

## **Volunteers and Professionals in Norwegian Sport Organizations**

**Ørnulf Seippel**<sup>1,2</sup>

---

*The mass media, politicians, and social scientists assert that there are increasing problems in recruiting volunteers to voluntary organizations. This paper investigates the situation with respect to voluntary sport organizations in a Norwegian context. The situation for voluntary and paid work is described and discussed with respect to different kinds of sport organizations. The empirical results show that voluntary work still is the foundation of most sport organizations, but that there are large differences between various types of organizations, and that voluntary work functions in complex interaction with other important economic and structural features of these organizations.*

---

**KEY WORDS:** Voluntary work; sport organizations; professionalization; civil society; Norway.

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

There are at least two reasons for a renewed interest in changes taking place within voluntary sport organizations. First, many of the shifts in the structures (postindustrialism) and cultures (postmodernism) of late modern society have consequences for the development of the social field of sport. On a societal level, and reflecting an increasingly differentiated society, the result is a more complex and diverse sport movement, offering a wider scope of opportunities for doing sports than earlier. On an individual level, the same development comes to the fore in people searching for a wider and richer range of experiences within sports—"a quest for excitement" (Elias and Dunning, 1986)—and, at the same time, looking for "sport experiences" outside the traditional sport organizations: on their own,

<sup>1</sup>Institute for Social Research, Oslo, Norway.

<sup>2</sup>Correspondence should be directed to Ørnulf Seippel, Institute for Social Research, Munthesgt. 31, 0260 Oslo, Norway. E-mail: ornulf.seippel@isaf.no

in commercial fitness-studios and at nonsportive arenas (Breivik, 1998; Dietrich and Heinemann, 1999; Dølvik, 1990; Rittner, 1995). In line with these changes, a widespread assumption seems to be that people today show less solidarity (Horch, 1994a) and less willingness for committing themselves to the organizations or institutions where sport is practiced: "The difficulties in recruiting volunteers are enormous, and the organizations are increasingly losing their 'self-help characteristics'" (Rittner, 1995, p. 36; *author's translation*).

Second, the last few decades have shown a marked increase in the ideological attention paid to civil society, and, as part thereof, voluntary organizations. On the one hand, the rationale for this ideological reorientation is, from both political left and right, a focus on the deficiencies of markets and politics. On the other hand, this critique has been the source for more positive visions associated with the concept of civil society, envisioning a kind of social interaction having both intrinsic values for those involved, contributing substantially to the development of the organizations in question and politics and society writ large (Ketab, 1998; Kirkpatrick et al., 1998; Putnam, 1992; Taylor, 1995; Walzer, 1992).<sup>3</sup> These interests and visions are also directly and explicitly expressed with regard to sport, both within scientific and political discourses (e.g., Arnold, 1992; Harris, 1998; Morgan, 1994; Roche, 1993; St.meld.nr14, 1999–2000; Stone, 1981).

Against this background, the purpose of this paper is first and foremost to improve the empirical knowledge of civil society through an analysis of voluntary sport organizations, but second, also, to contribute to a wider theoretical discourse. The focus of the paper is on voluntary work in sport organizations so as to give an empirical overview of the situation with regard to this topic within a Norwegian context. However, because debates on these questions are often heavily infused by theoretical, ideological, and normative judgments, it is necessary to begin by advancing some of the more general and theoretical points associated with these discourses.

### **VOLUNTARY WORK IN SPORT ORGANIZATIONS: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

To study voluntary work both in itself and as part of a larger context, a useful first approach to the topic is to focus on some core characteristics of voluntary sport organizations as they appear in the seminal works of Heinemann and Schubert (1992, 1994), Ibsen (1992), and Horch (1994a): (a) being a member in

<sup>3</sup>On a general level, the utopias involved are both libertarian, communitarian, and democratic (Tamir, 1998), and each of these general values, in turn, may represent several subdimensions. As an example, Warren (2001) distinguishes between three ways voluntary organizations might contribute to democratization of a society: (a) social capital; (b) strengthening the public sphere; and (c) as a channel for representing interests.

such organizations is voluntary;<sup>4</sup> (b) the organizations are independent of the state and market; (c) the decision-making structures are democratic; (d) the most important resource is voluntary work;<sup>5</sup> (e) the organizations have an obligation toward its members; and (f) the organizations' aim is to achieve specific goals. Within such a framework, it is possible both to focus on different aspects of voluntary work and to study volunteering as part of a larger context, where, for example, questions of commercialization and democracy are of great importance.

From such descriptive characteristics, there flow prescriptive visions. Voluntary membership might imply a certain obligatory and authentic relation between the individual and the organization because an exit option is always available (Lawler, 2002). Voluntary participation may contribute to a certain kind of learning process where social capital is formed (Portes, 1998). Also, voluntary organizations' independence of the state and market implies a possibility for a genuinely autonomous, critical, and less "systematic" form of social interaction (Habermas, 1987)—as different from market behavior (Hansmann, 1987) and action toward and within political and public institutions (Douglas, 1987). Furthermore, the voluntary sector itself holds a potential for democratic practice and learning (Putnam, 1992, 2000). And voluntary work as a resource has certain advantages compared with paid work because it, occasionally, includes a thematic, social, and temporal flexibility otherwise not always available (Heinemann and Schubert, 1992, pp. 15–17). Finally, many voluntary organizations seek to respond seriously and directly to the desires, aims, and interests of their members without, at the same time, developing into oligarchic organizations (Michels, 1962). Many such discourses communicate, although often implicitly, a positive vision. However, formulating the normative positions in such a positive way takes attention away from the possibility that voluntary organizations actually might function in a contrary and, in some instances, negative way.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time as civil society and voluntary organizations are promoted as the cure for the pathologies of late modern society,<sup>7</sup> there is also a deep-felt worry for the capacity of civil society to fulfil such ambitions (Putnam, 2000). With respect to the field of sports, many of these concerns are related to processes of

