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Political integration of immigrant women

The role of voluntary organisations in social capital formation and political involvement

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The work on this thesis started less than a year ago, in October 2006. Having just recently been introduced to the new master programme, finding a topic for the thesis was already one of my great worries. The world of international social welfare and health policy looked too big to be able to settle on one interesting topic that early. I am therefore thankful to Professor Frank Meyer for taking the initiative to bring students together in networks, working with a common project. I will thank Frank for giving such valuable insights and supervision throughout the working process, for always being patient and ready to help, and for being such an inspiration for us.

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Hege Larsen

Summary

In this thesis, I aim to make a review of existing literature on the subject of social capital, and relate it to voluntary immigrant organisations and political integration. Further, I choose a gender perspective, using the Tamil Women's Organisation as a case.

The research questions are: "how can voluntary organisations contribute to explain integration of ethnic minorities in Norway?" And: "what is the relationship between organisations, social capital and political participation among Tamil women in Norway?"

My methodological approach is qualitative, using literature review and semi-structured interview methods. One interview was conducted with the Tamil Women`s Organisation. An interview guide was prepared in advance, see appendix, page 44. Further, I have attempted to make a theoretical overview of the concepts used, and a discussion of findings on social capital and political participation. The overall picture has been shaped by an ethnic minority perspective as well as a gender perspective.

As the topic has proven to be a complex one, I have not attempted to draw strict conclusions from my findings. Rather, there appears to be a need for more research on these topics. I hope, however, that my contribution may provide with something new. Research has been conducted in other countries on immigrant organisations as providers of social capital and their effect on political participation. My task has been to create an overview of a somewhat undetected field of research in Norway, hoping that others will follow up on this in the future.

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1. Introduction

This work is based on an idea for a research project initiated by Professor Frank Meyer at Oslo University College. My research topic is to look at a voluntary ethnic minority organisation in Norway, its role in building social capital and its effect on the level of political participation, if any. From the project description, by Professor Frank Meyer:

> Theoretically, one can postulate that inclusive organisational patterns will help immigrants to build networks and to accumulate social capital. Inclusive organisations allow immigrants to use their individual resources and to help one another cope with present-day challenges to integration. There is strength in number, and this is an important factor in relations with the majority
> https://fronter.com/hio/links/files.phtml/46ea855445036.482622257$26972184$/Courses/The+master+thesis+preparation+seminar/Frank+Meyer+-+Ethnic+Minority+Organisations.doc

This overall project description by Professor Meyer provides a good overview of the perspective; it also describes the overall hypothesis, which I will come back to in the following. The idea for the project, based on research by Thränhardt and Weiss (2005) on voluntary ethnic minority organisations in Germany, is to study the relationship between immigration and organisational life in the new home country in relation with social capital.

The overall aim of my research project is to study and describe an ethnic minority organisation as a possible provider of social capital. I have chosen to conduct a semi-structured interview with one of the members of the Tamil Women's Organisation in Oslo. An important distinction is that I have chosen to look at this topic in a gender perspective, using a women's organisation as my case. Using a theoretical perspective, reviewing what researchers have done on the topic in the past, I aim to study effects of social capital on political participation among immigrant women in general as well as among Tamil women specifically. My specific goal for interviewing the Tamil Women's Organisation is to investigate political awareness among Tamil women. A more general goal of my research project is to achieve a greater understanding of immigrant groups in Norway, the way they organise, and to what extent the organisations contribute to integration. My research question is "How can voluntary organisations contribute to explain integration of ethnic minorities in Norway?" In addition, the sub-question is "what is the relationship between organisations, social capital and political participation among Tamil women in Norway?" Based on existing studies on social capital, the hypothesis is "can we expect a correlation between voluntary ethnic minority organisations, social capital formation and political integration?" And, more specifically, how does the hypothesis stated above relate to the situation of Tamil women in Norway, and their high level of political participation?"

Research on social capital in relation to associations and organisations was covered in a series of articles in the Journal of Ethnic and Migration studies (Volume 30, No. 3, 2004 and Volume 31, No. 5, 2005). A hypothesis is suggested by political scientists Fennema and Tillie; "…differences in political participation of ethnic minorities are linked to differences in "civic community", primarily seen as the amount of "ethnic" social capital (participation in ethnic associational life) of the relevant group" (Jacobs and Tillie, 2004:419). This is my starting point for studying the link between three factors; namely social capital, immigrant organisations and political participation. According to "Samfunnsspeilet" number 4/2006 from Statistics Norway, immigrant women from Sri Lanka have the highest voting turnout of all non-Western immigrant women in Norway. This fact about Tamil women in Norway contributed to my choice to look into this particular group, and in relation with the hypothesis by Fennema and Tillie, I aim to study political participation among Tamil women in Norway. It is a stated goal by the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development to raise the level of political participation among immigrants in Norway (http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KRD/Vedlegg/KOMM/Valg/010607_foredragKIM.pdf).

By conducting semi-structured interviews with a voluntary women's organisation, I hope to gather information about the political awareness of the Tamil women in Norway to make for a fruitful discussion of my topic. My goal is to contribute to further understanding of immigrant groups in Norway, the way they organise in the new country, and to what degree this affects integration. In the last part of the thesis, I will discuss some theoretical and empirical material on immigrant organisations, social capital, gender and political participation in different European countries.

2. Methods

The topic of my thesis is to study and describe an ethnic minority organisation in Norway as a social capital-building network. Further, I will review research on the relationship between organisations, social capital and political participation in the case of immigrant women. Through written reports and a semi-structured interview, I have gathered information about the Tamil Women's Organisation in Oslo. My aim is not to discuss this organisation directly in connection with my theoretical findings, since such an approach would demand more in-depth studies of the organisation and their work. Using this particular case, however, shows an example of a voluntary immigrant organisation which is regarded as a success. The Tamils in Norway have a reputation of being a well-integrated group, and I was curious to find some answers as to why this is the case. Limiting my investigation to only one such organisation was for both practical and other reasons. The practical reasons relates to limitations regarding space and time for the thesis. Moreover, my objective has been to gain a deeper understanding of the ideas behind organisational involvement and political participation. I chose to look at a women's organisation based on a personal motivation for bringing forward women's issues.

The interview conducted with Sumathi Wijeyaraj of the Tamil Women's Organisation was semi-structured in its form. A semi-structured interview is more like an informal conversation, usually directed by a list of topics or an interview guide with broad questions (Halvorsen, 2003:87). Being less structured, the interview form gives the respondent the opportunity to speak more freely. (For my interview guide, see appendix). This thesis has three main parts. First, I will present some background data on Sri Lanka, the Tamil population, as well as my case, the Tamil Women's Organisation. In the second part, I will review the theoretical background of some main concepts and ideas, such as social capital, networking, immigrant organisations and political participation. The last part is a theoretical discussion on my more specific research questions. I seek to investigate the relationship between immigrant organisations, gender issues, social capital and what Tillie (2004) calls political integration. I will return to the concept of political integration under point 5.7. For matters of discussion and illustration of the topics here, I refer to findings from four European countries; the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and Denmark.

3. Tamils

3.1 Sri Lanka

The population of Sri Lanka is divided into a number of social and ethnic groups (Fuglerud, 2004). The largest group is the Singhalese, which totals about 74 % of the population. Further, 11 % are Sri Lankan Tamils, 7 % Indian Tamils, and 7 % Muslim. The Tamil speaking population dominates the Northern part of the country, while Eastern parts have a more mixed population. Political stability has periodically since independence in 1948 been disrupted by ethnic confrontations, and since early 1980`s the country has suffered from civil war between state government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The goal of the liberation army LTTE is to establish an independent Tamil state. Important dimensions of the conflict are the repeated assaults committed by all parts, hurting every other group in the conflict (Fuglerud, 2004:94). Today, more than one third of the Tamil pre-war population live outside the borders of Sri Lanka, spreading the Tamil Diaspora across a number of countries. The people who have moved belong to different social and political categories, and the social and political complexity is reinforced by a conflict between generations.

3.2 The Tamil Women's Organisation, Oslo

The Tamil Women's Organisation in Oslo was established in 2000. At the time, the Tamil community found that there was a need for a Tamil organisation for women. These needs were based on certain problems within the Tamil community; loneliness, health issues, domestic violence and conflicts between generations. According to Sumathi Wijeyaraj of the Tamil Women's Organisation, the focus of the organisation is integration and equal opportunities for women. Tasks of the organisation are to give information and support for Tamil women in Norway, to motivate and give guidance, and to function as spokespersons for the Tamil community, especially on women's issues (Tamilsk Kvinneorganisasjon, Rapport 2006). Tamil culture has traditionally been male dominated. This is gradually changing in Tamil Diaspora, as Tamil women now largely combine education and work with having a family. Traditional Tamil family patterns have changed from the extended family pattern normally found in Sri Lanka to the typical nuclear family pattern found in Norway. In this, the Tamils also experience the transition towards a shared workload between husband and wife. Sumathi Wijeyaraj explains that the Tamil Women's Organisation was established as a reaction to problems experienced by Tamil women in Norway as this transition took place.

The focus shifted towards the possibilities and strengths in forming a community and working together to face social and domestic problems.

Concerning the organisation's work in Norway, social problems in the Tamil population have demanded attention. Domestic violence is a problem that is hard for couples to solve on their own. As it might be more difficult for immigrant couples or immigrant women on their own to ask for help at a Norwegian women's shelter, they rather approach the Tamil Women's Organisation. As many Tamils are in need of help and services provided by the organisation, the workload for the mere 16 permanent members has been immensely large. Members of the organisation all share their time between family life, having a career and doing voluntary work. Facing social problems in their ethnic community creates a need for guidance and training of members, in order for them to be able to give qualified advice in difficult cases. Sumathi Wijeyaraj tells me about serious problems experienced by the rather large Tamil population in Canada. Domestic violence, murders, crime and formation of gangs gave grounds for starting an organisation to help tackle social problems. 10-15 members of the organisation had extensive training as mediators; providing therapy, guidance, and supervision. This training of staff has inspired the Tamil Women's Organisation in Oslo, as the goal of its members also is to receive training to be able to provide with qualified help for severe social problems. Within the Tamil population, there is a growing awareness of problems related to health deprivation, also with mental health care being an area of growing concern. In addition to health problems in the population, conflicts between generations are a problem for some families. Young Tamils sometimes experience extensive pressure from parents regarding important life choices; for example concerning education and career. The Tamil Youth Organisation in Oslo is working on this problem. As Sumathi Wijeyaraj says, "to balance integration is never easy".

