

Norway, Anthropology in

THOMAS HYLLAND ERIKSEN

University of Oslo, Norway

As in many other European and Latin American countries, social anthropology has grown steadily in Norway since the 1960s, with an accelerated growth rate in the early 1990s. The discipline is taught at all levels at four universities (Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, and Tromsø), the Oslo and Bergen departments being the largest with a permanent scientific staff of between fifteen and twenty each, in addition to dozens of PhD students, postdocs, and temporary lecturers and researchers. A considerable number of social anthropologists also work at research institutes and colleges around the country.

The number of people qualified as anthropologists in Norway—more than 1,000 in a total population of 5 million—is proportionately very high. Most work outside the academy—in the civil service, the nongovernmental sector, and the private sector. Anthropology also has a strong public presence in the country, with many professional social anthropologists regularly writing op-eds in newspapers, participating in media debates, and publishing the occasional book for a general readership.

Because of the generally strong position of social anthropology in Norwegian society, perspectives from basic cultural relativism and comparative analysis often appear in the public sphere even without the active agency of practicing anthropologists. Moreover, all Norwegian schoolchildren are exposed to some anthropology. The mandatory subject *Samfunnslære* (social studies), taught in lower secondary school, includes a little social anthropology; in theory, this makes all Norwegians in their early teens aware of its existence. In upper secondary school, sociology and social anthropology is an optional subject, chosen by more than 10,000 seventeen-year-olds every year, which teaches the fundamentals of cultural relativism, comparison, ethnographic method, and global cultural diversity.

The reasons for the domestic success of anthropology in Norway are complex and will be touched upon toward the end of the entry. The entry now considers the history of the discipline in the country, which is interesting not only in its own right but also as a clear-cut, almost exemplary case reflecting the shifting intellectual trends in European studies of culture and society between the mid-nineteenth and the early twenty-first centuries.

Folk customs, race, and exotica: Some beginnings

The first Norwegian ethnologist, indeed often hailed as the first social scientist in the country, was the Lutheran theologian Eilert Sundt (1817–75). A contemporary of Marx and Darwin, Sundt carried out empirical studies of Norwegian Gypsies (*tatere*) and

The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology. Edited by Hilary Callan.

© 2018 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2018 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

DOI: 10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea1553

peasant culture and published voluminous and meticulously researched works on a wide variety of subjects, ranging from rural building customs to conditions in prisons, his most famous study being *Om sædelighetstilstanden i Norge* (On the State of Sexual Morality in Norway) (Sundt [1857] 1968). A moralist and reformer as well as an empirical scientist, Sundt was concerned with questions such as hygiene and cleanliness, prostitution and extramarital affairs, but he was most fondly remembered as a spokesman for the poorer segments of society. Tellingly, the journal he founded was called *Folkevennen* (The Friend of the People). Writing in a terse, precise language about the beliefs, practices, and customs of rural people, the prolific Sundt even exerted a perceptible influence on mid-nineteenth-century Norwegian literature, nudging it away from the dreamscapes of Romanticism and toward the earthy realist style that flourished, in Norway as elsewhere in Europe, toward the end of the nineteenth century.

Like his more famous contemporaries in Continental Europe and Britain, Sundt had a firsthand experience of the transition from an agrarian peasant society to a modern, increasingly urban, society. Growing up with twelve siblings as the son of a ship captain in a small southern town, Sundt was accustomed to hard work as a child and, unlike some of his European contemporaries, he was unburdened by nostalgia for a traditional society. Rather, he was concerned to raise the moral standards and material wellbeing of poor folk across the country and made numerous pleas to the political authorities on their behalf.

With Sundt, one major branch of cultural and social research had been established in the country, namely ethnology or *Volkskunde*, the study of local rural customs, usually with the main emphasis on material culture and driven by a search for authenticity with a strong nationalist motivation. Later taught as ethnology and folklore studies at universities, and today under as cultural history, this line of research was closer in its methods and ideological leanings to history and archaeology than to the more global and comparative approaches represented in anthropology from the very beginning.

The Ethnographic Museum in Oslo, which now makes up the third and fourth floors of the stately Museum of Cultural History in central Oslo, began its existence in a far smaller location in 1857, at the same time as Sundt's research was beginning to make its mark on the small but growing intellectual world of Christiania (as Oslo was called until 1922). Yet Sundt had little interest in the African masks and Indian figurines donated by Norwegian ship captains and missionaries to the fledgling museum displaying exotica from around the world. His was an empirical science of Norwegian folkways with a firm basis in quantitative methods, not a lofty, comparative science of Man. The Ethnographic Museum represented an early expression of *Völkerkunde*, the study of other cultures, as opposed to the *Volkskunde* of the ethnologists.

It must, nevertheless, be pointed out that the boundaries between Norwegian folk culture and the material artifacts of remote peoples were for a long time blurred. Indeed, objects from rural Norway were on display alongside African and Asian artifacts until 1907, when they were finally moved to the outdoor Folk Museum at Bygdøy, a peninsular suburb also known to foreigners for the museums housing the Viking ships and the Kon-Tiki raft, on which the explorer Thor Heyerdahl sailed from Peru to Easter Island in 1947 in his attempt to prove that Polynesia might have been populated from South America.

The ethnographic museum and a lone explorer

For many years, the Ethnographic Museum was not involved in academic research but concentrated on its exhibitions and—until its relocation in 1904—on dealing with the mounting problem of space for the growing collections. Its obligations to the public as a museum entailed, in practice, that the academic staff of the museum also wrote books and articles aimed at a general readership. Yngvar Nielsen (1843–1916), professor of geography and ethnography and director of the Ethnographic Museum from 1877 until his death, first made his name as the author of a popular traveler's guide to Norway. The book, fondly known at the time as *Yngvar*, was published in several languages and became a major best seller in Norway. It was Nielsen who instigated the move of the Norwegian collections to Bygdøy, and in his time the collections of exotic artifacts grew rapidly, in no small way as a result of his wide networks and social skills (Bouquet 1996). It was, however, Nielsen's successor, Ole Solberg (1879–1946), who began to bring Norwegian anthropology closer to the international mainstream. Trained in Germany, Solberg carried out fieldwork among the Hopi in 1903–4, and took his doctoral degree in Leipzig on a study of the early history of the Eastern Inuit.

