

Theories for a better climate

“Even if the international community were to implement drastic reductions in the emission of greenhouse gases within the near future, it would take about 50 years before we see any positive effect on the climate. All the more reason to work towards more powerful international agreements and new technology as well as better economic theories and models” says environmental economist Professor Michael Hoel. Pages 4–5

Statistics saves lives

■ The entry of statistics into modern medicine has saved many lives. Medicine is at the moment undergoing rapid development and the statisticians have to keep up with new methods.

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The Centre requests proposals for group leaders 2008/2009

■ The Centre for Advanced Study organises basic and interdisciplinary research at a high international level. In December 2005 the Board will evaluate candidates to head research groups that will have a one-year research period at the Centre in 2008/2009.

Group leaders are chosen from leading Norwegian researchers within the fields of the humanities/theology, the natural sciences/medicine and mathematics and the social sciences/law. The groups are to have an

international composition and are fully financed by the Centre in co-operation with the Norwegian universities.

The Centre requests proposals for group leaders. Proposals should include:

- Name of candidate(s), place of work and a short CV (max 1 page)
- A description of the research group's theme, central issues for the project and an evaluation of the project's scientific significance (max 20 lines)

For more information please see <http://www.cas.uio.no>

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**Closing date for applications:
Friday 18 November 2005**

Innovation, basic research and applied research

The Norwegian Government's White Paper to the Parliament *The Will to Research* (Stortingsmelding nr. 20 2004–2005 *Vilje til forskning*) defines innovation as “a new product, a new service, new production process, new application or new form of organisation that has been launched on the market or adopted for use.” In the chain from research to application, basic research is an important supplier of new knowledge, while applied research to a great extent produces new combinations of existing knowledge. In this picture basic research is the foundation for applied research in a chain that ends in application in society.

Research has gradually moved over into a post-academic period in which basic research and applied research to some extent merge with society's strategic needs for more high-quality research. Applied research institutes such as IBM, Microsoft, the Bell Laboratories

and the Max Planck Institute have moved many milestones of great basic research significance.

At the same time applied research has found its way into the universities. In Norway close on 50 per cent of university research is applied. Thus basic research is both researcher and user-governed and brought about by curiosity as well as practical needs. It is therefore difficult to draw a sharp

distinction between applied and basic research in the innovation process.

In the light of this it is to go backwards into the future to propose to separate commercial research from basic research and link the former to the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the latter to the Ministry of Education. Never before have the two research traditions been more strongly integrated than they are today.

What Norway needs is *more* research of high quality, and not a new organisation of research that weakens the power of innovation. In this work the CAS and Norway's many Centres of Excellence fulfil an important and integrated role in the innovation process.



WILLY ØSTREM
Scientific director, CAS

To tell, lest we forget

The last 60 years have provided many reminders of the greatest crime in world history, namely the Nazis' exterminations of Jews during the Second World War. But now the eyewitnesses are gradually disappearing, so that new means are required to ensure that this crime is never to be forgotten.

“How are we to tell the story of the Holocaust when the last survivors have passed away?” ask Susan Rubin Suleiman and Jakob Lothe. The two researchers are afraid that it will not be so simple once the last witnesses and survivors from the Nazis' extermination camps soon fall silent.

“As long as we still have witnesses and survivors among us, the Holocaust is a historical event that is relatively close to us in time and space. But in a few years' time we shall have lost all the first-hand sources. Therefore it is a matter of urgency to get hold of the stories that are still lacking, and it is a matter of urgency to develop new ways of telling about the Holocaust”, Professors Suleiman and Lothe believe.

Jakob Lothe, who is a professor of English Literature in the Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages at the University of Oslo, is in charge of a research team that is to work on precisely this question at the Centre for Advanced Study during the coming year. Professor Lothe is particularly interested in narrative theory and analysis, while Susan Suleiman is a professor of French Civilisation and Comparative Literature at Harvard University in the USA and has written a number of books on Holocaust-related subjects. Susan Suleiman survived the Holocaust as a child and left her native city of Budapest as a ten-year-old in 1949.

