

# Being a part of it: People with intellectual disabilities as volunteers in the Youth Olympic Games

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## ABSTRACT

During the Youth Olympic Winter Games event in Lillehammer, Norway, a group of students with intellectual disabilities worked as volunteers. The teachers of the class functioned in a social entrepreneurial manner, using the event to create social value for this particular group. Qualitative interviews were conducted with the group of students (n=12), and observations were made during the event. The students' teachers (n=3) and the head of volunteers (n=1) from the organizing committee were also interviewed for triangulation, thus verifying the interpretation of the data. This study demonstrated that social value was created through the practical tasks the students with intellectual disabilities were given, especially in relation to the Olympic context of the event, and the job itself was more important than those for whom they were doing it or why. Other important sources of social value were for the students to be outside of the classroom and to be cooperating and learning from each other within the group. Last, the students had the opportunity to aid and assist, instead of being aided and assisted, and to give something back to the local community.

## INTRODUCTION

Sports are employed increasingly as an entrepreneurial mechanism to promote important social issues such as developing a global society (Ratten, 2015). Creating a "better world" by finding solutions for social problems or inequality and, in particular, creating social value, are also the main hallmarks of social entrepreneurs (Dees, 2001; Guo

& Bielefeld, 2014; Helmsing, 2015; Sullivan Mort, Weerawardena, & Carnegie, 2003). Traditionally, social value is viewed as something that benefits people whose needs are not being met by any other means. Social entrepreneurs aim to create social value by stimulating societal change or meeting needs through a process of combining resources innovatively with the intent to explore and exploit opportunities to develop social value (Mair & Marti, 2006). According to Schenker, Gerrevall, Linnér, and Peterson (2014), sports are both suitable and capable of addressing and contributing to solving social problems and are used increasingly in this social entrepreneurial manner.

At the Youth Olympic Winter Games (LYOG) held in Lillehammer in 2016, several actors saw an opportunity to work as social entrepreneurs to create social value for various target groups (Undlien, 2017). According to Hulgård and Lundgaard Andersen (2014), social entrepreneurship is about creating social value by doing something new, with a high level of influence by participants and often with the involvement of elements of civil society such as the volunteer sector. By participating as volunteers in the LYOG, several foundations, organizations, and other actors were able to gain advantage and momentum for their entrepreneurial projects working toward social change and the creation of social value for their respective target groups (Undlien, 2017). Among these groups was a high school class for people with intellectual disabilities (ID).

Internationally, volunteerism has been used to promote the social inclusion of vulnerable groups in mega-sporting events such as the Commonwealth Games and the Olympic

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Games (Darcy, Dickson, & Benson, 2014; Nichols & Ralston, 2011). In a Norwegian context, promoting social inclusion through volunteerism is less common. For instance, at the FIS World Cross Country Championships in 2011, 16% of the volunteers were in a catch-all category, such as the unemployed, civil workers, conscripts, and those with disabilities. However, no distinctions were made among various groups within the category. Moreover, Norwegians have often been labeled the world champions of volunteering (Skille, 2012), and sports represents the largest arena for volunteer work in Norway, with a volunteer effort equivalent to 23,000 FTEs (St. Meld. nr. 39 (2006-2007)). Research shows that, within sports, people with disabilities are underrepresented as volunteers (Eimhjellen, 2011). Moreover, this research does not distinguish between people with intellectual disabilities (ID) and those with physical disabilities. Little is known about people with ID and volunteerism in sports (although some research on people with ID and volunteerism in other contexts has been conducted (Patterson & Pegg, 2009; Roker, Player, & Coleman, 1998).

People with ID as volunteers is new and not visible within the Norwegian sports context; thus, they are labeled “nontraditional” volunteers in this study. To discuss the nontraditional, it is necessary to first consider the traditional. According to Folkestad, Christensen, Strømsnes, and Selle (2015), the traditional Norwegian volunteer is a highly educated, married man between the ages of 35 and 49, with children and a high income. At past major Norwegian sporting events (e.g., the world skiing championship in 2011), the majority of volunteers were employed men with a university degree (Skille, 2012).

Participating in volunteer work can be an important arena for promoting integration and social inclusion (Eimhjellen, 2011). In Norway, a political objective is that everyone, independent of functioning, should have equal opportunities to be part of different social and cultural arenas, including the volunteer sector (Söderström & Tøssebro, 2011). Still, it is not traditional to consider issues related to social responsibility and social value in the context of marginalized groups in relation to larger sports events. The official political platform of the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF), for the period 2015–2019 does not emphasize or mention social responsibility related to larger events, nor does it consider using events to create social value for marginalized groups through volunteering (Norges Idrettsforbund, 2015).

