

## **Civic engagement and social capital in ship-preservation work in Norway: The scope, impact, and demographics of formal volunteering and publicly funded engagements**

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## **Abstract**

*Introduction: The current focus on volunteering related to civic engagement in Norway has led to a rise in complementary private initiatives and public funding, specifically with regard to the preservation of historic ships. Volunteers for this programme are primarily men aged over 50 years who spend significant amounts of leisure time in municipalities along the coast, fjords, and lakes of Norway. Despite the historical significance of this kind of volunteering, the social capital that is gained and the substantial funding that the Directorate for Cultural Heritage provides, no study has mapped the impact or outcome of these efforts over the past 20 years.*

*Objective: The primary objective has been to study the scope of formal voluntary ship-preservation work in Norway. This article aims to map the volunteers in associations in this programme, the breadth of their efforts, and their motivations.*

*Design: All ships (n = 90) that were funded by the Directorate in 2009 were included in the case study. A qualitative survey of telephone interviews with 82 key informants (100% response rate) was conducted, and questionnaires were mailed to gather descriptive statistics.*

*Results: Age, gender and a robust relationship with the region and the specific ships appear to be relevant to voluntary ship preservation activities. The reasons for commitment and effort were companionship, unity, and memories of and relationship to the specific ships. The strong socio-political aspect of the volunteers' efforts was reflected in an aggregate of approximately 5.5 million euros in unpaid work.*

*Conclusion: Volunteering in this context is an important component of social capital among elderly men in Norway. The group dynamics and strong collective aspect of these voluntary associations maintain internal cohesion and the members only leave when forced by increasing age, poor health, or insufficient financial resources.*

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this article is to describe the connection between volunteering and historical ships in Norway, the volunteers as a group, and the scope of their efforts and motivations. This article seeks to contribute to the understanding of volunteering in Norway by the close examination of this area of voluntary activity. This article will highlight

and examine two important aspects. First, it will present the impact and scope of volunteer work on historic ships. Secondly, it will discuss the motivations of individuals, the collective aspect of volunteering, and the connection between volunteering and historical ships.

### **Civic engagement, social capital, and the concept of *dugnad***

Civic engagement is defined as 'individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern' (American Psychological Association, 2012). Types of civic engagement may encompass volunteer activity both individually and in groups. Thus, working together in a voluntary association to restore or maintain historic ships is an example of civic engagement, serving to enforce local stability and collective identity.

Social capital is seen as the expected collective gain derived from cooperation between individuals or groups. Social capital is measured by interpersonal trust as well as civic engagement. Trust and engagement on all levels might result as the societal value of communal health (Putnam, 1995). Here Putnam pinpoints that excessive personal individualization might lead to the absence of collective orientation. Civic engagement refers to a gamut of activities that build social capital and strengthen the local community (Adler & Goggin, 2005). Other empirical studies elaborating on the impact of social capital on health have shown a strong correlation between personal trust and mortality (Kawachi et al., 1997)

In this article, we examine volunteering on historic ships in Norway and focus on social capital, not as an individual asset but, as a significant element in society leading to features and elements of social life that encourage participants to act and attain certain goals. Social capital creates bonds among various parts of the community, allowing its members to consort and function together. Whereas Pierre Bourdieu views social capital primarily as an individual resource by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 119), Coleman (1990) and Putnam (1993) regard social capital bonds as collective resources of which individuals can take advantage (Hvinden & Gissinger 2005). Such bonds and resources are easiest to 'construct' in local and informal social networks (Campbell, Wood & Kelly, 1999). Social capital might be said to relate to broad societal measures of communal health (Putnam, 2000) and to individuals' health, as shown in epidemiological studies by Berkman & Glass (2000).

Volunteering within institutional structures is characterized by reliability, social relationships, and networks characterized by activities for public benefit (Atchley, 1989). Coleman sees this function comprising a variety of different entities consisting aspects of social structure, facilitating certain actions of individuals within the structure, thus making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence (Coleman, 1990, 302). Furthermore Coleman states that social capital gained must be maintained and renewed through use if there is to be no decay (Coleman, 1994). Social capital in voluntary organizations is thus a special type of community resource that strengthens the connections between individual, community, and national levels (Hvinden & Gissinger, 2005).

