**Qualitative changes masked by stable rates? Trends in Danish volunteering over the last decade.**

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**I: Introduction and outline of the paper**

Compared to Norway and Sweden, Denmark is characterized by a somewhat lower level of civic engagement. While around 50 pct. of the Norwegian and Swedish population report to be active volunteers (Svedberg, von Essen & Jegermalm 2010; Wollebæk & Sivesind 2010) the equivalent Danish figure is about 40 pct. Comparatively speaking this is still a high level and, more importantly, it seems to rather stable. Thus a number of studies indicate that the level of volunteering in Denmark is on the same level today as it was 10 – 15 years ago. No signs of decreasing civic engagement seem to appear on the near horizon, and little seems to have happened in Denmark (Torpe 2011).

However, overall stable rates of volunteering do not necessarily mean that changes and transformations are not taking place. A general stable level of volunteering may for instance mask internal dynamics between different areas of volunteering that may attract new volunteers. It may also mask evolving differences in relation to which status groups increase or decrease their civic engagement. And finally, it may mask important changes in the value base that legitimize and induce volunteering.

This paper will in greater detail explore changes in Danish civic engagement from 1999 to 2008 with respect to the latter two factors important to civic engagement and volunteering: 1) personal, human resources such as income, education, and job position, and 2) values that may induce or stimulate civic engagement and volunteering.

The individual’s socioeconomic position and resources can both qualify a person for volunteer work and also make her more attractive to voluntary organizations. John Wilson and Marc Musick have termed such resources ‘human capital’ by which they mean ‘those resources attached to individuals that make productive activity possible’ (Wilson & Musick, 1997, p. 698). Education, income, and occupational status are often identified as the main sources from which human capital can flow. While economic affluence in Denmark, at least compared to the exceptional Norwegian case, may be more moderate, the period from the late 1990’s to 2008 was still characterized by economic growth and prosperity among the large majority of Danes. However, increasing economic growth in this period also led to increasing economic inequality between high and low status groups. Speaking in relative terms the rich got richer and the poor got poorer. It is possible that this more uneven distribution of material resources have had consequences for civic engagement. For the most privileged groups it may shift interests, and possibly also the amounts of free time because of increased work duties, away from volunteering. However it may also make interest representation through civic organizations more important. For the least privileged groups it is possible that increasing demands for individual skills and competences obtained through education may have led to a decline in volunteering. The question we want to explore is whether volunteering, in the period from 1999 to 2008, have become more contingent upon socio-economic factors such as income, education, and job status leading to a more unequal civil society mirroring a more unequal society at large.

The second question relates to possible changes in the value base of modern volunteers. Many studies have demonstrated the positive relationship between volunteering and motives such as ‘doing something for a cause that is important’ or ‘helping people in need’ (Dekker & Halman, 2003). Although it is often difficult to predict actual behaviour from highly generalized value questions, it makes sense to say that broader cultural frameworks influence the decision to volunteer (Wilson 2000, p. 219) because they function as collective frames of references, which guide individual behaviour. Recent research, (Hustinx & Lammertyn 2003; Hustinx 2010) point to the fact that volunteers’ motivations have become more reflexive and guided by individualistic references to self-realization and career orientation. Consequently, it becomes important to explore whether such trends can be found in Denmark, whether they apply to particular demographic and/or socio-economic groups, such as the younger cohorts, and, not least, how such processes may be associated with new patterns of social differentiation and possibly also increasing class cleavages.

Such values and motivations are usually analysed as dependent variables, adopting the position that social structures and strata are the independent drives of values. Contradicting this approach, Michèle Lamont has argued that while value dispositions are part of the identity-defining boundary work of status groups and consequently intertwined with differences in status, resources and power, they cannot be reduced to these nor are they necessarily hierarchical in nature (Lamont, 1992, 2000). Symbolic distinction in the form of values and perceptions are not simply an epiphenomenon of social structures, though often described as such within the social sciences. First, moral and symbolic boundaries and distinctions may be overlapping with socio-economic boundaries but may also prove a more detailed and intricate set of differences and distinctions. Consequently, there may be subtle differences in what people consider to be of importance that is lost in using socio-economic variables as explanans. Secondly, the way values and perceptions are correlated is not merely spurious associations, but rather the very structure of how things make sense to people. If people consider volunteering important and are worried about the conditions of the poor this particular correlation may be their reason to volunteer – certainly, their level of education or income is not (though this may be important resources that enable them to volunteer). Approaching these symbolic distinctions and boundaries may prove fruitful both to understanding volunteering and to spot value changes in the nature of volunteering that may be of interest to civil society research.

