

Self-doubt in a perfect land?

The death of Benjamin Hermansen and the Norwegian

Parliamentary debates on racism,

1997 – 2005.

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UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

Spring semester

23.05.2017

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2017

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Word count: 24891

<http://www.duo.uio.no>

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

Abstract

The murder of Benjamin Hermansen in 2001 has been *regarded* as an event that changed how Norwegians understood and debated racism. However there has been little research as to what changes it caused, if any at all. This thesis accounts for the way the murder altered how Norwegian parliamentarians understood and debated the phenomenon of racism. Using discourse analysis as a methodological framework, the thesis identifies how racism was understood, legitimised, justified and debated before and after the death of Benjamin Hermansen in 2001. Analysing both the short-term (2001) and long-term (2002-2005) effects of the murder, the thesis will suggest that while the parliamentarians were able to more easily identify the threat of biological racism, they failed to address racism in a holistic manner. The issues of cultural racism and micro aggressions were deemed too divisive to discuss in a parliamentary arena and were therefore not sufficiently broached. These issues could only be discussed within a moral framework and evaded a functional political response.

Acknowledgements

Despite of what one may think, this thesis did not write itself. Although I wrote it in the literary sense, there are a lot of people who deserve big hugs. To my fellow classmates in PECOS; thanks for all the fun board game nights, beer drinking and pizza eating and all the long (un) productive hours in the reading room. Dear James, you are probably the most patient guy I know; thanks for keeping me (relatively) sane and for providing me with food, support in addition to proofreading my entire thesis. Julie and Thea, you guys deserve a bottle of wine and a huge bag of Cheese Doodles for all the support, hugs and reality checks throughout this period. Line, the only one I know who would bother to spend so many hours on the phone listening to my stress and desperation – a big and much deserved hug is sent by express mail. An enormous hug is sent to my much deserving Dad. The man who has patiently read through all of my master thesis-related ramblings and who considered it as his fatherly duty to help me get rid of all the Norwegian-English I have produced during the last 9 months. Last, but not least I extend my gratitude towards my supervisor Elisabetta Wolff who guided, pushed and motivated me to work through the tougher periods of this master process.

To the rest of my friends, who are not mentioned by name – thanks for not forgetting me even though I went into social hiding while writing this master thesis.

Silje Vestnes Greger

Oslo, 23rd of April 2017

Abbreviations and English names

EU – European Union

KRL – Christianity, Religion and Philosophy studies

MP – Member of Parliament

OED – Oxford English Dictionary

SMED – Senter for Etnisk Diskriminering /Centre for Ethical Discrimination

SSB – Statistisk Sentral Byrå/ Statistics Norway

St.meld – White paper

UNHRC – United Nation Human Rights Council

Arbeiderpartiet (A) – The Labour Party

Folkebevegelsen imot innvandring - People's movement against immigration

Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs - The Freedom Party of Austria

Fremskrittspartiet (FrP) – The Progress Party

Høyre (H) – The Conservative Party

Justis og Beredskapsdepartementet - Ministry of Justice and Public Security

Kommunal og Arbeidsdepartementet – Ministry of Local Government and Labour

Kommunal og regionaldepartementet - Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

Kristlig Folkeparti (KrF) – The Christian Democratic Party

Kystpartiet (KP) – The Coastal Party

Norsk Folkehjelp – Norwegian People's Aid

Norsk Front – The Norwegian Front

Norske Idrettsutøveres Sentralorganisasjon - Norwegian Players' Association

Regjeringen – The Government

Senterpartiet (SP) – The Norwegian Centre Party

Sosialistisk Venstreparti (SV) – The Socialistic Left Party

Venstre (V) – The Liberal Party

Österreichische Volkspartei – The Austrian People's Party

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Chapter I - Introduction

1.1. Starting point

On 26th January 2001, a 15-year-old teenager, Benjamin Hermansen was stabbed to death with a knife.¹ The attack took place in Holmlia, an area of Oslo well known for its multiracial and multi-ethnic demography. Born to a Ghanaian father and Norwegian mother, Hermansen was a Norwegian national who has resided the majority of his life within Norway. The murder was perpetrated by two members of the violent neo-Nazi group *Boot Boys* and quickly declared by the police to be racially motivated.² On the night of the murder, Hermansen and his friend were waiting outside a shopping mall when a car with two men and a woman stopped in front of them. Panicked, the two boys ran off in different directions. The woman stayed behind in the car while the two men ran after Hermansen. Having stumbled over a fence, the two men caught up with Hermansen and proceeded to stab him repeatedly in the arms, chest and back. The stabbing resulted in Hermansen bleeding to death within 20 minutes. He was declared dead upon arrival by the police officers who attended the scene of the crime.³ The two murderers were both convicted for the murder and were found to be in breach of the Penal Code paragraph 185, more commonly known as the Racism Paragraph.⁴

The murder received a significant reaction from several groups within Norwegian society and 6 days after the murder, 40 000 people gathered in Oslo's city centre to protest against racism, discrimination and hate crimes.⁵ The Norwegian media described the incident as 'shameful, shocking and outrageous'.⁶ The well-known Norwegian Social Anthropologist, Marianne Gullestad claimed that the murder indicated 'a loss of the Norwegian innocence'.⁷

¹ Henceforth, Benjamin Hermansen will be referred to as Hermansen. This choice is not only due to a

² *Boot Boys*, a self-claimed neo-Nazi group located at Bøler in the eastern part of Oslo. 50 people belonged to the group at the most. It was known to be one of the most extreme right-groups in Norway throughout the 1990s.

³ Borgarting Lagmannsrett. Conviction of 4th of December 2002 in criminal case 02-00850 M/01 («Holmlia-murder») against Jahr and Kvisler

⁴ Den norske straffeloven. (1902)13th chapter of "*Forbrydelser mod den almindelige Orden og Fred* (Paragraph 135a)

⁵ Røkke, Turid. (03.12.2001) Holmlia-rettssaken: ti måneder etter fakkeltøget. *NRK* Available from: https://www.nrk.no/urix/holmlia-rettssaken_-ti-maneder-etter-fakkeltøget-1.461235 (last accessed 29.03.17)

⁶ Eriksen, Thomas Hylland (2006) Diversity versus Difference: Neo-liberalism in the Minority Debate. In *The making and unmaking of Differences*, edited by Richard Rottenberg, Burkhard Schnepel and Shingo Shimada, 13-27. London: Transaction Publishers: 15

⁷ Gullestad, Marianne (2002a) *Det norske sett med nye øyne*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget: 37
Translation own

Jens Stoltenberg, the Prime Minister stated that he saw this as a ‘watershed’ in the Norwegian understanding of racism.⁸ Despite the very public protestations against Hermansen’s murder the questions remains as to how such a violent act changed the debate and understanding of racism within Norwegian society. Turning the focus towards the political fraction of the society, this thesis will answer the following research question; *Did the murder of Benjamin Hermansen change the way racism was debated and understood in the Norwegian Parliament?* I will answer this research question through an analysis of the parliamentary debates between 1997 and 2005. Using discourse analysis as a methodological framework I will identify the short-term and long-term changes caused by the murder of Hermansen in the way the parliamentarians debated, understood, identified and justified the concept and phenomena racism.

1.1.2. Why Benjamin Hermansen?

The murder of Benjamin Hermansen was not the first racially motivated murder on Norwegian soil, neither was the first time the Norwegian state would have to confront the issue of racism. As shall be elaborated upon, there is a divergent understanding of what impact the murder had, if it had an impact at all. Regardless of this disagreement, there are two crucial features to the case which I suggest give it a *watershed* status within the history of Norwegian’s relationship to racism. Firstly, the murder itself was a clear attack solely driven by racial ideology.⁹ Secondly, due to the racial motivation of the murder, it received substantial coverage from both national and international media outlets. Consequently, it created a debate around the issue of racism in a public and parliamentary setting.

The international newspaper *the New York Times* wrote;

In the perfect land, could there be self-doubt? The sad story and violent death of Benjamin Hermansen suggest that there could.¹⁰

⁸ Stoltenberg, Jens (26.01.2011) *Tale til minne om Benjamin ansen*. Available from: <http://virksommeord.uib.no/taler?id=4585> (last accessed 29.03.17) Translation own

⁹ Hylland Eriksen. (2006): 15-16/ Bangstad, Sindre and Cora Døving. (2015) *Hva er rasisme*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget: 9

¹⁰ Cowell, Alan. (03.02.2002) After Black Teenager Is Slain, Norway Peers Into a Mirror. *The New York Times*. Available from; <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/03/world/after-black-teenager-is-slain-norway-peers-into-a-mirror.html> (Last accessed 29.03.17)

The New York Times quoted the director of the *US Center Against Racism*, Nadeem Butt with regards to how he thought the murder affected the Norwegian society:

People realized that Norway is not the country they thought. Most thought racism is not a problem. That has changed quite radically. People do understand now that this is a problem.¹¹

While Butt was ill-equipped to comment upon the particular implications Hermansen's murder had within Norwegian society, he did represent an international understanding of the attack. This was an understanding of a paradigmatic shift as to *how* racism was understood within the Norwegian state. The murder forced the Norwegian state to look into a mirror and realise that the predominant understanding of Norwegian society as one without racism, did not exist. However, no matter how much focus the murder has received, it does *not* mean that it created a change in how racism was debated and understood. As the Norwegian Parliament, Stortinget is the Norwegian peoples instrument to exercise legislative power, I saw it as a highly relevant arena to research whether or not the murder of Hermansen did contribute to a change in the way racism was debated and understood.

1.2. Existing theory

In the following section, I will account for the previous research that has been conducted within the field of racism and Norwegian politics and its contribution to this thesis. I have chosen to use the existing theory as guidelines and assistance as this thesis is of an interpretive character. In the end of this section, I will explain where there is a gap within the field, a gap this thesis and its research question will fill.

Anniken Hagelund is a Norwegian sociologist who has researched how the word 'racism' has been used within parliamentary immigration debates between 1970 and 2004. Her research accounted for the terms 'racist' and 'racism' as uncomfortable for the parliamentarians to use in debates. Because of this, the terms were often carefully avoided in a large proportion of parliamentary debates. Hagelund's research accounted for a 'two-folded tendency' in the understanding of and usage of the racism concept.¹² This tendency will be useful throughout

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Hagelund, Anniken (2004) Anstendighetens utside – rasisme i norsk innvandringsdiskurs in *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning*. 45(1): 3

this thesis. Firstly it acknowledges that Norwegian politicians regarded racism as an issue that required addressing. Secondly her study illustrated the term racism was a difficult word to use as it carried a lot of moral weight.¹³ The result was that the parliamentarians rarely used the word to identify racially motivated events or expressions within the Norwegian parliament. This tendency will be further explored in my research.

Another important contributor to this field has been the critical analysis performed by Gullestad in her book *Det norske sett med nye øyne* and her article 'Om å være både farget og norsk'.¹⁴ In her research Gullestad focused on the attitudes and language in the immigration debate at the public stage. Her work accounted for the viewpoint of politicians, academics and journalists. Through placing her focus on 'us' (the Norwegians) as opposed to the 'other' (the immigrants) her study elucidates several useful strands of thought that have subsequently contributed to this thesis. Gullestad claimed that the Norwegians were often highly prejudiced without the ability to self-reflect about what their own values implicated.¹⁵ She claimed that this was especially visible in the Hermansen case. 40 000 people showed up at Youngstorget to demonstrate against the act of racism he was a victim of. However, a large number of the same people protesting would throughout the upcoming years refuse 'Ali' a job interview, solely based on the fact that he did not have a Norwegian name.¹⁶ One of her main conclusions was that Norwegians were able to protest against and reflect upon extreme versions of racism performed by 'their own', such as the murder of Hermansen, yet were unable to mobilise and protest against the 'milder' forms of racism, such as micro aggressions.¹⁷

Mette Andersson, a Norwegian sociologist has also researched the understanding of the term racism in the Norwegian public debate. She argued that racism had become a question of being a part of the community rather about the biological aspect of race.¹⁸ In connection to the Holmlia case she understood it as the last proof of the 'lost innocence of the Norwegian

¹³ Hagelund. (2004):3

¹⁴ Gullestad. (2002a) / Gullestad, Marianne (2002b) Om å være både farget og norsk. In *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift*.19 (2)

¹⁵ Gullestad. (2002a): 165

¹⁶ Gullestad. (2002a): 37

¹⁷ Micro aggressions is a less structuralised type of racism that can be detected in language, attitudes and ect. A more thorough explanation will be accounted for in Chapter II.

¹⁸ Andersson, Mette. (15.06.04) Bad guys and good guys. *NRK* Available from: <https://www.nrk.no/kultur/bad-guys-og-good-guys-1.1656214> (Last accessed 30.03.17)

state'.¹⁹ Her understanding of why the murder garnered so much attention, was that Benjamin Hermansen was regarded to be 'one of us' while the neo-Nazis who killed him were not a part of 'our community'.²⁰ Her thoughts and reflections regarding the development of the term racism have been important contributions in the analysis of the parliamentary debates.

Thomas Hylland Eriksen is a Norwegian social anthropologist who specialises in researching ethnicity, nationalism and globalisation as well as the interconnectedness of these three subjects. Hylland Eriksen's contribution to this thesis has mainly been in the process of understanding the historical context of these themes up until 1997. He believed that the Norwegian population had increasingly become 'more racist in the restricted sense of the word'.²¹ This implies that Norwegians increasingly seemed to regard *culture* rather than the previous racial-and ethnical aspect of racism as the main incompatible difference in a globalised society. He claimed that the public reaction in the aftermath of the Holmlia case was proof that 'blackness was no longer a marker of undesirable differences'.²²

Gullestad, Andersson and Hylland Eriksen all draw different inferences from the Hermansen case. While they all agree on his death as being an influential event both in the public and political debates about racism, their conclusions regarding its wider impact differ. Hagelund who looked into the debates in the parliament with regards to racism did not mention the case of Hermansen. Does this mean that Hermansen did not create a change in the debate? Or was this change not apparent in the immigration debate, which was Hagelund's main focus? Was her researched focused on the larger picture of the debate as she researched a much longer time span? Was she therefore unable to see the changes over a shorter time span? Trying to understand what impact Hermansen really did have on the parliamentary debate is the aim of this thesis. I will account for a shorter parliamentary period than Hagelund, and will therefore be able to go through the debates more thoroughly. I did not centre myself around one type of parliamentary debate but looked at *all* the debates in the Parliament. I will look at the changes in the parliamentary debates as a whole, regarding the understanding, justification and rationalisation of racism before and after the murder.

¹⁹ Andersson. (2004) Translation own

²⁰ Andersson. (2004)

²¹ Hylland Eriksen. (2006): 17

²² Hylland Eriksen. (2006): 15-16

1.3. Delimitation

1.3.1. Topic

The topic of this thesis is if and how the understanding and the way of debating racism changed within the Norwegian Parliament as a reaction to the murder of Hermansen. This means that the focus of this thesis is to understand and identify how racism was debated and understood by the parliamentarians prior to 26. January 2001 and if it changed in the period after this.

As my scope is the debate in the Norwegian Parliament, I will not be able to account for the changes with regards to understanding racism in the public debate. It is also important to be aware that my focus has been the debates in the parliament, and while debates may occur between politicians outside the debating chamber they will not be accounted for. The debates in the Norwegian parliament are driven by consensus. Consensus is occasionally reached behind closed doors in unofficial debates between parliamentarians. This thesis will not account for these unofficial debates. I will only use the official parliamentary proceedings to answer the research question of this thesis.

During the period under scrutiny many high-profile, international events occurred. While these may have shaped the parliamentary debate, the purpose of this thesis is to privilege the statements of those within parliament. I have let the debates in the parliament guide me as to what the parliamentarians understood as the important events, this applies to events within both the national and international arena.

1.3.2. Time

This thesis will account for two periods within the Norwegian Parliament. The point of departure is October 1997. The final debate that I will analyse in this thesis was held in September 2005. The Parliamentary debates between October 1997 and early January 2001 will be analysed to get an overview of the dominating trends within the debates concerning racism before the murder of Hermansen. To account for changes in the debate this thesis will analyse the debates between January 2001 and December 2001 to be able to account for short-term changes in the debates. Furthermore, this thesis will also analyse the debates between January 2002 and September 2005 to be able to account for the long-term changes in the debates.

1.3.3. Space

As previously mentioned, Norwegian Parliament will be the arena that this thesis is focusing on. In the process of writing this thesis I have looked through all the public debate proceedings between October 1997 and September 2005, searching for certain concepts and themes. In Chapter II, I will further account for the Norwegian parliament as an arena of analysis, the concepts and themes that have been searched for and the types of debates that will be analysed in this thesis. As this is an analysis of the Norwegian Parliament it is important to note that a parliamentary election changes the political constellation in the Parliament as an election changes how many representatives a political party has. This change in constellation accounts for a changing tone and nature of the debates. When a political party is in power, its members tend to be more careful in the way it debates, both with regards to what they are talking about and the rhetoric they use. Simultaneously, a political party in opposition can be more outspoken and direct in its claims and in its rhetoric.

