

Norwegian culture and society in a comparative perspective

#01 Bergen and the Medieval Kingdom.....	2
#02 Politics and government in Norway from 1814 to today.....	3
#03 Norwegian economy today.....	4
#04 Food in a cultural perspective.....	5
#05 The welfare state, health polices.....	6
#06 The Sami population in Norway.....	7
#07 Norway as a multi-ethnic society.....	8
#08 Women and family policies in the welfare state.....	9
#09 The Norwegian educational system.....	10
#10 City walks.....	11

#01 Bergen and the Medieval Kingdom

Norway has a rich history, from the Viking age to the modern Norway.

Viking Age (800-1000)

- “Norway” means “*norð-wegr*”, the “north way”
- The first document about Norway was written by an English king. Two Norwegians told the King that there are fishers, local chieftains, and taxes, so we can deduct that there was some organization between the people.
- Good regions to cultivate soil. Also good fishing.
- They had good ships: fast and can go in rivers.
- The Vikings attacked towns and churches in another countries. They raided undefended places, looking for a loot.

Medieval Age (1000-1300)

- There were a lot of taxes.
- Fights between local chieftains. Unification, less local chieftains. First kings.
- First “sagas”: stories about Scandinavian history. People from Iceland wrote it.
- Christianisation, by the monarchy. Two reasons:
 - Religion, domination
 - Jerarquical organization.

Unions (1300-1814)

- *Black Plague* weakened everything. Lots of inhabited farms implied lower rents.
- The Kalmar Union (1397), between Norway, Denmark, and Sweden.
- New industries

Political independence, new union (1814-1905)

- Denmark lost the Napoleonic Wars. Denmark gave Norway to Sweden.
- Norway made a Constitution (May 17, Constitution Day).

Modern Norway (1905 – 2006)

- “Neutral ally” in WWI
- Occupied by German forces in WWII
- Welfare state

#02 Politics and government in Norway from 1814 to today

Main differences between Norway and other countries

- since 1814 there is no nobility
- kind of monarchy
- peculiar political parties
- don't want to join the European Union (2 referendums)
- Women in politics

Modern Norway

- Medieval kingdom abolished (because Norway was a Danish possession)
- Napoleonic wars.
 - Sweden wins, Denmark gives Norway to Sweden
 - Norwegian Constitution of 1814
 - Norway come in union with Sweden, but being semi-independent. Swede king.
- Nobility abolished. Consequence: very egalitarian culture
- In 1905, Norwegian state is strong enough to challenge Sweden.
 - Norwegians wanted a republic, but allowed a Monarchy to please other European Monarchies.
 - Norwegian king was chosen by referendum. A Danish prince was elected by majority.

The political parties

- Alliances between parties, groups
- Some typical parties from Nordic countries: left wing party, social-democratic party, liberal party, farmers party and conservative party
- But also some Norwegian deviations: Christian people's party, Progress party (for the abolition of taxes and governmental regulations), Maoist party

Refusal to join the EEC

- Two referendums: 1972, 1994
- Not so different:
 - Sceptical groups, like in European countries
 - In Norway these groups are relatively stronger
 - Also some other big groups against: farmers and fishermen

The role of women in politics

- In 1986, Norway had a female prime minister, with a Cabinet where almost half were women.
- There have been other institutional innovations. But below the top governmental level, things are quite different.

Controversial issues in political life

- Norway have common problems with western countries
- But also unique problems:
 - the language question
 - EU, to join or not to join
 - How to (not to) spend the government's money
 - how to address the shortage of manpower

#03 Norwegian economy today

Main exports:

Norway exports are based on raw-materials:

- Ships
- Fisheries
- Forest
- Hydroelectricity and aluminium

Why open economy?

- Norwegians are few people
- Country with limited resources (need lots of things from the outside)
- People have high living standards
- need to import

Economic structure:

- Diversified industrial structure
- The most important sectors: services (> 50%), petroleum (20%) and manufacturing (9%)

Quote: *“Our great welfare depends on problems in other parts of the world”*

#04 Food in a cultural perspective

Culture

We define culture as: “*Knowledges, beliefs, thoughts, and skills that human being have acquired as members of a civil society, and which are transferred from one generation to the next.*”

Relationships

Food is related to a lot of different areas: chemistry, politics, health, history, anthropology, religion, law, communication, etc...