Enabling people with ID to volunteer at major sporting events allows an opportunity for a new discourse. They can be seen as useful and contributing to society. As volunteers,

they are not necessarily seen as people with an intellectual disability who rely on aid and assistance on a daily basis. Opportunities for people with ID to be a part of new discourses, such as volunteering, can be seen in relation to what Grue (2001) describes as “to make oneself known,” a strategy for mastering one’s life situation. Within this perspective, people with disabilities are given the opportunity to influence how others see them by choosing the context they want to be part of instead of being placed in a discourse by others (“to get known”). In this way, attention is directed away from the disability and toward the aspects the disabled person wants to display. Furthermore, this allows persons who are disabled to resist being labeled as “disabled.” Thus, we can say that volunteering is a potential source of social value for people with ID. Through volunteering, they might “make themselves known” by visually demonstrating their potential, mastering specific tasks, and developing new skills, thereby influencing how they are perceived by others—in other words, becoming a volunteer at an Olympic event and someone who is useful, instead of a boy/girl with an intellectual disability in need of aid to accomplish daily living activities.

The aim of this study is to contribute to the field of volunteerism and social entrepreneurship in order to identify the possibilities of these perspectives in the context of nontraditional groups and their participation as volunteers in sports events. Little is known about how people with ID experience being volunteers at major sporting events and especially how volunteering can contribute to creating social value for this population. It is hoped that this study will contribute to filling this gap.

The following research questions were developed:

- How can social entrepreneurs create social value for people with intellectual disabilities through volunteer work at a major sporting event?
- How do people with ID experience working as volunteers at a major sporting event?

## BACKGROUND

The present study’s interviews revealed that the mother of a student with ID came up with the idea for her daughter’s class (for students with ID) to volunteer as other students do. She discussed this with the head teacher, who contacted the head of volunteers for the Lillehammer Youth Olympic Games Organising Committee (LYOGOC), and the volunteer project for students with ID was initiated. The program was not adapted for the target group; rather, they enrolled as regular volunteers. The Olympic Games have

had a strong standing in Lillehammer since the games in 1994, and LYOG was seen as a significant opportunity to be part of the same story, resulting in several actors with social entrepreneurial projects wanting to be included in the event (Undlien, 2017). This made participation in the games especially attractive, thereby pushing potential entrepreneurs such as the high school teachers to develop new approaches for taking part.

The Youth Olympic Games (YOG) differs from other Norwegian sporting events in several aspects but particularly for having a wider range of tasks needing to be completed. According to the LYOGOC's head of volunteers, they needed a broad spectrum of volunteers as the event was so diverse; thus, there were many options for identifying appropriate tasks. However, it was clearly expressed on behalf of the group that the tasks they were assigned had to be meaningful (tasks that actually needed to be done) while simple enough that all students could learn and master the necessary skills. Together with the LYOGOC, the class's teacher identified the task of collecting and recycling trash at the largest venue for the event. Trash is generated wherever people gather for several days, but a large-scale event like the YOG is likely to generate a huge amount, and the job of recycling and cleaning up will thereby be more extensive than for smaller-scale events.

### **Social Entrepreneurship**

Social entrepreneurship is receiving an increasing amount of attention within the field of sports management (Bjärsholm, 2017). However, according to Weerawardena and Mort (2006), it remains an ill-defined concept. Entrepreneurs are considered people who are able to discover and exploit new possibilities and have the motivation and dedication necessary to pursue them while being willing to take the risks involved (Martin & Osberg, 2007). Broadly, social entrepreneurship can be seen as a process involving innovative use and a combination of resources to pursue opportunities to enact social change and/or address social needs (Mair & Marti, 2006). Furthermore, Dees, Emerson, and Economy (2002) argue that social entrepreneurship is about creating social value and especially finding new and better ways to do so.

It is common to discuss social innovations when talking about new elements that social entrepreneurs bring to the table to create social value. An innovation is often created across three sectors: state, market, and civil society. Social innovations can be seen as new ideas that comply with social needs while creating new forms of social

relationships or cooperation (Hulgård, 2007), while Pol and Ville (2009) take a somewhat wider stance on the subject, defining social innovations as ideas with the potential to improve the quality or quantity of life.

There are several definitions of the concept of social value. Young (2006, p. 56) defines it as something that "benefits people whose urgent and reasonable needs are not being met by any other means." Hence, it is important for social entrepreneurs to create social value by stimulating social change or meeting social needs through a process of combining resources in a new way that aims to explore and exploit opportunities to create social value (Mair & Marti, 2006). According to Martin and Osberg (2007) entrepreneurs are attracted to a suboptimal equilibrium where the entrepreneur sees the opportunity for a new and improved solution, service, or process, while others may perceive it as an inconvenience to be tolerated.

According to Young (2006), value has five crucial features from a social entrepreneurial point of view. First, value is subjective and a matter of real life experiences. Second, social value is negotiated between stakeholders; third, it is open for reappraisal, and fourth, it includes incommensurable elements. Fifth, (social) values are inseparable from social activity. As Dees (2001, p. 4) notes, "It is inherently difficult to measure social value creation." However, social value is created through activities and services that target marginalized groups, which often experience that the market and political systems fail to meet their needs (Young, 2006).

