

“All of my remaining property I donate to the poor...”

Institutions for the poor in Norwegian cities during the 18th century

1. Introduction

In 1762, the unmarried merchant Thomas Angell of Trondheim drew up his will, leaving most of his large estate to the poor people of his home city. Subsequent additions to this will gave more precise details regarding the use of the remaining property. The interest earned on one-sixth of the capital was to be used for the education and maintenance of the children in the orphanage (Waisenhuset), the interest earned on another one-sixth was to go to the members of the poorhouse, while the interest on yet another two-sixths was to go to poor widows of respectable standing and finally the remaining two-sixths of the interest accrued was to be added to the capital every year. According to his further instructions, a building adjoining the poorhouse should be erected for 16 needy, respectable burghers of Trondheim, while another house should be erected for 16 respectable and poor widows of clergymen, civil servants or merchants, unmarried maidens of the same estates and/or old, respectable men who, in their time, “have been useful to their city”. Moreover, members of the first house were to receive an allowance of one and a half riksdalers per month, and members of the other house four riksdalers per month. These houses, built in 1770 and 1772, respectively, constituted new social institutions for the old people from the middle and upper classes in the city, whereas the existing poorhouse received old, destitute people from the labouring classes. The money given to the orphanage resulted in a new building as well, thus allowing the orphanage to be able to receive more children, and to equip the house with better teachers.¹

Thomas Angell’s gift was part of a development that made the institutions for the poor more stratified during the second half of the 18th century. This paper will ask how a system of institutions for the poor from different social classes developed in Norwegian cities, how such institutions were financed and how they turned out at the end of the 18th century. In Trondheim, the testamentary gift from Thomas Angell, which was released upon his death in 1767, was essential in building this system, and similar structures were established in other Norwegian cities. Almshouses, which were financed by private gifts, and poorhouses, which were usually jointly financed by public and private means, along with other institutions for poor people to be maintained or put to work, only existed in cities. The

¹ Nissen, *Thomas Angells stiftelser* (1967), 27-45. The citation in the headline is from Thomas Angell’s will.

first section of this article will discuss the development of institutions.² The following sections will discuss the financing of such institutions and the motives behind the donors' desire to give out alms. Finally, the last section deals with how the institutions favoured in Thomas Angell's testament ended up and found their place as an integrated part of the poor relief system of the late 18th century. The source material consists of testaments leaving gifts to institutions, statutes for the use of donations, royal regulations and existing literature on single institutions and cities. To examine the practical outcome of the development, census material is used.

Poverty and the institutions erected for dealing with poverty have to some extent been researched in Norwegian history. As part of a larger Nordic research project in the 1970s on administrative processes that took place during the 18th century, the development of social care and legislation was among the studied topics.³ Anne Lise Seip's work on the welfare state begins with a discussion of the early history of Norwegian social politics from the 1740s within a European framework.⁴ The idea of the institutions as extended households has been advanced, as well as relating the concept of an industrious revolution to the development of institutions for the poor.⁵ In previous works, I have analysed the relationship of merchants to the poor as part of the responsibilities the merchants have as members of the leading social class.⁶ One recent work on ideological discussions and social practice in the Danish kingdom – of which Norway was a part – is Juliane Engelhardt's book on patriotic societies in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when institutions and politics for the poor were part of the patriotic framework for these societies.⁷ In an older study on poor relief in one particular Danish city, Tyge Krogh placed the development of workhouses within the framework of change from a feudal to capitalistic society, while Peter Henningsen has stressed that the Danish authorities of the 1760s and 1770s made great efforts to make the able-bodied poor work.⁸

Norwegian studies also refer to international studies about poverty, such as Foucault's studies of institutions and Geremek's studies on poverty, the latter of which focuses on "the

² Organisations established to deal with public purposes and the buildings they used.

³ Dyrvik, *Oppdaginga* (1983).

⁴ Seip, *Sosialhjelpstaten* (1984).

⁵ Carstens, *Sykehusutvikling* (2006); Bull, 'Children' (2008).

⁶ Bull, *Handelshusene* (1998), 262-282.

⁷ Engelhardt, *Borgerskab* (2010).

⁸ Krogh, 'Fattigvæsen' (1982); Henningsen, 'Copenhagen poor relief' (2008), 346.

war against ‘idleness’” as being central to the institutions.⁹ Several studies on poverty have focused on the growing number of poor people in the labouring classes during the early modern period following a restructuring of the social classes,¹⁰ and other studies make explicit the division between poor people from different social classes.¹¹ The general discourse in the late 18th century stressed the need to preserve the order of the social structure and cautioned against breaking down the dividing lines between the estates.¹² Alms were therefore directed at supplementing the public poor relief system with institutions that protected the dignity of people from the “better” social groups, thereby preventing them from falling into destitution.¹³ Reforms in several German cities, with Hamburg in the 1780s being the primary example, developed a system in which care for the poor was understood as being best achieved through educating the poor, or – if necessary– forcing them to work, thereby integrating them into a system encompassing poor relief, health and work.¹⁴ Similar approaches could be found in Norwegian cities, most explicitly in Trondheim, in the ordinances from 1789 and 1790 concerning the poor law system, including schools for the poor.¹⁵ Anne McCants discusses how charity was especially important to the middle class during the Golden Age of Amsterdam, leaving the urban underclass out of the picture and not of interest to the elite.¹⁶ Recent research in the Netherlands on philanthropy, organised within the project *Giving in the Golden Age*, has resulted in a special issue of *Continuity and Change*, which focuses on private donations to almshouses through bequests and other kinds of charity.¹⁷

During the 17th and 18th centuries, Norway became increasingly involved in the international economy. Only Bergen had an established commercial tradition dating back to the Middle Ages, which was based on the export of fish and involvement in German trade networks, though during the early modern period, medium-sized cities such as Christiania (modern-day Oslo), Trondheim and Kristiansand all developed as commercial centres with international networks.¹⁸ Merchants, who were mostly immigrants, as well as their

⁹ Foucault, *Folie* (1961); Geremek, *Poverty* (1994), 218-228.