In the Norwegian context, *dugnad* is an important tradition of volunteering (Lorentzen & Dugstad, 2011). The term of *dugnad* can be roughly translated as 'do it together' and originates from a traditional system of mutual help with tasks that a single farming household could not manage alone (Frimannslund Holmsen, 1965). The call for *dugnad* requires everyone voluntarily to contribute both time and effort towards a common good. Further, it demands everybody's presence and frowns upon attempts to replace physical presence with the offering of cash or other material goods, thus symbolizing a gesture of equality. Like the English term 'barn-raising', *dugnad* in principle strengthens the communal feeling among those who work together. In this regard, *dugnad* differs from the term 'volunteering' as it is more normative and refers to the experience that is evoked.

The field of formal volunteering in Norway, co-created by the 'Nordic model', comprises combined public funding and private and individual *dugnad* volunteering. Matthies describes this model as having a particular relationship between the public and society sector that has enabled a certain type of society to develop (2006, p. 13). Current changes in Nordic welfare politics have effect on the field of welfare services as well as to the civic society sector. With reduced resources for public services this leads to an increasing mixture of private, public and activities within what used to be primarily financed by public means. Aiming at an increase in activity, the voluntary sectors activities are organized as projects while the responsibility of the state is becoming more distanced (Matthies, 2006, p. 25).

In this article, we consider whether certain circumstances render volunteering in non-profit organizations (NGOs) more attractive to elderly men, because gender and age are significant parameters of how leisure time is used. Women have more social interactions earlier in life, and there is equal involvement in volunteer work between genders in older age (Statistics Norway 2012). Yet a local study has shown that as a group, male volunteers aged over 67 years are the most active with regard to volunteer efforts (Wollebæk, Selle & Lorentzen, 2000).

The collective dynamics of volunteering have been debated in various theories that seek to describe and explain the social activities that are associated with people as they age. The continuity theory, states that older adults strive to maintain the same activities in which they engaged earlier in life (Atchley, 1989).

Today the sector of culture and recreation depends heavily on volunteer work, and its economic impact has been highlighted in various public reports (Ministry of Culture, 2013; Senter for forskning på sivilsamfunn og frivillig sektor, 2012). Our literature search indicates that the field of voluntary ship preservation in Norway has not been examined for the past 20 years. More importantly, however, is that our qualitative study of this form of volunteering can enhance the understanding of volunteering in this country, especially among the elderly.

In his study on resources, practices and ideologies in ship preservation the anthropologist Berkaak investigated the funding situation in 1986 (Berkaak, 1992, pp. 28-34). That year there were 48 registered preserved ships in Norway and the funding from the Directory of Cultural Heritage (DCH) was 685 769 Euros (5.1 million NOK). In comparison, the figures in this study were 211 preserved ships and seven million Euros (52 million NOK) in 2009. Between 1991 and 2009, the number of registered preserved ships increased steadily by six to ten each year (Directorate for Cultural Heritage 2010, 24). Because most organizations own just one ship, the number of registered owners in 2009 was more than four times as many as in 1992.

### **Historic ships in Norway**

With the exception of certain public-benefit foundations, large private funding of cultural heritage is uncommon in Norway. In 2009, state funding for historic ships by the Directorate for Cultural Heritage (DCH) was approximately seven million euros (52 million NOK). The

chief principle of this funding was that the work carried out by the owners would not be reimbursed. The public funding would only cover the actual cost of necessary equipment, materials, and commissioned work. Local contributions mainly consist of donations of services and equipment.

Most historic ships in Norway are owned privately by volunteer-based organizations or by public institutions (e.g., museums). Regardless of individual ownership, it is primarily volunteers effort maintaining the ships. The collective dynamics of volunteering and the amount and outcome of the volunteers' extensive efforts have never been mapped. Despite extensive state funding and the general consensus on the importance of volunteering in this programme, the knowledge on the preservation of historic ships by volunteers in Norway is limited.

### **Volunteering in Norway**

With five million inhabitants, Norway has a volunteer sector that comprises more than 90 000 locally based non-governmental and non-profit clubs and organizations with limited financial means (Ministry of Church and Education, 2006). In 2009, up to 48 per cent of the adult population in Norway participated in some type of volunteer work (Wollebæk & Sivesind, 2010), and this can be translated into the work of 115 000 full-time employees (Statistics Norway, 2009). The slogan of the national association of NGOs, "Without volunteering Norway stops" (Association of NGOs in Norway, 2010), emphasizes the impact of volunteer work, which is estimated to be as large as 4.9 per cent of the gross national product (GNP), exceeding 12.5 billion euros (Statistics Norway, 2012). Nevertheless, the value of unpaid volunteer work is excluded from the GNP.

