UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education

“*It’s engraved in the Norwegian people.”*

Dugnad during the time of corona

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1 Introduction

"*The virus spreads when people gather and are close to each other. Therefore, it is now vital that all the inhabitants of the country participate in a dugnad to stop contagion. We will do this in solidarity with the elderly, chronically ill, and others who are especially at risk of becoming seriously ill. […] In Norway we stand together when it counts. We mobilize to* ***dugnad*** *and cooperation in both small and large local communities. This is now more important than ever. The virus is so contagious that we can't touch each other. But we shall look after each other.*"[1] (Aftenposten, 2020)

The above quote is from former Prime Minister Erna Solberg's national press conference on March 12th, 2020, when the country went into a national lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic. Along with the lockdown came the strictest measures ever to be enforced in peacetimes – measures Norwegians hadn't been subjected to since World War II. Society shut down, and we were confined to our homes for an unknown amount of time. Now, in 2023 as I finalize this thesis, this all seems quite far away, and the lockdown(s) eventually ended. But at the time it was completely shocking. Nonetheless, the nation accepted this, because we had been asked to follow these restrictions in the spirit of 'dugnad' against the coronavirus – a concept that resonated among the Norwegian population.

What are we to make of Solberg's use of the word 'dugnad' in the context of the coronavirus? The word, which normally describes a common Norwegian cultural practice, is usually translated as having to do with 'voluntary work' and involves a group of people (a school class, or residents of a block of flats) coming together for a set amount of time (normally an afternoon or a weekend) to do practical, physical work that in some way benefits them. This can be a range of different tasks, from raking leaves to painting fences. How then, was it being applied to encourage an entire nation to follow government-enforced rules and

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[1] Viruset smitter når folk samles og er tett på hverandre. Derfor er det nå helt avgjørende at alle landet innbyggere deltar i en dugnad for å bremse smitten. Det skal vi gjøre i solidaritet med eldre, kronisk syke, og andre som er spesielt utsatt for å utvikle alvorlig sykdom. […] I Norge står vi sammen når det gjelder. Vi mobiliserer til dugnad og samarbeid i små og store lokalsamfunn. Nå er dette viktigere enn noen gang. Viruset er så smittsomt at vi ikke kan ta på hverandre. Men vi skal ta vare på hverandre.

restrictions to stop the spread of the coronavirus? What does ‘dugnad’ *actually* mean, and why was the government using it in this setting?

As the pandemic progressed, the word became more evident in government discourse – and the contrast between ‘dugnad’ in the context of the coronavirus pandemic and its normal usage became increasingly obvious. What exactly is it that changed, and what was the Norwegian population’s reaction? I decided to explore this and other questions for my thesis.

The concept of ‘dugnad’ has a long history in the Nordic languages and can be traced all the way back to the Icelandic sagas from the 1200’s. In this thesis, I will explore the original meanings of the word, showing how these meanings have changed over time, while also showing how certain core elements have remained. The concept originated in a premodern, preindustrial society in small, isolated farming communities where the interdependence of neighbours was a highly important element of the social structure. As society began to change in the nineteenth century, the meaning of the word dugnad began to change in some ways as well. I will explore the way in which the dugnad was perceived as something that was considered a duty, to becoming more voluntary in modern society.

The concept of ‘dugnad’ is very tightly connected to the concept of community – which is also a word that can be ambiguous and difficult to define. What is a community? Who is included in a community? What obligations does this entail, and how have these obligations changed over time? In this thesis I explore the concept of community through the statements of my informants and show how this is closely connected to the concept of ‘dugnad’.

In the chapter 6, I will explore the voluntary nature of ‘dugnad’. ‘Dugnad’ is often defined as voluntary – but the extent to which ‘dugnad’ is something that one has a choice to participate in is a subject of disagreement, both in the literature on ‘dugnad’ and among my informants. Is it the word ‘dugnad’ that is unclear? Or does the concept of dugnad lead us to deeper questions about the extent to which we are obliged to participate in community actions? When looking at this, it is also crucial to ask how ‘dugnad’ is relevant to Norwegian society. What values does the practice contain? And can it say anything about societal norms in Norway? If so, what?

Moving to the corona ‘dugnad’, it is necessary to contextualize ‘dugnads’ socially, historically, and politically. When did the trend of using ‘dugnad’ as a way of reacting to a national crisis begin? What positions have politicians taken, and how have they used the word in different contexts? How was the usage of ‘dugnad’ in relation to the coronavirus pandemic both in line with the former usage, and how did it adapt to this specific situation?

Finally, I explore how and why my informants’ relationship to the national ‘corona’ dugnad changed, in many cases becoming questioned or challenged. What was it about the corona ‘dugnad’ that changed, and what reactions did people have to this change?

An exploration of the concept of ‘dugnad’ was not my original focus when I started the Master’s program in social anthropology at UiT in 2019, long before the coronavirus pandemic began. In the next section, I explain how I came to choose this topic as hopes of completing my original project drained away in the first months of 2020.

It is also important to acknowledge that the frightening and uncertain nature of the pandemic had consequences on both my project and me personally. Even though society was often more open in Tromsø than in other more populated areas in Norway, I suffered from severe anxiety, meaning that I rarely left the house unless I absolutely had to. As such, this has had some consequences for my methods, which will be discussed in chapter 2.

1.1 Defining a new project

Although the word “dugnad” had been used as a tactic to encourage people to follow restrictions and combat the coronavirus pandemic from the first day of the national lockdown, I (perhaps unsurprisingly) didn’t question the use of the word in this context or give it much thought at the time. It wasn’t until around two weeks later that I noticed “dugnad” popping up in the Norwegian media. At this time, most articles were framed negatively, writing about specific groups who were perceived to not be taking part in the “corona dugnad”. The first group I recall reading about were joggers; there were concerns that joggers were more likely to spread the virus because they didn’t keep an appropriate distance from others, and because there were uncertainties about how far the virus could travel when airborne. This was quickly followed by a scathing criticism of cabin-goers, who were considered a risk to the limited healthcare of small municipalities. For further context, this debate began during Easter 2020

(Easter being a time when large groups of Norwegians travel to their cabins to enjoy the holiday) and was bought up again the following year.

As the pandemic went on, other groups were criticized in the media: Those who travelled abroad despite recommendations not to, and youth, who were accused of spreading the coronavirus by hosting parties. Criticism of youth was mainly aimed at two parties: The russ – students in their last year of high school[2], and the group I chose to focus on – University students.

The youth were in a very difficult position during the pandemic. They were less vulnerable to the disease but suffered more from the social restrictions. They were the focus of criticism in many parts of the world, and also experienced the most mental health issues. The youths themselves, however, were aware early on about the unfairness of the criticism, and the particular vulnerabilities they were facing.

When I asked my informants about what they made of the media's criticism against them, many of them said that they understood the criticism, but also called it generalizing and unfair, as they had all been following restrictions. I also asked about how participating in the corona 'dugnad' had affected my informants, and in most cases, they talked about how it had affected them negatively – they were lonely and felt isolated, it had affected their mental health, and in some cases had led to a loss of job and income that contributed to further stress in already stressful times. This point will be explored more in depth in chapter 9.

The fact that I chose university students as my focus of research was precisely because of the criticism they were facing. When we look at the context of the criticism youth were facing, it actually tells us a lot about 'dugnad'. This will be expanded on in depth in chapter 8, but the expectation is that everyone's contribution in a 'dugnad' should be equal, and by not following the governments rules and restrictions and hosting parties and potentially spreading

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[2] "Russ" is a Norwegian term for students who spend the time from the 1st of May until Norway's Constitution Day on May 17th, celebrating having almost completed 13 years of obligatory schooling. Here, the celebrations consist of large parties, with large gatherings being held around the country.

the virus, Norwegian youth were perceived as making less of an effort in the national 'dugnad', as thus should be criticized for this.

The more I began seeing 'dugnad' used in the Norwegian media, the more curious I became: What was the purpose of the government using this word? Has the word been used this way before, in times of crisis? As dugnad is often defined as something close to 'voluntary work', what does this have to do with a pandemic? As time went on, I began to see how social expectations, cultural values, and morals all were wrapped in this one little word. I also wondered: What did this mean for Norwegian youth, and specifically university students?

2 Methodology

Madden (2017) writes that ethnography is description and analysis combined to answer questions and build theories. LeCompte and Schengal (1999a), take the position that ideally, ethnography should be a combination of deductive and inductive theory. Deductive theory is the top-down perspective – I, the researcher have noticed that the word "dugnad" is being used in a context outside of its regular meaning. I want to explore why people think this is and have certain theories that I want to confirm through participant observation and other methods. Inductive theory is the bottom-up perspective – I observe and interact with people, and this creates a hypothesis as to what this interaction is about.

2.1 Limitations and participant observation

Participant observation is the method that defines what I am doing as 'anthropology'. At the same time, because of the pandemic restrictions, possibilities to participate were somewhat limited. Throughout the process of data collection, I consistently felt as though I wasn't really participating in anything – how could I be, when I was stuck inside my home, cut off from others? Ironically, participating in the 'corona' dugnad was the very thing preventing me from participating in society and observing the situation as it played out.

These feelings of not participating came from there being a conflict in what it means to participate as an anthropologist, and to participate in the corona 'dugnad' as a citizen of Norway. But as an anthropologist, I am expected to participate by being *together* with those I am studying, observing them. However, participating in the corona 'dugnad' demands the exact opposite of this – that I stay at home and limit contact with other people, which makes it

hard to observe them. This experience and these feelings have therefore meant that it is important for me to discuss what ‘participation’ can mean in anthropological context.

Participant observation is defined by Madden (2017) as a qualitative social science practice seeking to understand human groups by having researchers and participants in the same social space. Participant observation itself is the research one does that is conducted face-to-face, but also final product that comes from writing up one’s research (i.e., this thesis). The method has been considered fundamental to anthropological research since Malinowski defined and expanded the method 100 years ago. This is because it is based on the value that “*to know other humans the ethnographer must do as others do, live with others, eat, work and experience the same daily patterns as others*” (Madden, 2017, p. 16). By doing this, participant observation gives you an understanding of a culture (in this case a cultural practice), thus giving the researcher legitimacy about the meaning of the data they collect. This in turn extends to being able to validate what you learn from observing and interviewing people (Bernard, 2011).

Political scientist and methodologist Howlett (2022) writes about how she had to change her methods due to the pandemic, and states that ethnographic field research has traditionally been understood as “*immersion in a field site*” (Howlett, 2022, p. 389) in the physical sense. This prioritization of the physical is furthered by the fact that methods courses have often not been preoccupied with online approaches. In my own experience as a student of anthropology, anthropological methods texts tend to favour the physical field. Although online methods weren’t ignored throughout my methodology studies, there often weren’t mentioned explicitly either. They were part of the syllabus but were often resigned to chapters at the back of methodology books – chapters that I often skimmed because I didn’t see how these methods would be relevant to me. Why would they be? After all, when I did my fieldwork, I was going to be “out there” in the field, collecting data by talking to people and observing the world around me.

With this mindset, it’s not surprising that I experienced a kind of methodological crisis when the pandemic threw me back into the metaphorical armchair. This changed after a discussion with my supervisor, in which I realized that even though I wasn’t “out there”, this didn’t mean I was passive either. Indeed, the post-modern critique of what ‘the field’ is and what

constitutes it has been discussed since the 1980's (Sluka and Robben, 2012). Shore problematizes the idea of the field as a "clearly bounded space or people", instead calling it "*a fluid, loosely connected set of relations, sites, events, actors, agents and experiences from which, and onto which, anthropologists try to impose some kind of conceptual order*" (Shore, 1999, p. 44-45)

Howlett (2022) builds on Hine (2000) also maintains that the changes brought about by the coronavirus pandemic blurred the line between the physical and digital field, as splitting ourselves into a "research self" who is out in the field and a "personal self" who is at home is quite literally impossible when participant observation is being conducted from home (Howlett, 2022, p. 396). And this is true. From the armchair (or perhaps more accurately "from the chaise lounge sofa"), my field-at-home had become anything the internet was made of - "*texts, videos, images, platform infrastructures, user behaviours, social relations, or an information network*" (Góralska, 2020, p. 47).

Even though I didn't feel like I was participating, I was, just not in the ways that I expected. I was having Zoom meetings with my supervisor and classmates - communicating digitally over Snapchat, Instagram, Messenger, and Facetime with friends and family (talking mostly about the coronavirus situation and how we were coping). Indeed, Bernard (2011, 2011, p. 260) writes about three roles that a researcher can occupy when out in the field, of which I occupied two: Participating observer and complete observer. The role of participating observer can further be split into two categories: "participating observer" or "observing participant", of which I belong to the latter. An observing participant is an outsider who observes and records aspects of life around them. On the other hand, a complete observer is someone who observes people and records their behaviour with either little or no interaction. I was following the news more regularly than I ever had before, to make sure I was up to date on what developments were happening in the pandemic - what restrictions were in place, and where? Did it seem as though people were following them? How was the virus spreading? What were the levels of contagion like in Tromsø and where my parents lived?

Also along with everyone I knew, I compulsively checked my phone. I read articles published by new outlets on Facebook, and examined what people were saying in the comments section. The amount of information about the coronavirus was overwhelming – there was a constant

bombardment of the many ways it could wreak havoc on the human body, how other countries were faring so badly that there weren't enough hospital beds for all the sick people, how there was no way of knowing how long lockdown would last. Just by unlocking my phone and tapping a few times, I had access to all of this information and more. In addition to being 'data' about the virus and the various responses to it, my own feelings of fear, isolation, and the constant checking of my phone also provided insight to a common practice during these strange times – in this way my research also ended up incorporating the method of autoethnography.

2.2 Autoethnography

I had not originally intended to use ethnography, but it became relevant as I began to incorporate my own experiences and emotional reactions, which also became a type of data and inspired some aspects of my research. Ellis, Adams and Bochner define autoethnography as "*an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and symmetrically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience*." (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2011, p. 273). As an approach, the authors explain that autoethnography combines elements of both autobiography, and ethnography. The autobiographical element is when the researcher writes about previous experiences that they have had – for example epiphanies and important events. In this thesis, examples of epiphanies can be found on pages 6 and 49, when I realized that the use of 'dugnad' in relation to the coronavirus pandemic was somewhat unusual, and when I realized based on the phenomenon of 'koronaskam' (corona shame), that shame could also be something that motivates dugnad participation. The ethnographical part of this method involves the studying of a cultural practice and common values.

Additionally, I have also used what Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) call "layered accounts". Charmaz (1983) explains that layered accounts are when authors place their own experiences next to their data, analysis and relevant literature, using this existing research as something that can stimulate questions, instead of merely presenting their experiences as a fact. This is done in chapter 5 and 6 when I refer to personal stories on dugnad participation and use them as examples to highlight certain theories or arguments.

2.3 Insider anthropology

Because I was also doing research among "my own group" (university students of a similar

age), what I was doing was insider anthropology, which has both its advantages and its drawbacks. Thankfully, I was lucky enough to reap the benefits of this method.

Insider anthropology is defined by Kirke as when "*the researcher has something in common with the researched before research begins*" (Kirke, 2013, p. 19). Kirke discusses the advantages and disadvantages of conducting insider anthropology based on first-hand knowledge, having conducted this type of research himself.

According to Kirke, the main disadvantage of being an insider anthropologist is not having "stranger value", which he defines as "*the ability to look at people in a way not flavoured by the culture in which they and the researched share*" (Kirke, 2013, p. 20). By studying the culture to which you belong, Kirke writes that it is automatically harder to retain neutrality and accuracy, and that observation may become harder because the setting is "mundane", and therefore important details that would be more obvious to an outsider are lost. However, it may be noted that Kirke (2013, p. 20, 22) ultimately believes that stranger value is an impossible ideal to achieve; researchers will always be affected by the setting they are in, but stranger value is still an ideal that one should strive for.

Indeed, Kirke (2013, p. 23) also writes that having a lack of stranger value can be beneficial for several reasons: In the starting phase of fieldwork for example, when doing insider anthropology, the researcher will have much easier access to their field of choice. They will also (most likely) not have to learn a new language or travel very far. In my case, this is true – all I had to do was ask friends and acquaintances if they would be willing to participate in my project.

Other advantages include that when you know about the insides and outsides of a certain way of life, it is a lot harder for others to mislead you about their own way of life, as it will be easier to pick up on inconsistencies or lies. Kirke also realized that because he shared the same perceptions and assumptions about the culture as his informants, his conclusions ended up reflecting the attitudes and expectations as them, with both researcher and researched reaching the same conclusions. Finally, Kirke writes that his insider status also made him much less likely to bring misconceptions into his research (Kirke, 2013, p. 22-23).

