

Reconsidering the grain monopoly: Conceiving potential responses to ecological disaster in the Danish-Norwegian public sphere 1770-1774

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Abstract

The mercantilist policy of the grain monopoly (1735-1788) was a fundamental part of the Danish-Norwegian composite state, as it thoroughly regulated the extent of grain transfers between Norway and Denmark whilst excluding the importation of foreign grains. While this system functioned well in normal years, it was challenged by harvest failures, so common during the Little Ice Age (LIA). One such case occurred in the early 1770s, as the subsistence crisis in the Eastern part of Norway testifies (1771-1773). This period came just after Struensee's implementation of full press freedoms in 1770, which gave commoners the opportunity to debate the ecological disaster and propose potential adaptations more freely. One such proposal was the abolition of the inflexible grain monopoly.

Nothing epitomizes this discussion more than the "Philopatris" debate, which is archived in the Luxdorph collection. The participants include significant Danish-Norwegian figures such as Christian Martfelt, Ove Høegh-Guldberg, and Ole Christian Bie, who debated whether the grain monopoly worsened the ongoing crisis. The purpose of this thesis will be to examine how the famine of Eastern Norway (1771-1773) affected public debates during the "Trykkefrihetstiden" (1770-1772), and how this laid the basis for later schemes to alter the rigid grain policy during the late 1780s. In what manner did people argue for and against the abolition of the current grain monopoly? To what degree was the existent grain regime believed to exacerbate the Eastern Norwegian famine? And ultimately, how did the debates of the 1770s initiate socioecological changes that seem too complicated to achieve today?

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1.0: Introduction

“Without this event it would have become [...] an impossibility [...] to realize this, seeming, hidden secret: That our State, when considering its entirety, cannot feed itself.”¹

The above segment was authored by the Danish economist Christian Martfelt in 1774, approximately a year after a sinister famine had afflicted Eastern Norway in 1771-1773. This experience had prompted the General-Toldkammeret to create an estimation of the overall grain situation. According to him, their calculations demonstrated how dismal Danish-Norwegian food security truly was.² As Norway was metabolically connected with Denmark through the mercantilist system of a grain monopoly, Martfelt wholly blamed it for the calamity. Through interdisciplinary cooperation between the fields of paleoclimatology, climate history and dendrochronology we can fairly confidently determine that the famine was, in fact, caused by an ecological crisis in the early 1770s which covered vast parts of preindustrial Europe.³ Whilst regarding the grain monopoly as the primary cause for the famine might seem like an unsubstantiated claim today, it is likely that the mercantilist setup was indirectly contested through negative public attention triggered by the subsistence crisis. Since the early 1770s also coincided with Struensee’s introduction of full press freedoms in Denmark-Norway, this thesis will analyse how the Danish public debated grain provision in light of harvest failures and the resulting famine of Eastern Norway. Moreover, it will describe how the liberalized debates managed to intensify underlying contradictions within Danish-Norwegian society regarding the applicability of having a grain monopoly. Consequently, the invigorated public debate helped pave the way for palpable reform in 1788, a significant change in ecological relations that could be interpreted as a form of mixed political-ecological “adaptation”. It also seems likely that while an opened public sphere put significant pressure on existing political structures, when synergised with additional straining factors, like climate fluctuations, it also had the opportunity to alter deep-seated convictions. As modern-day debates discuss how to confront current climate change, it is apparent that

¹ Martfelt, Beviis at Dannemarks Og Norges Fyrretive-Aar-gamle Korn-Handels-Plan Ikke Naaer Sin Hensigt, Gyldendals forlag 1774. xiv, Translated from Danish.

² Ibid. xiii

³ White, Sam., Christian. Pfister, and Franz. Mauelshagen. The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History. 1st Ed. 2018. ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK: Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 269

people back in the 1770s similarly utilized the public sphere as an instrument to ascertain how society ought to respond, or adjust, after a climate-induced calamity had arrived.

While harvest failures did occur frequently in preindustrial societies, most of them failed to prompt lasting change.⁴ This thesis will contend that the transformation of the 1770s emerged from a unique and potent combination: a catastrophic ecological event within the context of the Little Ice Age (LIA) coincided with a loosened public sphere – a connection the emerging field of climate history would call “socio-natural”⁵. Stemming from this socio-ecological setting in Denmark-Norway, a rich historical trove of sources was formed: namely the Luxdorph collection. This assemblage of ecologically, economically, and politically concerned manuscripts illustrate disparate contemporary attitudes towards the mercantilist regulations, but also how many demanded a more flexible grain regime in Denmark-Norway. This raises several questions: How did ecological stress enter this new, open debate? To what degree was the existent grain regime deemed responsible for worsening the famine? In what manner did people argue for and against the adaptation or abolition of the current grain monopoly? And ultimately, how did the debates of the 1770s initiate socioecological changes that seem too difficult to achieve today? Existing historiography has put little emphasis on the interconnection between the famine of Eastern Norway and the rest of Europe (1771-1773), the “Trykkefrihetstiden”⁶ (1770-1772) and the later demise of the grain monopoly (1770-1788). Therefore, it will be the ambition of this thesis to evaluate the potential “socio-natural” connection between these momentous events and challenge a blind spot of national historiographical research.

1.1 Primary sources, Method, and Scope

As there exists an intriguing chronological correlation between the Eastern-Norwegian crisis of the 1770s and a heightened public clamour for the abolishment of the grain monopoly, it remains to be examined how these were interrelated. Whilst the question of whether the disputes surrounding the grain monopoly were truly affected by the subsistence crisis of the 1770s could be assessed through other (and lengthier) approaches than the one chosen here,⁷ they might risk side-lining what I judge to be an important aspect of the period in question:

⁴ White, *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History*. 342

⁵ Collet, Dominik., and Maximilian. Schuh. *Famines During the ‘Little Ice Age’ (1300-1800): Socionatural Entanglements in Premodern Societies*. 1st Ed. 2018. ed. Cham: Springer International Publishing: Imprint: Springer, 2018. 11

⁶ The literary-historical period denoting the years of full freedom of the press in Denmark-Norway (1780-1772) which Struensee implemented.

⁷ Extensive demographic, economic, administrative, or climatological studies present viable alternatives in this.

namely the contemporary public attitudes. Of course, how the public understood the relationship between the monopoly and crisis, does not necessitate that there was any factual truth to or physical reality behind their claim. Yet, perception is crucial in motivating action, both then and now. As Mike Hulme prudently states, “Climate change [is] altering our physical world, but the idea of climate change is altering our social worlds.”⁸

Focussing on the public debate has other advantages also: it can rely on a broad body of sources that are plural and contested enough to reveal the inevitable elitist biases contained within most sources from this period. Moreover, they are rich enough to cover a varied, faceted debate within the framework of a thesis. Also, through a closer look at how contemporaries saw climate-induced famines as revealing the apparent societal vulnerability towards nature speaks for itself. This analysis will draw on a particularly rich yet underused collection of historical documents⁹ collected by the Danish official Bolle Willum Luxdorph (1770-1772). It covers the core of grain debates during the times and illustrates to what degree these were influenced by the ecological crisis that surrounded them.

The Luxdorph collection can be found within the Danish Royal Library, as a digitalized collection which was made in 2020 on occasion to the 250-year anniversary for the freedom of the press, which was instituted 14th of September 1770 in Denmark-Norway. As the Luxdorph collection overlaps with the crisis years of Norway 1770-1773, its applicability for this thesis was evident. Within its contents, the most relevant contribution are pamphlets written by three authors, which illustrate the scope of current debate: The first was Christian Martfelt who under the Pseudonym “Philocosmi” broadly critiqued the contemporary grain policy. In 1774 (nearly a year after the significant mortality crisis in eastern Norway) he wrote *Beviis at Dannemarks Og Norges Fyrretive-Aar-gamle Korn-Handels-Plan Ikke Naaer Sin Hensigt* which was published 1784.¹⁰ The second participant was an adamant supporter of the status quo and later de-facto prime-minister of Denmark-Norway: Ove Høegh-Guldberg writing under the pseudonym Philodani. The last participant was the literary agitator Ole Christian Bie who was the originator and name-giver of the Philopatreias debate.¹¹

⁸ Hulme, Mike. *Why We Disagree about Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. xxviii

⁹ All primary sources elevated within this thesis are translated from Danish to English in order to make the citations more accessible for English readers.

¹⁰ This book is not a part of the Luxdorph collection

¹¹ The term “Philopatreias debate” will be utilized throughout this thesis as a general categorization of the debates between 1770-1772, as it was Bie’s (under Philopatreias) publications who triggered a considerable amount of published responses

Discovering sources in which Martfelt debated some of Denmark-Norway's most distinguished voices about the precarious grain situation speaks volumes as to its contemporary significance.¹² Additionally, it is noticeable how each embodies a diverging intellectual undercurrent, specifically with Martfelt indicative of the reform-oriented physiocrat, Bie as the stalwart sceptic, and Guldberg as the conservative mercantilist.

Furthermore, additional sources will similarly be presented in chapter 3.1 and 3.6 to establish that the miserable Eastern-Norwegian situation in 1771-1773 was discussed on more intimate terms as well, often in publications by ordinary people situated outside the bubble of elite experts. Yet, it must be noted that the debate sources of the Luxdorph collection are for the most part written by well-educated and prominent individuals who lived in Copenhagen. This was because they held important positions within the Danish-Norwegian state, worked in tandem with its institutions, or simply happened to live in the most populous and dominant city in the Danish-Norwegian state at the time. This thesis will therefore not gauge the learned debate that transpired in peripheral Norway and will exclusively concentrate on written sources between 1770-1774 from Copenhagen.

Although the subsistence crisis of the 1770 affected the fragile societal setup, it didn't exceed in severity to other pre-industrial calamities. However, it did happen at a time which saw an unprecedented societal shift which allowed these vulnerabilities to be discussed more freely.¹³

¹² As a sidenote, it's important to state that very few used the term "grain monopoly" per se in the eighteenth-century. Contemporaries were more content with naming it "korn-lover" (grain laws), or indirectly discuss its regulations through general debates about the export and import of grain, and how trade influenced grain prices. They describe a set of rules that were used all over Europe to govern the relationship between the state and the public. (Kaplan, 2019, 9) Furthermore, the law itself never mentioned any "grain monopoly": "Forbud paa alle slags Fremmede Korn-Vahres Indførsel udi Danmark, samt Sydenfields i Norge, Christiansand alleene undtagen" The term "grain monopoly" is therefore mainly a modern-day category for this regulation from 1735. The word "grain monopoly" derives mainly from John Herstad (2000) whose work is formative for this thesis. As such, the term grain monopoly will be applied for conveniences sake throughout this thesis

¹³ Climate history in Norway can be quite a challenge when delving into its earlier phases of the LIA (1300-1700) due to the lack of written sources about demographic, climatic and economic data. However, we can, quite confidently assert that this lack of data available data does not pertain to the eighteenth-century. The "kapitelstakst" serves as one example of such sources, which was an almanac that displayed prices for various grain products in each respective region over time. It is also easier to find pertinent dendrochronological data as it is closer situated towards our own time. The century would also correspond with the scientific revolution in which scientists would observe and collect data from the weather and climate. Additionally, in alongside with the expanding bureaucracy of the Danish-Norwegian, a substantial body of letters between bureaucrats, governors and local officials was written. In conclusion, this extensive access of diverse sources renders the eighteenth century an ideal case-study for examining how climate impacted preindustrial societies. Climate history has typically been focussed on collecting tangible data and examining if it correlates with up-to-date climatological research. This approach often necessitates a quantitative approach. For instance, it is easier to prove a causal relationship between temperature, grain prices, and demographic fluctuations if these correspond neatly. And although this methodology has yielded remarkable results, proving in many instances that climate does impact past societies, it tends to observe humans as passive, and ultimately at the whim of natural variations. Climate historians have thus been typically reluctant to engage in qualitative data in fear of

Far ahead of most of contemporary Europe, Scandinavia's literacy began to increase substantially in the eighteenth-century. In Norway this can partly be explained by the introduction of "allmueskolen" in 1739,¹⁴ which essentially operated as public bible schools. The fact that people became more literate, would in turn lead to a heightened appetite for texts about earthly topics as well. According to the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, famously associated with the Frankfurt School, a new phenomenon began to take root in the eighteenth century in which the learned bourgeois elite began to actively communicate rational ideas amongst each other within a public sphere.¹⁵ This could in turn, reveal apparent deficiencies within the traditional structure of the state.¹⁶ As newspapers, booklets, pamphlets, and articles were proliferating and turned progressively critical, it became essential for the state to involve itself more directly as censors.¹⁷

Public contributions from the eighteenth century are therefore carefully written in a way that would not incur the wrath of the censorial state. The use of pseudonyms within the Philopatris debate, even after full press-freedoms had been enacted, demonstrates this fact. Criticism of the current state of affairs was often timid in its expression, and meticulously packed within heaps of appraisals of the king. Self-censorship was thus also a component.¹⁸ However, the timespan 1770-1773; corresponding with the demographic crises of Eastern Norway; was an extraordinary one in Denmark-Norway when it instituted freedom of the press. Writers could now be much bolder, within reason. And besides the dendrochronological, demographic, and economic data climate historians often utilize, it is apparent that the opening public sphere 1770-1773, through Luxdorph's collection, can function as a prism to examine how preindustrial societies devised alternative ways of combating perceived demographic crises, instigated by ecological shocks. This potent combination would eventually legitimize ideas that would later lead to the abolishment of the

being labelled as climate deterministic as it is much harder to prove how, or if, climate interreacts with societal, political or intellectual developments. This predicament within climate history has partly been remedied with the heightened emphasis on the notions of the vulnerability and resilience of societies (Endfield, 2014, 304). The latter concept is perhaps most pertinent towards this thesis. It is reasonable to assume that before a society adapts to the hazards of nature, it must formulate strategies on how to combat it. However, this requires a literate and comparatively open society which has left behind a set of sources that are accessible for us historians.

¹⁴ Krefting, Nøding, A., & Ringvej, M. R. *En pokkers skrivesyge: 1700-tallets dansk-norske tidsskrifter mellom sensur og ytringsfrihet*, Scandinavian Academic Press. 2014, 100-101

¹⁵ Rian, Øystein. *Sensuren i Danmark-Norge: Vilkårene for Offentlige Ytringer 1536-1814*. Oslo: Universitetsforl, 2014. 24

¹⁶ Langen, Ulrik, Frederik Stjernfelt, and Carlsberg Foundation. *The World's First Full Press Freedom: The Radical Experiment of Denmark-Norway 1770–1773*. München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2022. 9

¹⁷ Krefting, Ellen, *News versus Opinion: The State, the Press, and the Northern Enlightenment*. Brill Academic Publishers, 2018. 301

¹⁸ Krefting, *En pokkers skrivesyge*, 33

grain monopoly in 1788. The subsequent chapter will elaborate on the historiography of the Danish-Norwegian grain monopoly.

2.0 State of the art: The grain monopoly of 1735

The crisis of the 1770s occurred on the backdrop of a specific socio-ecological setting. The Danish-Norwegian composite state was built on complementary exchanges of grain against raw material. These metabolic flows constituted the fundamental framework that supported the political union. On the 16th of September 1735 the inherent asymmetries of this system were formalised by a royal decree which instituted this mercantilist regulation. It mirrored the arrangements of many other European states and provided an important tool for many governments of the time. In the Danish context, the monopoly was intended to secure additional income for the state whilst satisfying the aristocratic property-holders in Slesvig and Holstein.¹⁹ The law prohibited all external imports of grain in the “Sønna fjelske” part of Norway and Denmark while giving both “Nordafjelske” Norway and Slesvig better terms in trade.²⁰ This closed market were designed so that Denmark and Slesvig²¹ would operate as the only permitted providers of grain to Eastern Norway. Among Norwegians this regulation would prove especially loathed, as it was imagined that they only were provided with expensive and low-quality-grain.²² As “grain was the pilot sector of the economies of most European nations: the source of much of the wealth of the elites and of the revenues of the state, the regulator of employment and, above all, the ration of survival for vast numbers of ordinary people.”²³, how a state conducted grain policy was of colossal significance. Contributing to the development of the nation-state, European realms commonly made great strides (1650-1750) towards establishing a centralized food provision system which decided the “regulation of foreign trade, imposing export bans and/or stimulating imports of grain

¹⁹ By the conclusion of the Great Nordic war (1700-1721) through the Peace of Nystad (1721) with the seizure of Slesvig, the Danish Oldenburg-dynasty found themselves in an increasingly uncertain position. Even though they had secured the strategic southern border (which previously was susceptible to Swedish incursions from Bremen, Wismar and Stettin into Jylland), in addition to adding new rich domains to their composite state, it brought new concerns. In order to keep the Danish composite state intact it suddenly had to partly satisfy the elites within the duchies of Slesvig and Holstein to keep the political union intact. From these circumstances the idea of implementing a grain monopoly was conceived.

