

**Year Report 2019**  
Voice4Thought Foundation



Art and knowledge are change agents!

[www.voice4thought.org](http://www.voice4thought.org)

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## Statement

Voice4Thought (V4T) is a digital and offline platform that provides a space for voices from around the world to express their thoughts and make people think critically about the world around them. V4T supports and works together with artists, academics, activists, writers (journalists, bloggers), painters and cartoonists who are engaged in socio-political change. Anyone who strongly believes that we need open expression and different voices to create space for those that are often not heard is welcome. Voice4Thought is open to work in co-creation, in collaboration with other organisations or in supporting individuals and their projects.

In 2019 Voice4Thought has been working further on its orientation. V4T's platform has expanded its function(s) and we also operate increasingly as a news platform. The website is central in the organisation and our co-production's visibility and where we share all end-products. We are increasingly investing time and resources in improving our digital environment, e.g. website, social media, and digital archives. Facebook is used as our primary social media outlet, however in 2019 we expanded further to Instagram and Vimeo. Facebook proved a strong medium where people find V4T and start to engage. We will continue to build on this further.



2019 was a year of expansion. New team members have joined V4T and we have been working hard on the 'V4T Academy' project that starts in Mali in January 2020. Voice4Thought continued with crucial collaborations such as *Bridging Humanities*, the online peer-reviewed journal and the – LUF-funded - Master teaching programme at Leiden University. In 2019 V4T also started new partnerships. We are happy to collaborate further with [ZAM Magazine](#) (the Netherlands), [CASP](#) (Chad) and [Groupe Agoratoire](#) (Mali), who have become our partners in crime.

# 2019: Highlights, V4T projects and organisational updates

## 1. Teaching programmes at Leiden

### 1.1. Innovative Research Methods

The project introduces students in V4T methods where research methods are expanded with digital tools, such as digital photography, video, the use of all kinds of software for making maps, and for publication of results in multi-modal ways. The possibilities offered by the digital are endless, but how does a researcher develop in the digital age with academic rigour?

A tangible result of the project is the website ([www.innovativeresearchmethods.org](http://www.innovativeresearchmethods.org)) where student products are published and where we are still developing a space to guide students in their multi-model research and publication efforts. The subsidy demanded from Leiden University Fund (LUF) and the [Elise Mathilde Fonds](#) was already awarded in 2018, but were eventually used in 2019 because of the timing at Leiden University. Kim, Thomas, Sjoerd, Mirjam and Federica therefore continued to work on the [Innovative Research Methods](#) (IRM) - project for another semester. The end result of this 'experiment' will be the establishment of an IRM Lab at the Humanities Faculty in Leiden, where students can follow courses and ask advice on the digital research skills.



Still from the film 'Hopeless', scene from Mali

## 1.2. Multi-modal publishing in humanities research

In 2019, V4T worked together with LeidenGlobal, the Taalmuseum and the municipality of Leiden to develop a workshop on multi-modal publishing. Multi-modal publishing is an innovation in humanities research as it offers innovative ways to present research and show the research process in a transparent way. It prepares students for the open-access academy. A variety of workshops invite Master and PhD students to enter the field of 'multi-modal publishing' and 'co-creation'. We had hoped to organise this in November 2019, but the timing of subsidy and organisational matters led us to postpone to April 2020.

## 2. Slam & Eve

In November 2019, the festival "***Ndjam s'enflamme en Slam***" devoted its space to feminine slam by organising the [Slam & Eve festival](#), with female slammers only. *Ndjam s'enflamme en Slam*, which had its first edition in 2014 in N'Djamena, Tchad, is a festival that offers a platform for upcoming and established slam artists to exchange and share their critical words, ideas, and emotions that are part of everyday life. At Slam & Eve, six 'slamazones' from Chad, Guinea, Democratic Republic of Congo, the Netherlands, Morocco and Ivory Coast slammed on the status of women. Voice4Thought was represented by Loes, Mirjam and Didier (who is also the director of *Ndjam s'enflamme*). As Mirjam and Loes are working on a book about female slam artists, *Slam & Eve* ensured that they could do interviews, had photo and film material and new inspiration. V4T played an important role in the communication around the festival via the website and Facebook. Sjoerd edited a first small video from *Slam & Eve* from the materials of the CASP in 2018. The video is available at the V4T website, entitled '[les femmes s'enflamment en slam](#)'. Mette van Dijk, the Dutch slammeuse present in N'Djamena, will work on a video that will be in parallel with the book.



