## Methods for collective mobilisation in community work in Norway and Sweden - a comparative perspective

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## Abstract

In times of increasing global and local challenges in social work in Europa, it is time to re-open a discussion on community work and re-theorize methods for collective mobilisation. The aim of this article is to discuss Nordic community work, focused on methods and challenges for collective mobilisation from a comparative perspective. The discussion is based on a qualitative study with an exploratory design including two data sources, a selection of method literature and an online questionnaire about method use among Norwegian and Swedish practitioners. The results of the study show a diversity of methods and perspectives. Methods were used more systematically in Norway than in Sweden, where the method use was more fragmented. Practitioners in both countries did not put emphasis on collective mobilisation, rather on the significance of relation building, co-operation and co-creation, enabling collective mobilisation. Finally, current societal challenges call for further development of methods for both social collectivisation and collective mobilisation instead of increasing individualisation.

## Key Words: Community work, Collective mobilisation, Dialogue, Participation, Co-creation, Relation building, Methods

## Introduction

Community work, that is rarely discussed in social work in Europe, is a multifaceted approach encompassing diverse types of approaches and orientations from community development to social planning and social action for social development and change, especially in segregated and vulnerable urban and rural environments (e.g. Popple, 2015; Sjöberg & Turunen, 2022; Turunen, 2009; Twelvetrees, 2017, Ågotnes & Larsen, 2022). The objectives of social development and change, can vary from social prevention to collective mobilization for diverse aims from community activities to sustainable development. Historically, community work is a contextual and situational activity that can be discussed and carried out in multiple manners. In chief, the focus is put on proactive and collective efforts instead of retroactive and individually oriented methods. Internationally, there are three types of main directions: locality development, social planning and social action (Rothman, 1995; Sjöberg & Turunen, 2022; Turunen 2004). Locality development aims to create social and economic development in urban and rural environments, social planning to plan social services and put social aspects on community planning, while social action, which in Sweden is called social mobilization, has had an actionist and explicitly collective perspective on social change. Although community work has a long history in professional social work, it has been neglected in the mainstream of professional social work, not only in the Nordic countries, but also in other European countries. Indeed, since 2009 some new textbooks and scientific articles on community work have been published in the Nordic and international contexts (see further Sjöberg & Turunen, 2022). In European Social Work Journal, you can find only few articles with title of community work during the latest two decades, but an increasing number since 2021. Regardless knowledge development, there is still a lack of scientific studies focused on community work and its methods, even within professional social work. Therefore, this article aims to re-actualize the European discussion on community work within social work and to increase knowledge on methods for collective mobilization from a comparative perspective. The article is a further elaboration of a chapter by Midtgård & Turunen (2022) in a Norwegian book *Kollektiv mobilisering. Samfunnsarbeid i teori og praksis* (Collective mobilization. Community work in theory and praxis), edited by Ågotnes & Larsen (2022).

Both research and international reports show increased socio-economic and spatial polarisation between rich and poor, even in Norway and Sweden, countries which have been examples for prosperity, welfare and equality (cf. OECD, 2019; Piketty, 2022; WIR, 2022). In general, our planet has become a more and more unsafe and unsustainable place to live in economic, ecological, social and existential respects. In addition to the pandemics and environmental threats, we have ongoing wars, creating diverse crisis from energy to survival within countries and across the globe. Nationally, Sweden has been shaken by rampant gang crime with deadly violence, and both Norway and Sweden have been exposed for floods and landslide during the storm Hans in 2023. In North-West of Norway, Ingunn broke out latest in January 2024. We do not assume that community workers can solve all kinds of societal and environmental problems, but we claim that social work is to be developed at different levels of society, including community work, in order to be able to respond to current challenges. In 2022, communit work was discussed in relationship to Welfare State transformations och sustainability in the special issue of commmunity work in the journal of *Nordic Social Work Research* (Sjöberg & Turunen, 2022), and to collective mobilisasation in the above mentioned Norwegian book on *Kollektiv Mobilisering* by Ågotnes and Larsen (2022). In this article, we aim to put emphasise on methods for and method use of collective mobilisation from a comparative perspective. First, a brief discussion about the state of community work in the Nordic countries is given before presenting the purpose, method, and results of the comparative study in concern. The methods in the study are perceived as working methods with knowlegde base and practical skills for social development and change.

