

United Nations Expert Group Meeting on
The Scope and Content of Social Statistics
9-12 September 2008
United Nations, New York

Statistics on Culture and Leisure:
Activities at Statistics Norway

Prepared by

Asle Rolland
Statistics Norway

Asle Rolland

The Department of Social Statistics

**Statistics on Culture and Leisure:
Activities at Statistics Norway**

**Paper prepared for the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on the Scope and
Content of Social Statistics, 9-12 September, 2008, New York**

Introduction

This paper describes the Norwegian production of statistics on culture and leisure from the perspective of Statistics Norway (SSB). It addresses two issues. One is whether culture obtains the statistical attention it deserves as a sector of the Norwegian society and economy. The other is whether culture can obtain the statistical attention it deserves when limited to a sector of the Norwegian society and economy. The two issues reflect the two definitions of 'culture',

- (1) the sector concept, where culture is understood as the production and distribution of certain products, particularly those made by professional artists, for consumption as a leisure time activity, and
- (2) the holistic concept, where culture is understood as a population's ways of thinking, doing, and being, "the particular set of rule, beliefs, priorities and expectations" that mould "our world into a meaningful whole" (Benedict 1963, quoted in Gordon and Beilby-Orrin 2006).

Obviously the two interpretations are not mutually exclusive, but the sector concept inherent in the holistic concept. Statistics on the sector concept is therefore also statistics on the holistic concept. Hence the second issue concerns how much more could holistic cultural statistics contain.

Statistics on the Culture Sector and Leisure Time Activities

Being the national statistics institution (NSI), the SSB is by far the most important Norwegian collector, processor, and disseminator of publicly available statistics on the production and consumption of culture sector products. The other main public supplier, the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD), receives most of its culture statistics from the SSB (The NSD was originally set up for the purpose of supplying academic research with SSB statistics).

This being said, it should not be understated that private market research firms – in Norway as elsewhere – play crucial roles in the production of statistics on the consumption of culture and leisure time products, in particular audience research for the media. That statistics is however only to a very modest degree publicly available. At the time of the state broadcasting monopoly SSB was the supplier even of broadcast audience research, ensuring that the statistics it produced was publicly available directly from the SSB and via the NSD.

Being a major supplier of statistics the SSB is involved in much of the secondary cultural statistics produced by research elsewhere. An illustration is a study of the demand for books carried out by the cultural policy research unit of Telemark Research Institute. It is based on two SSB sources, the survey of consumer expenditure and the consumer price index (Løyland & Ringstad 2004).

Furthermore, due to its competence in the production of statistics and command of population and enterprise registers the SSB is frequently involved even in the production of primary cultural statistics elsewhere. The Telemark Research Institute may illustrate this, too. The SSB was a major collector of data for its recent study of the work and living conditions of Norwegian artists (Heian et al. 2008).

While the position of Statistics Norway within culture and leisure time statistics is central, the position of culture and leisure time statistics within Statistics Norway is peripheral. At least it

must have appeared so to the historians of Norwegian statistics, published at the SSB's 125th anniversary, as they did not devote a single chapter to this topic (Lie & Roll-Hansen 2001). The period from 1890 to 1930 they labelled the era of social statistics, but the statistics causing this label concerned poverty, social classes, morals, social disorder, and the cost of living, not culture and leisure time.

From a holistic perspective even these social statistics may be labelled cultural statistics, describing less fortunate aspects of the Norwegian culture at a time when North Sea oil still came from the herring and Norway did not aspire to a top position on the ranking of nations in terms of GDP per capita. However, they were not conceived as such by the historians. Yet the historical overview over completed statistical time series at the SSB's website shows that statistics on culture sector institutions like libraries, cinemas, theatres, opera, broadcasting, publishing, and state support of artists have been produced more or less regularly at least since the 1910s and 1920s.

In Statistic Norway's current classification of statistics by subject "Culture" is one of twelve main categories. Its two main subdivisions are "Cultural Offerings" and "Cultural Activities". The website for the category is labelled "Recreational, cultural, and sporting activities". The two main subcategories cover the production and consumption of culture, respectively. However, while the term 'offerings' refers to the products of cultural industries and professional artists only, the term 'activities' even encompasses culture being produced by the consumers themselves, for its own sake rather than for consumption by others.

Defined as cultural activities are consumer made products and consumer activities equal to those delivered by professional artists, i.e. the sector concept of culture is being employed. Still measuring consumer production of this kind, and measuring consumer participation in leisure time activities not necessarily labelled as (sector) cultural, contribute to a holistic understanding of the Norwegian culture, at least in the sense of describing what Norwegians are doing and hence what it implies being a Norwegian.