### 3. Reporting from unknown fields

Voice4Thought wants to develop into a platform for journalists and reporters who have no space to publish on situations in the world that need attention, such as silenced conflicts, youth initiatives such as festivals, and events where untold stories come to the fore. We want to facilitate training and freedom of expression to ensure a broader perspective coming from local citizen journalists.



Image from post 'Campagne contre la censure d'internet au Tchad', 28 January 2019.

We have established relationships with young journalists from the Netherlands who report on Lebanon, and with a network of journalists from Chad, through our reporter [Deuhb Emmanuel](#). These relationships have resulted in many published blogs and background stories in our '[Thought](#)' section. Two good examples are the reports about the arrest and [incarceration](#) of artist Valsero by multiple of our reporters, and the campaign against the internet censorship in Chad.



Valsero, a Cameroonian rapper, known artist and activist for peace in Cameroon, is finally free, 5 October 2019.

On July 15th, the first ever slam festival was held in Burundi, the *Vuga* festival. This relatively new art form in Burundi - the slam scene started in 2009 - is becoming bigger and more political. We were able to send a reporter Cedric Bahimpundu who analysed [the slams and songs](#).



**Vuga festival, Burundi, 15 July 2019.**

In Cameroon we worked together with Ebah Essongue Shabba, who reported on the festival [Slameroun](#) that was held in Yaoundé for the first time. Moreover, Nsah Mala from Cameroon made poems with a collective of poets on [dialogue and peace](#).

Initiatives to collaborate do not only come from us. We are happy to notice that journalists, artists and writers reach out to us and initiate a collaboration.

#### **4. Voice4Thought Academy**

The Voice4Thought Academy is our big success of 2019: we were able to guarantee funds to start a pilot year of the V4T Academy in Mali, thanks to the collaboration with SNV (a large Dutch NGO with an office in Mali), and the financial support of the Dutch Embassy in Mali. The project was accorded definitively mid-December and on January 1st, 2020, Didier Lalaye our *chef de projet* started the office in Bamako in the office of SNV. 2020 will be the year of great results and a blossoming Academy!

The [Voice4Thought Academy](#) is a space in which Malian youth are encouraged and empowered to express themselves through different (artistic) channels on the basis of a body of knowledge and opinions in order to play their role in peace processes and to restore a healthy society in Mali and the subregion. As youth are often neglected, the academy wants to stimulate restoring their dignity and become involved citizens. The Academy offers them skills that are necessary to be heard and included in decision-making processes. The ability to think critically is the start of every conversation. The Academy in Mali will also be led by young Malians. The desired objective of the Academy is for the trained students to pass down their knowledge to a next generation of Academy students.

Within this pilot year we will work with Malian partners Odyssee for qualitative research methods, with Agoratoire on expressions such as slam, comedy and poetry, and with Dutch-based Upinion on quantitative data collection through Facebook and private messengers. We will work in four different sites, namely: Macina, Bankass, Douentza and Bougouni. In all four sites we will have coordinators and trainers, who will be assisted by coaches from the different partners. Together, we form the Voice4Thought Academy.



## LOCATIONS ACADEMY

Bamako  
Bankass  
Bougouni  
Douentza  
Macina





## 5. Stichting Scholtus-de Bruijn

The Voice4Thought Foundation has taken over the funds of the Stichting Scholtus-de Bruijn. Stichting Scholtus-de Bruijn initially started to provide aid to local people in Chad, Mali and Cameroon. Among other things they have helped build a watering pump in Chad and an orphanage in Cameroon. By taking over the funds, Voice4Thought has also inherited a project. The project concerns the situation of often orphaned children in and around the Grassfields, Anglophone Cameroon. The orphanage was based in the village Baaba. Since the war broke out, the orphanage faced many problems and in 2019 it became clear that the village has been partly destroyed and the children were forced to flee. This meant in fact that the orphanage is no longer existing. This has resulted in a new interpretation of the project under the Stichting Scholtus-de Bruijn that has the ultimate goal to help the children who were in the orphanage to go to school. Gosse van Dijk has taken up the task to figure out where the children are, so that they can still receive some support. In 2020 we will support the children that are 'retracted' by Gosse van Dijk, who worked in the project as a volunteer and continues to be a contact person. Eventually we will look at supporting young people and children from the Grassfields in the form of Voice4Thought Academy.

