

**CULTURAL STUDIES IN A CHANGING WORLD.
"KULTURVITENSKAP" IN BERGEN IN ITS SOCIAL AND
INTELLECTUAL CONTEXTS**

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The article traces the transformations of Folkloristics and Ethnology as university disciplines in Bergen, Norway, since the 1960s. The changes in basic assumptions and fields of interest are seen in the context of the development of the educational system, especially the social role of the social sciences and the humanities at large.

Key words: *ethnology, folkloristics, social sciences, educational system, Bergen, Norway*

INTRODUCTION

The humanistic disciplines concerned with the study of culture have undergone considerable change in Norway during recent years. Various reorganization processes, of which the Bologna reforms make up an important part, are changing the conditions for research and education in this field.

At the University of Bergen, Ethnology in 2003 merged with other disciplines and is today part of what we call *kulturvitenskap* or, in the official English version, *cultural studies*. Its three elements are Folkloristics, Ethnology and Cultural Heritage Studies. In Oslo, there has been a similar merger under the label of *cultural history*. Structural changes in university degrees as a result of the Bologna process and the accompanying new curricula were in both cases implemented in the establishment of the new disciplines.

There has been considerable change in perspectives and fields of interest over time. Today, all aspects of everyday culture are legitimate objects of study, and an orientation towards the present is dominant, in contrast to earlier periods. The questions I want to pose here do not primarily concern education systems but have a wider scope: the discipline's relations to its academic and social environment. This internal reorganization of knowledge is intelligible only when seen in relation to broader tendencies at the universities.

My perspective is that an academic discipline like "cultural studies" is itself a cultural construct, which is formed through its relations, on the one hand, to other relevant disciplines, and on the other, to the development of society and culture in general. I am not saying that it does not produce scientific knowledge, only that the produced results are relative to the situation in which they were produced, and may be made irrelevant or obsolete by subsequent developments. In this sense, the output of the discipline is normative: it is meaningful only in a historically determined cultural context. To understand and assess it, it is necessary to understand its contextual situation.

My point of departure is rooted in the 1960s and 70s, when major shifts occurred both in the orientation of Ethnology and Folkloristics and in the overall role of the university in Norway. One could even say that the 1960s saw the beginning of a pervasive modernization of the university system at many levels, changes that have shaped the present situation. In my opinion, the development over the last decades, with its important changes in the role of both education and research in the field, is best understood against this background.

One aspect of this topic is the role of the social sciences. There is a clear convergence in perspectives and methodology between our *kulturvitenskap* and the social sciences, especially anthropology. I maintain, however, that the direct influence of anthropology has been limited. Overall developments in the humanities have perhaps been equally important for cultural studies at our department. As a result, there are differences which may be as interesting as the similarities with regard to anthropology.

The different academic disciplines are of course not nationally isolated, but form part of an international complex. The processes that I describe in the following are therefore probably unique only in the details. The development of our discipline may be seen as an example illustrating a broader, perhaps

West European experience. My sketch takes Bergen as point of departure, and takes glances at its other basis in Norway, the University of Oslo. As the details of the inner development of Ethnology and Folkloristics probably have their parallels elsewhere, I give more room to the contexts than to the disciplines themselves.

ETHNOLOGY AND FOLKLORISTICS IN THE 1960S: NEW BEGINNINGS

When Ethnology and Folkloristics were established as academic disciplines in Norway, they were dominated by national and historical perspectives that from the outset had characterized the whole humanistic field. Both were organized around the *'folk'* as their central concept, and both limited their research object to folk culture in pre-industrial times. Folkloristics had existed as a university discipline since the 1880s. When "Norwegian Folk Life Research (Ethnology)", was established at the University of Oslo in 1941, the contents of teaching were defined as "Norwegian folk culture in former times (before transformation in the 19th Century)" (Kolsrud 1981:199, my translation). They were preoccupied with origins (Alver 1980); research interest lay in tracing folk poetry and customs to their historical sources. The sources could be envisaged as national, or could involve a problematic of international diffusion. In both cases, the question of origin was central.

