., 2006; Shepherd and Williams, 2014). Recent research on this phenomenon highlights the important role of entrepreneurial actors in orchestrating collective action among diverse stakeholders through an approach known as 'spontaneous venturing' (Williams, 2014). These stakeholders often include community members, primarily ephemeral, who function as resource repositories and/or sources of solidarity (Shepherd and Williams, 2020; Williams and Shepherd, 2021). These ephemeral communities are formed to offer short-term assistance following crises and that only produce limited-term effects, often by temporarily repurposing resources within their wider community for victim relief (for reviews, see: Drabek and McEntire, 2003; Kreps and Bosworth, 2007).

* Corresponding author. University of Luxembourg, Faculty of Law, Economics and Finance · Department, Department of Economics and Management, Campus Kirchberg Building/Bloc G. 6 Rue Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, L-1359, Luxembourg.

E-mail addresses: mohamed.farhoud@uni.lu, mohamed.s.farhoud@utu.fi (M. Farhoud).

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Although some crises are brief, others might endure longer time spans (Williams and Fathallah, 2024). Indeed, persistent crises are on the rise (Shepherd et al., 2020). Persistent crises also trigger spontaneous venturing (Bundy et al., 2017; Williams and Shepherd, 2016), and necessitate the transitioning of spontaneous venturing into something else—which could include exit (Shepherd and Williams, 2014) or conversion into a long-term, sustained organizational effort (Majchrzak et al., 2007; Shepherd and Williams, 2014; Williams and Shepherd, 2018). One notable example of such a persistent crisis is the global refugee crisis associated with forced migration, which persists despite various governmental, nongovernmental, and entrepreneurial interventions (Shepherd et al., 2020; Thorgren and Williams, 2023). The global refugee crisis is particularly concerning because the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide continues to rise (UNHCR, 2023), caused by an expanding spread of persistent violent conflicts and natural disasters that both force migration and preclude individuals from returning safely to their home of origin. The result is a significant societal need for host countries that receive forced migrants to facilitate their long-term adaptation (Thorgren and Williams, 2023) and integration in their new communities (Chliova et al., 2018). While spontaneous ventures may facilitate certain stages of transition for affected individuals by targeting evolving needs (Williams and Shepherd, 2021), less is known about how spontaneous ventures become *permanent* and the processes by which they sustain the engagement of diverse stakeholders throughout that transition.

To develop theoretically grounded solutions for the problem of sustaining spontaneous venturing addressing refugee crisis, we conceptualized the present entrepreneurship rapid response research (ER3) paper (see JVBI, 2021, for the concept of rapid responses; Kuckertz et al., 2023 for a concrete ER3 example). As a translational approach in entrepreneurship, ER3 aims to systematically explore research-practice combinations to translate existing research evidence to solving entrepreneurial problems ((Muñoz and Dimov, 2023). The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. First, we elaborate on the core problem requiring rapid response (Slawinski et al., 2023), and explain the procedure for defining and providing solutions for the problem (Chen et al., 2023). Second, we discuss solutions for the core problem from four different theoretical perspectives. In doing so, we address a gap in the literature, as prior research has predominantly focused on the temporary nature of spontaneous venturing responses to limited-term crises (Shepherd and Williams, 2014). Third, we synthesize the solutions to the core problem as anchored in diverse theoretical perspectives and discuss implications for the problem owner and the broader community working in the context of entrepreneurial response to crises.

2. Problem owner, problem, and procedure: challenges in sustaining spontaneous venturing

The problem owner is a social entrepreneur and co-founder of Syrische Freiwillige in Deutschland (SFD), an entrepreneurial venture in Germany. SFD emerged as a response to the refugee crisis in Germany with the primary objective of addressing suffering stemming from forced migration. SFD engages forced migrants, particularly Syrian refugees in Germany, as key stakeholders in its entrepreneurial venturing activities through the means of volunteer work. SFD recruits and deploys refugee volunteers to provide humanitarian responses to emergent needs, targeting the evolving challenges faced by refugees as well as those faced by victims of more limited-term crises such as the Ahr Valley flood, the Russo-Ukrainian war, and the Turkey-Syria earthquakes. Thus, SFD seeks to address both emergent and long-term needs, creating a pathway for refugees to move from ‘emergency triage’ to social integration. Achieving successful social integration through SFD necessitates a sustained engagement of volunteers within its organizational structure (Handy and Greenspan, 2009; VAI, 2019). Nevertheless, initiatives of SFD do not endure, and dissolve after addressing emergent crises thereby impeding a successful social integration.

