

# Voluntarism Rationality in Norway: The Relevance of Ferie for Alle

**Muhammad Affan Asyraf**

Staf Sosial GHG Actions  
Email: [maffanasyraf@gmail.com](mailto:maffanasyraf@gmail.com)

## Abstract

The article examines a voluntary phenomenon in "Ferie for Alle." The name refers to a voluntary-based program organized by the Norwegian Red Cross, a prominent NGO in Norway. The program is oriented on ensuring free holiday experiences for children and families who are deemed unfortunate. Interestingly, such a regard is attached due to their inability to afford holiday vacation trips. This article aims to address why Ferie for Alle's phenomenon can emerge in Norwegian society and attract people to volunteer for it. This paper uses an ethnographic approach. Specifically, it utilizes qualitative methods such as semistructured in-depth interviews for the data collection process and narrative analysis for the data analysis process. Through the result, this paper argues that the existence of voluntarism in Ferie for Alle is instigated by volunteers' reasoning towards prominent social aspects, that is: (1) growing up experiences in Norwegian society, (2) interpretation of Norwegian culture (3) understanding of a particular Norwegian welfare provision discourse. Moreover, the actualization of volunteering further gave an idea of how the Norwegian welfare system is supposed to be conducted. As reflected by the Ferie for Alle volunteers, such meaning helps them navigate activism in addressing transnational political issues in Norway.

**Keywords:** *reasoning, voluntarism, experience, culture, Norwegian Welfare System*

## Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji fenomena kerelawanan yang ada dalam "Ferie for Alle". Nama tersebut mengacu pada sebuah program berbasis kerelawanan dari Palang Merah Norwegia, salah satu organisasi non-pemerintah besar di Norwegia. Program tersebut dirancang untuk memberikan pengalaman liburan gratis bagi anak-anak dan keluarga yang dianggap kurang mampu. Menariknya, ketidakmampuan tersebut melekat karena mereka tidak mempunyai biaya untuk pergi liburan pada masa libur nasional. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menjawab mengapa fenomena Ferie for Alle bisa muncul pada masyarakat Norwegia dan menarik sebagian dari mereka untuk menjadi relawan. Tulisan ini menggunakan pendekatan etnografis. Secara khusus menggunakan metode kualitatif seperti wawancara mendalam semi terstruktur untuk proses pengumpulan data, dan analisis naratif untuk proses analisis data. Melalui hasil penelitian, artikel ini berargumentasi bahwa keberadaan kerelawanan di Ferie for Alle dipicu oleh penalaran

para relawan terhadap aspek-aspek sosial yang menonjol, yaitu: (1) pengalaman tumbuh besar di masyarakat Norwegia, (2) interpretasi terhadap kebudayaan Norwegia (3) pemahaman tentang wacana spesifik terkait penyediaan kesejahteraan di Norwegia. Selain itu, aktualisasi kerelawanan juga memberikan gambaran bagaimana seharusnya sistem kesejahteraan Norwegia dijalankan. Sebagaimana tercermin dari relawan *Ferie for Alle*, makna seperti itu membantu mereka menavigasi aktivisme dalam mengatasi isu-isu politik transnasional yang terjadi di Norwegia..

**Kata Kunci:** *penalaran, kerelawanan, pengalaman, budaya, sistem kesejahteraan Norwegia*

---

## Introduction

Reasoning is an essential part of the equation to produce human beings' actions. Reasoning lays a foundation for provides humans to organize their very conduct of living, encompassing their daily practice, belief, and understanding (Hall 2001, 78). In practice, reasoning enables people to build on an idea correlating with the issues within the social context. Such ideas provide interpretive frameworks that define values and preferences, which allow people to act on their political and economic interests (Carstensen and Schmidt 2000, 318).

Within anthropology discipline, the explanation of reasoning leans heavily on experience and shared cultural symbol. Kleinmann and Kleinmann (1991) explain that experience transforms the relationship between a person and the social context in which they engage. Cultural symbols put meaning to certain social aspects that influence people's moral decision-making process (Fitzgerald et al. 2015, 414). Furthermore, Fitzgerald et al. (2015) emphasize that in these days and ages, the reasoning process is embodied within the dynamics of citizenship, where local context and transnational political issues towards moral-related issues are intertwined.

In regard to such complex framework, this paper intends to examine how the process of reasoning actualizes within a social phenomenon. A certain phenomenon which could be perceived as unthinkable or quite strange in common third world countries, but Its existence is somewhat justified within its designated cultural area. Such phenomenon exists in the country of Norway, a prosper first world country which regarded to have one of the best social welfare systems in the world (HuffPost, 2018). The phenomenon referred to a welfare-oriented program called *Ferie for Alle* (translated in English as: Holiday for All). *Ferie for Alle* is a voluntary-based program organized by the Norwegian Red Cross, a prominent NGO in Norway, which is oriented toward ensuring a free holiday experience for children and families who are deemed unfortunate due to their inability to afford a holiday trip during holiday time (Bachke et al. 2007, 14).

This paper will focus on the reasoning of volunteers in *Ferie for Alle*. Specifically, identifying the relevant experiences and cultural symbol which contributed toward their thought process. How the reasoning not only influence, but also justify their decision to take on the responsibility of making sure that the people do get the holiday trip that any

Norwegians deserve (or experience). Emphasizing voluntarism is important because not only that *Ferie for Alle* is organized by a non-government sector but also economically *Ferie for Alle* itself couldn't exist if it weren't conducted through voluntarism.