In Bergen, a unit of study covering the fields of both disciplines was founded at the University in 1965, called "folklore and folk life research", which was also to include the study of "social life and material culture" (Forland 1996:388, my translation). In the first phase it belonged to the Department of Nordic Languages and Literature. The new field of study gained a position in the following years, initially through the teaching of folkloristics. In 1972, the *Etno-folkloristisk institutt* was formed, and the Department established both folkloristics and ethnology as teaching and research subjects. Both perceived their object of study as 'folk culture'. Following the pattern of Oslo, folkloristics was oriented towards immaterial culture, in practice limited to the traditional genres of 'oral literature'. Ethnology had material culture as its object, the material products and practices of people conceptualized as "ordinary"; in practice, that usually meant the rural population associated with an agricultural way of life. The new department in Bergen, however,

soon developed an oppositional position in relation to established orthodoxy. In particular, its historical orientation was challenged, and programmatically, contemporary studies were declared an ideal. Folk culture was still seen as the object of study, but now understood in a new way. Everyday culture in its daily practice and appearance through everyday communication gained the main attention of researchers. Correspondingly, a certain method became central: the use of the qualitative research interview and a focus on personal narrative (Alver 1990). These tendencies also affected the milieu in Oslo, but to a lesser degree. In the course of time a distinct tradition crystallized in Bergen, partly formulated in opposition to Oslo where the first generation of researchers, all trained as folklorists, had gained their degrees.

The new orientation can be illustrated by developments in the field of folk medicine. Until the 1950s, Nordic folkloristics had studied folk medicine as a premodern phenomenon, which had ceased to exist as a living practice. On the basis of historical sources, folk medicine was depicted as tied to traditions of popular belief, traditions that were bound to disappear with cultural modernization. The study of people's beliefs and practices in this field, and their evaluations of "orthodox medicine", now brought the discipline into contact with questions of immediate social relevance. During the 1960s, research made it clear not only that old practices lived on, but also that new ones were emerging. As new phenomena, they could not be explained as relics of old beliefs, and consequently, their social circumstances became central. Research questions now focussed on the contemporary functions of such practices (e.g. healing) and on their social and cultural contexts. As a result, researchers found it necessary to engage in a new type of fieldwork, as they realized that they had little knowledge of the contemporary situation in the field. The existing collections had limited relevance for the questions they asked (Alver & Selberg 1987:66f.). This resulted in massive fieldwork creating new source material. In addition, a sustained body of work was started, analyzing methodical problems associated with the collection of material and defining new methodological procedures, centring on the interview (Alver 1990). An interesting result of this work was the discovery that the practice of folk medicine was very much an urban phenomenon, and that it was important in working class milieus. The field of interest eventually broadened and developed into what was termed 'alternative medicine'.

A similar change of perspective took place in the study of 'oral poetry'. The earlier concentration on the literary analysis of texts gave way to a preoccupation with contemporary oral genres. E.g., the Department collected children's narratives in the form of stories, rhymes, riddles and jokes. The material was analyzed in terms of social and psychological function: researchers stressed the role of different types of narrative in the socialization process. They even explained the emergence of new genres on the basis of function. E.g., frightening tales of death were interpreted as a means "to create both closeness and distance to a difficult theme" (Kvideland 1979:46). One could say that the tendency was to move from the linguistic content towards the behavioural aspects of folklore, a development which was also signalled by the introduction of performance theory (Kvideland 1981).

Important for the activity of the Department was the building of collections of material on a wider basis than before. The Ethno-folkloristic archive ("Etno-folkloristisk arkiv") held collections of traditional folk narratives, in large part in the form of copies of the collections at the University of Oslo. Now, contemporary material from different fields of research supplemented them. In addition, researchers expanded their interest beyond the area of oral culture, and started to analyze relations to popular culture and the way folk culture was mediated through the mass media. Mass-mediated culture, and relations between oral and mass media culture became an important area of research.