2.4 Semi-structured interviews

I decided to pair participant observation with interviews, a method that Madden (2017) states is prized amongst anthropologists because it "*gets to uncover valid and truthful statements as a consequence of the face-to-face and interrogative nature of the exchange*" (Madden, 2017, p. 65). Burgess (1991) also points out that these are two methods that complement one another well for two reasons: Firstly, interviews are often intended to be one part of a larger body of research, drawing on the knowledge that a researcher already has of a specific situation – in my case, the corona dugnad. Secondly, interviews can help gain access to situations that have otherwise been closed due to circumstances like time and place. Participant-observation had given me the opportunity to get an overview of the corona dugnad and the general discourse of the discussion, but interviews gave me a more concrete insight into people's understanding of the meaning of "dugnad" and their lived experiences during the corona dugnad.

Specifically, I chose semi-structured interviews, defined by Burgess (1991) as "conversation with a purpose". This means that although there were certain topics and themes I wanted to cover, many of the questions were formed during the interview itself, with additional topics and queries coming up throughout the conversation. To help this process along, I kept most questions open-ended. As opposed to closed questions that have a yes/no answer, open-ended questions give the participant "space to explore the answer as an act of conversation" (Madden, 2017, p. 68) – they could say whatever they wanted. Here, I wanted to see if there would be a pattern in what kind of words people used about "dugnad" to see if there was a shared cultural meaning as to what the "dugnad" is, and what cultural values it encapsulates.

Initially, I had intended to talk to people in all age groups, but after noting that university students had become one of the groups that were facing a backlash in the media for supposedly not taking part in the corona dugnad, I realized they would be an ideal group to look at. This choice was also made as a response to the limitations of the pandemic, as people my age were, in a practical sense, the easiest to reach out to. To make this process even easier, I asked mostly friends and some acquaintances to participate. This also means that insider anthropology was conducted, which is expanded upon on page 10. As stated above, although mainly interested in their thoughts about the corona dugnad, I was also interested in whether

they agreed with the criticism or not, and how they would compare their personal participation in the corona dugnad to that of other age groups.

As seen in the table on page 18, not all participants are originally from Tromsø, but most of the university students I spoke to have lived and studied in Tromsø during the pandemic. The only exception was a couple who lived and studied in Oslo, and one informant who lives in Fauske. In addition, I also spoke to an American citizen who has been living in Norway for seven years (currently residing in Trondheim), to get the perspective of someone like me who has not grown up with the concept or practice of 'dugnad'. One participant in my focus group was also a native Russian, but has lived in Tromsø for many years, and as such is familiar with the concept of 'dugnad'.

2.5 On conducting interviews

When speaking to students in other parts of the country, or when levels of contagion were particularly high in Tromsø, I conducted interviews over Zoom. In these cases, I either made sure that I had privacy at home or went to my office at work so that our conversations remained confidential. When physical meetings were possible, I arranged to meet people either in my office or book a room at the university. The interviews lasted from anywhere between forty minutes to a little over two hours. As many people I interviewed were either friends or acquaintances, the first ten minutes would go to having a quick catch-up; asking how they'd been, what they'd been up to, and how they'd been handling the pandemic situation, and offering them tea or coffee. After this brief catch-up, I gave my participants the form of consent, briefly explaining the contents before letting them take a couple of minutes to read it themselves and sign it. Finally, I explained that the interview session would be split into two themes: Firstly, we would have a more general discussion about the meaning of dugnad, before going over talking about the corona dugnad.

During the few physical interviews that I did, I took hand-written notes. When on Zoom, I split my screen in two, with Zoom open on the left side of the screen, and Word on the right. This is so I could see the person I was interviewing, and also be able to glance over at my notes if I needed. Although I never specified, all participants chose to have their cameras on during the interviews, apart from one, who didn't realize that there was a technical issue with their laptop. What surprised me during this process was how much I enjoyed doing Zoom

interviews. Within ethnographic research, there has been a preference for in-person interviews, with remote methods either being ignored or considered inferior. According to Johnson, Scheitle and Ecklund, this preference comes from two things: Scholarly tradition, and "*the apparent advantages of meeting a respondent in-person where they live, work, or play*" (Johnson, Scheitle and Ecklund, 2019, p. 1143). These advantages include a natural conversation setting, having the strongest foundation for building rapport and offering the best opportunity to observe visual and emotional cues.

I personally noticed no difference in the quality of data that I received physically or digitally, as all the above advantages were present when interviewing: My participants were in their most natural conversation setting – their homes or cabins, with rapport being easy to build, as we were both living through the same crisis. My internet connection was also always stable, so I didn't miss any visual or emotional cues (from the waist up, at least). Here, I must point out that these factors were undeniably helped by the fact that I recruited friends to interview. This ties together with Burgess's (1991) and Hendry's (1982) statement that it can often be helpful to be of the same age and similar life situation as those you are talking to – because you are perceived to be similar, the more likely someone would be willing to share information with you. Though my experience was a positive one, there are also differences between interviewing online and physically that must be acknowledged: For example, direct eye-contact can't be made, and body language can't be fully analysed, because my informants were only visible from the waist up. Whilst this didn't appear to affect the quality of data I received, there are undoubtedly cases where it would.

Using friends as informants has been broadly discussed in anthropology by authors including Hendry (1982), Brewis (2014), and Rabinow (1977). The consensus is that although this kind of relationship can have its benefits, it is often advised against due to the confusion of roles that often arises. Writing from personal experience, Hendry (1982, p. 163-164) explains that because each party has their own idea of what this relationship should involve, when these expectations aren't met, it can lead to both vulnerability and/or a feeling of obligation on the friend/informant's behalf. As such, this kind of exchange only works short-term. With the interview only lasting for the span of two hours (maximum), this was easily avoided, and in many cases, and I argue that the role of 'friend' was emphasized more than the role of 'researcher'; because of our previous relationship, my friends appeared to view the

interviewing process as any other regular conversation we would have, but with me asking the questions. Because the pandemic and corona dugnad had been such an all-consuming ordeal, people were in many cases eager to discuss their experiences and thoughts about these topics. Interestingly, the anxiety I had felt during long periods of the pandemic had been voiced back to me as something collective. People weren't afraid to be vulnerable with me, because there was a shared understanding of what we had both been through because of this life-changing event. Therefore, using friends and informants was highly beneficial for me.

2.6 Focus groups

Initially, I hadn't considered this method due to the limitations of the pandemic but was able to conduct one somewhat by chance towards the end of 2021, when restrictions were loosening, and society was opening again. Initially, I hadn't considered this method due to the limitations of the pandemic, and had been hesitant to conduct a focus group on Zoom because I had concerns about technical issues – that if one participant's internet connection wasn't stable, this would affect the flow of the conversation and effect the entire interview. Luckily, I was able to conduct a focus group somewhat by chance towards the end of 2021, when restrictions were loosening, and society was opening again. I had run into three acquaintances – a group of friends, and we got to talking about my thesis. I asked them if they'd be willing to do a group interview, and they all happily agreed. In retrospect, I would have like to have employed this method more throughout my research as I enjoyed watching my group dynamic in action – seeing how they bounced off one another, and how their opinions varied. It was also highly fruitful in the sheer amount of data I was able to collect in a relatively short time.

From a theoretical perspective, Morgan (1996, p. 134) states that focus groups pair well with individual interviews, and while focus groups can cover an array of different topics, individual follow-up interviews (which I conducted) can offer a deeper insight into what was discussed in the focus group. Additionally, Morgan (1996), along with Burgess[3] (1991) and Bryant (2007) all agree that the value of focus groups comes from the dynamic that emerges throughout this conversation, revealing both individuals' opinions and how participants

[3] Technically, Burgess writes about "group interviews", but his thoughts can be easily transferred to focus groups.

influence each other, with spontaneity allowing them to debate and discuss the various themes and topics that arise. Bryant (2007, p. 116) also explains that this group interaction can also lead to exposing norms within the group. Agreement between participants is valuable, but disagreement is almost more so because this forces the participant to explain and defend their point of view. Although the composition of focus groups is normally carefully planned by the researcher to create a safe environment for those involved, this was a step that I didn't need to think about, as the trio that I interviewed had already known each other and studied together for around four years. Unsurprisingly then, they were very comfortable with one another and weren't afraid to voice their opinions. They rarely disagreed, but even when they did, it didn't lead to any real frustration, and after exchanging opinions they could easily move on to the next topic.

One potential challenge to this method, acknowledged by both Burgess (1991) and Bryant (2017) is moderating a focus group. I experienced this, when two of the participants strayed so far from what we were originally talking about, that the third participant jumped in, saying "*But, to get back to what we were **actually** talking about*", moderating the conversation herself. I have come to realize afterwards that my hesitance to "interrupt" them and get the conversation back on course came more from the standpoint of a friend, rather than a researcher, not wanting them to find me rude. I look back at this and choose to define it as one of those vital moments where my personal embarrassment over this has led me to become a better researcher.

2.7 Positionality

Something that has been interesting to reflect upon throughout this project is how I, a non-Norwegian, am exploring a phenomenon that is considered by Norwegians to be wholly *Norwegian*. I was born and raised in England, and my family moved to Norway when I was eleven years old. This means that I have lived here for over half my life. As such, I am integrated in Norwegian culture; I speak the language fluently, follow Norwegian cultural norms and understand cultural references, thus appearing to natives as Norwegian. Like native Norwegian children, I have grown up participating in dugnads, but was only first exposed to the practice at age thirteen. Although my stepfather is a Norwegian native and thus familiar with the practice, we never talked about the 'dugnad' or what it was, meaning that I got to know the practice outside of the home, in contrast to native Norwegian children.

Occupying the role of outsider has also meant that my knowledge on the 'dugnad' has grown exponentially throughout the process of writing this thesis. Though I do have some personal experience with 'dugnad' from both my school days and after, I have participated without ever giving the practice or the concept much thought – it was something that I did either because I was told I had to, or because it's what everyone else was doing. As such, my research has allowed me to look at the dugnad with new eyes and appreciate the practice more.

One of the advantages of occupying an insider role is addressed by Bernard (2011), who maintains that doing participant observation in one's own language to answer specific questions (in my case about 'dugnad') is made easier because one already has "*a wealth of personal experience to draw on*" (Bernard, 2011, p. 264). In my experience, this was true – my personal knowledge of dugnad made it possible for me to realize that there was something odd about it being used in relation to the pandemic, leading to this project. This knowledge also made it possible to exchange personal stories about dugnad participation with others, and therefore I knew to ask about relevant topics like social expectations and arenas where the practice is performed. Knowing the language has also been invaluable as most sources about the dugnad are only available in Norwegian, meaning that much of the discussion about the concept would have been lost to me if I didn't speak the language, making the foundation of this thesis stronger.

2.8 On translation

I have made an active choice to write this thesis in English for two reasons: Because it is my mother tongue, and because I wanted to contribute to creating an awareness of the cultural practice of 'dugnad' beyond Norway. Interviews were (naturally) conducted in Norwegian, meaning that I had to translate them for the purposes of this thesis. There is always a concern of mistranslation. As stated, I am fluent in Norwegian. However, I have found that direct translation has sometimes been an issue, either causing a quote to lose its meaning in the way that I, the researcher have understood it or because the sentence structure in Norwegian differs from English. In cases like these, I have taken care to translate using phrases or words that are as close to the original as possible. Regardless, for complete transparency, I have chosen to include the original Norwegian quotes in the footnotes, although as mentioned, in the Norwegian written standard of *Bokmål* to maintain participant's anonymity.

2.9 Overview of informants

I have made a table of my informants that provides their pseudonyms (this is done to protect their identity and make sure nothing they say is traced back to them), their ages, their place of origin, and their current location when I interviewed them. This is done to create a picture of the people that I am describing in this thesis that can be referred to throughout reading. In total, I interviewed sixteen people, the majority of whom were in Tromsø, but with one being located in Fauske, one in Trondheim, and two in Oslo. Their place of origin varied widely across Norway, and included two born overseas – one in America, and one in Russia. The age range of participants was 19-35, meaning they all fall in the category of "youth".

Name	Age	Place of origin	Current location
Alina	23	Fauske	Fauske
Aleksandra	35	Russia	Tromsø
Bjørn	N/A	N/A	Trondheim
David	35	America	Trondheim
Einar	25	Trondheim	Tronsø
Hilde	28	Trondheim	Tromsø
Ida	22	Toten	Tromsø
Idunn	22	Tromsø	Tromsø
Ingrid	29	Skreia	Oslo
Kari	19	Trondheim	Tromsø
Kristoffer	28	Sandefjord	Oslo
Marianne	25	Valdres	Tromsø
Marit	24	Kristiansand	Tromsø

Margot	23	Karmøy	Tromsø
Pia	23	Trondheim	Tromsø
Tone	24	Sandnes	Tromsø

2.10 Ethics

This project has been approved by The Norwegian Centre for Research Data. Before interviewing my informants, they were asked to sign a form of consent, which stated that I would be the only one with access to the data that I collected during interviews and focus groups and that they would be anonymized. This has been done by giving people pseudonyms, and changing details like age and, current location and place of origin to be certain that nothing they say can be traced back to them. Further anonymization has been done by using the standard of Norwegian Bokmål when showing original quotes, instead of using informants' dialects. Additionally, I have also not referred to any pre-existing knowledge about the people I know[4] (McConnell-Henry et. al. 2010, p. 6), as they have only consented to me using what was said during our interviews.

I have already discussed the pros and cons of using friends as informants, but it is also important to acknowledge potential ethical implications. I relate this to the broader topic of insider anthropology and the ethics related to this. When collecting data about their informants' lives, researchers will in most cases ask about public life, and not genuinely private matters (Vike, 2001, p. 80). This is of course dependent on the topic of the thesis, but in this one at least, genuinely private matters were avoided. If they were bought up, it was because the informants did so themself, not because I elicited it. Perhaps the most private question ended up being beyond the scope of this thesis – asking how participating in the corona 'dugnad' had affected my informants. However, when asking, I also stated that the informant could expand on this as much or as little as they wished, meaning that they could

[4] Apart from their age and where they are from, which regardless is anonymized.

avoid matters they might have found embarrassing or delicate to discuss perhaps both in general, and with me.

Brewis (2014) also writes about the ethics of researching one's friends, based on her own experiences. In her case, Brewis *was* talking to her informants about very private matters (their personal lives and relationships) and feeling very uneasy about certain stories she had chosen to tell, and wondered if her friends would feel betrayed, or that Brewis has been disloyal to their friendship in some way by talking about their private matters in her very public research (Brewis, 2014, p. 854). For example, part of the uneasiness came from the potential that Brewis' friends shared stories with her based on their close friendship, seeing it as a personal discussion between the two of them, forgetting that what they said may end up being published. This itself is something that relates to the bigger topic of the power dynamics between researcher and informant.

This will be expanded upon in the following sub-chapters, but I feel like in a case like mine, being of a similar age to, and in the same kind of life situation of my informants, powers dynamic have been avoided. Something that has helped guide me during this process is a very valid question asked by Vike (2001): What do researchers gain from presenting their informants in a bad light? Within the context of this thesis, my answer is 'nothing'. This is of course because my informants are in many cases my friends – people who I want to have a long-lasting relationship to. Therefore, it would make no sense to me to portray them in a way that they feel is inaccurate, or that reflects badly on them.

3 Literature review

When I started looking at literature about and relating to "dugnad", I was surprised at how little attention this phenomenon had received. Although there are a number of sources on the topic, it is a small body of literature, with cross- referencing being common.

Håkon Lorentzen, one of the central authors on literature on the 'dugnad', being one half of the duo that contributed to the book '*Den norske dugnaden*'[5] (Loretnzen and Dugstad,

[5] The Norwegian Dugnad

2011) – which provides the largest overview on the 'dugnad' practice – theorizes that as a cultural phenomenon, the 'dugnad' has been taken for granted, being deemed too self-evident to warrant attention amongst Norwegian researchers. As a result of this "taken-for-grantedness" of the concept, there is little in the way of thick descriptions about the local organizations of the dugnad, and the ideals that are embedded in it (Lorentzen, 2011, p. 5). Although this Lorentzen's suggestion of the practice largely not having been noticed could be one reason for the lack of literature on the 'dugnad', another is that researchers have instead chosen to use the phrases voluntary work and voluntary organizations, using these words in places where 'dugnad' would be equally appropriate.

I will first highlight the sources that are relevant to my own discussion of the 'dugnad'. I will also make note of some other sources that are not as relevant – but still indicate the range of ways that the 'dugnad' has been approached in academic literature, including in reference to the coronavirus.

One of the most comprehensive works on the 'dugnad' is as mentioned Lorentzen and Dugstad's (2011) book, which has been particularly vital when exploring numerous topics such as the etymology of 'dugnad', what a 'dugnad' typically consists of, the values that are embedded in the 'dugnad', and how both the meaning of the word itself and the practice of dugnad has changed throughout Norwegian history.