In the interwar years, several leading anthropologists visited Oslo, including Marcel Mauss, Bronisław Malinowski, and Franz Boas. This was largely not as a result of Solberg's efforts—his professional contacts were mainly German—but at the invitation of the dynamic Institute of Comparative Research in Human Culture, founded in 1922. The institute organized international symposia and established a series of publications that still exists today, but it had no teaching program. Nor was there much in the way of formal teaching at the museum. Reputedly, only one of Solberg's students ever completed his studies, Johannes Falkenberg (1911–2004), who went on to do fieldwork in Australia after World War II, eventually producing an acclaimed monograph from Port Keats in the Northern Territory (Falkenberg 1962).

From an anthropological perspective, the interwar period was marked not by a conflict between ethnology and comparative anthropology but by controversies over race. In the early twentieth century, leading physical anthropologists, who laid claim to proper scientific methods in their study of human variation, set about classifying Norwegians according to skull shapes in order to ascertain which subracial variety they belonged to, and a cephalic index was developed. The general assumption was that the pure Nordics were brachycephalous (long skulled), while those contaminated by inferior races such as Sámi herdsmen or Portuguese sailors were dolichocephalous (short skulled). By the 1930s eugenic policies were debated vigorously in Norwegian societies, where enforced sterilization had taken place with certain ethnic minorities, notably Gypsies. At this time, the academic debates concerning whether or not Norwegians were a Germanic master race took place largely within the field of physical anthropology, and the influence of humanist scholars, who were often critical of the idea of race hierarchies, was modest (Kyllingstad 2012).

Solberg appears to have been critical of the racial pseudoscience that dominated Norwegian physical anthropology in the interwar period. His lack of visible engagement was to some extent compensated by his efforts as a museum director, and during his tenure the collections continued to grow and the exhibitions became richer. While Solberg was

busy filling the storerooms of the museum with objects from around the world, physical anthropologists at the Museum of Natural History further east in Oslo were debating skull shapes and racial classification. Many of the new artifacts in the museum were in fact donations from Solberg's main competitor for the job as museum director, the explorer and gentleman-anthropologist Carl Lumholtz (1851–1922).

While Lumholtz never achieved the status of the polar explorers Fridtjof Nansen and Roald Amundsen, he was internationally famous in his lifetime and his renown lingers even today in pockets of the world, especially Mexico and Indonesia (Klausen and Sørum 1993). His extensive travels took him to Aboriginal communities in Australia, remote villages in Mexico, and the Dayaks of Borneo, and he wrote extensive ethnographies from his forays into “uncharted territory.” Influenced by the late Victorian cultural evolutionism forcefully propagated by Herbert Spencer, Lumholtz represented a kind of anthropology that rapidly went out of fashion after his death in 1922. In his day, however, he was a highly respected anthropologist and an excellent lecturer. He was well connected in the United States, where he went on repeated lecture tours and spoke both to academic and general audiences.

In the 1880s, when Lumholtz began his career as an explorer and writer, no funding was available for ethnographers in Norway, and the museum relied largely on donations from missionaries and ship captains for their collections. Therefore, when Lumholtz's first travels were funded, he was obliged to send large quantities of animal specimens to the Zoological Museum of Christiania, but his main interest was in people and human diversity. Notwithstanding his evolutionist outlook, he expressed sympathy for the native populations he met, whom he believed were doomed to be obliterated by the forces of modernity. Theoretically unexceptional, Lumholtz was nevertheless a gifted storyteller and prolific writer, a good observer, and an outstanding photographer. His lack of fame in modern Norway, compared to the heroic status of his contemporaries Nansen and Amundsen, may simply be a result of the predominant form of nationalism in the country. Norway had no imperial ambitions in the tropical countries. By placing Viking longships at the center of its incipient national identity, Norwegian nationalists could portray the Arctic explorers as legitimate heirs to the brave men who had sacked Lindisfarne and colonized Greenland, but there was no standard nationalist narrative into which to fit someone like Lumholtz. He thus comes across largely as an appendix, a dead end, and a false start in the history of the country as well as its anthropology.

From Gjessing to Barth

The lower floors of the Historical Museum were dominated by nation-building artifacts from the Viking Age and beyond, relegating the Ethnographic Museum to the less accessible top floors. Modest in scale and ambition by international standards, the museum was, in the middle of the twentieth century, the sole institution in Norway where social and cultural anthropology of any kind was taught. At the end of World War II, social and cultural anthropology in Norway still had only two weak footholds, the institute and the museum. The latter would become the more important site as the location where modern social anthropology was finally established in the 1950s.

Lumholtz wrote in the tradition of the late Victorians, while Solberg, committed to the German *Kulturkreiselehre*—a kind of diffusionist cultural history—was uninterested in the new social anthropology of Malinowski and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. The few academics in Norway who were interested in theoretical developments abroad were, for their part, not anthropologists but linguists and humanist scholars. This situation would change to some extent with the appointment of Gutorm Gjessing (1906–79) to the directorship at the museum in 1947. Gjessing, trained as an archaeologist, had a broad vision and was familiar with contemporary anthropology, especially in its American versions. At the same time, in spite of the anti-German sentiment in the country after the end of the war, the influence from German diffusionism and *Völkerkunde* remained strong in his works, which are remarkable for their level of ambition.

