

ALTERNATIVE FUNDING INSTRUMENTS FOR



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ABSTRACT

The financial-social return gap, amongst many other issues, has caused the lack of funding of non-profit organizations like Servei Solidari, which runs a project named Espai Emprèn that provides advice in every step of starting up a business to those who do not have access to the traditional channels of financing. The purpose of this paper is to discuss whether two alternative funding instruments, a crowdfunding campaign and a membership scheme, are feasible in the context of Espai Emprèn and Servei Solidari respectively. On the one hand, some Espai Emprèn entrepreneurs and several crowdfunding platforms have been analysed in order to find the perfect match between a business plan supported by the organization and a platform from the market. From the crowdfunding types considered, crowdlending is the one that suits best these entrepreneurs' needs, although some other in-between options should be thoroughly considered. Servei Solidari's backup is essential in order to obtain favourable terms and conditions for these projects. On the other hand, before building the membership scheme, a prospect list has been drawn up in order to estimate the extent of the scheme and the prospect amount of money raised. With a 2 euro per month quota Servei Solidari will be able to not only cover its deficit but also give aid to a greater amount of people, while it also improves its communication and builds a loyal member base. Both have proved to be feasible instruments and numerous guidelines have been given in order to put these financing methods into practice.

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INTRODUCTION

The financial crisis of 2008 froze the credit to both consumers and firms, which made setting up a business harder than ever. Banks and other traditional financial institutions were highly reluctant to lend money to a prospective for-profit start-up, not to mention to a cooperative or to a family-owned business. Many individuals that donated part of their income to an organization saw their contributions reduced due to their own needs. Not only the private but the public funding also fell, which meant that non-profit organizations suffered a decrease in their sources of income. Actually, the latter issue began even before the collapse of the bubble, as Alexander (2000) stated at the beginning of the century that “in recent years – NGOs – have confronted increased financial vulnerability from reduced government funding, a shift from grants to service contracts, and heavy competition for foundation, corporation, and individual donor support”. Hence, it could be said that the non-profits’ lack of funding is a recurring issue.

This obstacle is associated with the term financial-social return gap, which explains how “most social enterprises are not profitable enough to access traditional financial markets” (Bugg-Levine, Kogut and Kulatilaka, 2012). Traditionally, grants have been made in the expectation of social return, while loans have been made in the expectation of a financial return; that is, interest and capital. The gap has aroused as “grantmakers have considered only the social return, and commercial funders just the financial return, and neither have found their criteria met” (Venturesome, 2008).

However, this paper is not focused on the issues, but on the solutions that social organizations can find in order to overcome this gap. There is a “middle ground” in which “total return on any investment is expected to be made up of both social and financial return (in varying degrees)”, according to the report from Venturesome (2008). If organisations acknowledged this “middle ground” and knew how to approach it, they would be able to access a higher amount of capital and have a greater impact on (Bugg-Levine, Kogut and Kulatilaka, 2012).

In order to harness this stage, two directions can be taken by social enterprises. The first one is to give a twist to some well known financial instruments, under which the donor becomes an equity holder, “providing capital that supports an enterprise and that makes the debt taken on by financial investors safer, with better expected returns”, such as loan guarantees, quasi-equity debt or social impact bonds (Bugg-Levine, Kogut and Kulatilaka, 2012). The second direction relies on some new financial instruments grouped under the concept FinTech (Financial Technology) that have gained in importance in the last couple of years. According to Research and Markets (2017), “FinTech represents both a highly disruptive challenge for incumbent financial institutions as a transformational opportunity for new market entrants as well as currently entrenched constituents in the ecosystem”. FinTech’s growth is booming; apparently, this type of firms grew by 75% in 2015 compared to 2014. This term encompasses

a wide range of innovations, from Internet banking and mobile payments to crowdfunding and peer-to-peer lending (Skan et al., 2016).

Once the background has been outlined, the true object of study of this paper should be introduced. Fundació Servei Solidari (FSS) is a foundation that leads many projects that foster the autonomy and full citizenship of young persons and adults in risk of social exclusion in order to produce a change towards a fairer society through education, entrepreneurship, awareness and an integral attention aligned with people's needs. It was founded in 2006 in Barcelona and, as a non-profit organization, fights against social inequalities empowering people to solve their challenges and overcome their obstacles by themselves.

Espai Emprèn is one of their initiatives, created by professionals and volunteers with the objective of enabling the empowerment of people that are having problems to access the traditional channels of training and financing to start or consolidate their own small business. They offer a close and personalized service of counselling during each step of the process of creating a business, from looking for a property or asking for a licence to looking for financing through their partners and financial institutions. That is, Espai Emprèn provides financial intermediation between the person that is willing to start a business and 3 credit entities: La Caixa MicroBank, Acció Solidària Contra l'Atur (ASCA) and Fundació Oportunitas. Not only that, but they also give courses related to entrepreneurship, in order to involve the users and give them tools that they can apply first in their business plan and afterwards in their already established business.

A complete picture is built mentioning two higher entities that Servei Solidari foundation is part of. The first one is Escola Pia de Catalunya (EPC), an organization rooted in our country and led by women and men, lay and religious, that share values and attitudes. Education, especially for the most vulnerable children and young adults, is their fundamental purpose. The second one is ATRI (Autoocupació, Treball en xarxa i Innovació), a grouping formed by FSS, Fundació Privada Prevent and Fundació Privada Trinijove, in which the three organizations give support to entrepreneurs with specific needs.