We use representative national Danish data from the last two waves of the European Values Study carried out in 1999 and 2008 respectively to explore these questions. While data from the European Value Studies may be less detailed in relation to the dependent variable (civic engagement and volunteering) they are particular well suited for analysis that want to explore changes over time in relation to socio-economic background variables and measures of value transformations.

In the first section of the paper we describe changes in volunteering related to socio-economic and socio–demographic position. In the second section we describe changes related to values and perceptions associated with volunteering. The paper ends with a short discussion.

**II: Changes in volunteering related to socio-economic and socio–demographic position**

In this section we provide the very first and very basic descriptive statistics as a first step to analyze changes in volunteering patterns from 1999 to 2008 within the domain of socio-economic and socio-demographic resources and statuses.

Relating to Lamont’s work we are particularly interested in investigating whether the distribution of resources and opportunities of volunteering has become more unequal in Danish society over the period.

As indicators of ‘hard’ discriminating socio-economic resources we look at income, labour market position, education, health, and age.

***Income***

Many international studies find that low income groups volunteer less than high income groups. It is not obvious why this is so because volunteering is giving of time and not money. One plausible explanation is that low income groups belong to fewer organizations (Wilson 2012:187). The richer people get, the more interests they also may have to defend, and volunteering for voluntary organizations may be an important way of advocating and taking care of such interests. However, in a Scandinavian context in which redistribution of income is high, income is often not found to be a significant predictor of volunteering, once controlling for other factors such as education, age, and health. However, things might have changed because of the economic development in the period from 1999 to 2008. In general this was a prosperous period with economic growth which most groups in Danish society benefitted from. However, we also witnessed increasing wage differences and growing inequality which may have induced increasing differences in volunteering rates between different income strata.

Table 1. ‘Household net income’. Self-reported. Percentage volunteering: 1999 and 2008.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Low third | Middle third | High third | Don’t know |
| Pct. volunteering within category  1999 | 31.3 % | 39.2 % | 44.4 % | 31.1% |
| n (pct. of N) | 300 (30.4) | 324 (32.9) | 277 (28.1) | 84 (8.5) |
| Pct. volunteering within category  2008 | 33.1 % | 38.4 % | 44.1 % | 34.0 % |
| n (pct. of N) | 387 (27.3) | 438 (30.9) | 331 (23.3) | 262 (18.5) |

N 1999: 985. N 2008: 1418. Sign. 1999: 0,006. Sign 2008: 0,012

In the bivariate analysis income is positively associated with volunteering as expected: the higher the income, the higher the likelihood of volunteering. However, what is more important from the perspective of this paper, table 1 does not indicate that income has become more or less important as a resource for volunteering from 1999 to 2008. The high income group has not increased their level of volunteering, and the low income group has not decreased their level of volunteering (or vice versa). However, we use a very crude categorization of income. Further and more detailed analyses are necessary to see if changes have happened in the highest or lowest end of the income scale. Some studies show that middle-income groups volunteer most and it is possible that our categorization is too crude to capture important changes at the margins of the income scale. Also, one should pay attention to a possible bias because of a sharp increase in the number of ‘don’t know’ answers in 2008.

***Education***

Across countries and studies education is consistently measured to be probably the single most important resource for volunteering. In general education raises the likelihood of volunteering. There are many plausible explanations for this fact. Education may raise people’s awareness towards problems in their environment and the importance of collective action. Education may provide people with skills, knowledge, confidence in themselves, and other forms of qualifications and competence that may be needed to act as a volunteer. Higher educated people may also belong to more organizations or have a higher status which can make them more attractive to voluntary organizations and furthermore provide them with more opportunities (and more requests) for volunteering.

Table 2 provides an overview of the importance of education for volunteering in Denmark from 1999 to 2008. The main difference in both years is between the group without any other educational background than primary school (‘folkeskole’) and all other groups. People with no further education volunteer significantly less compared to all other groups and there is no indication of change in this pattern.