¹⁰ Lis, *Social change* (1986); Lis and Soly, *Poverty* (1979); Lindemann, *Patriots* (1990).

¹¹ Woolf, ‘Order’ (1992), 189-192; Cowan, *Urban Europe* (1998), 153.

¹² Engelhardt, *Borgerskab* (2010), 270-273.

¹³ Mikkelsen, ‘Poor relief’ (2008), 397.

¹⁴ Lindeman, *Patriots* (1990), 100, 160; Jütte, *Poverty* (1994), 109-110.

¹⁵ Rescripts 3. April 1789 and 13. August 1790.

¹⁶ McCants, *Civic Charity* (1997), 8-10, 22-23.

¹⁷ *Continuity and Change* (2012).

¹⁸ All Norwegian cities were small in terms of European standards. The Norwegian realm was divided into four dioceses, where the main cities – Christiania, Bergen, Trondheim and Kristiansand – played a leading role. In the 1801 census, Bergen

descendants, established themselves as the economic and political elite in these cities, and the Angell family belonged to this group of merchants.¹⁹ Along with this economic development, social stratification became more distinct, as the merchants taking part in international trade were economically and socially more advanced than ordinary burghers such as shopkeepers and artisans. During this same period, the state bureaucracy increased, with civil servants entering the elite together with international merchants. Since there was no nobility to speak of in Norway, these groups, which were included in the middle classes in countries located farther south in Europe, subsequently formed the “elite”. Economic and political processes contributed to establishing a more differentiated social society, particularly in the larger cities, hence not only creating an elite that was stronger than before, but also more paupers at the bottom.

Groups that did not belong to the skilled trades with burgher rights were increasing, as growing commerce demanded more labour of an unskilled character, such as working in loading and unloading, working at the shipyards with different types of auxiliary functions or working as servants to the growing upper classes. For many of these types of labour, the border between work and poverty was weak, and they were thus at risk of falling below this borderline in old age, or because of sickness or slow periods. This development is true in other countries as well.²⁰ Women in particular were vulnerable in old age or as widows with small children.²¹

2. The development of social institutions in Norwegian cities

The infrastructure of social care in Norway was formalised in the different regions of the country during the period from 1741 to 1790. Prior to the first of the royal decrees imposed on the Christiania diocese, practical reforms had been accomplished in all of the larger cities, and several new institutions were built during the 17th and 18th centuries. The different institutions each had their own board, with a superior board for social care in each city. The boards consisted of secular and clerical authorities, as well as participating merchants, and they supervised institutions which were financed through both public means and private alms.²²

was the largest, with almost 20,000 inhabitants, Christiania had 9,200, Trondheim had 8,800, while Kristiansand was the smallest at close to 5,000 inhabitants.

¹⁹ Bull, *Thomas Angell*, (1992); Bull, *Handelshusene*, (1998); Collett & Frydenlund, *Christianias handelsparisiat* (2008).

²⁰ Lis, *Social change* (1986). Teeuwen, ‘Collections’ (2012).

²¹ Bull, ‘Enkers levebrød’ (1986).

²² Regulations for the management of the social institutions were laid down in royal decrees from 1741-1790. Christiania/Akershus: 2 Dec. 1741; Bergen: 29 Aug. 1755; Kristiansand: 5 May 1786; Trondheim: 3 April 1789.

Christiania had only a few small poorhouses at the beginning of the 18th century, while the Hospital, which was a remnant from the Catholic era, continued housing lepers, and, having increased capacity from the 1740s, also housed old, sick, disabled, blind and poor people of respectable burgher origin. The expanded capacity of the Hospital was part of a new effort to make the system of social care more efficient, and two new poorhouses were initiated during the same period as well. Funds that were previously collected to build an orphanage in Christiania were instead used for a workhouse, which meant that there were not enough funds left over for the orphanage until new initiatives and fundraising efforts started again in the 1770s.²³

When Bergen received its royal decree for social care, institutions and schools for the poor in 1755, all of its institutions for the poor were remnants from the previous century. Three poorhouses – Enkefattighuset (widows' poorhouse), Stranges fattighus (poorhouse) and Søfarendes fattighus (sailors' poorhouse) – were all mainly for women, with a clause for the last one from 1715 stating that one-fourth of the inmates should be men.²⁴ A fourth poorhouse was for the German population in Bergen, while St. Jørgen's Hospital was used for lepers and an orphanage was converted to a workhouse at the end of the 17th century.

In Trondheim, the only social institution up to the 17th century was the Hospital, which was founded in 1277 to take care of leprosy patients from the city and diocese, but which increasingly housed old and poor people. In the early 17th century, an institution for elderly citizens was established, St. Jørgen's House, which was a kind of "finer" poorhouse. Shortly thereafter, two new houses were established, one for boys and one for girls and women. The first one focused on boys' education, putting them in the Latin school or into an apprenticeship when they were old enough. The second one was turned into a spinning house, which also provided rudimentary education in religion for young girls.²⁵ A poorhouse that mainly housed widows was established in the 17th century as well, probably following a period of war.²⁶ Large fires, economic crises and a faulty administration destroyed these social institutions, thereby making a rehabilitation process necessary. This was started in the 1720s when a new poorhouse was built, which was based on testamentary donations from merchant Søren Bygball and his wife Sara Hammond, stepfather and mother of Thomas Angell. St. Jørgen's House had sufficient means to rebuild the house, and, following pietistic

²³ Daae, 'Tugthuset' (1908), 110-117; Sprauten, *Byen ved festningen*, (1992), 230-236.

²⁴ Fossen, *Borgerskapets by* (1979), 781-783.

²⁵ Supphellen, *Innvandrerne by* (1997), 144-147.

²⁶ Bøhmer, *Katalog Stiftelser* (1980), Fattighuset.

principles, two small orphanages were combined into a Waisenhouse.²⁷ The most innovative creation during this period was a house of correction (Tukthuset), which was established in 1732. The leading merchants of the city took over the administration of this house, organising tobacco manufacturing, spinning and weaving. Soon after, the regional commissioner and bishop concluded that the problems with begging and managing poverty in the diocese were resolved.²⁸ They were proud of their institutions, but the house of correction soon faced problems in trying to make workers out of the paupers.