In order to achieve its objectives, the project Espai Emprèn relies almost exclusively on a subsidy requested to the Generalitat through Catalunya Emprèn, a programme of the Catalan government that promotes public and private actions of value for the entrepreneur, giving direct support to them. In the call for this subsidy, ATRI commits to carrying out a series of indicators and requests a dedicated budget (Annex 1). As seen in the subsidy request, the budget of the work plan is greater than the actual amount of subsidy requested, therefore the financing that this organization receives is not enough to cover all the costs it incurs. In fact, if we observe the account closure in June of 2017 (Annex 2), we will see that the project of Espai Emprèn is running a deficit of 6%, which causes a deficit in FSS

accounts. Espai Emprèn is one of the projects with a higher deficit; that is the reason why Servei Solidari is looking for new ways of financing.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss two alternative funding instruments that Espai Emprèn could take advantage of: the crowdfunding campaign (Section A) and the donor membership scheme (Section B). The former focuses on helping an Espai Emprèn's entrepreneur candidate raise money to start a business, and the latter focuses on raising money for the project of Espai Emprèn and Servei Solidari as a whole. Each section contains a brief introduction, a suggested typology of the instrument, the fit between Espai Emprèn and the instrument, and how the instrument is applied within Espai Emprèn's and Servei Solidari's context.

SECTION A: THE CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN

A.1. Introduction to crowdfunding

For centuries, attracting outside capital to finance a project or an entrepreneurial initiative has mostly depended on the conventional fund providers, such as banks, venture capitalists, government agencies and foundations (Hossain and Oparaocha, 2017). In fact, nowadays Espai Emprèn mostly relies on public grants for its functioning and in banks and foundations for their candidates getting the money for their business projects. However, some alternative financing instruments have aroused recently, one of them being crowdfunding.

“Crowdfunding is an Internet-based funding method for the realization of an initiative through online distributed contributions and micro-sponsorships in the form of pledges of small monetary amounts by a large pool of people within a limited timeframe. It is the financing of a task, idea, or project by making an open call for funding, mainly through Web 2.0 technologies, so funders can donate, pre-purchase the product, lend, or invest based on their belief in an appeal, the promise of its founder, and/or the expectation of a return” (Hossain and Oparaocha, 2017).

A.2. Types of crowdfunding

There are two main ways of classifying crowdfunding platforms: in terms of funding model and in terms of business model. Regarding the funding model, it is globally accepted that a crowdfunding campaign can either be “All or nothing” or “Keep it all”. In the first case, the founder keeps the money raised if and only if the target funding goal is achieved. Otherwise, the money is given back to all the funders. In the second case, whichever amount of money is raised, the founder keeps it all, as the name suggests.

Regarding the business model, however, authors such as Hemer (2011), Bradford (2012) and Griffin (2013) seem to disagree in the typology for crowdfunding. The most similar one to the criteria of the Spanish crowdfunding market is the one proposed by Hossain and Oparaocha (2017), which classifies crowdfunding into four types: donation-based, reward-based, lending-based and equity-based models. In order to analyse which type is the most appropriate for the candidates of Espai Emprèn, a brief explanation and some examples of Spanish crowdfunding platforms are given for each of the types.

Donation-based crowdfunding: The most popular type of crowdfunding, in which funders donate for purely philanthropic purposes. It is usually a cause that they believe in and from which they do not expect anything in return; the only realisation of the project is enough reward for them. These donations are usually made to social and charitable initiatives (Hossain and Oparaocha, 2017). Some of the most popular donation-based crowdfunding platforms in Spain are, according to the website CrowdEmprende (2016), Mi Grano de Arena and Microdonaciones.

Reward-based crowdfunding: “... under this model, an entrepreneur or creator proposes a project, setting a subscriber status hierarchy based on the amount of aid offered by crowd members, with rewards being set accordingly” (García and Estellés-Arolas, 2015). These rewards are not purely financial, they are more of a symbolic return for what the funder has given, therefore they are not the primary reason for contributing. Some of the most well known Spanish platforms of this model are Ulule – the first crowdfunding platform in Europe – Goteo and Verkami (CrowdEmprende, 2016).

Lending-based crowdfunding: This type of crowdfunding is based on a Borrower-Lender relationship in which the funders or contributors “supply funds for an agreed period with the expectation of receiving their funds back, possibly with interest” (Hossain and Oparaocha, 2017). These interest rates might be more favourable than the ones that conventional financial banks and private investors offer, along with the fact that crowdfunding platforms are much less regulated than traditional financial institutions. Comunitae and Funding Circle, the former Spanish and the latter British, are in the Top 10 P2P (Peer-to-peer) lenders in Europe, according to Forbes (2013).

Equity-based crowdfunding: It is a profit-sharing model under which the individuals or companies that contribute to a campaign “seek a return in the form of profits, income, or share” (García and Estellés-Arolas, 2015). This way, the funder becomes a partner or a shareholder of the project, with everything that it implies. In the securities model, the contributor receives both shares and rights as a partner, whereas in the CIS (Collective Investment Scheme) model it only receives the shares, without becoming a partner (García and Estellés-Arolas, 2015). Under this type of crowdfunding, three names that stand out from the rest are Seedrs, Crowdcube and the Crowd Angel.

A.3. Prototype of business candidate of Espai Emprèn

Once all the types of crowdfunding platforms that operate in Spain are reviewed, the next step is determining the prototype of business candidate that Espai Emprèn works with. This way, it will be easier to match a future entrepreneurial project of Espai Emprèn with the crowdfunding platform of our choice. In order to do this, a sample of 10 business plans that have been funded during 2017 thanks to Espai Emprèn’s support has been taken. A table (Annex 3) has been compiled with the characteristics of these business plans, classified into multiple categories. The following remarks should be considered in order to understand the table properly and draw conclusions from it:

- The initial outlay is taken from the investment plan of each business, taking into account the money that is strictly necessary to launch the company. This is the minimum, but sometimes not the optimal amount in order to function as the entrepreneur would wish.
- Apart from the credit received from financial institutions or foundations, some of these entrepreneurs also received money from their family, but it is not taken into account since we are focusing on external financing methods.