To solve this lack of long-term engagement of volunteers, the structure of SFD needs to be transformed to permanently be “at the ready” for deployment when new challenges arise. This transition, which forms the core of our ER3 problem, precludes the need for repeated spontaneous venturing initiatives to emerge. With achieving transition, SFD seeks to provide a long-term structure capable of addressing emergent needs from new crises, while also offering *evolving* solutions to refugee volunteers that provide value commensurate with their evolving needs: value in the form of enhanced self-image, skill development and reduced self-isolation.

A result of the lead-author and the problem-owner deliberations was the identification of sustaining repeated spontaneous venturing as the core problem meriting rapid response. This core problem is delineated by specific five sub-problems. First, volunteers generally lack a culture of volunteerism, which prevents them from working with SFD for prolonged periods of time. According to the SFD team, the volunteers have not adopted a volunteering culture because it is not an everyday practice in the Arab community, to which most of the refugee stakeholders belong (Sub-problem 1). Second, volunteers often do not actively engage in volunteering operations unless the SFD core team specifically asks for a certain task (Sub-problem 2). This limited engagement has considerably slowed SFD's response time for rescue efforts. Third, volunteers often lack accountability (Sub-problem 3). For example, SFD once needed to use a warehouse to facilitate rescue efforts in another country; however, after organizing different teams and transporting the donated items to the warehouse, the volunteer in charge of managing the warehouse did not show up. Fourth, volunteers often fail to coordinate effectively with other aid agencies involved in rescue efforts, such as the Ministry of Social Affairs (Saarland-Germany) and the German Red Cross (DRK), resulting in poor customization of resources and wastages (Sub-problem 4). The problem owner explained that SFD is not an organized, systemic volunteering effort but rather a spontaneous action, *Fazaa*—the Arabic term that describes spontaneous fast rescue actions. *Fazaa* does not allow the emergent spontaneous teams to coordinate with rescue efforts in the affected areas in order to customize the needed materials. For example, at the beginning of a crisis, items such as clothes, medical supplies, tents, and the like would be best, but cash support is more helpful later in the process because of the long logistical and red tape process, especially during war. Fifth, SFD faces challenges in mobilizing resources vital for supporting and maintaining the engagement of its volunteers. According to the SFD team, this issue has developed because resource providers have begun to view SFD as being driven by politics (Sub-problem 5). The team attributes this issue to the negative media coverage which has framed SFD as an ‘anti-Russian’ organization, owing to SFD's continued humanitarian operations in countries like Ukraine and Syria that have poor diplomatic relations with Russia. Table 1 provides additional background information about SFD.

Table 1
SFD background information.

"Syrische Freiwillige in Deutschland" (SFD)	
First year of operation	2021
Volunteers	10 active and permanent volunteers with 25 more during crises
Age of volunteers	23 to 34 (one volunteer is 55 and one is 60)
Founders	3
Legal form	Non for profit

The process we followed for defining and solving the above ER3 core problem can be summarized in five stages: *problem formulation, sensemaking, sensegiving, solution interpretation, and future-looking*. We detail these stages in Fig. 1. Next, we discuss the four perspectives (contextualization, volunteering, community-based organizing, and venture legitimacy) we used to identify possible solutions to SFD's ER3 core problem.

3. Translational perspectives on sustaining spontaneous venturing

We first draw insights from the literature on context to offer a deeper understanding of the ER3 core problem and its sub-components. We will then propose solutions by utilizing the evidence gathered from the community organizing, volunteering, and legitimacy literatures. In Table 2 we summarize and define key concepts used in this ER3 paper.