## **Methods**

### **Definitions**

The definition of volunteer work that we have used was developed by Salamon, Wojciech Sokolowski, and List and is defined as an activity that is 'organised, not part of the apparatus of the state, it has not primarily commercial purpose, it is self-governed and the participation is voluntary' (2004, pp. 9-10). The basis for this definition is the assumption that non-profit organizations promote the common good and that this is the primary reason why volunteers work without expectation of personal profit.

## **Survey**

The survey was a qualitative exploration with a cross-sectional design, involving an observation of all fund receiving voluntary organizations at 2009. By using open-ended questions, we aimed to map the amount and frequency of volunteer work, the demographics of the volunteer work force, and their location in Norway in relation to the general funding situation in that particular year.

### **The collection of data**

All 90 ships that received funding from the DCH in 2009 and the volunteer associations restoring those ships were included in the study. A questionnaire with both closed- and open-ended questions was sent to the 82 organizations (belonging to 81 owners) of the ships.

The initial contact with the organizations was established by mail, requesting that they fill out and return the enclosed questionnaire. Owing to the low rate of response of 20 per cent, we issued a reminder by email, asking for consent to contact key informants by telephone over the following weeks. A response rate of 100 per cent was obtained, and all owners were contacted.

The survey data from telephone interviews were recorded on paper and systematized by coding, clustering and grouping of the data. The in-depth interviews were recorded and transcribed. On the basis of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we began our analysis with open coding in order to capture important concepts and themes and to illustrate central statements. Using deductive methods demonstrated the variation of the material.

To control for preconceptions and to assess the consistency of the answers, the open-ended questions were validated by the co-authors (USG and ES). To check validity, interviews with key informants of two active NGOs in this field in California were conducted, and their responses were identical. As part of our verification of data, the results were also validated by a 'member check', controlling interpretations and conclusions with each of the interviewees. (Patton, 2002, p. 381). This verification by the interviewees was followed by a transcription. Thereafter a reflection by authors (Patton, 2002, pp. 555-561) was performed.

In a follow-up, we conducted, transcribed, and analysed 14 semi-structured qualitative interviews with randomly selected volunteers from various projects. These interviews increased our understanding of a volunteer's personal engagement and relationship and they verified the results of the previous survey.

### **Key informants**

This study held interviews with 82 key informants from volunteer associations identified by the list of fund receiving ships from the Directorate of Heritage in 2009. All key informants are defined as individuals with knowledge and experience in the field who can articulate their observations. All key informants held managing positions or were in charge of supervising and conducting preservation work in the field. To ensure that key informants understood the nature of the questions, they received information before the interviews (Patton, 2002, pp. 321).

### **Estimating the value of the commitment**

We used the UN-recommended template for estimating the value of volunteer work to estimate the economic value of the work — a method that has been used by Statistics Norway to create a satellite GNP including all registered volunteer work in Norway in 2007. Satellite account is defined here as an account based on national accounts concepts and national accounts figures, while making a special adaptation to emphasize this economic phenomenon (Statistics Norway, 2010). We employed the average working hours and wages in 2009 as variables.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The interviewer (ES) has experience as a volunteer and is employed by the DCH. Being aware of biases that might affect the reliability and validity, the author (USG) analysed all data after transcription. The hermeneutic impact that the interviewer had on interviewees could not be adjusted for.

Another bias that limited the study is that the study population consisted of key informants in the role as contact persons for the individual project and being themselves active volunteers. The provided data were filtered through a key informant (Patton, 2002, p. 321) and



must be understood to represent an estimate of an estimate. Additionally, a recall bias must be accounted for, because informants relied solely on their memory.

This study was approved by the Regional Committee for Medical and Health Research Ethics, South-East in Norway (reference number 2010/173a).

### **The extent of ship-preservation activities**

The voluntary sector, also known as the non-profit sector, is an area of social activity dominated by non-governmental organizations. This sector is called the third sector in reference to public and private sector. Nordic countries are rich in third sector organizations, but the responsibility for financing, and partially also organizing, still remains in the public sector (Grassman, 2006, pp. 325-327). In Norway, volunteers carry out the majority of preservation activities on historic ships. Their efforts in total, their organization, both formal and informal, including forms of ownership of the ships, and the impact of the active volunteers, is one of the success stories of the welfare states in Northern Europe (Matthies, 2006, pp. 13-14).