1.4. Sources

The primary sources in this thesis are the proceedings from the Parliament. The parliamentary proceedings are accessible for everyone in the Parliament's digital archive. In my pursuit to answer the research question I have looked through all the debates in the parliament between 1997 and 2005. This accounts for several different types of parliamentary debates; the finance debate, the debates after the King's opening speech, question hours, debates regarding reports and statements of the government as well as interpellation debates.²³ Each and every one of these types of debates are guided by a set formula, goal and agenda that varies between the different types of debates. The debates are executed in a special institutionalised context that I will elaborate on in Chapter II.²⁴

The Norwegian Parliament is an arena where all elected parties have a voice. Parties promote their views, present ideas and explain their understanding of racism. The proceedings are only accessible in written form. This makes it impossible for me to include an understanding of rhetoric in this thesis, as that is highly dependent on a wider evaluation of a speaker's

²³ Stortinget. (30.11.2016). *Politisk Arena*. Available from <https://www.stortinget.no/no/Stortinget-og-demokratiet/Arbeidet/Moter-og-vedtak/> (Last accessed 05.04.17) Translation own

²⁴ Hagelund. (2004): 5

voice, movements and audience reaction. The thesis is therefore focusing on the language used by the parliamentarians.

The parliamentary proceedings gave me an indication as to which events influenced the debates. To gain a more thorough knowledge of these events, I have accessed numerous media sources. The coverage of the debates by newspapers and the Norwegian state owned media company *NRK* have allowed me not only to understand events within context but also to highlight the multiple interpretations that correspond to a singular event. I will use the existing research accounted for earlier in this chapter as tools of guidance throughout the upcoming analysis in Chapter IV and V.

Chapter II - Method and definitions

In this chapter, I will account for three aspects of the thesis. Firstly, the method used to analyse the data. To be able to answer my research question, I have decided to use discourse analysis as a methodological framework. Throughout the first section of this chapter, I will account for discourse analysis as a method, explain my reasoning for selecting discourse analysis and elaborate on how I performed the analysis. Secondly, I will account for the arena where the data was collected. I will elaborate on what type of debates that take place within the Parliament, as well as provide an outline as to what norms and regulations that dominates the arena. Finally, I will account for the contextualised concepts in this thesis.

2.1 Discourse analysis

2.1.1. What is a discourse and discourse analysis?

A discourse, explained by Kevin Dunn and Iver Neumann ‘entails the representational practices through which meanings are generated’.²⁵ The focus on discourse stems from the belief that knowledge cannot be understood separately from the social realm. Knowledge is therefore a construction of reality. A discourse from this perspective is the understanding of reality; the way an actor sees the world and consequently acts in it. One is not part of only *one* discourse, but several discourses. The world and the understanding of it do not present itself as self-evident to its participants. As a result of this, participants in a community construct an understanding of the world, they assign meanings and values to it in order to make it possible to live within.²⁶ A discourse is a collective worldview that is constantly changed and reproduced by the actors acting within the discourse. A discourse cannot be understood as a static phenomenon, but rather an ever-changing, dynamic understanding of the reality of the world. By performing a discourse analysis, one is aiming to understand *how* the actors understand the world, *what* myriad discourses consist of and how do they *reproduce or change* this understanding. The aim of a political debate, Dunn and Neumann stated, is for the politicians to present ‘the most natural and understandable reality for its audience’.²⁷ A discourse that is shared by the majority of a group is understood as the

²⁵ Dunn, Kevin and Iver Neumann. (2016) *Undertaking discourse analysis for social researchers*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press: 2

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Dunn and Neumann. (2016): 1-2

dominant discourse. The more dominant the worldview is, the more support the politicians receive.

When using this interpretive approach; opinions and the understanding of a situation are considered to be the catalyst for action.²⁸ From this point of view, if one wants to understand the policies created by the government, one has to look at the debate in the parliament as this lays the foundation for opinion making. Within the method of discourse analysis, language plays an essential role, as this is where opinions are created. Language, as the political scientist Michael Shapiro stated, can be understood as a set of signs that are generating certain understandings and objectives about the world.²⁹ This does not mean that language is revealing essential truths about reality. On the contrary, language has to be understood as a product of a social, contextual and dynamic process. It is a series of collective codes and conventions that are given a meaning within a context and therefore endowed with a particular identity.³⁰ The language in itself is carrying a story where the different concepts and explanations are understood differently from one discourse to another and from one context to another.

This divergent understanding of a concept, such as racism, can be a product of a historical period, geographical or social environment as well as a different cultural and intellectual tradition.³¹ The parliamentarians are all trying to convince the Norwegian voters that they are presenting the only sensible reality. It does not mean that the parliamentarians lie or construct a forged reality, they genuinely believe in the reality they are presenting.

2.1.2. Why discourse analysis?

There are two reasons in particular that make discourse analysis the most useful method of analysis in this thesis. Firstly, politicians constantly attempt to create and present the dominant discourse to their voters. This means that they have to adapt to their surroundings and debate what is happening outside the walls of the Parliament. The voter's opinions have a direct impact and influence on the policies and laws in Norway. Secondly, discourse analysis'

²⁸ Bratberg, Øivind (2014) *Tekstanalyse for samfunnsvitere*. Oslo: Cappelen Damm: 32

²⁹ Shapiro, Michael. (1984) *Language and Politics*. New York: New York University Press: 222

³⁰ Hansen, Lene (2006) *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. London: Routledge: 18

³¹ Bergström, Göran and Kristina Borèus (2005) *Textens mening och makt – metodebok i samhällsvetenskaplig text och diskursanalys*. Lund: Studentlitteratur: 183-184

main tool to understand a debate is to analyse its language. I did not have access to videos of the debates only the written proceedings, of the debates therefore written language is the main tool to understand the debate. Without a video it is not possible to analyse the full spectrum of rhetorical means in the debate. However, the proceedings will make it possible to account for how the parliamentarians understood and debated racism. And it will therefore allow me to answer whether or not this changed before and after the murder of Hermansen.

While discourse analysis can be critiqued for its subjectivity, with the recognition of a couple of caveats, such criticisms may be overcome. Deploying this cautionary approach I have taken into account Øivind Bratberg's comments relating to the methodological validity of discourse analysis: 'In order to provide a valid discourse analysis, it is important to account for both the documents analysed and the methodological tools used for the analysis'.³² As Chapter I has already provided an account of what documents I will analyse, the next section will focus on the analytical tools I will deploy throughout the thesis.

2.1.3. Discourse analysis, how?

Due to my research question, I chose to move away from the strict structural and linguistics based approach towards discourse analysis that is most prevalent in the social sciences. This approach tends to see the language in it self as the most influential factor with regards to changes in debates. However, as my research question aims to understand how or if the death of Hermansen constituted a change in the parliamentary debates, I will use a different approach. I will take the same approach to discourse analysis as Margret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter utilised in their research to map *The language of racism* in conversations, newspaper articles and parliamentary debates in New Zealand.³³ This is not to imply that I move away from the role of language or the importance of contextualisation. Instead I will use discourse analysis as a guide and a structural framework instead of a strict structural approach. I will use the method as a framework to help me identify the way Norwegian parliamentarians were arguing, legitimising, justifying and understanding the concept of racism between 1997 and 2005.³⁴ Racism is a concept that contains a strong emphasis on morality and good versus bad values; politics on the other end is a question of contribution

³² Bratberg. (2014): 55 Translation own

³³ Wetherell, Margret and Jonathan Potter. (1992), *Mapping the language of racism*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf

³⁴ Wetherell and Potter. (1992): 2

between the different interests within a society.³⁵ This makes a parliamentary debate a particularly interesting arena to analyse as it provides a high probability of colliding discourses.

Max Edling stated that the primary purpose in analysing political debates was to ‘investigate what the participants said and what they may have meant with their statement’.³⁶ However, one cannot identify meaning in a debate without doing some background research. Contextualisation plays a vital role when trying to understand the meaning behind the concepts and what the language itself implies. What was affecting the debates and what would be necessary to know and understand before one started to read the debates? Edling elaborated on what he understood as the vital background information;

It is necessary to know more than merely the meaning of the words in a vocabulary. We also need to know more about the political and social context and even about the immediate intellectual context in which the writer wrote his text. You need to address which audience the author was addressing, which works, action or phenomena he intended his own writing to answer or comment upon.³⁷

In Wetherell and Potter’s research this was defined as terrain, and this terrain was necessary to outline before one could present an analysis. In this thesis I will account for the terrain in four ways. Firstly, the next section of this chapter will contain information about the arena in which the debate is performed. This accounts for what structures, regulations and norms that are affecting the political, social and intellectual context in which the parliamentarians claimed their statements. Secondly, the last section of this chapter will explain the core concepts as this also provides an important understanding of the linguistic based context of the analysis. Thirdly, Wetherell and Potter emphasised the importance of understanding the historical context of the society and how identity and self-consciousness are constructed. I will therefore present the historical background of the debate within Norwegian society in Chapter III.³⁸ Finally, I will account for the terrain by outlining the social, economic and political events that the parliamentarians mentioned in the debates.

³⁵ Wetherell and Potter. (1992): 3

³⁶ Edling, Max (2000) *A revolution in favour of government. The American Constitution and ideas about state formation, 1787-1788*. Oxford: Oxford University Press:7

³⁷ Edling. (2000): 15

³⁸ Wetherell and Potter. (1992): 18

If establishing the context to the racism debate is the first step, the next step of performing a discourse analysis is using this contextual knowledge to understand and identify the vocabulary that is used to address the concept racism. Göran Bergström and Kristina Boreus stated that using the established context and the debates, one could identify the strategies of legitimising the concept. This would create an understanding of how the concept was debated as well as avoided.³⁹ Bratberg suggests that political arenas are useful arenas for analysing the refraction of different discourses as opinions are produced and reproduced through contradictions and comparisons.⁴⁰ This indicates that the actors' usage of a concept is both partisan, to promote and naturalise one's discourse over another, and also ever-changing as a concept is constantly developing together with the landscape around it. Reinhardt Koselleck claimed that 'concepts needs to be understood as navigational instruments in an analysis' as they do not indicate or record given facts.⁴¹ Rather, the usage of a concept indicates the formation of opinions and consciousness that are affecting the actors' behaviour. In this thesis I will look at the words and concepts in the debate that the parliamentarians use when they debate racism, but also which words they choose to avoid. The terms used or avoided when debating racism are not static. Wetherell and Potter stated that due to the changing word, the terms used to discuss racism are constantly changing. This could be new descriptions of stereotypes, attitudes, prejudice as well as concepts of motives and identities.⁴²

2.2. The Norwegian parliament as an arena

I accounted for the localisation and selection of debates in Chapter I. There is, nevertheless, no guarantee that I will be able to assess all of the debates where racism played a vital part. However, I will cover the most essential, comprehensive and important debates throughout the period and through the analysis be able to identify and detect a pattern in the way racism was understood and debated. When the pattern is accounted for, I will be able to observe if something changed in the way the parliamentarians debated and understood racism.

³⁹ Bergström and Borèus. (2005): 216

⁴⁰ Bratberg. (2014): 29

⁴¹ Koselleck, Reinhart (2002) *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*. Stanford: Stanford University Press: 129

⁴² Wetherell and Potter. (1992): 6-7

Hagelund suggests that Parliamentary debates create a special institutional arena of debating.⁴³ This suggestion is based on the set rules and norms as to how the parliamentarians are allowed to speak, what words they are allowed to use and the amount of time they are allowed to spend on their statement.⁴⁴ Due to the formal nature of the Parliament there is a long list of words that are understood as prohibited. Additionally, parliamentarians are not allowed to insult each other or offend each other by expressions of disapproval. There are also rules as to how long the parliamentarians are allowed to talk that are regulated according to the size of the party and the type of debate.⁴⁵ The President of the Parliament is bound by institutionalised conventions and he or she makes sure that the rules and norms of the Parliament are upheld. The nature of the debates has a formal character where the President is always in control. All contributions to the debate have to be directed towards the President by formal phrases such as ‘Mister/Miss/ Mrs President’ or ‘Honourable President’. Due to the formality of the debates a very specific structure and nature is constructed. This structure and nature differs from ordinary political talks, such as TV debates.⁴⁶ Such formalities of language and the conventions dominating the Parliament do have an impact on the nature of the debates; as a result of this, it is not the arena where one can find the most aggressive debates.⁴⁷ The formal language and rules prohibit the parliamentarians from having an overly accusatory or aggressive style of debate, which one is more likely to experience in a debate on TV or other public platform.

2.3. Contextualising concepts

In the following section of this chapter, I will present the definitions of the concepts; biological and cultural racism, micro aggressions, racial discrimination, xenophobia, ethnicity, nationalism and the Norwegian national identity. All these definition will act as an important prelude to the thesis’ analysis. There are myriad ways of defining the following concepts and there is rarely a unanimous agreement regarding one definition of a concept. Nevertheless, it is necessary to elucidate on the key terms that form the base of this thesis. Most of these terms are disputed; *racism* in particular. However I will not provide the full

⁴³ Hagelund (2004): 5

⁴⁴ Stortinget. (30.11.2016)

⁴⁵ Stortinget. (30.11.2016)

⁴⁶ Atkinson, Max (1984). *Our masters' voices: the language and body language of politics*. London:Methuen : 192-193

⁴⁷ Hagelund. (2004): 8

debate behind the definitions but rather give a contextual understanding of the definitions that I will deploy within the analysis section.

2.3.1. Racism

2.3.1.1. *A disputed concept*

Although the definition of racism is highly disputed, one can agree that racism represents a breach of democratic rights regarding similar opportunities for everyone no matter of what skin colour, ethnicity and origin of nationality one has.⁴⁸ It is the process of defining a situation or event as an act of racism that gives cause for conflict. Racism is a concept that challenges the limits between academia, politics, morality and experience.⁴⁹

Hagelund observes that there are two different understandings of the concept of racism. These understandings are not necessarily connected to the political belief, but a differing of opinions regarding what the concept racism should entail.⁵⁰ One could separate the concept into a wider or narrower understanding of the concept. The sociologist Ottar Brox and the social anthropologist Inger-Lise Lien promote the more narrow understanding of the concept.⁵¹ In their opinion, the wider understanding of racism turned the debates into a championship in moralism and in that way became an inhibitor for a rational discussion.⁵² By defining racism as ‘everything and nothing’ it becomes difficult to use concretely, but also very easy to use accusatorily in a debate. The narrower understanding of racism is therefore limited to a biological and racial based type.

⁴⁸ Rogstad, Jon and Arnfinn Midtbøen (2009) *Rasisme og diskriminering – begreper, kontroverser og nye perspektiver*. Oslo: Forskningsrådet. Available from; <http://www.socialresearch.no/content/download/18936/1486474/file/Rasisme%20og%20diskriminering.pdf> (Last accessed 03.04.17) : 1

⁴⁹ Ibid: 1

⁵⁰ Hagelund. (2004): 9

⁵¹ Brox is a Professor in Sociology, known to have a loud voice in the public debate regarding immigration in the Norwegian state. Brox has defined himself as an ‘immigration realist’ and has debated a lot with regards to what the word racism is doing to the immigration debate. / Lien is a well-known Social Anthropologist and an active voice in the public debate regarding immigration. Her field of research is migration, integration, racism and discrimination.

⁵² Brox, Ottar (1991) *Jeg er ikke rasist, men...* Gyldendal Norsk Forlag. Oslo: 21-23/ Lien, Inger-Lise (1997) *Ordet som stempler djevlene : holdninger blant pakistanere og nordmenn*. Aventura: Oslo: 189

Academics such as Gullestad and the Political Scientist Anders Todal Jenssen use a wider conceptualisation of racism, as it allows the term to grasp nuances within society. They claim that racism must be understood as a concept with several layers, implying that racism does not only exist as one phenomenon but several. The phenomena of racism are regarded as too complex to be defined by the strict biological understanding of the concept.⁵³ The challenge with this understanding is that racism is regarded as so wide that it becomes intangible in its usage. The wider understanding of the concept embraced both the biological and cultural types of racism, in addition to micro aggressions and to some degree racial discrimination. In the following section I will account for all of these different types.

2.3.1.2. Biological racism

The earlier conceptualisations of race were based upon the biological differences between races and it was understood as an ideological conviction that some human races are superior to others. Periods such as the Apartheid in South Africa and the racial segregation in the US are prominent examples of a conceptualisation of racism where the white race sought to dominate the black race. During World War II, the Nazi persecution of the Jews, represents the most extreme form of biological racism known in modern times.⁵⁴

An interesting aspect of biological racism is its implicit connection to the historical past. This historical connection implies that this type of racism is something vicious or evil ‘that has been left behind’.⁵⁵ The biological type of racism is easily linked to evilness and is therefore not compatible with the Norwegian understanding of ‘us’ as a tolerant people. Due to this understanding of biological racism as pure evil, it is unacceptable for the Norwegian society to support the notion that some races are biological superior to others.⁵⁶ This does not mean that biological racism has disappeared completely. The mind-set still exists in Norway; this was proven by the murder of Hermansen.

⁵³ Jenssen, Anders Todal (1994) *Rasisme? Hvilken rasisme? Eller: hvorfor vi ikke finner det vi leter etter*. In *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning*. 35 (3): 345/ Gullestad. (2002a) *Det norske sett med nye øyne*. Universitetsforlaget, Oslo: 37

⁵⁴ Rogstad and Midtbøen. (2009): 2 / Gullestad. (2002a): 17

⁵⁵ Jenssen. (1994): 346 Translation own

⁵⁶ Rogstad and Midtbøen. (2009): 8

2.3.1.3. *Cultural racism*

Amongst academics, such as Gullestad and Todal Jenssen, the concept of racism expanded during the 1990s. Rhetorically, it was no longer considered legitimate for academics and politicians to talk about biological hierarchy. In its place, the debates took a rhetorical turn from biology and got a more cultural focus.⁵⁷ Instead of one race being superior to another, it was argued that different *cultures* were not compatible and this would lead to a clash of cultures. The potential for a cultural conflict is often used as an argument for restrictive immigration policies.⁵⁸

This shift from race to culture is often understood as the transition from biological racism to cultural racism. The similarity between these two types of racism is that there exists a hierarchical belief that some people are worth more than others. The difference is that this is not based on biology; it is not about looking different or similar, rather it is about the culture, traditions and religion being different and therefore incompatible.⁵⁹ According to Rogstad and Midtbøen, it is unclear how closely these two types of are connected.⁶⁰ The fact that it was called cultural *racism* indicates that it is a further development of *biological racism*. If this is correct, cultural racism can be understood as a euphemism of its forbearer, biological racism. In other words cultural racism, as a type of biological racism, is only hidden in a new language where the focus is on culture rather than race. Nevertheless, this is very difficult to prove empirically. Further to this connection, Robert Miles has observed the links between cultural racism and nationalism.⁶¹ He claimed that there is a very fine line between being nationalistic and a cultural racist. In order to determine this, one had to look at the historical context. Park, Solomos and Back claimed that one couldn't make two definitions where the concepts of cultural racism and nationalism were totally separated.⁶² One has to understand how and in which ways social relations obtain a racialised character at different times and different places.

