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Authors: Gunnar Lind Haase Svendsen & Gert Tinggaard Svendsen

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***Homo Voluntarius* and the Rural Idyll: Voluntary Work, Trust and Solidarity in Rural and Urban Areas**

Gunnar Lind Haase Svendsen
Danish Centre for Rural Research
University of Southern Denmark, Esbjerg, Denmark
glhs@sam.sdu.dk

Gert Tinggaard Svendsen
Department of Political Science
Aarhus University, Denmark
gts@ps.au.dk

Abstract

Based on Mancur Olson's and Robert Putnam's theories, this article discusses whether it is more difficult to recruit volunteers in urban than in rural areas. We use data from the Danish Rural-Urban Barometer (2011/12), which contains 2000 valid responses from urban and rural respondents. We show that, in the case of Denmark, rural dwellers actually do more volunteer work than city dwellers in an environment characterized by relatively more trust and solidarity within the local area. All things being equal, increased urbanisation will therefore in the long run reduce volunteerism and increase the relative number of *Homo Oeconomicus* at the expense of *Homo Voluntarius* and the rural idyll.

Keywords: voluntary work, social trust, specific trust, solidarity, rural idyll

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Rural-Urban Differences

Far back in history, crucial differences between rural and urban values and lifestyles have been assumed. Among 'contrast theories' (Pahl, 1966, p. 300) we find Tönnies' distinction between *Gemeinschaft*, (i.e., a society characterised by a high degree of traditions and face-to-face interaction), and *Gesellschaft*, understood as a society characterised by formal roles and indirect interactions (Tönnies, 1887/1957). Equally influential is Durkheim's (1893/1984) famous idea of a macro-historical transition from mechanical solidarity in primitive, traditional societies without division of labour to organic solidarity in more complex, modern societies with extensive division of labour.

A third early description of the rural-urban antagonism is German sociologist Georg Simmel's (1950) essay "The metropolis and mental life", which offers a social psychological explanation. The sensory stimuli the villagers receive daily are characterised by their fast-paced, ever-changing and turbulent life, which makes them 'distanced' and 'reserved'. In contrast, rural dwellers are characterised by 'emotional relationships' and 'a slower, more habitual' rhythm of life (Simmel, 1950, p. 409 ff.).

In more recent times, American urban sociologist Louis Wirth (1938) has put forward the thesis that the larger the population size and density, the more division of labour, anonymity and impersonal relationships between people. This makes up the essence of a modern urban life. Conversely, a rural lifestyle is

based on more traditional, positive values involving strong intra-group ties and local embeddedness.

The idea of a 'rural idyll' versus rural deprivation has been further elaborated in the recent literature (Short, 2006). As argued by Michael Bunce, the ideal rural community "is an ideology which has its roots in the anti-urbanism and anti-industrialism of the back-to-the-land movements of the early part of [the 20th] century" (Bunce, 1998, p. 241).

Focus on the rural has often been neglected in contemporary policy-making when, for the first time in history, "the global urban population has surpassed that of the global rural population" (Pini, Moletsane, & Mills, 2014, p. 453). Thus, it is argued that rural issues have not been of national significance to, for example, contemporary Australia. We add to this literature by arguing that, in the case of a small Scandinavian welfare society such as Denmark, the countryside is indeed (still) an 'idyll' compared to the cities. This is true in terms of higher ability to self-organize by volunteering within local, rural communities characterized by, compared to the large cities, a higher level of life satisfaction as well as significantly higher levels of mutual trust, personal acquaintance and solidarity.

In recent years the rural-urban dichotomy has been tested empirically, and overall, it seems to hold (Glenn & Alston, 1967; Cohen, 1982; Willits, Bealer, & Timbers, 1990; Bell, 1992; Cockfield & Botterill, 2012; Sørensen, 2012, 2014). Moreover, specific trust and voluntary work tend to be more prevalent in rural than in urban areas, as demonstrated, for example, in the case of Denmark (Sørensen, 2014, 2015; Svendsen & Sørensen, 2007), a country that also historically has been characterised by strong rural, civic movements (Svendsen & Svendsen, 2004). Furthermore, a French study (Callois & Aubert, 2007) shows that both bridging and bonding social capital in rural areas—involving social and specific trust, respectively—are positively related to economic performance. In contrast, a study from the United States shows a decrease in small town social capital, including trust, density of networks, community participation and organization memberships—however not compared to urban areas (Besser, 2009).

