

# SOCIOLOGISTS AS PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS DURING THREE CENTURIES IN THE NORWEGIAN PROJECT OF ENLIGHTENMENT

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A widespread scientific illiteracy has been documented in the OECD nations. In survey studies it has, for instance, been shown that two thirds of the American population do not know that it takes one year for the earth to move around the sun, and half the population believe that dinosaurs and human beings lived together in prehistoric times (Sjøberg 1997: 13). Europeans are not much different from Americans. Because science is an essential element in the general culture of modern societies, studies like these document a more or less serious cultural problem in nations claiming to be knowledge societies.

Misinformation and lack of knowledge can distort democratic discourse and is therefore not only a cultural but also a democratic problem. Enlightened understanding is essential for democratic will formation (Dahl 1998: 37–40). Immediately after the election of President George W. Bush for his second term, a leading American historian, Gary Wills, provokingly asked if the leading democratic nation of the world could still be characterised as enlightened. ‘Can a people that believes more fervently in the Virgin Birth than in evolution still be called an Enlightened nation?... Respect for evidence seems not to pertain any more when a poll taken just before the election showed that 75% of Mr. Bush’s supporters believed Iraq either worked closely with Al Qaeda or was directly involved in the attacks of 9/11’ (quoted in Habermas 2005a: 122). I expect that readers of this article will be able to find comparable examples from their own societies.

Public spheres in modern democracies can be undermined and distorted by many forces, such as commercialisation, entertainment, lobbying and religious orthodoxy. A ‘deformed civic consciousness’ and ‘distorted public agendas’ are among the problems faced by citizens in

pluralist democracies (Dahl 1982: 43–47). Despite different cultural, religious and political inclinations, responsible cultural and political citizens share a common interest in stimulating the general cultural level in their society and the rationality of democratic discourse (Habermas 1996a: Chs. 7, 8).

Traditionally, Western academics have an ‘intellectual task’, a responsibility for contributing to definition of situations and rationality in public discourse (Kalleberg 2000a: 237–239). This article is focused on the intellectual role of academics, on academics as public intellectuals. The expression ‘academic as intellectual’ here simply refers to persons with a scientific education, communicating specialised (esoteric) insights from their specialty to outside (exoteric) audiences (publics), democratic discourses included.

The central actors in this article are Norwegian sociologists. The discipline is here defined so that it also includes general social theorists and ‘moral philosophers’ from early modernity. It is often useful to look back in history to get a better understanding of a social phenomenon. It is reasonable to commence an analysis of academic intellectuals in the Age of Enlightenment, opening up for a time span of three centuries. As a case, Norwegian sociology is interesting because of the size and influence of contemporary Norwegian sociology. Relative to population - 4.7 million - the two and a half thousand Norwegian sociologists today is probably larger - proportionally - than in any other nation. Perhaps, also, the influence of sociologists on the surrounding society is stronger than in other nations. That was at least an informed guess made in the mid-1990s by an international group of evaluators chaired by a Danish Harvard sociologist, claiming that Norwegian sociologists ‘quantitatively and perhaps also qualitatively /have a/ larger importance than in any other nation’ (Allardt et al. 1995: 31).

## **1. Historical projects of enlightenment**

In mainstream sociology, traditions from Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim to Jürgen Habermas, Robert Merton and Talcott Parsons, it is argued that modern societies emerged in the north-western corner of Europe half a millennium ago. It is sociologically surprising that this happened in this macro region, the countries around the English Channel and the North Sea. For long periods, Arabic and Chinese civilisations had been more advanced than Europe, and the societies around the Mediterranean had traditionally been more advanced than those farther north. These developments cannot be explained with reference to just a

single factor, for instance technology. The Arabic and Chinese world did have printing technology at the same time or before the Europeans, but the new technology was not widely used and did not stimulate a revolutionary transformation in these societies (Huff 1993: 222–226). Many of the developments characterising the modernisation processes during this period, were aggregated and unintended consequences of individual actions. The classic analysis of this is Weber's treatise (1920) on the inter-institutional relationships between Protestantism and capitalism. His analysis, and its further development represents one of the most robust insights in modern sociology, able to compete with well-established theories in the natural sciences (see Boudon 1986: 145–150, 190–197). Another classic example of such paradoxical developments is the productive relationship between Protestantism - especially in its puritan variants - and the emergence of modern natural science. Science did not emerge in spite of religion, but because of it (Merton 1938, 1968: part IV).

### **The three transformations and historical projects of modernity**

In order to analyse the transition from pre-modern to modern society, Talcott Parsons distinguishes between three transformations (revolutions) - economic, political and 'educational' (1973: Chs. 7–9). An economic revolution led to market societies and industry; a political transformation created nation states, rule of law and democracy. Generally speaking, the 'educational' revolution refers to the development of school systems for entire populations, where the secular sciences increasingly constituted their primary knowledge base. These fundamental changes unfolded over centuries. They can also be described as complex, interrelated, unfinished historical projects (Habermas 1996b).

A fruitful element in Parson's conception of Western modernisation is the focus on three transformations and not the more usual two, namely the English industrial and the French, and the American political revolutions. Parson's typology fits into a general model of modern societies consisting of three institutional spheres: economy, politics and civil society. The latter is heterogeneous, covering such institutions as families, universities, religious associations, schools, voluntary associations and mass media. In the terminology of Daniel Bell (1979), this is the realm of 'culture'. Instead of Parson's 'educational' revolution we can more generally talk about a sociocultural transformation, referring to a broad conception of civil society and the possibilities for 'rationalising' and 'modernising' its different institutions, practices and norms.

We can distinguish between different historical projects of modernity, consisting of three inter-related basic projects for the economy, state and civil society. The ‘enlightenment project’ primarily refers to ‘rationalisation’ of civil society and covers a broad range of fields. Examples are norms and values regulating behaviour in primary groups, norms related to freedom of speech, institutions like education, science, religion and art.

Here, the term ‘enlightenment’ is used in two different meanings. Firstly, the term refers to a specific historical period in a region. In that way we speak of the Age of Enlightenment in Europe, starting with the English Glorious Revolution in 1688, and ending with the French Revolution a century later. Understood in this way, the Age of Enlightenment belongs to the past in this region. In other nations of the world, such as India or South-Korea, the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be characterised as such an Age. Global developments during the last 150 years have made it clear that we have to distinguish between multiple Modernities (Sachenmaier et al. ed. 2002, Eisenstadt 2004), and not treat the Western version as the only one. Secondly, ‘Enlightenment’ can also be used to refer to a specific, ongoing, historical project, requiring to be actively maintained, regained and developed.