⁵⁷ Gullestad. (2002a): 18 / Jenssen. (1994): 346 /Stolcke, Verena (1995) Talking Culture: New Boundaries, New Rhetorics of Exclusion in Europe. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 36, No. 1, Special Issue: Ethnographic Authority and Cultural Explanation: 15

⁵⁸ Rogstad and Midtbøen. (2009): 8

⁵⁹ Gullestad. (2002a): 149

⁶⁰ Rogstad and Midtbøen. (2009): 8

⁶¹ Miles, Robert and Malcom Brown (2003) *Racism*. London: Routledge: 10

⁶² Park, Robert (2000) The Nature of Race Relations. In *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*. Edited by Back, Les and John Solomos. London: Routledge: 167

2.3.1.4. *Micro aggressions*

Bangstad and Døving suggest that one cannot exceptionalise the phenomenon by translating racism into ideas, attitudes and practices that only can be judged by the legal system.⁶³ Racism can also be understood as a phenomenon in the everyday life. Racism is a concept which covers both awful events, monumental injustice and immense suffering throughout history, although it can also be understood as something less structuralised. The phenomenon does not need to be based within institutions, in the judiciary system or in political debates to be understood as racism. It can also be spotted as an event, an expression or attitudes of a less sensational character.⁶⁴ One example could be to not invite someone for a job interview because his name is Ali and not Anders. In this thesis, this is defined as micro aggressions. Micro aggressions can be both intentional and unintentional. However, it is not based upon the intended action, but rather how it is received. Micro aggressions in the Norwegian society has usually been linked to references to alien types of religion or culture. Although this type of racism is understood to be less of a security threat, it does still have the hierarchical structure where people are put into groups and these groups are placed on a scale where some are perceived to be better than others.⁶⁵ This type of racism is difficult to analyse as it refers to a certain categorisation or practices that establishes a separation between ‘them and us’ or provokes an including or excluding of specific groups.

Although it is a difficult line to draw, it is important to separate micro aggressions from stereotyping and holding prejudice. Jackson defines prejudices as generalisations that are usually, but not always of a negative nature towards a group or individuals of a specific group.⁶⁶ Even though prejudices are acts of marking differences between one group and an individual, it does not need to have the same hierarchical structure as the phenomena micro aggressions has. There is not necessarily *one* group that is superior to *another* group. An example of a prejudice can be the statement ‘all Africans are really good dancers’. It is an obvious generalisation, because not all Africans can dance. Nevertheless it does not say anything about a group being superior in any way. However, generalisations have often been understood as a basis for racist theories and practices throughout history.⁶⁷ As Allport says,

⁶³ Bangstad and Døving. (2015): 9

⁶⁴ Bangstad and Døving. (2015): 10

⁶⁵ Bangstad and Døving. (2015): 12

⁶⁶ Jackson, Lynne (2011) *The psychology of prejudice: from attitudes to social action* Washington: American Psychological Association: 20

⁶⁷ Bangstad and Døving. (2009): 20

‘there is reason to believe, that prejudices exist in all human societies’.⁶⁸ In other words, prejudice is to be found *anywhere*, and is not limited to racist or threatening acts.

2.3.2. Avoiding the racism term

Wetherell and Potter accounted for racism as a word of both linguistic practice as well as the social action of anti-racism.⁶⁹ Hagelund and Gullestad claimed that parliamentarians are very careful using the term racist or racism as it could be understood as an act of naming and blaming the participants of the society or the dominating linguistic and social structures in a society.⁷⁰ The empirical findings throughout this thesis supports Hagelund’s understanding of the term racism as affected by the rhetorical possibilities regarding justification, rationalisation, categorising and blaming.⁷¹ The parliamentarians throughout this period debated racism as an evil phenomenon, however the concept was also debated as a morally heavy concept that was an uncomfortable concept to use in the debates by the parliamentarians.⁷² Based on this understanding of the concept of racism, one can understand why the parliamentarians avoided this process of naming, shaming and blaming their own potential voters. If they had used the concept of racism they could have pointed to the linguistic and social structures within society, which they have contributed to building themselves through changing and reproducing a set of images of the world. However, as Hagelund also stated, it does not mean that the parliamentarians are not debating the phenomena racism. Instead they use other terms as a substitute or extenuation of the term racism.⁷³ Hagelund argued that Norwegian parliamentarians tends to use expressions such as; racial discrimination, xenophobia strong nationalistic nature, negative attitudes, intolerance and scepticism against multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity when debating racism.⁷⁴ As these terms are applicable to the analysis, I will define the most important ones in the upcoming section.

⁶⁸ Allport, Gordon (1958) *The nature of prejudice*. New York: Anchor Books: 11

⁶⁹ Wetherell and Potter. (1992): 2

⁷⁰ Gullestad argued that the immigration debate was dominated by linguistic and social structures that guides how one understood, used and acted within a debate. These structures shaped directly or indirectly how one would think of, argue and act regarding a word or a situation. They are understood as both social structures as they shaped the way one acts and linguistic structures as they shaped the way actors uses certain concepts.

⁷¹ Hagelund. (2004): 10-11

⁷² Hagelund. (2004): 6 / Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 13.10: 89/ Parliamentary proceedings (2000), 04.12: 904

⁷³ Hagelund. (2004): 10

⁷⁴ Ibid: 10

2.3.3. Racial discrimination

The phenomena of racism have a close connection to discrimination and differentiations between groups or cultures.⁷⁵ As a result of the high morality that is apparent in the concept of racism, actors are often focusing on discrimination instead of racism. As the concept discrimination focuses on the individual actions, the concept is less connected to social structures and ideology.⁷⁶ This will be apparent in the analysis of the debates, as the parliamentarians are more comfortable with using the term racial discrimination instead of racism in a substantial number of debates throughout 1997 and 2005.

The definition of discrimination is a systematic differential treatment based on individual characteristics such as skin colour, age, ethnical background etc. Racial discrimination is therefore specified towards characteristics connected to race, such as colour of skin or ethnicity.⁷⁷ Although, discrimination is a concept with many definitions, the definition created by Ronald Craig will be used in this thesis. He stated that if one is to define an action as discrimination there are four elements that need to be present.⁷⁸ Firstly, an individual or group needs to be treated *differently* than the one that they are compared to. Secondly, this differential treatment is not beneficial to the individual or group. Thirdly, the discriminative action or the consequence of it is causally connected to the individual or group that is protected by anti-discriminative legislation. Finally, one cannot make exceptions to or legitimise these types of actions depending on the intended or unintended thought behind the action.⁷⁹

2.3.4. Xenophobia

Within the English language, xenophobia has come to simultaneously represent both a fear and hatred towards foreigners.⁸⁰ By contrast, the Norwegian language separates a *fear of outsiders and strangers*, 'fremmedfrykt' and *bearing a sentiment of hostility towards outsiders and strangers*, 'fremmedfiendtlig'.⁸¹ In the parliamentary debates that are the main

⁷⁵ Bangstad and Døving. (2015): 14

⁷⁶ Rogstad and Midtbøen. (2009): 13

⁷⁷ Ibid: 13

⁷⁸ Craig, Ronald (2007) *Systematic discrimination in employment and the promotion of ethnic equality*. Leiden and Boston: Martinus Nijhoff: 32

⁷⁹ Craig. (2007): 32

⁸⁰ See OED, *Xenophobia*

⁸¹ Rattansi, Ali (2007). *Racism, a very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 6

sources of this thesis, the first understanding of the term is most frequently used. This might be a result of morality, as it is easier to talk about someone's fear rather than his or her hostile attitude as it is considered more rational and legitimate to feel afraid and to act upon it than resentful and to act upon it. Throughout this master thesis, unless something else is explained or mentioned, the term xenophobia will be used to express fear of outsiders and strangers. In other words fearing what is unknown and foreign, which is questionably similar to racist attitudes, Rattansi stated.⁸²

2.3.5. Ethnicity and nationalism

Chattoo and Atkin stated that ethnicity refers to a process of self-identity and a form of social stratification.⁸³ It is defined as a social construction of heritage, culture and social organisation. This means that people are not born with a culture or shared ancestry, it is a process of elaborating 'the ideas of a ethnical community founded upon these attributes'.⁸⁴ This process of elaboration is a dynamic process of self-identification and differentiation where negotiating boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are an important factor.⁸⁵ The word in itself, ethnicity is based on the Greek word *ethnos* that implies that people are living together as a tribe, nation or caste.⁸⁶ The word does have excluding facets to it by defining an inside group and an outside group, like Norwegian and non-Norwegian. The Greek word's adjectival form, *ethnikos*, had two meanings denoting 'national' and 'foreign'.⁸⁷

Nationalism is both a political ideology and the feeling of belonging to a nation. One often talks about nationalism as both a negative and a positive force. Throughout Norwegian history it has been promoted as a positive force, contributing to building a society.⁸⁸ In Norway, this form of nationalism is understood as a moderate kind of nationalism or as a type of patriotism. Nationalism can also adopt a highly negative and extreme form, such as

⁸² Rattansi. (2007): 10

⁸³ Chattoo, Sangeeta and Karl Atkin. (2012) 'Race', ethnicity and social policy: theoretical concepts and the limitations off current approaches to welfare. In *Understanding 'race' and ethnicity*, edited by Gary Craig, Karl Atkin, Sangeeta Chattoo and Ronny Flynn, 19 -40. Bristol: The policy press: 22

⁸⁴ Fenton, Steve. (2003) *Ethnicity*. Cambridge: Polity Press: 3

⁸⁵ Chattoo and Atkin. (2012): 23

⁸⁶ Ibid: 23

⁸⁷ Chattoo and Atkin. (2012): 23

⁸⁸ Gullestad. (2002a): 34

Nazism in Germany during the Second World War where it promoted exclusiveness as opposed to inclusiveness.⁸⁹

2.3.5.1. Norwegian national identity

Anja Spilling defined national identity as a nation's understanding of who they are. This identity is closely entwined with the elements of geography, social conditions and culture.⁹⁰ The identity of a nation is therefore built up by the group's connection to a territory through legal, economical, historical and cultural togetherness.⁹¹

The Norwegian national identity is difficult to define as it is a dynamic process and understood differently from one context and one person to another. As the Norwegian state is relatively new compared to older states such as Great Britain and Germany, the Norwegian nationalism was generally understood as good and liberating aspect of the national identity.⁹² Gullestad stated that Norwegian national identity is commonly understood as natural, given and with an undefined normative centre.⁹³ She stated that Norwegians are very rarely aware of what these values are as the values are usually normative and unspecified. The values are often put in line with Christian values. When Norwegian politicians talk about Norwegian values they often refer to 'solidarity, tolerance and inclusiveness'.⁹⁴ These are all values promoted throughout the Bible and taught to children through the mandatory subject 'Kristendom, religion og livssyn' (KRL).⁹⁵ Christianity is therefore considered to be an important contributory factor towards Norwegian identity. However, it is rarely specified exactly *what* these values entail. The understanding of solidarity and tolerance seems to affect the nature of the Norwegian political debates, Andersson claimed that Norwegian debate culture is characterized to be both consensus seeking and self-promoting of an image of innocence.⁹⁶

⁸⁹ Gullestad. (2002a): 35

⁹⁰ Spilling, Anja (2009) Norsk nasjonal identitet. Published in *NFL-nytt* no. 45 December 2009: 1

⁹¹ Ibid: 1

⁹² Gullestad. (2002a): 286

⁹³ Ibid: 286

⁹⁴ Parliamentary proceedings (2000), 04.12: 904/ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 07.12: 930

Translation own

⁹⁵ Gullestad. (2002a): 287/ Parliamentary proceedings (2005), 12.04: 2019 Translation own

⁹⁶ Andersson. (2012): 419

Chapter III – Historical context up until 1997

In this chapter I will account for the social, political and economic contexts that contribute towards an understanding of the subsequent analysis chapters.

3.1. Globalisation and the growth of Norwegian nationalism

During the 1980s and 1990s, the rise of globalisation led Norwegian society to experience an increased sense of interconnectedness and dependency upon the rest of the world. Hylland Eriksen stated that increased globalisation led to a national identity crisis within the Norwegian state.⁹⁷ The traditional picture of Norwegians as historically, ethnically and cultural homogenous was challenged by increased immigration, increased interconnectedness across borders and a stronger global political and economic dependency.⁹⁸ Hylland Eriksen posits that in response to this perceived crisis, Norwegian society sought to strengthen its existing national and ethnical identity.⁹⁹ Although retrospectively the term ‘identity crisis’ may appear to be an exaggeration, some sectors of contemporary Norwegian society did perceive the population flux within Norway as a threat to the very essence of being Norwegian. It was upon this perception that numerous individuals within Norwegian society acted upon, seeking to redress the societal decay that immigration had caused.

The Norwegian state was often characterised as a society of small class differences, being a strong welfare state, and possessing a tolerant political arena that was driven by consensus.¹⁰⁰ Andersson argued that notions of innocence dominated the national self-made image.¹⁰¹ This was based upon the Norwegian state’s absentee position during the era of imperialism and colonisation. From this point of view, Norwegians were seemingly understood as an exception to the nationalist expansionist ambitions and hierarchic racism espoused during both the nineteenth and twentieth century.¹⁰² The understanding of Norwegian nationalism as innocent could be observed in the way it played a central role in Norway’s hosting of the

⁹⁷ Eriksen, Thomas Hylland (1997) “The nation as a human being – a metaphor in a mid-life crisis? Notes on the imminent collapse of Norwegian National identity”. In *Siting Culture: the Shifting Anthropological Objects* edited by Fog Olwig, Karen and Kristin Hastrup.103-122 London: Routledge:114

⁹⁸ Eriksen. (1997): 114

⁹⁹ Eriksen. (1997): 115

¹⁰⁰ Andersson, Mette (2012) The debate about the multicultural Norway before and after 22 July 2011. *Identities*, 19:4, 418-427 DOI: 10.1080/1070289X.2012.684442: 419

¹⁰¹ Andersson. (2012): 419

¹⁰² Ibid: 419

Winter Olympics in Lillehammer 1994. The event turned out to be a great triumph for the Norwegian participants. The efforts of the Norwegian sports stars contributed to an increasingly proud and allegedly innocent form of Norwegian nationalism. Two years earlier, the Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland had expressed that 'it was a typical trait of a Norwegian to be good'.¹⁰³ While the statement was used in a different context, it was adopted by the Norwegian population during the Olympics. The hosting of Olympics pedestalled Norwegian culture and traditions, presenting Norway as an innocent and ethnically homogeneous country. This expression was epitomised by the events mascots: two white, blond haired children, Kristin and Håkon. In turn this image of an innocent, ethnically homogenous nation was reflected in the events international press coverage¹⁰⁴

Another event that could be understood as both a product and result of a rising sense of nationalism was the referendum regarding Norwegian membership to the European Union in 1994. The result of the referendum was 'no' and can be viewed as a partial contributor to the nationalistic surge in the period. The 'no' vote did not represent an ideological victory for either left or right, but was rather marked as victory involving cooperation across the political spectrum.¹⁰⁵ Indeed Norway's 'no' vote was regarded as a national victory that focused on democracy and the people's ability to practice self-determination. In this instance the Norwegian people had appeared to put nation above class or gender. The political motivation in the no-vote should not be understood as having derived from a xenophobic drive, but rather a desire for greater protectionism.¹⁰⁶

Gullestad argued that these expressions of nationalism and self-protection were a result of an increased fear of the future, owing to the effects of globalisation. The Norwegian population became increasingly perturbed about the unknown future. This sentiment subsequently resulted in the formation of new nationalistic groups. The fear of the Norwegian population became an important political argument for politicians with a talent for simplifying and presenting a scary reality.¹⁰⁷ Since Norwegian nationalism had been regarded as a liberating power throughout the nation's history, it was difficult to connect the negative aspects of

¹⁰³ 'Typisk norsk å være god' Brundtland, Gro Harlem.(01.01.92) Nyttårstale. *NRK*. Available from <http://www.nrk.no/nett-tv/klipp/35843/> (Last accessed 06.04.17) Translation own

¹⁰⁴ Gullestad. (2002b): 160

¹⁰⁵ Ibid: 160

¹⁰⁶ Gullestad. (2002b): 160 -161

¹⁰⁷ Gullestad. (2002b): 159

nationalism to the Norwegian form of the phenomenon in political debates. During 1980s and 1990s nationalist groups such as *Folkebevegelsen imot innvandring* and *Norsk Front* gained an increased number of members and supporters. Additionally, the political party *Fremskrittspartiet* (FrP) garnered the increased favour of the Norwegian electorate.¹⁰⁸ Although FrP scarcely bore resemblance to the aforementioned nationalistic groups, they were also gained support from a platform of scepticism and protectionism.