The Norwegian Red Cross (or commonly known in Norway as Røde Kors) is a prominent, and rather old non-governmental organization (NGO), founded in 1865 (developmentaid 2020)<sup>1</sup>. Originally started as voluntary medical aid in war, these day Norwegian Red Cross engage in voluntary sector providing secondary and tertiary social works. To put into context, *Ferie for Alle* exist in Norwegian Red Cross branches across various cities in Norway. This paper will focus on the branch of Agder, which exist in Kristiansand, a city in southern part of Norway who also a municipality in Agder county, with population of around 116.000 as of 2020 (Statistic Norway 2013)<sup>2</sup>. To be exact, a *Ferie for Alle* is a program which conducted during long holidays in Norway (summer, winter, easter, etc.) where a team of volunteers (5-6 people) organized the plan and executed the budget of holiday created by the Norwegian Red Cross. They, along with 6-8 families, travelled to a common holiday destination in Agder Country, and stayed in a hotel for a week. During that time, the volunteers are responsible for organizing various indoor activities such as games, handcrafts, and out-door activities such as skiing and hiking. The essence of volunteer is to make sure that all the families participated have the luxury to enjoy holiday and not thinking of all the trifle things such as planning accommodation, booking the hotel, preparing food, registering on ski resort, and most importantly, spending most of their income towards holiday trip.

Within voluntarism, people draw their reasonings based on their idealized welfare situation. According to van Fraassen (1984), people utilize reasoning as a motivation to volunteers, intended to establish specific welfare conditions relevant to their capability. Voluntarism work represents how such action to distribute, ensure and strive for welfare is supposed to be actualized. In that way, the ideal characteristics of welfare provision depend on the context of its society (Taylor 2005, 120). Moreover, such understanding means that social conditions and prominent ideas in society can formulate a particular justification for people to strive in ensuring people's well-being. Notably, it instigates volunteers to utilize the process of critical thinking as a means to produce activism-related action (Ranft and Lord 2000, 315). In a way, it reasoned their time and energy as something that expandable. Particularly in the matter of distributing welfare for other people without them gaining any significant material matters in return. Thus, voluntarism and activism in this sense exist within a linear dynamic where both of correlates with addressing social issue which deemed as a problem (Østerud and Selle 2006, 27).

As explained by Liisa Malkki (2015) the tendency within the Nordic welfare picture voluntarism as a belief uniquely contributed by rationalization of empirical evidence to establish a proper living condition based on the threshold of equality, contingent by most of the population. Therefore, one might wonder about the importance of holidays for a society. How come such tertiary commodity is integral for people to not only to reasoned

---

1 <https://www.developmentaid.org/organizations/view/61189/norwegian-red-cross>

2 <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/statistikker/folkendrkv/kvartal/2013-11-21?fane=tabell#content>.

as important, but also fight for it where a circumstance arises that the other people's access to it is being threatened? This paper will address such a question.

The leisure transcends in Norway as a concept called '*ferie*' (translate holiday). The concept of *ferie*, or holiday has somewhat become an important tradition in Norwegian society. Such an idea is strongly supported by Vittersø (2005) who explained that holidays have become important cultural practice in Norway because it advances the leisure tradition, and belief in work-social life balance (Vittersø 2005). Therefore, Norway could be considered as a leisure society, in the sense that holiday has become a tradition and the purpose of leisure itself is to secure continued political economic growth in the society (Aall et al. 2011, 730). Through such framework we can regard that reasoning on the importance of holiday in Norway to some extent encompass their culture and political identity.

## Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative approach as the method of the research. Specifically, ethnography study, as it relies heavily on the framework of reasoning to explain volunteers' motivation in contributing to *Ferie for Alle*. Ethnographic approach becomes relevant as it enables researchers to identify the correlation of experience with the process of cultural symbolization. Moreover, how the two aspects instigate a thinking to do voluntarism specifically in *Ferie for Alle*.

Ethnographic approach would provide a rather untethered exploration to correlate that the reasoning of voluntarism is one of many direct byproducts in the shift of global political economy. As explained by Selle (1993) the socio-economic change which put neoliberalism on the pedestal, has situated voluntary organizations' role in basic welfare provision to be very limited, as the health, insurance, and pension are provided by profit-oriented companies. Thus, such change stressed voluntary organizations to adapt and create new spaces for voluntary service provision (Selle 1993, 10). This in turn provides a reasonable explanation for *Ferie for Alle* to emerge. The exact emergence date of *Ferie for Alle* is somewhat debatable, however, according to Backhe et. Al (2007) the idea of *Ferie for Alle* was conceived in the early 1990s, but only starting in 2004 it became a designated program within the Norwegian Redcross.

In the process of data collection, I conducted a semi-structured in-depth interview to 6 volunteers who occasionally chosen as volunteer coordinators and have been participating in *Ferie for Alle* for over 1 years. I choose to do such method of interview as it enables me to ask an open question for informants to explore the notion that voluntarism is a justified form of welfare activism in Norwegian society (Bernard 2017, 212). The sampling method is snowball, as I receive the list of informants through an employee of Norwegian Red Cross. All the informants are young adult women who ranged from 18-24 years old.

As a reflection toward methodology, an impression came that their reasoning is mediated by the left political spectrum. Specifically, toward social inclusion citizenship activism which popular among young adult in Nordic states (Ødegård and Fladmoe 2020, 279). Moreover, I was unable to establish a firm rapport towards the informant, as I only met them once, and that was when the interview was conducted.