- Instituto de Crédito Oficial or Corporate State-owned Entity is a state-owned bank, with the legal status of corporate state-owned entity, which enters into obligations and debts with third parties (Instituto de Credito Oficial, 2017).

The purpose of this collection of data is coming up with the characteristics of the average entrepreneur that works with Espai Emprèn. Computing the mean of the numerical characteristics an easily comparable data can be obtained. The amount of money needed by a company of this size to start its entrepreneurial activity is, on average, 23.523€; and the amount of time the entrepreneurs have to raise it is usually 1 month. The majority of the companies work in the retailing sector, therefore the initial outlay usually goes to the rental or transfer of the establishment, the furniture and the supplies. On average, these businesses managed to receive a credit slightly higher than 20.000€ from different financial institutions and foundations, mainly MicroBank, and at a nominal interest rate of around 5,6%. Therefore, these entrepreneurs were able to fund their own MSME with the money of third parties and then give it back at a relatively low-interest rate in 4 to 6 years. However, considering the financial conditions of these people – some have lost their house in the past and the bank will not lend them any money – getting these loans is not easy at all. This is when other alternatives, such as crowdfunding, come into play.

A.4. Crowdfunding platforms appropriate for Espai Emprèn business candidates

Bearing in mind the features of the Espai Emprèn businesses mentioned above, there is one type of crowdfunding platform that could be instantly ruled out of the list of candidates, one which is meant for purely philanthropic causes: Donation-based crowdfunding. Espai Emprèn businesses, such as Carmela's La Poderosa Lab fashion design brand, are personal projects that allow the entrepreneur to make a living and improve her and her surrounding's quality of life, in exchange for offering a product or service to the community. This is a win-win situation; therefore, presenting it solely as a charitable cause would not make it justice.

Given this scenario, the other categories of crowdfunding seem more appropriate. However, they are really different from each other, having their own pros and cons. The bright side of Reward-based crowdfunding is that it does not expect you give the money back; creditors only expect a non-financial reward. Hence, it gets rid of the risk of default, but it also makes the offer far less appealing. On the contrary, equity-based crowdfunding attracts a wider range of investors which, overall, are able to invest larger amounts of money. These investors, who work as business angels and almost as shareholders, expect some monetary gains in the long-run, which means that the businesses that apply for this category of crowdfunding must have successful and profitable prospects for the future. These two options might not completely fit with Espai Emprèn's prototype, but the third one definitely does.

A.4.1. Lending-based platforms

In lending-based crowdfunding platforms, creditors expect their money back plus an additional interest. The main idea of this category of crowdfunding is the same as the one that traditional financial institutions have when they become lenders of an entrepreneur. Actually, this has been Espai Emprèn's approach since its beginnings: acting as consultants to create a borrower-lender relationship that allows setting up a business. The collected data shows a number of successful companies that are still running after they launched the project and that are meeting the deadlines of their creditors accordingly. These businesses could be funded in a similar way, only swapping traditional financial institutions for a large pool of individuals.

Lending-based crowdfunding platforms provide several advantages. Firstly, interest rates might be lower, thanks to which the entrepreneur saves up a considerable amount of money. Secondly, the risk of lending is minimized as the project relies on multiple small lenders rather than on one big lender. Thirdly, the platform provides a broad diffusion of the campaign, reaching not only the people related to the entrepreneur but also unknown people that are willing to make some profit with their money as well as supporting a social cause. Last but not least, some of these small creditors are both potential clients of the business and word of mouth advertisers in the neighbourhood, which makes for the entrepreneur easier to recoup the initial outlay and pay all the creditors.

Under the name of Lending-based or P2P crowdfunding, there are around 15 platforms to choose from in Spain (CrowdEmprende, 2016). Some of them are approved by the CNMV¹, which means that they follow the Development of Business Funding law passed in 2015 (Fernández, 2017). The crowdlending platforms operating in Spain and registered in the CNMV are the following ones: Arboribus, Zank, Grow.ly, Einicia, Socilen, Lendix, Colectual, ECrowd!, Excelend and MytripleA.

Some of them are dismissed for different reasons. The first ones are Arboribus, Grow.ly, Lendix and Colectual, as they only work with companies that have already been set up, which doesn't match the interests of Espai Emprèn. Neither do Excelend or Zank, which support exclusively personal and individual projects; or ECrowd!, which is directed towards technological projects. MytripleA is not a possibility either since the minimum amount of loan is 50.000€ and none of the previously analysed business cases of Espai Emprèn reaches this quantity. Therefore, we are left with 2 platforms: Einicia and Socilen. Their main characteristics have been gathered according to the information found on their own sites and the website Tufinanzacion (2017), as well as the features of the loans from MicroBank and Oportunitas² (Annex 4).

The specific conditions of each loan depend on the person that is launching the campaign. These platforms carry out an exhaustive research of the individual and their financial health in order to rate

¹ Comisión Nacional del Mercado de Valores

² We shall leave ASCA out of the comparison, as its loan's conditions are really favourable, but it is really difficult to obtain.

their degree of solvency and therefore allocate a particular interest rate to each campaign. The backing of Espai Emprèn could serve as an extra warranty, allowing them to achieve better interest rate conditions. In this aspect, they follow a similar procedure to that of MicroBank or Oportunitas. However, in some cases, the overall conditions are much more advantageous, as we can deduce from the numbers in the table. The nominal interest rates can be lower both in Einicia and in Socilen, and the amount of money that these platforms lend surpasses the one that MicroBank and Oportunitas offer. Between the two, I believe Socilen is a better option, as both its interest rate scale and its commissions are lower. But still, all the terms and conditions offered by the platform should be carefully examined before choosing it over traditional financial institutions or foundations.