3.2. Immigration

Unlike European countries such as Great Britain, the Netherlands and France, which had colonies and experienced immigrations from these countries, the immigrants that started to immigrate to Norway in the 1960s had no direct link with the Norwegian state.¹⁰⁹ The immigrant's choice to settle in Norway rested upon coincidence as opposed to colonial legacy. The acceptance of refugees into the Norwegian state was based on the recommendations by the United Nation Human Rights Council (UNHRC). However, the final say with regards to the amounts of refugees admitted was a decision made by the Norwegian government and was understood as an expression of solidarity.¹¹⁰ The number of labour immigrants were however restricted by the Parliament's decision to ban labour immigration in 1975. The immigrants to Norway throughout 1980s and 1990s were therefore mostly people seeking refugee and asylum away from a conflict situation in their home country, as well as cases of family reunion.¹¹¹ Due to the increasing amount of both civil and international wars and the different varieties of global crisis, the number of immigrants settling in Norway increased throughout the 1990s. Two main trends during the 1990s substantially altered the composition of immigrants living within the Norwegian state. Firstly, restricted labour immigration pushed a decrease in European migrants to Norway. Secondly, pressure from the international community for Norway to aid asylum seekers and refugees promoted an increased level of non-European migration to the country. Collectively these

¹⁰⁸ Gullestad. (2002b): 161/ I have chosen to keep the Norwegian names of the political parties, as this is an analysis of the Norwegian Parliament.

¹⁰⁹ Andersson. (2012): 419

¹¹⁰ Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet. *G-04/2015: Retningslinjer for arbeidet med overføringsflyktninger jf. utlendingsloven § 35*. Available from; <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/rundskriv-g-042015-retningslinjer-for-arbeidet-med-overforingsflyktninger-jf.-utlendingsloven--35/id2426422/> (Last accessed 20.04.17)

¹¹¹ Andersson. (2012): 419

trends accounted for a shift in Norway's demography along the lines of class, culture, race and tradition.¹¹²

3.3. Racism in Norway

The murder of Hermansen in 2001 was not Norway's first racially motivated murder. Although the Norwegian identity had been built upon an image of innocence regarding multi-ethnicity, multiculturalism and hierarchical attitudes towards other races, people and groups, Andersson argues that this was not necessarily the case.¹¹³ While the country's history is less violent and oppressive when compared to other European states there are several notable incidents of Norwegian racism.

During the nineteenth century, the Norwegian state's policy towards the Sami people can be classified as oppressive. Additionally, the Norwegian constitution of 1814 forbade Jews and Jesuits to enter the country. This was later changed and excused by the politicians as a product of its time.¹¹⁴ Throughout the 1980s there were several episodes of violence against immigrants. The most prominent of which occurred in 1989, when a young Norwegian-Pakistani was stabbed to death in the streets of Oslo with his pregnant Norwegian girlfriend as a witness. The murder was driven by a mob mentality with a large group surrounding the crime scene, yelling 'kill them, kill them'.¹¹⁵ In 1999, the 17-year-old Indian-born Arve Beheim Karlsen, who was adopted by two Norwegians, was found drowned in Sogndal River. The police failed to find sufficient evidence to classify the death as a murder, but he was last seen chased by two teenagers screaming 'kill him' and 'kill that nigger' through Sogndal city centre.¹¹⁶ The two teenagers chasing Beheim Karlsen were prosecuted for racially motivated expressions, however the court did not find enough evidence to prove the connection between the racially motivated statements and Beheim Karlsen's death.¹¹⁷ Despite proof of racially motivated bullying, the court stated they were in doubt as to how

¹¹² Statistisk Sentral Byrå. *Flytting 2015*. Available from; <https://www.ssb.no/flytting> (Last accessed 06.04.17) /Statistisk Sentral Byrå. *Folkemengde og befolkningsendringar*. Available from; <https://www.ssb.no/folkemengde> (Last accessed 06.04.17)

¹¹³ Andersson. (2012): 419 - 420

¹¹⁴ Marthins, Ragnhild (1963) *Synet på religionsfrihet i Norge i første halvdel av det 19. århundre slik det kommer fram i debatten om § 2 i Grunnloven*. Master thesis, Universitetet of Oslo: 45

¹¹⁵ Bangstad, Sindre and Cora Døving. (2015) *Hva er rasisme*. Oslo:Universitetsforlaget: 8
Translation own

¹¹⁶ Bangstad and Døving. (2015): 8 Translation own

¹¹⁷ Senter mot etnisk diskriminering (SMED). (2001) *Underveis mot et bedre vern 2001*. Oslo: SMED: 121

seriously they could regard these racially motivated statements. It was argued in court that these racially motivated statements did not push Beheim Karlsen into the river, and there might have been a set of further incidents that contributed to his death. The court claimed that the racially motivated words spoken by the two teenagers could have been; ‘a result of unfortunate gang mentality amongst youth, combined with usage of alcohol.’¹¹⁸

3.3.1. Right-wing activism

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s right-wing extremism in Norway could be typified as disorganised, informal but yet of an increasingly violent character. Towards the mid-1990s there was a considerable growth in the nationalist and the neo-Nazi skinhead culture.¹¹⁹ Tore Bjørgo stated that in 1990 there were 20-30 ‘members’, while in 1995-1996 there were 500-600 ‘members’ in different nationalistic groups throughout the country.¹²⁰ Although this may appear to represent a miniscule proportion of society, as Katrine Fangen stated;

It is not the size of the environment, the ability to organise in groups or the ideological consistency of the group that determines how dangerous these neo-Nazi groups were. One of the members could be under the influence of alcohol, in need of recognition from the group or is encouraged by fellow gang members while having a knife in their pocket.¹²¹

The groups often posed a serious problem to the local communities in which they were situated within. They were known to harass and act violently towards immigrants and asylum seekers in their local communities. Additionally, they often acted aggressively towards their political opponents.¹²² During 1995 and 1996 this violence became increasingly aggressive and extreme, and *Boot Boys*, the group that Hermansens’ murders were part of, were renowned for their hyper-aggression. Bjørgo stated that the use of explosives was exceptionally high in Norway compared to the rest of Scandinavia.¹²³ As the prevalence of right wing groups increased, *Politiets Sikkerhetstjeneste* (Norwegian Police Security Service - PST) became further involved with surveillance of the groups. Ole Nicolai Kvisler, one of the leading figures of *Boot Boys* was ‘in and out’ of prison throughout the last part of the 1990s.

¹¹⁸ SMED. (2001): 122 Translation own

¹¹⁹ Bjørgo, Tore. (1997). *Racist and right-wing violence in Scandinavia: patterns, perpetrators and responses*. Oslo: Tano Aschehoug: 80

¹²⁰ Bjørgo. (1997): 80

¹²¹ Fangen, Katrine (2001) *En bok om nynazister*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget: 11 Translation own

¹²² Bjørgo. (1997): 81

¹²³ Bjørgo. (1997): 82

The increased surveillance of nationalistic groups illustrated that they were regarded as a threat. However, the security service's enhanced surveillance proved insufficient as to prevent Hermansen's murder in 2001.

3.4. The new role of the media

Due to increased globalisation, the Norwegian society was increasingly connected to the rest of the world. In turn this increased the demands of the Norwegian population to get more information about the world around them. Gullestad claimed that media, and especially TV achieved a more important and influential role within society.¹²⁴ As the amount of information increased, people depended upon the media to help interpret and perceive the world around them. However, along with the increased flow of information, came the media outlet's dependency on generating sufficient profit in order to provide the Norwegian population with the information they wanted. The result was that the media was organised with an aim to generate revenue and not simply to provide correct and precise information. TV especially, focused both on informing the population and entertaining them.¹²⁵ Television provided a more substantial role as an arena for debate, and this arena required alternate skill to what the politicians' possessed. Politicians with good rhetorical skills who were able to explain the complex reality in a simple, yet dramatic way gained increased support from the voters.¹²⁶ Gullestad pointed to the leader of FrP, Carl Ivar Hagen as one of the actors who was exceptionally good at using the strength of the arena.¹²⁷ Hagen's main focus became immigration and integration politics and he had an ability to meet the voters at 'their' level by explaining reality in a simple yet effective manner. Such tactics resulted in a growth of the party's influence in the public debate as well as an increased amount of votes. The party maintained a strong electoral presence in 1987 and 1989 due to the FrP's politician's ability to Norway's economic and immigration issues.¹²⁸ Above all it was Hagen's ability to provide concrete solutions and simplify the reality through TV debates that can be viewed as vital to FrP's 1989 electoral gains. Although the media did not have a direct impact on the debates within Parliament, it did change the arena of the election campaign that in turn altered the outcome of the election. Furthermore, the greater the number of seats a certain party

¹²⁴ Gullestad. (2002b): 159

¹²⁵ Gullestad. (2002b): 160- 161

¹²⁶ Gullestad. (2002b): 159 -160

¹²⁷ Gullestad. (2002b) 159

¹²⁸ Due to the revolution in Iraq, the world experienced a second oil crisis in the course of a ten years time. This challenged the Norwegian economy.

acquired, the longer they were permitted to speak on the parliament's floor. In this way the new media landscape can be viewed as not only having an impact on the elections but also on the very nature of the parliamentary debate.

Chapter IV - The short-term effects

This chapter will account for the parliamentary debates between October 1997 and December 2001. As the murder of Hermansen occurred in January 2001, this chapter will only account for the *short-term effects* as to how racism was understood and debated in the Norwegian Parliament in the wake of the murder. I will attempt to outline the political, economic and social context of the debates and subsequently explain the pattern of how racism was understood and debated in the parliament up until the murder of Hermansen. The last section of this chapter will focus solely on the year of 2001. First I will outline the political, economic and social context. Secondly, I will elaborate how the murder changed the way racism was debated and understood in the Parliament in the short-term.

4.1 The pattern of debating racism between 1997 and 2000

4.1.1. The political, economic and social context

4.1.1.1. 1997-1998

The Parliamentary elections of 1997 resulted in a change of government. The Norwegian state transitioned from an *Arbeiderparti* (A) government with Thorbjørn Jagland as Prime Minister, into a new minority government. This government was led by Kjell Magne Bondevik and consisted of *Kristlig Folkeparti* (KrF), *Senterpartiet* (SP) and *Venstre* (V). The government will be referred to as the Bondevik government throughout this chapter. Before the Jagland government stepped down, the government published White Paper no. 17 pertaining to 'Immigration and Multiculturalism'. The paper became an important contribution to the debates through the following years as it laid the foundation of understanding for Norway as a multicultural state and how the state should construct policies related to multiculturalism in the future.¹²⁹ The paper, Hagelund stated, was viewed as a confirmation of the increased institutionalisation of racism prevention through the 1990s.¹³⁰ Prevention of racism and discrimination was stated as a key factor in the Jagland government's immigration policies. The paper focused on the role of the centralised welfare state in preventing racism in the Norwegian society. The paper suggested that a good welfare

¹²⁹ Hagelund. (2004): 3

¹³⁰ Hagelund. (2004): 4

state would actively work to integrate all groups in the society and in doing so become a central measure in the prevention of racism and discrimination within Norwegian society.¹³¹

The political turbulence associated with the international arena of 1997 placed an increased pressure on the Norwegian state to welcome more refugees and asylum seekers. The increased tensions in Kosovo, as well as in Croatia and East-Sudan resulted in a growing number of people in need of protection and subsequently an increased pressure from the international community on states to act on a human and moral basis in this time of need.¹³² The new minority government responded to the increased pressure from the international community and implemented a more liberal and humanistic approach towards asylum seekers and refugees in order to address the increasingly tense situation in both Europe and Africa.

4.1.1.2. 1999 -2000

During 1999, Norway accepted 33 000 new inhabitants, amounting to one of the state's largest annual increases in population since 1950.¹³³ The new influx of immigrants placed an unprecedented pressure on Norway's state apparatus and social system. While the state sought to benefit from the import of foreign labourers whose skills held the potential to strengthen Norwegian businesses, integration proved more complex in practice than in theory.¹³⁴ On the 26. April 1999, the 17-year-old Arve Beheim Karlsen was found dead in the Sogndal River after being chased by two boys who yelled 'kill that nigger'.¹³⁵ Even though the event was seen as an abhorrent incident, it did not create the same wave of rage and shock within the public or parliamentary debate as the murder in Holmlia.¹³⁶ The incident however did contribute to the start of a debate in the public arena as to whether the term 'nigger' was acceptable to use in the everyday life. This debate surrounding the word 'nigger' did not

¹³¹ Kommunal og Arbeidsdepartementet. (1997) *Om innvandring og flerkulturelle Norge*. White Paper no. 17 (1996/1997). [Oslo]:[Regjeringen]: 45

¹³² Parliamentary proceedings (1998), 29.04, Available from; <https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Publikasjoner/Referater/Stortinget/1997-1998/980429/muntligsporretime/> (Last accessed 09.02.17)

¹³³ Statistisk Sentral Byrå. *Folkemengde og befolkningsendringar.* / Parliamentary proceedings (2000), 03.10: 6

¹³⁴ Parliamentary proceedings (2000), 20.01: 1725/ Parliamentary proceedings (2000), 08.02: 1930/ Parliamentary proceedings (2000), 05.04: 2624-2628

¹³⁵ This event is more thoroughly explained in Chapter III, in the section regarding Racism in Norway./ Vie, Vidar (16.05.1999) Beheim-Karlsen tragedien. *NRK*. Available from; http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/distrikt/nrk_sogn_og_fjordane/beheim_karlsen_saka/1029103.html (last accessed 01.02.17) Translation own

¹³⁶ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 05.05: 3033

manifest itself in the parliament.¹³⁷ On 10th March 2000, the Bondevik government stepped down as a result of a vote of no confidence. A minority *Arbeiderparti* government led by Jens Stoltenberg replaced the previous government.

In the global arena, the brutality of the Kosovo war ended on the 10. June 1999.¹³⁸ The following year was considered by the Parliament to be a year of tumult, owing to the increased numbers of conflicts, refugees and people in need of protection.¹³⁹ In the 1999 Austrian election, the right-wing nationalist party *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* won 26,9 % of the votes and formed a coalition government with *Österreichische Volkspartei* in early 2000.¹⁴⁰

4.1.2. The pattern of the debate, 1997 -2001

Although the main focus of the debates within the Norwegian Parliament changed in response to the surrounding global and national landscape, there are certain common features in the way which racism was debated and understood between October 1997 and January 2001.

As mentioned in Chapter I, Hagelund refers to the political debate surrounding racism as having a ‘two folded tendency’. On one level, racism is considered a moral wrong that demands to be taken seriously.¹⁴¹ Simultaneously, few incidents were actively defined as racist or required immediate action. Hagelund’s ‘two-folded tendency’ will be confirmed in this upcoming section.

Primarily, racism was understood as an immense challenge that must be taken seriously by the parliamentarians.¹⁴² There were several debates throughout the years in focus where racism was claimed to be an important priority and a considerable challenge to Norwegian

¹³⁷ The debate on the public arena was known as the ‘neger debate’ and spun with varied intensity and focus points between 1999 and until today (2017).

¹³⁸ NATO. *NATO's role in relation to the conflict in Kosovo*. Available from: <http://www.nato.int/kosovo/history.htm> (Last accessed 27.04.17) / Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 10.06: 3789

¹³⁹ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 10.01: 1524- 1525

¹⁴⁰ Parliamentary proceedings (2000), 27.01: 1785

¹⁴¹ Hagelund. (2004): 3

¹⁴² Parliamentary proceedings (1998), 28.10: 313/ Parliamentary proceedings (1998), 18.11: 425 / Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 04.05: 2977

society. MP Inga Kvalbukt (SP) stated; ‘Racism is destructive in so many ways and disruptive and must be disrupted at all costs.’¹⁴³ Racism was even claimed to be ‘one of the main foundations of war and conflict’ and as a result of this, ‘it should be prevented at all costs from taking hold within [Norwegian] society’.¹⁴⁴ The moral aspect of racism was also visible, as racism was declared incompatible with Norwegian values. MP Marit Nybakk (A) claimed that ‘Norwegian society is based upon social democratic values such as equality, solidarity and human rights’, all of which were claimed to be ‘clashing with racially motivated attitudes’.¹⁴⁵ Up until the murder of Hermansen racism was debated with an increased moral understanding implying that the majority of the parliamentarians did not see it as an immediate physical threat but more of a moral threat to Norway’s supposed innocence. This is visible in MP Gunnar Kvasheim’s (V) statement;

I believe that we are moving into a period where we, to a larger degree than before, are shaping a liberal Norway. In this community intolerance, racism and prejudice will be further and further left behind, placed on the scrap heap together with the totalitarian ideologies.¹⁴⁶

Hagelund’s second observation referring to how politician’s debate racism can be also be extended to the debates during this period. While the abstract threat of racism pervaded parliamentary discourse, it was rarely used to refer to an incident or event within Norway. When Beheim Karlsen was found dead in 1999, MP Heikki Holmås (*Sosialistisk Venstre Parti*, SV) said ‘it looks as if we have experienced the first racially motivated homicide in Norway’.¹⁴⁷ However, as the boys accused of killing Behim Karlsen were proved to be innocent by the Norwegian court, the event was not considered to be racially motivated by the parliamentarians. This was however the closest the parliamentarians came to defining an event within Norwegian society as racist. There were however, several discussions where the different parliamentarians debated which forms of act were considered to be racially motivated. In response to the increased violence in the Norwegian cities, MP Carl Ivar Hagen (FrP) claimed that ‘this is a result of the increasingly negative attitudes towards the new

¹⁴³ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 12.12: 930 Translation own.

