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**‘We Can Do It’: Community, Resistance, Social Solidarity, and Long-term
Volunteering at a Sport Event**

Elsa Kristiansen*, Berit Skirstad*, Milena Parent and Ivan Waddington*****

***Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Oslo**

**** University of Ottawa and Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Oslo.**

***** Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Oslo and University of Chester, UK.**

Corresponding author: Dr. Elsa Kristiansen, elsa.kristiansen@nih.no

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Abstract

Much research on volunteers has focused on who the volunteers are, and what motivates them on an individual level. This study, however, aims to contextualize the long-term commitment found in a whole community of volunteers and to explain this pattern of collective volunteering not in terms of individual motivations but in terms of broader social processes. Data gathered from interviews with volunteers in Vikersund, Norway, and the analysis of local and national press coverage in the years leading up to the 2013 World Cup in Ski flying in Vikersund suggest that long-term volunteering can be understood in terms of (i) a high level of social integration (socialization, institutionalization); (ii) the creation of a collective identity focused around the ski flying hill; and (iii) the maintenance and reinforcement of strong community identity and social solidarity by local resistance to the perceived hostility of outside organizations. This focus on the broader community/social processes has implications for researchers examining sport event volunteers as well as managers of recurring sport events wishing to retain volunteers.

Keywords: Sports events, volunteers, community, solidarity, identity, ski flying.

‘We Can Do It’: Community, Resistance, Social Solidarity and Long-term Volunteering at a Sport Event

1. Introduction

For almost four decades, Vikersund, a small community in Norway with fewer than 3,000 inhabitants, has hosted major competitions in ski flying. The jumping hill is a major landmark of this small community, and the focus of much local pride, as it is currently the world's largest ski flying venue with a hill record and world record of 246.5 meters. More than one third of the people living in Vikersund volunteer whenever the community hosts an event. In the last three years, this community has hosted two World Cups and one World Championship; on each occasion, more than 1,000 local volunteers have provided the core of the labor force for the event. Our interest in these volunteers was triggered by what appeared to be a relationship between, on the one hand, the high level of local volunteering and, on the other, a high level of social integration and a strong local collective identity associated with local community resistance to what were seen as attempts by outside bodies, most noticeably the Norwegian National Ski Federation (NSF) and the International Ski Federation (FIS), to undermine the position of Vikersund as a major venue for ski flying (e.g., Bratvold & Gullord, 2013; Kaggstad, 2011).

The central objective of this paper is to contextualize the long-term commitment found in a whole community of volunteers and to explain this pattern of collective volunteering. To answer these questions, we initially took a traditional theoretical approach to volunteering in sports events, that of individual motivations (see the literature review in section 1.2). However, as data collection and analysis continued in this exploratory study, we found that the existing literature, which focused largely around the psychology of individual motivation, did not adequately explain what was occurring (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Suddaby, 2006). In exploring alternative explanations,

we drew upon a Durkheimian perspective which enabled us to shift the focus away from the individual level and towards broader social processes, particularly but not exclusively at the community level (see theoretical framework). We believe this approach contributes to the literature on volunteers by opening up a new and potentially fruitful area for investigation. We demonstrate the impact of broader social/community processes on individual behavior (volunteering) and volunteer retention/long-term volunteering. This approach highlights the key social processes (e.g., socialization, institutionalization) that helped create a collective/community identity based on pride and solidarity, which in turn was sustained and reinforced through continued engagement (volunteering) and resistance to perceived external 'powers' (i.e., the NSF and FIS). Our findings have implications for researchers, such as the fact that volunteering is a more complex topic of study than simply examining individual characteristics, and implications for managers, such as the need to understand the local context not only to attract volunteers but also to retain them. Before turning to these findings, we present the unique history of the ski flying venue and its place in the local community as an essential prelude to understanding volunteering in Vikersund.

1.1 Historical Background

The first normal hill jumping competition in Vikersund took place in 1936, when the winner jumped 86 meters (Drolsum, Flattum, & Lund, 1994). Thirty years later the first ski flying hill competition was held following a campaign by the local community, led by prominent people such as the founder of the hill, who was also the director of a ski factory (Hegtun, 2011). The NSF, which was a very conservative organization, opposed attempts to modernize the traditional ski jump (Drolsum et al., 1994); despite this opposition, Vikersund built what was Norway's first ski flying venue (and the only one in the Nordic countries). Over the years, Vikersund has hosted the World Championship four times (1977, 1990, 2000

and 2012), World Cup events nine times (1980, 1983, 1986, 1995, 1998, 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013), and five world records have been set on the hill.

The difference between ski jumping and ski flying is the inrun and the pitch. Ski flying hills have a hill size of over 185 meters. In Vikersund, the hill size is 225 meters. In comparison, normal hills have a hill size of 85 to 109 meters (FIS, 2013). Building and updating such a venue is expensive. As such, there is a shared ownership of the venue; the ski jumping facility is owned by the Foundation Vikersund Jumping Centre, which in turn is owned by the municipality, the county and Vikersund sports club. In particular, the ownership by the sports club, of which all the different sports in the community are members, gives local people a sense of ownership in the jumping hill. Furthermore, any financial surplus from events is divided among the non-governmental organizations which the volunteers represent.

Hosting many sports events over several decades, Vikersund has assumed a position of international sporting prominence, which is unusual for a small town. Associated with this, the local community has developed what may be described as a ski jumping culture, while the ski jumping hill has become a focus of local community pride and identity. This became very apparent a few years ago when the status of the Vikersund jumping hill as the national venue for ski flying was threatened due to Oslo's application for the 2011 World Championships. Powerful groups within the Norwegian skiing community wanted to build a new national arena for ski jumping in Rødkleiva, just outside Oslo. The new plan was to build an ordinary jumping hill first for the 2011 World Championship, and then extend it out to the ski flying hill. The plan was that Rødkleiva would replace both Holmenkollen (the national pride and most visited tourist attraction in Norway) and Vikersund. This plan was adopted by the NSF in May 2005. However, after strong protests, especially from Vikersund, the decision was

overturned in June 2008, and both Holmenkollen and Vikersund underwent extensive rebuilding instead.