The next leap in social institutions in Trondheim happened as a result of Thomas Angell's testamentary gift and the administrative work preparing royal decrees in 1789 and 1790, which made social care, institutions and schools for the poor an integrated system.²⁹

The stratification of early modern society was reflected in the population of poor people. Regulations for the various Norwegian institutions often made it clear what type of persons should be admitted as inmates. As early as in 1739, when Oslo Hospital was given new statutes, it was deemed necessary to state clearly who this hospital was meant for and who did not belong there. Ordinary people who had been doing coarse or unskilled labour were not worthy of entering the hospital, even if they were old, sick and disabled. Such people "belong to every city's poorhouse and should be kept on the alms from the parish or the city".³⁰ The Hospital was to be only for those who had held some office or who had worked as merchants. Artisans could also enter, but only if their trade was "good". In addition, they had to be decent and honourable burghers, and their poverty must not have arisen due to any fault of their own. In the same way, the statutes for St. Jørgen's House in Trondheim made it clear in all versions from 1607 to 1922 that the house was meant for men and women of the burgher class. It was explained in the statutes of 1922 what was meant by the burgher class: persons who had previously been in a "good" position.³¹

Thomas Angell stated quite clearly how the new institutions founded with his money should complement the existing institutions. The house for the widows of clergymen, civil servants and merchants, or for men or unmarried women of the same classes, would provide lodging for the top stratum of the poor – those who are unable to maintain their former high status in their old age. On the other hand, the house for respectable citizens would be for the middle classes – shopkeepers, artisans and women of the same classes. This was an addition

²⁷ Lie, *Waisenhusstiftelsen* (1935).

²⁸ Supphellen, *Innvandrerne* by (1997), 244-246.

²⁹ Supphellen, *Innvandrerne* by (1997), 340-349.

³⁰ Semmingsen, *Oslo Hospital* (1939), 95.

³¹ Lie and Tvette, *Stiftelser* (1923), 32-37.

to the already existing poorhouse, which was for the destitute old people of the working classes.³² The smaller of Thomas Angell's houses received people from the lower bourgeoisie, as the Hospital. However, when the Hospital from 1790 was integrated under the Poor Law of Trondheim its clientele became more similar to that of the poorhouse.³³ In other cities, hospitals and widows' houses founded by private persons stated what their target groups were in similar ways: what was important to them was that the inmates had been burghers and living in the city in question, and that they were needy, but at the same time decent, respectable and Christian.³⁴

The care the inmates received differed according to the social class the institution was meant for, as well as the economy of the institution. When inmates were increasingly given money to buy their own food, instead of the old practice of being fed at the institution, the social differences between the institutions was to some extent expressed through the amount deemed necessary to survive. For the hospitals and widows' houses in the period from 1755 to 1789, the amounts allocated per week ranged from 36 shillings up to 56 shillings.³⁵ One exception was Thomas Angell's house for the most respectable group of the bourgeoisie, in which the monthly sum of four riksdalers was equal to 96 shillings per week. On the other hand, the weekly allowance in the smaller Thomas Angell's house was 36 shillings a week – about the same as in other widows' houses. Another exception is Peder Michelsen's widows' house in Christiania, where it was obviously expected that the inmates brought some personal means or were able to earn some money. A gift in 1765 increased the weekly pay from 12 to 18 shillings, though if a person was so sick that she could not manage on that amount, she could be given more, up to 48 shillings. The same would apply if some of the paupers in the house were of "good burghers' people or other respectable families".³⁶

On the other hand, the inmates of the poorhouses were not always guaranteed a specified amount of money for their food. When Hans Nissen and his wife gave money to the poorhouse in Trondheim in 1766, they decided that the interest on the capital should be used to increase the pay for the inmates, although they did not indicate any exact amounts.³⁷ If the size of the allowance was in fact stated, it was lower than in the hospitals. A gift to one of the

³² Nissen, *Thomas Angell's stiftelser* (1967), additions to the testament 1763 and 1765: 38-39, 42-45.

³³ Grankvist, *Nidaros kirkes spital* (1982), 217-218.

³⁴ Nicolaysen, *Norske Stiftelser* (1858), vol. 2, 60 (Dankert Krohn's foundation, Bergen 1789), 298 (widows' house in Kristiansand 1805), 313 (Drøbak Hospital 1806).

³⁵ Nicolaysen, *Norske Stiftelser* (1858), vol. 1, 482 (Arendal Hospital 1755), 495 (Larvik Hospital 1762), 580-588 (Sander Kaae's foundation 1769, 1779, 1785); Nicolaysen (1858), vol. 2, 60 (Dankert Krohn 1789), 313 (Drøbak Hospital 1806); Lie and Tvette, *Stiftelser og legater* (1923), 17 (Trondhjem Hospital 1785).

³⁶ Nicolaysen, *Norske Stiftelser* (1858), vol. 1, 555.

³⁷ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 1, 565.

poorhouses in Christiania in 1754 mentioned 24 shillings per week to each of the inmates,³⁸ while in 1801 other sources mention 18 to 21 shillings per week.³⁹

What they might be able to buy for these sums is not so easy to determine. Prices for staple goods like barley, oats, peas and different kinds of fish were officially set each year for the region and for the local market.⁴⁰ However, those prices were wholesale prices. Paupers would certainly have had to buy in smaller quantities and at a much more expensive rate. A few examples from household accounts can give an impression of such retail prices. Around the year 1780, ¼ kg butter could be bought for 8 shillings, 2.5 litres of beer for 6 shillings, and ½ kg coffee for 24 shillings.⁴¹

The general opinion was, however, that for most of the institutions, allowances were scarce. The statutes in 1755 for Arendal Hospital explained how the system might work: The hospital did not arrange for meals, but the housekeeper was to ensure that the inmates could buy the necessary beer and food with their weekly allowance (and that they did not spend it on brandy, tobacco or strong beer). An agreement was made with a woman to supply food, especially beer and bread, as there was no equipment to make this in the hospital. However, there was a kitchen and stoves available so that the inmates could cook whatever they had been able to buy. In this hospital, a full allowance was 36 shillings, but there were also persons who were given only a half allowance. The people drawing up the statutes were aware that the allowance was insufficient, at least for those who could not do any work. The statutes therefore included the hope that some “Christian hearts” would sometimes donate a little food from the outside to bedridden inmates, as was the tradition. If that took place, the 36 shillings would be more sufficient for the remaining days of the week.⁴² Additional alms or other resources would be needed, and not merely in this hospital.

