

The Cultural Welfare: Parliamentary Debates about Culture during the Creation of the Norwegian Welfare Society

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Abstract

The paper explores how Norwegian politicians have discussed the arts and culture within a welfare society perspective. The creation of welfare programs during the 20th century was primarily linked to developments in the labour market. However, during the 1960s and 1970s, welfare theory researchers added other societal elements to the conception of the 'good life'. First, the paper describes how culture can be included in welfare theory by applying the concept of public good. This gives us some factors for analysing culture as welfare. Second, the paper describes how these factors have been used by members of the Norwegian parliament when debating state appropriations to the arts and culture. The purpose of the paper is to shed some light on how culture has been seen as an element in the development the Norwegian post-World War II welfare society.

Keywords

Cultural policy, culture as welfare, culture and public good, parliamentary debates, Norwegian cultural policy

Introduction

It is not an easy task to study culture within a welfare theory perspective. Usually, people's welfare level has been associated with indicators that can be measured quantitatively, while Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1963) have demonstrated the complexity of the term 'culture'. Nevertheless, there are examples of welfare theorists who have argued for including culture and leisure (Laver 1981; Robson 1976; Ringen 1995) and of cultural policy researchers who have discussed culture as welfare (Zimmer and Toepler 1996). Zimmer and Toepler's article focused on different welfare state regimes and their consequences on organizational elements in cultural policy. This paper, on the other hand, explores the types of arguments that members of the Norwegian Storting (Parliament) have used to defend government appropriations to the arts and culture, Norway representing a Social-Democratic welfare state regime - the other two regimes being Liberal, and Conservative (Esping-Andersen 1990; Esping-Andersen and Korpi 1984).

First, the paper describes some historical aspects that have influenced policy making in different sectors of the Norwegian society. This is followed by a brief overview of culturally related regulations between 1687 and the beginning of the 20th century. Section four gives an introduction to a specific set of welfare criteria while the fifth

section includes a discussion of how such criteria can be used to treat culture as a welfare issue. Finally, the sixth and last section of the paper describes how these criteria have been used by members of the Norwegian parliament during debates about state appropriations to arts and culture.

Welfare programs in Norway date back to the late nineteenth century. However, conceptions of the 'good life' in a broader sense entered political discussions particularly after the Second World War. Therefore, this paper covers the parliamentary debates particularly from the post-World War II period. The quotes that are included in this paper are just a few among a large number of quotes that were collected as part of a research project about the history of Norwegian cultural policy between 1800-2000 (Bakke 2002b). Elsewhere (Bakke 2003) I have given a more complete description of cultural policy in Norway; its cultural policy goals, the administrative structure of cultural affairs, and government funding of the arts and culture.

Basic Political Dimensions in the Norwegian Society

There are three dimensions that have influenced the formation of the Norwegian nation state and of Norwegian politics in general, including its cultural policy: (1) The process that led to political independence in 1905, (2) The relationship between center and periphery, (3) Notions of welfare.

Notions of Independence

The process towards obtaining independence lasted several hundred years. From the 9th century onwards Norway was ruled by regional lords who fought for control over large areas and eventually over the whole country. In 1274, Magnus Lagabøter succeeded in merging the many regional laws into one with national jurisdiction. This centralizing legal and political power made Norway into one nation, although not yet politically independent. From 1319 until 1905, Norway was continuously in union with either Sweden or Denmark, depending upon the latter two countries' success or failure in wars on the European continent and on the content of the peace treaties that were made. In 1814, Sweden accepted the Norwegian constitution that had been written by a group of intellectuals, politicians, farmers, civil servants and representatives of other occupations that had come together at Eidsvoll, and which gave Norway a semi-independent status. In 1905, the Swedish King Oscar 2 acknowledged the Storting's decision to abolish the union with Sweden, a decision which indeed resembled a peaceful *coup d'état* that was administered by the Norwegian Prime Minister, Christian Michelsen.

In sum, Norway is a fairly young country in which the population has cherished notions of sovereignty and national independence. This historical fact has had an impact on Norwegian politics¹, and, as we shall see in section 6, on the arguments being used in cultural policy debates in the Parliament.

Center and Periphery in Norwegian Politics

Regional differences have played an important role in Norwegian politics. Rokkan and Urwin (1982: 4) argued that nation building in Europe, and also in Norway, was built on two types of conflicts: one that is based on cultural distance (linguistic, religious, etc.) and another that is based on economic interests in regional centers that compete for control over trade and productive resources. In Norway there were three cultural issues that

contributed to the establishment of regional identities (Rokkan and Valen 1970): religion, language and teetotalism.

Around 1800, a Low-Church movement that was based on Pietistic Lutheranism evolved in the southern and western parts of Norway, where it has remained a strong element in everyday life. Second, the so called “new Norwegian” language (*nynorsk*) was created in the 1850s, as a social and cultural protest against the Danish influenced “book language” (*bokmål*) that pervaded among civil servants, most of whom lived in the capital and in cities throughout the country. The *nynorsk* movement still has its stronghold primarily in the southwestern region of Norway. The third cultural issue emerged from the manifestation of a strong temperance movement that began in the 1840s. Here too, the southwestern parts of Norway were the main territorial attachment.

The relationship between center and periphery, between geographic regions, and between urban and rural areas has influenced electoral politics in Norway. In section 6 we shall see that this dimension has been an important one also in cultural policy.

Notions of Welfare

Values connected with the welfare society have constituted a much more explicit political basis for cultural policy in Norway, as well as for other policy realms. Until recently, a welfare state system has been the dominant organizational framework for providing public goods and services in the Scandinavian countries. The system dates back to the turn of the century, when a sort of “public culture” developed among politicians and socially-politically conscious intellectuals who were inclined towards social reform for the benefit of the collective, be it special groups or people in general (Grindheim 1994).