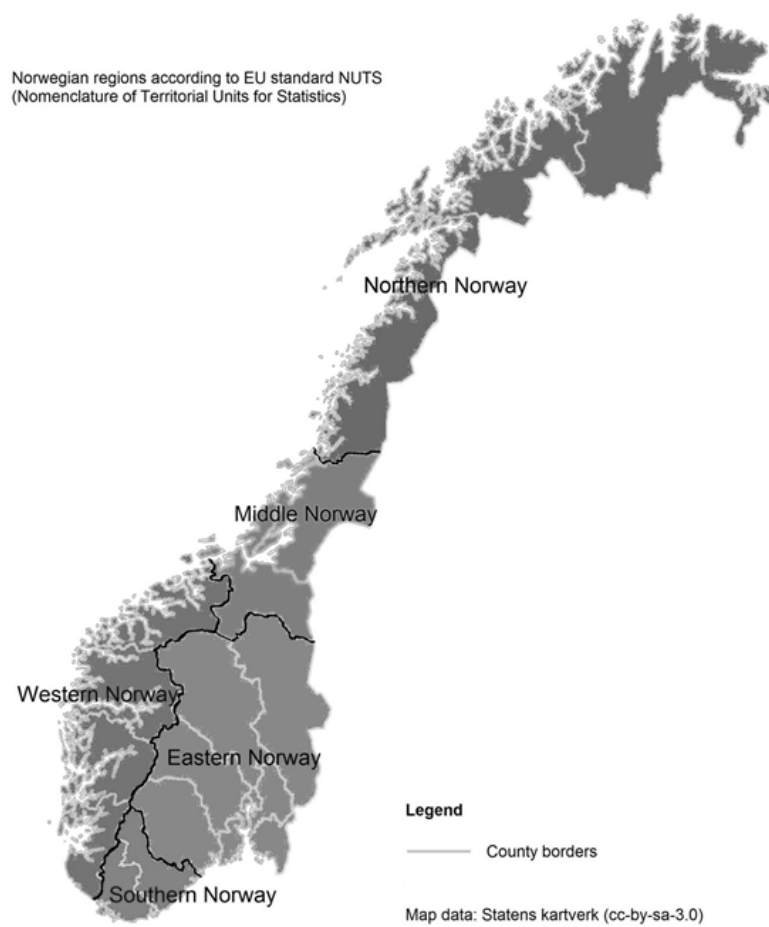
### **Descriptive statistics**

Table 1 shows the geographic distribution of formal volunteer effort on ships in Norway in 2009. Most of the volunteers who invested more than ten hours monthly, adjusted for population size, resided in southern and eastern Norway, followed by central, western and northern Norway. This pattern is consistent with Berkaak (1992, p. 21).

