

Final Report

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- CP Organization: Taste Before You Waste (Amsterdam, the Netherlands)
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For the past 16 weeks, I have worked with Taste Before You Waste for my community project. The organization aims to spread awareness about how much food are being wasted and to encourage people to reduce such waste. While the volunteers try to reduce the wastes themselves by collecting food waste from markets, we also simply have conversation with people passing by, suggesting what little things they can changed in their daily eating habits to prevent food waste. I have participated in different activities, and not only did I enjoy working with other volunteers, I learned so many things as well. In this report, I would like to summarize my work within the organization, evaluate and reflect on my experiences.

Because TBYW is on the process of developing different activities and strategies to reach its aim, the contents of the community work is still changing; we add new activities, some projects are only temporal, and sometimes, project that does not work out well is cancelled. I am still continuing with the work, the contents that I participate in will vary further on, but to summarize what I have done so far, the first work that I was assigned to was the food pick up, which takes place daily at Javastraat. Volunteers take turn each day to take the pick up bike and collect food that cannot be sold at the markets, which the owners have already agreed to participate in this activity. My job in this project is to introduce new volunteers the route they have to take —especially in case that the new volunteer is not from around the town and is not familiar with the directions— and the shops that they can collect food from. I did not join the activity on the regular base as the actual person to run pick up on designated day because I was not capable of riding the big bike safely, but nevertheless worked as a guide for the

newcomers. Because TBYW is based on the volunteers, it is always possible that the volunteers stop working with the organization for various reasons. Therefore, it is important to keep recruiting new volunteers and teach them the route so they can even be on the backup list, in case some volunteers cannot make it to the pick up round.

Another work that I took part continuously, and still will, is the Wednesday cooking session. Every Wednesday, the volunteer who collects the food from the market bring the food to the Meevaart, where the volunteers will cook free dinner for people who come. I participate in both the cooking session and the cleaning session after the dinner. As one of the cooks, I usually follow the chef's order and prepare meals and clean up the dishes and the kitchen afterward. I think this activity was what I could get the most concrete result out of, as we would always make food. Although the ingredients are randomly collected, we would always make something out of it, and people usually liked what we prepared.

Although this activity was cancelled due to lack of participation of other volunteers, I was also part of the free food market activity. As a leader, it was my job to organize the volunteers at the place that we hold the free market. With the food that the volunteer in charge of picking them up collected, we gave them away to people who would like to take them, and while they are at it, we would start a conversation about the food waste, tell them our aim and ask for their cooperation. What we could not give away, we took them back to the Science Park and put them in the designated spot where free food market is held every Tuesday night for the students to pick up what they want.

Finally, I was also in charge of making signs that can be used for advertisement

in various ways. They were made out of wooden boards, and I drew some vegetables that look slightly different from normal vegetables; for example, a potato with a big hump, or carrot that looks like it has two legs. This was, at first, to be used at a festival that was held in Javastraat, to grasp attention from children, but we later used them in free food markets as well. I took this activity because I am interested in art works, and I plan to participate in other works that are related to art.

I may not have worked long enough or as a particularly significant position to have greatly influenced the result of the organization's work, but I believe that I was able to become part of the gears that enable the organization to work smoothly. In the case of the food pick up, it is hard for the new volunteers to find the shops on the maps that are given, so I help them in person. I also give out the bike keys to the new volunteers, which is hard to pass on if other volunteers who run the pick up round were to distribute. Through my introduction, I believe that changing volunteers become smoother process.

It is a shame that the free food market had to become cancelled until enough number of people gather to make it more efficient, but I think this activity was a success at first. Many people became interested in food waste, enough to have a quite long conversation about the relevant topic and what they saw about it on YouTube or documentaries, and quite many people became interested in TBYW itself and volunteered to work with the organization. There were also people who wanted to interview the director of TBYW. Even without these results, I think the free food market helped us reach the goal since people picked up the food that may otherwise be wasted, and therefore, we could reduce food waste.

In general, I think these activities, including both my and others' work, helped others see how serious the food waste problem is, and hopefully, they will continue to care about the issue and try to reduce it. Although there are not much that individuals can do, if we raise this problem to the surface, I think there will definitely be a change in long term, and help the community reduce money to take care of the food waste as well as to provide food for those who cannot afford much.

My jobs in the organization may seem unrelated to each other, but I still think that as a whole, the experiences provided me important skills and knowledge. One thing that I can confidently say that I have improved is the communication skill. Because not every volunteers that I worked with were from Amsterdam University College, we had to contact each other thoroughly to make the work most efficient; this was also because we had to meet at a certain place for the work most of the times. I cannot say that I have always succeeded in communicating with my coworkers well enough, but I can feel that I know what to expect and what to ask for when making appointments and working with other people. Not only that, I also got to talk to other people during the dinner after the cooking session or at the free food market, and I was challenged to explain and persuade people about our organization's goal in limited time. This helped me balance the casual talk, attention grabber, and the actual topic that I would like to discuss in one conversation, and I think this will not only help me in a business manner, but even in the daily life.

