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The state of the nation: the Norwegian King's annual addresses – a window on a shifting nationhood

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ABSTRACT

This article supplements the limited research on the monarchy by highlighting the symbolic and cultural value of Norway's Royal House in nation-building. To maintain his unifying and non-partisan role, the king must balance between conflicting perspectives on national identity. Our analysis of royal New Year's speeches 1960–2014 examines the concepts of 'Norwegianness' conveyed, noting the increasing focus on diversity and a multicultural society.

KEYWORDS

Monarchy; Norway; diversity; national identity; nation building

Introduction

Sociological research has shown strikingly little interest in monarchies. According to Billig (2003), monarchies are not seen as a 'problem' – and social science research focuses on topics considered problematic by the authorities. The media, however, still demonstrate considerable interest (Jönsson & Lundell, 2009). According to Blain and O'Donnell (2003, p. 2), 'obsession with royal events is a routine British media habit'. They contrast this with Norway, as an example of a country where the monarchy plays a more withdrawn role. Nonetheless, we hold that the Norwegian monarch still serves as a symbol of the nation. In this article, we analyse the narrative of nationhood conveyed in his annual New Year's speeches broadcast to the nation.

To serve a unifying purpose, the monarch must avoid taking a position on controversial issues or expressing partisan perceptions, balancing potentially conflicting perspectives and attempting to create consensus (Billig, 1988a). Further, the monarchy should be taken seriously, for it is the symbolic representation of nationalism (Billig, 2003, p. 129). We see the Norwegian King's speeches as balancing between banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) with themes like 'us', 'our homeland', 'our Christian traditions', and attempts at broader inclusiveness.

The legitimacy of constitutional monarchs hinges on their not being considered political. As argued by Max Weber (in Gerth & Wright Mills, 1948, p. 264), the constitutional monarch lacks legitimate political power, but his existence and charisma guarantee the legitimacy of the existing social and political order. Further, Coakley (2011, p. 272) notes

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that although the constitutional monarch has limited political power, he ‘can exercise great moral authority’. This involves his role as representative of the nation: ceremonial occasions, like annual speeches, ‘may constitute foci of popular unity at least in an ephemeral sense’. The annual New Year’s speeches are addressed to Norway’s population as a whole, with the monarch speaking both to the nation and on behalf of it (Hovland, 2000, p. 18). Our analysis of 55 royal New Year’s speeches 1960–2014 focuses on the images of Norwegianness communicated, and how these embrace the increasing diversity in the population. We explore how King Olav V (1957–1991) and King Harald V (1991–), have spoken of immigration and growing diversity, how the shifting notions of Norwegianness in the context of these speeches may seem exclusionary or inclusive, and how this has changed over time.

Background

In the nineteenth century, all but two countries in Europe were monarchies; in the twentieth and twenty-first century there were only eleven monarchies left. Those remaining after the French Revolution were generally constitutional or parliamentary monarchies: monarchies with limited power, defined by a constitution (Roobol, 2011). These resemble republics, as the power of the monarch (like that of the president) is ceremonial. Interestingly, Europe’s few remaining monarchies are all known for their strong democratic traditions. As Bjørnskov and Kurrild-Klitgaard (2014) note, European constitutional monarchies are found in countries ranked among the most democratic, as is the case with Norway, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, the UK.