A.4.2. Three in-between platforms

Crowdfunding is not an exact science; neither crowdlending is a perfect choice, nor the rest of the crowdfunding types are completely unfeasible. Especially when we are working with a wide variety of businesses, what may work for one might not work for another and vice versa. Thus, I would like to introduce three in-between options that are not exclusive to any category of crowdfunding above mentioned.

The first one is a concept commonly used in financial markets but not widespread in the Spanish crowdfunding sector yet: convertible debt. This is a choice that falls in between lending-based and equity-based crowdfunding, i.e. the contributor lends a certain amount of money to the entrepreneur and decides whether she wants to own a percentage of the business after knowing whether it is profitable or not. Not only the lender, but the entrepreneur also wins, since a lower risk decreases the interest rates and makes easier to get a loan. Plus, if the business is successful it does not have to pay the debt back and the money can be reinvested instead (Gass, 2011). In the US, SeedInvest is one of the platforms that operate this way (Wroldsen, 2016), but in Spain there isn't any platform that has successfully managed to apply this idea yet. Even if nowadays this is not a realistic option for Espai Emprèn's businesses, I believe that in the future they will be able to take advantage of it.

The second option is crowd-sourced advance sales financing, a pioneering idea of the platforms Indiegogo and Kickstarter. "These sites allow individuals to pledge funds to various projects or start-ups in exchange for their products when they are produced" (Williamson, 2013). This method of crowdsourcing has become an attractive option for entrepreneurs that have designed a unique product and want to know whether people are willing to buy it. Carmela Rosciano, a fashion designer who founded La Poderosa Lab thanks to Espai Emprèn, is an example of an entrepreneur that could have benefited from this method of crowdfunding using Kickstarter, a platform that operates successfully in Spain since 2015.

The third alternative considered within this section is the one offered by Goteo. This Spanish platform, which manages reward-based crowdfunding campaigns, provides one unique complement to this type of crowdfunding: a matchfunding pool. A matchfunding pool is "a deposit of big donations"

that come from different entities and that “are distributed through specific temporary calls for crowdfunding projects” (Goteo, 2017). For example, ‘Conjuntament’ is a programme aiming to boost 24 projects of proximity social entrepreneurship and collaborative economies in Barcelona run by Goteo thanks to Barcelona City Council. 96.000€ are assigned in total to the programme so that for every euro that a citizen contributes to one of the chosen projects one euro more is raised thanks to the matchfunding pool. Both the multiplying effect and the diffusion that these entities offer stimulate society’s contributions and help overcome the difficulties that a Espai Emprèn entrepreneur might have to face within reward-based campaigns.

A.5. Launching a crowdfunding campaign: Before, during and after

Whichever platform is chosen; every crowdfunding campaign follows a similar guideline. The first thing to do is to present all the information you have to the platform, such as the business plan and the entrepreneur’s financial information, in order to show that you have already done your homework and that you deserve the chance of raising the money – no matter which approach you are going for. It is important to remember that before convincing anyone to lend you money, you have to convince the platform to provide you with the tools to run your campaign. Espai Emprèn should focus on “tailoring their message to fit the expectations of potential contributors” (Newstex Finance & Accounting Blogs, 2015), in order to align everyone’s interests.

After agreeing on the terms of the campaign and making sure that both parties understand their obligations and rights, it is time to prepare the audio-visual and written material of the campaign, such as a video, some photographs and a brochure that gives the right message. According to Hossain and Oparaocha (2017), “the effective application of these communication tools... helps to bridge any gaps in the understanding between the founders and the funders. In this way, understandable project objectives and value propositions help build a fan base and increase the confidence, support, and commitment of the various stakeholders.”

One of the keys to the pre-campaign is motivation. It is essential to emphasize the importance of the funder in this project, focusing both on the ‘win-win’ strategy and the social aspect of the campaign. Although it is important to explain how this campaign supports the social inclusion of an individual and her surroundings, it is also necessary to stress that the funder is going to get something back. Depending on the approach, the return can be monetary or non-monetary, but the social return will be present anyway. Regarding crowdlending platforms and against what was believed until recently, money can be made while promoting a good cause, and “a growing number of social entrepreneurs and investors realize that social enterprises of all sorts can generate financial returns that will make them attractive to the right investors” (Bugg-Levine, Kogut and Kulatilaka, 2012).

The other key to the pre-campaign is trust and transparency, as “crowdfunding entails the channelling of uncollateralized funds through a non-banking intermediary to fund a specific initiative”

(Hossain and Oparaocha, 2017). Therefore, it is necessary to break the costs of the project down into a pie chart so that the contributor knows what she is investing in. The clearer and more transparent a campaign is, the more confident will the investor or contributor feel when putting money into an entrepreneur's business campaign.

Both motivation and transparency can be achieved relating the crowdfunding campaign to previous successful business cases of Espai Emprèn, in order to demonstrate that the banks and foundations that trusted these entrepreneurs at the time have afterwards obtained their return.

The duration of the campaign is as much as or even more important than the pre-campaign, as the need of engaging people in your project is constant from the first day until the last. "Posting progress reports and information updates... will not only keep your current backers informed, it will also likely attract new contributors since you are further demonstrating your commitment to the project that you are trying to fund" (Newstex Finance & Accounting Blogs, 2015). Servei Solidari's and Escola Pia's communication channels can be used to do this, apart from the crowdfunding platform itself. Moreover, the beginning is the most difficult part, since many people prefer investing in a project that already has a significant support. Trying to attract one powerful investor related to Servei Solidari or Escola Pia might be really useful to encourage other investors to join the campaign. In fact, "there is a positive reinforcement effect where attention to a story initially increases because the first few people that like it further pass on this information to others" (Kuppuswamy and Bayus, 2015). In order to do this, a great diffusion of the campaign must be done, through all the communication channels available for the entrepreneur and Espai Emprèn. This includes social media posts, emails, distribution of brochures, word of mouth and even press releases or a 'beginning of campaign' event.