3.1. Perspective 1: contextualizing the challenges in sustaining spontaneous venturing to understand their roots

Addressing the ER3 core problem requires a deep understanding of its roots, and a contextualized perspective on entrepreneurship (Welter, 2011; Welter and Baker, 2021) offers a fruitful basis to do that. A contextualized perspective underscores that entrepreneurial processes are enabled and constrained by the particular social context in which they are embedded (Jack and Anderson, 2002; Sarason et al., 2006). As such, social contexts, which can vary significantly, shape stakeholder understandings of norms, values, and regulations impacting entrepreneurship processes (Welter et al., 2018). Such differences can occur across national cultures (Scheidgen and Brattström, 2022; Shirokova et al., 2022) as well as between smaller analytical levels, such as communities (Mittermaier et al., 2023).

As it relates to sustaining the spontaneous venturing of SFD, SFD occupies a unique position between providing perpetual volunteering opportunities to victims of forced migration crises (Syrian refugees) and providing immediate aid to victims of other crises through these volunteers. Thus, SFD creates value by bridging diverse contexts and the diverse stakeholders embedded within those contexts. To accomplish its objective, SFD requires the sustained engagement of stakeholders who participate for different reasons (Seyb et al., 2019) and hold potentially competing interests/values that influence whether they will continue to collaborate with SFD

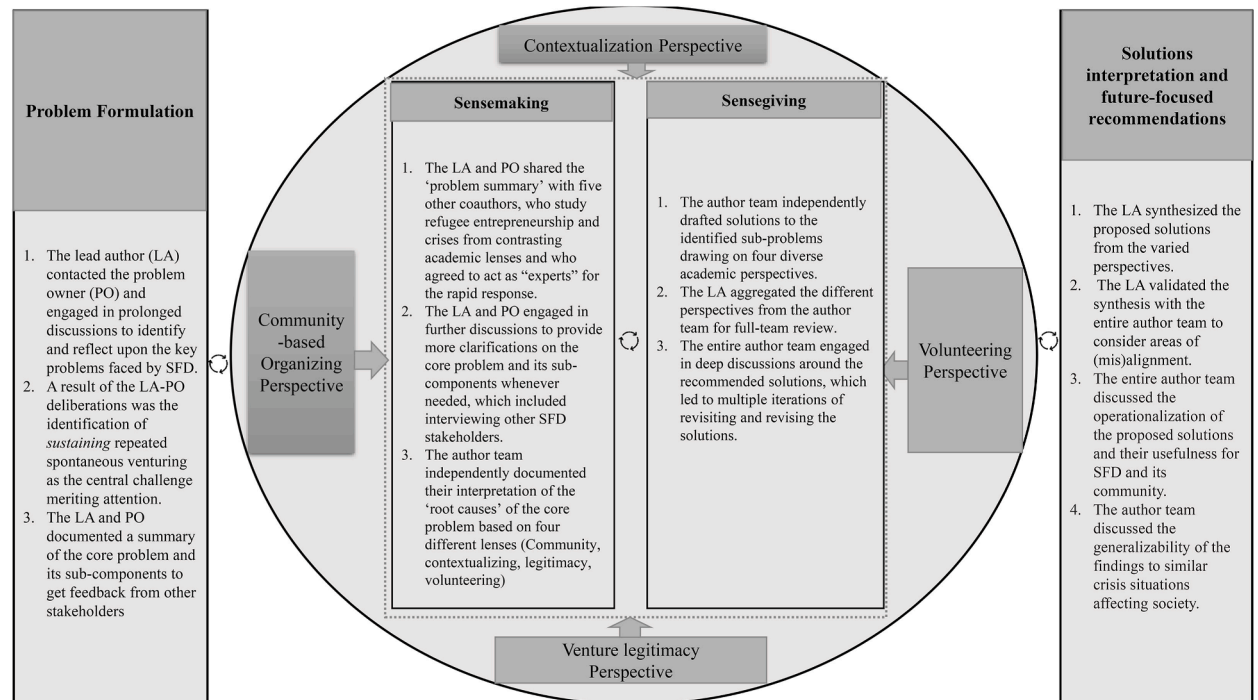


Fig. 1. The process of defining and solving the ER3 problem.

Table 2
List of definitions.

