

# BEING NORWEGIAN IN A SHRINKING WORLD

## REFLECTIONS ON NORWEGIAN IDENTITY

THOMAS HYLLAND ERIKSEN

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*Could these gents be Norwegian traditionalists showing off recent haute couture from the national heritage industry? Read the essay and find out!*

A desolate rocky cliff arising gloomily from the foaming, dark Arctic waters - the home of a small breed of stocky peasants and tough fishermen painfully eking out a living from their rough and hostile environment. Is this Norway? No? Then how about this one: It is the most perfect democracy in the world; along with Sweden it has the planet's only fully-fledged welfare state, it is technologically highly advanced and rich in natural resources, and its inhabitants enjoy the highest standard of living in the world as well as the least polluted environment. The German sociologist Hans Magnus Enzensberger wrote, in his small book on Norway (Enzensberger, 1984), that this country is simultaneously an ethnological museum and a future laboratory. Seen from the vantage-point of continental Europe, Norway is in many respects out of step, and Enzensberger's characterisation of the country as a place of contradictions - wedged between the turbulence of modernity and the inertia of tradition - may be a good starting-point for a reflection over Norwegian identity at the end of the second millennium, A.D.

The first part of this chapter outlines the contemporary domestic discourse about "Norwegianness". In the second part of the chapter, critical light is shed on the cultural construction of modern Norway, and some recent challenges to the customary perceptions of Norwegian identity will also be discussed.

## ***1. THE ONGOING INVENTION OF NORWEGIAN IDENTITY***

### **The making of the Norwegian nation**

Foreigners are often at a loss at describing the country in simple terms, but so are - alas - Norwegians. Since the advent of Norwegian nationalism in the 19th century, discussions concerning the Norwegian national character have periodically been at the frontstage of public life in the country, and they never fail to arouse great passion. What does it actually entail to be Norwegian? What are the Norwegians "really" like, and in which ways are they different from other peoples? In the early 1990s, these issues have flared up with almost unprecedented intensity. There are several causes for this strong interest in Norwegian national identity, and we shall look into some of them in greater detail below. Let me nevertheless mention the recent wave of non-European immigrants, the Saami ethnic movement in the north, the prospect of membership in the European Community, the globalisation of culture, and the planning of the 1994 Winter Olympics at Lillehammer, as some concomitant processes which inspire many Norwegians to scratch their heads and ask themselves: Who are we, and why is that so?

When we try to understand the contemporary concern with Norwegian national identity, we should keep in mind that the country's history has been construed so as to distinguish it crucially from every other European country, including its closest neighbours, Sweden and Denmark. Although there was a mediaeval kingdom roughly where Norway is presently located, its history as an independent nation-state is short, dating from its peaceful secession from Sweden in 1905. Sweden, being among the winners of the Napoleonic wars in 1814, had in turn taken over Norway from one of the losers, Denmark. Norway

had then been a part of the Danish kingdom for more than four hundred years.

A peripheral country in Europe as well as in the world-system until the 20th century, Norway was scarcely affected by the many upheavals and conflicts unfolding on the Continent from the Renaissance on, and its development followed, in many respects, its own course. Notably, Norway was never an independent colonial power, nor did it have a widespread feudal system. For centuries, the only sizeable town with strong links to Continental Europe was Bergen in the west. With no powerful city bourgeoisie and no strong landed gentry, burgeoning Norwegian nationalism took on a different character from that of other European countries in the 19th century. It was emphatically rural and egalitarian in its orientation, and it tended to glorify the simple ways of life of the countryside rather than revelling in urban grandeur or the military pride of the state (see Berggreen's contribution to this book). There was, after all, little grandeur and military pride to attach oneself to, since the country had been a peripheral part of the Danish kingdom for centuries.

An irony of this invention of nationhood is the fact that those individuals who most strongly promoted the idea of Norwegianness as a rural form of life, were themselves urban and highly educated people - their daily life was very far removed from that of the simple peasants whom they defined as the carriers of national identity. It was the urban middle-class, riding on a pan-European wave of 19th century romanticism, which decided on rural folk costumes, folk dances and fairy-tales as central national symbols towards the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>i</sup> The farmers who actually wore the "typical" costumes and danced the "typical" dances were less likely to see them as "typically Norwegian" (Østerud, 1984). This creative production of a national identity consists in what an anthropologist might describe as a form of bricolage (following Lévi-Strauss, 1962), whereby one appropriates a set of known objects or symbols, and combines them in new ways in order to create new forms of meaning. Thus the old dances, tales and handicrafts of the Norwegian countryside took on a new meaning when they were juxtaposed with the trappings of a modern state and a nationalist ideology.

## **Nationalism**

Nationalism is a kind of ideology which proclaims that the political boundaries should be coterminous with the cultural boundaries of a given territory; in other words, that a state (a "country") should only contain people of the same kind (Gellner, 1983). The idea of the Norwegian nation was born the moment a few people decided that (i) the area contained a distinct culture, (ii) the area should have political self-determination. Neither of these assumptions were evidently or "naturally" true at the time. During the formative stage of Norwegian nationalism in the mid-19th century, Norwegian nationalists had to compete with Scandinavianists, who regarded Scandinavia (or at least Norway and Denmark) as a single cultural area.<sup>ii</sup> That fusion of a cultural identity with a state which is implied in nationalism, is not in itself "natural" either, as recent writers on the history of nationalism have reminded us (Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1983). Before (and indeed after) the French Revolution in 1789, few states were nation-states: they were multi-cultural states. At the court of the Ottoman empire, to mention but one example, three languages were spoken - Arabic, Turkish and Farsi (Persian). At the royal court in Copenhagen - the capital of Denmark-Norway - German, French and Danish were used.

Nationalism and nationhood are cultural products, imaginatively created by nationalists. Nationhood is a social fact in so far as the inhabitants of an area believe in the existence of that imagined community (Anderson's, 1983, phrase) which is proposed by the nationalists. They hold that they have something profound in common, which could be phrased as metaphoric kinship, with a great number of people whom they will never know personally. It is in this sense that the nation may be spoken of as an imagined community; it is no more "imaginary" than other kinds of communities, but it is abstract and depends on ideological justification - it must be "imagined" by its members - in order to exist. In the case of Norway, Norwegianism was eventually to win out over Scandinavianism, and by today, surely, few Norwegians claim that they belong to the same nation as Danes, or Swedes, for that matter.