<sup>4</sup>Here it is timely to be aware of a discussion, referring to Hirschman (1970), emphasizing the importance of the exit option in voluntary organization (Gutmann, 1998; Warren, 2001). Moreover, it is also occasionally possible and relevant to ask *how voluntary* memberships are (Walzer, 1998).

<sup>5</sup>According to Ibsen (1992), voluntary work is (a) unpaid, (b) voluntary, (c) serves other than ones family, (d) provides a service/gain for others, and (e) has a certain formal character. See also Wilson (2000) for a more thorough discussion.

<sup>6</sup>"[A]s long as freedom of association is respected, civic society will be home to every imaginable type of association—authoritarian, elitist, bureaucratic, hierarchies, sexist, racist, and blindly traditionalist. Such associations may foster non-democratic tendencies, sharpen social cleavages, foster mutual distrust, and advocate disobedience of the law" (Tamir, 1998, p. 219).

<sup>7</sup>"In the recent literature, the revival of civic associations and the civic sphere is offered as a panacea for all the main illnesses of modern society—alienation, isolation, excessive anarchic and individualistic capitalism, social disintegration, and political indifference" (Tamir, 1998, p. 214).

commercialization and professionalization, and most of them, again, matter for the characteristics of voluntary (sport) organizations presented earlier. For example, there is, first, the problem of the membership role when sport is practiced in “non-voluntary” contexts, more marketized or politicized, where members (with rights and obligations) turn into customers or clients (with rights, without obligations).<sup>8</sup> Second, when organizations become too dependent on market or political sources for support, there is the danger of co-optation and of decreased autonomy for voluntary organizations (Horch, 1994b; Ibsen, 1997). Third, strengthening the relations and commitments toward commercial and political actors would probably weaken the influence of the members on their own organizations. Fourth, such an announced (but seldom empirically verified) development within sports could undermine the central position of voluntary work as the most important resource for such organizations. Furthermore, a process of professionalization could also lead the attention of the leaders of the organization away from the interest of the members, and thereby, pave the way for oligarchical tendencies (Michels, 1962). But, again, it is important to remember that some of these discourses are ideologically biased, and what are mostly presented as problems—partly as a process of degeneration or disintegration—could also in many cases imply a strengthening of organizations and an improvement of their capability to offer their members a possibility for doing sport.

Both sport studies and civil society studies are often weak on more general organizational theory. Although this will only be a marginal focus in this paper, it should be an aim to integrate organizational theory and the kind of studies of voluntarism conducted here to investigate how shifts along the lines described earlier will have consequences that matter for the aims and strategies of organizations—for their complexity, formalization, and specialization (Slack, 1997).

Beside theoretical controversies, these many and important discussions also reveal a serious lack of empirical knowledge when it comes to the question of what is actually going on in the field (Skocpol et al., 2000). Although the media abounds with warnings and describes a situation of degradation, there is a more complex and contradictory picture within more social scientific discourses. For example, Thibault et al. (1991) confirm the view that professionalization of sport organizations—although of a different sort than those discussed in this paper—implies centralization, specialization, and formalization. But contrary to the impression of deterioration given in the media, German researchers have found that from 1986 to 1991 there was an increased amount of voluntary workers available and a decrease in the proportion of people employed in German sport organizations (Dierker and Wadsack, 2000; Pitsch and Emrich, 2000). In a Norwegian context, both general studies of volunteering (Wollebæk et al., 2000) and studies of sport organizations (Enjolras and Seippel, 2001) question and reject the thesis

<sup>8</sup>Such a development of shifts in the relations between individuals and their social context is also described, in more general terms, by Williams (1961), as moving from members to consumers.

of voluntary work being on the wane when it comes to sport. In short, how voluntary organizations (and civil society) actually function and which ideals they might fulfil is an empirical question, and accordingly, there is a need for empirical knowledge in this field.

## DATA AND METHODS

Data applied in this paper is drawn from “The Sport Club Study, 1999–2000” and are based on a random sample of Norwegian sport clubs from the register of clubs held by the Norwegian Olympic Committee and Sport Federation (NOC). In a population of about 7,000 clubs, a random sample of 549 clubs was sent a questionnaire covering four main topics: club and members; organization; volunteers/professionals; and economics and facilities. The leaders of the clubs were asked to fill in the questionnaires. A total of 294 clubs responded to the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 54%. The collection of data and communication with the clubs involved was administrated by the Institute for Social Research (Oslo) in close cooperation with the NOC. The reason for not achieving a higher response rate is probably due to the size and requirements of the questionnaire (16 pages), the fact that leaders of voluntary organizations already have too much work to do and, perhaps, a kind of diffuse conflict between the top level and the grassroots level of Norwegian sport.

