



# **Norway – National Report on Disciplinary Barriers between the Social Sciences and the Humanities**

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## Introduction

This report is part of the EU-financed project *Changing Knowledge and Disciplinary Boundaries Through Integrative Research Methods in the Social Sciences and Humanities* (see [www.hull.ac.uk/researchintegration](http://www.hull.ac.uk/researchintegration)). The project is a collaboration between nine universities in eight countries in Europe. In this first stage of the project we focus on the national situation for interdisciplinary research and education, interdisciplinary in the sense of cutting across the boundaries between the social sciences and the humanities. In other words we shall examine interdisciplinarity at different levels in the Norwegian system of higher education and research, analysing the barriers for different types of interdisciplinary work.

## Methodological remarks

Since higher education in Norway was completely reformed in 2003 – in accordance with the Bologna Process – it is this new situation that has been our point of departure. The focus of this report is how disciplines and interdisciplinarity have been done in the turmoil of this change.

Searching for interdisciplinarity in the abstract, as we have, might give the impression that interdisciplinarity is much more strongly in evidence than might actually be the case if one looked at it at the level of practice. But since the aim of this report is to say something about the policy on disciplinization and interdisciplinarity, as this is expressed not only in texts but also through different setups and organizations, we have found it important to focus on the actual manifestations of interdisciplinarity. Our aim was to see if the educational reform introduced in 2003 – the so-called Quality Reform (*Kvalitetsreformen*) – has contributed to an opening or closing of disciplinary boundaries. Other aims, though, more thorough investigations – especially of praxis – and other methods and materials might have produced a different picture. The picture that we have produced is for example likely to have been brighter regarding interdisciplinarity, if we had given the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) the focus it probably deserves. However, for practical reasons this was not possible here.

It is also important to stress the type of data that we have used and the methodological challenges we have encountered. Three types of data have been our major sources: *official documents*, *web sites* and *interviews*. The documents are for the most part Commissioned Reports and White Papers of the Norwegian Parliament. In addition we have looked at other documents – for example evaluations – of the various parts and institutions in the Norwegian education and research systems. The web sites referred to are basically the official sites for the various bodies inside these systems. These two – the documents and the Internet – were the two major sources of information at the start of the project. The kind of information that is posted on official web sites represents the formal outline of how institutions and different systems are supposed to work, and rarely offers information regarding the concrete functioning of the systems in practice. In other words, there might be quite fundamental discrepancies between discourse and praxis. This is also why interviews were carried out in the course of the project. The chances of misinterpretations and incorrect descriptions were hereby

reduced.

The following “resource persons” have been interviewed: the rector at the University of Oslo, faculty representatives, the head of research at the Centre for Women’s Studies and Gender Research, representatives of staff and administration at the Research Council of Norway, researchers/staff and students in different disciplines in social science and humanities, and last but not the least, a teacher at an upper secondary school. However, the responsibility for any misinterpretations of our data – either regarding the documents or the interviews – rests formally with us.

Taking these reservations into consideration, we hope that this report can trigger further questions about and investigations into the makings of disciplines and interdisciplinarity in different contexts.

## **Background – the historical and political context**

Norway is a young nation. It was not until 1905 that it was proclaimed an independent kingdom. Before that, Norway was governed by Sweden and Denmark. Lacking nobility and feudal hierarchies and structures, its small population – consisting of farmers, fishermen and merchants – was less differentiated than was the case in most countries in Europe at the beginning of the previous century. The population is still small, only 4.5 millions, but it is spread along a long coastline, where the main means of subsistence still are shipping and fishing and now also oil. Industry came late and is – except for the new oil industry – of a small-scale character – compared to its neighbour, Sweden. For topographic reasons (mountains and fjords), agriculture is also small-scale compared to its other neighbour, Denmark.

This “backward” situation at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century naturally affected matters of education. Higher education often meant going to Copenhagen, and schooling was on the whole scarce and required travelling. When building a new and modern nation, education was accordingly a key issue.

Norway’s first university, the Royal Fredrik’s University, with four faculties (theology, medicine, law and philosophy) was established in 1811, three years before the constitution of Norway was written.<sup>1</sup> The close connection between science and politics – often manifested in the very same persons – stressing education both for the bourgeoisie and for the people (that is education reforms from above was combined with education reforms from below), are corner stones in the Norwegian house of knowledge. This combination became characteristic for the development of the Norwegian nation. It is even stated that if one were to pick only *one* word to characterize Norwegian history for the last two centuries, it would be “educational revolution”<sup>2</sup>. Combining political economy, statistics and law, like Schweigaard did in his positions as professor and parliamentarian in 1840, founded a tradition which formed Norwegian governing ideology for the next 150 years.

Eilert Sundt (who died in 1875), the father of Norwegian sociology, took a stance for the perspective from below, in stressing people’s experiences as the base for knowledge and political action against so-called expertise and traditional science as a tool

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the following account is mainly based on NOU 2000: 14, appendix 1: “The house of knowledge in the Norwegian system”, by Rune Slagstad.

<sup>2</sup> NOU 2000: 14, p. 434, our translation.

for ruling. This was part of the historical background from which social sciences entered the scene in the 1950s. Slagstad (2000) claims that the social sciences were split in two – science of ruling (economics and pedagogy) and science of opposition. Sociology and philosophy, belonging to the latter category, got their institutional centre at the Institute for Social Research (ISF), established in 1950, where science from below, from the perspective of the ruled, was developed and used in empirical research. The rest, the story of the problem-oriented empirical perspective and its dominance within Norwegian sociology, is common knowledge among Norwegian sociologists, thanks to Lars Mjøset (1991). That – and here we quote Slagstad – "this oppositional social science research got its culmination in the new women's research, where the Norwegian milieu belonged to the international avant-garde"<sup>3</sup> is maybe less known. It is also worth stressing the connections between philosophers, lawyers and social scientists from the 1950s and onward, which granted social science its specific character. Reflexivity, moral issues and ethics were accordingly raised as key issues thirty years before Anthony Giddens and others made it a topic on the international scene. And when the University of Tromsø was established in 1968 all the different social science disciplines were gathered in one department, the Department of Social Sciences, which also housed history and philosophy. The University of Tromsø with its interdisciplinary organization, education and research, and its stated aim to respond to the needs of the community, is as such an example of this grassroots-oriented tradition.

The so-called Labour Party State after 1945 was, it is said, "a political regime dressed in social science"<sup>4</sup>. The welfare state was shaped by the mobilization of the social sciences. This knowledge regime was kept even after the Labour Party lost its power, in 1965. A new knowledge regime was however signalled in the late 1980s, through Gudmund Hernes, Minister of Education, Research and Church Affairs. The university was now to be less "populist" and more professional, with a division of labour between the university colleges – which were to take on the education of the professions – and the universities<sup>5</sup>.

The Norwegian educational revolution was shaped by the combination of two traditions, the Anglo-American and the German-Continental, the first representing social usefulness (*samfunnsnytt*) while the other represents social intellectualism (*samfunnsdannelse*). After World War II, the Anglo-American tradition gained the upper hand, manifesting itself through, among other things, the establishment of a variety of institutes for applied research. A division of labour regarding research was hereby established. The research institutes were to take on applied research while the universities' main responsibility was to be basic research.

Before describing the educational reforms relevant to the present organization into disciplines in education and research, let us try to summarize some characteristics of the Norwegian situation that we believe might favour an interdisciplinary development. These are the

- lack of a long disciplinary history,
- lack of a feudal hierarchy,

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<sup>3</sup> Slagstad 2000, p. 63, our translation.

<sup>4</sup> NOU 2000: 14, p. 434, our translation.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 12 for details.

- close connections between politics and science,
- few people with higher education, scarce financial resources, etc.

These seem to have favoured a grassroots-oriented development of the sciences, in particular in the social sciences and the humanities. A problem-oriented empiricism (in contrast to positivistic empiricism) has guaranteed an un-dogmatic gaze where the topic and not the discipline is the starting point. A foundation for interdisciplinary work was thereby laid which was also implemented within the disciplines. An example is women's law at the Faculty of Law at the University of Oslo. Even though there are of course also other paths in the development of higher education and research, which result in patterns more similar to those in other countries, these mentioned here are specific to Norway and of particular relevance in the discussion around interdisciplinarity. The vital question then is if the foundation for this approach is still there and if the reforms of the last decades have undermined or favoured this orientation. Or are there perhaps new reasons for working interdisciplinarily? Maybe the reforms in themselves represent such an opening or a possibility for change towards interdisciplinarity?

# 1. The relationship between state and education

The relationship between state and education in Norway is a close one. First of all, compared to some other countries in Europe, the education system is for the most part public. From the age of six, when the children start school, to the age of 19, when they either go on to one of the institutions of higher education or start working, the vast majority of Norwegian children go to a public (state driven) school. Approximately 98 per cent of children at primary and lower secondary levels and 96 per cent of upper secondary school pupils attend schools run by the local authorities<sup>6</sup>. The private schools are regarded primarily as a supplement to local authority schools. In the higher education system there are more privately run institutions, but all of these get at least a part of their funding from the state. This chapter focuses on the level of ministerial involvement in the decision-making processes at the various institutions of education.

## Present educational reforms

In Norway, just like in Sweden, an adoption of the American high school system was implemented in the 1970s and 1980s. Freedom of choice and flexibility diminished the pupils' affinity to and identity with particular subject/disciplines<sup>7</sup>. "In a couple of years Sweden and Norway had taken farewell from their own traditions which before the time of Americanization had linked us to the European continent, (...) in no other European country was the Americanisation of school politics as thoroughly implemented as in Sweden and Norway"<sup>8</sup>. The school reform of 1994 is considered to be the (present) end station of this process. The reform further reduced the separation between practical and theoretical subjects by invoking a shared frame where so-called "general subjects" were given increased importance. This enabled those pupils with a major in practical subjects to enter university studies. We shall return to the question whether or not these changes and reforms have favoured interdisciplinary thinking and dispositions among the younger generations.

In 1987 a committee was appointed to investigate higher education and present an overview which was supposed to result in a more "efficient" division of labour between the different institutions in higher education<sup>9</sup>. One year later, in 1988, the report *Med viten og vilje (With Knowledge and Will)*<sup>10</sup> was published, suggesting an integrated system – the Norway Net (*Norgesnett*) – based on competition and division of labour. Research competence was to be strengthened by specialization and concentration in specific milieus, i.e. the universities each were to have their profiles and their special competences. And there was to be a division of labour between the universities and the university colleges, where the latter were to be in charge of the education of the professions. Education at Masters and PhD levels was generally restricted to the

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<sup>6</sup> [www.odin.no/ufd](http://www.odin.no/ufd).

<sup>7</sup> NOU 2000: 14, p. 478.

<sup>8</sup> Rudeng cited by Slagstad, NOU 2000: 14, p. 478, our translation.

<sup>9</sup> NOU 2000: 14, p. 61.

<sup>10</sup> This is the NOU 1988: 28.

universities, as a guarantee of quality. This was also a criterion for the categorization of institutions as universities or university colleges. Parliament decided upon and implemented, in accordance with these suggestions, a law to rule all institutions of higher education<sup>11</sup> and a council, The Norway Net Council (*Norgesnettrådet*) to handle all issues that cut across established structures and decision-making bodies. The question is if these changes favoured or hampered interdisciplinary activities.

In 1999 Norway signed the so-called Bologna Declaration, and was one of the first countries to change the structure of higher education so as to achieve the goal of three years (Bachelor) + two years (Master) + three years (PhD). In the autumn semester of 2003 the “new” institutions of higher education opened their doors, welcoming both new and old students to Bachelors and Masters programmes. As part of the Bologna Process, the Quality Reform – one of the most comprehensive higher education reforms in the history of Norway – was implemented in 2003. The Quality Reform had as its aim to increase the quality of the education through changes in teaching and examination forms. As a result of the Reform, students are, among other things, expected to participate actively and continuously in teaching and also writing – individually and in groups. The question, which we will deal with more thoroughly later on, is whether this reform, which has had more far-reaching objectives than the objectives of the Bologna Process, has actually favoured interdisciplinarity.

### ***Budget, facts and figures<sup>12</sup>***

Relevant in this context is how much money is spent on education in Norway. The education budget is equal to 6,8 per cent of the gross domestic product. The average for the OECD countries is 4,9 per cent. In terms of number of people with education we see that approximately 83 per cent of the population aged 25–64 have education in addition to compulsory schooling. Fifty-four per cent of people over 16 years of age have upper secondary education, while 26 per cent have higher education.

### ***The State Educational Loan Fund***

Essential in a description of the education system in Norway is the State Educational Loan Fund (*Lånekassen*). The Fund was founded in 1947, and provides financial support to students in the form of loans and grants. The idea behind the Fund is to enable people to study regardless of their social and economic backgrounds. The Fund provides grants and loans to pupils in upper secondary schools and to university and university college students. Most Norwegian students in higher education finance their studies through grants and loans from the Fund. The loans are meant to cover the costs of studying in Norway. There has, however, been a debate in recent years about whether the students are given sufficient support to cover their basic costs, since quite a few students, in addition to the loans and grants, have to supply their income with part-time jobs.

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<sup>11</sup> Proposition to the Odelsting (proposal for new act) No. 85, 1993–4.

<sup>12</sup> [www.odin.no/ufd](http://www.odin.no/ufd).

## The education system – a brief overview<sup>13</sup>

The Norwegian Parliament (*Stortinget*) and the Government define the goals and decide the budgetary frameworks for education. The Ministry of Education and Research (from now on referred to as the Ministry) is Norway's highest public administrative agency for educational matters, and is responsible for implementing national educational policies. The Minister of Education and Research heads the Ministry. Individual municipalities are responsible for the running of primary and lower secondary schools, while county authorities run the upper secondary schools. The state has the responsibility for universities and university colleges, but does also provide considerable financial support for the running of primary and secondary schools.