Table 2. Percentage volunteering by education: 1999 and 2008

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Education | Primary school only | Vocational | Short further educ. | Medium further educ. | Long further educ. |
| Pct. Volunteering  1999 | 27.1 | 41.0 | 39.0 | 43.5 | 41.6 |
| n (pct. of N) | 240 (23.8) | 334 (33.0) | 218 (21.5) | 131 (12.9) | 89 (8.8) |
| Pct. Volunteering 2008 | 27.9 | 36.8 | 38.3 | 41.9 | 47.7 |
| n (pct. of N) | 330 (22.0) | 446 (29.8) | 311 (20.8) | 260 (17.3) | 151 (10.0) |

N 1999=1012. N 2008= 1498 Sign 1999: 0,003 Sign. 2008: 0.000

There are two changes within the educated groups, however, that may indicate important transformation. The first is the drop in the percentage among people with vocational training who volunteer. The second is the increase in the volunteering rate in the group with the highest education.

The decreasing share, which is not dramatic (and therefore should not be overestimated), of volunteers among people with vocational training may have two explanations. First, it might be that the economic growth in the period from 1999 to 2008 have put more time pressure on this group either in manufacturing industries or in craft and building. This group may be particularly exposed to pressure to work more hours to keep up with raising demands. The other explanation is more serious from the perspective of the voluntary sector. It may indicate that voluntary organizations are less in demand of skills possessed by these groups, or that the voluntary sector as an arena for collective action appears less attractive to people with practical skills.

If the latter is the case it might resonate with the simultaneous increase in volunteering rate among the group with the highest educational level. This may either be interpreted as growing awareness and/or interest in volunteering among the highest educated, or an increase in the demand for knowledge and competencies possessed by these groups. We may interpret this as a growing awareness and importance of educational capital in the knowledge society which is also reflected in civil society organizations. If this is the case we may see increasing inequality in the forms of capital (resources) deemed relevant to volunteering and the symbolic power attached to these forms of capital.

**Health**

Health may be considered a resource for volunteering because many volunteer tasks demands physical presence (i.e. mobility) and in many cases also strength and energy which may be reduced if one suffers from chronic illness or handicap. Consequently health is often positively associated with volunteering.

As expected we see a positive association in both years which, however, seems to have grown in significance. Health matters more in 2008 compared to 1999. This is probably mainly explained by a drop in the volunteering rate in the category judging their health ‘bad’. There are only marginal changes in the other categories except for the category ‘very bad’, but we should probably not pay too much attention to this as there are very few observations in these cells.

Table 3. Percentage volunteering by health. Self-reported. 1999 and 2008

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Health | Very good | Good | Fair | Bad | Very bad |
| Pct. Volunteering  1999 | 40.4 | 38.2 | 34.1 | 28.6 | 9.1 |
| n (pct. of N) | 433 (43.3) | 348 (34.8) | 170 (17.0) | 35 (3.5) | 11 (1.1) |
| Pct. Volunteering 2008 | 41.1 | 36.3 | 31.7 | 19.6 | 17.6 |
| n (pct. of N) | 700 (46.4) | 493 (32.7) | 240 (15.9) | 56 (3.7) | 17 (1.1) |

N 1999= 998. N 2008= 1507 Sign 1999: 0,108 -- Sign. 2008: 0.001

It is difficult to interpret this change in the volunteer pattern among those considering their health bad. One possible interpretation is that the threshold for entering the voluntary sector has become higher creating a stronger boundary between the included and the excluded. However, we need to look closer at how health is related to other variables (gender, age, education) before any conclusions can be drawn.

***Labour market position – and age***

The possibility of increasing selectivity may be further investigated by looking at changes in the relation between volunteering and labour market position. Jobs and work position are important for volunteering because they can provide people with skills or value orientations that can spill over and be utilized in the voluntary sector (Wilson 2012). Labour market position is also an important indicator of social status and therefore of particular importance in this study. Furthermore the time limits that are put on people on the labour market may be important for recruitment to volunteering.