**The state of community work in the Nordic countries**

Historically, community work has a similar development process in the Nordic countries (Hutchinson, 2009, 2022; Sjöberg & Turunen, 2022; Turunen 2004, 2009, 2020). It was introduced as a more environmental approach and method in modern social work around 1970, although older examples also exist from the end of the 19th century, mainly in the form of settlement work. This work spread from Toynbee Hall in London to Hull House in Chicago and to the Nordic countries where some of the settlements still function as socio-cultural meeting places for all ages (Turunen, 2004, 2020). Nordick community work had its golden years in the 1970s, but has gradually become almost extinct in the social sector, while the same type of approach has emerged in other sectors of society under different titles. The trend has since 1980s been towards increased fragmentation and diversification, meaning diverse discources and stakeholders from single municipalities to civic associations as well as social and private entrepreneurs (Sjöberg &Turunen 2022; Turunen 2004, 2009, 2020). Within professional social work, community work is an interdisciplinary approach and method to prevent and solve problems at group and community level. This interdisciplinary stance of community work for social change and local development is further developed at the Master Programme of Community work at the Western Norway University of Applies studies in Norway, the only master programme of community work that exist in the Nordic countries (see further Larsen, Ågotnes & Agdal, 2022; Høgskulen på Vestlandet, u.å.).

There is no overall picture of the current state of community work in the Nordic countries, although new attempts to create Nordic knowledge have been made since 2004 (Sudmann & Breivik, 2018; Hutchinsson 2009, 2022; Sjöberg & Turunen 2022; Turunen 2004, 2009, 2020). The lack of interest in community work in the Nordic countries' social work can be explained in relation to welfare states' transformation through intensified neoliberalism, individualisation and the introduction of new public management (NPM), but also as a result of lacking interest for it at schools of social work and in social work research. Despite the re-vitalisation of community work, it remains as a marginalised activity in professional social work in the Nordic countries, where the development has gone towards increasing diversification of actors, arenas, perspectives and methods (Hutchinson, 2022; Midtgård & Turunen, 2022; Sjöberg & Turunen 2022; Turunen, 2004, 2009, 2013; 2020).

Fundamental to community work is still to meet, discuss and identify common needs, problems or interests in order to gradually start acting collectively for social development and change - locally or globally (IACD, 2023; Popple 2015; Ronnby, 1994; Sjöberg & Turunen, 2022; Turunen, 2017; Twelvetrees, 2017; Ågotnes & Larsen, 2022). The traditional methods of the Nordic community work have included neighbourhood work (creating contact and meeting places), organising (creating participation and cooperation), social planning (planning social services and participating in community planning) and action-oriented work (mobilising people for different types of actions) as well as action research, where research and change work go hand in hand (Sjöberg & Turunen 2022; Turunen 2004, 2009). Some attempts at action research were made in social work in the 1970s, but failed to make a breakthrough. However, action research as research method has been reactivated in the recently published book on Participation (Denval & Iwarsson, 2022) and in a special issue on participatory research in a scientific journal of social work published in Sweden (Gruber, Gustafsson & Sköld, 2022).

**Old and new methods in community work**

Along side traditional methods such as neighbourhood work, organisational work, planning work or social action, there is a wide range of specific methods that can be used in community work such as Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), Future Workshop (Jungk & Müllert, 1987), Open Space, (Owen, 2008), and several variants of change methods (Holman et al, 2007) and other participatory and dialogical methods (Midtgårdh & Turunen, 2022; Turunen, 2013 ). These methods are discussed in this article as structured methods. They are characterized by clear manuals, principles, phases and steps for mapping needs, problems and resources, organizing meetings, networks, co-creation, collaboration, social innovation or promoting collective mobilization. Many of these structured approaches have become part of public sector work in public health, elderly care, culture, professional social work and voluntary social work. When discussing methods, it is important to remember that community work is not only a method or technique. It has a knowledge base of theories, principles and ethics (Banks, Shevellar & Narayan, 2022; Hutchinson 2022; Popple 2015; Sjöberg & Turunen, 2018; 2022). Democracy, participation and humanism are still key values and principles in community work. In both Norway and Sweden, dialogue, participation and collaboration are also goals for the public sector, particularly for societal planning and for sustainable development (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation 2014; SOU 2001:1, SOU 2020:47). Despite ambitious goals of welfare, participation and sustainability, they are lacking in practice in market orientated practices and city planning (Brusman & Turunen 2018, NOU 2003:19, SKR, 2022).