This last proposal is related to a showroom that Espai Emprèn is already intending to organize with all its entrepreneurs. It would be a wonderful opportunity for a new candidate of Espai Emprèn to explain his or her project and motivations and to launch the crowdfunding campaign, so people can hear first-hand the objectives of the campaign, and also physically see the results of other Espai Emprèn entrepreneurs that have managed to build a company from scratch. This way, people will be able to relate to these entrepreneurs more than in any other way, reaching higher motivation and transparency levels. These type of events are "truly multichannel, with elements of direct mail, commercial advertisement, Web content, email and social media" (Beebe et al., 2014), which can be really useful to increase the scope of the crowdfunding campaign the following weeks.

None of the crowdfunding campaigns ends when they reach their time limit, especially in lending-based crowdfunding. If the campaign has come to an end and the minimum amount of money has been raised, it is time to prove all the investors or contributors that you are worth their trust and make the most out of the money you have been given. This does not only mean putting your business plan into action but also keeping your investors updated. Although the project has already been funded,

these citizens are still part of the project, which means that they will most likely have an interest in what is going on in the business. Apart from providing them with periodical updates and media of the process, it could be interesting to invite the contributors to the opening of the business so to keep in touch with someone who could be a potential customer. A big opening event with the investors and the press gives a great image of success, which could help future Espai Emprèn entrepreneurs to get their businesses funded more quickly and easily. A research run by the Michigan State University shows that in platforms like Donors Choose the 21% of contributors have donated to multiple projects of similar nature, therefore it is important for Espai Emprèn to keep in touch with its contributors and sustain their interest (Wash, 2013).

SECTION B: THE DONOR MEMBERSHIP SCHEME

B.1. Introduction to donor membership schemes

Donor membership schemes are definitely a much more traditional funding method than crowdfunding, but not because of their longevity in action are necessarily less successful. In fact, the 2010 Fundraising Success Gold Awards for Fundraising Excellence proved that the donor acquisition package campaigns were some of the most successful ones in the US, such as Research Leaders by the Muscular Dystrophy Association or 2009 Tell Your Story Acquisition Mailing by the National Museum of American Jewish History. These campaigns produced a high response rate, thanks to them being highly personalised and really emotional (Battistelli, 2010).

The membership of an organization is a “large number of donors who make relatively modest contributions each year, usually to an annual fund appeal” (Seltzer, 2001). Although each individual might not contribute a lot by itself, summing up all the donations they reach a considerable amount. Considering that Servei Solidari relies almost exclusively on public grants, this extra source of income could be really helpful. The objective of a membership scheme is building “a broad base of support” and identifying individuals “to build relationship with so that they become increasingly active in affairs of the organization...and, hopefully, involve their friends and institutional contacts” (Seltzer, 2001).

In return for their contribution, members usually get some benefits, which can be of many kinds, from gifts or discounts to subscriptions, special events or other types of services. Apart from these perquisites or ‘perks’, a membership also gives them a sense of belonging and commitment to the organization. It is essential not to forget this last point and lose the perspective since, according to Seltzer (2001), “tangible membership benefits serve as an incentive to give... but they rarely provide the primary stimulus”. The primary stimulus usually comes from intangible benefits, such as recognition, personal satisfaction and increased self-esteem, apart from the sense of belonging and commitment mentioned above.

B.2. Types of donor membership schemes

Some academics, such as Ken Burnett (1992), suggest that a donor membership scheme should have a fixed annual membership fee. Moreover, it suggests offering “a hierarchy of members (or supporters)”; that is, providing different membership categories to choose from, each of them with a different annual fee. Special concessions should also be made for the different collectives, such as students, unemployed or the elderly (Burnett, 1992).

On the other side of the spectrum, some academics such as Barbieri and Malueg (2012) propose that “suggested contributions, membership categories, and discrete, incremental thank-you gifts... focus donations at discrete levels, thereby effectively limiting the donors' freedom to give”. Their model proves that a rigid contribution scheme produces a crowding out effect, which basically means that fewer people will be willing to contribute than if a flexible contribution scheme was applied.

Donor memberships can also be divided into monthly or annual schemes. The main advantage of a monthly scheme is that people have to pay out less money at a time, which is probably more affordable for everyone. In fact, an article from the journal *Successful Fundraising* (2017) stated that “if a potential donor doesn't feel that she or he can give enough to make a true difference, many may choose to not give at all, and a sustainable monthly giving program helps to alleviate those concerns”. Plus, if they are not convinced about becoming members, they can always give it a try for a couple of months instead of committing to a whole year. Another argument to consider in favour of a monthly quota is that it attracts the members' attention more frequently, which strengthens the contributor-organisation relationship and increases the likelihood of building more of these relationships.

An annual scheme implies a greater pay-out, as it is done once a year. Some people might actually prefer this if they are too busy for having to allocate an extra expense in their monthly budget. It is easier to keep track of your accounts if you just have one payment a year to make, as you know how much you have to set apart from your annual income. However, the party that probably benefits the most from an annual scheme is the organization, who receives all the money at once and therefore is able to allocate it to the budget according to its needs. This is really helpful in order to make the annual forecast. As convenient as it is, the organization could even consider introducing a discounted quota for the annual membership scheme, which would be a considerable saving for the contributors over the years.

B.3. Building a prospect list

Before jumping into building the membership scheme itself, it would be interesting to analyse who is going to be aimed for. The “Concentric Circles” model is a tool created by Tom Boyd for building a prospect list, a list of individuals that might be willing to support the organization if approached, divided into three categories:

- “The first circle...is defined as your internal constituency; the insiders of your organization, each with a direct stake in the success of your effort”.
- The second circle is made up of the individuals already known by the people from the first circle.
- The third circle is described as your “prospective supporters”; individuals with no previous contact with your organization but that might have a connection with it and be responsive to your campaigns (Seltzer, 2001).