¹⁴⁴ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 25.03: 2519 Translation own.

¹⁴⁵ Parliamentary proceedings (2000), 04.12: 904 Translation own.

¹⁴⁶ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 13.10: 89 Translation own.

¹⁴⁷ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 05.05: 3033 Translation own

citizens'.¹⁴⁸ However, Minister of Justice Aud-Inger Aure (KrF) soon corrected him by saying 'we should be somewhat careful using such big words in this setting'.¹⁴⁹ In a later debate MP Hagen again claimed that increased immigration was to blame for the increased violence in the big cities in Norway. MP Ivar Østberg (Krf) replied to Hagen by stating that 'Hagen and KrF have a very different view of the situation'.¹⁵⁰ Østberg claimed increasing violence was not connected to increased immigration, but it was rather a result of increased alcohol usage amongst youth. Although all parliamentarians could agree that the increased violence 'promoted a culture of hatred', it was not stated that this hatred was racially motivated.¹⁵¹

The exception to Hagelund's observation was when an event or incident *outside* of the Norwegian borders was debated. It was then easier for the parliamentarians to claim a non-Norwegian event or incident to be racially motivated. When *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* won the Austrian election in 2000, MP Johan Jakobsen (SP) said;

That a democratic country in the heart of Europe can be led by a party with clearly racist, even Nazi, characteristics is a very scary development.¹⁵²

In addition to the definition of the 'racist' Austrian party, the politics of the President of Congo, Joseph Kabila, was claimed to be 'clearly racist' by MP Erik Solheim (SV).¹⁵³ Both of these incidents were not commented upon or challenged in the parliamentary debates indicating that it was an opinion of consensus.

This two-folded tendency influenced the way racism was debated as a whole. As the parliamentarians were hesitant to define something as racist, racism or racially motivated, they also struggled to debate what racism *was* and *where* racism was located within Norwegian society. Instead the debate focused on what *might lead to racism*. In the debates regarding what triggered racism, there was a clear split in the parliament between the MPs of FrP and the rest of the parties represented in Stortinget. MP Dag Danielsen (FrP) highlighted

¹⁴⁸ Parliamentary proceedings (1998), 27.05 Available from; <https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Publikasjoner/Referater/Stortinget/1997-1998/980527/muntligsporretime/#a3> (Last accessed 05.02.17) Translation own.

¹⁴⁹ Parliamentary proceedings (1998), 27.05 Translation own

¹⁵⁰ Parliamentary proceedings (1998) 08.12: 839 Translation own

¹⁵¹ Parliamentary proceedings (1998) 13.05: 2954 Translation own

¹⁵² Parliamentary proceedings (2000), 27.01: 1785 Translation own

¹⁵³ Parliamentary proceedings (1998), 28.10: 313 Translation own

the lack of integration as the reason for, what he claimed, ‘was increased negative [and possibly racist] attitudes in the Norwegian society’.¹⁵⁴ The only way to decrease these attitudes was to make the immigration policies stricter, the MPs of FrP argued. At several debates the MPs of FrP referred to the Bondevik government’s immigration politics as naïve, too generous and unsuccessful and an obvious source for frustration and ‘negative attitudes’.¹⁵⁵ MP Siv Jensen (FrP) said;

The liberal immigration policies of the Bondevik government are both naïve and unsuccessful as they are unable to integrate the increased number of immigrants.¹⁵⁶

Although the MPs of FrP continuously claimed that there were increasingly negative attitudes expressed towards immigrants, the other parties did not express the same opinion. As to how to deal with racism, the rest of the political parties embraced the focus points White Paper no. 17 had emphasised; a centralised welfare state had the main responsibility to integrate immigrants and to achieve the goal of a harmonised multicultural state.¹⁵⁷ MP Rolf Reikvam (SV) suggested with support from the majority of the parliamentarians, that cultural understanding between the different groups was that the best way of combating;

Intolerance and potential negative attitudes is to promote cultural understanding and thereby increase tolerance as a result of multicultural and ethnical diversity.¹⁵⁸

Throughout the given period, the MPs of FrP claimed that they were increasingly understood and defined as racist and xenophobic. MP Jan Simonsen (FrP) claimed that he felt ‘accused and expected an apology from several parliamentarians’.¹⁵⁹ While FrP were blamed for contributing to increased societal tension, no parliamentarian defined the party as racist or xenophobic. MP Solheim (SV) did claim that FrP and its members ‘lacked interest and empathy for everything south of the Sinsen roundabout’, which indicated that he did not see FrP as the political party with the most human politics.¹⁶⁰ MP Karin Andersen (SV)

¹⁵⁴ Parliamentary proceedings (2000), 20.01: 1725 Translation own

¹⁵⁵ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 28.01: 1763/ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 20.05: 3344-3348 Translation own

¹⁵⁶ Parliamentary proceedings (1999) 13.10: 141 Translation own

¹⁵⁷ White paper no. 17 (1996/1997): 46

¹⁵⁸ Parliamentary proceedings (2000), 13.04: 2816 Translation own

¹⁵⁹ Parliamentary proceedings (1998) 13.05: 2954 Translation own

¹⁶⁰ Parliamentary proceedings (1998), 27.10: 226 Translation own / The term Sinsen roundabout’ has been used as a separation line between the city of Oslo and the more rural areas of Oslo municipality.

questioned if the ‘*rhetoric* of FrP might contribute towards creating hatred or xenophobia against certain races’.¹⁶¹ And MP Børge Brende (*Høyre*, H) clearly did not see the MPs of FrP as the most adept politicians with regards to achieving the most harmonious and inclusive society;

A lot of us used quite a lot of time on this in the election campaign to meet new challenges in the immigration politics by building bridges and creating an inclusive community. Not everyone did this – Vidar Kleppe and Øystein Hedstrøm, both from FrP were amongst the ones who didn’t.¹⁶²

However, none of these claims defined FrP as a party or its members as a racist or xenophobic party. MP Jensen was not particularly satisfied as to the way FrP was presented in the parliamentary debates;

This has become a debate that is more like a Norwegian Championship in disagreeing the most with FrP. It has become a competition in being the best at disagreeing, remembering the most quotes or being the best at changing these quotes to their favour.¹⁶³

However, Jensen added that FrP had nothing to be ashamed of regards to their ‘views on immigration, multi-ethnicity nor multiculturalism and said that it should be understood as healthy scepticism rather than xenophobia’.¹⁶⁴

During this period, parliamentarians failed to hold a coherent understanding of what the concept of racism entailed. Consequently, Norwegian parliamentarians were in disagreement with regards to how to *define* something as racism as well as how to *detect* racism within Norwegian society. This spilled over into a larger disagreement as to what caused racism, and therefore how racism should be dealt with respectively.¹⁶⁵ Although the battle against racism was stated as a priority on several occasions, the concept in itself was debated without a clear definition.¹⁶⁶

In this context it is used with regards to foreign affairs and was used as a separation line between (most of) Norway and the rest of the world.

¹⁶¹ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 13.10: 143 Translation own

¹⁶² Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 13.10: 144 Translation own

¹⁶³ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 13.10: 144 Translation own

¹⁶⁴ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 13.10: 144 Translation own

¹⁶⁵ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 10.03: 2304

¹⁶⁶ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 25.03: 2519/ White Paper no. 17 (1996/1997): 45

4.2. The change of 2001

The following section of this chapter will account for short-term changes in the way racism was understood by the parliamentarians in the aftermath of the murder of Hermansen. The analysis following in this section will therefore account for parliamentary debates between January and December 2001.

4.2.1. The political, economic and social context

The year of 2001 was a year where racism was placed under the spotlight. In January 2001 the homicide at Holmlia occurred, an event that both shocked the Norwegian people and their elected representatives. The homicide initiated a protest march in the Norwegian capital where 40,000 people gathered to demonstrate against racism and xenophobia. The election campaign between June and September was regarded to be a traditional campaign, topic-wise.¹⁶⁷ Conventional subjects such as taxes, elderly care, the school system in addition to the health system experienced an increased focus. Due to the murder of Hermansen, *Senter for Etnisk Diskriminering* (SMED) challenged all the political parties to sign their declaration ‘Ytringsfrihet og etniske relasjoner i et demokratisk samfunn’.¹⁶⁸ This declaration aimed to promote an election campaign without xenophobia, racism and discrimination and while simultaneously encouraging the parliamentarians to take responsibility regarding xenophobic, racist and discriminating attitudes within Norwegian society.¹⁶⁹ All the parties in the parliament signed the declaration. Despite the lack of discussions concerning racism in the election campaign, it was also mentioned in the declaration of inauguration created by the new government that; ‘both discrimination and racism shall actively be combated’.¹⁷⁰ As a result of the 2001 election, the Stoltenberg government stepped down and left the office in the hands of a new government.¹⁷¹ This government, referred to as Bondevik II, consisted of

¹⁶⁷ Arneberg, Gro (20.08.01) Valgnytt. *NRK*. Accessible from; http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/innenriks/valg/valg_2001/valgnytt/1224462.html (Last accessed 08.03.17)

¹⁶⁸ In English the declaration is named; ‘Freedom of speech and ethnical relations in a democratic society.

¹⁶⁹ SMED (2002) *Sunshine and shadow. The shadow report of the Centre for Combating Ethnic Discrimination. Senter mot etnisk diskriminering*, Oslo: 132

¹⁷⁰ Bondevik, Kjell Magne. *Regjeringens tiltredelseserklæring*. 23.10.01. Accessible from; https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/regjeringens_tiltredelseserklæring/id265184/ (last accessed 08.03.17) Translation own

¹⁷¹ Election results by percentage; Arbeiderpartiet 24.3 %, Høyre 21.2 %, Fremskrittspartiet 14.6 %, Sosialistisk Venstreparti; 12.5%, Kristelig Folkeparti 12.5%, Senterpartiet 5.6%, Venstre 3.9%, Kystpartiet 1.7% / Statistisk Sentral Byrå. *Stortingsvalet 2001* Available from; <https://www.ssb.no/a/kortnavn/stortingsvalg/arkiv/tab-2001-11-02-09.html> (Last accessed 27.04.17)

the *Kristlig Folkeparti*, *Venstre* and *Høyre*.¹⁷² As the government was a minority in the parliament it went into cooperation with *Fremskrittspartiet*. In addition to the change of government, the power relations in the parliament altered. The election of 2001 contributed to a substantial change to the party composition in the parliament. *Sosialistisk Venstreparti* experienced the best election in its party history, gaining 12,5 % of the total votes.¹⁷³ This subsequently increased the representation of SV in the parliament to double the amount of MPs compared to the 1997 – 2001 period. *Arbeiderpartiet* on the other hand, experienced their worst result since 1924, with only 23,4% of the vote.¹⁷⁴ The result of this was a decrease in the amount of representatives in the Parliament from 65 to 43.¹⁷⁵

In the global arena, the eight day long ‘World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance’ was held in Durban, South Africa at the end of August. The conference declared the year 2001 as the ‘International Year of Mobilization against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance’.¹⁷⁶ The conference aimed towards;

Giving new momentum to the political commitment to eliminate all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.¹⁷⁷

In addition, the world experienced a huge shock on the 11. September. The terrorist attack on American soil, subsequently referred to as ‘9/11’, resulted in almost 3000 Americans deaths and the beginning of the ‘War on Terror’. The attack was the first invocation of Article 5 in the NATO charter.¹⁷⁸ As a result of the attack on the USA, the ‘War on Terror’ started with American and British aerial bombing of Taliban and Al Qaida camps in Afghanistan on the 7.

¹⁷² Bergseteren, Tove. (02.11.01) Stortingsvalet 2001. *Statistisk Sentralbyrå*. Accessible from; <https://www.ssb.no/valg/statistikker/stortingsvalg/hvert-4-aar/2001-11-02> (Last accessed 07.03.17)

¹⁷³ Berseteren. (2001)

¹⁷⁴ NRK.(02.11.01) Laveste deltagelse noensinne. *NRK Valgfakta* Accessible from; http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/innenriks/valg/valg_2001/valgfakta/1408225.html (Last accessed 07.03.17)

¹⁷⁵ Stortinget. *Partioversikt*. Accessible from; <https://www.stortinget.no/no/Representanter-og-komiteer/Partiene/Partioversikt/?pid=2001-2005#primaryfilter> (last accessed 07.03.17)

¹⁷⁶ United Nations. *Declaration of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* Available from <http://www.un.org/WCAR/durban.pdf> (Last accessed 27.04.17)

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁷⁸ Article 5 says; ‘An attack on a NATO member, is an attack on all members’ and the announcement is available from here; NATO. *Statement by the North Atlantic Council*. 15.09.01 Available from; <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2001/p01-124e.htm> (Last accessed 03.03.17)

October 2001. Military operations in Afghanistan later expanded into a full invasion of the country. The attack in itself created a huge impact on the debates in the Parliament. Additionally, as Norway is a member of NATO, it was bound by the legal obligation of the NATO Charter. The Norwegian parliamentarians appreciated the full ramifications of the attack. In a statement, MP Åse Nilssen (KrF) noted:

9/11 was an attack on the democracy, the value of humans and on open society. The attack has created a more serious threat scenario. [...] Their goal is to create fear and to make us feel unsafe - we cannot let them succeed. We have to respond by a show unity, building common trust and understanding between people.¹⁷⁹

The flow of immigrants to Scandinavia continued to increase during 2001. The total amount of immigrants and refugees coming to Norway was approximately 15 000.¹⁸⁰ The increased amount of immigrants influenced the debate in the Norwegian parliament, however not in the same degree as it influenced the Danish election campaign. Xenophobic statements and cultural and racial scepticism dominated the volatile debates in the Danish election of 2001.¹⁸¹

4.2.2. The change of the debate in 2001

In 2001, there was a noticeable increase in the frequency that the concept of racism was debated in Parliament. Previous use of the word racism lacked both a clear definition and seemed to cause a lot of discomfort. As a result of, the concept was rarely used. In 1999 the concept racism was mentioned 31 times all together in the parliamentary debates.¹⁸² In 2000, racism was mentioned 20 times.¹⁸³ In 2001, however, racism was mentioned 62 times throughout the year.¹⁸⁴ While the Global Conference on Racism was debated, the majority of the instances where racism was discussed were in relation to the murder of Hermansen.

¹⁷⁹ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 25.10: 98 Translation own

¹⁸⁰ Statistisk Sentral Byrå. *Folkemengde og befolkningsendringer*.

¹⁸¹ Roemer, John and Karine Van der Straeten (2006), The Political Economy of Xenophobia and Distribution: The Case of Denmark. *Scandinavian Journal of Economics*, 108: 251–277. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9442.2006.00450: 252/NRK. *Ny Rasmussen overtar i Danmark*. 20.11.01 Accessible from; <https://www.nrk.no/urix/ny-rasmussen-overtar-i-danmark-1.568581> (last accessed 02.03.17) /Strand, Trond. Den grimme valgkampen. *Bergens Tidene*. 20.11.01 Accessible from; <http://www.bt.no/nyheter/utenriks/Den-grimme-valgkamp-3642b.html> (last accessed 01.03.17)

¹⁸² Holder de ord. *Sagt i salen*. Available from; <https://tale.holderdeord.no/search/count/rasisme/0> (Last accessed 29.01.17)

¹⁸³ Holder de ord. *Sagt i salen*.

¹⁸⁴ Holder de ord. *Sagt i salen*.

However, 2001 marked not only a quantitative increase in the use of the term racism but also a qualitative change in how it was used.

