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The relationship between trade unions and far-right parties in Scandinavia

A comparative analysis of the construction and positioning of collective identities
in political speeches from 2020-2023

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to research the relationship between trade unions and far-right parties in Scandinavia. Considering the well established trade unions, the Nordic model, with the rise of support for the far-right, and how their founding ideologies are very different from each other, the region of Scandinavia constitutes a unique area for the relationship between trade unions and far-right parties to be researched. This is executed with a theory of discourse analysis, theories of collective identities, including a dimension of social identity complexity, construction of collective identities, and mechanisms of naive realism, with narrative analysis as a method. The material consists of speeches from 2020 to 2023 of the trade union confederations LOse, FH, and LOno, and the far-right parties the Sweden Democrats, The Danish People's Party, and the Norwegian Progress Party. This study draws the conclusion that the actors' narratives are different mostly in terms of discourse, and most prominently in terms of how the political parties construct collective identities of ingroups and outgroups through a different process than the trade union confederations. The trade union confederations consistently have a low social identity complexity, while the political parties have a high social identity complexity. The far-right parties are also more extreme in their mechanisms of naive realism in terms of ingroup favouritism as well as discrediting the outgroup in order to legitimise themselves. These differences were expressed through the usage of language, where the political parties used normative language, while trade union confederations used a more inclusive, descriptive language. The actors were similar in their usage of essentially contested concepts such as *democracy*, *freedom*, and *equality*, as well as in their critique towards the government. These findings contribute to knowledge of the overlap of the actors' supporters and relationship between the trade unions and the far-right parties.

Keywords: Scandinavia, construction of collective identity, narrative, discourse, trade unions, far-right parties, radical populist right, political speeches, social identity complexity, naive realism

Abbreviations

DF - Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti)

ETUC - European Trade Union Confederation

FH - Fagbevægelsens Hovedorganisation

FrP - Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet)

ITUC - International trade Union Confederation

LOno - Landsorganisasjonen Norge¹

LOse - Landsorganisationen Sverige

RPR - Radical Populist Right

SD - Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna)

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¹ Note that this is the author's own abbreviations to distinguish between the Norwegian and the Swedish LO

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1. Introduction

Since the infamous pandemic hit humanity in 2020 the world has not been the same. Russia's war in Ukraine, the energy crisis, inflation, growing concerns for the environment, and now the escalating conflict between Israel and Palestine, are all contributing to a growing concern for security and the economy (both on a national and a personal level). Those most affected by these complications are already regarded as the most vulnerable in society, along with the workers. The working life is constantly changing and evolving. Income inequality is increasing in the EU which remains a concern, as "the working poor constitute a substantial part of the workers in the EU" (Eurofound 2024). Trade unions protect the workers in securing and advocating for their interests towards the employer, and are an essential part of the perseverance of democracy, both in the workplace but also on a national societal level, and act as protectors, as well as an index of the democracy of a country (ITUC 2024). In a European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) resolution on democracy it is mentioned that "trade union membership and social dialogue² are essential tools for democracy in the workplace and play a key role in building democratic and inclusive societies" (ETUC 2021a, 5).

Trade union density is relatively high in Scandinavia, compared to for example Eastern Europe, however, trade union membership is declining in all European Union member states (Eurofound 2019). At the same time, the far-right is gaining supporters in Europe. In 2022, one out of three Europeans voted for populist parties with support for anti-establishment politics, and this type of voting is only increasing (The Guardian 2023). Many trade unions in Europe have even expressed that one of the most prominent threats to the trade union movement is the populist far right and their discourse, which resulted in the ETUC adopting a roadmap on "Building the Trade Union response to the rise of the far-right" (ETUC 2021b). The decline of trade union membership and the increasing support for far-right populist parties could be a dangerous combination for the future of our continent.

² Social dialogue is the process of negotiation of labour policies between the employer, employees (represented by the trade union), and government.

Different definitions on populist parties include different aspects of the characteristics. This research will use the definition of right-wing populist parties by Hans-Jürgen Bieling, Professor of political economy, as presented in his article "Trade unions and right-wing populism in Europe: challenges, strategies, experiences" (2023, 1):

The term "Radical Populist Right", emphasises that these parties are primarily characterised by two features: First, a populist component that propagates an anti-elitist, anti-institutional, and anti-intellectual stance with reference to the "true people" and "common sense", often accompanied by a pronounced moralisation and personalisation of politics, and second, a right-wing political agenda that includes ethnonationalist or racist orientations, the rejection of immigration and a multicultural society, a negative attitude towards supranational institutions such as the European Union, and the curtailment of democratic participation and the rule of law. The curbing of the rule of law typically includes a disregard for the non-discrimination of social groups, independence of the courts, freedom of speech, independent media reporting, protection of minorities, and so on.

Bieling (2023, 2) continues by claiming that through this definition, the political parties the Sweden Democrats (SD), the Danish People's Party (DF), and the Norwegian Progress Party (FrP) are all considered to be radical populist right (RPR) parties. This does not mean, however, that the parties are radical or populist in every instance of their operation and their politics. By naming them RPR parties, it is simply suggested that they have populist tendencies, as well as right-wing oriented politics in combination with negative attitudes towards immigration and multiculturalism. However, the negative attitude towards supranational institutions such as the EU is not necessarily absolute. This also raises the question if there are any pro-EU populists. This definition of RPR is not applied with the intent to discredit them as political parties or to reduce them to radical populists, but simply a way to differentiate them from other right-wing parties as the term *far-right* does not capture the essence of the parties the SD, the DF, and the FrP to the extent as the term *RPR* does.

Historically, one might say that trade unions and far right-wing parties are on opposite sides of the dichotomy of ideology, representing the political far left and the far right. However, considering the potential overlap of their supporters³, the previous crystal clear dichotomy is perhaps not so clear anymore. Workers take the heavy load of building the country, and

³ The term *supporter* refers to all kinds of supporters, e.g. official members, voters, other affiliations, and positive feelings towards them in general.

constitute the majority of the population. The workers *are* the people, and even if they are no single entity with a common mind, they are the ones targeted by both trade unions and many political parties - including the far-right.

1.1 Research questions and aim

Considering the combination of the decline in trade union membership and the rise of support for far-right and RPR parties in Scandinavia, research on the relationship between trade unions and far-right parties is needed. This thesis aims to analytically discuss the relationship between trade unions and far-right parties by analysing narratives in selected speeches from the years 2020 to 2023, through a theoretical framework of collective identity, and discourse. The analysis will be conducted inductively, meaning that there is no preliminary hypothesis and that the material will guide the analysis. For simplicity and to avoid confusion, the trade union confederations and the political parties will be referred to as the actors when speaking of them collectively.

This research compares RPR parties with trade unions and not for example labour parties, workers' parties, or social democratic parties for three reasons. First of all (and perhaps most importantly) is the aspect of duality. One can be a supporter of both a trade union and a political party simultaneously. One does not have to choose either or, it is in fact rather common to be a supporter of both at the same time. The SD, for example, claims that 25 per cent of LO.se's members are also voting for them (SD 2024). It is this dynamic of duality that is an interesting object for research, and especially how the actors navigate this dynamic. LO.se did not respond to this directly but have published several articles about how the SD is an 'anti-worker' party and how their politics is harmful for workers (LO.se). Secondly, the aspect of democracy is present to a higher degree in trade unions than in political parties, due to the function of trade unions in society that contributes to democracy, while political parties are merely an aspect of how democracy is practised. Thirdly, this thesis is not aiming to research differences in political ideologies, reforms, or which parties workers 'should' vote for, but rather how the actors' constructed narratives reveal how they perceive the world. Indirectly this becomes the perspective from which the public perceives the actors, without looking at their behaviour outside of the speech. All these aspects would not be possible to achieve without the comparison to trade unions and is why the research is focused in such a way.

Considering the well-established trade union movement in Scandinavia, the Nordic Model (which will be explained in the next chapter) and the tradition of high social security, it is interesting to analyse the dynamic of trade union confederations and RPR parties in Scandinavia. The possible overlap of supporters of RPR parties and trade unions is for that reason possibly greater in that region. In some contexts, it may perhaps not be possible to be both populist while maintaining a far-right political stance, and thus to analyse that dynamic by how they position themselves within collective identities could contribute to knowledge on the overlap of supporters of RPR parties and trade unions. The research questions were formulated inductively, after theories and the material were processed. This research aims to analytically discuss the collective identities on different levels by comparing the narratives that trade union confederations and RPR parties create and formulate of themselves, and to answer the following research questions:

- What narratives are portrayed and maintained through the speeches and to what extent are they different and similar to each other?
- How do the actors express their collective identities through their narratives, and how are these different and similar?
- How does language usage affect their construction of collective identities, and is there any correlation between language usage and how identities are constructed?

1.2 Disposition

This thesis will continue this chapter with previous research regarding trade unions and far-right parties. The following chapter will present the methodological framework for this thesis, including discourse analysis and theories regarding construction of collective identity, such as the dissension of social identity complexity and mechanisms of naive realism. This chapter also presents the method for conducting the analysis; narrative analysis, as well as how the methodology is applied and operationalised for this specific research. Chapter 3 gives a brief background and contextualisation of the Scandinavian labour movement historically, including the Nordic Model, as well as the current political landscape in the countries respectively. The material is presented in Chapter 4, which includes selection and limitations, and a list of the

selected speeches. Chapter 5 presents the result of the narrative analysis, structured text by text and organised by country and actor. A summary of each actor is also included, as well as an analytical comparison of the findings. Chapter 6 consists of a discussion of the research, and puts the research in an academic context by relating the findings to previous research. The last chapter draws conclusions from the research, and provides suggestions for future research.

1.3 Previous research

No previous research comparing trade unions and far-right parties has been conducted in terms of the narratives they construct of themselves. Deppe, Herding, and Hoss, (1978) compared the actions of trade unions and political parties in general, predicting a revolution by the working class. Richard Stöss (2017) also wrote on the actions of trade unions and far-right parties, focusing on the measures trade unions should adopt against the far-right movement in Europe. However no research analysing the differences and similarities of how trade unions and far-right parties portray themselves in their narratives has been conducted before.

In their articles “The myth of the typical far-right populist voter” (2023a), and “Democracy and discontent: institutional trust and evaluations of system performance among core and peripheral far right voters” (2023b), Professor Sofia Vasilopoulou and Professor Daphne Halikiopoulou write about who the far-right populist voter actually is. By analysing data from the European Social Survey from 2002-2018, they concluded that there are two kinds of voters of far-right populist parties: based on discontent, and ideology - demeaning the previous idea of a man with poor education who has a strong attitude against immigration and limited prospects on the labour market. There is also no empirical evidence of the relation between low trust in institutions and voting far-right. The first group, those who vote for far-right populist parties from a perspective of discontent, do so because they are discontent with the current system and thus the purpose of their vote is to vote *against* the system rather than in favour of the party. This group is also referred to as the peripheral voters by Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou, reflecting the distance to the political party. The second group, those who vote for far-right populist parties out of ideology do so because their ideologies of nationalism align with the party’s. These are the core voters of far-right populist parties. Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou could also conclude that the core, ideological voters are much fewer in number than the peripheral, discontented voters. With their

research, Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou challenge the idea of who the voters of the PRP parties are, as well as their underlying reasons for their vote, and they concluded that there is no typical far-right voter as they are multifaceted, driven by different appeals (2023a). Positive evaluations of democracy and the democratic process could affect the peripheral voters and work as a deterrent but did not have the same effect on the core voters (2023b). They also concluded that “political trust and system performance matter: when the broad framework of collective cooperation is perceived to be working well, then citizens are less likely to resort to the far right. But for those core far-right supporters with extreme views on immigration, the mechanism is different” (2023b).

Another research of importance to this thesis is “The radical right, the labour movement and the competition for the workers’ vote” written by Nadja Mosimann, Line Rennwald, and Adrian Zimmermann in 2019. This research concluded that members of trade unions could better resist the radical right parties. Unionised members were less likely to vote for radical right parties than those who are not, and the unionised working class and middle class voters were less likely to vote for the radical right than their non-unionised counterparts, however, the unionised working class is in no way immune to the radical right. The research concluded that there is an indication of a growing capacity of the radical right to attract voters from the unionised working class, especially “workers with low to medium skills” and the radical right could “directly compete with left parties for these voters”. In an attempt to explain the differences between the current radical right compared to the extreme right in the interwar years, they said that: “the new radical right tries to undermine the working class solidarity with its anti-immigration agenda, by pretending to take care of (native) workers with its welfare chauvinism⁴ and by attacking the legitimacy of trade unions in their discourses”, while the old radical right instead focused on “openly attempting to destroy the labour movement”.

Birte Siim and Susi Meret wrote the chapter “Right-wing Populism in Denmark: People, Nation and Welfare in the Construction of the ‘Other’” in the book *The Rise of the Far Right in Europe: Populist Shifts and 'Othering'* in 2016, and write about ‘The ‘politics of fear’ which is a widespread and universal phenomenon. They write: “Who is perceived as friend or foe, as well

⁴ Welfare chauvinism is the idea that the social security systems and the welfare in general should only be available to the natives of a country, i.e. not the immigrants.

as how this perception is negotiated and influenced by politicians, institutions, authorities and ‘the legal system’ is among the issues central to an understanding of how ‘othering’ and discrimination occur and spread” (Siim and Meret 2016, 131). They could conclude that right-wing populism in Denmark takes two forms. The first targets ‘the immigrant other’ and Islam through welfare chauvinism, mostly developed by the DF and their rhetoric, defending the welfare state for native, ethnic Danes only. The second form targets Islam and ‘the Muslim other’ through international Islamophobic movements in Europe, defending freedom of expression.