### **From the esoteric to the exoteric through communication in publics**

Scientific institutions were essential in the formation and development of the new societies in early modern Europe (Weber 1920, Merton 1938, Habermas 1984/1987). The activities in academies and universities were esoteric. But the operations were also exoteric, motivated and designed so as to disseminate knowledge within society at large, both to be useful in economy, the military, politics, and civil society, and to stimulate socio-cultural modernisation generally. A cultural ambition in the European enlightenment period was, for example, to combat superstition of all sorts and stimulate tolerance between different religions.

The classic argument for the exoteric task of scientists was given by the towering figure of Enlightenment philosophy and social theory, Immanuel Kant. It is too often forgotten how essential Kant - as theorist of science, as moral philosopher and as social and political theorist - is for later developments in sociology. Kant is not only central in the German tradition but also an essential figure in American sociology (see Levine 1995: 253–54, 181–211). In his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant insists that scientific disciplines also are *exoteric*. He talks about ‘that in

/science/ which everyone necessarily has an interest' (1781: 658). I take that to refer to our deep-seated shared knowledge-interests in relation to nature, society and culture. Kant not only presented ambitions for a future historical project. He also reflected on what had already been practised in centres of modernity, be it in London, Glasgow, Amsterdam, Berlin, Copenhagen or Philadelphia.

Communication, reception and discussion of scientific insights require adequate arenas and complementary roles, making possible the translation from esoteric to exoteric languages, from specialists to lay persons. Characteristic of modernisation is the creation of a peculiar new mode of social interaction. Habermas identified this as private people meeting in public forums (*Öffentlichkeiten*) to discuss issues of common interest. Publics were communication contexts characterised by a high degree of egalitarianism, openness for all kinds of topics of common interest and the opening for news people to participate in more inclusive publics, for instance as readers of periodicals (Habermas 1989: 36–37). The peculiar aspect of this new form of social coordination, was that the interaction should primarily be regulated by a specific 'mechanism', the force of the better argument, not by money, hierarchy, unquestionable religious beliefs, habits and traditions. If we say that exchange is a primary coordinating mechanism in the economy and (hierarchical) authority in the state apparatus, we can say that argumentation is a primary coordinating mechanism in civil society. Persuasion with public arguments is not only important in democratic discourse, but generally in opinion formation and interpersonal influence of all kinds.

Kant not only insisted on the motto *saupere aude*, dare to think for yourself, without being under tutelage of anyone (1784: 54); he also insisted on the importance of daring to think together with others, in dialogues and discussions in publics. His claim was based on a sociological understanding of the difficulty of thinking alone: 'It is difficult for each separate individual to work his way out of the immaturity which has become almost second nature to him'. Therefore, publics are essential, be they specialised in science or more general: 'There is more chance of an entire public enlightening itself. This is indeed almost inevitable, if only the public concerned is left in freedom' (Kant 1784: 54–55).

According to Habermas, such public forums did not exist in England before the end of the 1600s and in France until the beginning of the 1700s (1989: xvii). In his modern classic, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989/1962), Habermas primarily focused on publics connected to the arts and political discourse. He could also have focused

on science as a public in interaction with the surrounding society, on academics as public intellectuals.

### **The academic disseminator and debater in dialogue with cultural and political citizens**

The complex role-set anchored in the structural position of a contemporary university academic as a professor, also includes exoteric roles, such as being an expert (for instance a therapist or consultant), or contributor in cultural and political discourse. In such roles, the specialist has to be able to communicate with non-specialists, be they *clients* such as patients in psychological therapy, or organisational leaders wanting to improve the efficiency of their organisation, or cultural and political *citizens*.

When academics communicate with publics as intellectuals, they interact with other people in their roles as political and cultural citizens. The primary task is not to sell something or make something visible (PR), as may be reasonable and legitimate tasks for the same persons in other academic contexts. The task is to contribute with scientific knowledge to lay people outside of the scientific specialty, and to public discourse. ‘Lay’ people here includes all kinds of non-specialists, also specialists in other esoteric specialties than that focused, as for example geologists in relation to sociologists.

Any particular position in a social structure, such as a mother in a family, a nurse in a hospital or a professor in a university, is not the basis for just one role, but an ‘array of associated roles’ (Merton 1968: 423). The social status or position is the structural basis for a role-set. The mother is engaged not only in interaction with children, but also with her husband, the immediate family, friends and neighbours, to mention just some. The nurse regularly interacts with patients, different types of colleagues, leaders, or friends and family of the patient, where the different relationships require different abilities.

The structural position of the university academic, such as a professor in a research university, is the basis for a fivefold role-set. The academic is *researcher*, *teacher*, *intellectual* (populariser and participant in public discourse), *expert* in relationships with clients, and *member* of a disciplinary institution (with governance responsibilities) (Kalleberg 2000a: 229–32, 2005: 388). The roles in the set are interrelated and contain several sub-roles. The teacher role, for example, includes that of lecturer, supervisor, participant in seminars and censor.

In the exoteric conversations with people in broader publics, it is useful to distinguish between two sub-roles under the intellectual role, which we

can label disseminator and debater. The first has many traits in common with the teacher role. In the other, the academic contributes to public discourse, using his specialised knowledge in trying to convince other citizens participating in public discourse. There may be many kinds of contribution, for example clarifying concepts such as ‘terrorist’ or ‘criminal’, giving reliable documentation, taking a reasoned stand on critical issues, presenting solutions or seeking to introduce new themes on the public agenda. The ordinary academic role of public intellectual does not require high visibility in the most widely distributed mass media. Lecturing to local voluntary associations and participating in local discourses are good examples of being in the role of public intellectual.

The recipient role related to dissemination is similar to being an inquiring student. Many of us enjoy this role, for instance reading popular science articles by Steven Jay Gould. In the debater role, the academic tries to contribute to the definition of public situations. It is required that as an intellectual the academic is making active use of his specific knowledge and insight. Obviously, it can be difficult to draw the lines between a disciplinary role as debater, and a political role where the academic has moved out of the disciplinary status (position) to another status, that of being an ordinary, politically active citizen. We do not need to discuss that here; it is sufficient to note that it is possible to make such a distinction and also find clear cases.