Some examples:

- Economy: consumption, transportation, refinement, selling, technology
- Society: relatives, human relations, traditions, social patterns (meals)
- Ideology: beliefs, imaginations, rituals morals/ethics, religion
- Politics: food safety, sustainable food supply, nutrition, law and order, defence

Typical food

Matpakke is what Norwegians eat every day at the work. It's a kind of cold sandwich, made of bread, brown cheese, sugar, and carrot.

Other typical food are *smalahove* (lamb head), *rakefisk* (salmon), *lutefisk* (cod), and *aquavita* (strong alcohol of potato)

Quote: “*We put our diamonds on, we go to parties, and we eat this horrible stuff*”

#05 The welfare state, health polices

Main aspects of the welfare state

- Health services
 - run by the state and local governments. Free
 - minor fees. No additional insurance
 - needs and new treatments always exceed budget increases -> shortages
 - a few, minor private hospitals (for the very rich; minor treatments)
- Care for the elderly
 - local government service
 - needs are growing faster than budgets
- Child care
 - serious shortage of kindergartens
 - culture: idealization of staying at home with the kids
 - government pays to keep child at home. And also save the money for the kindergarten...
 - expensive
 - private and public kindergartens
- Educational
 - Lemma: “don't push!”
 - free
 - mainly public
 - private schools are hardly regulated
 - High School is free
- Pension
 - Everybody receives a minimum pension at the age of 67
 - many retire earlier, due to medical problems
 - all who work pay a monthly contribution to the pension fund
 - government pensions vary with how much you earned
 - majority of the people has only government pensions
 - additional insurances on the rise
- Loss of income
 - (for those already on the labour market)
 - government pays during sick leaves (employer pays for the first days)
 - unemployment support
 - support during re-training
 - permanent support if permanently unable to work
- For those outside the labour market: Social Services
- Problems
 - Shortage of money
 - Shortage of man-power

The economic foundation

Some people thinks that it's all founded with the oil money, but:

- the welfare state developed before the oil had been discovered
- the exportation of oil and gas reserves don't always benefit the people

#06 The Sami population in Norway

The *Sami people* are the indigenous people of “*Sápmi*” (parts of Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia)

History

- They were nomads, they used to hunt reindeer.
- Sami children went to Norwegian schools, they were punished if they spoke the sami language,
- Missionaries wanted to convert the Sami religion (animism) to Christianity. They were forbidden to have another religion than Christianity
- Their economy made them sell things in order to get money to pay taxes
- Lost of sami people changed their sami names to Norwegian names
- Norway had a lot of influence in the area. Services of the Welfare State
- Sami people learn to degrade themselves: their culture, language, etc, were shown as “inferior”, primitive. Culture assimilation.
- In 1970, the politics changed.
 - Sami status was recognized.
 - States gave some special right to their culture and educational
- Nowadays they are no longer nomads, they have all kind of education, and they are Norwegian.

Facts

- Sami has three dialects:
 - North sami
 - Lule sami
 - South sami
- Traditional sami music: joik
- There are 100.000 sami people in the world, most of them (70.000) living in Norway

#07 Norway as a multi-ethnic society

History

- 18th century: emigration from the west coast to America (specially to Minnesota)
- 1850 ~ 1/3rd of the population emigrated
- 1960 immigration and emigration becomes balanced
- 1967 immigration increases. They come from other parts of Europe
 - economic reasons: they earn more money than in their countries
 - Economy expanding: need for manpower: unskilled workers
 - Migration network: chain migration
 - People of the same origin countries tend to live together in some parts of some cities
 - Norway: 8% immigrants
 - Oslo: 20%, Bergen: 8%
 - Finland: 25%
 - familiar reunification: government allowed families to come,
 - Adapted to the Norwegian school behaviour
- 1970's the immigration was restricted
- 1975 ban of immigration on Norway
 - Accepting only refugees, asylum seekers from other parts of the world
 - Immigration rules are harder on all the EU
 - High qualified workers: doctors, engineers, oil industry...
 - Debate about immigration rules.