### **Sports Entrepreneurship and Social Entrepreneurship**

Previously, the association between innovation, entrepreneurship, and sports has received little attention. However, Ratten (2011b) has made an effort to address this omission. According to Ratten (2011b), in a sports context, social entrepreneurship occurs when sport as a whole field starts to address social change or social problems, and thus social entrepreneurship or other entrepreneurial activities conducted in a sporting context may be referred to as sports entrepreneurship. Defined as "the mindset of people or organisations actively engaged in the pursuit of new opportunities in the sports-context" (Ratten, 2012, p. 66), sports entrepreneurship has a social entrepreneurial nature. Innovation plays a crucial role in social entrepreneurship, as solutions to social problems often involve doing something new (Hulgård & Lundgaard Andersen, 2014). Innovation also lies within the core of an entrepreneurial sports process, as it emphasizes the creation of new ventures or the maintenance of an organization (Ratten, 2012). In addition,

Sullivan Mort et al. (2003) emphasize proactiveness and risk taking as central to social entrepreneurship, and the same characteristics are the hallmarks of sports entrepreneurs (Ratten, 2011a).

### Volunteerism as a Theoretical Concept

The subject of volunteerism in sporting events is one of the most prominent research topics of sports management (Wicker, 2017). This study relies on the works by Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) and Hustinx (2010), which have attempted to conceptualize volunteerism in a theoretical framework. Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) separated volunteers into two main categories: reflexive/modern and collective/traditional volunteers.

The reflexive volunteer often volunteers for events with a short time frame and chooses the activity as a means to express his or her identity. The main reason for volunteering is often to extend networks and/or to improve one's work resume to appear more attractive to potential employers. Frequently, the reflexive volunteer has no or little affiliation with the organization or event for which he or she is volunteering (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003).

The traditional volunteer has strong roots in the Norwegian context and is a long-term volunteer who often does work on the basis of solidarity and contributing to the local society. Unlike reflexive volunteers, they frequently have strong affiliations with the organizations for which they volunteer. Furthermore, patriotism is an important value for them (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003).

Hustinx (2010) has further developed the theoretical framework of volunteerism by introducing another category of volunteers, institutionally individualized volunteers. According to Hustinx (2010), new organizational and institutional models affect volunteerism today, resulting in a type of volunteer she describes as institutionally individualized. Organizations dependent on these types of volunteers are increasingly adapting their activities to be flexible according to volunteers' preferences. This is a kind of volunteerism where the institutional association of the individual, in this case the students' school, becomes important to whether the person volunteers or not and for whom he or she volunteers.

## METHODS

### The Case Study

In order to answer the present study's research questions, a

case study was conducted with a high school class for students with ID (n=12) volunteering at the Youth Olympic Games (YOG). This is considered a single case study of one complex case with several perspectives and is studied to learn about the participation of people with ID as volunteers. Several actors were involved in order to ensure the class's participation as volunteers, to facilitate a positive experience, and to identify tasks for them so they could contribute in a meaningful way. Therefore, the perspectives of the teachers (n=3) as facilitators for the students were included. The head teacher was interviewed prior to the event, while the other teachers were included in interviews following it.

Last, the perspective of the head of volunteers for the event's organizing committee was included to gain a broader picture of the participation of students with ID as volunteers. The selection of the case was information oriented and related to the author's expectation about the information content that this specific case might provide. The goal of this kind of selection is to maximize the utility of information from a single case (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Triangulation is about controlling conclusions drawn from one source of data by gathering data from other sources (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2004). By including several sources (the class's teachers and the head of volunteers for LYOGOC), triangulation of the data was ensured in order to validate the answers to the research questions.

According to Flyvbjerg (2006), choosing few cases to study may be fruitful, as atypical cases often reveal more information as they include more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation being studied. The case for this study was chosen strategically, as the group of students with ID stood out from traditional volunteers. They were special because of the circumstances of their participation (the school played a crucial role in this), in addition to their abilities to explain what they were doing and why. Furthermore, people with disabilities (including people with ID) do not usually volunteer at sporting events and are considered marginalized in the society (Eimhjellen, 2011). They also have unmet social needs and a need for social change (to be fully included in society) and are thus a suitable group to study in a social entrepreneurial context.

The case was conducted through qualitative interviews and participant observations. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) interviews may provide a fruitful method if the aim is to seek a better understanding of someone's subjective experiences and self-perception in the social world. However, some challenges that will be discussed

below became apparent.

### Qualitative Interviews and People with ID

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2004), it is only through conversation (e.g., interviews) that we can create generality about the social arena. However, numerous challenges and methodological issues arose when conducting qualitative research with people with ID. They may lack verbal language, forcing the researcher to rely on observation as a research method and paving the way for new challenges. When completing observations, researchers don't necessarily "see everything you notice, you don't notice everything you see, and sometimes you see something else than what you noticed" (Sundet, 2010, p. 123). In addition, the cognitive levels of interviewees with ID may pose difficulties for understanding complex questions or grasping the reach of questions (Ellingsen, 2010).