The Scandinavian monarchies have remained stable, in countries otherwise known for their egalitarian culture. One reason is that the throne today has a mainly symbolic function (Dogan, 2009); moreover, only recently did the Norwegian monarchy become based on inheritance. In fact, the ruling monarchs of the 1800s and most of the 1900s were not Norwegian-born. Before becoming independent in 1905, Norway had been under Danish rule for 300 years, and under Swedish rule for slightly less than 100 years. In 1905, the union with Sweden was dissolved after a referendum, and Norway became a free, indivisible kingdom (Leon, 2011, p. 97). The parliament elected a Danish prince (who then took the name of Haakon VII) to reign over the new state (Coakley, 2011, p. 272). He was married to his cousin, Maud, the youngest daughter of the British monarch Edward VII. According to Redvaldsen (2016, p. 15), Edward VII had strongly favoured the candidacy of his son-in-law, and asked him to accept the throne if it were offered to him. Maud and Haakon’s son Alexander (born in Denmark) later became King Olav V. As noted by Brochmann and Kjeldstadli (2008, p. 89), according to the earlier definition used by Statistics Norway, the ‘immigrant’ population includes those born in Norway of two immigrant parents, so Olav’s son Harald (the current monarch) in this sense is an ‘immigrant’, as his mother Märtha was Swedish. We highlight this because of the monarch’s role as a national symbol, and because both Olav V and Harald V have thematised Norway’s increasingly multicultural society. In fact, the monarchy itself has not been unambiguously ‘national’, not even in recent times.

The Norwegian Constitution, conceived in the spirit of the French Revolution, was ‘radical’ in the sense of popular representation (Kissane & Sitter, 2010, p. 53). Since 1814, Norway has been a constitutional monarchy, with the King (or a Queen) as the

formal head of state. The Constitution stipulates that ‘executive power is vested in the King’, who ‘chooses a council of state which he deems appropriate’. However, as Lane notes (1996, p. 9), ‘although no one would question the authority of the Norwegian constitution, it remains a fact that the parliamentary principle which has replaced monarchical rule has not been codified’. Further, the government is ‘chosen by the King’ – but in practice it is the party(ies) elected by the people who form the government, and the King acts in line with this result. The only exception was when the Nazis forcibly occupied Norway in 1940 (Wehr, 1984).

The Norwegian monarch has very limited political powers: the duties are mainly representative. According to the Norwegian Constitution of 1814, political power is executed by the government, and the parliament exercises legislative power (Frantzen 2011, p. 273). Similar constitutional monarchies are found in the UK, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands (Leon, 2011, p. 97). Although we focus on Norway, many of our findings are applicable to other European monarchies, as well as republics where the president’s role is symbolic rather than political, as in Finland (Paasi, 2016) or Austria (Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, & Liebhart, 2009, p. 72). Actually, there is little difference between the three Scandinavian monarchies and the republics of Iceland and Finland. Paasi (2016) describes the Finnish republic as similar to Norway: the president has a ceremonial role, and the nationalism expressed stresses the importance of independence – a point as important throughout Finnish history as in Norway.

As mentioned, there has not been much research on modern-day monarchies. Billig (2003, p. 7) sees this as linked to the tendency of social science to examine topics generally deemed problematic – and the Scandinavians do not view the monarchy as a problem. Further, as the monarchy does not hold much political power, there may be greater scholarly prestige attached to studying other, more powerful societal arenas. However, viewing the monarchy solely in terms of political power ignores its symbolic and cultural value. Those are the aspects we highlight in this article.

That Norway’s current royal house was established following a *referendum* gave it a special form of legitimacy. Grimstad (2001, p. 42) encapsulates this as *folk monarchy* – the idea that the reigning monarch’s mandate originates primarily from the people. This differs from traditional monarchies where legitimacy stems from ideas of Divine grace, charisma, or an inherited position (Helset & Stordrange, 1998, p. 47). According to Skagesstad (2005, pp. 280–281), the idea of having an *elected* monarch helped to support the authority, legitimacy and credibility of Haakon VII as king. Olav V and now Harald V have been able to draw on these qualities. However, Haakon VII did not begin as a ‘folk monarch’. Danish-speaking and aristocratic in bearing, he was initially perceived as ‘distant and unknowable’ (Stokker, 1996, p. 289). His popularity soared after the Nazi invasion in 1940; in exile, he served as rallying point for the resistance movement. Goksøyr (1997, p. 111) notes how the flag, the national anthem and the king became wartime symbols of opposition – a specific aspect caused by the Nazi occupation of Norway.