When analysing sociologists and people from other disciplines among the social and cultural sciences, one would often have to place ‘dissemination’ or ‘popularisation’ in quotation marks, as they can only be analytically distinguished from their scientific contributions. Books and articles can simultaneously be excellent contributions to science, and readable material for a larger audience wanting to gain a reliable insight on important public issues. Four such examples are Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944), Robert Merton’s classic article from 1948 on self-fulfilling prophecies (1968: Ch. 13), Vilhelm Aubert’s *The Hidden Society* (1965) – for instance writing on the sociology of love - and Arlie Hochschild’s *The time bind: when work becomes home and home becomes work* (1997).

## **2. Establishing roles, institutions and traditions in early Scandinavian modernity**

The dominating intellectual figure in Denmark-Norway during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was Ludvig Holberg, an enormously productive scholar, essayist, playwright –and academic intellectual. From 1722, his

comedies, such as *Jeppe on the Hill*, have been regularly staged in Scandinavia. The first play staged in the autumn of 2007 at the National Theatre in Oslo, is one of Holberg's best known comedies, *Erasmus Montanus*. Outside Scandinavia, he is now only known by specialised scholars and a handful of enthusiasts in the general public. But there is no doubt about his historical influence, especially in the countries in the north-western corner of Europe. (Billeskov-Jansen 1973, Engelstad 1984, Rossel 1994, Langslet 2001).

### **Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754) as Denmark-Norway's first 'sociologist'**

Clearly, it is an anachronism to talk about Holberg as a sociologist. Comte invented the label 'sociology' in the 1830s in the same decade as William Whewell first coined the English word 'scientist', emulating the German *Wissenschaftler* (Merton 1997). The institutionalisation of the discipline in universities under the name of 'sociology', is generally a phenomenon belonging to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although the first courses, positions and institutions so designated came in the Mid-west of USA at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Sica 1983).

It is nevertheless common to refer to contributors as sociologists before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and with good reason. A discipline like sociology has a much longer intellectual than institutional history (Engelstad et al. 2005: Chs. 2, 3). Raymond Aron (1963) discusses Montesquieu (1689–1755) as the first sociologist in France, Habermas (1963) refers to 'the three great Scots' (Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson and John Millar) as transformers of moral philosophy into sociology in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Richard Olson (1993) discusses James Harrington (1611–1677) as the first sociologist. Donald Levine (1995) identifies several moral and political theorists in early modernity such as Machiavelli (1469–1527), Hobbes (1588–1679) and Kant (1724–1804), as cognitively essential for the different designs of the new discipline of sociology in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Holberg fits well into this company (Kalleberg 2006a). His basic understanding of man and society is articulated within the conceptual framework of natural law in the tradition of Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Samuel Pufendorf and Christian Thomasius. Using a conceptual and systematic apparatus explicated by Samuel Pufendorf (see Pufendorf 1673/1991), Holberg focuses on basic social processes of production and reproduction such as family relationships, socialisation of the newborn child, language, working life, reading publics and artistic and



scientific institutions. His book on natural law and the law of nations, *Naturens og Folkerettens Kundskab* (1716/1769), is a clear statement of his understanding of human beings, life in small groups, the main institutions in a nation state, and the relationships between sovereign states.

Holberg was born in Bergen on the western coast of Norway. At this time, Bergen was an important European trading city and the second largest city in Denmark-Norway. During Holberg's childhood, around half the city's population were non-Norwegians. His mother came from a family of business people and civil servants. Her father (young Holberg's grandfather) was Bishop of Bergen, one of the most powerful positions in the Lutheran state of Denmark-Norway. Holberg's father probably came from a community of small farmers further north in Norway. He had worked his way up from the status of an ordinary soldier to become a leading military officer, an unusual social mobility at that time.

Holberg went to a German elementary school in Bergen, and later to the old cathedral school – established in the 1150s – where he learned Latin. As a social theorist, Holberg had a clear understanding of the importance of childhood experiences, and was well aware of the influence of family circumstances and Bergen on his own mature academic habitus. In city life, and through family relations, Holberg was exposed to basic institutions and broad processes of modernisation, in a city situated in this macro-region aptly characterised as the 'cradle of capitalism' (Heerma 1997).

Holberg received his higher education at the University of Copenhagen (established in 1479). He studied theology in the North-European type of Lutheran Protestantism. He was proud of this education (Müller 1943: 80). During his whole working life, he was connected to this university in different professorships. He was unusually productive, publishing 20,000 pages, more than half of which can be characterised as historical writings. His *magnum opus* was the great Danish history (*Danmarks Riges Historie*), 2500 pages in three volumes, published in the 1730s. He described and explained historical developments up to the transition to enlightened absolutism in the 1660s. It was characterised by a strong generalising ambition, making it natural also to classify the work as general political sociology.

### **Scandinavian enlightenment and multiple modernities**

Too often, 'the Age of Enlightenment' is referred to in the singular, and all too often the French model is assumed to be the main model in European

development. In most contexts, however, it would be more appropriate to take England as *the* model, if one had to choose but one European model. It is generally more fitting to distinguish between different models of modernisation and enlightenment. There always were several projects of enlightenment in Europe. In the north-western part of Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, we can speak about English, French, German Dutch, Scottish and Scandinavian enlightenments, without being exhaustive (Porter 2001: 47 ff., Schneider ed. 2001: 9–24).

Science and enlightenment based on scientific knowledge were considered important in the cultural modernisation of all countries. But inter-institutional interdependencies were different, as for example the relationships between science and religion. Here, the contrast between England and France is striking. The French enlightenment was antagonistic towards an anti-modern catholic church, whereas ‘Enlightenment in Britain took place within, rather than against, Protestantism’ (Porter 2000: 99; see also Boudon 2001: 63–65, 135–139). The process of enlightenment in Scandinavia did not develop in fundamental opposition to religion, but fits into the German and British pattern.

Denmark-Norway and Sweden were important kingdoms in the northern part of Europe in this period. (Germany was unified as a modern nation as late as 1871.) Only the kingdom of Prussia had more soldiers per inhabitant than Denmark-Norway (Knudsen 2001: 45). In these Protestant nations universities were actively promoting enlightenment processes, not counteracting them as in Catholic countries. Holberg’s social base was a professorship. Samuel Pufendorf had been born in Saxony, but was a professor at the new university in Lund (Sweden) at the time when he published his great treatise on the law of nature and nations (1672), dedicated to the Swedish king Charles XI. Carl von Linné (1707–1778), the most famous individual in the Scandinavian Enlightenment, was a professor at Uppsala University.