Table 4. Percentage volunteering by labour market position: 1999 and 2008

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Labour market position | Empl. more than 30 h. | Empl. less than 30 h. | Self- employed | Pensioner (age or health retired) | Student | Unemployed |
| Pct. Volunteering  1999 | 40.7 | 47.1 | 50.0 | 28.9 | 40.5 | 32.5 |
| n (pct. of N) | 546 (53.8) | 51 (5.0) | 32 (3.2) | 235 (23.2) | 79 (7.8) | 40 (3.9) |
| Pct. Volunteering 2008 | 41.2 | 46.6 | 40.2 | 29.6 | 32.4 | 14.8 |
| n (pct. of N) | 777 (51.9) | 103 (6.9) | 92 (6.1) | 392 (26.2) | 74 (4.9) | 27 (1.8) |

N 1999 = 1013 --- N 2008 = 1498. Sign 1999: 0.005 --- Sign. 2008: 0.000

There are two observations that are of particular interest and relevance in this study. The first is the drop in the volunteering rate among the self-employed from 50 pct. to 40 pct. Despite the low count, this may indicate that this group in times of economic growth shifts their attention away from collective action towards their own business. We looked at whether this trend also applied in general to those employed in the private sector as a whole, but this is not confirmed. Among those employed in the private sector 37.5 pct. volunteered in 1999 compared to an almost identical 35.2 pct. in 2008.

The other observation is the sharp drop in volunteering among the unemployed from 32.5 pct. in 1999 to 14.8 pct. in 2008. The change looks dramatic but it may be explained by the fact that the national unemployment rate fell from 6 pct. in 1999 to a historic low of about 2 pct. in 2008. Those that were capable of getting an ordinary job may have brought their volunteering rate with them, leaving the most marginalized unemployed with an even poorer volunteering rate in 2008.

It is a surprise that the volunteering rate among students drops from 40.5 pct. in 1999 to 32.4 in 2008. If we look at changes in the volunteering rate among different age groups (table 5 below) we can see that the volunteering rate among the youngest people actually increases.

Table 5. Percentage volunteering by age group: 1999 and 2008

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Age | 18-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60-69 | 70 or more |
| Pct. Volunteering  1999 | 31.8 | 39.7 | 47.0 | 42.4 | 34.6 | 23.7 |
| Pct. Volunteering 2008 | 37.6 | 33.5 | 44.5 | 37.7 | 37.7 | 26.9 |

N 1999= 1013 --- N 2008= 1507 Sign 1999: 0.000 --- Sign. 2008: 0.003

Because we know there is a strong association between education and volunteering one should expect the increase in the volunteering rate among younger people to be carried by students, at least to some extent. Here the results are counter intuitive. Maybe students invest in other career promoting activities such as internships and student jobs which are highly frequent in Denmark --- as well as high in demand by students because it is considered necessary to gain work experience and establish professional networks which facilitate entrance to ordinary jobs. As student volunteering and service learning are being promoted more and more by government agencies we may see future shifts among students to volunteering which are not visible in the 2008-data.

The changes in the distribution of volunteering among the age groups is, however, highly interesting in and by itself since there is a very clear change in the overall pattern. While the youngest age groups and the two oldest groups increase their volunteering rate, there is a general drop among the three mid-life groups which normally carry the bulk of volunteer jobs. Normally the high interest in volunteering in mid-life is explained by two factors: first, people in midlife has more resources and are more integrated in jobs and family networks; second, people in mid-life has more interest to take care of (children, status positions, reputation). This is probably still the case. However, the change from 1999 to 2008 is important since it may indicate that mid-life groups are losing interest in volunteering while the younger and older groups are gaining interest. For the older groups improved health and early retirement from the labour market definitely also plays a strong role.

In conclusion the preliminary analysis of transformations related to socio-economic and socio-demographic resources and status reveal some signs of change that may be important. Some seems to be related to changes in the economy while others point at more fundamental changes, of which stronger selection effects found among the groups with fewer resources (bad health, low education, unemployment) may be of particular importance. This may point to either more demanding requirements to enter the voluntary sector, e.g. because of professionalization, or stronger self-election.

**III: The changing symbolic value of volunteering.**

While we have found some signs of socio-economic and demographic variation from 1999 to 2008, but also stability, the development in values and perceptions associated with volunteering is somewhat less stable. Values and perceptions are linked in different ways to more traditional background variables, but following Lamont we argue that moral and cultural distinctions cannot be reduced to socio-economic boundaries and that they indeed may reveal important information about volunteering patterns in their own right. Investigating and describing how volunteering as a social action or form of practice relates to different ways of perceiving the social may enable us to discern different perceptions of volunteering. The general picture of both values and their relationship to volunteering is one of stability (Gundelach 2011, Torpe 2011). In general, people who prioritize their spare time, friends and family, express higher levels of solidarity and tolerance, and those who generally take an interest in society and community are more prone to volunteering. This picture is the same in both 1999 and 2008. However, there are value changes taking place, which may in the long run also have an impact on the national level of volunteering.