Closeness to the people characterises all three Scandinavian monarchies. Marklund (2017, p. 337) notes how the Danish royal house combines ‘tradition and royal rituals with egalitarian values, folksiness and modernity’ – the ‘folk monarchy’ may also have to do with the egalitarian lifestyle in Scandinavia as such. Marklund (2017, p. 334) points out the importance of mediatisation for the monarchy to become the unifying symbol of a nation in Denmark. Jönsson and Lundell (2009) have similarly analysed many cases

of the importance of mediatisation for the monarchy in Sweden. In contrast, we do not analyse how the monarchy is represented by the press, but rather how the monarch presents himself through the annual televised speeches each New Year's Eve.

In Norway, the first (radio) broadcast New Year's speech was held by then-Crown Prince Olav in 1934. The Second World War constituted the framework for the next speech, held in 1939. Although these speeches were broadcast only nationally, they were designed as a New Year's greeting to Norwegians abroad. They addressed a national community and therefore had a unifying function. With the royal Norwegian family in exile in London, communication had to travel across the waters, and radio made this possible. The wartime New Year's speeches were all addressed to the Norwegian people, with a special salute to the resistance movement at home and abroad. That the Nazi occupation forces forbade Norwegians to listen to radio broadcasts imbued the link between king and people with great symbolic value. These speeches reached Norwegian homes, serving as a communication channel between the royal family and the people: contact was maintained, despite the physical distance (Hovland, 2000, pp. 26–31).

Brottveit, Hovland, and Agedal (2004, pp. 94–95) see the timing of the New Year's speech, which became an annual tradition after the war, as deeply symbolic: the transition from one year to another evokes contemplation and visions of the future. This was particularly important during the war, because it helped to focus on who 'we' are, what we are fighting for, and what we want to achieve. The monarch became a link between the past and future, emphasising the national past as good and free, and current times as oppressive and unfree, while expressing hopes for future national freedom. Haakon VII became a national unifying symbol, his New Year's speeches emblems of resistance.

Analytical framework

This article draws on the theoretical work of Michael Billig (1988a, 1995) a leading scholar of modern nationalism who is also one of the few social scientists to examine royal speeches. In his study of the British royal family's speeches, he introduced the concept of *common-places* for understanding royal parlance. Like the British royal family, the Norwegian royals have non-political roles, and must be cautious when speaking.

'Common-places' denote statements that confer an expression of values, socially shared beliefs about what is desirable (Billig, 1988b, p. 98). Such values are based not on their usefulness or potential impact, but on their own intrinsic value. Common-place statements appear uncontroversial – especially suitable for royal orators. For Billig (1988a, pp. 194–197), because the British royal family have no political role, they become moral symbols, and their utterances are expected to have a moral dimension not linked to specific factions. They must convey general values that have a unifying function: and here the 'common-places' concept is salient. When a royal speaker expresses common-places, s/he creates a connection with the audience. Both speaker and listener are part of the same moral community – not that the values are necessarily neutral, but they relate to the shared history of that community.

Although common-place statements tend to be uncontroversial, it may be less clear whether a monarch is aiming at something specific, and this uncertainty may create challenges of interpretation. One solution is to include the context of the expression (Billig, 1988a, p. 199), thereby creating a broader framework for interpretation.

In addition to this concept of common-places, we draw on Billig's work on 'banal nationalism', which refers to the 'ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced' (1995, p. 6). Banal nationalism stands in contrast to exotic, passionate or violent nationalism, as in the form of struggles for autonomy and independence. It is the nationalism that passes unnoticed, because it draws on widely shared beliefs that are reproduced in various ways in daily lives – and also in ceremonial events like the annual New Year's speech.