During interview, I found glimpse of rather personal reasoning such as: becoming a volunteer to gain experience which could be relevant in strengthen portfolio in labor market, becoming a volunteer to have “free holiday trip” in itself, becoming a volunteer to find network and friends. However, such reasoning is deemed “not more important enough” to be a factor in their decision to become a volunteer. Therefore, I focused on the narration of trying to reason their volunteering decision within the framework of activism which is sourced through experiences and cultural symbol.

In forming the conclusion, this paper utilizes narrative analysis which involves illustration of structural context and the subtle choice of words expressed by the informant in the discussion of the research (Franzosi 1998, 518). Through narrative analysis, I can layout explicitly the narrations which were expressed by the informant. In detail, I will be able to explain the reasoning of experience and cultural symbol of welfare as a source of motivation, or also justification, for voluntarism in the *Ferie for Alle*.

## Discussion

### Reasoning of Voluntarism in *Ferie for Alle*

Within the lens of anthropology, experience is deemed as an integral aspect in the process of reasoning. Garro (1998) explains that rationality is rather pragmatically oriented. At the same time, it is mediated by cultural design, in the sense that practical experience and customary practice simultaneously influence or dictate each other (Garro 1998, 331). Experience constructed through lived interaction, it deemed what are rational and what aren't, thus it becomes one of the means in decision making (Kleinmann and Kleinmann 1991, 227).

In such a framework, it can be implied that when certain issues arise, which contrast within the things experienced in the past, one ought to delve and try to make sense of the issue. As it is deemed to be a problem, the reaction towards it tends to be contrasting in regards of the issue. It tends to counter or oppose the issue. Things that happen within voluntarism in *Ferie for Alle* perhaps resembled the study conducted by Liisa Malkki regarding volunteer in Finnish Red Cross. Malkki (2015) demonstrates how voluntarism is motivated by humanitarian imagination which domestically and internationally related. Malkki (2015) emphasize that voluntarism decision within Red Cross organization is instigated by emotional realities which came from their observation seeing unfortunate events experienced by other people, most commonly vulnerable groups. In the case of *Ferie for Alle*, such unfortunates manifest in unequal access towards ‘proper Norwegian’ holiday.

Regarding cultural symbols, Barrett et al. (2004), emphasize that the concept of motivation needs to be incorporated into the study of culture. Such reason is established by the magnitude of impact of culture on social influence and compliance process (Barrett et al. 2004, 21). As explained by Vaisey (2009), Cultural understandings heavily dictated people's moral compass and in that sense, culture becomes a tool for people to solve their everyday problems. To cite on the idea by Vaisey (2009, 167) that “culture is best viewed as a loose repertoire of justifications that rationalize or make sense of the choices that individuals make in their lives”.

Thus, the existence of values and cultures in Norwegian society is important to

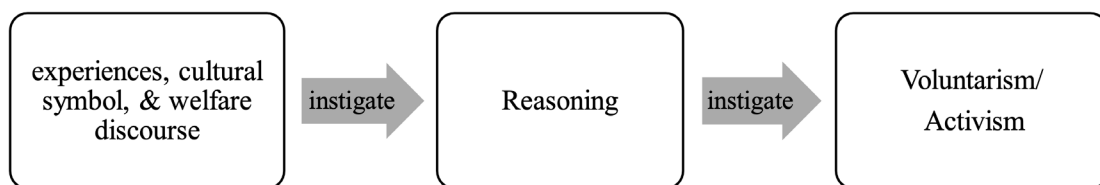


be integrated in the issue of reasoning toward voluntarism discourse in *Ferie for Alle*. Identifying relevance values and culture within the framework of volunteering discourse in relation to *Ferie for Alle* would be able to create a comprehensive understanding how its existence sustains and become relevant in Norwegian society.

Another important account toward reasoning is discourse. Druckman and McGratch (2019), explain that generally, motivation is constructed through the process of reasoning of people's standing values and beliefs. Such aspects derive from empirical evidence and consistent theory communicated through regarded or powerful social institutions (Druckman and McGrath 2019, 114). Such aspects could be accommodated by what Foucault defines as discourse. Foucault (1976) explains that discourse is a system of thought, knowledge, or communication that constructs our experience of the world. Foucault claims that modern society constitutes individuals 'as an object within a system of thought' where they are assigned, by the flow of knowledge, to a certain way of being (Haugaard 1997, 43).

Contextualizing in the context of volunteer's motivation, the discourse refers to a powerful, and somewhat consensus, narration on how welfare is supposed to be regarded in Norway. According to Veenhoven (2000), welfare is a manifestation of an idea, which is established through theory, to improve the well-being of human beings physically and socially. Such interpretation means that the reasoning related to welfare discourse, constructed by experience and cultural symbol, can formulate a particular motivation for people to enact in a particular action of striving for prosperity for themselves and for others. In making sense of the theoretical framework, I have composed a simple mind map to illustrate how the reasoning process of volunteers as it will thoroughly discussed within the next sections, see below.

**Figure 1.** Mind map of volunteer's reasoning process.



Relating to the figure, it can be inferred that experience, cultural symbol, and discourse are all integral in materializing reasoning towards a motivation to engage in socio political related activities such as voluntarism. At the same time, it exists within the grey line of activism, it does not engage in the spectrum of campaigning to bring about political or social change, rather it came about as an action to resolve the problem emerging in the society.