Nationhood need not be strongly related to "objective cultural traits", although nationalist ideology tries to persuade people that it is. So although it could be argued that people from south-eastern Norway have more in common culturally with people from centralwestern Sweden than with people from western Norway, such a similarity has little consequence in so far as people from Eastern and Western Norway insist that they belong to the same nation and exclude Swedes from it.

The nation is, in other words, a historical and cultural fact; it is not a fact of nature. Nationalism is also a modern phenomenon, and this has been poorly understood until quite recently. Since nationalists are eager to present their nation as ancient, and since they draw on traditionalist symbolism (such as folk costumes and myths of ancient wars), many have been led to believe that nations - such as the Norwegian one - are indeed very old. In fact, the use of old symbols (some dating back to the Viking era) in Norwegian nationalism can be quite confusing since it seems to suggest that the Norwegian nation can be traced back to the Viking era. We should therefore be aware that these symbols had a different meaning in their original context, before that creative bricolage which built a bridge between past and present. At that time, the springar (a typical dance) was not an expression of national identity, but an imported weekend pastime, or a part of a wedding ritual. It is only retrospectively that it has become an embodiment of nationality.

Looking critically at the historical sources of the nationalist project, one will find that they are ambiguous. For example, the history of the Nordic region may just as well be used to justify a Scandinavian or regional identity as a Norwegian one; the history of each country is intertwined with that of the other Scandinavian countries, and at a lower level, people from Sunnmøre may feel that they have little in common with people from Oslo. We should therefore be aware that history is a product of the present, not of the past. The contemporary view of say, the Viking era, is quite different from the view which was current in the sixteenth century. These and related aspects of nationalism and national identity will be dealt with in the second half of the present chapter. At this point it should be kept in mind that the nation - as a

community of citizens regarding themselves as culturally similar - depends on ideological justification in order to exist. And - since nations are historical products - the definition of nationhood may change. It is with such a context in mind that the discourse on Norwegian national identity can be properly understood.

### **Dano-German and Norse trends**

Perhaps a feeling that their nation-state and national identity are vulnerable, can account for the widespread Norwegian interest in discussing the content of domestic "national character". The country has a small population, it is geographically peripheral, and it has a comparatively short history as an independent state. Today (1992), there seems to exist a real fear of the imminent disappearance of the "Norwegian way" if the country is to join the European Community, and the organisers of the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer have vowed to take care of the national heritage in their choreography of the event. However, Norwegian identity seems to be contradiction-ridden. The Norwegian language issue is a strong indicator of this. Since the invention of the Norwegian nation in the mid-19th century, the country has been divided into adherents of Nynorsk (New Norwegian) and Bokmål (literally, "Book language") or Riksmål (State language). Nynorsk, a standard script based on certain rural dialects, was invented by Ivar Aasen in the mid-19th century, and rapidly gained popularity among certain segments of the population, particularly in the west and extreme south. Claiming that the users of Riksmål/Bokmål were really writing Danish and were thus unpatriotic, Nynorsk users saw themselves as the more authentic carriers of nationhood. Even today, all schoolchildren have to write compositions in both variants of the language, which are incidentally closely related. Although the language issue, virulent for decades, has abated, the persistence of the division indicates a widespread self-conscious, and contradiction-ridden, reflection over one's national identity.<sup>iii</sup>

The Norwegian language issue could be articulated as an expression of a cultural division between Dano-German and Norse currents in Norwegian cultural history (Øyvind Østerud's suggestion), where movements of lay

Christianity and teetotalitarianism go together with EC scepticism and nynorsk on the Norse side, confronted with the modernism and extroverted tendencies of the Dano-German trends. A passionate defence for the Dano-German trends is a small book by Jørgen Haugan (1991), where the author laments the lack of Continental manners and an exciting intellectual life in his native country. Strongholds of "Norse" trends are the western parts of southern Norway, while the "Dano-German" trends are strongest in the larger cities, particularly Bergen and Oslo.

Despite such internal divisions, it could be argued that Norwegians are generally concerned to retain their distinctiveness, and moreover, that most of them insist that they are a single people. Trine Deichman-Sørensen (1988) has suggested that in a small country such as Norway, nothing unites the population more strongly than the general interest in "Norway". But what does this distinctiveness consist in? Instead of providing a more or less random checklist of "Norwegian cultural traits", I shall outline the recent public discourse on Norwegian distinctiveness. Frequently anecdotal or satirical in character, much of the popular literature on "Norwegian character" should perhaps be read as political statements in its own right, and not necessarily as "scientific" work. It nevertheless contains many valuable insights as well as itself being a contribution to the ongoing definition of Norwegian identity.

### **Egalitarian individualism**

Most of those writing on Norwegian national identity seem to agree that politics in the country is marked by a peculiar democratic ideology, which we may tentatively label egalitarian individualism. Equality and the integrity of the individual are in other words believed to be highly valued. Historical and geographic reasons for such an ideology are often evoked - for example, Norwegian farms were scattered and did not invite the communal form of organisation more common in other parts of Europe, and the country lacked a strong aristocracy and related hierarchies - but we shall not go into such arguments here.

The ideology of egalitarian individualism, it has been argued, expresses itself through a strong suspicion against social climbers and rejection of formal social hierarchies. In political rhetoric, equality is a positively valued word, whether it concerns gender, class or town and country. Few politicians would venture to say that they were all for inequality. The social democratic ideology which has guided post-war Norwegian politics expresses such values, which are embedded in the concept of the Welfare State (cf. Andersen, 1984). The author Aksel Sandemose, an immigrant from Denmark, coined the Law of Jante (Janteloven, cf. Sandemose, 1953), which presents such an egalitarianism in a less charitable manner. The Law of Jante proclaims - in a variety of ways - that "Thou Shalt Not Think Highly of Thyself". It expresses, in other words, an ideology of equality which depreciates the original and the unusual. It is widely held that the Law of Jante is a deeply embedded aspect of Norwegian culture, and that it discourages brilliance and high achievements. Indeed, the Law of Jante has repeatedly been mentioned by local businessmen as an obstacle to economic growth and prosperity. (It is true that Norway contains fewer very rich people and thus has a greater measure of economic equality than most other countries, but it is not true that the country has had an unusually low economic growth rate.)

Be this as it may; the idea of Norwegian egalitarianism has inspired, and continues to justify, legal provisions for equality between the genders, a progressive system of taxation and a highly subsidised rural sector. Egalitarian individualism is also frequently mentioned as a driving force behind the strong resistance to EC membership, which reached a temporary peak in the 1972 referendum when 52.5% of the population voted against membership. The idea of decentralisation, a related aspect of this ideology, will be discussed below.