Compulsory schooling in Norway is ten years and has ten grades divided into lower and upper primary school and lower secondary school. Upper secondary education embraces all courses leading to educational qualifications above the lower secondary level and below the level of higher education. Since autumn 1994, everyone between the ages of 16 and 19 has had a statutory right – in other words; it is not compulsory – to three years' upper secondary education leading either to higher education or to vocational qualifications or partial qualifications. Below is an outline of the education system up to higher education:

**Table 1: Norwegian school system below higher education level**

SCHOOL (GRADE)		AGE	
			Upper secondary (1–3)
Compulsory	Lower secondary (8–10)	13–16	
	Upper primary (5–7)	10–13	
	Lower primary (1–4)	6–10	

Primary and lower secondary education in Norway is founded on the principle of a unified school system. This system provides equal and adapted education for all on the basis of a single national curriculum. We will not focus on these levels of education in this report. We will, however, discuss upper secondary education in slightly more detail although the main focus is on the system of higher education.

### Upper secondary school

The national educational system has been subject to many reforms during the last decades, some of which have still not been implemented. The intentions behind the reforms for the upper secondary education have been manifold. One of the aims has been to qualify as many as possible either for the labour market or for higher education, after three years in upper secondary school.

Ninety-five per cent of the pupils who graduate from lower secondary school

<sup>13</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the main written source for this section is the web site of the Ministry of Education and Research: [www.odin.no/ufd](http://www.odin.no/ufd).

continue to upper secondary school. Forty-nine per cent of the students choose vocational study programmes while the rest attend programmes that automatically qualify for higher education. There are significant gender differences in the pupils' choices of study programmes in upper secondary school. The great majority of girls follow programmes that qualify for higher education or the vocational programmes for health and social care or arts, while there are very few girls choosing traditionally male dominated study programmes like technical, building and electrical trades.

There is great emphasis on the importance of *both* general knowledge and early specialization. One wants to give the pupils the possibility to specialize as early as the first year, *without* letting this limit the choices for further education. Even those who choose vocational training programmes in upper secondary school, can qualify for university studies afterwards, provided they have done a year of general theoretical subjects (*almennfaglig påbygningsår*) as the third year or an extra year.

During the first year, students take one of 15 foundation courses, while specialized courses (about 100) are offered in the second and third year and in apprenticeships. The foundation courses are:

- General and Business Studies
- Music, Dance and Drama
- Sport and Physical Education
- Health and Social Care
- Arts, Crafts and Design
- Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry
- Hotel and Food-Processing Trades
- Building and Construction Trades
- Technical Building Trades
- Electrical Trades
- Engineering and Mechanical Trades
- Chemical and Processing Trades
- Woodworking Trades
- Sales and Service Trades
- Media and Communication

These foundation courses are the first steps in *fields of studies* (*studieretninger*). The first three from the list above qualify for university studies while the rest give job competence.

### ***Ministerial involvement and policies on interdisciplinarity in upper secondary school***

There are national curricula and national standards for the amount of hours for each subject in upper secondary school, and all pupils in a given subject have to take the same final exam. Each school is free to choose learning material and methods of teaching, as long as it is within the framework set by the national curricula. Since 1994 it has been mandatory for all upper secondary school pupils to do at least one interdisciplinary project a year. Apart from this the teachers are free to choose themselves whether they want to engage in interdisciplinary work or not, and it varies significantly from school to school – and from teacher to teacher – to what extent interdisciplinarity is practised.

The national policy on education underlines the importance of interdisciplinary

work in school, and it is a stated aim to stimulate to interdisciplinarity and new working methods. Interdisciplinary work in school is most often combined with non-traditional teaching methods. Pupils work in groups on thematic projects, combining skills and knowledge from different subjects. The teacher is then supposed to function as a *supervisor* rather than a *lecturer*. But there is often a discrepancy between the official policy on interdisciplinarity and non-traditional teaching on the one side, and the actual organization of the school on the other. There is a great stress on national curricula, exams and grades, which can be seen as encouraging traditional discipline-oriented teaching. When engaging in interdisciplinary projects the teachers have to keep in mind the "interests" of their own subject, since the amount of available hours to get through the curriculum and prepare the pupils for the final exams is limited.

There are also other practical barriers for interdisciplinary work and new teaching methods, like for example lack of space for working in smaller groups and the lack of teacher capacity. The traditional discipline-oriented teaching demands few resources, while interdisciplinary projects demand much more resources in terms of time for planning and organizing.

It is still important to emphasise that there have been dramatic changes regarding teaching methods during the last decades. Even though the traditional discipline-oriented teaching might still be the norm, pupils in Norway today are used to cooperate and work in groups, as well as to think across disciplines. These skills, which are acquired in school, can be seen as a fruitful foundation for interdisciplinary work at higher levels of education.

### The system of higher education<sup>14</sup>

Entrance into higher education in Norway is normally gained on the basis of upper secondary education. This means that most of the students enter the higher education system when they are about 19 years old. The system of higher education in Norway is divided into two sectors – the *university sector* and the *university college sector* – and into private and public institutions:

**Table 2: Sectors in higher education**

	private institutions	public institutions
university sector		4 universities 6 specialized university institutions
university college sector	17 private university colleges	26 state university colleges

The majority of students in Norway (about 90 per cent) attend state institutions although there is a considerable amount of private higher education institutions. The university sector, as well as the university college sector, is engaged in both teaching and research. The institutions offer undergraduate and graduate study programmes<sup>15</sup> and also doctoral

<sup>14</sup> The main written sources for this section are – unless otherwise stated – the NOU 2000: 14 and [www.odin.no/ufd](http://www.odin.no/ufd).

<sup>15</sup> The degree programmes are made up of courses and course groups. Some courses are compulsory, while students may freely choose others. One type of study programme provides a Bachelor degree. Another type leads to a Masters degree.

programmes. The university sector has a special responsibility for basic research and the education of researchers. The universities in particular are given the task to do research on a great range of topics in accordance with the variety of subjects that they offer. The university college sector has as its main task to secure the competence needs related to different professions. The aim of the state university colleges is also to make higher education more widely available while increasing the amount of academic expertise available to the different regions of Norway. The 26 state university colleges primarily offer shorter courses of a more vocational orientation than those offered by the universities. In addition to teacher training and courses in engineering, health and social work and other vocational courses of two to four years' duration, the colleges offer undergraduate courses interchangeable with those offered by the universities. These make an important contribution to the decentralization of higher education.

Many students combine courses at the colleges with courses at universities, since credits can be transferred between institutions in the different sectors and between public and private institutions.

### ***Degrees and qualifications***<sup>16</sup>

With the Quality Reform in 2003 came a new degree system. Today students can obtain the following degrees in the higher education system:

- The *Høgskolekandidat* (University College Degree) degree is obtained after two years of study. This degree can be enhanced with courses so as to obtain a Bachelor's degree. The degree is offered at state university colleges and a few private institutions.
- The *Bachelor's degree* is awarded by all the state universities, specialized university institutions, university colleges and a good number of the other higher education institutions, both private and public. It is obtained after three years of study. The national university colleges of the arts offer a Bachelor's degree of four years' duration.
- The *Master's degree* is awarded by the universities and specialized university institutions, several university colleges and some private institutions. The degree is obtained after 1,5–2 years of study<sup>17</sup>.
- Various *professional qualifications* are awarded by all the state higher education institutions and a number of the private higher education institutions. These programmes/degrees are of four to six years' duration and cover both regulated and non-regulated professions.
- The *Doctoral degree* (Philosophiae Doctor, PhD) is awarded after three years of study following completion of a Master's degree or a professional degree/programme. Doctoral programmes, which are essentially research programmes, are offered by all university-level institutions, some state university colleges and a few private institutions.

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<sup>16</sup> [www.nokut.no](http://www.nokut.no)

<sup>17</sup> The vast majority of Masters degrees lasts for two years. Therefore we mostly refer to Masters degree as a two-year course.



and other budgetary issues are key to understanding the relationship between state and education. We will return to this issue later in the report.

The different accreditations imply different levels of independence from ministerial involvement, and are thus an essential part of the education system. For instance, it is easier to get funding from the Research Council of Norway if the institution is accredited as a university. This makes NOKUT a key body in order to understand the relationship between state and education.

### ***NOKUT***

This is the agency that evaluates and accredits higher education institutions. NOKUT started its activities in January 2003 as a consequence of the Bologna Process. It is an independent state body whose purpose, among other things, is to safeguard and develop the quality of Norwegian higher educational institutions. This is done through evaluation, accreditation and recognition of quality systems, institutions and degree programmes. NOKUT is an independent agency in the sense that the Ministry may not instruct NOKUT in excess of what is authorized by statute or laid down by the Ministry in regulation. Neither can the Ministry reverse the agency's decisions, and it cannot permit the establishment of degree programmes that have not been accredited or approved by NOKUT. NOKUT also has the authority to withdraw accreditation or recognition if the conditions are no longer fulfilled by the institution in question. In effect this means that what NOKUT says is "the law", although formally it is the Government and the King who have the final say.

### ***Policies on interdisciplinarity in the system of higher education***

If we look for government policies on interdisciplinarity concerning higher education, we find that there is not much written on this issue. In the commissioned report for the Parliament that laid down the fundament of the Quality Reform<sup>20</sup>, there are no direct references or instructions about interdisciplinary education or research in higher education. On the other hand, one of the consequences of the Reform is the establishment of interdisciplinary study programmes in a way that was never formalized before. It is a fact that when the new system was planned, faculties and departments were encouraged to think in cross-disciplinary terms, for example when planning study programmes. The result of this were a number of interdisciplinary programmes. In this respect there are more options after the Reform than before for those students who want to go for an interdisciplinary degree. This said, however, we have to remember that there are of course still more disciplinary study programmes – programmes where you get a degree in a particular discipline – than interdisciplinary programmes.

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are met the finance system is the same as for the state-run institutions.

<sup>20</sup> NOU 2000: 14.

## **2. Infrastructural definitions of social sciences and humanities**

In this section we are concerned with the infrastructural definitions of social sciences and humanities in Norway. This implies looking at how these bodies of teaching and research are defined – first and foremost in terms of disciplines included. We will also look at how the funding bodies define the different branches of education and research and how the professional disciplinary associations develop and reproduce the boundaries between the disciplines. In the first part we look at infrastructural definitions in relation to education. We present the structures of Norway's four universities and one of the university colleges, in order to understand the disciplinary structure at these institutions of higher education. In the second part we focus on research, and look at how the funding bodies for research in Norway – basically the Research Council of Norway – define social sciences and humanities.

### **A. Infrastructural definitions in relation to education**

Five institutions of higher education in Norway will be highlighted: the four universities<sup>21</sup> that we have in Norway and one of the university colleges. All universities are divided into faculties – for example the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Humanities. Under the jurisdiction of the faculties we find departments. Faculties and departments are administrative and disciplinary entities, even though different disciplines might belong to the same department. Under the jurisdiction of the faculties we also often find what we refer to as centres. These centres will almost always be founded on the basis of a topic of research and/or instruction. The University of Bergen, for example, has a research centre called Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies situated in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Sometimes such centres come directly under the central administration of a university and are not part of a faculty. The colleges have similar structures although the units are not always called faculties and departments, but for instance units and sections.

We selected five institutions to illustrate this. The reason why they were chosen is first of all that we wanted to look at all the universities, since they all have different structures and profiles. By presenting all of them, we can give a picture of the academic variety in Norway, and perhaps also the academic sameness in this young country with a modest academic history. Oslo University College was selected because it represents an important part of higher education in this country – the university college sector, a sector that differs from universities regarding history, structure and content, and most of all in terms of the subjects taught.

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<sup>21</sup> From January 2005 there will be five universities, since Stavanger University College has been accredited as a university.

## **Five institutions and their disciplinary organization<sup>22</sup>**

The four universities are the University of Oslo, the University of Bergen, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (in Trondheim) and the University of Tromsø. These institutions are situated in different parts of Norway. The University of Tromsø, being the northernmost university in the world. In the following the structures of all these universities are presented, and in addition we look at Oslo University College – situated in the capital. How the different disciplines are divided into departments and sections is the focus here, but first a brief presentation of the institutions themselves.

### ***The University of Oslo***

The University of Oslo – situated in the capital – is Norway's largest and oldest institution of higher education. It was founded in 1811 when Norway was still under Danish rule. Today the University of Oslo has approximately 31,400 students and 4,600 members of staff. When the university opened, however, it had only 17 students and 6 teachers. In 1861 the Faculty of Philosophy was divided into two faculties – The Faculty of Arts and The Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. The Faculty of Social Sciences, on the other side, is one of the younger faculties, and opened in 1963. Today the university has 8 faculties and some 46 departments. The University of Oslo's profile is that of a comprehensive general university with mainstream curricula and no special focuses.

### ***The University of Tromsø***

The University of Tromsø was established in 1968, and is the youngest university in the country. It is also the smallest of the four universities, but it is the largest research and educational institution on the Northern Peninsula. Its location makes it a natural venue for the development of studies of the region's natural environment, culture, and society. The main focus of the university's activities is on the Northern Lights and space research, fisheries research, bio-technology research, multi-cultural societies, Saami culture, social medicine, and a wide spectre of arctic research projects. In Tromsø you can also study law, medicine and dentistry. In the beginning, the university was not organized into faculties, but later it developed a more traditional faculty-based organizational structure.

Today the university has 6 faculties – one of them is also a college: the Norwegian College of Fishery Science – and about 28 departments. There are about 6,100 students and about 1,700 staff members.

### ***The University of Bergen***

The westernmost university in Norway was established just after World War II, in 1946. By European standards the University of Bergen is a young university. Its academic roots are deep, however: research and teaching have for a long time been fields of activity at the Bergen Museum, which was founded as far back as 1825. Today the university has some 18,600 students and about 2,500 employees (the university is hence a medium-sized European university). The University of Bergen is both a teaching and research institution in most subjects, organized into 7 faculties and some 39 departments.

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<sup>22</sup> The main written sources for this presentation are the web sites of the five institutions. See the bibliography for details.

Situated on the west coast, it was only natural that subjects related to the weather and the oceans should be well established in the Bergen academic environment. Marine research, oceanography, biology, geology and meteorology were important subjects in Bergen. Today you can also study traditional university subjects like humanistic subjects and social sciences subjects in addition to medicine and dentistry.

### ***The Norwegian University of Science and Technology***

The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) was established January 1<sup>st</sup> 1996, as a result of the reorganization of the University of Trondheim which was established in 1968. The university has its foundation in three institutions: the Norwegian Institute of Technology, the College of Arts and Science, and the Museum of Natural History and Archaeology. Today NTNU has 21,100 registered students, 3,300 staff members, 7 faculties and 53 departments.