The story must be repeated, varied and analysed

“The exterminations of Jews are no doubt the best documented genocide in history. But it's frightening to note that there're still people who are either uninterested or even try to marginalise the events or deny that they took place. So this story must be repeated, varied and reinforced. This is an obligation with respect to those who lost their lives and to the future, so that it becomes impossible to repeat a similar crime,” Professor Lothe believes.

Professors Lothe and Suleiman feel it quite natural that they as literary researchers become involved in this project which might have fallen more naturally to historians or political scientists. “We have, both as human beings and as researchers, a tendency to view

the Holocaust as a story or a *narrative*. A narrative can be defined as a story with a beginning, a progression and a conclusion. The Holocaust narrative is related to the growth of Nazism, comes to a dramatic climax with the extermination of the Jews in the death camps and has a sort of conclusion in the defeat of Nazism at the end of the war in 1945. It is crucial that attempts to remember, understand, discuss and retell the tale must never stop”, says Professor Lothe.

A tale of the collapse of civilisation

“It is important both morally and ethically to consider who should be interested in the Holocaust. The narrowest answer is that the story is important to the Jews as six million Jews were murdered. This can however in no way be a purely Jewish story – it suffices to consider that a large number of the Romany people were exterminated. The real answer, in my opinion, is that the story concerns *all* people. The Holocaust was an event of great significance for the whole of human civilisation”, says Professor Suleiman. She adds that it is important to differentiate between the concentration camps such as Buchenwald and Dachau and the extermination camps Auschwitz/Birkenau, Treblinka and Sobibor. It was in the extermination camps that the unique aspect of the Holocaust became apparent, that is the industrial mass murder and the systematic extermination of people, she emphasizes.



“Eyewitnesses are gradually disappearing. It's therefore more important than ever to ensure that the Holocaust should never be forgotten”, say Susan Rubin Suleiman and Jakob Lothe.



This picture – which also is the fragment of a story – of a mother and her three children on their way to the gas chamber in Auschwitz/Birkenau in 1944, was taken by an SS-photographer perhaps as documentation of “daily life in camp”. After the liberation of the camps in the winter and spring of 1945 the young Jewish woman Lili Meier found a photo album with this and some hundred other photos. (Photo: Yad Vashem/Scanpix)

Professor Suleiman believes that we need the concerted efforts of historians, writers and film makers in order to preserve the memory of the Holocaust once the eye-witnesses are gone. “I think it’s true to say that it’s narrators rather than historians who can keep a memory alive in a people. By definition historians are concerned with exact information, the context and the details of what happened whereas eye-witnesses and narrators have a totally different angle. They’re the ones who can tell us ‘what it was like’ and ‘how it felt’, even though eye-witness accounts are not always completely accurate.

“Perhaps it’s a paradox that a researcher should say this, but it’s first and foremost the lyrical and graphic accounts that will keep the story alive. Art and truth are not contradictory”, adds Professor Lothe.

We must never forget

Professors Lothe and Suleiman, along with their colleagues in the research team are going to study existing accounts of the Holocaust and also collect new ones, and generally study how this collapse in European civilisation has been and is recounted. “Basically we aim to compare, analyse and discuss different narratives which however fragmented they are, can make it easier to remember that which we

must never forget. In this context a ‘narrative’ can just as easily be a film as an autobiography or a literary text”, Professor Lothe explains.

“A film like Steven Spielberg’s ‘Schindler’s List’ has probably made a greater impact than most historical dissertations”, continues Professor Suleiman. “But if ‘Schindler’s List’ is people’s only source of information about the Holocaust, their knowledge may be very limited. The French film director Claude Lanzmann for example shows things from a completely different angle in his film ‘Shoah’ from 1986. ‘Shoah’ lasts for nine hours and is hard going for any viewer, on the other hand it is bursting with information and accounts and engages the viewer in a different and deeper way”.