Compared with the size of the organizations in the universe, the data shows a slight statistical deviation where smaller clubs are underrepresented and medium-size clubs are overrepresented (for details, see Enjolras and Seippel, 2001). To strengthen the quality of the data, all analyses presented in this paper are weighted according to the size of the sport organizations in the universe (as given in the NOC register). When it comes to the quality of the data, there are certain points worth mentioning. First, it is an open question as to how well the leaders (who are supposed to answer on behalf of the clubs) actually know their clubs. Second, there is a question as to whether respondents were able to recollect and remember all the information requested. Third, some of the questions clearly involve an evaluation of the situation in the club, which of course makes it questionable as to the extent which answers are actually “correct” and comparable. Yet, all in all, the data should give a reasonably representative picture of the situation within Norwegian sport organizations.

## THE NORWEGIAN CASE

The historical development of Norwegian sport and its voluntary organizations shares many of its characteristics with the sport organizations of other Western nations (Heinemann, 1999). In Norway, the starting point for sport as an organized activity has been the rifle/shooting associations that operated in close connection

with military forces from around 1860. Thereafter, the leading influences in most other western countries are central: German and Swedish gymnastics, and English sports. The postwar period is characterized, first, by an enormous growth in both number of sport organizations and level of activity, and second, by a differentiation within the field of voluntary sport organizations (Enjolras and Seippel, 2001; Olstad, 1987; Skirstad, 1999). Looking at Norwegian sport, it is important to point to how geography and climate have made certain sport disciplines—such as skiing and skating—more popular than in southern countries, and these traditional and historical sports have played their role in nation building (Goksøyr, 1998). More recently, however, sport as a cultural carrier seems increasingly to be part of global processes (e.g., football) (Goksøyr, 1994; Maguire, 1999), and some of the national particularities are probably about to lose their impact.

There are about 7,000 voluntary sport organizations in Norway, all under the NOC. Among the most central characteristics of these clubs are their size: they are small, 36% of them have fewer than 50 members, 54% have fewer than 100 members, and not more than 3% of the clubs have more than 1,000 members. Yet, it is important to bear in mind that the clubs with fewer than 100 members (54% of clubs) only represent 13% of the total amount of members whereas the 3% of clubs with more than 1,000 members host 18% of the members. When it comes to the age of members, 29% of the members are under 13, 17% are between 13 and 16, and 54% are 17 or older. Males make up 61% of the members. The most popular sport—based on the number of organizations having the sport on their agenda—is football (34% of clubs) followed by skiing and “exercising groups” (both 18%), handball (14%), track and field (11%), shooting (10%), and gymnastics (8%). Moreover, it is also worth paying attention to the fact that Norway has relatively high scores both when it comes to number of memberships in voluntary organizations and the amount of voluntary work invested in these organizations (Curtis et al., 2001; Schofer and Fourcade-Gourinchas, 2001).

### **VOLUNTARY WORK IN NORWEGIAN SPORT ORGANIZATIONS: AN EMPIRICAL OVERVIEW**

This section presents an overview of the extent and composition of voluntary work in Norwegian sport organizations in terms of three key measures. First, the proportion of the total amount of work in clubs performed by volunteers is analyzed. Second, consideration is given to how much voluntary work (hours) is being undertaken in each club per week, both in sum and with respect to various concrete tasks. Third, the question of how much work is spent in proportion to the size of the club—that is, hours of voluntary work per member, again both in total and with respect to various concrete work tasks—is studied.

So, the first and most basic question with respect to voluntary work is: How fundamental is voluntary work in various sport organizations? Here the organi-

**Table 1.** Proportion of Work Done by Volunteers in Sport Clubs in the Last Year Compared with Total Sum of Work ( $N = 269$ )

Proportion of work (%)	Proportion of clubs (%)
100	68.4
95–99	14.1
90–94	5.9
51–89	7.9
Up to 50	3.8
<i>Total</i>	100.1

zations were asked directly, “How large a proportion of the work invested in the club over the last year was done by volunteers (i.e., unpaid)?” Answers are given in Table 1.

Table 1 gives a clear and unequivocal picture of the important status of voluntary work in Norwegian sport organizations. In about two thirds of the clubs (68.4%), volunteers perform all the work. In a further 20% (14.1 + 5.9) of the clubs, more than 90% of the work is done by volunteers. In about 4% of the organizations, volunteers carry out less than 50% of the work, whereas between 50% and 90% of the work is done by volunteers in 8% of the sport organizations. In sum, in nearly 90% of voluntary sport organizations, volunteers perform 90% of the work or more.

Two points are worth paying attention to here. First, rather evidently, Norwegian sport organizations are fundamentally based on voluntary work. Second, even though voluntarism is the bedrock of sport organizations, the sector is so large that even a marginal professionalism, in amount of time and money, contains a considerable and important resource for Norwegian sport and is thus worthy of consideration.

The pivotal role of voluntarism in Norwegian sport appears even more pronounced when compared with other countries. In a German study Heinemann and Schubert (1992) show that only 39% of the sport clubs in Hamburg and 47% in Schleswig-Holstein are exclusively built on voluntary work. In Ibsen’s Danish research, instructors (“some or all”) are paid in 46% of clubs (Ibsen, 1992). The Norwegian data does not indicate significant differences between geographical locations with respect to these issues. Consequently, it seems as if voluntary work has a more central role in Norwegian sport than that in its German and Danish counterparts.