Members of the organisation meet with newly arrived Tamil immigrants to provide help, guidance and information about the new life in Norway. By helping out in this way, the women hope to prevent loneliness and later social problems. Sumathi Wijeyaraj believes that most Tamils in Norway make use of one or more of the existing Tamil organisations, actively or passively. Based on her experience, she finds that a result of staying on the outside of the organisational life is the accumulation of social problems. Sumathi feels that the organisation gives people a sense of belonging. The Tamil Women's Organisation has 16 active, permanent members, as well as many passive members who offer their help at gatherings,

seminars, and other activities. Equal rights for women are an important part of the organisation's focus. In this, Sumathi Wijeyaraj highlights political participation as an important aspect. With four female representatives from the Tamil community in Oslo running for the city council election in September 2007, the level of political commitment within this ethnic minority group is indeed impressive.

In Tamil Diaspora, the traditional class society of the Tamils is diminishing. Sumathi tells me that arranged marriages sometimes still happen, but are seldom forced. Marriage is now more about love and free choice than before. The Tamil Women's Organisation expresses a stand against forced marriages, believing that it is a part of an old tradition that should come to an end. Regarding tradition, though, Sumathi Wijeyaraj says, "it does feel good to have a sense of belonging to your religion and culture". The focus of Tamils in Norway in general, as well as the Tamil organisations, is to a large extent directed towards the home country; the hope of being able to save the language and identity in exile while waiting for the opportunity to return to a free and peaceful Sri Lanka. There is a hope among this generation of Tamils in Norway that the next generations of Tamils in exile will keep the same focus and continue to work for saving the culture. Sumathi Wijeyaraj describes the current situation in Sri Lanka as being a land of difference. For instance, the well-developed city of Colombo stands in sharp contrast to the northern region of Jaffna, which is war-torn territory. However, in areas where the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has been operating, there is a certain feeling of freedom and surroundings that are more peaceful. Tamils in Sri Lanka have suffered from oppression, they were not allowed to participate actively in society or even develop as human beings. As they were refused proper work and education in the past, Tamils now want equality.

Working for peace in Sri Lanka is an important aspect of the objective of the Tamil Women's Organisation. The firm viewpoint is that women should be an important part of any peace building process. Sumathi Wijeyaraj believes that most emigrated Tamils would want to go back to a free Sri Lanka if provided with the opportunity in the future. This future scenario of a safe return is the dream of the Tamil Diaspora. In order to be able to build a new life in Sri Lanka, Tamils in exile find it important to educate people who can go back and rebuild the country sometime in the future. As the welfare of women and children is the main concern, the Tamil Women's Organisation for some time now has been working on the establishment of a women's shelter situated in the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka. However, because of war, these

plans have constantly been postponed over the last years. Financing is in place, but because of the ongoing conflict, the building of the shelter has temporarily stopped.

The Tamil Women's Organisation in Oslo cooperates and stays in close contact with the other Tamil Women's organisations in Norway, situated in Bergen, Stavanger and Ulsteinvik. All the organisations share common goals and more or less the same work methods. The organisation in Bergen has established a close relationship with the Norwegian community. According to Sumathi Wijeyaraj, there is a feeling that this has been harder to achieve in Oslo. A Women's Forum for members during the fall of 2007 is under planning; here, common strategies and problem areas will be debated. The Tamil Women's Organisation is also actively working outwards, collaborating with other organisations abroad and in Norway. One of the partners in Norway is FOKUS (Forum for Women and Development), a resource centre on international women's issues as well as a coordinating organ for women's organisations in the country (http://www.fokuskvinner.no/English). The Tamil Women's Organisation participated at the FOKUS Networking Conference in Thailand 2007, where organisations and representatives from countries in Asia and the Middle East met with Norwegian partner organisations to discuss the topic "Women in and after war and conflict". This important conference was funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (http://www.fokuskvinner.no/484/Rapport_Thailand_web.pdf). Sumathi Wijeyaraj believes that establishing more women's organisations would lead to more trust in society. The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (Utlendingsdirektoratet) asked the FOKUS organisation for a recommendation, and the Tamil Women's Organisation was approached to become its advisor in the process of forming a Burmese women's organisation. In other words, the organisation serves as a model and teacher for other women's associations.

Organisations are meeting places and arenas for social gatherings. The Tamil Women's Organisation has established an exercise group and successfully arranged a sports day in 2006. There is also an exercise group for children, which has proved to be very popular. During summer, the women gather for a "hiking group", where they meet up to go for long walks and chat about everyday things. "Exercise is a social thing", Sumathi Wijeyaraj says. The organisation arranges meetings and parties, where members cook and sell food to collect money for an orphanage in Mullative, Sri Lanka. As the tsunami struck and hit many of the countries surrounding the Indian Ocean in 2004, Sri Lanka, as well as Indonesia, was struck particularly hard. According to estimates, about 37 000 people died in Sri Lanka and about

550 000 people lost their homes (Kommunal- og regionaldepartementet, 2005). After the tsunami, the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development (Kommunal- og Regionaldepartementet) granted 1 billion Norwegian Kroner in aid for countries struck by the catastrophe. Out of this sum, 300 million NOK were earmarked for rebuilding Sri Lanka. An orphanage in Mullative being swept away in the tsunami was one of many sad events in Sri Lanka, as many children were lost and others lost their home. The Tamil Women's Organisation, which has had a central role in running and financing the orphanage, requested Norwegian authorities for grants to rebuild the orphanage. The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development earmarked a certain amount of money out of the total grant for rebuilding the orphanage. The foundation stone was laid down at an official ceremony during a Memorial Trip to Sri Lanka in 2005, sponsored by Norwegian authorities. Representatives from a number of organisations as well as representatives from Norwegian authorities were present at this important event.

3.3 Integration of Tamils in Norway

Fuglerud (2004) claims that when discussing what we call integration, we should take into consideration processes in the home country of the ethnic group in question. The national community labelled "Norway", or the nationality "Norwegian", rests on the assumption that most of the inhabitants in the country have a common history. Fuglerud argues that among the Tamil population in Norway you find two different understandings of exile, related to different understandings of the aspect of time. Within the one paradigm, people see life in exile as an opportunity to preserve their own culture and way of life during times of war in the home country (Fuglerud, 2004:92-93). The other group sees exile as a part of the fight for social change in the home country. "While the first relates to the past as a cultural heritage that should be preserved, the other is in itself a producer of a politicized history which views the past in light of the liberation to come" (Fuglerud, 2004:93, my translation). The first position might be interpreted as one opening up for its social surroundings and people thus welcomes the challenge of being a Tamil in a non-Tamil country. Arguments of the other position will be that ethnic identity cannot be separated from the area of origin of the Tamil population. According to Fuglerud, most Tamils in Norway are oriented towards the home country. Most of the Tamil organisations` cultural activities in Norway may be linked to the hope of once returning to a free Tamil home country (Fuglerud, 2004:94).

In relation with Tamil organisations, Fuglerud (2004) claims that in Norway, LTTE`s exile organisations dominate the political picture. The earliest migrants to arrive in Norway established contact with the Norwegian society at that time. According to Fuglerud, these have somewhat experienced marginalisation within own ethnic environment. The activities of LTTE support organisations are important for maintaining a shared identity for Tamils in exile. Their work rests on two principles. Firstly, activities relate to a Tamil future in a liberated Tamil homeland, not in Norway. Secondly, the organisations see themselves as being in a legitimate position to maintain the shared identity (Fuglerud, 2004:96). Sumathi Wijeyaraj confirms this moral support of the LTTE in our interview.

In the Tamil society in Sri Lanka, education has traditionally been valued strongly. Engebrigtsen et al. (2004:151) explain this with the lack of land as well as long traditions of having English-speaking missionary schools in the parts of Sri Lanka where the Tamil population has been living. As a result, education has traditionally been the foremost opportunity for social mobility (Arasaratnam, 1994, in: Engebrigtsen et al., in Fuglerud, 2004:151). "Most Tamils regard themselves as part of a written high culture, going back thousands of years" (Engebrigtsen et. al, 2004:151, my translation). Sumathi Wijeyaraj confirms this focus on education as a means for building or maintaining status. Moreover, education is vital for preparing and for building up a free Tamil state in the future.

Strict immigration policies in Norway and the rest of Europe have made it difficult for Tamil families to reunite in exile (Engebrigtsen et al., 2004:153). Thus, the first generation of families usually split up during the migration process, and are now scattered over numerous countries. As a result, family networks weaken for Tamils. Split up families instead opened up for other types of networks within Tamil community, these working as substitutes for the lack of learning possibilities within the extended family and between generations. Engebrigtsen et al. (2004:153) argues that there are two types of such relations; social contact between nuclear families based on friendships, and an extensive organisational life and mutual solidarity. This stands in contrast to the situation as it was before the war, when the Tamil community was more about class and caste. Some political disagreements may still exist within the community. However, at this point in history and in exile, all Tamils are mostly welcome on public arenas such as Tamil organisations, clubs and social gatherings based on networks. Engebrigtsen et al. (2004:153) argue that Tamils in exile have a strong tradition for doing voluntary work within sports, music, dancing and education.