Denvall and Salonen (2000, 30), who have examined participatory methods such as the future workshop, open space, scenario method, etc., have found the following common features:

- putting dialogue at the centre

- all persons and organisations relevant to the theme are invited to participate.

- they are based on a longer time perspective: past-present-future

- they are conducive to acting and action

- they have rules and structure to create freedom and security

- They combine rational and logical analysis with creative innovation.

- they require external leaders to support the process

- they challenge ingrained structures of thought and acting

Many of the structured methods can be perceived as neo-liberal management techniques without power-analyses. Regardless critical reviews of the ABCD method that have been made by Emeluju & MacLeod (2014) and Maclure (2023), and other methods (Turunen, 2013), we claim that it is not the method itself that determines its value, but for what purpose and how it is used. For example, the Future Workshop method has been tested in all possible contexts from grassroots movements to administrations and private companies (Denvall & Salonen, 2000). Next, we will present our researchon methods and method use for collective mobilization.

## Research design and methodology

The comparative perspective by Midtgårdh & Turunen (2022) on methods for collective mobilisation in Norway and Sweden was aimed to increase knowledge of methods and method use for further method development of collective mobilisation within community work. The research direction followed the idea of practice research, which in the Nordic countries has been discussed as research on practices, research collaboration with practitioners and user-led research (Marthinsen & Julkunen, 2012). The focus of our study was on qualitative research on practices, consisting of two data sources: a review of selected methodological literature in the field of community work and an online questionnaire among 19 practitioners in Sweden and Norway. The aim was not to make a total study but to start with an exploration where we stand. Exploratory studies are about mapping and problematising unexplored fields.

Selection of method literature included books and research reports used in the Nordic context (e.g. Amdam 2021; Bergem, 2020, Denvall & Salonen, 2000; Holman et al., 2007; Midtgård & Agdal 2022, Svendsen et al, 2012; Turunen, 2013). Web-based sources were also used (e.g. SKR, 2022). The target group for the online questionnaire was selected according to convenience sampling. We contacted practitioners who we knew were engaged in some form of social development and change work called community development, community planning, social prevention, public health, neighbourhood work, community work or action research in both urban and rural settings. Those contacted were employed in the public or private sector or active in voluntary organisations. The questionnaire was sent to 24 people in 24 organisations, 10 in Norway and 14 in Sweden, where it was more difficult to recruit participants. The aim was to get an equal number of responses from both countries. In Sweden nine people responded and in Norway ten, totalling 19 people responded, four men (two men from each country) and 15 women. Most were over 50 years old and their professional backgrounds were varied, from social workers (socionomers) to anthropologists and engineers. In Norway, responses (six responses) from the public sector dominated, while in Sweden, four responses came from the public sector, one from a public housing company and four from associations, three of which were in rural environments and one in an urban environment. This diversity reflects the diversification that has occurred in community work in the Nordic countries (cf. Sjöberg & Turunen, 2022; Turunen, 2004, 2009, 2020).

The questionnaire included 12 questions about the organization's goals and working methods and how these were used, which ones were used specifically for collective mobilization, which theories and perspectives were used, which societal challenges were met, lessons learned and results, how the methods could be further developed for collective mobilization, and anything else the respondent wished to address. The questions and summaries of the answers are presented in detail in Table 6.1 in the chapter by Midgård and Turunen (2022, pp. 164-167). The analysis was done abductively, including both deduction and induction. First, the answers were read in relation to the questions and recorded per question and country to first discover meaningful sentences and patterns about the methods used. After this, similarities and differences were analyzed between countries. In the overall analysis of the material, four themes emerged which are discussed at the end of the article.

## Theories and perspectives on methods of collective mobilization

The theory base in community work and methodological literature is interdisciplinary and eclectic; inspiration is drawn from many different sources. There are pluralist, critical and feminist theories (Sjöberg & Turunen, 2018). The pluralistic theories of practice focus on working methods and skills, while the critical theories include theories of power and societal development and the feminist ones focus on both gender and power relations. The structured methods are largely based on system and management theories. In this article, the focus is on practice theories of methods and method use.