One of its main objectives is to be one of the leading research and learning institutions in Norway in relation to interdisciplinarity<sup>23</sup>. Another part of the profile of NTNU is the technological basis of the university.

### ***Oslo University College***

Oslo University College differs from the four other institutions first of all through its non-university status. It is instead a university college. It was established in 1994 when the Norwegian college system was restructured and 18 smaller colleges in the Oslo area merged. Therefore, many of the College's degree programmes date far back. Its 7 faculties offer more than 30 Bachelor degrees in addition to Masters in various subjects. The College's structure is not included in the table below, since it differs significantly from the ones we find at the universities. Therefore we give an overview of the College's structure in this paragraph. There are seven faculties or units: Nursing; Engineering; Health Sciences; Business, Public Administration and Social Work; Journalism, Library and Information Science; Education; and Fine Art and Drama. There are thus no traditional faculties of social sciences or humanities. However, social sciences or humanities disciplines are integrated in the units and degree programmes that are offered. In that respect it seems as if the College is organized in a more interdisciplinary way than the universities, since the units are more built around topics than disciplines.

The profile of Oslo University College is shaped by development work within pedagogy, multicultural work and the study of professions. These are three important areas in which the College has developed special expertise.

Let us now look at table 4. It lists the structure of the four universities in terms of the faculties of social sciences and humanities and the departments that they administer<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Langfeldt 2002: 12.

<sup>24</sup> The humanities faculties at the different institutions have different official names, both in Norwegian and English: The University of Oslo, the NTNU and the University of Bergen have the Faculty of Arts. In Tromsø they have the Faculty of Humanities. In this report they are all understood as humanities faculties.

**Table 4: The administrative and disciplinary setup of the humanities and social sciences faculties at the four Norwegian universities.**

	University of Oslo	University of Bergen	University of Tromsø	Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Social Sciences	Sociology and Human geography, Political Science, Psychology, Social Anthropology, Economics	Administration and Organization Theory, Information and Media Science, Geography, Comparative politics, Social Anthropology, Sociology, Economics	Archaeology, Philosophy, History, Education, Planning and Community Studies, Psychology, Religious Studies, Social Anthropology, Sociology, Political Science	Geography, Sport Sciences, Economics, Sociology and Political Science, Industrial Economics and Technology Management, Education, Teacher Education, Social Work and Health Science, Psychology, Social Anthropology
Faculty of Humanities/Arts	Archaeology, History of Art and Conservation, British and American Studies, Philosophy, Germanic Studies, History, Classical and Romance Studies, Culture Studies, Linguistics, Media and Communication, Music and Theatre, Scandinavian Studies and Comparative Literature, East-European and Oriental Studies	Archaeology, Philosophy, German, Music, History, Linguistics and Literature, Cultural Studies and History of the Arts, Classic Philology, Russian and Religion, Scandinavian Studies, Romance Studies	Culture and Literature, Language and Linguistics	Music, Language and Communication Studies, Modern Foreign Languages, History and Classical Studies, Philosophy, Art and Media Studies, Scandinavian Studies and Comparative Literature, Archaeology and Religious Studies, Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies

In many ways the University of Tromsø and the NTNU differ the most from the more traditional university setup that we find at the universities in Oslo and Bergen. Part of the reason why Tromsø is different is that the university is small and therefore needs to economize its resources. In addition it has a history of not having faculties. NTNU on the other hand owes its unorthodox setup to the technological influence that came with the 1996 reorganization. We should also recognize the special position for psychology in Bergen where the university has a Faculty of Psychology and not psychology departments under the social sciences like the other universities.

If we analyse these setups, not from an institutional perspective, but more the disciplines as the starting point, we see that the traditional humanities disciplines, like language, linguistics and literature, philosophy, archaeology and history are administered under the humanities at all the universities except the University of Tromsø. In Tromsø, history, religion, archaeology and philosophy are classed under the social sciences. Interesting in this respect is that the latter faculty presents itself as having a “unique mixture of social sciences subjects and humanities subjects”<sup>25</sup>. Apparently they are well aware of their uncommon faculty setup. And as long as they call the subjects “humanities subjects”, they do not seem to claim that the humanities subjects in the Faculty of Social Sciences are social sciences subjects – even though that faculty administers them.

In many ways we see that the different university profiles are reflected in the subjects taught. At NTNU – as we have already mentioned – there is a significant technological influence, which first of all is reflected in the name of the social sciences faculty: it is called Faculty of Social Sciences and Technology Management. This name reflects the interdisciplinary basis and the technological influence that is present at this university. In the same manner one of the departments is called Department of Industrial Economics and Technology Management. At the other universities we find departments of economics, but not combined with technology management.

Let us now go further into this analysis of the (inter)disciplinarity of the different institutions by looking at the degree programmes that are offered. As mentioned before degree programmes are made up of courses and course groups. A Bachelor programme lasts three years. It is made up of different courses and contains 180 credits (ECTS). A Masters programme lasts for two years and contains 120 credits.

## **The degree programmes and their implications in relation to (inter)disciplinarity**

The degree programmes offered at the various institutions are sources of knowledge about the significance and nature of disciplinary boundaries at the institutions that offer them<sup>26</sup>. Do the institutions only offer disciplinary programmes or do they have programmes that transcend the traditional disciplines? Before the Quality Reform disciplinary subjects and programmes dominated. Does this still apply? In order to answer this and related questions we must look at the actual programmes offered at the different institutions.

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<sup>25</sup> www.uit.no, our translation.

<sup>26</sup> Even though the institutions offer more than Bachelor and Master programmes, for instance one-year study units, we only look at complete degree programmes here (Bachelor or Masters programmes). We think that these programmes provide a good picture of the sort of degrees offered.

### ***The degree programmes – contradictory tendencies***

We shall now take a look at the degree programmes in the social sciences and the humanities, using the University of Oslo as the dominant example. This university offers about 55 programmes within the social sciences and humanities area. Of these 17 are interdisciplinary, meaning that they have subjects from both the humanities and the social sciences<sup>27</sup>. There are thus signs that the degree programmes may downplay the role of the disciplines and the institutional setup that back them up. We have come across a discrepancy between how the institutions work administratively and how the degree programmes are organized – especially when we look at the interdisciplinary programmes. It is clear that the traditional university structure is not designed to administer interdisciplinary programmes. Earlier the different departments administered their own programmes – the Department of History administered their programmes in history etc. But now, with the interdisciplinary programmes, the question is how to administer programmes that are not only history programmes but that also have for example sociology or social anthropology subjects. This has been a challenge to many administrations, for example at the University of Oslo. This discrepancy is a sign that the administrative structure is lagging behind the development in the degree programmes.

Let us take a closer look at the new Bachelor programmes by comparing them to their pre-reform equivalent, the Cand. mag. programmes. What was the combination of subjects in this degree? The Cand. mag degree implied 1,5 years in the major discipline and 2,5 years in other subjects. Today's disciplinary Bachelor degree has 1 year and 1/3 in the major discipline and 1 year and 2/3 in the other disciplines. Although the new system has “less of everything” it gives more emphasis – more time and more credits – in *relative* terms to the major discipline. On the other hand, when looking at the actual combination of disciplines in a degree, the pre-reform students often had interdisciplinary combinations in their degrees. However, this was chosen on an individual basis where the students would plan their studies a year ahead. Today's students choose for at least two years (three years if it is a Bachelor's degree). The interdisciplinarity in the new system is also to a larger extent planned from above, since the students must agree on and sign a study plan when they start studying. Accordingly, today there are formal structures that “push” the students towards interdisciplinarity. This was not the case earlier. The students then had to combine their subjects on their own. All in all we can then speak of three somewhat contradicting implications of the Reform in relation to interdisciplinarity:

1. There are more interdisciplinary degree programmes and more emphasis on these from the departments and faculties.
2. The disciplinary degrees have relatively speaking become more disciplinary (the major discipline has been given more space compared to the other disciplines).
3. The degrees are shorter than before, which means that there is less of every discipline.

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<sup>27</sup> In addition many of the programmes are interdisciplinary in the sense that they transcend disciplinary boundaries *within* the humanities or the social sciences. For example there is a programme called Western European Medieval Studies where you study this topic through a combination of a range of humanities subjects such as history, archeology, language and literature.

## How are the programmes presented?

What we found interesting in relation to the degree programmes was the kind of information about the institutions and the degrees that students encounter when they look for information about the university studies – either on the Internet or in the degree/university prospectus.

Interestingly enough – and this may help downplay the disciplinary boundaries – the (new) students do not encounter disciplines; they encounter subjects or topics. This means that when a 19-year-old who wants to study at the university looks for information about degrees, she is not necessarily confronted with the traditional disciplines, but rather with *topics* that she can study. Examples of this phenomenon can be found in the prospectus for the University of Oslo (2004). This presents all the degree programmes that one can apply for at this university. The prospectus is organized by topic, not by discipline. In fact, the departments and faculties are practically non-existent in the prospectus. The topics that make up the individual sections of the prospectus are:

- Health and medicine
- History, religion, ideas, aesthetics
- Information technology
- Law, economics, management, administration
- Teacher education
- Mathematics, natural science, technology
- Media subjects
- Pedagogical subjects
- Social studies
- Language and literature

There are of course disciplinary degree programmes as well, but they are in no way highlighted in the prospectus. Looking at the presentation of the university and the degrees it offers, we might argue that the disciplines are downplayed since there is more focus on what topics you can take than through what disciplines you can study them.

In the individual sections in the prospectus, the disciplines are further downplayed. In the section on social studies, for instance, the first study programme that the reader encounters is the Bachelor programme in Asian and African Studies. The second is the European Studies Bachelor programme. Actually, the first five study programmes in the social studies section are interdisciplinary programmes. The sixth is the Bachelor in Criminology – a disciplinary programme. Then, the “traditional” disciplines: for example sociology, social anthropology, psychology and political science. This means that in order to get information about the degrees offered at the University of Oslo, one need not go via the different faculties or departments. Actually one is not encouraged to. The way we see it, this way of organizing and presenting the degrees at the university reduces the focus on disciplines, departments and faculties in the university context – at least in the everyday lives of the students. The fact that the students encounter degree programmes and not disciplines is the same for all the other universities and also Oslo University College.

## Assessments

As mentioned before, as part of the Bologna Process, the Norwegian system of higher education is going through great alterations. One of these has to do with the system of quality assurance that is now being implemented. A central part of this system is NOKUT (see chapter 1). In the Norwegian case the Ministry of Education and Research has mandated NOKUT to develop an assurance system that will safeguard and improve the quality of higher education in Norway. As a part of this assignment NOKUT has developed a number of criteria which the various institutions have to meet. What is interesting in relation to this report is that there is no evidence that NOKUT has anything to do with or pays any attention to disciplinary conditions or circumstances. The system of quality assurance is only an arrangement that the institutions have to use to ensure the quality of education. Content is completely irrelevant but NOKUT does not demand degree programmes to be either disciplinary or interdisciplinary. NOKUT only provides a system to make sure that Norwegian higher education is up to standard. It is left to the institutions and the different faculties, departments or units to develop the professional or disciplinary content of the education that they offer. The government has no direct influence on which disciplines exist or the development of new ones.

If we look at the quality systems in the institutions, assurance work has been given priority during 2003 following the introduction of the Quality Reform. The system is being streamlined, and it applies to all faculties, departments and/or units. The central administration at all institutions supervises and governs quality assurance work in their respective institutions, but they are instructed to do this by the Ministry through NOKUT. In this way then there are in fact tight bonds between the state and the education institutions. They seem even tighter if we remember that NOKUT is the agency that accredits the institutions of higher education. The basis for this accreditation is an evaluation of the quality assurance systems at the institutions at hand.

Let us take a quick look at what quality assurance work implies at one of the institutions, the University of Oslo<sup>28</sup>. Even though it is not yet fully implemented, we have enough information to get an understating of what the process centres on.

### *The Quality System of Education at the University of Oslo*<sup>29</sup>

The University of Oslo operates with six aspects of quality in education: entrance quality, framework quality, programme quality, teaching quality, result quality and administrative quality. These aspects are monitored through the following four evaluation processes:

- *First Semester Evaluations*: in the course of the first semester of a degree programme the students give feedback on the programme.
- *Course Evaluations*: an evaluation of the course content and profile and whether they fit nicely into the whole degree programme.
- *Annual Evaluations*: evaluation assessing whether the intentions of the degree programme have been achieved.
- *Periodic Evaluations*: at least every fourth year there will be a more comprehensive

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<sup>28</sup> This work will imply pretty much the same at all the institutions, but the University of Oslo will do as a concrete example.

<sup>29</sup> The main written source for this section is [www.kvalitetssystem.uio.no](http://www.kvalitetssystem.uio.no).

evaluation of the programmes.

It is the various faculties that have the responsibility for evaluating the degree programmes, whereas the obligation to assess the different courses that make up the degree programmes lies with the departments.

## **Journals**

There are a quite a few Norwegian journals within the humanities and social sciences, most of them discipline-oriented. There are also some interdisciplinary journals, but only one or two aiming at both the humanities and the social sciences and these are mainly thematic journals, like *Kvinneforskning (Journal of Women's Research)*.

Today most Norwegian academic journals have a peer-review system, and, generally speaking, less prestige is connected to publishing in journals *without* such a system. There are a few examples, however, of journals that have insisted on other review systems and still have managed to keep their prestige. Not adopting a peer-review system leads to a drop in prestige for most journals.

This effect has been accentuated with the new budget system at the universities, which accredits publishing differently according to where an article is published. One is for example given more credits, and prestige, when publishing in an international journal compared to publishing in a Norwegian one. This is an issue much debated among academics, especially within the social sciences and humanities where one quite often both writes about and for Norwegians in particular.

Both the budget system and the prestige issue effect the choice of a journal for publication. Whether a journal is interdisciplinary or disciplinary, however, does not seem to have any decisive effect on the choice of a journal for publishing. This is instead linked to factors like the dissemination level of a journal and the style and thematic orientation of the journal. Depending on the genre and topic chosen, one will select the appropriate journal for publication.