The first significant change was that the parliamentarians appeared to realise that racially motivated violence and even murder *could happen* within Norwegian society. Throughout the debates between 1997 and 2000, the parliamentarians were debating about the horrific phenomenon of racism. They were talking about negative attitudes, but these attitudes were not defined as racism. They debated about the promotion of a culture of hate and how racism was the cause of war and conflict. Racism as a phenomenon was understood as a very diffuse concept and more of a moral challenge rather than a physical one. Acts of racism were understood as something evil and scary that occurred and existed *outside* of the Norwegian state's border. The fact that there existed nationalistic groups in Norway was debated, however the parliamentarians seemingly did not believe that these attitudes groups were capable of inspiring a racially motivated murder. The murder of Hermansen provided a sufficient shock to change the framework of the debate. The debates of 2001 illustrate that parliamentarians realized that the negative attitudes they had been talking about were a larger threat than what they had believed. The Minister of Municipality, Sylvia Brustad (A), stated;

The horrible event that happened during the weekend [the murder of Hermansen] should not and shall not happen again in Norway.¹⁸⁵

This reaction was quite different to the reaction in the aftermath of the Beheim Karlsen incident of 1999. Except for a comment from MP Holmås (SV) the debate in the aftermath of the Beheim Karlsen case in 1999, could not be classified as a debate about whether or not racially motivated violence was a problem within Norwegian society.¹⁸⁶

The two murderers were self-proclaimed neo-Nazis, however the murder made the parliamentarians understand that wider Norwegian society was not devoid of racist attitudes. This sentiment is traceable in the following statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jagland (A);

¹⁸⁵ Parliamentary proceedings (2000), 31.01: 1691 Translation own

¹⁸⁶ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 05.05: 3033 Translation own

We have seen it, again and again, that racist speeches and racially motivated violence have led to murder. The tragedy of Holmlia has clearly shown that Norway is no longer spared from this.¹⁸⁷

The murder of Hermansen became an incident that forced the parliamentarians to take a more hands-on approach to racism within Norwegian society. The Hermansen case was argued to be proof for the parliamentarians that racism existed within the Norwegian society. MP Lars Sponheim (V) said ‘The racially motivated murder we saw just a short time ago, shocked us all.’¹⁸⁸ This was the first time between 1997 and 2001 that a parliamentarian defined an act *within* the Norwegian state to be an act of racism. There was a set of reasons why the case of Hermansen generated a debate in the parliament. The homicide was an act of *biological* racism. Hermansen was murdered solely because of the colour of his skin. It was a clear case of racism that *could not* be legitimately excused. Due to this, defining the homicide as an act of racially motivated murder was therefore in no way controversial. The labelling of the attack as ‘racist’ was not only uttered but was unanimously employed by parliament. The act of traditional, biological racism made it impossible for any parliamentarian to question whether or not this could be an act of racism. In other words, the death of Hermansen put a face to racism within Norwegian society and this made the concept *biological racism* easier to use. The concept biological racism became a tangible concept that the parliamentarians seemed to be able to use in contrast to earlier debates. Minister of Foreign Affairs Jagland (A) stated that Norway was ‘no longer spared from this’.¹⁸⁹ He also claimed that racism *was* a societal challenge and it was about time that the Parliament should approach this challenge. The Minister of Children and Equality, Karita Bekkemellem Orheim (A), stated that Norway ‘is currently standing at a crossroad with regards to what we recently experienced’.¹⁹⁰ She emphasised the importance of actively preventing the increasing tendencies of racism in the future. It was Jagland and Orheim that expressed their views regarding the murder and how racism should subsequently be understood. The parliament as a whole held a ‘more proactive, action-oriented debate with a stronger will of action in the combat against racism’ MP Odd Einar Dørum (V) stated.¹⁹¹ This battle against racism was perceived to be more important than party politics. As MP Sponheim (V) said;

¹⁸⁷ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 07.02: 1761 Translation own

¹⁸⁸ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 13.02: 1869 Translation own

¹⁸⁹ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 07.02: 1761 Translation own

¹⁹⁰ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 07.02: 1760 Translation own

¹⁹¹ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 28.02: 2421 Translation own

The racially motivated murder we saw recently, shocked us all. It is important that in the fight against racism, the political parties have to rise above fight of party politics. In the battle against racism, social democrats and true liberals in this hall will have to find one other.¹⁹²

Even though racism was proclaimed to be a priority by both the Bondevik and Stoltenberg government, through an analysis of previous White Papers, speeches and debates between 1997 and 2001, this did not appear to be the case in practice. It was rarely regarded as a real threat towards Norwegian society. In the parliamentary debates MP Kristin Halvorsen (SV) claimed the murder to be unacceptable and embarrassing;

It is utterly unacceptable that someone is to be murdered here in Norway, solely because of the colour of their skin [...] and that Norway is not a society that is fighting violence and discrimination as their number one priority.¹⁹³

No matter how much discomfort the parliamentarians felt by using the word racism, the discomfort of not being able to deal with racism within the Norwegian society was more profound. After the change of government in October, a greater optimism was placed behind creating a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Norway. The Declaration of Inauguration created by the new government contained a focus on combating both racial discrimination and racism; an approach that was met with great support by the majority of the parliamentarians. MP Afshan Rafiq (H) stated that he was;

Very happy that the government would focus on this [racism and racial discrimination] as we know there is a lot of racial discrimination within the labour market.¹⁹⁴

Unlike the earlier climate within Parliament, the parliamentarians were able to pinpoint racial discrimination *within* a specific area of society. Although they did not use the word racism, it was clear that the parliamentarians were more comfortable using words connected to the biological aspect of the racial diversity found within Norwegian society. The parliamentarians used a more specific and functional conceptualisation of racism when referring to traditional biological racism. Different to earlier occasions, parliamentarians were able to grasp the problems of racial differentiation by actually defining it as *racial*

¹⁹² Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 13.02: 1869 Translation own

¹⁹³ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 13.02: 1857 Translation own

¹⁹⁴ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 25.10: 107 Translation own

discrimination and consequently being able to call it a problem. Minister of Finance Per Kristian Foss (H) contended that the labour market was an arena where people's attitudes were increasingly visible;

We are initiating special arrangements to develop attitudes to the increased amount of multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity. [...] We are seeing countless examples of people with a different background, outside of the European boarder, who are having problems getting jobs.¹⁹⁵

Minister Foss was more careful in his usage of the word racial discrimination than MP Rafiq. Regardless of his lack of concrete use of the concept racism or racial discrimination in his statement, he did define attitudes towards multi-ethnicity as a problem. It was an acceptance of racial differentiation as a problem within the Norwegian society, both by members of parliament and members of the government. This was unlike the debate before 2001 as the concept was used rather diffusely and did not pinpoint a specific policy area or event.

In 2001, parliamentarians started to debate racism as an *actual physical problem* in Norwegian society, initiating a debate as to where racism derived from. What were the triggers of racism and racially motivated actions? As previously mentioned, the word racism caused discomfort for the parliamentarians. To deal with this sense of discomfort, the majority of the parliamentarians needed to attach racism to a tangible someone or something. This marked the opening of the debate regarding the role of language and more specifically how language could trigger racism. 'One of the main concerns for this debate [regarding racism in Norway]', MP Helge Bjørnsen (SV) suggested;

Should be how to attack state promoted racism. Asylum politics is an area where we balance on a dangerous edge language-wise. It is a minefield where we have to step carefully.¹⁹⁶

What MP Bjørnsen was alluding to, was that they as parliamentarians, were representatives of the Norwegian people and had to lead by example. It had been debated in earlier years as

¹⁹⁵ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 19.12: 1220-1221 Translation own

¹⁹⁶ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 21.02: 2061 Translation own

to how politics can affect the opinions and attitudes with the Norwegian people.¹⁹⁷ However, the debates were tarnished by conflicting opinions and motions were often pushed aside or not debated sufficiently. The debates in 2001 regarding how language and rhetoric could affect Norwegian attitudes were held with a greater degree of urgency. Especially the language and rhetoric used by FrP was debated in a much more direct manner than before. MP Bondevik (KRF) expressed;

Due to the recent horrific, violent incident and killing it has shown how important respect and equality for different ethnic groups are and how important it is to combat racism. [...] How important it is that we all are conscious of how our language conveys respect and equality. FrP have stood out with a language that does not do this.¹⁹⁸

In general, the debate following the homicide of Hermansen, provided a more direct and accusatory approach towards the language used by FrP MPs. As suggested earlier, there had been debates earlier regarding the use of language and the lack of empathy from the MPs from FrP. However, their utterances had not been linked to the increased racist attitudes amongst the Norwegian people. In the immediate aftermath of the Holmlia homicide, the *negative* effects of the language used by the FrP MPs was placed under further scrutiny. MP Andersen (SV) was pointing particularly to the negative focus FrP placed on immigration and asylum politics; ‘the focus of the MPs of FrP regarding the current politics throughout the last years is seen as particularly negative’.¹⁹⁹ The majority of the parliament seemed quite determined to influence the MPs of FrP to change their expressions and negative attitude towards certain policy areas as it was thought to alter racist attitudes in the society. However, FrP was not directly blamed for generating societal racism. It was instead argued that certain sayings and expressions from elected politicians *could have* had a direct effect on the Norwegian people’s moral compass. MP Erna Solberg (H) argued that during the recent years, ‘each and everyone of us have gained a higher threshold of what can be defined as racism in everyday life’²⁰⁰. This statement indicated that rather than directly creating racism, the language used by the parliamentarians had gradually changed what was considered acceptable to say. An example of this could be the claim by MP Jensen that FrP’s response to

¹⁹⁷ Parliamentary proceedings (1998), 11.03. Available from; <https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Publikasjoner/Referater/Stortinget/1997-1998/980311/muntligsporretime/#a3> (Last accessed 05.02.17)

¹⁹⁸ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 13.02: 1871 Translation own

¹⁹⁹ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 23.04: 2646 Translation own

²⁰⁰ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 13.02: 1869 Translation own

increased immigration was one of ‘healthy scepticism’.²⁰¹ In other words, the language and rhetoric of FrP could *normalise* a negative approach to immigration. The MPs of different parties were eager to describe the MPs of FrP as xenophobic and hostile, but *not* racist. Some of the parliamentarians thought that the MPs of FrP had a negative effect on each other as well as the Norwegian population. Speaking of three FrP MPs, MP Solberg (H) stated;

It is a part of Kleppe and Jørn Stang’s competition in the debate with Hagen as to who can hold the most hostile position towards immigration.²⁰²

While MP Ågot Valle’s (SV) referred to FrP as a party of exclusion;

I have a strong feeling that some of FrP’s suggestions are not based upon thoughtfulness, but rather an attempt to draw a separation between them and us.²⁰³

Some parliamentarians feared political fallout from the Danish election campaign during the autumn. This concern placed particular emphasis on the language of the Danish politicians. It was asserted that the language used by the politicians *promoted* political views of scepticism towards other cultures and ethnicities.²⁰⁴ Although the reason for this scepticism was due to the terrorist attack of 9/11, it was a worry amongst the Norwegian parliamentarians that the usage of language could be a trigger or contribute to the creation of xenophobia, fear and racism within the Norwegian population. MP Jagland (A) was one of the parliamentarians who showed concern with regards to this. This was apparent in one Jagland’s questions put to the Minister of Foreign Affairs;

What thoughts do you have regarding the election campaign, has it been strongly influenced by xenophobia and racism and to what extent have several parties used the terrorist attack of 9/11 for this purpose?²⁰⁵

After the murder, it was not only language and its effect on racism that were debated in the parliament. MP Shahbaz Tariq (A) argued that by looking at the recent event, one could

²⁰¹ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 13.10: 144 Translation own

²⁰² Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 11.06: 3559 Translation own

²⁰³ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 12.06: 3708 Translation own

²⁰⁴ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 21.11: 338/ Vartdal, Åsa.(20.11.01) Fremmedhets i dansk valgkamp. *NRK*. Accessible from;

http://www.nrk.no/programmer/tv_arkiv/redaksjon_21/1451301.html (last accessed 05.03.17)

²⁰⁵ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 21.11: 338 Translation own

detect that racism had surfaced on several levels;

One cannot fight these types of [racist] attitudes with words only, you also need actions and measures that prevent and combat racism.²⁰⁶

MP Tariq's statement indicated that racism was not only found in language, but the murder showed that the racism was so entrenched within some people that they were willing to kill for it. Through the debates in the Parliament it appeared that the understanding of racism and how it manifested itself in Norwegian society had changed. The concept of biological racism seemed more tangible than before. However, this also accounted for a new way to combat racism as well. In the earlier debates, between 1997 and 2000, I have accounted for a centralised and structural approach to tackle racism. The understanding of the concept was based on moral values, where the welfare state was given the main task of dealing with the issue. The moral measurement of racism as pure evil made it problematic to introduce any direct and concrete actions, because it was very difficult and uncomfortable to define an event or a statement as racism. The homicide of Hermansen seemed to shift the responsibility of combating racism over to local communities as well as municipalities. MP Marit Arnstad (SP) stated;

I see that the government will combat racism and racial discrimination in an active way[...] Let me add that when I meet young people from Holmlia in Oslo they say that they are still scared. That's why I want to encourage the focus on local initiatives around them and their community.²⁰⁷

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jagland (A) also embraced a local initiative approach;

The government is urging the importance of promoting awareness to change racist, violent and authoritarian attitudes. [...] Especially the local communities have to be able to meet these challenges.²⁰⁸

The local communities were deemed to be closer to the people and could therefore provided a platform more adept in dealing directly with the challenges of xenophobia and racism. The 'new' approach to combating racism was not directly to leave the welfare state approach behind, but rather to extend it to a more local level. MP Dørum (V) pointed to several policy

²⁰⁶ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 22.02: 2083 Translation own

²⁰⁷ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 04.12: 577 Translation own

²⁰⁸ Parliamentary Proceedings (2001), 07.02: 1761 Translation own

areas that were seen as vital in the racism battle; ‘culture, religion and sports, equality and a focus on children’.²⁰⁹ Parliamentarians’ placed a special emphasis on local sports clubs and cultural activities as a measure to fight intolerance, racism and xenophobia amongst youths.²¹⁰ The role of the local public schools, in particular the mandatory subject *Kristendom Religion og Livssyn* (KRL) were considered to be vital in building knowledge and creating tolerance and understanding for the different religions, cultures and beliefs. MP Rikke Lind (A) also stated that ‘by understanding our own identity and culture, it is easier to meet other cultures’.²¹¹ The approach towards racism amongst Norway’s youth population was given a special focus as they were considered to be most impressionable and hence vulnerable to racist attitudes. As Prime Minister Stoltenberg (A) stated;

The Holmlia homicide was not a lone misdeed, but rather a reminder that it is possible to get lost in Norwegian society. In the blind spots of the community, it is possible to build prejudice, rage and hatred.²¹²

The focus on youth could also be emphasised in this quote from the Minister of Education, Research and Church Affairs, Trond Giske (A) who said;

I am very worried regarding the developments we have seen within the right-wing extremist environment over the last 10-15 years and especially in how they are attracting young teenagers.²¹³

This was not only a concern held by the party in government, however also MP Finn Kristian Marthinsen (KRF) also suggested that the Government and Parliament both had to do whatever they could do to ‘counteract the tendency which has been visible amongst the young Norwegian teens’.²¹⁴

There were however some parts of the debate regarding racism that failed to change. The Bondevik II government was criticised for being big with words but small in action when countering racism. This was visible in the following statement by MP Inge Ryan (SV);

²⁰⁹ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 28.03: 2421 Translation own

²¹⁰ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 04.04: 2556 – 2557 Translation own

²¹¹ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 23.04: 2679 Translation own

²¹² Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 13.02: 1857 Translation own

²¹³ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 07.02: 1783 Translation own

²¹⁴ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 07.02: 1783 Translation own

It is not the lack of words from the government, nor from the parliament that is the problem [with regards to racism in the society]. It is the lack of action that is the major problem here.²¹⁵

This implied that even though the murder of Hermansen did bring racism into the parliamentary discourse, it did not necessarily create any *action*. This could have been an indication that the murder of Hermansen was seen as a *one-time* event that was not likely to be repeated and therefore not worth prioritising funding on. In spite of a lack of action, the call for action was *demande*d with a higher frequency in the parliamentary debates than before. MP Arnstad (SP) highlighted that the debate had been driven in the wrong direction;

We are neglecting the debate regarding prevention and are instead focusing on the debate of reparations.²¹⁶

MP Arnstad pointed to a very important part of the racism debate as a whole. The topic of racism and the threat it posed towards Norwegian society seemed to be debated only when it was *too late*. The debate seemed to be too uncomfortable, too unimportant or just not possible to take *before* something happened, an event that forced the parliamentarians to debate it.

Although focus had shifted away from the moral dimension of racism, it still remained within the debates, consequently hindering a full exploration of the concept's contours. Even though the death of Hermansen changed how seriously racism within Norwegian society was understood, it only went so far as to denounce biological racism. It still remained a central feature of the parliamentary debate on racism to separate the moral repulsiveness of racist acts from racist attitudes held within Norwegian society.²¹⁷ The moral element of the debate can be detected in this quote from MP Arild Lund (H);

This is an important act of recognition, where we are standing together as a society, strongly condemning racism and discrimination.²¹⁸

Also the newly appointed Minister of Finance Foss (H) claimed that 'racism is not an acceptable trait to hold within the Norwegian welfare state.'²¹⁹ This implied that racism, as a

²¹⁵ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 25.10: 109 Translation own

²¹⁶ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 04.12: 576 Translation own

²¹⁷ Parliamentary proceedings (2000), 04.12: 904/ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 07.12: 930

²¹⁸ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 20.02: 2007 Translation own

phenomenon was still a moral issue in conflict with fundamental Norwegian values. And even though the homicide in Holmlia did create an instant disbelief and changed some of the approaches to deal with traditional racism on a short-term basis, it did not mean that it provided a new understanding of what racism was and how it should be dealt with in the long-term.

²¹⁹ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 19.12: 1221 Translation own

Chapter V – The long-term effects

This chapter will aim to delineate how the racism debates following the death of Hermansen altered over a broader period of time. This chapter will be based upon the parliamentary proceedings between January 2002 and September 2005. The chapter will first account for the challenges of observing the long-term changes of a debate. The next section will act as bridge, showing how the implications of the short-term debates helped create a platform for the long-term debates. The analytical sections of this chapter will take a chronological approach, starting with an elaboration of the political, economic and social context of the debates and then account for how racism was understood and debated in the Parliament.

5.1. Long-term changes versus short-term changes

Focussing on the broader trends of the debate and how one specific event affected the wider debate provides other challenges than when assessing the short-term changes. First of all, short-term changes have the benefit of temporal proximity to the event. The closer the debate was to the actual event, the more publicity and focus the event gets. Hagelund claimed that a result of an event gaining focus and publicity is that it is easier to get consensus in the parliament because the parliamentarians are more likely to have a common understanding of the situation.²²⁰ In other words, the longer time between an event and a debate, the more distant the memories, feelings and affiliations become. As stated previously, the debate in the Norwegian parliament is highly driven by consensus and a concrete event such as a murder makes it easier to achieve this consensus. A second aspect in accounting for long-term changes reflects how the debate in the Parliament was driven by a surrounding context. The debates in the Parliament do not occur in a hermetically sealed chamber but are rather influenced by issues within the national and international arena. It is therefore impossible to state that *one* event alone changed the course of the understanding of racism. Consequently, to detect what effect the murder of Hermansen did or did not have on a long-term basis I will focus on the short-term changes accounted for in chapter IV to see if these shifts had changed the debate in the long run.