Of course, aside from the social skills, I got to know how serious the food waste problem is. This does not require statistical, complicated information, but just one single

pick up round to the markets proves how much food are being wasted simply because either a tiny little spot has gone bad or they simply look weird. It is also interesting that from the conversations, many people are already aware of the problem, yet they do not actively take part in projects or personal plans to solve the problem. By actually working with such concept, I was able to gain insight to the increasing food waste issue, and maybe, I can carefully apply such controversy of knowing the problem but not doing anything to solve it to other social problem as well.

Because TBYW work is in Amsterdam, I was able to meet people from various backgrounds during the activities. At free food market, which was usually held near Amsterdam Centraal, I was able to meet people of more diversity than the students at AUC. Also, people at Meevaart had different backgrounds as well, which eventually helped us make food from various culture. Not only was I able to communicate with them in global level, I was also able to learn how such social issues are like in their countries. Moreover, it was interesting to see how those people from outside the country were still concerned about the food waste in the Netherlands; this helped me realize that social issues are now so easy to spread in global level, and that an issue in one country is no longer its and only its problem, but everybody else's. I think my perceptions about social phenomena became wider thanks to the community project.

Furthermore, I was able to think about volunteering in general and work as well. Working while studying for the school courses were harder than I expected, and unlike the volunteering that I have done so far, to meet the hour requirement, I was to work longer and more frequently than before. The responsibility was great, and at one point, I just could not imagine myself going through the workload. But through asking for help

and advices—which I was not comfortable nor familiar with, considering that I have always tried to do things alone even if I end up with bad results—I was able to learn how to negotiated between works that require equal amount of responsibility.

As Media and Communication major, I was interested in how communication within the activities took place. Rather than between the volunteers, I was more interested how the organization made itself and its aim known to the others. During my work, I saw people taking promotion video at the Meevaart kitchen, and also got to know about the website, Facebook page, and even advertisement that does not involve media, such as the signs that I made. I found it interesting that even though there are websites, people still depend partially on the old-fashioned communication methods, and was tempted to look deeper into the relation between the high-tech and old-fashioned communication.

Even though not directly related to my major, I also took a course about Literature of Social Exclusion. This course has made me think about the socially excluded, and such group of people include those who do not have enough food to eat, although the poor were not the main topic in the course. One of the activities that were cancelled due to complications was delivering the food to the refugees who reside in the city. I think, if possible, such activity can be resumed when the conditions are met, and I it would greatly help not only the refugees from foreign countries, but also those within the country who need help. In other words, just as the social issues are closely related to one another, the solutions for them can also be related; one solution, eventually may work on multiple problems.

As one of the volunteers that started as the new school semester began, I was one of the volunteers with more experience, even if it was just for one or two times more than others. So I tried to be responsible and help others, but I think I underestimated the responsibility as well as the amount of the work. During the midterms and finals, I had hard time catching up with both study and the community project. But I still tried to find works that I can do, and since one of the activities that I was in charge of was cancelled, I tried to put efforts into other activities to make up for it. Considering I was also quite new to the TBYW system, I think I managed to show adequate leadership, but I really tried to be the lubricant to make team work smoother, and that is what I really want to be evaluated on that.

It turned out that social and communicational aspect of this community project was way better than what I expected, as sometimes I really felt like I was there to enjoy conversation and relax rather than actually working. Also, through talking to people with such diverse background gave me more insights and knowledge about the global world, not necessarily about the food issue, but overall. While that was beyond expectation, I was also disappointed at myself for the free food market being cancelled. I do understand that it is not exactly my fault, since the volunteers had their own works to do and could not join the activity, and the work was simply not something that could be done single-handedly. However, I keep looking back and wonder if I could recruit more volunteers who would regularly participate, perhaps it did not have to be cancelled. I wonder if it was lack of my leadership that caused such failure.

While working with TBWY, there are others small things that I learned aside from those that I already stated. Cooking would be one of them, as I learned how to cook

with unusual ingredients. Also, I think I learned how to make friends, which may sound slightly awkward. Even with people that I seldom meet outside my usual boundaries, I can talk with them with more ease. I have not found this to be this easy before, so I think this is a small improvement that came with other learning experiences. Not only that, I can now ride bike better before, at least enough to go around the town. These trivial improvements are not related to my academic skills, but I would say that these are personal investment that will, in long term, help in one way or the other. I am quite happy that I made such progress without really expecting it.

The career that I want to have is not necessarily related to the food waste nor volunteering. However, I think the basis on the communication of this community project as well as the personal developments regarding leadership, time management, and the getting used to heavier responsibility will become helpful in any career that I choose to take. I am happy to have made improvement, not necessarily in the field that I want proceed, but rather as a successful person in general. This experience has been very valuable to me, and since I will continue working with TBYW, I would like to have more and better experience from now on as well.