Østberg (1925), Klepp (1982, 2001) and Norddølum (1976) write about the historical meaning of the word dugnad, and how it was practised in pre-industrial Norwegian society. These authors present the pre-industrial dugnad as a neighbourly duty, mostly used by groups of farmers who were reliant on one another to perform annual work tasks.

Klepp (2001) explores the historical development of the term, including how the practice became more voluntary in the second half of the 20th century. With the shift from premodern to modern society, neighbours were less dependent on one another, making the 'dugnad' not a duty one had, but a favour to be offered. Klepp also explores how values and morality have been encapsulated in the practice since its humble beginnings in premodern Norwegian society. He also shows how the 'dugnad' eventually became used as a national rhetoric in the 1990s and rose in popularity after this. Of this he is critical, as he believes that the phrase 'national dugnad' has become overused by politicians, used

whenever there is a need for collective effort. The use of 'dugnad' for nationalist uses and national rhetoric has also been critiqued in more recent popular opinion pieces in Norwegian media; I will return to these in chapter 8. I will add that whilst in many places Klepp writes about the 'dugnad' from an academic, descriptive perspective, he does also take a decided, personal stance on the 'dugnad'.

Sørhaug (1996), draws on his own experiences of doing 'dugnad' for his children's school band, and like Klepp (2001), connects dugnad participation to morality. Here, he explores how those who contribute most in 'dugnad' are morally elite, and those who don't contribute are "free riders" with no morals. This has been of use when looking at why people choose to participate in dugnads or not. He also shows how there are conversion possibilities and barriers and possibilities when participating in the 'dugnad', which I will explore in relation to the corona 'dugnad' in chapter 8.

Simon and Mobekk (2019) argue that the 'dugnad' as a cultural practice creates an environment that fosters pro-social and cooperative activities. They also explore how 'dugnad' is a social control mechanism, reinforced by thinking about the potential personal gains and losses if one chooses to participate or not, and particularly in cases where the participants are people you know. They also argue that dugnad as a cultural practice creates an environment that fosters pro-social and cooperative activities. Much like Sørhaug (1996), this was particularly useful in chapter 6, when I discuss what motivates dugnad participation.

Other works discuss the practice and concept of 'dugnad' in relation to a range of topics, such as immigration and immigrants (Penner, 2021; Aschim and Giskeødegård, 2017), medical research (Ursin and Solberg, 2008), food and morality (Døving and Kielland, 2013), environmental issues (Bergo, 2020), and social entrepreneurship (Indjov, 2018). These sources have provided me with a broader understanding of the social importance of the concept of 'dugnad'. Although they aren't referred to in this thesis, they have helped inform my perspective on the practice.

There is also a small but growing body of literature on how the 'dugnad' relates to the coronavirus pandemic, with this thesis being a contribution to such literature. My initial assumption that I wouldn't find much research related to this topic was correct. However, as

the pandemic went on, more research was published. Works that I use and refer to in this thesis are those that discuss societal responses at different stages of the pandemic, and the government's use of the concept.

Nilsen and Skarpenes (2020) describe Norwegian responses to the government's use of 'dugnad' in the first couple of months of the pandemic, and the cultural values and social models in which understandings of the word are embedded. Moss and Sandbakken (2021) Moss and Sandbakken (2021) explore the same topic, showing how the government's used of 'dugnad' as a meta-narrative when talking about coronavirus restrictions was integrated into people's personal narratives. These works have been valuable due to their descriptions of how 'dugnad' came to take on a situated meaning in the pandemic context, and how this situated meaning was a success, helping stop the spread of the coronavirus in Norway during the first months of the pandemic. Gjerde (2021) and De Lauri and Telle (2020) have been of additional use by exploring the situated meaning of 'dugnad' in the context of the coronavirus pandemic.

Finally, Stenøien and Tønseth (2022) have also explored how, how from young adult students' perspectives, citizenship has been both strengthened and challenged during the pandemic, and by participating in the 'dugnad' against coronavirus. This is relevant in relation to chapter 8 and my discovery that the situated meaning of 'dugnad' had become challenged, with people being less willing to participate specifically in a 'dugnad' to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Stenøien and Tønseth's (2022) look at the same category of people that I do – university students. They also come to a similar conclusion on the situated meaning of 'dugnad'. However, Stenøien and Tønseth (2022) operate with the term "citizenship", whereas I am working with "community" and taking a more anthropological perspective. They operate with a purely sociological standpoint, using Goffman's (1974) frame analysis to show how people were acting and how they ideally should have been acting in public and private spheres during the pandemic. Their study of relevant to mine because of their point on the situated meaning of 'dugnad' confirms what I have discovered in my research.

There were also a handful of other sources that explored other aspects of the dugnad in relation to the pandemic. Sandvik (2020) examines how the corona restrictions potentially

impeded children's rights, and Melbøe, Hirsti, Gjærum and Kane (2021) describe how corona restrictions impacted intellectually disabled people's right to live an independent life. Magnani, Magnani, Venovcevs and Farstadvoll (2021) explore how following restrictions in Tromsø could be seen through material culture. Kjeldsen (2021) uses the corona 'dugnad' as an example of national rhetoric in Scandinavia. The governments use and the public understanding of 'dugnad' was clearly noticed and is a topic of interest among researchers. Hågvar (2021) explores the four media discourses on the coronavirus in the early days of the pandemic. There are some questions that all of these studies – including my own – are addressing: What does it mean, when the good of the collective is put in front of the good of the individual? Who is affected by this, and how?

4 A history of the dugnad

Having explored how the 'dugnad' has been discussed in literature, I will now turn my focus to the practice itself. The 'dugnad' is clearly very special to Norwegians, as they voted for it to be their word of the year in 2004 on a radio segment from the Norwegian Broadcasting Company (The Language Council of Norway, 2020).

But what is a 'dugnad'? When you type the word 'dugnad' into Google Translate, the given translation is "voluntary work". The Norwegian encyclopaedia also defines the dugnad as "*voluntary, unpaid work that is done in a community*" (Nordbø, 2021). Although this definition isn't wrong – as a practice, dugnad is indeed done by carrying out voluntary work – it also doesn't encase everything that the dugnad means implicitly. Some typical examples of dugnads are bake sales that raise funds for school trips or sports clubs, tidying schoolyards, and painting houses in a housing association.

Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011, p. 10-12) believe that the dugnad has such a special status because of its long history in Norway, being tightly intertwined with specifically Norwegian conditions (that I will explore shortly), consequently making it a "typically Norwegian" practice. Additionally, they praise the "dugnad" for surviving upheavals of social, political and cultural nature, surviving for example the huge transition in Norway from a farming society to an industrial society. They credit this survival to the word's flexibility, some of which we will see now, and will be further explored in chapter 7 when looking at the corona dugnad.

According to Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011), there are five characteristics that are central to a dugnad: Firstly, the work is unpaid. Secondly, there is simultaneity – meaning that people are meeting face-to-face. Thirdly, work – that those who participate perform common work tasks. Fourthly, there is a defined beginning and end to a dugnad – usually of one to two days. Finally, after the dugnad is over, there is a party, a meal, or other activities that strengthen the participants feeling of community (Lorentzen and Dugstad, 2011, p. 13). When looking at the history of the dugnad, we see that these elements have been a part of the practice for hundreds of years and are still applicable to dugnads today. It is not surprising then that the authors praise the dugnad for its resilience.

4.1 Early history

Because the practice of dugnad is such an old one, it is hard to know its true origins. However, Loretnzen and Dugstad's research shows that the term dugnad can be traced back to the 11th century Old Norse *dugnadr*. *Dugnadr* has two potential meanings, depending on the context: It can be used in a practical sense, as help that is given to someone, or it is a virtue – a good quality that someone has (Lorentzen and Dugstad, 2011, p. 19).

In a specifically Norwegian context, "dugnad" comes from the Old Norwegian word "due", which also has two meanings: "duge", which means to be good at something, and "dyktighet" which can mean something like "skill". Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011, p. 21) explain that there is a very clear connection between morals and the practice of dugnad, writing that in premodern societies, actions and morality were two sides of the same coin, and as such it was impossible to separate duty from the action. As such, the virtue of doing dugnad can only happen through the act of doing dugnad. This is noteworthy, as in chapter 6 I go on to argue that although it is defined as voluntary, there is also a social pressure to participate in dugnad.

According to Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011, p. 18) dugnad as a practice in Norway has roots in the 1200s, making it one of the country's oldest traditions. As stated earlier, although sources from this time are rare, they theorize that the practice of dugnad most likely began on a farm, or at a trading post, where the individuals needed more help to perform as task than what they had. They show that one of the first written sources to mention the dugnad practice is the Icelandic saga "Eyrbyggja" from the 1250s, where it is stated that all men in Iceland were duty-bound to bury their dead. Although this work is clearly defined as a duty,

Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011) still claim that this is a good example of the beginning of the dugnad practice.

Although they theorize that the dugnad existed in Norway in some form in the 1200s, Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011, p. 19) explain that in a Norwegian context, the dugnad began sometime in the Middle Ages, and much like in Iceland most likely first appeared on farms, and in cases where the manpower needed to perform a task exceeded the number of people living on the farm. Norddølum (1975, p. 70) points out that these tasks were ones that would need to be done within a certain time frame, and preferably as quickly as possible – for example, harvesting crops before the frost came. In these cases, farmers would ask their neighbours for assistance, and though food was served when the work was taking place, those who assisted would receive nothing material in return – and not even help from those they had assisted.

According to Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011, p. 21,23) it isn't until the 1600s that dugnad became a kind of umbrella term for different kinds of exchange work. Here, they also state that it is around this time that reciprocity became a central value of the dugnad, noting that this was related to factors like living in a rural area, where few people moved to and from the are. Østberg (1925) echoes this, stating that in a premodern society if you wanted help with your own work, this meant you would have to return help.

Norddølum (1975) shows that in Valdres, in south-eastern Norway, there were very clear expectations and norms for dugnad participation. Here, the dugnad was clearly defined as a neighbourly duty, and if you chose to not participate, you would be considered a bad neighbour (Norddølum, 1975, p. 69). Most often, dugnads in Valdres would take place on a farm, and this is noteworthy, as Norddølum also writes that farm work in Valdres was clearly defined as voluntary, and not a duty, which is how it has typically been defined so far. This is an interesting part of the discussion on the history of the dugnad, as it shows that its voluntary nature has, throughout time and place, been somewhat ambiguous.

Another noteworthy factor, as explored by Norddølum (1975, p. 74-75) shows that in many cases, dugnad was also used in cases where one was referring to "duty work" ("pliktarbeid") – work that was imposed upon a group of people by a body of authority – in his work he uses the example of farm owners who would make their servants do dugnads around the farm but

Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011, p. 29-30) tell us that this could also be work forced upon people by the church or the king. Despite it being forced, this "duty work" was in many ways it was in fact quite similar to a dugnad: It was unpaid, the work was connected to a collective project (and ones that I have noticed had to be completed because the welfare system didn't exist yet), like the building of roads, and because the work was divided between the inhabitants of a certain area.

Simon and Mobekk (2019, p. 820) theorize that there are three specific characteristics that helped the dugnad flourish throughout Norwegian history: Firstly, Norway's population has always been spread thinly over a large area. Therefore, it would be natural that the dugnad would develop in small communities where the people were dependent on one another. This is shown explicitly by the practice being particularly prevalent in premodern, rural farming communities. Secondly, there has been little social mobility in Norway. As the population have mostly been poor, this has also created a dependency on one another. Thirdly, because the population has been poor, they would contribute with labour instead of money (dugnad in the practical meaning). Here, it must be acknowledged that the presentation of Norway's history as purely egalitarian in English literature has been called into question by authors such as Abram (2018) and Hylland-Eriksen (1993), who call this portrayal inaccurate.

Although the dugnad today is defined by The Norwegian Language Council specifically as voluntary, as we have seen in literature on the practice, there isn't agreement about its voluntary nature, with Klepp (2001, 1982), Østberg (1925), and Norddølum (1975) each claiming that in pre-industrial society, in many cases the dugnad was a duty. Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011, p. 28) also argue that expectations regarding participation were often dependent on factors like time in history, the type of works-tasks and geographical area. This is shown by Norddølum (1975) and the fact that farm work was not considered a dugnad in the south-eastern Valdres.

Regarding geography, Klepp (1982, p. 97) hypothesizes that the dugnad was less widespread in northern Norway[6], attributing this to two factors that weren't present in the valleys of the

[6] Here, Klepp defines this as to the two northernmost municipalities of the country: Nordland, and Troms and Finnmark.

south[7]: A paid and mobile workforce, and the existence of labour markets. He believes this could be true because in the north people could buy the manpower they needed, and therefore there was no need for dugnads. Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011) debunk this theory, stating that there is no systematic evidence that this theory could be true, and refer to Brox (1976) who explores the existence of the practice in Ytre Senja, where help was given in times of crisis to those who needed it.

Even though his claim about the dugnad being less widespread in northern Norway don't appear to be true, Klepp's (2001, p. 82) historical research confirms that the dugnad was prevalent among farmers, with "dugnad groups" (consisting of eight to ten farmers) helping each other with large tasks that couldn't be done alone. In this context, Klepp defines the dugnad as "*an institutionalized form of cooperative labour [...], whereby neighbours had a mutual duty to help each other in particularly large tasks*" (Klepp, 2001, p. 82). Although he points out that this cooperation could have been purely pragmatic due to a lack of hireable labour, Klepp (2001, p. 83) states that help was given also in circumstances out of the ordinary – if for example a farmer was ill and had gotten behind on his work, his dugnad group would band together and do his work for him (with the presumption that this favour would eventually be returned). The social element mentioned earlier is present here as well, with a feast after the day's work being standard.

This system of the dugnad group did not however always work as intended. Klepp (2001, p. 83) explains that despite being based on the premise of reciprocity, the exchange of dugnad services was sometimes uneven. Nonetheless, if conflicts did occur because of this, help was never denied. As the dugnad was a neighbourly duty, participation was a matter of personal honour, and no one wanted to be labelled the bad neighbour who didn't do their duty. Because it was a duty, dugnad groups would span for generations, thus also signifying stability and reliability within a community. Therefore, not participating in dugnads would essentially mean placing yourself outside the community, which Klepp believes no one would have dared. This shows that the discussion of the dugnad being voluntary or not is actually part of a broader discussion on how we actively choose to participate because we want to be

[7] "The south" appears to ambiguously mean the rest of the country.

part of a group. This point Klepp (2001) makes about being outside of the community is highly relevant in this context, as it shows that the social stability that came along with doing dugnad was so important, that even in unfair circumstances, people would still do their bit to avoid becoming outsiders.

4.2 Later history

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the practice of began to change, and eventually gained a new meaning. In this period, voluntary organizations and associations gained popularity in Norway, and around the 1850's they adopt the practice of "association dugnads" to build clubhouses and sports tracks (Lorentzen, 2011, p. 6). This was also a time when social differentiation began to emerge. This, combined with factors like better infrastructure, technological advancements, increased trade and prosperity, and less labour-intensive technology meant that people were much less dependent on one another than they had been before (Klepp, 2001, p. 84). Because of this, Klepp (2001) and Norddølum (1975) claim that the dugnad, in the sense of being a duty one *had* to do died out in most areas around World War II.

My research shows that this is not true, and that although this aspect of being a duty has perhaps changed in some ways, it never really disappeared, with Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011) arguing that the rebuilding of the country the post-World War II period is a prime example of dugnad as a duty. Here, neighbours once again came to help one another with a task that none of the could have done by themselves. I will come back to this example in chapter 7, in the discussion about 'national dugnads'.

Despite stating that the practice of dugnad as a duty died out completely, Klepp (2001, p. 84) later clarifies this statement, saying that the practice lived on in certain rural areas, for example Valdres in the south-east, but that it took on the form of neighbourly assistance. Though this neighbourly assistance bears resemblance to the pre-industrial dugnad in the sense that those who are ill or suffering get the help they require, it differs in the sense that everyday acts of assistance – like helping a friend move house, could also be considered dugnads. Another important difference Klepp (2001, ibid) maintains is that this help is given as a favour, where one shouldn't expect anything in return, thereby removing the element of

reciprocating from the exchange. My research suggests otherwise, and that when participating in dugnad, my informants expected that others would also reciprocate by participating.