### **Consensus, compromise and formal justice**

The Argentinian anthropologist Eduardo Archetti, who has lived in Norway for many years, has compared the Norwegian style of discourse with that prevalent in Catholic countries (Archetti, 1984). In his view, Norwegians are consensus-oriented and issue-oriented (saklige) when they are forced to solve



tasks together, for example in discussions at meetings. This entails that (i) they tend to be unwilling to accept disagreement; (ii) they stick to the facts and avoid including personal or other formally irrelevant aspects into the situation. Regarding the consensus orientation, Norwegians would, according to Archetti, tend to prefer a poor compromise to a violent quarrel - even if they were eventually to emerge victoriously from the latter: They strongly wish to agree.

As regards the "issue-orientation" of Norwegians, Archetti links this with a related observation of Norwegian culture, namely a concern with formal justice - or, as an anthropologist might say, balanced reciprocity. This means that one returns a favour or a gift almost immediately, and measures the return virtually with mathematic precision. In other societies, people might buy each other drinks, cups of coffee or meals without demanding an immediate return of the favour. In this way, they establish a lasting relationship. In this country, it is uncommon that people do not split restaurant or bar accounts, pay their own entrance fees, and so on - even if they know each other well. Are Norwegians afraid to develop informal commitments or obligations vis-à-vis others? Are they simply afraid of making friends? So it may seem, if Archetti is correct. It may be the case that Norwegians (and, it could be argued, other Scandinavians), imbued with Protestantism and Puritanism, fear the consequences of a friendship with a person whom they do not already know well. Since honesty and sincerity are important values in Norwegian definition of self, it could be argued, the Norwegians may be afraid of making promises of friendship which they might break in the future. Further aspects of the discussion of Norwegian identity seem to confirm this assumption.

### **The rural connection**

"You can get me out of Valdres, but you cannot get Valdres out of me," writes the native social anthropologist Tord Larsen (1984) as an illustration of the intimate identification of Norwegians with their place of origin, even if they have long since migrated from their native valley or fishing hamlet. Norway was urbanised later than many other European countries - largely during the

20th century - and half of the population still lives in rural areas. Of those who live in towns, many maintain strong affective links with the home of their ancestors, as well as relatives who remain in the countryside. Even some of the most urbane and sophisticated members of the Oslo bourgeoisie leave the city for Christmas in order to visit a remote mountain valley where their kin group originates. Norwegian identity, as it is generally defined by Norwegians, is primarily a rural identity, not an urban one.

Foreigners sometimes complain that Norwegians are difficult to befriend; that they jealously guard their personal space and seem worried and slightly afraid when confronted with strangers. It has been claimed that most Norwegians rarely address strangers unless drunk or if for some reason or other they either really have to. Perhaps such an assumed aspect of the Norwegian way of life could be related to their recent rural origins. In many rural areas, strangers were treated with suspicion, and every individual had only a small number of friends whom he or she knew intimately. Villages were, as noted, absent. The social situation typical of the city, implying a very high number of superficial acquaintances, may therefore seem alienating and difficult to handle for people with a rural background. A self-perception common among Norwegians conforms to this view: they do not regard themselves as a cosmopolitan and easy-going people, but rather as somewhat private and introvert. Lacking the mannerisms of sophisticated urbanites, they might argue, they compensate through a sincere and trustworthy character - and this is a characterisation of Norwegians also commonly invoked by foreigners. The British expression "Norwegian charisma", used to describe people entirely devoid of grace and charm, confirms this image.

### **Nature and culture**

The wild and varied Norwegian scenery and clean environment comprise a source of pride to many of the country's citizens, and it may be the most important component in the standard image of Norway presented to foreigners. Instead of drawing on grand cultural traditions or a proud military history, Norwegian patriots (and surely, visiting foreigners) may talk of their beautiful mountains, clean lakes and breathtaking fjords. A genuinely peculiar

aspect of Norwegian identity, further, seems to consist in the social use of nature in the country. A Norwegian who lacks interest in nature and *friluftsliv* ("life out in the open") may well be accused of being a poor specimen by his fellow citizens. A great number of people own cottages (*hytter*) in some remote valley, forest or mountain area, and many spend the majority of holidays there - it has been estimated that over half of the population has easy access to a hytte. Rather than seeking contact with other people, or exploring foreign cities, they regard the holiday as an opportunity to "get away from it all", which means spending it with the nuclear family in a remote place where they can fish, walk or ski. These cottages, although many are well furnished and equipped, are expected to signal an ideal of simplicity in lifestyle - an aspect of Norwegian self-definition to which I shall return below.

The origins of most Norwegians in rural, non-hierarchical environments are again apparent. For one thing, there is little to boast about as regards urban grandeur in the country. One need only compare the Royal Castle in Oslo with the rather more spectacular ones in Copenhagen and Stockholm to see the point. As the national anthem goes, "Hytter og hus, men ingen borge" ("Cottages and houses, but no castles"). Further, many Norwegians express that they do not feel at ease in the city. Many claim to live in the city *malgré eux* - in spite of themselves, and the ideal of living in a "small red house in the country" is widespread enough to have become a cliché. A TV journalist who had just completed a series of programmes about Oslo in the autumn of 1991, was asked what she valued the most about the capital. Not entirely unexpectedly, she answered Nordmarka; that is, the nature reserve just inside the city limits.<sup>iv</sup>

Few Norwegians admit that they love the city. There is also a tendency that urban life is evaluated on the basis of standards originating in the country. If the city does not fulfil human needs in the same way as the rural settlement did, something must be wrong with the city. Since it is impossible to move the city to the mountain valley, one tries instead to move the valley to the city. Norwegians have slowly become an urban people to the extent that many of them live in towns and cities, but they have scarcely become an urbane people

in their own view. The rural connection and love of nature are very important aspects of the public self-definition of "what is typically Norwegian" (see also Witoszek, 1991).

