Social relations in Bremnes, Norway, fall into three categories: relatively stable formal organizations serving many different purposes, unstable associations engaged in fishing, and interpersonal links that combine to form a social network and on which perceptions of class are based. In fishing situations, orders are given and obeyed; in the other social settings, consensus decisions are reached obliquely and tentatively.

When I returned to Manchester, England, I used the term in the first paper I wrote on my research. Then I moved to the London School of Economics and found that Elizabeth Bott was grappling with somewhat the same pattern of relations in her work on married couples. Neither her findings nor mine attracted much attention at the time. Other inquiries with the social network as their central analytical tool followed, notably those inspired by Clyde Mitchell. These made a great impact on micro-sociology, and Bott’s book and my paper came back into currency. There is now a flourishing specialty of network analysis that has its own journal, Social Networks; a professional organization, the International Network for Social Network Analysis; and introductory textbooks.

My career led me away from Norway and network analysis. I became interested in the sociology of knowledge and, in particular, in the development of specialties in social science. I’ve tried to keep in touch with network analysts if only as an outsider. I’ve even been rash enough to tell them what they look like from the outside.

My paper deals not only with social networks in Norway but also with processes of decision-making. All the instances of citation that I’ve seen invoke only my comments on networks. I still think that what one might call the “Duke of Plaza Toro” mode of leadership I observed in some Norwegian contexts merits further analysis, but perhaps I shall have to write another paper to prove my point.