4. Theoretical background

4.1 Social capital; the concept

Robert Putnam defines social capital in the following way; "Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them", (Putnam, 2000:19). The concept of social capital is closely related to civil society, calling attention to the power embedded in strong networks. Further, reciprocity is a vital part of social capital; "The touchstone of social capital is the principle of generalized reciprocity – I'll do this for you, without expecting anything immediately in return and perhaps without even knowing you, confident that down the road you or someone else will return the favor", (Putnam, 2000:134).

Bourdieu distinguishes between symbolic, cultural, economic and social capital (Danielsen, 2004:125; Nyhagen Predelli, 2006). Symbolic capital is defined as what is recognised as valuable by different social groups, while cultural capital reflects the taste of the dominating classes. The concept of social capital is defined as relational resources. It refers to the total amount of resources, which may be mobilised through friendships, ethnic group, family networks or organisations (Danielsen, 2004:125):

> Social capital is a product of collective and individual investment strategies which establish and reproduce social relations and may transform unstable social relations between neighbours, colleagues, as well as ethnic relations into lasting and useful relations which may be activated individually through feelings of obligation or as institutionally guaranteed rights
> Danielsen, 2004:126, my translation

Further, social capital is capital only if it is effective, that is, if it brings something to the individual that is of value, and if the individual is actually able to use it. Some members of immigrant communities are mediators between their own ethnic environment and the host society (Danielsen, 2004). A challenge for many immigrants is a sense of helplessness in the face of government and bureaucracy, which is often a result of actual experiences of corruption in the country of origin. The government back home may not be trustworthy. The perception is that in order to reach responsible individuals, the case should be presented by a person - an intermediary - in the community who has competence on the functional aspects of the new society, as well as some influence on the authorities. This mediator would know both systems well, and be capable of communicating the needs of people living in the outskirts of

society to the larger society or to official decision makers (Danielsen, 2004:131). "Trans-national lives find their form in the "field of tension" between adaptation to the country of exile and relations to the home country and other exile communities around the world", (Engebrigtsen, 2004:142, my translation). Regarding young second generation immigrants, patterns of adaptation among children of immigrants are created and developed because of the interplay between different factors. The historical background behind the migration process of each minority group, as well as how the group is welcomed in the new country, is important for the adaptation process. Cultural and financial barriers that young people face, such as discrimination, subcultures, and problems in the labour market, may all affect adaptation. The sum of available resources, such as family and networks, are vital for helping fight barriers met (Engebrigtsen, 2004).

Social capital has become a buzzword among politicians and academics, although some confusion surrounds the meaning of the concept (Halpern, 2005). For some scholars, it is the most important concept in contemporary social sciences. Among other things, the focus on social capital serves as a counterpoint to new economic liberalism (Halpern, 2005). (This statement may be understood as making the concept of social capital a political one, stating that social relations are more important than economic outcome). The famous statement by M. Thatcher; "there is no such thing as society" (Halpern, 2005:2) stands in clear contrast to a focus on the concept of social capital. Recent academic research on social capital has provided documentation of the relationship between form and quality of social networks and a number of important outcomes. Definitions of social capital are many in academic work on the subject, but are increasingly becoming more structured and agreed upon (Halpern, 2005).

Important aspects of social capital are social networks, norms, values and expectancies, and finally, sanctions in case of violating norms and values. These three components are essential for an analysis of any kind of community or network at any level and size. Further, social capital comes in different sub-types, the most important being the distinction between "bonding" and "bridging" social capital (Halpern, 2005). Putnam (2000:22-23) refers to bonding social capital as "exclusive": "Some forms of social capital are, by choice or necessity, inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups" (Putnam, 2000:22). Bonding social capital therefore strengthens solidarity and reciprocity within a group. In contrast, bridging networks are what Putnam refers to as "inclusive" and "…are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion" (Putnam, 2000:22).

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It has been claimed that these weaker ties with distant acquaintances moving in different circles from one's own are more valuable than the stronger ties with relatives and close friends. "Moreover, bridging social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves" (Putnam, 2000:23). As I understand this distinction, being an immigrant may be a great disadvantage since social networks in the host country, outside ones own ethnic group, may be very limited.

Creating a conceptual map of the field of social capital, Halpern (2005) illustrates that there are three crosscutting dimensions to the subject. The first dimension is the components of social capital, which are networks, norms and sanctions. Second, the level or domain of analysis is important to uncover, as a qualified study of social capital requires that we look at the subject from the correct perspective; whether it represents an individual-, group, community or national level. Lastly, we need to recognise the character or function of social capital to find whether it represents bonding, bridging or linking social capital. Ideally, one should measure all these, as a society or a group may be high on one of these and low on others. The distinction between bonding and bridging social capital may be important in some cases (Halpern, 2005). However, supported by findings by R. Putnam, Halpern finds that

> …contrary to what many had expected, those individuals in those areas with many connections to other similar individuals in those areas also tend to have high levels of connections to distant and different others. This suggests that while the bonding-bridging distinction may be important in some cases, maybe we don't need to worry quite so much about always measuring both bonding and bridging social capital – if an individual or community is rich in one, then they will probably be rich in the other too Halpern, 2005:21

Generally, a good measure of social capital is social trust. However, measures for different types of social capital are needed in order to make qualified judgements. Ethnic, social and gender differences will probably further complicate this picture (Halpern, 2005). One may hypothesise that lack of social capital could contribute to disadvantage in a never-ending spiral; a lack of social connections will probably lead to a situation of constant disadvantage for weaker groups, resulting in marginalisation.

4.2 Outcomes of social capital

4.2.1 Policy implications

"The relationship between social capital and economic growth, health, crime, education and the efficacy of government (…) explains why policymakers across the world are becoming interested in social capital"(Halpern, 2005:284). As social capital, or lack thereof, may have

great influence on different aspects of life, it is an important field of study. In policy formation, it is important to be aware of the gender factor, recognising the diversity between men and women in contributing to local social capital (Healy, et al., 2007:117). "In particular, policy initiatives that value informal network activities, especially those associated with the informal care of children and other people, will contribute to greater awareness of women's contributions to social capital creation" Healy et al., 2007:117. To make women involved in politics, social capital policy initiatives must recognise the differences between men and women what interests and opportunities are concerned.

4.2.2 Macro-level effects

Research on macro-level effects of social capital and economic performance is about effects at the regional and national level (Halpern, 2005). Fukuyama`s basic proposition, claiming that "nations with high social capital (as measured by social trust between strangers in the World Values Survey) tend strongly to be wealthier nations (as measured by GDP per capita)" (Fukuyama, in Halpern, 2005:59), is supported by a number of empirical studies. The Norwegian newspaper Dagbladet claims that the factor making Scandinavian countries among the wealthiest in the world is trust. High level of trust among people in the Scandinavian countries pays off in economic terms in the end. The article points to a newly published work by Danish researchers Svendsen and Svendsen on social capital, claiming that there is something lacking in economic theories. The costly welfare systems, high wages, the high level of consumption, high production costs and the affluence in these countries should have reduced the level of welfare significantly, at least according to some economic theories (http://www.dagbladet.no/magasinet/2007/02/07/491296.html). Social capital may account for the missing piece of the puzzle. There are two great advantages to the concept of social capital. One, it brings together insights from different academic disciplines like economy, history, anthropology and sociology. Two, the concept appears to represent a type of "missing link" in research, as social capital may contribute with fresh ideas on the connection between visible and invisible forms of capital. This confirms the vital role of organisations. However, "negative" social capital may be a part of the picture when closed groups isolate and act destructively. Further, the concept of social capital is difficult to define in a precise way, it is difficult to measure and the direction of causality may be difficult to establish. So far, surveys appear to be the most trustworthy method of measuring social capital. Svendsen and Svendsen (in: http://www.dagbladet.no/magasinet/2007/02/07/491296.html) find that the high level of

social capital in Scandinavia may be under threat from globalization and the shift in power represented by membership in international economic and political co-operation. On immigrants, some claim that ethnic minorities develop parallel societies and fail to meet the norms and standards valued by the majority population. Svendsen and Svendsen have found the contrary in Denmark, as it appears that immigrants adjust to the Danish level of trust shortly after arrival in the country. Investigations into the problem show that immigrants` trust in other people, as well as trust in the larger community, is indeed greater compared with the level of trust in their country of origin. The Scandinavian countries have high levels of trust between people in general, as well as great trust in institutions (http://www.dagbladet.no/magasinet/2007/02/07/491296.html). Putnam (2000) covers the distinction between trust in other people and trust in institutions:

> Trust in other people is logically quite different from trust in institutions and political authorities. One could easily trust one's neighbour and distrust city hall, or vice versa. Empirically, social and political trust may or may not be correlated, but theoretically, they must be kept distinct. Trust in government may be a cause or a consequence of social trust, but it is not *the same thing* as social trust
> Putnam, 2000:137

4.2.3 Economic prosperity

At the individual level, social capital – meaning social connections – affect the life chances of an individual. You are more likely to succeed in the economic marketplace if your family has valuable social ties, and there is indeed a connection between money and valuable social ties: "Conversely, individuals who grow up in socially isolated rural and inner-city areas are held back, not merely because they tend to be financially and educationally deprived, but also because they are relatively poor in social ties that can provide a "hand up"" (Putnam, 2000:319). Economists are also interested in the phenomenon of social capital, as social ties often influence employment, promotions and employment benefits. Social networks are vital for economic prosperity, as they provide people with information, job leads, advice, as well as letters of recommendation. In this process, other unfortunate individuals are even more marginalised (Putnam, 2000). Building social capital requires resources, both economically measurable and non-measurable. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive and provides opportunities for the individual. Thränhardt and Weiss (2005) argue that social capital is of great value in economic terms, shown by outcomes such as financial security, job opportunities and valuable networks.

Durlauf (2002) discusses methods for developing empirical evidence of socioeconomic outcomes of social capital. Scholars from a variety of academic disciplines have taken an interest in social capital as a mechanism for explaining socio-economic phenomena. Durlauf is clearly sceptical to the use of the concept, which he claims is "…too vague to permit analysis whose clarity and precision matches the standards of the field" (Durlauf, 2002:F477). Believing that a use of observational data in order to identify social capital variables is unreliable, he claims that evidence should rather come from economic experiments (Durlauf, 2002). I have pointed to the methodological discussion about how to measure social capital earlier. As I have just referred to a claim from the economic discipline on the subject, my impression is that views on this methodological problem vary greatly depending on academic discipline.