1.2 Trust and Free-Riding

To sum up, rural-urban differences exist, but apart from applying the classic, and in some cases somewhat mythological, sociological theories, how can we explain these differences? What is their logic? We will here attempt to supplement the 'contrast theories' with another, possible explanation, namely that the excellence of volunteerism and self-organisation in rural areas compared to urban areas is related to trust and free-riding. Obviously, volunteers provide collective goods for an entire community via their activities, but they also face the incentive to 'free-ride' (Olson, 1965), where it is tempting to let others do the hard work. Normally, the total costs in terms of money and time far exceed the individual volunteer's own private benefit. In other words, their large and altruistic efforts are not strictly 'rational' in a traditional economic sense. Still, it may be useful to uncover the incentive to free-ride, which is a constant enemy in all volunteers' daily work, also when new volunteers have to be recruited. As such, trust and free-riding should be seen as two sides of the same coin. Where a high level of trust in a group hampers harmful free-riding and encourages volunteerism through both positive and negative, social sanctions, low trust allows for free-riding, which again reduces volunteerism.

Of course cities may also be divided into smaller communities, either place based or communities of interest. Furthermore, when the size of a community makes regular face-to-face interaction impossible, the community may then be 'imagined' (Anderson, 1991). Still, we address the physical reality in this paper, simply arguing that the likelihood of repeated social interaction between the same individuals is arguably higher in an environment that physically defines a small group (the village) compared to the larger group (the city).

With this in mind, we present a rural-urban comparison to shed new light on the volunteers' work and highlight their altruistic efforts, considering that they could have done other things such as working late hours in paid jobs. Free-riding definitely deserves more attention in the literature on volunteerism and, as we will argue, a comparison between urban and rural Denmark may shed fresh light on the matter. Our main question is: How does free-riding affect volunteerism in the city and the village?

1.3 Outline

In Section 2.0 we define various forms of trust and discuss the linkage between trust and social sanctions, which helps to secure social order. Then, in Section 3.0 we explore how trust should be seen as an important part of the incentive structure of *Homo Voluntarius*, making people contribute and not free-ride although the latter appears most economically rational. In Section 4.0 we turn to *Homo Oeconomicus* and the free-riding problem based on *public choice* theory. Here, theory predicts that *Homo Voluntarius* is more likely to thrive in the village—as characterised by more trust among locals—than in the city, where *Homo Oeconomicus* seems to prevail. In Section 5.0 this theoretical expectation is confirmed by empirical evidence in the form of Danish survey data. The final section 6.0 concludes.

2.0 Trust and Social Sanctions

2.1 Social, Moralistic and Specific Trust

Trust means to be vulnerable, because you can never be one hundred percent sure that you can trust another person. As stated by Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer (1998), trust is “a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviors of another” (p. 395). In other words, when we trust, it is always at the risk of an economic, social or emotional cost.

In the literature, we find many forms of trust. *Social* trust is defined as the expectation that a given informal (non-recorded) standard is respected. Social trust deviates fundamentally from *specific* trust, that is, trust to a specific other whom you know personally. This is because social trust is extended to people about whom the trusting party does not have any direct information. As pointed out by Uslaner (2002), like specific trust social trust is experience-based. However it is deeply rooted in *moralistic* trust, which is trust in the form of a cultural value that we learn through socialization from early childhood and which, to a large extent, determines our worldview for the rest of our lives.

Also, specifically within rural studies, there has in recent years been an increasing focus on the importance of trust, ranging from food assurance (e.g. Hinrichs 2000; Eden, Bear, & Walker, 2008; Thorsø & Kjeldsen, 2015), the impact of livestock diseases on trust (Palmer, Fozdar, & Sully, 2009; Scott & Midmore, 2004), environmental problems connected to collective action problems (e.g. Graham, 2014; Mariola, 2012), information dissemination and

social networks among farmers (e.g. Koutsou, Partalidou, & Athanasious 2014; Fisher, 2013; Sligo & Massey, 2007), rural libraries as hotbeds of trust and social capital (Svendsen, 2013), agricultural change in central and eastern Europe (Slangen, Kooten, & Suchánek, 2004), community resilience (e.g. Skerratt, 2013) to the importance of personal and institutional trust among elders in Wales (Curry & Fisher, 2012).