### **Reasoning to Volunteer in Relation to Experiences Growing up in Norwegian Society**

One idea predominantly communicated by volunteers, which graze upon their motivation on volunteering, is the increasing gap between the poor and the rich in Norway. Through their explanation, such ideas inherently derive from their socialization process in society. Each of the volunteers has different examples in conveying their explanation, for such

explanations are drawn from their particular social position and circumstances, which differ from each other. Based on their subjective knowledge, such reasoning can be formed through rationalization of first-hand or close experiences with inequality circumstances. A volunteer named Julia explained that she had seen her close friends and relatives struggle with income as they have health-related problems which make them unable to work. The problem is deeply worsened by her perception that the welfare system has not sufficiently helped those people. She understands that the social or financial support from the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) has not increased significantly in the last twenty years. While the vulnerable are having difficulties, she explains that those who possess advantages such as education and the ability to work have been having an increased wage more so than the government support to those who are vulnerable. She explained:

“I think even though we are a country that is very fortunate, there is some group of the population that are more fortunate than others. Some have it easier, like jobs and education. If your parents can support your schooling or help you get a job, of course, those differences aren't as big as in some countries, but those gaps are big for some people in Norway. And I think knowing that you are poor amongst the rich makes the stake more significant and visible.” Julia (21 years old).

These unequal circumstances also expressed by another volunteer named Michelle in a different context. Based on her close experience, the example she gave indicates that in Kristiansand, there has been an increase in daily expenses like toll fees (freeway) and the price of gas and electricity. It burdened them even more because a household would be charged late fees if they could not pay the expenses in time. She thinks that such a circumstance is unfair because clearly, people who don't have extra money each month would certainly be affected. It clearly shows that, despite being a rich country, some families in Norway cannot keep up with the country's high cost of living. It showed a big chunk of inequalities circumstances that ward off people from considering additional expenses such as a holiday.

“I think it has got a lot to do with things where they just can be flexible. Like, I can drive the toll when the price is not twice as much, I can choose to leave the car at home because the gas price is high, or I can wait to shower at eleven at night. But if you have kids that must go to bed early, you have to use it at that peak hour (which is more expensive). So, in this way, everything costs a lot, or everything is getting more expensive, I guess. And not getting it in an equal way that is kind of sad to see it.” (Michelle, 19 years old)

In this sense, it becomes rational to think that despite the firmness of the nation's welfare system, holiday in Norway, obviously, is not something that every Norwegian could experience (Backhe et al. 2007, 14). As a result of a capitalistic society and growing neoliberalism, the concept of leisure has somewhat become commoditized with the establishment of sophisticated infrastructure, equipment, and destination, which in turn make holidays to be an expensive commodity and hard to get for low-income families (Wearing and Wearing 1992, 4).

The exorbitant cost for holiday proposed a concern, judging how important holiday

in the face of Norwegian welfare discourse. As explained by Vittersø (2005) holidays have become important cultural practice in Norway because it advances the leisure tradition, and belief in work-social life balance (Vittersø 2005, 268). In Norway, there are many studies which emphasize that sometimes children and parents' ought to be away from one another or, be indifferent surroundings, to ease tension within the family (Backhe et al. 2007, 9). As explained by Backhe et al. (2007), holidays could create meaning and content in daily life, engaging children to be reflective and enhance their critical thinking, particularly preventing them from being left out of the youth environment in a form of ability to report a holiday to peers or in class. Thus, the consequences of the inability of certain people to go on holiday in Norway, due to financial reasons can be quite severe as it exposes social exclusion.

Aside from experience, acknowledgment of growing inequality is something that is established by the media and government as a social reality. This is where discourse supports experience in building reasoning to volunteer. The reasoning to volunteer in *Ferie for Alle*, to some extent, is enhanced by the discourse built up by the government through their social inequality report in Norway. Another volunteer named Anna (21 years old) explains that the reason why she wants to keep volunteering in *Ferie for Alle* is the urgency that it has. She considered that it's necessary to supply families who could not go on holiday because their inability is not something that is deceptively made up. This reasoning is based on the information that she got from a report which tells that the percentage of children who grew up in low-income families rapidly grew from 10 percent to 11, 19 percent in just two years (nav.no 2012).

Living in such conditions is perceived to have a negative effect on the parent's mindset, which can affect the upbringing process of children. The statistic she mentioned seems to resonate with the report from NAV titled "Poverty and Living Condition in Norway." The report mentioned that the proportion of low-income families has risen from 7,7 percent to 9.3 from 2012 until 2015 (nav.no 2012)<sup>3</sup>. Those numbers refer to the people who live in relative poverty by Norwegian standards. The report also mentions that families with children, single parents, families with immigrant backgrounds, and social assistance recipients are the social groups considered too low income in Norway. Interestingly, those characteristics also become the crucial indicator for the Norwegian Red Cross to determine the families who will get invited to *Ferie for Alle*. Thus, the report showed that there is a general understanding that the condition of welfare in Norway is getting worse, especially for the children, while at the same time rationalizing injustice in the poverty phenomenon discourse.

