



Tag Del / Participate

Tag Del offers a platform to facilitate collective problem solving with regard to current challenges in the local communities. Citizens, youth clubs, pensioners, NGOs, enterprises, public sector institutions, etc. can all face challenges and need input to solve the problem. People can engage by offering practical help, ideas, previous experience or knowledge of the area. In sparsely populated areas, Tag Del can be a forum for communities to come up with collective actions to find solutions for small and major issues relating to demographic challenges and local development.

Preconditions, Inspiration, Nurture

The main idea behind Tag Del has been to make volunteer work more accessible. By providing a platform that can be accessed around the clock, volunteer work becomes independent of time and space. Thus, it is no longer necessary to attend a meeting in the local village hall because at present, people have the opportunity to support local work while riding the school bus or commuting to and from their workplace.

The inspiration for this platform came up when the founder, Simon Holmgaard, was coordinating a campaign for a Danish politician some years back. Many people wanted to support the work of the politician, and in a number of different ways. Some wanted to give five hours of their time, and others were prepared to work full time over a specific period. The input from the various volunteers required considerable effort to coordinate and at some point, it culminated in a 'volunteer paradox' where it almost took more resources to coordinate all the volunteers compared to the work they carried out.

After the campaign, the founder considered how this type of ad hoc volunteer contributions could be organized. At the time, a friend was writing a thesis about a platform he called 'exchanges' where people could sell amateur handicraft services, etc. In connection with this, the idea of having a platform supporting 'user to user' dialogue in volunteer work also arose. The main idea behind Tag Del is to strengthen democratic participation in society through combining democratic processes and technological opportunities.

When Simon and his friend began drafting the concept, they also searched for funds to support the project. After sending out several applications, they received support from two private funds (det obelske familiefond and Villum&Velux fonden). They received funding for one year, to get the planned platform up and running. The financing was received on May 1, 2012, and the online platform was launched on March 11, 2013. While developing the platform, the founder, Simon Holmgaard also had a part-time job teaching project leadership to support himself.

Implementation

Resources

In the process of developing the concept behind Tag Del, a number of civil society organizations participated to ensure that the original idea fitted their needs. An important function of the platform was to address and solve challenges for public sector institutions, humanitarian environmental associations, etc. The organizations participating in the development of the platform were also ambassadors for it, which ensured that the launch of the platform had a broad outreach from the beginning.

The business model has been through several transformations to ensure economic viability. In the beginning, the focus was on maintaining the high number of users and developing a business model based on that aspect.

At first, it was thought that people all over the country could help, for example, a single community on the island of Funen that was faced with a particular challenge. Although this was an evident opportunity, it was not how the users of the platform reacted. They tended to mostly engage in issues that were relevant for them locally. This led to the idea of outsourcing the platform to municipalities, to encourage active citizenship.

Approximately five or six municipalities have set up a local Tag Del platform, and offer their citizens insight into current challenges to see how they could contribute with ideas and actions to solve them. A main feature when creating a local municipal Tag Del website was to gather all local input regarding one municipality together. Some municipalities also used the platform as a communication tool functioning as a type of volunteer reception point.

While this was the main focus for Tag Del, most of the time spent by the founders was on ensuring that all the technological aspects functioned correctly. So, rather than addressing local challenges, they were merely setting up a digital communication platform.

This was approximately two years ago, and for many of the municipalities it was a new idea to use social media as a communication tool. Furthermore, several of the municipalities were nervous about the possibility of having too much debate in case issues arose that they were unable to tackle.

Because the founders behind Tag Del also wished to be more involved in the challenges rather than just deliver a digital platform, they decided to change the business model. With the new approach, they are now taking an active part in formulating the challenges and engaging users by means of organized workshops for many different national associations.

Today, there are three people employed at Tag Del; the two project leaders and one person managing the legal and administrative aspects and handling partnership agreements.

Tag Del has been implemented in cooperation with Copenhagen Project House, and it can be characterized as a hybrid between a social enterprise and a social innovation. All profit from Tag Del is reinvested in the project aimed at enhancing active citizenship through the online platform in communities all over Denmark.

The Network / Cooperation

An important partner in developing Tag Del was Copenhagen Project House, which is a non-profit association supporting cultural and social entrepreneurs.

During the birth of Tag Del, many people played a vital role in helping the initiative to develop. Among the most important are the associations and all the volunteers who continuously make use of the Tag Del platform to post, give advice and take action in solving various challenges posted. Furthermore, the large group of citizens who are engaging with it as well as professionals working within the areas concerned are also vital for the initiative.