2.2 Trust and Social Sanctions

Regardless of how trust is formed, the consequence of trust and trustworthiness is less crime, less free-riding and fewer breaches of contracts. In other words, an informal agreement emerges when cheating is punished with social exclusion.

As physical meeting places, voluntary associations can help reduce the free-riding problem via a tit-for-tat strategy. In a tit-for-tat strategy, an agent cooperates in the first game and then copies the second agent's moves in the next (Axelrod, 1984). If the second agent chooses not to cooperate in the first game, the first agent will copy this move and play non-cooperation in the second game. In other words, if you have been cheated by someone in the soccer club, you can refuse to cooperate with that person the next time you show up for training and tell the others about what has happened. In addition to the cost in terms of reputation effect and lack of future cooperation, the first player can also impose an extra cost on the second player by scolding him.

This can be very unpleasant for the breaker of informal rules, since the social network can implement informal sanctions for 'bad' behaviour and being 'a bad boy', which may contribute to educate this 'bad boy' and change his future behaviour. Furthermore, agents with a bad reputation will not have access to future resources and information in other social networks, which will reduce future net gains. Just as a person has an incentive to build a good reputation in order to work with others in the future, companies will invest in brands to gain the consumers' loyalty and trust (Cook, Hardin, & Levi, 2005).

An example of social punishment is a used car dealer who cheats a customer. He will risk being scolded by the customer, face a loss in reputation and fewer people will want to buy a used car from him. The customers lose trust in the dealer, and trust is rather important in this business since most people cannot judge whether a used car is a heap of junk. Examples from associations are treasurers who steal from the till, or parents who promise to assist scout leaders or soccer coaches but let them down and leave them feeling cheated and exploited. Trust, that is, the expectation of not being cheated, compensates for asymmetric information so that, for example, parents and voluntary leaders can better work together (Ostrom & Ahn, 2009; Hillman, 2009).

In sum, extra social costs can be imposed on those who do not cooperate and attempt to free-ride—that is, *Homo Oeconomicus* types, who wish to enjoy various goods for free, without contributing to provide them. Conversely, social reward is a roaring success for a *Homo Voluntarius*, a 'hard-rider' so to speak (Svendsen & Svendsen, 2016)—everything is great, and she or he gets high on oxytocin, the 'happiness hormone' which is released in the body when you help others and obtain social recognition. Besides this, praising of the *Homo Voluntarius* in public also sends a clear message about what good behaviour is (Poulsen & Svendsen, 2005).

3.0 *Homo Voluntarius*

3.1 *The Socio-Economic Importance of Social Trust*

What are the incentives for a *Homo Voluntarius* who, in contrast to traditional rational actor theories, refrains from free-riding? A common explanation is impact from culture, here not least the civic society. Thus, rich traditions of civic engagement, including voluntary associations, can be seen as a precondition for socializing citizens into *Homines Voluntarii* and hence builders of socio-economically beneficial social capital, as set forth by Robert D. Putnam. Putnam indeed sees cooperative social networks as a *capital* both for individuals, communities and whole societies, just like economic, physical and human capital. This is because widespread network cooperation leads not only to private goods but also, due to a kind of spillover effect, the shared goods of norms of reciprocity and social trust (Putnam 2000, p. 19). Social interaction across group cleavages simply 'lubricates' society, as "a society that relies on generalised reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society, for the same reason that money is more efficient than barter. Trust lubricates social life" (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti 1993, p. 3).

Putnam's idea is in short that social trust is created through voluntary organisations. When people voluntarily come together in groups, face-to-face interactions build specific trust, which then spreads to the surrounding community as social trust. For example, being a scout is a face-to-face activity. The participants have to actively move out into the public domain and thereby achieve social contacts with other scouts. Informal meetings at the scout hut or camp can be just as important for building and maintaining social networks as involvement in professional or political organisations (cf. Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993; Putnam, 2000).