There is a fundamental and dramatic break inherent in this reorientation. To abandon the historical perspective implied to depart from the tradition of humanist thought that had defined the historical-philosophical disciplines from their foundation in the 19th century. Another mode of thought was introduced, suggesting that the understanding or explanation of a phenomenon is not necessarily found in its origin. This perspective follows from important changes in the concept of 'folk culture'. The romantic tradition envisaged the 'folk' as a definite social category, associated with rural areas reported to have long-standing living traditions of oral poetry. Source collection concentrated on these areas; to collect in working-class milieus would have been considered a foreign idea. The Norwegian folklorists' notion of folk culture was thus similar to the original Herderian concept (Bendix 1997:40f.). In the new orientation, 'folk' was no longer associated with 'nation' and the corresponding notions of an historical subject bearing an historical mission.

Instead, it took on the meaning of 'ordinary people' as opposed to social élites. 'Folk culture' came to denote above all the forms and content of cultural expressions associated with the everyday activities of any group or category of people. People's narratives were still interesting, not any more as a source of the nation's origins, but because of what they reveal about the cultural universe of the narrators and the social and cultural conditions they live under (Cf. Alver 1980). This conviction became a central *credo* for the new Department, and it laid the foundation for future development.

The foundation of Ethnology and Folkloristics in Bergen involved a conscious break with the tradition of thinking in a *Bildung* perspective and of valuing the national-romantic complex. This was especially true for folkloristics, a 19th century construct occupied with collecting the 'national heritage' of folk poetry. Ethnology has another background: it is based in museums and was developed well into the 20th century as the "science of artefacts". In spite of the differences, there were clear affinities between the two disciplines and they had close relations until their recent merging.

It is pertinent to ask about the social and intellectual context of this reorientation. Why did this confrontation with the scientific tradition take place in the 1960s? Inherent in the new perspective was, among other things, a rejection of the idea that the primary purpose of the discipline was to effect cultural education, or *Bildung*. There was a new interest in functionalist perspectives (Alver & Selberg 1987:68, Kvideland 1979). The scholars of the *Etno-folkloristisk institutt* wanted their activities to be relevant to contemporary social affairs (Alver 1980, Kvideland 1985).

THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

The university of Bergen was founded in 1946. The establishment of Ethnology and Folkloristics in Bergen thus took place in a relatively new institution, even though teaching and research had a long local history connected to Bergen Museum. The museum had been a scientific institution since the 19th century, concentrating on natural sciences, archaeology and dialect studies, which included collecting folklore material. The museum's activities formed the basis for the university, and initially, they were expanded only slowly. In the mid-1960s, a process of differentiation started, resulting in the establishment of several new humanistic subjects.

The 1960s was also the era of the founding of the social sciences in Bergen. What is more, these disciplines (with the exception of economics) were relatively new in Norway as a whole. They were introduced in the years after WW2, when a group of intellectuals led by the philosopher Arne Næss worked to institutionalize them as university disciplines, especially sociology, political science and social psychology. The foundation of these new disciplines in Norway was deeply influenced by American social science, probably more so than in most European countries, even if this was a general phenomenon in the years after 1945 (Mjøset 1991:125ff., Thue 2005:2). The Norwegian group had close contacts to Paul Lasarfeld and through him to Columbia University and, among others, to Robert Merton. The new fields of study represented a programmatic positivism: they were generally strictly synchronic, and relied on new statistical methods for collecting data developed in the inter-war period. The 'behavioural sciences' in particular had high credibility, since they promised scientific research similar to the natural sciences. The survey methods of sociology and social psychology seemed to open new possibilities for strict scientific research (Mjøset 1991:134ff., Thue 2005:4ff.). The early social scientists in Norway were deeply sceptical about what they termed the "national myth". The "nationalism project", which aimed at explaining different forms of nationalist attitudes, rested solely on a social psychological perspective, and did not refer to the historical dimension at all (Thue 1992:194ff.). This kind of analysis, carried out shortly after the defeat of fascism, represented a challenge to the historical disciplines.