The traditional Norwegian welfare model has been based on centralized and rule-orientated institutional arrangements, with notions of *citizenship*, *equality* and *solidarity* as crucial value elements. The notion of citizenship implies that people have certain rights that guarantee specific social services regardless of individual status and resources. Citizenship, therefore, means equality in terms of *formal*, *legal* rights, e.g. freedom of speech. Second, equality can be interpreted in terms of equal distribution of *resources* and equal *conditions*, e.g. money to spend on culture and the degree of access to cultural facilities. Statistics (Vaage 1998) show that this type of equality has not been obtained: people with higher education (and income) spend more time going to concerts, theaters, and museums, than people with lower education. The third type of equality implies that people having the same type or level of *competence* should be treated equally (e.g., they should be paid the same salary). Fourth, equality in terms of *results* implies that certain measures may be taken to compensate for the lack of relevant resources, be it income, education, cultural goods, or some other types of welfare goods and services (Hernes 1976). The notion of solidarity implies that people have accepted tax laws and regulations as legitimate means for, directly or indirectly, redistributing money from the more to the less affluent groups in society.

This paper will show that all these aspects of welfare have been mentioned in debates about culture in the Norwegian Storting.

Historical Overview of Cultural Regulations

Until the middle 1930s, government decisions concerning cultural issues in Norway were made on an *ad hoc* basis. This laissez-faire policy nevertheless produced laws and regulations that represented the first elements in that which eventually became a consistent cultural policy.

The first example dates back to 1687, when Christian V's *Norwegian Law* defined procedures for securing historical objects and artefacts found in the ground, and for distributing remunerations between the king, the land owner and the person who found the objects. The partners' share of the remunerations was revised in the 1752 law, and once more in 1868. The government's awareness of the importance to preserve historical objects was confirmed when the 1851 *Road Works Law* stated that no artefacts that were found in the ground should be destroyed. A law that was passed in 1904 put a ban on exporting historical objects, thereby assessing them as part of the national cultural heritage. All these efforts to secure historical objects culminated in a major *Cultural Preservation Law* in 1905, the very same year that Norway split from the union with Sweden and became an independent nation state. This timing can, of course, be quite a coincidence.

Artist rights in Norway were first acknowledged in a 1741 regulation. It covered writers only and its legal mandates were quite diffuse. The protection of the publishers' rights were guaranteed by law in 1830, and in 1857 the law was expanded to include, for the first time in Norway, also artists' rights. A law that was passed in 1875 ordained that public performances required a public license, and the law also guaranteed the individual artist's rights in connection with public performances and display of their production. Inspired by the *Bern Convention* of 1886 the law was revised in 1893, and it has been revised several times since Norway signed the *Bern Convention* in 1896.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth century Norway was influenced by continental European ideas about rationality and enlightenment, and access to books became an important issue for both the church and schools. Norwegian public libraries began to receive government support in 1876, thereby abolishing the need for a library fee that had prevented many poor people from borrowing books. The first library law was passed in 1935, and, according to its revision in 1947, every municipality should have a public library.

During the union with Sweden (1814-1905), the political, administrative and intellectual establishment in Norway joined forces to create institutions that could promote a sense of national identity in the ongoing nation building process. The creation of *The Royal Drawing and Art School* in 1818 is regarded as the first step toward a Norwegian arts policy (Solhjell 2002). *Nationalgalleriet* (the National Gallery) was established in 1836, (the public having access from 1842), and *Nationaltheateret* (the National Theater) was established in 1899.

Particularly from the 1850s to the 1890s the middle and upper middle social classes dominated the public sphere, politically as well as culturally. Cultural values and life among people in rural areas – by many judged to be the genuine Norwegian culture – were more or less ignored by the city establishment. The same happened with the working class culture that emerged along with the industrialization process at the end of the nineteenth century. This has been coined the “period of exclusion”. An increased awareness also among factory workers and farmers of their specific political as well as cultural values led to the formation of three political parties. *Høyre* (the Conservative Party) and *Venstre* (the Liberal Party) were both established in 1884, the former representing civil servants, the

latter representing the more well off farmers (to the extent one can speak of large farms in Norway) and city residents who were opposed to the civil servants' regime. *Det norske arbeiderparti* (the Labour Party) was founded in 1887.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly from the early 1920s to 1935, culture became an integrated part of the political mobilization among social classes. This was most clearly the case among farmers and within the labour movement, which created their own leisure time organizations that offered evening classes in politics, home economics, hand craft, music, languages, literature, etc. The goal during this "period of politicizing" was to prepare civil citizens for participation in a democratic society. In the cultural field this implied a wider perspective that included also Norway's cultural heritage as a valuable supplement to working class culture. Elementary schools and libraries became the neutral arena where different cultural views and traditions could meet. Cultural expressions and activities were no longer primarily means for raising the workers' political consciousness, but could be enjoyed and cherished in their own right.

Welfare and the Good Life

Towards the end of the nineteenth century it became evident that, as a consequence of industrialization, social security measures were necessary to hinder mass poverty and to cope with political unrest. This was the social basis for welfare programs from the late 1880s onwards. The primary beneficiaries of welfare programs were the poor as well as those who, for various reasons, were excluded from the job market. Thus, the expansion of welfare programs during the nineteenth century was linked to developments in the labour market. A major task for the welfare state was to compensate for loss of income in the labour sector and not to deal with people's leisure and cultural life.

During the 1960s and 1970s welfare researchers asked for a wider conception of welfare. For instance, attempting to explain the Provo movements in the Netherlands during the 1960s, Thoenes (1967) wrote:

"In a way what makes the welfare state such a pleasant society is the stress on the good life. To earn a lot is, of course, still tremendously important, but there is a growing amount of 'gardening' in daily life. 'Gardening' here means focusing on personal things in your immediate surrounding. There is less interest for long-term, large-scale public affairs; more time for hobbies, collections, friendship, and love."