Gjessing was an engaged public intellectual. As a Rockefeller fellow in the United States in 1946–47, he seriously began to doubt the sustainability of the capitalist societies in terms of global justice, environmental issues, and human wellbeing. Quite unlike his predecessors at the museum, Gjessing saw political engagement for developing countries as a duty of the subject of anthropology, since it had the nonindustrial societies as its main focus. Gjessing was an enthusiastic defender of *samnorsk*, a radical hybrid language fusing the two main varieties of Norwegian, Nynorsk and Riksmål. He was a committed environmentalist at a very early time and a founding member of the Socialist People's Party, branching off from the left wing of the Labour Party in 1961. Gjessing, whose main empirical research field was Sámi archaeology, eventually produced rich voluminous books in Norwegian that revealed a synthesizing intellectual who saw few limitations to the possibilities of anthropological knowledge. A major work was the ambitious two-volume synthesis *Mennesket og kulturen* (Mankind and Culture) (Gjessing 1953). Whether writing about the Sámi, ecological adaptation, or comparative politics, Gjessing rarely let slip an opportunity to draw inferences about the implications for politics and critical self-examination.

However, the influence of engaged iconoclasts and maverick intellectuals like Gjessing did not last. Just as British anthropology had shifted to a more empirically rigorous and analytically focused style after World War I, a comparable development took place in Norway after World War II. Gjessing welcomed students and invited criticism, even if he was known to be a dry and somewhat unengaging lecturer. At the Ethnographic Museum, a handful of students were, by the early 1950s, quickly absorbing the latest British social anthropology, which they correctly saw as the most dynamic and innovative branch of anthropology at the time. *Primus inter pares* in the museum attic during its first years was Axel Sommerfelt (b. 1927), son of the famous linguist Alf Sommerfelt, an early adviser to UNESCO and a board member of the Institute of Comparative Research in Human Culture. The young Sommerfelt convinced his fellow students, *pace* the likes of Fortes and Gluckman, that anthropology was tantamount to the comparative study of social forms and, in particular, legal and political forms, and that the vastly ambitious anthropology of Gjessing was far too imprecise and, at the end of the day, too amateurish to count as scientific. Although he was encouraging and positive, Gjessing was disappointed by this narrowing of anthropology, which he preferred to see as a grander and not least politically engaged, “science of man.” In the early 1950s Gjessing was at the height of his powers intellectually. He could not

possibly have seen that a young man just returned from his studies in Chicago, who joined the small student group in the museum attic, would within a decade make substantial contributions toward rendering his brand of anthropology obsolete. Yet this is exactly what happened to Norwegian anthropology in the 1950s under the intellectual leadership of Fredrik Barth.

This handful of dedicated young men from varied backgrounds was known as the “attic group” from their informal seminars in the museum attic. Although Fredrik Barth (1928–2016) spent periods in the attic, he never became a full member of the group. The son of a professor of geology, Barth studied anthropology in Chicago from 1946, graduating with an MA as early as 1949, whereupon he was immediately invited to join his archaeology professor, Robert Braidwood, on an excavation in Iraq. He first arrived at the museum in 1950 but left for fieldwork among Iraqi Kurds in 1951. Indeed, throughout the 1950s, Barth’s presence at the museum was intermittent; he spent a year at the London School of Economics with Edmund Leach and Raymond Firth, later won a scholarship enabling him to take his PhD at Cambridge, and went to new ethnographic field sites twice during this decade, first to Swat Valley in Pakistan and then to Iran.

Yet, Barth’s influence on the attic group was considerable. He arrived not only theoretically up to date, with a degree from one of the best anthropology departments in the world, but also with an intellectual energy and appetite for fieldwork that put the others to shame. Most of the members of the group went on to teach and do research at the Oslo and Bergen departments from the early 1960s until the turn of the millennium. They included Sommerfelt, who would later do fieldwork in East Africa and work as a lecturer in Salisbury (now Harare) until he was evicted by Ian Smith’s racist regime in 1966; the analytically sharp Jan Petter Blom (b. 1927), later a familiar sight at the University of Bergen with his beret and bow tie; and Henning Siverts (1928–2002), a witty and original researcher who would later experiment with punch cards and computer technology in his analysis of village life in Mexico. Later joiners included Harald Eidheim (1925–2012), whose important studies of Sámi–Norwegian ethnic relations exerted a strong influence on ethnicity research, and Arne Martin Klausen (b. 1927), for many years the public face of social anthropology in Norway.

Gjessing’s anthropology was inspired by the American four-field variety, and he added studies of material culture to the palette, which already included sociocultural anthropology, linguistics, physical anthropology, and archaeology. Gjessing was a museum enthusiast and held that perfectly decent and interesting research could well be carried out on the museum’s collection of objects. However, by the early 1950s his students had become convinced that the subject ought to concentrate on the study of actual social life rather than on dead objects. This conflict probably never became clearer than at the meeting where Barth, as the students’ delegate, proposed, slightly tongue in cheek, that the museum could sell off its collections to fund fieldwork. Gjessing and Barth never warmed to each other.

The comparison with the situation in the United Kingdom after World War I remains an apt one. When, in 1922, both Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski published important monographs, the anthropology of James Frazer suddenly seemed dated and that of E. B. Tylor positively antediluvian. With the introduction of the ethnographically based functionalist and structural–functionalist anthropology in Oslo, the memory of earlier

Norwegian anthropologies was effectively erased, including that of Gjessing, who never made it into the curricula of the new study programs developed in the following decade. Mary Bouquet recalls sitting in the Ethnographic Museum in the mid-1990s studying the history of the museum and the shifting attitudes to the representation of other peoples, with Sommerfelt separating the pages of a book by Ole Solberg with a penknife as he simultaneously translated from it (Bouquet, pers. comm.). The book had been sitting on its shelf for half a century without having been read once.