Asked whether they consider politics to be important in their life, the Danes have become markedly more interested in politics in the course of the nine year period, thus indicating a greater interest in society and the social in general (Table 6). Roughly fourteen percent more Danes consider politics important in 2008 compared to 1999. It would be obvious to expect this to lead to increasing levels of volunteering, but surprisingly this is not the case. As one would expect, the volunteering rate of those uninterested in politics declines a little when a number of people quit that group to take up an interest in politics. However, this group apparently brings their low rate of volunteering into the group of politically interested resulting in a five percent reduction in the rate of volunteering. Consequently, it would appear that political interest is only indirectly associated with volunteering. While those politically interested are generally more prone to volunteering, it is not the fact that they are politically interested that make them volunteer.

Table 6. ‘Politics is important in your life’. Percentage volunteering: 1999 and 2008.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Not or Not at all important | Very or Quite important |
| Pct. volunteering within category  1999 | 32.0% | 45.6% |
| n (pct. of N) | 590 (58.5) | 419 (41.5) |
| Pct. volunteering within category  2008 | 32.5% | 40.7% |
| n (pct. of N) | 668 (44.4) | 837 (55.6) |

N 1999=1009. N 2008= 1505 Sign. 1999: \*\*\*, Sig. 2008: \*\*\*

However, other value changes within the population seem more closely associated with volunteering. The survey item ‘People should stick to their own affairs and not show too much interest in what others say or do’ is intended to measure a type of moral appropriateness associated with either collectivist or individualist values (Table 7). This item shows a quite stable pattern of volunteering rates across categories in both 1999 and 2008. As one would expect, the rate of volunteering increases along with increasing collectivist orientation. However, the part of the population holding collectivist sentiments has decreased by five percent while the individualist part has increased by seven percent. If not for a minor increase in volunteering in the intermediate group, this shift would mean a general lowering of the national rate of volunteering. This moral boundary between what concerns only the individual and what concerns the collective is more strongly associated with volunteering than political interest, since a change in one is accompanied by a change in the other.

Table 7. ‘People should stick to their own affairs and not show too much interest in what others say or do’. Percentage volunteering: 1999 and 2008.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Agree or Agree strongly | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree or Disagree strongly |
| Pct. volunteering within category  1999 | 30.1% | 32.5% | 46.6% |
| n (pct. of N) | 336 (33.4) | 209 (20.8) | 425 (42.2) |
| Pct. volunteering within category  2008 | 29.8% | 35.6% | 46.1% |
| n (pct. of N) | 607 (40.5) | 312 (20.8) | 562 (37.5) |

N 1999=1007. N 2008= 1497 Sign. 1999: \*\*\*, Sign. 2008: \*\*\*

An even more interesting development is that some types of values and symbolic boundaries seem to be losing their meaning to issues of volunteering. The materialism – post-materialism index (Inglehart 1990) is usually argued to be connected to the progression of an individualized modernity associated with post-material values. One would expect that those taking the post-materialist stance would be more prone to volunteering since humanitarian and solidary values are associated with this end of the value index. This is indeed the case in 1999 with a fifteen percent increase in volunteering from materialists to post materialists (Table 8). Surprisingly, this correlation has disappeared in 2008. Not only is the rate of volunteering almost the same within all three response groups: the correlation has changed from highly significant to insignificant. While no significant changes have taken place in the marginal distribution of the index, the volunteering rates have changed significantly. Interestingly, this signifies a change from a post-materialist bias in volunteering to a mainstreaming of volunteering within materialist and post-materialist values. However, most of the population is situated in the ‘in-between’ category where the rate of volunteering remains stable.

Table 8. Percentage volunteering by Materialist – Post-materialist values index: 1999 and 2008

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Materialist - Post-materialist | Materialists | In-between | Post-materialists | Total |
| Pct. volunteering  1999 | 28,9% | 37,9% | 45,6% | 37,7% |
| Pct. volunteering  2008 | 33,1% | 37,6% | 37,3% | 37,0% |

N 1999=1008. N 2008= 1499 Sign. 1999: \*\*, Sign. 2008: insignificant.