Some of the institutions had inmates who were provided only with shelter, or shelter and a lower allowance than the other inmates. To make do, these persons must have had resources of their own, gotten alms from other people or worked for their maintenance. There is not much mention of work in the statutes for hospitals and poorhouses, although it seems that it was common that the inmates in the houses were supposed to work to the extent of

³⁸ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 1, 421.

³⁹ Bergkvist, *Fattigdom* (2008), 182.

⁴⁰ SAT, Trondheim stift og amt, Jz1 Kapitelstakster 1704-1914.

⁴¹ SAT, Privatarkiv 280 Hoë, 4.24. These prices are from the household accounts of a merchant's madam. The household bought staple goods in larger quantities, which makes it difficult to compare with the paupers' situation. Retail prices for the local market have not been collected for the 18th century, and there are few possibilities to do so. Grytten, *A consumer price index* (2004).

⁴² Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 1, 478.

their abilities. The statutes for Sander Kaae's Foundation in Bergen explicitly mentioned the expectation that the inmates work, and the purpose was specified: They should avoid idleness, and they should earn something to improve their situation. However, they were not allowed to engage in any commercial undertakings or do work that belonged to the burghers.⁴³ There were two reasons for this limitation: the inmates in the house should avoid competing with the citizens with burgher rights, and they should not do work that disturbed the calm in the house. In addition to working to earn money for a living, inmates were probably expected to help out with the running of the institution, such as helping the bedridden, cleaning, repairing clothes, etc., as is visible from the statutes and accounts of Trondhjem Hospital.⁴⁴

It is likely that most of the paupers who were considered worthy of staying in the hospitals and poorhouses were old and sick and unable to do much work, but alms were also given to institutions for children, such as the orphanages in Christiania and Trondheim, where work was always on the agenda, and more so towards the end of the 18th century. Traditionally, orphans in institutions were expected to work in order to help out with the economy of the orphanage, and to prepare for a position in service when they were old enough. In addition, book learning was also provided in orphanages, at least from the 17th century onward. Towards the end of the 18th century, the discussion on how to deal with orphans stressed raising them to become useful members of society and learning to work and be industrious.⁴⁵ Almsgivers pointed to the same need when they expressed the aim of the orphanage in Christiania, where the children were to be brought up to be god-fearing and useful human beings, to the benefit of both themselves and society.⁴⁶ Alms were also given to schools, where education in labour and raising the children to become industrious was also stressed during this period.⁴⁷ Hence, the system of institutions was stratified according to status as well as according to age, while the care the inmates received and what was demanded from them also depended on social status and age.

3. Financing social care

Similar to other countries, the combination of private and public arrangements characterises social care in Norway. A shift from private charity to public social care has been discussed for the Netherlands, and the way in which private charity forms part of a larger pattern of

⁴³ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 1, 580.

⁴⁴ Carstens, *Lokal sykehusutvikling* (2006), 225-226.

⁴⁵ Bull, 'Children' (2008).

⁴⁶ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 1, 704, 779.

⁴⁷ Bull, 'Industriousness' (2011).

informal giving has been recently studied for England.⁴⁸ In Norway, the initiative to found institutions often came from civil servants, but the King sometimes contributed financially by providing landed property for the institutions to use or for the institutions to collect revenues from, or by giving money. He could also guarantee the institutions' income by giving them the right to collect certain state revenues; nevertheless, private citizens had to contribute. Contributions could be more or less voluntary, privately given as alms to beggars or dependents, through the churches, to specified institutions, as regular commitments to the poor authorities or as taxes. Gifts could consist of small donations in money or in kind, regular pledges several times a year or a smaller or greater capital given for a specified institution, often as bequests – as with Thomas Angell's testament. Endowments could be designed to found or contribute to a special institution, but were often given only "to the poor" and could be used for the inmates in poorhouses or as aid to paupers living on their own, administered by the poor law authorities. Small private donations are difficult to trace, while larger donations were usually followed by written documents or bequests.⁴⁹

During the Middle Ages, hospitals in the larger cities (which were primarily for lepers) were organised through the churches and were financed by gifts consisting of landed property, which resulted in revenues being paid as farm produce. After the Reformation, rules were laid out in a church ordinance of 1607, prescribing alms boxes in churches and other places where people gathered, which seems to be a continuation of old customs benefitting the poor.⁵⁰ Gifts consisting of landed property or money continued to be donated to social institutions, and when landed property owned by the institutions in the 18th century was largely sold to the peasants, the income generated by such institutions shifted from revenues in kind to interest-bearing capital.⁵¹ This change was part of the growing money economy, which also entered the institutions. While inmates had traditionally received food in the hospitals and poorhouses, this was usually substituted by a certain sum of money for the week or for the month, as noted earlier in this article.⁵² New gifts were usually given in the form of money, which was lent to people in exchange for interest. The interest was subsequently used to run the institutions. However, there were exceptions, such as the

⁴⁸ Heijden, Meerkerk, Vermeesch and Burg, *Serving* (2009). Ben-Amos, *The culture* (2008).

⁴⁹ Smaller donations can sometimes be traced in private papers and accounts, as in the household's accounts of madam Hoë in the 1770s, where she repeatedly noted small sums for paupers. SAT, privatarkiv 280 Hoë, 4.24. Such charity donations, as well as organized charity through collections, taxing and private societies are discussed in Bull, *Handelshusene* (1998), 262-282 and (shortly) in Bull, 'Foreningsdannelse' (2007). This kind of charity is also discussed in Teeuwen, 'Collections' (2012) for the Netherlands.