The word collective in this study refers to a group of people with common interests. There are different types of collectives from community housing to co-operatives. In political theory, the ideological discussion concerns individualism and collectivism, historically linked to liberalism and socialism respectively (Larsson, 2014). Collectivism emphasises interpersonal dependence and solidarity rather than individual independence and egoism. The discussion about individual independence and community is not new, originating from Theories of Tönnies about Society and Community from 1887 (Turunen, 2004). The book *Är Svensken människa. Om gemenskap och oberoende i det moderna Sverige* (Is the Swede a human being. About community and independency in the Modern Sweden) by Bergren and Trådgårdh (2006/2015) highlights the Swedish welfare state's development, paradoxically towards increasing individualistic independency. In community work, a collective is more than a temporary gathering of people (Sudmann & Henriksbø, 2011). It is about creating a social community in time, space and place so that interaction can occur when people meet each other (Polletta & Jasper, 2001), for creating and promoting diverse activities, social mobilisation of people and solidarity between people (Popple, 2015; Sjöberg & Turunen, 2018, 2022, Åtgotnes & Larsen, 2022).

In community work there are varying ideological perspectives and orientations from conservatism to Marxism and feminism, from religious charity to political mobilisation. (Ledwith, 2016; Popple, 2015; Pyles; 2014; Sjöberg & Turunen, 2022; Turunen, 2004;). The political orientation focuses on the collective identity building and the mobilisation of 'powerless groups' from social, humanistic and political perspectives (e.g. Ledwith 2016; Ronnby 1992). Additionally, renewed perspectives have also been added such as collective empowerment (e.g. Sjöberg et al., 2015), eco-social perspectives (e.g. Matthies & Närhi, 2016) and green perspectives on commonalities (e.g. Askheim & Askheim, 2023; Barthel et al., 2022). Most recently, the need for ethics work has been highlighted by Banks et.al. (2022). In sum, collective mobilisation in community work is about creating space and room to meet, discuss ideas, needs, interests etcetera for various purposes and actions together. Community work is not steered by laws and regulations in detail, but co-created by those involved in each context.

One aspect that relates to collective mobilisation but has not been discussed explicitly in community work in the Nordic countries is collective capability while this aspect has been discussed in working life science and crime prevention (Gerell et al., 2018). Collective capability includes the idea of collective strength that Puttman discusses as social capital (Putnam, 2000), and used even Nordic community work (Ågotnes & Larsen, 2022; Turunen, 2004). Collective capability relates to relationships, interaction, cohesion and trust in each other as well as the ability to solve common problems such as in a vulnerable neighbourhood (Gerell et al., 2018). As we see it, collective mobilisation assumes that people can develop a collective capability and capacity for acting together. A collective is not an anonymous mass (a sea of people), but a group of individual people who have the ability to communicate and cooperate with each other, especially at the meso-level, between the individual and society, in meaning making manners. According to Ronnby, collective mobilisation in community work cannot occur until a 'group in itself' becomes a 'group for itself', that is, a group becomes aware of its common needs and interest in organising itself and acting (Ronnby, 1992, p. 78). A group may be in the same situation, but not feel a sense of community or common interests to act collectively. Only when people start to co-operate on common issues or problems they can become a 'group for itself¨ for social development and change together.

What the specific structured methods have in common is that they can be applied in many different ways. They can be used manipulatively but also creatively to develop, quality assure or streamline community work in practice (Agdal et al., 2019; Holman et al 2007; Turunen, 2013). Holman et al (2007) describe some 60 change methods and Sweden's municipalities and regions (SKR, 2022) provide information on some 50 diaglogue methods. Only some examples of methods used in Norway and Sweden are shortly summarised here. ***Asset Based Community Development*** (ABCD) by Kretzmann & McKnight (1993) is a strength-based method that can be used especially for co-operation and capacity building in a local community. It has been widely disseminated in Norway (Agdal et al., 2019). ***Future*** Workshop is an action- and future-oriented method used in Sweden to "break the power of habit" by promoting creativity and action (Denvall & Salonen, 2000). This method by Jungk & Müllert (1987) has been imported from Germany and further developed in many countries, including in Sweden by Denvall & Salonen (2000), and later in Norway by Dalback & Hansen (2015). ***Open Space*** is a meeting form initiated by Owen in the 1980s as an alternative to traditional conferences where participants are mobilised to shape the conference agenda themselves (Owen, 2008). The method has spread to many countries, including Sweden and Norway (Svendsen et al., 2012; Turunen 2013). **World Café** or café dialogue is a method that is widely used in different kinds of meetings to discuss and take action. The method was developed by Brown & Isaacs (1995) and aims to promote interactivity and vision to create something new and innovative. **Photovoice** by Wang & Burris (1997) is a visual method that is also used in research (Chang et al, coming). In this method, photography and story-telling are used as a starting point for communication at individual, group and societal level. This method can be used for empowerment, mobilisation and participation in municipal planning and diverse processes, including schools (Warne 2012). More recently, increasingly business-oriented methods have been developed for collaboration such as placemaking and BIDs (Business Improvement Districts) to create attractive urban development (Swedish City Centres 2018; 2022). These business-orientated methods have not been explicitly focused on the most vulnerable or powerless as in community work (c.t. Hutchinson 2022; Sjöberg & Turunen 2022).