If Solberg's interwar *Kulturkreise* anthropology was condemned to the dustheap of oblivion after the war, a far more famous, indeed world-famous, Norwegian claiming identity as an anthropologist was scarcely even mentioned in the museum attic, namely Thor Heyerdahl (1914–2002). Notwithstanding his international fame, Heyerdahl's diffusionist theoretical orientation was immediately deemed obsolete, his empirical documentation sketchy, and his style of argument unscientific. It nevertheless deserves mentioning that the Kon-Tiki Museum to this day contains an excellent library, chiefly focusing on the Pacific, and a small research department.

North Sea anthropology

By the early 1960s social anthropology was being institutionalized. Barth founded the department at the University of Bergen, where he was employed from 1960 until he resigned to take over Gjessing's chair in 1974. The department grew rapidly in size and significance during this period. In Oslo, study programs were developed at the same time, initially at the museum, but in 1964 a separate department of social anthropology was founded. The two remaining departments appeared at a later stage: Trondheim got its anthropology department in 1975, while social anthropology in Tromsø—the world's northernmost university—developed from the inauguration of the university in 1968, with its own sections in a series of interdisciplinary departments and centers. For years, Tromsø anthropology was organized along with Sámi studies, and it is currently joined with archaeology.

The entry now turns to an examination of the kind of anthropology that was established in Norway from its embryonic state in the 1950s until its institutionalization was completed in the early 1980s, and will then discuss some of the subsequent developments and controversies, as well as the role of anthropology in Norwegian society.

Although the University of Bergen was newer and smaller than the one in Oslo—it was founded in 1946 whereas the one in Oslo dates back to 1811—in the 1960s the social anthropology department quickly became the more vital and more internationally known of the two. This was a direct result of Barth's leadership. He published widely and was often invited to give prestigious lectures abroad. His *Political Leadership among Swat Pathans* (Barth 1959) quickly became a modern classic, and reviewers noted how Barth, through his emphasis on agency rather than structure, had produced an analysis of segmentary organization that differed markedly from Evans-Pritchard's classic analysis. Initially an admirer of Radcliffe-Brown's sophisticated structural–functionalist anthropology, Barth moved toward a more individualist and processual approach during his postgraduate years in London, Oslo, and Cambridge. He may have been the first anthropologist to apply the theory of

games to political strategies, and he also wrote about the caste system in Swat in terms of economic opportunity and social stratification rather than viewing it in terms of subcontinental culture.

When Barth took up the post in Bergen he was still in his early thirties but had already published three monographs based on fieldwork in as many locations. In 1963 Firth invited him to give a series of lectures at the London School of Economics, which were subsequently published as *Models of Social Organization* (Barth 1966), his strongest and most compact theoretical statement to date. In *Models*, a strictly processual perspective on social life is developed, the emphasis being on the factors that generate a particular social form (he avoided the term “structure”). Barth assumed that human beings would maximize utility strategically in social encounters, a view for which he received much criticism from colleagues who saw the model as reductionist and utilitarian. He was disappointed by this reading of *Models*, claiming that his aim had not chiefly been to redefine social interaction as utilitarian transactions but to show the analytical potential of “generative process analysis,” where the focus is not on the form but on the ongoing process of social life that creates, reproduces, and modifies a particular form. This method required microdata of high quality: meticulously described, detailed accounts of actual behavior rather than general descriptions.

While his initial impact was naturally strongest in Bergen, Barth’s work, and perhaps especially *Models*, had a lasting influence on the other Norwegian anthropology departments as well. Therefore, it may well be said that Norwegian anthropology was set up in the fifties and sixties as a subsidiary of British social anthropology, and more specifically as a branch of the Malinowskian school. Although Barth himself had studied at Chicago, where Radcliffe-Brown had been professor in the 1930s, he had aligned himself with the Malinowski students Firth and Leach in England, and his own anthropology, with its emphasis on detailed ethnography and individual agency, was developed in critical dialogue with and in opposition to structural functionalism.

While an undisputed leader in Norwegian social anthropology, Barth was not alone in developing a processual, actor-oriented anthropology with a stronger emphasis on political and economic processes than on symbolic meaning. Eidheim’s (1971) studies of ethnic relations in the north have already been mentioned, and Gunnar Haaland’s (1969) research on ethnicity and livelihood in Darfur was also influential locally, as was the politician-scholar Ottar Brox’s (1966) work on center–periphery relations between southern and northern Norway. Although Barth had his own fieldwork in Asia and was busy setting up a collaborative relationship between Bergen and Khartoum, Sudan, in the 1960s, he was also concerned to make anthropology speak directly to Norwegian matters. Among other things, Barth organized a symposium about entrepreneurship in northern Norway in 1962, at which Brox was a key participant.

The kind of academic craft that emerged during these formative years has been described as “North Sea anthropology.” It was mainly sociological and analytical, eschewing Continental trends from structuralism to Marxism, and empiricist in an Anglo-Saxon manner. Although there were dissenting voices and new tendencies would emerge in the 1970s, this is probably an accurate description of the situation when Barth and his collaborators published their most famous book.

The ethnicity paradigm

The single most influential text produced in Norwegian anthropology may well be Barth's introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, a book that radically questioned assumptions about ethnicity that had formerly been widespread and even taken for granted in many quarters (Barth 1969). Barth and his Scandinavian colleagues rejected explanations that had cultural differences at their core and concentrated instead on the social boundaries that kept ethnic groups apart. Instead of cultural differences as such, it was the *social communication of cultural differences* that was the basic fact of ethnicity. Ethnicity was thus reconceptualized as *relational* rather than substantial, social rather than cultural. Moreover, this group of researchers were keenly interested in the ways in which the content of an ethnic relation and its social relevance shifted with changing circumstances. Ethnicity was thus also seen as *situational*. Although an ethnic identity had an *imperative* aspect, its practical social significance was open to, as Barth had it, situational manipulation, or, in the words of others such as Harald Eidheim, the dynamics of the overall social system.