Thus, in this section it can be concluded that the volunteer's reasoning in sustaining the existence of *Ferie for Alle* is a manifestation of their standing values and belief which is constructed by a complementary relation between experienced reality and powerful discourse. In this way, volunteer reasoning in relation to their experiences materialize a reasoning to prevent the stigmatization created by the rising standard of living for the majority, followed by, if not stagnant, then decreasing standard for the other portion,

---

3 The report was obtained from official website of Nav: <https://www.nav.no/no/nav-og-samfunn/samarbeid/for-kommunen/barn-og-unge2/barnefattigdom/navs-ansvar-og-oppgaver-pa-fattigdomsomradet/fattigdom-og-levekar-i-norge-statistikk-og-analyse>



especially immigrant. The experiences that volunteer get during their upbringing is a privilege to have a consistent holiday trip with their family, which translates into their competent citizenship in society. Having thought that others might not be able to have the same holiday experiences, due to all the reason mentioned above, the volunteers then conclude that something must be done to prevent it.

### **Reasoning to Volunteer in Relation to Norwegian Cultural Symbol**

The volunteers' motivation in *Ferie for Alle* is contributed by their familiarity with the idea of volunteering, conceived through their particular personal experiences. One of the volunteers named Eleanor (22 years old) explained that volunteering is a long-time life experience for her. She has been familiar with the activity involving voluntarism since an early age. One example she gave was her experience being a manager in her local handball club at the age of 13. Another volunteer also shines a light to this issue explaining that volunteering is ingrained in the culture of society. The reason for such thinking is because of a terminology known as *dugnadsånd*. She describes it as an idea that explains why everyone in Norway loves to or expects to help each other. In English, *dugnadsånd* translates into the spirit of service. Retrieved from the website "Det Norske Akademis Ordbok" the word *dugnadsånd* represents the idea of willingness to stand up for the community and participate in work that serves more than oneself.<sup>4</sup>

Two out of five volunteers, named Eleanor and Penny (24 years old) have been volunteers in the Norwegian Red Cross since their teenage years. But during that time, they haven't participated in *Ferie for Alle* because the minimum age for volunteering is 18 years old. In this sense, to some extent the Norwegian Red Cross is perceived to be aligned with the value of the volunteers, as expressed by Eleanor.

"The Red Cross has seven ground principles which kinda makes it out a bit different from other organizations, this is the ground principle, and that is where it operates. Neutrality and not taking sides, and I think that is very important both in being able to do the activity we have, but also being a religious free neutral very open where everyone can volunteer," Eleanor (22 years old)

The identity of the Norwegian Red Cross also contributed to implementing the reasoning to volunteer in *Ferie for Alle*. It solidifies their motivation as something that is not only necessary but also enjoyable. Moreover, their voluntarism is also reasoned through their existing cultural identity. How value which was ingrained perhaps produced value and preference which dictated their decision and formed the reasoning to volunteer in *Ferie for Alle* as something feasible and logical. In In this sense, all the volunteers perceive holidays as a common commodity for the population in Norway. Their justification lies in the assumption of how common it is for Norwegians to go to tourist places, their perception of holiday culture in Norway, and the abundance of holiday time in Norway. Their understanding somewhat emphasizes that holidays are embedded in Norwegian culture and become one of the points of reference for social participation for children.

The social condition in Norway also contributes to the reasoning for holidays. The volunteer named Penny explained that Norway has an abundance of holiday time. As a

---

4 See more detailed explanation on <https://naob.no/ordbok/dugnads%C3%A5nd>

schoolteacher, she has around 190 days of work or school, with the rest being weekends and national holidays such as, winter, summer, Christmas, Easter, and so on. This circumstance solidifies the holiday as something that is routinized in Norwegian society. It is expected for children to be able to articulate their holiday experience. It aligns with the stage of children's development by emphasizing the equal knowledge of the situation in which every child in Norway grew up. In this sense, the holiday connects the ideas of voluntarism in *Ferie for Alle* to the conception of welfare provision discourse embedded in volunteers. However, it must be stressed that such characteristics of holidays expressed in the narratives don't objectively exist in Norway. But, all the narratives do represent how the volunteers conceptualize their function in Norwegian society. In a way, it helps them to justify their voluntarism as something construed in establishing welfare provision ideals in Norway in the context of children and families.

Thus, in relation of cultural symbol, it can be understood that voluntarism in *Ferie for Alle* is an articulation of the welfare state's civic culture, which is embodied among Norwegians. Five of the volunteers (Julia, Michelle, Anna, Eleanor, Penny) mentioned that ensuring holidays is relevant to their perception of the voluntary sector in Norway. However, they still think that the government must help the voluntary sector realize such activity by giving the budget to voluntary organizations such as the Norwegian Red Cross to organize *Ferie for Alle*.

Such notions are conceived through their understanding that, on the one hand, the Norwegian government has enough money to support it, but on the other hand, such welfare provision measures would be relevant if it was conducted through voluntarism. In this way, the idea of volunteering flourishes. People understand that their privilege is not taken as merely a merit but also an obligation to volunteer to help establish prosperity through equality. Through such explanation, it is found that privilege is a big part of reasoning for voluntarism motivation in *Ferie for Alle*. The volunteers also acknowledge that volunteering is somewhat a privilege determined by their cultural position and cultural precondition in society. They realize that they have spare time, an economically stable situation, and had done informal voluntarism before *Ferie for Alle* are the reasons they can easily say they will keep contributing to it.