4.3 Dugnad and "community"

Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011, p. 36) are very explicit that the framework of community has always been important to the dugnad, going all the way to its beginnings in farming communities. When people lived close to one another, this eventually created a common culture. This would have meant social stability was hight, as people would only see the same people in their everyday lives. This common culture would then create feelings of "us" in the farming communities, against the stranger "them" of the rest of the country. Because of this, long-term reciprocal relationships were established, and those who chose not to reciprocate would experience negative social sanctions. Here we can think back to Klepp's (2001) statement that because the dugnad offered security and stability, people wouldn't have dared to not reciprocate, as this would place them outside of the community, and these two elements would be gone. As such, Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011) believe that this makes the dugnad a very specific type of work that contributes to a feeling of community.

Due to the broad and long-lasting discussion on community within anthropology and other social sciences, I have decided not to limit myself to one definition of "community", instead operating with four of Tjora's (2018) seven typologies of community. These four are community as *unity*, community as *interaction*, community as *identification*, and community as *work*[8]. This allows us to look at how community is created in different arenas and makes it possible to switch back and forth between community on the local and national levels. This is helpful, because although my informants generally talk about dugnad at the local level – dugnads for their schools, sports clubs, and blocks of flats, in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, we discuss how the government attempted to invoke a national sense of community through the call to the corona dugnad. In the following chapter, I will present Tjora's (2018) four typologies, and relate them to my informants' thoughts about dugnad and

[8] The other typologies are community as integration, community as communication, and community as presence.

community. Tjora's typologies will also be mentioned in chapter 8, where he specifically connects them to with the corona restrictions.

5 Defining the dugnad

As the discussion in previous chapters shows, the concept, practice, and discourse of dugnad has changed throughout the years. As such, I was very interested in hearing how my informants defined the dugnad, and this was something I asked all of my informants. It is perhaps not surprising that many informants defined that dugnad as a type of voluntary work. But what was surprising is how quickly a different pattern emerged, with most of the definitions referring to 'community' or 'group', as signalled by variations of the Norwegian word "felles" ("fellesskap", "felles gode"), as well as "the common good". I argue that by the shared use of "felles", community and common good are two sides of the same coin: Dugnad creates a sense of community. References to 'dugnad' as something one does for the common good reflects a desire to do something positive for the community, showing that dugnad participation is closely connected to wanting to belong to a group.

Tjora (2018) agrees with other researchers of community such as Day (2006), Delanty (2003) and Cohen (1985) that the ambiguity of the word "community" is precisely what makes it a valuable concept and why it survives – because people can fill it with their own opinions of what community is. Tjora (2018, p. 12) relates this to times of crisis when representatives of a nation call on the population to come together as a community, without ever actually defining what they mean by community. Although this could of course apply to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, Tjora relates this to the first anniversary of the terrorist attack in Oslo and on Utøya on July 22nd, 2012, when former Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg asked the nation to come together and "look after one another".

However, Tjora (2018) suggests that the lack of definition in community when it is used in times of crisis can be a negative thing, as it can leave the word devoid of all meaning. He questions if people really do feel feelings of community in times of national crisis, or if this is performative and done for the sake of others, motivated by when he calls "*the compulsion to*

fit into a collective straitjacket"[9], (Tjora, 2018, p. 13). This point is particularly relevant to chapter 8 and will be further addressed there. Now I will explore how Tjora's four typologies of community and explore how they relate to the dugnad.

5.1 Community as interaction

When exploring his four typologies, Tjora (2018, p. 15) takes the position of a constructive. This means that our understanding of reality is created in social contexts. Specifically, this is done through actions and negotiation. Therefore, community and experiences of it are created through various forms of social interaction. As time passes, these actions and social interactions become routinized and a constant. Eventually, these forms of community gain such an objective and indisputable meaning that they come to exist as facts, even though they are created socially.

Tjora (2018) bases his typology of *community as interaction* on Goffman's (1983) theory of the interactive order. In short, this theory supposes that community is created through interaction with others. We adhere to the norms of a community, and by doing this we remain a part of it. I have no quotes that directly link the dugnad to *community as interaction*, as this is not a way that people consciously identify community. My research still supports the connection, as it shows that both community and feelings of it are created by interactions with others, and that this is done specifically through the practice of dugnad.

Because of its long history in Norway, I argue that the dugnad has become a "routinized" part of Norwegian society. Therefore, it is a societal norm to participate in dugnads, and is something you must do if you want to remain a part of the community (whether local or national). This will be expanded upon in more depth in chapter 6 and 7, when I show how there is a societal pressure to take part in dugnads, despite the practices voluntary nature, and how the norm of participating in the corona dugnad was done through the very specific practice of following the governments rules and recommendations – such as keeping ones

[9] Despite Tjora's negative-sounding phrasing, it is worth pointing out that the wearing of a collective straitjacket doesn't have to be a bad thing. As Klepp (2001) suggests, we know that fitting in to one's community was synonymous with survival.

distance, washing ones hands, staying at home if unwell, and other measures that would limit the spread of the coronavirus.

5.2 Community as unity

Tjora (2018, p. 29) writes that community is often created indirectly when people are put into situations where group development can occur. This can happen on two types of occasions: When there is physical closeness between people – for example when soldiers develop feelings of solidarity for one another, or when people share actions and values – like a group of activists protesting a war. In these cases, community can arise either due to imposed actions (in the case of the soldiers) or because of actions that are perceived as being necessary (in the case of the activists).

Both types of situations can be applied to the dugnad: As I will explore in chapter 5, simultaneity and common works tasks are central aspects of the dugnad, meaning that physical closeness is achieved. Regarding shared actions and values, again, the action can refer to the physical action of doing dugnad, whilst the shared value is the social norm to participate. This point will be discussed further in chapter 6 but although it is defined as voluntary, my data (and literature on the dugnad) shows that there is a tension to this, in many cases also making the dugnad obligatory, in this way making it imposed. However, dugnads can also happen because of actions that are perceived as necessary. One example of this is a story of my own: When I lived in student housing, our shared kitchen was suffering from an infestation of flour beetles. Everyone's food had been contaminated, and we had agreed that a "beetle dugnad" was required where we went over the entire kitchen, checking all drawers and cupboards, throwing away contaminated food, and making sure that we got rid of all the flour beetles. Alina, who had initiated this dugnad said the following:

Alina: "*Everyone had to make an effort for a common good, which was a beetle-free kitchen*."[10]

Here, the action considered necessary was the cleaning and tidying of the kitchen. Alina's use of "the common good" shows that the consequences of this common effort affected people

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[10] Alle måtte gjøre en innsats for et felles gode, som var billefritt kjøkken.

positively, specifically because our shared kitchen was now beetle-free, and we didn't have to worry about our food being contaminated.

In cases such as these then, Tjora (2018, p. 29) explains that community is developed by the circumstances people are in – by people doing something together. In turn, this "something" lays the groundwork for community. Tjora uses the dugnad as a specific example of this, where he posits that community is a side-effect of the dugnad – but not necessarily an unintended one. Here, he refers to Sørhaug (1996) who posits that if you don't take part in small talk when you're doing dugnad, your fellow participants will look at you oddly, because you clearly don't understand what the dugnad is *really* about. The dugnad is about more than just the practical task, but also community. In the case of the beetle dugnad, it wasn't just about getting rid of the beetles themselves, but also about spending time together with one another for an afternoon.

Alina: ""*Something you do together for a common good". Everyone sacrifices something for the common good – time, manpower and such*."[11]

Through her use of "something", Alina shows that the common good is contributed to through physical acts. The use of "together" means that there is an interactional aspect, and as such, contributing to a common good is something that creates community. Additionally, the fact that people have to sacrifice "something" for this common good, shows that this something is not always something that is given freely.

Marianne and Ida's statements are more straightforward, with Marianne confirming that dugnad is a voluntary effort, made for a common good. Ida's definition is slightly more playful, as she hints towards to non-voluntary nature of the dugnad, yet still reiterating that it is work done for a common good.

Marianne: "*Voluntary effort for a common good*."[12]

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[11] Noe man gjør sammen for et felles gode. Alle ofrer noe for et felles gode – tid, arbeidskraft, sånt.

[12] Frivillig innsats for et felles gode.

Ida: "*You can look at it as involuntary voluntary work for a common good.*"[13]

5.3 Community as work

The dugnad is also used by Tjora (2018) as an example of *community as work*. As with *community as unity*, community is also placed at the local level, with the practice of dugnad being central to community building in civil society. The dugnad aims to get people engaged about something that isn't about themselves, and where everyone is equally engaged in the dugnad, thereby creating the groundwork for collective effort (Tjora, 2018, p. 110). This relates back to community also being created through shared physical space, actions, and values.

Marit: "*Something you do voluntarily for the good of the community*."[14]

Marit clearly defines the dugnad as voluntary, and states that the goal of the dugnad is to do something that is good for the community that you are in. This shows that when other informants refer to dugnad as an effort that is made for the common good, this is about making a contribution specifically to their community.

Kristoffer chose to use the English phrase "community work" when defining the dugnad. Though he doesn't define the dugnad as voluntary or something else, he does reiterate the point that dugnad is a kind of work that is done specifically for a community.

Kristoffer: "*Community work, something you do for a community*."[15]

Interestingly, even though it ultimately ends up engaging everyone, Tjora (2018, p. 111) maintains that *community as work* will always be dependent on a few specific individuals – there will always be a few individuals who are the most passionate about what they do, and who will always be the ones to initiate dugnads to fund their children's sports clubs' trips or band practice. This is noteworthy because as we have seen, reciprocity and equality have been defined as values that are central to the dugnad (Simon and Mobekk, 2019). Additionally, as

[13] Du kan se på det som ufrivillig frivillig arbeid for et felles gode.

[14] Noe man gjør for et fellesskaps gode

[15] Community work, noe du gjør for et fellesskap

we will see in chapter 8, as time passed, the government's use of dugnad to get people to follow coronavirus restrictions was challenged both by my informants and by the Norwegian media.

5.4 Community as identification, and the need to belong

Having explored these three typologies of community and how they related to dugnad, I now want to turn to Tjora's *community as identification*. This typology focuses more on community at the national level. The need to appeal to feelings of national community became extremely important during the coronavirus pandemic. I will come back to this in chapter 7 but will for now explore how national community is related to dugnad and Norway's Constitution Day on May 17th.

When discussing theories of nation building, it is only natural to mention Anderson's (1983) imagined community. Anderson writes that the nation is a politically imagined community. He uses the word 'imagined', because even though people don't know most of their fellow citizens, they are still able to imagine them as part of the national community (Anderson, 1983, p. 6). The national community is created through what Anderson (1983, p. 34-35) calls "mass ceremony". This can be things like reading the morning newspaper or watching the evening news. Tjora (2018, p. 76) emphasizes the importance of simultaneity in the imagined community, explaining that when people do something at the same time as others, this will give them the experience of actually being together. Although not entirely topical to this chapter, an excellent example of this is the frequent national press conferences the Norwegian government held, where they would go over the updated rules and recommendations Norwegians would have to follow for the coming weeks/months. There was undoubtedly a sense of mass ceremony in the way that everyone was asking to contribute to stopping the spread of coronavirus and engaging in behaviour that made this possible.

The imagined community can also lead to what is referred to as *imagined sameness* (Gullestad, 2002). This is a theory that suggests because Norwegians strive to be an egalitarian people, they will emphasize their similarities when interacting on the local level to give the impression of being alike. Although "sameness" typically refers to how one is alike, it can also refer to having the same opinions. Tjora (2019) writes that this can be scaled up to the national level, to the point where shared traditions – such as celebrating Norway's

Constitution Day can lead to these feelings of imagined sameness, therefore creating simultaneity and the imagined community.

Although they don't explicitly state it, my informants have also shown that community is also about the search for, and the desire to belong (Delanty, 2003). In a Norwegian context, belonging is about membership. This is twofold: You must identify with this group, and they must accept you as a member. When you have become a member, inclusion becomes performative – membership is maintained by fulfilling the expectation to contribute to the community in which one lives (for example through a dugnad) (Stromsø, 2019, p. 1239). This can be related back to Tjora's (2019) *community as interaction*, as it shows how terms of belonging are negotiated through interaction.

Stromsø (2019) shows that belonging to the nation can be created at the everyday, local level, making it similar to the theory of imagined sameness, in the sense that Norwegians have a desire to be seen as "the same", and that they will do what is expected of them to make this happen – for example through dugnad, this in turn leads to them being alike. This emphasis on contribution as a prerequisite for belonging is also echoed by Horst, Erdal and Jdid (2020), and Tranvik and Selle (2007).

But what does it mean to belong? According to Cohen (1983, p. 3, 5), belonging is something that must be discovered, and this normally happens at the boundaries of a community – when interacting with others and is something that happens through everyday life. Because our sense of belonging is something that lives so deeply within us, it's not until we see behaviour that differs from our own that our sense belonging becomes evident. This obvious doesn't meant that we are completely unaware of our culture. People know their own way of doing things - something like what Tjora (2018) refers to when taking the perspective of a constructive interactionist: People know what the customary way of thinking and performing is. This becomes routine over time and becomes something that suits a certain population and their needs, thus making it the most practical way of doing things (Cohen, 1982, p. 5). This relates to Tjora's (2019) earlier arguments – that community can also be created by an experience that binds people together, with verbal activity creating community and identity.

These theories of community and belonging all relate closely to an unexpected finding in my research: When they told me about what kind of dugnads they would participate in just under

half of my informants talked about dugnads they had done at school before the 17th of May – Norway's Constitution Day. This is a national holiday in Norway, and a day of huge celebration. People dress up in national dress or their nicest clothes, meeting in town and city centres to socialize, celebrate, and watch the many parades that take place throughout the day. For children, the 17th of May is often celebrated at school, where they meet after walking in the children's parade. Here, they get something to eat and drink, and like the adults, get the chance to socialize with one another.

"*At primary school and secondary school, we had to pick up rubbish before the 17th of May*."[16] – Hilde

"*At primary school and secondary school, we had to go out and pick up rubbish before the 17th of May*."[17] – Marianne

As we can see, Hilde and Marianne's comments are almost entirely identical. Because they have grown up in different part of the country – Hilde in Trondheim and Marianne in Valdres, this suggests that this is a common dugnad that Norwegian children experience at school. That this school dugnad also takes place *before* the 17th of May also shows that picking up the rubbish is a way of making the schoolyard look presentable, precisely because it will be a place where children, parents, and others meet on the big day.

Tone: "*When people say 'dugnad' the first thing I think of is the 17th of May, because that's always been the biggest dugnad.* […] *And maybe the one where it's most expected that people participate, because the 17th of May is very important for very many* [people]."[18]

For Tone, the dugnad before the 17th of May is the day she associates most clearly with the practice and concept of dugnad. She clearly states that the compulsion to participate is most likely felt most strongly in this dugnad, precisely because the 17th of May is a day that is important Norwegians. This feeling occurs because it is the biggest dugnad – although the

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[16] På barn- og ungdomsskole måtte vi plukke søppel før 17. mai.

[17] På barn- og ungdomsskole, måtte vi ut og plukke søppel før 17. mai.

[18] Når folk sier 'dugnad' det første jeg tenker på er 17. mai, fordi den har alltid vært den største dugnaden. […] Og den der det kanskje forventes aller mest at folk deltar, fordi 17. mai er veldig viktig for veldig mange.

tidying of schoolyards physically happens on the local level, it is also a contribution to the unofficial national dugnad to make the country look presentable for what is a day of huge importance and source of national pride for Norwegians, making them feel a collective sense of community, belonging, and nationalism.

6 What motivates dugnad participation?

What is it about dugnad that motivates people into participating? My research shows that Norwegian children are made to participate in dugnads at a young age, and this routinizes the practice in a way that although they know it is defined as voluntary, there is still a tension between this and the obligation to participate. Other factors that motivate people into participating will also be explored, such as social control. This will be discussed in two different ways: Firstly, as something that people desire to do because it means that they get something in return, motivated by the fact that they are being watched. Secondly, I will show how people choose to participate, because it can elicit an oppressive response in the form of shame and being excluded from the group.

6.1 Fostered from a young age

The year is 2009, I am thirteen years old and have been living in Norway for a year and a half. It's the end of the school year, and my class has been asked to do a "dugnad" – we each have to bring in a dish to share with the rest of the class for our end-of-term celebration. At this point, I have absolutely no idea what this funny little word "dugnad" means. We get a note home explaining what needs to be done, and a week later I dutifully bring in my contribution of pineapple and cheese on a stick.

The vignette above is the first of many school dugnads that I participated in as a young person in the Norwegian school system. In almost all of my interviews, people referred to school dugnads, and I realized that dugnad participation is cultivated in Norwegian children from a young age. This sentiment is confirmed by both Simon and Mobekk (2019), and Nilsen and Skarpenes (2020). Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011) also state that the dugnad is a cultural practice that Norwegians have an almost innate relation to, and as my research shows, this appear to be true. When asking my informants what they associated with dugnad, over half of them mentioned school dugnads. I therefore argue that Norwegian children first learn the practice of dugnad from their parents/caregivers at a young age, and then this is further

fostered in the school system. Because this begins at such a long age, it plays into the tension between dugnad as something that is technically voluntary, but where one is often obligated to participate.