Barth's "Introduction" was a powerful text, and its main argument on the relational quality of ethnicity has been hugely influential both within and outside of anthropology. However, a glance at the intellectual ecology in which it was developed suggests that Barth's views were inspired by both Haaland's work in Sudan and Eidheim's research on ethnic relations between Norwegians and Sámi. Haaland showed how people can change ethnic identity, while Eidheim introduced an analytic rigor and conceptual distinctions that had hitherto been absent from the field. Eidheim's slim volume *Aspects of the Lappish Minority Situation* (1971), a formative text for later studies of ethnicity in Norway, consists of five short articles. This work was based on long-term fieldwork in Sámi areas from the late 1950s to the early 1960s, but not in the core areas of up-country Finnmark, where Sámi (Lappish) identity was unquestioned and was associated with reindeer herding, transhumance, Finno-Ugric languages, and cultural notions and practices which clearly set them apart from ethnic Scandinavians. Instead, Eidheim worked in an area where Sámi identity was marginal and precarious, where local Sámi were bilingual or even monolingual in Norwegian, where there had been a considerable degree of what we would today call cultural hybridization, and where there were few visible markers of Sámi identity. The coastal Sámi were considered adulterated, impure, inauthentic Sámi not only by ethnic Norwegians but also by many mountain Sámi, and the identities of coastal Sámi were thus contested, precarious, and uncertain. Many, perhaps most, north Norwegian have a mixed ancestry, but until very recently it has been common to undercommunicate one's partial Sámi origins.

Eidheim had a special interest in the emerging ethnopolitical movement of the region, writing about ethnic stigma, political entrepreneurship, and the strategic communication of difference and identity. His analyses had a major impact on Sámi ethnopolitical discourse, and several Sámi politicians, including an ex-president of the Sámi parliament, have studied social anthropology at Tromsø.

While there was definitely merit and originality in the Norwegian perspective on ethnicity, it built on earlier theorizing such as Edmund Leach's work on political symbolism and change among the Kachin, J. Clyde Mitchell's research on

“re-tribalization” on the Copperbelt, and Erving Goffman’s perspectives on strategic over- and undercommunication of role behavior. Nevertheless, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* showed, at the end of the 1960s, that Norwegian (and Scandinavian) social anthropology was by now fully part of the international, Anglophone professional debate and that it now consisted of far more practitioners than “could be counted on a mutilated left hand,” as John Barnes had phrased it a decade earlier.

Pluralism and diversification

The late 1960s saw a political radicalization of students in the humanities and social sciences in many countries, and Norway was no exception. Although some Norwegian anthropologists were engaged in development projects, especially in Africa, and others worked in an activist manner on behalf of indigenous peoples, social anthropology was considered a relatively apolitical subject. There was a general concern with method, comparison, and the kind of neutrality that comes with cultural relativist principles.

Among the students, many were now committed to Marxist analysis and/or feminism. They brought new perspectives into the seminar rooms, insisting that the “bourgeois science” represented by Klausen, Barth, and the other lecturers be replaced or at least augmented by works by Marxist and feminist authors. Although the department in Bergen was “a fortress that didn’t fall,” as Barth proudly expressed it many years later (Eriksen 2015, 128), overtly political orientations did leave a visible legacy across the board in Norwegian anthropology. Most notably, feminist anthropology—which was supremely compatible with the strong feminist movement in Norwegian society generally—made its way into new research projects and reading lists. Engagement on behalf of indigenous peoples was also noticeable, and it remains to this day. With Marxism, the situation was more complicated, not least since many felt that the Marxist evolutionary schemes were impossible to reconcile with cultural relativism; but both structural Marxists, such as Maurice Godelier and Claude Meillassoux, and anthropologists drawing on political economy, such as Sidney Mintz and Eric Wolf, were added to the theoretical repertoire and were in some cases invited to give guest lectures.

Partly as a result of growing student numbers in the 1970s, diversification continued. The influence of Claude Lévi-Strauss’s structuralism, which had been weak in the 1960s, was increasingly being felt in pockets, as was that of distinctly non-Barthian anthropologists such as the structural–functionalist Mary Douglas and the culturalist Clifford Geertz. Barth had himself moved on from research on rational agency to studies of knowledge and symbols (Barth 1975), and during the student revolt in Paris in 1968 he was—characteristically—on fieldwork in New Guinea, oblivious of the political upheavals in Europe.

By the early 1980s, the politicized polarization of the previous decade was all but gone. Characteristically, one of the most vocal young Marxist feminists, Marit Melhuus, coedited a volume on anthropology and development in 1982 with the allegedly bourgeois liberal professor, Arne Martin Klausen (Melhuus and Klausen 1983).

At this time, four departments of social anthropology had been established in the country. Although Barth had left Bergen in 1974 to take up Gjessing's chair at the Ethnographic Museum in Oslo, Bergen was still considered, at least by Oslo, as "Barthian" in flavor, while Oslo saw itself as more pluralist and open minded. It is certainly true that the diversity, theoretically and geographically, was considerable in Oslo by the 1980s. Eduardo Archetti was carrying out research in Ecuador and Argentina, Melhuus in Mexico, Eidheim in northern Norway, Ingrid Rudie in Malaysia, and Klausen in Norway, to mention just a few. Bergen was also diversifying geographically but with a concentration on Sudan and East Africa. Trondheim, a small department founded by Jan Brøgger (1936–2006), who had a dual education in psychology and anthropology, was theoretically eclectic and perhaps further from the international mainstream than the others. Tromsø remained focused largely on indigenous issues, but increasingly Tromsø anthropologists did fieldwork outside of the country, for example, on San (Bushmen) in southern Africa and on Māori in New Zealand.