Together these researches have contributed to identifying who the RPR voter is, how being a member of a union affects voting tendencies, and does not completely defer them from voting for RPR parties, and how the ‘politics of fear’ is a widespread phenomenon used by RPR parties. This research aims to contribute to knowledge of the relationship between trade unions and RPR parties by comparatively analysing how they speak to the people and position themselves in collective identities. This will give a clearer understanding of how the people perceive these actors and what the public opinion is based on.

2. Methodology

This chapter will cover the methodological framework of this research, beginning with discourse analysis, theories of collective identity including construction of identity, a dimension of social identity complexity, and mechanisms of naive realism. Then the method for conducting the analysis: narrative analysis, is presented, followed by an operationalisation that explains how the methodology is applied to this research.

2.1 Discourse analysis

There seems to be an endless amount of ways to describe discourse analysis, as there are many ways to interpret and apply the term, making it easy to become overly preoccupied on the ontology of discourse as a concept. Below I have included what I deem relevant to this research about narratives in political speeches, with a focus on discourse as a theory.

Language usage is a social activity and is therefore shaped around the social context. But social practices such as beliefs, identities, and relations are shaped through the use of language. The use of language can thus not be considered a neutral instrument of communication (Robertson 2012 p. 378; Walliman 2011, 143). When speaking of discourse analysis, especially in relation to power dynamics, it is close to impossible not to mention Professor Michel Foucault, one of the most prominent scholars in the field of discourse. Foucault makes the connection between discourse analysis and social sciences and provides conclusions on the characters of power, subjectivity, and knowledge in modern societies from an epistemological perspective (Howarth 2007, 59). These aspects are essential to all different kinds of discourse analysis, but perhaps to a greater extent when the discourse analysis is of political leaders. After all, they have the power to influence policies, and more importantly, they have the power to influence people and their opinions. Politicians are also the ones implementing politics, and they have a certain power over the agenda setting and the information available to the public.

According to William E. Connolly (1993), Professor of political science, it is the language that provides perspectives of our reality. This is especially the case in the world of politics, considering all terms are connected and related to certain values. For example, the difference between a terrorist and a freedom fighter is the language used to describe them. Therefore politics are intertwined in the language and the use of it. This view of the relationship between politics and the language is about the creation of meaning. When speaking of politics, it is difficult to keep the actual politics separate from the language used to describe or discuss it. When speaking of the term *political discourse*, Connolly (1993, 2) is referring to:

First to the vocabulary commonly employed in political thought and action; second, to the way in which the meanings conventionally embodied in that vocabulary set the frame for political reflection by establishing criteria to be met before an event or act can be said to fall within the ambit of a given concept; and third, to the judgements or commitments that are conventionally sanctioned when these criteria are met.

Connolly (1993) elaborates and reviews W. B. Gallie's essay "Essentially contested concepts" from 1955, who writes about conceptual disputes, which is the disagreement on how to interpret a concept. An example of such a concept is the term *democracy*. What does it really mean? It is a term so full of meaning that the term itself becomes empty. Connolly (1993, 10-11) uses two

equally correct but different possible descriptions of the term *democracy*: “the central criterion of a democracy is the power of citizens to choose their government through competitive elections” and “the equality of opportunity for all citizens in attaining positions of political leadership”. The problem, however, lies in the conceptual disputes within the description. Concepts such as *power*, *citizen*, *equality*, and *politics* all need further definition where there is no consensus on the exact definition. There is a conceptual dispute on the exact meaning and definition. These concepts are fundamentally impossible to not have differing definitions and meanings according to the observer. These kinds of concepts are not objective nor can they be, and are therefore well suited to the term *essentially contested concepts* (Connolly 1993). To circle back to the beginning of this chapter, perhaps is even the term *discourse* to be considered to be an *essentially contested concept*?

There are two main approaches of description: descriptive or normative. Descriptive concepts aim to explain. Describing something is not to just name it, description is to characterise something. As Connolly (1993, 23) describes it “a description does not refer to data or elements that are bound together merely on the basis of similarities adhering in them, but to describe is to characterize a situation from the vantage point of certain interests, purposes, or standards”. Normative concepts, on the other hand, are based on a moral notion or normative perspective that includes an evaluation. They are open-ended and controversial. However, it is not always easy to keep the descriptive and the normative apart, as they sometimes overlap. Many concepts in politics are constructed from a normative perspective, and “when groups range themselves around essentially contested concepts, politics is in the mode in which the contest is normally expressed” (Connolly 1993, 40). In this thesis, the descriptive language will instead be called inclusive, as that better describes the function of the descriptive language.

Murray Edelman (1984), Professor of political science, notes that it is important to remember that the problems we face in society today, such as poverty and discrimination, have not always been considered to be societal problems. In fact, they were considered to be part of the ‘natural order’ and not something that could be solved with politics. Likewise are previous phenomena, such as witchcraft and the devil, not at all considered to be societal problems in Scandinavia today, but were very much societal problems just a few centuries ago (Edelman 1984, 12-13).

The concept of what are considered to be societal problems change with time as the context changes, one might even say that those in power also have the power of the change. Edelman suggests that certain problems also can be emphasised for political benefit. A problem to some people could be an advantage for others, such as when the societal problem with unemployment also benefits the employer in terms of reduced labour cost for example. It all depends on the phrasing when referring to it. As Edelmann (1984, 17) explains it: “Problem construction is a complex and subtle occurrence, a facet of the concurrent formation of the self and of the social sphere, integrally linked to the endless construction and reconstruction of political causes, role structures, and moral stances”. Politics are about creating meaning and it is through language that the social and political reality is constructed and is given meaning (Edelmann 1984).

2.2 Theories of collective identity

Identities are social constructions. Manuel Castells (2012, 6-7), Professor of sociology, defines identity as: “The process of constructing meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute”. Furthermore, he defines meaning as “the symbolic identification by a social actor of the purpose of his/hers action”. Identity is the process of identifying who we are by giving meaning to our attributes. How identities are formed, is based on the social context, surroundings, and circumstances. Castells (2012) distinguishes identity from role. Any role in itself, such as a mother, a worker, a union member, does not require an individual to project meaning of the role onto oneself. In his words: “Roles are defined by norms structured by institutions and organizations of society. Their relative weight in influencing people’s behaviour depends upon negotiations and arrangements between individuals and these institutions and organisations. Identities are sources of meaning for the actors themselves, and by themselves, constructed through a process of individuation” (Castells 2012, 6-7). The roles are merely something we possess that describes what we do, rather than who we are. These roles however can become identities if, and only then, the individual internalises and self-constructs them, and gives them meaning to their identity. Identities are stronger sources of meaning than roles, as roles organise functions while identities organise the meanings (Castells 2012, 6-7).

Humans are complex beings and every individual has a plurality of identities that together constitutes who they are. These collective identities create different groups within our society.

Everything from, for example occupation, gender, class, race, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality, inevitably creates groups which one may feel belonging with, provided that the individual gives this attribute meaning. This group becomes the *ingroup*. The creation of the *ingroup* automatically causes the creation of its opposite, the *outgroup*. It is important to note that this is not a conscious action, on the contrary, perceived identities are just that, perceived and subconsciously constructed. There is no limit to the amount of social groups one can feel belonging to and thus, all these groups are coexisting within every individual. This simultaneous membership of different social groups is a complex process of collective identity. Tajfel (1978, 63) defines collective identity as “that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership”. Again, the meaning of the attributes to the individual is emphasised.

Brewer and Pierce (2005, 428) explain in their article “Social Identity Complexity and Outgroup Tolerance” that in regard to an individual’s social groups belonging, what matters is not the amount of social groups an individual identifies with, but rather how the different identities are combined within the individual’s “cognitive representation of his or her group memberships”. It is this combination that determines the overall inclusiveness of the individual’s *ingroup* memberships. Brewer and Pierce (2005, 428) call this phenomena the complexity dimension. This dimension exists on a spectrum of high or low complexity according to the overlap of *ingroup* identities towards others. An example of a low complexity dimension is when an individual defines their *ingroup* only as the combination of all of their collective group identities, e.g. female, Swedish, student, thus creating one very specific *ingroup*, and all aspects of the combined identities must be fulfilled in order to be considered part of *ingroup* to that individual. Therefore also resulting in anyone who does not share all of those identities/social groups belonging to be part of the *outgroup*, even if partly or even most of the aspects are fulfilled, e.g. female, Swedish, teacher. An example of high complexity is when an individual recognises anyone that shares any of their social groups belongings or aspects of their identity as part of their *ingroup*, and those who share more or several of them as a more inclusive *ingroup* (Brewer and Pierce 2005). For example, someone identifying with the social groups female, Swedish, student, would consider anyone relating to any of those three as the *ingroup* (every woman,

every Swede, every student). Low complexity requires a high overlap of shared social groups, while high complexity requires a lower overlap. The higher the overlap, the lower the complexity, and vice versa. “Low social identity complexity means that multiple identities are subjectively embedded in a single ingroup representation, whereas high complexity involves acknowledgement of differentiation and difference between ingroup categories” (Brewer and Pierce 2005, 429). The ingroup and outgroup relationship is complex and as mentioned, not fixed as it is entirely contextual (not to mention individual) which could cause the same individual to be considered as either ingroup or outgroup based entirely on changing social contexts and the fluctuating hierarchy of identities according to those changes in circumstances. There are contextual circumstances where one social group identity becomes more important than another, causing the ingroups and outgroups to change, despite the social group memberships, and the individuals remaining the same (Brewer and Pierce 2005).

Robinson and Kray (2001, 135-152) write about mechanisms of *naive realism* in their chapter “Status versus Quo” in the book *The psychology of legitimacy* on ingroup favouritism; the mechanism where the ingroup is favoured and the outgroup is dehumanised, stereotyped. The perception of social conflicts, and how group membership influences the perception of identity both ways, is explained as:

The tendency to polarise differences between opposing partisans in power, would demonstrate greater judgmental bias, and that lower power partisans seeking social change would be more likely to be stereotyped as holding extreme convictions. Clearly, the portrayal of the other side’s views as more extreme than they really are is a powerful influence in establishing the legitimacy of one’s own views.

In a study they could conclude that in social disputes, all sides would exaggerate both their opponents ideological bias, the opponent's extremism, as well as the magnitude of the conflict. Both sides of the social conflict would also try to delegitimize the opposition. This is however not necessarily a conscious process. Furthermore, they could conclude that the side arguing for, and defending the status quo have an apparent bias, and that it is a question of power. Most people assume that their worldview is objective, causing them to underestimate how their perception and judgement are shaped by subjectivity. People also assume that the same ‘objectively true reality’ is the base for others’ perception and judgement, projecting their

perception of reality onto others. This tendency is called the “false consensus effect”. People also attribute deviations of judgements of the opposing groups to ideological bias (Robinson and Kray 2001, 136-152).

2.3 Narrative analysis

When the paradigm changed in the 80s with ‘the narrative turn’, humans were seen as ‘narrative beings’ on the basis that our identities and social life are constantly evolving through narratives (Robertson 2012, 220-223). Narratives are a human phenomena, as we think, feel, interpret, relate, and identify, all which are essential aspects in the construction of narratives. One person’s hero is another one’s villain, it all comes down to perspectives, and narratives. Narratives reveal the human aspect of our reality and how we interpret the world around us. The same event or story can be interpreted into vastly different narratives based on who did the interpretation (De Fina 2023, 206). There are different kinds of narrative analysis. This research will analyse non-literary, non-fiction narratives in the form of political speeches. “Narratives and politics have and have always been intertwined in a variety of forms” (De Fina 2023, 203). Traditionally many studies on parliamentary debates or political speeches have focused more on the content of the storytelling, but in the eye of the digital era, the focus in more recent studies tends to be on the narratives (De Fina 2023, 207).

Different researchers have different definitions of the term *narrative*, where they include different variables. There is not one universal definition of what a narrative is (Robertson 2012, 228). The term *narrative* is in this research however based on the Professor of rhetorics, Seymour Chatman’s structuralist definition⁵ (1978, 9) that narratives consist of a *story* (the what) and a *discourse* (the how). The relation between the story and the discourse is described as: “Story is the content of the narrative expression, while discourse is the form of that expression” (Chatman 1978, 23). This definition is included in the model *anatomy of a narrative* by Alexa Robertson (2012, 232). Her model is a collected combination of other researchers’ definitions and divisions of narrative analysis where the definition of a narrative as constructed by *story* and *discourse* is taken from Chatman 1978. The definition of *story* is taken from William Labov,

⁵ It is worth noting that Chatman’s structure of narrative is based on fiction and film, and thus does not mention the types of narratives used in this research. However, since his substructure of *story* is not applied, his division of narrative into story and discourse is still relevant and useful to this research.

Professor of linguistics (1967; 1972) when he elaborated the definition by Russian formalist Vladimir Propp (1928) to include the following components:

- **Abstract:** summary of the narratives
- **Orientation:** time, situation, actors
- **Complication:** creating imbalance
- **Resolution:** what ended up happening
- **Coda:** revisiting current perspective

In Robertson's model, the *discourse* only has one component, but with two purposes:

- **Evaluation:** the meaning of the action is commented; and in what way the content is communicated and gives meaning to the story.