Professors Lothe and Suleiman emphasize that there are still many accounts of the Holocaust that are not known. The Norwegian writer Espen Søybye’s biography from 2003 about Kathe Lasnik supports this point. Søybye found 15-year-old Kathe’s name on a form she filled in 2 weeks before she was sent to Auschwitz in November 1942, and starting from this, Søybye began to trace the story of her life.

Kathe Lasnik arrived in Auschwitz on 1 December 1942 and was sent to the gas

chamber the same day together with her parents and a sister. Among other things Søybye examines what actually happened during the operations against the Jews in Norway and how Norwegian policemen played a central part in collecting everyone with a J stamped in their passports to take them to the death ship “Donau” which transported 532 Jews to Germany.

“This book is a warning against ignorance and can help us to understand that perhaps six million books like this could have been written”, comments Professor Lothe.

Narrative theory and analysis

■ The theory of story-telling or narrative theory examines the circumstances and the content of the many different types of story which surround us – novels, short stories, films, television series, myths, tales etc. The research team *Narrative Theory and Analysis* are going to examine issues within two fields: Firstly an analysis of modernist narrative, concentrating on the work of Joseph Conrad and Franz Kafka, and secondly a theoretical examination of the narrative, emphasizing the relationship between fiction and history. The research team are going to concentrate on narrative representation of, and various forms of response to the Holocaust.

Agreements, technology and theory can reduce climate change

Changes in the global climate will probably continue for many decades yet even if we should manage to control emissions of greenhouse gases. The environmental economist Michael Hoel does however believe that climate change can be moderated but in order for that to happen we need stronger international agreements and new technology as well as economic theory and economic models.

In many ways Michael Hoel is a pessimist with regard to the global climate and envisages that the combined emission of greenhouse gases will continue to increase during the next 10–20 years. Even if we manage to achieve drastic reductions in the amount of emissions in the near future, climate change for the next 50 years would be almost as great as without the reductions in emissions. “The measures we implement in the next few years in order to reduce emissions will not give any noticeable results until the second half of this century”, says Professor Hoel.

The most likely scenario is that we will get a “warmer, wetter and wilder” global climate at the same time as climate change will result in many local and regional effects that we have not yet imagined. Nevertheless Professor Hoel does not have problems sleeping at night; rather he uses his insight to motivate people to extra effort. It is difficult to solve the problem of the climate but not impossible, and being passive today will only make matters worse for the generations to come.

The long-term problem

“There are at least two factors that makes it difficult to solve the problem of climate change. One is that we are faced with a very long-term issue”, Professor Hoel points out. “It is difficult politically to implement expensive measures today when the reward for these measures does not become apparent for another 50 years”.

“Economists are used to calculating investments ‘today’ against reward ‘tomorrow’, but not with such a lengthy time perspective. It is quite usual to calculate investments today against their benefits in 10–20 years, whereas here we are talking about a perspective of at least a hundred years. What we do or do not do today will have