The associations participating in developing the concept for Tag Del include a number of nationwide professional organizations working for certain interest groups such as:

- the Association for Young Disabled and Handicapped Persons (SUHM, Sammenslutningen af Unge Med Handicap)
- the Muscular Dystrophy Association (Muskelsvindfonden)
- the Danish Social Innovation Club (DANSIC)
- the Senior Citizens Association (Ældre Sagen)
- the Association for Consumer Co-operative (FDB (Coop))
- Red Cross Youth (Ungdommens Røde Kors)
- the Network of Youth Councils (NAU, Netværket af Ungdomsråd)
- the Green Girl Scouts (De grønne pigespejdere)
- the Volunteer Center Lyngby–Taarbæk (Frivilligcenter Lyngby–Taarbæk)
- Cancer Combat (Kræftens Bekæmpelse)
- the Danish Refugee Council Youth Network (DFUNK, Dansk Flygtningehjælps Ungenetværk)

- the Volunteer Center and Self-Aid Denmark (FriSe, Frivilligcentre og Selvhjælp Danmark)
- the Danish Youth Network for Aid (Nødhjælpens Ungdom)
- the Organization for Highly-Educated Newly-Arrived migrants (NOVUM)
- Copenhagen Project House (KPH, Københavns projekthus).

Several public sector institutions are also part of the network using Tag Del, and in particular within the area of urban regeneration it has become standard to include and use the citizens' perspective before planning for new buildings, open spaces, playgrounds, etc.

Enablers and Barriers

A key challenge throughout the life cycle of Tag Del has been balancing the activities between the users posting challenges as well as those reacting to them. In some periods, Tag Del might lack challenges whereas in others there are too many challenges and too few individuals or entities following them up.

The team behind Tag Del works to balance this state of affairs by engaging associations and people in their network. When there is a lack of challenges, they try to reach out through the social media and their network of associations, public institutions, etc. to see if there are any topics that could be relevant for others to contribute to.

In periods with too many challenges, it can help to get a discussion started. People are sometimes hesitant to make suggestions regarding challenges regarding which there are no comments. On the other hand, as soon as the discussion starts, it can be an incentive for others to comment and join the discussion, and thus for a solution to be found.

A crucial enabler for Tag Del has been the partnership with Copenhagen Project House. This was established because the founders of Tag Del were looking for an office to work from. They contacted the Project House, which at the time was experimenting with new, innovative startups working with social and cultural projects in terms of how fast they could become economically sustainable.

The support Tag Del received from the beginning of the project was also an important enabler to become economically viable later on. Today, the business model for Tag Del is based on consultancy work: the two project leaders facilitate and support associations and public institutions in terms of highlighting and resolving challenges thanks to active user involvement.

A lesson learned in this process has been about the value of encouraging users to meet at workshops, etc. as a supplement to the online activity. Handling challenges through a core

group of people who also meet on an ad hoc basis has also proved to be highly efficient in identifying innovations and providing solutions.

Interaction with Municipalities and Other Levels of Governance

From the beginning, Tag Del has endeavored to reach out to the municipalities with its services. The municipalities that have actively set up an online Tag Del platform have used it for many different reasons. Egedal municipality has used it as part of the campaign to involve civil society to a greater extent in the municipality. Overall, interaction with the municipalities continues to be relevant, and Tag Del continues to support small and large municipalities by fostering active involvement by their citizens.

Social Innovation Effects

Outcomes, Impact and 'Scaling'

The team behind Tag Del works full time with active civil society involvement and delivers strategies, facilitates the solving of challenges, and supports large and small associations through the online platform as well as through consultancy work. Thus, Tag Del is currently a well-established, economically viable association under Copenhagen Project House.

The most recent tasks have included assignments for the Central Handicap Council, in the form of providing support in efforts to break down prejudices about disabled and handicapped people and how to involve them more in society, i.e. the labor market, educational institutions, volunteer associations, etc.

Tag Del has also worked on the challenge of how the Folk High School Vallekilde, offering non-formal adult education, in Odsherred municipality could support the two small villages of Hørve and Vallekilde, located nearby. The folk high school involves many creative individuals, with new students arriving and residing there each year. Often, this type of folk high school offering residential facilities can become a small 'bubble' without much contact with the surrounding settlements.

The workshop with Tag Del explored questions relating to how the local communities and the folk high school could work together for mutual benefit. Very often, this type of school takes an interest in various national and global challenges but what is their responsibility in terms of local challenges? This project was initiated by a former student at Vallekilde Folk High School, who suggested that Tag Del become involved with it and examine the possibility of local cooperation.

Given the amount of time that people spend on Facebook and other social media, the contribution of Tag Del has been to create a platform that could be connected to other social media networks, and thus to encourage people using social media to also use them with a view to resolving societal challenges.

Along the way, the team behind Tag Del has learned the importance of combining online space with physical meetings and workshops. People tend to commit to other people they have met and talked with rather than those they have only chatted with online. A core group of people engaging online but who also have ad hoc meetings is important for interaction with regard to sharing, discussing and solving societal challenges.

Lessons Learned

- Technological developments have proved useful in facilitating active citizenship.
- People mostly engage in challenges that are relevant for them locally.
- Support from private funds, together with business counselling, are crucial for new start-ups in the field of social innovation.
- There is a potential for engaging people through the social media considering the time they spend there.