

## Volunteering, everyday life and home dwelling older people.

How to create community-based rehabilitation in Norwegian municipalities?

How well are we doing together?

### Introduction

Rehabilitation as “business” and fieldwork has a long history. At the moment there will be new challenges in the field, and still rehabilitation has resources that are not utilized yet. The whole field of health, welfare, and rehabilitation practices are rapidly changing these days. The focus onward will be more and more on home based services, which grow in all OECD-countries (Langeland et al., 2016; Rostgaard & Zechner, 2012). New Norwegian governmental papers also points at rehabilitation to be implemented in the users’ home and habitual environments (Forskrift om hab/rehab). Increased effort in rehabilitation will be of social economic benefit, and give increased well-being for each single person living at home (Eide, Fuglerud, & Lauritzen, 2017; Fuglerud, Lauritzen, & Eide, 2018).

The commission of Hagen and the plan for Health Care for Tomorrow published some years ago (Meld. St. 29, 2013), have clarified and stated the reasons for innovational twists in public health care and rehabilitation in the years to come; more involvement, participation and responsibility for one’s own health, and challenged everyone to become a responsible citizen. According to this “second coordination reform” (Meld.St. 29, 2013), more and more complex tasks will be shifted from the specialist to the community level of health services. And further, much of the new distribution of tasks and responsibility for people in need of care (task shift), are meant to take place in between the public services and civic society (Hagen & Johnsen, 2013; St. Meld 47, 2009). This means that the everyday life more often will become an arena for cooperation, and family and next of kin will be more visible – they cannot be ignored as a part of the professional practice. Altogether, this also means that the service user should be looked upon as a part of his or her social community – rather than a person with a disease in a clinical context (Navne & Wiuff, 2011; Vabø & Vik, 2017).

The role of civic society in renewing the welfare state, is not a new debate (Jill, 2018).

However, the knowledge about voluntary work in connection with elderly people has mainly focused on medical help and caring. From a Norwegian standpoint we have little knowledge

about this topic in a rehabilitation context (Rønning, 2011; Rønning, Johansen, & Schanke, 2009; Veenstra & Daatland, 2012). During reablement-services older people with reduced physical functioning, are offered an urgent and forceful rehabilitation, keeping them cling to their homes for a longer time. A purpose of this chapter will be to have a closer look at the public, private, and voluntary support, in connection with elderly living in place, and I am asking; how well are we doing together?

## Background

A human rights-based model for persons with reduced functioning involves socially and societal perspectives, as rehabilitation is described according to both the UN Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and new Norwegian definition (Helse- og omsorgsdepartementet, 2012). According to § 26 in CRPD, participation and inclusion in the local community will be necessary, together with public support. The descriptions and aims for the convention are high, which means there will always be room for improvement.

The concept Community Based-Rehabilitation (CBR) was 'exported' to low-income countries in the 1980s from Scandinavian through the World Health Organization (WHO). Already some years ago Eide and Grut (2012) suggested that Norway as a high income country, with advantage could "take back" the thinking of CBR. WHO has made detailed manuals for implementing CBR. Here I must confine myself, to tell it is a strategy related to different people with impaired or reduced functioning, to build up simple, systematic learning and exercising, training of co-persons, and genuine community based grounding, based on existing human resources in the community (Eide and Grut, 2012, p 315). Even though CBR have had some negative consequences, like women living in poverty to be assigned even more caring and responsibility, CBR has contributed to growth of the social model of disability, where roles and influences have turned out positively. The consequences have been growing emphasis on the environment and the community. Volunteers traditionally bear the activities of CBR, where proximity to the community, both structurally and culturally are unique components (Eide and Grut 2012).

A governmental supported project about community based rehabilitation in south-eastern part of Norway, tells us that the societal perspective is kept loud (Eide et al., 2017; Fuglerud et al., 2018). The overall idea is to create equal opportunities and social inclusion for people with impairment – also the elderly residents. The method will be to give cross professional support, in combination with the effort from the person him-/herself, their family and civic society (Authen, 2019). After running this project for some years, the project leader tells that they have achieved a lot according to cooperation and technology for instance, while this community-based issue still will be the hard part, and still have lack of descriptions (Dehli, 2019).

In this chapter, I will have a closer look at the material based on a project in two municipalities in the western part of Norway, and see if it can bring some new understandings about cooperation between the civic society and public sector (Haarr, 2019; Vabø & Vik, 2017). Further, I will bring some arguments about how the consequences of CBR and community based activities, probably can give the home dwelling older people a better everyday life situation.