## **Bridging figures**

One way of analysing if there are incentives to interdisciplinarity or interdisciplinary tendencies is to look at the theorists whose texts are read in the curricula in the different disciplines. Are there any *bridging figures*, i.e. theorists that are taught in different disciplines and in both the humanities and the social sciences? We searched through the curricula that students on different levels and in various subjects and disciplines at the University of Oslo are expected to read. Methodically this meant that we started out with a few names that we expected to find – these were our hypotheses about what names would appear in curricula in both social sciences subjects and humanities subjects. We then searched for these on the Internet pages of all the subjects (all programmes have all the information about the programmes on the University's web pages). These searches also generated other names that appeared on curricula across the spectrum of subjects. Through our search we found several bridging figures. In Table 5 we have outlined some of them. In the table we list their disciplinary affiliations (social sciences or humanities) and some of the disciplines where they are used as part of the curricula. This list is not exhaustive, but it does show an outline of major theorists that cross-cut the disciplinary

boundaries between the humanities and the social sciences. Many of these theorists are famous for their epistemological positionings. This in many ways reflects the current debates about the construction of knowledge in the social sciences and humanities. We will come back to this in section 6. For now suffice it to say that theorists like Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva and Jacques Derrida are among these key bridging figures.

**Table 5: Bridging figures**

		Socio- Logy	Social Ant.	Politi- cal Sci.	Philo- sophy	Lite- rature + lang- uage	Media Science	Crimi- nology	Reli- gion	Hi. Of ideas
Social sciences	Bauman, Zygmunt	X	X	X		X				
	Weber, Max	X	X	X	X					X
	Bourdieu, Pierre	X	X	X		X	X	X		
	Beck, Ulrich	X		X		X	X			
	Giddens, Anthony	X	X			X	X			
	Berger, Peter	X	X	X					X	
	Habermas, Jurgen	X		X	X		X			X
Humanities	Ricour, Paul	X			X		X			X
	Moi, Toril	X			X	X		X		
	Butler, Judith	X				X	X			
	Kristeva, Julia		X		X	X				X
	Said, Edward	X	X			X		X		
	Beauvoir, Simone de	X			X					X
	Foucault, Michel	X	X		X		X			X
	Derrida, Jacques	X				X	X			

## **B. Infrastructural definitions in relation to research funding**

The Norwegian research system may analytically be divided into three levels: First, *a political level*, where the framework conditions for research are defined and the main goals and priorities for research policies are outlined. Secondly, *a strategic level*, where the Research Council of Norway has a key function. Finally, *the executing level*, where we find industrial companies, research institutions, universities and colleges.

### **The Research Council of Norway**

In Norway, as in most other countries, research funding is both private and public. Large corporations, organizations, labour unions and the like either accept applications for funding, employ their own researchers, or finance separate research institutes. There are quite a few social science-dominated research institutes in Norway (presented elsewhere) – compared to the other Scandinavian countries – which are financed, at least partly, through private means. But even here a major part of the funding is based on applications to the national research council, the Research Council of Norway. Norway has only one publicly financed and controlled research council which accordingly has the sole responsibility for the overall administration of the national research fundings. Political guidelines manifested in budget decisions constitute the frames of its workings. The Council has about 4000 million Norwegian kroner (NOK) annually, which equals about 500 million € at its disposal, for research projects in all disciplines. In 2003 the Council was totally reorganized. In 2004 it is divided into three divisions: the *Division for Science* (allotted 36 per cent of the total budget), the *Division for Strategic Priorities* (24 per cent of the total budget) and the *Division for Innovation* (35 per cent of the total budget). All three divisions are headed by the Council's managing director and his (or her) staff, consisting of about 300 employees plus 1000 external experts used for committee work, evaluations and so forth.

The Division for Science has as its main task to contribute to the development of basic research within all disciplines but also to the development of inter- and multidisciplinary. The responsibility of the Division for Strategic Priorities is to identify and investigate national strategic research needs and to build up knowledge and research capacity in areas of priority. The instrument “large-scale programmes” is anchored in this division. The Division for Innovation, finally, is to be an important partner to both trade and industry, and the public sector within the areas of research, development and innovation. It will also contribute to converting research results into commercial business activities.

The division most relevant to the humanities is the Division for Science, while the Division for Strategic Priorities is of equal importance to the social sciences. The Division for Science is divided into five departments: Social Sciences; Humanities; Physical Science and Technology; Biology and Biomedicine; and Clinical Medicine and Public Health. The departments for the social sciences and the humanities are both in place to guarantee the development of the disciplines and the recruitment to the disciplines. Research-initiated and independent projects together with strategic projects initiated by university departments are here the main means to fulfil this goal. The Department for the Humanities is also given the task to initiate interdisciplinary research programmes, in collaboration with the Department for the Social Sciences.

The Department for the Social Sciences finances around 460 projects, including support to different milieus research environments . In the category “independent research project” there were 197 applications in 2003 (for 2004) out of which only 10 per cent were granted financial support. This department also gives a basic allocation of money to social science research institutes, and lists around 20 such institutions that have been granted that kind of support. The total budget for the Department for the Social Sciences was 361,543 815 NOK (2003) – about 45,000 000 € – which is about 43 per cent of the total amount awarded to the social sciences<sup>30</sup>.

The Department for the Humanities finances around 250 projects, small as well as large. Just as in the social sciences, financial support to different research environments is also included and counted as projects. Regarding the independent research projects there were 219 applications in 2003, of which, again only 10 per cent were granted financial support. Almost 90 per cent of the total amount of money awarded the humanities in 2003 was channelled through this department.

The Department for Social Sciences and the Department for the Humanities often co-finance programmes or centres. Therefore some programmes are listed under both departments, such as for example the programme ‘Gender research: knowledge, boundaries, change’. This is an interdisciplinary programme (humanities and social sciences) with an explicitly stated aim to strengthen interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary gender research. It is a continuation of the previous gender programme ‘Gender in change’ which was run from 1997–2001 and had a total budget of 25 million NOK, about 3 million €. The new gender programme started in 2001 and will end in 2007, with a total budget of 53 million NOK, about 5,5 million €. The annual budget of about 8–10 million NOK, about 1 million € is planned to cover projects as well as various events such as for example research conferences. Three main thematic areas are highlighted: dialogues in the field of knowledge (gender research and its potentiality as a critique of science), borders and categories (the ambiguous character of the sexuality and gender categorization) and politics and work for change (the need for social change).

Jointly, the Department of Social Sciences and the Department of Humanities also support projects on globalization and internationalization, globalization and marginalization, publication, and some university college projects. All this is lumped together under the heading “other research financing”.

Social scientists have more options for research fundings than researchers from the humanities, since there are more programmes where a social science perspective is welcome. The areas Research for the Public Sector and Medicine and Health are such cases. A positive signal is also that the Council suggests that a new thematic area called Welfare and Life Quality is to be added to the list of “commitment to future research” (to be decided on in 2005). So far the thematic areas on this list – information and communication technology, marine research, medicine and health and research in the cross section of energy and environment – have had few openings for social scientists, not to mention the humanities. The same is true for the large-scale programmes – research on functional genomics, nanotechnology, climate changes, pure energy systems, the management of petroleum resources, aquaculture and information and communications technology – which are considered a vital element of the Division for

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<sup>30</sup> Social science projects can also get funding through other departments, large-scale programmes or independent projects.

Strategic Priorities. Of these only information and communications technology is set up to invite applications from the social sciences or the humanities. The Division for Strategic Priorities got about 30 per cent of the total budget for the Council in 2003. But the same division also houses a lot of other large-scale programmes, some of which, as for example the welfare state programme, are strongly social science-dominated. In 2003 about 37 per cent of all the money awarded the social sciences was channelled through this division, while the same figure for the humanities was only 11 per cent.

Taking disciplines as a starting point, the social sciences get about 19 per cent of the Council's total budget, while the humanities only get 4 per cent. Medicine got about 7 per cent, mathematics and science around 18 per cent, agriculture and fishing about 12 per cent and technology about 36 per cent (the rest, around 4 per cent, is not specified). These are important numbers when discussing which disciplines actually get most public research funding, especially when comparing countries.

A feather in the Council's cap, the so-called Centres of Excellence, has so far mostly been granted to the sciences. The stated intention of the centres is to bring more researchers and research groups up to a high international standard, and the centres are to be devoted to long-term, basic research. Presently there are 13 such centres established, one for social scientists, the Centre for the Study of Civil War, and two for researchers from the humanities; the Centre for Advanced Study in Theoretical Linguistics and the Centre for Medieval Studies. On the Nordic level, however, an effort is being made in 2004 to launch a new Nordic Centre for Excellence Programme in the Humanities and Social Sciences by the Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities and the Social Sciences. It will run from 2005–2010 and will grant 2–4 Nordic projects an annual amount of between 300,000–500,000 €

The Council annually awards two prizes, one for excellent research and one for outstanding research dissemination. In addition to these prizes there are also scholarships awarded to so-called Young Researchers of Excellence. Annually 18–20 million NOK, about 2,2 million € are granted applicants in this category.

Summing up, Norway is way below the OECD average regarding amount of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) spent on research. In 2001, it was 1,5 per cent while the OECD average was 2,2 per cent. Other Scandinavian countries, like Sweden with 4,2 per cent and Finland with 3,5 per cent are useful comparators. However, these figures do not tell us the relative amount allocated to the social sciences and the humanities. In Norway, as previously mentioned, the social sciences are allocated about the same amount as mathematics and science, and this is considered to be a better proportion than is the case for most other European countries. The problem, as it is generally understood, is that the business sector does not support science to the same degree as elsewhere in Europe. Therefore increased public funding on this area is deemed necessary, and the Minister of Education and Research has now claimed that it is time to favour and stress basic research again.

Within the Research Council there have been profound changes, not only of an administrative character. Strategic planning of research has increased dramatically. Previously – a decade or two ago – the distribution of research funding was based more on the applications that were sent in than it is today. The money was distributed to good applications, no matter what the topic was. Of course there were programmes then too, but a substantial part of the funding was not tied to other than to disciplinary strategic

plans or goals. As a result of this change, there has been a change of focus, from disciplines to topics. Where before there was struggle and competition for research funding between the disciplines, the battle is now fought between programmes that for the most part are interdisciplinarily formulated, at least those related to the social sciences and the humanities. The big battle is now primarily between “the hard and the soft sciences”, although the less favourable situation of the humanities in relation to the social sciences is still a much debated topic.

The fact that programmes themselves are interdisciplinarily formulated and that it is required of applicants to be affiliated to specific research environments, constitutes a push towards interdisciplinarity. The general rule is that money no longer is awarded to individuals or small projects, but instead is given to large projects and research environments. As a policy, a division of labour between the Research Council and the universities has been underlined. The universities are given the responsibility for the development of the separate disciplines and accordingly for allotting individual graduate scholarships. The Research Council, on the other hand, has the national and overall responsibility for the development of research, and should accordingly stimulate the establishment of research environments, large projects and competition. But this is a long-term policy, and the Council still takes a disciplinary responsibility when and if the universities and university colleges are not able to do so.

The functioning of the Council is founded not only on its announced policy and organization but also on the applications it receives, and here the reorganization of the school and of the university regarding disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity is likely to have an input.

## **Research institutes**

Norway has quite a few, more or less independent, social science research institutes, more than any other country in Scandinavia. One reason for this is that in Norway the public administration was previously less developed, and accordingly had to rely, *inter alia*, on external research investigations. This situation was favourable to the development of social science research institutes. Today 25 of these get basic funding from the Research Council of Norway alongside basic allocations from the ministries and various associations and organizations (depending on the research profile of the institute in question). But since this kind of money rarely covers more than the costs for the facilities and administration, they – the employees – have to apply for research funding on the same terms as university staff. Due to increased costs for facilities and less basic funding awarded to the research institutes, research money from the Research Council has become more and more important. But since university staff are increasingly expected to bring in research projects and research money, the competition for scarce research money distributed through the Council has increased considerably. And researchers from the institutes are almost twice as expensive as researchers from the universities, due to different overhead percentages. In the future, the result might be that some of these institutes are closed down or considerably reduced. The increased amount of researchers from the research institutes applying for positions at the universities during the last few years might be a sign of such a threat.

Although classified as social science research institutes, some of the employees come from law or the humanities. Organized into thematic and interdisciplinary research

groups, the research institutions respond quite well to the new signals from the Research Council (stressing large, interdisciplinary projects). But, as previously mentioned, their researchers are far more expensive than researchers from the universities, the specialized university institutions or the university colleges.

There are only a few research institutes that can be classified as dominated by the humanities. Three of these with basic funding from the Council are there classified as “environment and development research institutes”.

### **3. Disciplinization: process and problematics**

How disciplinization occurs is here illustrated through an example – a model scenario – of how a specific Bachelor's programme came into being. Our point of departure is again the Quality Reform in higher education. But first we will say a few words about the everyday administration of change and the role of the budget.

#### **From reforms to practise – how is change done? The everyday administration of change**

The change to Bachelor's and Master's degrees – the three + two-year model – was mandatory, and since that implied a general shortening of the education with a whole year, all disciplines and faculties had to think anew on what was to be included and what was to be taken away. Already from the start there were signals from above – from the Ministry of Education and Research, the university boards and rectors etc. – that it would not do, however, only to reduce the content and stick to disciplinary Bachelor's and Master's programmes. One was told to think in new terms, to open up the disciplines and faculties and make links across such boundaries. Interdisciplinarity, both within and across the faculties, was stressed. And the new budget system – the money goes and comes with the student (the new system is described below) – meant that the programme had to be modern and attractive to the students. If not, students would not apply, and the departments and faculties in charge would lose money and in the long run face the risk of extermination. In the longer term this fact silenced the resistance which could be found among staff in most disciplines and faculties. In spite of a daily public criticism – in the papers, through meetings and demonstrations – the reform machinery proceeded undisturbed. Most critics seemed to have a double strategy; on the one hand they were against the reforms and articulated their criticism in different fora, on the other hand they participated in the reform work (planning new Bachelor's programmes, courses and so forth) in their respective departments and faculties. And then and there the issue of survival triggered creativity and interdisciplinarity. For small and specialized disciplines it was both a necessity and a possibility to seek alliance partners in the process of planning programmes. Being a part of a programme meant paving the way to the discipline, a way that the student might not have chosen, if the choice was totally free – like it was before the Reform. Whether the Reform has actually improved the situation for small disciplines and whether the programmes and the students' choices under the Reform have actually meant more interdisciplinarity is too early to say.