**Table 1 – Volunteer activity on ships in Norway (2009) by region**

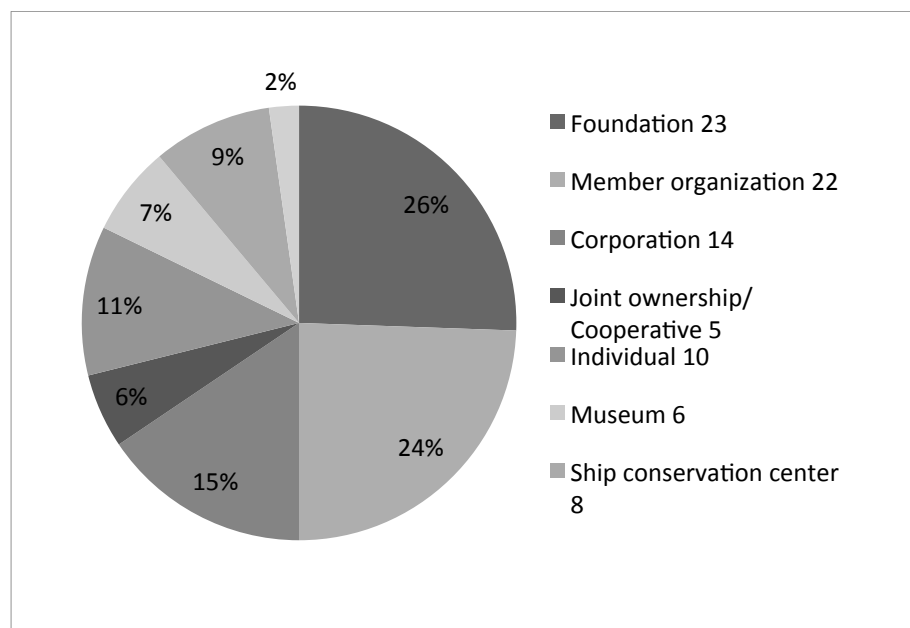
| Region                             | Population<br>Jan. 2010 | Ships | Adjusted number<br>of volunteers<br>(≥ 10 hours<br>monthly) |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------|---|
| Northern<br>Norway<br>(Nord-Norge) | 465 000                 | 18    | 153   |
| Middle<br>Norway<br>(Trøndelag)    | 423 000                 | 8     | 63  |
| Western<br>Norway<br>(Vestlandet)  | 1 263 000               | 36    | 256   |
| Southern<br>Norway<br>(Sørlandet)  | 278 000                 | 3     | 29  |
| Eastern<br>Norway<br>(Østlandet)   | 2 428 000               | 25    | 295   |
| Overall                            | 4 858 000               | 90    | 796   |

**Figure 1: The regions of Norway**



Regarding the ownership of the ships and volunteer activity of the 90 ships that were included, 76 were associated with volunteer activity (Figure 2). The remaining 14 ships were owned by museums, corporations or the municipality and one was privately owned. For 2009, we estimated 10.1 per cent (994) from a total of 9887 registered members of various ship-preservation organizations, as active members.

**Figure 2 Ownership of the 90 ships in the study**



Only few key informants reported that they only had passive members in their ship-preservation organizations in 2009. This means that the majority of associations maintain at least at some level of activity at the time of the study. Over ten per cent of members participated in more than ten hours volunteer activity per month. We used the 'full data set' as the inclusion criteria. We ultimately included 796 members for further analysis. The percentage of female volunteers was 19.1 per cent, which is low compared with leisure and culture as a whole, and this number demonstrates that preserving historic ships appeals particularly to men. This is perhaps not surprising; the building and managing of boats and ships have traditionally been male-dominated professions.

Table 2 shows an overview of the contributing members demonstrating that the active volunteers primarily are men within the 50+ age group with a 60+ age group being heavily represented. Large proportions of men in this age group have retired from paid work and have time to spend on volunteer activities. The female volunteers were reported to be less active and mainly took part in more traditional female roles such as preparing food for the other volunteers and visitors.

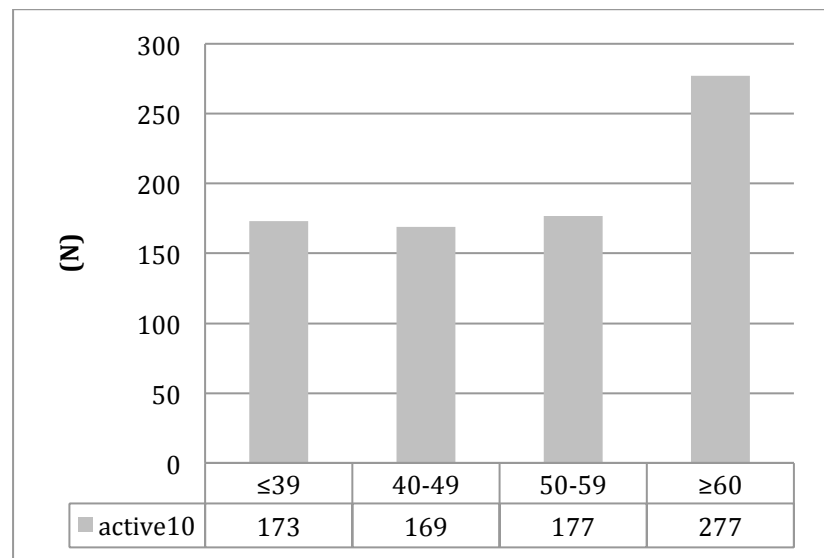
**Table 2: Overview over the field – contribution by hours and demographic data**

| Age-groups | Hours total (hours member) | pr. Active $\geq 10$ hrs (%) {hours} | Male/female $\geq 10$ hours |
|------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| $\leq 39$  | 27 450 (159)               | 173 (28.9%)                          | 123/50                      |
| 40-49      | 14 500 (86)                | 169 (20.1%)                          | 135/34                      |
| 50-59      | 32 860 (186)               | 177 (13.56%)                         | 153/24                      |
| $\geq 60$  | 54 900 (198)               | 277 (15.88%)                         | 233/44                      |
| total      | 129 710 (628)              | 796                                  | 644/152<br>80.9%/19.1%      |