²⁰ Herstad, John. *I Helstatens Grep: Kornmonopolet 1735-88*. Vol. 8. Skriftserie (Riksarkivet (Norge): Oslo: Tano Aschehoug, 2000. 350

²¹ *Ibid.* 19

²² Dyrvik. *Norsk historie 1536-1814: vegar til sjølvstende*: Vol. B. 2 (p. 335). Samlaget. 2011, 195

²³ Kaplan, S., & Reinert, S. *The Economic Turn in Enlightenment Europe*. In S. Reinert & S. Kaplan (Eds.), *The Economic Turn: Recasting Political Economy in Enlightenment Europe*, Anthem Press. 2019. 9

when it was in short supply”,²⁴ to counteract price volatility after harvest failures in fear of associated political turmoil.²⁵ In Norway, the so-called “dispensation trade”, which permitted the short-term importation of foreign grain, would become a recurring facet of the monopoly after the dismal harvest of the 1740’s.²⁶

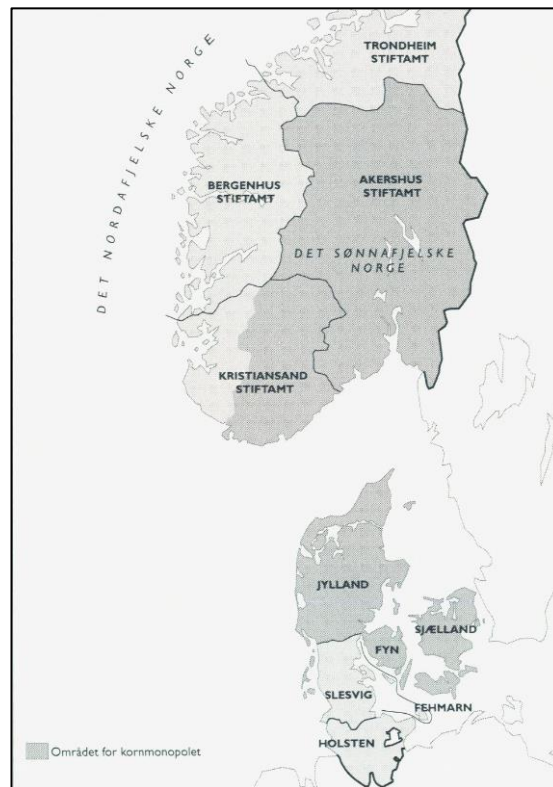


Figure 1. Map of the areas in which the grain monopoly was applicable.²⁷

The existing historiography about the grain monopoly of 1735, is often divided between those who accentuate its negative repercussions for Norway’s population and those who want to critically assess it without condemning it outright. Early Norwegian historiography (with a national focus) was firmly placed within the former category, whereas Danish historiography in general has been of the latter.²⁸ Ernst Sars was the first historian to emphasize its detrimental effects in 1887, stating how it was a “great misfortune” for Norway, especially since it barely could supply Eastern Norway on average years, leading to famine in bad years.²⁹ Also of a critical outlook, the Danish historian Edvard Holm wrote that it led to

²⁴ Persson, Karl Gunnar. *Grain Markets in Europe, 1500-1900: Integration and Deregulation*. Vol. 7. Cambridge Studies in Modern Economic History; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 1

²⁵ *Ibid.* 1

²⁶ Dyrvik, *Norsk historie 1536-1814*, 195

²⁷ Herstad, *I Helstatens Grep*, 15

²⁸ *Ibid.* 24

²⁹ Sars, Johan Ernst. *Udsigt over Den Norske Historie: 3-4*. Vol. 3-4. Christiania: Cammermeyer, 1887. 72

“uncomfortable outcomes” both for Denmark and Norway and that it was a practice that was doomed from the start.³⁰ Nevertheless, Holm stressed while the grain monopoly was the worst instance of harmful mercantilist practice in Denmark-Norway, it wasn’t accurate that it was the ultimate instigator for misery.³¹ The grain monopoly only contributed to worsening bad years due to its rigidity.

Gazing at the grain monopoly through a Marxist lens, Halvdan Koht states how it deprived farmers the right to buy grain from foreign ships, while benefitting the bourgeois middlemen in the Norwegian market towns.³² To him, the grain monopoly was essentially an instrument in the class-struggle against the poor. Sigvald Hasund supported these conclusions, recognizing that the grain monopoly entailed that Norwegian farmers were provided exclusively with low-quality grain (from Denmark) for obscene prices, which in turn would render them more class-conscious, particularly when bad harvests occurred.³³ After the 1940s, hardly anything had been written about the subject apart from Sven B. Nielsen’s assessment from 1974. Although recent historiography about the subject isn’t of a large quantity, it sure makes up for it with the quality of John Herstad’s *I Helstatens Grep: Kornmonopolet 1735-88*. Herstad’s main task with the book is to counteract the victimhood-history offered by Norwegian historians of the early 20th century and the incorporation of the Danish perspective. His work can therefore be seen as a more balanced, and nuanced interpretation, in which he stresses the pragmatic merits of the monopoly initially, while explaining how it naturally became more derelict as time went.

As for the grain monopoly during the crisis years of the 18th century, it is important to note that the Norwegian population almost doubled during the eighteenth-century. Herstad maintained that the Danish importation was adequately bolstered to supply this increasing population. Yet, it remains unclear however whether local grain production in Norway did. Moreover, Herstad incorporated a chapter in his book where he discusses whether the crisis of the 1740’s (albeit not in the 1770s) was intertwined with the monopoly. In his words, the provision regime of the Danish state did “sharpen the crisis” for Eastern Norway through unequal distribution, but since the imported quantity of foreign grain was so insubstantial throughout the period, the ban on foreign imports can’t directly be blamed for worsening the

³⁰ Holm, Edvard. *Danmark-Norges Historie Fra Den Store Nordiske Krigs Slutning Til Rigernes Adskillelse (1720-1814)* : B. 7 2 : Den Udenrigske Historie 1807-1814. Vol. B. 7 2. Kjøbenhavn: Universitetsboghandler G.E.C. Gad, 1912. 125

³¹ Herstad, *I Helstatens Grep*, 24

³² Koht, Halvdan. *Norsk Bondereising : Fyrebuing Til Bondepolitikken*. Oslo: Aschehoug, 1926. 306

³³ Herstad, *I Helstatens Grep*, 23

situation.³⁴ While Ståle Dyrvik did draw comparable conclusions to Herstad in “Norsk Historie 1536-1814” (2011), he deviated when he underlined how the grain monopoly generally made it harder for people to acquire sufficient grain during bad years.³⁵

While Herstad concludes that the grain laws didn't impact prices of Eastern Norway for most of its existence, he is open to the prospect that it might have had some impact in the two decades leading up to its abolishment.³⁶ Satisfactory grain provision was noticeably tougher to maintain in the 1770s than in 1735. Still, Herstad believes that the principal reason for the heightened grain prices was the increased dependence of Eastern Norway on imported food grains as opposed to seed grains.³⁷ This entailed that Eastern Norway's population had become less dependent on local food consumption and relied more on external providers of food, particularly Denmark. As the detrimental climate shift in the 1770s reduced both Danish and Norwegian yields, it is not surprising how only the latter experienced famine.

Drawing from estimations by Herstad, the yearly average of the total imported amount of grain during the years 1762-69 to Eastern Norway was approximately 342 000 barrels.³⁸ Corresponding to contemporary economist Christian Martfelt's calculations³⁹ from the years 1766-1768, the absolute minimum grain demand for Norway, was 304 990 barrels in Eastern Norway and 23547 barrels in North-western Norway, in normal harvest-years.⁴⁰ While we can't be certain of the accuracy of Martfelts calculations, both estimations gives us an overall grasp of the situation before the crisis of 1771-1773. The Norwegian chamber ordered in 1771 the Stiftamtman (functionally a governor) Caspar Herman von Storm to produce an overview of the local grain situation in Akershus province in normal growth-seasons.⁴¹ He maintained that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the demand for grain could be covered by local yields while $\frac{1}{4}$ had to be imported. This meant that Eastern Norway needed somewhere between 1.2 to 1.4 million barrels of grain to feed the entire population in 1771. The meagre harvests of 1770-1773 would entail it had to import a lot more than 300 000 barrels. If we compare these numbers

³⁴ Herstad, *I Helstatens Grep*, 319

Nevertheless, he does recognize that the monopoly might have indirectly led to a sharpening of the crisis.

³⁵ Dyrvik, *Norsk historie 1536-1814*, 195-197

³⁶ *Ibid.* 207

³⁷ Herstad, *I Helstatens Grep*, 238

³⁸ *Ibid.* 199

³⁹ His numbers were based on estimations by the General-Toldkammeret

⁴⁰ Martfelt, *Beviis*, 8

⁴¹ Sogner, Sølvi. *Folkevekst Og Flytting: En Historisk-demografisk Studie I 1700-årenes Øst-Norge*, 1976. 105

with the data provided by John Herstad (Figure 2.), we can see how Eastern Norway wasn't even able to satisfy its ordinary import-demand of 300 000 until 1772.

Year	Total importation of grain (barrels)	Imported foreign grain (barrels)
1761	292 000	2 200
1770	285 000	10 000
1771	171 000	31 000
1772	360 000	70 000
1773	348 000 (worst mortality year)	120 000
1774	438 000	5 000

Figure 2. Table which displays the annual total imported quantity of barrels of grain to Eastern Norway (Sønna fjells) for the years 1761 and during the subsistence crisis of 1770-1774. Data collected from John Herstad.⁴²

The regulations of the grain monopoly were suspended through dispensation trade in the 1770s due to famine events, this explains the increase of foreign-imported grain.⁴³ In the period 1770-1774, on average, about 50 000 barrels of non-Danish grain was imported to Eastern Norway, with the biggest volume being imported in 1773 with 150 000 barrels.⁴⁴ However, as crop failures afflicted Northern-Europe in general,⁴⁵ the expected grain suppliers, England and the crucial Baltic ports of Königsberg, Memel, and Danzig, also prohibited the exportation of grain.⁴⁶ This meant that Eastern Norway wasn't able to receive its required amount of grain, evidently leading towards food-scarcity in the years 1771-1773. How, or if, this lack of grain imports notably affected the mortality-rate remains to be examined.

The demographic historian Sølvi Sogner acknowledged how complicated it is to tie the degree of self-sufficiency to food-shortages' impact on mortality.⁴⁷ One must include additional factors, such as crop failures, access to other foodstuffs, food storage, grain supply, price-relationships, how affordable food is for the populace, public measures against food-shortages, transportation, or crop failures in the export country. Nevertheless, it is firmly established among historians that Eastern Norway was reliant on grain imports in ordinary growth-seasons during this period and thus predisposed to food-insecurity during wars or bad

⁴² Herstad, *I Helstatens Grep*, 383

⁴³ *Ibid.* 197

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 195

⁴⁵ Collet, Dominik, and Daniel Krämer. "Germany, Switzerland and Austria." In *Famine in European History*, 101-18. Cambridge University Press, 2017. 107

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 195

⁴⁷ Sogner, *Folkevekst*, 106

harvest years. This, however, this did not mean that Eastern Norway was economically derelict, its economy was simply more differentiated. Sogner even goes as far as claiming that preindustrial Akershus was market-oriented.⁴⁸ The overall focus on the lucrative lumber-, sawmill-, iron-, glass-, and fishing-industries demonstrates how economically dynamic Eastern Norway was. Nevertheless, when the ecological shock of the early 1770s ultimately strained the inherent mechanisms within the grain monopoly⁴⁹, this relative economic vitality mattered little.

2.1 The Little ice age in Norway

As a subfield within history, environmental history focuses on the societal-natural interactions that have transpired in the past. Whereas the field has gained noticeable momentum in response to our ongoing climate crisis, the notion that nature impacts humans is old and has a long history with the first written sources dating back to the Antiquity. Many enlightened intellectuals and philosophers in the eighteenth century had no difficulty stating how the natural world could impact past or contemporary societies. The sharp distinction between the humanities and the natural sciences only became apparent when history as a field achieved academic status in the early nineteenth century. Historians of the nineteenth to early twentieth century were therefore hesitant to acknowledge climate's impact on the course of history, with a few rare exceptions.⁵⁰ Yet, since the 1960s, great advances have been made to render climate history as legitimate subfield within history, on par with other subfields.⁵¹

The frigid anomaly of the 1770s transpired over a period known as the Little Ice-age. It denotes the relatively cold period of 1300-1850⁵² (coinciding with the early modern period) in which the Alpine glaciers were expanding. Although the northern hemisphere was about 0.6 degrees colder during this period,⁵³ its climate varied greatly between regions and could change each year, with variations in precipitation, temperature, wind and humidity. Europe, including Norway, was relatively cold and wet during the eighteenth century.⁵⁴ Several temperature fluctuations happened during the century, in which cold and late summers, and/or

⁴⁸ Sogner, *Folkevekst*, 106

⁴⁹ The monopoly was tasked with securing Eastern-Norway a stable supply of grain in exchange for raw materials.

⁵⁰ White, *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History*, 6

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 7

⁵² *Ibid.* 338

⁵³ Dybdahl, Audun. *Klima, Uår Og Kriser I Norge Gjennom De Siste 1000 år*. Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2016. 57

⁵⁴ Collet, Dominik. "Predicting the Past? Integrating Vulnerability, Climate and Culture During Historical Famines." 39-57. Dordrecht: Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2014. 47

early winters, could cause harvest failures.⁵⁵ Periods which stand out as especially cold or unstable in Norway are 1709-11, 1741-44, and 1770-73.⁵⁶ Yet, the relative coldness of Norway during the 1770s was not extraordinary within the European context. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie considers “the crisis of 1770–71 [in France]— “[as] an anti-subsistence, weather crisis”— [and] is in fact “a pure climatic-grain crisis, the ideal for the historian of the climate,” all the more so because there is no war involved”.⁵⁷ Similarly, the climate historian Dominik Collet states how “Unlike many other famine crises [...] the disaster of the 1770s occurred against a relatively calm general historical background [in Europe as a whole]. While the famine years of 1709/10 and 1816/17 were significantly affected by military conflicts and accompanying economic crises, there was no major political, economic or military turbulence in the run-up to the 1770s (with the exception of Poland-Lithuania)”.⁵⁸

Norwegian historiography was once an early pioneer of “climate history”: Ludvig Daae speculated already in 1868 in his *Uaar og Hungersnød I Norge 1740-1743* that terrible climate caused the famine.⁵⁹ He was followed almost sixty years later, in 1925, by Sigvald Hasund who stressed that the years 1740-42 and 1771-73 were periods with “documented bad weather, famine and a decline in population”.⁶⁰ Hasund questioned the prevailing positive notion that the eighteenth century saw both demographic and economic growth, due to excellent climate-conditions.⁶¹ He stressed that “these climate-theories [were] built on sloppy ground”. As a result, historiography concerning climate-history in Norway during the eighteenth-century has since 1920 been quite scarce and the ecological context of the 1770s crisis was largely ignored or forgotten.