When I asked Kristoffer at what age dugnad participation begins, he held his new-born son up to me, saying:

"*From about this age!* [laughs] *No, I'm kidding, but from about the age that you can hold a rake*."[19] – Kristoffer

This comment is noteworthy, as raking was mentioned by several participants when they were talking about typical dugnad activities. When discussing with Alina what she associated with dugnads, she said it was:

"*The typical stuff, the first things you learn – raking and picking up rubbish.*"[20] – Alina

By using the phrase "typical stuff", Alina implies a sense of normality in the dugnad – that there is a mutual understanding about what it entails, even though this may not be easy to put into words. She also defines the activity of raking (and picking up rubbish) as a typical activity that children do at dugnads, and by calling them "the first things you learn" she echoes back to Lorentzen and Dugstad's (2011) comment on the innate nature of the dugnad. Her use of "you" is interesting, as it also brings other people into the equation, suggesting that she believes this is a common experience that other Norwegian children have.

One potential reason that raking was mentioned so frequently, is that it is a relatively easy task, even for the youngest participants, as explained by Tone:

"[…] *I've had my cousins with me at a dugnad, and okay, a four-year-old can't do that much at a dugnad, but if you give them a little broom and are like "can you take this leaf and bring*

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[19] Fra omtrent den her alderen! [ler] Neida, jeg tuller, men fra cirka rundt alderen man kan holde en rake.

[20] Det typiske, det første man lærer, rake og plukke søppel.

it over here?" then it becomes a game, and later when they're used to it then they join in, because that's what you do."[21] – Tone

Tone's experience tells us that letting children do an easy task like raking leaves gives them a light and fun introduction to the dugnad practice. Her comment about how her cousins will participate later because "that's what you do" is noteworthy for two reasons: Firstly, it shows how the practice for Tone has already been solidified as something that there is a clear obligation to participate in – that participating is "the done thing", despite the dugnads supposedly voluntary nature, and secondly, that her cousins will also grow up to view the dugnad in the same way, showing that they are going through the same process that Tone herself has gone through.

School dugnads were also mentioned or discussed by my informants as arenas where they were used to doing dugnad, and here I expand on them as an area where the notion of expected participation is normalized. When I was talking to Kari about her dugnad participation, I asked her whether school dugnads could be considered voluntary. She said:

"*You couldn't say no at school, because it was in the schedule - "now we're going to go outside and pick up rubbish". You could gotten away with not doing it, but you had to be outside anyway*."[22] – Kari

Alina and Runar also agreed with this sentiment of the obligatory nature of school dugnads:

"*[At] primary and secondary school, before the seventeenth of May, but I suppose that's forced. You can't say no.*"[23] – Alina

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[21] Jeg har jo hatt mine søskenbarn med på dugnad, og okei, en fireåring kan ikke gjør så mye på dugnad, men hvis du gir dem en liten kost og er sånn 'kan du ta denne løven og ta det bort hit?' så blir det en lek, og senere når man er mer vant med det, så blir de med, fordi det er sånt man gjør.

[22] Man kunne ikke si nei på skolen, fordi det var på timeplanen – 'nå må vi ut og plukke søppel'. Man kunne kommet unna, men man måtte være ute uansett.

[23] […] På barne- og ungdomsskole, før syttende mai, men det er vel tvang. Man kan ikke si nei.

"[…] *like school dugnads before the seventeenth of May, mum was the secretary, so I got dragged along whether I wanted to or not*."[24] – Einar

This shows that school dugnads are obligatory – or "forced" as Alina calls them. Even if you don't want to participate, Kari states that this is irrelevant as it is in the school schedule, and you would still have to go outside with the rest of the class. This is echoed in Runar's quote about being "dragged along" (the need to be dragged also implying that it is forced), regardless of his own wishes.

This stands somewhat in contrast to Tone's statement about making activities in a dugnad a "game" for children – a fun introduction to the practice. However, here we must take age into account – the cousin Tone talks about is only four years old and hasn't started school yet. Because they are so young, it is likely that they are not expected to contribute in the same way older children or adults are. As they grow older and attend school, they are expected to contribute in a bigger way, and because it's in the school schedule, they feel "forced" to participate. Here, they cannot say no, and this feeds into a perception that they are already familiar with – namely that the dugnad is not voluntary, but what Tone refers to and "something you do" – it is the norm to participate, and therefore expected.

6.2 Voluntary *and* obligatory

Now that I have established that Norwegian children are from a young age, and in particular in a school setting expected to participate in dugnads, I will further explore the voluntary nature of the dugnad. If we look at page _, we see that my informants specifically included the word "voluntary" in their definitions, which is in line with The Norwegian Language Council's definition of dugnad. However, as explored in chapter 4, literature on the dugnad shows that that even since its beginnings as the Icelandic *dugnadr*, there has always been a certain tension between the practice being voluntary, and something one is obliged to do. After all, *dugnadr* had the double meaning of practical help and a personal moral, there has always been a certain tension between the dugnad being voluntary and something one is obliged to do. Although there can be flexibility depending on where in the country one was,

[24] […] som skoledugnad før syttende mai, mamma var sekretær så jeg ble dratt med om jeg ville eller ikke.

Norddølum (1975) and Klepp (1982, 2001) also write that the dugnad was a neighbourly duty that had to be performed for two reasons: To avoid being a bad neighbour, and to remain a part of the local community. Though Klepp (2001) believes that in modern Norway the dugnad has become entirely voluntary, the data presented in this sub-chapter will show that people still feel very obliged to take part in dugnads.

Other authors lean more towards the dugnad being obligatory, with some calling it "*never wholly voluntary*" (De Lauri and Telle, 2020, p. 2), and others questioning why dugnad often refers to voluntary work, noting that the use of "voluntary" implies participation isn't required, and that no kind of social sanctions (either positive or negative) will be placed on people that coerce then into participating (Sørhaug, 1996). I have and will continue to acknowledge that there is a tension between these aspects of voluntary and obligatory, and that this belongs to a bigger discussion on why we want to belong to a community.

When I asked my informants about their motivation for participating in dugnads, and if they believed dugnads were voluntary, it was fascinating how quickly people would contradict their earlier definition, suddenly saying that dugnad wasn't voluntary after all, or that it was "but not really", relating this to the social pressure to participate.

Alina provided a good example of this, as when I asked her if the dugnad was voluntary, she said the following:

Alina: "*A criterion for it to be a dugnad is that it's voluntary [...] you can't be forced to do dugnad.*"[25]

However, when talking about dugnads in a school setting Alina had specifically used the word "forced" when talking about participation. One could argue that this is purely because school dugnads are, as noted, almost impossible to get out of, but Alina once again repeated the word "forced" when I asked her about her reasons for participation, where she said, "*I've been forced to participate in most things.*"[26]. So, even though she accepts the words definition

[25] Et kriterium for at det skal være dugnad er at det er frivillig, […] man kan ikke tvinges til dugnad.

[26] Jeg har blitt tvunget med på det meste.

as a kind of voluntary work, her own experiences show the opposite – that dugnads for her were something she has been forced to do throughout her whole life.

Here I will point out that despite her choice of the negative "forced", Alina still clearly views the dugnad practice as an important one. Otherwise, why would she have invited us, her neighbours to take part in one? Initiating the beetle dugnad wasn't just about the practical task of getting rid of the flour beetles, it was also about social participation; it was a way of getting our little community to spend an afternoon together – to create and strengthen feelings of belonging among us – "look what we can achieve when we work together!".

The way Hilde defines dugnad also shows us this dual nature:

Hilde: "*It's a form of voluntary work.* ***It shouldn't be obligatory, but it's implied*** *– you have to participate, it's a duty.*"[27]

If we relate this to the story of the beetle dugnad, we can consider how it was implied that it was obligatory to take part by asking what would have happened if one of our neighbours had just chosen to sit in their room during the dugnad. I will point out that my informants mentioned several reasons that are considered valid for not participating in dugnads, such as, illness, having ill family members, or having exams. The only reason for not participating that was considered truly unacceptable was not taking part, simply because you don't feel like it. Therefore, if one of our neighbours had chosen to just sit in their room during this dugnad, I can without a doubt say that this would not have been okay[28].

Why is this? Firstly, by letting everyone else do the work, this individual would have been reaping the benefits of everyone else's labour, which is unfair, as the effort was supposed to be communal. Secondly, by choosing to sit in their room by themselves instead of participating in the flour beetle dugnad with us, this individual would have been turning their

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[27] Det er en form for frivillig arbeid. Den skal ikke være obligatorisk, men det er underforstått – du må delta, det er en plikt.

[28] In the case of the beetle dugnad, there were no such cases.

nose up at the community in the student housing, thus implying that their own wants are more important, and that they don't care to belong "to us".

This is further highlighted by Pia's quote, as it shows that even though you may not want to participate, you ultimately know you should, because you know deep down inside that you should because it contributes to a common good.

Pia: *It's a little voluntary-non-voluntary. You don't really want to do it, but you know that it pays off to do it, so you do it for the common good*."[29]

Admittedly, Pia's could be said of any kind of work that has to be done between a group of people that live together. But the difference here is that dugnad is a specific word for this and have developed a specific set of social norms around it.

A story that shows this especially well is from David, my American informant. When talking about his first experiences with dugnads, he told me about something that had been said at a Norwegian language class he had been attending the day before:

David: "*The idea the teacher conveyed is that dugnad is frivillig [voluntary], but not really. If you don't attend people will look at you oddly*."

He expanded on this by telling an anecdote. During his second year in Norway, David's partner, Bjørn had told him about a dugnad that would be going on in their block of flats. David had originally said no to participating because Bjørn had said it was optional, and because he didn't understand why he was being asked to spend his weekend painting the building he paid to live in. Later, Bjørn admitted that he was embarrassed that David hadn't shown up. David explained that he didn't understand how "silly, egotistical, and under-appreciative" it was of him to not attend.

It is interesting that Bjørn told David that the was optional, as this makes it seem like he wanted David to participate willingly. The comment David makes about being "looked at

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[29] Det er litt ufrivillig frivillig. Du vil egentlig ikke gjøre det, men du vet at det lønner seg å gjøre det, så du gjør det for et felles gode.

oddly" is reminiscent of Sørhaug (1996) as discussed by Tjora (2018), in that if you try and get through the dugnad as quickly as possible, this will lead to people looking at you oddly, because this means you don't really understand what the dugnad is about – not just the practical work itself, but the sense of community that is built through the practice. David can of course be excused for "not really understanding", as he was still relatively new to Norway at this time. However, by not participating, it was clear that David had made a mistake. This is made evident by the reaction Bjørn has – embarrassment that David wasn't there. This is because it most likely would have reflected badly on Bjørn as well. David's later comment about not realizing how "egotistical" it was to not participate is also noteworthy, as "selfish" was most frequently used about those who didn't participate in dugnads – both in normal dugnads and the dugnad during the coronavirus pandemic.

What this shows is that there is a strong desire for people to take part in dugnads voluntarily, and that a character judgement happens if you do not. This follows a very simple line of thinking: If you participate in the dugnad of your own free will, you are a good person, willing to spend your time on a task that makes something better for everyone. If you do not, you are viewed as a bad person. If you spent your afternoon taking part in a dugnad, you have contributed to something that is good for the community – like painting the building you live in. If you don't take part in the dugnad, this is viewed as an affront to both the practice, and to the other participants, because you have put your own desires first. Furthermore, this example shows us that in Norwegian society, the ideal is the belonging is something that should be actively sought after, because it gives us things – it gives us both sociality with others, but it also gives us goods that we otherwise would have to pay for if it hadn't been for the effort of the group.

6.3 Social control

Writing from a behavioural science perspective, Simon and Mobekk (2019) explore why the dugnad is a successful practice. They begin by stating that the dugnad is successful because it creates and environment that fosters cooperative and prosocial behaviour. They define "prosocial behaviour" as something that benefits both individual and others, and that contributes to the community in some way (Simon and Mobekk, 2019, p. 818). This is similar to how my informants also define the dugnad in chapter 5 - as something done for "the common good".

Simon and Mobekk also cite Wilson and Hessen (2014, p. 125-126), who write that Norway is successful because of the Nordic model. Explained briefly, the Nordic model is the theory that Scandinavian countries are successful because they underline the importance of values of equality and reciprocity. In Norway, this is related to the country having a welfare state that has plenty of benefits, like free education, and free/affordable healthcare This success comes from the fact the Norway has been able to scale up social control measures that are normally present in village-sized groups. Simon and Mobekk (2019) theorize that this is expressed through the practice of dugnad. This claim corresponds with what authors such as Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011), Klepp (2001), and Norddølum (1975) have written, as they all state that in both premodern and preindustrial Norwegian society, social control was strong particularly in rural areas, and that this motivated people to participating in dugnads for their neighbours.

The main point of Simon and Mobekk's (2019, p. 823) theory is that people are more likely to participate in a dugnad if they get something in return (this can be both goods and positive emotions), *and* if they know that others will participate. This happens because of how people evaluate their own potential actions and base them on what will give the best result. This is done by thinking about both long- and short-term consequences. For example, let us look back to my story of the flour beetle dugnad that took place in my student housing. Let's say that I chose not to participate (because ultimately, I *can* choose not to). The short-term consequences of not participating would be that I got to spend my afternoon at my disposition. However, the long-term consequence of this is that I run the risk of being considered a bad neighbour, as my housemates had to do all the work without me, just because I preferred to have a relaxing afternoon.

When choosing to participate in dugnads then, Simon and Mobekk (2019, p. 825, 827) explain that you will be able to reap the long-term benefits of an activity that was done, and also being able to call yourself a good neighbour. They also point to the lack of anonymity in dugnad as something that further contributes to social control, stating that people are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviour when they know that someone is watching. This is supported by examples given by just over half of my informants:

Ingrid: "*I considered not going to a dugnad in my housing association, but I lived on the first floor, so they'd have seen me at home alone in the window [...], it was more stressful to stay*

at home. Both because I want the garden to look nice, and because I feel like I can't not participate."[30]

Ingrid says that she wanted to participate for two reasons: To make the shared garden look nicer, and because she felt as though not participating wasn't an option. Making the shared garden look nice appears to be motivated by a positive desire to contribute to the common good. But it appears that she also fears her neighbours' responses to her not participating. She evaluates this in the way that Simon and Mobekk (2019) suggest we do – by considering the long-term consequences of not participating. She realizes that not participating is the option that gives the worst outcome – implying this will make her a bad neighbour. This is undesirable, as it risks placing her outside of this specific community. It is then clear that for Ingrid, belonging was ultimately more important than her individual desires. She also confirms Simon and Mobekk's (2019) point about social control in the form of people watching you makes you more likely to participate, as it was specifically the fact that her neighbours would be able to see her not participating that informed her decision.

Margot uses a similar example, but what it noteworthy is that it is completely theoretical. Her use of "you" indicates that this is a shared experience she assumes that others have had. Margot clearly knows that the consequence of not participating in a dugnad means being labelled a bad person/neighbour. This in turn leads to feelings of shame, expressed by the fact that this will cause you to hide from the people you live with, so you won't have to face them. This also shows that someone is aware they have acted in the wrong, socially unacceptable way. When she says "even though it's been voluntary" this highlights the tension between the voluntary and obligatory nature of the dugnad.

Margot: "*[…] it's like in a block of flats, if you never take part, then you meet them* [your neighbours] *in the hallway you might feel you're a bit unpopular and such. That you try and*

[30] Jeg vurderte å ikke være med på en dugnad i borettslaget, men jeg bodde i førsteetasjen, så de ville sett meg alene hjemme i vinduet […] det ble mer stress å være hjemme. Både fordi jeg ville at hagen skulle se fint ut, og fordi jeg føler at jeg kan ikke *ikke* delta.

avoid the people you live with because you haven't taken part in that dugnad, even though it's been voluntary."[31]

6.4 Social control and shame

Social control is presented in a positive light when Simon and Mobekk (2019) explore how it relates to the dugnad. Yes, it leads to people feeling obliged to take part in the dugnad, they write, but it is also how the dugnad survives, promoting positive attributes prosocial behaviour and equality. However, they also show that social control has a more nefarious side, including the shaming of people that do not comply and take part in dugnads. This is also relevant to my exploration of the phenomenon of corona shaming in the following chapter.

Shame motivates us because it very clearly shows us that we do not belong. In certain situations it can be considered dangerous to end up outside of the community – think of people in farming communities in pre-modern Norway. Would they have been able to survive without the help their neighbours gave them? Perhaps not. Therefore, belonging, or the lack thereof provokes strong emotional reactions in people.