4.2.4 Health

There is a strong association between health and social capital (Halpern, 2005:75). The direction of causality may however be unclear. The evidence is inconclusive as to whether isolation is a result of illness, or illness a result of isolation. On mental health, few studies to date examine this problem in relation to social capital. Existing evidence on health has led some experts to propose that social capital should be considered an integrated factor in health policy formation. Poverty, and stress related to social problems and financial insecurity, is a possible contributor to bad health. A controversy in the field is in particular the debate on material versus psychosocial accounts on health (Halpern, 2005). Putnam (2000) argues that there are some plausible theories on the effect of social cohesion on health, as social networks primarily provide assistance and a safety net. These factors reduce mental and physical stress. In addition to that, social networks may also reinforce healthy norms. Socially isolated people are more likely to be involved in health threatening behaviour, such as smoking, drinking and overeating, since no one teaches them otherwise. On the local level, a socially cohesive community with a great level of solidarity will be best able to organise politically in a sound way to ensure good quality medical services. Further, Putnam claims the following; "…social capital may actually serve as a physiological triggering mechanism, stimulating people's immune systems to fight disease and buffer stress. Research now under way suggests that social isolation has measurable biochemical effects on the body" (Putnam, 2000:327).

4.2.5 Crime

Social capital, or the lack thereof, clearly affects crime and the formation of safe neighbourhoods (Putnam, 2000). It is of course not the only factor affecting crime rates, but works with other factors to build a stable community. The role of social capital in poor communities is particularly important. "Precisely because poor people (by definition) have little economic capital and face formidable obstacles in acquiring human capital (that is, education), *social* capital is disproportionately important to their welfare", (Putnam, 2000:318). A healthy and safe environment throughout life, with the informal social control that comes out of such relationships, seems to be a main protector against crime and criminal behaviour.

4.2.6 Education

Social capital affects education (Halpern, 2005). At the micro-level, supportive families and the child's immediate network are vital factors affecting educational achievement (Halpern, 2005:143). Educational attainment of ethnic minorities is a topic of considerable interest and concern in many countries. In Britain, for instance, educational achievements vary greatly between different ethnic groups, as some groups overachieve compared with the majority population and some significantly underachieve. There are indeed variations between different ethnic groups, but findings suggest that social capital plays a similar general role in the educational achievements of ethnic minority groups, as is the case in the majority population (Halpern, 2005). Putnam claims that child development is indeed shaped by the level of social capital (Putnam, 2000). Research has demonstrated that networks, trust and norms of reciprocity within the family, the school, the child's peer group, as well as the larger community have wide-ranging effects on the child's opportunities and life choices (Putnam, 2000:296). This further affects the child's behaviour and development. Although social capital correlates with positive outcomes for kids, this does not automatically mean that social capital *causes* these outcomes (Putnam, 2000:297). Other factors such as parental education level, family structure, race and poverty may of course also affect the outcome in child development. Both social capital at the community level as well as the family's social capital will have an impact on child learning and development.

4.2.7 Criticism against Putnam

Halpern (2005) discusses criticism against Putnam's analysis of social capital. The main objective is that although it may be thorough and well considered, it is almost completely US-based. Putnam fails to consider counterfactual cases, and his research does not capture the

potential importance of US-specific but uniform variables. In addition, commercial elements may be a part of the picture:

> … by the time Putnam wrote *Bowling Alone*, he no longer had only academics in his sights but was also concerned that the issues be taken up seriously by a wider audience. In the US political and ideological context, this may have led to the de-emphasis of parts of the story that are uncomfortable or difficult in the US. In particular, to a European eye at least, the limited discussion of economic inequality and the potentially positive causal role that might be played by the state is especially striking.
> Halpern, 2005:230

Evers (2003) discusses Putnam's theories on social capital and civic commitment, introducing a different perspective on the topic. Arguing that Putnam views the relationship between the two as somewhat one-sided, Evers finds no reason for restricting democracy and welfare strengthening solutions to a bottom-up perspective only. Contrary to Putnam, or maybe adding to Putnam's work, Evers finds that viewing the relationship as one where social capital is a basis for good policymaking is not precise enough. Rather, Evers states; "…I would argue that there is an open interrelationship between the two. And that means that we do not only need "social capital to make democracy work" (Putnam) but often more democratic politics in order to make social capital work", (Evers, 2003:13). The relationship thus goes both ways, meaning that in addition to focusing on community building and building local social networks one should not forget to consider the impact of central action and politics. This larger picture sets the scene for social capital building and participation in civil society (Evers, 2003). Supporting a top-down process, Lowndes (2004:60) argues that understanding formation and mobilisation of social capital as a two-way relationship between civil society and government is by far the best strategy: "The relationship between gender, social capital and political engagement is profoundly affected by the policies and structures of the state" (Lowndes, 2004:60).

4.2.8 Social capital; status of research in Norway

The 2005 report from the Norwegian Research Council on social capital examines different perspectives on the subject, the status of knowledge in the field, important findings on social capital as well as areas in need of more research (Norwegian Research Council, 2005). An important statement of this report is that research on social capital gives us an opportunity to ask questions that are more precise about development in society. The concept of social capital encompasses trust, social norms and the control of such norms by social networks in the individual's life. Social capital is built on different levels, such as the individual, local and on a national level. It is an important and valuable part of society, and demands constant

investments to be sustained. The Norwegian Research Council's report states that the level of social capital in Norway is large, a finding which is also confirmed by Halpern (2005). However, the level of social capital is unevenly distributed in the population (Norwegian Research Council, 2005). Among other factors, it is probable that higher education and membership in organisations give more access to social capital. The bonding type of social capital may be greater among non-western immigrants compared with ethnic Norwegians. The Research Council recommends more research on social capital in relation to gender, as well as to explore whether men and women have different access to bonding and bridging social capital.

Social capital is vital as a means of attaining equal opportunities, social inclusion, and for improving the quality of life for individuals (Norwegian Research Council, 2005). It strengthens academic achievements, the chances of labour market adjustment, volunteering, engaging in collective self-help, and integration of ethnic minorities. On a macro-level, social capital strengthens outcomes regarding financial growth and the level of productivity. It is assumed that social capital is important as a means of stimulating political participation and commitment, and thus, strengthening democracy. The Norwegian Research Council identifies the four main researchers in the field of social capital; Bourdieu, Loury, Coleman and Putnam. These researchers, having made significant contributions on social capital, have been criticized for not paying enough attention to the gender factor. There should be a systematic investigation of whether there are differences between men and women in building and preserving social capital, or whether there are differences between the sexes regarding expected positive outcomes of social capital, (Norwegian Research Council, 2005:21). It is important to judge both the positive and negative outcomes of social capital, since it leads to exclusion for some and inclusion for others. Especially Putnam and Coleman have been criticized for overstating positive effect and understating the negative (Norwegian Research Council, 2005; Halpern, 2005). Research should look further into the divide between bonding and bridging social capital. Regarding research on minorities in Norway, the Research Council propose to focus on the above mentioned distribution of different types of social capital, and whether the distribution is different for different ethnic minority groups. In addition, is this changing according to the length of their stay in Norway? Ethnic diversity and relationships between ethnic minorities and the majority population should be an important topic in further research on social capital. In case of tension between different ethnic groups, it is probable that social capital might decrease. On the other hand, some ethnic groups have

strong bonding social capital within. At the same time, it is important to do research on how to help develop social capital of the bridging kind so that relationships build outwards, between different ethnic minority groups as well as between ethnic minorities and the majority population (Norwegian Research Council, 2005:36).

4.3 Networking

Human beings are not just an anonymous mass of individuals; they are really part of specific social relations and networks. These relations may be more or less structured, formal or informal, and the ties between people may be emotional or functional in character (Thränhardt & Weiss, 2005). Every human being is part of personal networks consisting of family, friends, colleagues and others in their life. Thränhardt and Weiss claim that networks change gradually through life. Only rarely are the changes fundamental in character and effect, such as when moving to another city or another country. Information, opinions and attitudes pass through these networks and shape the individuals (Thränhardt and Weiss, 2005). Social networks create safety nets and stability. To possess knowledge about the community, to know how to get access to resources and to know how the system works is vital for optimal functioning in society. "Good networks are inclusive, facilitating collective learning, allowing sharing of success and generating wider social acceptance" (Lee et al., 2005:281). Social capital is unevenly distributed (Behtoui, 2007). Those with high levels of other kinds of capital tend to score higher on social capital. In a study of the distribution of social capital in Sweden, Behtoui finds that social capital correlates with education, work experience, memberships in organisations and having a partner. Immigrants, often lacking the networks that are associated with success, find themselves in a fragile position:

> (…) being an immigrant was associated with a substantial social capital deficit, which arises because immigrants are embedded in social networks that constrain their ability to gain valuable social resources. The inferior position of immigrants in the Swedish labour market is in part due to this social capital deficit, since such a capital deficit offers fewer opportunities for immigrants to mobilize better social resources and improve their labour market outcomes
> Behtoui, 2007:402

4.4 Voluntary organisations

The concept of a voluntary organisation is perhaps best explained or defined by showing its position compared with other sectors in society (Selle, 1996:189). It is common to operate with three sectors: the market, public sector and civil society. Civil society consists of groups

and voluntary organisations acting independently of the market and the state (Halpern, 2005). Research on voluntary organisations requires clarification and definition of concepts (Selle, 1996:189). The concepts are many, and confusion widespread. For a research project, one should therefore make sure to clarify main concepts, such as what is voluntary work, altruism, charity? What is meant by non-profit organisations? Where should one draw the line between what is public and what is private? These questions should be taken into consideration when doing research on social capital and voluntary organisations.