Student numbers continued to grow in the 1980s and 1990s. The public visibility of social anthropology also increased perceptibly in this period, with an increasing number of anthropologists appearing in the media with op-ed articles, comments, or polemical interventions typically dealing with national identity, minority questions, or development. The attic group and their contemporaries went into retirement in the last decade of the twentieth century and were in many—but not all—cases replaced by their own students, who represented a theoretical and methodological continuity with the North Sea anthropology that had been developed half a century earlier in incipient form and had proven to be quite resilient in the face of the ideological and theoretical upheavals of the last third of the twentieth century. Concepts from Marxism, feminism, and structuralism entered the vocabulary of Norwegian anthropology, to be later supplemented by postcolonial and postmodernist thought and by symbolic and cognitive anthropology. In spite of the unmistakable diversification—some might say fragmentation—of Norwegian anthropology, there remains a consensus over some core virtues, notably the importance of a strong grounding in an ethnographic method that emphasizes the study of social relations.

The integration of Norwegian social anthropology into the wider international community, especially the dominant Anglophone part of it, continued to intensify and not just with respect to international publications. Signe Howell (b. 1942), professor at Oslo since 1989, was educated in Oxford and came to Oslo from Edinburgh. Eduardo Archetti (1943–2005), educated in Buenos Aires and Paris, was a founder member of the European Association of Social Anthropologists in 1989, and the Oslo department organized its biannual conference in 1994. With the appointment of Bruce Kapferer (b. 1940) as professor in Bergen in 1999, ties to British social anthropology were further strengthened. Several younger staff members have trained abroad, and exchange research visits of shorter and longer duration are frequent. In addition, foreign examiners (or "opponents") are usually called upon at PhD examinations. Most of the dissertations are written in English, a practice that strengthens and diversifies international networks further.

Anthropology at home and away

Norwegian anthropologists had always carried out research at home, that is, in their own country. More often than not, the focus was on minority groups, and there is an interesting continuity between Sundt's Gypsy research from the mid-nineteenth century and Eidheim's work among Sámi a century later. Barth's symposium on the entrepreneur in 1962 marked a different emphasis, whereby the focus was not on ethnic minorities but on rural Norwegians. His Bergen colleague Jan Petter Blom, similarly, did sociolinguistic research in rural Norway and wrote a chapter in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* about cultural styles among lowland farmers and mountain farmers in central Norway (Blom 1969). However, the anthropological study of Norwegian society that marked a true watershed would appear later and was written by one of Blom's students, Marianne Gullestad (1946–2008). Gullestad's fieldwork took place in a working-class area in her hometown, Bergen, and the monograph, *Kitchen-Table Society* (Gullestad 1984), is a rich tapestry weaving detailed descriptions of material culture seamlessly together with a story about class, gender, and networks. Originally a student of Barth and Blom in Bergen, Gullestad found her main sources of theoretical inspiration elsewhere, in cultural theory, symbolic anthropology, and later, cognitive anthropology. Hailed internationally as a landmark study, the monograph from Bergen was initially received with some wariness in Norway. It was untypical both empirically and theoretically, and senior colleagues murmured about the difficulty of writing ethnographically about one's hometown, and how the boundary between her personal experiences and ethnographic data seemed to become blurred. The book has nevertheless withstood the test of time and was republished as a classic in 2002, with a glowing introduction by Daniel Miller.

The methodological problems raised in connection with Gullestad's seminal study have been discussed intermittently ever since in the growing circles of Norwegian anthropology. The contrast between anthropology "in remote places" and anthropology "at home" is still frequently invoked. However, if it is true that one task of anthropology consists in rendering the exotic familiar and the familiar exotic, it can be argued that anthropologists have a job to carry out in their own country. In the same year as Gullestad's book, a collection of articles edited by Klausen was published, entitled *Den norske væremåten* (The Norwegian Mode of Being) (1984). Covering a lot of ground, the book had a decisive impact on public debate about "Norwegianness" at a time when intensified contact with the outside world was being felt through new media channels, increased travel, and non-European immigration. The chapters dealt with topics such as the local community as totem, equality as a key value, and conflict avoidance. Immigrants were represented in the chapter by Julian Kramer, himself a South African immigrant to the country. However, the book soon appeared dated because it presented a rather static picture of Norwegian culture, lending itself to criticism of essentialism.

Some of the methodological challenges of doing fieldwork in Norwegian society are common to all fieldwork in large-scale societies. The practical possibility of carrying out participant observation is limited and, as a result, the ethnography may become fragmented, consisting largely of conversational data rather than observations. Yet an

increasing number of anthropologists, many of them employed at applied research institutes, carried out fieldwork in Norway. By the early 2000s the time seemed to be ripe for taking stock of the potentials and limitations of fieldwork at home, and an edited volume entitled *Nære steder, nye rom* (Close Places, New Spaces) was edited by two anthropologists with their fieldwork in Norway (Rugkåsa and Thorsen 2003). A couple of years previously, Howell (2003), whose research had been in Malaysia and Indonesia, had argued against the feasibility of carrying out fieldwork at home, claiming that the important experience of the otherness of an unfamiliar cultural world, as well as the possibility of making original observations, were lost in home anthropology. In the most widely cited contribution to the book, Kathinka Frøystad (2003) responded to Howell's critical view, noting that highly original and innovative anthropological research had in fact been carried out in Norway, often with a firm base in observational data. Interestingly, Frøystad's own research had been in India, whereas Howell was at the time doing fieldwork in Norway. Frøystad thus pointed out that the contrast described by Howell was perhaps a result of differing scales (village versus city) rather than degrees of cultural distance.