The initial interviews with the students with ID revealed that it was challenging for most to talk about something that had not yet happened. Furthermore, several students had difficulties expressing themselves orally and, in particular, finding the words to describe their feelings and experiences. Yet it was important to include their voices, as this is a group that is seldom heard within qualitative research (Ellingsen, 2010). Thus, it was decided to interview them again in real time as they were performing their volunteer work, in addition to observing them during the LYOG, to acquire appropriate data.

### Observation

When conducting participatory observation, the researcher interacts with the person(s) to be studied while studying and observing as the person(s) acts in a certain environment (Fangen, 2010). Participant observation is often used to study subjects in the context of their worlds. Although language may be important within participant observation, there is also an option to study situations from the perspectives of individuals with ID who are nonverbal. The aim is to discover and explore the meaning that the subjects make of their world (Biklen & Moseley, 1988). Throughout the study, the interviews and observations were divided into two main subjects, social entrepreneurship and volunteerism.

### Social Entrepreneurship and Volunteerism

Social entrepreneurship occurs when a person or organization recognises a suboptimal situation or problem for a specific social group and combines resources in a new

way to address it (Martin & Osberg, 2007). Thus, it was important to identify who saw the opportunity for the students to volunteer and who worked to make it happen. In other words, who was the social entrepreneur in this case? In addition, it was interesting to see whether the students with ID could picture the event as something that would somehow change their current social world for better or worse. Moreover, this author wished to understand how involved they had been throughout the process and their level of influence.

Regarding volunteerism, the interview questions were mainly related to the students' expectations, especially the eventual outcomes they hoped to achieve by participating in the event (e.g., making new friends or just having a positive experience). Important topics included things they were looking forward to and, to some extent, eventual concerns that some of them had. Other subjects were about the event itself to understand the extent to which they knew for what and whom they were volunteering. This was relevant in order to understand their participation in relation to Hustinx and Lammertyn's (2003) categories.

### Sampling

Although this author had no previous affiliation with the high school class, their main teacher was approached after a tip from an informant in another study (also regarding the LYOG). A meeting was scheduled in which the aim of the study was explained to the main teacher. To follow up, a written notice stating the aim of the study, the methods to be used, and its duration was sent to all parents/guardians of the students, as well as the school administration. This form also served as informed consent to participate in the study, giving all the students the possibility not to participate or to withdraw their participation at any point with no repercussions. Furthermore, for the ethical considerations of the study, it was reported in and approved by the Data Protection Official for Research in Norway prior to data collection. In addition, all names and personal information were anonymized during the transcription of the interviews. Moreover, all names of the interviewees are changed and anonymized in this article.

### Data Collection

The initial data collection was interviews with the group of 12 students, which were divided into smaller groups of three to four students. The 12 students were 16–19 years old with six boys and six girls. Each interview lasted between 10 and 30 minutes.

Observations were conducted during the LYOG, and the

group of 12 students was divided by the teachers into smaller groups of five or six students. The observations were made over the five days the event lasted. The students' working sessions usually lasted from 09:00–15:00, with a 30-minute lunch break, and observations were conducted during these hours with this author fully included as part of the group. Since the author had talked with the students before the event, they were comfortable with the author, who quickly gained the trust of several students. They frequently requested help from the author, for example with mittens, shoes, or even advice about where to pick up trash next, or asked permission to do things. The observations were recorded as handwritten field notes in a notebook.

When observing, situations promoting joy, positive new experiences, and learning were of particular interest, as social value may be conceptualized as positive, subjective everyday experiences (Young, 2006). Some students could not use words to express themselves at all but clearly indicated their emotions using body language (e.g., smiling, hugging, skipping, and jumping as they walked, or wearing a frown, displaying tiredness, being displeased). The observations focused on specific situations and circumstances in which the students displayed joy or displeasure.

Another important aspect of the observations was the social element. As the aim of the study was to identify how the event itself could be used to create social value, it was important that the observations were focused on the event itself. Thus, interactions or situations of interest had to be a direct result of the event rather than just two friends enjoying a conversation, as they would have done in school. Those instances when subjects of conversations concerned something they had experienced together during the event were especially interesting. Thus, the subject of the observations had to be social (interaction), and context specific for the event. Hence, situations that were particularly interesting for this study involved positive or negative experiences resulting from social interaction with each other within the group and with other volunteers, participants, or people involved with the event.

### Analysis

The analysis was theory driven, using the perspective of social entrepreneurship, social value, and volunteerism as concepts. Furthermore, it aligned with what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) call a “bricolage” approach, in which transcriptions of all the interviews are made and analyzed, and additional observations are used while focusing on the bigger picture. Bricolage is an eclectic approach that

generates meaning by applying theoretical terms ad hoc (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The observations and conversations at this particular event were utilized to discover aspects of the link between volunteerism and social value in general. Selected parts of the interviews and observations, in particular, were studied to find relevant structures and patterns for this study.