### **The creation of roles and institutions: literary and reading publics**

During the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, publics (*offentligheter, publikum*) emerged in Denmark-Norway. One of these was anchored in a public theatre. Before the 1720s there was no theatre in Copenhagen. This was irritating for people in the leading strata, the social basis of the emerging *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*. In 1722, the first theatre was opened. It needed new plays where people could recognise themselves. During 3 years,

Holberg wrote 25 comedies, many of which have become classics. They were soon translated into German, and ‘until the last quarter of the eighteenth century Holberg dominated all German theatres.... Between 1748 and 1865, more than 2000 Holberg performances took place in Germany’ (Rossel (ed.) 1994: 83).

Holberg was a master in integrating enlightenment and entertainment. *Erasmus Montanus* concerns a student from a small village who has studied at the university in Copenhagen. He has learned so much that he is no longer able to understand the simple language and thoughts of his parents and friends. He seems to be transformed into an esoteric scientist on a higher level, and his simple name (Rasmus Berg) is consequently transformed into the Latin, Erasmus Montanus. The play demonstrates the perspective of the sociologist Holberg, focusing on the interdependence between science and other institutions. He is critical of the tendency in the university to focus on irrelevant issues, unproductive methods (disputations), and to be disinterested in the practical use of results.

Holberg did read, write and discuss in Latin, but generally chose to write in the vernacular, starting commencing with his first book in 1711. This reflected a language-change taking place in all the states in the macro region of north-western Europe. In this way, a large reading public was created, a phenomenon of basic importance for the broader modernisation processes. With this development, a new dialectic was created between authors and reading (and debating) publics. The written word and printing made possible large publics and stimulated clarification of arguments. In such discussions, new insights could be disseminated much more effectively than before. Holberg claimed that king and church should not be afraid of the new publics. They actually also made it easier to identify and reject false ideas. As he wrote: ‘that which is *published* by means of printing, immediately comes into the hands of everyone and can therefore immediately be repudiated’ (1931: 33).

The creation of reading publics is an example of reinforcing interdependencies between different groups in society, such as between printers with economic interests, technologists with inventions, business men where reading and writing capabilities were necessary for maintaining long-distance trade, publishers, authors, and religious people. The Bible was translated into the vernacular in this Protestant part of Europe. Everyone should be able to read for himself, not only be dependent on the interpretations of priests.

### **Scientific publics, academics as intellectuals, and the academic bundle**

The new sciences emerging during the scientific revolution were pure types of publics, regulated by the force of better arguments when functioning according to ambitions (Kalleberg 2007: 146). The archetype of these new academies was the Royal Society, established in London two decades before Ludvig Holberg was born.

Holberg was not only interested in the new scientific knowledge that was created in this early modern period; he was also an interested and interesting sociologist of science, identifying and analysing the institutional and cultural conditions for the new scientific communities. In several essays, he pointed to the effectiveness of the new academies as compared to the old universities. He emphasised that they were ‘societies’ (publics) where peers communicated with each other, so that everyone could observe experiments, control documentation and follow the logic of arguments. Tradition, revelation and feudal authority should no longer reign. Unfettered discussions should govern the formation and acceptance of opinions (1744: 277–281).

Holberg influenced the definition of the role-requirements associated with academic positions. More than any other individual in Scandinavia in early modernity, he defined the role of being a public intellectual as part of the regular role-set of Scandinavian academics. He had a clear understanding of the importance of developing and maintaining universities as ‘bundle institutions’, being responsible for several different tasks on different levels of complexity (see Kalleberg 2000a: 229–232). He argued against too much specialisation at the universities, and was critical of the new academies because they were specialised only for research. The older universities should instead learn from academies how to stimulate research and at the same time maintain their teaching and study functions (Holberg 1744: 279). Universities in that meaning are indispensable for national progress, he claimed.

Holberg insisted on the importance of integrating scientific knowledge with self-knowledge and balanced personal development. He practised the unity of the sciences, himself publishing in fields that today were located in a large number of different social and cultural disciplines, even in veterinary medicine. The four unities we today one-sidedly associate with Humboldt and the university reform in Berlin in 1810 - the unity of science and teaching, science and enlightenment, science and personal development and the unity of the sciences – actually emerged over a long period of time in many universities in north-west Europe (Kalleberg

2000a: 229-237). In Copenhagen Holberg presented a clear conception of this four-fold bundle of tasks during the 1740s.

### **Holberg as scholarly critic of slavery and the subjection of women**

Holberg insists that there is, and should be, a 'natural equality' among people. He argues that every human being can and should claim the same degree of respect and dignity. With such a normative basis, he rejects the old Greek conception of natural slaves. Holberg notes that there are states in the Christian world where slavery is practised. He is critical of this and insists that they are in error, both as human beings and as Christians (Holberg 1716: 112–115). Denmark-Norway was the first country in the world to forbid slave trade. The political background for the ban on the Atlantic slave trade and its actual effects are complex, but it seems reasonable to assume that the writings of Holberg had influenced changes in public opinion on the issue of slavery and the slave trade. (See Hopkins 2000, Knudsen 2002: 61 and Kalleberg 2006a: 120–122).

Holberg was an early feminist. In his scholarly works and his fiction he insisted that women were as intelligent as men and that they could hold the same positions. He referred to equality among human beings, but was also as a typical Protestant, passionately interested in usefulness and the efficient use of human resources. The feminist theme was an important element in his internationally best-known book during his lifetime, the utopian novel about Niels Klim's travel to the underworld (1741). It is a book similar to Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Niels Klim visits several different nations located inside our own planet, which gives the reader a comparative perspective on existing European societies. In this manner, Holberg was able to criticise institutions in Scandinavia and the rest of Europe, be it the unfruitful disputations in the universities, the discrimination of women, irrationalities in Protestant and Catholic doctrines or the lack of religious tolerance.

### **3. Public intellectuals in Norwegian nation building from 1814 to 1905**

As a result of the peace treaties after the Napoleonic wars, the union between Denmark and Norway was terminated and a union between Norway and Sweden established in 1814. Sweden was the leading nation

but Norway had a high degree of independence. The union lasted until 1905 when Norway achieved full sovereignty.