The development of the Vikersund jumping hill has faced other challenges over the years. One of these relates to the economic costs, particularly for a small community, of keeping a venue such as Vikersund at the required level for international competition. Hosting a major event does not necessarily boost the local economy (Mules & Faulkner, 1996). Especially in the 1990s, major events generated little profit, even though labor costs were minimized by the large number of volunteer staff, as the major source of income – the TV revenues – went not to the local community in Vikersund but to the NSF (Kaggestad, 2011).

In addition, these local struggles have been further complicated by developments within ski flying at the international level. In recent years, several world records in ski flying have been set in Planica (Slovenia), which emerged as a major competitor to Vikersund as the world's best ski flying hill. The extended Vikersund jumping hill, it might be noted, was built out to the maximum length allowed and designed as a blueprint from Planica and, in 2011, a new world record of 246.5 meters was set at Vikersund.

The development of this small town into an international center of sporting excellence has not been simple or unproblematic, but problems and obstacles have been met by everyone, from ordinary volunteers to the three symbolic and/or organizational leaders and contributors: the leader of the organizing committee of the event, a resourceful local entrepreneur, and the vice president of competition (Kaggestad, 2011). What is clear is that the local community has remained a highly integrated community with local pride and loyalty focused largely around the ski hill, and that this sense of community has been further reinforced by what was seen as a common external threat, almost as if they were involved in a war against an external enemy. Although war, of course, constitutes a much more serious

threat to communities, the analogy is not entirely irrelevant; indeed, what has become the local Vikersund slogan – ‘We can do it’ – was actually a war time slogan from 1943 designed to boost morale and inspire women to work harder.

1.2 Literature Review

Conventional approaches to understanding volunteering have usually centered around identifying psychological processes which can be loosely summed up under the heading of motivation, with studies typically seeking to identify motives for volunteering and the personal rewards/satisfactions which volunteers gain from volunteering (Allen & Shaw, 2009; Downward, Lumsdon, & Ralston, 2005; Farrell, Johnston, & Twynam, 1998; Love, Hardin, & Koo, 2011; Skirstad & Hanstad, 2013; Strigas & Jackson, 2003; Williams, Dossa, & Tompkins, 1995; Wollebæk, Skirstad, & Hanstad, 2012). Such an approach is not unproblematic for it has often been argued that ‘motivation’ is an overused and vague term (Roberts, 2012). Nevertheless, what is clear is that motivational processes, however defined, are psychological processes, which differ from one person to another such that the motives of those who volunteer are likely to be different from those who do not volunteer.

In addition to research on individuals’ motivations, researchers have also examined ‘successful’ volunteer management programs and the management of relationships between paid staff and volunteers (e.g., Chanavat & Ferrand, 2010; Costa, Chalip, Green, & Simes, 2006; Parent & Slack, 2007). These individual and organizational approaches – even allowing for definitional looseness – may be useful in helping us to understand why some people volunteer while others do not and, similarly, why some people who volunteer will continue to do so while others will find volunteering less rewarding and may not volunteer again (see also Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013).

However, sports events continue to lose upwards of 30% of volunteers during the event, and retention remains a problem. Despite this problem, there appears to be little

academic literature on long-term volunteers, and we want to fill this void. In contrast to research showing a trend in volunteering away from traditional volunteerism towards a more individualized form of volunteerism (e.g., Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2004; Wollebæk et al., 2012), this case seems to indicate that there are communities where traditional volunteerism is still found. Perhaps our observations in Vikersund describe what Hustinx and Meijs (2011) call the re-embedding of volunteers, a process which goes beyond individual motivation to wider community processes and which may, at least partially, counter the individualizing processes in society. In understanding this process, the context becomes important (cf. Pettigrew, 1987). Policy makers have used volunteering to enhance social cohesion and social inclusion, as well as to develop community engagement (Hustinx & Meijs, 2011). Some researchers claim that to host an event leads to greater subjective well-being (Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010; Pawlowski, Downward, & Rasciute, 2013). Researchers have considered national pride (Hallmann, Breuer & Kühnreich, 2013; De Bosscher, Bingham, Shibli, Van Bottenburg, & De Knop, 2008), but local pride has thus far not been systematically investigated.

Finally, Byers (2013) recently used a critical realist perspective in her research on volunteering in sport clubs. She argues that much of the sport volunteering research has been underpinned by a polarity of positivist and interpretivist methodologies which has contributed to narrow ontological perspectives of the sport volunteering phenomenon. By investigating long-term voluntarism and with a focus on the social context, she concludes that volunteering is a complex process which involves much more than individual motivations and that it is highly contextual (socially, temporally, etc.). Although Byers uses a different theoretical/methodological approach from that which underpins the study reported here, her work nevertheless has some synergy with our investigation which examines the social and historical context in which the volunteers operate in an annual sport event.

2. Theoretical Approach

Based on the above, an individual-centered approach does not address the key question which arises in relation to the pattern of long-term volunteering in Vikersund, namely the unusually high level of volunteering within that community. We situate our study as one which considers the local context in understanding the persistence of long-term volunteering for a recurring sport event. Thus, what is needed is an approach that focuses on social (local/community) processes. In order to set the problem out more clearly, we found it useful to revisit one of the classic studies of sociology, Emile Durkheim's *Suicide*.