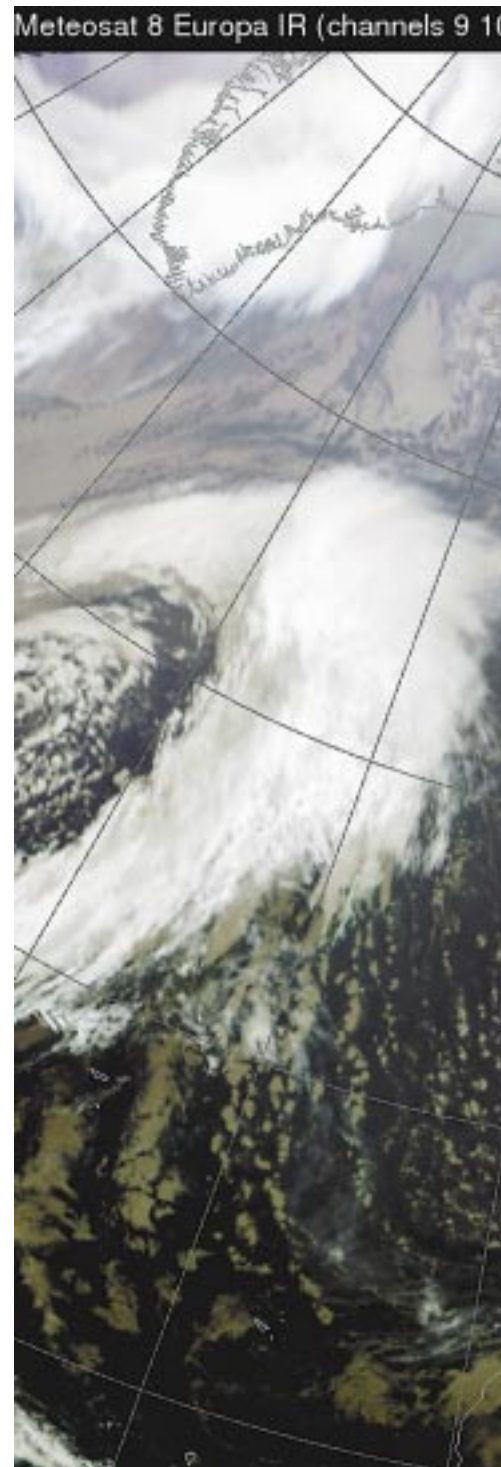


“The authorities should consider how to stimulate the development of new technology which can improve the global climate”, says Professor Michael Hoel.

consequences for our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren”, Professor Hoel points out.

“When economists compare expenses today with future gains, they tend to use a so-called calculation of present value with an interest rate that can be in the region of 3 to 5 percent. This is sensible if you are going to invest with a view to a future return up to 20–30 years hence. When however we are talking of a hundred-year perspective, this method of calculation favours the present at the expense of the future to such an extent that expenses today become worthless. Thus we need a further development of traditional economic analyses which can cope with really long-term issues”, says Professor Hoel.

He adds that economic theories have traditionally assumed that individuals, companies and states act purely out of self-interest without considering social or moral norms. More recent research has shown however that individual behaviour is often more generous, showing signs of mutuality and reciprocity, and more conditional on the behaviour of others than traditional theories would have it. “We aim in this research group to increase our knowledge of how such factors influence the economy”, he says.