### **Decentralisation**

In his aforementioned book, Enzensberger points out that a peculiar characteristic of Norwegian society lies in the fact of 47 airports (actually, the number is 53) for a population of four million. Like many other commentators on Norwegian society, he sees the high value placed on a scattered settlement of the population (spredt bosetting in political rhetoric) as being typically Norwegian. If we compare Norway with say, France or Sweden, this notion is confirmed. A roadmap of France would indicate that virtually all main roads lead to Paris. Frenchmen have accustomed themselves to seeing the main seats of finance, politics and higher learning located to the capital. As regards Sweden, that country, like Norway, had a very scattered population at the turn of the century. From the inception of the modern Swedish welfare state in the years after World War I, there was an increasing awareness that it would have been extremely expensive to offer the same rights and benefits to people in remote Norrland as to people in the Stockholm area. Many of the erstwhile inhabitants of Norrland - the northernmost third of the country - have later moved to newly erected housing estates in central areas. The Norwegian picture differs starkly. Although there have been advocates for a greater centralisation of power and people in this country as well, their influence has been limited. In Norwegian politics, it is a widespread notion that people should be able to live in the place where they grew up, if at all possible. Subsidies, generous tax deductions and other economic benefits have been channeled into Utkantnorge ("Peripheral Norway") to ensure this; expensive bridges and tunnels connect small islands with the mainland, and Norwegian agriculture is, along with Japanese and Swiss agriculture, the most heavily subsidised in the world. Language is decentralised to the extent that every valley has its own, semi-officialised dialect in which at least some of the inhabitants take great pride. Educational facilities up to University level are available in every county, and there are not only many airports, but also regional hospitals, libraries, post offices and administrative offices of various

kinds in a very large number of localities. In 1990, the national library was moved from Oslo to a place called Brønnøysund, which - it has been noted by critics - is a remarkable place for not being within commuting distance from a single town. Small is still beautiful in Norway. The cost of all this, some have argued, is an overall decrease of welfare in the country. Besides, they claim, the decentralisation has come to a point where there remains nothing to decentralise: in other words, that the central institutions and urban areas have been neglected. Such criticisms seem to have had little effect yet, and few politicians would dare to omit the "districts" or Utkantnorge, in their campaign speeches.

The priority given to peripheral areas in political life confirms the image of Norwegian identity as an essentially rural identity. It is further confirmed in the nisselue stereotype with which I shall presently deal.

### **The unsophisticated, but practically minded farmer**

The nisselue, the red woollen hat worn (particularly around Christmas) by the gnomes (nisser) featured in local folklore, has in recent years become an ambiguous symbol of Norwegian nationhood. "Pulling the nisselue down one's ears" refers to isolationist tendencies in Norwegian society, often invoked against, for example, those who oppose EC membership. The nisselue, frequently worn by people on skis, is also a reminder of the intimate relationship between Norwegian identity and rural life, and thus seems to present the typical Norwegian as an unsophisticated and clumsy peasant unable to move gracefully about in a complex and modern environment. Some Norwegians have tried to turn aspects of the nisselue stereotype into a laudable description of themselves, and tend to regard themselves as a practical and earthy people. The anti-EC movement has actually used the nisselue as their symbol. During the German occupation in 1940-45, the nisselue was a symbol of resistance, and was actually prohibited by the Germans. A symbol of earthiness and simplicity, the nisselue simultaneously signals independence and self-sufficiency.

To wear designer-made Italian clothes, to own a sleek but impractical luxury car, and to relish the bouquets of fine wines and champagnes, would be considered emphatically un-Norwegian. Despite the country's rise to wealth, a certain frugality and simplicity are still considered proper in this society. There are heavy taxes on "luxury goods", and wine and liquor can still only be purchased in state monopoly stores at exorbitant prices. In some parts of the country, puritanist Protestant sects, which rail against moral decay of every conceivable kind, remain powerful. In these rural areas, one can sometimes travel for days without coming across a wine/spirits monopoly outlet, since the politicians of the communities refuse to have one lest their inhabitants should run astray.

Self-definitions of a typical Norwegian "personality" would usually depict that personality as formal and slightly stiff, but sincere to the point of naïveté. In a bid to defend Norwegians against accusations that they are cold and unpassionate, Eduardo Archetti (1984) has called attention to the institution of the Norwegian party where, it is true, people tend to bring their own wine, but where a certain joie-de-vivre and lack of formality are for once apparent.

### **The brown cheese**

In 1990, the hosts of Nitimen, the most popular daily radio programme, which features light music and assorted small talk,<sup>v</sup> invited its listeners to elect that object or cultural trait which was most Norwegian. The programme had earlier designated the national bird (fossekallen, that is the dipper) and the national fish (the cod). This time, a very large number of responses elicited a variety of proposed "national totems", and the list suggests how ordinary Norwegians perceive themselves as being distinctive from say, Swedes or Englishmen. Among the suggestions were the cheese slicer (a Norwegian invention), the Hardanger fiddle, the Selbu mitten, Constitution Day (17 May) and the folk song "Kjerringa med Staven". The winner of the competition was, however, the brown cheese. Sometimes misleadingly called goat cheese (only a minority of brown cheeses are made exclusively from goat's milk; the classic G45 is 50-50 goat's and cow's milk), the brown cheese could almost certainly be regarded as a genuine Norwegian contribution to world cuisine. Perhaps

more importantly, the brown cheese epitomises central values in a widespread Norwegian self-definition: Being a dairy product, it is associated with the rural life; its unspectacular taste signifies frugality and simplicity in style; its widespread use in the bagged lunches typical of Norwegian society further expresses a spirit of common sense and a "no-frills" attitude. - Or maybe this interpretation is wrong. Whatever the case may be: The brown cheese did get the most votes.

## ***2. NATIONAL IDENTITY IN A CHANGING WORLD***

Characterisations of "national character" - such as those discussed above - tend to be stereotypical, and can be grossly misleading. After all, there are enormous regional and individual variations in a large society such as a nation-state. When Norwegian intellectuals talk about "Norwegian culture", they frequently exclude themselves from its compass. A common expression in many quarters is this: "Bah! That's typically Norwegian!". Besides, the anthropological literature on ethnicity has shown that ideas of cultural traits distinguishing ethnic groups (or nations) from each other are often oversimplifying or simply mistaken. The "cultural traits" mentioned as unique by a group are often vaguely described or even shared with its neighbours (cf. Knudsen, 1989, for a similar point concerning the Mediterranean). Besides, the presumed continuity in time of an ethnic group or nation can in several senses be regarded as mythical. It is obvious that the content of Norwegian nationhood and "national character" changes as the world changes; being a Norwegian in 1992 means something different from what it meant in 1952. I shall now sketch some ways in which the public discourse on Norwegian national identity may also be said to change, and in which ways changes in the external world may influence domestic reflection on the topic.