Besides looking at how central voluntary work is to the total amount of work in sport organizations, it is necessary to study how much voluntary work is performed in each club (hours per week), and more specifically, how much time is spent on various tasks. The respondents were asked to calculate the amount of time spent according to a specific list of tasks, and the findings show that 45.4 hr of voluntary work is—on average—put into each club. Table 2 shows in detail how time is spent with respect to various tasks.

**Table 2.** Voluntary Work, Hours per Week, Devoted to Various Tasks in Norwegian Sport Organizations

Administration	8.3
Accountancy	2.7
Instruction	17.4
Miscellaneous practical work	6.5
Janitor	1.1
Support functions	2.4
Organizing volunteers	5.2
Other	1.8
<i>Total</i>	45.4

Comparing the various tasks performed by volunteers, the most important single task is without doubt “instruction,” with 17.4 hr/week. As part of the total amount of voluntary work, this represents slightly more than one third. The next most important tasks are “administration” (8.3 hr/week), “miscellaneous” (6.5 hr/week), and “organizing volunteers” (5.2 hr/week). Thus, administration in a more general sense—including both administration and accountancy—adds up to less than a fourth of the total amount of voluntary work, whereas more activity-directed work stands for more than half the work.

There are two things worth taking note of in Table 3. First, it is interesting to notice the total sum of voluntary work spent per week per member is 0.27 hr (16 min); again, the most important activity for the volunteers is “instruction,” where about 6 min is spent each week. Thereafter, “administration” and “accountancy” together occupy about 5 min per member per week. Second, in comparing activities, “instruction” again comes out as the most important activity. Perhaps the most interesting measure for voluntary work is hours worked (per week) per member (see Table 3).

### PAID WORK IN NORWEGIAN SPORT ORGANIZATIONS: AN OVERVIEW

In much the same way as earlier, this section presents an overview of the extent and composition of paid work in Norwegian voluntary sport organizations.

**Table 3.** Voluntary Work, Hours per Week per Member (Minutes), Devoted to Various Work Tasks in Norwegian Sport Organizations

Administration	0.06 (3.6)
Accountancy	0.02 (1.2)
Instruction	0.10 (6.0)
Miscellaneous practical work	0.03 (1.8)
Janitor	0.01 (0.6)
Support functions	0.01 (0.6)
Organizing volunteers	0.03 (1.8)
Other	0.007 (0.4)
<i>Total</i>	0.27 (16.0)



**Table 4.** Paid Work, Hours per Week, in Norwegian Voluntary Sport Clubs

Administration	1.1
Accountancy	0.4
Instruction	2.1
Athletics	0.06
Janitor	1.2
Support functions	0.05
Other	1.0
<i>Total</i>	5.9

As a first approach to the question of professionalization, the clubs were simply asked whether they have people employed or not,<sup>9</sup> and the answers reveal that 24% of the clubs have people employed. Compared with this finding, Pitsch and Emrich (2000) found that 47% of German sport clubs hire professionals. Again, the picture of Norwegian sport as dependent upon voluntary work is confirmed. Clubs were also asked to state how much time was spent by paid workers on various tasks, and the findings are given in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that almost 6 hr of paid work is invested in the average Norwegian sport club each week. Of these 6 hr, 2.1 hr is devoted to “instruction.” Thereafter follows “janitor” and “administration.” Even though janitor seems important, this work task is concentrated on a selective group of clubs (those owning sport facilities). An important distinction between voluntary and professional works is also the existence of professional athletics, an empty category with respect to voluntary work.

As with voluntary work, the most interesting measure is perhaps the amount of paid work in light of the size of the club: How much paid work is contributed per member per week per club? Answers are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 indicates that 0.02 hr (app. 1 min) of paid work is invested per member per week into Norwegian sport clubs. Again, and more clearly, “instruction”

**Table 5.** Paid Work, Hours per Member per Week (Minutes) in Norwegian Voluntary Sport Clubs

Administration	0.002	(0.12)
Accountancy	0.0004	(0.024)
Instruction	0.01	(0.6)
Athletics	0.00007	(0.004)
Janitor	0.002	(0.12)
Support functions	0.0002	(0.012)
Other	0.001	(0.06)
<i>Total</i>	0.02	(0.94)

<sup>9</sup>A definition was given as part of the question: “By ‘employee’ we think of persons having an agreement (written or oral) with the sport organizations to do specific tasks (instructing, administration, or something else) for payment.”

is central, contributing to over half of the paid work. The next most important activities for paid workers seem to be “administration” and “janitor,” but each only makes up a fifth of the total.

An interesting issue here is to compare the amount and kinds of voluntary and professional work devoted directly to Norwegian sport clubs. Again, the result confirms the central role of voluntary work. On average, about 17 times as much voluntary as professional work (per member) is put into the organizations (0.27 as against 0.016 hr/week). Taking a closer look at some of the specific and comparable tasks, the amount of voluntary administrative work is about 30 times as prevalent as professional administrative work and about 10 times as much voluntary work is invested in “instruction and practice” as paid work.

### **INTERMEDIATE COMMENTS: PROFESSIONALIZATION IN SPORT<sup>10</sup>**

Horch, in his paper “On the socio-economics of voluntary organizations,” articulates a common view when he propounds that we have “professionalization, where paid work replaces volunteer work” (Horch, 1994a, p. 223). However, the sociological concept of professionalization aims at something more than simply distinguishing between paid and unpaid works. Accordingly, if we want to understand whether a process of professionalization is taking place or not, we need a more precise concept of professionalization.