### **Rapid modernisation**

During the period of Swedish rule, Norwegians experienced a rapid modernisation process characterised by democratisation, economic growth and cultural modernisation. At the time of independence, Norway was an agricultural and fishing society, with an unusually large proportion of independent farmers, larger than in any other European nation with the possible exception of Switzerland. As an agrarian democracy, Norway was similar to the United States of America. When Norway got its own constitution in 1814, between 30 and 40 per cent of Norwegian males acquired the right to vote and could elect the members of parliament (the *Storting*). This was by far the largest proportion anywhere in Europe at that time (Stråth 2005:84). During the whole union period, Norway was generally ahead of Sweden in democratic development, with its liberal constitution, the abolishment of nobility in 1821, the powerful role of independent farmers and the early introduction of parliamentarianism (1884), and universal suffrage for men (1898).

Economically, both nations experienced economic growth, and very strong expansion in several sectors. In the 1870s, gross national product per capita was higher in Norway than in Sweden (Sejersted 2005: 520), which again became the case at the end of the twentieth century. In 1875, Norway had become the third largest shipping nation in the world, being exceeded by only the UK and the US (Hodne 1981: 136). External factors, such as the British abolition of its Navigation Act in 1849, created new possibilities for growth in neighbouring nations. Norwegian politicians, stimulating a characteristic blend of free markets and state interventions, were efficient in grasping the possibilities. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Norwegian gross national product was probably only a little below the west European average, implying that Norway was one of the richest countries in the world even at that time.

A modern infrastructure for cultural modernisation and political democratisation was built, covering such institutions as schools, newspapers, independent associations of all kinds, scientific institutions and institutions for art. Norway got its own university in 1811, which became essential for modernisation and nation building. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was characterised by cultural creativity in many fields, such as the arts, theatre, music, literature and painting. There was a spectacular cultural productivity in the small nation. The playwright,

Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906), is the outstanding example. If Søren Kierkegaard is Denmark's gift to world culture, Ibsen is Norway's. (On Ibsen, see Meyer 1967, Moi 2006). Ibsen stimulated later generations of Norwegian sociologists. That can be seen in their interest for the hidden society, tensions between ideals and realities included, and in their passion for doing research on serious social problems that should be discussed in democratic publics. (On Ibsen's relevance for contemporary organisation studies, see March 2007.) Authors like the Nobel prizewinners in literature, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Knut Hamsun, the composer Edvard Grieg and the painter Edvard Munch, were important contributors in this cultural landscape. (See Sørensen & Stråth (eds.) 1996, Slagstad 1998, 2004, Prideaux 2005, Carley 2006.)

The cultural modernisation took place on a broad scale. One important indicator of this is literacy-rates in the population at large. Around 1850, everyone in Norway under 50 was able to read and write, a socio-cultural achievement perhaps at the top of the European experience (Berend and Ránki 1982: 56). According to the same authors (8982: 56), by mid-nineteenth century the number of illiterate adults in Scandinavia was no more than 30 per cent, the lowest in the Europe. In England, the level of illiteracy was 33 per cent; in France, between 40 and 45 per cent. In Southern Europe the illiteracy-rate was 75 to 80 per cent; in the Balkans 95 per cent.

### **Eilert Sundt: The disseminator and the role of self-teaching**

Eilert Sundt (1817–1875) belongs to the same generation as Karl Marx and Herbert Spencer. He was academically trained in theology at the University of Oslo, but mostly worked as an empirical sociologist. For two decades, he was financed by the Norwegian parliament to investigate social problems. Sundt published an impressive series of books, articles and reports during the 1850s and 60s on themes including vagabonds, marriage, death rates, sanitary conditions, living and working conditions. His main subject was the living conditions and mores of common people in Norway.

He focused on contemporary problems, but was always aware of the importance of historical tradition. He had a keen eye for the force of structural factors combined with an understanding of the responsibility of individuals. Sundt was both an excellent field worker and statistician, and had an unusual ability to combine quantitative and qualitative data. He made the breakthrough to a more sophisticated type of statistic, where he was also able to avoid the untenable determinism of Quetelet. Lie and

Roll-Hansen (2001: 60) argue that Sundt laid the foundation for the development of representative sampling in the Norwegian Central Bureau of Statistics in the 1880s and 1890s. This was a path-breaking methodological improvement of international importance. According to Lie and Roll-Hansen (2001: 155), the first studies in the world based on representative sampling were done in Norway during these years. Jon Elster (1983: 135-138) describes Sundt as an interesting contributor to the explanation of technical change using a type of evolutionary theory based on 'natural selection', possibly as a direct inspiration from Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859). Sundt's books are well documented, highly informative, and a pleasure to read. It is no anachronism to characterise him as a sociologist, although he probably never used that label in reference to his own work. His characteristic blend of qualitative and quantitative data, constant comparisons, preferred themes – the hidden society, ideals and realities – and constructive attitude, represent the best in Norwegian sociology (Sundt 1857, Christophersen 1962, Stenseth 2001, Engelstad et al. 2005: 74-77).

Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Norway was a period for the creation of all kinds of new associations on the local and national levels. Sundt was one of the founders of *Selskabet for Folkeoplysningnes Fremme* (Association for the Encouragement of Public Enlightenment) in 1852. Its most important means of communication was the journal *Folkevennen* (The Friend of the People). In periods, he both chaired the association and edited the journal, and he himself wrote a large part of the content. Sundt strongly believed in the project of enlightenment and the usefulness of problem oriented, social research. His ambition was that better knowledge and insight should provide a knowledge base for people, enabling them to improve their own situation with their own resources, both materially and culturally.

Sundt notes (1859: 116) that all books had become 'peoples books', as books in his time were no longer written in Latin but in the vernacular. At the same time, the differences in degrees of difficulty and esotericism obviously existed. Sundt wanted people that wrote in his enlightenment journal to find a middle way. He was critical of the condescending simplifications of so-called 'peoples literature'. The author should not merely 'write down', but write in an egalitarian, direct way, respecting the interested reader's intelligence. That this was possible, even to write eminently readable books that at the same time were excellent scientific contributions, he himself convincingly demonstrated.