Selle (1996) writes about voluntary organisations and their influence on public policy. Selle labels Norway as traditionally being what he refers to as a "state-friendly" country, where co-operation between voluntary organisations and the public sector was established already in the 19th century. This means that voluntary work as an autonomous way of life, valuing total independence from the public sector, has always had a subordinate position in Norway. Voluntary organisations vary what size, interests, political power and public sector co-operation are concerned (Selle, 1996). Women's organisations in Norway have traditionally been large, but their fields of interest - mainly health and social policy – more often lead to limited power and a low level of public sector co-operation. Selle argues that one cannot understand the voluntary sector without at the same time considering the characteristics of the public sector in the country in question. In particular, this goes for the Scandinavian context, with its advanced public welfare systems (Selle, 1996:123). Elements of one sector of welfare producers indeed affect the other sectors.

The voluntary sector in Scandinavia is by some viewed to be virtually insignificant. Selle refers to a theory by Estelle James, where she predicts a strong positive correlation between the religious heterogeneity of a society and the size and significance of the voluntary sector (James, in Selle, 1996:123-4). In a comparative perspective, the Scandinavian countries are homogenous, and thus, do not fit the picture and should not have strong voluntary sectors. To bring it further, Anheier (1988, in Selle, 1996:124) argues that in the social democratic countries of Scandinavia, solidarity is institutionalised to such a degree that it pretty much replaces self-help, family help and voluntary charity work. Building on Esping-Andersen`s typology of welfare state regimes, Anheier (in Selle, 1996) argues that this characteristic of the social democratic welfare states – making social services universal rights – creates a need for stronger public involvement. In spite of agreeing somewhat with the description of Scandinavian welfare states, Selle argues that "state-friendly" Norway, as well as the other

Scandinavian countries, has a relatively strong voluntary sector with its own particular characteristics. Selle asks if Norway and Scandinavia matter in research on welfare. His own answer to this question is yes, weighting the strong bonds between the public and the voluntary sector in these "state-friendly" countries. The findings imply that Estelle James` theory mentioned above is superficial, since Selle finds that the voluntary sector has a strong influence in the religiously homogeneous, state-friendly countries also. Basic characteristics of voluntary organisations vary depending on context (Selle, 1996). Future research should therefore focus on main characteristics of the connection between different sectors in different surroundings as part of a historical and comparative research strategy. Scandinavian experience is indeed relevant for research on the voluntary sector (Selle, 1996:136).

Halpern argues that different forms of voluntary organisations stimulate different forms of social capital. Voluntary organisations involving diverse memberships between different nationalities, ethnic groups and religions, that is, heterogeneous organisations, seem to stimulate higher levels of generalised trust and participation (Halpern, 2005:259). Further, "…interpersonal trust and subjective well-being (whether people are satisfied with their lives in general) significantly affect the duration and level of democracy" (Sullivan and Transue, 1999:641). Horizontally organised associations where members are at the same level build social capital, whereas vertically organised associations with hierarchical power structures fail to build social capital. The outcome of organising thus depends on the organisational structure. It is more likely that organisations are social capital building in cases where their members meet as equals (Sullivan and Transue, 1999).

4.5 Ethnic minorities and the migration process

What is an ethnic minority? How do ethnic minorities come about? What should the relationship between minorities and majority population be like? How should the state, or the majority, relate to minorities? Haagensen et al. (1990:31). Ethnic minorities have always existed, but the modern minority concept developed with the breakthrough of democracy and the idea of the nation state in Europe from the 18th century onwards. Three models are in particular relevant for the way a state relates to ethnic minorities. One alternative is an ideology of conformity, claiming that minorities should dedicate themselves to learning the language and culture of the minority population. In other words, the opinion of the state is that it is of great value to have a homogeneous population. This ideology equals the idea of

assimilation; "… totally surrender ones own culture and adapt to the majority culture" (Haagensen, 1990:36, my translation). Banton (1988:144) defines assimilation as "the process of becoming similar". The idea of society as a melting pot is another approach to ethnic minorities, depending on the existence of a quite large number of minority groups in the population (Haagensen et. al, 1990). The idea is that all these should melt with the majority population, the result being a new, common nationality "design" consisting of positive parts from all cultures. According to Haagensen (1990), most researchers on the subject have concluded that the melting pot ideology never actually had a practical significance. The third alternative is the cultural pluralist ideology. When following this ideology, different ethnic groups are given the opportunity to maintain and develop their languages and the distinct features of their ethnic group. At the same time, the majority population expects loyalty and solidarity with state and majority population. In this, the state values a multicultural society where different cultures live together in harmony (Haagensen et. al, 1990:35). The cultural pluralist ideology equals the integration idea, which is about keeping some of the original features of ones own ethnic culture at the same time as giving up others in order to harmonise with the majority culture.

Research within the fields of migration and immigration has focused on the following; processes which cause migration or escape, or processes leading to either integration or exclusion in the receiving country (Engebrigtsen and Fuglerud, in Fuglerud and Hylland Eriksen, 2007). In an article about networks as entrances for cultural processes, Engebrigtsen and Fuglerud (2007) focus on individuals` and families` social networks in order to understand the relationship between processes in the home country and the new country. Migrants` relationship with the home country is about participation in processes going on back home at the same time as one tries to start a new life in the new country. This topic is central in the literature on Diasporas and trans-nationalism. Engebrigtsen and Fuglerud have studied this topic in a comparative perspective, looking at the differences between Tamils and Somali people in Norway regarding networks. Among the findings is the fact that Tamils reported to have more friends in their networks compared to Somalis. Another distinct difference is the connections between spouses` individual networks. In Tamil families, there is a tendency for the spouses` individual networks to overlap, mainly consisting of mutual friends. Bonds between the spouses` networks are strengthened in Norway through social gatherings including both men and women. Such gatherings are typically cultural festivities, weddings or birthdays. Equally important is weekend schooling for children, which also gives

parents an opportunity to stay in touch (Engebrigtsen and Fuglerud, 2007). The hypothesis used for this project was that individuals` social networks are important for access to resources and thus a feeling of trust and safety, as well as a feeling of being in control over own life.

In research on immigrant groups and on political goals and practice regarding immigrants, integration is often expressed both as a goal in itself and as a strategy. Haagensen et. al (1990:37) argues that expressing integration as a goal might cause some problems. Integration should rather be regarded as a process of dialogue between the individual and/or its family and the larger society. The premise for this dialogue is active participation from both the immigrant population and the majority population. "Integration" is thus not a static term, rather one expressing progress and dynamics (Haagensen et. al, 1990:37). The theory of integration seems to be resting on contradictory terms; an idea that the integration of a group in the larger community rests on the terms of being integrated in ones own ethnic group. The clue is to be able to keep one's identity at the same time as exchanging views with the larger community (Haagensen et. al, 1990:39). Cultural pluralism will be legitimized and vitalized as an ideal if one regards globalisation and migration as two-way processes. The importance of relations between human beings also needs to be acknowledged (Engebrigtsen, 2004:361).

4.6 Immigrant organisations

In a project by German researchers Thränhardt and Weiss (2005), it was found that the poor integration of Italians compared with Spaniards in Germany could largely be explained by the different organisational patterns formed by these groups in the new country. A large network of organisations that are mainly homeward looking separates Italian migrants from one another. Spanish people traditionally form organisations that are more oriented towards the German society and the life and challenges in the new country (Thränhardt and Weiss, 2005; from Frank Meyer's project outline, 2006).

> Migration scholars are increasingly realising the importance of immigrant organisations. Such organisations are not only important for the immigrants themselves, but also for their participation and integration in the host society. Immigrants set up organisations to create, express and maintain a collective identity. By studying organisations we gather valuable information about the settlement process of immigrants.
> Schrover and Vermeulen, 2005:823

This statement highlights the importance of understanding immigrant organisations as a means of integration and participation in the new country. What is interesting for a qualitative research project is to see whether immigrant organisations are actually oriented towards the new society or towards the old country, and thus, whether the organisations contribute to integration or not.

There is an increasing awareness among migration scholars of the importance of immigrant organisations (Schrover and Vermeulen, 2005). Such organisations are important for immigrants` participation and integration in the host society; "Immigrants set up organisations to create, express and maintain a collective identity. By studying organisations we gather valuable information about the settlement process of immigrants" (Schrover and Vermeulen, 2005:823). Further, studying immigrant organisations will provide valuable knowledge on the complex field of immigrant communities. However, according to Schrover and Vermeulen (2005), to use the label "immigrant organisation" is in fact not as straightforward as one may think:

> Do we regard organisations as immigrant organisations because the majority of its members are foreign-born, or because most of its members are descendants from immigrants? Do we call an organisation an immigrant organisation because the inspiration for the organisation originally came from immigrants, and when does an organisation stop being an immigrant organisation?
> Schrover and Vermeulen, 2005:825

Further, there is of course a distinction between formal and informal immigrant organisations concerning goals, continuity and leadership. Informal organisations are harder to study, since they are difficult to identify, and leave few traces in public archives (Schrover and Vermeulen, 2005:825). Naturally, for these reasons most studies are on formal organisations. The differences between formal and informal organisations are, however, not absolute. Formal organisations may sometimes take on roles and goals that are different from what has been officially stated (Schrover and Vermeulen, 2005). In such cases, elements of informality show themselves within a formal organisation. The character of an immigrant organisation is determined by the demographic and socioeconomic profile of the particular ethnic minority group, such as regional background, religion, occupational structure, education, political orientation, sex ratio and age. Population turnover is also important, as a high turnover creates instability within the group.