According to the Successful Fundraising journal (2017), however, there is a broader range of categories for building a prospect list from scratch. They can be considered subcategories of the Concentric Circles mentioned above:

- First circle: Current and past donors; current and past board members; volunteers; employees; anyone who is benefitting or has benefitted from your organization’s services.
- Second circle: Your organization’s regular vendors; family and friends of anyone who is benefitting or has benefitted from your organization’s services.
- Third circle: Local businesses and foundations; area clubs, associations and religious organizations.

Adjusting these categories and subcategories to Espai Emprèn’s and Servei Solidari’s environment, an approximate prospect list has been made (Annex 5) taking the following considerations into account:

- The numbers from the First circle have been obtained from Servei Solidari’s ‘10-years’ report.
- The prospect members that form the Second circle are taken from Servei Solidari’s database.
- Figures for the Third circle are statistics published by the Barcelona City Council: (1) Number of operating establishments in ground floor in the neighbourhoods of el Raval and Sant Antoni in 2014 and (2) Population of the neighbourhoods of el Raval and Sant Antoni in 2016.

These prospect members (103.943) are the target at which Servei Solidari is aiming with its donor membership scheme. However, expecting that all of them are going to join the membership scheme from the beginning is not realistic at all. Instead, we have considered three different scenarios:

- Worst case scenario: 5% of the prospective members join the membership scheme.
- Middle case scenario: 10% of the prospective members join the membership scheme.
- Best case scenario: 15% of the prospective members join the membership scheme.

Being the first time that any type of membership is launched by Servei Solidari, the uncertainty is reasonably high, hence these percentages are low. Of course, this is a primary study and we have not taken into account word-of-mouth or other types of information dissemination that come after the announcement of the membership scheme. These should be considered in a follow-up study, but for now we will work with the initial percentages. The prospective money raised is computed in the next section, after determining the membership quota.

B.4. Building a membership scheme

Being realistic, the main feature of the membership scheme that every individual is going to focus on first is the subscription fee. Neither the benefits nor the payment options; but the quota that they will have to pay for being part of the Servei Solidari community. As Burnett (1992) said, “getting the right price is obviously crucial – too high and you’ll put people off, too low and you’ll lose money and also give wrong signals in terms of value for money”. Seltzer (2001) goes a step further and suggests “inducing individuals... to giving more”, becoming upgraded members who enjoy exclusive benefits. When it comes down to basic figures, according to him this means an average amount of 15€ per annum for the lowest membership hierarchy, around 25€ per annum for the medium one and 150€ and so on per annum for the lifetime one.

However, Servei Solidari should be careful of setting the price too high, since its potential members are not usually in a position in which they can contribute a lot. Seltzer’s upgrading probably would not work in Espai Emprèn’s or Servei Solidari’s framework, as the people related to these organizations will seek a simpler scheme that allows them to contribute within their capabilities. Instead, a 20€ per annum quota could be contemplated, which could also be translated into 2€ per month. This would allow Servei Solidari to benefit from the advantage of monthly and annual schemes and the contributors to choose from whichever scheme works best for them. Plus, the ones choosing the annual scheme would benefit from a slightly discounted quota. 20€ or 24€ might not seem really encouraging at first, but multiplying this amount by the prospective members according to the scenarios previously considered in our prospect list result in a significant quantity (Annex 6). In the worst case scenario, Servei Solidari would raise annually 124.728€ (A) in case that everyone pays the per month quota and 103.940€ (B) in case that everyone pays the annual quota. All the other combinations lie within this range. In the best case scenario, the foundation would raise 374.184€ (A) and 311.820€ (B) respectively. Even in the worst scenario, the total amount is really significant, especially considering that currently Servei Solidari mostly relies on public grants.

Tied to determining the membership fee goes determining the method of payment, which might seem more boring but not less important. Practicality is crucial when talking about contributions; the members should be given everything done so that bureaucracy doesn’t put them off when deciding whether to become part of the community. According to the Spanish Organic Law 16/2009, direct debiting is a payment service aimed at debiting a payer’s payment account in which the payment transaction is initiated by the payee on the basis of the consent given by the payer to the payee. That is, if the member – payer – gives express consent of debiting 2€ from her account each month, Servei Solidari – payee – has the consent of initiating this transaction each month until the member decides otherwise. The document that enables this transaction is called ‘SEPA mandate’ and has to be signed by both parties in order to be applicable.

A really attractive side of the membership that should be stressed out when trying to encourage people to join is tax deduction. According to the Spanish Law 49/2002 and its subsequent reforms, the

deduction percentage applied on donations below 150€ is 75% for a natural person who pays IRPF³ and 35% for a juridical person who pays IS⁴. Therefore, the real cost of the membership would be 5-6€ per year for a natural person and 13-15,6€ per year for a juridical person. Fiscal deduction also applies to the crowdfunding campaign of Section A: donations over 150€ are deducted 30% for a natural person and 35% for a juridical person, which allows both citizens and businesses to save up a considerable amount of money (ABC, 2016).