Pushed towards interdisciplinarity, a variety of interdisciplinary programmes were developed alongside disciplinary ones. Most departments wanted very strongly to continue to offer a disciplinary education, degree and identity. This meant betting on both horses, and it was up to the faculties to decide the amount of programmes, which meant that not all suggestions from the department level won through. The result of this betting is reflected in the present programme structure at the different universities and colleges of higher learning. This current setup will however most likely change, since new programmes will replace programmes that do not attract students.

### **The role of the budget**

A new budget system accompanied the new university reform. Previously a department would, roughly speaking, get its basic funding based on its average amount of students. Now, however, there are four criteria used in the distribution of grants to a department. First, there is the basic allocation, and secondly, there is the money allotted for each student taking an exam in the discipline, no matter on what programme. Thirdly, a department is also given money for the publications of its faculty members. And fourthly, external research projects bring in overhead money. The two last sources of income are increasingly stressed – from “above” – as a means to stimulate departments to become flourishing research environments and not only teaching departments. And since the Research Council of Norway is the institution where research money is applied for, and its “signals” accordingly decisive for the departments’ research politics, the departments can in the future be expected to house primarily large, collaborative and interdisciplinary research projects. The participation of their staff in such interdisciplinary research networks will most likely further future interdisciplinarity in both research and teaching. Being linked to research and research politics, the new budget system can accordingly be expected to promote interdisciplinarity both in research and teaching. The same is probably true for the distribution of money on the basis of exams taken in the discipline in question. The more courses that are offered as parts of degree programmes, the more exams will be taken and the more money will be allocated. Participating in the administration of interdisciplinary Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes will accordingly result in more money to the disciplines and the departments. Another issue, though, is that basing the allocations on exams taken might result in diminished qualifications. An economic interest or incitement in making the students pass the exams is raised as an issue posing a threat to quality, disciplinary or interdisciplinary.

University centres such as the Centre for Women’s Studies and Gender Research, have a different budget system which varies, for example in relation to their education responsibilities. Those centres that offer courses or programmes will, however, in the future also be funded based on the number of exams taken.

### **A model scenario**

In 2003 a new interdisciplinary Bachelor programme titled ‘Gender, Feminism and Equality’ was offered at the Centre for Women’s Studies and Gender Research at the University of Oslo. For many years the Centre had struggled to be allowed to offer education (courses) that gave credits, but had met resistance both from above – the board of the university – and from below, from some of their fellow feminists at the faculties. The arguments were of course different. The board did not want to grant educational rights (and examination rights) to a non-permanent institution (the Centre was not made permanent until 1997) which on top of it all was placed administratively directly under the board (giving them extra work and responsibility), and not under the faculties like other departments and institutions. The feminists – those who expressed resistance – in the faculties feared both for their own jobs and courses but also for an increased ghettoization of feminist perspectives. Slowly, but still successfully, feminist perspectives and gender research had won some terrain in the departments of the social sciences and the humanities. Feminists had received teaching and research positions, courses were

being taught, feminist/gender perspectives were represented in the general curricula, and students could be supervised. Integration seemed not only possible but also an important path to follow, even though a perpetual fight seemed necessary to guarantee and expand gender perspectives. Change from within, changing the doxa of the disciplines, had always been one important goal for academic feminism. And now that we had finally managed to get a foot in, was a strengthening of the Centre really the right strategy? With this as a background one may wonder how it was possible for the Centre to develop and have a full-fledged interdisciplinary Bachelor programme accepted.

A foundation was laid when the Centre took the initiative to develop a shared introductory course for two semester courses at Bachelor level: 'Gender and Society' and 'Gender and Culture'. These belonged to the Faculty of Social Sciences ('Gender and Society') and the Faculty of Arts ('Gender and Culture'). The Centre wanted to develop interdisciplinary thinking and perspectives, and also thought that they could increase the quality through the use of the research environment (famous guest researchers and so forth) and the network that the Centre represented. When the Centre was made permanent they had a strong case, and their model for the two courses was finally accepted. The Centre was accordingly to offer an introductory course – running over four weeks – and then the faculties were to offer their “own” courses, just as before. The Centre hereby received the right to teach courses that gave credits, while examination rights and the administration thereof still belonged to a faculty – the Faculty of Arts. This new model was not applied until 2000–2001, and since the Centre had put a lot of energy, time and resources into developing the new course, the Quality Reform of 2003 – which might have wiped it all out – represented a threat. Mobilizing to keep the right to teach courses now meant thinking in terms of Bachelor or Masters programmes. And inspired by their widely liked introductory course, they decided that they would make use of the reform situation – where invitations to think innovatively, creatively and in a modern way circulated – and develop a Bachelor programme with a gender perspective. The argument for choosing to develop a Bachelor and not a Masters programme was that a Bachelor programme would draw in and form the students at an early stage in their studies. It was further argued that the programme – if it was successful – would produce students who would demand gender perspectives at the Masters level. This would put pressure on the departments to integrate and develop gender perspectives, and it would be a foundation on which the Centre could later both develop and legitimate a Masters programme in gender research and gender perspectives.

Presenting their preliminary plans to develop a Bachelor programme the Centre was allowed to establish an interim-board (just like other Bachelor programmes) to handle it all, a formal necessity since the Centre – as earlier mentioned – is not under the administration of a department or faculty. Thus half a victory was won, since it meant that they were given the right and the chance to offer a degree programme at Bachelor level.

Two aims were clearly expressed from the very start. The programme was to have both a political/practical and a theoretical/research agenda, it was in other words meant to be directed both towards those who wanted to work more practically with equality issues and those who wanted to develop a gender perspective more generally (including those planning to do research). With this aim in mind they developed a “two track” model – also used by other programmes – in which the student after some introductory courses

could choose the subject area Gender Equality or the area Gender Studies with Subject Specialization. That is, actually two Bachelor programmes were offered but with a shared foundation. The second aim was that the programme was not to be a dead-end in relation to the disciplines. It had to be possible for the students to proceed to Masters studies; the disciplines were not to be able to lock them out. But since most Masters degrees require a certain amount of points or specific courses in the discipline in question, these requirements had to be built into the Bachelor programme offered by the Centre. Having a focus on gender perspectives, the Centre could not open up their programme to all kinds of disciplinary courses without such perspectives. Then the whole idea of a Bachelor with a gender perspective would have failed. The Centre accordingly approached all the disciplines that their future students were likely to proceed to Masters studies to see what they had to offer. In addition disciplinary mandatory courses in methods and/or theory, courses with a gender perspective were to be put into the basket of the 80 points demanded (out of the 180 points which make up a Bachelor degree) for entry into Masters studies. Indirectly this made disciplinary gender perspectives and courses visible, and constituted a pressure to keep it all up and/or develop it. In the disciplines where such courses were lacking, the centre could offer their own courses or courses offered by other disciplines, but the discipline in question had to approve these in relation to the 80 points. On the basis of such negotiations contracts with 16 disciplines were outlined, making it possible for those students choosing the subject area Gender Studies with Subject Specialization, to proceed to Masters level in the discipline they had chosen to major in within the Centre's Bachelor programme. For those choosing the track Gender Equality and lacking the prerequisite of 80 points in disciplinary courses, there is so far only one Masters programme to which they formally have access and that is the one offered by the Department of Interdisciplinary Culture Studies at NTNU in Trondheim. However, it is quite possible also for students taking this track to plan the basket of courses so as to be able to enter a specific Masters programme.

Summing up, the model accordingly consisted of mandatory, introductory and interdisciplinary courses on gender and gender perspectives (first year), two paths for the second and third year; one focusing on equality and the other focusing on a particular discipline where courses offered by the discipline in question are taken. Since the students have a great amount of freedom of choice in the second and third year, students from the two tracks might very well end up taking the same courses. It should also be noted that due to the reform the disciplines themselves are now to offer more interdisciplinary courses and give credits to courses from other disciplines. Choosing Gender Studies with Subject Specialization did accordingly not mean a restriction to a discipline in any narrow sense. Quite the opposite, there were plenty of courses to choose from, including of a more interdisciplinary kind.

Such a model – impressive in its logistics and for its efforts to combine gender perspectives and disciplinary foundations, theory and praxis, the interests of students with those of the staff – was of course impossible to turn down. It could not be accused of ghettoization, quite the opposite. It would instead contribute to the strengthening of gender perspectives within the disciplines. And it was “society-oriented”, offering a focus on practise (the Gender Equality subject area) as well as a research focus. The design of the model undermined any serious criticism and resistance, and no such criticism was in fact articulated. So, in 2003 Gender, Feminism and Equality was offered as a Bachelor

programme at the University of Oslo, alongside all the other new Bachelor programmes. If the model had been less disciplinary and/or less practise-oriented and the contextual situation less favourable, the outcome might have been different. The turmoil of change and the demand for and expectations of innovative and creative solutions made it possible to present such a Bachelor programme. On the other hand, the amount of new Bachelor programmes presented and the time pressure in implementing the reform probably resulted in less attention and visibility, and thereby probably also less resistance than would “normally” have been expected. But, and that should be stressed, the programme was founded on thorough work, and had been through a scrutinized reading in a committee and had gained recognition from those in charge. So it was a complex situation but definitively also a historic opportunity that the Centre managed to take up. As Berit Ås, a Norwegian feminist researcher has expressed it: “If you are not ahead of time, the time will never come”.

In the next section we present two examples of how change occurs in disciplinization. The first example is the Centre for Women’s Studies and Gender Research at the University of Oslo, which in this context must be considered a successful innovation. The other example is the Department of Sociology and Human Geography at the same university, which can be interpreted as a failed innovation in terms of the lack of collaboration and exchange between the two disciplines gathered under the same roof.

## 4. Change in disciplinization: two case studies

### The Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research

The first centre for women's research in Norway was established in 1985, at the University of Bergen. It was the Centre for Women's Research in the Humanities – under the Faculty of Arts – which a decade later was replaced by the Centre for Women and Gender Research, now under the Faculty of Social Sciences. A year later, in 1986, the Interdisciplinary Centre for Women's Research – nowadays renamed to Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research – was established at the University of Oslo, directly under the board of the university. In 1989 a similar Centre was established at the University of Trondheim, a decade later, though, reorganized to be part of the Department of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies under the Faculty of Arts at NTNU. As the last university to get these kinds of activities institutionalized, the University of Tromsø established KVINNFORSK – the Centre for Women's Research and Women in Research in 1995. Similar centres or networks have also been established at the various university colleges and specialized university institutions throughout the country.

As illustrated above, the centres have changed organizational frames, disciplinary bases and funding and thematic focus during the two decades of their existence. Some of these changes have primarily come about due to personal struggles and/or initiatives (Bergen) while other changes are more founded on the local structure of the university (Trondheim) or the specificity of the surroundings (Tromsø). As a whole, though, they reflect the character of their respective universities, as well as the general trend within feminist research, to move from women's research to gender research, yet keeping both terms to signal a continuity regarding perspectives.

The relatively late birth of the centres in Norway – compared to for example Sweden – as well as their size and organizational forms, must be understood against the background of at least two factors. First of all, university education was not organized in the form of courses in the past but in whole disciplinary blocks (one year, half a year or two years), which made it almost impossible to develop and offer interdisciplinary courses. Secondly, Norway had the Secretariat of Women's Research, established in 1977 at the Research Council of Norway (at that time named *Norges almenvitenskapelige forskningsråd*, The Norwegian Research Council of General Science). This secretariat was unique in the Scandinavian context, maybe also in Europe as a whole. The purpose was to “initiate and promote research on women's life conditions and position in society and to strengthen the collaboration between social scientists and other researchers in the field”<sup>31</sup>. It had three major tasks: a) work to increase the recruitment of women to research, b) to initiate and promote women's research, and finally, c) to disseminate women's research. This implied internal “oppositional” and “underground” work within the Council as well as external work in relation to research environments and universities and society in general. The interdisciplinary secretariat was accordingly given the political tasks of both equality and research. The first was fulfilled by investigating and

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<sup>31</sup> Pedersen 1995, p. 130 our translation

pushing for quotas regarding grants, positions etc. and gathering women in science to inform and support them – for example in relation to research funding. The second, the task to promote and coordinate women's research, was fulfilled through supporting or establishing networks and through organizing interdisciplinary and national research conferences on different topics relevant to women's research. Later, once the different centres were established, the Secretariat also organized annual meetings to discuss the division of labour between these two sets of institutions. The Secretariat was the driving force behind various book series, such as *Kvinnerns levekår og livsløp (Women's Living Conditions and Life Course)*, research-political investigations such as *På kvinners vis – med kvinners råd (On Women's Terms – with Women's Advice)*, journals like *NORA – the Nordic Women's Studies Journal* and *Nytt om kvinneforskning (News on Women's Research)*, later renamed to *Kvinneforskning, Women's Research*, which all fulfilled the task to disseminate women's research. Some of the investigations undertaken on the initiative of the Secretariat gave rise to intense debates both inside and outside of academe.

It is difficult to give credit to all the activities emanating from the Secretariat in the 1970s and 1980s when “ordinary” university centres were established elsewhere in Scandinavia. Its national conferences were well known all over Scandinavia, and everybody tried to “get in”. In the other Scandinavian countries one envied the Norwegians their Secretariat and all their women's research, happening thanks to it. They did not seem to need women's centres like the rest of Scandinavia. The tremendously well-functioning Secretariat and the political goodwill that surrounded it most likely delayed the establishment of centres in Norway. The Secretariat also made it possible for the centres to concentrate on women's research and leave the task of increasing the number of women in (science) research with the Secretariat, a task which most other centres in Scandinavia – at least in the beginning – had on their agenda.

The Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research in Oslo is the largest (if not in terms of staff, at least as a research environment) of the centres, not only in Norway but also in the whole of Scandinavia. And its story of disciplinization is a success story. It started out small, in 1986, and was named the Centre for Women's Research. The Research Council of Norway paid for a position for the head of research and the university paid for a position of the office manager in addition to allocating some money for the operation of the activities and a small house off campus to call their own. In this house there were 8 offices, with room for 11 researchers, and a seminar room. It was full from the start, and frequent (overcrowded) seminars and research gatherings made the atmosphere vibrant. It became a meeting place for women researchers not only from the university but also from the research institutes, the ministries and so forth, and already after a year or two it had more than 2000 people on its mailing list. The centre belonged administratively directly under the board of the university, and was at first only granted funding and housing for a trial period of three years, starting in 1988 when the head of research was finally appointed. At the end of the trial period an internal evaluation was required to decide whether the Centre was to become permanent or not. Instead, however, a new trial period was decided upon in addition to an external evaluation. The external evaluation, which was conducted by professors from the other Scandinavian countries, was extremely positive, and suggested not only that the Centre be made permanent but also that it ought to be given more resources. But since the policy of the university at that

time was that centres should not be permanent institutions but temporary arrangements which were to be evaluated every fifth year, the Centre for Women's Research was in 1992 just given another five years. In 1997, finally, it was made a permanent institution. At the start the Centre was not allowed to give undergraduate courses or any other courses that offered specific credits. Courses at graduate level could be offered, but each PhD student had to apply for approval from her own department, which also decided how the course would be credited.

In 1994 the Centre moved to larger premises, still off campus. The number of offices increased to 16, housing about 30 persons, and in addition to a seminar room there was now also a library where lunches or meetings could be held. The number of positions and resources increased; now men were also welcome to apply for positions, desks or offices at the Centre. In addition to the head of research (a professor position), the Centre was allocated three professor II positions (a professor II equals 1/5 of a full professor position); one in the social sciences, one in the humanities and one in women's medicine. In 2004 the Centre still has the head of research position, three professor II positions – one in philosophy, one in political science and one in medicine – one lecturer II position in technology, three research positions and five administrative positions. The Centre also houses six PhD students, three post-doc scholars, six Master's students and four "freelancers" or "keykids", i.e. researchers who can use the facilities but who do not have a desk or an office of their own. All in all, about 25 researchers (only 2 are men) representing both the humanities and the social sciences from the research context with disciplinary diversity as the foundation, strength and character. The list of disciplines represented – art history, theology, archaeology, philosophy, literature, media and communication, history of ideas, music, pedagogy, social anthropology, sports science, technology, political science and sociology – illustrates this point.

From the start the Centre housed research projects of various size and degrees of interdisciplinarity, in addition to those initiated by the head of research. It was of course the natural place for collaboration and interdisciplinarity, and the Centre has always had more applications than it could grant money for. A certain amount of students at Masters level is however always guaranteed working space, so as to assure intergenerational dialogues. But it is the researchers who bring in the money – through overhead money – something which is vital for the day-to-day activities of the Centre. And since the Centre invites guest lecturers and guest researchers, the seminar activity is high, and this contributes to making the Centre an attractive research environment. In their *Bulletine*<sup>32</sup> – the free magazine distributed to the 3000 on the mailing list at least twice a year – all seminars, network meetings, graduate courses as well as present research projects were presented. As an illustration: in the autumn of 2004 two graduate courses are offered, one on feminist perspectives in the tradition of human studies, and one on Descartes and his feminist critics. In addition three networks, one in multiculturalism, one in queer studies and one in sexualized violence, announce their monthly meetings at the Centre. Guest lectures on topics such as 'The phenomenology of sexual difference', 'Sex(y) art', 'Odysseus in skirts', 'From hysterics to allergy', are announced as well as the annual New Year Party where the prize for excellent women's and gender research is awarded to one of the Master's students.

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<sup>32</sup> *Bulletine* 2/04.

Regarding undergraduate education the Centre has struggled all along to be allowed to give courses that give credits, but it was not until 1999 that they finally won this battle. In this respect they differ radically from the other centres in Scandinavia, which have turned into educational centres rather than research centres. In Oslo it has been the other way around. For the Centre, though, having finally got one foot in regarding undergraduate education, the Quality Reform of 2003 meant new opportunities. Feminists from different disciplines were called upon to outline an interdisciplinary Bachelor's programme which the Centre would be in charge of. They succeeded in doing this, and the story of how this was done was presented as a model scenario in the previous chapter of this report.

### **The Department of Sociology and Human Geography**

In 1996 it was decided that Human Geography was to be merged with Sociology at the University of Oslo. Previously it had been administered by the Faculty of Arts but located in the Faculty of Mathematics and Science, together with the section for Natural Geography. Together these two sections – the Section for Natural Geography and the Section for Human Geography – administered a first year course in geography where each section had its own courses. Students continuing with geography then had to specialize and major either in natural geography or human geography. Since the sections had very different disciplinary orientations it was natural for human geography with its social science orientation to seek affiliation with the Faculty of Social Sciences. This faculty, however, granted this affiliation only on the grounds that they would merge with another department. The argument behind this demand was that human geography was too small a grouping to form a department of its own. Since the faculty had a model of representative democracy regarding decision-making, with each department represented in the faculty board, its small size would also have given human geography a disproportionate amount of power and influence in the faculty. For the human geographers sociology was the discipline they felt most disciplinarily comfortable to merge with. And since the sociology department did not object, this was decided upon, and the new department named the Department of Sociology and Human Geography was established.

Since this merging was neither founded on research nor teaching collaborations, the administrative solution was to institutionalize the department into two sections which had relative autonomy, i.e. their own budgets, personnel (regarding daily as well as faculty administration) and board. The two sections were, however, headed by a shared chairperson, head of administration and board of the department. And since the sociology section was at least twice the size of the human geography section (regarding full-time employed faculty) it was considered “natural” that the elected chairperson should be a sociologist while the deputy chairperson should be elected among the human geographers. This decision to have two parallel structures meant some extra administrative costs – for example more meetings for those in charge of the department – but it intended to eliminate conflicts that were likely to arise over issues concerning money and disciplinary matters. The human geographers were in a vulnerable situation, as “intruders”/“foreigners”, and understandably they feared that they were going to be walked all over by the giant sociology. Besides there was the hope – among the human

geographers – that this “forced marriage” was a temporary situation. More students, a Masters programme for foreign students and the possibility to employ more staff, all contributed to the notion that there was a chance of establishing an independent department (again) in the near future. With this in mind, their own disciplinary history and identity became more important than using their scarce resources on interdisciplinary collaboration. Sociology, on the other hand, as one of the biggest and most highly regarded departments in Scandinavia did not think it needed to change its routines, practices and disciplinary thinking. The administrative model decided upon was established to soothe both parties. Everything went on pretty much as before, at least for the sociologists, whose daily activities were not affected by the merging, except for the change of names, of course.

Were there then no efforts in terms of interdisciplinary research and teaching collaborations between the two parties? For the human geographers their main goal was to establish and maintain their disciplinary identity and not become sociologists. And since they were few people among the staff but had a considerable amount of students, whose numbers also increased with the move to the social science faculty, they were in a tight situation. The burden of teaching responsibilities and on-going research projects left little time and energy or interest for initiating or planning collaborative projects with the sociologists. One might perhaps have expected the sociologists then to grasp this chance, at least those influenced by post-structuralism, since the human geographers have a competence in the “hot” areas of time and space, which most sociologists lack. Still, hardly any such approaches were made. Except for small talk at joint social gatherings – for example the annual Christmas and summer seminars and/or dinner parties – and one or two “political agenda talks”, the contacts between the disciplines were minimal, and still are. There are no joint courses and only one research project – initiated by two researchers (one from human geography and one from sociology), and only rarely supervision or assessment tasks across these disciplinary boundaries. If those in charge of the department – the board and the head of the department – had taken the initiative for such collaboration and given it priority, it is not unlikely that something more would have come of it, since the reason for the lack of collaboration is not primarily founded on disciplinary differences, at least not regarding research, perhaps more so when it comes to teaching, especially courses on methods. It is, however, quite understandable that such an initiative from those in charge was not taken at the very start when everything centred on eliminating conflicts and suspicion and getting it all working as smoothly as possible. Planning the implementation of the new reform, the Quality Reform, in 2001–2003, constituted a new opportunity to rethink disciplinary boundaries, and was as such an opportunity to develop joint courses. No such efforts were made, however. Here again we believe the time pressure and the work overload to be the major reasons behind the lack of such initiatives. Eight years after merging the two disciplines have accordingly not come closer together. Maybe it will be the students – who today do take courses in both human geography and sociology – and young researchers who will demand such a change, for the sake of knowledge – just like in many other interdisciplinary cases.

## 5. The establishment and legitimation of professional identities in academe

How are professional identities established and legitimated in Norway? How does for example a historian become a historian? How does a social anthropologist come “into being”? We will examine this in both a formal and an informal sense. We will look at what kind of legitimizing processes an academic must go through to get a formal title, i.e. what kind of studies or degrees he or she must complete in the higher education system. Regarding informal legitimation the analysis centres on the networks and the various disciplinary associations academics can take part in and the importance of these associations in establishing a professional identity.

As mentioned previously, the Norwegian policy on upper secondary education is to qualify as many as possible for either the labour market or higher education. The system is quite open in the sense that the choices the pupils make are not supposed to block possibilities for further education. All pupils can obtain a general entrance qualification for higher education (*generell studiekompetanse*), even those who graduate from vocational studies (provided they have chosen general theoretical subjects in the third year). There are only a few subjects at the university level, like medicine and pharmacy, which demand special subjects in upper secondary school. All subjects in the faculties of humanities and social sciences are in principle open to students with a general entrance qualification for higher education (although you might have to have good marks).

### Academic titles

There are, as mentioned previously, basically three degrees in higher education: Bachelor and Masters degrees, and the PhD. As previously stated you can complete either a Bachelor or a Masters degree in a discipline or in an interdisciplinary programme. It is also possible to hold an interdisciplinary Bachelor degree and join a disciplinary Masters programme, and the other way around. What about the PhD then? Can you have an interdisciplinary PhD degree? And what kind of title does that award you?

First of all it ought to be stressed that the faculties are responsible for the day-to-day running of PhD education. In addition, the different departments administer their PhD programmes under the supervision of the faculties. The major responsibility for PhD education, however, lies with the central authority of the institutions, i.e. the board.

In Norway all PhD candidates get the same title after finishing their PhD. This title is *Philosophiae Doctor*. It varies across the different institutions, however, what sort of “subtitle” or “suffix” they get. In Tromsø, in the Faculty of Social Sciences, you become a *Philosophiae Doctor* either in Culture and Social Studies or in Psychology. The Culture and Social Studies programme has nine discipline-based branches of study. The Psychology degree has only one option. Under the Faculty of Humanities the degree is called PhD in the Humanities, and has four disciplinary options. That means that you can follow a programme in Documentation Science, Art Science, Literature or Language. At the University of Oslo there are seven PhD programmes in the Faculty of Arts. In the Faculty of Social Sciences there is only one PhD programme, but six discipline-based

branches of study and, interestingly enough, an interdisciplinary PhD branch of study (students from the humanities are also admitted, and it is called PhD studies in Technology, Innovation and Culture). This means that the title is *Philosophiae Doctor* in Social Science. This is to show that the candidates are trained in social sciences in general. There is a tradition for adding to the title the discipline doctorants come from, so as to underline the disciplinary affiliation. This was also the case before the latest reform – the so-called Doctor Polit – so there are no clear signs that the disciplines have been weakened on this level since the implementation of the Quality Reform in 2003.

At the Faculty of Arts in Oslo you can be a *Philosophiae Doctor* in Philosophy and Humanistic Informatics, History, Cultural Studies, Linguistics, Literature, Aesthetics and Classical Studies, Media Science or Musicology. This means that there is no overarching programme in the Faculty of Arts in Oslo in the same way as there is in Tromsø. Under some of the programmes there are other subjects or disciplines. For example under the PhD programme in history there are students from medieval studies. In that respect the PhD programmes are interdisciplinary within the humanities, but not cross-cutting the social sciences/humanities divide.

After the PhD degree there are several possibilities. The candidate can continue to do research, either at one of the higher education institutions or at one of the private or public research institutes somewhere in the country. Or he or she may get another sort of job – for example in the administration of businesses, as a consultant or in some branch of the government. In these latter positions your academic discipline matters less than if you continue to do research, for example at one of the universities. At least that is the case in our two branches of learning and research, i.e. the humanities and the social sciences. Whether you are a sociologist or a social anthropologist does not matter in many jobs outside higher education institutions. Inside, however, it is of vital importance. To get a research position at for example the Department of History you need to be a historian, i.e. must have a Master's degree or a PhD in history. This might perhaps be to state the obvious, but the disciplines matter more inside the higher education system than outside.

## **Recruitment to positions**

Parliament can propose new university positions and award money for their implementation through the state budget. Usually, though, the decisions regarding positions – how many, what level and their specialisms – are left to the departments and faculties to decide when we talk about universities. It is up to the departments to suggest how they want to use the money they have been allocated, and the faculties decide if the suggestion is a reasonable one. For example, when a full professor retires, the department can decide to announce the position anew or to announce two PhD scholarships instead. Once the decision has been made and the faculty has approved it, the position(s) will automatically be announced publicly in a special journal where all such positions are announced. Depending on the specialisms of the applicants, a committee (comprised of members who know the field of research) is appointed by the department. The final decision rests with the faculty. The committee – whose task is to assess the work of the applicants – will write a joint assessment and proposal to the department, which its board will use as a basis for their decision and proposal to the faculty. If the committee is united

in their proposal, the department usually decides in accordance with the committee, and then the faculty usually also goes along with the proposal. This is the formal and common procedure for positions such as lecturers or professors. It implies that everybody with the required qualifications can apply for such a position and that the formal procedures are regulated, democratic and (fairly) transparent. Part-time positions, like for example professor II positions (1/5 position), can however be appointed more directly, if the department and faculty find it more convenient. A professor II might accordingly be “called upon” for a period of 3–5 years. Quite often, though, even these short-term positions are announced the regular way so as to avoid criticism of favourism (of for example men and/or certain thematic areas). Politics, of course, comes in at all levels in the formal procedure; through lobbying for the type of position to be announced; the announcement text; in contacting and persuading possible candidates to apply; who is to be on the committee, and finally at the board level of the department and of the faculty when the decision is made. Still, though, this formality makes it an open rather than a closed system.

### **Professional disciplinary associations**

There is often more than one professional association connected to each discipline within the social sciences and the humanities. Membership is in general open to anyone who has graduated from the discipline, either in Norway or abroad. Some of the associations have different categories of membership, *full* or *associated*. The latter category is normally reserved for students within the discipline.

