The Structure of the Academic elite in Norway

This paper is a first attempt to analyze the structure of the Norwegian academic elite, according to gender structure and academic legitimacy.

A Gender Structure

From the elite study of the Norwegian Power and Democracy Project we know that women are underrepresented in the elite positions in Academia. In this elite, 20% are women, but among those in scientific positions only 10% are women (Skjeie and Teigen 2002). To obtain a more nuanced picture of the gender structure, I have divided the sub samples depending on the various categories of interviewee’s main occupation, whether scientific or administrative.

Table 1 shows great variations between the positions. On the one hand, women constitute a negligible number of the leading positions in the sector of research institutes; on the other hand, the distribution of men and women within the administrative positions related to the Norwegian Research Council approximates 60 – 40%. The reasons for these variations may be connected to an interaction between the institutional framework for selection, the "doorkeepers", and the supply of candidates (Christiansen m.fl. 2002).

Table 1. Distribution of gender in various positions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Num.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academy of Science etc. scientific</td>
<td>50 %</td>
<td>50 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy of Science etc. administrative</td>
<td>75 %</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRC, scientific</td>
<td>71 %</td>
<td>29 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>(7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRC, administrative</td>
<td>62 %</td>
<td>38 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>(13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute sector</td>
<td>98 %</td>
<td>2 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deans</td>
<td>88 %</td>
<td>12 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>(32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rectorate</td>
<td>68 %</td>
<td>32 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>(25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University directors</td>
<td>76 %</td>
<td>24 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82 %</td>
<td>18 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>(138)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Danish elite study shows that the elite positions where selection is done through public elections has lesser gender differences, while positions where selection is based upon merits or mixed principles, gender differences are greater (op. cit.). In the Norwegian context, it will also be important to point to the § 21 in the "Law of equal opportunities", which decides that in all official boards, councils and committees, each gender shall be represented by at least 40%. This may have contributed to the fact that 30% of the scientific representatives i the Norwegian Research Council are women, even though the election of representatives to the board is a rather closed process and a process where professional merits are thought to be of great importance. Thus, the "Law of equal opportunities" may be said to have influenced in a selection process that otherwise would not favour women. The inequity in gender representation between deans and the Rectorate is probably best understood from the composition of the selected data material. The selection for both these positions is carried out by public elections within each unit, and should therefore have about the same gender distribution. In the material, the Rectorate is, however, a rather complex group, while the deans form a relatively homogenous group, meaning that the latter represent the top scientific leadership within the faculties. In contrast, the Rectorate includes rector and vice-rectors in universities, as well as rector of scientific and regional public colleges and major private colleges, and unfortunately the material does not allow any division of these positions. But if we suppose that, more often than not, rectors and vice-rectors in universities hold a scientific education, a differentiation according to educational level may point to the differentiation between universities and colleges. When scrutinising the educational background of the Rectorate, it appears that this position is held by persons with up to 6 years of prescribed higher education (72%), or more than 7 years of prescribed higher education (28%), and while 7 of the 8 women have education up to 6 years, this goes for 11 of the 17 men. When looking at which disciplines that hallmark the Rectorate, 5 of the women and 7 of the men are educated within humanities, general or pedagogical studies. These educations are well represented in the college system, in particular within the former pedagogical colleges, which now are integrated in the regional colleges. This may indicate that the better balance of gender within the Rectorate is connected to the women’s better chances to succeed in elections in the regional college. But as we cannot know if this premise of difference in educational level between universities and regional colleges is true, we can also permit ourselves to wonder if the norm of equal representation breaks through in principal elections at the universities. There the principal candidate puts him/herself up for election together with a chosen vice-rector candidate, whom often may be of the opposite sex, i.e. a woman. On the other hand, the facultative elections of deans are locally oriented, and are hardly carried out for the benefit of gender balance, but will rather be a reflection of the gender division amongst the professors, which is 12% on a national basis.