For example, in his comparison of Northern and Southern Italy, Putnam concludes that the density of voluntary associations is higher in the North than in the South due to historical differences in the hierarchical structure of society. Examples of voluntary associations are homeowners' associations, glee clubs, coops, sports clubs, religious societies, literary societies, guilds and trade unions. Putnam's explanation is that Northern and Southern Italy chose different paths already in the 11th century and that the South subjected itself to a hierarchical Norman empire around 1100. That type of authoritarian society reduces trust in leaders. Common people and leaders have no social relations and therefore do not generate social capital. This is why Southern Italy is experiencing the Hobbesian outcome, namely ineffective government, corruption, lawlessness, mafia dominance, economic problems and so on. The solution to this 'southern logjam' would be to limit the hierarchical state's interference and make room for voluntary associations as trust creating institutions in civic society.

With regard to his own country, the USA, Putnam explains the quite dramatic drop in social trust with the fact that around 2000, the post-war generations spent their free time in front of the TV rather than in voluntary associations where they could generate and preserve trust. Putnam (2000) laconically sums up the phenomenon as a 'privatisation of leisure time'—which today comprises time spent in front of a variety of electronic screens like cell phones, computers, playstations, iPads, etc.

In this line of thought, an important public arena for formation of trust in a young person is arguably voluntary associations where people from all social groups meet, get to know each other, and learn to cooperate. In other words, like Stolle & Hooghe (2004) we hypothesise that trust formation in young people is, to some

degree at least, correlated with their active engagement in voluntary associations, including voluntary work. This is also consistent with studies of the Long Civic Generation in the USA, i.e. the generation of Americans who were young in the 1950s and 1960s. These people were engaged in civic movements and *never stopped* being engaged in voluntary associations (Putnam, 2000).

3.2 Trust and Voluntary Work: The case of Denmark

As can be seen in the World values surveys, Denmark—together with the other Scandinavian countries—has one of the highest social trust levels in the world. This may partially explain the country's wealth (Bjørnskov, 2009).

Denmark is sometimes called 'the Associational country of Denmark' (*foreningslandet Danmark*). As argued by Putnam, such historical development of civil society matters to the level of social trust today. Thus, the Danish cooperative movement, which took off from the mid-1860s, and Denmark's associational life can be claimed to be important hotbeds for the creation of trust (Svendsen & Svendsen 2000, 2004; Chloupkova, Svendsen, & Svendsen, 2004).

Other examples are voluntary organisations formed with the purpose of constructing sports halls and culture houses, parents' transportation of kids to sports, and voluntary involvement in sports clubs in general. Danes' voluntary organisation makes it more difficult to cheat each other, because you meet your fellow citizens every week in the choral society, in the tennis club or wherever it may be. It becomes unpleasant in the long run for those who do not keep their word, in particular when everybody knows about it. The other side of the coin is that when you meet many nice people in the tennis club who show good behaviour and are trustworthy, you take this experience with you when you meet new people. In other words, 'ideological' *moralistic* trust is confirmed in your daily life, when you actually experience that your co-citizens generally can be trusted, something that makes you remain a social truster.

All this makes 'Associational Denmark' an interesting laboratory where we can study the Danish way of organising in voluntary associations up close. A popular saying is that when two Danes meet they shake hands; when three Danes meet they form an association! Civic engagement as an explanation of trust finds support in this deep-rooted Danish tradition of engagement in voluntary associations that help to socialize kids into being social trusters and *Homines Voluntarii*.

In fact, in Denmark particular traditions for youth engagement have been developed, rooting back in the so-called youth movement of the 19th century (Svendsen & Svendsen, 2004). Such participation is clearly a win-win situation. Society gains when young people are socialised into contributing to society—and most probably will feel a life-long obligation to do so—and young people will profit, e.g. by extending their social network, learning important things about formal and informal rules in society, trusting and being trustworthy, or finding a job.

In sum, we suggest *Homo Voluntarius* as a term for a person that needs to be able to trust others, and be trusted, and in doing so becomes a social capitalist who—when providing private goods for him- or herself, such as connections, good reputation, social recognition and human capital—at the same time provides collective goods that can be enjoyed by all, such as shared norms of cooperation, trust and various fruits of civic engagement and volunteering.