About ten years later, Robson (1976: 174) wrote: "It [welfare] extends to social and economic circumstances, conditions of work, remunerations, the character and scope of the social services, the quality of the environment, recreational facilities, and the *cultivation of the arts*." (italics added by author). This quote confirms a change not only in the conception of welfare, but also of the position of culture in a given society, and of the functions that the arts and culture may serve.

The fact that cultural aspect of social life have been almost totally absent in academic welfare theory, can be explained by the elusive character of culture. Welfare programs deal with money and concrete services - and we can indeed ask how culture can be measured? Around 30 years ago the Finnish Sociologist Erik Allardt (1973, 1975) proposed a list of indicators for national development. Among them were a set of individual needs, the realization of which could enhance the so-called 'good life'.

Allardt (1975) viewed the 'good life' along two dimensions (see figure 1): On the one hand, the *level of living* and, on the other hand, *quality of life*. The level of living dimension refers to (ibid.: 3-4): "[...] material and impersonal resources with which individual persons can master and command their living conditions", while quality of life is defined in terms of human relationships. Allardt also distinguished between *welfare* and *happiness*, that is, between objective and subjective aspects of the good life. It is this distinction that has created methodological headaches for welfare researchers. While "welfare" to a large extent is defined according to experts' objective indicators

Figure 1. Dimensions in the term the 'good life'

	WELFARE	HAPPINESS
LEVEL OF LIVING	Needs for which satisfaction is defined by having or mastering material and impersonal resources.	Subjective evaluations and perceptions of how satisfied an individual feels as regards his material living conditions.
QUALITY OF LIFE	Needs for which satisfaction is defined by human relations or by how the individual relates to other people, nature and society.	Subjective evaluations and perceptions of how satisfied an individual feels as regards his/her relations to other people, nature and society.

(e.g. minimum income and infant mortality rate), "happiness" is a state of mind based on people's perception of their material resources and social relationships. The challenge for welfare research, and for policy makers, is to decide the relevant objective indicators in a given society, indicators that also correspond with people's perception of needs that constitute the 'good life'.

Although philosophically inclined people may say that they do not need much to be happy, they nevertheless must have food, water, shelter and cloths in order to stay alive. The demand for such amenities will vary with time and space, and with our personal expectations. In a welfare theory perspective the term 'good' is used for everything that can take care of people's needs, either of a material or immaterial kind. Such goods are characterized according to two dimensions: (1) Whether the consumption of a particular good is individual or collective, and (2) Whether it is feasible to exclude anyone from consuming a specific good or not. Thus we can distinguish between *private consumption goods* and *public consumption goods* (Laver 1981: 30). Once an individual has consumed a particular unit of a private consumption good, that good cannot be used by anyone else. This is the case with, for instance, a particular book or a piece of beef. On the other hand, public consumption goods can be consumed by many people simultaneously without reducing the value of the good for each individual use. This is the case with roads, libraries, stores, etc. There may, however, exist regulations that make it more or less easy for people to use and enjoy goods that, theoretically, are defined as public consumption good. Paying fees before you can drive on a highway or enter a national park are just two examples of how the use of public consumption goods can be regulated. One issue in welfare policy is whether it should provide private or public consumption goods. Another issue is whether access to such goods should be defined as entitlements or not. The

political implication is that we can complain if we do not receive, or have access to, goods and services that are entitlements.

Culturally Related Welfare Indicators

How, then, can we discuss culture as welfare goods? Once more, I turn to Erik Allardt (1975), this time to his distinction between three types of needs: HAVING, LOVING,

Figure 2. Indicators of Welfare Needs

<u>HAVING</u>	<u>LOVING</u>	<u>BEING</u>
Income	Community attachment	Personal prestige
Housing	Family attachment	Indispensable
Employment	Friendship	Political efficacy
Health		Interesting leisure
Education		

Having refers to material resources, *Loving* refers to human relationships, while *Being* stands for personal satisfaction, and the ability to fulfill creative and intellectual potentials (see figure 2).

Looking specifically at culturally relevant indicators, we can add the following ones. In the HAVING-dimension we can add cultural competence and access to cultural facilities; in the LOVING-dimension we can add opportunities to participate in culturally related arenas and networks. Finally, the BEING-dimension can also include artists' sense of being recognized and appreciated, and also that people are happy with their cultural activities such as singing in a choir, dancing salsa or playing basketball.

These indicators are measured at the individual level. However, usually we cannot obtain these goods totally on our own accord. Thus, in order to get more cultural competence, having access to cultural facilities, or to be artistically accepted, we need some kind of social organization that can cater to various types of individual need. The question is whether such institutional frameworks should be organized and financed by private or public agents.

There are two arguments that legitimize government financing in order to provide either private or public consumption goods: *market failure* and *external benefits*. A classic market failure based definition of a welfare state is (Briggs 1967: 29): "A welfare state is a state in which organized power is deliberately used (through politics and administration) in an effort to modify the play of market forces [...]". This type of argument has been used by Norwegian politicians in parliamentary debates about government funding of arts and culture. In 1952, a representative of the Conservative Party said that the government had to take notice of the increasingly higher tax level. The consequence of this development must be that the government should be prepared to step in with funds that previously were provided by private art lovers and patrons. (*Stortingstidende* 1952: 2158). This politician argued that the market did not function because taxes were getting too high, and that the government had to compensate for the private sector's reduced capability to support the arts and culture. Another type of market failure is that cultural activities simply do not pay. According to Baumol and Bowen's (1966) diagnosis, the operating costs (salaries in particular) of performing cultural institutions will increase more than earned income. In other words, they cannot survive on market terms only. Therefore, given that a society wants to establish and keep theatres, symphony orchestras, opera, etc., government money must be available. It is not surprising that representatives from Social Democratic

and Socialist parties have argued this way, as they in fact did during the 1950s and 1960s in the Norwegian Storting. It is more unexpected that also representatives from the Liberal and Conservative parties did the same in the post-World War II period. Rolf Stranger, a member of the Conservative Party, in a parliamentary debate in 1952 (*Stortingstidende* 1952: 2167) simply stated that: "It is evident that our theatres cannot operate without support. Because expenses are increasing while the "krone" [the Norwegian currency] value is decreasing, we better be prepared to raise government funding."

