

"Vi mobiliserer til dugnad": The Norwegian dugnad as a metaphor in times of COVID-19

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On 12 March 2020, the Norwegian government instigated measures intended to limit the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the most drastic policies of any Norwegian government in times of peace. In her speech announcing the measures, Prime Minister Solberg appealed to a particularly Norwegian tradition to help persuade citizens to obey the new directives:

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. (Aftenposten, 12.03.22)

This study will trace the trajectory of dugnad metaphors related to the coronavirus pandemic in Norwegian public discourse, both immediately prior to and following Solberg's March 12th speech. The term 'dugnad' - when used in a non-metaphorical sense - refers to the widespread Norwegian cultural practice of voluntary work carried out as a community, a tradition firmly grounded in Norwegian heritage and history. These voluntary activities differ from charity in that they benefit some aspect of the collective good, typically being held to support kindergartens and schools, neighborhoods, sports and other organizations, etc. (see e.g. Lorentzen & Dugstad, 2011; Simon & Mobekk, 2019). This research aims to shed light on the aptness of the dugnad metaphor when used about the pandemic, with 'aptness' defined here as "the extent to which a comparison captures important features of the topic" (Chiappe et al., 2003, p. 53).

The primary data comes from the Norsk aviskorpus (bokmål), a monitor corpus of Norwegian newspaper articles freely available through the CLARINO online repository (<https://clarino.uib.no/korpuskel/page>). All occurrences of the lexeme DUGNAD during the period from March 2020 through June 2021 have been retrieved from articles published in the three largest Norwegian national newspapers: Aftenposten, VG, and Dagbladet. The articles consist of a mix of news reporting (including direct citations from politicians and other public figures) and opinion pieces.

As of this writing, the resulting concordance lines are being filtered to 1) discard all occurrences of DUGNAD that are unrelated to the pandemic, and to 2) gather together occurrences of the lexemes that occur in the same texts. The final dataset will then be annotated for features of aptness: specifically, 1) the understanding of the metaphor's implications evidenced in the data (i.e. the entailments of the dugnad metaphor explicitly referred to in the newspaper articles) and 2) any stated or reported reactions to the imposition of that dugnad (i.e. acceptance/support or rejection/resistance).

This study will add a Norwegian contribution to the growing body of research stimulated by the #ReframeCovid initiative: "an open, collaborative and non-prescriptive initiative to collect alternatives to war metaphors for COVID-19 in any language, and to (critically) reflect on the use of figurative language about the virus, its impact and the measures taken in response" (Olza et al., p. 98; see e.g. Hanne, 2022, Pérez-Sobrino et al., 2022; Semino, 2021). How the dugnad metaphor compares and contrasts with the war metaphor will thus also be explored.

This paper will present research that is currently in a preliminary phase. The language of presentation will be 'Norwenglish' (English with untranslated Norwegian examples).



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