The topic got new impetus only with Audun Dybdahl, who became the second historian, after Andreas Salvesen,⁶² since the 1920s to consider climate as a catalysator for demographic

⁵⁵ Hansen, Tor Ivar. "Med Kongen Som Redningsmann - Kornmagasin Som Klimatilpasning På 1700-Tallet." Saved by the king. The construction of granaries provided an adaptation to climatic stress during the 18th century, no. 3, 2015. 233

⁵⁶ White, The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History, 269

⁵⁷ Kaplan, Steven L. *The Stakes of Regulation: Perspectives on 'Bread, Politics and Political Economy' Forty Years Later*. Anthem Other Canon Economics. London: Anthem Press, 2015. 65

⁵⁸ Collet, Dominik Mauch Christof U. Trischler Helmuth Vandenhoeck, and Ruprecht. "Die Doppelte Katastrophe Klima Und Kultur in Der Europäischen Hungerkrise 1770-1772." 2018. 54 (translated by me from German to English)

⁵⁹ Daae, Ludvig, *Uaar og Hungersnød i Norge 1740-43*, 1868, in *Norske Historikere I Uvalg: 8: Studier I Norsk Historie 1537-ca.1800*. Vol. 8. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1984. 123-125

⁶⁰ Pedersen, Einar S. "Klimaets Plass I Norsk Historie: En Forskningshistorisk Oversikt." *AmS-Varia*, no. 58 (2016): 63

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 63

⁶² Huhtamaa, Heli, and Fredrik Charpentier Ljungqvist. "Climate in Nordic Historical Research - a Research Review and Future Perspectives." *Scandinavian Journal of History* 46, no. 5 (2021): 673

collapses during the eighteenth century.⁶³ Dybdahl asserted that the years of 1740-1742, and 1771-1773 were climate-caused calamities.⁶⁴ He concludes: “the bad years were an important determining factor in a demographic context. Serious bad years and lack of food led directly or indirectly (through increased exposure to illness) to a significant rise in mortality.”⁶⁵ It is therefore reasonable to assume that there was a deep causal relationship between climate, food production, and the preindustrial demographic crises.⁶⁶ Similar claims have been made for other Nordic countries: Recently, an article by Ljungqvist et al (2021), using new data from paleoclimatology, investigated the impact of climate variability on early modern (1500-1800) European grain prices. They found that there was a striking correlation between grain prices (barley, oats, rye, and wheat) and temperatures, in which colder temperatures coincided with high grain prices.⁶⁷ As this recent publication sheds new light into how cool climate-anomalies repeatedly concurred with steep grain prices throughout the early modern period, the historiographic discussions about Danish-Norwegian grain policy ought to elevate this significant relationship.

2.2 Was there a crisis in 1770s?

While this thesis will examine how public responses attributed the grain monopoly for the Eastern-Norwegian famine of the 1770s, the notion that there indeed was a famine at all hasn't always convinced historians. The earlier historiography of Norway ignored the climate impact of the 1770s mainly with two arguments: (i) that epidemics rather than weather were to blame, (ii) or that climate induced famine remained largely inconsequential and therefore not quantifiable. Both are challenged convincingly by more recent studies spearheaded by Audun Dybdahl whom I will return to later in this chapter.⁶⁸ Preceding him, the demographic crises in eighteenth-century Norway were widely discussed among historians especially during the 1970's. The widely cited British historian Michael Drake estimated in *Population and Society in Norway 1735–1865* that the mortality-rate peaked in 1742 with 52,2 deaths

⁶³Pedersen, *Klimaets plass*, 69

⁶⁴ Dybdahl, *Klima, Uår Og Kriser*, 133

⁶⁵ Dybdahl, Audun. "Climate and Demographic Crises in Norway in Medieval and Early Modern times." *Holocene* (Sevenoaks) 22, no. 10 (2012): 1165

⁶⁶ Dybdahl Audun, "Klimatiske sjokk, uår, sykdom og demografiske kriser i Trøndelag på 1600- og 1700-tallet," *Historisk tidsskrift*, no. 2 (2014). 244

⁶⁷ Ljungqvist, Fredrik Charpentier, Peter Thejll, Bo Christiansen, Andrea Seim, Claudia Hartl, and Jan Esper. "The Significance of Climate Variability on Early Modern European Grain Prices." *Climetrica* 16, no. 1 (2021): 60-61

⁶⁸ Dribe, Martin, Mats Olsson, and Patrick Svensson. "Nordic Europe." Chapter. In *Famine in European History*, edited by Guido Alfani and Cormac Ó Gráda, 185–211. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017. 198

(per 1000) and 47,5 in 1773.⁶⁹ Also, the mortality-year of 1773 was incidentally happening at a time which saw above-average grain prices.⁷⁰ As opposed to Sweden and Norway, Denmark experienced only a moderate increase in mortality 1771-1773.⁷¹ While only suggesting the causes for these mortality-spikes in his book, Drake would nevertheless inspire later historians to examine these in further detail.

Sølvi Sogner would in 1976 categorize “years with an especially marked increase in the number of deaths are generally called crisis years, connoting demographic crises, mortality crises, or death-rate crises”.⁷² Although Sogner posits that epidemics were the main driver of mortality in preindustrial Norway as opposed to famine, she considered the demographic crisis of 1771-1773 to be a potential exception. She argued that this crisis should be typologized as a “combined crisis” consisting of (i) several harvest failures (1770-1772), (ii) irregular grain supply, (iii) high prices on grain, (iv) economic depression, (v) an epidemic outbreak of typhus and dysentery. All are crucial factors which contributed synergistically towards the mortality crisis.⁷³ These assertions are more in line with the latest historiography on the subject, even though Sogner could not have known about the climatological context when she wrote. Nevertheless, the notion that there was any significant causal link between climate-fluctuations, grain failures and the mortality crises of the eighteenth century was denied by the authors of *Norsk Historie II* (2003), asserting that epidemics were the triggering factor for the high mortality.⁷⁴ This outlook would be quite prevalent within Norwegian historiography until Audun Dybdahl interpreted the dichotomy between famine- and sickness-driven causes as misdirected. Whereas there is ample evidence to suggest that

⁶⁹ Drake, Michael. *Population and Society in Norway, 1735-1865*. Cambridge Studies in Economic History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1969). 192-193

⁷⁰ Audun, "Klimatiske sjokk, uår, sykdom og demografiske kriser i Trøndelag på 1600- og 1700-tallet." 263

⁷¹ Post, J.D, "The Mortality Crises of the Early 1770s and European Demographic Trends." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 21, no. 1 (1990): 44

⁷² Sølvi Sogner, "A demographic crisis averted?," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 24, no. 2 (1976), 114
The classification also necessitates that mortality has at least doubled and continues over a longer timeframe, often by year. Short term spikes in deaths are thus not regarded as mortality crises. Furthermore, if the crisis years also display low natality and marriages, it can be claimed that it is a shortage-crisis or at the very least caused by epidemics. The discourse between historians concerning the several mortality crises in eighteenth-century Norway began to split in 1970s between those who saw famine as the main cause and those who regarded illnesses as the primary mortality-enabler. Sogner could be considered the leading advocate for the latter position. In a demographic study that centred on the Eastern-Norwegian province of Akershus in the eighteenth century, she explained that the mortality crisis years correlated greatly with outbreaks of epidemic diseases of typhus, dysentery and smallpox. Sogner proved this by looking at parish-records from 1741-1815 in which priests were obliged write causes of death. Some of these source's attribute 90% of deaths to epidemics, and only 1,5 % to hunger.

⁷³ Sogner, *Folkevekst*, 106

⁷⁴ Moseng, Ole Georg; Opsahl, Erik; Pettersen, Gunnar I.; Sandmo, Erling. (2003) *Norsk historie II: 1537-1814*. Universitetsforlaget. (2003). 259

epidemics was the biggest cause of the increased mortality, Dybdahl claimed that both elements played a crucial part.

He contended that a short-term climate shift could lead to a crop failure which in turn could cause famine.⁷⁵ The preindustrial society of Norway was significantly dependant on its agricultural output, and it is worth mentioning that Norway is positioned near the possible limits of agriculture.⁷⁶ This rendered the pre-industrial society of Norway particularly vulnerable to climatic variations both economically and in terms of nourishment. Whereas a particular crop failure could prove disastrous for a preindustrial society, chronic crop failures over several years would almost certainly cause widespread famine. However, Eastern Norway was not geared solely towards agriculture as it relied on grain imports, while exporting its extracted resources.

Dybdahl employs several methods and sources to support his position, for instance his thorough examination of the “kapitelstakster” for the provinces of Trondheim, Bergenshus, and Akershus. As displayed in chapter 3.1, Dybdahl found a strong correlation between years of high “kapitelstakst”, temperature swings (from dendrochronological data) and years of high mortality.⁷⁷ Pertinent for our focus, Dybdahl asserted that 1773 constituted the “second worst year [of the eighteenth century] in term of mortality country-wide”⁷⁸ with 4,8 % of the population dying. More granularly, the province of Akershus (falling within the jurisdiction of the grain monopoly) had the highest mortality rate in 1773 with its 6,4 %.⁷⁹ Although Eastern Norway sticks out, other regions in Norway also suffered. In comparison, the mortality of Kristiansand, the only city within Eastern Norway exempted from the grain monopoly, had a mortality rate of 3.6 %, Trondheim 4,4 %, and Bergen 2.2%^{80, 81}

⁷⁵ The famine would accordingly render many malnourished and make them successively vulnerable towards diseases. He also underlines that there were some starvations, although rare. He references a source from Kristiania parish in 1773 which records how 37 people had been found out in the fields dead due to starvation.

⁷⁶ Dribe, "Nordic Europe", 186

⁷⁷ Dybdahl, *Klima, Uår Og Kriser*, 120

⁷⁸ Ibid. 120

⁷⁹ Ibid. 120

⁸⁰ It is worth mentioning here that Bergen did experience higher mortality in the years prior to 1773, with 2.8% mortality-rate in 1771 with and 2.9% in 1772. This data derives from Michael Drake *Population and Society in Norway, 1735-1865* on page 193.

⁸¹ Dybdahl, *Klima, Uår Og Kriser*, 120

Whereas the percentages Dybdahl provides exposes the relative distribution of mortality in Norway in 1773, it nevertheless is limited how much we can benefit from this data without asserting the yearly average mortality rate. Ståle Dyrvik estimated that the average mortality-rate between the years 1735-1815 was 25 dead per 1000 people, or 2.5 % (Dyrvik 2004, 35) If we compare this average percentage with Dybdahl's mortality rates of 1773, it paints a clear picture. The entirety of Norway, even the provinces that weren't a part of the Grain monopoly, experienced a substantial increase in mortality in 1773. However, as stated earlier this chapter,

Consequently, it is evident that Akershus province suffered an almost threefold increase in mortality in 1773, well above the definitional requirement of a demographic crisis. As the geography of Akershus province roughly corresponds with the boundaries of the grain monopoly, the relationship between the famine and the grain monopoly seems significant. As Eastern Norway relied greatly on its grain imports for sustenance, the grain monopoly must be taken into consideration when assessing the overall supply situation and its impact on mortality. Herstad denied that there was any sharp demographic distinction between “Nordafjells” and “Sønnefjells” Norway, accordingly suggesting that the grain monopoly didn’t affect mortality in any notable degree.⁸² Yet, he did state that if we were to compare the mortality-rates and birth-rates of the provinces of Bergenshus and Akerhus during the crisis years of the 1740s and 1770s it can be argued that mortality did indeed follow the boundaries of the grain monopoly. He writes “this illustrate that the crisis years not only absolutely, but also comparatively had bigger consequences for Akershus than Bergenshus”, albeit concluding that the timespan of the grain monopoly (1735-1788) didn’t affect overall demography in any noticeable degree.⁸³

Consequently, it remains to be examined whether the grain monopoly had any impact on the demographic crises of the 1770s, or perhaps more relevant for this thesis, how the contemporary public saw it as a contributing towards the increased mortality? Rather than de-emphasizing natural causes and shifting the focus on how the man-made grain monopoly could have caused the hunger, it is likely that there must have been an interaction between the two. Perhaps the grain monopoly established an artificial boundary between eastern and western Norway in which the former became more predisposed towards food-shortages in times of bad harvests? Perhaps only perceivably so? If so, fluctuations in climate can be said to have strained the existing grain policy, or at the very least helped reveal to the public its inadequacies in responding to it. To answer this, the next chapters will present how the Danish public understood the precarious grain situation in 1770-1774 in Denmark and Norway, what they thought about the grain monopoly, and how some began to see it as an inflexible institution in meeting these organic stressors. Moreover, these sources showcase

Sogner’s definition of demographic crises can only being defined as such if it exceeds the average mortality by double. More specifically, the mortality-rate must be around 5% to be identified as a mortality crisis in eighteenth-century Norway. In another article by Dybdahl, he operates a definition from Kjell Haarstad from 1980 which defines crisis years as being mortality exceeding 0.30 % of the population (Dybdahl, 2014, 248) There is thus a discrepancy between what can be defined as a demographic crisis.

⁸² Herstad, *I Helstatens Grep*, 243

⁸³ *Ibid.* 244

how the Danish public, when discussing the grain monopoly, went from emphasizing price concerns over to concerns about subsistence in tandem with the developing mortality crisis in Eastern Norway.

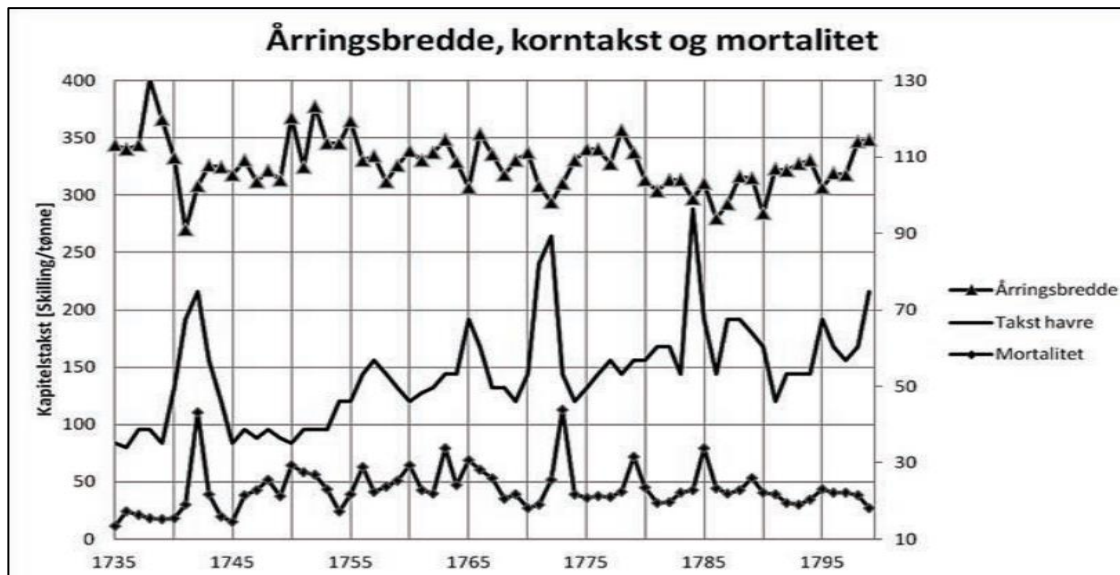


Figure 3. A diagram by Dybdahl which displays values for yearly growth of pine (årringsbredde), the price for oats (takst havre), and the mortality (mortalitet) in the period 1735-1799 in the province of Trondheim. The spike in 1784 is attributed to the Laki volcano in 1784, which caused widespread harvest failures.⁸⁴

3.0 Voicing concerns: Critiquing and defending the grain monopoly

1771-1772

What happened when the ecological crisis and the political arrangement of the monopoly met? What role did the newly introduced press freedom play in this clash? Voicing worries was strictly governed, formalised, and restricted in early modern societies. Through the “Kongeloven” of 1660 (Denmark) and 1665 (Norway), the legal structure of the Danish-Norwegian rested entirely on the Danish Monarch. All worldly power was seen as “voluntarily”⁸⁵ given from the people to the Monarch who would act as God’s intermediary. As such, the laws and regulations of the state was seen as congruent with the monarch’s person, who acted on behalf of God’s will. In truth, the monarch’s political involvement during this period was nuanced, limited, and often steered through the voice of compelling officials.⁸⁶ For instance, in matters of trade, royal-sanctioned privileges was frequently given to cities and institutions, to act on the king’s behalf (conveniently reducing his workload as

⁸⁴ Dybdahl, *Klimatiske Sjokk*, 273

⁸⁵ Rian, *Sensuren I Danmark-Norge*, 113

⁸⁶ Wieners, Claudia E. "Haze, Hunger, Hesitation: Disaster Aid after the 1783 Laki Eruption." *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research* 406 (2020): 107080. 2

well).⁸⁷ Also, even though the grain monopoly of 1735 (the “Rentekammeret” was the institution normally responsible these decisions)⁸⁸ was “verbally ordered by the King himself”,⁸⁹ it is probable that king Christian VI saw its merits after having been persuaded by Otto Thott, a member of the “Kommercekollegiet”.⁹⁰ Accordingly, critiquing the mercantilist grain monopoly would entail critiquing the official judgments of the Monarch. This, however, shifted in the 1750s when the Danish authorities became more lenient towards alternative economic discourses, even going so far as to encouraging them.⁹¹

Understandably, discontented citizens before 14th of September 1770 had to voice concerns about the grain monopoly delicately, often through humble “supplikker” to the king or “klagebrev” to the appropriate administrative branches.⁹² For instance, in a letter written to the General-Toldkammeret (the branch concerned with tariffs) in August 1770, several elite members of Christiania city council complained about the meagre grain stocks in the city and the noticeable lack of grain imports from Denmark, expecting the central bodies to react accordingly.⁹³ While their worries were not heard, an alternative venue of voicing concerns would emerge just a few months later.