### **Reasoning as to Make Sense Activism within the Framework of Norwegian Welfare**

Hagelund (2005) explains that despite various efforts by the government, the gap of inequality between non-western immigrants and natives has not disappeared. Many non-western immigrant families in Norway tend to have a lower living standard as they tend to have low employment. Such conditions to some extent sustained by the Nordic welfare systems. It done so by constituting that primary welfare benefits can only be accessed through consistent engagement to costly tax payment (Hagelund 2005, 671). That means, those who pay less taxes get less benefit than those who pays more.

Therefore, it could be assumed that immigrant families who aren't economically sufficient, as they are just settling in, might experience complications due to not having the capability to go on holiday trips. Judging how important leisure is for participation in Norwegian society, children in the immigrant family will generally be exposed to a certain social vulnerability which is being excluded from society. Penny also explains that in her perception when children just stay at home or do normal outdoor activities during the

holiday, he or she will be excluded socially, as going on holidays means a lot within their socialization process in Norwegian society. In context of activism, voluntarism motivation in *Ferie for Alle* stands within the value and belief of children and family's equality. As expressed by the volunteer named Lucy:

"I don't think that everyone deserves to have the same, because some work hard and some work less hard, and it is room for individual differences, but I do think whatever happens, I do think that the children should be treated equally, and if they are not the same, is not that the children have the same stuff, but they should have the opportunity to have the same stuff. I think it's important to understand that this difference is not about whether we must allow for individual differences, but children have to have the same access to opportunities in their social life." (Lucy, 22 Years old)

In this sense, the reasoning motivation of their volunteering represents a reaction toward knowing the economic inequality problem. The process translates to volunteering, which gives them a reason to ensure children and families in Norway are not harmed by the circumstance. Consequently, it makes them strive to provide children with the same opportunity as each other, which in terms of *Ferie for Alle* materialized in having holiday experiences. Such thought could be considered as activism as it is correlates with the general understanding of how welfare supposed to be conducted in Norway. Specifically, it represents their action on how to prevent certain injustice which not aligned with the Norwegian welfare system. The general discussion of volunteering and Norwegian welfare system is explained further in the section below.

### **Volunteering and its Relation to the 'Ideal' Norwegian Welfare System**

Though it has developed and changed, the welfare provision system in Norway still stresses the notion of social democracy in the state welfare policy (Esping-Andersen 1990, 26). Such an agenda is intended to spread the length of social and individual rights and responsibilities, and establish equality of opportunity, while at the same time keeping the social stratification somewhat agreeable to the population (Esping-Andersen 1990, 78).

According to Midtbøen and Teigen (2014), increasing inflation and unemployment in the 1970s has consequently changed the ideas of world economics from Keynesian economic policies to neoliberal economic policies. The difference is that Keynesian policies focus on government spending to increase economic output. While neoliberal policies focus on deregulating the market to sustain and increase economic prosperity. (Midtbøen and Teigen 2014, 268). The implication is that countries like Norway since the 1980s have gone towards reduced government expenditure to further privatization of the economy (Midtbøen and Teigen 2014, 269). But as time went on, the idea of neoliberalism tended to lead to many shortcomings, especially on the issue of justice and fairness.

Rehmann (2016), explains that the 2008 financial crisis brought about the breakdown of the neoliberalist economy followed by many huge companies' bailout in the US emphasizing blatant power and privilege abuse by those who possess social advantages. Moreover, it showed that there was no truth in the assumption that state intervention was hampering the economic prosperity of the people (Ellison & Fenger 2013, 62). In this light, Ferrera (2009), argues that the orientation of governments, especially in Western Europe, is to put the problem of social exclusion as the primary agenda for the welfare to

solve. As countries turn into service and knowledge-based economy, it makes education and well-being of children regarded as very important aspect as it's aligned with producing intellectual which relevant to the economy system (Ferrera 2009, 526).

In practice, the welfare system in Norway provides the population with commodities and access which enables them to sustain their lives, financially and socially, in the society. Askheim et al. (2017), explains that Norway's welfare provision goes beyond democratic rights by ensuring people's right to gain prosperity and economic security while pertaining to the common norms of Norwegian society. In this way, the notion of equality and integration became a significant notion in the state welfare policy. In addition, Norway's welfare provision system also emphasizes user participation, which emphasizes provision mechanisms achieved through private sector corporatism (Askheim et al. 2017, 587). The system pressures the government to provide welfare services that can be enacted through various non-governmental organizations including those in the voluntary sector. The welfare provision in Norway also seems to perceive equality as the most regarded social principle, while at the same time putting family, children, and the elderly on the pedestal of the welfare provision discourse (Halvorsen and Stjernø 2008, 59).

Perhaps the clearest idea of welfare in Norwegian society can be seen through a notion stated by the Norwegian Tax Administration (Skatteetaten). As displayed on the official website of Skatteetaten: "We can view our society as a large, collective box of money, a shared source of funding. Everyone pays tax according to their ability and receives the benefits they need." (The Norwegian Tax Administration).

Such a notion indicates that the idea of welfare in Norwegian society is a two-way system of rights and responsibility. Through this exploration, one of Norway's welfare ideas can be considered a venture to establish prosperity in society by investing in eradicating disadvantages and poor living conditions experienced by certain particular groups of people. With the intention so everyone has the same opportunity to sustain or improve the standard of their living condition. However, such ventures are conducted through fair and shared responsibility.