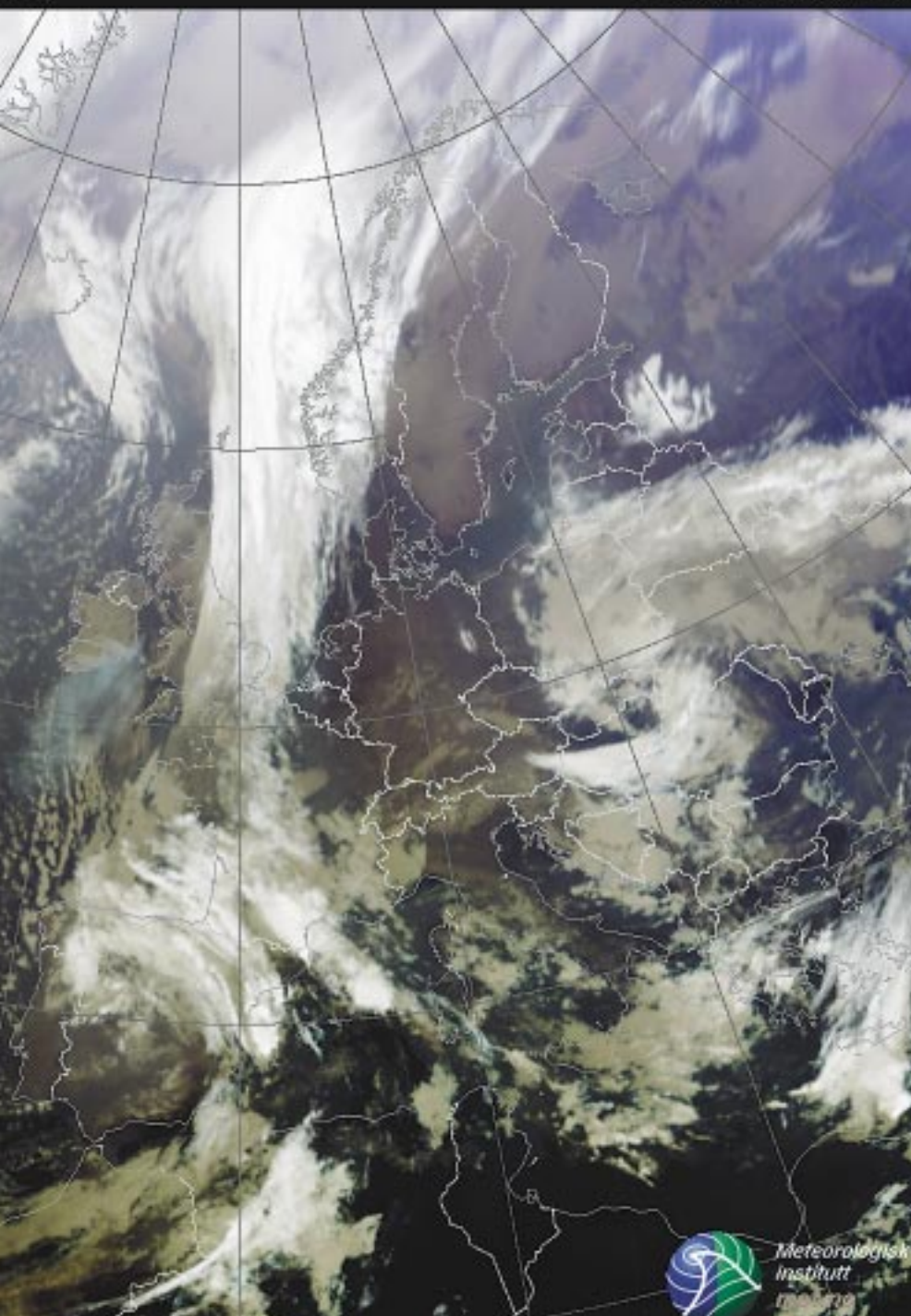


The international issue

“The other factor that makes the climatic issue exceptionally complex is that it can only be solved by the pledged international co-operation of all nations. It is the collective emissions that cause climatic problems and we cannot solve these problems unless we have a binding international agreement to do so. Today we are nowhere near such an agreement, says Professor Hoel.

One of the problems with the Kyoto Protocol is that it focuses solely on quantity of emissions. This will have only a small if any effect on the global climate when there are only a handful of countries who participate and especially when these countries in addition only reduce their emissions modestly.

“If we really are going to reduce the effects on the climate then it’s not enough to check the



Even if we managed to achieve drastic reductions in the amount of greenhouse gas emissions in the near future, climate change for the next 50 years would remain almost the same. The picture was taken from Meteosat 8 October 13 2005 at 08:00.

1990s he became interested in the greenhouse effect and CO₂ emissions and he introduced among other things a link between the energy market and environmental conditions in his models. He has also worked on analyses of how international climate agreements should be formulated in order to keep the cost to the international community to a minimum.

The field of environment economics is related to resource economics, which has roots that go back to the classical economists David Ricardo (1772–1823) and Thomas Malthus (1766–1834). Right back in 1920, the British economist Arthur C. Pigou advocated the use of taxes so that those who polluted should pay for the damage they inflicted on others. Economists call this “externalities” – i.e. the costs that do not occur on the company’s balance sheet.