A useful definition says that “We have a profession where (1) a specific, enduring, formal education is taken by (2) people oriented toward achieving specific occupations which, (3) according to social norms may not be fulfilled by people without this specific education” (Torgersen, 1981, p. 10; *author’s translation*). Although the first two points—education/knowledge and career/occupation—are rather straightforward, the third point needs some elaboration. Professionalization implies that one group is able to make its knowledge or education unique with respect to the solution of specific social problems that “society” wants solved. To establish a profession in this meaning implies both a certain autonomy and monopoly with respect to problem solving—and that the profession is able to legitimize this monopoly. Professionalization, then, is based on a certain distribution of roles between profession (expert) and layperson (client), where the client is dependent on the expert to get problems solved. A good example here is the medical profession.

To fully evaluate whether professionalization is growing in Norwegian sport—and this goes probably for most western countries—it is useful to assume that this process consists of three phases: potential, formation, and stabilization (Hartmann-Tews, 1999, pp. 37–39). A potential for professionalization is present when there is deep-felt public opinion that there is an important problem, and

<sup>10</sup>This section builds on Hartmann-Tews (1999) and Cachay and Thiel (2000).

that this problem should be solved by a specialized occupation based on specific formalized knowledge. With respect to sport, the situation is ambiguous. In favor of sport moving into a profession, there is the fact that the last few decades have witnessed the establishment of a scientific field related to sport. At the same time, though, there are controversies about what should be the substance, core, and name of such a science (Coakley, 2001). This speaks against the existence of an established science of sport. It also seems difficult to understand “sport” as an answer to a social problem requiring specific expertise and competence: You do not need an expert to do sport, and most people would probably consider sport a leisure activity similar to other leisure activities. As such, the potential for the professionalization of sport is probably not too promising.

To understand how sport professions might develop, it is fruitful to take a closer look at the occupations chosen by those pursuing a sport education, and here it seems reasonable to distinguish between three occupational arenas. First, many people work directly related to sport activities. The problem here is, again, that doing sport does not require—beyond a basic familiarity with rules and equipment—specific knowledge and competence. This situation makes it difficult to establish those power and authority relations implied in the concept of professionalization. Second, there are sport-educated people in health and social service occupations. In this arena, it is probably easier to convince people of the significance and need for professionals. The problem is that there are already various forms of established knowledge present in the field, and it will be hard for sport competence to gain ground in competition with, for example, the medical profession. A third field of work is the expanding fitness sector, but the problem is partly the same as with traditional sport; the activity does not require a specific kind of knowledge and, consequently, it is difficult to make clients dependent on a level of professional competence. Another problem with this sector is the need for various competencies—administrative, health, medicine, and economics—that makes it difficult for one group to establish itself as inevitable for solving certain challenges and problems.

In effect, and with an eye to the data, it seems reasonable to conclude that there are three kinds of occupations related to sport: instructors, administrators, and athletes. It is interesting to note that at least with regard to the first two occupations, there is a specific education available, which makes it reasonable to assume the existence of a “regime of knowledge” related to these practices. Thus, even though it is hard to talk of a thorough professionalization going on in Norwegian sport, it does seem that an established system of education could lead to the institutionalization of specific regimes of knowledge with respect to certain roles. Looking at the third sport occupation—the athletes—it seems misplaced even to assume that there is a specific knowledge present. In conclusion then, it seems pertinent to claim that the building of specific regimes of knowledge is occurring, but that a thoroughgoing professionalization is unlikely to take place within Norwegian sport.

In light of the main issues discussed in this paper, the above points have both positive and negative sides. On a very general level, paid work often implies the establishment of regimes of knowledge, and, without referring to specific topics, it is difficult to say how they would influence voluntary sport organizations. But it is clear that when such a process takes place it will move the balance of power away from volunteers, and this would most probably be interpreted as a questionable development. On the other hand, it might also have certain positive effects with respect to the actual running of the organizations and the activities supported by them.

### **VOLUNTEERS AND PAID WORKERS IN DIFFERENT SPORT ORGANIZATIONS: A MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS**

So far, the results have referred to voluntary and professional work invested in sport organizations in general, and the main conclusion has been that voluntary work is fundamental to these organizations. However, the challenge is to draw a more complex and nuanced picture: What kinds of organizations are respectively based on voluntary and professional works? Which characteristics are important to explain such differences? In this section the status of voluntary and paid work and how it varies between different kinds of sport organizations is studied in terms of a multivariate analysis of the following variables discussed below.

According to Danish (Ibsen, 1992) and German (Heinemann and Schubert, 1992) studies, there are many factors explaining sport organizations' respective dependency on voluntary and professional works. Both studies emphasize the importance of the size of the organization: the larger the organization, the fewer volunteers and the more paid workers (relatively speaking). Thus, one variable is the number of members in each organization. Both studies also highlight that the homogeneity of clubs—the composition of clubs members with respect to gender and age—influences voluntary efforts: the more homogeneous, the easier it is to involve volunteers. And thus, in this paper, two variables are applied to reflect, respectively, the proportion of boys/men and members beyond 13 years in each club. Ibsen proposes a more detailed thesis with respect to the kind of activities that further voluntarism: “The investment in voluntarism is larger in clubs with competitive and elite sport and in organizations also having non-sportive activities” (1992, p. 200). That is, the more competitive clubs have greater access to voluntary work. To capture this, in this paper, the leaders of the sport organizations were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 to 7 how important “participation and social aspects” (=1) and “competition” (=7) were for their organization. Ibsen, concerned with an organization's autonomy (especially with respect to the market), also suggests that the willingness to volunteer correlates positively with level of autonomy. Hence, three measures of autonomy are applied in this paper: commercial income per member, income from public actors per member, and income from member fees per member. Heinemann and Schubert in their research found a correlation between

the age of an organization and voluntary involvement: the younger the club, the easier to mobilize volunteers. Accordingly, the age of the organization is included as a variable in this paper.