In such light, Ellison and Fenger (2013) explain that Norway and other European countries have experienced new politics and welfare economies oriented toward a paradigm of social investment. The paradigm derives from the psychological discipline that perceives welfare in society as a legitimate state intervention to prevent being disadvantaged because of exposure to the encompassing societal risk bounded by the economic structure of society (Ellison and Fenger, 2013, 621). Aside from eradicating social vulnerabilities, social investment also acknowledges the tendency for people to be socially excluded from participation due to their financial ability. In regard to social vulnerabilities Solga (2014) explains that social investment in the context of welfare is commonly discussed as a framework to acknowledge the value of human capital for personal prosperity. Thus, the social investment paradigm is oriented toward providing the best condition for every person's education, which encompasses other associated beneficial situations for developing different skills relevant to their ability to function in society (Solga 2014, 273).

Therefore, if not similar, the reasoning for volunteering in *Ferie for Alle* is identical to the social investment discourse. Although they do not communicate with the term "social investment", their reasoning represents the idea presented in such discourse. Interestingly,

all of the volunteers mentioned that they don't necessarily blame the parents for their inability to take their children on holiday. They realize the circumstances in which the current economic structure is created (Ellison and Fenger 2013, 620). The volunteer motivation is directed towards ensuring the trip holiday for children and the belief that such experience would contribute to the children's welfare in the future. First, volunteering is perceived to be an effort to uplift low-income families' economic conditions by easing the burden created by social demands. Second, it also perceived as a concrete effort to help formulate children's social capital so they can develop and contribute positively to Norwegian society.

Though it is instigated for different reasons, the articulation of the voluntary sector occupying secondary enrichment social service is intended to sustain the value and cultural belonging of Norwegian society in the face of unprecedented changes. One of the changes mentioned in this paper is constructed through transnational political issues, embodied in capitalism expansion and immigrant-related moral issues (Bendixsen 2018, 229). Though it seems like what they are doing is very local, one cannot fathom that *Ferie for Alle* enacts as one of mechanism in mediating national humanitarian program with the issues brought upon by entities across national boundary. Thus, volunteering in *Ferie for Alle* can be perceived as a form of activism in the face of Norwegian welfare system and towards the emerging transnational political issues.

## Conclusion

To some extent the motivation of volunteering, which also means the decision to sacrifice holiday time is fueled interrelation of experience, cultural symbol and their interpretation of Norwegian welfare discourse, which in this case manifested in social investment paradigm. The process then lays foundation for their justification to not only join but fully committed in doing days of unpaid work. By no means such framework encompasses the whole country's welfare provision regime, but rather it is representing parts of welfare discourse which mostly concern the importance of holiday within a society and the problem of children upbringing within a weak financial household created by the transnational issues.

Through such understanding the voluntarism represented in *Ferie for Alle* stands for one of various means of activism in Norway to establish or maybe maintain the value of equality. In this case, it manifests through their mechanism of addressing and resolving the emerging inequality situation in Norway within their capability. For these people, which are dominated by young adult, volunteering is the most relevant means judging by their capital, energy, interest, opportunity, and situation.

In the end, what I tried to do in this paper is not making a conviction that *Ferie for Alle* exist based on such particular theoretical flow of rationalism. In contrast to that, I merely intend to rationalize that such phenomenon voluntarism in *Ferie for Alle*, through the approach of anthropological discipline, as a somewhat inevitable consequences of the issues (in this case a rather transnational political one) which experienced by Norwegian population. Though, it does not entirely explain all the motivation, and altruism, someone put into account when volunteering, however, I surely hope that it can mediate discussions to further examines the diversity of volunteering motivation across social spectrum.



## References

- Aall, Carlo. 2011. Energy Use and Leisure Consumption in Norway: An Analysis and Reduction Strategy. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 19(6), 729-745.
- Alonso, Sonia., & Fonseca, Santa. Claro. D. 2012. Immigration left and right. *Party Politics* 18(6), 865-884.
- Askheim, Ole Petter, Karen Christensen, Synnøve Fluge and Ingrid J. Guldvik. 2016. "User participation in the Norwegian Welfare Context: An Analysis of Policy Discourses." *Journal of Social Policy* 46: 583-601.
- Bachke, C.Carl., Hallandvik, Jan-Erik. and Hødnebo, Sigrid. Melbye. 2007. Å bli rik på opplevelser... Evaluering av "Ferie for Alle"-et tilbud fra Røde Kors i Aust-Agder.
- Barrett, Daniel.W., Wosinska, Wilhelmina., Butner, Jonathan., Petrova, Petrova., Gornik-Durose, Malgorzata. and Cialdini, Robert. B. 2004. Individual differences in the motivation to comply across cultures: The impact of social obligation. *Personality and individual differences* 37(1):19-31.
- Bendixsen, Synnøve. 2018. Transnational practices of irregular migrants and nation-state management in Norway. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 8(4), 229-236.
- Bernard, H. Russel., 2017. *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1979. Symbolic Power. *Critique of Anthropology* 4(13-14), 77-85. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.ugm.ac.id/10.1177/0308275X7900401307>
- Carstensen, Martin. B. and Schmidt, Vivien. A. 2016. Power through, over and in ideas: conceptualizing ideational power in discursive institutionalism. *Journal of European public policy* 23(3): 318-337.
- Druckman, James. N. and McGrath, Mary. C. 2019. The evidence for motivated reasoning in climate change preference formation. *Nature Climate Change* 9(2): 111-119.
- Ellison, Marion. and Fenger, Menno.2013. Social investment, protection and inequality within the new economy and politics of welfare in Europe. *Social Policy and Society* 12(4): 611-624.
- Esping-Andersen, Gosta. 1990. *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Princeton University Press.
- Fattigdom og levekår i Norge, statistikk og analyse. nav.no. 2012, February 28., from <https://www.nav.no/no/nav-og-samfunn/samarbeid/for-kommunen/barn-og-unge2/barnefattigdom/navs-ansvar-og-oppgaver-pa-fattigdomsomradet/fattigdom-og-levekar-i-norge-statistikk-og-analyse>
- Ferrera, Maurizio.2009. From the welfare state to the social investment state. From the Welfare State to the Social Investment State 513-528.
- Fitzgerald, Ruth. P., Legge, Michael., and Park, Julie. 2015. Choice, rights, and virtue: prenatal testing and styles of moral reasoning in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 29(3): 400-417.
- Foucault, Michael.1976. *The archaeology of knowledge*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Franzosi, Roberto.1998. Narrative analysis-or why (and how) sociologists should be interested in narrative. *Annual review of sociology* 24(1): 517-554.
- Garro, Linda. C.1998. On the rationality of Decision-Making studies: Part 1: Decision models of treatment choice. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 12(3), 319-340.