Debates about Culture in the Norwegian Storting

In this section I will describe the parliamentary debates about culture from three perspectives: (1) culture as a political salient issue, (2) culture as collective goods, and (3) social needs among creative and performing artists.²

Culture as a Salient Policy Issue

Section 3 showed that cultural heritage preservation, libraries, and artists' rights have been objects for state regulations dating back to the seventeenth century. The laws that were passed cannot be seen as instruments in an overall cultural policy, but they nevertheless indicate what were regarded as sufficiently important cultural issues to be discussed by the politicians. Thus, culture has to appear on the political agenda before it can be dealt with as a policy issue. It is a fact, however sad, that issues related to the arts and culture never have been among the politicians' top priorities. Politicians have a stake in promoting issues that are politically legitimate as well as popular among the electorate, and culture has never been able to compete with social issues like health care, taxes, unemployment, drug abuse, crime, pollution, etc. The interplay between politicians and their constituencies, assisted by mass media coverage, has contributed to putting cultural issues low on the political agenda. This is what Rochefort and Cobb (1994) call the stage of problem definition, which depends on how different people (ibid.: 3): "[...] perceive] a situation's [...] social significance, meaning, implications, and urgency." What is at stake? How serious is the problem, is it a crisis situation? Are we dealing with a single incident or a consistent problem? How long have we known about the problem? How close to us is the problem; in our neighborhood, in our own country, or on the other side of the world? Who will be afflicted by the problem – the whole national population or specific groups, e.g. cultural minorities?

Government appropriations to the arts and culture have been compared with the need to provide a good school system, to build new roads, to cater to people's health problems, and to meet demands from the military system. There are several instances in which Norwegian parliamentarians defended the cultural sector in such comparisons. In 1925, Olav J. Sæter, a teacher and newspaper editor who represented the Labour Party, even argued that it was more important to support the country's cultural life than the antiquated and dispensable monarchy (*Stortingstidende* 1925: 533). And in 1936, Magnus Nilsen, representing the Labour Party, after having listened to the debate about the military budget, expressed his amazement over the Storting's modesty on behalf of the cultural sector (*Stortingstidende* 1936: 861).

The Christian Democratic Party was the only one that did not want to prioritize cultural purposes over other social issues. This was the case both before and after the Second World War. In 1938 one of this party's representatives said that the "screaming" economic demands from asylums and hospitals were much more important than the luxury ones put forward by advocates for cultural purposes (*Stortingstidende*

1938: 1125). A similar perspective was expressed by the same party during the 1950s, arguing that schools and roads were far more important than culture. There appeared, however, that some art forms were less worthy of government support than others. Thus, in 1951, one Christian Democratic Party representative was not very enthusiastic about a proposal to grant about \$ 2.500 (20.000 NOK) to ballet (*Stortingstidende* 1951: 1498): "I really wonder what ordinary people in rural areas will think about such a proposal. [...] We don't have money to preserve our cultural heritage [...], to build schools and roads." The party's scepticism included also funding for theaters. Preserving the cultural heritage, yes - performing arts like ballet and theater, no. This was the Christian People's Party's attitude until the late 1950s, the reason apparently being that theater was associated with suspect moral values. Finn Moe from the Labour Party attacked this consistent hassling against theatres (*Stortingstidende* 1953: 2104):

"I would like to warn against this type of hate speech against theaters. I believe that theaters represent an important part of our culture. [...] There are several noble purposes on our national budget, and usually we don't compare them with other items to see which one may give the best results. I don't know why such comparisons should be used only with respect to cultural purposes."

From the late the 1950s onwards members of the Storting began to look at the importance of culture for tourism. This happened particularly when they discussed remunerations to cultural heritage preservation. That part of Bergen which dates back to the Hansa trade during the fourteenth and fifteenth century - *Bryggen* - had for a long time attracted tourists. The same was the case with the medieval wood churches (*Stavkirker*). These sites as well as historical monuments were important also for the Norwegian population because they confirmed a specific national cultural identity. I will return to this aspect in the next section.

Culture as Collective Goods

At the end of section five (page 9-10) I presented some examples of market failure being used as an argument for government appropriations to cultural purposes. The other argument for government support is externalities, that is, that the funding serves external benefits. The external benefits in the cultural sector are (Heilbrun og Gray 1993): Availability, cultural heritage, national identity and prestige, enlightenment and education, artistic innovation and creativity. The presentation on the following pages will show that all these arguments have been used by members of the Norwegian Storting.

Availability

The definition given on page 8 prescribes that several people can use the same good without excluding others from using the same good. Norway is sparsely populated and is characterized by long geographic distances. These conditions imply that the biggest challenge for policy makers is to make cultural facilities available for the whole population regardless of their living conditions. Availability has been interpreted not only in geographic terms, but also in economic and social terms. Given that the Norwegian welfare society's legitimacy is linked to the value of equal opportunities (see page 3-4), it is no surprise that the issue of availability has been prominent in the parliamentary debates about culture.

Art collections that are stored and exhibited in national museums have been paid with the taxpayers' money. Thus, it seems quite reasonable when representatives from the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party in 1925 asked the Minister for Church and Education, who was also in charge of cultural affairs, to request that paintings from the National Gallery be sent on tour to parts outside the capital. The Conservative Party

representative said (*Stortingstidende* 1925: 543): "A large number of the country's inhabitants have never had the opportunity to visit the National Gallery. However, most people can travel to a regional center where they could enjoy these goods [i.e. visual art] that the government has spent so much money to obtain." The representative from the Liberal Party lamented the fact that the government spent money to acquire new art works, only to store them on "the loft, in the basement or wherever they may be stored". He argued for a solution in which the arts works were sent throughout the country, thus "being beneficial for the population. [...] We must remember that many people cannot afford to travel to Oslo to watch these paintings." (*Stortingstidende* 1925: 544). One Liberal representative put it quite bluntly: "I cannot understand why those paintings are stored away like a dead treasure, while they could be cherished by people throughout the country, people who have contributed to paying for them." (ibid.: 547).