Term	Definition
Spontaneous venturing	“The spontaneous creation of new ventures in response to a disaster” (Shepherd and Williams, 2019, p. 45).
Crisis	Rare, often-surprising situations that significantly threaten high-priority values and resources of an entity (e.g., individual, organization, community, etc.) and inhibit an affected entity's ability to mobilize a mitigating response (Hermann, 1963; Pearson and Clair, 1998; Turner, 1976; Williams et al., 2017).
Refugee	People who have fled war, violence, conflict, or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country. They often have had to flee with little more than the clothes on their back, leaving behind homes, possessions, jobs, and loved ones (UNHCR).
Asylum-seeker	Someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed (UNHCR).
Volunteers	People who give their time, effort, and talent to a cause without profiting financially (Farny et al., 2019a,b, p. 1094).
High reliability organization (HRO)	Include teams of firefighters, emergency response personnel, healthcare workers, and temporary organizational teams (La Porte, 1996).
Speed of response	“Amount of time taken to initiate and complete the response to persons suffering” (Dutton et al., 2006, p. 73).
Scale of response	“Amount of resources generated and directed toward persons suffering” (Dutton et al., 2006, p. 73). It is understood as the quantifiable (number of) items.
Scope of response	“Variety of resources generated and directed toward persons suffering,” and it gauges “the breadth of the action repertoires” (Dutton et al., 2006, p. 73). It includes breadth of items (clothes, cash, and housing) and breadth of involved people from within and outside the devastated areas.
Customization of response	“Efficient patterning and shaping of resources to meet the particular needs of those who are suffering,” and it gauges “effectiveness, and more effective organizations customize service to customers' needs” (Dutton et al., 2006, p. 73). It includes “attention toward non-duplication of efforts or resources” (Dutton et al., 2006, p. 73).
Effective response	An adequate speed, scale, scope, and customized response to crises/disasters (Dutton et al., 2006).

(Williams and Shepherd, 2018). Specifically, SFD's entrepreneurial venturing bridges (a) the Syrian refugee community, characterized by *Fazaa* as a practice for disaster response, and (b) the German disaster relief system, characterized by long-established (inter-) organizational structures and bureaucracy. While such a combination bears a lot of potential (Powell and Sandholtz, 2012), it also comes with severe challenges that impair entrepreneurial venturing. To be successful in sustaining this bridge, SFD must navigate conflicting social rules, norms, values, and practices embraced by diverse stakeholders, satisfying their diverse and potentially competing outcome expectations. For example, since the Syrian refugees are guided by *Fazaa*, which involves spontaneous and fast—but less coordinated—rescue actions, their voluntary engagement is likely to conflict with the more structured and sustained coordination envisaged by SFD for providing aid under the German disaster relief system.

The first four sub-problems SFD faces in sustaining stakeholder engagement in spontaneous venturing largely have come from challenges associated with aligning stakeholders with competing expectations. For example, as it relates to the social value of volunteering, *Fazaa* renders volunteering somewhat less relevant, thus hindering sustained venturing. Similarly, the spontaneous orientation of *Fazaa*'s activities complicates sustained venturing because it runs counter to the German relief system, which is characterized by structure, planning, and coherence. These differences, together with the absence of a shared reward structure, have further inhibited volunteering and, in turn, sustained venturing. Finally, the fifth sub-problem faced by SFD can be explained by the politically charged humanitarian context in which SFD operates. The portrayal of a humanitarian organization like SFD as politically-driven by the media may indicate a mission drift (Grimes et al., 2019) to many key stakeholders of SFD. In other words, such stakeholders may fear a drift in SFD's focus from its key mission of alleviation of suffering and may question SFD's ability to achieve this mission (Whelan, de Bakker, den Hond and Muthuri, 2020). This, in turn, may negatively affect the willingness of such stakeholders to provide resources to and associate with SFD, whom they feel is politically driven.