All of the associations within the social sciences and the humanities share the fact that they are not in any position of power, either in relation to the university system or the labour market. There is no *prestige* connected to being a member of the associations, and membership does not give you any particular privileges. The role of the professional disciplinary associations can rather be described as *meeting-places*. They are arenas for debates within and about the disciplines, for establishing networks and for strengthening and building disciplinary identities.

### **The relationship between education, research and research institutes**

How do the research institutes relate to the disciplines? For example: When they have a vacancy, do they advertise for a sociologist or political scientist or just a social scientist or perhaps just a person with a degree from a higher education institution? And research at the institutes, is this mainly discipline-oriented research, or is the research interdisciplinary?

Looking at the system at the research institutes it is clear that the kind of people they look for varies with the different projects and also across the different institutes. However, it seems as if it is more common to look for a social scientist or someone from the humanities – in general – than for a discipline-specific person. Nevertheless, quite often institutes have topic-specific projects so they look to employ researchers with relevant backgrounds, and in these cases it is sometimes stated that having a degree in for example political science or history would be appropriate. In some cases one might want to hire a specialist of some kind, for example a psychologist.

When looking at how research is carried out at the research institutes, we find that

the work for a large part is interdisciplinary, but also that this varies with different institutes and projects. The researchers often work in teams comprised of people from different disciplines. Whether the researchers come from both the humanities and the social sciences depends on the institute and the research topics, but at some of the institutes we looked at<sup>33</sup> there were researchers both from the social sciences and the humanities.

One of our informants said that even the most interdisciplinary researcher has some kind of disciplinary identity – for example on the basis of method – which leads him or her to think that one's own discipline has the best approach.

All in all our impression is that most of the research that is carried out at the various research institutes that deal with social sciences or humanities topics is done in teams and on an interdisciplinary basis. If this means a focus on and a strengthening of disciplinary differences or less emphasis on disciplines, only an investigation of the actual practice can tell.

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<sup>33</sup> NOVA – Norwegian Social Research, ISF – Institute for Social Research, and Stein Rokkan Centre for Social Research.

## 6. Current debates about the construction of knowledge in the social sciences and humanities and the impact of these on disciplinization

Every time new paradigms emerge the epistemological bases for the social sciences and humanities are debated as well as the relationship between them and their shared foundations. In the 1970s the challenge came from Marxism, and since it had a stronghold within the social sciences, they got the upper hand in relation to the humanities. In the 1980s and 1990s post-structuralism took the place of Marxism, now leaving the humanities to set the terms. This is also illustrated in Table 5 about “bridging figures”, where the post-structuralist thinkers that are read across the disciplines are all affiliated with the humanities. However, to get a more precise picture of the promise of post-structuralism regarding interdisciplinary thinking, an investigation of research and teaching praxis would have to be undertaken. Traces of its influence can, however, be found in the debates that now and then surface in the different journals. In *Kvinneforskning (Women’s Research)* for example, the epistemological challenge of post-structuralism – especially to social scientists – has been debated intensively over the last decade. There was for example a special issue called Empirical Research after Post-structuralism<sup>34</sup>, where the debate centred on how one can best do empirical research in light of the challenges from post-structuralism. Many expressed the view that the debate between modern and post-modern philosophies of science had been too polarized, and that there was a need for a more nuanced opinion. In one of the articles, for example, Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen stressed that the post-structuralist insights claiming that reality is discursively constituted do not imply that one ought to stop producing knowledge about the experiences and practices that have been produced in this way. Nielsen wanted to stress that there is a room between “citation and deconstruction”<sup>35</sup>.

The Bachelor’s programme at the Centre for Women’s Studies and Gender Research in Oslo – described elsewhere – can perhaps be seen as a temporary solution and compromise regarding this epistemological battle. Here we will present the debates as summed up by the Research Council of Norway to see if these or other epistemological issues are raised when the disciplines are asked for a description and evaluation of their current situation<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> *Kvinneforskning (Women’s Research)* 1/2000.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> The main written source for this chapter is so-called discipline notes (*fagnotater*) – ordered by the Research Council of Norway – written by members of disciplines within the social sciences and the humanities (Research Council of Norway 2000a and b). The subject matter for the notes is the conditions and current situation for the disciplines. We can think of these texts as survey reports about the disciplines. In relation to the humanities our point of departure is the reports from philosophy and history of ideas, history and literature and film, theatre and media sciences. From the social sciences we use the reports from social anthropology, sociology and political science.

## **Debates and concerns in the humanities and the social sciences**

There are not many signs that the humanities or the social sciences when presenting their survey reports to the Research Council in 2000 were heavily concerned with the challenge from post-structuralism. The sociology report, however, sums up the debate when saying that sociologists have become more aware of their own role, the interpreter's role, but very few go so far into post-modern criticism that they want to erase the division between sociological research and fiction. This means that although sociologists have come to realise that what they present is always an interpretation of social conditions – not *the truth* in a more positivistic sense – there is a great difference between what they do and what for example writers of fiction do.

Other issues are, however, stressed considerably more in the survey reports, and here we highlight three: a) the teaching pressure on faculty members so that they have too little time for research; b) the “battle” between basic and applied research; c) the power of the Research Council.

### **Too much teaching and administration, not enough research**

All the disciplines in these publications stress that for university faculty members there is so much focus on administration and teaching that they do not find time for their own research, which for the most part is basic research. All faculty members are supposed to devote a certain percentage of their time to research, but find that this time is eaten up by their other duties as university employees. The survey reports were written before the Quality Reform, but the pressure imposed on the faculty members through teaching and administration is even more present today, with the increased numbers of teaching hours consequent upon the Reform. The implications of this are that basic research is suffering. The disciplines are concerned that there are too few resources for basic research. This concern is also raised in the debate that centres on the difference between basic and applied research.

### **Basic vs. applied research**

Some of the disciplines are worried about the fragmentation that seems to exist in some of the disciplines, for example sociology. Here one points to a division between the theoretical and metatheoretical stance on the one hand, and the more empirical and descriptive stance on the other. Both of these are important, and it is not considered fruitful for one type of research to dominate. However, some disciplines see this happening today in the sense that too much money goes to applied research, or at least too few resources go to basic research.

This battle between basic and applied research – which is not a new one – also has to do with the division between the universities and the research institutes. Especially the sociologists are concerned that too much money goes to the institutes and their applied science, and that the universities get too little funding for basic research. And not just research, but also basic education within the disciplines and education of researchers. For sociology 3/4 of the funds from the Council are channelled into the institute sector outside the universities. The political scientists also highlight this issue, and argue that basic research loses ground because political science is too much influenced by current

themes. They also talk about the need to rebuild the universities as research institutions.

### **The Research Council vs. the universities?**

The third debate or concern is voiced by several of the disciplines, and has to do with whether the Research Council has too much power in terms of it being the largest – and the only public – research funding body in Norway. This means for example that when the Council stresses the importance of large-scale interdisciplinary research programmes, it is difficult for the universities and other research institutions to develop smaller programmes based in individual disciplines, or groups of disciplines, because they will have difficulties financing these projects. It is also hard to get funding for independent projects (for example a PhD or a postdoc project). In the last few years the Council have made large-scale interdisciplinary programmes their area of commitment. This has meant and still means that researchers who want to do research, must be linked to – in one way or the other – these kinds of projects. The Council also stresses thematic areas of importance in relation to research. This, alongside the focus on large-scale programmes, in many ways sets the premises for research carried out in Norway, and several of the disciplines voice their concern about this. They argue that there is potentially a problem that the Council – which provides the research funding – focuses on these large-scale projects, whereas the universities are responsible for the disciplines' development. The disciplines state that there is not enough room for research topics based on disciplinary approaches to develop from within the research community.

## 7. Interdisciplinarity

### Inter- or multidisciplinary?

Interdisciplinarity can be a response to very different questions or issues, which will also affect its implications and outcomes. In the previous chapters we have argued that scarce economic and academic resources (few people with higher education), young academic traditions, local and labour market adjustments, internationalization and theoretical paradigms are all “factors” that have favoured interdisciplinary thinking and organization in research and higher education in Norway. But whether it has implied only *multidisciplinarity* – i.e. cooperation between different disciplines only administratively tied together – or actual *interdisciplinarity*, where elements from different disciplines are integrated in the actual research process, or even *trans-* or *post-disciplinarity* (producing knowledge beyond disciplinary thinking), is another matter.

The young academic traditions and the relatively small (in terms of staff) university communities historically favoured interdisciplinary thinking and organization. The “big men and women” of the previous generation within the social sciences and humanities (like for example Arne Næss, Vilhelm Aubert, Harriet Holter and Ida Blom) collaborated in both teaching and research, often in an actual interdisciplinary sense. And they paved the way for future interdisciplinary research and teaching environments such as in the area of women’s law and at The Centre for Environment and Development Studies. On the other hand, in the strengthening of national identity and in the development of the economy and the modern welfare state, education and research have played an important role. In this process already established disciplines have expanded, resulting in quite huge disciplinarily founded departments that through their students and research not only reproduce but also multiply their own importance. Originally interdisciplinary university institutions, like the University of Tromsø, accordingly had to compete with giants (the disciplines), a competition they seem to have partly lost when returning to disciplines as an organizational device.

So when the issue of interdisciplinarity is raised anew at the turn of the millennium, we have a cemented organizational structure of disciplines organized as departments in universities. And in these institutions future schoolteachers – of the “new school” – are also taught the importance of disciplines. The Ministry, however, clearly states that the modern (international) society and the (international) labour market demand general as well as specialized qualifications and an ability to cooperate and to do teamwork, something which calls for a different organization of the school as well as higher education and research. The discourse on interdisciplinarity in the public sphere emanating from the Ministry and the universities is implicit rather than explicit. It is something taken for granted, not defined or discussed, but something “modern” or international, something intrinsically good. Maybe because interdisciplinarity here actually implies multidisciplinary?

At school level, knowledge production is now organized through teamwork and problem solving, which furthers interdisciplinary thinking. Exam and credit systems, however, still seem to stress the importance of the disciplines, maybe because that is the way that the teachers have been educated. However, there are contradictory demands in

the public debate, where specialized knowledge – discipline-based – is called for at the same time as the demand for broad, general and interdisciplinary perspectives are voiced.

Entering university – as we have stated earlier – the students first encounter Bachelor's programmes, i.e. topics or subjects that they can study, not disciplines. And these programmes are thematically named and organized. In Table 6 we list the interdisciplinary Bachelor's and Master's programmes (cutting across the borders between the social sciences and the humanities) that these institutions offer their students, in order to gain an understanding of the range of interdisciplinary programmes that students have the opportunity to participate in at the four Norwegian universities.

The list shows that popular subjects for interdisciplinary study programmes in Norway at the moment (i.e. you can study them at several universities) first of all are so-called area studies where one or two geographic and economic areas are studied. In these programmes the students study Europe, i.e. the European Union, individual European countries, Africa or America. In addition women's and gender studies are popular in the same way as development, peace and conflict studies. We also see that cultural studies are present at three of the four universities, underlining a shift in the last 10–15 years where the “cultural dimension” has diffused from especially social anthropology to other disciplines creating a new area for interdisciplinary studies and research<sup>37</sup>.

The teaching and examination forms in higher education have also changed, stressing process writing, teamwork and problem solving. All of this favours interdisciplinary thinking. But the organizational structure of disciplines into departments is still there, with their teachers and researchers and doxa. Examining specific interdisciplinary programmes – like the Bachelor's programme in Gender, Feminism and Equality described previously or the Master's programme in Peace and Conflict Studies described below – might reveal that they are multidisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary. And maybe that is also how they have become legitimate? Offering a foundation in a discipline alongside an interdisciplinary foundation, like in the Bachelor's programme offered by the Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research, satisfies both the demands for specialization and generalization. Here interdisciplinarity is combined with multidisciplinary in the very same programme but at different stages. And maybe the same model is true for most interdisciplinary programmes where only the amount of interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary might vary?

It is, however, not only the Quality Reform that pushes for interdisciplinarity. The Research Council of Norway – also reorganized lately – now stresses large-scale, interdisciplinary and collaborative projects. And since the funding of university departments – with the new budget system – partly relies on overhead funding and the money allocated on the basis of the publication rate and quality of their staff, these signals are taken seriously in the universities. At department level, individuals or groups are “reminded” and stimulated to apply for research money, and at faculty level interdisciplinary projects are initiated. Even the rector takes such initiatives, which the

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<sup>37</sup> Research Council of Norway 2000a, p. 42.

**Table 6: Interdisciplinary study programmes combining humanities and social sciences subjects.**

Inter-disciplinary programmes	University of Oslo	University of Bergen	University of Tromsø	Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Under adm. of Fac. of Social Sciences	Asian and African Studies, European Studies, European and American Studies, International Studies, Gender, Feminism and Equality, Culture and Communication Studies, Development Studies, Development and Environment Studies, Ethnicity and Multicultural Societies, Peace and Conflict Studies	Public Organization and Management, Development Studies	Russian Studies (joint venture with the Faculty of Humanities), The Multi-cultural Norway in Past and Present, Peace and Conflict Transformation	African Studies, Sport and Human Movement Science, Pedagogy, Media, Communication and Information Technology, Social Change
Under adm. of Fac. of Humanities/ Arts	Archaeology, History of Arts and Conservation, Culture and Ideas, Journalism, Media Science	Working life Studies, European Studies, History and Culture, Cultural Dissemination, Women and Gender Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Gender and Development, Ethno-musicology	Russian Studies (joint venture with the Faculty of Social Sciences)	European Studies with foreign language, Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies

case of HUMSAM (a short term for humanities and social sciences) at the University of Oslo is an example of.

In 2003 the rector of the University of Oslo organized a meeting with representatives from five faculties (Social Sciences, Humanities, Law, Education and Theology) which were to formulate strategic research programmes for the university. After an external evaluation of the proposals, the HUMSAM project Cultural Complexity in the New Norway was chosen for financial support by the university. Some of the other proposals were forwarded directly to the Research Council (the elected programme was also expected to apply for additional funding from the Council). The HUMSAM project is an interdisciplinary project, involving several disciplines from both faculties. It is meant to initiate research on issues of multiculturalism, grant PhD scholarships, hold seminars and courses and establish a research environment around these issues. Since it only started in the autumn of 2004 it is too early to tell to what extent it will function interdisciplinarily or multidisciplinarily. Here it is used as an illustration of an initiative from above regarding interdisciplinary research and that the signals from the Research Council are being taken seriously.