If experiencing exclusion from the host society, an immigrant organisation might respond defensively. For defensive organisations, strategy is superior to identity (Schrover and

Vermeulen, 2005:824). Stress or categorically ignoring differences are possible outcomes of choosing such a strategy, the outcome depending on the positions of the particular immigrant group in the host society. Other organisations may be offensive, choosing to set themselves apart from others and aiming to retain their members` ethnic identity. A further distinction can be made between organisations aiming to enforce and encourage integration and organisations aiming to distinguish its members from the members of the host society (Schrover and Vermeulen, 2005). Immigrant organisations are highly influenced by the political or institutional opportunities provided by the receiving governments: "Political opportunitites can be described as the extent to which powerful groups, including governments, are vulnerable or receptive to new claims made by groups that hold a marginal position in the political system", (Scrover and Vermeulen, 2005:828).

4.7 Ethnic minority organisations in Norway; status

The 2006 report from the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) on immigrant organisations in Norway gives an overview of the distribution of immigrant associations, as well as their structure and modes of operation. Nyhagen Predelli (2006) presents an analysis of the role played by immigrant organisations concerning cultural and political mobilisation, as well as political processes. Most immigrant organisations in Norway work at a local or regional level. Only a small number of organisations receive public funding as national organisations (Nyhagen Predelli, 2006). Further, most of the immigrant organisations are voluntary. The organisations usually co-operate with other voluntary organisations in Norway, as well as with local governments or county governments. Nyhagen Predelli (2006) finds that immigrant associations primarily prefer to call themselves "cultural" associations. Among their activities are cultural events, celebrations of national festivities, informal socialising, sports, language training, religious gatherings and political meetings. Teaching and informing immigrants about the Norwegian society is an important activity for some associations, as well as the other way around, to give information to the Norwegian society on cases concerning the immigrant communities. An important aspect of many organisations` work is building networks. On organisations` goals, Nyhagen Predelli found that:

> The associations were asked to rank various goals, and "inward-oriented" goals, such as contributing to group solidarity and taking care of members` social and cultural needs, received high ratings. Interestingly, the more "outward-oriented" goals, such as contributing to the integration of members in Norwegian society, working against racism and discrimination, strengthening members` knowledge of

Norwegian society, and influencing public arrangements of importance to members, achieved similarly high ratings.
Nyhagen Predelli, 2006:11

The report presents "a picture of an organisational landscape where a majority of the associations are outward orientated" (Nyhagen Predelli, 2006:11).

After three years of residence in Norway, immigrants gain the right to vote in local elections (Nyhagen Predelli, 2006). Parliamentary elections are restricted to Norwegian citizens only. In research on the immigrant population and political participation, the organisational or institutional perspective has gained importance. This perspective includes collective aspects of political participation. Such collective aspects may involve studying cultural mobilisation and the influence of immigrant organisations on political processes (Nyhagen Predelli, 2006). Very few immigrant organisations have any contact with politicians at the national level, but about one fourth of them have political contacts at the regional or the local level. Supporting the picture that most immigrant organisations are outward looking, is the fact that a majority of them have at least yearly, and some more frequent, contact with the media. It has been stated in public documents that immigrant organisations should be regarded as important dialogue partners in political decision-making. However, only a minority of the organisations actually receive formal invitations to participate at public hearings and debates, leaving most organisations in effect marginalised when it comes to political participation (Nyhagen Predelli, 2006:12). Both a lack of interest in politics and structural constraints thus affect political participation by immigrant organisations in Norway. Concerning politics, Nyhagen Predelli concludes that the immigrant organisations may be divided in two groups; those somewhat interested in political issues while at the same time engaging in social and cultural activities, and the other group being a-political and exclusively dedicated to social and cultural activities (Nyhagen Predelli, 2006:13). The overall picture drawn seems to be that political participation is not a "big issue" for most immigrant organisations. There seems not to be a clear-cut answer as to whether this relates more to structural constraints rather than attitudes towards political participation in the immigrant population, and a mix between the two is perhaps the most plausible explanation.

4.8 Political participation

Putnam finds that the character of political and governmental involvement has changed in the US, particularly over the past three decades (Putnam, 2000:31). "Political knowledge and

interest in public affairs are critical preconditions for more active forms of involvement. If you don't know the rules of the game and the players and don't care about the outcome, you're unlikely to try playing yourself", (Putnam, 2000:35). Voting is not the only form of political participation, of course, but Putnam finds that "voting and following politics are relatively undemanding forms of participation. In fact, they are not, strictly speaking, forms of social capital at all, because they can be done utterly alone" (Putnam, 2000:37). It is a well-known fact that a democratic self-government requires an actively engaged citizenry. Putnam finds that voluntary organisations may in effect function as arenas for learning civic virtues, and motivate for participation in public life (Putnam, 2000:339). On social capital and democracy, Putnam writes:

> Voluntary groups are not a panacea for what ails our democracy. And, the absence of social capital – norms, trust, networks of association – does not eliminate politics. But without social capital we are more likely to have politics of a certain type. American democracy evolved historically in an environment unusually rich in social capital, and many of our institutions and practices – such as the unusual degree of decentralization in our governmental processes, compared with that of other industrialized countries – represent adaptations to such a setting
> Putnam, 2000:341

A prerequisite for political participation is political trust (Halpern, 2005). Key factors for political trust are perceived honesty and public-mindedness on the hands of politicians, proven competence, institutional checks and balances, as well as respect for, and communication with, the public. Halpern finds that political trust has fallen in many countries. However, countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway show high levels of political trust, proving that the fall in political trust is not inevitable (Halpern, 2005:181). The importance of social capital and citizen participation for democracy is an argument that is widely made by politicians, claiming that effective and legitimate democracy requires citizen participation (Halpern, 2005:188). Behind this argument lies an understanding of the relationship between being well-connected and being well-informed. Halpern finds that there is certainly a correlation between voting and other measures of social capital, but these findings go two ways. It is the view that a decline in active political participation equals a crisis for democracy that has been challenged by some scholars. The picture is complicated and confusing, though, as researchers have reached different conclusions and the direction of causality is somewhat unclear (Halpern, 2005).

5. Theoretical discussion

5.1 The gender issue

In an article, Farstad (2004) investigates dilemmas related to working with feminism in a multicultural context. She presents a classic critique; that western feminism is not necessarily valid for other parts of the world. In western feminism, there is a clear understanding that self-realisation happens by taking part in the labour market, and through liberation from tasks and responsibility in the home. Farstad argues that one should indeed reflect on what happens when this understanding is made applicable for different cultures. As many immigrant women get jobs in low status occupations, being pressured into the labour market might enhance their feeling of vulnerability rather than liberate them. Some immigrant women staying at home do not regard their situation as living under suppression by men; they rather enjoy their role as mothers, wives and taking care of the home. One should not necessarily use the liberation of western women as a model for non-western immigrant women. What we have then is cultural imperialism, meaning that the experience and culture of a dominant group is universalised and turned into a normative model of how one should behave. As the hegemonic group for the most part has access to draw main lines regarding interpretation and communication in a society, this creates a highly uneven relationship between the majority population and minorities. Pham (2003, in Farstad, 2004:300) uses the term "authoritarian feminism" to describe such a relationship concerning women's liberation (Pham, 2003, in Farstad, 2004:300).

In individualist societies, human beings as well as social entities are primarily defined in relation to the self, either as individuals or as groups (Walle, 2004). Subsequent to this, they may be defined according to interaction and relationships with other individuals or social entities. In holist societies, on the other hand, social entities are defined in light of the relations formed with other such entities. Thus, in holist societies, the picture turns the other way around (Walle, 2004:337). However, rather than seeing holism and individualism as mutually exclusive, one may view the two as end points on a continuum. Regarding gender, Walle (2004) states that gender roles and the male role in particular have seldom been discussed in studies of the immigrant population in Norway. Gender is often not seen as a relevant dimension apart from distinguishing between male and female. In addition, assumed or actual gender segregation in immigrant groups may violate norms in the majority population. There is an established understanding in gender studies that women and men both

possess vast spectres of strategies for expressing femininity or masculinity in different settings. However, Walle (2004:359) finds that in terms of studying gender roles within the immigrant population, the understanding of gender differences appear less nuanced. In other words, the same does not go for the immigrant population as for the majority population.

5.2 Gender and social capital

The increased female participation in paid labour is a great historical social change (Putnam, 2000). In relation to social capital and participation in voluntary organisations, working outside the home is a double-edged sword as it has two opposing effects on involvement. It increases opportunity for making new networks and getting more involved in organisations, but at the same time, it may leave less time available for doing voluntary work. Nonetheless, findings show that people who are active in the workforce are generally more involved in the community. The gender gap concerning public involvement has narrowed downwards over the last decades. At the same time as men decrease their public involvement, women increase voluntary work, closing up the gap between the genders. Putnam finds that the degree of civic involvement varies according to certain factors. Full-time versus part-time work, as well as the individual's motivation for working are important factors. Women working by choice are more socially involved. Overall, full-time work seems to inhibit women's social involvement (Putnam, 2000).

Putnam investigates the explanations for the decline in social capital in the US (Putnam, 2000). Putnam discusses whether the movement of women into paid labour causes this decline. Findings, however, imply that this trend is down among men and women both, so the explanation must be a different one. Further, Putnam examines education as a possible factor, as it is one of the most important predictors of social connectedness (Putnam, 2000:186). The level of education in the US has risen throughout the years, and education boost civic engagement. However, this did not happen in the US despite increased level of education. Putnam discusses the answer to this, asking whether the decrease in civic engagement is a result of two-career families. He does not conclude on the question, rather states that multiple causes are most likely to be in play (Putnam, 2000). Putnam disclaims the view that working women are to blame for civic disengagement in the US, since civic engagement and social connectedness have diminished almost equally for men and women both.