Labov (1972, 366) highlights the importance of the evaluation saying that it is "perhaps the most important element" of the narrative, and that the evaluation is the *raison d'être* of the entire narrative. There are many ways to tell the same story, with exactly the same sequence of events, but the evaluation is the centre of the narrative and creates something beyond the *story* and the events in it - it gives it perspective. The evaluation transforms the story into a narrative. Both Chatman and Labov seem to agree about the function of the evaluation, and even though they have different methods of defining narrative, their meanings are quite similar, with the difference that Chatman made the explicit distinction to divide narrative into *story* and *discourse* while Labov did not.

There are different ways to construct a narrative analysis, based on two main aspects, holistic or categorical, and content or form based, depending on the purpose of the analysis (Robertson 2012, 336). This research will focus on a holistic and content type of analysis, where the text is analysed in its entirety, focused on the content and not the form of it. The holistic-content based analysis is advantageous when "the person as a whole, that is, his or her development to the current position, is what the study aims to explore" (Lieblich 1998, 13). While the categorical aspect isolates the text from its context, and the form based aspect is more similar to critical discourse analysis as it focuses on the structure and the form of the language rather than the content of it, these are not relevant for this specific research.

Narrative analysis is an interdisciplinary method of analysis and the distinction of *story* and *discourse* as part of the narrative is practically useful when it comes to empirical application of narrative analysis, according to Robertson (2012, 221, 230). Consequently, this model of a narrative will be the basis for the analysis in this research, where both the content of the narrative and how it is communicated will be analysed and compared. This narrative analysis will focus more on the *how* of the speakers' narratives, and less on the factual parts and structural elements of the *story*. How this method is applied more specifically, will be explained in the following chapter on material for this research.

2.4 Operationalisation

This research will be conducted with a qualitative method, that with inductive reasoning will compare the selected material. Regarding the hermeneutic nature of narrative analysis, the research becomes more reliant on the researcher, but that does not automatically mean that the research is subjective. Comparative analysis is useful as it puts the objects of analysis in relation to each other. This comparison is, due to the inductive reasoning and the aim of this thesis, shaped after both the actors' similarities and differences. The theory of discourse analysis will analyse the language usage in the actors' narratives, while the theories of collective identities will analyse how the actors construct their collective identities, and to what extent they include mechanisms of naive realism.

The multidisciplinary approach of combining narrative analysis and discourse analysis is well suited to this research, as narrative analysis alone would not find the essence of the speeches as it is missing the aspect of power and to some extent context, which is an essential part of this thesis. Discourse analysis alone, although it captures the aspect of power, is not entirely applicable either, as the selected material is too broad with only one speech per organisation and year, and would therefore not be able to make claims about the discourse. The combination of both narrative analysis and discourse analysis will ensure that the analysis is well-nuanced and captures the essence of the speeches considering who the speakers are, including what they stand for, as well as what and who they represent. Aspects of language, context, and power will be taken into account without focusing too much on what they say as in their words and their

grammar, but what they say as in terms of what narratives they use/construct, and what they *mean* with what they say, what they choose to say as well as what they choose to not say. The language is of course an essential part of that, however that is not the aim of this research to conduct a critical discourse analysis and review the language on a micro level.

3. Background

This chapter will first provide a brief background to the Scandinavian labour movement, including an explanation of the Nordic Model. Then follows a contextualisation of the political landscapes in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, including a brief background of the parties SD, DF, and FrP.

3.1 The Scandinavian Labour Movement

The creation of workers stemming from industrialisation and creating socialist trade unions is not as straightforward as it might seem. Harald Gustafsson, Professor in history (2022, 204) suggests that the ‘creation’ of workers as a concept was an inevitable reaction of the economic processes, causing workers to identify themselves and be identified by others as workers. The workers invented themselves, rather than being created by an outside force. The Danish trade union movement began in the 1870s, followed by the conflict “Slaget på Fælleden/the fight on the commons” in 1872 which was the first socialist confrontation with authority (Arbejdermuseet 2022). The Norwegian trade union movement was founded in 1887, and the Swedish counterpart in 1889. The political labour movement became a central actor in the development of the Scandinavian societies by 1900 (Gustafsson 2022, 205). Gustafsson (2022) also pointed out that the labour movement was mostly for men, by men, as women were included in the labour movement on a local level but not so much on a centralised, national level which was male-dominated.

The political labour movement in Scandinavia was in the beginning quite similar between the countries. When it emerged, social democracy was based on the trade union movement, with Marxist ideology, and reformist ideas. But after World War I, differences in the development between the three countries emerged, even though parties with a social democratic ideology were

in power and had about one-third of the votes (Elvander 1980). In Denmark, the social democrats were striving towards moderate reforms. In Norway, the Labour Party collaborated with revolutionary syndicalism. The social democrats in Sweden took the middle road being reformists but not as radical as Norway and averted from collaborating with the liberals, like the Danes did (Elvander 1980). As a result of the economic crash in New York in 1929, the unemployment rates in Scandinavia rose to as high as 32 per cent. This caused great social insecurity, worry, and a tense labour market. This took different forms of expression, some more radical than others. For example, the attempted murder of the Danish social minister in 1930, and when the Swedish military opened fire at protesters in 1931, resulting in the death of five men. The political worry was gradually settled with the implementation of increased measures against unemployment and support for the agricultural sector, and new economic ideas based on Keynesian theories. This became the birth of the Nordic Model, as “the central idea that the state has the overall responsibility of employment and welfare” (Gustafsson 2022, 234-236).

3.1.1 The Nordic Model

The Nordic Model is based on the partnership between employers, the government, and trade unions. Together they negotiate the terms of the workplaces, eliminating the workplace being regulated by laws regarding pay, resulting in collective bargaining being the norm instead of a national minimum wage regulated by national laws. Results of the collective bargaining are applied industry-wide (Lindahl 2001). Key characteristics of the Nordic Model are high taxation, capitalist economies, and large social security. The objectives of the Nordic Model aim to ensure work for all, basic income security, paying taxes according to ability, equal rights to education, and equality. Along with strong active states, international free trade agreements, a close collaboration with the parties in working life, and economic policy aiming for full employment - as a base for growing equality and improving working conditions and wages. The implementation of these objectives is done through the coordination of welfare policy, collective bargaining systems, labour market policies, and macroeconomic policies (Dølvik 2013, 15).

This model is globally referred to as ‘the Nordic Model’ however the Nordic countries have different variations of it and consequently refer to it as ‘the Danish/Norwegian/Swedish model’ when speaking internationally, in everyday language. It is therefore perhaps more correct to

speak of the Nordic Models, however, to keep it simple, the umbrella term that will be used consistently in this research is *the Nordic Model* when referring to any of the countries, with the exception of citations when the result is presented.

3.2 The Political landscape

The Scandinavian political landscape is somewhat similar between the countries in terms of constitutions. They are all monarchies, with representative governments as the body of power. The countries' political landscapes will be presented in this chapter, including judicial and historical aspects.

Specific events that affected all of Scandinavia (to varying degrees) that are worth to briefly mention in this thesis are the immigration crisis of 2015, as well as the massacre on Utøya in 2011⁶. It is possible that these events contributed to both a rise of support and fear of RPR parties, depending on previous attitudes. I will not speculate further on that matter, as these events are not directly related to the research, but it is important to have those events in mind, as they both had tremendous impacts on the Scandinavian people, and possibly the political landscape.

3.2.1 Sweden

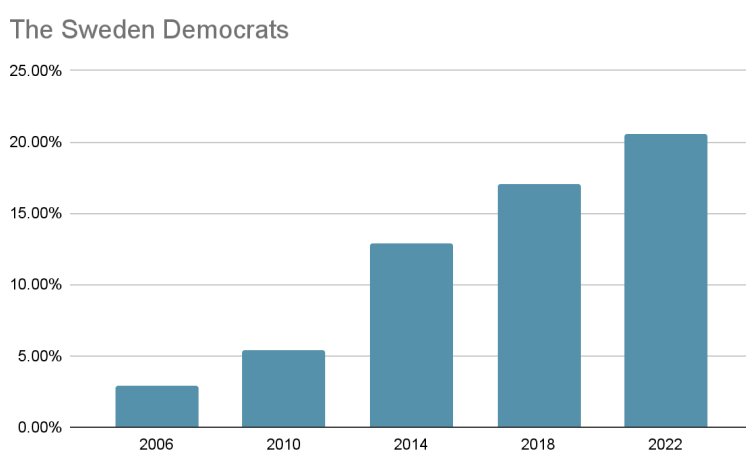
The Swedish government consists of 21 ministers and the Prime Minister. The Parliament consists of 349 seats and the bar for a party to be elected into the parliament is 4 per cent. The current Prime Minister is Ulf Kristersson from the right-wing party the Moderates (Riksdagen.se). The population of Sweden is 10.6 million people (Worldometers 2024).

The Sweden Democrats was founded in 1988, and since 2011 they describe their ideology as social conservative with a nationalistic base value (SD party program, 2011). Jimmie Åkesson has been the party leader since 2005. They first passed the national parliamentary bar in 2010 with 5.7 per cent. In the following election in 2014, they became the third largest party and they also got elected to the European Parliament for the first time in 2014. They have the informal

⁶ Due to limitation of this thesis it is not possible to include more information about this, for further reading, see the book: *One of us: the story of Anders Breivik and the massacre in Norway* by Åsne Seierstad.

slogan “Make Sweden great again” which is in clear reference to Donald Trump’s famous slogan “Make America great again”. The SD have been in opposition since they were founded, until the election in 2022. Since 2022 the Swedish government has been ruled by the right-wing bloc but for the first time, the Sweden Democrats are in a supporting position. They are not part of the coalition in government but they received 20,54 per cent of the votes, making them the second largest party in the Parliament (val.se).

Table 1: National election results for the Sweden Democrats from 2006 to 2022⁷ (val.se)



This steady rise could be explained by the lack of competition from other PRP parties in Sweden. There are other parties such as “Alternative for Sweden”. These are however not well established in the political landscape in Sweden and none of them have ever received seats in the Parliament.

3.2.2 Norway

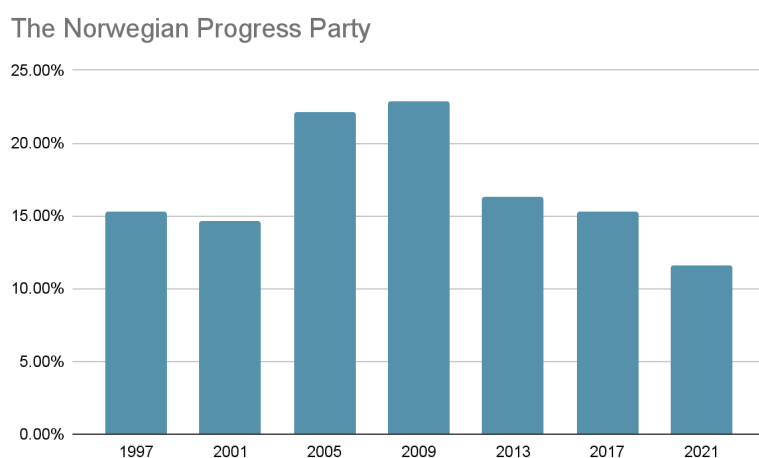
The Norwegian government consists of 19 ministers and the Prime Minister. The Parliament consists of 169 seats (Stortinget 2024). The bar for a party to be elected into the Parliament is 4 per cent. The current Prime Minister is Jonas Gahr Støre since 2021 from the Labour Party (Stortinget 2024). The population in Norway is 5.5 million (Worldometers 2024).

The Norwegian Progress Party was founded in 1973 by Anders Lange and got 5 per cent in the election the same year. The FrP was in opposition until the conservatives won the election in

⁷ Election results: 2006: 2.9%, 2010: 5.4%, 2014: 12.9%, 2018: 17%, 2022: 20.54%

2013 and built a coalition government with them that lasted for five years (regjeringen.no). The FrP has the slogan “For the most people” and their ideology is based on liberalism. In the last election in 2021, they got 11,6 per cent of the votes and became the fourth largest in Norway.

Table 2: National election results the Norwegian Progress Party from 1997 to 2021⁸
(samfunnsforskning.no).



3.2.3 Denmark

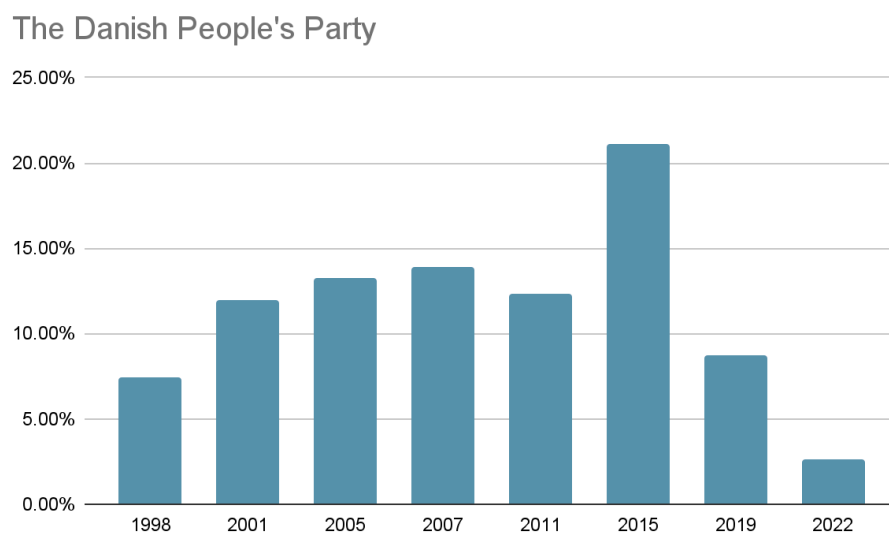
The Danish government consists of 22 ministers and the Prime Minister. The Parliament consists of 179 seats, whereof two are reserved for Greenland and two for the Faroe Islands. Denmark has a bar of 2 per cent of the votes for parties to be elected into the Parliament, resulting in many smaller parties in Parliament, there are currently 15 parties (Folketinget 2024). Mette Fredriksen has been Prime Minister since 2019, and the current coalition was formed in 2022, consisting of the Social Democrats, the Liberal party, and the Moderates, making it a left-right coalition. The population in Denmark is 5.9 million people (Worldometers 2024).