### **The social importance of "imagined communities"**

Ideological constructions of national identity and uniqueness, misleading as they may be, are important for two main reasons. First, such designations fix a

social identity and protect its boundaries. If Norwegians were convinced, for example, that they were the only herring-eating people in the world, this would confirm and strengthen their national identity. The very idea of cultural uniqueness serves to strengthen the boundaries against the external world. Secondly, cultural definitions of national identities may eventually become self-fulfilling prophecies. If one is consistently taught that one's culture is egalitarian, decentralist and concerned with formal justice, one will eventually define oneself as egalitarian, etc. A typical example concerns the Norwegian language. A traveller going from Bergen to Stockholm at the turn of the century - before Norway's secession from Sweden - would pass through valleys and towns where different dialects were spoken. However, he would scarcely be able to tell where the Norwegian dialects ended and the Swedish ones began. In 1992, it would have been possible to draw such a dividing line, corresponding with the national border. A nationalist ideology monitored through the state, the mass media and civil society has led to an increasing degree of cultural homogenisation. It has thus been argued that Norway became an integrated nation in the 1960s, when national TV was introduced and virtually everybody - from Hammerfest to Lindesnes - began watching the same TV news at the same time every day.

The nation, seen as a collectivity of people defining themselves as "a people", came into being after nationalist ideology. To some extent, it was created through the implementation of nationalist ideology in the central agencies of the state and civil society.

### **Deconstructing national myths**

A public concern with defining national identity, which has been very important in Norwegian intellectual life throughout this century, implies its own negation. As some "nation-builders" create a certain image of the history or the national identity of a country, others will - if they are allowed to - take the opportunity to tear it down; deconstructing, criticising, indicating in which ways the stories of their past and present have been misleading and ideological in character, aimed at presenting a certain, political opportune view of the past.



In Norway as in many other countries, historians and creative writers have been instrumental in this creation of nationhood during the past two hundred years or so. Critical voices have throughout added their versions of Norwegian history to those explicitly or implicitly exhorting the virtues of nation-building. The national myth of the heroic resistance of the Norwegian people during the Second World War, largely created by historians and others writing on the period, could serve as an example. Several historians have in more recent times filled in this picture with new facts and interpretations of the period (for two recent contributions, see Dahl, 1991; Sørensen, 1991). They have argued that Norwegian Nazis, many of whom died on the Eastern Front for their fatherland, may be regarded as devoted patriots. Parallels between certain aspects of Nazi politics and social democratic politics have also been revealed. It has also been shown that although many Norwegians actively resisted the German occupation from 1940 to 1945, very many did not.<sup>vi</sup> In order to understand the controversial character of such facts and re-interpretations of history, one must understand the role of the Second World War in the contemporary national self-consciousness. A very great number of books have been published on the war, and many of them depict Norwegian resistance as heroic. This resistance highlights sacred aspects of Norwegian nationhood: it shows the willingness of Norwegians to sacrifice their lives for their country, the importance of patriotism in times of hardship, and the divine destiny of the area, as it were, as an independent country. It is not surprising, therefore, that re-interpretations offering alternative perspectives on Norwegian achievements during the war, can be controversial.

Other central nationalist ideas have also been tampered with recently. The transition from the heroic age of Norwegian nationhood (notably the Viking age) to the "four-hundred years' night" under Danish rule has been re-written by historians lacking the nationalist bias formerly widespread, and it has become possible to argue that there was no "necessary" continuity between the medieval Norwegian state and that Norwegian nation-state which was created in 1814, and which gained full independence in 1905. This presumed continuity, evident in the name of the new king (Haakon VII) which suggests that modern Norway was really the same country as the medieval kingdom,

must be regarded as an ideological construction, neither more nor less. The king himself was originally a Danish prince, and spoke Danish till the day of his death.

In his book on the doctrine of national self-determination, the political scientist Øyvind Østerud (1984) reminds his readers that many "typical" aspects of Norwegian culture were really quite recent imports from the European continent at the time when they were discovered and fashioned as national symbols by the early nationalists. This holds good for "traditional" Norwegian handicrafts, musical instruments and folk costumes. Most of the regional bunads, an important type of national costume, were invented in the beginning of the 20th century; the patterns were profoundly inspired by costumes in Continental Europe.

The very idea of Norwegian culture and society as a "natural" and constant entity evolving according to its internal laws for over a thousand years, is about to become untenable. Norwegian culture and society have developed through crucial, if sometimes sporadic, contact with continental Europe, and the changes have been dramatic. It can be argued that contemporary Norwegians have less in common with the Wergelands of the 19th century (famous Norwegian nationalist) than with contemporary Germans or Dutchmen.

The "tradition" on which nationalism and national identity feeds has been deconstructed; the great tradition of nationhood is increasingly being fragmented into several lesser histories which point out the ambiguities involved in interpreting the past, and which reveal nationalist versions of history as conglomerates of fact, myth and contestable interpretations. This does not mean that the Norwegian nation does not exist, but it reminds us that it is a cultural invention - and a fairly recent one at that. Since Norwegian history can be reinterpreted, the content of Norwegian identity can be changed. This, some have argued, is called for in our day and age, marked by two strong tendencies which apparently run counter to some currently held conceptions of Norwegian nationality. These tendencies are the emergence of

a poly-ethnic Norwegian society, and the globalisation of culture. I shall first look into the challenges from minority ethnicity.

### **Are the Saami Norwegians?**

Their numbers are few, but they are highly visible. Approximately 100,000 non-European immigrants and refugees and 40,000 Saami comprise a small percentage of the country's population, but in recent years they have increasingly demanded formal equal rights and an acknowledged minority status. A continuous reminder that nationalist ideology does not conform perfectly with social reality, ethnic minorities constitute a thorn in the eye of many governments. Norway is no exception, and problems arising from the presence of minorities go to the naked core of nationalism: What is the actual content of the national identity; who should be included in the nation and who should be excluded from it; and what kinds of demands should be placed on inhabitants who are not members of the nation?

The Saami, that sub-Arctic ethnic group who were formerly known as the Lapps, are Norway's oldest ethnic minority.<sup>vii</sup> In all probability, they have lived in what is now Norway for at least as long as ethnic Norwegians. Until the late 1950s, Saami identity had been strongly stigmatised. Many Saami living in ethnically mixed areas chose to undercommunicate their ethnic origins - that is, they pretended they were not Saami; and many indeed became Norwegians in a matter of a few generations. From the early 1960s, but particularly since 1980, the country has seen the growth of a powerful ethnic revitalisation movement investing pride and dignity into the formerly despised Saami identity; they have taken conscious measures to glorify and recodify half-forgotten Saami customs and tradition, while simultaneously making certain that they receive their share of the national welfare. This ethnopolitical movement has enjoyed considerable success. The Saami language, threatened by extinction as late as the 1960s, has been revived, and it is now the main administrative language in those parts of Finnmark county which are defined as Saami core areas. In 1989, a Saami parliament with limited but real power, Sametinget, was officially inaugurated by the late Norwegian king Olav V.