The reasons for the total lack of gender balance in the sector of research institutes may be related to the selection processes in this sector: It is a non-transparent process, taking part in the institutes’ board rooms, and the selection is based on merits – both processes that are supposed to favor men (op. cit.). Also in this sector technological or natural sciences are considered particularly meritating, as half of the institute leaders possess such background (see fig. 1).

The gender quota amongst scientific and administrative personnel within scientific societies and academies concerns such a small number that I find no reason to suggest an explanation.

A field of relations
In order to construct a structure including both formal positions, gender and differential field specific legitimacy, I use the statistical method called correspondence analysis.

This technique provides the possibility of presenting relations between positions or groups of individuals based on data from nominal level upwards, in a diagram which will give an intuitive impression of the relationship between different positions. This means that the different positions are placed in a diagram of points according to how they differ from where they would have been placed if distributed at random, and in particular how they are different in relation to the other positions. The distances between the points indicate the difference between the positions. An advantage with this method is that the distinctive features of small groups appear as important as those of larger groups. The disadvantage is that it may lead the reader to believe that this feature bears a similar significance (Broady 1990, Cibois 1991, Clausen 1998, Hjellbrekke 1999).

The categories included in this analysis are gender and the formal positions according to table 1. To obtain an impression of positions with different legitimacy in the field, more detailed information in the material had been desirable. In Bourdieus study of the French academic field, he was able to differentiate between educational institutions with more or less elitist character. In the Norwegian context we do not have more or less elitist higher educational institutions, although both NTH (the former Norwegian University of Technology) and NHH (Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration) have been characterized as such, because many people from the general elite study have their education from these institutions (Klausen 2003). Still, there is reason to believe that scientific positions at the universities have greater scientific legitimacy than positions at professional or regional colleges. My reason for this supposition is primarily that the regional colleges had to obtain recognition from a university to start education in university disciplines, and secondly because the universities have had the exclusive rights to approve of doctorates in the disciplines. In addition, the scientific field is characterized by an ideal of objectivity and freedom of interest from external circumstances, which in lesser degree is the case in professional colleges with a closer connection to "the practical life". As it has not been possible to distinguish between the different types of institutions within the sector of universities and regional colleges, I have tried to compensate for this by including information about the interviewees place of residence; if the person lives in a town, it is likely that he/she is connected to a regional college, while residence in Oslo or other university cities may include both universities, state-owned, regional and private colleges. Another type of information which would have been useful for the classification of scientific legitimacy is scientific merits, as for instance publishing activities. I therefore use the information in the material that can give an impression of variation in scientific legitimacy: level of education, field of studies, studies abroad and the period of time the interviewees have occupied their main position at the time of interview. The following categories are included in the analysis:

Level of education:
- Ph.D. (doktorgrad in Fig. 1)
- Masters degree (Hovedfag)
- Up to 6 years higher education (6 års høyere utdanning)

Field of studies:
- General studies
- Humanities and aesthetical studies (Humanistisk/estetisk)
- Pedagogy (Undervisning)
- Administrative, economical, juridical and social sciences (Økonomisk-administrativ)
- Natural sciences and technology (Teknisk/naturvitenskapelig)
Health (Helsefag)

Studies abroad:
Yes (Utenlandsstudier)

Number of years in the position:
Up to 5 years (år)
6 – 15 years (år)
16 years or more (år)

Geographical position:
Oslo and its environment (Oslo)
Other university cities and their environment (Universitetsby)
Other towns (By/tettested)

Gender:
Male (Mann)
Female (Kvinne)

These categories are used in order to construct the relations between the different formal positions, which have been marked as capitals in the diagram:

Scientific or administrative employees in scientific societies or academies (VITENSKAPSAKADEMI)
Norwegian Research Council, scientific representatives on the board (NFR VITENSKAPELIG)
Norwegian Research Council, administrative employees and administrative representatives on the board (NFR, ADMINISTRATIV)
Directors of research institutes (INSTITUTTLEDER)
University deans (DEKANER)
Rectors and vice-rectors of universities, rectors of scientific, regional and private colleges (RECTORAT)
Directors of universities and of scientific, regional and private colleges (U & H ADMINISTRATIV)