⁵⁰ Sprauten, *Byen* (1992), 226; <http://www.lutherdansk.dk/trellix/id134.htm> (17.05.2011).

⁵¹ Semmingsen, *Oslo Hospital* (1939), 74-80.

⁵² Semmingsen, *Oslo Hospital* (1939), 70-71; Lie and Tvete, *Stiftelser* (1923), 17.

donation from Thomas Angell, which to a large degree consisted of landed property and shares in copper mines that were not to be sold. It was only from the end of the 19th century that the foundation, contrary to the testator's will, was allowed to sell the farms. Valuable forest resources were retained, and, to this day, the foundation still owns vast forests.⁵³

In Christiania, the oldest known donation to the poorhouses was granted in 1594, more donations were given towards the end of the 17th century, and still others over the course of the 18th century. From 1778 onwards, donations were mostly directed towards the establishment of Waisenhouses – one of which was financed by the joint achievement of several citizens in the city, and the other by the rich Bernt Anker and his wife Mathia Collett – with both orphanages opening in 1780.⁵⁴ Private donations and endowments for institutions as well as for poor people in general were increasing in Christiania during this period.⁵⁵

In Bergen, some institutions – such as the workhouse, the leprosy hospital and the sailors' poorhouse – acquired large parts of their resources through donations granted by the state in the form of interest on capital originating in royal gifts, income from landed property granted by the King or income from state revenue, such as duties on trade. Other institutions, particularly the widows' poorhouses, were totally dependent on private means, increasing during the 18th century. Between 1720 and 1800, Strange's Poorhouse received 19 new donations, and the widows' poorhouse, 25.⁵⁶

In Trondheim, the initiatives in social care during the 1720s and 1730s brought several forms of financing together. The first of the initiatives was the poorhouse, which, thanks to the gift from Søren Bygball and Sara Hammond, was able to build a new house in 1721. The donation was the largest given to a poorhouse up to that point, and aside from building costs, revenues from the capital were used to pay a teacher for the poor as well as for the paupers' maintenance. Only 20 years later would a new gift to the poorhouse equal this first one, which also came from members of the Angell family. In addition to the donation to the poorhouse, a smaller donation to the orphanage was given from Bygball's estate.⁵⁷ Several gifts were also given to the poorhouse, St. Jørgen's House and the Hospital in the following years, although none of them equalled the gift from Thomas Angell's testament.⁵⁸ In 1781 and 1787, two considerable donations were given to establish institutions that

⁵³ <http://www.thomasangell.no/>

⁵⁴ Sprauten, *Byen* (1992), 236, 372-374.

⁵⁵ Sprauten, *Byen* (1992), 375.

⁵⁶ Fossen, *Borgerskapets by* (1979), 784-787.

⁵⁷ Bull, *Thomas Angell* (1992), 251-252.

⁵⁸ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1858), vol. 1, 484, 506, 542, 564.

focused on industry in particular. The headmaster of the Latin school, Søren Peter Kleist, gave his estate to the “public benefit, so that industriousness and diligence can be encouraged and useful crafts furthered”.⁵⁹ After some named beneficiaries had passed away, his gift should be used to buy wool and linen and pay poor people in the city to spin, as well as making children in the schools spin. In 1787, the testament of Hans Nissen and his wife decided for a workhouse to be established.⁶⁰ However, the workhouse was only realised in 1851, though it existed as a workhouse until 1972, and still exists to this day as a foundation.⁶¹

Other Norwegian cities were smaller, usually mostly relying on outdoor relief, but poorhouses and workhouses did exist in several of the small cities, and private donations were given to some of these such as the donations to a hospital in Larvik, which was founded by the count of the region in 1736, and extended by his son in 1762.⁶² A donor in Fredrikshald (Halden) wanted to establish a workhouse in 1765, with a new donation for the same purpose in 1789, which indicate that the first initiative had not been realised.⁶³ A poorhouse for widows in Kristiansand was founded in 1813, the result of two previous testamentary donations, and a house for six widows in Drøbak was realised in 1806, following a testamentary gift.⁶⁴ A hospital in Fredrikstad was founded in 1641 when a local nobleman donated a house and some money. After the house was destroyed in a fire, a new one was donated by the mayor of the city in 1660 and used from 1678 until 1858 for 10-12 poor people, mainly women. This hospital had a very modest income from some landed property, endowments and private gifts. Complaints from the 18th century indicate that the inmates had to beg, or depended on alms in addition to what was provided through the hospital.⁶⁵

4. Why give alms?

As members of the elite, both merchants and civil servants contributed to the poor relief system in different ways, giving alms privately and through the church, poorhouses,

⁵⁹ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1858), vol. 1, 735; Lie and Tvette, *Stiftelser* (1923), 70-72.

⁶⁰ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1858), vol. 2, 10-21.

⁶¹ Bøhmer, *Katalog Stiftelser* (1980), 135.

⁶² Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1858), vol. 1, 495.

⁶³ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1858), vol. 1, 543; vol. 2, 80.

⁶⁴ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1858), vol. 2, 298, 302-303, 313.