In Norwegian anthropology today, both "remote" and "close" sites are common. MA students carry out six months of fieldwork as part of their dissertation work, and many travel to remote settings, while others do fieldwork in their hometown. Nevertheless, the tendency is usually for permanent staff in anthropology departments to have their main fieldwork in non-European societies, while many anthropologists carrying out research at applied research institutes such as the Institute of Social Research, Oslo, study Norwegian contexts, often with an ethnic-minority perspective. There are, however, a substantial number of anthropologists who do applied research on development as well, for example at the Christian Michelsens Institutt, Bergen, and whose regional specialization is in the global South.

Norwegian anthropology and the public sphere

Norwegian social anthropology has an unusually high profile and visibility in the public sphere (Eriksen 2006), and a critical mass of anthropologists have for decades engaged in popularization as well as a degree of participation in civil society. In a typical month, a few anthropologists give public talks in fora ranging from Rotary clubs to Oslo's popular House of Literature; some offer a few comments on public events in the media and others publish op-ed articles or columns in the press.

Although Barth presented a miniseries on his own fieldwork in 1979 called *Andres liv og vårt eget* (Others' Lives and Our Own), the one person who stands out in the recent history of Norwegian public anthropology is Klausen, who retired from his professorship at Oslo in 1997. Klausen's first field of intervention, in the 1960s, was development assistance, where he criticized the tendency in development agencies to neglect the cultural dimension both in academic and in public fora. He would later publish studies of Norwegian society, including the aforementioned *Den norske væremåten*. Klausen, who led a group of researchers studying the 1994 Winter Olympics as a ritual celebrating modernity, always argued in his lectures that anthropologists should be relativists away and critics at home. He regarded anthropology as a generalist's discipline which

was opposed to the fragmenting specialization typical of knowledge production in complex modern societies. In a word, Klausen tried to teach a generation of anthropologists that they should be quintessential intellectuals: their job at home consisted in approaching society from a different perspective, saying unexpected and sometimes unpopular things, adding breadth and depth to society's self-reflection, while explaining the normality of customs, beliefs, and practices that usually came across as exotic. Interestingly, Klausen, who became acquainted with Barth at the Ethnographic Museum in the 1950s, chose a different path from that of his more famous contemporary. For his first dissertation, he chose to study basket weaving among the Dayaks of Borneo, drawing on the artifacts collected in Borneo by none other than Carl Lumholtz. There was a deep irony in the fact that, when Gjessing's chair at the museum became vacant, Barth was appointed, while Klausen, who was ranked second, became a professor at the university. Many have speculated on the possible subsequent history of Norwegian anthropology if the outcome had been the other way around. Indeed, the university director suggested a change of places but Barth declined; it was Gjessing's chair that he desired.

In later years, new generations have taken over, elaborated, expanded, and developed Klausen's vision for anthropology as a generalist discipline. During the 1990s, social anthropology's reputation as an anti-elitist kind of activity spread, an unruly anarchic science of greatcoated, ruffled men (and women) with unpolished shoes and strange views. In many nonacademic observers' view, it compared favorably with the humanities, where the Western canonical traditions still tended to be reproduced in an almost monastic way, and even with a subject like sociology, which in its Norwegian version is largely a problem-solving discipline focusing on the welfare state and gender equality, unlike anthropology, which is arguably driven by curiosity rather than anxiety. For years, Norwegian journalists seemed to contact anthropologists for comments on current affairs every day of the week—be it a royal wedding, a sport scandal, or recent political changes in a remote country.

Anthropologists continue to be active and visible in the public sphere in Norway but their position and reputation have changed somewhat, not least as a result of the growing polarization around cultural diversity and immigration in the country, which has intensified after the al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001 and the domestic right-wing terrorist attack in 2011. When Gullestad later published a study of Norwegian racism, the public reception was mixed, and she was criticized for being too negative toward "her own people." Several anthropologists were later attacked for being too lenient toward minorities, on the assumption that they represent a moral relativism, and for being too critical of Norwegian cultural and national identity. In public discourse generally, the tendency since the September 11 attacks has been that the curious and open-minded attitude toward diversity, which is rightly associated with social anthropology and which was largely positively marked in the 1990s, has been viewed with growing suspicion.

It should be added that the subject called sociology and social anthropology remains by far the most popular optional subject in upper secondary school. It also remains that anthropologists continue to punch above their weight in Norwegian society, and have made inroads into many professions, in both the public and the private sector, outside academia.

It is not easy to see why it should be in Norway and not in, for example, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, or the Netherlands that anthropology should have such a notable public presence. The explanation is unlikely to be elegant and is bound to involve several factors, including fortuitous coincidences. First, as mentioned, all children in upper primary school are exposed to a little bit of anthropology. Second, the profession was lucky to have individuals like Gjessing, Klausen, and to a lesser extent Barth, who went out of their way in the early years to engage a larger public. Third, the relative egalitarianism of academic life in Norway—unlike in the more hierarchical academic worlds of Great Britain or Germany—created a legitimate niche for the anthropologist as an eccentric, which could be played without negative sanctions from the academy. Fourth, the media pluralism of Norway (nine newspapers are published only in Oslo) offers a varied mediascape with many opportunities to express oneself. Fifth, these four factors have created an awareness in the media, in the public service, and in organizations of the exciting potential inherent in the anthropological perspective. That many Norwegian anthropologists now carry out research in Norway itself adds to their perceived social relevance. Indeed the more critical recent attitude toward social anthropologists and their alleged cultural relativism may be a sign precisely of the subject's maturity as a player in the public arena.

Conclusion

The growth and transformations of Norwegian anthropology since its modest beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century reflect intellectual developments in Europe. The shift from nationalist *Volkskunde* to a comparative *Völkerkunde*, the controversies over race and cultural evolution, the transition from the all-encompassing study of Man to a more precise discipline grounded in ethnography and, finally, the growing interest in carrying out social anthropological research at home can be seen as a variation on a theme common to many countries. What is perhaps unique to the Norwegian case, apart from the indisputable success of the discipline, is the marked, indeed dramatic, shift from a strong connection to Germany to an Anglo-Saxon orientation, which happened almost overnight in 1945.