In tandem with Christian VII’s deteriorating mental health, the monarch’s personal doctor and friend Johann Friedrich Struensee, a native of Halle, managed to obliterate the dominance of the aristocratic institution Gehejmekonseillet 10th of December 1770 by abolishing it. This functionally rendered Struensee as the dictator of Denmark-Norway. Thoroughly influenced by contemporary enlightenment thinking, Struensee began a phase within Danish-Norwegian history which saw an unprecedented number of radical reforms being implemented. As Struensee’s enlightened decrees, or “kabinettsordre”⁹⁴ instituted freedom of press in Denmark-Norway 14th of September 1770, new voices began to emerge. Recognizing a remarkable shift had occurred, the book-collecting official Bolle Willum Luxdorff, assembled from 1770 to 1773 as many publications as he could find, and compiled them into

⁸⁷ Rian, *Sensuren I Danmark-Norge*, 114

⁸⁸ Wieners, “Haze, Hunger, Hesitation”, 2

⁸⁹ Herstad, *I Helstatens Grep*, 110

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 110

⁹¹ Dyrvik. *Norsk historie 1536-1814*, 196

⁹² Supphellen, Steinar, and Birgitta Ericsson. *Stadsadministration I Norden På 1700-talet. Vol. 1. Publikation (Centralmakt Och Lokalsamhälle - Beslutsprocess På 1700-talet: Trykt Utg.)*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1982. 39-40

⁹³ Herstad, John. *I Helstatens Grep: Kornmonopolet 1735-88. Vol. 8. Skriftserie (Riksarkivet (Norge): Oslo: Tano Aschehoug, 2000. 178*

⁹⁴ Feldbæk, Ole, and Aksel E. Christensen. *Tiden 1730-1814. Vol. 4. Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1982.76*

a thematically organised collection.⁹⁵ Somewhat covertly, many of them would employ various sophisticated pseudonyms to hide their identity, sharing their honest concerns about political, economic, theological, agricultural, or philosophic matters. Whilst the public sphere received unprecedented freedoms to articulate concerns openly, the deteriorating harvests of the autumn 1770 would encourage many to openly state their apprehensions about existing policies.

3.1: “An impartial investigation of Norway’s misery”: the public perception of famine

While not directly contributing to the Philopatris debate there exists separate set of sources within the Luxdorph-collection which also warrant a mention in this thesis. These additional sources elaborate on the terrible Eastern Norwegian experience of famine in the 1770s and demonstrate that the crisis constituted a present aspect within the Danish public. Also, the fact that they are part of the same collection is strongly indicative that the Philopatris debate (1770-1773) was held in a tense environment in which nearly everyone living within Copenhagen would be quite aware of the acute Eastern Norwegian situation of those years. This becomes even more apparent through a closer look at the content they share:

An anonymous public plea published in 1772 titled “the poor’s plea to the king in their true destitution, proved by the Extra-tax [of 1762]” is one such example. Attempting to influence the moral conscience of Christian VII, it gravely stated the direness of the situation: “you cannot deny that, that people in these times cannot feed themselves . . . [and due to this] the Extra-tax being [levied] are too large of a burden.”⁹⁶ Moreover it includes a section expounding the Norwegian context: “I do here have to mention the deplorable fate of Norway, that the public newspapers tell us about, how its inhabitants in their particular places eat [tree] bark; think about this condition, to demand eight shillings monthly of the famished. Oh god! Let us hide this scene, in which even a barbarian would quiver”.⁹⁷

In another pamphlet, *Om Oeconomien, særdeles Norges* from 1771, the grain monopoly and the Extra-tax were both acknowledged as further deteriorating the situation in Eastern Norway. The pamphlet was written by Peter Fredrik Suhm, a colleague of both Gerhard Schøning and Johann Ernst Gunnerus, and like them a member of the administrative-

⁹⁵ Rian, *Sensuren I Danmark-Norge*, 179

⁹⁶ ” De Fattiges Raab til Kongen i deres sande Nødlidenhed, beviist af Extraskatten, Assistentshuset, med mere.” 1772, 12

⁹⁷ ” De Fattiges Raab”, 12

academic elite of the union.⁹⁸ He introduced European “physiocratic” ideas on grain economies into the discussion. Suhm remarked at length how Norway consumed far more grain than it locally produced and why grain imports from abroad were required. Nevertheless, he further concluded that the dependency of imports posed a significant problem regarding food-security. For while the entirety of Norway imported half of its required grain in normal years from its Danish and Slesvig providers, years of crisis, such as wars or harvest failures, would reveal its perilous foundations.⁹⁹ “What now currently ensues for the Eastern part of Norway is truly unjust, in that it can’t take grain from other places than Denmark, and that Denmark is required to receive their iron, timber, glass ... Either the trade in both respective realms ought to be entirely free or they should take each other’s products”.¹⁰⁰ That is to say, why should the “Nordafjellske” part of Norway be allowed to freely import grain from England and the Baltic ports whereas Denmark and Eastern Norway was bound in a thoroughly regulated market. Moreover, Suhm emphasised how the Extra-tax worsened subsistence for Norwegian farmers:

By means of the Extra Tax, one has impoverished the [Norwegian] country, which had to be depleted by constantly being taken away [through taxes], and never brought in. The misery is now so great that outside Gudbrandsdalen, one of the most fertile villages, the common people have begun to eat bark-bread; a few years ago, many people died of hunger outside the Aafiorden.¹⁰¹

Suhm recognized how the then-current taxation and trade regime in Eastern Norway was thus directly leading towards destructive outcomes in which the population declined either through famine or the emigration of “able sailors to Holland”¹⁰², in times of bad harvests. His remedy for the climate-induced predicament of the 1770s was entirely physiocratic, favouring an expansion of local cultivation to make Eastern Norway more resistant to relatively poor yields:

Should bad harvests occur, then my pen is too weak to describe the miserable consequences that would flow from it. How furious it must have been, [to those] who proposed that arable farming should be abolished in Norway altogether and [...]

⁹⁸ Krefting. *Enevelde, Offentlighet Og Peter Frederik Suhms Hemmeligheter*. Scandinavian Academic Press, 2017. 7

⁹⁹ Suhm, Peter Friedrich, «*Om Oeconomien, særdeles Norges*» 1771, 36

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 70

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 96

¹⁰² *Ibid.* 37

[obligated] to take all its grain from Denmark, any reasonable person can easily conclude from this, that arable cultivation [in Norway] must not be stopped by any means, but rather through all imaginable funds is encouraged and increased.¹⁰³

Suhm was not alone in this belief; indeed, it was a belief which he shared with many Europeans at the time. Thinking that society was a natural order that optimised itself organically, physiocracy was an economic thought spearheaded by François Quesnay and Marquis de Mirabeau in the 1760s that considered agriculture as the sole and vital underpinning for all economic prosperity.¹⁰⁴ Hence, it fundamentally differed from the mercantilist notion that economic growth came through the accretion of gold through a sensible trade-balance. Drawing on the famous analogy of blood circulating freely through the body they postulated that the “unnatural” regulation of the grain trade, so ordinary in mercantilist states, caused stoppages and even “strokes”. It was deemed disadvantageous by physiocrats, who instead predicated the liberalization of internal and external trade¹⁰⁵ relying on the “self-regulating, equilibrium-making market”.¹⁰⁶ As Europe was infatuated with French fashion, style, and philosophy, it is no wonder the physiocratic ideas also would gain notable traction in the 1760s and 1770s throughout the continent, including Denmark-Norway.

In another pamphlet lengthily titled "An impartial investigation into the condition, lack and poverty of the common people in all ranks, from the minister down to the street hut; with added economic considerations." conclusions similar to those of Suhm were advocated. Somewhat illegible due to decay on its front page, the date and originator of the work is unknown. However, as it is included within the Luxdorph collection, we can be sure it was written sometime between 1770-1773. The subsequent segment taken from the source is protracted. Yet I will cite it in full as it explicitly states how climate-fluctuations, and society's inability to confront its effects on food-security, had caused the calamity in Eastern Norway sometime between 1770-1773:

Norway's shortage of cereals is and will be an equally important and deplorable object for the patriot's consideration. How often must the poor Norwegian farmer be

¹⁰³ Suhm, *Om Oeconomien*, 37

¹⁰⁴ Kaplan, *The Economic Turn*, 11

¹⁰⁵ Persson, Karl Gunnar. “Bread and Enlightenment: the Quest for Price Stability and Free Trade in Eighteenth-Century Europe.” Chapter. In *Grain Markets in Europe, 1500–1900: Integration and Deregulation*, Cambridge Studies in Modern Economic History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 2

¹⁰⁶ Kaplan, *The Economic Turn*, 11

deprived of the blessed bread, and how often must he mix it with the pine bark ground into flour, which is more bitter than wormwood? The main reason for Norway's grain shortage lies in the country's own nature and climate's hardness. Many places that lie high up in the country [...] cannot grow grain at all, mainly because of the cold spring and early winter, and in the places that could grow grain, and where it really grows frequently in good summers, it often happens that an early and unexpected cold spoils and in one night makes the most hopeless harvest come to nothing [...]

One must in no way wrong the Norwegians, by accusing or considering them to be bad cultivators, on the contrary, they have for a long time driven it to a fairly high level [...] The laziness or ignorance of the nation in the cultivation of the fields is by no means the cause of the lack of grain; but what can the best attempts to help do when nature does not want to support, and when, as I said, the early onset of cold all too often turns the best plants squelchy. But if that disadvantage never existed, we see that in the most fertile years, Norway has by no means enough grain for its inhabitants, but the supply of foreign grain must save them from a lack of bread.

This supply, which depends on the vigilance, insight and way of thinking of the merchants, is subject to as many cases as the desire for profit and the merchant's self-interest can create, and they are the reason why Norwegian farmers often miss the precious bread [...] Now one had to ask how this could be rectified? The only means of averting the great and so frequent shortage of bread in Norway [...] [is] to set up granaries everywhere in the country.¹⁰⁷

Although “An impartial investigation” was more overt about the direct natural impact on the subsistence-crisis and Norway's structural vulnerability through its dependence on food-imports, this doesn't mean it were somehow more informed of the socio-natural interaction than most participators within the Philopatreas debate. The fact that they all discussed grain prices, grain policy, and the grain monopoly when they did (1770-1772) was highly likely triggered by the meagre harvests of those same years. After all, Ljungqvist et al. concludes that “temperature variability was an important factor influencing grain price variability”.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ ” *En upartisk Undersøgning om det almindeliges Tilstand, Mangel og Fattigdom i alle Stænder, fra Ministeren af indtil Straaehytten; med hosføyede oeconomiske Tanker.*”, 1770-1773, 46-49

¹⁰⁸ Ljungqvist, *The Significance of Climate Variability*, 60

Their arguments and evaluations on the fluctuating grain-prices were thus indirectly or directly (for some) motivated by subsistence concerns as well. Furthermore, it's a fact that they all recognized that some structural adjustments in the Danish-Norwegian state had to be made promptly to lessen this predicament. If not for the famished Norwegian farmers, then at least for the territorial integrity of the Danish composite state.¹⁰⁹ What distinguished them from one another was the question of how Danish-Norwegian society ought to respond to these meagre harvests. Perhaps most intriguingly was how the Philopatreias debate shifted from concerns about prices initially, after the measly yield during the autumn of 1770, over to grim concerns about food-scarcity as 1773 drew near. The debate would ultimately motivate Martfelt to write his influential *Beviis at Dannemarks Og Norges Fyrretive-Aar-gamle Korn-Handels-Plan Ikke Naaer Sin Hensigt* in 1774 which explicitly labelled the grain monopoly as detrimental in meeting the subsistence-crisis of the 1770s. The next chapters will chronologically present the relevant contributions and conflict-lines within the Philopatreias debate pertaining to grain policy in Denmark-Norway.

3.2 Philopatreias: The Discontented Agitator

A new pseudonym, Philopatreias (ostensibly representing one who loves his fatherland)¹¹⁰, otherwise known as Jacob Christian Bie, was among, if not, the first of the voices who would take advantage of the newly liberalised press freedoms to critically assess the grain situation. Bie was born in 1738 in Trondheim, son of a local official, who with few means moved to Copenhagen, eager to become a writer. The controversial and ironic Norwegian would in 1765 publish and get a professorial “imprimatur”¹¹¹ for *Originale danske moralske fabler, i bunden still* until it was later discovered that some of the fables in the book, in fact, criticized a royal resolution.¹¹² The book was confiscated and Bie was sent to prison in Christiansø fortress in Norway. He managed to escape from his captive but was ultimately pardoned in 1766 in accordance with the ascent of the more forgiving Christian VII to the royal throne. Far from being remorseful, Bie's subsequent writings in the 1760's undoubtedly pushed the censorial inclinations of the Danish-Norwegian state. He had by this time gained a reputation for being rude and rough. As soon as the freedom of the press was established in Denmark-

¹⁰⁹ Public outrage over steep grain prices was often regarded by contemporaries as a significant contributor to political turmoil. My later inclusion of the Lofthus-Commission in chapter 5.0 will elaborate how prevalent this idea was.

¹¹⁰ Arvesen. Tre Betragtninger Angående Trykkefriheten. - Nouvellisten, Patriotten Og Gartneren. Og Jacob Christian Bie, 2020. 53

¹¹¹ A formal approval from the Danish-Norwegian state that a text can be published, printed, and proliferated.

¹¹² Rian, *Sensuren I Danmark-Norge*, 231

Norway, Bie rose to the occasion and published a booklet called *Philopatreias' trende Anmærkninger, 1. om de dyre Tider og Handelens Svaghed, 2. om Rettergang, 3. om Gejstlighedens Indkomster* on the 23 of November 1770. In it he presented sceptical statements about the circumstances in Denmark-Norway, shortly followed by patriotic proposals for reform. Relevant for this thesis is his chapter “about the expensive times and the weakness of trade”. He writes:

If we consider the immeasurable prices of food in our dear Denmark, then one must weep over it; If we ask about the reasons, then they are countless; most of the reasons are due to self-interest, only a few due to misfortune, but almost all of them can be prevented. — We live in the middle of a grain country, which for many years (God be pleased with it) has not suffered any significant misgrowth; a country which can supply not only Norway but other places; and yet the prices here are so unbearable that one approximately one hundred and fortyseven-seven miles from here, high up in Norway (a country which has to get grain from elsewhere) can buy a barrel of rye 6 to 7 marks less here than in Kiøbenhavn, where one lives, so to speak, in the middle of the grainfields, and that you daily can reach Jutland's and Fyen's foodgrain.¹¹³

In this segment, Bie criticized how Denmark, a land abundant in grain, had artificially heightened the prices on grain domestically. Furthermore, he emphasized how the steady price-increase had not been caused by crop failures (up-until 1770), denying any natural causes. While it is crucial to state that Bie wrote a year before the advent of a true crisis in Denmark-Norway, he was able to define some of the inequalities which would then escalate in later discussions. For instance, the high prices were caused by the self-interested and the excessive exportation of Danish grain to Norway. As Denmark had to supply Norway alone with grain, and exported so much, he contended that the policy had detrimental consequences for people living within Denmark, who had to pay 6-7 more Danish Marks for a barrel of rye than a Norwegian. Why couldn't Norway get their rye from somewhere else? As such, he disapproved of the regulations that the grain monopoly of 1735 stipulated.