The Danish People’s Party was founded in 1995 due to a split from the Danish Progress Party (Folketinget 2024). In their first general election in 1998, the DF got 7.4 per cent of the votes. The DF has never been part of a government coalition. The DF party had a decrease in votes in the most recent election in 2022 and has been in opposition since then. This decline in votes was

⁸ Election results:1997: 15.3%, 2001: 14.6%, 2005: 22.1%, 2009: 22.9%, 2013: 16.4%, 2017:15.3%, 2021: 11.6%

also related to the change in party leader, where Morten Messerschmidts took over from Kristian Thulesen Dahl as he left the party (with many others from the Party). Thulesen Dahl created a new party called “Nye Borgerlige”/”New Bourgeois” together with Ingrid Støjberg who was the former leader of Venstre⁹. The reason why the DF is still the subject of this research is due to its establishment on the Danish political scene, while it remains the largest far-right party in Denmark. Birte Siim and Susi Meret (2016, 110) called the DF “one of the electorally most successful and consolidated rightwing populist parties in Europe”. The current party leader Morten Messerschmidt was previously a MEP in the group European Conservatives and Reformists Party (ECR) before the DF changed to Identity and Democracy (ID).

Table 3: National election results for the Danish People’s Party from 1998 to 2022¹⁰
(Stortinget.dk).



⁹ Contrary to what the name of the party suggests, is this a liberal party, situated more in the centre/right of the left-right scale

¹⁰ 1998: 7.4%, 2001: 12.0%, 2005: 13.3%, 2007: 13.9%, 2011: 12.3%, 2015: 21.1%, 2019: 8.7%, 2022: 2.6%

4. Material

This chapter will first present the selection process and limitations of the material, followed by a list of the selected speeches that also provides information regarding year, country, organisation, speaker, and if the speech was accessed in video format.

4.1 Selection and limitations

The primary material for this research consists of political speeches by trade union confederations and RPR parties in Scandinavia. In order to best represent the union side, it makes most sense to choose the largest union organisation for each country. For Sweden it was Landsorganisationen (LOse), for Norway it was their counterpart Landsorganisasjonen (LOno), and for Denmark it was Fagbevægelsens Hovedorganisation (FH). They all represent the most number of workers in their respective countries: LOse represents 1,4 million workers across different sectors (LO 2023). LOno represents just over one million workers (LO 2024). FH represents 1,3 million workers across 65 organisations (FH 2024). All selected speeches are held by the president of the organisation or the party leader for the political parties. The leader embodies the organisation/party in a way other politicians/ representatives cannot. Their legitimacy will always be high, as long as they are the current party leader, and therefore have a different power and ability to spread the message of the party. The timeframe of the speeches are from 2020 to 2023. The reason why 2019 was not included is because the covid-19 pandemic hit Scandinavia in the beginning of 2020 hence the speech from 2019 would have a very different context from the other speeches, and was therefore left out.

When selecting the speeches for both the unions and the political parties, it was important that they were of similar character so a comparison would be valid. The speeches also had to be directed towards the audience and be *for* them. Therefore, the speeches could not be from a seminar, a debate, or interview. It simply had to be the leader of the organisation addressing the public. For the trade union confederations, this resulted in all of the speeches being from the first of may, which is one of the few times union leaders speak directly to the people. For the political parties, there are more speeches to choose from, however they had to be *to* the public, which

meant that speeches at internal meetings/congresses could not be included, as they are intended for party members and not the general public¹¹.

Some of the speeches were accessible in a transcript form from the website of the organisations or a national speech archive. Others were accessed only in video format. The way the speech was told in videos (gestures, body language, pronunciations) was not taken into consideration in the analysis. Rhetorics and mannerisms will not be analysed as it does not affect the narratives. Nor will the actual policies, decisions or reforms proposed in their speeches be analysed. Just the discourse and narrative *in* the speeches. All speeches were analysed in their original language. I am only fluent in Swedish, even if I can understand Norwegian and Danish I might not understand the finer nuances in the language and therefore I am limited to the meanings behind the narrative and can not look at all the references. Also important to note that the translations of the citations in the result chapter are the author's own. The speeches will not be transcribed as that is not necessary for this kind of analysis.

I was given access to the Peggy Hessen 2023 speech transcription by requesting it from LOno, as it was not available on their website, but the speech itself was a public speech. Additionally, it is always the spoken word that is favoured over the transcripts, which is something that had to be taken into account when analysing the transcripts. However, it is reasonable to assume the differentiation is not substantial, and since the method is not focusing on the language on a micro level, the narrative is likely to remain the same and thus not affected by those differentiations.

4.2 The speeches

The list below presents the speakers from each country and actor, as well as which speeches were accessed in video format. The speeches are 24 in total (8 per country and 4 per actor) whereof ten were accessed only in video format (6 from Norway, 4 from Sweden).

¹¹ Some exceptions had to be made however. The speeches from DF (Morten Messerschmidt 2022 were from an extraordinary annual party meeting, 2023 were from an opening debate of the Parliament, as other speeches available in either text or video did not live up to the other criterias. These speeches are available in both video and transcript and therefore accessible for the public. They are also 'special' instances and therefore more likely to be viewed by the public. The speech by the FrP in 2020 was from a meeting/press conference where their politics were presented, as other speeches were not available.

Sweden	LOse	SD
2020	Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson	Jimmie Åkesson (video)
2021	Susanna Gideonsson	Jimmie Åkesson
2022	Susanna Gideonsson (video)	Jimmie Åkesson (video)
2023	Susanna Gideonsson	Jimmie Åkesson (video)

Denmark	FH	DF
2020	Lizette Risgaard	Kristian Thulesen Dahl
2021	Lizette Risgaard	Kristian Thulesen Dahl
2022	Lizette Risgaard	Morten Messerschmidts
2023	Morten Skov Christiansen	Morten Messerschmidts

Norway	LOno	FrP
2020	Hans-Christian Gabrielssen (video)	Siv Jensen (video)
2021	Peggy Hessen (video)	Sylvi Listhaug (video)
2022	Peggy Hessen	Sylvi Listhaug (video)
2023	Peggy Hessen	Sylvi Listhaug (video)

5. Results and analysis

The result of the narrative analysis will be presented in this chapter, making no explicit distinction of how their narratives consist of both *story* and *discourse*. Every speech will be presented text by text, structured by country and actor, in chronological order, followed by a summary of the overall narrative of that actor. Then the comparison between the actors will be presented.

5.1 Sweden

5.1.1 LOse

2020 Karl-Petter Thorvaldsson

This speech has a narrative of a clear focus of the workers and how they are affected by the aftermaths of covid. *It is the workers that carry Sweden through the crisis.* LOse value their work and at the same time conclude that the possibility of getting through economic crises depends on your type of employment and unfortunately many are unemployed due to Covid. It is clear how fragile the society is, because the growing inequality and social classes are more visible now. Work for all is about a sustainable working life. LOse is *ready to negotiate, and will not let the parliament worsen job security.* Here it is suggested that the Parliament is the outgroup to both LOse and workers. It is also interesting that they mention the parliament and not the government as their outgroup, but LOse mentions that the government (the Social democrats) handled Covid well. This narrative creates a collective identity of all workers. There is also a narrative of hope for the future: *We can get through the crisis together, as we did in the 30s, the 90s, and 2008.* By *we* Thorvaldsson means *the government, the common people, organisations, companies* which further puts the parliament as the outgroup of this narrative. *In us Swedes is all we need.* He also mentions that what the social security system needs is a more just system for taxing, abolition of private profits in the welfare, better pensions, school, healthcare, eldercare. This will create *a stronger society for a better future together.*

By stating that *more people in the labour movement today have realised the value of a strong society*, Thorvaldson creates a core ingroup, although still quite inclusive, consisting of those active within the labour movement. The social identity complexity is low and the language is inclusive.

2021 Susanna Gideonsson

This speech has a narrative of workers as important for society, especially during Covid. *The workers have been in the frontline of the fight against the virus.* Not everyone has the option of working from home, especially the working class. Gideonsson also mentions that contrary to what she has heard, the working class does in fact exist, and that they are members of LOse.

Their work during the pandemic is described, followed by saying that they want respect, a good salary, and a good working environment. The *politicians* promised improved working environments but that has not happened, many of LOse's members are victims of accidents and sickness because of their work. Working life must be sustainable. *Politicians must get it together! Those who have worked hard all their life should not be forced into poverty and Even workers deserve a worthy retirement.* There is also a narrative of international solidarity. Democracy is under attack, authoritative leaders use the virus as an excuse for attacks on trade unions. Gideonsson sends solidarity to Hong Kong, Belarus, and Myanmar, in their fights for freedom and the right to organise. *Alone is not strong, only together. Join the union and the social democratic party - It depends on us.* This enhances the narrative of LOse as protectors of the workers and the social security systems.

The vague term *politicians* are portrayed as the outgroup, whether that refers to the government or the parliament is however unclear, but since Gideonsson encourages people to join the social democratic party, are they perhaps the exception to the outgroup. The ingroups are the workers, the working class, and the social democrats. The social group complexity is low considering the few outgroups, even if the ingroup includes the social democrats, the language is inclusive.

2022 Susanna Gideonsson, Gothenburg

This speech has a narrative of how LOse always have fought for the workers. Gidensson mentions that this was the year war came to Europe, when *Putin's Russia invaded free, democratic Ukraine.* LOse condemns this war and sends solidarity to Ukraine. *Alone is never strong.* She encourages people to vote for social democrats in the upcoming election, *there is only one party with the answers [the social democrats],* and says that all democracy needs is a strong defence and a strong welfare. *Old orders do not always retain* and privatisation has caused damage to the common people by: inflation, high prices, high rates of unemployment causing insecure types of employment. The labour movement sees the inequality and wants to change. Gideonsson highlights this by stating that there are 330 new billionaires¹² in Sweden during the pandemic, and that the salary of one CEO is the same as 65 industrial workers. *There is money,* the state just needs to collect it. She also wants to increase the defence. *We can afford it.* There is

¹² This is in the Swedish currency SEK.

also a clear narrative of what needs to be done for a better society for the common people. *A strong society is the basis for a strong economy.* LOse wants investments in the climate, infrastructure, the development and quality of welfare, and getting people into employment. Demand on politics: a fair division of costs, risks, and profits. The politics must take back control of what is best managed jointly: the welfare mission (healthcare, childcare, elderly care). *The ability to survive on the salary gives independence and security.* Those who have worked their entire life deserve a substantial pension. *Without welfare, it is just luck. The common people do not want to have it like it is today.*

The speech has overall a narrative of solidarity with Ukraine, and the common people, although with a serious tone. The social group complexity is in itself complex to determine. It is low in terms of the ingroups: the workers, and the recurrent reference to the common people. It is high because of the explicit political bias towards the social democrats. However, considering the lack of explicit outgroups apart from Russia and Putin, and the inclusive language, the social group complexity becomes a bit higher than low, but it is still on the lower end.

2023 Susanna Gideonsson, Skellefteå

This speech has a narrative of the social democratic politics as the solution to the social problems. *It depends on us [social democrats]. No one else will do the job.* The common people in Ukraine are fighting for freedom and democracy. The labour movement stands for international solidarity and supports Ukraine. The responsibility for climate change adjustments lies not with the common workers, *it takes joint solutions, a political will, and a strong labour movement, not a government sitting in the lap of the climate denying SD.* Gideonsson continues by saying that the budget of the government is not good as they *do not lift a finger to defend the common people. It is a betrayal.* Ulf Kristersson likes to play Prime Minister and put on a show, but does not care about the common people. Sweden needs higher employment rates, and increased resources for welfare, and to put an end to privatisations, and to create an energy market for the common people. A hundred years ago, workers had no rights, but they fought anyway, they organised themselves. Democracy is a practice, and the trade union movement is

practising. That is the responsibility of democracy. Gideonsson also quotes Anna Lindh¹³ about changing society little by little, and reminding people that we are stronger together.

This narrative creates a high social identity complexity, especially in combination with the many explicit outgroups (Russia, the government, the Prime Minister, SD). This is not cancelled out by the frequent usage of the term *the common people* throughout the speech (eleven times). The language is normative, causing the complicity to be even higher. The strong affiliation with the social democrats together with the lack of the term *workers* reduce LOse to be less of a trade union but still not a their own political party, making the ingroup also very exclusive. Their discourse is highly political thus excluding a lot of workers from their ingroup.

LOse summary

The combined narrative of the speeches by LOse has a clear focus on the workers. They speak of how important the workers are to the society and also how LOse protects them. The first three speeches are coherent in having a low social identity complexity together with inclusive language. The last one however, adverts from this trend as it has a high social identity complexity together with normative language, and even if the speech follows the same theme of protection of the workers, it focuses more on the social democratic party instead of the trade union movement. The combined outgroups in LOse's narrative are the parliament of 2020, politicians in general, Russia, Putin, the SD, Ulf Kristersson (the Prime Minister), the government of 2022. Interesting to note that when referring to the parliament and then government, LOse is referring to the same group of people (the right-wing block). The combined ingroups are the common people, workers, the working class, the social democrats, and the trade union movement in general. Essentially contested concepts that are mentioned are: freedom, democracy, equality, security, and hope.