Reflect on the multicultural situation in Spain

In the 50-60's, a lot of Spanish people emigrated to Europe (Germany, France) to do unskilled work. Most of them returned back to Spain, with the money they earned. Also some people went to South-America.

Later the immigration balance changed. Spain developed fast (70-80's) and there was a lot of work, so less people tried to emigrate and more people came from outside.

Nowadays there is immigration from North-Africa and South-America. They do unskilled, low-paid work, mainly in construction and agriculture. In most on the sectors there isn't a big need for foreign workers: it only lowers the salaries and degrade the work conditions. In some sectors, like in agriculture, there is a need for temporary workers (at the recollect).

#08 Women and family policies in the welfare state

Gro Harlem Brundland

became the first female Prime Minister in Norway (1981).

- She had experience as a doctor and with environmental questions.
- She tried to improve the women participation in social life, politics, economy, etc...
- “Modernization” of Norway, formal equality
- 40% quota of female representation in her cabinet (8 female ministers out of 18)
- Scandinavian welfare model
- Equal opportunities for women

History

- 1845: inheritance for daughters and sons
- 1884: admission to the university
- 1888: married women get equal legal status
- 1913: right to vote
- 1959: same teaching to boys and girls
- 1967: contraceptive pill
- 1978: abortion
- 1979: Equal Status Act for Gender Equality
- 1981 Gro Harlem becomes Prime Minister
- 1993 first woman bishop
- 2003 employers obliged to report annually on gender status

Challenges

- Uneven work force: women work more part time, and are paid less
- Unequal access to labour market
- Apparent lack of interest for gender equality issues among younger women

Family politics

- Statistical typically family: “married couple with 1,8 children”
- Growing number of other family types

Family welfare

- Child support
 - Universal benefit, 1.000 per month per child
- Maternity/paternity leave: 52 weeks at 80% income or 48 week at 100%
 - Dad's quota: 4 weeks of maternity leave reserved for the father
- State subsidized day care service / “Cash support”
 - Currently KR 3.657 per month per children aged 1-3

Current political issues:

- The cash support: Christian democrat for; Social democrats against
- The universal principle of the Norwegian welfare model: “*Should rich people receive same benefits as those less well off?*”
- Compulsory “Parent Certificate”? “*Has state involvement in private life gone too far?*”

#09 The Norwegian educational system

Primary school	7 years	6-13
Lower Secondary school	3 years	13-16
High secondary school	3 years	16-19
Higher education		

- University College is focuses on specific knowledges (work), while University is oriented to general knowledges
- 26% of Norwegians have university education
 - 60% of the students are females
- Education is free for Norwegians
- There are scholarships, loans, etc.
- 23.000 students study abroad (internationalization programme)
- “*Examen artium*”, is a test to enter the higher education, at higher secondary level. It's very important to Norwegian people.
- The Ministry of education elaborates “The law of Education” and “The national curricular guidelines”. These are the guidelines to teach.

Aims of education

- Social development
- Economical development

Values of education

- Equality
- Democracy
- Respect for diversity

#10 City walks

Bergen - an international trade centre in medieval times

We visited the Bryggen, the castle, and the Bryggen Museum.

The Bryggen Museum has archaeological material from the Middle Ages.

- There are two permanent exhibitions:
 - “The Oldest Tenements – Building remains from the Towns First Century”
 - “The Medieval Town of Bergen around 1300”
- The ground floor is reserved for an exhibition whose topic is changed from year to year
- The first floor is reserved for temporal exhibitions.

The Lepra museum. Bergen Art Museum.

The “Lepra museum” was a representation of what a *leper hospital* was. It was a big building with separated rooms for man and women, kitchens, hospital, and a church..

We also went to the “Bergen Art Museum”. We saw Norwegian paintings from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Excursion to Øygarden

We went to Øygarden. We were in farms and fishing houses, we did an excursion to Hjelme's old church, and to the heather moors of Tjeldstø. Then we went to the “Coastal Museum of Øygarden. We saw a exhibition about the energy resources of Øygarden, and a film of the “Troll Gas Project”. We went to the Troll Gas Plant.