“The immediate aim of this research is to publish articles in acclaimed scientific journals that will be noticed. We hope to contribute to illuminating important aspects of climatic problems. Should it prove to be the case for example that it is not possible to involve the USA or developing countries in a furtherance of the Kyoto Protocol, then people will increasingly say that this was a blind alley. The debate around alternative agreements and methods of co-operation will intensify and hopefully our research will form a foundation for better informed opinions”, says Professor Hoel.

increase of emissions of greenhouse gases or stabilize them at the present level. Instead we must reduce emissions and this is difficult to envisage with present day technology. It would be so expensive that it would be unacceptable for politicians and for people generally”, says Professor Hoel. “Logically this leads to the necessity for the authorities, both nationally and internationally to consider how to stimulate the development of new technology. What sort of environmental policy, what sort of international agreements and which incentives can contribute to this? This is a difficult area. It may be useful to introduce tax on fossil fuels and subsidize various forms of renewable energy sources. On the other hand: should the authorities opt to subsidize a particular technology as for example wind power, this could lead to a weakening of

the incentives to develop totally new and valuable technologies of which we today are unaware. Here it’s important to mind the details”, emphasises Professor Hoel.

Overwhelming arguments

Professor Hoel points out that the research group is not going to spend time giving grounds for the fact that we really have a global climate problem. “We are content that the natural scientists have put forth overwhelming arguments to demonstrate that the increased greenhouse effect and the climatic problems are man-made. That is what our research is based on”, he says.

Professor Hoel has published work on resource economics in acclaimed international journals since the 1970s and became interested in the European gas market in the 1980s. In the

Researching environmental economics

■ The research group *Environmental Economics: Policy Instruments, Technology Development and International Co-operation* is led by Professor Michael Hoel at the Department of Economics at the University of Oslo.

The real world is much more complex than simple economic models often assume. The research group’s aim is to increase our understanding of the properties of several types of environmental policy instruments. The researchers will explicitly include several important features of the economy that have often been ignored in previous analyses, for example: technology development, distortionary taxes, international trade, altruism and individual preferences and companies with power in the market.

Better statistics can save more lives

When a leading international journal selected the most important medical advances ever made, neither Odd O. Aalen nor Ørnulf Borgan were surprised to see the use of statistical methods come high up on the list. They were well aware that statistics can save lives. This also means that *better* use of statistics can save even more lives.

“It was the New England Journal of Medicine that proclaimed the use of statistics in medicine as one of man’s 11 most important advances in medicine over the last 1000 years. This was on 6 January 2000, which was a good day for us statisticians”, says Professor Odd O. Aalen.

“The use of statistics in medical research really did represent a great advance. Without the use of statistics one could have an understanding of the biological mechanisms of a new medicine, but it is the statistical analysis of data from clinical trials that can reveal whether the medicine actually makes people healthier”, adds Professor Ørnulf Borgan.

Elvis at the dance

The British epidemiologist Sir Richard Doll (1912–2004) was one of the pioneers of using statistical methods in medicine. In 1952 Doll published a report that used statistics to demonstrate the link between smoking and lung cancer, and the rest is history. When in 2001 the 89-year-old Doll came to Trondheim to be one of the opponents at a Doctoral Disputation, the Norwegian medical journal wrote that “among epidemiologists this must be compared to having got Elvis to come to the local dance”.

“Today statistical methods are an invaluable instrument for measuring the effects of medical treatments and for identifying the causes of disease. One of the important areas of application is clinical trials, as we have already mentioned. Here, one divides a number of patients, who have consented to participate, into two or more groups who then undergo different medical treatments.

Afterwards one can compare the results of the treatments statistically. This sounds simple, but in order to obtain good, clear results there are a number of conditions one must observe both in the choice of groups and in how the treatments are applied”, explains Borgan.