And somewhat unexpectedly, Bie didn't see his countrymen as suffering from the current grain policy, but rather the Danish grain consumers (which also at the time included himself). It is unclear if Bie here meant Norway in its entirety or the parts that were outside the grain

¹¹³ Bie, Jacob Christian, “*Philopatreias trende Anmærkninger 1. Om de dyre Tider og Handelens Svaghed. 2. Om Rettergang. 3. Om Geistlighedens Indkomster*”, 1770. 8

monopoly. Being a local from the “Nordafjelske” city Trondheim, it is fair to assume that Bie had grown accustomed towards the cheaper grain prices here. He later specified this distinction later when he comments that “the free importation of grain products prevents unbearable prices in Nordenfjelds in Norway ... it’s also true, that an excessive exportation [of grain] has doubled Danish prices”¹¹⁴ And quite rightly, prices were higher in Denmark compared with “Nordafjelske” Norway. However, having studied and compared the price difference between the “Sønnafjelske” province of Akershus with the “Nordafjelske” province of Bergen 1720-1799, Herstad determined that grain prices were higher in Akershus than in Denmark throughout the period.¹¹⁵ Appropriate towards his provocative character Bie follows his statements with accusations of who’s to blame for the soaring grain prices:

People often complain about the high grain prices. Apparently, they do it a lot. But if you ask again where they come from, then the source is the same; For everyone who owns money, and sees that the agricultural products are so immeasurably expensive, invests his capital in landed property. This profit creates proprietors and tenants, and from them again “Kornpugere” are bred. But the most important reason is this: that those who own the largest estates have for a long time had too much influence in the government of this country [...]

[when] excessively large exports [of grain] have made the prices immeasurable, and the necessary import been urgently desired, then they (the corrupt landowners within the state) have been powerful enough to prevent its permission until such a time that it has been impossible; For to permit the importation of foreign grain at a time when winter makes navigation impossible, and to curtail this permission a few months before the ice closes the lake, is itself the same as wanting to gratify a hungry man with the smell of food.¹¹⁶

Bie claimed that the wealthy had progressively began acquiring landed property as a venture to maximize profits. He also condemned the so-called “kornpugere”, which denotes a grain hoarder or a person who buys grain to later sell at a high price during bad harvests.¹¹⁷ In this, Bie was correct, because the “widespread tendency during severe shortages”¹¹⁸ are indeed an

¹¹⁴ Bie, *Philopatreias trendes Anmærknings*, 9

¹¹⁵ Herstad, John. *I Helstatens Grep: Kornmonopolet 1735-88*. Vol. 8. Skriftserie (Riksarkivet (Norge)). Oslo: Tano Aschehoug, 2000. 232

¹¹⁶ Bie, *Philopatreias trendes Anmærknings*, 9-10

¹¹⁷ <https://holbergordbog.dk/ordbog?query=kornpuger>

¹¹⁸ Slavin, Philip. "Climate and Famines: A Historical Reassessment." *WIREs Clim Change* 7, no. 3 (2016): 439

increase in grain hoarding by people who produce it, but also those who panic. Applicably, Collet writes that “it was often the fear of shortages, not shortages themselves that led to rising prices and famine”.¹¹⁹ Similar speculations - that some segment of the population was involved in grain hoarding during the crisis years of 1770-1772 - was part of a broader European phenomenon which sometimes took a sinister turn. For instance, in Prussia such anxieties were exploited by the state who began to campaign against perceived scapegoats, entailing the ““Corn-Jews” ..., distillers, rich foreigners or the "lazy", "idle" or "incompetent" tradesmen who failed to provide relief.”¹²⁰ However, it was ultimately the largest landowning elite’s influence within government, that was the leading culprit according to Bie. Through associating the landowning elite, by virtue of them being the main benefactors of the high grain prices, with the strict grain policy, at the detriment of the poor majority, it goes without saying that Bie’s booklet was deemed provocative by contemporaries. Still, since Bie did not directly offend the King, conducting himself within the legal framework, he was wholly permitted to write in such coarse manner.¹²¹

That Bie was acquainted with the French physiocratic school is unlikely. Nevertheless, his own attitude would concur with that doctrine, wanting for foreign grain imports to follow local demand. The difference is that while physiocrats espoused the liberalisation of trade based on a broad economic principle, Bie principally desired it to lower the local price of grain. Besides this, Bie also proposed the construction of private or public granaries to stabilize grain prices to an affordable level.¹²² Although Bie’s remarks were provocative and his assertions weren’t based much on evidence, it contained some honest insights that struck a chord with many displeased Danish-Norwegian individuals, whilst being peripherally associated within a broader European debate about the role of grain policy. Accordingly, in due course, a public discourse in Denmark began forming around Bie’s original statements by writers eager to critically assess or comment his remarks.

3.3 Philodani: The Patriotic Mercantilist

Rather sceptical of the implementation of the free press, the conservative Ove Høegh-Guldberg nevertheless exploited it eagerly to counter Philopatreias outrageous accusations. Born in 1731, Jutish in origin, and son of an unsuccessful grocer, his clerical uncle had

¹¹⁹ Collet, Dominik. "Storage and Starvation: Public Granaries as Agents of Food Security in Early Modern Europe." *Historical Social Research* 35, no. 4 (2010): 245

¹²⁰ Collet, "Storage and Starvation", 242

¹²¹ Arvesen. *Tre Betragtninger Angående Trykkefriheten. - Nouvellisten, Patriotten Og Gartneren. Og Jacob Christian Bie, 2020.60*

¹²² Bie, *Philopatreias trende Anmærkninger*, 12

provided him with an educational path. This would later lead him to study theology and history at Sorø Academy. Having an all-encompassing reverence for monarchy and religion, his outlook was firmly of a conservative and bourgeois disposition.¹²³ By 1770 Guldberg had developed into one of Denmark's most renowned historians while employed as court-tutor for the brother of Christian VII since 1764, the Hereditary Prince of Denmark Frederick. Both would play a central part in Struensee's downfall in 1772. But first, Guldberg would publish a response to Bie: *Philodani Undersøgelse af Philopatreiases Anmærkninger* with the pseudonym "Philodani", possibly intended to reflect his patriotic affection (Philo) for Denmark (Dani).

He concurred with Bie in (i) that the prices in Denmark were "immeasurably" high, (ii) that it led to "deplorable" outcomes, (iii) that prices ought not to be that high in a grain-rich country,¹²⁴ (iv) that granaries ought to be built to combat steep grain prices,¹²⁵ (v) and rather surprisingly that the landed property had too much influence on politics. However, Guldberg's agreement with the latter point had a more generalized and moralistic undertone; emphasizing how corrupt landowners, in general, had influenced the government for selfish reasons in the past: "People are still never people, always greedy, covetous, and tempted [through influential position's] to abuse their access to the sovereign's [for selfish ends]. It appears that this doubt is well-founded: at least it seems to me that it clearly proves that Philopatreias should once again highlight this as his most important [and valid] cause [for the steep prices in grain]".¹²⁶ Where Bie and Guldberg diverged, was on the question of why and how grain prices had become so high. Guldberg particularly rejected Bie's assertion that the landed property-holders and "kornpugere" were to blame, stressing how they are reliant on their income to pay of rents, and accordingly cannot wait to sell the grain at a steeper price.¹²⁷

In terms of the grain politics, Guldberg acknowledged that cutting the exportation of grain and encouraging its importation would lead to lower prices. Nevertheless, he stressed how this would be "dangerous" and irrational, emphasizing how the "country is undeniably poor".¹²⁸ Guldberg rationalized this by asserting that "the long-term effect would be, if not such a country would become so depleted, that it would in the end had to grab its utmost life-savings, to nurture the

¹²³ Cedergreen Bech, Svend, Hal Koch, and John Danstrup. *Oplysning Og Tolerance: 1721-1784*. Vol. 9. København: Politiken, 1965. 493

¹²⁴ Guldberg, *Philodani Undersøgelse*, 6

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* 17

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 10

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 7

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 11

strangers, and hunger-feed itself".¹²⁹ Displaying an evident mercantilist mindset, Guldberg highlighted that Denmark only could get richer by selling more and importing less. He stated, "now our realm has besides horses, only grain and oxen, and pork to sell",¹³⁰ illuminating how he even categorized resource-rich Norway as a competing "realm" in terms of trade. Implicitly, this indicates that Guldberg wouldn't have been in favour of abolishing or amending the regulations of the grain monopoly of 1735.

As for the causes of the high prices, Guldberg argued that there were several and that bad weather was not necessarily one of them. Firstly that, there was too much money circulating¹³¹ and that this brought up rents and prices.¹³² Secondly, how the enduring and "miserable cow-disease" deprived people of meat, butter, cheese and milk, consequently leading them to consume more grain.¹³³ He also denied the potential for an alternative shift over to other livestock-animals such as pigs, sheep's, fowl's, and geese's on the grounds that they consumed grain, especially during winter, which in turn could worsen grain prices. What Gulberg essentially described here was an ongoing outbreak of the rinderpest in Denmark. The now-extinct cow-disease led to a severe loss of livestock throughout Europe and was especially destructive in the recurring outbreaks during the 1750s, 1760s and 1770s.¹³⁴ Without having proper access to what caused the outbreak Guldberg alludes to the phenomenon being caused by a certain weed or coolness:

Those knowledgeable of nature! Alas cannot tell us, the reasons why, this disease [the Cow-pest], so rampant in Skåne, has not spread to the northern Swedish provinces. Could not this give us enough insight and lead us on a path towards the cure? Do not certain weeds or the coldness cause these Phenomena? What is the reason why this disease spares Vendsyssel¹³⁵ and other smaller districts in the King's lands? It is evident that this Sickness is a Plague and should be treated as a Plague."¹³⁶

¹²⁹ Guldberg, *Philodani Undersøgelse* 12

¹³⁰ Ibid. 11

¹³¹ Ibid. 18

¹³² He specifically blames the implementation of wicked banknotes: "Banco-Sædler, Noter og hvad man kalder al den indbildte Mønt, der nu som en Syndflod oversvømmer alt.". In line with his sceptical proclivity towards unfamiliar systems, he wanted banknotes to be restricted, and a general return towards a tangible metal-currency. These banknotes had been issued by "Den københavnske Assignations-, Vexel- og Laanebank", or commonly known "Courantbanken" that had since 1736 been owned by a state-sponsored joint-stock company. Considering Guldberg's furious statements about banknotes, it is not unexpected that the bank was nationalized in 1773, alongside Guldberg's political ascension.

¹³³ Guldberg, *Philodani Undersøgelse*, 23

¹³⁴ Widenberg, Johanna. "Cattle Plague and Society." *Sjuttonhundredatal 17* (2020). 28

¹³⁵ A region in the northernmost part of Jutland, Denmark.

¹³⁶ Guldberg, *Philodani Undersøgelse*, 26

Guldberg affirmed how little had been done to prevent the spread of the cow-pest and insisted that society at large should take a more active role in preventing it, by rigorously “beating”, “burning” and “destroying” the infected cows. Far from being oblivious to nature’s impact on the economy and prices, Guldberg acknowledged its potential impact on food-prices. Nevertheless, little did he know, how the approaching and dismal growth-season of 1771 would worsen grain yields and expose how dreary Eastern Norway’s food-security was. Guldberg also never acknowledged any weaknesses with the current mercantilist grain monopoly, positioning himself instead as one its most vocal proponents. Additionally, he judged the monopoly first-and foremost as catered towards Danish interests, demonstrating a relative indifference towards the Norwegian grain situation. Being a staunch royalist, hence reluctant to criticize structural weaknesses of the Danish-Norwegian state, Guldberg chose mainly to comment on aspects that didn’t scrutinize it directly. As a matter of fact, recognizing that the Danish-Norwegian mood shift swing in opposition against the grain monopoly, it is appropriate to envisage that Guldberg sought to keep royal dignity intact by confronting Bie’s outrageous claims with deflecting - but reasonable - arguments: Grain prices were steep - possibly due to corrupt individuals - but certainly because of banknotes issued by private banks and the ongoing cow-pest. Accordingly, not by any doing of the crown or misbehaviour by the state. Whereas Guldberg never gave any vigorous critique of the status quo, preferring to protect it instead, others were not so fearful in exposing structural flaws head on.

3.4 Philocosmi: The Advocate of Enlightened Reforms

Christian Martfelt was three years Guldberg’s senior. Also born in Jutland, though from an affluent family, with his father, August Martfelt, serving as the Mayor of Odense, Martfelt would in 1748 begin his studies at Copenhagen University. Martfelt would subsequently pursue an early career as a teacher, translator, and writer, until he in 1755 would be acquainted and study under the erudite priest-polymath and natural historian¹³⁷ Johan Ernst Gunnerus (1718-1773).¹³⁸ Whereas Martfelt certainly didn’t develop into a polymath like his lecturer, it’s pertinent to presume that he was handed the intellectual tools and open mind to consider natural causes when assessing the complex question surrounding the grain monopoly. Being recommended by Gunnerus, Martfelt was employed at Sorø Academy as a “hovmester” for a

¹³⁷ Eriksen, Anne. "History, Exemplarity and Improvements: 18th Century Ideas about Man-made Climate Change." *Culture Unbound* 11, no. 3-4 (2019): 355

¹³⁸ Being a teacher in philosophy, theology, Hebrew, logic, natural law and metaphysics, Gunnerus later became the creator; along with the historians Peter Frederik Suhm and Gerhard Schøning; of a scientific society in Trondheim: “Det Trondhiemske Selskab” in 1767 and here developed into an eager and prolific maker of articles pertaining to the natural sciences.

local aristocrat in 1758. It was here that Martfelt became influenced by another renowned scholar, this time in political science. His name was Jens Schielderup Sneedorff, an adamant advocate for enlightened absolutism and Danish patriotism. In 1761, Martfelt started his lengthy travels around Europe visiting England, Holland, France, Ireland, and Northern Germany. It is likely that he during these travels got thoroughly acquainted with the new economic ideas of the times, most notably with the physiocratic thought in France or the “republican” customs policy of Holland.¹³⁹ These insights influenced Martfelt’s own beliefs surrounding trade and the economy. Lastly, in 1763, he visited the Danish West Indies as a surveyor employed by the merchant Niels Ryberg to examine the local growth conditions for sugar-plantations.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, it is worth stating that he was traveling at a time which saw the establishment of formal agrarian associations throughout Europe, such as when France in 1761 founded Société d'agriculture de la Généralité de Paris. These societies often had educational, political, economic, and social purposes in mind.¹⁴¹

As Martfelt returned to Copenhagen in 1768 he almost immediately began laying the foundations for a new and comparable agricultural society in Denmark. This endeavour would ultimately culminate in the creation of “Det Kongelige Danske Landhusholdningselskap” or the Royal Danish Agricultural Society in 1769. Being the secretary of the society and functionally its leader, Martfelt was by 1771 very engaged with questions regarding agronomy, the state of the economy, and grain policy. Having thorough objections to both Guldberg and Bie’s arguments, Martfelt published on 8th May 1771 a 523-pages long commentary named *Philocosmi Betænkninger over adskillige vigtige Politiske Materier, i Anledning af Philodani Undersøgelse, meddeelte en god Ven paa Landet*, styling himself as “Philocosmi”.