Furthermore, the observations were analyzed from a social value perspective, looking specifically at how positive experiences could be seen in a larger picture, for instance, to move toward social change or meet a social need. Examples are skills the students with ID learned throughout the event that might assist them to live independently as adults in the future or other aspects that might promote inclusion in sports settings and society as a whole.

Value was studied in terms of positive experiences (Young, 2006). In the analysis, these experiences and descriptions were recontextualized by looking at how people with ID are positioned in the society and attempting to observe how the experiences of value related to the event could be useful in the students' everyday lives.

The concept of social entrepreneurship was used as a possible interpretation of the described or observed experiences. In other words, the context that the interviewees described was recontextualized by applying the theoretical lens of this study in an attempt to highlight new angles and gain new insights about the theoretical fields of this study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Themes or outcomes to be included in the findings section were selected through a set of criteria. These had to be positive or negative situations that were context specific (YOG itself) and in which the students interacted within the event, especially in relation to their specific tasks as volunteers.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### People with Intellectual Disabilities as Volunteers

The volunteers of this study differed from the existing conceptual groups of volunteers, such as the “reflexive” and “traditional” categories of Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003), as some were unable to describe what they were volunteering for or why. From Hustinx's (2010) perspective, there are also similarities to institutionally individualized volunteers, as the school was crucial for this group's participation as volunteers.

The group of students had several elements in common with Hustinx and Lammertyn's (2003) “traditional volunteer,” as

the interviews showed that several of them talked about the importance of contributing to the local community. This may be illustrated by the following quotes: “It is good that we have the YOG, so that the youth get more things to do,” and “We get to do something for our town.” Some students even perceived their own efforts in a bigger picture when several talked about the global importance of recycling trash—not just tidying up the arena, as some of them emphasized, but doing their part to “save the globe,” as illustrated by the quote: “We are picking up garbage for the environment.” By contrast, some students had difficulties describing the value of their work and were unable to answer questions about why they were doing a particular task and if they saw the value in doing it.

Observations showed that this was a group with a high morale for working, and there was joy in doing physical labor. The main social value was closely connected to the actual tasks, such as picking up trash and recycling. The job itself was more important than who they were doing it for or why. Like the reflexive volunteers, these volunteers did not have a close affiliation with the organization or event for which they were working (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003). For some students, the main value was instead being outside the classroom and doing something practical; regarding the most fun about being a volunteer at the YOG, one said, “Not being in school.”

The students knew they were there to pick up trash, but it might be that they considered it to be part of school rather than a voluntary act, as the school was the main facilitator and their main source of information. One may argue that the efforts of this group were not done voluntarily at all since they often couldn’t explain why they were volunteering or simply claimed “because the teacher told me so.” However, there were students in the class who refused to be part of the project, indicating that those who participated actually wanted to do so, even though it was difficult to express why.

Several of the students also had difficulties understanding what they were actually volunteering for. They had talked in school about volunteering in general prior to the event and especially volunteering at the LYOG. Still, they were struggling with the difference between the “regular” Olympics and the Youth Olympics. For instance, all were asked before the event, “What are you looking forward to the most in volunteering at the YOG?” One student answered, “to seeing Marit Bjoergen and Therese Johaug<sup>1</sup> competing.”

Although not fully aware of the extent of the event for

which they were volunteering, the students did not expect to get anything in return for their time and effort. As Carl said, “It’s not the best job I’ve had, we don’t get any money for this (laughing).” Moreover, as Jens said, “It has been fun to help out.” These statements imply that they understood the concept of volunteering and helping out while not expecting or getting something in return for their time and effort, according to Mannino, Snyder, and Omoto (2011).

Observations and interviews showed that even those students with little or no verbal language could recognize the colors and symbols of the event. “Youth Olympic car,” said one of the girls (with limited verbal language) when she spotted a car from the organizing committee, wearing the same colors as her uniform. She could recognize the volunteer uniforms, the cars, the flags, and the mascot, knew that all of them were interconnected, and saw herself as part of that bigger picture. She had a sense of belonging to a bigger community, even though it was hard for her to describe what this community actually was.

### Challenges for the Volunteers and Their Environment

The observations conducted during the LYOG also showed several limitations in the students’ volunteer efforts linked to the nature of their disabilities. Some were rather passive in their work efforts, but small facilitations could change the picture drastically. A waste-picker was a tool that made a huge difference for some students, changing their efforts from nonexistent to high intensity.