## Online survey results: Variety of methods and practices

No generalised conclusions can be drawn from an exploratory study involving only 19 practices. Despite this, the results provided examples of over 50 different methods that had been used. According to the practitioners, it is the purpose and context that determines which method is to be used or what is to be done and how. The results also showed differences between the countries that the Norwegian method users seemed to be more method-oriented towards specific methods than the Swedish users, who emphasised the importance of activities. Several Norwegian method users were familiar with methods such as ABCD, Framtidsverkstad, Open Space, World Café and photovoice. The ABCD method was only mentioned in several Norwegian responses. A possible explanation for this may be that the ABCD method in Norway has been launched by the national public health programme as a method for collaboration in local public health work (Bergem, 2020; Midtgård & Agdal, 2022). It also turned out that three of the Norwegian respondents were consultants with their own firm specialising in methods such as the Future Workshop and Open Space. The Norwegian responses also mentioned two self-developed methods such as "Ruslemaking" and "Use your talent", which in a closer examination turned out to be simplifications of existing methods adapted to Norwegian needs. The informants also responded that they adapt the methods in relationship to the context, such as the situation, target group, time and age.

Regarding the Swedish responses, four responses represented associations. These responses highlighted practical activities such as study circles, theatre group, village hall, community services, meeting places and co-operation as a method for achieving objectives such as community sense, local development, collective mobilisation, etc. In two Swedish responses that came from community planning and other municipal services, several structured methods were mentioned such as maptionnaire, service planning, future workshop, workshops and digital meetings. One association member wrote that "we don't use any methods" despite many actual results such as improved public services and local development. The Swedish use of methods seemed to be more about traditional community work for local community development. Among structured methods, Future workshop, Open Space and Safety Waks were mentioned and even used in Sweden. Safety Walks (Trygghetsvandringar ) is a Swedish method that aims to examine a local area in co-operation with residents and other local actors with specific regard to safety aspects in order to initiate development and change. The method was originally initiated by *Tryggare och Mänskligare Göteborg,* a council for a more safe and human Göteborg*,* and further developed by other organisations, such as the *Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention* (Brottsförebyggande rådet/BRÅ, 2020). Maptionanaire (community engagement platform) in city planning was a method that was only mentioned in one of the Swedish responses.

It was surprising that many Swedish respondents did not bring up well-known international dialogic, participatory democratic or systemic methods even though they are documented in method books and reports in the country (Denvall & Salonen 2000; Ranger & Westerberg, 2004; Turunen, 2013) and online (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions 2022). There may be several explanations for this: that those concerned lack knowledge of the methods, that knowledge of the methods has not been disseminated by the authorities as in Norway, or that those concerned consider that the structured methods do not fit into their activities.

Indeed, the Swedish situation of method use seemed as fragmented and ambivalent as the situation of community work in the early 2000s, while the Norwegian situation of community work could be described as a more systemic top-down model (Turunen, 2004). There are also bottom-up approaches in Norway, but a systematic co-operation between universities and practitioners in municipalities has been in progress where the dissemination of knowledge about methods has been an important part of the governmental strategy (Helsedirektoratet, 2015, see even Turunen, 2004). In one of the Swedish responses, a lack of support from academia was pointed out, while in another municipality there was co-operation with researchers from a university. However, there is a number of local variations in cooperation and using methods, depending on the purpose and context of method use.

In terms of the use and benefit of methods as well as further development, four themes could be identified.