3.2. Perspective 2: Enacting priorities of community-based organizing to mobilize actors with different goals toward a shared objective

Crises and their responses unfold over time in phases (Bundy et al., 2017). In particular, a crisis unfolds as a trajectory with warning signs, an acute stage, and then amplification and resolution (Pearson and Mitroff, 1993; Turner, 1976), necessitating an effective response to shift in line with the different phases. Many spontaneously emerging ventures are designed to address immediate acute needs in crises and dissolve once their objectives are achieved (Shepherd and Williams, 2014). Individuals often join spontaneous venturing efforts for different reasons that may or may not change over time, making sustaining volunteer engagement one of the most difficult challenges to overcome (Ferraro et al., 2015). At the onset of crises, various actors converge toward a common goal of alleviating immediate suffering, which results in a surge of resources rapidly flowing to a disaster area (Pearson and Clair, 1998; Williams et al., 2017). However, this convergence also causes an ‘explosion of meaning’ (Williams, 2022) about what is possible in terms of helping victims in the new context. Hence, organizers seek to identify and enact collective goals (e.g., to ‘build back better’ [Shepherd and Williams, 2014]) and often do so despite those goals not being universally understood and/or embraced by those participating in the collective organizing efforts (Williams and Shepherd, 2018, 2021).

To help resolve resource deployment challenges (Sub-problems 1–4), SFD could begin by being as clear as possible about its venturing objective, both in a general sense and for each individual initiative. For example, SFD could clarify what type of organization it seeks to be and, equally as crucial, what it does not want to be. Is SFD meant to be a small core team that can ‘staff up’ and deploy when acute crises emerge? Does SFD seek to morph from an organization that responds to acute stressors to a long-term aid organization where central coordination, financial compensation, and long-term role clarity are critical? Are there aspects of SFD's efforts that should be temporary—that is, should they dissolve once a particular mission is accomplished? What stage of the crisis does SFD seek

to address: emergent needs and/or long-term ‘amplification and resolution’ needs? In addition, SFD should think of its overall effectiveness in terms of the scale, scope, speed, and customization of a response (Dutton et al., 2006). This is well noted in sub-problem 4, which explains how, over time, physical resources are less useful than cash donations, given the shift in the nature of the humanitarian need. The clearer SFD can be about these aspects, the easier it will be for volunteers and other temporary actors to rapidly align with the shared objective and maximize their efficiency.

Finally, while the specific strain on SFD's image caused by media polarization (Sub-problems 5) is unique in this context (i.e., the perception of an anti-Russian orientation), this situation is reflective of a broader challenge faced by those seeking to organize communities toward a common goal. Fundamentally, spontaneous efforts to ‘help’ others involve moralized questions, such as what the good or right thing is to help those in need. However, people differ substantially in their understanding of moral principles (Graham et al., 2013). Therefore, sustaining the collective engagement of diverse actors requires finding ways to accommodate diverse and often contradictory understandings of moral principles (Haidt, 2008). One possible way to resolve this issue is for SFD to seek to achieve a systematic approach that involves demoralizing various aspects of the venture to allow diverse resources to be sustainably deployed. This approach is a significant challenge of our time since more and more activities are infused with moral meaning that can then be leveraged as a political bully club to challenge ‘the enemy.’ Yet organizations of all types will need to evaluate what they want to prioritize as well as the costs (i.e., tradeoffs) of enacting those priorities.

3.3. Perspective 3: Integrating volunteers into the structure of spontaneous venturing to catalyze their long-term engagement

Volunteers are important stakeholders to spontaneous ventures, and their long-term engagement is critical for the transition to sustained spontaneous ventures over time *and* for migrants integration objectives (Shepherd and Williams, 2019). Recent research on volunteering in pro-socially motivated venturing acknowledges the importance of emotional components for motivation, long-term, and active engagement of volunteers (Sub-problem 1–3) (Conduit et al., 2019; Farny et al., 2019a,b). These studies highlight three key drivers for fostering emotional connectivity.

The first key driver is value congruence between volunteers and the pro-socially motivated venturing (Fernandes and Matos, 2023; Katre and Salipante, 2012). The existing evidence suggests that the social mission of prosocial ventures is a relevant way of recruiting new volunteers (Doherty et al., 2014). Hence, the SFD team should, after clarifying the organizing objective, recruit volunteers who comply with SFD's values and goals. While doing so, it is important to perceive volunteers as ‘consumers’ of a volunteering experience, where they expect some rewards in return for their time and effort. These rewards, such as certificates for active participation, should focus on benefiting individuals by enhancing their social, human, or cultural capital (Handy and Greenspan, 2009), which could enhance the volunteers' professional curriculum and help them find job opportunities. The second important driver is the volunteers' perceived autonomy and competence (Conduit et al., 2019; Haivas et al., 2013). One way to increase perceived autonomy and competence of volunteers is by offering regular trainings and empowering them through offering leadership roles, which in turn, would enable volunteers with leadership capacity to manage other volunteers as well as participate in the decision-making process (Millette and Gagné, 2008). Finally, the third driver is the volunteers' personal relationship with the organization (Handy and Greenspan, 2009; VAI, 2019), with other volunteers (Snyder and Omoto, 2008), and with beneficiaries (Shantz et al., 2014). Hence, creating an environment to promote shared experiences through team-building activities (Fernandes and Matos, 2023) could enable SFD to build and promote a culture of unity and togetherness.