The "Cultural Offerings" subcategory consists of Radio and television, Film and video, News agencies, newspapers, and periodicals, and Libraries, museums, and archives. To some degree the cultural offerings category overlaps a subcategory of the "Industrial Activities" main category: The "Technical indicators" subcategory, which covers statistics on the ICT sector and the information society.

The “Cultural Activities” subcategory consists of Membership in organisations and religious communities, Media use, library visits, Sports and outdoor recreation. Sports and religion are in Norway defined as culture; politically the field is administered by the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs. Sports are however excluded from Eurostat’s definition of cultural statistics, which is restricted to activities recognized as cultural by every EU member state. For the same reason Eurostat excludes tourism from its concept of culture.

The SSB, too, subsumes travel and tourism under a different main category, Industrial activities, sub-category Hotels and restaurants. However, travel and tourism are also leisure time activities, and from this perspective they are even reported under the Culture category. Important SSB sources for statistics on these activities are travel, tourism, and holiday surveys.

The “Cultural Offerings” statistics present the culture sector’s supply as it appears to the consumers, and the demand as it appears to the producers. Supply statistics cover the number of producers and products in the different culture sector subcategories, e.g. the number of theatres and cinemas and the number of plays and feature films having been shown, the number of libraries and museums and the size of their collections. Demand statistics cover the turnover of the products, e.g. the number of tickets having been sold by theatres and cinemas, the number of books having been borrowed and the number of visitors to the collections (irrespective of whether the visitors are a small group of heavy or a large group of light users, irrespective of whether they are Norwegians or tourists from abroad).

Cultural offerings statistics even cover the economics of the different culture sector industries, and public spending on culture at state and local level. Sources are registers based in information supplied by the producers, as well as public budget and account figures.

The “Cultural Activities” statistics present the consumption pattern and the leisure time/recreational activities of the individual Norwegian citizens. Sources are surveys describing different kinds of citizen behaviour:

- The Culture Barometer (a survey covering several culture sector industries and products)
- The Media Barometer (a single source multimedia survey, including Internet)
- The Time Use Study (with the time spent on cultural products, the media, and leisure time activities being covered)

- The Study of Living Conditions (with leisure time and recreation as one of the conditions under scrutiny)
- The Survey of Consumer Expenditure (of course including expenditure on cultural, media, and leisure time products and activities)

The surveys are intended to show the Norwegian population's consumption of culture while in Norway, but as the Norwegians, too, are tourists abroad in their leisure time and consume culture while in other countries even this is regularly being studied. Thereto comes that unless specifically asked for, statistics on the cultural consumption of Norwegians while in Norway does not necessarily show the demand for the nationally produced cultural supply, as much of the supply in many of the media and culture subcategories is imported.

The web is the SSB's most important distribution channel. The website on culture, the media, and recreational activities presents the most recent and important information on the topic, in Norwegian and English. Thereto it offers interested readers an opportunity to create their own statistics by cross-tabulating the underlying data. Using that opportunity one may for instance obtain confirmation of Norway being a nation of skiers, as in 2004 80 percent had been on a day trip for skiing in the forest or in the mountains. In contrast, only 5 percent had visited the opera. That was however before Oslo got its new opera house, which in itself has become a tourist attraction.

The main print publications, also available as PDF files, are the series reporting the culture and media barometers (e.g. Vaage 2005, Vaage 2008), and the report called "culture statistics", a compilation of figures from different sources (e.g. Pettersen, ed. 2006; Taule & Bårdseth 2008). Relevant information is however also to be found in the series containing "key figures on the information society" (e.g. Gjedtjernet et al 2007). Thereto comes reports containing comparative analyses, longitudinal studies, and so on. Recently the SSB published a comprehensive longitudinal study based on the culture and media barometers from 1991 to 2006 (Vaage 2007).

According to the most recent Consumer Survey, culture and leisure is now the third most important expenditure of the average Norwegian household, less important than housing and transport, but more important than food. From this perspective culture and leisure is the third most important topic for public statistics.

From an industrial economical perspective the culture industry is however not that important. According to the key figures on the information society the value creation of the total ICT sector amounted to 33 percent of the Norwegian economy's value creation in 2005. Value creation in the information content sector, which comes closest to what could be labelled the cultural industry, amounted to only 1 percent. Focus on production rather than consumption therefore seems to explain the relatively peripheral position of cultural statistics at the SSB.