## 6. The Hague Humanity Hub

In 2019 we discovered that the Humanity Hub in The Hague was not the perfect fit for Voice4Thought. None of V4T's team members live in The Hague, so we all had to travel quite far, which resulted in that we did not use the space as much as we thought. We are looking for a space in Utrecht or Amsterdam to make an office. On the positive side, we got to know [Upinion](#) at the Humanity Hub for which we are grateful. Upinion is an organisation that gathers insights and stories from people in crisis situations, through digital technologies. Upinion is an important partner in the V4T Academy project in 2020.



## 7. Forgotten conflicts

When we shared space in the Humanity Hub we wanted to contribute to the space in the form of exhibitions and sharing our networks with other social entrepreneurs and foundations. We organised a photo exhibition on the Central African Republic (CAR). This photo exhibition was composed by Jonna Both, Marius Crepin and Sjoerd Sijsma, who worked together on a research project in CAR. The project gathered stories of young men and women who had been involved in the (civil) wars that have been part of the post-colonial history of CAR. The project was done in collaboration with UNICEF. We were also working to set up a larger project in which different so-called forgotten wars would be presented: Turkey, Yemen and Ethiopia, with performances of artists and film and photo exhibitions. The project has not materialised at the Humanity Hub, however we will continue with this project in our own V4T virtual space and on the platform Bridging Humanities. Rana Norman will be an important collaborator for this project.

## 8. New team members

V4T is growing! [Margriet Reinders](#) joined the team to take care of the administration, office management, monitoring and evaluation and quality control. **Rana Mono**, **Catherina Wilson** and **Laurens Nijzink** also joined our team. Rana will work on the 'forgotten wars' in Yemen, Catherina is interested in working on the crossroads between art and academics and is now preparing a festival in Kinshasa modelled after the V4T festival formula. Laurens brought with him the connection to ZAM Magazine, a platform where artists and journalists work together on various events and information on Southern Africa. Laurens is an experienced (visual) journalist and will support the team in this branch.

Unfortunately Eva Mud left the team. We thank her for all her help and innovative ways to develop the social media and website of V4T. Vera will take over this task. Loes has retreated from her position in the executive board of V4T because of her PhD position at ASCL. Congratulations Loes! Loes will be an 'ordinary' team member. She will devote her time on the CASP and the *Slam & Eve* publication. She will be in Senegal in 2020 from where she will report and connect to V4T.

## Website and Facebook statistics

The new website was launched at the beginning of 2019. The design, layout and content structure has been changed to meet the requirements and ambition that V4T holds with regards to its digital platform. With the launch of the new website we have seen a growth in exposure of our digital content to a larger international audience; in numbers and reach. Additionally, towards the end of 2019 the V4T website became fully bilingual so that English language content became available in French via auto-translation (and vice versa), utilising the virtual reality driven translation engine Deepl.com. This further enhanced the reach of the website across language borders. Our social media presence has also been improved by being more active on Facebook. It shows that links between the Facebook page and the website increases visitors flows between the platforms. On our Facebook page we promote online and offline activities of Voice4Thought.