Legend: \* Included all members (full data set)

Table 2 shows the activity for those aged  $\leq 39$ , 40-49, 50-59, and  $\geq 60$  years. The average number of hours of volunteer work per active member (over 10 hours pr. week) was 163. Most active members (57.03 per cent) were aged  $\geq 50$  years.

**Figure 3: Active volunteers spending ten or more hours volunteering on an individual ship in 2009, stratified by age and effort**



Based on Table 2, Figure 3 shows the number of active members who contribute more than ten hours per month.

*Calculating the Economic Value of Volunteer Work*

Despite the attention of various policies and public institutions and subsidies from the DCH, the value of volunteer work has not been calculated.

In the Johns Hopkins Comparative Non-profit Sector Project, heritage and historical organizations are included in the subcategory 'culture and arts' under 'culture and recreation' (Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs, 2006, p. 69). For Statistic Norway's estimate of the value of volunteer work in this subsector, the data were supplied by museums, art galleries, and performing arts organizations.

Volunteer work on historic ships comprises both blue-collar work and tasks that are related to planning, financing, and promoting a project. These tasks resemble the activities of the shipyard industry more than those of the performing arts and museums. To estimate the value of volunteer work in preserving historic ships in 2009, we used the

average work hours and wages per year in the shipping and oil platforms and modules sectors (Statistics Norway, 2011).

In 2009, the average number of work hours for employees in the shipyard industry was 1666. The 129 775 hours of volunteer work in 2009 equals that of 77.9 full time employees. The average wage in the shipyard industry in 2009 was 70 000 euros (511 000 NOK). Using the method per Statistics Norway and these figures, we calculate that the value of volunteer work on the 90 ships that we have included was 5.34 million euros (39.85 million NOK) in 2009 (Statistics Norway, 2009).

The funding from the DCH is not intended for reimbursement of volunteer work, instead covering expensive equipment, materials, dry docking, and commissioned work by specialists. The volunteer work consists primarily of tasks that are related to maintenance, minor restoration tasks, sailing the ships, planning the work and running the organizations. Thus, and due to additional private and local funding, the amount of volunteer work on a ship does not depend solely on funding from the DCH. Hence, the volunteer work on ships that did not receive funding in 2009, or on ships whose owners did not even apply for DCH funding that particular year, may not be less than that on ships that received funding.

Thus, the value of volunteer work on all 211 historic ships with approval from the DCH could have exceeded 12 million euros (nearly 90 million NOK) in 2009. In conclusion, funding from the DCH is crucial for financing larger or expensive repairs of damage that threatens historic ships, which, for most of them, have surpassed their life expectancy several times over.

## **Qualitative Results**

The volunteers were aged between 17 and 85 years, and two-thirds of the group were in their 50s and 60s. Many of those who initiated the projects one to two decades ago still remain active.

Key informants highlighted the volunteers' distinctive, often personal, relationship to the particular ship or the ship's original company. A background in maritime-related jobs was also frequently mentioned. All interviewees described volunteering as a function of the social interaction between the individual and his social surroundings. 'Volunteers are people who are enthusiastic about what they are doing' (Key informant 14) and 'Volunteers are active, positive, are in a

good mood and are flexible' (Key informant 73). The following statements describe what we found volunteers to be: enthusiastic, active, and positive individuals who are often extroverted.

'We are optimists and wish to create something', key informant 51 said, indicating how volunteers as a group have a common set of beliefs and values and a common aim, purpose, task or goal.

After coding, clustering, and grouping the data, we identified four major reasons for participation, two or three of which were given by every volunteer. Our study shows that the reasons for voluntary participation are compound. The main reasons for volunteering were as follows:

- The wish to have a feeling of unity and companionship.
- The wish to have a relationship to the individual ships or site.
- The volunteer has an interest in the nautical environment and the specific ship.
- The wish to see results and to experience empowerment.