The pioneers of the Norwegian social sciences also believed in their positive role in the development of society. They saw their disciplines as inherently linked to a democratic attitude, on the grounds that they would make it possible to draw the whole population into the task of developing society. At the same time, there was a marked rationalism inherent in this mode of thought: an idea that it was possible to control the path of social development. One could speak of "applied Welfare sciences" (Thue 2005:602). However, the researchers generally did not see their role as securing social control. More often, they were critical of the existing order. In the sociology of law, for example, a central problem concerned how the structure of social inequality effected unequal treatment by the legal system. By pointing to such injustices through research, one could help building a better society (Mjøset 1991:150ff.). It was a really democratic, constructive and future-oriented outlook.

This social science programme represented a marked contrast to the humanities, which were generally occupied with supplying national self-understanding. Folkloristics had, since it was founded as a university discipline in the 19th century, played an important part in creating the image of the Norwegian nation by collecting popular oral poetry and music, and in presenting the material as authentic folk culture through scientific presentation as well as publications aimed at a broad audience. When it came to the understanding of social matters, the cultural sciences would merely offer historical explanations. The social sciences differed from the humanities both in their outlook and their social function. They gave answers to social problems – the state administration needed tools for the smooth functioning of social life in the welfare state. And their graduates eventually entered the political administration. Even if the perspectives of social researchers had become more pluralistic, and critical positions had crystallized in opposition to the positivist epistemology that had prevailed when the University in Bergen adopted social sciences in the 1960s, they still had enormous prestige within academic knowledge society, in the political system and in the larger public sphere.

Institutionally, the social sciences were established inside the faculty of humanities. A Department of social anthropology was formed in 1965, and another for sociology and political science the year after (Forland 1996:393). Among the new subjects was social anthropology, started when Fredrik Barth became a research fellow in 1961. He already had an international reputation, and when the Faculty of Social Sciences was founded in 1971, he was able to command a strong and confident department of social anthropology as one of the new social sciences. Barth furthered an analytical type of anthropology, defined as "the study of human social and cultural forms, by means of a comparative method, with the aim of analyzing their structure" (Forland 1996:392, my translation). The British tradition of *social* anthropology formed the starting point. The social anthropologists did not highly value disciplines like folkloristics. On the whole, the humanities were discredited among social scientists who represented a competing mode of understanding and felt that the historical disciplines were outmoded and irrelevant (Thue 1996, Mjøset 1991).

The following account reflects the intellectual prestige of the new disciplines: when the decision was taken to establish a social science

faculty at the University of Bergen, the history department wanted to be part of it. But the social scientists rejected the historians, partly in order to signal distance to their scientific perspectives (Forland 1996:397). As we shall see below, the folklorists, too, had a positive attitude towards social scientific perspectives.

I therefore argue that one of the most important contexts forming ethnology and folkloristics in this period was the ascent of the social sciences. The period might also be called "the golden age of (social) science" (Halvorsen and Nyhagen 2005:3). These were also the disciplines that attracted most students and that experienced the biggest growth. This situation unavoidably affected the humanities. I do not mean to launch a functionalist proposition here to the effect that the disciplines changed because of new social functions. But the outlook of students and scholars changed, and did so in line with the mode of thought dominating the social sciences.

THE HUMANITIES

In a situation where the academic agenda was defined by the modernist social sciences, the humanities appeared to many academics as old-fashioned, backward-looking and socially irrelevant. This was perhaps especially true of ethnology and folkloristics, which were supposed to study the culture and artefacts of yesterday and were seemingly apolitical in their outlook. A scholar of folkloristics has reported that when he signalled that he wanted to participate in a seminar for anthropologists, he was told that they had no interest in maintaining relations to the "fairy discipline".