Preferring to write in a cosmopolitan manner,¹⁴² Martfelt starts off his booklet by recognizing that Philopatreias (Bie’s) “anmærkninger” had put some interesting topics to the forefront. Nonetheless, he’s belittling Bie’s contribution as nothing more than a provocative hodgepodge made by a man with a “merry” and “loony” head,¹⁴³ whilst applauding Philodani (Guldberg) for having responded to him with sound reason, “making the country a favour” in doing so.¹⁴⁴ By

¹³⁹ Langen, *The World's First Full Press Freedom*, 114

¹⁴⁰ https://biografiskeksikon.lex.dk/Christian_Martfelt

¹⁴¹ Segers, Yves, and Leen Van Molle. “Introduction: Knowledge and Its Networks in Rural Europe: From the Early Eighteenth to the Late Twentieth Century.” Chapter. In *Agricultural Knowledge Networks in Rural Europe, 1700–2000*, edited by Yves Segers and Leen Van Molle, 1–25. Boydell & Brewer, 2022. 15

¹⁴² Langen, *The World's First Full Press Freedom*, 114

¹⁴³ “*Philocosmi Betænkninger over adskillige vigtige Politiske Materier, i Anledning af Philodani Undersøgelse, meddeelte en god Ven paa Landet.*”, 1771, 11

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 15

foreshadowing Malthusian thought, Martfelt maintained how the high grain prices were caused by the exceeding growth-rate of the population relative to that of the production of grain: “In relation to population-size, when the grain quantity is not increased comparably, the price of grain will increase ... partly because it’s the most integral [ingredient] for bread and beverage, [and] partly because it’s most needed [as food] to various livestock-animals.”¹⁴⁵ He remarks that even though serfdom had gradually expanded since King Christian VII ascension, to the economic benefit of the landed gentry, food production had correspondingly decreased. For whilst the serfs must work on the fields of the landed-property holders “for opulence’s sake”¹⁴⁶, they are forced to neglect their own patches of lent soil that are more afflicted by “infertility” and “weeds”. Since the fields which constitute a larger part of the total cultivated area in Denmark attain lower yields, grain prices soar. As for supplementary causes for the steep grain prices Martfelt mentions (i) the heightened production and consumption of grain-based liquor (ii); the ineffectual making of beer leading to grain waste; (iii) in accordance with Guldberg, how the cow-pest has led to the augmented breeding of alternative grain-consuming livestock; (iv) and lastly the “neglect of the fisheries”.¹⁴⁷

Having listed all the immediate causes for the high prices, Martfelt used the opportunity to reveal how existing trade policy had worsened the situation: “Alongside the unrelenting export of grain, in a time, when the population ... everyday multiply, in a time, when the grain did not grow stronger or in higher quantity than before; in a time when our politicians forgot the main balance of trade; and the paramount rule ... of feeding every mouth, either by our realms own produce, or by the excess balance, in which grain from foreign realms can be bought”.¹⁴⁸ Martfelt was in other words, trying to highlight how an outmoded trade policy had the potential of causing hunger in Denmark-Norway. While his message unfortunately was prophetic, it did add a significant layer of urgency to the debate. Whilst Bie and Guldberg were concerned about the general trends of the economy and prices, Martfelt accused politicians of failing their upmost claim towards legitimacy: namely to keep the masses fed. Even worse, they had neglected the food-security for personal profit. Addressing directly and questionably towards Philodanus (Guldberg), Martfelt enquires: “Was there any time in Denmark, when the property-owning ministers, have had a better opportunity, to profit from their landed estates, and will any

¹⁴⁵ Martfelt, *Philocosmi Betænkninger* 26

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 26

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 28-30

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 30

according to their interested purposes, better than the stated, ever come?”¹⁴⁹ As the self-interested ministers desired to keep grain prices high, they were also inclined to keep the existing grain exportation going while prohibiting imports. And Martfelt asserted that they “easily” did so by exploiting their positions as ministers.¹⁵⁰ Consequently, it is evident that Martfelt saw the grain monopoly of 1735 as unsustainable as it was detrimental to affordable prices for food, and only really benefitted the landed gentry as well as a minority of farmers.

As for Norway, Martfelt suggested that each province ought to get a separate “Oeconomie- og Commerce Collegium”¹⁵¹ that would consist of the “amtman” and elected officials that would function as “assessores”, which functionally means an assisting judge. This would render decision-making free from “inexperienced Danish outlook” and delegate it to the “experienced consideration” by Norwegian and Danish administrators.¹⁵² Additionally, he suggests establishing granaries to combat high grain prices. Intriguingly, Martfelt mentions while Denmark had sanctioned the importation of grain against steep prices, (Eastern) Norway was not permitted to do the same without having specified the sale-prices for grain.¹⁵³ Martfelt also incorporates some Norwegian sources or “hearsay” from an unspecified journal that informs how “Norwegian farmers are paying taxes to the king, more than they can endure” and that they consequently have begun “plundering” their forests to pay it off.¹⁵⁴

In summary, Martfelt - inspired by the novel physiocratic ideas - considered the up-until then price crisis of 1770-71 to be the perfect opportunity for the implementation of otherwise vital reforms. Underscoring the current derelict state of affairs in which food production had decreased, whilst the population had increased, he maintained how the rigid systems of the old regime would be inept at preventing further economic decline without reform. Yet, he was confident and optimistic that Struensee’s regime in due course would heed his rational advice, not envisioning that the king would allow his subjects to starve.

3.5 Contesting the grain monopoly: Reaching a fragile consensus

As a supplement to *Philocosmi Bætenkninger*, Martfelt also wrote *Philocosmi Indfald ved Giennemlæsning af Philodani Undersøgelse* refining some of his positions on trade, finance, and economic thought. Eager to reinforce his ideas to wider public even further, Martfelt also

¹⁴⁹ Martfelt, *Philocosmi Bætenkninger* 31

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 31

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 435

¹⁵² Ibid. 435

¹⁵³ Ibid. 436

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 438

expressed dismay over the fact that some powerful Danish individuals have abused their position in regards to Norway, by taking advantage of its current precarious situation in order to further their private interests.¹⁵⁵ As an alternative, he emphasized the merits of furthering Norwegian interests instead, suggesting Norway ought to have a more equal position vis-à-vis Denmark, getting their own institutions, banks, and more influence over trade.

"All the advantages, that Norway according to its nature [through the extraction of timber, fish or iron], gets in trade and credit, when it does not consist of exclusive privileges [or hurtful regulations] [...] Denmark would get its share when Norway also enjoys them. They are twins who [...] came into this world hand in hand, and the benefits from their trades should go from hand to hand, from one to the other, to the benefit of the larger family and tribe, both kingdoms are equally loved [...] the prosperity of both kingdoms, that is: what politics should concentrate on; and he who thinks differently, he hardly thinks as the right Politician for the Realms"¹⁵⁶

As Martfelts booklet was written 8th of May 1771 he couldn't be aware of how terrible the situation in Eastern Norway eventually would get. This is because it experienced its first significant harvest failure in the autumn of 1771. The harvests subsequently worsened each year until 1773 when the mortality peaked. However, it is apparent that Martfelt in 1771 saw the Norwegian circumstance as quite precarious, susceptible to exploitation by the self-interested, and in great need of political and economic reform. Recognizing how Martfelt's voluminous booklet had eclipsed his own arguments, Guldberg briefly and humbly recognized its impressive insights in a short public pamphlet written sometime between 8th may and 12th of June 1771. Guldberg for instance marks: "Among the greatest pieces [of published texts], that has appeared this last year of writing-freedom, have I never read anything, which I heed more than *Philocosmi Betænkninger*."¹⁵⁷

Martfelt responded on the 12th of June 1771, stating how it was an enlightening endeavour writing against Guldberg, emphasizing how "Norway deserves the upmost attention in everything, that concerns economy, trade and finance".¹⁵⁸ Having mutual respect, and probably knowing the identity of the other pseudonym, Martfelt and Guldberg would publicly exit the debate on polite terms. Nevertheless, it is improbable that Guldberg genuinely approved of

¹⁵⁵ Martfelt, *Philocosmi Betænkninger*, 61

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 61

¹⁵⁷ Guldberg, Ove-Høegh, " *Philodani Tanker over Philocosmi Betænkninger.* ", 1771, 3

¹⁵⁸ Martfelt, Christian, " *Philocosmi Brev til Philodanus, som Svar paa hans Tanker over Philocosmi Betænkninger.* ", 1771, 9

Martfelt as much as he stated publicly. This is because when Guldberg was in a position of power, free to follow Martfelt's advice, he instead chose to disregard proposals surrounding trade-reform, content with maintaining the old mercantilist policy.

Nevertheless, the discourse would embolden Martfelt to write and publish a proposal for a reform commission named *Forslag til en Kongelig Reformations-Kommission, i Hensigt at forfatte en retskaffen varig Plan for Ækonomie- Kommerce- og Finants-Væsenet i Danmark* 6th of august 1771. In this he advocates reforms and outlays 34 positive consequences of those reforms that would considerably change Denmark-Norway into a more competitive and fair economy.¹⁵⁹ One reform-proposal was that "Sønna-fjelske" (Eastern) Norway and Denmark ought to define the tariffs-price for grain imports and exports, instead of having a grain monopoly which forbids the former.¹⁶⁰ Relevant to us, he also underlined how expensive times would subside if his entire reform-proposal was implemented, and that all classes would benefit from "fertile years", and that "infertile years" would be bearable, even for the poor. To him, a relatively liberal policy which permitted the importation of foreign grains, with some tariffs, was an effective adaptive mechanism to shifting climate.¹⁶¹ Hence suggesting a new socio-natural interaction in which the state ought to adjust its stiff regulations in order to protect against climate-induced famines.

3.6 A Farmers reflection: the perspective from below

Ove Høegh-Guldberg and Christian Martfelt undoubtedly were the most influential persons in Denmark that responded to Philopatreias. Pleased with debating bourgeois ideas regarding the economy, prices, politics, tariffs, and trade, these members of the elite missed a crucial element when assessing current grain situation. Namely, the hands-on experience of the lower strata. The responses to Philopatreias hitherto mentioned, constitute only a fraction of the total reactions to him, including those from the increasingly literate lower class. Most likely written after the harvesting season of autumn 1771 had concluded¹⁶², a farmer named Hans Hansen published a pamphlet responding to Philopatreias named *Bondens første Betænkninger, om de Aarsager Philopatreias har anbragt for de dyre Tider*. The identity of Hans Hansen is hard to ascertain. However, what we do know was that he had been a farmer,

¹⁵⁹ Martfelt, Christian "Forslag til en Kongelig Reformations-Kommission, i Hensigt at forfatte en retskaffen varig Plan for Ækonomie- Kommerce- og Finants-Væsenet i Danmark.", 1771, 38

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 24

¹⁶¹ Ibid. 38

¹⁶² Hansen, Hans, "Bondens første Betænkninger, om de Aarsager Philopatreias har anbragt for de dyre Tider.", 1771, 34-36

that he had lived in Copenhagen for a year until he wrote *Bætenkninger*¹⁶³, and that he was Danish.

Firstly, feeling agitated by Philopatreias accusations that no “considerable harvest-failure had transpired” in many years, Hansen confronts him with ignoring its predominant role in impacting the current prices.¹⁶⁴ Crop failures were, according to him, the major cause of the “expensive times”.¹⁶⁵

"So little, harvest failures and fertility matters! So little, abundance can give birth to immeasurably expensive times! So little does Philopatreias consider harvest failures to be [...] this principal cause, which always tends to lead by the hand with it the expensive times”¹⁶⁶

Furthermore, he disputes Philopatreias accusation that “kornpugere” were responsible for the high grain prices. “The rye is immeasurable expensive, when crop failures occur”.¹⁶⁷ And as the farmers lived in such uncertain circumstances, they sold when they thought prices were highest, sometimes even before the grain itself was harvested:

“The farmer sells early in the year, yes, even before the corn is threshed! Partly; because he needs: Partly; because he has the right to preserve the grain for himself. Partly out of fear that prices will fall. Partly: Because he never knows at what time to join the prices [by selling] in the future, without the knowledge of the price and the fertility of the grain, which he has grown out on his fields. “¹⁶⁸

Hansen argues that rather than accusing Zeeland’s farmers of being “kornpugere” because their produce is especially expensive during bad years, Philopatreias ought to thank them for providing the city-dwellers with food at all.¹⁶⁹ The farmers are simply responding to bad years of harvests to secure their unstable livelihoods. And when Philopatreias criticises about a barrel of rye being 6-7 marks cheaper in Norway than in Denmark (in November 1770), Hansen counters it with assertions that this is expected Norwegian farmers buy grain during summer (to stockpile food for the winter), because they can’t get it during winter.¹⁷⁰ Hence leading to steeper prices

¹⁶³ Hansen, *Bondens første Betænkninger*, 33

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 7

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 7

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. 7

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 22

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 22

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 22

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 9

during summer and lower prices during winter. While he doesn't specify why, it is possible he meant that remote-living farmers (the majority) chose to buy grain during summer rather than winter because transportation was easier during summer. Reprovingly Hansen writes: "Are self-interest to blame? Are the Norwegians those grain hoarders that Philopatreias alludes to? No, that they aren't. They are, in all sincerity, our ancient brothers".¹⁷¹ Naturally they would be provided with required rye in times of plenty.

The real culprits are not some grain-hoarding Norwegian or Danish farmers. Culprits are, according to Hansen, positioned within the state. He complains about the "the rotten limbs within the state! Worse than the plague itself"¹⁷² These "monsters" anticipate bad-years and look for high price-conjectures. After which they will purchase the entire stock of grain when it's in high demand and refuse to sell it until prices reaches a point which satisfy "their insatiable greed for money".¹⁷³

Hansen also contends with Philopatreias point that Norway ought to import grain in general, to alleviate prices in Denmark. The grain monopoly was only harmful to Norway if there was a grain shortage in Denmark,¹⁷⁴ as such it ought to allow the importation of grain from abroad only then. He stresses, as grain shortages became apparent in the autumn of 1771, the paternal and caring king allowed grain imports, thus preventing famine in Denmark-Norway.¹⁷⁵

"The king's paternal heart sees how his children lacks bread; therefore, he opens the door of the pantry: That they may freely take from his treasure-chamber and buy for it. It is; what the King permits! To export the country's money to strangers [by importing foreign grain], in order to bring in bread for the country's children in need. I say: Scantyness! Therefore, this permission [or dispensation-practice] has its limits."¹⁷⁶

Conclusively, when Denmark experiences years of abundance it ought to keep the grain monopoly intact, thus forbidding imports of grain. Otherwise, Hansen supposes it to be a "iniquitous" practice.¹⁷⁷ Depressing grain prices through imports, in otherwise good harvest-years, would be disadvantageous to the Danish farmers, but also to the realm's finances. As such, Hansen was fully supportive of the existing mercantilist grain monopoly in ordinary

¹⁷¹ Hansen, *Bondens første Betænkninger*, 9

¹⁷² Ibid. 19

¹⁷³ Ibid. 19

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 25

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 34

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 25

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 25

harvest-years. Hansen recognized that Norway wasn't completely self-sufficient in grain in years of ordinary crop-yields, and that Denmark ought to supply them, even if it sometimes would entail steeper prices at home.¹⁷⁸ More interestingly, Hansen was the most vocal advocate within the Philopatreas debate to emphasize the socio-natural interaction. Crop-failures, caused by yearly weather-fluctuations, was the leading source of the precipitous grain prices.

Norway needed to import just about 300-350 000 barrels of grain in normal years.¹⁷⁹ During terrible harvest-years, Norway needed around 1 million barrels of grain to replace its local shortage.¹⁸⁰ If we take into consideration that communication and transport was especially slow, the grain imports often came late, or at the very least only partly met the demand once it came. Furthermore, if an early autumn-frost would worsen yields not just in Norway, but in neighbouring countries as well (as it did in 1770-1773), finding willing importers of grain would prove harder. Lastly, the authorization to import grain often was institutionally limited by the monopoly and new ordinances often came very late. For instance, after the first harvest failure in 1770 (grain is often ripened early August), the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway disallowed exports 5th of November while temporarily allowing importation of rye from the 28th of December 1770 until late May 1771.¹⁸¹ Whereas Norwegian farmers often had some stockpile of grain to keep them fed through winter, hoping for better yields next season, subsequent years of bad harvests would empty this stock. Considering how Norwegian farmers relied on their produce both for sustenance and income, it is evident that this situation would worsen with each subsequent bad harvest-year. Furthermore, by examining the subsistence crisis of the 1740's, Herstad ascertained that while foreign grain imports increased meagrely in the "Sønna fjelske" Norway, it more than doubled in the "Nordafjelske" region. Deriving from the figures presented on page 13, we can quite confidently say that the importation situation for Eastern Norway in the 1770s was equally as insufficient.

This perhaps reveals how the complicated and rigid regulations of the grain monopoly delayed (some would say strategically), and thus exacerbated the ongoing subsistence-crisis caused by disruptive climate-anomalies. Far from being unaware of this "the [crisis] years of 1740-43 and 1771-73 must have created a sounding board and resonance for thoughts [among Norwegians]

¹⁷⁸ Hansen, *Bondens første Betænkninger* 9

¹⁷⁹ Herstad, *I Helstatens Grep*, 18

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 18

¹⁸¹ Martfelt, *Beviis*, 26

that the Danish and the grain monopoly had contributed towards the calamity.”¹⁸² Nevertheless, the Philopatris debate demonstrate that discontentment extended to Danish individuals as well.