5.1.2 SD

2020 Jimmie Åkesson, Speech to the nation

The speech begins with Åkesson saying he is going to speak from his heart, and has a narrative of a united country in times of crisis. Even if he thinks the government did not handle Covid well

¹³ Anna Lindh was a Swedish social democratic politician and former Minister of Foreign Affairs who was murdered in 2003.

in the beginning, he emphasises that at this time, it is best to not challenge, but to stand united, and as the opposition offer support to the government. *We go through this crisis as a united country, as a nation, as a family.* He continues by saying how he does not agree with the government and what he would change. International solidarity sounds good, but the reality is different. Åkesson mentions the incident where Germany took healthcare material for themselves that was intended to be shipped to Sweden. He does not condemn them for doing so, he wishes Sweden would also think about itself like that, saying that Sweden is a developed welfare country that must be able to supply our own healthcare with equipment in a crisis, with our own Swedish companies and creating jobs. *We are going towards extreme unemployment.* We must act now. He suggests lowering aid for other countries in favour of affording internal growth. *I am prepared to discuss what we can do in order to save the Swedish economy.* Then he repeats the phrase *We will go through this together, as a nation, as a family.*

This narrative has a low social identity complexity, especially considering the quote of Sweden as a family, and in combination with no explicit outgroups. The government could be seen as the outgroup, but they barely qualify as Åkesson reassures the viewers that they acted well overall and that we should be united now. It is still clear however on where the SD stands in relation to the government. The language in the speech is inclusive and thus does not negatively affect the social group complexity.

2021 Jimmie Åkesson, Almedalsveckan¹⁴

This speech has a narrative of Sweden as divided and segregated, caused by political misrule by previous governments both red and blue. Åkesson mentions that *insecurity cuts up and divides our country*, and that *criminal gangs have no respect for our laws*, stating that *multiculturalism is dangerous* and that they must be punished. When it comes to handling criminals, Sweden should prioritise security and rectification of the victims before rehabilitation of the criminal. The government has always been passive. Most of the liberal left are in a *sedated state*, and it is up to the SD to wake them and make them realise that the country is at its limit of what it can handle. *Afghans come before poor pensioners, small business owners, workers. Before those who need support and help the most (the sick, disabled), those who do not deserve it should not have*

¹⁴ Almedalsveckan is an annual political event in Sweden lasting one week.

access to our welfare. It is not clear if *Afghans* is referring to immigration or criminals in this context, or perhaps both at the same time? Åkesson creates the dichotomy of hard working Swedes against immigrants/criminals, which stands in contrast to the statement of their politics being about *justice, humanity, inclusion* as foundation of a well functioning welfare. He also states that *to make demands is to care*, even in schools, and that *the teacher should have the power in the classroom.* Also a narrative of the SD voters and politicians as victims. *They call us racists, who are cold, evil and should shut up, that is not the language of democracy. We are systematically the object of defamation.* He makes the connection of when the SD are attacked, their voters are also attacked, all one million of them. *But we have a backbone and pride.* He also says that this is overshadowing serious problems that affect honest, common Swedes.

The explicit narrative of the government as the cause for segregation stands in contrast to the narrative of the SD as victims, creating some confusion as to what the ingroups are. The outgroups are on the other hand very clear and explicit: all previous governments, the current government, the social democrats, criminal gangs, Afghans, immigrants, other politicians in general, and Putin. The explicit ingroup is the common Swede, but the ingroup is defined by the outgroups, creating implicit ingroups of those who agree with them on the discontent of the government, and the other parties, the immigrants, the criminals. And the narrative of the SD politicians and voters as victims, Åkesson creates a core ingroup as well. This together with the normative language makes the social group complexity high.

2022 Jimmie Åkesson, Sölvesborg¹⁵

This speech has a narrative of the SD as the only ones good for Sweden, and the other parties have ruined the country for decades. *[The other parties] have Sweden-hatred*, and Åkesson continues by saying that the social democrats blame their incompetences on Putin, (mostly referring to the expensive prices on fuel and energy) and that they are *trying to trick the voters.* Åkesson then speaks of record levels of immigration in 2022, and calling out the *clear hypocrisy and fraud* by the social democrats as they spoke of immigration limitations. *They call us racists* but the welfare was built by hard working Swedes. *It is for us.* He says that *the voters prioritise security, both economically and in terms of employment, and the ability to live on one's salary,*

¹⁵ Sölvesborg happens to be the birth-city of Åkesson.

saying that work and education must always be profitable. The criminals should be scared, locked up or deported for life. And that all the other parties are *directly responsible for the values that built the country have been thrown in the garbage (trust, community, fellowship)* and that it is disrespectful against the generations of Swedes who built the country. *We are the only party without blame. We put Sweden first.* He then reminds the people that the general election is coming up and of the importance of voting, and that he is tired of the social democratic rule, high prices, violence and insecurity, and the disassembled welfare in the countryside.

Åkesson is very explicit in his critique against the social democrats, and the other parties, making them the outgroup, together with Putin and immigrants. He is trying to discredit the government and the social democrats by saying they have ruined the country and have Sweden-hated. The language is clearly normative, which together with the many outgroups and the lack of explicit ingroups apart from *Swedes*, makes the social identity complexity high.

2023 Jimmie Åkesson, Speech to the nation video

This speech has a narrative of a country in ruins, caused by segregation. In 1979, Sweden was one of the world's richest and safest countries, but it is more like the *wild west* today: *broken, shattered, insecure, dangerous*. People are scared of gang violence and *innocent people pay with their lives*. There is also a narrative of Swedes as victims of islamism and immigration. Åkesson takes the example of the two Swedes who were killed by an islamist, simply because they were Swedes in Brussels in October the same year. The underlying problems are caused by the political system. He then turns directly to the immigrants: *it is your responsibility as a guest in our country to contribute and adapt. We will not adapt to you.* Then Åkesson says to the immigrants who do not want to adapt to the 'Swedish life' *I do not think you should be here, to me, you are not welcome in Sweden*, explicitly making them an outgroup. He continues by saying that the most important conflict in society today is between *those who contribute constructively versus those who do not contribute at all. Those who try versus those who ruin. Those who build cars versus those who burn cars*, making a clear dichotomy of Swedish workers against criminal immigrants. Then on a more positive note he wants Sweden to unite and build the *new, modern welfare state*, saying that Sweden is the land of possibilities, where power and will is required in order to challenge old truths and the naive rule.

The outgroup in this speech is explicitly Muslims, immigrants, and specifically the immigrants who do not want to adapt to Sweden, and the politicians who let it happen. The language is normative and the only explicit ingroup is Swedes, thus making the social group complexity high.

SD summary

The combined narrative of the speeches by the SD consists of Sweden as a country in ruins, caused by immigrants and social democrats. The last three speeches are very similar in narratives, where it is explained how segregated the country is, and also how their own politics will 'save' Sweden. The social complexity is high and the language is normative. The first speech however is along a different line. It has a narrative of a united country and hope, in the context of a national crisis. The social identity complexity is low in that speech, with an inclusive language. There are aspects of naive realism mechanisms present in the narratives of the SD. They often exaggerate the conflict between them and the government/the social democrats by telling the audience of their presumed narratives of them, and by doing so they try to establish their own legitimacy while discrediting the opposing side. The combined outgroups are all previous governments, the current government (the Social Democrats), the liberal left, immigrants, Muslims, Afghans, Putin, Russia. There are two main kinds of outgroups. The first is the other politicians in Sweden, specifically the social democrats, and the second group which consists of immigrants. The combined ingroups are Swedes, workers, pensioners, and the own organisation's supporters as a more exclusive core ingroup. Essentially contested concepts that are mentioned are segregation/unity, humanity, inclusion, security, democracy.

5.2 Denmark

5.2.1 FH

2020 Lizette Risgaard

This speech has a narrative of solidarity, and FH's contribution for a better Denmark. *A society needs to know how we treat the weakest*, and not a society where the poorest pay the most, like in 2008 during the financial crisis. The way out of this crisis (Covid) is through solidarity, and we will fight hard, together for Denmark. *Thanks to those who stood in the frontline since the*

beginning of Covid. FH has made good changes for Denmark, including negotiating good deals for 600 000 workers. Risgaard speaks of international solidarity, saying that it is frightening and embarrassing that poor people have less access to healthcare. Too many are avoiding paying their taxes, we must combat global inequality. This is a joint challenge with the goal of rebuilding the welfare after the crisis. Risgaard emphasises the value of having a workplace, and many are unemployed due to covid. FH wants more people on the labour market, it strengthens us all. The current government is putting things right that the previous government caused. *Climate improvements and social responsibility must go hand in hand.*

The outgroups are the bourgeois government during the financial crisis, the previous government, and tax frauders. Even if the ingroup only consists of workers, the social group complexity remains low as the language is inclusive and the outgroups are quite broad and non controversial.

2021 Lizette Risgaard

This speech has a narrative of hope for the future. *Together everyone has worked to get Denmark through the crisis.* Openness and the willingness to do things in a new way will help us in the green adjustment. The first of May is about solidarity. *We must leave a green globe to our children and grandchildren.* We can find new solutions that are beneficial for the society. There is also a narrative of how important FH is for the green transition. *We have done good things for Denmark. We have shown the way. Proved we have the right recipe. Let us show the way to a green and safe future for all of Denmark.*

Overall a narrative of solidarity. No one is portrayed as the outgroup, the speech is positive and hopeful, inspiring of adjusting for the climate and the trade union movement, as well as praise to the own organisation for what they have accomplished. At the same time there are no explicit ingroups either, however the language is still very inclusive and the social groups complexity is therefore low, even if no explicit social groups are present in the speech.

2022 Lizette Risgaard, Copenhagen

This speech has a narrative of solidarity. Covid is now behind us but we stand instead in the shadow of *Russia's vicious attack on a peaceful Ukraine. Putin is a coward*. Risgaard expresses solidarity with Ukraine by condemning Putin. *He is stepping on the values we all share: freedom, democracy, justice, the right to be who you are and to fight for what you believe in*, and adds that by doing so he indirectly attacks all of those who also support those values. These values are essentially contested concepts that are easy to agree with, but the more difficult to define. The war in Ukraine resulted in lots of Ukrainians fleeing the country that will come to Denmark. Risgaard expresses a worry that this increase of immigrants on the Danish labour market also increases the risk of them being exploited by *cynical employers seeking profit at their expense*, as has happened before. *We cannot start fires if we don't know about it [the reality of the labour market]*. This worry however does not interfere with, or affect the feelings of responsibility. *We will not turn our backs to Ukraine*. She adds that it is important for employers to simultaneously not forget the unemployed in Denmark. She highlights the importance of having decent working conditions, it should be safe to go to work in Denmark *regardless if your name is Anders or Anne, Aisha or Ahmed, Vladimir or Vanya*, clearly referencing Muslim/Arabic names as well as Ukrainian names. Søren Pape¹⁶ and Jakob Ellemann-Jensen¹⁷ are critiqued for abolishing the right to early retirement and the only improvement to the unemployment insurance in thirty years. She *hopes the Danes will remember that when it is time for election*. FH will continue to defend those rights as well as new rights for employees.

The outgroups are Putin, Russia, some employers, Søren Pape Poulsen and Jakob Ellemann-Jensen, while the ingroups are the workers, Ukraine, immigrants. The social groups complexity remains low, much due to the essentially contested concepts as they are ambiguous in meaning and something most people agree with, especially in combination with the broad ingroups. The way Risgaard is able to simultaneously address the solidarity and worry for both the Ukrainian immigrants and the unemployed Danes without placing them on opposite ends of a dichotomy contributes to the inclusive language throughout the speech. The language is normative when speaking of Putin, but does not affect the collective identities, or the construction of them.

¹⁶ Søren Pape Poulsen was at the time leader of the Conservative People's Party and minister of finances 2016-2019.

¹⁷ Jakob Ellemann-Jensen was at the time leader of the party Venstre and the minister of defence.

2023 Morten Skov Christiansen

Contextual background: A scandal recently surfaced regarding Lizette Risgaard behaving inappropriately towards staff, resulting in her resignation from her position and Morten Skov Christiansen replacing her the day before this speech was held. This could perhaps explain the shortness of it.

This speech has a narrative of the need for the trade union movement. *Lizette has done a lot for Danish employees.* Denmark has large problems with safe working environments and the labour mortality is the highest in 14 years, where 43 people died while working last year (2022). Skov Christiansen says that this means clear responsibility, *we need to take action! We need a strong trade union movement. We are the key.* He also says that the government has taken a good initiative for a permanent tripartite institution, *we have the answers for the future.* He thinks the Prime Minister is sending good signals - the government is considering other alternatives than abolishing the pension for elderly. Skov Christiansen mentions that their purpose is to *ensure that Denmark is well organised, equal, and fair.* He then criticises the government for *attacking the Danish model* but ends with saying that the trade union movement defended it and that he is proud of that.

The government is simultaneously an outgroup and an ingroup. The overall narrative is otherwise positive while speaking of serious matters. The ingroup only consists of workers, and trade unionists but the language is inclusive resulting in a low social groups complexity. There is a narrative of not wanting the incident with Lizette to negatively affect the organisation or the trade union movement.