In spite of the current sprawl and diversity, there is a distinct North Sea character to the subject. As noted by an international panel asked to evaluate the discipline for the Norwegian Research Council, all “the panellists agreed that there seemed to be a strong affinity between Norwegian anthropology and British social anthropology,” adding that “there was a distinct Norwegian flavour to many publications that it was hard to pinpoint, but which seemed to derive mainly from a Barthian legacy” (Hastrup et al. 2010, 70). While many active and prolific anthropologists in Norway would take exception to this characterization of their work, the view from afar may be accurate. The towering figure in Norwegian anthropology in the second half of the twentieth century, Barth has continued to exert a strong influence up to the present directly, indirectly, and by provoking disagreement. There remains a core of microsociological, comparative empiricism in Norwegian anthropology, even if the satellites circling it are growing in number and may sometimes seem far more luminous than the center.

SEE ALSO: Anthropology beyond the Academy: Communicating the Subject to Non-specialists; Anthropology, Public Perceptions of; Anthropology: Scope of the Discipline; Barth, Fredrik (1928–2016); Boas, Franz (1858–1942); Darwin, Charles, Influence on Anthropology of; Denmark, Anthropology in; Douglas, Mary (1921–2007); Ethnicity in Anthropology; European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA); Firth, Raymond (1901–2002); Geertz, Clifford (1926–2006); Godelier, Maurice (b. 1934); Leach, Edmund (1910–89); Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1908–2009); Malinowski, Bronisław (1884–1942); Mauss, Marcel (1872–1950); Public Anthropology; Social and Cultural Anthropology; Wolf, Eric (1923–99); World Anthropologies

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Barth, Fredrik. 1959. *Political Leadership among Swat Pathans*. London: Athlone Press.
- Barth, Fredrik. 1966. *Models of Social Organization*. London: Royal Anthropological Institute.
- Barth, Fredrik, ed. 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Barth, Fredrik. 1975. *Ritual and Knowledge among the Baktaman of New Guinea*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Barth, Fredrik. 2007. "Overview: Sixty Years in Anthropology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 36: 1–16.
- Blom, Jan Petter. 1969. "Ethnic and Cultural Differentiation." In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, edited by Fredrik Barth, 75–85. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Bouquet, Mary. 1996. *Bringing It All Back Home ... to the Oslo University Ethnographic Museum*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Brox, Ottar. 1966. *Hva skjer i Nord-Norge? En studie i norsk utkantpolitikk* [What's Happening in Northern Norway? A Study in Norwegian District Politics]. Oslo: Pax.
- Eidheim, Harald. 1971. *Aspects of the Lappish Minority Situation*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2006. *Engaging Anthropology: The Case for a Public Presence*. Oxford: Berg.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2015. *Fredrik Barth: An Intellectual Biography*. London: Pluto Press.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland, and Finn Sivert Nielsen. 2012. *A History of Anthropology*. 2nd ed. London: Pluto Press.
- Falkenberg, Johannes. 1962. *Kin and Totem: Group Relations of Australian Aborigines in the Port Keats District*. New York: Humanities Press.
- Frøystad, Kathinka. 2003. "Forestillingen om det 'ordentlige' feltarbeid og dets umulighet i Norge [The Idea about 'Real' Fieldwork and Its Impossibility in Norway]." In *Nære steder, nye rom: Utfordringer i antropologiske studier i Norge* [Close Places, New Spaces: Challenges in Anthropological Studies in Norway], edited by Marianne Rugkåsa and Kari Trædal Thorsen, 32–64. Oslo: Gyldendal.
- Gjessing, Gutorm. 1953. *Mennesket og kulturen* [Mankind and Culture]. 2 vols. Oslo: Gyldendal.
- Gullestad, Marianne. 1984. *Kitchen-Table Society: A Case Study of the Family Life and Friendships of Young Working-Class Mothers in Urban Norway*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Haaland, Gunnar. 1969. "Economic Determinants in Ethnic Processes." In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, edited by Fredrik Barth, 58–74. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

- Hastrup, Kirsten, Christina Garsten, Thomas Blom Hansen, Jon P. Mitchell, and Ulla M. Vuorela. 2010. *Social and Cultural Anthropological Research in Norway: An Evaluation*. Oslo: Research Council of Norway.
- Howell, Signe. 2003. "Feltarbeid i vår egen bakgård: Noen refleksjoner rundt nyere tendenser i norsk antropologi [Fieldwork in Our Own Backyard: Some Reflections Concerning Recent Tendencies in Norwegian Anthropology]." *Norsk Antropologisk Tidsskrift* 12 (1–2): 16–24.
- Klausen, Arne Martin, ed. 1984. *Den norske væremåten* [The Norwegian Way of Life]. Oslo: Cappelen.
- Klausen, Arne Martin, and Arve Sørum. 1993. *Den store norske oppdager Carl Lumholtz* [The Great Norwegian Explorer Carl Lumholtz]. Oslo: Tiden.
- Kyllingstad, Jon Røine. 2012. "Norwegian Physical Anthropology and the Idea of a Nordic Master Race." *Current Anthropology* 53 (S5): 46–56.
- Melhuus, Marit, and Arne Martin Klausen, eds. 1983. *Sosialantropologers rolle i bistandsarbeid* [The Role of Social Anthropologists in Development Work]. Oslo: Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo.
- Rugkåsa, Marianne, and Kari Trædal Thorsen, eds. 2003. *Nære steder, nye rom: Utfordringer i antropologiske studier i Norge* [Close Places, New Spaces: Challenges in Anthropological Studies in Norway]. Oslo: Gyldendal.
- Sundt, Eilert. (1857) 1968. *Om sædelighetstilstanden i Norge* [On the State of Sexual Morality in Norway]. Oslo: Pax.