As stated in the chapters 4.2-4.6, the contents of the Luxdorph collection from the years 1770-1772, that concerns itself with the deteriorating grain situation, were chiefly centred around price-concerns and identifying who was responsible, what the causes were, and potential measures that could alleviate this. All authors hitherto discussed agreed that establishing granaries was a clever move (even Guldberg), some espoused price-decreasing measures, others used the opportunity to advocate more radical transformations in trade. Martfelt was undoubtedly the central proponent for the latter position, writing a would-be influential book about the subject in 1774. As I have shown, it demonstrates how the grain monopoly ultimately became associated with the famine in Eastern Norway in the 1770s for those inclined towards reform. Its practical contents and the aftermath of Philopatris debate will be examined in the subsequent chapter.

4.0: Adaption: Responses to Famine 1772-1788

Being acutely aware of the miserable grain situation, Struensee implemented a necessary dispensation trade¹⁸³ (an exemption from the regulations of the grain monopoly) for Denmark-Norway 26th of December 1771 for nine years, hence allowing external imports of grain until 1780. This nine-year allowance of grain imports was unprecedented and radical in the history of the composite state because dispensation trade was habitually decided on an ad-hoc basis and ordered only for a short-term duration (1-2 years until the apparent crisis was over).¹⁸⁴

Clearly distraught with Struensee’s incessant use of decrees and total disregard for existing privileges, institutions, traditions, and social norms, opposition within the public and bureaucracy soared over the course of 1771.¹⁸⁵ In addition, the fact that he was German and had a noticeable affair with Queen Caroline Mathilde spurred further anger. It all culminated in a palace-coup 17th of January 1772 after a masquerade at Christiansborg palace in which the representatives of the alienated aristocracy and conservatives toppled Struensee’s control. Ove Høegh-Guldberg, the King Christian VII’s stepmother Juliane Marie (1729-1796), and her son the Hereditary Prince Frederick (1753-1805)¹⁸⁶, were the leaders of this coup. Likely

¹⁸² Herstad, *I Helstatens Grep*, 351

¹⁸³ Ibid. 180

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 179

¹⁸⁵ Feldbæk, *Tiden 1730-1814*, 76

¹⁸⁶ Even though he was heir presumptive for a short while, he must not to be confused with Crown Prince Fredrick who took over as regent in 1784 and became heir immediately after his birth.

having been negatively impacted by the food-shortages of 1772, it is suggested that disenfranchised soldiers were used as a pretext to initiate the coup in Denmark, but also one in Sweden.¹⁸⁷

Equally as illegitimate as Struensee had been, the new policymakers sought to hastily reverse Struensee's reforms, including freedom of speech which was revoked 20th of October 1773.¹⁸⁸ From this point on Guldberg would functionally serve as prime-minister of Denmark-Norway until 1784, accentuating traditional, religious, and patriotic values. Additionally, several key officials which had previously been dismissed by Struensee in 1770 returned to their respective governmental positions. Otto Thott, the now elderly duke who most likely urged king Christian VI to implement the grain monopoly back in 1735, was for instance given the position as cabinet-minister in 1772. Even though the Gulberg-led government was interested in restoring the old grain monopoly, and relinquishing Struensee's protracted dispensation trade policy, they couldn't immediately do it. The severe lack of grain and ensuing hunger in Norway prevented this.¹⁸⁹ As Martfelt's "Royal Commission for the Reformation of Economy" would be overlooked by Struensee's regime, he saw an opportunity to implement his own ideas when his old pen-nemesis, Guldberg, offered him a governmental position as a member of the Department of Economy and Commerce in January of 1773. Ulrik Langen and Frederik Stjernfelt explains how "Martfelt worked to realize parts of his trading plan [by having a prominent position], not least the issues of consumption taxes and the fight against "opulence". But Martfelt was eventually dismissed by his superiors. His dismissal in the summer of 1774 was most likely connected with Martfelt's strong views on grain prices, grain trade, and especially their immediate effects on Norwegian policies."¹⁹⁰

However, as the fields yielded plentifully the year after, a re-examination of the dispensation trade was begun in 1773 which ultimately resulted in the reintroduction of mercantilism 14th mars 1774 overturning Struensee's nine-year import-liberalisation. This was a very unpopular move both in Norway and Denmark, as prices were still high, and there wasn't a significant abundance of grain circulating. Accordingly, Guldberg and his cabinet-ministers decided that something had to be done. As such, it was decided that the "Courantbanken" should be nationalized to reduce banknotes being issued, but also in a resolution 17th May 1773¹⁹¹ that

¹⁸⁷ Collet, "Die Doppelte Katastrophe", 113-114

¹⁸⁸ Rian, *Sensuren I Danmark-Norge*, 180

¹⁸⁹ Herstad, *I Helstatens Grep*, 184

¹⁹⁰ Langen, *The World's First Full Press Freedom*, 116

¹⁹¹ Hansen, *Med kongen som redningsmann*, 239

non-military granaries should be implemented.¹⁹² Accordingly, both of these governmental measures were designed to reduce and balance the price of grain, but also to counteract potential Eastern-Norwegian grain shortages in the future without having to resort to the importation of foreign grain. Seemingly keeping his principles intact, both measures were espoused by Guldberg's alias of Philodani back in 1770 as potential solutions to the harvest failures. Despite of these developments, the crisis years of 1771-1773 and the free circulation of ideas had convinced many, whether they were Danish or Norwegian, how derelict the grain monopoly in fact was. The new ideas were impossible to get back in the box. As such, switching the clock back to 1735 did seem like an unwarranted move to many, particularly those living in Eastern Norway.¹⁹³

4.1 Discovering nature-society entanglements: Martfelt's "proofs"

On the 14th of April 1774 Martfelt delivered and dedicated his newly written book to the Crown prince Fredrik of Denmark, hoping that his ideas about the grain monopoly would resonate with the future king.¹⁹⁴ Being disappointed that the "necessary" dispensation of 26th December 1771 which allowed "Sønnefjellske" Norway to import foreign grain was being rescinded 14th mars 1774; effectively reverting back to the grain regulations of 1735; Martfelt felt an obligation to voice his concerns:¹⁹⁵

Whereas the Ordinance of 26th Dec 1771 (the dispensation-decree instituted by Struensee), which, as reported, most graciously grants "Søndenfjellske" Norway the permit to introduce foreign goods [...] should be changed in the requested manner (annulled), you will understand from my previous suppositions [...] [that] this Most Merciful Regulation should be disposed, for the important reason, namely: that at this most convenient time for both kingdoms, the sharpest proofs exists against the doubtful Danish and "Holsteenske" property-owners and farmers [...] [that] for the whole state, the grain trading plan, laid by the Ordinance of 16th Sept. 1735, is a harmful plan for the state, which impossibly can stay in power for long, for otherwise it would become purely destructive for the Throne and State"¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Herstad, *I Helstatens Grep*, 188

¹⁹³ Bull, Edvard, Valborg Sønstevold, and S.C. Hammer. *Kristianias historie 1740-1814*. Vol. 3. Kristiania: I Hovedkommission Hos Cappelen, 1936. 302-303

¹⁹⁴ Holm, *Danmark-Norges Historie*, 45

¹⁹⁵ Martfelt, *Beviis*, 145

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 155

Rather than returning to the mercantile system, Martfelt underpinned the true advantages of the free import of grain to the “Nordafjelske” Norway and the occasional dispensation trade conducted in the “Sønnafjelske” part (as had happened in the early 1770s after the subsistence-crisis).¹⁹⁷ In effect, Martfelt avowed the annulment of both the grain monopoly and any amendment to it, including Struensee’s decrees (though appraising its needed implications). The old mercantile grain system should be replaced with an entirely new one, less restrictive towards foreign grain imports. His “evidence” consisted for the most part of grain supply calculations drawn from “Rentekammeret”, a systematic investigation of the Dutch and English grain trade, but also a *mention* of the French replacement of the “Colbertian” grain regime with physiocratic reforms in France.

He listed six reasons as to why such a plan ought to be implemented. Firstly, that the overall grain prices would become stable and lower, as well as not reaching exorbitant levels during “lacking years”. Confronting the presiding mercantilist practice, Martfelt also stressed that a state ought to limit grain exports if it lacked grain for domestic consumption, and that it had to maintain a grain stockpile (implying granaries) in case bad years struck.¹⁹⁸ Secondly, with the mortality crisis in Eastern Norway fresh in mind, Martfelt stressed that “hunger and poverty would not reach the same levels anymore”.¹⁹⁹ Thirdly, people involved in other industries would be able to sustain themselves more easily. Fourthly, the prices of products made by artisans would cease to be so “immeasurably high”.²⁰⁰ Fifthly, the upper classes would enjoy a lower cost of living. And lastly, that the king could spend less in bureaucratic salaries than he otherwise had to. In short, Martfelt alluded to the notion that if food became cheaper through imports, it would prevent famines, improve the general standard of living, reduce expenditures, and stimulate additional industries. Martfelt assessed that reforming the grain policy would make Denmark “less miserable”²⁰¹ while generating more revenue for the state than what staunch mercantilism could promise. Nevertheless, categorizing Martfelt as a free-trade advocate akin to Adam Smith would be an exaggeration. He favoured the liberalization of grain trade due to pragmatic and rational concerns about subsistence, prices, but also a general distaste of paternalistic and rigid monopolies, hence his stance should instead be considered physiocratic. Martfelt almost certainly believed that extreme times

¹⁹⁷ Martfelt, *Beviis*, 55

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 56

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.* 56

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 56

²⁰¹ Martfelt, *Beviis*, 56

sometimes necessitated radical solutions, even if this entailed a reconsideration of an entrenched trade mindset that had lasted for around three hundred years. Looking through the broader European context, the 1770s crisis was comparably utilized to promote economic reforms.²⁰²

Referring to the crisis of 1770-1773 in Eastern Norway copiously throughout the book, Martfelt didn't shy away from linking the grain monopoly with the misfortune: "Do you forget that our brother the Norwegian, whom nature has set on rocks, is sometimes forced by our political mismanagement, like a wild animal, to eat the bark of trees. ... [based on this] isn't this a convincing argument for the grain laws' evident transgression?"²⁰³ In another quote he emphasizes that "the apparent advantages, as a consequence of the constant free importation of foreign grain towards Sønnefjelske Norway are according to my calculations, less Hunger, a minimized urge [for the famished] ... of eating the bark of the trees, thus less death."²⁰⁴ Having understandably not received any response from the six-year-old Crown Prince, Martfelt wrote a Pro-Memorandum 16 months later in order to receive a response from the adolescent prince and encourage him to elevate his remarks to the state ministry.²⁰⁵ This pro-memoriam was, as opposed to the *Beviis at ... Korn-Handels-Plan Ikke Naaer Sin Hensigt*, published without any restriction, due to the government seeing its considerations valid, but less radical.

In this postscript, Martfelt beseeches a further investigation into the reasons for the high grain prices, mentioning "Harvest-failures and infertility; Landprang and Kornpugerie; Trade and exportation; abundance in larger or smaller parts; ... or an increased population"²⁰⁶ as potential explanations. With modern paleoclimatology and climate-historical evidence in mind, we can verify his first point pertaining to harvest failures as there certainly was meagre growth during those years. Also, Martfelt's conviction that the harvest failures 1770-1773 had a significant role in the risen grain prices demonstrates that Martfelt's ideas was partly intended to serve as a socio-natural response to what had happened. His incessant mention of the Eastern-Norwegian famine also indicates how he saw the current mercantilist trade regime as immoral and harmful. As a result, he foresaw the abolishment of the grain monopoly as potentially alleviating natural-induced calamities through a sturdier grain policy.

²⁰² Collet, "Germany, Switzerland and Austria.", 108

²⁰³ Martfelt, *Beviis*, 165

²⁰⁴ Ibid. 52

²⁰⁵ Ibid. 45

²⁰⁶ The illegal sale by farmers of Agricultural products that had to be sold at designated market-towns.

Consequently food-security for the inhabitants of Danish-Norwegian composite state would be improved.

Unfortunately for Martfelt, his radical proposals would be discounted for many years. A prominent co-minister of Guldberg, Joachim Otto Schack-Rathlou, would initially be curious of Martfelt's ideas. Nevertheless, this would not amount to anything as he opposed to any new grain laws as late as 1784 (though changing his opinion on a later date).²⁰⁷ As for the grain situation, the period 1776-1781 saw plenty of futile requests from Norway for import-privileges in exchange for moderate tariffs due to insufficient yields and a lack of grain from Denmark.²⁰⁸ After 1781, Guldberg realized it was necessary to be more lenient in providing dispensations to Norwegian ports, owing to reports of "hard times" in Norway.²⁰⁹ Herstad considers the period 1781-1788 to be more liberally and pragmatically inclined because of an increasing disbelief within several bureaucracy-branches that Denmark wasn't able to fulfil its grain imports to Norway by itself.²¹⁰

4.2 A time for Agrarian reforms 1784-1788

When Guldberg's reactionary government was replaced on the 14th of April 1784 by the regency of 16-year-old Crown Prince Fredrik, a new era of agricultural reforms was ushered in. Ministers employed under him would for the most part consist of progressive Danish landowners, such as Christian Ditlev Reventlow, who desired to reform the current subsistence-driven system over to a more rational model. The state's finances were in a dire condition,²¹¹ and considering food was in lack throughout Europe, officials saw the economic potential of optimizing agricultural production while increasing the exportation of surplus grain. As such, the ancient village-driven production-unit of open-fields and the obligatory labour by tenant-peasants on landed property had to be replaced through extensive agrarian privatisation. The abolition of "stavnsbånd"²¹² and land-transfer would in turn bring forth an autonomous peasant-class that had ownership over the land, they themselves, farmed.²¹³ Hence, the planned reforms were also a way to satisfy the lower rural class, thus preventing

²⁰⁷ Herstad, *I Helstatens Grep*, 331

²⁰⁸ Ibid. 189

²⁰⁹ Ibid. 190

²¹⁰ Ibid. 192

²¹¹ Jespersen, Knud J.V. *A History of Denmark*. Palgrave Essential Histories. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 132

Denmark-Norway had considerably increased their military expenditures in response to the Seven-years' war and the American war of Independence.

²¹² A system reminiscent of serfdom in which a peasant between the age 18-36 were forced to live on the estate they were born in.

²¹³ Jespersen, *A History of Denmark*, 53

potential political turmoil.²¹⁴ Nevertheless, the reforms would also encounter opposition both from conservative peasants and landowners. As such, the initial reforms were only enforced in those areas which were directly possessed by the crown, in order to incentivise and “lead by good example”.²¹⁵ These agricultural reforms are commonly known in Denmark as the “Landboreformene”. The groundwork of this radical plan was started in 1784, and the “Great Land Commission” was initiated in 1786 seeing its first substantial law being enacted in 1787.²¹⁶

As for the grain monopoly, the Crown Prince would shortly after his ascent as regent in the spring of 1784 get acquainted with Martfelt’s considerations,²¹⁷ and Martfelt would be permitted to publish his book *Beviis at ... Korn-Handels-Plan Ikke Naaer Sin Hensigt* in 1785, divulging its contents to the public for the first time. Nonetheless, abolishing the monopoly was not given priority due to the ongoing dispensation of grain imports of 1781 which essentially offset it as a pressing matter for the time being.²¹⁸ However, Martfelt’s proposals did get an affirming nod from a government that, for the moment, was predominantly centred on the labour-intensive implementation of the agricultural reforms in Denmark.