When I asked if the taking part in the dugnad could be because of shame, the majority of my informants states that this could be the case, showing the tension that exists between the dugnad as voluntary and obligatory, as exemplified by the following statements:

Alina: "*I would think so. More on the side that those who don't participate in the dugnad, they're selfish. You don't want to be the one on the outside and not contributing. Then I'd probably feel shame.*"[32]

What Alina's quote expresses is that ending up "outside" is something that should actively avoided, precisely because it leads to shame. This can also be related to Tjora's (2018)

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[31] […] som i et leilighetskompleks, da, hvis du aldri blir med, så møter du disse i gangen så kanskje føler du at du er litt upopulær. At du prøver å unngå de du bor med fordi du har ikke vært med på dugnad, selv om det har vært frivillig.

[32] Jeg vil tro det. Mer på den siden at de som ikke deltar i en dugnad, de er egoistiske. Du vil ikke være den som står utenfor og ikke bidrar. Da ville jeg kanskje kjent på litt skam.

typology of community as work – that by not participating in the dugnad, non-participants are effectively turning their noses up at community. By calling non-participants selfish, Alina also implies that non-participants put themselves and their needs about the collective, which also goes against the elements of reciprocity. This point of not belonging to the group is reiterated by both Idunn and Marit:

Idunn: "*When the rest of the group does a dugnad, and you're not there, then you're not a part of the group*."[33]

Marit: "*Yes, it's about not being a part of the community, you think about yourself and what you want to do*."[34]

6.5 Shame and the national corona dugnad

I first came to recognize that shame could be used as a motivator for dugnad participation after the phrase *koronaskam* (*corona shame*) appeared in the Norwegian media not long after the coronavirus pandemic began in 2020. The phrase was initially intended as a critique against the groups I refer to in chapter 1 – joggers, cabin-goers, and youths, who were considered by many to not be participating in the corona dugnad, due to their flaunting of government rules and recommendations. In its original meaning, corona shame was supposed to make the aforementioned groups feel ashamed of their lack of participation. However, despite the context it was initially used in, *corona shaming* quickly spiralled out of control, and was used against anyone who has caught the virus.

When shame is connected to actions, it can be a positive motivator, as it leads us to make smart choices (Houge, 2021). This line of thinking is already familiar to us, with Simon and Mobekk (2019) arguing a very similar point – that social control motivates people into making the choice that gives the best personal gain. In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, this would be actions that prevent the spread of the virus.

However, *corona shame* became harmful because it was connected to the specific act of catching the coronavirus (Houge, 2021). The presumption was that anyone who caught the

[33] Når resten av gruppen gjør dugnad, og du er ikke der, så er du ikke en del av gruppen.

[34] Ja, at man ikke er med på fellesskapet, du tenker på deg selv og det dur har lyst til.

virus must have caught it because they were acting irresponsibly in some way and not complying with restrictions. Whether this was true or not was completely irrelevant. So, although it came from a desire to motivate people to make the right choices and not take part in actions that would spread the coronavirus, *corona shaming* ended up having the opposite effect: It led to people being afraid to get tested because of the potential shame they would be made to feel by their peers.

Youths were particularly vulnerable to *corona shaming*, according to psychologist Hedvig Montgomery: Not only were they at risk of being *corona shamed* by their peers, but they were also at risked of being shamed in the media, already being a group that was facing backlash for supposedly not following restrictions (Berge, 2020). Indeed, things got so bad that Bent Høie had to hold a national press conference, asking for the corona shaming to cease, as it was only leading to people being much less willing to get tested for coronavirus, contributing to the mass spreading of the virus (Bjørnestad, 2020).

7 The corona dugnad

Having explored the meaning of dugnad, what characteristics it contains, its historical roots, what it has come to mean today, and the values it contains, it is now time to turn our attention to the corona dugnad. Why was the word 'dugnad' used when asking Norwegians to follow restrictions and stop the spread of the coronavirus, when what was being asked of them in this context was so different than a typical dugnad? What response was the government hoping to elicit with the use of this word? How does the corona dugnad fulfil the characteristics outlined by Lorentzen and Dugstad? In this chapter, I will answer these questions, showing how the practice of dugnad lays important groundwork for national efforts in a time of crisis.

I will start with a brief review of the time leading up to the first national lockdown on March 12th, 2020, to show when dugnad was first used in relation to the coronavirus pandemic, and how this relates to previous national dugnads.

7.1 Invitation to corona dugnad

"*In the first case we'll have relatively few costs the next few weeks, but there is a large chance we'll have to pay a very high price [in terms of] human lives, economically and socially in a couple of months. In the second case we will incur large costs now through* ***a***

national dugnad *to stop the virus but will most likely avoid an epidemic and save hundreds of human lives*."[35] (Svanæs, 2020)

The first time "dugnad" was related to the coronavirus pandemic was on March 10th, 2020, when a professor of informatics published an article in the Norwegian paper VG (Svanæs, 2020). The above quote is from this article. Here, he explored the two potential strategies the Norwegian government could take to stop the spread of the coronavirus. It is worth highlighting that Svanæs uses the same line of thinking that Simon and Mobekk (2019) present – he explores the short- and long-term effects that implementing strict measures will have, and based on how it will save human lives, showing that this is the ideal way to proceed.

The following day, March 11th, an article written by now former Minister of Public Health and Care, Bent Høie appeared in the same newspaper. This article was titled 'Summons to dugnad'[36] and marked the first use of dugnad in relation to the coronavirus pandemic by a member of Norwegian Parliament. Although he does not refer to Svænes' article, it unlikely that Høie's used of the word is coincidental, given the short amount of time between the publications.

In his article, Høie (2020) states that Norwegians have always been good at dugnads, in many different kinds of settings. He goes on to explain the coronavirus situation, reiterating Svanæs' (2020) point that Norwegians must take part in a dugnad both to stop the virus from spreading and to ensure that seriously ill people get the help they need. Although he is specifically asking for a dugnad in the healthcare sector, Høie also very clearly states that everyone was needed in this dugnad, and that everyone needed to make an effort for the community. The next day, March 12th, former Prime Minster Erna Solberg held her press

[35] I det første tilfellet så vil vi ha relativt få omkostninger de neste to-tre ukene, men stor sannsynlighet for å måtte betale en meget høy pris både menneskelig, økonomisk og sosialt om et par måneder. I det andre tilfellet så tar vi store omkostninger nå gjennom en nasjonal dugnad for å stoppe viruset, men slipper med stor sannsynlighet unna en epidemi og redder hundrevis av menneskeliv

[36] Innkalling til dugnad

conference to the nation, shutting down the country, and asking Norwegians to stay at home and keep their distance to one another as part of a national dugnad against the coronavirus.

7.2 A history of national dugnads

The use of the word 'dugnad' as a reaction to the coronavirus pandemic is far from the first time that the word had been used to elicit national, collective effort. It is also not the first time that the phrase 'national dugnad' has been used. In previous usages, the government, politicians, or other interest organizations have used the phrase to bring out a national response to a specific crisis, appealing for the population to come together to in some way to contribute for the good of the nation. These dugnads are typically limited to specifically Norwegian issues (or how to solve international crises in a Norwegian context), but in more recent years, the phrase has also been used in relation to a more general need to get together and do something about issues that affect the world, for example, a dugnad to prevent climate change.

As mentioned briefly in chapter 4, the first time the word dugnad was used as a call to national action happened in the immediate years after World War II. Because of the war, there was a housing crisis in Norway. The socialist Prime Minister at the time, Einar Gerhardsen, wanted to give the population "*socially acceptable housing for a socially acceptable price*" (Kronborg, 2022), and so, the first national dugnad came into being. Here I will note that it is hard to establish whether Gerhardsen actually used the word dugnad himself in this situation or not, but in the years after at least, this is often referred to as the first national dugnad.

In the usually accepted sense of the term, this rebuilding of country fulfilled many criteria of being a dugnad, where everyone was participating: Banks provided affordable loans, municipalities provided cheap land to build on, and the *selvbyggerlag* contributed with their labour, helping one another build houses. As sources on *selvbyggerlag* are somewhat scarce, it is hard to know the exact demographic and the size of this group. However, it is known that men, women, and children all participated in the building process, and that ten years after it was established in 1946, the *selvbyggerlag* had reached 80 000 members across the nations, and had built roughly 30 000 houses (Kronborg, 2022). Klepp (2001) calls this national dugnad was a huge success, with thousands of hours of voluntary labour being laid down.

Even though at a glance it appears that this national dugnad was entirely voluntary, this was in fact not the case. Like many other types of dugnad, this was work that had to be done, and to make sure of this, stamping clocks became the norm, and with dugnad hours were carefully registered. Workers earnt "dugnad points" based on how many hours they worked, and one needed at least 250 dugnad points to get an apartment. One example from Strømmen in Akershus that shows us that each worker contributed 5500 hours of labour (roughly 229 days), building 47 houses altogether (Lorentzen and Dugstad, 2011, p. 60-61).

It is somewhat hard to deduce which of Lorentzen and Dugstad's (2011) five dugnad characteristics were present in the first national dugnad, due a lack of sources. However, the following can be deduced: The work appeared to be unpaid. People met face-to-face, and they performed the common work task of building houses. The two characteristics not present are there being a defined beginning and end, and some kind of social event at the end of the dugnad to build community. Though Gerhardsen initiated the dugnad, it is hard to know exactly when it ended. It is also not known if there was a social element that created community during this process. Indeed, the workers normally didn't know one another beforehand, and as such, feelings of community were most likely created after the building work was done and people had moved into their new homes (Lorentzen and Dugstad, 2011, p. 58)

Despite the popularity of Gerharsen's first national dugnad, Klepp (2001) states that it isn't until the 1990s that the phrase 'national dugnad' really gained popularity. His research shows that the first politician to use it was former Minister of Finance, Sigbjørn Johnsen, when he presented his revised national budget. Johnsen appealed to the nation's spirit of dugnad. He wanted to give the nation a boost by preventing unemployment and raising raising the quality of education. There is no evidence to suggest that that Johnsen's proposed national dugnad contains any of the five typical dugnad characteristics. It is somewhat unclear who Johnsen is appealing to in this situation, and how this group is supposed to respond. Johnsen's government was in a minority at this time, so Klepp (2001) tells us that his goal was never achieved.

A more recent example of a national dugnad is when the financial crisis of 2007-8 happened. In his New Year's speech to the nation, Stoltenberg addressed the nation, asking for a dugnad

“Among employers and employees. Among citizens and the government. Among individuals and the community”[37] (Aftenposten, 2009) to prevent job losses and an increased class divide, adding that the Norwegian ability to cooperate was highly valuable. Although it is clear that Stoltenberg is trying to appeal to the nation in his speech, it is, like Johnsen ultimately unclear what dugnad characteristics this dugnad is supposed to contain.

This common effort would technically be unpaid, and Stoltenberg implies a sense of simultaneity when he states that the dugnad should happen “between” certain groups. However, he gives no instruction on how this should be done. He generally states that the dugnad is to prevent job losses and a class divide, but it is unclear what kind of common work tasks the population is supposed to do to achieve these goals. Stoltenberg also gives no time limit – how long is this national dugnad expected to last? It can also be noted that even though the financial crisis was something that affected everyone in Norway in some way or another, compared to many other counties, Norway got out of the situation relatively unscathed.

There is a more humorous example of a national dugnad that happened in the same year as the financial crisis. Here, the Food Safety Authority invited the nation to participate in a dugnad against the Iberian slug. Nicknamed “the murder slug”, the Iberian slug is invasive to Norway, and at this time the populations growing rapidly in numbers, destroying plants in people’s gardens, and farmers’ crops. Through an information and media campaign, the population was mobilized into taking measures to reduce the population (Brunvoll, Thorgrimsen, and Åsland, 2008). Even though the information campaign was national, it is highly likely that not everyone would have been affected by the Iberian slug. Indeed, even though it would have been bothersome for those affected, it appears that the consequences wouldn’t have been more severe than garden plants being eaten.

This dugnad was undoubtedly unpaid. Simultaneity and common works tasks could be argued, as it is possible that groups of people got together and performed the task of laying down salt to get rid of the slugs. The time aspect is also somewhat ambiguous, with there

[37] Mellom arbeidstakere og arbeidsgivere. Mellom borgerne og myndighetene. Mellom enkeltmenneskene og fellesskapet

being no set end point to this dugnad. However, because of the harmful nature of the Iberian slug, the implication is "the sooner the better". Finally, I also found no evidence that this national dugnad ended in a celebration. In contrast to Johnsen and Stoltenberg's dugnad though, it is clearer that the national information campaign was intended to recruit the nation and how they were expected to respond. It also appears that this national dugnad was a successful one, with the population of the Iberian killer slugs being reduced.

They appear to be trying to manipulate the concept of dugnad in some way. Although they do not contain many (or any) of the characteristics that are typically found in a dugnad, these politicians are still trying to use the word to evoke a national, voluntary effort. It can also be considered that each national dugnad since the first one has been trying to emulate the success of the first one. However, it is hard to live up to the rebuilding of the country.

7.3 Why a 'corona dugnad'?

In light of the history of national dugnads, I will now explore what the Norwegian government was doing when they decided to use the word dugnad as a way of combatting the coronavirus pandemic, in light of my informants' comments. All of my informants noted the following points: That dugnad had been used because Norwegian's are familiar the word, making it easy to apply to this national crisis. And when they invite the nation to a dugnad, politicians invoke clear expectations as to how to respond to the situation – by coming together and making a collective effort for the (national) community.

Klepp (2001, p. 94) theorizes that using the word "dugnad" in relation to a national crisis can be effective for two reasons: Its positive association with voluntary work, and because it works extremely well as a metaphor - instead of having to use many sentences to explain what a situation is about, one can use "dugnad" instead. Moss and Sandbakken (2019) explain that because dugnad has been a part of the Norwegian discourse for centuries, this makes it "*akin to a master narrative on unity and working together*" (Moss and Sandbakken, 2019, p. 5). This is something they say speaks to Norwegians, as they are already familiar with the concept, and the expected behaviour associated with it, therefore "appealing to a positive social identity as Norwegians who work together for a shared goal (ibid).

By using the word dugnad, the Norwegian government made the population a unified entity in the fight against the coronavirus. It made them equals – a national "we" (Gjerde, 2020)

(Kjeldsen, 2021). By emphasizing the voluntary aspect of the dugnad while also emphasizing the need for a collective effort, the Norwegian government was also able to come off as coercive, yet still liberal. They justified the restrictions by telling us that vulnerable groups like the elderly needed to be protected, and to make sure that hospitals weren't overwhelmed (Gjerde, 2020, p. 483). That the government also wanted to come across as coercive, yet liberal also shows that the value of equality is an important aspect of politics and as an ideology in Norway (Kjeldsen, 2021, p. 108).

By calling upon dugnad, politicians also tried to invoke a sense of *imagined sameness* amongst the Norwegian population. Although imagined sameness typically refers to how feelings of equality are mediated through interaction and by playing up similarities on a local, everyday level (Gullestad, 2002), because the pandemic affected the entire nation, it was easy to play up the similarities that appeared here, mobilizing this as a way of making everyone equal. By creating a set of rules and regulations everyone had to follow, a sense of *mass ceremony* (Anderson, 1983) and *simultaneity* (Tjora, 2018) was present, thus strengthening feelings of community among the nation. Even though the nation was participating in the national corona dugnad "apart" from one another, there was still a feeling that they were participating together.

The paragraph above explores theoretical reasons as to why the government chose to use the word dugnad. But how was this viewed empirically? How did my informants understand the way that the government used the word dugnad?

Marianne: "*[…] dugnad is something that touches the entirety of the Norwegian soul - "Here is our work task, we have to fold up our sleeves, it has to be Norwegians that are the best". […] It was a conscious choice to use the word dugnad, because most Norwegians have a certain association with it – how you're supposed to behave, "now we shall contribute to the community.*"[38]

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[38] […] dugnad er noe som rører ved hele den norske sjelen – 'her har vi en arbeidsoppgave, vi må brette opp armene, det må være nordmenn som er best'. […] Det var et bevisst grep å bruke dugnadsordet, fordi de flest nordmenn har en viss assosiasjon til det – hvordan man skal oppføre seg, 'nå skal vi bidra til fellesskapet'.

There are several points to make about Marianne's statement: She presents the government's use dugnad in relation to the coronavirus pandemic in a wholly positive light. By calling it something that touches "the entirety of the Norwegian soul", Marianne tells us about the collective identity of Norwegian's – that dugnad is, as noted by Lorentzen and Dugstad (2011) something that Norwegian's have an innate relationship to. That she refers to "our work task" can be connected to Lorentzen and Dugstad's (2011) characteristics of simultaneity and common work tasks, implicating all Norwegian's as dugnad participants.

