

The Nordic model meets the US liberal model-A Norwegian company in New York

12th LPR Network seminar,
Trondheim, 1-2 September 2015

Focus on Norwegian companies that have become international

- ◆ Work /family practices
- ◆ Time cultures
- ◆ Can we observe tensions between national and external institutional contexts?

Snøhetta architects

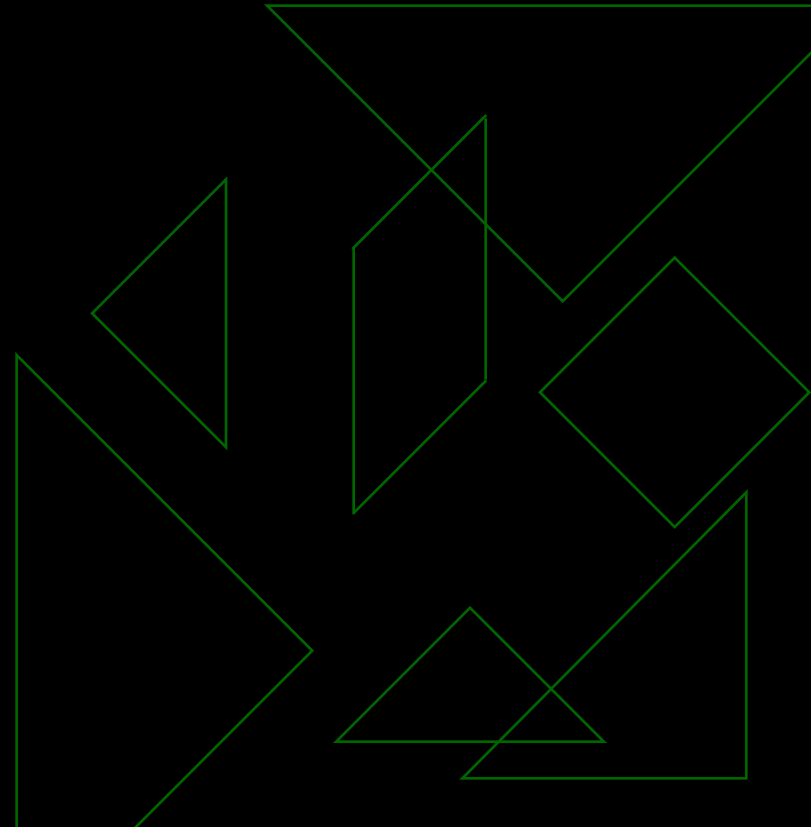


The Snøhetta mountain at Dovre

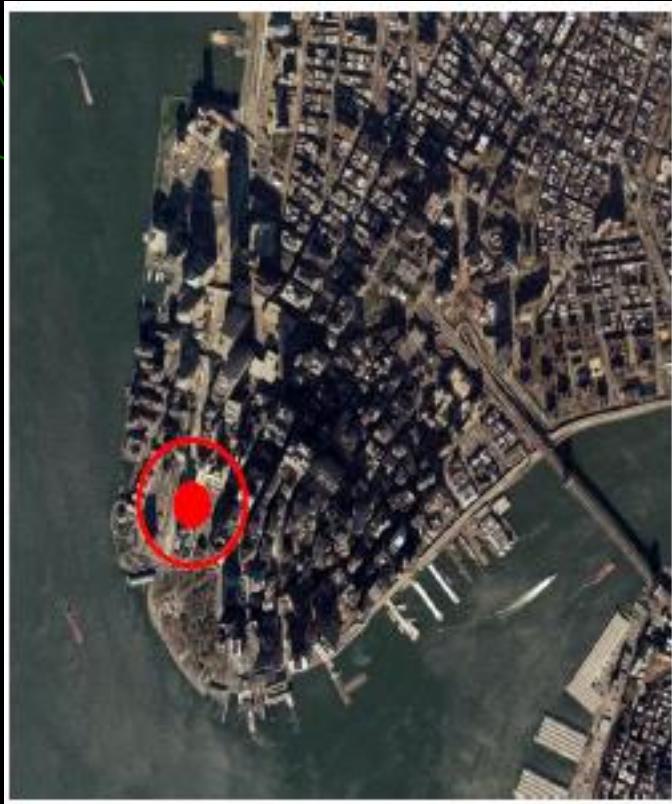




Ground Zero Memorial, New York



From Vippetangen to Manhattan



NYC 25 Broadway



Oslo, skur 39, Vippetangen

«Cloning the Oslo model»

- ◆ Collective wage agreements
- ◆ Norwegian working hours (37,5)
- ◆ Five weeks holiday
- ◆ Democratic organization of work
- ◆ Norwegian parental leave system

The liberal work- and welfare-state model (Esping –Andersen 2006, Westenholtz 2011)

- ◆ Familized and market based welfare
- ◆ Low unionization
- ◆ Hierarchical control and management tradition
- ◆ Individual wage system
- ◆ No federal regulations of parental leave