Slowly moving away from *Fazaa* toward a loyal and sustained baseline of volunteers can help SFD to adapt to any sudden change in the response scope of rescue actions (e.g., increased cash vs. fewer clothes) (Penner, 2004; Snyder and Omoto, 2008), addressing the customization and reducing wasting materials (Sub-problem 4). A baseline of loyal volunteers can also act as ambassadors (Yoo et al., 2022) of the organization within their communities, which can promote SFD's legitimacy (Sub-problem 5) (Fisher et al., 2017), particularly in the broader German community, wherein its legitimacy is being threatened.

3.4. Perspective 4: Maintaining venture legitimacy for ensuring uninterrupted resource availability during sustained spontaneous venturing

The loss of legitimacy can be a major impediment to resource mobilization for new ventures (Fisher, 2021), particularly in the case of spontaneous venturing (Shepherd and Williams, 2019). As media is a powerful evaluative institution that can influence the legitimacy of entrepreneurial ventures, the media coverage of SFD as an anti-Russian organization seems to have negatively influenced SFD's legitimacy (Sub-problem 5). To regain and defend legitimacy, venture legitimacy literature has suggested various strategies to deal with negative media coverage (Bednar et al., 2013; Graf-Vlachy et al., 2020; Rhee and Valdez, 2009; Tracey and Phillips, 2016). In particular, the literature acknowledges four responses to legitimacy-challenging media accusations: (1) a denial response that involves a dismissal of the allegation; (2) a defiance response, a stronger form of denial involves contesting the accusation and challenging the accuser; (3) a decoupling response that involves distancing from the source of the problem; and (4) an accommodation response that involves accepting responsibility and taking corrective action.

Prior studies on the effectiveness of the above responses point out that denial and defiance responses have been traditionally perceived by the public as suggestive of concealment, and they tend to erode public trust in the organization (Ashforth and Gibbs, 1990; Elsbach, 1994; Oliver, 1991; Seeger et al., 2001). A decoupling response primarily involves finding a scapegoat for the problem (Elsbach and Sutton, 1992), which can be an effective strategy if individuals external to the firm are identified as the source of the problem (Shu and Wong, 2018). However, when individuals internal to the firm are made scapegoats, the public may interpret this response as an evasion of responsibility (Benoit and Brinson, 1994). Since the anti-Russian accusations against SFD do not seem to be tied to an external entity and instead emanate from actors within the organization, including the volunteers, issuing a decoupling response may not be a suitable strategy for SFD.

Table 3
Translational recommendations for sustaining spontaneous venturing.

Sub-problems to be solved	Recommendations to the problem owner	Perspectives
Sub-problem 1: Volunteer retention and sustained engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligning stakeholders by specifying expectations. Clarifying goals, structure, and practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contextualization perspective
Sub-problem 2: Passive engagement in volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specifying success criteria in terms of speed, scale, scope, and customized response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-based organizing perspective
Sub-problem 3: Lack of accountability in volunteering-based community organizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fostering emotional connectivity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value-aligned recruiting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteering perspective
Sub-problem 4: Customization of a response to different stages of crises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introducing reward system Training and empowering to enhance volunteers' perceived autonomy and competence. Encouraging unity and togetherness 	
Sub-problem 5: Negative media coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> De-moralize operations by focusing on alleviating suffering and allow diverse resources from diverse stakeholders to be sustainably deployed. Forming loyal and sustained baseline of volunteers. Adopting an accommodation response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge the problem at hand and take action to resolve it Expand crisis outreach to different contexts. Localize response leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-based organizing perspective. Volunteering perspective. Venture legitimacy perspective.

