

## Public Spending and the Search for Cultural Identity: Monumental Buildings or Cultural Activities? - Knut Samset

*Norway has developed over the last century from an extremely poor country to a booming oil economy. The tiny country in the arctic has today the highest GNP/capita of all nations. Rapid economic growth is now resulting in a complete makeover of society, as well as a new search for cultural identity within the international community. One way to express its new riches is by engaging in a frantic wave of investments in cultural buildings, both in in the country's capital, but subsequently also in every town and urban settlement around the country.*

*This paper discusses the significance and justification for these types of investments. Will they become vehicles in the development of the new and growing quaternary sector of the economy? Will there be there sufficient cultural contents to engage the buildings? And will there be sufficient audience to sustain these institutions? Are there other ways to justify such investments, for instance their role in promoting changes in the urban landscapes? Or will they all end up as white elephants, i.e. valuable but burdensome possessions of which its owner cannot dispose and whose cost (particularly cost of upkeep) is out of proportion to its usefulness or worth.*