The starting point for Durkheim was his observation that the suicide rate in some countries is higher than that in other countries, while groups within nations – for example different religious groups, or people of different marital status – also have higher or lower rates which remain relatively constant over time. Durkheim set himself the task of explaining these systematic variations in what he called the 'social rate of suicide'. Durkheim did not focus on processes at the level of the individual – for example, the psychological characteristics of individuals, or mental illness – for while such processes might help to explain why some individuals rather than others commit suicide, they could not explain the systematic variations in the *social rates* of suicide between groups; as Durkheim put it, 'We do not ... intend to make as nearly complete an inventory as possible of all the conditions affecting the origin of individual suicides, but merely to examine those on which the ... social suicide-rate depends' (Durkheim, 1951, p. 51). The social rate of suicide was, Durkheim demonstrated, a *social* phenomenon, and therefore the answer had to be sought in terms of *social* processes, rather than processes at the level of individual personalities. Durkheim argued that variations in the social rate of suicide between different groups had to be explained in terms of the differing structures of relationships within those groups, with levels of social integration being particularly important. Thus, as Durkheim's translator pointed out,

in seeking to explain why married people had lower rates of suicide than unmarried people, the ‘individual characteristics of the spouses is unimportant in explaining the suicide-rate; it is dependent upon the structure of the family and the roles played by its members’ (Simpson, 1951, p. 14). The question of why certain individuals, rather than others, commit suicide and the question of how one explains variations in the social rates of suicide are, as Durkheim pointed out, distinct questions, whatever relation may nevertheless exist between them (Simpson, 1951, p. 51).

In much the same way, the problem of why some individuals volunteer while others do not, which has been the focus of much research on volunteering and which has usually focused around questions related to individual motivation (Allen & Shaw, 2009; Downward et al., 2005; Farrell et al., 1998; Love et al., 2011; Skirstad & Hanstad, 2013; Strigas & Jackson, 2003; Williams et al., 1995; Wollebæk et al., 2012), is a very different question from the question which stands out as requiring explanation in the unusual case of Vikersund: not why some individuals in Vikersund volunteer while others do not but rather, how do we account for what we might call, after Durkheim, *the social rate of volunteering*, and specifically the unusually high level of volunteering within the community?

Finally, the sense of *communitas* which, as Chalip (2006) has noted, is often associated with major sporting events, may also be useful in shedding light on communities with exceptional patterns of volunteerism such as that in Vikersund. Building *communitas* results in social bonding. Chalip argued that the sport event may be merely a catalyst, in the sense that something that transcends sport is going on. This is called liminality.

It feels as if new energy has been injected into the communal atmosphere, an energy that can be shared by all. Social rules and social distinctions seem less important, and are sometimes suspended altogether. There is a heightened sense of community among those who are present (Chalip, 2006, p. 110).

Liminality and *communitas* foster social capital. This sense of community or *communitas* may come from different sources, such as identifying with a given sport subculture (cf. Green, 2001) or a particular community/place/nation (cf. Jinxia, 2010; Kim, Kim, & Odio, 2010; Ramshaw & Hinch, 2006).

3. Methods

Data were collected during the FIS World Cup Ski Flying in Vikersund, a one-off event with a mix of young and old volunteers that took place on 25-26 January 2013. All except two of the interviewed volunteers were very experienced, as Vikersund had previously hosted several World Cup events and the World Championships. In 2012, more than 60,000 spectators visited the Championships (Vikersund 2012) and there were 1,400 volunteers. During the World Cup event in 2013, 27,000 spectators visited Vikersund (DT, 2013), and it is estimated that there were approximately 1,000 volunteers.

3.1 Data Collection

Most previous sport event research has used quantitative methods (e.g. Coyne & Coyne, 2001; Doherty, 2009; Mac Lean & Hamm, 2007; Downward & Ralston, 2006; Skirstad & Hanstad, 2013; Wollebæk et al., 2012), but since we wanted to examine long-term volunteering in greater depth, we used a qualitative approach in this exploratory case study. The first two researchers made observations and conducted interviews before and during the event. In total, 15 volunteers were interviewed. The sample of interviewees was gathered on the basis of convenience and purposive sampling designed to ensure that volunteers with a range of responsibilities were included because of the possibility that volunteer commitment might be linked with type of volunteer tasks undertaken (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The interviewees came from accreditation, hospitality, parking, security, distribution, medical aid (logistics), the organizing committee, volunteers management, and food service (see Table 1 for more information).

[Insert Table 1 near here]

Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted when the volunteers had their breaks either outside, at the café, or near their volunteer post, whichever was convenient for the interviewees. The interviews were developed and conducted according to ethical guidelines and criteria outlined by Patton (2002). We tailored an interview guide, where most themes were shared across interviews, but with minor adjustments for interviewees with different responsibilities. The guide was drawn from the existing literature, which focuses largely on volunteers' motivation (Kristiansen, Skille, & Hanstad, 2014). However, we used a relatively open interview guide which enabled us to change focus as the responses from our interviewees consistently pointed towards the importance of community bonds for understanding the pattern of volunteering in Vikersund. The shift in focus in the interviews – a possibility within qualitative research (cf. Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) – was also consistent with the media attention the conflict received. As a result, the interview guide included: (a) general background information about who they were; (b) what being a volunteer means to them and how often they had done it before; and (c) their identity with the sport, the local community and national identity (see appendix 1). Probes and follow-up questions were used in order to further explore responses. Interviews lasted 20 to 35 minutes.

Field notes were written for one day of observation, and additional data were gathered from attendance at a team leader meeting the next day, and a study of the local newspaper in the year leading up to the event through the database, Retriever, which covers electronic material from all major newspapers in Norway. Newspaper articles provided reporter-based views of events and valuable information, including quotations and reactions from individuals speaking on behalf of key actors at the field level. We searched this database for documents on Vikersund and volunteers.