In addition, this paper includes two other variables. As it seems reasonable to assume that owning sport facilities will influence how to organize and run an organization, ownership (or not) of facilities is included as an independent variable. It is also interesting, in addition to size, to see whether there are differences between multisport and single-sport clubs. This variable is simply a measure of how many groups there are within a sport organization.

Moreover, because there are various ways to measure “voluntarism,” and there are reasons to assume that these measures behave differently in the following analyses, five dependent variables are included: (a) voluntary work as a proportion of the total amount of work performed in each sport organization; (b) total amount of voluntary work invested per week in the organization; (c) total amount of professional work invested in the organization; (d) amount of voluntary work invested in the organization per member per week; and (e) amount of professional work invested in the organization per member. The results of the analyses are presented in Table 6.

An interesting result, given the small sample, is that a substantial part of the variance is explained in the models (between 23% and 53%) and that so many independent variables actually have a statistically significant effect.

For the first independent variable—voluntary work as proportion of all work—both size and “single-sport club versus multisport club” have an effect, and they are opposites; the larger the club, the less voluntary work—but multisport clubs are, on average, more voluntary than single-sport clubs. Apart from these variables, the only significant variable is commercialization, suggesting that the more commercialism, the less voluntarism (as proportion of all work).

For the total sum of voluntary work invested in an organization, the only significant explanatory variable is size; the larger the club, the more voluntary work. For the total amount of paid work size is important, but also commercial incomes have a positive effect on paid work. There is also a clear effect indicating that professional work is more common in single-sport clubs than in multisport clubs. Together these variables explain 53% of the variance associated with the total amount of professional work.

The most interesting variable is perhaps voluntary work invested per member, and here five variables do have a significant effect. First, male proportion and youth (under 13 years) proportion both have importance for voluntarism; in effect, more voluntary work is performed in male youth sport clubs. Moreover, it also seems that emphasizing competitive results relative to social participation is conducive to voluntarism. Commercial income goes together with voluntary work, but membership income distracts volunteers. In the case of voluntary work per member, size has no effect. For professional work per member, two variables stand out as important: size and commercial income.

**Table 6.** Regressing Various Measures of Voluntarism and Paid Work on a Selection of Explanatory Variables<sup>a</sup>

	Voluntary work, proportion	Voluntary work, total	Paid work, total	Voluntary work per member	Paid work per member
Size	-0.02***	0.17***	0.09***	-0.000	0.02***
Single-sport vs. multisport org.	8.2**	19.8	-14.9**	-0.03	-0.02
Age of organization	0.08	0.70	-0.2*	-0.000	-0.00
Male proportion	7.9	25.2	-0.9	0.2**	-0.02
Under 13 years proportion	2.8	36.7	-6.4	0.3**	0.02
Participation vs. competition	-0.40	2.7	1.2	0.04**	-0.000
Commercial income	-4.66***	16.2	6.5**	0.06*	0.02***
Public income	-4.70	74.8	6.8	-0.03	0.05*
Membership income	0.07	-0.61	0.14	-0.3**	0.00
Constant	81.8***	-95.6	12.3	-0.00	0.02
R <sup>2</sup>	0.27	0.24	0.52	0.20	0.23

<sup>a</sup>Nonstandardized regression coefficients.

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

This multivariate analysis clearly shows how complex the question of voluntary work in sport organizations has become. Viewing voluntarism–professionalism as a zero-sum game where the one increases at the cost of the other misconstrues the phenomena: there are several ways to analyze the position of voluntarism within sport organizations. The various dimensions of voluntarism are influenced in different—sometimes opposite—ways by the independent variables. This points toward the need for more studies in this field to see the degree to which the phenomena described here have effect on other aspects of running a sport organization, and how they might have bearing on the individuals operating within these organizational constraints.

### CONCLUDING COMMENTS

After presenting some central characteristics of voluntary sport organizations and discussing some of the normative visions associated with civil society and voluntary organizations, the empirical analyses in this paper produced a rather multifaceted picture of the extent and composition of voluntary and professional work in Norwegian sport organizations. In more than 68% of Norwegian sport clubs, all work is done by volunteers, and in an additional 20% of the clubs, more than 90% of the work is performed by volunteers. In short, Norwegian sport organizations are based on voluntary work. It was found that 45 hr of voluntary work is invested in the average club per week, that is, 17 min per member per week. Comparable numbers for professional work is 6 hr per club per week, that is, 1.2 min per member per week.