### Methods and materials

One of the purposes of this former study was to elucidate voluntary initiatives, and looking for the potential for co-creation with local actors that already existed in the communities. Related to the efforts to make older people more self-reliant, both municipalities had initiated a strategy for partnerships with volunteers and social entrepreneurs (Haarr, 2019; Vabø & Vik, 2017). Data for this research was derived from various qualitative approaches, such as interviews with volunteers and public sector employees, participation in local meetings and events, as well as observations while “walk-and-talk” (Jones, Bunce, Evans, Gibbs, & Hein, 2008). This walk-and-talk-methode combine the strengthes from both observation and interviewing, and will particularly be usefull to find out more about how people use their physical and social surroundings during their daily living (Tjora, 2017, p. 69). The research project contributed also by facilitating focus group sessions for municipal employees, team-leaders, volunteers and local service companies – all of whom had experience in working for improving life for home-dwelling older people with some functional disabilities. Some of the focus interviews where mixed groups. And some of the

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groups we met twice; first at the point of departure for the reablement services, and then repeated some 7-8 months later (Halkier & Gjerpe, 2010; Vabø & Vik, 2017).

After monitoring two municipalities over a three-year period, we experienced that public sector employees and volunteers share a willingness to co-operate. Simultaneously, we realised that a common co-operative strategy needs effort, and that collaboration still is challenging and dependent on individuals; thus highly unreliable (Haarr, 2019).

Although it may be possible to mobilize volunteers to make a difference in the lives of older adults in need, there is always a risk that events aiming at promoting social inclusion of older people will be regarded unattractive by the older people themselves. Several of our informants had experienced that older people in the target group may have difficulty identifying themselves with social actions that are too clearly related to their vulnerability. If municipalities intend to preserve the identity of older adults as self-reliant individuals, it is suggested that social connectedness initiatives are integrated as far as possible into the "neutral" service and cultural life of the community (Vabø & Vik, 2017, p. 137).

#### Purpose and research question

The fact that a larger number of people are going to age in place, implies the requirement of social meeting places, together with support and encouragement during everyday living. Preparing warm meals and table fellowship, along with transportation to all kind of necessities, are recurrent issues (Haarr, 2019). A purpose for taking this material a step further, will be to find out more about how professionals, volunteers and the home dwelling older people are able to meet "wicked problems", and describe how they perform activities together. Tentative research question will then be:

Which consequences do we see from public-private-voluntary co-operation for home dwelling older residents/citizens?

And/Or

What will be necessary steps towards community-based rehabilitation in Norwegian municipalities?

### [A suggestion for a theoretical perspective](#)

Human occupations have seldom been sketched only as an individual affair. However, when knowledge on occupation has been developed in a scientific context, there is a strong individual focus, making it difficult to acknowledge transcending dimensions (Josephsson, 2017). Especially within the field of Occupational Science (OS), the last decennium scientists have outspoken an increasing discontent with the state of the art. An awareness and a critical dialogue have been started, to better understand the full nature of occupation, and more fully reveal and describe how occupation can be a recourse or a hindrance for humans (Josephsson, 2017, p. 393). Most scientist in the field of OS continue to overlook the social processes and mechanisms which creates occupational injustice, and which endure the taken-for-granted customs and practices. To continue an individualistic orientation “stifles the capacity to address issues of equity and justice” (Laliberte Rudman, 2013; Lavalley, 2017)

Scientist will need to understand the process through which humans, acting together, coming into being – as living communities...

We need to understand how we are coming into being together – how we grow, flourish, develop, or how we make hindrance, punish, exclude or discriminate... The community and the individual unceasingly influence one another. None has gone so far as to theoretically characterize occupations that emerges from a functional system, according to Lavalley (2017, p. 459). Nevertheless, some authors have opened this conversation with collective occupation, suggesting a lens through which the occupation of communities and social entities can be understood. Kantartzis (Sakellariou et al., 2016, p. 19) describes the potential for the transactional perspective to embrace “exploration of occupation as emerging from diverse elements at multiple levels”. Co-occupation, understood as each of the occupational experiences of the individuals actively influencing each other, will not be sufficient. However, we seek a solution to the communal question: “How well are we doing together?” What are the situational characteristics and outcomes of the relationships among those individuals?

The authors Lavalley (2017), Clutchin, Dickie and Humphry (2017) all point at the philosopher John Dewey pragmatism, a theoretical ground map for communally understood occupation can be achieved, developed through his understandings of associated living.