Sundt wrote in such a way that the interested layperson could generally read his texts. They exerted a strong influence on the self-definitions and identity-formation of Norwegians. His work was organised as a type of



contract research, financed by parliament, and influenced the political and civil-servant elites and their definitions of situations. Sundt wanted to inspire the Norwegian people as an active reading public. In 1859, he wrote about ‘self-teaching’ (auto-didacticism) and public libraries. He insisted on the importance of using public money to build libraries, and gave recommendations on books to buy. He insisted on the importance of reading with the aim of self-enlightenment. If reading was additionally experienced as a form of entertainment (*underholdning*), that was all the better.

Sundt started his career being paternalistically critical of the lower classes, but ended up from the mid-1860s as being more critical of established academic professions and his own social stratum, with their upper class ethnocentrism, making it difficult or impossible for medical doctors and folklorists to see the rationality in the mores of common people. This created conflicts and contributed to a process where parliament ceased financing his research. Sundt finished his working-life as a priest.

### **Sigurd Ibsen: the Debater**

Sigurd Ibsen (1859–1930) belonged to the same generation as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and George Herbert Mead. His father was Henrik Ibsen. The even more famous author – at that time – Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, became his father in law. Sigurd was a brilliant student in Germany and Italy. He studied law in Munich and Rome and completed a doctorate degree in law in Rome in 1872, where his thesis focused on the role of a second house (chamber) in representative government. Not yet being 23 years old, he had to get a special permission for receiving this academic degree.

Ibsen was a political sociologist and general social theorist, influenced by Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer and Karl Marx. He believed in evolution, social progress and the importance of an enlightened, liberal elite, and regarded the social sciences as essential for modernisation. He was a thinker in the Enlightenment tradition, actively critical of the later Romantic tradition with its focus on ethnic and linguistic solidarity, and not the more abstract solidarity between citizens (*demos*) (cf. Brunkhorst 2005). For most of his adult life, he was a *freischwebende* intellectual. During some years he held important positions as a civil servant and politician, the highest rank being the Norwegian prime minister in Stockholm, in the dramatic period between 1903 and 1905, where a war between the two nations could have broken out.

In the mid-1890s Ibsen aimed to become the first Norwegian professor in sociology. As part of Oslo University's assessment, he had to give a series of public lectures. They were widely attended and discussed. However, the evaluation board rejected his application. The main argument was probably that it did not think that the new discipline of sociology yet had become a mature science. Leading members probably also disagreed with his political views on the union between Norway and Sweden, resented his criticism of established disciplines (as law), and were perhaps sceptical of Ibsen's prospects as a creative scientist.

As an academic intellectual, Sigurd Ibsen was a debater. Successful debaters may define situations in consequential ways, using their scientific knowledge to take a stand on issues on the public agenda, and to be able to put new issues on the agenda. Ibsen was exceptionally successful in influencing Norwegian politics between 1890 and 1905. He achieved this through the publication of books, articles in widely-read journals, series of articles in newspapers, and speeches in political and civil society associations.

In a series of newspaper articles commencing in the spring of 1890, he defined the design of the union with Sweden as an abnormality (Stråth 2005: 341). Both his academic background and his experiences from representing Norway abroad, including Stockholm and Washington DC, made it easier for him to see that Norway did not have an adequate representation of its interests abroad, for instance its shipping-interests. He created a political basis for unification of the Liberal Party (*Venstre*), but he did not have party politics as an important personal motive.

Ibsen used his knowledge of European politics and political history, international comparisons and his own experience from diplomatic positions. He criticised the Swedish tendency to disregard Norwegian foreign affairs interests. But this was primarily an attack on Norwegian politicians in the Liberal Party, not seeing that the Norwegian situation had to be changed within a reformed union or as an independent nation.

From 1898, he argued that an independent Norway should continue as a monarchy, with its own king. He did not, and could not, hide his own republicanism, but by referring to the need for national unity and political legitimacy in the wider European context made a convincing case for a Norwegian monarchy. There is no doubt that Ibsen strongly influenced the political transformation that led to the peaceful dissolution of the union and the establishment of a new European monarchy. The Swedish historian, Bo Stråth, characterises Sigurd Ibsen as 'the architect behind what happened in 1905 (2005: 448), as the 'real driving force with regard to ideas and initiatives in Norwegian union policy' (2005: 317).

Langslet (2004: 10) uses two concepts developed by Ibsen (1911), distinguishing between ‘pathfinder’ (*banebryter*) and ‘implementer’ (*fullfører*). Ibsen comments that the persons first identifying problems and solutions tend to be forgotten, whereas those who accomplish the tasks tend to be remembered. Sigurd Ibsen was conspicuously forgotten in Norway after 1905.

#### **4. Public intellectuals in the age of 20<sup>th</sup> century social democracy**

In a recent publication on Norwegian and Swedish history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Sejersted aptly labels this period in Scandinavian history ‘the age of social democracy’ (Sejersted 2005: 9–20). The Scandinavian countries belong to the success stories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In their different ways, they managed to develop and maintain open and competitive economies, democratic institutions, impressive welfare arrangements and well-functioning cultural institutions. It has often been commented that the Scandinavian states are open economies (Katzenstein 1985); they are also open cultures. Because of their small populations, it has been indispensable for them to learn from the intellectual centres in the larger nations, be it Britain, France, Germany or the USA (Engelstad et al. 2005: Ch. 3). During the last decade there has been renewed international interest in the Scandinavian model(s), not least because of its ability to uphold a balance between economic productivity and flexibility, democratic participation and inclusive social welfare arrangements with relatively little inequality. (See, for instance, Dreier 2007 for comparisons of nations.)

The European social democratic labour movements have been mass movements believing in the project of modernity. Cultural modernisation has been an important aim, where education and science are essential. An element in Norwegian social democrats’ belief in science has been the trust in the social sciences as instrumental for planning and problem-solving. These sciences have consequently been well equipped with resources (Slagstad 2004, Engelstad et al. 2005: 80–84).

The first department of sociology at a Norwegian university was established in 1950 (Kalleberg 2000b). As in other European countries, the institutional history is much shorter than the intellectual one. Before World War II, there were individuals with academic degrees in sociology from Germany such as Ewald Bosse who achieved his doctorate at the University in Kiel in 1912 (Ferdinand Tönnies as supervisor), and Arvid Brodersen from Berlin in 1930 (with Werner Sombart as one *Doktorvater*)

(see my articles on Bosse and Brodersen in Arntzen (ed.) 2005). There were Norwegian academics in disciplines such as law, history and linguistics who were also knowledgeable about sociology. Examples are the influential professors Fredrik Stang (law), Halvdan Koht (history), Edvard Bull (history) and Axel Sommerfelt (linguistics). Stang, Bull and Sommerfelt established 'The Norwegian Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture', employing a sociological perspective in the Durkheim tradition as their basic frame of reference. One mission of this institute was to contribute to public enlightenment and stimulate peace initiatives in a devastated Europe after World War I (see Holmås in this book).

