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Active ageing: prospects and pitfalls

• Demographic ageing
• Active ageing
  – Integration into productive activities such as paid and volunteer work
• My focus: voluntary work
• Advantage for individuals and for society
  – Individuals: it is healthy and leads to societal integration
  – Society: unmet social needs can be covered
• Precondition:

• Seniors are able and willing to participate

• The voluntary sector is able and willing to absorb seniors (voluntary sector may be marked by entrenched notions of chronological age)
Research questions:

• Which resource-related, socio-economic and individual features characterize the senior volunteers?
• What are their reasons for participating in volunteer work?
• In which parts of the volunteer sector do seniors carry out volunteer work?
• What is the potential to strengthening voluntarism amongst seniors?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voluntarism</th>
<th>Denmark (5.66 million)</th>
<th>Italy (60 million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of voluntary organizations</td>
<td>82,000</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of participation among adult population</td>
<td>40 %</td>
<td>2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic value</td>
<td>2 % of GDP</td>
<td>0.11 % of GDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth in older volunteers (between 2004-2012)</td>
<td>30 -&gt; 37 %</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Denmark – Italy compared

• DK: large, but very decentralized welfare state; responsive to local needs. Boundaries between the state and voluntarism are blurred (voucher-system).

• DK is a very egalitarian society (not long distance from top to bottom of society). High levels of social trust and high levels of self-esteem (Danes do not feel that other people low down upon you).

• DK: low degree of regulation and bureaucratization of the voluntary sector
  – No specific laws on volunteering
  – No policies on volunteering in older age
RQ1: Which resource-related, socio-economic and individual features characterize senior volunteers?

- International literature shows that voluntarism among seniors are preconditioned by several factors:

- Senior volunteers are resourceful, i.e. they are well educated, a good income, a strong socio-economic position, integrated in strong social networks, are in good health and have a positive self-image
• Denmark is an out-layer:
• Standard predictors do not work. There is a great equality in voluntarism amongst Danish seniors
• Health and social networks, however, do play a minor role.
• Help to explain why 37 % of seniors between 65-80 are engaged in voluntary work
RQ2: What are their reasons for participating in volunteer work?

• In international literature several reasons for volunteering are given:
• People engage in volunteerism to feel better about themselves.
• People engage in volunteerism in order to improve their position in the community; i.e. the motives are selfish or career-oriented.
• People engage in volunteerism in order to do something for others; i.e. volunteerism can be grounded in altruistic or community-oriented motives.
Motives for participating in volunteer work for different age groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motive</th>
<th>≤ 29</th>
<th>30-44</th>
<th>45-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... that you, as a volunteer, feel better about yourself?</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... that you can develop contacts that can help you later in your working life?</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... that it is good to be able to document having done volunteer work?</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... that you, as a volunteer, display compassion towards those who are worse off than yourself?</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... that you, as a volunteer, can do something that is important for the local community?</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† p < 0,1; * p < 0,05; ** p 0,01; *** p < 0,001
• Younger age groups place great emphasis on self-centered (or self-expressive) reasons and view volunteer work as a means to position themselves better in other contexts (as part of career planning)

• Seniors place relatively greater emphasis on self-development and community-oriented reasons.

• => Seniors are interested in becoming volunteer in different sectors than you volunteers

• Is there a demand for seniors – and where?
RQ3: In which parts of the volunteer sector do seniors carry out volunteer work?

- Young people are involved in sports etc.
- Seniors are involved in areas such as culture, social work (e.g. as visitors friends) and religion

- Gender differences amongst seniors:
  - Men (39.5 %): sports, recreation, environment, trade union activities, counselling and legal aid, politics and political parties
  - Women (33.9 %): social work
RQ4: What is the potential to strengthening voluntarism amongst seniors?

- 2012: 37 % of seniors (65-80 years of age) were engaged in voluntary work.
- Among those not engaged, 25 % report that they are interested in participating in voluntary work, if someone asked them to do so
- 12 % don’t know
- So, there is some potentials
Conclusion: how to mobilize potentials

• Denmark: a showcase for promoting active ageing
• Room for moving forward:
• Information campaigns/active encouragement may mobilise more seniors (+ more generally: combat inequality in access to voluntary sector)
• Demand must meet supply:
• Neccesary to expand areas in which senior volunteers are interested in becoming volunteers (altruistic voluntary work)
• How can this be done???
Thank you!