Any attempt at describing Norwegian anthropology must of course be a very subjective affair. The present attempt is impressionistic, and a more developed presentation can be produced only at a later date. I start therefore, by presenting my apologies to my Norwegian colleagues for leaving out things that they think should have been in, or to putting the emphasis in wrong places. However, there are certain trends that stand out, which partly reflect general developments in the field world-wide, and some that are more Norwegian in origin and character.

First, there is probably a consensus about the fundamental importance of Fredrik Barth in shaping theoretical concerns and in the process of institution-building within Norwegian anthropology. His “attack” on structural-functionalism is well known and mentioned in most general overviews of the discipline. Barth championed transactional analysis, a generative view on society and culture, developed within thematic fields such as entrepreneurial studies, ethnicity and religion, he worked on the problem of scale and social organisation and contributed to debates on systems of meaning and the anthropology of knowledge. He was key to building anthropology at the University of Bergen, where he was teaching in the 1960s into the 70s. Later on he was at the Ethnographic Museum in Oslo, and he had appointments in anthropology departments in the USA, notably at Emory and Boston, all the time producing contributions to the field.

Although Barth’s thinking still represents a basic premise for Norwegian anthropology, obviously the research within the discipline is moving on, inspired by the general developments and debates in world anthropology. Continuities do exist in thematic foci and cumulative research within the field of ethnicity, migration and nationalism, development anthropology, Indigenous Studies, ecological and economic anthropology, all drawing on Barth’s initial contributions, but also taking that legacy into new directions both by Bath’s earlier students but also by others, including non-Norwegian faculty with their study backgrounds from outside Norway.

One effect of the above history is the increasing interest in anthropology in Norway, expressed through the establishment of anthropology departments in the four major research universities, in Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim and Tromsø, each with their own “take” on this tradition, and all offering degrees at all levels. Later anthropology and anthropologists also entered into the University Colleges around Norway, as well as in various research institutes combining applied and basic research.
• The total effect of this development is one in which anthropology today is well established as an academic discipline in Norway, that anthropologists are found in many sectors of the labour market, and that the discipline enjoys a high popularity among students.

• A Union of Norwegian Anthropologists exist, with annual meetings, with a Journal of Norwegian Anthropology publishing high quality papers in Norwegian, and with a sub-unit for anthropologists who work outside of academia, allowing for links of communication between the many different usages of the discipline. A Union for Development Research is also an arena in which anthropologists play significant roles.

• With this type of success the discipline is also subject to the various types of finance and to the various general policies for higher education in Norway. The end of the 1980s into the 90s saw an explosion of student numbers in Norwegian universities, also in anthropology. Subsequent university reforms initiated to unify the Norwegian university system with international systems, particularly the increasingly dominant EU-system, produced needs to rethink teaching programmes injecting more flexibility in combining different disciplines, promoting inter-disciplinary research and also promoting more institutionally based research programmes. Funding systems have changed towards promoting students’ ability to finish their studies within stipulated time periods.

• But the period also gave room for innovations. One institutional innovation was NUFU, standing for Norwegian University Based Research and Development, funded via Norwegian development aid budgets. The programme has funded collaborative research between Norwegian universities and universities and research institutions in the South. Through this programme several links have been created and maintained, linking Norwegian research interests and competence building closely to those of colleagues in the developing world. Anthropologists have, naturally been key players within such programmes and we see clear effects also on anthropological research and institution building. In Tromsø a study programme on ethnographic filming was established initially based largely on linkages from within a NUFU-funded programme between anthropologists in Tromsø and in Cameroon. In Bergen NUFU has helped forge links between anthropologists, ethnographic filming and research related activities at The Bergen Museum. Medical anthropology in different universities has also been influenced by NUFU-funded programmes within the HIV-Aids field.

• Anthropology in Bergen has also been active in developing an M.Phil programme in “The Anthropology of Development”. Through this programme, taught in English, Bergen can: 1. undertake quality research within the field of social anthropology 2. work on issues that have an applied value and that are of relevance to development questions 3. seek to put the anthropological insights into interdisciplinary contexts 4. establish institutional links to academic institutions in the Developing World, assisting in their research and competence building efforts and in their general efforts to create their own independent academic resource base. 5. strengthen the teaching component in cooperating universities through teaching inputs as well as infrastructural support.

I stress this, not only because it is my own department by also because I think that in a world of globalisation, privatisation and commercialisation of education anthropology should also be in the forefront in helping institutions in the south build their own
institutions, competence and traditions. The efforts in Bergen have engaged students from universities in Nepal, Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Mozambique, Malawi, Bangladesh, India, China, Kirgizistan, Peru, Vietnam and Indonesia. Some of these students have proceeded to do Ph.Ds, both in Bergen and elsewhere. Within the Department of Social Anthropology the programmes also represent possibilities for Norwegian students who are interested in undertaking studies in the regions where the programmes are located, and the research themes of the programmes continue to be the base of teaching at all levels.

- A note should also be made about the increasing focus on EU funding, translated into Norwegian anthropologists participating in research programmes funded by the EU as well as being among applicants for the Marie Curie Initial Training Network programme for Ph.D and postdocs.

- While this recent history of university policies and changing funding sources certainly has changed study programs, the effect on research is also there. Individual research projects still play a fundamental part, but there has been a clear tendency towards larger projects, built not only upon the interest of a single individual but also on shared interests across regions, or across disciplines. Supported by “Strategic Research Programs” in the Norwegian Research Council, the Oslo department has had a big programme with a focus on globalisation. Tromsø has a focus on similar themes, with a particular focus on the Northern areas of Norway, and the re-establishment of historical links to Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union. Bergen has had a programme on “Challenging the State”, based on the same type of funding. The department in Trondheim is influenced by the fact that that particular university is the result of a unification of an earlier University of Trondheim and a University College of Engineering Studies, now called NTNU, Norwegian Technical-Natural Scientific University.

- While these are anthropology projects, focussed on developing basic research within departments of anthropology, other large projects or broader institutional efforts have grown out of the increasing call for inter-disciplinarity. CULCOM (Cultural Complexity in the New Norway) in Oslo is a case in point and represents a collaboration between five faculties (Social Science, Arts, Law, Theology and Education), headed by anthropologist Thomas Hylland-Eriksen). In Bergen a research programme combining anthropology, sociology, archaeology and history entitled “Global Moments in the Levant. Towards an Understanding of a Contact Zone Between Peoples, Cultures and States” is another effort in which anthropologists (Leif Manger is project leader) play a leading role.

- A most recent initiative relates to the establishment of collaborative links within the level of Ph.D training, in the form of a jointly organised Ph.D course between the departments in Oslo and Bergen. I don’t now the outcome of that experience but it might be the beginning of a closer collaboration on the Ph.D level between the university departments which can help strengthen the teaching programmes directed at that level.

- With that we are at a point in which it might be convenient to end. With the issue of how to reproduce the research quality at a Ph.D level that the discipline needs in order to reproduce itself. And I am not primarily concerned with theoretical positions or with thematic foci. The challenge to the discipline comes from another direction, I think. The challenge comes from funding limitations on time for learning languages, on time to do fieldwork, on time to reflect. A lot can change in anthropology, but without long time fieldwork at base, home and abroad, anthropology is in trouble.