4.0 *Homo Oeconomicus: Free-riding*

4.1 *Mancur Olson: The Free-Rider Problem*

The idea of economic man, *Homo Oeconomicus*, originates in Adam Smith's famous book *Wealth of Nations* from 1776. In an example, the baker gets up early in the morning to bake bread for others for his own gain rather than to please others (Smith, 1976). The baker is profit maximising just as any other business actor in the market. Ideology, sense of community, or ethics play no role in this connection.

Offhand, we might think that people would join together voluntarily when they have a shared goal. However, the free-riding problem arises every time two or more people pursue a common goal, a collective good. A collective good means that all members of a particular group receive the good whether they contribute or not. The incentive to 'sit on the fence' is simply too great. Most parents in the sports club appreciate the sporting event; they know that it is a great experience for their children. Still, they hold back and hope that 'others' will do the work so that they don't have to. So because no-one can be excluded from consuming the good and join a club, it seems economically rational not to contribute.

Mancur Olson, who introduced the modern understanding of the free-rider behaviour in his famous book *The Logic of Collective Action* from 1965, argued that the size of a group conditions the ability to organise and for example initiate voluntary cooperation in a group (Olson, 1965). His distinction between small and large groups is central (Congleton 2015). Who will take the initiative to do something? Can we hide in a large group or do we stand up front and therefore cannot refuse?

4.2 *Example: Establishing a Soccer Club*

Let us take a look at potential winners and losers among volunteers in terms of group size. Assume, for instance, that we compare the citizens' incentive to volunteer in a large city and in a village. Let us say that the large city has 1 million inhabitants, the village 1000 and, importantly, the volunteers are not organised beforehand. Where is someone most likely to take the initiative to solve the collective action problem of starting some volunteer work for the common good? Who takes the initiative to start a soccer club or arrange a large sports event to please the local children and young people?

Assume that a voluntarily run soccer club will create an added value for the city and for the village of €5 million per year (in the form of improved health, fewer sick days, network formation, better information, trust formation, advertising, increased local turnover, etc.). Assume also, to make it as simple as possible, that the total cost of organising and establishing a soccer club in the city and in the village amounts to €40,000 to the initiator to make up for lost earnings and less free time. The benefits per inhabitant now become more concentrated in the village than in the city, and this is exactly why it makes more sense to become a volunteer in the village (see Table 1).

As Table 1 shows, the individual inhabitant in the city will get a *negative* net profit of -€9,995 by volunteering to establish the soccer club, even though all 1 million inhabitants as a group will earn €5 million. In the example, the overall profit of €5 million per inhabitant is far higher than the initiator's overall cost of €40,000. The result is that without organisation and sharing of the total costs, the collective good in the form of a soccer club will not be provided in the large group of inhabitants and possible volunteers. The incentive to free-ride is too great in relation to the private profit for the individual volunteer.

Table 1. *Volunteering and group size*

	City (large group)	Village (small group)
Number (group size)	1 mil.	1,000
Total profit	5 mil. €	5 mil. €
Individual profit	5 €	50,000 €
Total costs	40,000 €	40,000 €
Individual net profit	5-40,000 € = -39,995 €	50,000 € - 40,000 € = 10,000 €

In comparison, things will get done in the relatively small group of 1000 inhabitants where the individual person has an interest in doing something on their own. The 1000 villagers thus earn €50,000 each. The costs of establishing the soccer club are the same as above, i.e. €40,000, but here it is worthwhile for individuals to act on their own, even without organisation. An individual profit of €50,000 minus the costs of €40,000 amounts to a positive net profit of €10,000. The incentive to establish the soccer club is therefore greater in the village than in the city. In addition, the villagers will have a stronger incentive to gather, form a working group and share the costs of establishing the club, which will subsequently result in *even* larger net profits for the individual villager. Olson's group size logic thus demonstrates how we can expect a stronger incentive to volunteer in the smaller group than in the larger group and thus a smaller risk of free-riding.

As will be seen in the following, our results indicate that we should expect personal acquaintance and solidarity within the local community to decrease significantly with the degree of urbanisation: The more inhabitants, the less local, solidarity and participation. All in all, our numbers thus indicate—in accordance with the Danish values studies and international studies—that group size actually matters for participation. It is clearly more common to be a free-rider in the largest cities, whereas inhabitants in the least populated areas can claim the largest engagement in terms of membership of local associations and volunteering (see e.g., Sørensen, 2012; Svendsen & Svendsen, 2014).