A similar attitude existed towards the "historical sciences" as a whole. At the beginning of the 1960s, they were still to a broad extent disciplines meant to produce national self-images. But it was becoming difficult to defend this function, not only because the social sciences seemed more useful. There were also internal tendencies in the humanities themselves towards critical reorientation. There are striking similarities among most of the humanistic disciplines at the University of Bergen in this respect. Across the field of humanistic studies, scholars sought new theoretical perspectives and applied more abstract research questions. There was also a tendency to abandon diachronic in favour of synchronic perspectives. E.g., in the study of language there was a growing interest in sociolinguistics,

while in literature studies the biographical method gave way to new literary criticism and semiotics. The disciplines were generally internationally oriented. Even if many of them worked with material from Norway, they received theoretical impulses from developments in their own fields in other countries (Bergsvik & al. 2007). A broad range of international theoretical approaches were employed (Thue 1996:495), many of them resulting from new theoretical positions or the rethinking of established perspectives from within the humanities themselves.

There were also extra-academic impulses. The student revolt, a peaceful but important mobilizing impulse at Norwegian universities, furthered a critical turn against the theoretical basis of the disciplines. The student movement, dominated by radical political currents, raised the question of the social function of the humanities, criticizing them for producing material that fostered national identity. It soon became impossible to maintain that *Bildung* could be a scientific aim. However, we cannot understand this critique as an external impulse. Rather, it was the result of epistemological rethinking inside the disciplines. The movement of "critique of positivism" played a crucial role here. It had its origin in the social sciences and philosophy but became important in the humanities, partly in answer to the challenge from the social sciences, partly as a legitimization of humanistic perspectives. Hermeneutic approaches were revitalized, and currents like *verstehende Sozologie* contributed to diminish the gap between the two.

This critical turn, then, in many ways represented a convergence of modes of thinking in the humanities and the social sciences. For the humanities, this meant a critical re-evaluation of their own intellectual basis. When a perspective becomes scientifically untenable, it is a question of recognizing some intolerable flaw in the practice of the discipline. The problematic aspects of the nation-building function only now became clearly visible. These disciplines had of course produced knowledge earlier, too, judged on the basis of their own premises, and the new understanding confronting these problems was to be only relatively critical: there will always be blind spots in our perception of reality. But this particular critical rethinking was in tune with social scientific thinking. On the other hand, this convergence by no means signified the disappearance of all differences.

For the humanities, it was not only a question of existing perspectives and positions becoming untenable. In addition, they were losing their

meaning as motifs for research since demand for them in wider society was weakening. This, in turn, can be connected to changes in the social functions of the humanistic disciplines. They had to adapt to the social environment on a new basis.

UNIVERSITY BUILDING AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The internal reorientations at the University of Bergen also had a background in wider social developments. Around 1960, the central government was about to launch a new strategy for the university sector in Norway. An expansion plan was adopted with the aim of increasing the capacity of the existing universities considerably (and eventually, new institutions were to supplement them). The expansion plan was based on both the number of students seeking education in the different fields, and on prognoses concerning society's future needs for personnel with academic qualifications. The plan directly intervened in the construction of the University of Bergen (Forland 1996:328ff.).

The 1960s and 70s was a period of rapid expansion in the occupations produced by the welfare state. The health and the education sectors represented new demand for people with university education. As the education sector was growing bigger, university departments grew to cope with the many students. The number of students at Norwegian universities had been less than 10.000 in 1960 but grew to over 30.000 in 1970 and more than 40.000 in 1975. Many factors in combination explain this development. The general school system was modernized, giving all citizens the same formal right to education. One of the lasting results of social democratic policy was the democratization of education, which meant social levelling in opportunities to gain higher education. Before the Second World War, students had been recruited from a small élite, but this changed rapidly, especially from the 1960s on. In 1960, about 25.000 pupils attended college, while in 1975 the number was approx. 65.000 (Forland 1996:332). Thus, the potential for recruitment to university studies grew substantially. The number of students at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Bergen rose from 380 in 1960 to 1246 in 1973, while the number of scientific employees also more than trebled (Forland 1996:383f.).

Seen in a wider context, these processes were parts of broader modernization at the social and cultural level. The changes in occupational structure affected the ways people organized their lives. The share of women participating in the labour market was growing. Youth went to school for a longer period – eventually, higher education became relatively frequent. The composition of the work force changed, family patterns changed, and the life projects of a large part of the young population were oriented in new directions, with higher education as a central component.