FH summary

The combined narratives of the speeches by FH are consistent in the theme of solidarity and the organisation's (good) work. The speeches are also consistent in the inclusive language and the low social identity complexity. The combined ingroups are workers, the government, and immigrants, specifically Ukrainians and Muslims. The combined outgroups are the government of 2008 (right-wing), cynical employers, tax frauders, Putin, Russia, Søren Pape, and Jakob

Elleman-Jensen. Essentially contested concepts that are mentioned in the speeches are solidarity, hope, freedom, democracy, justice, and equality.

5.2.2 DF

2020 Kristian Thulesen Dahl, Lykkesholm Slot

This speech has a narrative of critique towards the government and the Prime Minister. Even though he initially agreed with their decision to go into lockdown he is critical of the rest of their decisions in relation to covid. *The government has been more and more self-willed* and the lockdown has had enormous consequences for the people, especially for those that lost their jobs, those who have events to celebrate, and the elderly that want visits. He also says that the DF was against immigration *before it became popular* as he is critiquing the immigration politics of the social democrats, referring to that they did not implement the immigration limitation that they promised during their election campaign. The elderly have not received attention during Covid, empathy and help packages are lacking. Many who have continued to work over the retirement age have been dismissed, that is discrimination. There is also a narrative of anti-EU. The constitution is the framework of the democracy that ensures free elections, freedom to gather and speak, and the distribution of power. *The Danes decide in Denmark* but they were undermined by the EU during Covid with *violent suggestions* and the EU is *a power machine* that makes decisions over the heads of the Danes. He is also advocating for Denmark to leave the EU if Brexit gets resolved well, alternatively for Denmark to follow Norway's road. Thulesen Dahl wants Denmark to be a country *we with pride can give to our grandchildren*.

The outgroups are the government, the EU, Mette Fredrikson, the social democrats, and immigrants. The ingroups are the elderly, the young, the workers. The language is normative and together with the many outgroups makes the social identity complexity high.

2021 Kristian Thulesen Dahl

This speech has a narrative of their vision of Denmark. Denmark is opening up again, marking the end of Covid. Everyone has been affected. Many are now vaccinated and the virus is under control, and restriction has to be something temporary. *It is about the freedom of the Danes*,

protected in the constitution, a free Denmark. There is also a narrative of discrediting the government. Thulesen Dahl is stating that they *committed crimes against the constitution* when they decided to euthanize an entire mink farm in the beginning of Covid, based on the recommendations from the health agency in order to limit the spread of the virus. *Mette Fredriksen has stepped on the foundation of Denmark. The constitution must be respected.* Along the same lines, Thulesen Dahl expresses a narrative of the DF as protectors of the elderly, insinuating that the government is not, by stating that *the elderly were too often forgotten by the government and their supporting parties.* Continuing with the argument that *one welfare area does not have to pay for another,* implying that the government prioritised other areas at the expense of the elderly, adding that that area is a crucial question for DF. *It is about respect and dignity.* There is also a clear narrative of Islamophobia. The government has a project where 130 convicted criminal immigrants/*fanatic Islamists/terrorists* are to be placed on an island in Denmark. The neighbours to this institution are not happy about this, and the government suggested that they could put up a fence on their property to feel safe. *The government wants to lock up common Danes. That is wrong. The criminal aliens must be the ones locked up.* The regard to international conventions comes before the regard to the Danes. Then he reminds the people of the local elections in a few months. The DF supports a Denmark with *freedom of expression, equality, openness, the elderly, welfare, and we fight outer threats.*

The outgroups are: the government, the coalition parties, Mette Fredriksen, islamism, immigrants and in combination with the normative language creates a high complexity of social group identity. The ingroups are the common Danes and the elderly. Thulesen Dahl has a clear narrative of naive realism where he is discrediting Mette Fredriksen and the government, by implying that they are against freedom, democracy, the elderly, the Danes and therefore also indirectly Denmark.

2022 Morten Messerschmidt, extraordinary annual meeting of DF

Morten Messerschmidt just took over as party leader from Thulesen Dahl and this was his first speech. This speech has a narrative of who and what the party is. *The DF never gives up, we fight not only for a party, but for a country, for the people and for everyone's future.* He describes the DF as a movement and as the only ones who dare to speak for the Danes, a party that puts the

right of the people to defend and preserve the land that was theirs first. The phrase *The Danes first* is repeated many times throughout the speech. Messerschmidt adds that *one has to be able to admit wrongs* and continues by stating what the party should have done differently in the past. *The DF is more like a family than a party.* Then he says that he himself comes from a poor working home with five younger siblings, and that he is motivated by the party members. *I will not forget the 21% who voted for the DF in 2015, or the 26% the year before, or the 465 000 who voted for me in the EU election in 2014.* Then he adds that Denmark must leave the EU and that they must put pressure on the Prime Minister who *took the lives of hard working people.* There is also a narrative of how the DF is different from other parties. *'Not only Denmark, but the entire western world is in a war against islamism' is what we say to remind the others of when they speak of the benefits of immigration. When they speak of business life and competitions, we speak louder of general pensions and better conditions for the disabled. When they speak of growth and power of competition, we speak of welfare, social politics, elderlaws, better conditions for families with children.* Continuing with *the DF is a bourgeois party, but we are blue, only soft in the heart. We are bourgeois, but we are firstly Danish.* Here they explicitly state the hierarchy of the social group memberships of DF.

Messerschmidt differentiates the party from the other right-wing parties with their social politics. They are explicitly stating that *the DF is the true people's party, where everyone is welcome* and that *the DF must be the party that unites Denmark.* The outgroup is Mette Fredriksen, Islamism, and the other parties. The ingroups are: the elderly, the workers, the disabled, families (with children), and the people/the Danes. The many ingroups in relation to the few outgroups that are mostly referring to other political parties, creates a low social identity complexity, especially in combination with the somewhat inclusive language. However the language is sometimes normative, especially when he speaks of Islam, but the overall narrative is based on solidarity.

2023 Morten Messerschmidt, the opening debate of the Parliament

This speech has a narrative of everything that is wrong with Denmark. To begin with, they want to change the focus of the school. *We need to prioritise calm classrooms.* Then on elderly care, implying that the social democrats do not care for the elderly any more, referring to that it was long since they talked about them in their campaigns and they are making cuts to the daily

elderly care. *The Social democrats are neither social nor democratic.* He also speaks of the age discrimination of the elderly on the labour market. The DF has many suggestions on how to *repair the decency of the elderly* and says that many Danes are worried about the health area and how the money is spent. *It is crucial to give the welfare a lift.* Then Messerschmidt suggests that the money can come from firing *unnecessary administration personnel* such as communicators and consultants from the public sector as they are *an unnecessary layer of fat* and that they are *thieves sitting on the tax money of the Danes.* He then continues by saying that Denmark has received many immigrants from the middle east, *where it is common with cousin marriage, and their children get sick [because of that],* implying they are straining the Danish healthcare.

The outgroups are immigrants (from the Middle East), Muslims, the government, the social democrats, consultants and communications workers in the public sector. The ingroups are the elderly, the Danes. The language is very normative and extreme, resulting in a high complexity in the social identity.

DF summary

The combined narrative of the speeches by the DF is quite broad. They speak of everything that is wrong with Denmark by critiquing/discrediting the government, they also praise their own party as protectors of the elderly and the Danish people, and there are narratives of anti-EU and anti immigrants. Aside from the speech in 2022 that has inclusive language and a low social identity complexity, the other three speeches are consistently of a high complexity and have normative language. There are also clear aspects of naive realism mechanisms in these speeches, as the conflict between the DF and the government is exaggerated and the many attempts at discrediting Mette Fredriksen as Prime Minister. The conflict between the Danish people and the immigrants is also exaggerated and Kristian Thulesen Dahl is literally dehumanising the convicted criminals by calling them aliens in his speech in 2021. The combined outgroups are Mette Fredriksen, the government, the social democrats, the supporting parties, the EU, and immigrants. The ingroups are the Danes, the elderly, the own party. Essentially contested concepts that are mentioned are democracy, freedom, unity, equality, openness, dignity, respect.

5.3 Norway

5.3.1 LOno

2020 Hans-Christian Gabrielsen

This speech has a narrative of the need to protect the workers. Gabrielsen begins his speech by thanking all the workers who have continued to work through Covid and contributed to keep society functioning. Covid also resulted in many being unemployed, and thus not having the security of a work life community, or a salary. *We need each other*, and the trade union movement, as *that is what makes us able to improve the workplaces, it won't come by itself*. He also adds that many jobs will disappear after Covid is over and that it is LOno's job to secure them as well as create new ones, to ensure work for all. The core of the Norwegian model is the cooperation and community between equal partners. The right-wing government wanted to lower taxes, but LOno wanted to ensure the workers' security, which they succeeded with. He continues by saying that *we need to keep using the big money to create a secure public welfare*. LOno sends their support to other countries that have it worse, stating that the Norwegian labour movement has always been good at international solidarity. *We are at a junction, our decisions now are crucial*, if the unemployed will get work or if the young people will be a lost generation on the labour market. A crisis can foster cohesion, success, and solidarity. *We chose solidarity, a workplace for the common people, and a welfare state that helps us*.

The outgroup is the right-wing government, while the ingroups are the common people, and the workers. The language is hopeful, inspiring about the future, and inclusive, making the social identity complexity low. However there is some aspects of naive realism present in his speech, as he exaggerates the conflict between LOno and the right-wing government, by implying that the government is against the workers' security.

2021 Peggy Hessen

Hessen tells a personal story of her first work experience and being part of the trade union movement. This speech has a narrative of how much the trade union movement means and has accomplished, but also that the fight is not over, *no victory is won forever*. Rights such as the normal working day, sick pay, and the law ensuring a good working environment have been

under attack, *from a government that has not always considered what is best for the workers.* LOno have won and fought for over 100 years, with the goal that *one should be able to live on one's own premises.* Not all employers allow workers to organise and be members of trade unions. The last couple of years *we have seen countless examples of employers that avoid responsibility for their employees and that entire branches are built upon the employer paying the least amount possible, giving the employees as few rights as possible.* Hessen emphasises that Covid could change the labour market in Norway for the worse, and that the crisis is not over until everyone is back into work. Hessen is overall positive of what the future can bring and at the same time stating the seriousness of the consequences of Covid for the Norwegian labour market and the workers. *We will use the crisis to take the fight, it is not enough with opening up Norway, we must rise again. Now it is the workers' turn.* Then she makes a commemoration to Utøya and those who were killed in the terrorist attack almost ten years ago, *they were killed for the same values we share: community and trust* and where all humans are of value.

The outgroup are the government and employers. The ingroup is only the workers. The language is very inclusive resulting in a low social identity complexity. Hessen uses a lot of word play to make subtle 'jokes' that do not translate very well, but they are still contributing to the inclusive language and the overall feel of the speech as inclusive.

2022 Peggy Hessen, Følsvik

This speech has a narrative of solidarity. Hessen mentions that freedom, democracy, and solidarity are strong values in Norway, but that *the right-wing forces want to break them down.* LOno have led the freedom movement, and *no one is free until all are free.* Then she states that the right wings in some countries are anti democratic (Russia, France, USA, Germany, and Great Britain) and we need to stand up against them. Europe is insecure/unsafe and scared, and LOno sends solidarity and support to Ukraine, Colombia, Myanmar, Belarus, Palestine, as *they are fighting for freedom.* She adds that they will not accept hate for Russians in Norway, *we must meet Russia with economic sanctions.* Many are worried about the labour market and the economy, but Hessen is positive for the future as the government (the labour party) are listening to LOno and working with the Norwegian model. *Together we are cleaning up the mess from the previous government.*

The outgroups are the right-wing forces, the previous government, and anti-democratic countries. The ingroups are the workers, the current government. The language is overall inclusive, with a few exceptions. Hessen does call some countries anti-democratic, however considering the examples she gives, is the claim not controversial, especially when she adds that they will not tolerate hate towards Russian in Norway. There is also one normative phrase when she mentions that right-wing forces are against freedom, democracy, and solidarity. The social identity complexity remains low however.

2023 Peggy Hessen, Rjukan

The speech was held in Rjukan, an important city for the trade union movement In Norway. This speech has a narrative of solidarity. *We stand together even if we do not know each other and have different backgrounds, but we have the same goal: freedom, equality, solidarity.* Hessen mentions a strike that has just come to an end after two weeks and that all of LOno's members are supporting them, *almost 1 million people.* The strike resulted in a historic result, the largest pay increase. *We take the fight, and always have.* She then reflects over a previous victory from 105 years ago, the eight hour working day. *We did it together.* She also mentions that the general election is coming up and that the biggest right-wing party (Høyre) wants more competition in the welfare, but LOno wants a strong public sector in Norway. *It is wrong when the taxpayers' money goes to companies and the finance sector on Wall street.* LOno's solidarity lies with those who need the welfare. *The welfare state took many years to build, we must protect it together. It is the power of the collective.*

The outgroup is the right-wing party Høyre in Norway, and the ingroups are the workers, and the people. The language is inclusive, making the social identity complexity low. The essentially contested concepts of freedom, equality, solidarity, community together with the narrative of what LOno has done for the workers is furthermore inclusive and non-controversial.

LOno summary

The combined narrative of the speeches by LOno are of solidarity towards the workers and how the trade union movement succeeds in protecting them. The four speeches are consistent in the

themes, with slightly different focus depending on the context. They have a low social identity complexity and an inclusive language. The combined ingroups are workers, the unemployed, the government of 2020 (right-wing), the common people. The outgroups are Høyre, employers, right wing forces, and Russia. Essentially contested concepts that are mentioned in the speeches are community, trust, cohesion, success, solidarity, freedom, equality, democracy, and security.