*Occupation emerges through an associated existence that never deserts the presence and influence of other people, culturally norms, power structures, or the environment./ /Through an analytic lens of associated occupation, researchers can uncover unique ways in which various living communities form actions, policies, structures, cultures, and systems (Lavalley, 2017, p. 462).*

Which will be a shift to look for the consequential changes in network of people doing together; that means changes in patterns, systems, structures that emerge from occupation of living communities (Lavalley, 2017, p. 463). This also means changing focus from person-centered initiatives, to look for the persons' interaction with their environments, not to lose the more socio-political processes out of sight.

#### *John Dewey's pragmatism*

The core concept of Dewey's philosophy and pedagogy is *experience*, which denotes the dual nature of transaction. This significant issue is that by the continuous transaction between organisms and the environment, both the individual organisms and the environment change – a process, which never will be 'at rest'. In short, by the term 'experience' Dewey hints on doing – acting on the one hand, and undergoing the effects or consequences of it on the other hand. This will be part of all living organisms, not only humans. The difference between plants, animals and humans, will be that humans are not only connected in a natural way to all living things, but also in a cultural way (Berding, 2015, p. 50).

From the very beginning, adults have children participate in various activities and thereby use language. The main point of this process is mutual action – the process of give and take, culturally mediated by the tool of language. Moreover, during this taking part in and sharing structural activities, Dewey connects this with a vision of democracy. He connects the political and social notion of participation to the way, in which children can acquire a place of their own in the community. Dewey's pedagogy was to give space for the child to play; *Play is like art, derives from the life itself*. Further, he was a spokesperson for bringing the children in contact with ordinary material and everyday occupations during education and through that give the opportunity to learn about social relationships and meanings of the

signs that occur in everyday life. Understood by Dewey, we learn like this throughout the life span, during experiences and participation. Through these opportunities to communicate and use language, meaningful activities will emerge, and about meaning, one can argue. (Berding, 2015, pp. 51-53).

### Analyzing

#### Example 1)

Informant – voluntary woman tells;

*This gathering will be for the home dwelling persons with dementia, and their next of kin, so that they can have a place to meet each other. We then meet at the local nursing home, a service center. At the first, many residents came. However, after a while I think it becomes difficult, especially for the next of kin, to show up – and that's a pity. Those living in the nursing home are very eager to participate. Sometimes there will be a group of exercising, and sometimes we invite a guest for singing, have a slideshow with pictures from the city in older days, or something like that. Primarily this is for coming together, chatting – have a cup of coffee and something little to eat. It is supposed to be a meeting place.*

*I have taken part from the start. I like it a lot, but we should have reached out for more people in need, those living at home, and not to say – their next of kin, who need to meet up with likeminded. I think there is a kind of resistance here somewhere.*

#### Example 2)

Interviewing the director for health and social affairs in the one municipality, she says:

*We have to think out of the box...*

*The elderly inhabitants can buy services like other adults and adolescents. Receiving (ready-made) food for instance, is not about privatizing but normalizing. Practical help will change the same way – (we are) not yet into privatizing these businesses, but it will be developed.\**

\*Consequences in this case: the director for health and social affairs contacted a local café in the small town, encouraging them to establish dinner delivered at the entrance for frail or immobile citizens. The owner of the café made a leaflet and a web site about the dinner-delivery. In addition, he made a co-operation with the local taxi-driver, who got a radical new job, driving and delivering dinner at the doorsteps several days a week.

*Some tasks and services, which the municipality delivers, can volunteers do – as a watch over dying people. Looks to me that some will contribute with this. The knit-cafe category, hold lectures, decorate and making the table for parties etc, can be left to clubs and organizations.*

*The day centers have to be moved out of the nursing homes – they better do not be connected to the nursing homes, neither organizationally nor geographically. The municipal can host the day center and the staff. The Volunteer Coordinator will be a piece in this.*

*By being a volunteer, one can experience a special meaning.*

*The municipality must own and operate day centers, while employees and volunteers will be responsible for the content. (I am) thinking that we need to think out of the box, not to save money, but because someone wants to do this.*

#### Discussion

*How well are we doing together?*

Which consequences do we see from public-private-voluntary co-operation for home dwelling older residents/citizens?

And/Or

What will be necessary steps towards community-based rehabilitation in Norwegian municipalities?

#### Summing up and conclusions

The Norwegian municipalities is concerned with developing cooperative relations with family and civil society to build and develop rehabilitation practices for the future. More and more, this type of collaboration goes under the term co-management or partnership (Røiseland and Vabo 2012). Will this bring Norwegian municipalities closer to a community-based-like rehabilitation, or will these first steps bring the reablement-practices in another direction?



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