In an attempt to differentiate between various measures of voluntary work and various kinds of club characteristics, a rather complex picture emerges. Among the most interesting results, and almost paradoxically, it was found that with increased commercialization the proportion of voluntary work as part of the total amount of work decreases at the same time as the amount of voluntary work invested per member increases. This points to a blend of volunteering and commercialization that is very interesting, and that blurs a common view of the relation between the two being a zero-sum game. The case is, probably, that voluntary work is applied to generate commercial income (market income, in contrast to public or member income). This makes it relevant to speak of a certain kind of voluntary–commercialization (Enjolras, 2001), and a central topic for future research must be to study in more detail what this form of mixed economy (or mixed volunteering) actually implies.

A detailed interpretation of these empirical findings in light of the theoretical perspectives presented earlier in the paper would require time-series and multi-level data—and without these any conclusions have to be rather explorative and speculative. Nonetheless, five factors are worth mentioning here.

First, even though the data does not address the issue, the common wisdom of there being an increased amount of paid work does seem acceptable, at least against a broader historical background. Second, the study nevertheless shows that voluntary work is the foundation of voluntary sport clubs. Third, there are important differences between sport organizations when it comes to the status of voluntary and paid works. Fourth, the situation of voluntarism/paid work/professionalism seems to be more complex than widely assumed, and is not a zero-sum game. Against such a background, the best conclusion is neither to state that there is a massive process of professionalization, nor to state that the voluntary foundation of sport organization is unaffected by professionalization, but to say that there is a kind of differentiation going on. This implies that the status of voluntarism/professionalism varies significantly between various clubs. Fifth, in light of the theoretical discussion of professionalization, it is also worth emphasizing that a true professionalization is neither what is happening, nor what is expected to happen in the field of sport in the future. A more fruitful approach is one that would differentiate more clearly between voluntarism, paid work, and professionalization, and then study how various regimes of knowledge imply shifts in power coalitions in the field of voluntary organizations.

Beyond this, it is possible to speculate on how a possible differentiation with respect to voluntarism/professionalization might influence other aspects of the life of voluntary organizations. If the running of a voluntary organization is increasingly dependent upon people with specific formal knowledge, this could present a threat to many of the characteristics of voluntary organizations discussed earlier. Professionalization might weaken such organizations' ability to fulfil their more social functions. Ordinary members' ability to influence the organization could be disturbed, and the possibility for oligarchic, hierarchic, and bureaucratic organizations tendencies could increase. Dependence on formal knowledge might also decrease the autonomy of voluntary organizations, making them more dependent on state and market actors. At the same time, however, it is also important and necessary to realize that increased knowledge also enhances the ability to develop effective organizations.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have received fruitful comments to earlier versions of this paper from Bernard Enjolras, Bjarne Ibsen, Håkon Lorentzen, and *Voluntas'* reviewers.

### REFERENCES

- Arnold, P. J. (1992). Sport as a valued human practice: A basis for the consideration of some moral issues in sport. *J. Philos. Educ.* **26**: 237–256.
- Breivik, G. (1998). Sport in high modernity: Sport as a carrier of social values. *J. Philos. Sport* **25**: 103–118.