⁶⁵ *Liv og død på Hospitalet*, (1999).

workhouses and other institutions. In the Netherlands, it has been found that middle class people were the most active in giving alms.⁶⁶

Institutions for the poor depended on private means, and some private financing of social institutions was more or less compulsory. In some cities, taxes had to be used to finance the necessary social care.⁶⁷ The alms boxes in churches and other places were important, but never provided enough to cover the needs of these institutions. In addition, books were usually carried around, and people were called upon to put down their name for a certain sum of money. In contrast to the alms boxes, where the amount of money given was not very visible, the amounts entered in the alms books was official. In this way, it was possible to see who was generous and who was not. For instance, according to the alms books, Thomas Angell and his brother each contributed 40 riksdalers every year from 1733 until their deaths. In 1750, their contributions constituted more than 10 % of the total collected money through the alms books in Trondheim.⁶⁸

The amounts collected each year through the books were meant to cover current needs, while larger donations were fundamental for extra investments or new institutions. The motives for giving this kind of larger, voluntary donations were diverse.⁶⁹

One motive, which was important in the Catholic era, was to ensure the donor's position in the afterlife. While the Lutheran religion did not acknowledge this motive, private persons might still think this was possible, as is discussed as a motive for Dutch givers.⁷⁰ Donations given to churches could be combined with a duty for the priest to pray for the donor. For a Christian, it was a moral duty to give alms to the needy, although giving alms would also show to the world that the donor was a respectable Christian. In the early modern period, this continued to be a motive. In accordance with the pietistic interests that were strong in Norway during the first half of the 18th century, the interest in giving donations to

⁶⁶ McCants, *Civic Charity* (1997), 8-10, 22-23. Her argument is on the one hand, that the top elite were not interested in charity. There was almost no nobility in Norway, but a small group of persons of rank can be compared to the Dutch elite. However, they are too few, to be studied as a group for this purpose, but they did not entirely avoid charity. On the other hand, McCants' argument is that the lower classes did not participate in charity. Meerkeerk (2012) agrees that the middling groups of society were more active in giving to institutions, but that this may not hold true when the smaller donations are included. In studying charitable collections through almsboxes and door-to-door collections, Teeuwen (2012) argues that a large majority of the population contributed to such collections. That would have been the case in Norway as well, but the sums were most often quite moderate.

⁶⁷ Fossen, *Borgerskapets by* (1979), 791-792. Nissen, *Thomas Angell's stiftelser* (1967), 101; Bull and Rian, *Magistratsarkiv* (1998), 33.

⁶⁸ Bull, *Thomas Angell* (1992), 252. The collection of smaller donations is discussed in Teeuwen (2012), Collections for the poor.

⁶⁹ Kidd, 'Philantropy' (1996) reviews some of the theories concerning this, and concludes that "(c)haritable giving may have less to do with the wants of the needy than with the needs of the donor...".

⁷⁰ Leeuwen, 'Giving' (2012).

poorhouses increased.⁷¹ The Christian duty to give alms was supplemented by an interest in giving the poor religious knowledge. The funds for a teacher, the salary for a clergyman or a room to use for preaching were often part of donations. Having pity for the needy was also an obvious possible motive, though this was seldom clearly mentioned.

Giving alms was also a tradition. Several of the examples cited above were gifts from members of the Angell family, and there seems to have been a tradition for giving such donations within this family.⁷² Many of the merchants in Trondheim originated in or near Flensburg and maintained their relationships with family there, and the German tradition was strong in Bergen as well. The tradition for giving donations to the poor or other charitable purposes seems to have been strong in Flensburg, and Norwegians could draw inspiration from abroad in several ways.⁷³ For instance, Thomas Angell is known to have been familiar with the institutions in Halle through Francke's publications, while the reforms in Hamburg in the 1780s were also certainly known in Norwegian cities.⁷⁴

Other motivations were added to the motive of Christian duty. From the donations in the 18th century, it is possible to read out different motives, including that of personal vanity. Consumption increased during that period, and luxury was one way of making oneself stand out. However, luxury was considered by many to be morally questionable, and alms could be another way of demonstrating not only one's wealth, but also a type of moral superiority – a morally acceptable version of conspicuous consumption.⁷⁵ Many institutions were named after the person donating the capital to found the institutions, e.g., one of the poorhouses established in Christiania in the 1730s, "Peder Michelsen's enkestue", was named after the late wheelwright Peder Michelsen.⁷⁶ Donors usually expressly wished the institutions, or the gifts, to carry their name. Thomas Angell stated this in his testament: "This bequest I ask should forever carry my name, so that it is called Thomas Angell's gift...". When adding new details regarding the use of his money, he was specific in stating that the houses built for his legacy should also carry his name.⁷⁷ In Bergen, Sander Kaae bequeathed a large sum to the establishment of a poorhouse with his name, and when Dankert Krohn added a new donation to the same house some years later, his wish was that the institution should now be named

⁷¹ Bull, *Handelshus* (1998), 269.

⁷² Bull, *Thomas Angell* (1992), 251-252.

⁷³ *Flensburg*, (1966), 104.

⁷⁴ Bull, *Thomas Angell* (1992), 247-248.

⁷⁵ Mordt, 'Luksus' (2010); Bull, *Handelshus* (1998), 271.

⁷⁶ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1858), vol. 1, 555.

⁷⁷ Nissen, *Thomas Angell's stiftelser* (1967), 32, 39, 45.

after both of them.⁷⁸ Smaller donations could also be accompanied by the same wish. The shipmaster Chr. Bindrup in Christiania left donations to several charitable purposes in 1802, the most generous to the Hospital, with the clause that “one member of the Hospital should for ever be called Bindrup’s member...”.⁷⁹

In addition to the desire that the gift or institution be named after the giver, another reason to give large donations would be a lack of children to carry the name of the donor after him/her. Thomas Angell was unmarried and childless, as was headmaster Søren Peter Kleist, and many testaments begin by stating that the donor and his wife were without children.⁸⁰ The wish to be remembered is also apparent in the instructions of many testaments to use some of the money to remember the testator in some way, for instance by making an epitaph in the church.⁸¹ The motive of making a memory is discussed in the same way with regard to Dutch almshouse founders as well.⁸²

Even if large sums were given to charitable foundations, they were very often combined with the favouring of relatives. Donations were given to poorhouses, hospitals, widows’ houses and orphanages on the condition that specially named persons were to be given priority. Giving funds to such institutions was a means to provide for sisters, cousins or servants in their old age. Where no specific names were mentioned, unspecified relatives or servants could be given preference, as Thomas Angell did in his testament. In the smaller house with his name, relatives or former servants of his or his parents were given preference, and in the larger house, relatives were given preference.⁸³ This generated extensive research into family history for more than a century to come.⁸⁴ The parson’s widow Anna Hammond accompanied her gift to St. Jørgenshus in Trondheim with the hope that relatives would be given preference. Bernt Gundersen’s widow’s gift to Stranges poorhouse in Bergen depended upon her niece receiving a place there, and several other gifts in Bergen presupposed a preference for relatives.⁸⁵ Many of the favoured persons in testaments were to be given the interest of specified sums for their lifetimes, the donations to the institutions being postponed

⁷⁸ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 1, 588.