5.3.2 FrP

2020 Siv Jensen, national board meeting

This speech has a narrative of how the FrP's politics is beneficial to the common people. *We are alone in being for freedom of choice, diversity, market competition.* There are uncertain times now, insecurity on the labour market and many are worried. The FrP wants to strengthen business life in order to create more jobs, fight unemployment, health care queues, the elderly, the defence, and in the end Norwegian interests. Jensen mentions that the social democratic Prime Minister in Sweden is lowering taxes which is beneficial to the common people, but the opposite is happening in Norway. *The government wants to stick their straw into the wallets of the common people.* There is also a narrative of why immigration is bad for Norway. *Immigrants are very expensive, one immigrant costs around 16,4 million NOK.* Jenssen continues by saying that immigration is therefore irresponsible in the midst of an economic crisis, and that the focus should be on helping them in their countries instead. *When we were in government we deported on average 6 criminal immigrants per day. Immigration is challenging our values of freedom,* referring to the right of expression as making Norway a free democracy, and that the FrP does not support a prohibition of burning the Quran. Jenssen also states that Norway must be better at integrating the immigrants that are already here, and the importance of having Norwegian friends. She also states that the FrP would rather spend the money on the elderly, and that *no one protects the elderly as we do,* and that it is the other parties' fault that the elderly are living in bad conditions. In order to afford that, the FrP suggests lowering the aid to other countries, taking fewer refugees, and removing the *expensive and symbolic climate adjustments that do nothing to lower emissions.*

The outgroups are the government, immigrants, Muslims, the other parties. The ingroups are the elderly, workers, and the common people. Jenssen uses normative language which in

combination with the many outgroups creates a high level of complexity of the collective identities, especially considering how she praises the own party's accomplishments.

2021 Sylvi Listhaug, Arendalsuka¹⁸

This speech has a narrative of the party's solutions benefitting the common people and the elderly. Listhaug mentions that we must prioritise secure governing of the country, in order to *ensure that the generations after us have at least as good as we*. She continues by stating that there is only one winner after Covid - the Treasury. *The other politician says we cannot afford it*, and that Norway at the same time is *expected to be experts of saving the climate*. Many Norwegians can not afford the latest medications, and we must reprioritise so the sick have access to medications. *We prioritise building the country*. There is also a narrative of who in society is considered a problem. According to Listhaug, the elderly portrayed as a problem by the government, as expensive. *It is a shame pensioners are living below the poverty line*. The Labour Party cut down rights for pensions in 2011 and the FrP were the only ones against it. She then says that it is unheard of for politicians to say we can not afford aid to other countries, *we must prioritise our own inhabitants first*. Immigrants are very expensive, *one immigrant costs 20 million NOK*, and climate adjustments are costing tax money, resulting in more expenses for the common people.

The outgroups are the government, the other parties, and immigrants. The ingroups are the elderly and the common people. Jenssen creates the dichotomy of immigrants against the elderly, and the common people, which together with the normative language is resulting in a high social identity complexity.

2022 Sylvi Listhaug, Arendalsuka

This speech has a narrative of opposition against the government. *It is the common people's turn now*, referring to the rising prices of food, fuel, and energy. *We predicted the energy crisis, but the other parties did not listen to us, they lack power of action*. She also says that the suggestions implemented by the government are not good enough. The earth has one atmosphere, and we must therefore work towards lowering emissions globally, not like the labour party that increases

¹⁸ Arendalsuka is an annual political event in Norway, lasting one week.

the prices for Norwegians in the form of environment-taxes. *The Norwegians will not pay the price because Europe and Germany have carried irresponsible energy politics.* She continues by saying that the politicians could reduce the prices of energy if they wanted to, *we are an oil-country.* On food prices she says that even though politicians can not regulate them, it is still possible to reduce the taxation on food, in order for single parents and pensioners to afford it. The state has an excess in the treasury, and *you should leave the farm in a better state than when you got it,* implying that Norway can afford their suggestions.

The outgroups are the government, Germany, Europe, the other parties, the Labour Party. The ingroups are single parents, pensioners, Norwegians, the common people. The language in the speech is passionate rather than normative, even if some phrases are clearly normative. However due to the clear differentiation of the FrP and the government and the many outgroups, the social identity complexity becomes high, regardless of the many ingroups.

2023 Sylvi Listhaug, Oslo Symposium

Fifty years ago, the goals of the FrP were: no to higher taxation, no to higher fees, and no to power abuse. Those goals are still the same. *The fight for freedom never ends and the work of ensuring freedom, welfare, and democracy continues.* People in Ukraine are willing to die for a free country, and the FrP sends their solidarity and support. Listhaug also criticises the United Nations for condemning Israel but being *paralysed* and not critiquing Iran. *We can never take freedom for granted,* highlighting the importance of democracy and the freedom of expression, and then Listhaug differentiate the FrP from the government by saying that the government has prioritised a powerful state at the expense of the individual's freedom. *The state gets richer but poverty is increasing. The wealth must be shared with the common people* - a narrative of the government as not wanting what is best for the people. Contrary to the belief of LOno that increased taxes are beneficial, the FrP is of the opinion that the increased money to the state should come from cutting back on administrative personnel in the public sector. There is also a narrative of the FrP as protectors of the elderly, the children, and the families. *The elderly have worked and paid taxes all their life, they deserve care.* Listhaug emphasises the importance of childcare and that many children are struggling in school, *we must take care of the teachers, they*

should have the power in the classroom. Listhaug ends the speech by saying that the FrP are for *freedom, security, and care.*

The language is somewhat normative, but still including, mostly because of the frequent usage of essentially contested concepts such as *freedom* and *democracy*. The outgroups are the government, LOno, FN, Iran. The ingroups are the elderly, the people, Ukraine, and teachers. The social identity complexity is high considering the many outgroups and the normative language.

FrP summary

The combined narrative of the speeches by the FrP are focused on how the government and immigration is bad for Norway, and how the FrP's politics are good for the people. All four speeches are consistent in having a high social identity complexity and somewhat normative language. Some of the speeches are more normative and some are more inclusive, however they all have normative aspects. There are also aspects of naive realism mechanisms, in terms of their method of establishing legitimacy by polarising the social conflicts and speaking from their presumed narratives of the opposing side (the government). The combined ingroups are the common people, workers, single parents, elderly, and families. The combined outgroups are the government, the other parties, immigrants, Muslims, the UN, Iran, LOno, and administrative personnel in the public sector. Essentially contested concepts that are mentioned in the speeches are freedom, democracy, diversity, solidarity, and security.

5.4 Comparison

To begin with, the most prominent differences between the actors' narratives are based on the content in their speeches. They have different opinions, based on their ideologies, concerning matters such as taxation, privatisation, and to some extent also on immigration, and climate. The RPR parties are firmly against higher taxations in general, while being for privatisations. The trade union confederations are of the opposite opinion, being for higher taxations and being against privatisations. When it comes to the climate, the trade union confederations are more vocal in the need for green adjustments, while the RPR parties are not necessarily against it, for them it seems to be more of a question of prioritisation and efficient usage of state money. The

RPR parties are the more vocal and focus on immigration and the immigrants are seen as a problem. While the trade union confederations focus more on solidarity in general and not on whether immigration as a concept is good or bad for the country. The only trade union confederation that even raises concerns that could follow immigration is FH in 2022, in regards to the concern for the immigrants on the labour market and that this might result in the unemployed Danes getting forgotten. That speech is also the only one that defines immigrants as part of the ingroup. These kinds of differences between the actors are to be expected as they are stemming from differences in the actors' ideologies and are thus not included in the overall comparison of the actors.

Another aspect of differences between the trade union confederation and the RPR parties is the language. The RPR parties consistently use normative language to a much higher degree than the trade union confederations, while their language is more inclusive. The exceptions here are LOse 2023 that uses normative language, and SD 2020, DF 2021 that are descriptive and including in their language. This could also be because the RPR parties are political parties, while the trade union confederations are not. This could explain why the LOse 2023 speech is normative as it is advocating for a political party (the social democrats). However all speeches analysed are political, but it is possible that the technical distinction between a political organisation and a political party is the deciding factor. The language usage is also related to the social identity complexity. Low complexity was commonly matched with inclusive language, and high complexity was most commonly matched with normative language. There are of course mixtures of various degrees of normative and descriptive language in the speeches, most prominently of LOse 2022, DF 2022, LOno 22, FrP 2023. However, it can be concluded that the RPR parties mostly used normative language and presented a high social identity complexity, while the trade union confederations used descriptive, more inclusive language and a low social identity complexity.

There were also differences in terms of the construction of the collective identities, more so of the construction of the ingroup(s). The trade union confederations were in general less explicit in the definition of the outgroups and having broad definitions of the ingroups, such as *workers* - a term many can identify with, resulting in a low social identity complexity, and thus more people

to be able to access the content of the speech. This stands in contrast to the RPR parties, as they were very explicit in their definitions of the outgroups to oftentimes include different groups of the society, such as political affiliations, nationality, religion, and certain occupations, that have a large scope of possibilities for the public to identify with. In combination with the lack of explicit ingroups apart from *the people* - a term that can be applied to almost everyone, creates a high social identity complexity. It is as if the ingroup is constructed around the outgroup, where those who agree on the outgroup as the outgroup is part of the ingroup. This phenomenon is both wide and narrow at the same time, depending on the social identity complexity and the form of the language, and of course how specific the definition of the outgroup is. If the outgroup can be applied to a large group of the population, then the ingroup becomes more exclusive. Often when the RPR parties did define the ingroup further, they also created a core ingroup consisting of them as a party/their politicians/their voters, which created an even higher social identity complexity. By constructing the ingroup around the outgroup, the ingroup (or the core ingroup) becomes the more exclusive and coherent; a small number of people in relation to the outgroup that have strong and extremely similar thoughts and ideas on collective identity and social groups. At the same time the RPR pirates often referred to the explicit ingroup as the *common people* or *Danes/Swedes/Norwegians*, making the exclusive core ingroup seem open and inclusive at first glance. One unique and interesting phenomena of identity construction was in the speech of the DF in 2022 when they explicitly stated the hierarchy of their collective identities of different social memberships, as they ranked being Danes higher than being a right-wing party.

Another difference on the constructing of collective identities between the actors is how the actors speak of the elderly. There is no substantial difference in terms of the content or how the elderly are valued, but the difference between the actors lies in *how* they speak of them. The RPR parties seem to give more meaning to their own function as political parties that care for the elderly. They internalise and project the meaning of this attribute to themselves and therefore it becomes part of their identity as a political party to care about the elderly. The trade union confederations still put emphasis on the importance of good care and pensions of the elderly but they do not project this attribute of their function to their identity. All actors advocate for the

rights of the elderly, but the actors differ in the *how*, the discourse. Essentially the actors want the same things for the elderly, but have different ways of communicating this.

There are aspects of naive realism mechanisms present within the narratives of all actors. All of them express some degree of ingroup favouritism. The RPR parties more so, as they refer both to their politics, their organisation, and their supporters, while the ingroup favouritism of the trade union confederations was more vague referring to the entire trade union movement. The trade union confederations also expressed the ingroup favouritism with inclusive language, making it less prominent compared to the RPR parties, especially the SD which were vocal on their own party's and voter's superiority. All actors also expressed stereotypes and/or attempted to discredit the outgroup. For the trade union confederations, this took the form of critique towards the government which will be elaborated on further down. For the RPR parties this took a more extreme route. They all aimed their critique towards the government and politicians in general, often together with normative language. The DF did not hold back on their critique against Mette Fredriksen in order to delegitimise and discredit her, her government, and her rule. The SD were very similar in their attempts but did not personify the government by the Prime Minister as the DF did. The FrP were also similar, but personified the government even less than the SD. The RPR parties also delegitimised other outgroups apart from the government. Immigrants were dehumanised by DF, and even if the SD and the FrP did not go to that length they also expressed stereotypes against immigrants. The DF also expressed critique towards the EU and even advocated for a 'Dexit'. The FrP aimed their critique of supranational institutions towards the UN. The SD did not express any negative feelings towards the EU as a supranational institution in the analysed speeches, but neither did they express positive feelings towards the EU. This again raises the question if a negative attitude towards supranational institutions such as the EU is required in order for the party to be considered as RPR. The SD have expressed critique towards the EU in other instances than the speeches analysed but not to the same extent as the DF. This in turn also raises the question to what extent and how many instances must be documented for the party to be considered RPR.

What the actors had in common in terms of mechanisms of naive realism, both the trade union confederations and the RPR parties, was the critique against the government and that they all

exaggerated their conflicts with them. The difference here being that the trade union confederations focused more on what their organisation had accomplished in the past, and the RPR parties on what they will accomplish in the future, or if they were in the government in the past - how great of a job they did. The trade union confederations also praised the government, although only when ruled by Social Democrats. Even if the actors in general supported the government, they were not immune from critique.

When it comes to the essentially contested concepts, the actors are very similar. Every actor mentioned *democracy*, *freedom*, and *equality*. The nature of the essentially contested concepts makes it difficult to know exactly what they mean by their usage of the terms. But it is clear that they value these essentially contested concepts as positive. The actors also have somewhat similar definitions of the societal problems, as they all speak of the problems of criminality, unemployment, insecurity, inequality, covid, and Russia's invasion in Ukraine. They all have slightly different focus to what they deem as the most prominent societal problems, which could also be the result of their national differences as the countries are affected differently by different problems. It is possible that the actors have different definitions of *the people/the nation* as well, thus making them essentially contested concepts as well. The RPR parties use the terms almost interchangeably, but make it clear that immigrants are not included in this definition, while the trade union confederations are more inclusive in their definitions.