The “mass university” was a consequence. Expansion was rapidly changing study conditions for both students and teachers. In the 1950s, a single student heard lectures in art history, which were held in the professor’s office. Fifteen years later, this situation was a far away dream. Departments had to cope with ever higher numbers of students. And there was mounting pressure from the political system for reforms to rationalize higher education.



Bergen Museum, founded in 1825, was a museum and a research institution which was incorporated into the new university in 1946.

The picture shows the museum building from the late 1860s.

One important source of the critical turn may be found in the broader social recruitment of students that expansion represented. Another may have been the differentiation of occupations open to the university graduates. In the first phase after its founding in 1946, the University of Bergen concentrated on expanding its capacity to educate college teachers, so the central school subjects (languages, history) had priority and were popular among students (Årseth 2007:33). The introduction of folkloristics in Bergen took place within the same context. It was a speciality belonging to the Department of Nordic Languages and its *raison d'être* lay in supplying knowledge of national folk poetry *as literary tradition*. In the 1970s, the potential labour market widened, especially with regard to heritage-related public administration. To study humanities no longer meant to become a teacher. Ethnology was different from the outset: when it became a university subject in the 1940s, the purpose was to supply museums with staff with knowledge of artefacts, and the subject was constructed around the object as the primary source of knowledge about folk life. But for ethnologists also, potential jobs became more varied (Alver 1981:214ff.). In the process, the differences between the two subjects were reduced.

CONTEMPORARY TENDENCIES IN KULTURVITENSKAP

Ethnology and folkloristics were from the beginning related subjects, in so far as both saw 'folk culture' as their object. In theory, what divided them was the distinction material/immaterial, but in practice, the division became less and less clear-cut. Especially in Bergen, they were becoming twin disciplines. Both tended towards a kind of social science stressing the importance of culture – folk culture, or the cultural relations of everyday life. When the two merged in 2003 to form one discipline, it had already become difficult to make a distinction.

Even though I am arguing that the new beginnings of the 1960s and 70s were fundamental, it would be an exaggeration to say that they completed the transformation. The potential of the new way of thinking introduced at that time has since been realised only gradually, while the break with the earlier perspective has become deeper. In practice, traditional folkloristic topics - i.e., folk narratives, folk music, etc. - still formed an important part of the work of the first generation scholars, but the *products* of cultural activity were

those that gained attention. *Draumkvedet*, a much-debated ballad supposedly dating from the Middle Ages, was a very relevant topic in the 1970s. But as mentioned above, researchers started to study cultural phenomena of the present. Jokes were seen as expressions of living folk culture, and the study of jokes was motivated by a way of thinking stressing the psychological functions of joke performance. This kind of research was motivated by a positive evaluation of folk culture, on the grounds that it represented the outlook and situation of 'ordinary people' (Kvideland 1985). The task of documenting this reality was important, since it was seldom discussed as an element of culture in the public sphere.

During the last two decades, the range of research topics has been considerably extended. Gradually, a broader and more all-embracing concept of culture has been employed. Eventually, all kinds of cultural phenomena have become potential research questions, and a broad variety of topics has been studied. One example is the topic of cultural conceptions of family relations – e.g., having or not having children (Fjell 2005), or ideas of a good living environment for families with children (Danielsen 2006). This does not mean that the historical dimension is absent; on the contrary, the historical aspect is important in the disciplines' understanding of culture, and this is maybe the key element attaching them to the humanities. Researchers at the Department also pursue cultural history, for example belief in magic and witchcraft and other aspects of popular religion in the 16th and 17th centuries (Alver 1971, Gilje 2003) or the construction of gender and gender relations in the 19th and 20th centuries, including the formation of the concept of the single woman living alone (Hellesund 1996, 2002). The conceptual worlds of modern tourists (Tveit 2002) and intellectual refugees in Norway (Ytrehus 2004) are other examples. Kapstad (2002) and Hjemdal (2002) have explored the meaning of action for subjective reality in such different fields as environmental campaigning and children's experiences in theme parks.