“The other important area of application is epidemiology, where one tries to say something about the causes of disease. Sir Richard Doll has already been mentioned. A more recent example concerns cot deaths, which were quite common in many western countries in the 1980s. At that time parents were advised to let babies sleep on their stomachs. Towards the end of the 1980s, however, one found statistically that this was a very bad advice, and the advice was changed to that babies should sleep on their backs. This led to the incidence of cot deaths being greatly reduced”, adds Aalen.

Ørnulf Borgan and Odd O. Aalen of the University of Oslo are leading the research team Statistical Analysis of Complex Event History Data at the CAS. (Photo: Bjarne Røsjø)



What is epidemiology?

■ Epidemiology was originally “The study of contagious diseases in man”, but today the term is also used of chronic illnesses.

Many people regard the British doctor Dr. John Snow (1813–1858) as the father of epidemiology. During an outbreak of cholera in London in 1854 he charted and interviewed the people who had caught the disease, and from this started to suspect that the source of infection was the water from a pump in Broad Street in Soho. The legendary short version of the story goes like this: Snow removed the handle on the pump and thus ended the epidemic.

Another pioneer was the Hungarian doctor Ignaz Semmelweis (1818–1865) who observed that the number of women who died of childbed fever was drastically reduced if doctors washed their hands after visiting the morgue. The Norwegian doctor Gerhard Henrik Armauer Hansen (1841–1912) who described the lepra bacteria is also one of the first heroes of this discipline.

Statistical methods reveal small differences

“The strength of statistical methods lies among other things in that they can be used to reveal the small differences. This is important as in most areas of medicine the really big breakthroughs are few and far between. If a new cancer treatment can prolong the life or reduce the pain of for example five per cent of patients it is necessary to use statistical methods in order to see this difference”, Aalen emphasizes.

“It is also necessary to be familiar with statistical reasoning in order to avoid drawing the wrong conclusions from an investigation. The treatment of HIV patients illustrates the point in a plain and simple way. If one naively goes ahead and compares HIV patients who have been given advanced antiretroviral treatment with patients who have *not* been given that sort of treatment, it will seem as if the treatment makes people more ill! In so doing one would have ignored the lead up to the treatment, which is prescribed for a selected group of patients. It is simply the case that the treatment is applied when the patients have become more seriously ill”, Borgan explains.

New challenges in the field

In the course of the last five to ten years the use of statistical methods in medicine has developed along several new lines. This had led to a need for further development and refining of the methods in the field.

“One of the lines of development concerns the growing importance of examining what we call *event histories*. A person may be healthy, then develop cancer, undergo a series of treatments which renders him free of symptoms for a few years, and then have a relapse which leads to the initiation of a new treatment. All of this is an event history, and we need specific statistical methods in order to be able to deal with this sort of event history data”, Borgan says.

“Statistics as a subject has also got to keep up with the rapid development in molecular

biology and new techniques for genetic analyses. In the course of a few years it has become possible to collect enormous amounts of genetic data about the patients. For example, it is now possible to register which of tens of thousands of genes are active in a cancer tumour. Our job is to develop statistical methods which can help the doctors discover which genes are of importance”, explains Borgan.

“In addition to this, we observe a tendency to take more and more tests and measurements of varying sorts during the course of a medical treatment. The statistical methods available must also be adequate for dealing with all these pieces of information”, adds Aalen.

“Not to mention the growing number of bio-banks, which contain various types of biological material with personal identification. A need arises to be able to use the contents of these bio-banks for research purposes without “exhausting” them, as they may be of use in the future if we wish to examine connections of which we at present are unaware. This is also an area in which there is a need for developing statistical methods”, declare Aalen and Borgan.

Statistics and Event History Data

■ The research team *Statistical Analysis of Event History Data* is led by two professors from the University of Oslo: Odd O. Aalen from the Department of Basic Medical Sciences and Ørnulf Borgan from the Department of Mathematics.