A close reading of transcripts and interview notes reveals that the patterns of interaction and the decision-making processes were imbued with self- and collective efficacy and a sense of community dynamics. Key informant 32 explained this as follows: 'Unity, companionship. Getting it right, technically and economically' (Key informant 32). Another informant described self-efficacy as follows: 'we receive and offer both trust and responsibilities very fast' (Interview no. 13); interviewee 12 claimed that '...to see a result, this is the important thing. To get it right, no matter what it is'.

The strongest motivation was 'the social aspect and the interest in ships – and having an unbelievably good time' (Key informant 6). Expressions of unity, companionship, and specific interest were mentioned in nearly every interview.

Like within reminiscence, linking memories to objects or giving them a tangible reality through heritage means that they can be collected and preserved. Informants expressed this concept as follows: 'We grew up there - so we have been here since childhood, where we used to travel by boat to the town!' (Interviewee 9).

The most frequently emphasized factor for volunteer participation was the personal interest in a particular ship or the company that had operated the skip. 'Interest in the history of the company and the ship' was decisive to key informant 17, because it evoked important memories.



### **Reasons for dropping out**

Many key informants could not recall anyone dropping out of their volunteer association or had not experienced it for several years. Reasons for discontinuation given were loss of motivation (poor progress or inadequate funding), 'getting tired' (old age) or other physical factors, including death.

## **Discussion**

### **Demographic differences and recruiting**

Fifty-one and 64 per cent of all female and male inhabitants of Norway, respectively, participated in various forms of volunteer work in 2004. Women devoted an average of 24 hours per year versus 44 hours for men (Sivesind, 2007, p. 19).

Owing to the lack of comparable data on heritage volunteering, we must refer to Berkaak's study, which reported ten per cent participation by women (1992, p. 24). In our study, 19.1 per cent of active female members committed over ten hours. This gender imbalance, based on the strong male dominance (80.9 per cent), leads us to conclude that this form of volunteer activity primarily attracts men before and after retirement.

In the past two decades, the number of organizations that deal with the preservation of historic ships in Norway has grown considerably. Because boats and ships have played an important part in Norwegian communications and everyday life throughout history, old ships of all kinds are considered an invaluable part of the nation's cultural heritage (Småland, 1995). Participation in voluntary organizations differs by social group, age, personal background, and gender (Enjolras, Steen-Johnsen & Ødegard, 2012). High income and high education and being a member of the active workforce increase the likelihood of volunteering. In addition, gender has an impact on diverse volunteer activities.

The white paper 'The role of the owner' expresses tremendous concern over volunteer recruitment (Norwegian Ship Preservation Association, 2009, p. 12), as did several of our key informants.

Our findings indicate that volunteers recruit primarily from their social networks and thus within their own age groups. This pattern might create the impression of stagnation, as the entire group ages.

However most associations show a healthy influx of new recruits leading to a stable membership base. Because volunteers are aging, work on historic ships becomes increasingly important for the social network and coherence of a growing segment of older men.

In Berkaak's study (1992), the average age of volunteers was estimated to be slightly over 38 years, whereas 20 years later in the present study, the average age is 52 years. Berkaak's study included 31 ships and 48 individual responses that were not randomly selected. Although only 14 of Berkaak's ships are included in the present study the results still indicate a notable increase in the average age among volunteers. Despite the divergent criteria for inclusion, our results indicate a notable rise in the average age of volunteers, consistent with a recent study on volunteerism by Christensen, Strømsnes & Wollebæk (2011, p. 42). Furthermore, our results are consistent with the number of protected ships and consequent rising number of organizations over the past 20 years (Directorate for Cultural Heritage, 2010, p. 24).

With regard to changes in society and volunteering, Christensen et al. (2011, p. 9) have noted rising commitment and growth in non-organized volunteering, indicating a new tendency of contribution by individuals linked to personal well-being without the requirement of formal membership.

### **Characteristics of Volunteers**

The determinants and characteristics of volunteers are seen as contextual, with characteristics in social background, personality and attitude (Smith, 2013). Additionally volunteering for a non-profit organization is seen as a way to remain active engaged in later life. In this voluntary or third sector, the sphere of social activity is undertaken within organizations that are not for profit and non-governmental.