3.2 Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim. All relevant Vikersund and volunteer press coverage, and interview transcripts, were manually coded by the two authors who are native Norwegians. The raw data were content analyzed using the procedures recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994), focusing upon the themes of volunteering and identity. The two researchers conducted separate observations and coding, and the results were later compared and discussed until the researchers agreed. Themes, quotes and paraphrased quotes representing a meaningful point/thought were individually identified. Following this, the research group discussed and consensually validated the themes and quotations that were grouped into patterns of similar responses. A summary label for each category was then determined; these categories constitute our results presented below. Translation of the Norwegian quotes was done by the two native Norwegians, who are fully bilingual. The trustworthiness of the findings was improved by the use of a triangulated method, which involved interview data, documentary data and observations. Both field researchers have previous experience in interviewing volunteers at sport events. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that prolonged engagement, persistent observation and triangulation all increase the probability of credible findings. This research fulfils all these requirements.

4. Results

The findings revealed that the high level of long-term volunteering in Vikersund can be explained by (i) it being an institutionalized, social process that is linked to (ii) a strong collective identity, which is (iii) sustained and reinforced over time by building stakeholder relationships and through resistance to external ‘powers.’ More precisely, we found that the local community is characterized by a high level of social integration revealed in the willingness to become a volunteer (point 1); a key basis of this integration is the values and sentiments focused around the ski flying hill, which is a major focus of local pride and identity within the community as they see themselves as ‘underdogs’ (point 2); and that this

strong identification with the local community (*communitas*), and the associated high level of social solidarity, have been sustained and reinforced by local resistance to the perceived hostility of outside organizations (point 3). Each of the three aspects linked with long-term volunteering in Vikersund is described below.

4.1 The Social Process of Becoming a Volunteer in Vikersund

The level of commitment among residents of Vikersund – around one third of the community is regularly involved in a volunteering capacity with ski flying – makes Vikersund unusual, even by Norwegian standards. As one interviewee put it:

Most people who live here have the desire to make a contribution to the ski jump [venue and event]. The youngest kids cheer. As adolescents with alpine ski we had to prep the ski jump. And now, [with a sigh, when realizing that he has been a volunteer his entire life...] I am a volunteer [Male volunteer, 29].

The importance of the hill, and its centrality within the local community, has been institutionalized in some revealing local practices. For example, secondary school students who volunteer are not recorded as absent from school, as the schools approve their commitment to the local community; as one 17 year old male student put it, ‘the teachers seem to like that we contribute’. Thus a form of behavior – absence from school that is not illness-related – which would normally be regarded as deviance, is not only tolerated but encouraged within the local school system. This is, in effect, an institutionalized form of socialization into volunteering by young people.

Everyone involved in the event is made aware of the importance of the volunteers. The FIS race director, Walter Hofer, started his interview by stating that ‘we depend on volunteers and we need at least 300-400 people everywhere to build up a facility to host such an event’. Hofer added that Norway is unusual because of the Norwegians’ interest in sport: ‘Sport in Norway is not only a sport event, it is also culture, and it is an integrated part of

their (Norwegian) leisure time. Everybody is into sport, even as spectators'. The local organizing committee in Vikersund clearly recognizes the importance of the volunteers:

...before, during and after ... we get these reminders where they appreciate the work we do and underline it would have been impossible without us. I think that is great. I even wrote back to them about this last year [Female volunteer, 69].

The most striking finding to emerge from the data is that, for the people of Vikersund, being a ski jump venue volunteer involves much more than simply showing up for a particular one-off event. Among older volunteers, many of those in the age group between 50 and 75 work all year round at the jumping hill and its cafeteria: 'we try to keep everything in a good condition' [Female Volunteer, 55]. For such volunteers, there is a schedule with regular weekend work, and they also try to help out at weddings, graduation and other similar events held at the cafeteria with a magnificent view of the jumping hill. These individuals are, of course, a particularly valuable resource since they are very experienced and have a great deal of local knowledge. They are the 'stalwarts' in Nichol's definition (Nichols, 2005, pp. 32–33). This was also commented on by an experienced volunteer who had held leadership jobs during the World Championship in Nordic Skiing:

Here in Vikersund, you have an established group of volunteers who are used to making decisions and fixing things right away. There are many 'mini-bosses', you know [laugh]. It is a small village that makes the same people volunteer over and over again, it is amazing to observe.

Some of the stalwarts who wished to participate in ski jumping formed their own club ahead of the World Cup races in 1993 (Finsrud, 2011). The club is named after the current hill record in Vikersundbakken, and thus has borne the names of Club 171, Club 185, Club 194, Club 207, Club 219 and now Club 246. The members are, perhaps not surprisingly, highly committed volunteers who work weekly at the venue to support ski jumping

financially, and they travel together to ski flying events in the four other venues (Oberstdorf, Germany; Kulm, Austria; Planica, Slovenia; and Harrachov, Czech Republic). Some honorary members are also chosen; the patron and the local community's very own world champion (Ole Gunnar Fidjestøl) are among them. In 2011, the current world record holder in ski flying was made an honorary member. It is considered a great honor to become a member and, according to one interviewee, 'someone must almost die before we accept a new one' [Female volunteer, 75].

In order to understand the culture of volunteering in Vikersund, it is necessary to examine the relationships between the town and outside bodies, most notably the FIS and the NSF and the ways in which these relationships have shaped both the community of Vikersund and the self-image of its residents. Central to this is their sense of being an 'underdog' within the national and international ski community.