Towards the end of the 1930s, the idea that government funded visual art ought to be taken on tour throughout the country was put into effect as an experiment. In 1947 it was turned into a permanent institution called the Government Committee for Touring Visual Art Gallery, and the Touring Art Gallery of Norway (*Riksustillinger*) in 1952.³

Such arguments are linked to the issues of justice and political legitimacy. These concerns were explicitly expressed when some parliamentarians argued that public support could contribute to reducing ticket prices, thus enabling the low income groups, children and adolescents to use the cultural facilities. During the 1930s it was particularly important to keep the use of public libraries free of charge. During the 1950s and 1960s, several parliamentarians argued that subsidies to theaters would encourage a new audience among people from social groups that so far had not attended theater performances. Thus they believed that money could overcome the cultural capital obstacles described by Bourdieu (1993). It is interesting to note that even representatives from the Conservative Party, a party that usually viewed government support with scepticism, supported appropriations to theaters. In 1953, the Parliament debated extra funding to theaters and symphony orchestras. Herman Smitt Ingebretsen from the Conservative Party said (*Stortingstidende* 1953: 2101):

"If it was possible, by reducing the ticket price, to fill the theater halls - although it would not at all be cheaper for the state - we would at least feel satisfied that government support actually contributed to bringing a larger audience in touch with dramatic art."

It is more according to what we would expect when a Labour Party representative in 1966 argued that the society should stimulate cultural life and cultural initiatives "[...] not only for the sake of the cultural elite. We must bring the arts to the people, also to those who during these problematic transitional times ought to receive a greater share of happiness and a richer spiritual life." (*Stortingstidende* 1966: 1449).

Thus, all political parties agreed on the principle of spending government money in order to make visual arts, books, and theater performances available to the country's population, in some instances by compensating for people's low economic status. The nation wide distribution of music was provided by the public Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, which was financed by the income from a fee on broadcasting equipment. Some politicians thought that the cinema reached a wider audience than the theaters did. Therefore, the cinema halls should be exempt from paying a "luxury" tax on the tickets, thus making them more available.

Preserving cultural heritage

During the 1980s and 1990s environmental issues became more prominent on the public and political agenda. This seemed to have consequences also for the debate about what

to preserve. Thus the conception of the cultural heritage became broader to comprise not only concrete objects to be kept in museums, but whole sites that exhibit a special type of landscape and/or particular buildings and objects. Several mountain areas throughout Norway have been designated as national parks that are to be preserved. Two sites have been included on the World Heritage List: The old mining town Røros (active for three hundred years from 1644), and *Bryggen*, the old section in Bergen that dates back to the fourteenth and fifteenth century when Norwegian merchants traded with the Hansa towns in northern Germany. Also the *Rock drawings of Alta* and *Urnes Stave Church* are on the World Heritage List.

All the political parties in the Norwegian Storting have agreed on the importance to preserve the cultural heritage. During the nineteenth century, literature in the Norwegian language, folk music, traditional architecture, etc., were regarded as significant elements of a national heritage. This view continued after Norway became independent in 1905. The Cultural Heritage Law of 1905 has already been mentioned. Also the value of traditional lifestyles, handcraft and art works was often used during parliamentary debates during the 1920s and 1930s about state appropriations to culture. Preservation was seen as necessary in order to enhance people's sense of national identity, but also to counter what some politicians called the "railway culture" – i.e. the modern industrialized times. Several politicians argued that the expansion of railroad tracks brought habits and perspectives on life that challenged the traditional culture in rural areas. Therefore, it was crucial that separate buildings, collections with traditional architecture, and written records of historic mores and customs could be preserved with state money .

National identity and international prestige

To preserve the cultural heritage was in itself important for most of the political parties. However, it seems that arguments for government support gained extra momentum by relating the cultural heritage to a specific Norwegian cultural identity. Thus, once people became aware of their rich heritage they could be part of a collective sense of pride and self-esteem, so important for a young country. It was also important to show the very same heritage to tourists and visitors from abroad.

This type of argument was used already in 1863 when the Norwegian Parliament discussed if it should grant a life long salary to the author Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. One of the parliamentarians supported such a grant by saying (*Forhandlingene i Stortinget* 1863, No. 68. Sag no. 1. Gasje til Bj. Bjørnson):

His writings have offered a mirror in which we can obtain a better understanding of our characteristic traits as a nation. Any writer of this kind who also inspires people's moral force deserves gratitude and acknowledgement from the present as well as from future generations. There is no morally great nation that does not have poetic geniuses who have been highly praised.

Right after the Second World War the Norwegian Storting became concerned about providing structural frameworks for people's cultural creativity, not only to preserve the cultural heritage. This called for improved economic conditions for a national movie production, and to encourage Norwegian literature and music.

There are around 4,5 million inhabitants in Norway. This means that the market is too small to give a sufficient basis for financing new film productions. In the parliamentary debates the government's responsibility for securing a national movie production was emphasized. In 1947 one of the Conservative Party's representatives expressed it with the following words (*Stortingstidende* 1947: 1284):

“Norwegian film in the Norwegian language, with Norwegian music, Norwegian spirit and mentality is a fundamental prerequisite for us as a people and as a nation. We have previously experienced many and big culture wars to defend a fundamental sense of what it is to be Norwegian. Today this culture war is about having a Norwegian film.”