The relationship between volunteering and different symbolic boundaries may change without a change in type of socio-economic explanans: the way things are important to people has its own dynamics which cannot in any simple way be explained by socio-economic background variables. However, another type of background variable is highly interesting to the study of value change. Birth cohort is often strongly correlated to value changes since many fundamental values remain stable through-out life. If value socialization had no impact on volunteering we should expect the age and life stage pattern to prevail, resulting in the highest level of volunteering among those in their work-life prime with children participating in different types of activities within civil society organizations. However, the development in volunteering rates within birth cohorts diverges somewhat from this expected pattern (Table 9). The two cohorts between 1964 and 1981 have, contrary to expectations, hardly increased their rate of volunteering, despite entering into the age bracket where increased volunteering is expected. True to expectations those born between 1955 and 1963 sustain a high rate of volunteering and those born between 1946 and 1954 reduce their rate of volunteering by five percent while approaching their retirement age. Puzzling, however, the 1937 to 1945 cohort has retained the highest rate of volunteering in 1999 of all cohorts and eight percent higher than the ensuing cohort at the same age. However, in 2008 this cohort reduces their rate of volunteering by almost nine percent. While large parts of this cohort have presumably retired within this time frame, they have nonetheless postponed their retirement from volunteering for nine years compared to the ensuing cohort. One interpretation of this is that volunteering is either directly linked to or considered part of working life or everyday life in general by the ‘37-’45 cohort, whereas volunteering may predominantly be linked to family life and dependent children by the ’46-’54 cohort. Furthermore, it may be that the values shift in volunteering away from post-materialism and collectivism, towards materialism and individualism is a result of these war and postwar cohorts simultaneously lowering their rate of volunteering. This is countered by the youngest cohort in 2008 who enter with a very high rate of volunteering, stabilizing the overall rate of volunteering. However, these younger cohorts may well represent a new type of volunteering disassociated from those values traditionally connected to volunteering by the older cohorts.

Table 9. Percentage volunteering by birth cohort: 1999 and 2008

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Birth Cohort | 1910  to  1918 | 1919  to  1927 | 1928  to  1936 | 1937  to  1945 | 1946  to  1954 | 1955  to  1963 | 1964  to  1972 | 1973  to  1981 | 1982  to  1990 |
| Pct. Volunteering  1999 | 18.9 | 24.1 | 31.6 | 45.6 | 42.0 | 45.1 | 34.5 | 35.1 |  |
| Pct. Volunteering 2008 |  | 4.4 | 31.4 | 37.0 | 37.3 | 45.2 | 38.7 | 34.7 | 37.6 |

N 1999=1013. N 2008= 1507 Sign 1999: \*\*, Sign. 2008: \*\*\*

**IV Discussion**

From this preliminary analysis of the Danish volunteering trajectory we can identify some points of interest to guide the further investigation. First, it would seem that volunteering has to some degree become more unequally distributed within the population, despite generally increasing affluence. Those with the higher educations have retained or increased their high rates of volunteering while those with the lower levels of education have retained or decreased their low rates of volunteering. Similarly, those remaining unemployed despite increasing employment have become less likely to volunteer. Furthermore, the half of the population with the best health has increased their rate of volunteering a little, while almost everyone else has lowered theirs. Secondly, it is not only the unequal distribution of socio-economic resources that affect the rate of volunteering. Those self-employed or with a vocational education are more forcefully subjected to the increasing pressure of market forces similar to the increasing time-bind enforced on those within the career and home-making life stage. Consequently, these groups have experienced a lowered rate of volunteering while other groups have increased theirs. Thirdly, it would appear that the profile of the Danish volunteer has changed in terms of values and perceptions. Increasingly volunteering is associated with individualist and materialist values contrary to a more collectivist and post-materialist profile in 1999. Fourthly, the predominant value orientations characteristic of birth cohorts seems to influence their rate of volunteering beyond what should be expected from changes in age, life-stage and resource development.

In sum we can preliminarily conclude that the stable general rate of volunteering does indeed hide shifts and changes in socio-economic background and the moral and cultural outlooks characteristic of Danish volunteers. These changes may both be the result of developments within the population as well as within civil society – this remains a question for further research.

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