Only a generation ago, many Saami were about to become assimilated into the Norwegian ethnic group, while others were politically passive, poor, culturally stigmatised and largely uneducated. Their success has proven that it is possible for a well-organised aboriginal minorities to reinvent and indeed strengthen their identity in the face of fast social and cultural change, and that there need be no contradiction between modernisation and ethnic identity. Although many Norwegians of Saami ancestry still reject Saami identity, the number of citizens who define themselves as Saami has increased. Today, the self-conscious members of this minority present themselves a culturally self-conscious group whose identity has survived the process of modernisation. Only a minority engage in the reindeer herding with which the group is associated (and associates itself in its ethnic symbolism), but many thousands - many of them residents of cities - insist on their right to be non-Norwegians in an ethnic sense, and yet to benefit from the same rights as other Norwegian citizens. Many others, it should be added, have an uncertain and ambiguous identity, sometimes oscillating between Saami and Norwegian ethnic self-identification.

### **Non-European immigrants and Norwegian identity**

The Saami's achievement of political, cultural and linguistic rights within the Norwegian nation-state also indicates that there need be no serious conflict between an ethnic majority and a minority living in the same country. However, the avoidance of conflict seems to require that the minority is granted cultural self-determination in respects defined as important by its leaders. This can entail demands for religious and linguistic rights which may not be accepted by the nation-state, which proclaims - as a virtue - the essential cultural homogeneity of its inhabitants. Indeed, if we look at the more recent immigrants to Norway (see Long's contribution to this book), it becomes evident that the rights successfully claimed by the Saami are not automatically granted by a national majority. During the election campaign of 1991, leading politicians in Oslo suggested that immigrant children should be deprived of the right to be taught in their mother-tongue in primary schools, and strong political lobbies have for years fought against the erection of a

mosque in the city, although Muslim organisations were willing to fund it themselves.

The overtly anti-immigrant groups, some of which are openly racist, are small and politically marginal in the country. But suspicion, fear and myths, especially targeting Muslim immigrants, abound. Many Norwegians exaggerate their numbers if asked; many believe that Muslim women have an average of ten children each, and so on. In general, the very presence of Muslims in the country is seen as a threat against Norwegian identity by some zealous patriots, who depreciate that "mix of cultures" presumed by migration, and who would prefer that Norwegian society conformed firmly to nationalist doctrine; namely, that it should only contain people "of the same kind".

Two books on multicultural Norwegian society written from an anthropological perspective (Eriksen, 1991; Brox, 1991) have argued the need for a more finely nuanced debate on multiculturalism than that which has been typical so far. The public debate of the 1980s and early 1990s has polarised the Norwegian population in camps either violently for or violently against immigration. (As a matter of fact, regular immigrants have not been allowed to enter the country since 1975.) Instead, both books argue, one should see the non-European presence in the country as an empirical fact, if not as an unproblematic one. Issues which demand critical scrutiny include cultural conflicts, power relations and the future content of Norwegian national identity. In the 1990s, it is possible for a person to identify himself simultaneously as a Saami and a Norwegian. It is so far much less common for a person to identify him- or herself as a Pakistani-born Muslim and simultaneously as a Norwegian, even if the person in question is a Norwegian citizen. The idea of Norwegianness, as it is produced and reproduced in public discourse, seems incompatible with Islam. Since the new minorities must be considered permanent ones, I have suggested (Eriksen, 1991) that Norwegians should rethink their national ideology in order that ethnic minorities may be included as legitimate and "natural" members of Norwegian society.

Perhaps the future will see an increasing polarisation between Norwegians and immigrants; perhaps many of them will leave, or perhaps many will be assimilated; that is, they will give up their language and their religion and become some kind of ethnic Norwegians. It is also conceivable that the Asian, African and South American immigrants and refugees will succeed along the same lines as the Saami; that they will be able to assert their minority identity while simultaneously becoming integrated into Norwegian civil society. Perhaps the future will even see an alliance between Norwegian cultural patriots and Muslim immigrants - against the onslaught of American mass culture? The outcome of the current situation of culture contact is uncertain.

The relationship between isolation and contact with others, or introverted and extroverted tendencies, is highly ambiguous in Norwegian history. The relative isolation of the society, which among other things entailed the absence of a powerful landed gentry, has had substantial effects on its ideology, social organisation and self-definition. On the other hand, Norwegians are also proud of their large merchant fleet (which, it is sometimes claimed, can be traced back to the Viking age), and during the past century, Norwegians have been a very extrovert people; they are well travelled, have recruited many Protestant missionaries in Africa and Madagascar, and are among the strongest supporters of the United Nations. Through migration, Norwegian society has come closer to the rest of the world in a different way; it has been confronted at home with customs and beliefs radically different from the endemic ones. In another sense, too, Norwegian society is much less sheltered from the rest of the world than it used to be. This concerns what we may call the globalisation of culture; the spread, through modern media of mass communication, of symbols, images and messages which know of no national or cultural boundaries, and which are virtually identical all over the world.

### **The globalisation of culture in Norway**

Ours is the era of the jet plane and the satellite dish. The world has shrunk, and some of its internal boundaries are vanishing. You may buy clothing from Marlboro Classics in Nairobi; you may watch Dynasty in Indonesia, and you

may listen to Prince's latest CD in your hotel room in Rio. Travels which took weeks only two generations ago now take less than a working-day.

The Norwegian periphery, Utkantnorge, is scarcely that picturesque, slightly anachronistic kind of place which tourist brochures try to depict it as - where time has stood still for a century, where the fisherman still patiently mends his nets on the wooden pier and the farmer's working-day follows the sun, where rustic and simple folk still worship nature and their Protestant god as if NATO and the European Community had yet to be invented. Surely, these images are not difficult to come by, if one tries hard enough. But the picture is more complex. The representation of "average Norwegians" created by Marianne Gullestad (1984), who interprets everyday life in a Bergen working-class suburb, is probably more representative than the rather exoticising depictions of say, Hans Magnus Enzensberger. The inhabitants of the outlying districts are as much consumers of videos, pop songs and colourful weekly magazines as they are geographically marginal. Former groceries have been replaced by large shopping malls or by combined video shops and snackbars. MTV waves and hamburger outlets are present all along the Norwegian coastline. The farmers of Gudbrandsdalen travel to the Canary islands in July, just like everyone else; about forty per cent (my estimate) of the northern fishermen whistle Bob Dylan songs as they wait for their catch. - Kjartan Fløgstad, one of the country's most highly esteemed novelists, described the country as Media Thule and its inhabitants as mediatullingar in his book *Det sjuande klima* ("The Seventh Climate", Fløgstad 1987) - a pun meaning, literally, "media idiots", which refers to the presumed immense power of the mass media over the Norwegian population. Norway is today a country whose inhabitants probably eat more hamburgers than fish balls, where Jackie Collins's novels are more widely read than Bjørnson's peasant tales, where well over half of the population can make themselves understood in slightly broken American English. The country is a more strongly integrated part of the global ecumene than many Norwegians prefer to think, but to be fair, it is a local part with a distinctive local flavour in which Norwegians take great pride. The impact of the current globalisation of culture is visible even in remote parts of Norway, where local shops may have American names and everybody wears jeans