When stating that Norwegians need to be "the best" at reacting to the pandemic, Marianne indirectly refers to Norway's status as a country that is generally considered very successful. This awakens an association to the Nordic model mentioned on page _, which theorizes that the Nordic countries are successful due to their emphasis on values like egalitarianism and reciprocity (Simon and Mobekk, 2019). There is an expectation that Norway will handle the coronavirus pandemic well, and therefore all citizens have to act to make sure that this expectation has been met, as the government has asked it of them. Marianne also explains that the word dugnad was used because Norwegians already have very strong associations to it. As such, even though the corona dugnad was taking place on the national level instead of the local level, when calling for a dugnad, Norwegians implicitly understand that politicians are asking them to behave in a certain way: By contributing to the community. She argues that the governments choice to use dugnad was made actively, precisely because it gives the population an idea of how they should respond to this crisis.

Ingrid and Kari make similar connections to the governments use of the word dugnad as Marianne:

Ingrid: "*Because that word and what you think of it has such strong roots in the Norwegian society, that it's easy to attach to the pandemic, to get people to understand it, get people to*

join in. […] It was supposed to awaken the feelings we already have for dugnad, to make people understand that it was about community."[39]

Like Marianne, Ingrid's statement begins with highlighting the importance of the dugnad as a practice and as a concept in Norwegian society, indirectly referring to its long history in the country by saying it had "strong roots". Ingrid, like Marianne, also concludes that the word dugnad was easy to apply to the pandemic, precisely because Norwegians already have associations to the word – that they will understand what it being asked of them and make them participate. This is done specifically by appealing to a sense of community.

Kari: "*It's engraved in the Norwegian people – it's positive and to make us motivated. Now we together as a united people work to reach that goal. There's a goal to motivate and awaken cohesion […]. Now we together will manage this with an iron fist – we can do it together.*"[40]

Like both Marianne and Ingrid, Kari also begins her statement by highlighting the dugnad as a practice and concept that is of great importance to Norwegians. When calling it something "engraved" in Norwegians, she implies that Norwegians have an innate relationship to the practice (Lorentzen and Dugstad, 2011) in the same way Marianne does. Like Marianne, she also highlights the dugnad as a positive concept – something that should make people want to participate in an activity. Her use of cohesion further implies a sense of community and the desire to contribute and be a part of something bigger than oneself.

What my informants say in their statements above relate the governments use of corona dugnad to positive aspects of the dugnad, like community – as something that is effective at mobilizing effort because Norwegians understand that both as a practice and as a concept, the dugnad is about coming together and doing something good for the community. However, as we know, an important part of the dugnad is how it can be motivated by negative social

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[39] Fordi det ordet og hva man tenker om den har et såpass sterkt rot i det norske samfunnet, gjør det lett å hekte pandemien på det, å få folk til å skjønne det, få folk til å bli med. […] Det skulle vekke følelser vi har om dugnad fra før, og få folk til å skjønne at det handler om fellesskap.

[40] Det er inngravert i det norske folk – det er positivt og for å motivere oss. Må skal vi stå sammen som et samlet folk og jobbe for å få det målet. Nå skal vi sammen klare dette med iron fist – we can do it together.

control in the form of shame. As such, when I asked why they thought the word dugnad had been used, five of my informants stated that this was a consequence of the potential negative sanctions that non-participants would face:

Margot: "*It's probably to give a little guilty conscience. It's a cheeky way to express yourself to get people to join in voluntarily, and that maybe you will be a bit excluded or looked at a bit weirdly if you don't do what the government has said and are part of this dugnad. And that would lead to shame, and that would lead to that they participate anyway.*"[41]

That the word dugnad would be used to make people feel "a little guilty" whilst also defining is as a cheeky way or coercing people to participate voluntarily emphasizes the tension between the dugnad as something voluntary and obligatory. Margot also confirms earlier points that have been made throughout this thesis – that not participating by following the governments restrictions you will place yourself outside of the group or looked at weirdly because you don't understand what dugnad is "actually" about. That it is shame leads to you participating "anyway" shows the coercive effect that oppressive social control has.

Hilde: "*People have an understanding of what it is, there's a sense of duty. You'll be punished with shame if you don't participate.*"[42]

When saying that there is a sense of duty when being invited to dugnad, Hilde also reflects the tension that exists between the dugnad as voluntary and something obligatory. By stating that don't participate will be punished with shame, she shows that this is not passive, but active – it is something negative that you are subjected to, because you have made an individual choice that the community views as being wrong.

A story told by Aleksandra can further highlight how oppressive social control was a part of the corona dugnad. Due to a severe allergic reaction she had to a vaccine as a child, she is

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[41] Det er sikkert for å gi litt dårlig samvittighet. Det er en lur måte å uttrykke seg på for å få folk til å bli med frivillig, og at man blir kanskje litt utstøt eller sett litt rart på hvis man da ikke gjør det regjeringen har sagt og er med i denne dugnaden. Og det vil føre til skam, og det vil jo da føre til at de kanskje blir med i denne dugnaden allikevel.

[42] Folk har en forståelse av hva det er, det er en pliktfølelse. Du straffes med skam hvis du ikke deltar.

now unable to be vaccinated against any other diseases, including the coronavirus. When the vaccine(s) for coronavirus became available around the summer of 2021, getting vaccinated was also considered a part of the corona dugnad, as it would reduce the risk of dying or getting seriously ill. It was also a topic that was discussed frequently. When communicating with friends over social media or meeting them, one of the first set of questions would be "Have you gotten the vaccine yet? What type did you get? When will you be getting the next dose?"

Aleksandra voiced a sense of frustration over this, explaining that she often had to bring up her personal medical history to legitimize the (very valid) choice she had made not to get vaccinated. That people pried so much into her personal life shows us several things: It highlights that her choice, according to the national community was the wrong one, meaning it needed to be legitimized. It is also conceivable that when Aleksandra told people she wasn't vaccinated that this was a surprising response – that generally, she appeared to be the kind of person who followed the restrictions and recommendations, and therefore people needed to find out why she has actively made this choice. By prying into her private matters, the people she talked to about her vaccination status need to establish whether they have a reason to ostracize her or not – is she the kind of person that ignores the rules and puts others at risk? Or is there in fact a legitimate reasoning behind her choice?

7.4 What is participation in a corona dugnad context?

I have now explored the history of national dugnads in Norway and show why Norwegian university students believed that the word dugnad was used in the fight against the coronavirus. Now, I will ask: How are Lorentzen and Dugstad's (2011) five dugnad characteristics employed in the corona dugnad? Are they present here, or have they been adapted to fit the context of the pandemic? How do these characteristics reflect what participation in the corona dugnad involved?

7.4.1 Unpaid

The corona dugnad, much like normal dugnads was an unpaid one. However, it can be noted that any people did end up receiving benefits throughout the pandemic as because they had been laid off either temporarily or permanently. This was also true of businesses, who also received funding to keep them afloat.

7.4.2 Simultaneity and common work tasks

Two posts that were circulating on social media poke fun at how two aspects of the dugnad, simultaneity and common works tasks were adapted to the context of the pandemic. This first post was shared by a family member on Facebook on November 9th, 2021: "*Why can't people just do what they do during all the other dugnads? Stay inside until it's over*"[43].

Another post from the same Facebook page was shared by the family member of a friend on March 19th, 2021. This image says: "*A tip for these corona times! Behave exactly as though you were participating in a dugnad for your housing association – Keep a good distance or stay at home! Regards the chairman*"[44].

These posts do several things: Firstly, the images imply that people actually aren't very good at participating in dugnads – that people generally don't participate, staying inside instead. Therefore, the images also make fun of the tensions between the voluntary and obligatory nature of the dugnad by implying that people don't want to attend, they do. Secondly, they confirm that during a normally dugnad, meeting people face-to-face is the norm. Thirdly, the images show us how this aspect changed during the corona dugnad. There is a certain irony to the dugnad suddenly meaning being apart, precisely because of how associated it is with sociality (De Lauri and Telle, 2020, p. 1). However, the posts show us that even though people were now doing dugnad by staying at home, this was now a valid mode of participation - instead of being with one another physically, expected dugnad participation now meant following the rules and recommendations of the government – staying inside and keeping your distance. This was confirmed by all my participants in some way or another:

Runar: "*By following orders […], keeping your distance, disinfecting and washing your hands, don't travel abroad, having digital meetings, and taking your quarantine*."[45]

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[43] Hvorfor kan ikke folk bare gjøre det de gjør på alle andre dugnader? Holde seg inne til det er ferdig.

[44] Tips i disse koronatider! Oppfør deg akkurat som det er dugnad i borettslaget – Hold god avstand, eller hold deg hjemme. Hilsen velformannen.

[45] Man følger påbud […] å holde avstand, å sprite og vaske hendene, ikke reise til utlandet, og at man tar karantenen.

Marianne: "*You follow infection control measures, try to be around as few people as possible, stay at home*."[46]

All my informants stated that infections control measures were how people could take part in the dugnad, showing us that common works tasks were performed, just of the typical painting of a shed or raking of a garden, these tasks became things like washing one's hands, avoiding close contact with others, and complying with self-isolation rules.

7.4.3 A set beginning and end, and a celebration

While there was a set beginning to the corona dugnad (March 12th, 2020), this dugnad began very suddenly, with restrictions being enforced immediately after Solberg's national press conference. As such this didn't give people time to prepare. Solberg also invited to the corona dugnad without ever specifying how long it was expected to last. The only reference to a time frame she makes is when she says it would be easier to open up later if we closed down now, with later being ambiguous. However, that Solberg hadn't specified when the dugnad would end didn't appear to be a problem in the beginning. As I go on to discuss in chapter 8, this changed over time.

While there was a set beginning to the corona dugnad (March 12th, 2020), there was no time to prepare for it, as restrictions were enforced immediately after Erna Solberg's speech to the nation. The only time frame she referenced in her speech was when she stated, "if we close down harder now, the easier it will be to open up later"[47]. Although this ambiguity wasn't an issue during the first months of the pandemic, it would eventually, as will be shown in the following chapter, become a problem that there was no given end date to the corona dugnad.

Finally, when Erna Solberg declared that the corona dugnad was over on September 24th, 2021, this news was celebrated with nationwide parties. The end of the corona dugnad also came about quickly, again, with Solberg saying that all restrictions would be removed the same day as her national press conference, at four P.M.. For those who chose to go out and celebrate the end of restrictions, this undoubtedly led to feelings of community, with people

[46] Man følger smittevernregler, forsøker å omgå minst mulig folk, holde seg hjemme.

[47] Tar vi hardt i nå, kan vi heller slippe litt opp senere

being together, physically, in large groups for the first time in a year and a half. However, for those who chose not to go out, perhaps in fear of catching the coronavirus, seeing everyone else together while they were alone had the opposite effect.

Lorentzen and Dugstad's (2011) five characteristics were in some way all present in the corona dugnad, even if they had been adapted to fit the context of the coronavirus pandemic. But when the dugnad was made to mean something so different, could it still really be considered a dugnad?

8 How the public reaction to the corona dugnad changed over time

As explored above, although the corona dugnad did share characteristics with a normal dugnad, participating mainly involved things that one wouldn't stereotypically do during a dugnad – in fact, in many cases, it was doing the exact opposite. In this chapter, I will explore the following questions: How and why did public perception of the corona dugnad change over time? Here, I will show that the corona dugnad came to differ so much from a normal dugnad, that people were no longer willing to call it a dugnad.

When researching whether the government's use of the word dugnad as a way of getting people to follow coronavirus restrictions has been contested by Norwegians, Nilsen and Skarpenes (2020) state that even though the dugnad received a new meaning "*[...] people seemed to embrace it remarkably well, and the commitment to contribute, implying the original sense to 'to be there' was strong*"[48] (Nilsen and Skarpenes, 2020, p. 3), therefore making it a successful tactic. Moss and Sandbakken's (2021), research also showed that during the first weeks of the pandemic, their informants frequently used the meta-narrative of dugnad when talking about their support for the restrictions, also using the word to explain their participation in said restrictions. Because having a set and beginning turned out to be an important also in the corona dugnad, I argue that these articles must be viewed within their

[48] They relate this specifically to the practical side of dugnad, stating that in the coronavirus context, dugnad participation related to activities like the ones mentioned in the previous chapter, and that the government had recommended – things like keeping a distance to others and complying with self-isolation rules.

specific temporal context. As they were published early in the pandemic, this means that their data was collected in a period when it was unknown how long we would be expected to live with restrictions. This is noteworthy, as one of the most frequent complaints I heard was that the corona dugnad had lasted too long.

8.1 Critiquing the national dugnad

Around eighty years after Einar Gerhardsen's first national dugnad, critics like Klepp (2001) and Kagge (2019) believe that the phrase national dugnad has become overused, and that politicians, the government, and other interest organizations use the word dugnad whenever there is any kind of need for a group effort. This can be seen by the fact that in the past few years, these figures have invited Norwegians to take part in national dugnads from causes ranging from car tolls to the Norwegian language, as pointed out by Kagge (2019).

Another important question to ask in regard to national dugnads is: How are they realistically expected to work? As shown in chapter 7, the call for a national dugnad is rarely followed by concrete measures like a division of labour, allocations of responsibility, or economic support (Hungnes, 2016). The corona dugnad is perhaps one of the few national dugnads to escape this critique. Though it is unclear how the average Norwegians was supposed to solve a financial crisis, the three factors listed above were all in some way mentioned in Erna Solberg's speech to the nation on March 12th, 2020. Although technically not talking about labour in the typical sense of doing work, there was a division where essential workers kept doing their jobs "as normal" when the rest of the population was given the task of staying and home and following coronavirus restrictions and recommendations to stop the spread of the virus. Asking people to follow restrictions and recommendations also placed responsibility on them, again to stop the spread of the virus. Solberg also explained that the government was working on creating economic measures for companies that would be affected by the pandemic. In this way we can say that the corona dugnad was a success in the sense that all parties, both the government and the population, contributed to a common effort that would benefit the community.

8.2 Early criticisms

Despite achieving things that national dugnads typically don't, critiques of the corona dugnad began in the Norwegian media as early as April and May of 2020. As I mentioned in the

literature review, the first person to challenge this use was Tjora (2020), when he published an article in the newspaper *VG*. In this article, he actively refers to his typologies of *community as* to show how the national corona dugnad and normal dugnads are two very different things. Indeed, Tjora (2020) stated that the corona dugnad was not a dugnad, because so little of what a dugnad normally contains is present. He argues that even though politicians and other figures of authority want to call every recommendation and restriction a "dugnad", the dugnad is ultimately about something else – about coming together to complete a specific task for a designated amount of time. Tjora also refers to other aspects and characteristics of the dugnad that we are already familiar with; the dugnad's history as a neighbourly duty in local societies, and how dugnads normally involve working together, and the social elements of coffee and waffles after. As such, it also makes sense that Tjora (2020) is somewhat critical of using dugnad in relation to a national crisis, as he believes (as mentioned in his 2018 work) that the dugnad is central to civil society, which he calls that which is not connected to the state, steering, business, or family, but rather what contributes to engagement and collective effort. All the dugnads that my informants have mentioned are examples of collective effort, as they are done with others. By repeatedly and actively choosing to take part in dugnads, my informants show that they are engaged, whether this be in schoolyards, where the live, or elsewhere.

Tjora (2020) also problematizes the corona dugnad by referring his own typology of *community as identification*, which, as explained, is achieved through synchronization. In a coronavirus context, Tjora (2020) explains that synchronization happened through a change in collective behaviour – things like the shift to the home office, and the closing of schools, saying "*The national identification is strengthened today by an unprecedented, forced synchronization that gives an experience of "of being in the same boat.""*. However, Tjora (2020) notes that this synchronization doesn't apply to for example those who have lost their jobs. This indicates that even in the early days of the pandemic, the corona dugnad affected people differently.

Emanuelsen (2020) was another early critic. Though calls the dugnad so one of Norway's proudest landmarks, he is critical to how the word "*is quickly becoming a rhetorical plaster politicians stick over any unpleasantness between us*" (Emanuelsen, 2020). The unpleasantness he refers to is how groups who served a critical function in society (nurses,

bus drives, cleaners) were expected to contribute more to the corona dugnad than others, as society would come to a standstill without them. This was considered unfair as they were not compensated.

This line of thinking eventually became a crucial point as to why the corona dugnad became so contested amongst the Norwegian public. What this case shows us is that no one is supposed to contribute more to a dugnad than anyone else – everyone is expected to contribute equally. When this does not happen, it is so provoking that it actually breaks with the dugnad tradition.