In order to realize this goal there has been several support schemes during the post World War II period. The basic principle in these schemes have been that a professional agency has evaluated project proposals which include a script, a cost estimate, and financial plan. Until 2001 a special committee evaluated the applications for production grants, and there was a State-owned film production company (Norsk Film A/S). Independent film producers regarded Norsk Film A/S as a particularly favored actor in the competition for government support. Due to this criticism and also because market system ideas gained ground during the 1990s the support system was changed in 2001. The State-owned film production company was shut down, and all government support to the film industry was to be handled by one public foundation, Norsk Filmfond, the director being appointed by the Ministry of Culture. Norsk Filmfond has continued to give grants to fiction and documentary movies, and to short films. A significant change between the old and the new support system is that the policy statement of the new foundation requires that one among its six consultants shall look particularly for projects with a promising market potential in order to attract private investors. It is also an explicit goal to produce twenty fiction movies per year, and that these films should be seen by 20% of the cinema attending audience in Norway.

The same concern for the national importance of culture was expressed in the Storting debates also with respect to literature and music. To facilitate a book production in the Norwegian language was regarded as particularly important. Several representatives said that we just had to acknowledge the fact that the price of cultural production has been, and will continue to be, much lower within large linguistic units which comprises 100 million people or more. Thus, cheap (not in the qualitative sense) books in foreign languages will be easily available, and in the long run represent a challenge for “the destiny of our language and for the national cultural production and distribution.”⁴ Therefore, there was consensus across party lines in the Storting that special regulations were necessary. In 1965 the Norwegian Cultural Council was created to advise the government on cultural affairs and to administer the 100 percent state-funded Culture Fund. Right from the beginning, the Council's most significant programme has been the so-called ‘purchasing scheme’ (*Innkjøpsordningen*) for Norwegian fiction. The purpose has been to enhance the production of fiction in Norway, to increase writers’ income, to make it economically feasible for publishers to print original Norwegian fiction and to promote people’s reading of such works.

On page five I mentioned that several national cultural institutions were created as part of the nation-building process during the decades after Norway gained semi-independence in 1814. This process continued after Norway became an independent country in 1905. It was a slow process, very much because – as shown in section 6.1. – Norwegian politicians regarded social needs, education and roads as much more important than creating cultural institutions that often were seen as primarily serving the urban middle class. Another reason was that during most of the 1920s and 1930s the dominant perspective on culture was that it should enlighten and educate people to become citizens in a democratic society. However, after World War II the touring cultural institutions were created (referred to in the footnote on page 14), and also a national opera was discussed as a prerequisite for Norway to have the right to be called a civilized country. Eventually, in 1958, a national opera company, Den Norske Opera, was created.

After the Second World War festivals became an increasingly prominent part of cultural life in Norway as well as in other countries. Most of the festivals started because like-minded people wanted to meet and enjoy folk music and dance, film, chamber music, rock music, etc. These events were created and organized by enthusiastic entrepreneurs, and after some years they often wanted to expand the audience beyond the “inner circle” to national and international audiences. The largest culture festival in Norway, *Festspillene* in Bergen, has taken place every spring since 1953. Its importance to attract foreign tourists has been emphasized also by member of the Storting. In 1961 a representative from the Conservative Party said (*Stortingstidende* 1961: 1320): “It is important, with various means, to turn other countries’ eyes towards our cultural life. The Bergen Festival is one such event that attracts foreign visitors and bring them in touch with the cultural values we have to offer.” This view was confirmed in 1966 (*Stortingstidende* 1966: 1432) when another representative argued that it was a national responsibility “[...] to give the Bergen Festival the best support possible, not least based on its reputation throughout Europe and also in the United States.”

Enlightenment and common education

The section about cultural heritage preservation showed that the reasons given by politicians for government appropriations often were that people could be able to see “the living conditions among our ancestors” and that it provided an opportunity for adolescents to learn traditional handcrafts. Thus, it was almost more important to emphasize the educational purposes than to argue that the cultural heritage confirmed a national identity. In the parliamentary debates that have been analysed in this research, I have found the arguments linked to educational purposes from 1924 and then regularly until the 1960s. Standard phrases have been “to serve the enlightenment of people”, “people’s cultural development”, “educative”, and “to enhance people’s esthetic sensibility.”

There is one particular government document that indicates how important the politicians regarded education as a means for developing the Norwegian society. In 1934 the Department of Church and Education published *Innstilling om Arbeidet for folkeopplysningens fremme* – Recommendation concerning the Enhancement of People’s Enlightenment. I mention this document here because it turned out to present some of the crucial premises also for the cultural policy that emerged after World War II. It expressed a fundamental belief in the government’s responsibility to improve people’s cultural as well as material conditions. Evening classes, public libraries, folk academies, public broadcasting, cinemas, touring arts exhibitions, museums and theatres – all were seen as tools for such a cultural development, although libraries in particular.

From the 1930s and until the 1960s the politicians in the Norwegian parliament often argued in favor of state appropriations to public libraries. One particularly reason was that they could serve people in rural areas of the country, and also low-income groups. Thus government support was supposed to facilitate access to libraries as a common good, and it should also compensate for people’s small economic means. In 1933, during a debate about appropriations to public libraries, a farmer and fisherman, representing The Agrarian Party, actually lamented that the libraries acquired an increasing number of entertaining literature to the detriment of professional books that could give people practical advice in their everyday life (*Stortingstidende* 1933: 757). During the 1950s and 1960s the parliamentarians focused on the public libraries’ role for encouraging the reading habits of young people. One representative from the Christian Democratic Party endorsed government support to public libraries because they contributed to “steering reading habits as well as the desire for knowledge in healthier and more correct direction, away from that which the coloured press had to offer.” (*Stortingstidende* 1954: 834). Also amateur and professional theatres were seen as tools for enlightenment. To participate in the activities of amateur groups could be a good way

to prepare children and adolescent for professional performances, thus expanding the theaters' audiences – and increasing their earned income.