Another challenge appeared in the electronic registration of the volunteers, a small task for the regular volunteer but time demanding for one person doing the job for 12 others. Every student needed a great deal of assistance registering personal information and retrieving pictures for accreditation. The main teacher, doing all this in addition to her regular tasks as a teacher, still saw what Baron (2006) describes as an entrepreneurial opportunity and, in doing so, activates a set of characteristics often associated with entrepreneurs. Among these are optimism and willingness to take a risk believing that all will turn out favorably for the entrepreneur (Baron, 2006).

Many people with ID rely heavily on close follow-up with one or more assistants, which can be challenging from an organizational perspective. In this case, the teachers followed the students, aiding them as little as possible (to ensure maximum learning) but still being present as a safety net for the students. Thus, the school was crucial for the participation of these students. However, it is becoming increasingly common that third parties, such as institutions,

<sup>1</sup>Athletes on the senior national team for cross-country skiing and therefore not eligible for participating in the YOG.

mobilize and organize volunteer groups (Haski-Leventhal, Meijs, & Hustinx, 2010). In this case, some students did not function, refusing to do anything unless a specific teacher was present.

Several other challenges for the students with ID appeared during the observations conducted throughout the event. Some tended to be more interested in talking with people and watching the crowds than working. Others needed many repeated instructions to become efficient workers. One student, who became a leader, expressed challenges attached to getting co-students to do what they were supposed to be doing. When asked about the biggest challenge of volunteering, he said, “making people do what they are supposed to.” However, a little facilitation in finding the proper tasks (for instance, driving the wheel cart instead of picking up trash) could make the difference between total passiveness and full-speed activity. This implied that the group was dependent on people around them who knew them and what they could and could not do and could find solutions when things were about to turn negative. Last, since it was the teachers who had to facilitate this within their work hours, this is clearly a limitation of this kind of volunteering, as the volunteer efforts of the students could happen only during regular school hours.

According to the teachers, every day that is different, when regular schedules and routines are broken, results in negative experiences for these students. This event, however, was considered positive for all those involved. When writing about the power of the Olympic Games, Chalip (2006) uses the term “liminality.” Although Chalip does not clearly define liminality, he describes it as the feeling of being part of something outstanding and a heightened sense of fellowship and community among those present (Chalip, 2006, p. 110). A sense of unity and being part of something bigger than themselves, almost like the experience of liminality, may have influenced the students to do their very best, making everyone pull in the same direction.

From the event organizers’ perspective, there were few or no challenges involved with including this kind of nontraditional volunteer in the event. Quoting the head of volunteers, “There were far more challenges in dealing with the regular class of 10B<sup>2</sup>, down here at junior high, than with this group.” Furthermore, she emphasized that having a group of volunteers with ID demanded a little extra from the leader in charge of clean up and recycling, especially in finding suitable tasks that were also meaningful. However, as soon as the tasks were found, the event organizers had a group that, quoting the head of volunteers, “displayed a

profound amount of joy and enthusiasm, and there were so many people telling positive stories having met this particular group during their working hours.”

### The Teachers as Social Entrepreneurs

Acknowledgement of risk but still being willing to “go for it” because of a highly possible favorable outcome is characteristic of social entrepreneurs (Dees, 2001; Sullivan Mort et al., 2003) as well as sports entrepreneurs (Ratten, 2011a). The teachers for the group acknowledged that there was risk involved in the volunteer project (e.g., students refusing to work or having negative experiences). As one teacher said, “This has exceeded all expectations. There hasn’t been any nonsense with anyone!” The quote indicates that there was an expectation or precaution that not every student might function well as a volunteer. In general, people with ID are dependent on a high degree of predictability and rather fixed frames for their everyday lives in order to maintain or achieve a good life quality (Albrecht & Devlieger, 1999). The YOG, by contrast, is an event that deals with several potential X-factors (such as interaction with an unpredictable number of unfamiliar people, different languages and cultures, and sudden practical tasks that need to be solved). On the event organizer’s part, there is an expectation that the volunteers will actually do what is expected of them. Still, in an entrepreneurial manner, the teachers focused on how to optimize their efforts with the resources at hand spotting and exploiting possibilities as they appeared (Martin & Osberg, 2007). The observations showed few or no instances where the students expressed negative feelings attached to their tasks.

Within social entrepreneurship literature, the focus has traditionally been on firms or nonprofit organisations (NPOs). In this context, the emphasis has been on how to create social value for a specific group while creating profit or making an economic impact. Others argue that social entrepreneurs can also be individuals independent of organizations or firms (Sullivan Mort et al., 2003), such as the teachers in this study. The high school for this study is a county-driven institution, and thus the state and government have a strong influence on how it works. Governmental enterprises often work entrepreneurially, for example, to improve education for special groups, health care, and other low-cost services for the common good. They do, however, frequently face rigid bureaucracies that can restrain entrepreneurial activities (Lee, 2014). The teachers in this study, although working in a state-run high school, had freedom of action that often NGOs also enjoy (Lee, 2014).

<sup>2</sup>10B is the name of a tenth grade class. At larger junior high schools, there may be up to four parallel classes, usually labeled A through D.