- Cachay, K., and Thiel, A. (2000). *Soziologie des Sports*, Juventa, Weinheim.
- Coakley, J. (2001). *Sport in Society: Issues & Controversies*, McGraw-Hill, Boston.
- Curtis, J. E., Baer, D. E., and Grabb, E. G. (2001). Nations of joiners: Explaining voluntary association membership in democratic societies. *Am. Sociol. Rev.* **66**: 783–805.
- Dierker, H., and Wadsack, R. (2000). Ehrenamt: Chancen und Probleme. *DVS-Inf.* **15**: 9–14.
- Dietrich, K., and Heinemann, K. (eds.) (1999). *Der Nicht-Sportliche Sport*, XOX Verlag, Jesteburg.
- Douglas, J. (1987). Political theories of nonprofit organizations. In: Powell, W. (ed.), *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
- Dølvik, J. E. (1990). *Idrett, fritid og organisering* [Sport, leisure, and organization], Oslo, FAFO-rapport nr. 99, Oslo, Norway.
- Elias, N., and Dunning, E. (1986). *Quest for Excitement*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Enjolras, B. (2001). *Community-Based Economy, Market and Democracy*, Report 6, Institute for Social Research, Oslo, Norway.
- Enjolras, B., and Seippel, Ø. (2001). *Norske idrettslag 2000: Struktur, økonomi og frivillig innsats* [Norwegian Sport Organizations 2000: Structure, economy, and volunteering], Report 4, Institute for Social Research, Oslo, Norway.
- Goksøy, M. (1994). Norway and the World Cup: Cultural diffusion, sportification and sport as a vehicle for nationalism. In: Sugden, J., and Tomlinson, A. (eds.), *Hosts and Champions: Soccer Cultures, National Identities and the USA World Cup*, Arena, Aldershot, UK.
- Goksøy, M. (1998). The popular sounding board: Nationalism, “the people” and sport in Norway in the inter-war years. In: Meinander, H., and Mangan, J. A. (eds.), *The Nordic World: Sport in Society*, Frank Cass, London.
- Gutmann, A. (ed.) (1998). *Freedom of Association*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Habermas, J. (1987). *The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. 2. Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, Beacon Press, Boston.
- Hansmann, H. (1987). Economic theories of nonprofit organization. In: Powell, W. (ed.), *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
- Harris, J. C. (1998). Civil society, physical activity, and the involvement of sport sociologists in the preparation of physical activity professionals. *Sociol. Sport J.* **15**: 138–153.
- Hartmann-Tews, I. (1999). Von der Passion zur Profession? Die Entwicklung sport-bezogener Berufe in Licht soziologischer Theoriebildung. In: Hartmann-Tews, I. (ed.), *Professionalisierung und Sport*, Czwalina Verlag, Hamburg, Germany.
- Heinemann, K. (ed.) (1999). *Sport Clubs in Various European Countries*, Hofmann Verlag, Stuttgart, Germany.
- Heinemann, K., and Schubert, M. (1992). *Ehrenamtlichkeit und Hauptamtlichkeit in Sportverein*, Verlag Karl Hofmann, Schorndorf.
- Heinemann, K., and Schubert, M. (1994). *Der Sportverein. Ergebnisse einer repräsentativen Untersuchung*, Verlag Karl Hofmann, Schorndorf.
- Hirschman, A. O. (1970). *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Horch, H. (1994a). On the socio-economics of voluntary organizations. *Voluntas* **5**: 219–230.
- Horch, H. (1994b). Does government financing have a detrimental effect on the autonomy of voluntary associations? Evidence from German sports clubs. *Int. Rev. Sociol. Sport* **29**: 269–285.
- Ibsen, B. (1992). *Frivilligt arbejde i idrætsforeninger*, DHL/systeme, København.
- Ibsen, B. (1997). Fordærver pengene foreningerne? *Politica* **29**: 49–61.
- Ketab, G. (1998). The value of association. In: Gutmann, A. (ed.), *Freedom of Association*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Kirkpatrick, M. J., Beebe, T., Mortimer, J., and Snyder, M. (1998). Volunteerism in adolescence: A process perspective. *J. Res. Adolesc.* **8**: 309–332.
- Lawler, E. J. (2002). Micro social orders. *Soc. Psychol. Q.* **65**: 4–17.
- Maguire, J. (1999). *Global Sport: Identities, Societies, Civilization*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Michels, R. (1962 [1915]). *Political Parties*, The Free Press, New York.
- Morgan, W. J. (1994). *Leftist Theories of Sport: A Critique and Reconstruction*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana.
- Olstad, F. (1987). *Norsk idretts historie: Forsvar, sport, klassekamp 1861–1939*, Aschehoug, Oslo, Norway.
- Pitsch, W., and Emrich, E. (2000). Veränderungen des Umfangs hauptamtlicher Tätigkeit in Sportvereinen im Vergleich verschiedener empirischer Erhebungen. *DVS-Inf.* **15**: 15–20.

- Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* **24**: 1–24.
- Putnam, R. D. (1992). *Making Democracy Work*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon & Schuster, New York.
- Rittner, V. (1995). Sport in der Erlebnisgesellschaft. In: Allmer, H., and Schulz, N. (eds.), *Erlebnissport — Erlebnis Sport*, Academia Verlag, Sankt Augustin.
- Roche, M. (1993). Sport and community: Rhetoric and reality in the development of British sport policy. In: Binfield, J. C., and Stevenson, J. (eds.), *Sport, Culture and Politics*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, UK.
- Schofer, E., and Fourcade-Gourinchas, M. (2001). The structural contexts of civic engagement: Voluntary association membership in comparative perspective. *Am. Sociol. Rev.* **66**: 806–828.
- Skirstad, B. (1999). Norwegian sport at the crossroad. In: Heinemann, K. (ed.), *Sport Clubs in Various European Countries*, Hofmann Verlag, Stuttgart, Germany.
- Skocpol, T., Ganz, M., and Munson, Z. (2000). A nation of organizers: The institutional origins of civic voluntarism in the United States. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* **94**: 527–546.
- Slack, T. (1997). *Understanding Sport Organizations: The Application of Organization Theory*, Human Kinetics, Champaign, IL.
- Stone, G. P. (1981). Sport as community representation. In: Lüschen, G., and Sage, G. H. (eds.), *Handbook of Social Science of Sport*, Stipes, Champaign, IL.
- St.meld.nr.14 (1999–2000). *Idrettslivet i endring*, Kulturdepartementet, Oslo, Norway. [Government Report to Parliament].
- Tamir, Y. (1998). Revisiting the civic sphere. In: Gutmann, A. (ed.), *Freedom of Association*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Taylor, C. (1995). Invoking civil society. In: Taylor, C. (ed.), *Philosophical Arguments*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Thibault, L., Slack, T., and Hinings, B. (1991). Professionalism, structures and systems: The impact of professional staff on voluntary sport organization. *Int. Rev. Sociol. Sport* **26**: 83–99.
- Torgersen, U. (1981). *Profesjonssosiologi*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, Norway.
- Walzer, M. (1992). The civil society argument. In: Mouffe, C. (ed.), *Dimensions of Radical Democracy*, Verso, London.
- Walzer, M. (1998). On involuntary action. In: Gutmann, A. (ed.) *Freedom of Association*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Warren, M. E. (2001). *Democracy and Association*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Williams, R. (1961). *The Long Revolution*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Wilson, J. (2000). Volunteering. *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* **26**: 215–240.
- Wollebæk, D., Selle, P., and Lorentzen, H. (2000). *Frivillig innsats: Sosial integrasjon, demokrati og økonomi* [Voluntary work: Social integration, democracy, and economy], Fagbokforlaget, Bergen, Norway.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.