Artistic quality and creativity

The previous sections have shown that members of the Storting have been very concerned about cultural heritage preservation. Folk music, old buildings and monuments can document a particular Norwegian cultural history and cultural identity both for our own inhabitants and also for other nations. However, government support should not be given unconditionally. Artistic production and cultural performances had to meet certain qualitative standards. Such demands were addressed to the theaters in particular, very much because they were hit by “Baumol’s disease” and therefore constantly asked the Storting for extra state appropriations. The demands to have a high quality repertoire were even more pronounced when the parliamentarians discussed state appropriations to new theater institutions. This was a common theme during the decade-long discussions about whether to create a touring theater company (Riksteatret), and it continued as an issue also after its creation in 1948. The same concerns about quality were raised when the Storting in 1952 was asked to support a new theater (Folketeatret) in Oslo, and the politicians were told that it intended to have a more popular repertoire than the usual ones in the other theatres. However, the theater’s stated goal to reach new audience groups worked in its favor, and one representative from the Liberal party felt assured that “Folketeatret would present performances of such an artistic quality that government support would be reasonable and just.” (*Stortingstidende* 1954: 1073).

I have previously described how the politicians decided to pass a government support scheme for film production. The desire to have a national film industry could not, however, override the concerns for quality. Jørgen Grave from the Christian Democratic Party put it bluntly in 1963 (*Stortingstidende* 1963: 1216): “quality must be the decisive reason for government support to Norwegian film production.” A similar view was expressed by Helge Sivertsen who was Minister of Culture in the Labour government that year. He promised that the state would (ibid.): “[...] take all the risks and guarantee for the economic costs once a plan for a film had been evaluated by a professional committee as having potentials to become a quality production.”

As already mentioned on page 16, government grants to Norwegian writers and other artists date back to 1863. This grant system lasted with only small changes for about hundred years. For several decades poets and fiction writers were seen as contributing to the nation building process during the nineteenth century and also as educators of the people. From the beginning of the twentieth century the Storting decided to give government grants because “this writer is highly gifted”, “this represent something novel in Norwegian literature”, “this gifted composer”, “she has reached almost the highest of that which is created of Norwegian poetry.” Although quality was a crucial criteria for the parliamentarians, there were several fights during the 1930s and 1940s over what quality exactly implied. The basis for these conflicts was that some politicians were more concerned about the moral values that certain writers presented in their books than with their literary capabilities. It did not make things easier when some of these writers sometimes reached a wider audience by expressing their views also in public debates. The critics meant that there ought to be consensus about who should have the honour of a life long salary from the Norwegian Parliament. Ingeborg Refling Hagen was one such controversial candidate. When the Writers’ Association suggested her for a grant in 1936, this was supported by a representative from the Agrarian Party because “there is no one among our country’s writers today that can meet her talent and artistic ability.” (*Stortingstidende* 1936: 847). On the other hand a representative from the Conservative Party did not like her existential life view (ibid.: 845):

Is this writer really so important that she means something for our youth and, therefore, also for our country? [...] To write about a sinister atmosphere does not by itself bring something valuable, something constructive. [...] In addition it really worries me that she mixes different biblical stories and presents them in a fairy-tale form that I find most improper.

In 1952, Anders Hove who was a Labour Party representative, compared two authors who had been suggested for life long grants. He acknowledged that one of the writers had made many people happy with his portrayals of the ways of animals in their natural settings, but, by sticking to these themes, his literary scope was very restricted and therefore did not qualify for this particular grant. Hove regarded the second writer's description of the human condition as much more profound, and even the Writers' Association had for a long time judged him as an outstanding writer (*Stortingstidende* 1952: 2165).

Social Needs

A welfare society is a society in which there are administrative and financial frameworks that can provide goods and services to its citizens, according to objectively or subjectively defined needs. Depending upon what type of welfare state regime the country has, the goods and services can be provided by private or public agents. In a Social-Democratic welfare state regime like the Norwegian one, the government has defined the welfare standards and also been the legitimate agent to guarantee the citizens' welfare. Section 4 described how welfare normally has been associated with people's living condition as a consequence of their relationship to the labour market.

Despite this dominant perspective on welfare, the previous section in this paper nevertheless has shown that the Norwegian Storting has passed laws and regulations in favor of government support to the arts and culture, and it has also appropriated state money for these purposes. The reasons have been that market failure is more than just economic theory in a country with only 4,5 million people, but also that the politicians, across party lines, have argued that government support to the arts and culture has external benefits.

In this section I shall describe that also more "genuine" welfare arguments, alluding to social needs, have been used in parliamentary debates about culture. As already mentioned in the fourth section, the original welfare system should compensate for people's reduced income in the labour sector, whether it be due to loss of a job, to illness, accidents, etc. Also artists regard themselves as workers, but their income is highly variable. Welfare for these people means to earn sufficiently to feel free to concentrate on their art work and not to have to take a job which would distract them from their activity as artists. Members of the Norwegian Storting have indeed been aware of these conditions. They have alluded to the economic needs of young people who have just started on an artistic career, of artists with health or social problems, or of aging artists who are beyond their prime. This type of argument are most frequent during the post-World War II period, that is, when the Norwegian welfare society in general was being established.

It was natural to use such arguments when the debate was about support to individual artists. Thus, it happened quite often that a life-long salary was defended because it no longer was an honorary grant, but had become a pension for "people who are past their artistically best and most productive age." (*Stortingstidende* 1951: 1501). During the 1960s all the political parties agreed that there ought to be a government programme comprising grants and salary that could ensure good working conditions for artists. One

of the representatives from the Agrarian Party, Einar Hovdhaugen, was particularly active when the Storting discussed these matters. In 1961 he said (*Stortingstidende* 1961: 1333) "It is a shame that artists of this magnitude, being right in the middle of their best years as creative workers must be weighed down by the struggle for the daily bread." One year later he compared artists with farmers, fishermen, workers, and craftsmen (*Stortingstidende* 1962: 1030):

Some of these people, who have only grants and old age pension to live on, are in a very difficult economic situation. This must be a bitter situation for someone who has spent a long life contributing to the artistic and cultural life. I will request that the Minister, until we have a regular pension plan, find a way to give extra support to those in most economic need.