6. Discussion

The research by Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou (2023a; 2023b) concluded who the RPR voter is, demeaning previous stereotypes against them, and providing knowledge of the main reasons why people vote for them; based on either ideology or discontent. In relation to the results of this thesis where it could be concluded that the RPR parties oftentimes constructed the ingroups of the collective identities around their perception of the outgroup, it further provides knowledge of who the RPR voters are. It is possible that the core voters of Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou's research are the same as the RPR parties core exclusive ingroups in their narratives. However this also means that the peripheral voters are perhaps not included in this core ingroup, but still vote for the RPR parties because of the extent of their discontent. It is also possible that the

peripheral voters identify as neither ingroup or outgroup in the narratives of the RPR parties. The question is what happens when the RPR parties mention the essentially contested concept of democracy, as Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou also concluded that positive evaluations of democracy could defer the peripheral voters from voting for the RPR parties. This thesis could not conclude the consequences of their mentioning of the essentially contested concepts, only which were mentioned and their contexts.

The previous research of Mosimann, Rennwald, and Zimmerman (2019) concluded that the members of trade unions could better resist RPR parties, but were not immune to them. They also claimed that RPR parties today try to undermine the working class by an agenda of anti-immigration and welfare chauvinism, which this research also could conclude with both the RPR parties' normative language, the high social identity complexity, and the aspects of naive realism. The fear of RPR parties being able to compete with left parties for the workers' votes are valid as this research has shown that the RPR parties explicitly put the workers in a dichotomy against for example immigrants, in an attempt to gain the workers support.

Similar to the research of Siim and Meret (2016) of the 'politics of fear', this thesis could also conclude that the RPR parties regularly construct narratives of immigrants and muslims as societal problems and blame the segregation on them. This took the form of welfare chauvinism, as expressed by all three RPR parties. It also took the form of Islamophobia (especially by the FrP) as they argued to defend freedom of expression. Their construction of collective identities, their normative language, and their high social identity complexity however, reveals that it is in fact the RPR parties that creates some division in society. Perhaps that is also the reason why the trade union confederations so often speak of solidarity, as a counteraction, but it may as well be the other way around. Immigrants were targets for outgroups in all countries by the RPR parties, but not by the trade union confederations.

However, this thesis can make no claims if normative language causes the social identity complexity to be high, or if it is the other way around. It is also possible that there is no direct cause and correlation between them and that they are a result of other aspects that have not been included in this research. Although it is clear that normative language and a high social identity

complexity are related, as they were observed together in the majority of the narratives of the RPR parties. This is further supported by the fact that low social identity complexity was consistently observed in relation to inclusive language.

The chosen method of narrative analysis worked well in relation to the material and the selected theories. It resulted in a holistic view of the relationship of language and collective identities. Had the analysis instead focused on only one of the aspects of the social identity complexity, the normative/descriptive language, the construction of collective identities, or the mechanisms of naive realism had the analysis been able to dig deeper into the aspect, although at the expense of the holistic perspective. By combining all those aspects into the analysis was it possible to analyse the relationship between the aspects as well, which provides a more comprehensive analysis and conclusions.

7. Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to identify the relationship between trade union confederations and radical populist right parties by analysing narratives of political public speeches from 2020 to 2023, and applying a theoretical framework of discourse analysis and construction of collective identities. This research answered the questions of what narratives were portrayed in the speeches, how the actors express their positions of collective identities, and how language affects the construction of collective identities, as well as speculate as to why this is. The analysis could conclude that the narratives of the political parties consistently had a high social identity complexity, compared to the trade union confederations consistent low social identity complexity. The actors were also different in terms of how the collective identities were constructed, both in their content and the process of constructing them. The trade union confederations had few explicit outgroups, while the RPR parties often had many explicit outgroups and also constructed the ingroups around the definition of the outgroups. Both the trade union confederations and the RPR parties had mechanisms of naive realism in their narratives, but the RPR parties went to further lengths to discredit the outgroups and express stereotypes of them. All actors also expressed critique towards the government, however for different reasons. They also mentioned the same essentially contested concepts of democracy,

freedom, and equality. All of these aspects were expressed through the use of language, where the RPR parties to a much higher degree used normative language than the trade union confederations. The analysis could also conclude that the actors often agree on what the societal problems are, but due to differences of ideology they do not agree on the solutions for them.

The dichotomy with trade unions and far right populist parties on each end is different from what one might expect. It is not one of strict ideology, as this research has shown that in many instances the RPR parties are advocating for social security and perseverance of welfare (albeit mostly for native citizens) as well as protection of the workers (although not very elaborative). This is further exemplified as the actors are also agreeing on what the societal problems are (however not on measures to fix them) as the essentially contested concepts were coherent across them. The dichotomy is rather referring to how they construct and position themselves in collective identities, and how they use language to express this. Both the RPR parties and the trade union movement are multifaceted and cannot be reduced to strict ideologies.

This thesis has provided additional knowledge of the relationship between trade union confederations and RPR parties, but further research on the matter is needed. It is difficult to know exactly how the public perceive the actors and therefore it would be interesting to complement this research by conducting interviews with the supporters of both trade unions as well as RPR parties. This would properly map their overlap, and research how they really perceive the actors, and if the findings of this research are related. It would also be interesting to redo this research in a few years to see if the result has changed or not, and the reasons behind that. This research framework could also be applied to other regions so the results of this research could be compared to others. It would also be interesting to apply a gender theory, considering that the majority of trade union members are women, and the majority of RPR voters are men.

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2023: KOLLEKTIVETS KRAFT

Kamerater!

Jeg liker det med denne bevegelsen. At vi er kamerater, selv om vi kanskje ikke kjenner hverandre. At vi står sammen, selv om vi kommer fra forskjellige steder, forskjellige arbeidsplasser, har ulik bakgrunn. Fordi vi ønsker det samme. Vi har det samme målet: Frihet, likhet og solidaritet. De tre ordene har vært våre siden starten! De har samlet oss. Det er våre grunnleggende verdier.

Disse ordene har stått på fanene som vi har samlet oss bak. Men stående for seg blir det en frase. Det er vår jobb å omsette det i noe konkret. I praktisk politikk.

For de som bærer fanene og for oss som går bak!

Som bevegelse har vi oppnådd mye, men vi kan aldri hvile. Vår kamp for et bedre samfunn vil aldri ta slutt. I år går vi i tog under slagordet «trygghet i fellesskap».

Det er i fellesskap vi tar våre kamper, men det er også i fellesskapet vi finner våre løsninger! Det er kollektivets kraft!

Kraften i dette kollektivet – kraften i arbeiderbev

fikk vi demonstrert under streiken etter lønnsoppgjøret for to uker siden.

Da tok 23 000 av LOs snart 1 million medlemmer kampen for økt kjøpekraft.

En million medlemmer som krevde økt kjøpekraft.

En million som ikke fant seg i at bedriftseierne og bedriftslederne beriker seg med lederlønnfest og bonusbonanza.

En million som sa at nok er nok. Nå står vi sammen.

Og sammen sørget vi for et historisk godt resultat. Vi har i nyere tid aldri oppnådd større lønnstillegg for LO-medlemmene enn dette.

Dette hadde aldri vært mulig uten den innsatsen og kampviljen vi har sett hos de som har vært ute i streik. De fortjener en ekstra stor takk!

Dere her på Rjukan kjenner godt til hvilken kraft som ligger i det kollektivet som arbeiderbevegelsen er! Som ett av Norges første virkelige industristeder, og dermed også tidlig åsted for organisering og arbeiderkamp, var det her man tok kampen for våre felles rettigheter.

Det var her - for 105 år siden - at arbeiderne ved Hydro bestemte seg for å ta kontroll over egen arbeidstid og marsjere ut etter 8 timers arbeidsdag.

De gjorde det i fellesskap. Ikke en og en. Fordi de visste at sammen var de sterke.

Det har vi alltid gjort. Vi har samlet oss, på klubbkontor og i kantiner, på gater og torg. Vi har marsjert bak fanene og tatt kampen for et samfunn med mindre forskjeller.

Et samfunn bygd på gjensidig tillit, solidaritet og fellesskapsløsninger. Der menneskeverd og likeverd er grunnleggende.

Det er derfor vi har kjempet frem like rettigheter, en velferdsstat for alle og et trygt arbeidsliv.

Og det er derfor vi tar kampen for det organiserte arbeidslivet, slik at de som ønsker å organisere seg og få de godene som ligger i en tariffavtale, skal få det.

Det var derfor vi støttet streikene til de ansatte i restauranten Olivia og logistikkbudriften 360 Logistics og deres kamp for en tariffavtale. Rettigheter som er selvsagt for de aller fleste.

Og det er derfor vi tar kampen i tarifforhandlingene. For at de som har minst, skal få litt mer enn oss andre. For å utjevne forskjellene.

Og om nødvendig går vi ut i streik!

Kamerater, gode venner!

I dag er det 123 dager igjen til valget. 123 dager igjen til vi skal gå til stemmeurnene og bestemme hvem vi vil skal styre den grunnleggende velferden vår.

Hver dag, hele året, går kommuneansatte på jobb for velferdssamfunnet. Over en halv million er i sving for å levere gode tjenester til alle oss andre.

De er på tur ute med barn i barnehager og skole, eller behandler byggesøknader!

Andre er i full utrykning til en brann eller en hjertestans. De henter avfall, passer vannforsyningen, brøyter veiene og fikser rørene i kommunale bygg over hele landet.

De farter fra en leilighet til en annen for å rekke å hjelpe hjemmeboende eldre, så de kan bo hjemme - i trygge omgivelser - litt til.

Dere,

Utfallet av lokalvalget i september vil ha store konsekvenser for arbeidsfolk. Det skal vi sørge for at våre medlemmer får vite. Fordi politikk virker - og fordi det betyr noe hvem som styrer.

· Når høyrepartiene sier de vil ha mer konkurranse i velferden, skal vi svare at vi vil ha god, offentlig velferd!

· Når høyrepartiene sier at de vil ha mindre formuesskatt, skal vi svare at vi vil ha mer utjevning!

· Når høyrepartiene sier at de vil ha mer midlertidighet og innleie, skal vi svare med faste ansettelse!

Vi har en god og sterk offentlig sektor her i Norge. Med ansatte som hver dag står på for å skape en trygg og god hverdag for barn og eldre, uavhengig av hvor mye penger de har i lommeboka.

Det har vært viktig for at vi har klart å skape et samfunn med relativt små forskjeller. Denne velferden er et felles gode, som sikres best gjennom offentlig eierskap og drift.

Velferdsstaten utfordres av kommersialisering og krefter som ønsker økt privat profitt fra drift av offentlig finansierte tjenester og infrastruktur.

· Ofte skjer det på bekostning av ansattes lønns-, pensjons- og arbeidsvilkår.

· Ofte skjer det på bekostning av kommunenes mulighet til å levere god velferd!

Kamerater – jeg tror på at folk i fellesskap former sin egen framtid. Sammen. På jobben. I lokalsamfunnet. På skolen. I idrettslaget. Over alt hvor folk er.

Om det er noen som lurer på hvorfor LO engasjerer seg i lokalvalgkampen så er det bare å vise hva vi har fått til i fellesskap.

Vi tror ikke at løsningen på en bedre eldreomsorg er at mormor blir et virkemiddel for å skape overskudd for finanskonserner på Wall Street, eid av noen av klodens rikeste menn.

Derfor mener jeg det er feil når skattebetalernes penger går til selskaper som Aleri Attendo, Unicare og andre. Mange av dem registrert i skatteparadis.

Vår solidaritet ligger hos de som trenger velferdsstaten, ikke hos kapitalister som vil tjene store penger på den.

Hvor mye investerer de i fellesskapet her i Norge?

Vi trenger kommuner, fylker og regioner som står for en annen politikk. En politikk hvor fellesskapets midler skal komme fellesskapet til gode.

Jeg mener denne konkurranseutsettingen representerer en direkte trussel mot verdiskapingen og innovasjonskraften i næringslivet.

Der man bare skal sluse privat kapital til investeringer i virksomhet som allerede finnes, som i dag drives av fellesskapet.

Dette er fantasiløse, risikofrie investeringer som ikke skaper én ny jobb, som ikke genererer én krone i økt verdiskaping og som ikke endrer en tøddel på handelsbalansen overfor utlandet.

Det er ikke det som trengs for å skape de nye arbeidsplassene vi trenger i våre lokalsamfunn.

Det er ikke det som trengs for å bygge nye sykehjem og barnehager.

Bygge nye veier.

Bygge det samfunnet vi er så stolte av og som vi ønsker å ta vare på.

Kamerater!

Den velferdsstaten vi har i dag er et resultat av bevisste politiske valg og har blitt bygget opp gjennom generasjoner.

Det har tatt tid. Det har krevd klokskap og tålmodighet.

Det vil det også kreve av oss fremover. Dette samfunnet. Denne velferdsstaten har tatt lang tid å bygge opp, men det går raskt å bygge den ned.

Derfor er det opp til oss å ta vare på den. I fellesskap.

Det er kollektivets kraft! Tusen takk for meg!

FrP

2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEtc6FakrY>

2021: <https://vimeo.com/587872989> (from 25:00)

2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RFL0sflyS58&list=PLYEoEuVdSgAvO5qiQjLGTXXVyx5z5XOPK&index=21> (from 42:00)

2023: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DO2ZI_IHAo