Theoretically, modernity theory has been a common presupposition for ethnologists and folklorists, and researchers in both fields have generally been interested in how people's subjective perceptions are constructed in cultural processes – a constructivist perspective that also implies that "tradition" is something which is produced in the present, rather than something "handed down" (Handler & Linnekin 1984). Inherent in the process has been an ongoing critique of own theoretical foundations. Like elsewhere in the

international field of the study of culture, new theoretical tendencies have inspired scholars and students. Anthropological theories have of course been adopted, but most often, influences have arrived through other paths, e.g. from American folklore studies, or Swedish ethnology. The Swedish "Lund School" deeply influenced the Bergen department during the 1990s. But it is difficult to see any basic shift in modes of thinking during recent years. It has been argued that the differences in theoretical understanding that have dominated internal discussions since the 1990s (constructivism, post-structuralism, phenomenology) have been more important for the theoretical self-understanding of the individual researcher or student than for the directions and results of the research itself (Gilje 2006:7ff.).

However, theoretical perspectives represent only one aspect of scientific activity. A diagnosis should include other levels as well to give a thorough understanding. It has been argued that a social science gains its characteristics from a variety of levels, from the most abstract reasoning to the most routine work involved (Alexander 1985). *Method* is probably central if we want to grasp the characteristics of the Bergen variant of cultural studies. It shares with anthropology the interest in subjective reality – what the actors themselves find important. Therefore, qualitative research methods have been central to almost all projects in cultural studies. Some scholars have worked with written texts (e.g., Hellesund 1996, 2002) and the photograph (Reiakvam 1995, Reme 1988). Participant observation also holds an important place (Hjemdal 2002, Kapstad 2002). But characteristic of the discipline is the qualitative research interview, which has been the preferred method of fieldwork since the 1960s and is still the most frequently used by today's graduate students. Bergen has a long-standing reputation for expertise in this field, mostly due to the work of Bente Alver (Alver 1990).

UNIVERSITY REFORMS FROM THE 1960S TO BOLOGNA

The structural changes in the education sector represent an important background for the directions of development of the discipline both when we look backwards and forwards in time. They made up conditions for scientific activity that influenced both education programmes and research. I propose that we can draw a line from the development of the 1960s and 70s to the Bologna process.

There is a certain paradox in the organization of the humanities in the Norwegian university system. The idea was above all to educate teachers, but since the system was based on the German, Humboldtian type, the content of teaching was oriented towards educating researchers. Students were supposed to take three "supplementary subjects" ("bifag") of which one was chosen as basis for the "main subject" ("hovedfag"), each of them giving rather thorough knowledge of its field. The candidates were then considered equipped as researchers in all three of them. This system was modified in the 1960s, when norms for the length of study was introduced. But students were still supposed to study three subjects – two of them for 1 ½ years, one for 1 year. They were then prepared to start the equivalent of today's master's degree. And most students of the humanities chose disciplines that supported each other, e.g. ethnology + folkloristics + another humanistic discipline, resulting in an education period of 6-7 years, in many cases longer, with the option of working with scientific texts and research problems in relatively closely related fields.

With universities becoming institutions for mass education, it probably was inevitable that the system was rationalized. The majority of graduates were going to other sectors of society than before, and they often needed education with another content. To secure the recruitment of researchers, the doctorate also changed to become a final stage in education following (in principle) directly after the master's degree. There was a marked reduction of the length of university education between the 1960s and the 2000s. The Bologna reforms, implemented in Bergen in 2003, form a part of this process: they have cut the education period by one year. In addition to reducing the time stipulated for taking a degree, they also imply a fragmentation. The bachelor degree of 3 years (180 ECTS, i.e. European credit transfer system) is composed of 12 exams. Normally, a student of cultural studies will take 30 ECTS preparatory courses (which include learning to read and write academic texts), then 90 ECTS cultural studies, and finally 60 ECTS chosen from other disciplines. The Bologna master's degree of 2 years does not represent a reduction, but it has also become more fragmented, and includes 5 exams. At cultural studies, we have tried to preserve this degree as a research period, and it is therefore structured as preparatory work for the master's thesis. So in effect the students still have 2 years at their disposal to work on their master's thesis.