The problem was that, contrary to other occupations, artists did not have any pension scheme, and "There are very few who become rich through an artistic career." In 1962 the government abandoned the life-long grants and introduced a system with working grants for 3 years, and travelling grants for one year. From now on the granting procedure was administered by the Ministry of Culture, and therefore the annual parliamentary debates about state grants to artists stopped. Even with the new scheme some artists were more vulnerable than others, particularly singers. When the Storting in 1968 discussed a proposal to appoint a committee to assess the state artist grant programme, a Labour Party representative referred to these artists when he said that "We are faced with the risk that we get a small group of people who will be lagging behind in the general development of our welfare society." (*Stortingstidende* 1968: 2747).

Concluding Comments

State involvement in the arts and culture increased towards the end of the nineteenth century. There were two reasons. First, this was the time for political and cultural mobilisation for nation building. Secondly, this also was the age when artists cut the economic strings to patrons such as the church, the royal courts and the aristocracy in order to become free and independent artists. At the same time there emerged a sense of common needs and problems, and the artists, often through their associations, turned to public agencies for support. We have seen that the Norwegian cultural policy debate has been about collective needs for the whole society as well as individual needs among creative and performing artists. The politicians have to a large extent agreed across party lines that it has been necessary to cater to collective needs, be it to enhance a national cultural identity or to providing access to cultural facilities for people throughout the country. The purpose of cultural infrastructure should, of course, be to serve whatever cultural interests individual persons may have.

The most significant aspect in the debates that have been analysed in this research is the almost unanimous *positive attitude towards government funding* of the arts and culture. Only a few among the parliamentarians have expressed any concern, arguing instead that the arts and culture ought to be supported by the private sector. The most vocal critic of state involvement was C. J. Hambro, representing the Conservative Party both before and after the Second World War. His view was based on a liberalistic ideology which implied that the state should stay out of affairs that could be handled by private people, organizations and agencies. When the creation of the touring theater company was discussed in 1948, Hambro said (*Forhandling i Odelstinget* 1948: 1055):

[...] I find it extremely unnecessary and it does not serve any purpose to pass laws about cultural and artistic matters where such laws are superfluous. I think it is about time to react against the attitude so often expressed that the artistic goods that we may acquire correspond directly with the size of state appropriations. During those times when dramatic art was the most valuable for our society, it did not benefit from state support in the way it does today. In no society has state sponsored art been the most spontaneous, impulsive or significant.

To preserve the *cultural heritage* has been a very frequently used argument for state appropriations, both the material and the immaterial heritage. This argument became even stronger when it was said that our cultural heritage promoted a sense of *national identity*, and that is also confirmed out belief in Norway as a civilized country. This became more important with the increasing tourism. The very same cultural heritage also served *educational* purposes. This type of argument was used particularly as an element in enlightenment project that was prominent on the political agenda during the 1930s and 1940s. This goal should be reached by attracting people to national cultural institutions such as the National Gallery and the National theater, but also to encourage people to listen to the public radio channel that broadcasted lectures, classical music, information and news throughout the whole country. The geographic inequalities in people's access to cultural facilities have been a real problem in Norway. It was therefore a significant innovation when the Norwegian Storting during the first two decades after World War II decided to establish the touring institutions for theatre, film, visual art and music. Appropriations for busses and ships to bring books to remote areas of the country were another important cultural policy act. All these initiatives were intended to make cultural facilities more *available*.

On a final note I want to return to Allardt's three welfare dimensions: HAVING, LOVING, BEING, as described on page 9. When the politicians decided to support institutions that brought different types of culture closer to where people lived, it increased their level of cultural HAVING, however small it may have been. The very same institutions may serve as places for people to meet, thus adding to the LOVING dimension. It is, of course, much more difficult to decide means in order to implement BEING, the most subjective among Allardt's welfare dimensions.

The Norwegian society is in transition and this has implications also for our cultural policy. The most important trend is the expansion of market elements. This has manifested itself in an increased number of private providers of that which has been defined as public consumption goods such as hospitals, nursing homes, electricity and phones. However, so far there is still a separate Ministry of Culture which is very firm in setting cultural policy goals that will serve the whole country. A significant market element in the Ministry's policy was the introduction, in 1996, of administrative tools for increased control and efficiency with respect to the use of government money. The basic principles were goal definition, setting results, and defining result indicators. In the government proposal to the Storting, the new management system was described in the following way:

The main goal for result management is to improve the political management of resources, tasks and functions, and to facilitate a goal-oriented steering system that may enhance the efficiency within the Ministry of Culture (St. prp. 1 1996-97. Kulturdepartementet: 15).

This new system can be seen as one response to the criticisms of the welfare state that emerged during the late 1970s. The welfare society is still a fundamental premise for Norwegian politics, but it has stronger demands for increased efficiency and accountability in public administration.

Notes

- ¹ For instance, the emphasis put on Norway being an independent, sovereign nation was one of the reasons why two referendums (in 1972 and 1994) gave a slight majority against Norway joining the European Union.
- ² I will use the English translation for the political parties: Labour Party for *Arbeidspartiet*, Conservative Party for *Høyre*, Liberal Party for *Venstre*, Agrarian Party for *Bondepartiet*, and Christian Democratic Party for *Kristelig Folkeparti*.
- ³ Bakke (1994, 2004) gives a more detailed description of this and the other three public touring cultural institutions (for theater, cinema, and music) that were established in Norway between 1948 and 1967.
- ⁴ Erling Fredriksfryd, Conservative Party, in a debate in the Storting about Norwegian literature and language (*Stortingstidende* 1962: 1025).

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