### Website statistics

Total visitors: 11.637

Total pageviews: 22.238

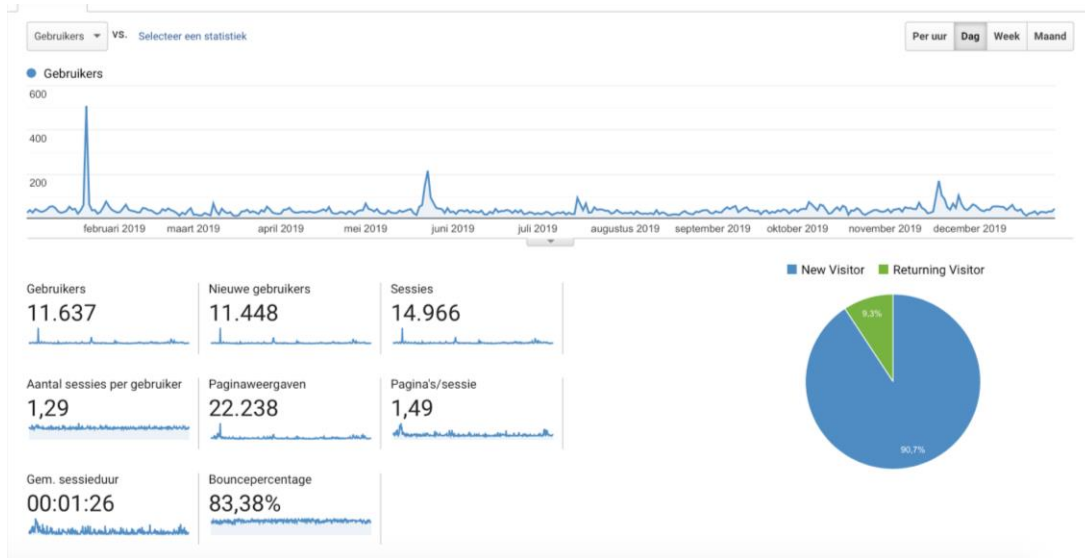
<u>Top countries</u>	<u>Visitors</u>
1. United States (18,18%)	2119
2. Netherlands (15,07%)	1757
3. Cameroon (11,18%)	1303
4. France (4,91%)	572
5. Chad (4,08%)	476
6. United Kingdom (3,50%)	408
7. Kenya (3,19%)	372
8. Germany (2,07%)	241
9. Belgium (1,99%)	232
10. Canada (1,88%)	219

Voice4Thought had a good reach to audiences in the United States, Netherlands, Cameroon, France and Chad. This shows connections with website publications about the countries concerned. For example, we notice that many members of the Cameroonian diaspora in the United States read our background stories on the conflict in Cameroon, on Slameroun and Valsero's imprisonment.

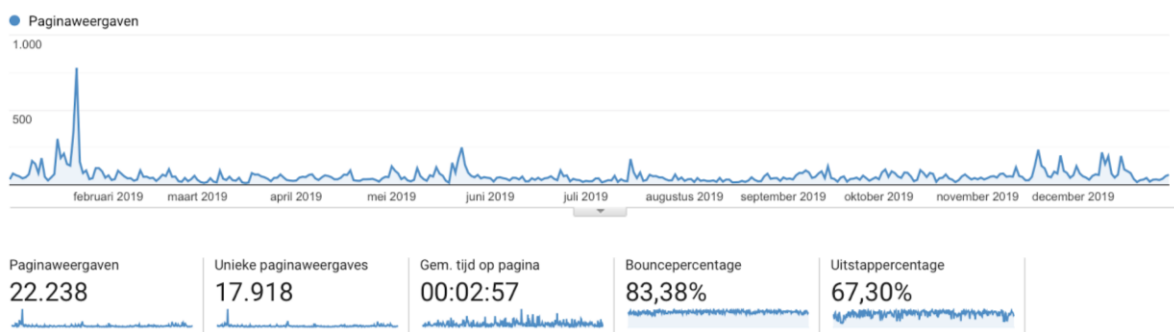
We can also see that the age category of attracted visitors is the highest between 25-34 years, with a percentage of almost 44%. Between 18-24: years this was 14%, and between 5-44 years this was 20%.

Statistics show that visitors barely use the 'search' option on the website. This shows that we could improve ways of navigating on our website; inviting visitors to stay and look for what they are interested in. One way of improving we already have worked with is the adding of hashtags. Website and social media statistics for the years 2019 show that there is still a lot of room for growth in numbers and in reach to specific audiences and countries. In 2020 we plan to grow the use of social media to a core activity with set targets.