It would also have been desirable to be able to distinguish between administrative employees in the Norwegian Research Council and the members of the board holding administrative posts elsewhere. This is not possible with the existing material.
The result of the analysis is shown in fig. 1. The relations between the different positions in the field are structured according to the level and the subject of education. The first dimension, level of education, describes 40% of the variation, and is mainly produced by the difference of educational level particular for deans and Rectorate. More often than not the deans hold a Ph.D., while, on the other hand, the Rectorate may have only up to 6 years of higher education. These positions also differ according to the amount of time they have held their main position. While the Rectorate relatively often have held their position for up to 5 years duration, the deans more often are characterised by having held their position for more than 16 years. Studies abroad are not a characteristic that distinguish any of the positions. Figure 1 also shows that the Rectorate, who hold positions both at universities and colleges all over the country, mostly live in town without a university, while the deans, who are only to be found in universities, live in university cities.

All in all, the first dimension shows a polarisation as to how heavily deans and Rectorate have been investing in academic capital, concerning both level of education and scientific production. Such an investment can rightly be called academic capital, not least because heavy investment in time has been used as an important argument against preferential treatment of women in order to improve gender equity.

Other positions are also differentiated by variation in academic capital. Close to the Rectorate, but with a relatively low capital, we find the directors of the universities. On the other hand, the scientific representatives on the board of the Norwegian Research Council and the heads of
scientific societies and academies are situated close to the deans. The leaders of the institute sector are situated in a position in between. Compared to the other groups, they are in particular characterised by holding a master degree and a service of 6 – 15 years in their main position. It is also apparent that this dimension of academic capital does not differentiate significantly between women and men; both groups are situated near the average. This means that, within the academic elite, both women and men, to about the same degree, carry either a doctorate, master- or lower degrees of education, as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Educational level amongst women and men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>54 %</td>
<td>59 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters degree</td>
<td>46 %</td>
<td>38 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower degree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Num)</td>
<td>(28)</td>
<td>(118)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The other dimension, the field of study, describes 30% of the variation in the material, and segregates between the Rectorate and the sector of research institutes. Leaders of research institutes have relatively more often education in the natural-, technical-, social- and economical-administrative disciplines, while the Rectorate more often are educated within educational-, humanities-, aesthetical- and health studies. This dimension segregates quite clearly between women and men, as women more often hold educational or humanistic degrees, while men more often are educated within fields distinguished by the institute sector.

If academic capital, as defined above, has any bearing on the academic legitimacy, this analysis shows that the groups consisting of the deans, the scientific representatives to the Norwegian Research Council and the scientific societies, may be central for reaching gender equality within the academic field. On the one hand, these positions may contribute to increase the legitimacy, both at the implementation of actions, and also in the organisational culture of the institution. On the other hand, these positions may also be quite efficient "doorkeepers" against increased gender equality. The Rectorate are, as the analysis shows, a more complex group concerning academic capital. For that reason, they cannot be described as a homogenous position. In the following analysis of the relationship of the elite to equal representation, intentionally this group will be divided according to the level of academic capital.
The analysis is based on data from the elite project within The Norwegian Power and Democracy project.

In order to assure anonymity, the original material was divided into sub samples: rectors, vice-rectors and directors at all universities, scientific, regional and private colleges in one group, directors and heads of major research institutes and scientific institutions in another group, the board of The Norwegian Research Council (NRC) as well as heads and directors for the divisions within NRC in one group, heads and vice-heads of scientific academies in one group and deans in a separate group.

This comprises both employees in administrative positions in NRC as well as members of the board which are not elected as representatives for the academic institutions, but as representatives for the group of users of research.

We don’t whether the persons in administrative positions within the sub sample represent the board or are directors within NRC.

This assumption is not unproblematic as Norway did not have any organized Ph.D education in all disciplines until 1991. Still I think this distinction may be of use as an indication of the difference between deans and the Rectorate.

This educational background is especially characteristic of the elites in enterprises and public administration. These sub fields within the field of power according to their specific logic, different from the logic of the academic field, where academic merits in principle have the highest value.