Culture Statistics, Sector Politics, Social Understanding

The culture statistics of the SSB is repeatedly under evaluation and debate, externally (e.g. Arnestad & Mangset 2003) and internally. The most recent internal evaluation, Rolland 2007, resulted in an article in *The Nordic Journal of Cultural Policy* (Rolland 2008), where the author discusses what official culture statistics is and could be if the necessary resources were available. The article identifies two needs that official culture statistics must cater for:

- the culture sector's documentation need
- the society's need to understand its own culture

The current Norwegian statistics serving administrative purposes the article argues for a public service approach encompassing four perspectives,

- (1) the holistic culture perspective
- (2) the sector culture perspective
- (3) the cultural preservation perspective
- (4) the cultural transformation perspective

From the (1) holistic perspective the article discusses the need for statistics describing a nation's and its subcultures' ways of thinking, doing, and being.

From the (2) sector perspective the article discusses the extension of the sector concept, particularly in relation to the mass media, faith, sports, advertising, and fashion, and advocates the need for statistics describing and analyzing the different arts and culture markets as supplement to the corporative and administrative points of view.

From the (3) preservation perspective the article discusses the channels communicating the cultural heritage, among them the education system.

From the (4) transformation perspective the article discusses the need for statistics on the channels communicating cultural change, in terms of import as well as export, in particular the mass media, immigration, and tourism, as well as the need to measure cultural innovation.

There to the article advocates statistics on culture's contribution to progress towards the good society, and conversely, its contribution to stagnation and regression. It defines the concept of progress as advances in technology and civilization, and relates the sector culture concept to technology and the holistic culture concept to civilization. It discusses the operationalization of the technological progress concept as equal to economic growth, and the operationalization of the civilization progress concept as perfection of the democracy at the societal level and human well-being at the individual level.

The article notes that politically there is growing interest in the culture's possible contribution to economic growth, at the Norwegian national level expressed in a White Paper on Culture and Industry (St. meld. no. 22 for 2004-5), at EU level expressed in the report *The Economy of Culture in Europe* (KEA 2006). In contrast, the political impression of culture's contribution to the democracy is rather negative. From a democratic perspective the culture sector is primarily associated with the commercialized media system, which is considered to have become a political force of its own and a threat to the established political institutions.

References

Arnestad, Georg & Per Mangset (2003): *Kulturstatistikk – med vekt på næringsmessige og økonomiske tilhøve*. Report no. 54. Oslo: Arts Council Norway.

Benedict, Ruth (1963): *Patterns of Culture*. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul.

Gjedtjernet, Per Erik, Anette Kalvøy, Ole -Petter Kordahl, Kjell Lorentzen & Geir Martin Pilskog (2007): *Nøkkeltall om informasjonssamfunnet 2006*. Statistical Analyses 89. Oslo/Kongsvinger: Statistics Norway.

Gordon, John C. & Helen Beilby-Orrin (2006): *International Measurement of the Economic and Social Importance of Culture*. Paris: OECD.

Heian, Mari Torvik, Knut Løyland & Per Mångset (2008): *Kunstnernes aktivitet, arbeids- og inntektsforhold, 2006*. Report no. 241. Bø in Telemark, Norway: Telemarksforskning-Bø.

KEA (2006): *The Economy of Culture in Europe*. In collaboration with Media Group (Finland) and MKW Wirtschaftsforschung (Germany), 13.11.06. Brussels: European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture.

Lie, Einar & Hege Roll-Hansen (2001): *Faktisk talt. Statistikkens historie i Norge*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Løyland, Knut & Vidar Ringstad (2004): *Hva bestemmer etterspørselen etter bøker i Norge. En mikroøkonometrisk analyse*. Report no. 214. Bø in Telemark, Norway: Telemarksforskning-Bø.

Pettersen, Stein Ove (ed.) (2006): *Kulturstatistikk 2004*. Statistical Analyses 76. Oslo/Kongsvinger: Statistics Norway.

Rolland, Asle (2007): *Kulturstatistikk. En perspektivanalyse*. Internal Documents 2007/26, Oslo/Kongsvinger: Statistics Norway.

Rolland, Asle (2008): 'Kulturstatistikk, sektorpolitikk, samfunnsforståelse'. *The Nordic Journal of Cultural Policy* 11 (1): 108-35 .

St. meld. no. 22 (2004-2005) *Kultur og næring*. Oslo: The Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs.

Taule, Liv & Asta Bårdseth (2008): *Culture Statistics 2006*. Official Statistics of Norway D 392. Oslo/Kongsvinger: Statistics Norway.

Vaage, Odd Frank (2005): *Norsk kulturbarometer 2004*. Statistical Analyses 73. Oslo/Kongsvinger: Statistics Norway.

Vaage, Odd Frank (2007): *Kultur- og mediebruk i forandring. Bruk av kulturtilbud og massemedier fra 1991 til 2006*. Statistical Analyses 95. Oslo/Kongsvinger: Statistics Norway.

Vaage, Odd Frank (2008): *Norsk mediebarometer 2007*. Statistical Analyses 96. Oslo/Kongsvinger: Statistics Norway.