although the climate suggests otherwise. These processes of cultural change cause a great deal of worry. Some Norwegians fear the erosion of their cultural distinctiveness; some lament the appearance of Anglicisms in the local dialect; some worry about the standardising and alienating effects of mass culture, American style. When the local coffeehouse is replaced by an outlet of McDonald's, it is certainly an occasion for intense nostalgia. A sociologist who has studied the "Americanisation" of Norway, Steinar Bryn, has argued that massive change of this kind took place during the 1980s, and that these changes were largely unnoticed by Norwegians. According to Bryn, Norwegians try to seem cosmopolitan and non-provincial through adopting aspects of American lifestyle and American words. Among the more curious examples he cites as evidence is a hamburger joint in some remote parish called "McNoreg" (Noreg is New Norwegian for Norway).<sup>viii</sup>

Many of the inhabitants of Norway, it has occasionally been suggested, are lacking in self-confidence on behalf of those very aspects of Norwegianness which they relish. Norwegian resistance against membership in the European Community - a movement unique in Europe - is simultaneously an expression of such a fear, and an indication of a strong and enduring cultural self-consciousness. Which other European country would in the early 1990s prefer to stay outside of that safe haven of abundance and protection that the EC offers? With that picture of Norwegian identity which has been drawn in this chapter in mind, it may be possible to understand - at least in part - why so many Norwegians (possibly more than half) stubbornly insist on standing alone, self-reliant, with as few commitments as possible towards unpredictable European partners.

### **National identity and cultural change**

In the face of technological change and the fact that formerly discrete societies have become intertwined, it may seem that it will be difficult to maintain the idea of Norwegian culture as an egalitarian, rural "no-frills" culture. Since processes of cultural homogenisation erase cultural differences, and since increased geographical mobility creates a mismatch between territories and "cultures", one might expect the distinctiveness to vanish gradually. In one



sense, this is doubtless happening. Like virtually every other ethnic group in the world, Norwegians nowadays watch Sylvester Stallone and Madonna on MTV; the pizza has become a local staple;<sup>ix</sup> an Oslo flat may be furnished and decorated in the same way as a flat in Milan or Berlin. In terms of consumption and lifestyle, there is less and less to distinguish Norwegians from any other Western European people. However, a main argument in this chapter has been that social identities are created imaginatively in a specific political context, and that they have no imperative relationship to "objective" culture.

If we look at Norwegian identity- the current self-definitions - we will therefore find a picture of a highly distinctive people, notwithstanding "objective" cultural changes. Indeed, it could be argued that modern ethnicity, seen as cultural self-consciousness, is a result of an ongoing process of cultural homogenisation. As a general rule, it is when the carriers of an identity feel that it is threatened from the outside that it becomes most important to them. So for the Norwegian farmer of the 1840s, there was no reason to stress his social identity. He could take it for granted; probably, he did not even reflect about who he was. To people living in modern, complex societies, the situation is quite different. Their way of life is different from that of their forebears, and that it resembles that of the neighbouring peoples, but the feeling of a continuity with the past may still remain important. They are now constantly brought into contact with people whom they define as different (foreigners, immigrants, etc.), and are thus brought to reflect on their identity. They must be able to explain why they describe themselves as Norwegians and not as Swedes, Pakistanis, etc. Furthermore, the shrinking of the world entailed by globalisation seems to lay pressure on their identity as distinctive: the old and familiar is replaced by the new and foreign, and threatens to erase one's uniqueness. In this way, the pressure from cultural complexity and globalisation is at the root of the modern identity crisis, where ethnic identities are often seen as a solution in the face of the disappearance of boundaries. As Anglicisms enter the language, new shopping malls with enormous car parks replace the old family-run groceries, and the video machine replaces the storytelling grandmother, the individual may react by

reaching towards that which seems constant and secure in a sea of accelerating change. The outcome is often the resurgence of ethnic or national identities which may have lain dormant for a period, and which now assert themselves with newly found vitality as a form of defence against perceived cultural change originating from the outside.

As with the ideological creation of national and ethnic groups, this resurgence of ethnic or national identities has no clear relationship to "objective" cultural changes or "objective" threats. It is only if a certain situation is perceived as threatening to one's identity that it inspires revitalisation. For example, it could plausibly be argued that the Norwegian way of life was transformed dramatically in the post-war decades, following massive US influence in the political, economic and cultural spheres. These changes, which entailed the introduction of television, the nearly universal use of private cars and consumerist ideology, were seen as threatening to the Norwegian identity only by a minority - and so Norwegian culture was allowed to change without its identity being seriously challenged. People felt just as Norwegian after the introduction of the TV as they did before. Since the 1970s and 1980s, on the other hand, the presence of a few thousand Muslims in the country has been perceived by many Norwegians as threatening to their identity, and they have taken measures to end immigration. The Muslims in Norway wield insignificant political and economic power, and they do not have any control of national mass media. Their presence is nevertheless perceived as threatening to some segments of the Norwegian population, who have responded through an intense glorification of certain symbols of Norwegianness.

### **Coda: Whither Norwegian identity?**

It is beyond doubt that a Norwegian identity will continue to be imagined by the overwhelming majority of the population for the foreseeable future, whatever the country's relationship to the European Community will be. This means that people living in the country, and counting it as their ancestral land, will continue to regard themselves as distinctive from others - as Norwegians. It does not, however, mean that the content of such an identity

will remain constant. Although Norwegians - like any self-defined people or ethnic group - tend to think that there is a strong continuity with the past, it is a fact that being Norwegian in the 1990s means something different from what it meant in the 1950s. But what will it look like as we approach the coming millennium? We do not know. But we may hazard the guess that Norwegian identity will remain proudly Norwegian.