The allocation of money, from the Research Council and the universities, to interdisciplinary research and teaching might in the long run challenge the present organization of departments and faculties. As long as one talks with a split tongue – of interdisciplinarity but implying multidisciplinarity – and acts so as to have it both ways, it is possible to live with this organizational strain. Interdisciplinarity has to be scrutinized and investigated continuously, in the same manner as was the case with the Masters programme in Peace and Conflict Studies.

### **Peace and Conflict Studies – a case of interdisciplinarity or multidisciplinarity?**

The Master's programme in Peace and Conflict Studies (PECOS) started in August 2003, i.e. it was introduced with the Quality Reform. This means that in November 2004 the first set of students were well into their second year. This allowed us to examine their experiences with the first half of the programme<sup>38</sup>.

The 20 students in the first set of students enrolled in this new Masters programme have different disciplinary backgrounds. They come from – i.e. they have at least a Bachelor degree in – sociology, literature, political science, religion, area studies, law etc. And since PECOS is an all-English programme, there are also foreign students. The programme is mainly administered by the Department of Political Science.

#### ***Theses, courses and curriculum***

Each student writes a thesis during the last year of the programme. These theses are written within different disciplines. Which discipline each student writes in is for the most part determined by his or her disciplinary affiliation, i.e. their major area of study in their Bachelor degree. But they can also choose to write within other disciplines than they studied before. No matter what discipline they choose, this means that the PECOS programme in this respect is a multidisciplinary programme, not an interdisciplinary programme where elements from different disciplines are integrated in the actual research

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<sup>38</sup> The sources here are the web pages for the programme, a student evaluation report made by the student committee at the programme, and an interview with one of the students enrolled in the programme.

process. To a large extent the students keep a disciplinary affiliation in the writing of their theses.

What in many cases gives a discipline its hallmark is the methodology. This often separates one discipline from the other, and also – in a historic sense – the methods in use have often helped constitute a discipline as a discipline. It is interesting in this regard to see what kind of methodology is taught in this Master's programme. Are methods from all the disciplines involved represented? They are not, it seems. The student whom we talked said that the teaching of methods was insufficient, and that it was an odd mixture of for the most part political science methodology and some elements of other disciplines' methodologies. He experienced this as a problem. The student evaluation report confirms this view when stating that a problem with the methodology teaching was that it was not linked to the topic that they were studying, i.e. peace and conflict issues. Rather, it came out of the disciplines, and especially political science.

One of the criticisms in the evaluation report, also confirmed by our informant, was that on the whole there was too much focus on the framework and perspectives of political science – especially in the texts that the students were reading. The students felt that the curriculum did not mirror the interdisciplinary agenda of the programme. They said that there was not much focus on other approaches in peace and conflict research – besides political science approaches – and that if there was talk of other approaches, they were only there to highlight or discuss the political science framework. The dominance of political science was also evident, some students said, in at least two of the exams – among them the exam in methodology – where they thought that students with a degree in political science had a great advantage. In other words, the other approaches did not constitute alternative ways of doing research on peace and conflict. Overall the evaluation report stressed that the focus on political science perspectives in both teaching and examination operated at the expense of the programme's interdisciplinarity. In relation to an inter- vs. multidisciplinary agenda one may then ask whether PECOS is even a multidisciplinary programme. A “true” interdisciplinary approach seems to be non-existent. The problems related to the administration of parts of the programme underlined the problems with disciplinization.

### ***Administrative structure vs. interdisciplinarity***

As we have been underlining time and again in this report, there is evidence that the present administrative system does not seem to be designed to cater for “interdisciplinary needs”. This is an obstacle for interdisciplinary degree programmes. This is also the case for the first set of PECOS students. It became especially evident during their second semester, where the students were supposed to sit in on courses in the humanities and social sciences faculties that are not PECOS courses. This turned out to be a problem for them, because the online registration system could not deal with students that were not enrolled in one of the regular programmes. This meant that the PECOS students came last in line for the courses they wanted to take, and many of them ended up not getting into the courses they had planned to take. This is an example of how the present university setup makes it difficult both to administer and take part in interdisciplinary degree programmes.

## 8. The impact of the Bologna Process on disciplinization

The Bologna Process – named after the Bologna Declaration signed in 1999 by 29 European ministers of education – is the commitment by 40 countries to reform their higher education systems in order to create convergence at the European level. It is said to be the most important and wide-ranging reform of higher education in Europe since the immediate aftermath of 1968. The ultimate aim of the Process is to establish a European Higher Education Area by 2010 in which academic staff and students can move with ease and have quick and fair recognition of their qualifications<sup>39</sup>. Norway is one of these 40 countries, and in this section we discuss the impact of this process in the Norwegian context.

In most respects the recent transformations in the Norwegian higher education system are the results of the Bologna Process. This chapter is therefore, in many ways, a summing up of the previous chapters, especially highlighting the importance of the Bologna Process on disciplinization. At this point we want to stress that in 2004 we do not have a clear picture of all the consequences of the Reform, since it is still underway. We can, however, say something about the formal structures that have been put into place as a result of the Reform, and suggest what may be the implications of these structures.

Before we move on to look at the actual changes that have been undertaken, we want to underline Norway's role in the Bologna Process.

### Look to Norway

Norway is one of the countries that have come a long way in implementing the objectives of the Bologna Process. In addition we play a part in the administration of the Process itself. First of all Norway holds the office of deputy chair of both the Bologna Follow-up Group (in charge of the Process) and the board of the Process until the next Ministerial Conference in May 2005. This meeting is to be held in Bergen, Norway. In addition the secretariat for the process has been established, and is in Norway. This “eagerness” can be understood in at least two ways, and both are probably right. First of all there was in the late 1990s a growing awareness that the Norwegian system of higher education was quite different from many of the systems in Europe. Compared to British students, for example, Norwegian students were much older when they finished their university studies, both because the Norwegian students were older when they entered the university and because the degrees in the Norwegian system took longer time to achieve than the British ones<sup>40</sup>. The feeling was that the system was ripe for change. The other explanation for Norway's eagerness in relation to the Bologna Process is an expression of fear that our country will be isolated because of our remote geographic position and the fact that we are not members of the European Union.

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<sup>39</sup> [www.enic-naric.net](http://www.enic-naric.net).

<sup>40</sup> NOU 2000: 14.

## The Quality Reform

When describing what sort of impact the Bologna Process has had on the Norwegian system of higher education, it is important to stress that the general Norwegian response to the Process is the Quality Reform that we have mentioned already. With the Reform most of the elements from the Bologna Declaration have been implemented: the adoption of a system of *easily readable and comparable degrees*, the adoption of a system based on *two main cycles*, the establishment of a *system of credits*, and the promotion of *mobility* for students, faculty members and academic staff<sup>41</sup>.

First of all the introduction of a new degree system with Bachelor's (three years) and Master's (two years) degrees aimed at making the Norwegian system more compatible with other education systems in Europe. This also means promoting mobility for students and academic and administrative staff, so as to make it easier to study and work abroad. In addition a new system of credits has been introduced, alongside a new standardised grading system, both designed to streamline the Norwegian system and facilitate mobility. Another answer to the challenges in the Process has been the establishment of NOKUT – The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education. This has been done to ensure quality in the Norwegian higher education system.<sup>42</sup> We have dealt with most of these changes in the course of this report.<sup>43</sup> Let us therefore move on to look at the impact of the Process on disciplinization.

## The impact on disciplinization

Concerning NOKUT, as we stated in section 2, there is no evidence that this agency has a policy on or has any influence on (inter)disciplinarity. Its main concern is with *quality* – whether it is disciplinary or interdisciplinary programmes that are assessed. As far as we can see, NOKUT has neither a disciplinary nor an interdisciplinary impact on the system of higher education.

Perhaps the most comprehensive transformation that has come out of the Bologna Process, and also one that has had an impact on disciplinization, is the introduction of Bachelor and Masters programmes. In the process of establishing these programmes, the people involved in actually constructing them were encouraged to think in interdisciplinary terms. They were made to think in terms of large-scale programmes that would involve more than one faculty, more than one department and more than one discipline. At the University of Oslo, for example, this meant the birth of 17 interdisciplinary study programmes cutting across the borders between the social sciences and the humanities (one of these programmes was the Bachelor programme at the Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research). These study programmes can in many ways be understood as downplaying the traditional disciplines, leaving more resources for interdisciplinary, subject-oriented initiatives.

In addition to this we have also experienced a reduction of the importance of the

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<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Education and Research 2003, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> At least two more elements are also underway in the higher education system as part of the Bologna Process – a new act for universities and university colleges have been proposed, and a framework for lifelong learning have been put into place through the so-called Competence Reform.

<sup>43</sup> See sections 1 and 2 for details.

disciplines through the general shortenings of the study programmes leading to Bachelor and Masters degrees. Earlier the Cand. mag. degree (the previous equivalent to the Bachelor degree) took four years, now it takes three. This means that the *hovedfag* (the previous equivalent to the Master's degree) normally took six years, now it takes five years. This may imply that the students will immerse themselves less in their major discipline, simply because there is less time for that, and in that way be barred from getting a deeper understanding of the nature, methodology and theory of their disciplines. This can also reduce their feeling of disciplinary identity. In other words, we might be witnessing a reduction of the importance of the disciplines<sup>44</sup>. Another consequence of the shortening of the Bachelor and Masters degrees, in addition to a situation where more and more people get degrees in higher education, is an education system that is more focused on the needs of the labour market. The goal of the higher education institutions will – to a larger extent than before – be to educate students to fit into this labour market. This we can call a popularization of the universities, which may reduce the importance of the academic disciplines. In the labour market the point is not to hold on to whatever disciplinary ideas or dogmas you might have, on the contrary, at a work place there is more need to be pragmatic and use what you have learnt in a fruitful manner. In section 5 we also stressed that the academic disciplines are important inside the system of higher education system than outside.

All this said, though, it is important to stress that at the moment it is hard to state clearly what kind of influence the Bologna Process will have on Norwegian higher education, since we are in the middle of the transformation process. What we can say, though, is that at the moment there is a “battle” between the “old” university structure and the day-to-day administration of the new interdisciplinary degree programmes. It is too early to tell what the outcome of this battle will be.

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<sup>44</sup> See chapter 2 for more on the possible implications of the new degree programmes on disciplinization.

## **Conclusions: disciplinary barriers between the social sciences and humanities**

The story of the development of disciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking and organization within and between the social sciences and the humanities in Norway is both complex and ambiguous. Historically, on the one hand the young academic traditions (there were few old and prestigious disciplines) and the scarce resources made interdisciplinary orientations in research and teaching both natural and necessary. And since most of the disciplines – especially the social sciences – developed alongside the development of the welfare state, there was an expressed demand for their usefulness, that is, a demand for thematic, problem solving, and, accordingly, interdisciplinary orientations. The establishment of quite a few interdisciplinary research institutions, research programmes, sections (for example on women's law) and subjects during the last part of the previous century, is one expression hereof. On the other hand, though, university education until the new reform in 2003 implied longer and more in-depth disciplinary undergraduate studies compared to the American model which was implemented in Sweden as early as the 1970s. A disciplinary identification, for example presenting oneself as a sociologist and not as a social scientist (the latter would probably have been the case in Sweden), was accordingly stressed through the education system.

With the transformation of the university into a mass university, the long studies and the disciplinary focus were considered problematic by the political authorities. Schools had already been reformed so as to be in more accordance with "the demands of modern society". Thematic approaches, problem solving and collaboration were being stressed while the importance of disciplines was downplayed. And while the pupils who graduated from school could be expected to fit into the new labour market, the "old" university could not be expected to fit. The university was conceived of as lagging behind in more than one sense, which made the Bologna Declaration an excellent and legitimate opportunity and excuse for a total reform of higher education. In this process labour market interests and ways of thinking, internationalization, but also intellectual debates and paradigms, pushed towards interdisciplinary orientations. This was heavily underlined by the new research policy formulated through the reorganization of the Research Council of Norway – stressing interdisciplinarity and large, collaborative projects – as well as through the new budget system for the universities. Money talked of interdisciplinarity and not of disciplinarity. On the other hand, though, the administrative university structure with discipline-oriented departments and faculties was left more or less intact, even though the allocation of money was now made more indirect (based on production). That is, the administrative skeleton is still more or less the same. So, even though there are interdisciplinary Bachelor's and Master's programmes planned and lined up for students – before the Reform interdisciplinary education was an individual affair – administratively the programmes are handled the old-fashioned way. That this setup is likely to end up in more disciplinary than interdisciplinary thinking, the Master's programme in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Oslo – previously presented – is an illustration of. When it comes down to the core issues – exams, curricula etc. – one seems to fall back to disciplinary thinking, including at school level.

The two cases of change in disciplinization presented in this report – the Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research and the Department of Sociology and Human Geography – illustrate the enormous amount of enthusiasm and hard work that is needed to get an interdisciplinary education accepted and running, but it also the enormous strength and inertia of the disciplines. The interdisciplinary Bachelor's programme developed by the Centre had to guarantee a certain amount of disciplinary specialization, so as to get legitimization but also to make it possible for the students to go on to a Master's programme in a specific discipline. The combination of interdisciplinary courses with disciplinary ones was intended to fit into the university structure. The Department of Sociology and Human Geography, on the other hand, was an interdisciplinary collaboration decided upon solely for administrative reasons yet organized so as to leave each discipline to its own affairs. Here, hardly any interdisciplinary work has taken place, neither in teaching nor in research. Interdisciplinary teaching and research obviously require both an intellectual drive (theoretical and/or methodological orientations) *and* an administrative structure to facilitate them.

Summing up it can be stated that the new reform has managed to erase some of the barriers between the social sciences and the humanities. There is now more interdisciplinarity going on in both teaching and research. The quality of both research and education might however not have increased, since the allocated time for these activities has been shortened. To what extent the teaching and the research actually are interdisciplinary, is a question in need of further investigation, especially of praxis. At the moment it looks more like multidisciplinary than actual interdisciplinarity, but this might just be a step on the road to actual interdisciplinarity or (a backlash) back to disciplinarity, again!

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