4.2 Collective Identity: Pride in being the Underdog

In his interview, the FIS race director, emphasized that ski flying is a relatively small sport or, as he put it, a 'niche sport'. Twenty nations competed in the 2013 World Cup in Norway, which, in the history of skiflying, is a large number. Ski jumping is usually a sport only a few European nations are committed to. By comparison, the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) has 209 member federations. Hofer argued that 'you cannot compare ski jumping with any other discipline' because ski jumping is limited geographically and to wintertime. In addition, the sport requires a special venue that cannot be used for anything but ski jumping; thus, it cannot be rented out to serve other purposes. And even in Norway, ski jumping is a relatively small sport; there are only 6000 registered ski jumpers, compared with 369,305 registered football players (NIF, 2013). Indeed, there are so few ski jumpers that the Norwegians have a saying: 'a ski jumping hill for every ski jumper'. In 2011, there were 384 people above 13 years old who had paid their license, while the

Ministry for Culture registered 714 ski jumps (Ministry of Culture, 2013). But currently, there is only one ski flying hill in Norway, at Vikersund. Ski jumping, and more particularly ski flying, is a relatively minor sport, which is perceived as being marginal even within the sport of skiing more generally. This marginality is further accentuated by the economics of major events for the major revenues from the rights of TV and marketing belong to FIS. The marginal economic status of ski jumping was emphasized by Hofer in his interview when he noted that 'ski jumping cannot manage on its own; such a sport needs support from industry, tourism, and mass sport. There is not much income from an event, it is a special situation'. It is this 'special situation', in the eyes of FIS, which is seen as an aspect of Vikersund's underdog status. As we document below, several incidents with FIS during the World Cup reinforced what volunteers considered to be the 'underdog' status of the Vikersund jumping hill, which was often described as the 'little brother' in the world of skiing.

It should be noted that, even though the people around the jumping hill in Vikersund consider it 'the little brother' in international ski jumping, this notion is not based on the actual size of the jumping hill, which is the largest hill in the world. It is based more on a feeling that FIS 'always' gives other ski flying venues additional advantages, and the perception that Vikersund was marginalized even within FIS (whether or not this is a correct perception) further reinforces local 'underdog' sentiments. As one volunteer put it:

Planica is in the pipeline to get a bigger ground ... I do not think Vikersund will be allowed to have jumps over 250 meters before they have developed the new ski flying venue. It's sort of mafia the way this works. Kulm, Oberstdorf, and Planica were built before Vikersund ... we are not among the big three, and I don't think the Austrians [i.e., Hofer] are fond of this ski jump venue [Female volunteer, 75].

This interview was conducted before the World Cup 2013 took place; during and after the event, the Norwegian media and newspapers reported more on the attitude of FIS (here

meaning Hofer) towards Norway than on the actual competition. This will be elaborated upon later.

Vikersund also has some clear local disadvantages due to the community's location in Norway. Vikersund jumping hill is situated 1½ hours' drive from the capital, Oslo, and is not easily accessible by road. It therefore has several factors working against an event becoming an economic success. However, the attempt to relocate the ski flying hill away from Vikersund had the effect of further mobilizing local sentiment to protect 'their' hill, as highlighted in this interview:

Since I was little and until now, and especially after the Rødikleiva incident in 2007, it is important to help as a volunteer. Actually, I think that incident became a positive boost among the volunteers here, and people feel that they are needed and therefore want to help because what they do matters [Male volunteer, 41].

As a result, volunteering in Vikersund involves much more than just showing up for the annual event; the volunteer group is characterized by a continual and on-going commitment both to the jump and to the local community. As one volunteer put it:

We are proud of this ski jump; there are so many people working both daily and weekly here, very devoted volunteers. These key people, who have been at the forefront of the facility for many years, have made Vikersund into the world's biggest ski flying jump right now [Male volunteer, 58].

Moreover, this sentiment was not limited to those who were born and brought up in Vikersund, but was effectively transmitted to 'newcomers.' Volunteers who had moved into the community as adults indicated that one of the first decisions they made was to become volunteers, for this was considered an important way of identifying with the local community. It was also a good way to get to know people and to help out because they were needed. 'I was here and looked at last year right after I moved, and I immediately felt that I

would like to be part of this. So this year I signed up as a volunteer and I am enjoying it' [Male volunteer, 23]. Such is the importance of volunteering as a central aspect of community life that one volunteer added reflectively: 'I don't think I have any friends that are not volunteers, we are all here' [Female volunteer, 55]. This communal commitment to volunteering is, of course, an immense resource for local event managers.

4.3 Sustaining and Reinforcing Collective Identity and the Need to Volunteer

The importance of the hill as a focal point of local identity and community solidarity was well expressed by one volunteer as follows: 'Obviously, the environment here is welded together around the ski flying hill' [Male volunteer, 29]. Particularly impressive is the fact that a 12-hour shift is not rare among volunteers; it is done because it is needed. Of course, it is also hard: 'Every year we say that we will never do it again, and here we go again' [Female 55, with a laugh].

Volunteers are also drawn from neighboring communities, in which there is also a strong local identification with the hill: 'This is the world's biggest jumping hill now, I'm quite proud that it is literally situated outside my home. It also helps that it is my club that started building the jumping hill' [Male volunteer 58]. The locals are proud of the jumping hill both due to its close proximity, and because they feel part of the historical struggle that made it a reality. One sentiment expressed by all the volunteers was that they all 'feel connected to the ski jump, and naturally I want to help' [Male volunteer, 53].

Some of the older volunteers also had dual responsibilities during the events; they were there partly because the companies for which they worked had provided goods or services prior to or during the event, but also because they wanted to be there as individual volunteers, as in the case of the following example:

Volunteer work is an important effort in this 'business' ... I work for cable TV, which is quite involved here [with equipment that is used by the broadcasting company

NRK], and I am a member of the shooting club who provides the night security, so I have also spent a night here [Male volunteer, 53].

Ski flying at Vikersund benefitted not only from the volunteer labor force but also from technical assistance and materials from local businesses. As a 41 year old male volunteer pointed out:

We are sponsored with money, cheap labor, free labor and machine power, but it is the entrepreneur who is the bedrock! The building we are in now [the huge cafeteria], the commentary building and rebuilding of ground has cost approximately 150 million NOK [approximately 20 million Euros], and I don't think this was subsidized by the government at all. By comparison, when Holmenkollen was rebuilt, it cost 1.8 billion NOK so you get the kind of perspective of the low costs; this is our entrepreneur in a nutshell [Male volunteer, 41].