The differences between the earlier reforms and the most recent ones are important, though.

The earlier changes met with strong resistance from students and (younger) university teachers (Skirbekk 2007:48). The students raised massive opposition against the rationalization of the study schedule – an important element in the student movement of the 60s and 70s. Today, unlike in the 1970s, no such mobilization exists. Another fundamental difference concerns the way restructuring is governed. Earlier, state government directly regulated the development of the universities through political decisions. *Bologna* is combined with a new model of regulation where the funding of universities is based on the number of exams. The result is that resources in the future will be canalized in accordance with the subjects students prefer. Changes in youth preferences will thus be an element in shaping the future of the disciplines, while inner scientific development is losing in importance. This seems to be a serious challenge to cultural studies; while students favoured the subject in the 1990s, today they are abandoning it all over the Nordic area.

Bologna, then, affects a lot more than the structure of education, at least in Norway. It is implemented in combination with neo-liberalism and is part of the restructuring of the whole of the public sector, and also of the way political regulations function. The humanities seem to be losing terrain in this process. It is perhaps a paradox that at a time when intellectuals and society at large are preoccupied with culture, the mechanisms for regulating research and education do not necessarily further the activities of the cultural disciplines.

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**KULTURNI STUDIJI U SVIJETU PROMJENA.
'KULTURVITENSKAP' U BERGENU I NJIHOV DRUŠTVENI I
INTELEKTUALNI KONTEKST**

Sažetak

Na Sveučilištu u Bergenu studij etnologije se prije nekoliko godina spojio s drugim disciplinama i danas je dio onoga što mi zovemo *kulturnim studijima* ('*kulturvitenskap*'). Folkloristika predstavlja drugi važan dio nove discipline. Pristupi, metodologija i područja interesa su se značajno promijenili, ali to je proces koji traje već neko vrijeme. Danas su sve sastavnice svakodnevne kulture legitimna područja istraživanja, te prevladava orijentacija na sadašnjost, za razliku od prošlih razdoblja.

Članak obrazlaže temeljnu promjenu koja se desila u društvenom položaju i ulozi *kulturnih studija* zbog promjene u odnosu discipline prema vlastitom akademskom i društvenom okruženju: početak masovnog obrazovanja na sveučilištima, diferencijacija znanstvenih disciplina koju karakterizira sve veća uloga društvenih znanosti te humanistički obrat od *Bildunga* do kritičkog propitivanja tradicije. Unutrašnja reorganizacija znanja unutar discipline bi se stoga trebala promatrati u svjetlu širih promjena na sveučilištima. Akademska disciplina poput '*kulturnih studija*' je sama kulturna tvorevina koja je stvorena u odnosu na, s jedne strane, druge srodne discipline, a s druge strane, na razvoj društva i kulture općenito.

Početna točka bile su 1960-e i 1970-e kada su se dogodile velike promjene u orijentaciji etnologije i folkloristike. Šezdesetih godina započinje i sveopća modernizacija sveučilišnog sustava na mnogim razinama i te su promjene utjecale na sadašnju situaciju. Naravno, taj proces nije jedinstven, nego je dio općeg razvoja događaja u mnogim zemljama. Akademska zajednica je transnacionalna i multidisciplinarna i novi impulsi se šire preko granica.

Jedna od sastavnica ove teme je i uloga društvenih znanosti. Postoji jasna sukladnost u pristupima i metodologiji između naše discipline i društvenih znanosti. U tom procesu, *kulturni studiji* su postali više orijentirani na sadašnjost te otvoreni čitavom nizu novih istraživačkih tema i područja.

Ključne riječi: etnologija, folkloristika, društvene znanosti, obrazovni sustav, Bergen, Norveška