The Nordic work- and welfare state modell

**(Esping- Andersen 2006,
Westenholz 2011)**

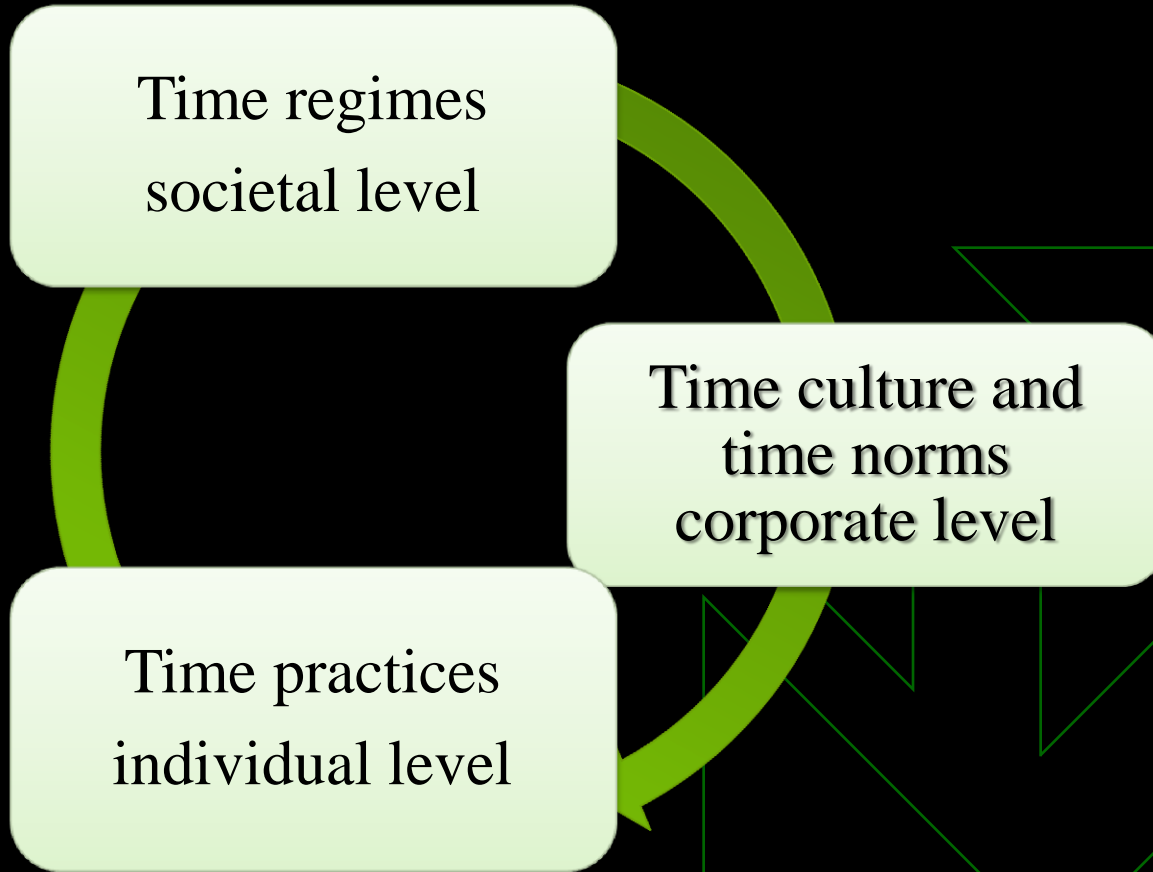
- ◆ De-familized and de-commodified welfare politics
- ◆ Cooperation between management and employees
- ◆ Collective wage negotiations
- ◆ Regulated working hours and holidays

Time culture

Time regimes
societal level

Time culture and
time norms
corporate level

Time practices
individual level



Data

- ◆ Interviews with employees and managers in New York and Oslo offices
- ◆ Many had worked at both places
- ◆ 1/3 had young children
- ◆ 100 employees (70/30)



Time-culture at the Oslo office:

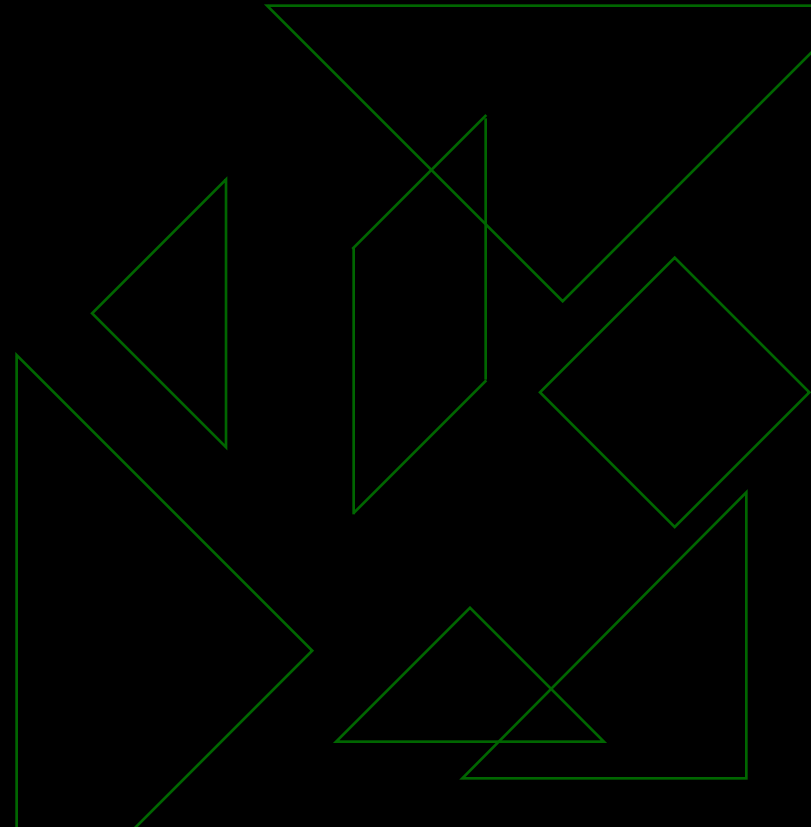
- ◆ Boundary setting time culture
- ◆ «Come early - leave early»
- ◆ Conscious about «work/family balance»

Maximising parental leave time

- ◆ Here there is a maximising of parental leave. Including for fathers, too. In recent years the leave has escalated from only a couple of weeks to perhaps four months. But it's a bit strange too, in a way, because now it's more like "Aren't you going to take more than that?" (Emma)

Time culture at the New York office:

- ◆ Long hours culture
- ◆ Start late, stay late
- ◆ Face time
- ◆ Parental leave
- ◆ Holiday



Long-hours culture

- ◆ *It's a whole different work ethic. It's very important to stay for a long time at the office for the American employees. ... you don't leave before the boss goes home, and...*
- ◆ *But in Norway we're more used to ... that it's allowed to go home because you're picking up kids at the kindergarten or, yeah, that the workday finishes*
- ◆ *between four and six (George).*

Face Time

◆ (George contin.):... *It's one of the most productive cultures. Because... and I think that is because if you come early to work, you know you don't have to do face time, which is an American expression for sitting at your desk doing nothing... you just work when you're there and then you go home and you have you're family,*

Norwegian employees as «lazy»?

- ◆ *Yeah. My perception was they left early. I think at the time they were actually doing overtime, because we of course had sometimes a lot of work to do. But still... there is a recognized better balance between how much one should work and how much home life one should have.*
- ◆ *Edward*

“I’m shutting everything down, we’re going home”.

- ◆ *We promote early going home. That being said, many of the staff are not from Norway so they have a different... In their head, it’s hard for them to go home early, and even when you tell them, I walk in here sometimes and I say “I’m shutting everything down, we’re going home”. And people are still like “No, I wana stay”.*
- ◆ *Craig at the New York office*

Snøhetta compared to New York standard

- ◆ *The working hours have been greatly reduced. Much, much less.*
- ◆ *I mean before I came here, yes, I was... Like a 60 hour week was a really common week. And the thing is that you... it's never stated... But it's kind of just expected that you'd do that, and even if you don't have work to do, you just kind of do that.*
- ◆ *Nigel*

Parental leave?

- ◆ Two months of paid parental leave
- ◆ Four months optional unpaid leave
- ◆ Fathers given two weeks paid leave and two additional unpaid weeks

Holiday?

- ◆ No federal standards in the USA (two weeks of unpaid holiday)
- ◆ Snøhetta wanted to introduce 5 weeks holiday, which was an institutional challenge

Negotiations about holiday !

- ◆ And like five weeks vacation was never heard of in New York. Half of the office would be willing to forego say two weeks of vacation for an increased salary. (Noel)
- ◆ When you consider how many holidays we get in Snøhetta, and crunch that into numbers, there's a major difference (...) I believe it's almost unheard of how much holidays we get here. (Stephen)

«Family- friendly» as a competitive edge

- ◆ *If you want to make the workplace in New York attractive, then the fact is if you can offer the type of family-friendly flexible working hours and holiday schemes we have, that's important for*
- ◆ *attracting good employees (Ethel, New York office)*

Threat against the brand name

- ◆ *Holidays became a major issue. The employees saw them as an important part of the corporate philosophy. The proposed reduction of the holidays from five to three weeks can therefore be considered a threat against the welfare policy which Snøhetta had offered. It was also a threat against the brand name Snøhetta had created about itself – about being a family-friendly office. (Sophie, NY office)*



Competitive edge

- ◆ I mean they all knew that they have very good social politics, like meaning very flat hierarchy, fair pay, better vacation, things like that, just basically that it seems to be a healthier work environment.
- ◆ (Chloé, NY office)

Conclusions

- ◆ Tensions between institutional contexts
- ◆ Boundary-setting time culture / Long hours culture
- ◆ A modified version of the Nordic model has been exported to New York (Hybrid)