Links between local schools and the competition organizers also foster community involvement from a young age. Schools are often invited to events and many young volunteers have been present at competitions since they were young children. As a result, key aspects of local community identity and culture associated with the hill are internalized from a young age. In addition, for the young volunteers the ability to make connections with possible future employers is an extra benefit, as key local employers are present: 'Last year I met many of the contractors in the area, and have worked for some of them the past year' [Male volunteer, 17]. However, it should be stressed that this was not his main reason for volunteering.

This strong identification with the ski flying hill has been reinforced by resistance to the perceived hostility of key outside organizations. A clear theme which emerged from the interviews was that there was a general perception among the volunteers that FIS is generally unsympathetic to, and excessively critical of, the organization and/or facilities at Vikersund;

these criticisms might involve anything from fences at the top of the ski jump which, FIS claimed, needed improvement, to the quality of the food served to the athletes. The perception of a lack of sympathy on the part of FIS towards Vikersund was also reinforced by a search of the newspaper coverage (e.g., Bråthen, 2013; Hegtun, 2011). The FIS decisions concerning the facilities at Vikersund were – rightly or wrongly – considered by interviewees as placing unreasonable obstacles in the way of the further development of Vikersund and were related to a local perception that FIS was more favorably inclined towards the facilities at Planica. This sentiment undoubtedly fed into and further reinforced the local feeling that Vikersund was the underdog. The difficult relationship between FIS and Vikersund was sometimes expressed in general terms, as when one interviewee said: 'I get very annoyed when people [FIS] do not give us the credit we deserve' [Female volunteer, 44], and can also be illustrated by reference to the following example.

The day before the 2013 World Cup started, FIS announced they would cancel the competition unless the Vikersund organizers improved the facilities. According to the newspaper *Nettavisen*, it was claimed at the team leaders meeting that Vikersundbakken was too big (Bratvold & Gullord, 2013). The technical delegate, Gabriel Gross, was quoted as saying that the transition at the bottom of the hill was too long and dropped too much. Along with race director Walter Hofer, he demanded that the Vikersund organizers make changes immediately. Norwegian newspapers wrote a great deal about the tense relationship between Vikersund and FIS, and noted 'Vikersund and FIS have never been best friends. On Thursday night the relations between the two hit rock bottom' (Bratvold & Gullord, 2013 ¶2). The CEO of the Vikersund Jumping Hill Company forcefully expressed his frustration in the newspapers. According to him, the hill had been prepared within the FIS guidelines, and a certificate had been issued by the FIS (Bråthen, 2013). Nevertheless, they had to hurry to rebuild the hill on Thursday night. In the same newspaper article, the reporter pointed out that

Planica had prepared its jumping hill in exactly the same way since 1977 (Bråthen, 2013). Volunteers whom we interviewed, as well as the media, repeatedly pointed to what they claimed were the different criteria which were applied to Vikersund and Planica. The resistance to FIS, together with the strong collective identity which was further reinforced by this resistance, was expressed well by the following interviewee:

I was really mad yesterday because ... they made us reorganize or they would cancel the event. Besides that, it's just fun to be here, show off the village as we do, and show everyone that we stand together as a group. Whatever they [i.e., FIS] find, 'we can do it!' Even if it means that we have to get 100 people out of bed at the middle of the night... [Female volunteer, 44]

Hofer, on the other hand, rejected these perceptions of the Vikersund volunteers, claiming that he and his staff were present at the different competitions in order to 'help' the organizers. He said:

We are in the same boat, we are not in opposition to the organizer, we are a part of the organization, and therefore there is no opposition at all ... Furthermore, ski flying is an outdoor sport, it is impossible to organize and plan for everything, it is a certain percentage that has to be improvised as you cannot plan for the weather, and then it is important how quickly you can react, how effectively you can react.

The volunteers did not take Hofer's response seriously. In their 'we can do it' philosophy, it was essential to resist what they saw as powerful external sources in the ski world who did not want Vikersund to write themselves into the history books as the first hill with a jump over 250 meters. The people of Vikersund saw themselves as 'victims of a political ski game' (Bråthen, 2013, p. 18).

As we noted earlier, we make no judgment as to the accuracy of the perception in Vikersund that FIS deliberately placed obstacles in the way of Vikersund's development as a

venue for ski flying, or that FIS favored Planica. The accuracy of this perception is not the key issue; what is important is that this was widely believed in Vikersund. As Thomas and Thomas observed long ago, ‘If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences’ (1928, pp. 571–572). And a very real consequence of this perception was the resistance to the decisions of FIS which reinforced collective solidarity within Vikersund. This resistance to FIS, and the solidarity which it engendered, were nicely summed up by one interviewee who said that he and his friends had been talking about the above incident the night before the research interview took place: ‘We were actually talking about this last night; it may well be that he [i.e., Hofer] thought he could stop the race, but he had not yet met the volunteers’ [Male volunteer, 39].

Throughout the interviews, a consistent theme was the solidarity of the local community, which was defined partly in relation to the perceived threat from external organizations, and which found powerful expression in the commitment to hosting successful events and in the associated community sentiment: ‘We can do it’.

5. Discussion: Understanding Long-term Volunteering in Vikersund

Our findings indicate that the high level of long-term volunteering can best be understood in terms of the following: (i) volunteering is an institutionalized *social process* that is associated with (ii) a strong *collective identity* in the community, which has been (iii) *sustained and reinforced* over time by continued and ongoing volunteering activities (both at the ski hill and in the community in general), by building stakeholder relationships, and through resistance to external ‘powers.’

In relation to the social process of volunteering, it is clear that, for many in Vikersund, volunteering has become part of a shared lifestyle, revealed by their extraordinary and continuing commitment not just to skiing but to their local community. In this regard, it might be suggested that what is special about the ski flying volunteers in Vikersund is the

strong collective sentiment, the fact that Vikersund forms a strong ‘moral community’ in Durkheim’s terms, and this sense of community or *communitas* is both expressed in, and reinforced by, volunteering at the ski jump. Volunteering in Vikersund is therefore about much more than personalized, individualized motives for participation. Recent research has suggested a trend in volunteering away from traditional volunteerism towards a more individualized form of volunteerism, in which volunteers look for personal or individualized rewards from the volunteering experience, such as learning new skills, enhancing one’s CV or other career-related benefits (Skirstad & Hanstad, 2013). However, data from the volunteers in Vikersund indicate that traditional, community-based values, most notably local pride and a strong community identity, were key elements in the volunteering process; these values have been institutionalized within the local community and strongly internalized by local people.