Still, our data show a considerable level of local volunteerism in the largest Danish cities—more than Olson's theory predicts. The reason could be the existing stock of *moralistic* trust (Uslaner, 2002) among Danes, which sustains social trust and, in general, *Homo Voluntarius* ideals, and therefore reduces the incentive for free-riding and self-interested behaviour.

5.0 Rural–Urban Differences in Denmark

5.1 The Danish Rural–Urban Barometer

Since group size is relevant, a first operationalisation could be to examine whether there are differences between rural and urban Denmark. Offhand, the expectation is that since the number of inhabitants is larger in cities than in small towns, there are relatively more volunteers in the small towns due to a smaller incentive to free-ride.

Tables 2–4 below draw on the Danish Rural–Urban Barometer (DRUB) (Sørensen, 2014, 2015; Svendsen & Svendsen, 2014). This questionnaire survey

was conducted in December 2011 and January 2012 and contained 2000 valid responses from urban and rural respondents.

The comparison of rural and urban zones is based on three categories: areas with less than 5001 inhabitants; areas with 5001–100,000 inhabitants; and areas with over 100,000 inhabitants. Since 4.6 percent of the respondents did not answer the question about number of inhabitants in their area, we only use responses from 1908 respondents. The average age is 54 for the 840 respondents in areas with less than 5001 inhabitants, 53 for the 837 respondents in areas with 5001–100,000 inhabitants, and 47 for the 231 respondents in areas with over 100,000 inhabitants.

First, to ascertain whether the framework conditions for voluntary work and—in general—procurement of common goods even exists, we will look at how people thrive where they live. The next point is how many local associations the respondents are members of, their participation in voluntary work in their local area and how many hours of voluntary work they perform in their local area. Finally, we will examine whether possible differences are reflected in the degree of fellowship. Note that the numbers only concern participation in the local community, so we cannot say whether the situation is different for associational participation in general.

5.2 Survey Results

In some countries there is a paradoxical gap between the image of rural areas held by common citizens, and the image produced by the media. In general, surveys show that ordinary citizens—rural as well as urban—have an overwhelmingly positive picture of rural lifestyles and values (e.g. Willits et al., 1990; Cockfield & Botterill, 2012). Conversely, the media in many countries stress the negative stereotypes of rural life. In Denmark, for example, negative terms like Peripheral Denmark, The Rotten Banana and Outskirt Denmark are common (Winther & Svendsen, 2012). Whose picture should we believe? Is life really so bad out there?

Table 2. *Agreement to two statements about life satisfaction. Source: Danish Rural-Urban Barometer, 2011*

		Number of respondents*
I thrive where I live	Percentage 'Fully agree'	
Below 5,001 citizens	86	840
5,001-100,000 citizens	88	837
Above 100,000 citizens	85	231
I am happy with my life at the moment	Average 1-10 scale	
Below 5,001 citizens	8,68	839
5,001-100,000 citizens	8,65	833
Above 100,000 citizens	8,43	229

*Don't know, answers are not included.

Table 2 illustrates the level of well-being and life satisfaction. As we can see, the three categories are fairly similar. Inhabitants in the least populated areas score a little higher on well-being, and inhabitants in the largest cities are a little less satisfied with life than the other citizens.

Table 3 shows the average number of memberships of local associations. Respondents in areas with less than 5001 inhabitants are members of almost twice as many local associations than inhabitants in the largest cities, and the share of persons who are members of a local association is significantly higher in the rural areas than in the cities.

Table 3. *Answers to three questions on associational membership and work for voluntary associations in the local area. Source: Danish Rural-Urban Barometer, 2011*

How many associations are you a member of in your local area?	Average number of associations	Percentage who are member of one or more associations	Number of respondents*
Below 5,001 citizens	1.37	66	839
5,001-100,000 citizens	1.12	59	836
Above 100,000 citizens	0.79	42	230

During the last 12 months, for how many voluntary associations have you done voluntary work in your local area?	Average number of associations	Percentage who have done work for one or more associations	Number of respondents*
Below 5,001 citizens	1.81	46	383
5,001-100,000 citizens	1.56	37	308
Above 100,000 citizens	1.37	29	67

During the last 12 months, how many hours a month have you spent on voluntary work for associations in your local area?	Average number of hours	Number of respondents*
Below 5,001 citizens	15.95	351
5,001-100,000 citizens	15.16	288
Above 100,000 citizens	14.04	57

*Don't know answers are not included.