⁷⁹ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 2, 259.

⁸⁰ E.g. Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 2, 155, 190, 208, 235.

⁸¹ E.g. William Walcker’s testament for foundation of a workhouse in Fredrikshald 1765 (Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 1, 543).

⁸² Looijesteijn, ‘Funding’ (2012).

⁸³ Nissen, *Thomas Angell’s stiftelser* (1967), 38, 43.

⁸⁴ Nissen, *Thomas Angell’s stiftelser* (1967), 160-161. In the regional state archives of Trondheim, several large handwritten volumes of genealogical tables written by the director of Thomas Angell’s foundation in the late nineteenth century are preserved: SAT, Horneman’s collections.

⁸⁵ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 1, 542, 566, 588, vol. 2, 6

until the time of their death.⁸⁶ This preference for relatives is also a motive that is recognised in the Dutch literature.⁸⁷

Early capitalist society had strong elements of paternalistic ideology, making the master responsible for his subjects' destiny.⁸⁸ As noted above, some donors wanted to give preference to their former servants.⁸⁹ Some of them, however, were in charge of larger enterprises such as sawmills, iron works or copper works. The count of Larvik, who in 1762 confirmed and extended his parents' donations, specifically mentioned the workers at his iron work and sawmill as beneficiaries.⁹⁰ In the same way, the director at the Røros copper mines created a legacy favouring the inhabitants of Røros, with nearly all of them connected to this industrial enterprise.⁹¹

Some institutions demanded an entrance fee, thereby excluding the most destitute paupers. To give more than demanded could be a route to a guaranteed place, as in the case of the widow Anna Maria Blakstad, who paid 300 riksdalers to the Hospital, and promised her estate to the Hospital when she died.⁹² However, that the estate – or what was left after paupers – should become the property of the institution after their deaths was a matter of course and instituted by law.⁹³ Setting up a new institution was also a way to be able to decide who should profit. When several citizens in Christiania pooled to found an orphanage, each of them were granted the right to propose which children should be admitted (according to the size of the gift, and provided that the gift was at least 500 riksdalers).⁹⁴ One reason for Bernt Anker and Mathia Collett to found their own orphanage was probably that they wanted to control who was to be admitted, as well as how the children should be brought up.⁹⁵ Several donors reserved the right to decide how the money should be used during their lifetimes, as well as who should benefit.⁹⁶

⁸⁶ E.g., Jacob Taaning's gift to the widows' poorhouse in Bergen, Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol 2, 155; Lars Busch's gift in Trondheim, vol. 1, 484; Kleist's foundation, vol. 1, 735; Hans Nissen's foundation, vol. 2, 10.

⁸⁷ Looijesteijn, 'Funding' (2012).

⁸⁸ Bull, *Handelshus* (1998), 262-268.

⁸⁹ Jütte (1996), 93, notes an increasing tendency among rich people to favour servants in bequests. This motive is also discussed in Looijesteijn (2012).

⁹⁰ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 1, 495.

⁹¹ Peder Hiort's testament 1788, Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 2, 37; SAT, private archive 211 Røros kobberverk, klasse 33 Hiorts stiftelse; SAT, private archive 435 Hiorts stiftelse.

⁹² Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 2, 65.

⁹³ Forordning om arv etter hospitals- eller almisselemmer 1749, 5th December, in Schmidt, *Forordninger* (1851), vol. 1, 534. That the means left after paupers should fall back to the poor relief is also prescribed by the poor laws for the dioceses of Bergen (Aug 29, 1755), Kristiansand (May 5, 1786), and Trondheim (April 3, 1789), as well as in several single statutes.

⁹⁴ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 1, 779.

⁹⁵ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 2, 68.

⁹⁶ Nicolaysen, *Norske stiftelser* (1958), vol. 1, 420, 580.

The same goals as those that motivated alms to poorhouses were also behind the donations given for other purposes. Many people gave donations to the church, or they gave money to schools or to establish work houses. Giving to almshouses was not the only way rich people could spend their money and demonstrate their piety and conscience in society, but part of a broader picture in a changing society.

5. The result: Social institutions in Trondheim around the turn of the century 1800

Poorhouses, hospitals, widows' houses, workhouses and orphanages provide a broad and manifold picture of the system of social care in the cities of Norway, and they were not all meant for the same clientele, as the statutes often make clear. If we use the census held in 1801 to analyse the institutions in Trondheim, it is possible to obtain a picture of the outcome. The social variation is confirmed, as well as the predominance of women as constituting the main proportion of the inmates in the houses.⁹⁷

In 1801, the poorhouse housed 74 inmates, 61 of them being women and 13 men. The inmates were living in four rooms, each with one attendant to look after them. These four attendants were women and quite old. In the adjoining small Angell's house lived 18 inmates, all women, and to help them, there were two women and two men. Only one of the widows in the poorhouse had her late husband's name attached to her name. In contrast, the same was true of all of the widows in the small Angell's house, which was important to show their status. More than half the inmates in the Angell's house had a family name (like Munck or Rosholt), while only seven of the 74 inmates in the poorhouse had a family name; the others were designated by a patronymic (such as Olsdatter or Johnsdatter). These two adjoining institutions obviously housed different clientele. While the attendants in the poorhouse were few, and were probably more watching over the inmates than looking after them, the attendants in the Angell's house were probably more like servants.⁹⁸

In the bigger Angell's house, which was called the Angell's Convent, there were 15 "members of the house" in 1801, and all of them were paid a monthly allowance from Angell's foundation. In addition, three women had a free room, and were living off a widow's pension. Two of the members had a daughter living with them. To help these 18 women (and the two daughters), there was a prioress in charge of the house, assisted by six maid servants and one male servant. The 18 women all had family names (one "Angel"), with most of them coming from well-known merchant or civil servant families. All were

⁹⁷ 1801 census for Trondheim. Digitalized version at <http://www.digitalarkivet.no>.