We suggest that the ski flying event has helped to generate valuable public goods such as civic pride and community spirit (Johnson, Mondello & Whitehead, 2007). Vikersund’s culture was one where volunteering in the community is important, which builds community pride and a sense of *communitas* through socialization and institutionalization of values and practices.

Local pride and a strong community identity (point 2) were key elements in the volunteering process, in terms of recruitment, as well as sustaining and reinforcing volunteering. Thus, within Vikersund, volunteering is not a highly individualized activity but, rather, it is a way of expressing, celebrating and reinforcing one’s commitment to, and identification with, the local community. Moreover, the values associated with volunteering have become strongly established within local culture and, as we saw earlier, they are effectively passed on both to students within the local school system and to people who have moved into Vikersund from other areas. Volunteering has thus become institutionalized as a

central part of what – to use Durkheim’s phrase – might be called the ‘moral community’ of Vikersund and, as Durkheim noted in a different context, the values and beliefs associated with moral communities ‘are not merely received individually by all members of the group; they are something belonging to the group and they make its unity’ (Durkheim, 1954, p. 43).

However, the development of this collective identity was assisted by the perceived marginalization of the community by powerful external organizations (e.g., FIS) and trigger events such as the Rødkleiva incident. These aspects helped to bring the community together, build social bonds, foster a sense of *communitas*, and strengthen the local community’s sense of pride in their ski hill, all of which helped to develop further the culture of volunteering.

The strong local identity and the associated local solidarity should be seen in relation to what is perceived by the people of Vikersund as their ‘underdog’ status – expressed in the idea of Vikersund as the ‘little brother’. In this regard, it is clear from the data that the perceived hostility from these outside bodies had the effect of binding the local community together – of reinforcing local social solidarity – even more strongly in the light of a perceived threat from external organizations. Identities, whether individual or collective, are formed in relation to others and there is no doubt that the relationship between Vikersund and these external bodies – and in particular, the resistance from the former to the latter – has been a key component in the formation of local identity in Vikersund.

The ways in which this perceived external threat integrated the local community and generated highly effective forms of resistance can be seen in examples of local collective action, notably the successful campaign alongside other groups to oppose the proposal to build a new ski flying hill in Oslo and particularly in the collective, and again successful, last minute effort to restructure the ski jump in the face of the threat from FIS to cancel the World Cup.

In relation to the process of sustaining and reinforcing volunteerism in the community, our data point to the importance not only of a continual and ongoing commitment both to the event (the ski hill in this case) and to the community to foster recurring engagement and socialization (sustaining volunteering), but also to a focal point or issue that can rally the community – here the resistance to outside groups in regards to the community's beloved ski hill – as well as the tradition of volunteering, its history, in the community (reinforcing).

In considering the power balance between groups, it is important to note that, as Elias and Scotson (1965) pointed out, an important aspect of the power of any group is the degree to which it is integrated. Where a group is only loosely integrated, then its ability to organize collectively – that is, its power – is significantly reduced; where, however, a group is highly integrated, its ability to organize collectively, its power, is commensurably greater. In this regard, the self-perception of the people of Vikersund as underdogs functions to increase their solidarity and thereby, apparently paradoxically, to increase their power to mount effective resistance to perceived outside threats. It is this high level of solidarity, based in part on resistance, which, we suggest, underpins the local culture of volunteering and which is expressed in the slogan: 'We can do it!' In addition, embedding or institutionalizing the importance of volunteering in the community by building stakeholder relationships (e.g., relationships between the event organizers and the local schools) fosters engagement and commitment in the event and community.

In summary, this paper contributes to the literature by focusing on the wider social/community processes associated with long-term volunteering. Local pride and a strong community identity were key elements in the volunteering process. The volunteers' commitment to the ski jumping hill was a focal point, and an integral part, of their commitment to the local community; volunteering is a way of expressing, celebrating and

reinforcing one's commitment to, and identification with, the local community. Within this situation, perceived hostility from outside bodies served to further bind the community together, and to reinforce local social solidarity. This paper therefore highlights the importance of broader social processes not only for leveraging and legacy (cf. Chalip, 2006) but also for fostering volunteerism and for retaining volunteers in sport events (cf. Coyne & Coyne, 2001; MacLean & Hamm, 2007).

6. Conclusions

An important implication of this study, on both a theoretical and a practical level, is that, as Chalip (2006) has suggested, there is a need to pay more attention to the social value of sports events, rather than merely focusing on the economic aspects of event management and marketing, crowd control and risk and security management. Chalip pointed out that major sporting events can engender what he calls a 'liminoid space that can foster social value, particularly through a sense of *communitas*' – that is a sense of community – and he further suggests that the narratives, symbols, meanings and affects which are often associated with sporting events 'can then be leveraged to address social issues, build networks, and empower community action' (Chalip, 2006, p. 109); put slightly differently, *communitas* can 'foster social capital, and thereby strengthen the social fabric' (Chalip, 2006, p. 111). He suggests that event organizers might seek to enhance the social value of sports events, and suggests five strategies which they may use to foster *communitas*: enabling sociability, creating event-related social events, facilitating informal social opportunities, producing ancillary events and theming (Chalip, 2006, p. 113).

This study of volunteering in Vikersund suggests that sports events may indeed help to build networks and empower community action and that sports events may provide a context within which event attendees can 'probe, test, and cultivate their identity with reference to the social context' (Chalip, 2006, p. 111). Moreover, these community bonds are

significant on both a theoretical and a practical level since they facilitate the development of relationships across age, gender and social class categories that are not normally bridged outside the liminoid space of events (Chalip, 2006, p. 122).