> The turndown in civic engagement coincided with the breakdown of the traditional family unit – mom, dad, and the kids. Since the family itself is, by some accounts, a key form of social capital, perhaps its eclipse is part of the explanation for the reduction in joining and trusting in the wider community
> Putnam, 2000:277

The relationship between gender and social capital is a complex one (Healy et al., 2007). In social capital research, one often fails to consider the gender factor. Given the important contribution made by women in informal social capital building, this is a troubling fact. It is particularly important to consider the way men and women may differ when it comes to the actual perception of social capital. Both the making of social capital and the actual presence of it may differ greatly. Healy et al. (2007) argue that since the relationship between gender and social capital is so complex, one should also include variables like age, location and income in research on social capital creation. Local differences would be a part of the picture. Lowndes (2004:46) reaches a similar conclusion concerning the relationship between gender, social capital and political participation: "For all (…) observations, variables including age, ethnicity, household structure and socioeconomic status interact with gender in important ways… (Lowndes, 2004:46). The gendered patterns differ greatly regarding social capital building activities, with men overshadowing women's informal care work (Healy et al., 2007). Men, tending to be more involved as volunteers in formal contexts, increase the visibility and recognition of their contributions. This picture may also reflect actual opportunities for participation, as women tend to have less time to engage in formal volunteering because of informal responsibilities (Healy et al., 2007). Further, it is of great importance to consider differences between women, as findings show that for example income has an impact on the perception of social capital in a community. Women with high incomes are more likely to have a positive view of their community compared with low-income women. Location also matters, as people in rural areas are more likely to have a positive view of social capital in their community (Healy et al., 2007:117).

5.3 Gender and politics

To have the power to define what is politics is in itself an important source of political power. The role of a politician has usually been a man's role, both in the past and in modern times. Male politicians have had the power to maintain male dominance both in politics and in society. However, during the last decades, politics have changed quite a lot in Norway, as women have entered politics more and more. A number of theories try to explain why women were less active in politics in the past. For instance, the fact that women traditionally

participated less in the active labour market, the lower level of education for women, a lack of interest in politics and lack of information about politics are all explanations put forward. According to Holter (1996), the male dominance in politics traditionally formed the female role, defining what life should be like for women. As women gradually catch up with men on the political arena, they have gradually changed a trend from voting conservative to voting left, even more than men (Holter, 1996:15). This change may be due to structural changes in society; increased female participation in paid labour, welfare systems, and the raised level of education among women may be explanations for the increased support of socialist left in some countries. In Norway, the high level of female participation in politics is mainly visible at the national level (Holter, 1996).

Although women's organisations in Norway traditionally were quite large, their interest in health- and social issues probably restricted their real influence (Selle, 1996). These "soft" and "typical female" values were not considered to be of the greatest importance, competing with "real" politics that intrigued men. Despite the obvious power limitations of the traditional women's organisation, Selle argues that women's organisations throughout history have greatly affected the formation of the modern welfare state. Women have been a driving force in civil society, especially in health and social policy issues. In the network of organisational members, professionals and representatives from the public sector, women played a vital and qualified role in forming policies and forming public opinion. Selle disagrees with feminist scholars claiming that women's organisations have been merely marginalised, functioning more like social clubs than important political organisations (Selle, 1996:70). Regarding the before mentioned possible limitations of women's organisations, the fact that Selle`s book is from 1996 should be taken into consideration here. The number of organisations in general and women's organisations in particular, may have increased over the last ten years. In addition to this, the motivation, goals and power structure of organisations might have changed, leaving the discussion with different conditions in 2007 compared with 1996. Nevertheless, history shows that women's organisations indeed have the potential for gaining influence in important matters. This fact should encourage the Tamil Women's Organisation to keep up the good work.

5.4 Political participation and immigrant organisations

Differences in political participation of ethnic minorities are found to correlate with the level of participation in civic community (Jacobs and Tillie, 2004; Fennema and Tillie, 2004). For some time, the concept of social capital has been playing its role as an important variable for increasing trust and political participation. However, some commentators have been sceptical about the somewhat one-sided focus on bonding social capital, leaving bridging social capital out of the picture.

> Furthermore, there is no acknowledgement of the importance of forms of social and cultural capital which one could designate as stimulating the formation of "bridging" social capital. One should think of forms of social and cultural capital which are differentially distributed amongst (ethnic) groups and are influential for integration into the "host society" (i.e. language proficiency, entrepreneurship, educational participation, etc.)
> Jacobs and Tillie, 2004:422

A somewhat one-sided focus on the "ethnic" social capital that is embedded in immigrant organisations may fail to include possible effects of cross-cultural social capital coming from participation in mixed and more mainstream organisations (Jacobs and Tillie, 2004). In investigations of the relationship between social capital and political participation, one should not fail to consider the different kinds of networks in which organisations are involved. Furthermore, political opportunity structures provided by authorities are an important part of the picture. To build bridging social capital requires a will to connect with people who are unlike us, transcending social and political barriers (Putnam, 2000:411). Establishing trust and building social capital across different socioeconomic groups, ethnic backgrounds and so forth may be very challenging. The level of heterogeneity in the community in question probably influences the process, as it has been argued that creating social capital in heterogeneous communities is far more difficult compared to homogeneous communities (Coffè and Geys, 2006). "One possible explanation for the correlation between heterogeneity and social capital is that people have more trust and feel more comfortable interacting with people who are similar in terms of income, race, and ethnicity", (Coffè and Geys, 2006:1055). Despite the challenge, a few arenas provide great opportunities for creating social capital of the bridging type. Team sports, art venues and cultural happenings are such arenas (Putnam, 2000).

5.5 Social capital and political participation

The positive link between organisational involvement and political participation is a well-recognized finding in political science research worldwide (Teorell, 2003). Theorists since the time of Tocqueville have done research on civic skills and associational life (Teorell, 2003;

Halpern, 2005). The findings signal great returns in human capital from organisational participation. Teorell (2003) chooses another angle as he aims to investigate the relationship between social capital theory and political participation, to see whether social capital may explain the same effect. He claims that voluntary organisations work as what he calls "schools in democracy", where members get first hand experience with making collective decisions in a smaller setting (Teorell, 2003:50).

> According to the logic of "weak ties", organizational involvement provides bridging social capital by connecting the individual to a wider range of people. As a result, the input of requests for participation increases and this ultimately leads to more activity
> Teorell, 2003:49

On this claim, Teorell finds that being connected to multiple voluntary organisations matters more for political participation than being part of organisations that cut across social cleavages. His conclusion rests on an empirical test conducted using 1997 survey data from Sweden (Teorell, 2003:49). What makes people more politically active is not bonding social capital as much as social capital of the bridging type, connecting people across a diversity of organisations.

Lowndes (2004) investigates whether women in Britain have equal access to social capital compared to men. In doing this, she studies the quantity, type and usage of social capital, particularly related to political participation. Asking what aspects of British women's political participation might be explained by social capital; Lowndes looks into political participation, representation and attitudes to politics. Levels of electoral turnout in Britain are roughly the same for men and women, closing the gap what political participation is concerned. The picture is different when it comes to representation, with women still lagging behind, even though the gap is becoming smaller. In addition, when women gain position, they tend to have less authority, yet work harder. Concerning attitudes to politics, it is a fact that women have less knowledge about, and are less interested in, politics. Moreover, women are less satisfied with politics in operation (Lowndes, 2004:46).

> …how might social capital help to explain women's patterns of political engagement? Perhaps women simply have less social capital than men – explaining their under-representation in politics? Perhaps women's social capital is in some way different from men's – explaining their concentration in less formal arenas of politics? Perhaps women have access to social capital but don't invest it in politics – explaining their lower levels of political interest and knowledge?
> Lowndes, 2004:46.

Lowndes finds that despite expressed concerns, there has been little research done on the relationship between social capital and gender differences in politics (Lowndes, 2004:61). In

seeking to investigate this relationship, she finds that social capital could indeed explain gendered differences on political participation, but only if more precise questions are asked. Based on survey data, she finds that women have as much social capital as men. However, women's social capital tends to be of a different type. It is usually not invested in formal politics, rather directed at informal networks and work at the local community level (Lowndes, 2004:61). There is no direct causal relationship between social capital and political participation; only depending on context may social capital work as a resource in political mobilisation. In conclusion:

> A better understanding is required of the circumstances under which social capital becomes an actual, rather than a potential, resource for democracy. Three points are of particular importance. First, we need to identify the factors that trigger or suppress the mobilisation of social capital. Second, we need to establish how these work in relation to different groups within society. Third, we need to explore the ways in which such factors can be influenced by policy-makers (and citizens themselves) in the service of good and equitable governance
> Lowndes, 2004:62

5.6 The decline of political support

The decline of political support in many Western countries is a result of citizens becoming more critical towards the running of government and the democratic system, and a lack of trust in their political leaders (Newton, 2006). Two main theories exist on this problem. The first one being built on the concepts of civil society, trust and social capital, centres around finding the explanation in society. The second theory focuses on the actual politics and the economy and performances of governmental agencies in particular. These are the most widely used theories on the subject of political support. Newton (2006:847) defines political support as follows; "…the extent to which individuals evaluate political objects positively, that is, the mix of attitudes about political leaders, institutions and the system as a whole". Usually, the two theories above are seen as mutually exclusive, implying that they are incompatible. However, what Newton finds is quite the contrary; that social capital, political performance and political participation are mutually interdependent factors. Causes and effects, on the other hand, are not perfectly symmetrical between the three, and the links are often somewhat weak. As such, both the theory of political performance as the vital factor as well as the social capital theory may be right. However, the two appear to be working together in non-regular patterns (Newton, 2006:859). This means that; "social capital may be a necessary but not sufficient basis for democratic government, and a necessary but not sufficient basis for high levels of support for the political system", (Newton, 2006:859).