### **Disseminators and debaters in contemporary Norwegian science**

The intellectual roles of disseminator and debater are well institutionalised in Norwegian science in general. To my knowledge, there is only one set of national surveys in the OECD area documenting this important field of academic activity in a representative way. Three surveys cover all academics in the four universities of Norway in the 1990s – Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim and Tromsø – covering two three year- periods ending in 1991 and 2000 (Kyvik 2005).

During the three years between 1998 and 2000, half the academics published at least one popular article and a third participated in public discourse. There were differences between the fields. Academics in the humanities were the most active as disseminators; two-thirds had participated and on average 3.3 popular science articles were published by each academic. University academics in technological fields were the least active, where a third had contributed, and on average each academic published 1.1 articles. Sixty per cent of social scientists had popularized research with an average of 2.4 articles of this kind (Kyvik 2005). The studies document that the level of activity was stable between 1980 and 2000.

Scientists are visible in different publics, also with more types of contribution than written texts of different formats. They may, for example, also give talks or lectures, and are interviewed and reported in mass media. Half of these Norwegian academics had been interviewed at least once, and their research reported in the media (Kyvik 2005). In total, 70% of Norwegian social scientists had either been interviewed or mentioned in mass media. In a study of 11 major newspapers in the beginning of the 1990s, it was documented that on average, these

newspapers had two articles daily covering social science research, appearing on the front page about once a fortnight. (For reference and other studies, see Kalleberg 2000a: 240–45.) In the period 1998–2000, social scientists at the four Norwegian universities published an average of 7.9 scientific articles, and 4.6 articles as ‘popularisers’ and debaters (Kyvik 2005:96). In these studies it has been documented that the academic role of being a public intellectual is widely practised in the Norwegian university system. There is probably no other nation within the OECD where these roles are more widely practised. But we need similar comparative studies to know if that is the case.

### **Vilhelm Aubert: The exemplary public intellectual**

If one had to choose only one Norwegian sociologist to represent Norwegian sociology after 1945, a good choice would be Vilhelm Aubert (1922–1988) (Kalleberg 2000b). He was academically trained in law and sociology. As a young student, he was active in the resistance against the German Nazi occupation of Norway from 1940 to 1945. He was appointed to an important position in what has been characterised as ‘the most organised and productive intelligence organisation operating during World War II’ (Kramish 1986:107). Aubert was internationally recognised for his scientific contributions, especially in the sociology of law (Aubert 1989). The chapter on secrecy in his renowned *The Hidden Society* (1965) is based on his own experiences from the resistance movement.

Aubert was both a disseminator and debater. By means of articles in newspapers, radio talks and public lectures, he remained actively engaged in public discourse throughout his life as a sociologist from the late 1940s and until his death. His range of topics was wide, reflecting his broad interests as a social scientist. He intervened in public discourses on public issues such as price and rationing bills, pacifism and conscientious objection to military service, equality and justice within the legal system, discrimination on the basis of class, sex and race (such as the discrimination of the Sámi minority in the north of Norway), political surveillance, national security, university and research policy, and the relationship between the developed and the developing countries.

A central event in the cultural and political life of Norway in the 1960s was the emergence of the inexpensive paperback book. A small, radical publishing house, Pax, was to play a central role in Norwegian civil society during the 1960s and 1970s, stimulating Norwegians as members of reading and debating publics. The very first Norwegian book that Pax published was Aubert’s *Likhet og rett* (Equality and Justice, 1964), a

critical study of class-prejudices in the Norwegian legal system. The book is an example of excellent popularisation of scientific research, disseminated in a publication that is also a scientific contribution.

Aubert's firm belief that social scientists should take part in public discourse can also be seen as a strategy for staying close to social reality in order to stimulate fruitful processes of inquiry and theory building in sociology. He insisted that 'social reality is the great teacher' (Aubert 1979: 3). He not only based his thinking in social reality through interviews, fieldwork and the use of primary material in archives, but also expected to acquire new sociological knowledge and insight from public discourse. This he did when, for instance, in the early 1950s he criticised right-wing social democrats for seeing communists and hidden conspiracies everywhere, not being able to differentiate between such phenomena and a well functioning liberal public sphere. Later, he generalised such criticism into sociological insights about 'Trojan horses' (Aubert 1982: Ch. 13).

Throughout three centuries, Norwegian sociologists—broadly understood – have contributed to the modernisation of the national economy, politics, law, social life and culture, of course most influential and visibly as one of the 'new' social sciences expanding after World War II. In his last book on *Continuity and Development in Law and Society* (1989), focusing on the long lines in the development of Norwegian society, Aubert, as a sociologist in the grand tradition, presented the Norwegian project of modernity:

Once the seminal idea that 'all men are created equal' came into the world and was embedded in pivotal social institutions like the judiciary, a one-way development was set in motion, notwithstanding that for a long time, the term 'all' as well as 'equal' have been given restrictive interpretations. Thus, although much of law may provide support for the *status quo* in the short and intermediate term, it has gradually, and in the long run, eroded the bases of legitimate social distinctions and hierarchies...inequalities cannot in public fora, be justified as natural, God-given, inborn or in themselves functional (1989: 22).

## **5. Institutional challenges in the unfinished project of Enlightenment**

One of the basic challenges in modern, pluralist societies is to develop and maintain a viable balance between the three basic orders (described in the first section of the article) and their subsystems. Markets, states and civil societies can all undermine and distort each other, hinted at with

catchwords like ‘political totalitarianism’, and ‘religious and market fundamentalism’. In contemporary liberal democracies, the commercial culture generated in the economic system also tends to undermine and distort the ethos of other institutions. Different terms are used to refer to such undesirable and often unintended inter-institutional influences, for instance ‘institutional imperialism’, ‘perversions’ or ‘colonisation’. The problem and challenge related to the relative balance between institutions is well known and discussed in different research traditions.<sup>1</sup> The cultural and political problems mentioned at the beginning of this chapter do not primarily reflect individual deficiencies, but deficiencies in institutions, their relative strength and legitimacy included.