Survival and event history analysis is the name for a set of statistical methods that are central in epidemiology and other medical research to analyse and describe lifetimes, durations and more complex event histories. The purpose of the project at the CAS is to contribute to the development of statistical methodology for complex event history data.

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The Centre for Advanced Study

The Centre for Advanced Study at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters is a private foundation with a Board appointed by the Academy, the Universities and Colleges Council and the Research Council of Norway.

The academic activity at the Centre shall be known to satisfy the highest international standards and thereby contribute to raising the level of basic and interdisciplinary research in Norway. The academic activity of

the Centre is to be of a long-term, independent and permanent nature with regard to research-political, political and financial influences.

Each year the activity is organised in three research groups. The groups are chosen from the following three subject areas:

- The Humanities / Theology
- Social science / Law
- Natural science / Medicine / Mathematics

The useful biologist

Professor Nils Chr. Stenseth has enjoyed a lot of success in recent years, in the form of prizes for research and other forms of recognition. “Much of the foundation for what I have achieved was laid during my stay at the Centre for Advanced Study in 1996–97”, says Professor Stenseth.

Nils Chr. Stenseth once said in an interview that it was not an ambition of his to be useful, but for once he was slightly wrong. Professor Stenseth has indeed been extremely useful, not least to other biologists who often quote him when writing their own scientific articles. According to the Science Citation Index, which can be regarded as the researcher’s answer to an Oscar, Professor Stenseth is Norway’s most often quoted biologist of the last 10 years.

It is not only research colleagues who appreciate Professor Stenseth’s work. In 1996 he received the University of Oslo’s research prize and in 2000 he received the Research Council of Norway’s prize for outstanding research for his pioneering work in the field of population ecology. It is perhaps even more prestigious that the Nordic Centres of Excellence in 2002 selected Professor Stenseth to head the newly established research centre EcoClim. The Nordic Council of Ministers was behind this and Stenseth’s task was among other things to raise the standard of Scandinavian research and make it more conspicuous internationally.

Foundation laid at the Centre for Advanced Study

Life as a researcher has not been all rosy for Professor Stenseth. Towards the end of the 1980s he was first appointed head of the Centre for Development and Environment in Oslo, where he met much opposition and became more entwined in administrative work than he appreciated. “Following this it was hard to return to research but then I started

doing work on the lemming which led me gently back into research. In 1996–97 I was given the research period at the CAS which meant that I had the opportunity to develop the platform that I had made. To a great extent this became the foundation for what was later to become my own research group at the University of Oslo and which later still became the Centre for Ecological and Evolutionary Synthesis (CEES)”, says Professor Stenseth. At the CEES Professor Stenseth heads the work of making the centre into an intellectual melting pot where previously separate scientific fields such as ecology, statistics, genetics and evolutionary science are merged to create new methods and accomplish good basic biological research.

A brilliant place to be

The stay at the CAS resulted among other things in several articles in prestigious journals such as *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* and *Science*, which have become fundamental works in population ecology. “This may sound like something I say because this is an interview for the Centre’s own magazine, but it really is true”, says Professor Stenseth. “Without the CAS my career would have been completely different”.

“I remember that I felt it a great honour when I was informed that I had been granted a research period at the CAS. To be perfectly honest though, to begin with I was rather dubious as to how fruitful this period would prove to be. It wasn’t long though before I



“The research period at the CAS has been of great significance for my career”, says Professor Nils Chr. Stenseth. (Photo: Ståle Skogstad, the University of Oslo)

completely changed my mind. The CAS was beyond doubt a brilliant place to be”, says Professor Stenseth.

Professor Stenseth appreciated among other things that the administration at the CAS ensured that researchers had favourable conditions. “For example, we just made lists of researchers we wanted with us and the administration took charge of this. That’s the sort of thing we researchers appreciate, as we ourselves are not usually good at giving priority to such things regarding infrastructure. The Centre for Advanced Study has simply been very significant for my work as a researcher”, says Professor Stenseth.

■ The CAS Newsletter

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