In the case of Vikersund, this sense of *communitas* developed spontaneously at a local level, rather than being something which was deliberately fostered as an aspect of event management. The Vikersund experience suggests that it may be worthwhile to investigate further the dynamics of a host community in relation to volunteering and how these are associated with a sense of ownership of a sports event. These findings would assist sport event managers with the volunteer recruitment and management program.

It is to be hoped that this study might also open up a new area of research in relation to the study of volunteering. As we noted at the beginning of this paper, most research on volunteers has focused on psychological processes which can loosely be summed up under the heading of motivation, typically seeking to identify personal motives and personal rewards/satisfactions which volunteers gain from volunteering (e.g., Downward et al., 2005; Williams, et al., 1995). Of course we recognize this as an important area of study. But a central implication of this paper is that there is a different, and no less important, area of study in relation to volunteering which has been largely neglected. In this regard, we need to ask not just why do some people volunteer while others do not, but also why is it that some countries, and some areas within countries, have higher levels of volunteering than other countries and areas? This paper is a contribution to that discussion. It also supports Byers' (2013) argument that volunteering is a complex phenomenon which cannot be understood simply in terms of individual motivations and that the broader social context within which people volunteer has to be taken into account. It is significant that, although our approach uses a different theoretical and methodological perspective, we come to complementary conclusions.

We recognize that there are some methodological limitations of this exploratory case study. Much previous sport event research has used quantitative methods, often involving large samples (Farrell et al., 1998; Skirstad & Hanstad, 2013; Wollebæk et al., 2012). However, since we wished to probe in greater detail the relationships between wider social/community processes and people's experience of and commitment to long-term volunteering, we adopted a qualitative approach, based on a smaller number of in-depth interviews. The relatively small number of interviews may reduce the generalizability of our findings to other events. Another limitation may be that we do not know the precise impact that the historical development of ski jumping/flying in the Norwegian context has had on fostering a cohesive community in Vikersund, as opposed to the impact on community cohesion of the sport event as a distinct entity. Has it been the sports events that have fostered a cohesive local community or have the key processes been those relating to the local setting (broader factors), with the event being part of that broader context? Our case study suggests that while the event is a key component, a point of common focus and effort for the community, ongoing maintenance and reinforcement are needed – through continued volunteering, stakeholder relationships and trigger events (in this case, resistance to external powerful organizations) – to foster long-term volunteering. However, such explanations require further qualitative and quantitative analyses (e.g., to determine moderating and mediating effects) to elucidate this question. The strength of the present study is that it provides one of the first examinations of the relationship between broader community/social processes and the long-term commitment and retention volunteer.

To conclude, we suggest greater attention be placed on the importance of the community in relation to sport event volunteering. A multi-method approach could be used to study volunteerism in greater depth, for example, by conducting longitudinal research using interviews, narrative analyses, and quantitative measurements. Perhaps the distinctive

contribution of this paper involves refocusing the discussion away from an individual-centered analysis towards one that focuses much more on the broader context and community, demonstrating the relationship between these broader social processes and forms of behavior such as long-term volunteering and volunteer retention. For researchers, a key implication is that volunteering is a more complex topic of study than simply examining individual characteristics; for managers, a key implication is the need to understand the local context in order not only to attract volunteers but also to retain them.

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Table 1

The 15 interviewed volunteers and the FIS Race Director

Gender and age	Position	Relationship to Vikersund and the ski jump venue
Man 58	Parking	Local, volunteer since 1979
Man 53	Parking/security	Local, volunteer since 1982
Man 23	Parking	New resident, first time volunteer
Female 75	Food service	Local, volunteer since 1979
Female 55	Food service	Local the last 20 years, volunteer since 1994
Man 74	Security	Local, volunteer since 1970
Man 63	Security	Local, volunteer since 1983
Man 39	Medical aid	Local, volunteer for the fifth time
Man 17	Logistics/driver	Local, volunteer since 2011
Man 39	Logistics	Local, volunteer since 2011, second in command
Man 41	Organizational committee	Local, volunteer since 2011, second in command
Man 29	Accreditation	Local, volunteer for the fourth time
Female 69	Accreditation	Out of town, volunteer since 2011
Female 44	Hospitality	Local, volunteer since 2000
Male 68	Organizational manager	Experienced volunteer
Walter Hofer	Race director ski jumping	His first time in Vikersund was 1982

Appendix 1

Interview guide for volunteers

Background information

- Gender
- Year of birth
- Place of residence
- Level of education
- Profession

Role as a volunteer

- Can you describe your tasks as a volunteer?
- Have you any previous experience as a volunteer? If so, where and when?

The process of becoming a volunteer

- How were you recruited to this role as a volunteer?
- Which factors made you accept this role?
- Is volunteering something you learned at home? Were your parents volunteers?
- Do you feel that being a volunteer gives you some extra dimensions in life by:
 - Giving you a good feeling of making a contributing /being important
 - Social aspects (team spirit, your friends are volunteers here, etc.)
 - Material effects like clothing, souvenirs, partly paid, etc.
 - Your career:
 - Do you include this in your résumé/ CV?
 - Do you include this experience when you apply for jobs/ in job interviews?

Identity, voluntarism and community

When you work as a volunteer, what would you describe as the primary driving force behind this commitment? Prompt for the different aspects/issues, and in the end ask them what means the most to them. Ask whether it is because of:

- Social identity (to the local community) Vikersund? How much does it mean to you that this is happening in the local community?
- Do you feel that Vikersund gets the recognition for the work it does as an organizer from FIS?

- Is voluntarism an important part of the culture here in Vikersund?
- Organizational identity with skiing (or sport in general)?
- National identity (Norway as a sports /ski nation). Is it more fun to be a volunteer and contribute when Norwegian athletes are successful?

Before we end, do you have anything else to add?