Another relevant question is how many of these associations have had voluntary work performed for them. According to Table 3, inhabitants in the smallest villages have volunteered for more associations than inhabitants in the large cities. Moreover, the share of local citizens who volunteer increases the fewer inhabitants there are.

Another indicator of rural and urban volunteerism is how many hours the respondents who confirmed that they volunteer in an association *actually* spend on their voluntary work. As Table 3 demonstrates, the difference is not

overwhelming, but voluntary engagement in the local community drops as the degree of urbanisation rises.

5.3 Social and Specific Trust In Rural and Urban Areas

Social capital and the ability to cooperate with people in general are difficult to measure in practice. The concept is therefore operationalised primarily as social trust as trust can be defined as the expectation that a given norm is respected, something that obviously makes cooperation smoother and, hence, increases network resources. As we mentioned, this includes the vulnerability that naturally arises when you voluntarily risk that the norm is *not* respected and that your trust is betrayed. The risk of vulnerability and pain caused by a breach of trust has been called ‘the price of trust’ (Barbalet 2009, p. 369).

We stated earlier that social trust deviates fundamentally from specific trust because it is expanded to include people, whom the trusting party does not know and therefore does not have much information about. Social trust in non-specific persons (strangers) is typically measured via questions about whether a person finds that most people can be trusted—a standard measure that has proven to be a consistent measure in worldwide surveys during the last 60 years. Trust in most (but not all) persons under most (but not all) circumstances simply means that we are optimistic enough to trust *most* strangers (Uslaner 2015, p. 73). Social trust thus says something about the likelihood of being cheated and consequently about the ability to cooperate. The smaller the risk of being cheated and hurt by breach of trust, the easier it is to cooperate with a stranger about whom you do not have full information. This also makes it easier to cooperate informally (Paldam & Svendsen, 2000).

Table 4 shows that 85 percent of the respondents from the big cities indicated that other people can generally be trusted compared to approximately 75 percent of the respondents in the two other categories. This difference between the level of social trust in rural and urban areas is, however, not significant. When applying a Wald-test to test whether there is a significant difference between the reference point in category 1 (village) and category 3 (city), there is no significant difference.

The fact that this difference is not statistically significant corresponds to earlier studies in Denmark. One explanation is that Danes are generally very trustful—regardless of where they live; another explanation is that this question is a poor measure for regional differences in social capital in a country (Sørensen, Svendsen, & Jensen 2011).

Rather, we may expect that the smaller group size in the rural areas makes it relatively easier to detect and punish free-riders and to reward people who do not cheat—and in this way educate other local people in ‘good behaviour’ by repeated face-to-face interaction. We might therefore expect that specific trust rather than social trust prevails in rural areas (where most local people know each other beforehand) compared to big cities (where most people do not know each other beforehand).

Concerning the second question about the respondents’ specific trust in their neighbours, 81 percent of respondents from cities above 100,000 fully agreed, compared to 90 percent from villages below 5,001 citizens. Here, the distance from the village as reference is 7.1 percentage points. Note that when the distance coefficient increases, this means that trust decreases, as the scale from 0–100 is defined as 0 indicating high trust and 100 no trust. A similar result is found for trusting people in the local area. Here 77 percent of the urbanites fully

agreed, while 85 percent of the village dwellers did the same. The distance to reference is 6.3 percentage points higher if you live in the city.