- Hagelund, Anniken. 2005. Why it is bad to be kind. Educating refugees to life in the welfare state: A case study from Norway. *Social Policy & Administration* 39(6): 669-683.
- Hall, Stuart., 2001. Foucault: Power, Knowledge and Discourse. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse, Theory and Practice* (72-81). London: Sage
- Halvorsen, Knut. and Stjernø, Steinar. 2008. *Work, Oil, and Welfare: The Welfare State in Norway*. Universitetsforlaget.
- Halvorsen, Rune. and Jensen, Per.H. 2004. Activation in Scandinavian welfare policy: Denmark and Norway in a comparative perspective. *European societies* 6(4): 461-483.
- Haugaard, Mark. 1997. *The constitution of power: a theoretical analysis of power, knowledge, and structure*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- HuffPost, O. assignment for. (2018, January 19). *Here's why Norway is consistently rated the best place in the World To Live*. HuffPost. Retrieved January 12, 2023, from [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/norway-best-country-to-live\\_n\\_5a6059c7e4b046f0811d0235](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/norway-best-country-to-live_n_5a6059c7e4b046f0811d0235)
- Kleinman, Arthur, and Kleinman, Joan. 1991. Suffering and its Professional Transformation: Toward an Ethnography of Interpersonal Experience. *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry: An International Journal of Cross-Cultural Health Research* 15(3): 275-301
- Malkki, Liisa. H. 2015. *The need to help: The Domestic Arts of International Humanitarianism*. Duke University Press.
- Midtbøen, Arnfinn. H. and Teigen, Mari. 2014. Social investment in gender equality? Changing perspectives on work and welfare in Norway. *NORA-Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 22(4): 267-282.
- Ødegård, Guro., and Fladmoe, Audun. 2020. Are immigrant youth involved in voluntary organizations more likely than their non-immigrant peers to be engaged in politics? Survey evidence from Norway. *Acta Sociologica*, 63(3): 267-283.
- Østerud, Østerud., & Selle, Per. 2006. Power and Democracy in Norway: The Transformation of Norwegian Politics 1. *Scandinavian political studies* 29(1): 25-46.
- Ranft, Annette. L. and Lord, Michael.D. 2000. Acquiring new knowledge: The role of retaining human capital in acquisitions of high-tech firms. *The Journal of High Technology Management Research* 11(2): 295-319.
- Rehmann, Jan. 2016. Bernie Sanders and the hegemonic crisis of neoliberal capitalism: What next?. *Socialism and Democracy* 30(3): 1-11.
- Selle, Per. and Svåsand, Lars. 1987. Cultural policy, leisure, and voluntary organizations in Norway. *Leisure studies* 6(3): 347-364.
- Selle, Per. 1993. Voluntary organisations and the welfare state: the case of Norway. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 4(1): 1-15.
- Silverman, David. 2017. How was it for you? The Interview Society and the irresistible rise of the (poorly analyzed) interview. *Qualitative Research* 17(2): 144-158.
- Solga, Heike. 2014. Education, economic inequality, and the promises of the social investment state. *Socio-Economic Review* 12(2): 269-297.
- Taylor, Rebecca. F. 2005. Rethinking voluntary work. *The Sociological Review* 53(2): 117-135.
- Vaisey, Stephen. 2009. Motivation and justification: A dual-process model of culture in

- action. *American journal of sociology* 114(6):1675-1715.
- Van Fraassen, Bas. C. 1984. Belief and the Will. *The Journal of Philosophy* 81(5): 235-256.
- Veenhoven, Ruut. 2000. Well-being in the welfare state: Level not higher, distribution not more equitable. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice* 2(1): 91-125.
- Vittersø, Gunnar. 2007. Norwegian cabin life in transition. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 7(3): 266-280.
- Wearing, Betsy., and Wearing, Stephen. 1992. Identity and the commodification of leisure. *Leisure Studies* 11(1): 3-18.
- Why do we pay tax? The Norwegian Tax Administration. (n.d.). Retrieved March 9, 2022, from <https://www.skatteetaten.no/en/person/taxes/get-the-taxes-right/young-people-work-and-tax/why-do-we-pay-tax/#:~:text=We%20can%20view%20our%20society,receives%20the%20benefits%20they%20need.>