As indicated the informant's volunteers were mainly men over the age of 50 described as 'idealistic', 'engaged', 'enthusiastic' people using their skills. As a study by Mjelde-Mossey & Chi (2005) indicates, utilizing skills are associated with volunteer experience by men. It is therefore likely that the gender bias registered and their differences in expectation are influencing the choice of activity.

As our results show, volunteers frequently show a highly special interest and personal relationship for one particular ship or the ship's original company. The importance of local history attracts many of the elderly. At the same time volunteers in ship preservation meet others who share their interests. The voluntary ship preservation activities

present an arena for social cohesion. These men often regard the wharf or boathouse as a meeting point, a place where they might feel needed in their effort to serve their community along with their peers.

Within ship preservation the most common reasons for volunteering appeared to be closely related to personal ties and one's personal sense of history, confirming that memory is an important constitutive element of identity formation—unlike professional historical narratives, it is personal, and thus, collective memory has particular emotive power (Smith, 2006, p. 60). Also, Berkaak (1992, p. 22) has observed that the most frequent motivation factors were closely related to personal experience. Wallace notes that volunteer motivation in the heritage sector is based on certain notions of intrinsic value in the labour itself (2006, p. 233), underscoring the preoccupation of skills and the presence of a strong personal factor among initial motivations. Although many volunteers have similar or closely related approaches, they are unique and personal, in that they must be experienced personally and included as a part of an individual's story.

Our results show that the volunteers desire unity and companionship. Beside that, the volunteers' motivations will both consist of an interest in a specific ship and the wish to give something back to the community. We also detected that the importance of feeling needed, the experience of positive self-worth created by volunteering as well as the opportunity to meet people was under-communicated. This confirms that social capital is strongly linked to subjective experience of well-being through different connections and in different forms. By volunteering, new links are created connecting people outside of their immediate circles and provide ties to friends and neighbours at a point in life when ties to workplace and family are reduced or even disappearing. Social capital gained by volunteering is robustly related to happiness and life satisfaction, both directly and through its impact on health (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004).

As seen, over half of the active volunteers in 2009 were 50+ and motivated by wanting to feel useful as members of society. There is also an incentive to fill the void left by retirement. This underlying value is not expressed explicitly but can be interpreted as a deliberate approach to maintain health (Frank 1995, Sixsmith & Boneham, 2003).

Engagement can take many different forms – actively preserving the ship or more passive by supervising, giving lectures or by participation in annual meetings. In some cases associations almost create a

lifestyle for the members – by joining a circle of friends at their local cultural heritage project.

Because all participants were seen as equal, volunteering was a strong contributor to a feeling of community and establishing a position in the network. This impact also influenced the respondents' perception of well-being. Several international studies (Frank, 1995; Falck, Hanson, Isacsson & Östergren, 1992; Sabo & Gordon, 1995; Sixsmith & Boneham, 2003) on volunteering in the given context have shown that participation in networks is based on a degree of participation in physical activity, tailored to individual requirements.

## **Conclusion**

Volunteers in preservation projects spend time, effort and knowledge, and experience a meaningful collective context. Participation on ship preservation projects create social communities where experiences are shared and passed on within the community. Participation in this kind of social communities provide important relationships, as well as recognition of the individual as a person, and by that create opportunities to form social capital. We found that the main group of volunteers in the field of ship preservation are men over the age of 50 with the desire to help others and to support a cause that they believe to be important. The participation is underpinned by a desire to remain active, to experience empowerment, and to maintain a social life. The comparison with previous studies shows that the average age of volunteers in this field has shifted considerably upwards, but that it still is dominated by male volunteers. Making new acquaintances is important for an age group who experience a decrease in social network. This might lead to the assumption that volunteering prevents the loss of informal social capital and social connectedness. Thus, the preservation of historic ships is an increasingly important endeavour for this group. They find the maintenance and care of their nation's maritime and local cultural heritage a meaningful and social activity.

Volunteering appears to have a positive impact not only on individuals but also on the economic resources dedicated to ship preservation. The value of volunteer work on the funded ships was estimated to be 5.34 million euros (39.85 million NOK). This not only equals the annual funding by the DCH, but also maintains the value of Norway's marine heritage.

We conclude that despite the aging volunteers the volunteer activity itself is increasing. Both the number of ships and the number of active members has increased over the last 20 years. On a more general level, this voluntary work on ships is crucial for the implementation, restoration, maintenance, and operation of Norway's historic ships. This activity has tripled over the past 20 years.

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