5.7 Immigrant organisations and political integration: findings

5.7.1 The Netherlands

In an article on political integration of immigrants in Amsterdam, Tillie (2004) finds that determinants both at an individual level and at the group level must be taken into consideration when studying this issue. Factors such as gender, ethnic- and cross-ethnic membership as well as social activities in the immediate network are of relevance on the individual level. The total amount of social capital of the particular ethnic community is the important factor on the group level. The concept of political integration is multi-dimensional, as research has identified three dimension of political integration. Political trust is one of these, representing the relationship between politicians and political institutions versus the public. Adherence to democratic values is the second type of political integration, meaning that without citizens subscribing to the basic values of democracy there is no political integration. The third dimension is political participation. Tillie states, "The citizen who participates within the democratic framework is politically integrated, independent of his/her trust in democratic institutions or adherence to democratic values" (Tillie, 2004:530-531). In the article, Tillie investigates four ethnic groups in Amsterdam: Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese and Antilleans in relation with political engagement, finding five important variables. Gender is a significant variable in the study, as it shows that women participate to a lesser extent than men do. Ethnic and cross-ethnic memberships are other important variables. Being a member of an immigrant organisation or a cross-ethnic organisation both increase the level of participation in politics. Further, trade union membership and active social networks increase the level of participation (Tillie, 2004). In conclusion, Tillie finds "an interaction effect between individual social capital, that is, individual networks, and group social capital, that is, the degree of civic community", (Tillie, 2004:539). Again, the type of social capital is important for the outcome what democracy and political participation is concerned, as outward connected organisations, that is, organisations with bridging social capital, have a strong positive effect on democratic processes.

> Organisational membership as such is only a partial indicator of individual social capital. At least two additional indicators should be taken into account: the social network of the (ethnic) citizen, and the social capital of the organisation as reflected in the connectedness of the organisation or the density of the organisational network of the (ethnic) community
> Tillie, 2004:540

Teorell (2003) reaches a similar conclusion in an earlier study of the Swedish case:

> …what makes some people more prone to take political action is not primarily the tightly knit, dense or *bonding* networks of friendship and kin. On the contrary, what makes a difference is being connected to a *diversity* of organizations, since that brings connections to large and loosely coupled networks of high information potential
> Teorell, 2003:62

5.7.2 Germany

Studying the social capital formation of immigrant organisations and political integration in Berlin, Berger et al. (2004) support the conclusion by, among others, Tillie and Teorell, that bridging social capital is of great importance for immigrants` political integration. Organisations teaching their members to trust and co-operate with people from different backgrounds are beneficial for democracy (Berger et al., 2004). Studying political integration of immigrants is important for the strengthening of democracy:

> From a normative perspective, democratic philosophies, regardless of their political colour, cannot tolerate that sizeable parts of the population are excluded from democratic rights and do not participate in the political process. From a factual perspective, migrants themselves have not remained passive and are an increasingly visible group in public debates and political contention
> Berger et al., 2004:492

The methodological approach in this study on Berlin includes an additional dimension, as the researchers recognise that immigrants may also be oriented to their country of origin. Findings indicate that political participation towards the country of origin is the most influential variable for explaining political integration in German politics. The latent variable seems to be a general interest in politics by some immigrants (Berger et al., 2004:504). Studying different ethnic groups in Berlin, the researchers find that the groups vary on different levels. The conclusion in this study is that measured on an individual level, ethnic and German political participation are not mutually exclusive. For political activities, the social capital hypothesis is confirmed, meaning that voluntary organisations are found to contribute to political participation. This finding also partly goes for measurements on political interest. However, findings are somewhat more inconclusive at the aggregate level, requiring further investigation (Berger et al., 2004).

5.7.3 Belgium

On Brussels, Belgium, the hypothesis stated by Fennema and Tillie regarding ethnic minority groups and political participation does not seem to fit in a straightforward manner (Jacobs et al., 2004). Using survey data on Turks and Moroccans, as well as lower-educated Belgians, the findings are somewhat confusing at first glance. It appears that ethnic social capital affects

political participation differently for the two groups, with Turks scoring high on a number of indicators suggesting a strong ethnic civic engagement at the same time as the Moroccans have the higher level of political involvement. Turks and Moroccans are both groups where women have less opportunity to participate in politics. Although finding that the political participation hypothesis does not seem to fit for Brussels, Jacobs et al. state that the analysis and findings for Amsterdam by Fennema and Tillie may indeed be correct due to national differences. Again, the differences between ethnic social capital and cross-ethnic social capital should be taken into consideration when using an approach like Fennema and Tillie`s. Moreover, one should not rule out the possibility that ethnic social capital may have different effects for different groups, cities and regions.

> The Fennema and Tillie approach cannot and probably should not be used in international comparative research into political participation of ethnic minority groups without a number of modifications. A test procedure at the individual level of the link between associational life and political involvement, in which the gender dimension is included, seems to be an important additional research strategy
> Jacobs et al., 2004:556

5.7.4 Denmark

In Denmark, Togeby (2004) finds that the impact of organisational membership on political participation shows great variation from one ethnic group to another. Also inspired by the hypothesis by Fennema and Tillie, Togeby investigates the link between immigrant organisations and democracy. With some researchers actually questioning the positive effect of organisational membership on social capital building, such a hypothesis should perhaps be tested in different countries and with different ethnic organisations before it is converted into practical integration policy (Togeby, 2004:510). In an analysis, one should also be aware of, and control for, underlying factors such as gender, educational background, language proficiency and employment when studying the relationship between organisations and political involvement. Back to the findings of Togeby, her analysis of second-generation ex-Yugoslavs, Turks and Pakistanis in Denmark indicates that the diverse nature of immigrant organisations result in considerable variation what political participation is concerned. In determining whether organisations generate social capital, Togeby finds no positive correlation with social trust for these ethnic groups. Furthermore, there are no negative correlations with social trust and voter turnout. The conclusive findings from Denmark indicate that it would indeed be an exaggeration to talk about immigrant organisations as generators of social capital (Togeby, 2004:528).

5.8 Concluding discussion

Immigrant organisations as arenas for social capital formation have the potential to strengthen relationships, increasing opportunities and resources for the individual and help the less fortunate. On the other hand, voluntary organisations, whether immigrant organisations or not, may choose to isolate and work solely for their own purpose, failing to build networks with others. The distinction between bonding and bridging social capital has many elements to it. Having reviewed some empirical findings, I have reached a broader perspective from the initial research questions that seemed so straightforward at first. To recap, my research questions are "how can voluntary organisations contribute to explain integration of ethnic minorities in Norway", and "what is the relationship between organisations, social capital and political participation among Tamil women in Norway".

Concerning the Tamil Women's Organisation, it appears to be a well-adjusted organisation with clear goals and a dedicated group of members. During my theoretical analysis of the stated research questions, I found that the Tamil Women's Organisation is indeed dedicated to both bonding and bridging capital-building activities. Engaging in activities for Tamils and their situation in exile in Norway, the women try to help individuals and families cope. They all seem to have a common goal, namely to return to a free Tamil homeland sometime in the future. Some concerns have come up, though, regarding the value of this way of thinking for the younger generations. Activities for Tamils create social capital of the bonding type, strengthening networks between people who are alike. As the Tamil Women's Organisation also builds networks with other organisations and with Norwegian authorities, they invest in social capital of the bridging type. During the work on this thesis, I have found much support for expanding voluntary organisations` networks outside the in-group. Being open to other groups and people who are unlike oneself may pay off significantly in resources and knowledge.

Scholars from many academic disciplines are interested in the concept of social capital. Discussions about the concept typically concern measurement, type of social capital, and the link between social capital and other social phenomena. Outcomes of social capital are sometimes obvious, but sometimes more difficult to notice and, indeed, to measure. For this thesis, I have been interested in discussing further possible outcomes concerning political

integration of immigrant women. I found some tendencies that I would like to put forward. First, being an immigrant usually means lacking the networks and resources needed in order to find a job and to manage in the new home country. For some, migration involves leaving behind networks and valuable knowledge. The ethnic minority organisation seems to be a good starting point when trying to become familiar with the new home country. However, considerations should be taken to ensure that immigrants are given the opportunity to expand their networks. Second, being an immigrant woman often means facing additional problems. I have referred to research on social capital and political integration stating that the social capital of women might be of a different kind. In research, this should be taken into consideration. Moreover, women might choose to use their social capital for different purposes compared to men. Political participation is indeed one of the areas where women seem to invest less than men do. Gender differences should not be ignored in social capital research and research on political integration. The reason why Sumathi and the other Tamil women participate in politics is that they want to make a difference, to improve their local communities and to fight for equal opportunities for women in their ethnic group. I have found that motivation for political participation may vary for men and women. Political integration is not only about involvement and political interest; it is also about inviting immigrants to participate. Nyhagen Predelli (2006) finds that Norwegian authorities repeatedly state that ethnic minorities are welcomed to take part in politics. However, most immigrant organisations are never formally asked to participate. Since political integration is a two-way process, increasing political participation will require some effort on both sides. The Tamil Women's Organisation has set the focus on political involvement in their ethnic minority group, and has already achieved great things. I hope that they are welcomed into politics in Norway and given the opportunity to contribute with their valuable knowledge from inside the immigrant community.

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7. Appendix; interview guide

1. Describe main tasks and focus of the organisation.

2. A few words about the history of the organisation; establishment and structure. (Management, how many members, etc.)

3. What is the motivation behind the organisation's work?

4. What does the organisation mean for those involved? (Both members and those benefiting from the organisation's work?)

5. Who participates at meetings and activities?

6. Did members of the organisation know each other from before?

7. What are the connections between the organisation and other Tamil and non-Tamil organisations in Norway and abroad? Moreover, which connections are there to Sri Lanka?

8. Is the organisation involved in work directed at the situation in Sri Lanka? (For example, related to the 2004 tsunami and the time after?)

9. Does the organisation co-operate with Norwegian organisations and government agencies? Which? (Co-operation/dialogue).

10. To contribute to integration; is this a stated goal of the organisation?

11. Are there elements of self-help in the organisation, for example self-help groups?

12. Would you say that the organisation contributes to raising the level of social capital for members and users of activities? How?

13. What kinds of networks do you build through the formation of organisations? (On all levels; state, regional, local level, political level, etc). What is the value of building networks?

14. How does the organisation contribute to building trust and a feeling of security within the ethnic minority group?

15. Is contributing to political participation among Tamil women a goal for the organisation? If so, why and how?

16. Are equal opportunities for women (immigrant women in particular) an aim for the organisation?