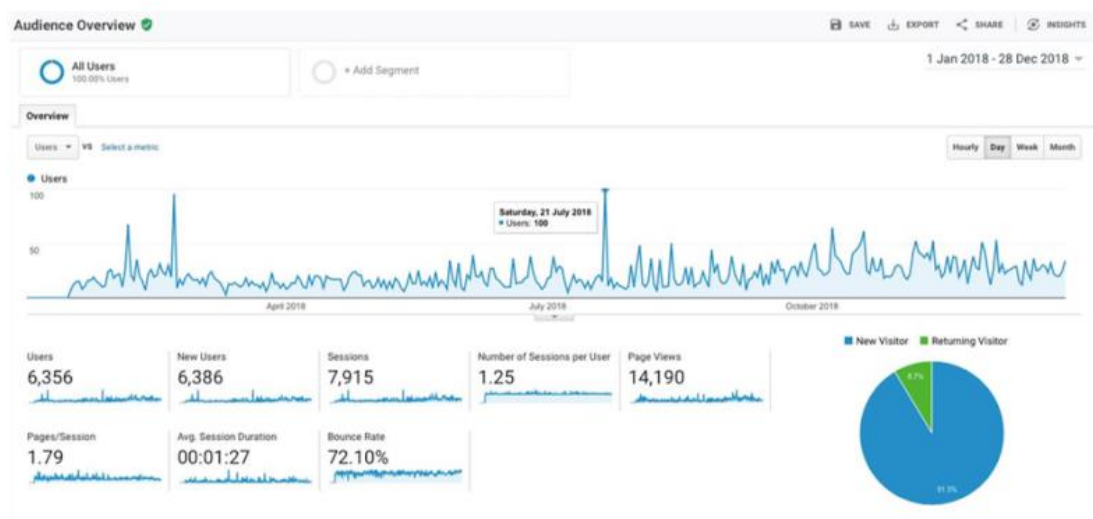
**Figure 1: overview of visits to the Voice4thought.org website 2019**



**Figure 2: overview of page views to the Voice4thought.org website 2019**



**Figure 3: overview of visits to the Voice4thought.org website 2018**



**Figure 4: Overview of specific page views 2019**

Pagina ?	Paginaweergaven ? ↓	Unieke paginaweergaves ?	Gem. tijd op pagina ?
	22.238 % van totaal: 100,00% (22.238)	17.918 % van totaal: 100,00% (17.918)	00:02:57 Gem. voor dataweergave: 00:02:57 (0,00%)
1. /	3.629 (16,32%)	2.743 (15,31%)	00:03:51
2. /tchad-des-individus-plus-riches-que-l- etat/	897 (4,03%)	822 (4,59%)	00:04:18
3. /our-candidate-is-mobutu-propaganda- in-candidat-na-biso-mobutu-1984/	618 (2,78%)	563 (3,14%)	00:05:55
4. /tchad-la-bavure-policiere-occasionne ra-la-chute-de-deby/	477 (2,14%)	422 (2,36%)	00:01:53
5. /demonstrations-in-cameroon-anglop hones-responce-to-their-marginalizati on/	460 (2,07%)	359 (2,00%)	00:02:02
6. /valsero/	460 (2,07%)	418 (2,33%)	00:04:20
7. /thawra-the-lebanese-revolution-in-art- and-words/	356 (1,60%)	283 (1,58%)	00:05:39
8. /tchad-laureate-du-concours-poesie-fi nes/	333 (1,50%)	308 (1,72%)	00:02:08
9. /the-relationship-between-art-and-hist ory/	324 (1,46%)	250 (1,40%)	00:03:16
10. /understanding-the-congo-crisis/	311 (1,40%)	215 (1,20%)	00:02:06

## Facebook statistics

The V4T Facebook page has also had a good reach in 2019. Especially the reports about the Slam festival for female slammers in Chad had a wide reach. We also see that reports done by our local reporters are well received.

The posts with the most reached audience in 2019 through Facebook are listed below:

1. Voice4Thought: [Mariusca et Fatou](#) dans le studio #FINES\_2019.
2. Voice4Thought is a [partner](#) of Festival International N'Djam s'enflamme en Slam-FINES.
3. Valsero is [released](#), yes, we are happy, but it is not the end of this sad episode.
4. World premiere: the documentary '[Hope-less? Biographies of radicalization](#)', produced by Voice4Thought, can now be viewed online (40 mins).
5. [Article](#): Academics can change the world - if they only stop talking to their peers.