* *There is a diversity of methods and perspectives*
* *The benefits are in collaboration and participation in practical activities and improvements.*
* *Social collectivisation is a step towards collective mobilisation*
* *Comparing similarities and differences expands and enriches.*

*Diversity of methods and perspectives:*  As mentioned before, over 50 methods were described as examples, among which ABCD, Open Space, World Café, Framtidsverkstad and Fotostämme were the most frequently mentioned methods in Norway, while Framtidsverkstad, Open Space and Safety Walks in Sweden. The methods had been used for several purposes, but were based on the needs and wishes of those concerned to achieve goals such as better living conditions, village development, better community services, prevention, activities, support and help, trust, community, safety, well-being, democracy, collaboration and dialogue, and even sustainable development. The Norwegian responses included several method descriptions, but in both countries the perspectives varied between activities and targeted systematic method work.

*The benefits of methods dealt with cooperation* focused on participation, practical activities and improvement of services. The concrete results and benefits comprehended creating meeting places, enabling participation and being heard, increasing knowledge of how the community works, maintaining services (grocery store, school, kindergarten, meeting room, housing theatre activities), creating sustainable social infrastructure in a geographical area for people to meet, get to know each other, create community, reduce anxiety, reduce tensions and influence power relations.

A Norwegian method user wrote that "all methods are collectively mobilising". However, it was not the collective mobilisation that was the focus of the practitioners' descriptions of methods but relationships, dialogue, collaboration, cooperation, interaction and co-creation, community and trust, communication and networking, which in itself is fundamental to all types of social mobilisation of people and resources. The word *social collectivisation* was mentioned in one of the Swedish responses which stated that study circles have always been a way of working for collective learning and mobilisation. Study circles are about group-based popular education to learn something together and create spaces for participation and community as well as for acting. Several responses emphasised the importance of relationships for method development and collective mobilisation by establishing meeting places, enabling participation and communication, promoting joint learning and mobilisation from below, based on local needs, problems and proposals.

The relational perspective is characteristic, as Aspelin (2013) points out, of everything that happens between people, i.e. the interactional aspect of a group or system. This perspective deals both with social relations and social processes in society locally and globally. In a deeper analysis of the answers, we discovered that social collectivisation constituted a meaning-making significance for a deeper analysis of collective mobilisation, reminding of the ideas and the pedagogical theories by Freire (1970), that Ronnby (1992, 1994) and Ledwith (2016) have used in order to understand collective mobilisation in practice, particularly among the oppressed. The emphasis of Freire is laid on dialoqical learning, co-operation and critical awareness.

## Collective mobilisation in response to complex societal challenges?

Among the societal challenges raised by respondents were many current issues such as environmental threats, the economy, social exclusion, lack of resources, survival opportunities, concerns for children and young people, gang crime, mental and physical health challenges, substance abuse, insecure prospects, unsafe neighbourhoods, poor conditions for volunteering, the need for participation and being heard.

The history of community work shows that meeting places, whether we call them settlements or neighbourhood houses or village halls, still constitute the starting point for social processes that can gradually lead to collective mobilisation through neighbourhood work, social planning, action-oriented work or action research (Ronnby, 1994, Sjöberg & Turunen, 2022; Turunen 2004, 2013, 2020). The more complex the societal challenges have become, the more the demand has grown for structured methods with clear manuals, phases and principles to address complex issues systematically, methodically and innovatively about collective mobilisation. It requires practical action with those in concern. This article shows that collective mobilisation can be promoted by using activities and traditional methods but also by using specific structured methods. It is the purpose, the context and the way of using methods that is crucial. In addition to knowledge and experience, the use of methods also requires critical awareness of risks, power-analysis and ethics. Arnstein's (1969) has discussed participation in terms of a staircase from manipulation to genuine citizenship. This staircase can be used as a tool for analysing and reflecting on the risks of manipulative practices. Manipulative use of methods can lead to reduced trust and participation fatigue and increase the risk of 'tyranny of participation' (Ågotnes et al., 2022).

## Methodology development for collective mobilisation in theory and practice

The analysis of the questionnaire responses showed that practitioners did not talk about collective mobilisation as much as we assumed. This may be because the concept is unclear and can be perceived in so many different manners. However, the responses gave us ideas on how collective mobilisation methods can be developed, where both traditional and structured methods and activities can be mutually beneficial. In terms of collective mobilisation methods, practitioners felt that it is important to be open, clear and inclusive in the way they work in order to increase trust, build networks, co-operate and coordinate different types of efforts. The practitioners did not put emphasise on theories and dit not give many examples of methodological literature. Among the theories mentioned were theories of sustainable development, urban design, human rights, systemic thinking, public health work, salutogenesis and intersectionality. A point of view stated that the practitioners are not theorists.