Table 4. *Agreement to five statements about trust and the local community.*
 Source: *Danish Rural-Urban Barometer, 2011*

	Pct. 'Fully agree'	Number of respondents	Linear Regression (OLS)	Wald-test (Category 1 and 3)	Distance to Reference (in pct. points)
Most people can be trusted				0.1506	
Below 5,001 citizens (Reference)	76	819			
5,001-100,000 citizens	75	825	0.041		
Above 100,000 citizens	85	226	0.011		
I trust my neighbours				0.000***	7.1
Below 5,001 citizens (Reference)	90	734			
5,001-100,000 citizens	86	801	1.502		
Above 100,000 citizens	81	217	7.073***		
I trust people in the local area				0.000***	6.3
Below 5,001 citizens (Reference)	85	798			
5,001-100,000 citizens	79	763	2.983		
Above 100,000 citizens	77	207	6.304***		
All people in the local area know each other				0.000***	34.5
Below 5,001 citizens (Reference)	38	837			
5,001-100,000 citizens	20	833	14.526***		
Above 100,000 citizens	8	231	34.531***		
I feel strong solidarity with others in the local area				0.000***	16.4
Below 5,001 citizens (Reference)	47	836			
5,001-100,000 citizens	37	833	6.260***		
Above 100,000 citizens	19	231	16.396***		

Note: $p < 0.001$ ***, $p < 0.01$ **, $p < 0.05$ *. Variables 84 and 85 have been rescaled from 1-4 to 0-100 while variables 42 and 44 have been rescaled from 1-5 to 0-100. 0 indicates a high degree of trust/solidarity while 100 indicates no trust/solidarity. Don't know answers are not included.

Is the smaller voluntary effort in the largest cities also reflected in a less close-knit local community? Indeed it is. Table 4 shows two indicators. The first one is a question about the extent to which the respondents agree that almost everybody knows each other in the local community. Here the difference between village and city is 30 percentage points and, as can be seen, this difference is highly statistically significant. Now the distance from the village as reference point amounts to 34.5 percentage points. So living in the city clearly reduces the relative likelihood of knowing all people in the local area.

The last question in Table 4 asks whether people feel a strong solidarity with others in their community. Here, we find a 28 percentage point gap between village and city. This difference is highly significant too, reflected in a 16.4 percentage point distance to reference. The overall result is that for all variables, except social trust, living in a village has a highly significant, positive impact, namely on specific trust, mutual acquaintance as well as on solidarity. Hence, local engagement and volunteering seems to be fostered in close-knit local communities rich on social capital.

6.0 Conclusion

The main question was how free-riding affects volunteerism in the city and the village. The theoretical expectation based on *Homo Oeconomicus* and Mancur Olson's theory was that it would be more difficult to recruit volunteers in large groups (e.g. in large cities) than in small groups (in rural areas). Conversely, based on Robert Putnam's theory we expected that social trust in the Danish society as a whole would reduce the incentive to free-ride. In this line of thought one would expect that *Homo Voluntarius* citizens socialised into civicness from early childhood would *not* be eliminated, which then would erase differences between rural and urban Denmark. We found that people in rural areas performed more voluntary associational work in their local communities than city dwellers. Olson's group size theory could explain this phenomenon, since the incentive to free-ride in small groups is smaller, because the benefits of procuring a collective good, for example a soccer club, are more concentrated on fewer individuals. However, volunteerism is also quite widespread in the Danish cities. Strong informal rules encourage dialogue and cooperation among the locals, whether they live in an area with high or low population density. Group size, repeated face-to-face interaction and social control matters! Our data, however, also showed that personal acquaintance, solidarity, life satisfaction, fellowship and specific trust is significantly stronger in small, local communities in rural areas than in large cities, whereas social trust—which roots in 'ideological' moralistic trust—is a little more widespread among urbanites. It is therefore important to secure this civic engagement and inherent social control by stimulating voluntary work in the future rather than putting the associations on the dole and thus threatening an autonomous and economically independent tradition—a tradition that, in the case of Denmark and many other countries, dates back to a gloriously 'civic' 19th century. In other words, social trust is a fortunate by-product of other people's actions, in particular the species of *Homines Voluntarii*. But if volunteering in associations stops, there is a risk that mutual trust among local people will be negatively affected since the two most probably go hand in hand. Thus, increased urbanisation will, all things being equal, reduce volunteerism, specific trust and solidarity within the local area due to the free-rider problem. In this way, we may risk that the relative number of *Homines Oeconomici* will increase at the expense of *Homines Voluntarii* and thus, in the longer run, threaten to transform the rural idyll into ancient hotbeds for civic engagement and social capital.

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