In a comparison between the history curricula of the school systems of the five Nordic countries, the historian Stein Tønnesson (1991) found that the Norwegian curriculum is the most nationalist in character. Whereas the Danes stress the intimate relationship between their national history and that of Europe, and the Swedes underscore the importance of "Norden"<sup>x</sup> as a cultural unit; while the Finns and Icelanders promote general humanistic and intellectual values instead of glorifying their national identity, the Norwegian school curriculum is markedly nationalist (Tønnesson, 1991). It presents Scandinavian, European and global history from a Norwegian vantage-point, and focusses extensively on the process of Norwegian nation-building. Can such an attitude be viable at a time when "internationalisation" is the big catchword everywhere - in business as well as in politics and intellectual life? Yes, but it should also follow from the foregoing that it cannot be predicted which social identities will be the most relevant ones for Norwegians in the future.

### **Acknowledgements**

An earlier version of this chapter has been read and commented fruitfully upon by Anne Hambro Alnæs, Kjetil Folkestad, Anne Cohen Kiel, Iver B Neumann and Stein Tønnesson, who also located a number of factual historical inaccuracies in the first draft.

### **Notes**

1 This is a common characteristic of most nationalisms, see Gellner (1983).

2 Linguists may regard the four Scandinavian languages - Danish, Swedish,

Standard Norwegian and New Norwegian - as closely related dialects of the same language. With some initial effort, a speaker of one of the dialects (or languages, as they are defined politically) can easily understand the others. Icelandic and Faroese are more distinctive, although they are closely related to the others. Saami ("Lappish") and Finnish belong to a different language family, namely the Finno-Ugric languages.

3 About 20% of the population use New Norwegian, but 25% of national radio and TV broadcasts are expected to be in that language. There are virtually no problems of mutual intelligibility.

4 Oslo tries desperately to be a big, bustling and cosmopolitan city, although it fails to convince foreigners that it is. With friends like this TV journalist, the city will manage quite well without enemies.

5 P1 at 9 o'clock daily. In the summer, the same programme is called *Reiseradioen* ("The pocket radio"), alluding to Norwegian holiday habits whereby many people stay at some remote cottage or campsite.

6 An undercommunicated fact of recent Norwegian history consists in the healthy and vigorous relationship between Norwegian and German intellectual life, which was abruptly cut off after World War II. In the 1990s, few Norwegians are fluent in German.

7 There are also Saami in northern Finland and Sweden, as well as on the Russian Kola peninsula. The largest community is the Norwegian one.

8 In Lars Aarønæs's language column in the weekly newspaper *Dag og Tid*, inept Norwegians who try to give a cosmopolitan impression abound. One representative example is The Italian Pizza Company, which is located at Sinsen, North Oslo. - And of course, Norwegians, like many other peoples, are liable to call each other "provincial" when they disapprove of something.

9 See Lien (1988) for a highly readable study of changes in the culinary habits

of rural Norwegians. The title of her work speaks for itself. It is called "From boknafesk to pizza"; boknafesk is a kind of dried and salted cod endemic to northern Norway.

10 Norden refers to the three Scandinavian countries as well as Finland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, and sometimes Greenland. Since Finland has been a Swedish province and contains a Swedish-speaking minority, Norden is more important than Scandinavia to most Swedes. See Neumann (1991) for a comprehensive discussion of the idea of "Norden".

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[A comment](#) (in Norwegian) on this article arrived on June 30, 1996:

Subject: Being Norwegian

Date: Sun, 30 Jun 96 15:47:26 -0000

From: Trond H vard Holmen <troholme@online.no>

To: Thomas Hylland-Eriksen <g.t.h.eriksen@ima.uio.no>

Mime-Version: 1.0

Har nettopp lest din artikkel "Being Norwegian". Jeg vil bare tillegge en observasjon som er typisk for meg: Norge har den høyeste andelen av vakre kvinner i verden ifølge de standarder amerikanerne har for hva som er pent. Dette gjør at det å gå rundt i en by som Tønsberg på mange måter er akkurat som å gå rundt i en Hollywood-film (selv innvandrerne våre er penere enn de kontaktbyråene legger ut på nettet. Akkurat dette fenomenet er hva jeg vil karakterisere som KOMPLETT uforståelig). Når jeg sier Hollywood-FILM, så mener jeg akkurat det. Som du selv beskriver, er dette systemet overhodet ikke interaktivt.

Hvordan har en egalitær kultur som vår klart å svelge en grunnleggende elitistisk massekultur som den amerikanske? Fordi vi har misforstått hele opplegget! Vi tror at disse filmene er helt REALISTISKE! Folk ser jo ut og oppfører seg omtrent som nordmenn i dem. Det typiske norske utseendet og den typiske norske væremåten slik du beskriver den er identisk med den du finner i den amerikanske overklassen (vel, de FORSØKER å være europeere). Resten av de folka ser ut og oppfører seg omtrent som meg. Det visste jeg ikke før jeg fikk Internett.

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<sup>i</sup> This is a common characteristic of most nationalisms, see Gellner (1983).

<sup>ii</sup> Linguists may regard the four Scandinavian languages - Danish, Swedish, Standard Norwegian and New Norwegian - as closely related dialects of the same language. With some initial effort, a speaker of one of the dialects (or languages, as they are defined politically) can easily understand the others. Icelandic and Faroese are more distinctive, although they are closely related to the others. Saami ("Lappish") and Finnish belong to a different language family, namely the Finno-Ugric languages.

<sup>iii</sup> About 20% of the population use New Norwegian, but 25% of national radio and TV broadcasts are expected to be in that language. There are virtually no problems of mutual intelligibility.

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<sup>v</sup> P1 at 9 o'clock daily. In the summer, the same programme is called *Reiseradioen* ("The pocket radio"), alluding to Norwegian holiday habits whereby many people stay at some remote cottage or campsite.

<sup>vi</sup> An undercommunicated fact of recent Norwegian history consists in the healthy and vigorous relationship between Norwegian and German intellectual life, which was abruptly cut off after World War II. In the 1990s, few Norwegians are fluent in German.

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<sup>viii</sup> In Lars Aarønæs's language column in the weekly newspaper *Dag og Tid*, inept Norwegians who try to give a cosmopolitan impression abound. One representative example is The Italian Pizza Company, which is located at Sinsen, North Oslo. - And of course, Norwegians, like many other peoples, are liable to call each other "provincial" when they disapprove of something.

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<sup>x</sup> Norden refers to the three Scandinavian countries as well as Finland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, and sometimes Greenland. Since Finland has been a Swedish province and contains a Swedish-speaking minority, Norden is more important than Scandinavia to most Swedes. See Neumann (1991) for a comprehensive discussion of the idea of "Norden".