Yet, when the reports from the Lofthus Commission 25th of January 1788 reached Copenhagen, the state of the grain supply of the “Sønna fjellske” Norway got renewed public attention.²¹⁹ The commission which had dissected why the Lofthus upheaval (1786-87) had transpired, determined that the grain monopoly of 1735, implicitly, had been the source for the uprising in Eastern Norway by causing the soaring grain prices. These conclusions would reverberate thoroughly within significant political institutions in Copenhagen, which had been aware of the dire Eastern-Norwegian grain situation for some time. Herstad concluded: “By putting together familiar interpretations and old insights about the ‘Sønna fjellske’ grain trade in a balanced way and within a broader political perspective, the Lofthus Commission drew attention to the fact that it was not only good provision-policy to abolish the grain monopoly ‘Sønna fjells’, but also that it would be a well-grounded economic decision, and a wise

²¹⁴ Boberg-Fazlić, Nina, Markus Lampe, Pablo Martinelli Lasheras, and Paul Sharp. "Winners and Losers from Agrarian Reform: Evidence from Danish Land Inequality 1682–1895." *Journal of Development Economics* 155 (2022): 2

²¹⁵ Jespersen, A *History of Denmark*, 54

²¹⁶ *Ibid.* 133

²¹⁷ Herstad, *I Helstatens Grep*, 331

²¹⁸ *Ibid.* 336

²¹⁹ *Ibid.* 337

national policy to do so.”²²⁰ Considering that the maintenance of the grain monopoly cost around 400 000 riksdaler in 1783 (and most likely double that),²²¹ Danish officials also deemed it economically reasonable to abolish it. These reflexions also reverberated well with Martfelts conclusions in *Beviis at ... Korn-Handels-Plan Ikke Naaer Sin Hensigt*, which saw the harmful regulations also as a costly endeavour. The abolishment of the grain monopoly finally transpired on the 10th of May 1788.

5.0 Discussion: Evaluating the impact of the Crisis debate

Herstad considers the dismantlement of the Grain monopoly in 1788 as being primarily caused by the conviction of cold-hearted and calculating Danish administrators and the fact that the government was otherwise spearheading the agrarian reforms within Denmark. He argues that the Lofthus Commission was conveniently initiated at a time when reform was in the air and that the Commission was utilized as a legitimizing instrument for the abolishment of the grain monopoly. Thus, he concludes that its abolition was not perceivably affected by recent events in Norway in any notable degree. This, he claims, is partly because the authorities had already been planning a draft for the abolishment of grain monopoly shortly before the commission had provided its report, and accordingly the report only confirmed their suspicions.²²²

Yet, he does not consider how the earlier memory of the Norwegian famine-events of 1771-1773, might have affected (through the public sphere) the conviction of many prominent officials about the current grain policy by elevating its harmful effects. It is also crucial to acknowledge that the Danish public, involving powerful officials, felt a sense of Christian compassion towards Norwegians, whom they often considered a “brother-people”, during “Bark-bread-times”. Evident in the Luxdorph-sources, influential writers, such as Peter Fredrik Suhm and Christian Martfelt, were quite aware of the misfortune which struck Eastern Norway in 1771-1773 and did feel a moral urge to alter the current grain regime in order to alleviate them. The period of press freedoms (1770-1772) made apparent the deficiencies of Norwegian subsistence, eventually laying the intellectual, rational, and ethical foundations for later schemes to alter the rigid grain policy during the late 1780’s.

²²⁰ Herstad, *I Helstatens Grep*, 337

²²¹ *Ibid.* 341

²²² Dørum, & Sandvik, H. *Opptøyer i Norge 1750-1850* (p. 462). Scandinavian Academic Press. (2012) 133

The attitudes developed during this time would ultimately be fostered in the young Crown Prince, who demonstrated great interest in Norway. For instance, shortly after the abolishment 10th of May 1788, the Crown Prince would sail up to Christiania in a notable spectacle to demonstrate his brotherly solicitude.²²³ Even if the Lofthus-upheaval didn't pose an existential threat towards the composite-state, leaving Norway famished, without any attempt by policymakers at its relief, would be considered immoral and unpopular. Concentrating on food riots in eighteenth-century England, E.P. Thompson stressed while revolts often were "triggered off by soaring prices, by malpractices among dealers, or by hunger",²²⁴ these actions were in essence caused by a popular sense of grievance that some social norm and obligation had been broken, and that their actions thus were legitimized. The notions within this "moral economy" would go beyond the poor strata and resonate within some parts of the "paternalist tradition of the authorities",²²⁵ who saw it as their principled responsibility to care for their subjects. In addition, a paternalistic stance could also help to legitimize the regime.²²⁶ Similar attitudes to these were shared by Danish elites vis-à-vis Norway, especially in the young Prince Regent.

Furthermore, Denmark itself experienced its last great famine after the eruption of the Laki volcano (1783-84),²²⁷ with subsequent bad harvests (1785-86) leading to increasing prices and mortality during 1786-87.²²⁸ As it couldn't supply Norway during these years, let alone itself, it was a perfect occasion to reassess the rigid system, by allowing foreign grain imports. As the new grain order was instituted, Denmark remained the main provider of grain to Norway, yet it was free of its ethical obligation to fulfil the entire import-demand of Eastern Norway. Intriguingly, Guldberg would in 1784 assist his friend and ambassador Peter Christian Schumacher to conduct a Grand tour throughout Europe in order to study the "national economy" abroad.²²⁹ In a correspondence between them from the 25th of December 1789, Guldberg avowed: "we do then concur regarding the grain imports, which always ought to be free, and its exports, which ought to be determined by the yearly grain sprouts alone, or

²²³ Holm, *Danmark-Norges Historie*, 273

²²⁴ Thompson, E.P., *The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century*. Past & Present, 50, (1971) 78-79

²²⁵ Ibid. 78-79

²²⁶ Pfister, C., and R. Brázdil. "Social Vulnerability to Climate in the "Little Ice Age": An Example from Central Europe in the Early 1770s." *Climate of the past* 2, no. 2 (2006): 126

²²⁷ White, *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History*, 521

²²⁸ Alfani, *Famines in Europe*, 198

²²⁹ Reinert, Sophus A. "Another Grand Tour: Cameralism and Antiphysocracy in Baden, Tuscany, and Denmark-Norway." In *Physiocracy, Antiphysocracy and Pfeiffer*, 39-69. *The European Heritage in Economics and the Social Sciences*. New York, NY: Springer New York, 2011. 55

even more specified the grain prices”.²³⁰ This reveals how even Guldberg modified his position in regards to the grain monopoly, seeing the virtue of allowing grain imports, and limiting exports if the domestic yields were poor.

Accordingly, within the historiography, the downfall of grain monopoly in 1788 is for the most part explained by the rising grain prices, subsistence concerns, potential or factual political turmoil in Norway, rational thought, external physiocratic impulses, pragmatic considerations by policymakers, and the ongoing agrarian revolution within Denmark. Nevertheless, none of these causes should be assessed in isolation; they were very much a part of a wider picture. Furthermore, considering the evidence provided in this thesis, it necessitates the addition of a further component, namely the proliferation of popular attitudes that the government had a moral obligation and responsibility to prevent potential subsistence-crisis in the future.

Whereas these grain debates conducted between 1770-1772 did not lead to the immediate abolishment of the grain monopoly, partly due to the intrinsic pro-mercantilist stance of the subsequent Guldberg-government (1772-1784), it was intellectually recognised, by some, that the grain monopoly had some role to play in worsening food security for its poorest. Accordingly, some of its critics, akin to Martfelt, gradually began to espouse its abolishment on more moralistic terms. These were dangerous ideas, and in a century which towards its end would climax in the French Revolution in 1789, Copenhagen would eventually react in a practical manner.

Therefore, the debates successively managed to proliferate the notion that the state ought to remedy catastrophes caused by climate-caused harvest failures. The response came in the form of Struensee granting the dispensation of grain imports in 1771, but also, when shortly after his ascension in 1772, Guldberg, properly convinced that granaries were the proper solution to the predicament, ordered the construction of additional granaries in famished Eastern Norway. Likewise, when harvest failures again loomed in the late 1780s, this time also for Denmark, a reform-oriented regime saw it both economically and politically appropriate to heed popular sentiments. It discarded the grain monopoly for good, incorporating many of the conclusions Martfelt drew fourteen years prior. In conclusion, it is apparent that each regime between 1770-1788, through varying methods, at least endeavoured

²³⁰ Guldberg, O. Høegh, J.O. Bro-Jørgensen, Peter Christian Schumacher, Frederik, and Det Kongelige Danske Selskab for Fædrelandets Historie. *Ove Høegh Guldbergs Og Arveprins Frederiks Brevveksling Med Peter Christian Schumacher 1778-1807*. København: Busck, 1972. 468

to adapt to the ecological predicament of food-scarcity. When Norwegian historiography in the early 20th century blamed Denmark for the famine, it did so with the benefit of hindsight. Yet, this simplification overlooks the fact that famine adaption involved a lot of trial and error by the Danish regime to better food security in 1770-1788. Furthermore, the myriad of opinions on display in the debates demonstrate that there was no obvious solution to the predicament of the 1770s.

5.1 The Philopatreas debate: Indicative of diverging social interests

Whereas the Luxdorph-sources are appropriate for displaying distinctive contemporary attitudes about the monopoly, they can be similarly indicative of the diverging interests within the stratified society of eighteenth-century Denmark. For example, those who were quick to condemn the grain monopoly during the 1770s was often part of the urban poor which were negatively impacted by elevated grain prices. On the other hand, it is also evident that those who benefited from high grain prices, namely those living of agriculture, was eager to separate the connotation of crisis away from the monopoly. In addition to the rural-urban conflict line, it is noticeable that disagreement between elites more than often derived from dissimilar intellectual and economical convictions, such as that between mercantilism and physiocracy.

Although little nuanced, the prevailing eighteenth-century perception among urban dwellers was, as exemplified by Bie's *trende Anmærkninger*, that the landed elites, and to a lesser degree the grain-hoarding farmers, benefited from the grain monopoly by heightening grain prices for selfish reasons. In short, the high grain prices were imagined as the cause of deliberate action, and not as a result of the nature. Eager to protect his integrity and livelihood as a rural farmer, Hansen dismissed Bie's notion that meagre yields hadn't impacted the current prices, and the accusation which relegated farmers as "korn-pugere".²³¹ Furthermore, as long as the Danish peasants were getting paid sufficiently and the Norwegians provided with their bread, no fault could be seen in the current grain monopoly. Still, ordinary folk like Bie and Hansen concurred that the elites within the state in part was to blame for the ensuing subsistence crisis.

It is therefore unsurprising that Guldberg, indicative of contemporary conservative attitudes, felt obligated to respond with his *Philodani Undersøgelse*, denying the notion that the subsistence crisis had gotten worse due to a faulty grain monopoly or state policy. Rather, it

²³¹ Hansen, *Bondens første Betænkninger*, 22

was the lack of regulation and state control of external stressors²³² which had allowed the price crisis to reach such heights. Rejecting such ideas,²³³ Martfelt sought to confront Guldberg in *Philocosmi Betænkninger* in a cosmopolitan fashion. According to him, the grain monopoly did not cause high grain prices; the high prices were caused by the unsynchronized relationship between stagnant local food production and the ever-increasing population. Nevertheless, the mercantilist regulation proved especially inflexible when food provision overall was experiencing difficulties. Followingly, Martfelt understood how these dire circumstances warranted a rational response in the shape of a royal reform commission which would reassess food provision, the economic system, trade regime, and agriculture in Denmark-Norway.

6.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, we can observe how divides within the stratified society of eighteenth-century Denmark were intensified during the crisis years of 1770-1773, between the poor and rich, the urban- and rural-dwelling, the conservatives and the reformists. Still, some parties could agree despite these distinctions. For instance, Guldberg and Hansen would agree that the grain monopoly was worthwhile keeping. On the other hand, Martfelt and Bie predilected its abolition. Furthermore, how ecological stress were manifested within the debate, varied greatly between the partakers. For instance, those who supported the grain monopoly highlighted the abnormality of the whole subsistence situation, believing that only temporary measures were needed. In contrast, in the perspective of those who saw the monopoly as derelict, the subsistence crisis had uncovered the irrational inflexibility of the current system of food provision. Although those who professed an overall liberalization of the grain trade had economic, political, or social objectives in mind, they equally regarded the abolition as a potential measure to safeguard society against climate-induced famines. The Luxdorph-sources affirms to us that this were the case.

Whilst dismantling the grain monopoly remained a contentious issue, and an impossible prospect after Guldberg's seizure of power, the implementation of additional granaries in 1773 was regarded as an acceptable and feasible middle-way for both sides. As such, it can be said Guldberg utilized granaries as a tool to assuage public concerns about the ensuing food insecurity in Eastern Norway and reduce grain prices overall, whilst not having to dismantle

²³² I am referring to chapter 4.3 in which Guldberg emphasises how corrupt individuals, private-issued banknotes, and the cow-pest were the major cause for the soaring grain prices.

²³³ Undoubtedly inspired by physiocratic impulses coming from Europe.

the grain monopoly. In other words, he attempted to partly satisfy the broad interests of the rural peasants, landowning elite, reformists, and urban dwellers while maintaining policies which accorded with his economic convictions. Hence, it is unlikely that the conservative government would have had the same propensity for alleviating the subsistence crisis without the insights drawn (and the sense of urgency that arose) from the Philopatris debate.

Yet, the fact that Martfeldt wrote an entire book in 1774 on why the grain monopoly was harmful demonstrates how inadequate he considered Guldberg's response to harvest failures was. As time went by, even Guldberg acknowledged that the dispensation trade had to be renewed in 1781 and that maintaining the grain monopoly orthodoxly would be detested, particularly by those living in Eastern Norway. This meant that proposals for the legislative abolishment of the grain monopoly were postponed through the prolongation of the dispensation practice, until the conditions discussed in chapter 4.2 eventually necessitated its abolishment in 1788. The grain monopoly was the preeminent expression of mercantilism within Denmark-Norway, to such an extent that considerable fractions within society, including landowning gentry and farmers, also benefited from it. Meaningful altercations to it were thus a time-consuming and contentious prospect. Although the debates of 1770-1772 didn't achieve a consensus on the issue of the grain monopoly, it managed to propagate the belief that society had to do something²³⁴ to alleviate the crisis for the famished. As such, the public sphere became a hitherto untested, but effective, arena that managed to instil a sense of urgency about the subsistence crisis, a matter that the regime previously could simply have brushed off.

The fact that several slight adjustments in both trade and grain provision were attempted by the government between 1772-1788 to improve the Eastern-Norwegian conditions, affirm this governmental sense of obligation to respond. Other climate historians examining the European context during the LIA similarly supposes that the restructuring of trade arrangements, grain provision, and grain storage²³⁵ acted as coping mechanisms to climatic variations.²³⁶ While it remains to be examined if the grain monopoly truly impacted mortality

²³⁴ As the philopatris debate shows us, this «something» could be quite varied, yet they believed that one through rational discourse could land at the most appropriate response.

²³⁵ Degroot, Dagomar, Kevin Anchukaitis, Jessica E Tierney, Felix Riede, Andrea Manica, Emma Moesswilde, and Nicolas Gauthier. "The History of Climate and Society: A Review of the Influence of Climate Change on the Human past." *Environmental Research Letters* 17, no. 10 (2022): 19

²³⁶ Degroot, Dagomar, Kevin Anchukaitis, Martin Bauch, Jakob Burnham, Fred Carnegy, Jianxin Cui, Kathryn de Luna, et al. "Towards a Rigorous Understanding of Societal Responses to Climate Change." *Nature* 591, no. 7851 (2021): 545

in Eastern Norway, there can be no doubt that some contemporaries expressed that this indeed was the case. Likewise, it's apparent how the controversial grain debates of the early 1770s, convinced many that the monopoly was flawed. This happened to such a degree that when the monopoly was abolished in 1788, few objected. Had the abolishment of monopoly been attempted before the crisis of 1770-1773, it is unlikely that it would have been as swift.

And like our current discussion, the Philopatreias debate demonstrates how challenging it can be for disparate social fractions to concur on how society at large should adapt to climate fluctuations, as the alterations often negatively impacts some segment within society regardless. Concludingly, it is apparent how the abolition of the grain monopoly wasn't just politically or economically caused, but also a result of a convergence between European ideas, climatic stress, freedom of the press, and economic change - a multicausal scenario in which the climate anomaly of the 1770s influenced the outcome, though not overwhelmingly. This can be suggestive of how climate adaptation might work generally: It is not just a top-down endeavour and a direct result to physical circumstances but is to an equal extent an entangled socio-natural learning event in which an open public sphere can play a vital role, even though the delay may be substantial.

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