Apart from talking numbers, when planning a membership scheme it is essential to discuss the benefits that the members could have in exchange for their contribution. This is when the imagination and knowledge of the people surrounding Servei Solidari – or First Circle – come into play. Open debates and brainstorming regarding the membership package of benefits will help to figure out the most suitable one for Servei Solidari or any other organization (Seltzer, 2001). However, the list below includes some perk suggestions that could be part of an initial package of benefits:

- Gift cards and discounts for Espai Emprèn's entrepreneur's businesses: There are around 120 small but successful businesses that were born thanks to Espai Emprèn help; now it is the time to return the favour. Members would be able to enjoy from groceries or coffee to a new haircut or a new fashion piece, all of it at a cheaper price than for any other neighbour.
- Monthly membership newsletter: Its purpose is to maintain the communication with the members and keep them updated on all the news that arise in every project of Servei Solidari. Showing not only the achievements of the organization but also the stage in which each of them is at the moment keeps them motivated and involved. Moreover, "the impact monthly giving has on the organization's budget and ability to fulfil the mission with greater efficiency and effectiveness" can be shared with the contributors (Successful Fundraising, 2017).
- Seasonal events: Periodical and exclusive events of different nature could be hosted by some of the schools acceded to Escola Pia. Some ideas are a live music concert, a popular meal or an educational seminar. These are just a pretext to gather everyone, share opinions and show the members that they are appreciated.
- Intranet: Each member would have a username and a password in order to access their own private site that could operate as a communication channel. Both Espai Emprèn and Servei Solidari could make exclusive announcements to the members, such as new discounts or the seasonal events, while they could chat with people from the organization to solve any doubts, make any comments and, in general, give some feedback.

³ Impuesto sobre la Renta de las Personas Físicas

⁴ Impuesto de Sociedades

These benefits intend to give the member of Servei Solidari a sense of belonging to the community and some recognition by their fellows, while at the same time does not imply a huge cost for the organization. A preliminary package can be arranged for the launch of the membership scheme, but it should be kept updated as the members share their interests through a questionnaire, for example. After all, this project relies on the member's contributions, therefore it is essential to keep them satisfied and the service personalised.

B.5. Becoming a member of Servei Solidari

In order to reach and engage as many people as possible, the process of becoming a member should be quick and easy. What works for one person doesn't work for another, therefore more than one option should be given in order to adjust to everyone's preferences. Some people might want to join the community in person, in order to ask any initial queries that they have or simply because they don't trust the internet or the phone. The receptionist at Servei Solidari's office should have some forms to fill in, as well as a broad information about the membership scheme in order to clarify any doubts regarding the terms and benefits.

Others might prefer joining Servei Solidari from the comfort of their home, either by phone or online. Doing it by phone is quite straightforward, as the receptionist at Servei Solidari has already been prepared for the face to face enrolling and he or she knows all the steps that must be taken. Evolving the webpage to sign up online is slightly more time-consuming. Since Servei Solidari already has a greatly developed site, there is no need to create a new one. A visible membership button should be added to the headboard of the homepage. This way, potential members can fill in the online form and learn everything about how the membership works.

Every member should receive a warm welcoming to create a good first impression. An emotional handwritten letter from someone who is truly involved in the project is many organization's choice, and not without reason, as the 2010 Fundraising Success Gold Awards for Fundraising Excellence corroborate. It is essential to emphasize how each contributor, as small as its donation is, makes a difference to the project, as every euro counts.

Two more things that every member should get are a membership card and a membership username. The membership card is really useful to allow entrance to any exclusive events and to benefit from all the gifts and discounts that Servei Solidari's scheme offers. There is no need of issuing a fancy card, but a practical one that is lasting and easy to carry. To enjoy all the benefits of the membership scheme, a username and a temporary password are needed, in order to be able to enter the intranet and be part of the community.

CONCLUSIONS

The financial-social return gap introduced at the beginning of the paper is definitely starting to disappear. The lack of society-oriented solutions from traditional financial institutions has pushed individuals to organize and move forward in a new direction in which economic relations become more inclusive and financial instruments have a rather secondary role. Their purpose becomes offering a communication tool that matches society's problems and solutions, aligning their interests and providing a win-win relationship.

A clear example of this situation is crowdfunding, which has proved to be a feasible alternative financing instrument for the entrepreneurs that approach Espai Emprèn. Within the crowdfunding sector, platforms have evolved in order to adapt as much as possible to the multiple needs of both organizations and individuals, offering a wide range of choices to choose from. Entrepreneurs that reach Espai Emprèn can focus both on crowdlending platforms, such as Socilen, or reward-based platforms, such as Goteo, as well as on the rest of alternative platforms suggested throughout the paper. The key now is considering all the possibilities and meeting the platforms, having Servei Solidari as a backup in order to gain more credibility and better terms and conditions. These entrepreneurs will be able to decide, with the help of Espai Emprèn, which type of platform suits their needs best and can offer them better prospects for their business, following the primary guideline set in this paper. Not only the choice of the crowdfunding platform, but the management of the campaign is crucial too. Transparency and motivation, as well as multichannel communication, are the key to make the most of the visibility that a medium-scale crowdfunding campaign offers.

A membership scheme, although less innovative, might also give a solution to a broader problem: the lack of funding of Fundació Servei Solidari. The deficit that the organization carries can be alleviated through the implementation of a simple, yet flexible membership programme. A contribution of 2€ per month or 20€ per year allows individuals and companies to engage with the organization and make a true difference. The prospect list reaches almost 104.000 individuals and, even if the most pessimistic scenario occurs, Servei Solidari will be able to raise enough money (103.940€) to overcome its losses and increase significantly the scope of its multiple projects. Apart from helping even more the community, this will also decrease the foundation's dependence on the government, becoming more financially stable. However, the membership scheme is not only about the money; it is a really useful instrument in many other ways: (1) Servei Solidari's marketing and communication are enhanced thanks to the scope of the membership scheme; (2) a loyal member base is developed thanks to the scheme's consistency; and (3) a greater quality service is offered by the organization thanks to the continued feedback and support.