This allowed them to engage in activities outside of school, as long as they could state the importance for the students. However, they had to think in an entrepreneurial manner, and see possibilities for new approaches (Baron, 2006).

Social innovations are highly important for social entrepreneurs, as they represent new ways of addressing a social need or problem that is not currently being met, often through new forms of cooperation (Hulgård & Lundgaard Andersen, 2014). In this study, the teachers engaged in a new activity, volunteerism, by cooperating with an organization that was partly a governmental and partly a private enterprise, the LYOGOC. Thus, the teachers displayed an entrepreneurial mindset in setting out to do something new and seeking new partners for cooperation while acknowledging that it wouldn't necessarily succeed (Martin & Osberg, 2007).

The teachers, and one in particular, did more than was expected of them to make the volunteer project happen. The main teacher said in one of the interviews before the event, "Had I known in advance how much work it would be, I would never have done it. But I think that it will be worth the effort, seeing the joy they get in return." Social entrepreneurship is about working toward social change and addressing social needs (Mair & Marti, 2006). The scope of this project is rather small and doesn't address people with ID as a whole group. However, it might be a first step on a path where people with ID are included in settings in which currently they are not present. This project did not result in a radical change, but those involved were left with highly subjective, valuable experiences and a significant positive learning outcome, according to their teachers. The project was, to some extent, used to display what the teachers felt was social inequality and to create valuable and positive everyday experiences to promote learning for these particular students.

Social entrepreneurship often has an economic dimension in addition to the creation of social value (Hulgård, 2007). The economic impact of this particular project is rather small, however, it is still present. Volunteer work, in its very nature, is about people using their time and effort to aid or assist someone without the expectation of compensation in return (Mannino et al., 2011). For the LYOGOC, volunteers do jobs the organization would otherwise have to pay for. The job that the students did during the event needed to be done, one way or another, and their volunteer effort saved money for the organizers. The students, for their part, learned new skills and improved their work resumes and networks, and demonstrated what they were capable of, thus becoming more attractive to potential employers.

### Social Value through Volunteerism

The term social value is problematized by, among others, Young (2006) in describing this particular kind of value as subjective and almost private. Regarding the class of students with ID, volunteering at larger events can be a source of value by being an arena to promote cooperation and learning to interact with others (for example, in the lunch line or in conversation with the trash recycling leader about what kind of trash goes where). However, the main value might be the work itself and the chance to be someone who assists instead of being assisted.

Furthermore, this experience allows students to choose for themselves what kind of discourse they want to be part of— as a "volunteer at an Olympic event doing an important job" instead of a "student with an intellectual disability with several limitations." Furthermore, the volunteer uniform also contributed to erasing differences among the various volunteers. For instance, those students with Down Syndrome became more like the others, despite their physical characteristics related to their disability. The uniform also contributed to letting students partake of the "volunteer context," which can also be described as "to make oneself known" where the students have opportunities to resist being placed in a certain context, for instance, as "disabled" (Grue, 2001). Moreover, volunteerism might provide an arena where people with ID can experience increased inclusion and an experience of "being normal," thus addressing a social need (the need to belong).

In addition, the LYOG was a valuable arena for exposure, as the volunteers with ID got the opportunity to raise awareness about their potential as a work force. People with ID working as volunteers can also be seen as a social innovation as defined by Pol and Ville (2009). Applied to this case, we can see a new form of cooperation (between the LYOGOC and the local high school), with a potential for increased quality of life for the students concerned, all made possible through this kind of new cooperation and blending of sectors (Hulgård & Lundgaard Andersen, 2014).

This approach may not be appropriate for every individual with ID, but with the prerequisites and circumstances they had, it worked successfully for this group. For instance, one of the girls showed remarkable capacity for physical labor while displaying profound joy and happiness. The observations showed that when she was working, she really had no time to talk to others; instead she rushed to offer assistance where needed because, as she said, "I *have to help!*" Moreover, she smiled the most when she was feeling useful; the heavier the load, the better. As one teacher said,

<sup>3</sup>Emphasis implying that the vast amount of garbage made it the most fun.

“Katrine, strong as a bear, carrying these huge bags of garbage with a huge smile on her face. That’s when she laughed, when she could run while carrying the biggest bags. She was ecstatic because that’s what she likes!” In response to the question of what had been the most fun, Katrine herself said, “to pick up garbage. *A lot!*” Another student, when asked the same question, simply replied, “really, it was good just being here,” implying that it was valuable just to be part of this large event, with so many activities to take part in for volunteers as well as spectators. In addition, watching athletes from all over the world, seeing their various team uniforms, and listening to their languages created impressions quite outside the ordinary and were positive experiences.