The recommended strategy in SFD's case, then, is to adopt an accommodation response. This response requires SFD to acknowledge the problem at hand and take action to resolve it. [Heartit \(1995\)](#) suggests that accommodation is 'essential' for the process of re-legitimation. Accommodation signals to the public that the organization cares about societal norms and is taking corrective action to align itself with such norms ([Elsbach, 1994](#)). The positive effects of accommodation are likely to be far greater than any negative effects (for example, interpreting accommodation as an admission of guilt) on public perceptions ([Lamin and Zaheer, 2012](#)).

Thus, SFD's accommodation response should be centered around acknowledging and resolving the "problem" it is being accused of, specifically that SFD is politically motivated and biased (against Russians). This perception seems to have arisen due to misalignment between SFD's actions, namely their focus on crises in anti-Russian countries like Syria and Ukraine, and German societal norms, particularly relating to those of nonpartisanship ([Wade, O'Reilly III, & Pollock, 2006](#)). Hence, one accommodation action SFD could take is to pay more attention to new and existing crises other than crises in Syria and Ukraine. Furthermore, the misalignment between SFD's actions and German societal norms also reflects the lack of familiarity of key members of SFD, who mostly are forced migrants themselves, to such norms. Hence, to make up for this limitation, another accommodation action SFD could take is to offer some key positions in the organization to locals, who are likely to be familiar with the German context. This strategy would help SFD ensure that their future actions are aligned with German societal norms, and also directly help improve the social integration of the volunteers by increasing their interactions with locals.

4. Solutions interpretation and future looking: synthesis and conclusion

This ER3 paper provides a translational framework to address the problem of sustaining spontaneous venturing (See [Table 3](#)). We address this problem in a novel setting of an organization where less-fortunate individuals who are themselves suffering (i.e., refugees) helped others facing similar difficulties (i.e., victims of new waves of crises). While exploring this problem, it became apparent that sustaining spontaneous venturing is a multifaceted problem. Hence, using existing evidence from four theoretical perspectives, we recommend a combination of diverse measures as a solution.

Spontaneous ventures that aspire to sustain themselves to address a persistent crisis should acknowledge that their activities are embedded in the local and broader societal context. An all-encompassing approach to the social context is essential to understanding the diverse stakeholder expectations because competing stakeholder aspirations may inhibit or facilitate volunteering-based community organizing (Sub-problem 1–5). In addition, activating practices such as fostering emotional connectivity through value-aligned recruiting, introducing a reward-structure, and encouraging togetherness, are important in addressing internal community-specific challenges (Sub-problem 1–3), whereas building a loyal baseline of volunteers is important in addressing external challenges characterized by customization and legitimacy defense (Sub-problem 4–5). Clarifying organizational goals, structures, and practices allows different stakeholders (e.g., forced migrant volunteers and members of the German relief system) to understand what SFD seeks to achieve and why engaging with it might align with their goals, values, and resources (Sub-problem 1–4). It also enables SFD to define its success criteria (e.g., scope, scale, speed, and customization), response strategy/trajectory, and temporal orientation (temporary vs. sustained operation). Lastly, to continue accessing needed resources, SFD should achieve legitimacy among stakeholders with competing values by systematically demoralizing various aspects of its operation and effectuating accommodation response (Sub-problem 5). We highlight that it is important to note that several of these strategies need to be intertwined to defy the complex challenges that arise in sustaining spontaneous venturing.

The above recommendations for sustaining spontaneous venturing, apart from its implications for the focal venture, also have key implications for the broader community it is a part of. Members of the broader community, such as aid organizations and the government, can enable the long-term recovery of crisis victims by supporting efforts of sustaining spontaneous ventures, especially those that focus on 'building back better' and facilitating victim 'transition from a state of crisis to one of autonomy, self-reliance, and advancement out of extreme hardship' ([Shepherd and Williams, 2019, p. 162](#)). For instance, since SFD engages refugees as volunteers,

sustaining SFD's spontaneous venturing helps improve refugees' societal image, facilitating their long-term integration into their new societies.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

All authors contributed equally.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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