Nevertheless, there is a long way to go in the alternative financing instruments world. Although this paper has provided several options to choose from, there are still some obstacles that need to be overcome in order to provide a global spectrum of choices that suit each and every organization on earth. Moreover, Spain falls behind other pioneering countries when trying to reach that “middle ground” in which financial return goes hand in hand with social return. There is a big gap between reward-based crowdfunding and lending-based crowdfunding that could be filled in by a 0% interest rate crowdfunding campaign. Individual lenders would get a social return while they give the other party the chance to make a favourable change in the community. Traditional financial institutions could also offer a second financing round to businesses that have successfully applied alternative financing instruments like crowdfunding. There is a lot to work on in this sector, but if something has been made clear is that people are taking more and more the lead of their finances and that entrepreneurs and Servei Solidari as a whole should not exclusively rely on banks and governments anymore.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

	Previsió de resultats
I. SERVEIS BÀSICS I OBLIGATORIS	
Serveis d'informació i orientació	
Nombre de persones beneficiàries dels serveis d'informació i orientació	130
Serveis d'assessorament	
Nombre de persones assessorades	95
Nombre de plans d'empresa finalitzats	25
Nombre d'empreses creades	15
Accions de formació	
Nombre de persones participants a les accions de formació	51
Servei de seguiment tècnic per a la consolidació	
Nombre d'empreses destinatàries dels serveis de seguiment tècnic	25
II. SERVEIS I ACCIONS COMPLEMENTÀRIES	
Accions de sensibilització	
Nombre d'accions de sensibilització	5
Serveis de mediació per a l'accés al finançament	
Nombre d'empreses creades amb els serveis de mediació per a l'accés al finançament	10
Serveis i recursos de vivers d'empresa i/o coworking	
Nombre d'empreses allotjades en el viver	
Serveis facilitadors de traspàs de negocis	
Nombre d'operacions de negocis traspassats	8
Serveis d'alfabetització digital (punt homologat TIC)	
Nombre de persones emprenedores que rebran serveis d'alfabetització digital	5
Serveis d'assessorament de les noves oportunitats de negoci dels projectes empresarials TIC i de foment de l'ús de les TIC en la gestió empresarial	
Nombre de persones emprenedores que rebran serveis d'assessorament de noves oportunitats/ gestió empresarial TIC	5
Serveis facilitadors de segones oportunitats	
Nombre de persones reorientades (que tornen a emprendre)	2
Serveis de finestra única empresarial	
Nombre d'empreses creades a través dels serveis de finestra única	
Pressupost i sol·licitud	
Pressupost del pla de treball	67.136,10 €
Subvenció sol·licitada	53.708,88 €

Source: Servei Solidari

Appendix 2

[illegible]

Source: Servei Solidari

Appendix 3

Company	Entrepreneur (s)	Type of business	Initial outlay	Time constraint	Credit from financial institution or foundation	Creditor	Interest rate
Esther Castelar - Estética y Quiromasaje	Esther Castelar	Beauty > Aesthetics salon and massage	49.404€	1 month	41.000€	Banco Sabadell	6,5%
Ilusioname Reyes	Ana Isabel Reyes	Communication > Event organization	25.678€	1 month	15.000€	Oportunitas	9,75%
Cafeteria LuAna	Anacy Magdalena Nogueira y Luciane Oliveira	Catering > Coffee shop	29.394€	Less than 1 month	25.000€	ICO	6,5%
Your Choice	Marina Kravchenko	Communication > Magazine	8.046€	1 month	7.000€	MicroBank	5,45%
Racó del Llibre	Jordi Ros	Retailing > Second-hand bookstore	26.144€	1 month	25.000€	ICO	5,95%
La Poderosa Lab	Carmela Rosciano	Manufacturing and retailing > Fashion design	19.879€	1 month	15.000€	MicroBank	5,45%
Frutería y verdulería	Carlos Enrique San Martín	Retailing > Grocery store	24.683€	Less than 1 month	21.000€	ASCA	0%
Peluquería Star Ckloé	Cleusa Ferreira	Beauty > Hairdresser	16.000€	Less than 1 month	17.000€	MicroBank	5,45%
Chatarrería Nyede	Nyede Gueye	Retailing > Scrap exchange store	11.000€	1 month	11.000€	MicroBank	5,45%
Pizzería Taller de Pasta	Joel Potou	Catering > Pizza restaurant and specialist dealer	25.000€	Less than 1 month	25.000€	MicroBank	5,45%
MEAN	-	-	23.523€	1 month	20.200€	MicroBank	5,6%

Source: Own work based on Servei Solidari's files

Appendix 4

Platform / Characteristics	Maximum loan	Nominal interest rate	Commission(s)	Repayment term	Other conditions
Einicia	2.000.000€	3,5-17%	Management, payment institution and calculation agent services: 2% + 1% + 0,65% = 3,65%	60 months	0,15€ commission for each contribution done by investors
Socilen	90.000€	2,5-8,7%	Management and coverage: 1,5-3,55%	60 months	-
MicroBank	25.000€	5,45%	-	60 months	-
Oportunitas	25.000€	9,75%	Opening: 5%	48 months	-

Source: Own work based on Tufinanziacion and the platforms' own websites

Appendix 5

Concentric Circles	Subcategories	Number of prospective members
First Circle	Current volunteers	10
	Current and past contributors	25
	Current employees at Servei Solidari	30
	Small businesses set up thanks to Espai Emprèn's counselling since its creation	120
	Total	185
Second Circle	People involved currently in other projects of Servei Solidari	200
	Other organizations partnered up with Servei Solidari	438
	Family and friends of the entrepreneurs that have set up a business thanks to Espai Emprèn's counselling since its creation	1.200
	Professionals inside Escola Pia de Catalunya	2.500
	People subscribed to EPC's newsletter and not considered in previous subcategories	10.000
	Total	14.338
Third Circle	Small establishments close to Servei Solidari	4.107
	Neighbours from districts close to Servei Solidari	85.313
	Total	89.420
TOTAL NUMBER OF PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS		103.943

Source: Own work based on Servei Solidari's files

Appendix 6

Scenario	Number of prospective members	Money raised per month	Money raised per year	
			A	B
5%	5.197	10.394€	124.728€	103.940€
10%	10.394	20.788€	249.456€	207.880€
15%	15.591	31.182€	374.184€	311.820€

Source: Own work