²²⁰ Hagelund. (2004): 4-6

5.2. What changes?

Chapter IV emphasised the important aspect of the Holmlia murder as an act of traditional, biological racism that affected the way parliamentarians were debating about a specific type of racism. However, the concept of racism as a whole was not necessarily changed. Additionally, there were three apparent changes worth mentioning that were altered on a short-term basis in the Parliamentary debate after the murder of Hermansen. Firstly, the homicide in Holmlia contributed to a common understanding that racism did *exist* and posed a threat to Norwegian society.²²¹ Secondly, it changed how parliamentarians understood the *role of language* as a possible trigger for racially motivated acts.²²² Finally, the homicide in Holmlia moved the focus away from a centralised approach in combating racism and led to the embrace of local community and municipality initiatives instead. As a result, the *local initiatives* became the main tool in combating racism.²²³

5.3. 2002-2003

5.3.1. The political, economic and social context

On 1 July 2002 the Bondevik II government published the ‘Handlingsplan mot rasisme og diskriminering’ (Action plan against racism and discrimination). The action plan stated that over the last 15 years, the immigrant population in Norway had grown from 3 % to 6,6 %.²²⁴ This provided the Norwegian state with new challenges regarding how they should adapt to a much higher degree of multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity, presenting a contrast to the previous ethnical and culturally homogenous Norwegian population. The debate regarding racism and racial discrimination within the labour market and housing market from 2001 continued into the years 2002 and 2003.²²⁵ The Minister of Education, Kristin Clemet (H) stated that there were ‘*huge* problems in the Norwegian Schools regarding bullying and racism’.²²⁶ Culture-Norway seemed to be challenged with racism and racial discrimination as well. MP Valle (SV) stated;

²²¹ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 07.02: 1761

²²² Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 13.02: 1871/ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 23.04: 2646

²²³ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 04.04: 2556 – 2557/ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 28.03: 2421

²²⁴ Regjeringen. (2002) *Handlingsplan mot rasisme og diskriminering*. Accessible from: <https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kilde/krd/pla/2002/0001/ddd/pdfv/157060-handlingsplan.pdf> (Last accessed 05.03.17)

²²⁵ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 29.05: 2896

²²⁶ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 20.03: 2059 Translation own

Institutionalized racism exists within Norwegian cultural life. Artists from other traditions than the Western or Norwegian are not being accepted, solely, because of their background.²²⁷

In addition to the problems associated with multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity, the unemployment rate in Norway was on the rise throughout 2002 and 2003.²²⁸ During the Bondevik II government, the number of unemployed went up from 60 000 up to 100 000.²²⁹

At the international level, instability in Russia, Ukraine, Somalia and Yugoslavia led an increased amount of immigration. The US-lead coalition force intervened in Iraq in 2003, an incident that resulted in yet further immigrants. Additionally, on 21 January 2002 a murder in Sweden generated a significant response in Norway. The Swedish-Kurdish national, Fadima Şahindal was killed by her own father in response to her living together with her Swedish boyfriend.²³⁰ Şahindal was the victim of an honour killing, a result of her father's rage against Şahindal's choice not to marry a Kurdish man, but to co-habitate with a white, non-Muslim Swede.

5.3.2. The debates

The further away from the homicide in Holmlia, the less the event is specifically mentioned. However, I suggest that Hermansen's murder was pivotal in structuring future racism debates. Firstly, the focus on local initiative in the combat against racism played an increasingly central role. Secondly, the focus on how the language of the political parties could increase racism, negative attitudes and also legitimate racial discrimination was still actively debated in this period. However, one aspect of debating racism in this period did change when compared to the direct aftermath of the murder. Throughout 2002 and 2003, the debate once again became *increasingly* moralistic and focused on a normative and idealistic goal of constructing a harmonious multicultural and multi-ethnic state.

²²⁷ Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 09.10: 123 Translation own

²²⁸ Statistisk Sentral Byrå. *Arbeidsledige i prosent av arbeidsstyrken* Available from; <http://www.ssb.no/a/aarbok/tab/tab-221.html> (Last accessed 27.04.17)/Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 20.02: 2025/ Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 20.02: 1992

²²⁹ Statistisk Sentralbyrå *Arbeidsledige i prosent av arbeidsstyrken* /Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 26.02: 2100/ Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 13.05: 2789

²³⁰ Norström, Camilla. Fadime, 26, sköts ihjäl för sin kärlek. Aftonbladet. Available from; <http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article10254792.ab> (Last accessed 19.04.17)

The importance of local initiatives were strongly emphasised in the aftermaths of the Holmlia homicide. Focusing on local initiatives was promoted as more viable method of protect the parts of the Norwegian society, which the parliamentarians considered to be most vulnerable; children and young adults. Although this was apparent in the debate of 2001, it was now emphasised as a *vital* aspect of combating racism throughout 2002 and 2003. This was visible in the statement made by MP Nybakk (AP);

After the racially motivated homicide at Holmlia in Oslo there was a broad political agreement; children and young adults in their local communities would become an area of increased importance.²³¹

There were several local initiatives that were promoted throughout the period; some within the control of the municipalities, such as the use of local schools as promoters of inclusive and tolerant values. The focus on school as a combatant against racism enjoyed a broad consensus in the parliamentary debates. MP Rune Skjælaasen (SP) declared; ‘School is a hugely important tool in the battle against racism.’²³² Prime Minister Bondevik, said that the local school, together with the children’s families had a significant job in ‘creating a safe environment where bullying, racism and violence is unacceptable.’²³³ The Norwegian schools seemed to be the main promoter of what was defined as Norwegian social democratic values; ‘equality, solidarity and tolerance’.²³⁴ School was supposed to guide and shape the Norwegian youth into accepting a Norwegian way of life that was based upon inclusion as opposed to exclusion. This was apparent in the statement made by MP Arne Lyngstad (KrF);

School is not only an institution for knowledge, but also an institution with the responsibility of turning children into proper human beings.²³⁵

In addition to encouraging the municipalities to use schools in the battle against racism, both sports and culture were pointed out as fundamental tools that could be used to distance children and young adults from groups who disseminated negative attitudes. Such groups were considered to collide with Norwegian values and by turning children towards sports and

²³¹ Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 22.10: 255-256 Translation own

²³² Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 06.02: 1757 Translation own

²³³ Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 13.03: 1929 Translation own

²³⁴ Parliamentary proceedings (2000), 04.12: 904/ Parliamentary proceedings (1999), 07.12: 930 Translation own

²³⁵ Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 18.03: 2013 Translation own

culture clubs it was hoped that the flow or racial hatred could be stymied. Vulnerable youths who turned to violence (whether racially or non-racially motivated) could instead channel their energy upon sports and cultural activities. The campaign ‘Give racism a red card’ was initiated by the organisation *Norsk Folkehjelp* and *Norske Idrettsutøveres Sentralorganisasjon* and enjoyed widespread support, both economically and morally from the Norwegian Parliament.²³⁶ Several local sports teams, in particular football and hockey teams, were involved in this campaign. The aim of the campaign was to attract children and youth into sports of their ethnic background and cultural connections. The main goal was to promote values of inclusiveness, team spirit and tolerance by using the symbols and terminology that were already a normative feature in sports as a means to tackle racism in the sports arena. These campaigns were applauded by numerous parliamentarians. MP Giske (A) described the initiative as a ‘very important instrument to tackle racist remarks connected to sport.’²³⁷ He also declared the campaign ‘as a success.’²³⁸ Minister of Culture and Church, Valgerd Svarstad Haugland (KrF) described the project as;

An example of work that is visibly changing attitudes at a local level. The campaign also managed to mobilise sportsmen to show their attitudes against racism.²³⁹

The focus on the connection between language and attitudes of racism continued into 2002 and 2003. The debate was based on the disagreement regarding what was understood as racism. MP Kjell Engebretsen (A) stated; ‘it is both a political disagreement of what to do[about racism] and a disagreement of what the reality is.’²⁴⁰ The MPs of FrP continued to receive a significant amount of comments by the other parliamentarians regarding both their use rhetoric and language. MP Trine Skei Grande (V) noted;

The exceptional factor of FrP is that they are operating within a general atmosphere of suspiciousness and reluctance against people from other countries and their level of precision is rather low, most of the time. [...] We are often experiencing a [debating] environment filled with suspiciousness, intolerance and generalisation that FrP, has unfortunately contributed towards.²⁴¹

²³⁶ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 13.11: 412

²³⁷ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 13.11: 412-413 Translation own

²³⁸ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 13.11: 413 Translation own

²³⁹ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 13.11: 412-413 Translation own

²⁴⁰ Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 11.02: 1817 Translation own

²⁴¹ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 18.04: 2300 Translation own

FrP was viewed to have a ‘the show must go on- attitude to contesting a more multicultural and multi-ethnic society’, MP André Dahl (H) stated in a debate.²⁴² The general opinion of FrP’s use of rhetoric and language was that the MPs were aiming to create as many headlines in the newspapers as possible. The MPs of FrP became increasingly irritated throughout the debates. Annoyance was visible when MP Per Sandberg (FrP) said; ‘I thought we were past these types of debates where FrP was accused of promoting xenophobia’.²⁴³ He also expressed that he was tired of people who defined FrP as a ‘right-wing extremist and/or racist party’.²⁴⁴ Although Sandberg claimed to be defined as both right-wing extremist and racist, it was not a view actively expressed during the parliamentary debates of 2002 and 2003. The closest FrP came to being defined as racist was when MP Holmås (SV) asked if FrP wanted to

Implement a racially motivated legislation that only permitted immigration from within the western culture sphere?²⁴⁵

Regardless of continued claims of racially motivated legislations, intolerance and suspiciousness, the party was not *defined* as racist nor seen as a direct danger with regards to triggering xenophobia and racism within society. This was a continuation of the norm dominating the debates before the Holmlia homicide. It continued to cause great discomfort to use the racism concept towards a specific person or group. And as a continuation of the debate in the aftermaths of the murder, MP Dahl (H) claimed that despite their rhetoric and language, ‘I do not perceive [MP and party leader] Hagen and FrP as dangerous in itself.’²⁴⁶ The debate regarding a party being understood as racist or not, was connected to the underlying problem of not having a set definition of the concept racism. What FrP called protective and careful with regards to their policies for ‘folk flest’, were understood as tendencies of xenophobia and/or racist by other members of the parliament.²⁴⁷ However, during the debate in the immediate aftermath of the murder the other parties talked more frequently about FrP’s rhetoric and language and what power of influence it had on the population’s attitudes as a whole. During the debates of 2002 and 2003, however FrP was *not* viewed as a serious contributor to increased racism within Norwegian society, but they were

²⁴² Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 11.02: 1809 Translation own

²⁴³ Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 11.02: 1811 Translation own

²⁴⁴ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 21.02: 1656 Translation own

²⁴⁵ Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 06.10: 45 Translation own

²⁴⁶ Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 11.02: 1810 Translation own

²⁴⁷ The slogan of FrP ‘for folk flest’ means ‘for most people’.

rather viewed as a humouring contribution to debates as MP Engebretsen (A) said; ‘A debate program without MP Hagen is lacking an [entertaining] element.’²⁴⁸

The murder of Swedish-Kurdish Fadima Şahindal in 2002 fuelled a debate both in the public as well as in the parliament with regards to where the boundary of government intervention lay in the culture of the immigrants. How much did the new residents need to adjust to Norway’s norms and culture and how much did the state have to demand for them to change? MPs of FrP in particular saw this murder as proof of their longstanding belief that immigrants were neither willing nor able to adjust to the Scandinavian way of life. Some MPs claimed that the current policies towards immigrants and integration were too naïve.²⁴⁹ This turned into a debate as to whether some traditions were representative of an entire group versus the ability to see the difference between a tradition within a group and the group as a whole. Although FrP stated their attitude to be that of healthy scepticism, the opinion of the majority in the parliament seemed to be well presented by MP Lars Rise (KrF);

The problem is that you are attacking an entire culture and are demanding a full change of traditions which are not *only* evil [...] We have to do something with regards to attitudes in the Norwegian population. This has been mentioned several times.²⁵⁰

The debate developed into a debate regarding micro aggressions within Norwegian society. The problem that was apparent in the aftermaths of the homicide in Holmlia became apparent again; as MP Knut Storberget (A) stated;

The main problem in these debates are that we are only taking the debate when a tragic event occurs [...] We still have a Norwegian championship in coming up with more or less subtle suggestions which are derailing the debate and creating an even bigger gap between the problem [of racism and negative attitudes] and the solution.²⁵¹

The problem with discussing micro aggressions within society seemed to be connected to the broader problem associated with racism; a lack of a set definition. Without a commonly understood definition of the concept, it is very difficult to hold someone culpable for their

²⁴⁸ Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 11.02: 1817 Translation own

²⁴⁹ Parliamentary proceedings (2003), 11.02: 1804/ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 21.02: 1659

²⁵⁰ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 21.02: 1656 Translation own

²⁵¹ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 21.02: 1658 Translation own

actions or attitudes. Once an event happens and triggers certain attitudes it becomes easier to have an opinion about it. Micro aggressions are regarded as the most challenging to define as it is very contextual, both for the person expressing the statements and also the people and groups which the statement is aimed at. The response towards such a debate in parliament was a turn towards moralism. This was visible in the statement by MP Arne Lyngstad (KrF); ‘the fight against micro-aggression has to be fought everyday.’²⁵² However, MP Lyngstad did not explain nor suggest how this should be carried out. The morality of the debate created a clear division between FrP and the rest of the parties. During these debates the MPs of FrP considered themselves to be pushed against a metaphorical wall of morality. As MP Sandberg (FrP) stated;

We have at several occasions tried to warn about the possible problems of immigration and have consequently been viewed as racists.²⁵³

It was clear by the debate that both groups wanted the same thing; a harmonious and tolerant society. However, it was a clash in the way both discourses viewed the path to the goal. FrP had previously expressed through several debates between the year of 1997 and 2003 that they were sceptical towards the increasing amount of immigrants residing in Norway. MP Jan Arild Ellingsen (FrP) stated;

The murder of Fadima must be seen as a wake-up call. Why does a murder have to happen before we wake up? [...] We have to talk about what we think is uncomfortable [...] and put forwards demands, which should be respected by all.²⁵⁴

These statements by FrP were strongly contested in the parliament by the other parties as they considered it to absolve the Norwegian population and the Norwegian state from holding negative racial attitudes. MP Andersen (SV) claimed that;

It is important to turn the gaze towards one self and see that the attitudes that we are experiencing now, no matter if they are based upon cultural, racial or religion justification, exist everywhere. Also within Norwegian society.²⁵⁵

²⁵² Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 24.10: 291 Translation own

²⁵³ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 21.02: 1656 Translation own

²⁵⁴ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 21.02: 1659 Translation own

²⁵⁵ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 21.02: 1665 Translation own

MP Andersen's statement was met with a lot of support by the participants in the debate, and was backed by MP Hove (H);

I think in this debate [regarding racism and racial discrimination in the population] it is not just a question regarding other people's attitudes and culture. But also the attitudes and culture held by the Norwegian people.²⁵⁶

These statements displayed that the Norwegian people were no longer understood with the same type of innocence as before the murder of Hermansen. Norwegians were clearly understood by several parliamentarians to be capable of having racist attitudes.

5.4. 2004 -2005

5.4.1. The political, economic and social context

The on-going arrival of immigrants influenced a continuing debate on the challenges accounted for in the last section. The government deemed the challenges sufficiently serious to create yet another 'White Paper' regarding multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity in Norway.²⁵⁷ The White Paper generated a polarising discussion in parliament as to what measures should be implemented to promote integration and combat racism. In addition to the new White Paper, concrete steps were taken to improve the integration of refugees and immigrants in Norway. Placing a special emphasis on language as one of the most important aspects of integration, an Introduction Program was implemented and set as a mandatory activity for the new residents.²⁵⁸ To combat racial discrimination, a committee compiled suggestions in order to formulate new integration policies.²⁵⁹ During the year of 2004, the Norwegian police experienced a large number of complaints related to ethnical discrimination. The acts of discrimination were so compelling that the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance recommended that the Norwegian state create a system to supervise the frequency of police checks on individuals, and thus determine if police actions

²⁵⁶ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 21.02: 1657 Translation own

²⁵⁷ Kommunal og Arbeidsdepartementet. (2004) *Mangfold gjennom inkludering og deltakelse*. In White Paper no. 49 (2003/2004). [Oslo]:[Regjeringen]

²⁵⁸ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 10.02: 1773

²⁵⁹ Kommunal- og regionaldepartementet (2005) *Lov om forbud mot diskriminering på grunn av etnisitet, religion mv. (diskrimineringsloven)*. Accessible from; <https://lovdata.no/dokument/LTI/lov/2005-06-03-33> (last accessed 09.03.17)

amounted to racial discrimination.²⁶⁰ This resulted in a parliamentary debate where parliamentarians debated a potential change in the Norwegian Constitution, adding a clause to more adequately account for systematic and unsystematic racial discrimination. During late 2004 and early 2005 the activity of Norwegian right-wing extremist groups underwent an increase for the first time since the murder of Hermansen.²⁶¹ Following the murder numerous right-wing extremist groups had disbanded or gone into hiding. In 2005 they were once again gaining momentum within some sections of society. This could be viewed as an indication of increasingly negative (and possibly racial) attitudes within Norwegian society.