⁹⁸ [http://www.digitalarkivet.no/cgi-](http://www.digitalarkivet.no/cgi-win/webcens.exe?slag=visbase&sidenr=3&filnamn=f18011601&gardpostnr=144&merk=144#ovre)

[win/webcens.exe?slag=visbase&sidenr=3&filnamn=f18011601&gardpostnr=144&merk=144#ovre](http://www.digitalarkivet.no/cgi-win/webcens.exe?slag=visbase&sidenr=3&filnamn=f18011601&gardpostnr=144&merk=144#ovre)

characterised as “madam” or “jomfru” (maiden), which points to their rank in the upper estates.⁹⁹

St. Jørgen’s House seems to be socially positioned somewhere between the two Angell houses. In 1801, there were 17 inmates, who were looked after by two maid servants. All but two of the inmates had family names (but, strangely enough, first names are given only for a few of them), all were characterised as “madam” or “jomfru” and all were living from pension and charity.¹⁰⁰

In 1801, the Hospital housed 63 persons in the section for “real members”, with 50 women and 13 men, and three of the women were attendants. Thirty-eight persons only had free housing, including 31 women and seven men. There was also a section for the incurable, which housed six patients (four men and two women), and one female attendant. The Hospital contained a ward for the insane as well, which housed three women and three men, with a married couple living with their two small daughters as attendants.¹⁰¹

The house of correction had 14 inmates at this time, sentenced to between four months to a lifetime in the house. The same building housed a hospital for syphilis patients, with 30 patients at the time served by one waitress and a maid servant.¹⁰² The workhouse, which was built as an extension of the house of correction and had a separate entrance, housed only a female attendant and a female teacher.¹⁰³ Those working there obviously did not live there at this time, but either worked there during the day or took their materials with them to work at home. A report in 1804 indicates that at that time, 52 persons were working in this house, in addition to the 120 working at home in their dwellings.¹⁰⁴ The report does not say whether these 52 persons lived in the workhouse, though they probably only worked there during the day. Even if it was located in the same building as the house of correction (Tukthuset), the new workhouse was clearly separated from it, which was the intention. The number of inmates in the house of correction varied, with the report from 1804 stating that, at the time of the report, there were 27 persons there, most of them imprisoned for begging or small thefts. Yet it also states that some years earlier, the number of inmates was usually only

⁹⁹ <http://www.digitalarkivet.no/cgi-win/webcens.exe?slag=visbase&sidnr=10&filnamn=f18011601&gardpostnr=2&merk=2#ovre>

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.digitalarkivet.no/cgi-win/webcens.exe?slag=visbase&sidnr=17&filnamn=f18011601&gardpostnr=59&merk=59#ovre>

¹⁰¹ <http://www.digitalarkivet.no/cgi-win/webcens.exe?slag=visbase&sidnr=21&filnamn=f18011601&gardpostnr=329&merk=329#ovre>

¹⁰² <http://www.digitalarkivet.no/cgi-win/webcens.exe?slag=visbase&sidnr=28&filnamn=f18011601&gardpostnr=140&merk=140#ovre>

¹⁰³ <http://www.digitalarkivet.no/cgi-win/webcens.exe?slag=visbase&sidnr=29&filnamn=f18011601&gardpostnr=141#nedre>

¹⁰⁴ Pram, *Kopibøker* (1964), 68.

six to eight, whereas during the later years, with crop failure and general poverty, the number of beggars and malefactors increased, and the number of inmates had risen to nearly 70.¹⁰⁵ The boundary between paupers and prisoners was clearly not very distinct.

Due to Thomas Angell's testamentary gift, the economic situation for the charitable institutions in Trondheim was supposed to be better than those in other cities. It was actually so good that the city's authorities used some of the money for other purposes, such as financing a new, large building for the Latin school and constructing a modern waterworks.¹⁰⁶ For them, it was a point that the poor not be given too plentiful resources, which would be bad for their morals. The census shows that they had succeeded in preserving the social distinctions among the poor.

6. Conclusion

The 17th century, the 1730s and 1740s and the final decades of the 18th century saw the establishment of several types of institutions for the poor in Norwegian cities, including poorhouses, widows' houses, orphanages and workhouses, which, along with outdoor relief became part of a system managed by city authorities. To found institutions, private donations, often through testaments, were needed. To run institutions, revenues from donated estates or testamentary gifts were combined with alms given through the alms boxes in church, the city's alms books and, in some cases, taxes.

The development during the 18th century, particularly during the latter half of the century, reveals some characteristic features. The different institutions were not only meant for different age groups, but also for different social groups. Donations were clearly aimed at safeguarding the social position of special groups in the city, that is, those persons who had been respected members of the community, but who did not have enough means to provide for themselves in their old age. People who had been doing manual work were supposed to be taken care of by the city's poorhouse, and not by privately founded almshouses. Citizens with burgher rights in the city by virtue of their craft or commerce were eagerly defending their position against the non-skilled workers, which was something that also held true when they fell out of their trade. As paupers with a more prosperous past, they were still eager to maintain their rank in society. Within this development, the aim to protect the existing social structure and prevent respectable bourgeois people from falling into destitution was evident. Private gifts supplemented the public poorhouses to help secure this aim.

¹⁰⁵ Pram, *Kopibøker* (1964), 69.

¹⁰⁶ Supphellen, *Innvandrerne* by (1997), 345-347.

The same types of institutions that were established in Norwegian cities during the early modern period, the types of donations financing these and the motives of those who gave such donations can be traced in other European countries as well. Particularly in the 18th century, when social differences were more evident than before, solutions for caring for different groups of poor people were sought. Burghers and civil servants in Norway had close ties with Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, and learned from how social care was organised in those places.

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