The goal of the project was for students with ID to learn and master new skills relevant for finding an occupation later on, to experience unity, and to be a part of the same discourse as their nondisabled peers. The teachers of this class emphasized that it is important for these students to be part of the same contexts and discourses as other youths. In addition, by cooperating on very specific tasks, such as opening a rubbish bin (in this case, a three-person job) they got a chance to act together in a new way to solve real world problems through cooperation. As one of the boys said to one of the girls, “You are strong; we are lucky that you are here.” This implies that there is value in solving practical jobs together, in a “real” setting. Thus, the LYOG was an arena where the students could appreciate each other’s skills in a new environment. All of these are potential sources of social value that is not possible to create inside a classroom.

According to Young (2006), social value is about activities and services valued by a group whose needs are not adequately served by the market or the political system. It is arguable whether all people *need* to volunteer. However, it may be argued that volunteerism is part of the “normal” discourse, as a huge number of people in Norway volunteer on a regular basis (Skille, 2012). Furthermore, according to Bogdan and Taylor (1999), contributing to the society through (for instance) volunteering is important for being part of the community. By volunteering, people get together and form social networks, and there is widespread belief that participation in sports may foster social integration in society (Elmose-Østerlund & Ibsen, 2016).

Observations during the event revealed several situations where the students with ID needed to interact with other volunteers. Many people with ID live highly organized lives and are part of only a few restricted social networks (Søderstrøm & Tøssebro, 2011). The LYOG was an arena where the students were part of a real world setting instead

of practicing skills within the confines of a classroom. At the LYOG, they had to interact with many different people from different countries while accomplishing the tasks that needed to be done (such as loosening garbage bags from cans, transporting them to the correct place, and opening the dumpster). The main learning outcome of the volunteer project was closely related to being part of the real world. According to the teachers, being part of society and being as independent as possible are also main concepts that the students needed to learn during their school years.

Several students also got to show other sides of themselves during the event. The teachers were particularly impressed by how one of the boys, Sander, developed during the event. He was also the one who volunteered the most before, during, and after the event. As one of the teachers said, “Really, all of them should have been working for five days in a row; maybe we would have had different learning curves for them as well.” As for Sander, the teachers described him as being unable to make his own choices. However, during the LYOG this was not visible, as he became a leader of the group, deciding where to go at what time and the order in which the garbage cans would be emptied. Through volunteering at this event, this particular student got an opportunity to develop new personal characteristics, make independent choices, engage in conversations with other (nondisabled people), and categorize rubbish. All are activities that he normally would not undertake. For the teachers, this led to the discovery of new potential for meaningful work for this particular student.

In regard to finding meaningful occupations for other students, this was one of the main tasks of the school, which is constantly searching for relevant settings where their students with ID might be placed and trained in order to prepare them for life after school. Through the students’ volunteer efforts, the teachers discovered skills and characteristics among their students that they had no knowledge of before the event. Thus, the teachers became aware of several work places to approach for place-and-train arrangements.

Social value is, according to Young (2006), inseparable from social activity. For the students with intellectual disabilities in this study, being part of as many social activities as possible may (arguably) be highly important. Sander may be an example as the one volunteer who participated in most of the activities and also the one with the highest reward in terms of personal development. By volunteering in the LYOG, all students received an opportunity to experience what Chalip (2006) describes as

liminality, the sense of being part of something bigger than oneself. With the history of Lillehammer hosting the Olympic Games in 1994, the students got to see themselves as part of that context as well. When talking about the event, almost all the students consistently used the term “the Olympic Games” instead of “Youth Olympics.” They had learned about the YOG in school before the event, and the abbreviation “YOG” was written nearly everywhere in the arena. Still, they called the event “the Olympic Games,” implying that they saw themselves mainly in an Olympic context. This might also imply that the Olympic context is more valuable than the YOG context.

Finally, the main social value for the students in this study might be the positive experiences and new skills they learned that may help them to live rich, empowering, and diverse lives—in other words, to partake in society. By relying on more empirical studies, contributions are being made in understanding the concept of social value while revealing the potential of sports in a social arena to create this kind of value.

## CONCLUSION

In the beginning, the following questions were raised:

- How can social entrepreneurs create social value for people with intellectual disabilities through volunteer work at a major sporting event?
- How do people with ID experience working as volunteers at a major sporting event?

There is a possibility for social entrepreneurs to create social value for people with ID through participating as volunteers in a major sporting event, as this is a real event, involving real people. It is also about letting marginalized groups participate in the society alongside others and to be a part of discourses that focus on being useful, rather than on their disabilities. Through this, they can learn valuable practical and social skills that may aid them in the everyday life outside of school. People with ID experienced volunteering at the YOG as an exclusive event with rich possibilities to contribute on different levels (locally as well as globally). Furthermore, the event was viewed as a positive and meaningful experience by the volunteers, much due to a careful selection of the tasks they were set to do and through facilitation by persons that knew them well. Additionally, the job they were set to do was experienced as important on its own, not being influenced by whom they were doing it for. Last, it allowed the students to cooperate on practical tasks that needed to be solved, letting them display and

develop personal characteristics that were new to themselves and their teachers.

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