Most of the methods and activities mentioned were aimed at increasing participation, enabling dialogical meetings, contributing to joint learning, community and co-creation. This can be described as social collectivisation around ongoing issues and processes in society . In order for collective mobilisation to be realised, social collectivisation is needed, that a "group in itself" can become a "group for itself" (Ronnby, 1992). Ultimately, social collectivisation is about creating contacts, community and solidarity with each other. For social collectivisation to occur, meeting places and activities where people can gather and participate are crucial. Meeting places and methods in themselves do not create social development and change unless people are able to come together and act for common goals. Issues and capacities can be collectivised in a conscious and systematic process where structured methods can be used to form the basis for discussions and analyses of current issues by mapping needs and problems, identifying common goals, building relationships, exchanging information and experiences, creating visions and action plans. In this, the community worker has a role as an enabler, even called for facilator. Community work aims to promote humanism, democracy, social justice and sustainable development. The activities must be meaningfull for those involved. The methods used today are characterised by collaboration and consensus rather than conflictual thinking. In general, community work in the Nordic countries has been more or less consensus-oriented since the 1980s (Sjöberg & Turunen, 2022; Turunen, 2004). The responses in our study did not provide any explicit examples of critical social theory or conflict-oriented community work, even if the Nordic literature on community work has discussed them (cf. Ronnby, 1994; Sjöberg & Turunen, 2022; Turunen, 2004, Wahlberg et al., 1978; Ågotnes & Larsen, 2022).

## Conclusion

To summarise, *comparing similarities and difference* expands and enriches knowledge development. Comparative studies force researchers from different countries to problematise their own and others' perceptions in the field of research, in this case methods and practices of collective mobilisation. Both the referenced methodological literature and the online survey show that there is a diversity of activities, methods and ways of using methods, depending on the context, the purpose and the situation of the target groups. There are both similarities and differences between countries, organisations and environments, but also differences in the understanding and interpretation of methods for collective mobilisation. The methods in themselves are not collectively mobilising, but the capability and capacity for collective mobilisation can be promoted by means of methods.

Norway can be characterised as a systematic method use country and Sweden as a more fragmented method use country. The Swedish responses showed a marked difference between professionals in the public sector and volunteers in organisations who wrote more about activities than methods. The Norwegian responses were more administration-oriented and emphasised collaboration and co-creation between public, private and civil actors. Many of the Norwegian responses came from public sector employees. There were also differences between urban and rural environments. The associations in rural areas were more practically orientated, where the living conditions, community and development of the village are crucial. As we see it, collective mobilisation requires activities, where both traditional and structured methods that can be used to support collective capacity and social collectivisation towards common goals. Collective mobilisation is not only an end in itself, but also a practical action process between people working towards common goals in order to become a "group" in its own right.

Informants who could show practical results had been working for more than 1-3 years. The major societal challenges such as environmental threats, segregation, lack of services or increasing gang crime cannot be solved at the individual or family level or through short-term projects when knowing that the problems that exist have been created over decades (cf. Sjöberg & Turunen, 2022). Long-term community work is needed and cannot be replaced by means of specific methods. The social challenges of today require both group and community-oriented initiatives and methods at several levels in society, from community work at the grassroots level to community planning and social policy. In the Nordic context, municipalities have a major responsibility to ensure that local community development also benefits the most vulnerable groups in segregated and marginalised areas. If it´s not done, there is a need of social collectivation and collective mobilisation.

The results of the study show that collective mobilisation is a complex concept but an important part of democracy and humanity. The methods of collective mobilisation include both traditional and new ways of working for promoting better living conditions and communities as well as for the fight against vulnerability, social problems and oppression. Working for social justice, sustainable development and peace has become increasingly relevant in Europe. That is one reason for re-vitalise community work. Further development of methods of collective mobilisation requires both knowlege and practical experience of the advantages and disadvantages of the method suiting the target groups and the context in which they are used. This requires more research but also sensitivity to people and their life situation and condition in each context.

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