Rationality in public discourse today – in Norway and other pluralist democracies – is under pressure from business enterprises commercialising public space, transforming cultural institutions into commercial entities, deforming enlightenment traditions into entertainment, and undermining publics as fruitful arenas for dialogue about cultural and political issues of general importance. A classic analysis of these phenomena is Habermas’s treatise, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962/1989). An essential element in his analysis here, further developed and improved in other contributions (1984, 1987, 1990, 1996, 2005b, 2006), is the identification of an institutional imbalance in Western societies: civil society is too weak in its relationships with state and market. Commercial (money) and hierarchical (power) norms are invading social orders which should primarily be regulated by arguments and solidarity.

What are some of the future challenges for Norwegian academics as public intellectuals? I conclude with six reflections on the individual and institutional character of the intellectual task, the importance of interdisciplinarity, the challenge to maintain forums for rational discussion of normative-empirical phenomena, productive relationships between science and schools, coordination with mass media and the design of a national infrastructure stimulating improved institutional balances and enlightened discourses.

As in other OECD countries, there is now a tendency in Norwegian science and research policy to misunderstand the intellectual task, either redefining it as a PR-function for individuals or institutions, or as the task of universities to contribute to economic growth (Kalleberg 2006b). Useful contributions to the economy and PR are legitimate academic tasks, related to the roles of expert and academic citizen in the fivefold role-set of academics. But as we have seen, the role as intellectual is something different. A necessary condition for the individual and institutional

contribution to cultural and public discourse is to have an adequate understanding of this academic task.

Many of the challenges facing us today cannot be mastered by only one discipline. In order to understand and counteract ecological problems, terrorism, or tendencies to overweight and obesity in a population, insights from several disciplines have to be integrated. Universities are strangely under-specialized 'bundle institutions' with all their disciplines, levels and tasks, and in relation to such complex challenges that could be used as an advantage (Kalleberg 2000a: 247–250). Universities can establish programs and arenas where specialists from different disciplines and institutions meet in order to document and analyse the problems. Such interdisciplinary arenas are also important as a way of cultivating scientific humility – recognising the intellectual limits of one's own discipline and creating a type of extended peer-review. The ordinary experience from such arenas is that they are also productive grounds for stimulating interest and discussions in the wider community. When natural scientists are able to speak so that scientists from the social and cultural disciplines understand them – and vice versa – most of the translation to a large interested public is achieved.

One has to acknowledge that such discussions are both empirical and normative. We have to find out what is feasible and what is desirable. Contributors to the normative turn in social theory such as Rawls, Habermas, Dworkin and Sen, have demonstrated that normative questions can also be discussed rationally. Interdisciplinary, normative-empirical discussions should be stimulated. In our context, it is interesting to note that Holberg practised social criticism and normative argumentation as an important element in his academic work. In this respect he is closer to contemporary social scientists after the normative turn commencing in the 1970s than social scientists of half a century ago who insisted on a non-cognitivist position, implying that normative questions could not be discussed with intersubjectively valid reasons (Kalleberg 2007: 152–156).

When discussing the intellectual task of science institutions, there is a tendency only to discuss the mass media. But in many ways, schools are the most important socio-cultural institutions in modern societies, the only ones that actually can compete with the family in forming our personalities. In the classroom, it is determined what will be remembered or forgotten in our cultural and political traditions. Here, basic rationality standards are internalised in us – our willingness to listen to argument and defend and modify our own positions in debate – a citizen ethos so essential for cultural reproduction and deliberative democracy.



The mass media are obviously essential elements in a discussion of the intellectual task of academics and academies. An essential point is to establish, maintain and develop publics, from the local to the international level, where participants are required to present, defend, develop and reject reasoned arguments. A concrete example is an institution in many larger Norwegian newspapers, the daily 'chronicle' (*kronikk*). This is an open, public forum where political and cultural citizens present a longer, reasoned argument on a specific issue. University academics are productive participants in this open public space. Perhaps the most important challenge today is to create more adequate fora for such discussions where we are 'forced' to argue and listen to arguments, not merely declaring given opinions and preferences. An inspiration can also be taken from the field of public journalism in the USA, the cooperation between local radio and television, civil society institutions and local institutions for education (Friedland 2003).

Democratic states have an interest in safeguarding and maintaining an adequate institutional infrastructure for public discourse and the development of enlightened understanding (Dahl 1989, Habermas 1996a). Paragraph 100 of the Norwegian constitution, concerning freedom of expression, was amended in 2004 (NOU 1999(27), NOU 2005). The most important new clause declared: 'It is the responsibility of the authorities of the State to create conditions that facilitate open and enlightened public discourse'. The interesting thing is that the new element in the constitution is focused on the infrastructural and not only individual conditions for enlightened public understanding. Institutions are evaluated and supported in order to stimulate enlightened discourse.

The low degree of institutionalisation of the intellectual task of universities and other scientific institutions in Norway as well as other countries in the OECD, is highly problematic. It is an example of institutional misconduct when evaluated on the basis of standards for sustainable cultural and democratic discourse (Kalleberg 2000a: 245–50). In our context, it is interesting to note the developments in the Norwegian legislation concerning these tasks as formulated for institutions for higher education. The task was first formalised as required by law at a late stage, half a century ago. The requirements have been made more explicit in the most recent Acts requiring that the institutions shall disseminate results from research to a broad public (NOU 2003 [25]). In addition, it is required that institutions shall develop an infrastructure, making it easier for academic staff and students to participate as debaters in public discourse. It is argued in the public hearing prior to formulation of the Act that academics in institutions of higher education should relate to

important discussions taking place in society. ‘Universities and colleges represent through their independence .....competent and impartial institutions that give necessary correctives and nuances to public discourse’ (NOU 2003 [25]: 178). To generate new social realities, this understanding has to be implemented in institutional and inter-institutional arrangements in different local contexts and actually practised by dedicated individuals.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Examples are political-economic theory as Dahl (1989), Lindblom (2001) and Lane (2005); the new institutionalism of March and Olsen (1995); social theory such as Habermas (1984, 1987, 1996); Bell’s (1979) analysis of capitalism; organization theory as Mintzberg (1983, 1996); structural sociology as Merton (1968, 1975).

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