## Independent projects supported by or in partnership with V4T

### 1. Collaboration with Bridging Humanities

Bridging Humanities is an open access online peer-reviewed academic publication platform that aims to experiment with alternative forms of academic knowledge production in the digital age. The focus of the journal is on biographical-narrative research that is carried out in co-creation and integrate digital methodologies. Bridging Humanities started two new projects for which V4T is the administrative partner. One project with the Liliane fonds and ASCL, in which the idea was to document the interaction between research and NGO projects. Sjoerd, Kim, Arnold and Mirjam were involved in the preparation and the execution of the project. Halfway through the project the Liliane Fund retreated from the project. So in the end there are no results, but we are an important experience richer. The approach of Bridging Humanities to arrive at publications that are transparent in all phases of the process of a project still needs a format that also fits NGO projects. We will work on an approach that could fit NGO projects that can be adjusted per project.

The second project was together with Andrea Stultiens where Bridging Humanities and Andrea will work on a research/publication project on the photo archive of Paul Julien, who was a researcher and traveller in different countries in Africa. The project is funded by NWO (innovation fund) for a period of 12 months. The first publications are expected in June 2020.



### 2. Dawa M-health – Chad

The [Dawa M-health project](#) has been funded by the Stichting Kinder Urologie. The Dawa M-Health project was set up by Didier Lalaye and a group of young doctors from Chad to address the underdevelopment of healthcare in south-western Chad. The mobile laboratory was able to function during 2019 due to these funds. This has been an important outreach to the remote regions in Chad's Mayo Kebbi region, but also an important way to understand the health situation better. The project will also publish the results. New funds are being sought for 2020 and after.

### 3. Coupe d'Afrique de Slam Poésie - Africa Cup of Slam Poetry

The Africa Cup of Slam Poetry (CASP) is a Panafricanist organisation and two-yearly event that brings together artistic talent from Africa and globally. CASP creates synergy and unification in the artistic scene and hence works on a united Africa. With its slam, poetry and other forms of expression it gives young African artists a voice. The next Cup is foreseen for November 2020 and will take place in Addis Ababa. Didier is director of the CASP and Mirjam is part of the fundraising committee. The partner countries are organising local competitions that have already started for some in 2019.



### 4. African Hip Hop platform

The [African Hip Hop](#) platform is gradually getting back to activity. Thomas is responsible for the platform. It is an important online and offline archive of Hip-hop culture in Africa since the mid-nineties. Digitisation of its music library of hundreds of rare and unique tapes, minidiscs, CDs and LPs is underway.



## Collaboration and Funding in 2019

### Active Partnerships:

- Bridging Humanities, the Netherlands
- G Hip Hop, Senegal
- ASCL/LeidenASA, the Netherlands
- LeidenGlobal, the Netherlands
- Groupe Agoratoire, Mali
- Ndjam s'enflamme en slam, Chad
- Tchad+, Chad
- CASP/ASCP, Cameroon / Chad
- SNV, the Netherlands
- Upinion, the Netherlands
- Gemeente Leiden, the Netherlands

### Funding partners and donors 2019:

- Leiden University Fund (LUF) and Stichting Elise Mathilde Fonds
- Project Nomade Sahel from the ASCL
- Children's Urology Foundation
- Municipality of Leiden
- Stichting Scholtus - de Bruijn (merged with V4T)
- Dutch Embassy in Mali
- NWO
- Liliane Fund

More information on funding partners and donors can be found in the financial report.

## Looking forward to 2020

- As we write this report the Voice4Thought Academy is in full schwing. This pilot year should lead to a larger project in the broader Sahel region, based on our lessons and team in Mali;
- It is important to broaden our partner network, with the aim to develop more projects together with other organisations;
- The merger with the Stichting Scholtus-de Bruijn has been a very important incentive for Voice4Thought, and we are looking forward to develop a beautiful project in Cameroon as the legacy of the foundation;
- Giving the Advisory Board a more active role, and making sure we have new and enthusiastic board members;
- We aim to have our own office space in Utrecht or Amsterdam;
- 2020 will be the year of Instagram, Vimeo and new social media pages for Voice4Thought Academy;
- Building a new project around the idea of networked citizen journalists around freedom of expression in oppression;
- Organising expositions, debates, street events and screenings in tandem with the programme of partner events and festivals;
- Building the V4T consultancy team in order to integrate our methods and network into existing or new projects from other organisations.