8.3 Later criticism

Criticism of the corona dugnad continued to flourish in the Norwegian media throughout 2020 and 2021. This criticism came from a range of different fields, and with many different voices being represented. The two examples mentioned below are by no means a complete overview, but offer an certain insight into some of the areas of criticism: From a student perspective, Geelmuyden and Staavi (2021) voiced their frustration about the distribution of the coronavirus vaccine in a chronicle published in VG, writing that it was unfair that the government was considering giving "vaccine passports" to the elderly that would have allowed them to travel abroad, while students (and other groups) would have to remain at home. They point out that students had also taken part in the corona dugnad, precisely to protect vulnerable groups like the elderly. They theorize that if given a vaccine passport, the elderly would then be the first to stop participating in the dugnad.

Another critique of the dugnad was that the use of the word dugnad *had* been successful, however, it hadn't taken much time before the spirit of the dugnad had been ruined. This is because Norwegian's weren't truly standing together when it counted, and that the corona dugnad could not have been a dugnad, as it wasn't a mobilization of community (Okkenhaug, 2022). Below, I will show how this final comment is true. However, I must disagree with the sentiment that the corona dugnad wasn't a mobilization of community. It has been shown in several places throughout this thesis how the government specifically chose the word 'dugnad', precisely because they know of the motivating power it has to get people to come together and make a collective effort.

These examples also show that a dugnad must be questioned when contributions are unequal. In the case of the corona dugnad, this happened when people there was a potential, or people did in fact put their own personal needs in front of the collective need to combat the coronavirus.

As time passed, Norwegian politicians also became aware of the criticism against the corona dugnad – that Norwegians were tired of both having to participate in the corona dugnad, and the governments use of the word. Already in January 2021, Solberg expressed her worry about spirit of the corona dugnad. Because infection control measures varied so much across the country at this time, people were affected in very different ways. Solberg pointed out the difference between the corona dugnad and normal dugnads herself, saying "*Yes, in a dugnad we all tend to be the same. But not everyone is participating equally here, and that is because we're not affected the same at the moment*"[49] (Røsvik and Sandblad, 2021). Later in the same year, the newly appointed Minister of Health and Care Services, Ingvild Kjerkol went so far as saying that she actually disliked using the word dugnad in relation to the pandemic (Fjellanger, Røsvik and Jåma, 2021), saying that the situation had been a kind of deal between infection control authorities and the Norwegian population that was made while waiting for the vaccine (Fjellanger and Røsvik, 2021).

The criticism expressed in the Norwegian media emphasizes how it was the growing sense of unfairness in particular that led the corona dugnad to become challenged. This criticism was also voiced by my informants. In my research, when I asked them if they thought the corona dugnad was the same as or different to a normal dugnad, and if so, how? The majority were undecided about whether to call it a dugnad or not, but others were less willing to do so, also questioning if it ever should have been called such in the first place.

Stenøien and Tønseth's (2022) study is highly relevant in this context. Although their work focuses more on how citizenship was affected by the coronavirus pandemic, they do reach some of the same conclusions: For their participants, taking part in the corona dugnad involved two things in particular: Everyone having to participate, and everyone "being in the

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[49] Ja, i en dugnad pleier vi å være likt med. Men vi er ikke likt med og det skyldes at vi ikke er likt rammet heller for øyeblikket

same boat". The authors also explain that when criticizing the corona dugnad, their participants, much like mine, also did this by noting how the corona dugnad was different than a normal dugnad. This was also explored in a way that involved Lorentzen and Dugnad's (2011) five characteristics. Here, time was perhaps the most deciding factor for Stenøien and Tønseth's participants and mine, with the critique being that the corona dugnad has gone on for far too long:

Einar: […] *but you can also see when looking at that dugnad now that people are tired. Like, dugnads can't last for two years*."[50]

Tone: "[…] *because, yes, we have simply used up the dugnad. People are tired*."[51]

By doing the same exercise as Sørhaug and relating dugnad participation to Barth's (1967) economic spheres, I argue that as the pandemic went on, a conversion barrier between the corona dugnad and time appeared. Both Einar and Tone highlight this conversion barrier, both referring to a sense of collective exhaustion that Norwegians feel directly because of the long-lasting corona dugnad. Tone goes so far as saying that the dugnad has been used up, implying that it can no longer be used to incite collective effort and motivate people to follow restrictions.

Hilde: "*They're different* [the corona dugnad and normal dugnads] – *we've been doing it for so long. People don't agree that it's a dugnad anymore. That word isn't used anymore* […] *because everyone has an opinion about when dugnad is supposed to be over*."[52]

Hilde clearly shares the same opinion as Einar and Tone – that the corona dugnad has gone on for too long. By explaining that Norwegians know how long dugnads are supposed to last, Hilde implies that the government is aware of the fact that they have exceeded the limits of

[50] […] men man kan også se litt på den dugnaden nå at folk er lei. Altså, dugnad kan ikke vare i to år.

[51] […] fordi at, ja, vi har rett og slett brukt opp dugnaden. Folk er lei.

[52] De er forskjellige. Vi har holdt på så lenge. Folk er ikke enig om at det er dugnad lenger. Det ordet brukes ikke lenger […] fordi alle har en formening om når dugnad skal være over.

people's willingness to participate in what for them is no longer a dugnad, and this is why the word isn't used anymore.

I have also shown how in the beginning of the pandemic, Lorentzen and Dugstad's (2011) characteristics of simultaneity and common work tasks were also present in the corona dugnad, although in a way that was adapted to the situation. However, as the media criticism showed, time changed this. Certain recommendations – like keeping a distance of one metre from others applied to the entire population, while others changed based on levels of contagion. For example, Oslo was frequently subjected to strict lockdowns, while in Tromsø, people mostly lived a relatively unrestricted life. This in turn contributed to the weakening of the sense of "being there" as well as the imagined sameness that the government had called upon when framing following corona restrictions as a dugnad. These aspects all led to a sense of frustration.

When I asked my informants if and how the coronavirus dugnad was similar to a normal dugnad, people once again appeared to be undecided, arguing both for and against:

David: "*In principle, [they're] very much the same, it comes from the same place, how you demonstrate worth as a citizen, fellow resident, being; be a good person, […] but in practice very different*."

David says that the principle of doing something good for your country and being a good person is the same as a normal dugnad, the practice of the dugnad is different. I interpret this as what one normally does in a dugnad, for example the typical activity of raking leaves.

Marianne: "*It's the same and different. It's the same in the sense that everyone has to contribute if we're going to make this* [ending the pandemic] *happen. But there has been completely different contributions here, and it's not possible to contribute in the same way. […] There are a lot of people who have sacrificed more […] so you have one group whose*

biggest sacrifice is working from home. Whereas nurses, they've been working until they get sores on their faces."[53]

For Marianne, a contribution to a common good an element that is the same in both normal dugnad and the corona dugnads. However, they differ because as she says, people cannot participate equally, creating a sense of unfairness. She polarizes this by comparing people who were working from home, and this being the biggest change to their everyday life to nurses, clearly implying that they have made a bigger and more important contribution to the corona dugnad.

Alina was less willing to call the corona dugnad a dugnad, for similar reasons as Marianne's, namely that as time passed and we got out of lockdown, it was easier to see how different people's contributions were, and that some had made bigger sacrifices than others.

Alina: "*It's a completely different dimension. Corona dugnad, I think it's wrong to call it a dugnad. In the beginning of the pandemic, everyone had to stay at home, limit who they were with the first few months. Then you saw pictures of crowded parks in Oslo – people let loose. There were lower [contagion] numbers, but it's still a pandemic. The autumn was a little better, but this year [2021], I think people are tired. There have been a lot of personal sacrifices.*"[54] – Alina

Idunn also stated that the corona dugnad should not be called a dugnad, because these two practices involve asking very different things of us – in a regular dugnad, you are expected to do some form of voluntary work, in the context of the pandemic, it's about keeping a "scary and threatening" virus under control. She also maintained differences in Lorentzen and

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[53] De er like og forskjellige. De er like på den måten at alle må bidra for at vi skal få det her til. Men det har vært helt ulike bidrag her, og det er ikke mulig til å bidra på samme måte. […] det er ganske mange som har ofret mer […] så du har en gruppe der det største offeret er å sitte på hjemmekontor. Mens sykepleiere, det har jobbet til de får sår i ansiktet.

[54] Det blir et annet dimensjon. Koronadugnad, jeg synes det blir feil å kalle det en dugnad. I begynnelsen måtte alle holde seg hjemme og begrense hvem man var med de første månedene. Så så vi bilder av overfylte parker i Oslo – folk slapp seg løs. Det var lavere tall, men det er fortsatt en pandemi. Høsten var litt bedre, men i pr så tror jeg folk er lei. Det har vært mange personlige sacrifices.

Dugstad's (2011) characteristics, noting that in this case, people are inside, not outside, and there is reduced sociality, which De Lauri and Telle (2021) explain is normally an integral aspect of the dugnad:

Idunn: "*The definition of dugnad is 'voluntary work'. During corona, it's about keeping a scary virus in check. It's a different kind of dugnad. Normally you're outside, in this one you're inside. You have to limit who you're with, while in a normal dugnad you're outside and with everyone else. They're two greatly different dugnads.*"[55]

9 How did the corona dugnad affect Norwegian university students?

As mentioned in chapter 1, a big part of my motivation for writing this thesis was because the group I belonged to, university students, were facing criticism in the Norwegian media for not taking part in the corona dugnad by supposedly not following restrictions. My informants found this critique unfair, as they ultimately found it generalizing. Chapter 6 also highlighted how youth were particularly at risk from the phenomenon of corona shaming, as they could be criticized both by the media, and by their peers.

It seems fitting that just before delivering this thesis, the World Health Organization declared on May 5th, 2023, that COVID-19 is no longer a global health emergency. However, when seeing the harsh criticism that that Norwegian university students and other youth have faced, I find it important to acknowledge that when I asked my informants how taking part in the corona dugnad, all participants said that it had affected them negatively in some way:

Tone: "[…] *it was that "okay, the money's stopped coming in". You know you get your student loan from the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund once a month, but there's that fear of that you're all alone, you're an adult, you're supposed to take care of yourself, and*

[55] Definisjonen av dugnad er 'frivillig arbeid'. Under korona, så handler det om å holde et skummelt virus i sjakk. Det blir en annen type dugnad. Vanligvis er man ute, på denne er man ikke. Du må begrense hvem du er med, men i en vanlig dugnad er man ute sammen med alle sammen. Det er to stort forskjellige dugnader.

half of your income suddenly disappears in one day, so the mental stress you have going on around you was what made it the hardest."[56] – Tone

Aleksandra: "[…] *And another thing was that the student counselling closed, and it was a while before they came up with digital solutions and such, so, that was also hard*."[57]

Einar: "*I got more anxious tendencies, started thinking a lot more, got more time to myself where I could think about completely banal things. So it was rough in that way*."[58]

That youth were affected more negatively than other groups has been confirmed in The Norwegian Government's Management of the Coronavirus Pandemic[59] (NOU 2022: 5) The report shows that students did suffer a loss in welfare during the coronavirus pandemic, concluding that being a student, is, socially and psychologically an important period of youth's lives, and due to the pandemic, many students had gotten a tougher start to adult life (p. 379). The SHoT[60] survey (Sivertsen, 2021), which catalogues students' well-being also confirms that students had a lower quality of life, suffering from more mental health issues and high levels of loneliness. It is proved that these factors were a result of the pandemic, as the survey from 2022 (Børge and Johansen, 2022) showed that these issues had improved.

We are still learning about the effects that the coronavirus pandemic had on us, but what my informants' statements show is that participating in the corona dugnad – the very thing they had been asked to participate in in the name of national community, ended up affecting them negatively. They were left lonely, isolated, and vulnerable to mental health issues. Ultimately,

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[56] […] men så er det den derre «okei, pengene har sluttet å komme». Du vet at du får bistand fra Lånekassen en gang i måneden, men det er den derre frykten av at du er helt alene, du er voksen, du skal ta vare på deg selv, og halvparten av inntekten din faller ut av ingenting på en dag, så det mentale stresset rundt du har rundt var det som gjorde det mest vanskelig.

[57] Og en annen ting var at studentrådgivningen stengte, og det ble en periode før de kom med digitale løsninger og sånt, så, det var vanskelig.

[58] Jeg fikk mer angst tendenser, begynte å tenke veldig mye, fikk mye tid for meg selv der jeg kunne tenke på helt banale ting. Så det var rough sånn sett.

[59] Koronakommisjonen

[60] Studentenes helse- og trivselsundersøkelsen (Students health and well-being survey)

we can say that there is an irony to this, as participation in dugnad typically leads to positive things – feelings of community and belonging.

10 Conclusion

I began this thesis by asking why the word dugnad was used by the Norwegian government as a way of getting people to follow restrictions to stop the spread of the coronavirus, when the word typically refers to a Norwegian cultural practice where voluntary work is performed at the local level. In chapter 3, I explored the history of the dugnad, all the way back to its humble beginnings in Iceland in the 1200's, showing how the practice began on farms. Literature shows us that there has always been a tension between the practice as something voluntary, and as a duty, which motivated participation.

When defining the dugnad, my informants all stated that the dugnad was a form of voluntary work, using the words 'common' and 'community' in their definitions. I related this to Tjora's forms of community, along with others anthropological theories that highlight how dugnad is about social participation: By voluntarily choosing to do dugnad, you are not just saying that you want to do whatever practical, physical task the dugnad entails, but it also shows that you are embracing the community, and actively showing that you want to belong.

When I asked my informants what motivated them to take part in dugnads, the tension between dugnad as voluntary and obligatory was once again highlighted. I discovered that for the majority of my informants, their introduction to the dugnad practice began at a very young age, in a school setting. This led to them feeling as though they had to participate, in this setting, they could not escape the dugnad. This was also related to the national context by showing how participation in the dugnad was routinized during their childhood on the 17th of May, Norway's Constitution Day.

Furthermore, motivation to take part in dugnads is also motivated by social control and shame. When evaluating what they will get out of participating in dugnads, my informants would think about the negative consequences they would face: If you choose not to participate in dugnad, this is viewed as placing yourself outside of the community, and others will pass a negative character judgement on you because of this. This in turn makes you feel ashamed, which is more likely to make you participate in other dugnads.

Turning my attention to the corona dugnad, I have shown how the phenomenon of national dugnads also has a long history in Norway, with the first one taking place shortly after the Second World War. This was viewed as a highly successful dugnad, and it contained three of Lorentzend and Dugstad's five typical dugnad characteristics. Other national dugnads have been less success and have employed these five characteristics less. Although the phrase "national dugnad" didn't truly become popularized until the 1990's, critics believe that is has already become an overused phrase.

Despite criticism, there is no doubt that calling for the nation to take part in a corona dugnad was a highly successful strategy. As explained in chapter 7, when asking my informants why they thought the word "dugnad" had been chosen in this situation, they reasoned that the government had invited the nation to the corona dugnad because people have such an implicit and positive relationship to the word and that when calling to dugnad, people understand that it requires them to come together and make a common effort for the community.

When it comes to defining what participation in the corona dugnad actually is, this can be described in simple terms: Informants unanimously related corona dugnad activities to the recommendations and restrictions that the government enforced. This includes practices like keeping one's distance and getting vaccinated.

Although the corona dugnad was accepted by the Norwegian population at the beginning of the pandemic, this changed as time passed. It did contain most of the five elements that Lorentzen and Dugstad present – it was unpaid, and even though people were apart, there was a sense of simultaneity because we were all in this situation together, participating in the common works tasks of following restrictions and recommendations. There was also a nationwide celebration when the corona dugnad ended. However, while there was a set end to the corona dugnad, there was no set end, and this ended up being problematic.

Criticism of the corona dugnad in Norwegian media had already begun in 2020 but flourished in the following year. My informants also agreed that as time went on, the corona dugnad could no longer be called a dugnad, because the typical dugnad characteristics of simultaneity and common work tasks eventually disappeared. It became impossible for everyone's contribution's to be equal. As time went on and people were vaccinated, there was less of a need for a corona dugnad, and it was officially declared over in September 2021.

When we look at the corona dugnad and how it relates to the group I studied – Norwegian university students, what can this tell us?

Like Norwegians before them, my informants grew up with the practice of dugnad, learning at a young age that there is an expectation to participate. In the case of the corona dugnad, they did this dutifully by doing what was expected of them – they followed the rules and restrictions presented by the government. They had the misfortune of belonging to a group where certain people were not participating in the corona dugnad, and thus were put even more at risk of being placed outside the community, in a time where the Norwegian government was calling on everyone to make a common effort for the good of the nation. My informant's contribution to the corona dugnad was equal with all others who chose to participate, and yet their participation ended up having a large personal cost for them. So, although they participated for the good of the nation, the nation was not so good to them.

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