During the years of 2004 and 2005 the world experienced an increased amount of large-scale terrorist attacks. On March 11, 2004, a set of bombs that killed 191 people and hurt an estimate of 2000 people in Madrid, Spain.²⁶² In September of the same year a group of Chechen separatists held 1300 school children hostage in Beslan, Russia for two days. The situation resulted in the death of 331 civilians. The hostage takers increased hostilities between Chechnya and Russia as well as increasing the already tense situation between Muslims and ‘the rest’ of the world. On the 7 July 2005 this relationship further deteriorated when three Muslims performed a terror attack on the London Underground. The attack resulted in the death of 56 civilians and approximately 400 casualties.²⁶³ The re-election of George W. Bush as the American president in 2004 led to the continuation of the War on Terror.²⁶⁴ In 2004 The French government suggested denying the use of the hijab in the French secular school system. This was defined as a ‘suppression and a misunderstanding of what equality and similarity are’ by the Norwegian MP Jon Lilletun (KrF).²⁶⁵ Throughout 2004 and 2005 the situation in Israel-Palestine became increasingly hostile and was considered by some members of parliament to have created an increase in anti-Semitism

²⁶⁰ European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (2008), *ECRI Report on Norway* (Fourth Monitoring Cycle. CRI (2009) 4, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/49e8891af.html> (last accessed 27.04.17)/ International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (2004). *International Helsinki Federation Annual Report on Human Rights Violations: Norway*. Available from; <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4692446dd.html> (Last accessed 27.04.17)

²⁶¹ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 30.11: 593/Nærland, Mina. Jeg er ikke rasist, men...*Dagbladet*.07.09.05 Accessible from; <http://www.dagbladet.no/magasinet/2005/09/07/442630.html> (last accessed 10.03.17)

²⁶² Aune, Oddvin.(26.12.09a) Dødsbølgen. *NRK*. Accessible from; <https://www.nrk.no/nyheter/nyhetsaret-2004-1.6912941> (Last accessed 09.03.17)

²⁶³ Aune, Oddvin.(27.12.09b) New Orleans drunker. *NRK*. Accessible from; <https://www.nrk.no/nyheter/nyhetsaret-2005-1.6912978> (Last accessed 09.03.17)

²⁶⁴ Aune (2009a)

²⁶⁵ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 29.02: 1655 Translation own

across the European continent, yet another event that would impact the racism debate within Norway.²⁶⁶

5.4.2. The debates

The White Paper no. 43 placed an increased focus on including and embracing cultural and ethnical diversity.²⁶⁷ This became apparent in the debate in the Parliament between 2004 and 2005. The debates became more normative and idealistic when debating the idea of an inclusive welfare state, and an inclusive business and cultural life. In chapter IV, I suggested that the Norwegian Parliament adopted a centralized and structural approach to deal with the diffuse concept of racism between 1997 and 2000. The concept was based on normative values, where the centralised welfare state was given the main task of dealing with racism. Through analysing the Parliamentary sessions of 2004 and 2005, it is evident that the debate once again took a turn towards this approach. The importance of local initiatives that had dominated the debates between 2001 and 2003 had almost disappeared in the debates of 2004 and 2005.

Instead of debating combating racism through local initiatives, the focus of 2004 and 2005 increasingly focussed on the *law* as a tool against racism. On the 30 September 2004 a key debate was held in the Parliament. This debate was centred around a change of the Norwegian constitution to make the Racism paragraph more functional and stricter. The debate contemplated a liberal dilemma between ‘freedom of speech and protecting the individual.’²⁶⁸ Or in other words, what should be the absolute in a society; ‘freedom of speech or human rights?’²⁶⁹ The debate resulted in a *change* of the Constitution to protect *against* racist and hateful expressions by making the responsible individual liable for the defamation of a group or individual.²⁷⁰ The discussed change was regarding paragraph 100 and how absolute the freedom of speech should be.²⁷¹ Should freedom of speech be more important than the inclusiveness of combating racism?²⁷² The thought behind the change was

²⁶⁶ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 29.01: 1646

²⁶⁷ Kommunal and Arbeidsdepartementet. (2004)

²⁶⁸ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 30.09: 3597 Translation own

²⁶⁹ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 30.09: 3594 Translation own

²⁷⁰ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 30.09: 3588

²⁷¹ Kongshaven, Halvor (2004) *Endring av grunnloven*. Accessible from; <http://www.ub.uib.no/avdeling/jur/arkiv/grunnloven2004.htm> (Last accessed 06.03.17)

²⁷² Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 30.09: 3597 Translation own

the same as had been discussed before; do racially motivated statements lead to and encourage racially motivated acts? The commission put together to determine this concluded there was a strong correlation between attitudes, statements and action.²⁷³ The nature of the debate was of a highly normative character and placed emphasis on how Norwegian law needs to be compliant with the values of the Norwegian society and the Norwegian state. MP Jon Lilletun (KrF) stated; ‘this process and debate that has gathered so many, is the Norwegian Parliament at its best’.²⁷⁴ It was also stated, by MP Grande, that even the tolerant state of Norway ‘should have a wide tolerance, but not without limits’.²⁷⁵ The need to change the constitution was a result of two factors; first, the need to find a common definition and understanding of racism and racial discrimination. Secondly, the existing law was considered to not be in compliance with the values of Norwegian politics and society. There were several cases mentioned by the parliamentarians where the existing law was understood as too diffuse and insufficiently functional. The following statement by MP Dahl (H) summarized some of the key arguments and particular cases;

One argument in favour of protecting the existing law is that we have to tolerate racially motivated statements. I want to ask the question; who has to tolerate these statements? [...] It is, in my opinion not a human right to express the most vile, racist and threatening statements. [...] Especially not anonymously, such as those that can be seen in the local newspaper *Romerikes Blad* where SMS’ with questionable content were published. The case of Arve Beheim Karlsen is another example where our current legislation has not been efficient enough.²⁷⁶

However, the case of Hermansen was not debated in this matter. The murder of Hermansen had been a *clear act* of racially motivated violence. The murderers of Hermansen had been judged according to the existing law in 2001 and both culprits had been put in prison for their actions. Due to this, there is no reason to believe that the discussion about changing the constitution was a result of the murder of Hermansen.

However, the law was not the only focus of the debate regarding racism in 2004 and 2005 as MP Arnøy (SV) stated;

²⁷³ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 30.09: 3588 Translation own

²⁷⁴ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 30.09: 3592 Translation own

²⁷⁵ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 30.09: 3598 Translation own

²⁷⁶ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 30.09: 3602 Translation own

Legislation is not the only tool to combat racism. In my opinion, some of the attitudes being expressed in this building or on the debating program *Holmgang* by respected politicians have been far more dangerous in terms of creating racism than what extremists such as Terje Sjølie²⁷⁷, e.g., have said. Although, I am not planning on prohibiting these types of attitudes.²⁷⁸

The focus on the rhetoric and language of MPs of FrP as promoting different degrees of negative attitudes was a continuing debate in the Parliament. FrP was seemingly seen as both an unserious contributor to the parliamentary debates, but also a perturbing influence outside the parliament. MP Steinar Bastensen (*Kystpartiet*, KP) suggested that ‘*Fremskrittspartiet* is the party that is riding the highest on the wave of xenophobia’²⁷⁹. Bastensen stated that FrP was using the racial, cultural and ethnical tension intentionally in the debates to gain votes. This was a continuation of the previous debate regarding *Fremskrittspartiet*’s rhetorical and language-based connection to racism and xenophobia. The normative aspect of the debate became even more idealistic throughout the debate of 2004 and 2005. The importance for the different parties to separate themselves from the values and policies that FrP represented was apparent in the statement made by MP Grande (V);

The main divider in the debate regarding immigration and integration is, as is usually the case, is between FrP and the rest of this hall. However, they are claiming to be the only party that are sincerely considering taking the challenges within this field seriously. That is wrong. They are involved with the battle, but the party is generalising in their statements and have a generally negative and moralising approach to the field.²⁸⁰ [...] What FrP should be applauded for is their ability to point to problems, not solving them.²⁸¹

MP Grande was not the only MP separating her party from FrP throughout this period. MP Rafiq (H) declared that he was ‘thrilled that FrP are alone in their excluding culture and political views.’²⁸² MP Andersen (SV) also made a point of separating his party from FrP; ‘in SV we are a lot less anguished in our views with regards to immigration than what FrP seems to be.’²⁸³

²⁷⁷ Previous leader of the Neo-Nazi group *Boot Boys*.

²⁷⁸ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 30.09: 3604 Translation own

²⁷⁹ Parliamentary proceedings (2005), 13.06: 2830 Translation own

²⁸⁰ Parliamentary proceedings (2005), 31.05: 2486 Translation own

²⁸¹ Parliamentary proceedings (2005), 31.05: 2487 Translation own

²⁸² Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 01.04: 2420 Translation own

²⁸³ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 08.06: 3209 Translation own

As a response to the segregation that unfolded outside the Norwegian borders there appeared to be an even greater focus on unification and societal harmony within the debates. When the parliament debated prohibiting the use of the hijab in school, the debate was based on moral and normative values. While the majority promoted the values of solidarity, tolerance and humanity, FrP desired to keep Norwegian culture as static as possible, as reflected in this statement by MP Simonsen;

Norway has been a Christian country through more than 1000 years of tradition, history and culture. In a period where our entire western civilization is under pressure from foreign religions and cultures, it is more important than ever to use Christianity as a background to defend our Norwegian culture, history and traditions.²⁸⁴

The more inhospitable the outside world seemed, the more idealistic and moralistic the debates regarding racism became, as was apparent in MP Holstad's (KrF) statement;

National security is not just about skills, it is about an attitude, to have a willingness to care about each other in everyday life.²⁸⁵

Throughout 2004 and 2005, the debates regarding racial discrimination were more efficient than before. It proved easier to gain a consensus and define something as racial discrimination or biological racism as it was connected to the colour of someone's skin. The murder of Hermansen seemed to have helped pinpoint that racism existed in Norwegian society, but it was limited to the biological, traditional type. The difficult complexities surrounding racism occurs when it comes to defining something as a micro aggressions or the newer form of racism that is grounded in culture. As the latter aspect was becoming a more prominent facet of society, it remained an equally uncomfortable and diffuse concept. Although the MP Skjælaaen (SP) stated that:

As mentioned the Minister of Justice has been quite clear on the dangers of stigmatising groups.[...] The politicians' practice of stigmatising people from some countries can lead to broader issues of stigmatisation within Norwegian society.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ Parliamentary proceedings (2005), 12.04: 2019 Translation own

²⁸⁵ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 30.11: 602 Translation own

²⁸⁶ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 11.02: 1831 Translation own

Although clearly aware of the dangers of stigmatizing groups, the parliamentarians considered it unnecessary or undesirable to define certain statements made by FrP MPs to be connected to micro aggressions or cultural racism. Other than a more direct use the concept of racial discrimination parliamentarians were still very cautious when using the words racism and racist in general. A statement by Bjørklund (SV) showed that it was only in their boldest moments that the term was alluded to:

*Fremskrittspartiet and MP Hagen are using a lot of energy to promote terrorism as an immense threat to Norwegian society and that this threat is coming from one group of people, as FrP says: actors who are connected to political Islam, often referred to as Islamists. I would advise everyone that it is unwise to generalise a larger group of people such as MP Hagen does.*²⁸⁷

²⁸⁷ Parliamentary proceedings (2004), 30.11: 593 Translation own

Chapter VI - Conclusion

In this thesis I have answered the following research question; *Did the murder of Benjamin Hermansen change the way racism was debated and understood within the Norwegian Parliament?* I have used the interpretive method, discourse analysis as a methodological guide to analyse the debates in the Parliament. Inspired by Wetherell and Potter's approach I have used discourse analysis as a framework to help me *identify* the way Norwegian parliamentarians *argued, legitimised, justified and understood* the concept racism between 1997 and 2005.

6.1. Did it change or not?

As the analysis in Chapter IV and V suggest, the way racism was debated and understood in the aftermath of the Holmlia case both changed and remained static. The debates in the parliament *changed* with regards to how *biological* racism was debated and understood. Although this change was most apparent within the short-term c, it was also traceable in the long-term analysis. However, as accounted for in Chapter II, biological racism only accounts for one classification of a broader concept.

The murder of Benjamin Hermansen *did little to change* the way *cultural racism or micro aggressions* were debated or understood by the parliamentarians, either the short or long-term perspective. In the debates between January 2001 and September 2001, the parliamentarians mainly debated *biological* racism. In the parliamentary debates between October 2001 and September 2005 cultural racism and micro aggressions were debated in the same moralistic and value based way as biological racism had been debated prior to the Holmlia murder. This implied that even though the parliamentarians understanding of *biological* racism had changed with regards to the level of physical threat, cultural racism and micro aggressions were not understood as *physical threat* towards Norwegian society.

6.1.1. Short-term changes

In the immediate aftermath of the murder the debate did change with regards to some aspects. Firstly, the murder of Benjamin Hermansen came as a shock to the Norwegian parliamentarians. The murder brought an awareness to the parliamentarians that *biological racism* not only existed within the Norwegian society, but also that the racial motivation was

so strong that some in the Norwegian society were willing to kill for their beliefs. Contrary to what the parliamentarians previously thought, the Norwegian state was not spared from racism. For the first time since 1997 the parliamentarians defined a domestic event as racially motivated. In this respect the case of Benjamin Hermansen became the typological example how racism can lead to human tragedy if not put in check. Biological racism was considered to be more of a threat than previously perceived and therefore it required a more active form prevention to be implemented by parliamentarians. This implied that the case of Benjamin Hermansen changed the debate into a less idealistic and more value based discourse requiring a more practical approach as an immediate response. Additionally it altered the parliamentarians understanding of the level of threat racism posed. Between 1997 and 2000, the parliamentarians understood and debated biological racism as a *moral* threat. The murder of Benjamin Hermansen altered this understanding; biological racism was instead regarded as both a moral and *physical* threat.

As racism was understood as a physical threat, the parliamentarians increasingly sought to debate where racism derived from. The parliamentarians debated the roles of rhetoric and language as triggers for racism. Previously, the MPs of FrP had claimed that it was unsuccessful, naïve and liberal immigration policies that were to blame for potentially negative attitudes amongst the Norwegian population. After the murder of Benjamin Hermansen it was a common understanding amongst the parliamentarians that language should ‘convey respect and equality.’²⁸⁸ The murder of Benjamin Hermansen did lead to a more direct approach amongst the parliamentarians towards the language used by the MPs of FrP. Although the MPs of FrP were not directly blamed for triggering racist attitudes, some parliamentarians suggested that FrP’s use of rhetoric and language did not always convey respect and equality. Instead the parliamentarians debated that their language *normalised* a negative attitude towards immigrants.

The way parliamentarians debated combating racism changed as well. In the debates between 1997 and 2000, the main tool to combat racism was through a centralised welfare state that promoted positive values. In the aftermath of the Holmlia murder, this approach shifted to a local approach. The youth population were considered to be the most vulnerable and therefore required guiding and encouragement to actively fight intolerance, xenophobia and

²⁸⁸ Parliamentary proceedings (2001), 13.02: 1871

racism. The parliamentarians suggested that the local schools, local sports clubs and local cultural groups should become increasingly active in this fight.

Although, there were several short-term changes in the parliamentary debates, these were all connected to *biological racism*. Morals and good values were still important factors in the debates and this became increasingly visible as the temporal distance from the murder increased. This becomes apparent within my analysis of the long-term changes of the debate.

6.1.2. Long-term changes

The most important long-term change was that the ability of the parliamentarians to continuously understand and debate biological racism as a physical threat. Although the concept of biological racism was rarely used in direct connection to a specific event, racial discrimination was frequently used in connection to the larger social and language-based structures of Norwegian society. The parliamentarians were more willing and able to talk about racial challenges within the Norwegian society if they connected the issues to racism's biological aspects, rather than its cultural aspects. Cultural racism and micro aggressions were understood and debated as moral threats rather than physical ones. The parliamentarians did on occasion comment that their fellow parliamentarians only debated incidents or aspects of cultural racism or micro aggressions when it was 'too late' or the damage had already occurred. However, these debates did not encourage any specific changes to the way these forms of racism were debated. Throughout 2002 and 2003, the debate once again became *increasingly* moralistic and focussed towards a normative and idealistic goal of a harmonious multicultural and multi-ethnic state. This shift resulted in the undertaking of increasingly normative debates centred around the issues of cultural racism and micro aggressions.

An additional long-term change was the debate and understanding of language and rhetoric as possible promoters of racist attitudes. The FrP MP's use of rhetoric and language was regarded by some as inflammatory and by others a trivial display of humour. No matter what approach the parties had towards FrP's rhetoric and language they all increasingly attempted to create a distance between themselves and the representatives of FrP. The MPs of FrP were increasingly asked to carefully consider the impact of cultural stigmatisation and a generalisation of the characteristics of large groups. They were accused of riding on a 'xenophobic wave' in order to get press coverage, as well as being accused of contributing to

a debating environment filled with intolerance, generalisation and suspicion. However, they were never defined as racist within the parliament, not even when the more approachable topic of biological racism was debated.

The short-term changes, implemented in 2001, that promoted local initiatives as *the* important tool in combating racism lasted up until 2003. In particular, local initiatives within sports clubs and culture groups were applauded and enjoyed both moral and economic support from a majority of parliamentarians.²⁸⁹ In 2004 and 2005 however, the parliamentarians reverted to the opinion that a centralised approach, with a special emphasis on law should be the main tool to combat racism. The Norwegian Constitution was changed in order to take a more functional approach towards people who were exposed to expressions of hatred based upon their skin-colour, culture, religion or social class. The focus on Norwegian society as *inclusive* made the debate more moralistic again. Instead of specific suggestions as to how local initiatives could prevent racist attitudes from taking hold amongst youths, the debates emphasised how an *inclusive* labour market, an *inclusive* culture and an *inclusive* housing market would combat xenophobia and racism.

²⁸⁹ Parliamentary proceedings (2002), 13.11: 412

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