Methodology

We chose to analyse the King's annual speeches because, in line with Wodak et al. (2009, pp. 74, 153), we see national identities as discursively produced and reproduced. Similar to their analysis of politicians' commemorative speeches, our analysis focuses on *content*. Instead of quoting entire speeches, we have selected excerpts related to the focus of our research question. Our study covers 55 royal New Year's speeches, 1960–2014 – a period of growing scope and awareness of immigration to Norway (see Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p. 179). Few New Year's speeches are available before the 1960s: three from the 1950s, and a couple during the war. Two speeches from the 1950s have brief references to refugees elsewhere in the world, but not as part of a situation in Norway. We began our sample with speeches from the 1960s, when the rising influx of immigrants was reflected in the New Year's speeches, and national self-images gradually changed accordingly. To clarify any changes, speeches from the early 1960s were contrasted with later ones. This historical approach also involves a comparison between two monarchs (Olav V: 1957–1991, and Harald V: 1991–). The texts, available in written form on the homepage of the Norwegian royal house – kongehuset.no (royalcourt.no) – have been translated by the present authors.

The time dimension, spanning 55 years, creates variety, with the chronological reading enabling comparison of speeches over time. Like Wodak et al. (2009), we aim not primarily at theory building, but at broader analysis of the empirical data. Similarly, we assume that national identities are shaped by the context and the public in which they emerge: these royal New Year's speeches are addressed explicitly to the nation and its people. Also like Wodak, we see these speeches as historical acts, to be understood in connection with available historical information. We employed an abductive research strategy, first reading carefully through each speech several times, searching particularly for structural and linguistic features. In interpreting meaning, it was important to view specific statements in conjunction with other statements and with the speech as a whole. Speeches were treated as uniformly as possible. Only towards the end of the analysis did we detach excerpts: but by then we were sufficiently familiar with the contexts in question. In this way, we could alternate between examining individual excerpts and viewing in light of the textual context.

Eventually, the analytical approach became partly thematic, due to a sharper analytical focus. The following questions guided our reading:

- (1) How is the Norwegian community or the Norwegian national self-image defined?
- (2) How do the monarchs speak of immigrants, immigration and diversity?

A holistic reading was important, but it proved difficult to get an overview of the temporal development of each theme. We therefore constructed a matrix for parsing out patterns and relationships. This provided an overview of the themes addressed in different periods, and how they evolved over time.

Norwegian society has undergone major changes during the period under study. As the same utterance or term may mean different things at different timepoints, caution is required when interpreting. We have sought to interpret royal statements in their historical context, by studying historical analyses of the changes since Norway became a net immigration society. In particular, we have used Brochmann and Kjeldstadli's (2008) seminal *A History of Immigration: The Case of Norway 900–2000*, the most comprehensive work on Norway's immigration history and increasing diversity. Where appropriate, we have also consulted other secondary sources, e.g. on Norway as a humanitarian nation.

Norway as a humanitarian nation

The most prominent nation-building element in speeches from the 1960s and 70s concerned Norway's humanitarian work and efforts to promote peace. This humanitarian image is part of a broader peace narrative clearly illustrated by excerpts from the 1963 New Year's speech. Against the backdrop of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Cold War, Olav V declares: 'there is hope that [...] the day will come where the threat of war disappears and where cooperation and feelings of solidarity between all peoples of the world, regardless of race, skin colour or creed, takes hold.' Note the mention of skin colour and race – at a time when these had not become hot topics in the political debate, as Norway had yet not become a net immigration country. His reference probably concerns the situation in the world at large; perhaps the awareness of race can be linked with the civil rights movement in the USA:

Perhaps it is an utopian ideal to hope that our world will ever make it that far, and perhaps we in our country feel that we are so few that we have no opportunity to influence the course of history. That's not something we will have either, if we think only in terms of physical power. But we have the will; we have the ability and opportunity to continue our efforts at preserving peace in the area of humanitarianism. We have good and valuable traditions in humanitarian work, and must honour our great compatriot, Fridtjof Nansen and his words: 'Charity is practical politics'. I therefore acknowledge our assistance to developing countries around the world as a positive step on the way to peace. (King Olav V, 1963)

Fridtjof Nansen is often used as a symbol of humanitarianism and goodness: indeed, he underlined that the great advances of humanity always come from small societies (Witoszek, 2011, p. 207). King Olav's reference to Norway's lack of physical might and the population's small size as being countered by 'our' extraordinary will, abilities and opportunities for preserving peace and doing humanitarian work can be seen in connection with the Nansen legacy. The king went on to acknowledge differing opinions about Norway's limited contribution in relation to today's needs:

I'm also aware that we can come to experience disappointment, perhaps many disappointments, with regard to the results we might accomplish, but then we'll try other ways and other means, until we see that the seed we sow sprouts in fertile soil. (Olav V, 1963)

Here Norway's efforts are symbolised through the 'seed', while the soil symbolises the recipients of such efforts – 'developing countries' or the world as a whole, both of which need help. Poor results are due to how such assistance is received, not to failures in Norway's efforts. The Norwegian concepts of peace and development work are presented as undisputedly right and universal. Tvedt (2007, pp. 623–624) sees this as a form of exercising power that is not perceived as power *per se*, because it conveys values that are shared by 'all', and appears natural and right – like common-places.

Another prevalent national self-image from the 1960s and onwards is the thematisation of Norway's past as something 'we' should learn from: 'we' should not take today's prosperity for granted, and 'we' are privileged. This image presents Norway as a once-subjugated nation that gained its independence (Witoszek, 2011, p. 39), with the Constitution as its origin:

On 17th May 1814, our Constitution gave us [...], the right to defend our country's existence. And with the 25th remembrance [of the 1940 Nazi invasion] on 9th April next year, a bitter memory of the time when darkness descended upon our country for five long years, we must be aware of what precisely the Constitution and its clearly defined right to liberty and independence meant to the Norwegian people and their efforts on land, sea and in the air. (King Olav V, 1964)

This thematisation of the Constitution links two functions. First, the Constitution enabled Norway's freedom and independence; second, it legitimises fighting for these values. Interesting here is the primary linkage of the Constitution and the Second World War – not dissolution of the union with Sweden. This is perhaps due to the desire to preserve good-neighbourly relations, but may also be the result of the positive connotations related to freedom-fighting. Heroic notions of a struggle for freedom can readily be linked to the war, because it involves a 'legitimate' enemy image, the Nazis – whereas the union with Sweden was peacefully dissolved through a referendum. The image is formulated so as to portray the Norwegian freedom fight as heroic, something 'we' should be proud of.

Another national self-image, continuing in later periods, is the 'prosperity image': Norway as a nation that has gone from poverty to prosperity. Prosperity is not presented as having a clearly defined origin, but is seen as based on several conditions, including the Constitution and the petroleum discoveries. Still, the work of earlier generations stands as the main cause:

[...] I think it can be both useful and good for people in this restless, indeed materialistic, time to glance back and think of all the bygone generations who, through their work and toil, have contributed to building our country [...] 'The fathers have fought and the mothers have wept', as it says in our national anthem, and one must surely believe that these verses not only reflect belligerent times but also everyday circumstances, where the struggle for survival was a struggle for life and death. Perhaps we all sometimes, and especially now on New Year's Eve, should stop for a moment and think about the living conditions and the opportunities that our country offers us today. And I think that such reflections, despite the individual concerns that will always follow a person, will provide a gratitude which may otherwise so easily be forgotten. (King Olav V, 1972)

Ideas of lineage emerge through references to earlier generations, presenting a trans-generational understanding of the nation instead of one based on common biological origins (Peters, 2002, pp. 15–16). The 'work' and 'toil' of former generation are indicated as direct prerequisites for today's wealth, establishing continuity. The reference to the national

anthem helps to create an emotional bond between generations and thus to the origins of today's Norway. The mention of increasing affluence highlights the positive conditions of the present as contrasted to the poverty of the past. The past and earlier generations are something 'we' can be proud of and grateful to. And the nation emerges as something 'we' deserve because it has been created through hard work.

When linked to ideas of 'our' personal ancestors, the dissemination of collective feelings is aimed mainly at the majority population, with ancestors among previous generations – which may seem exclusionary to others.

National self-image in the time of the first refugee influx

Until 1978, immigration was either thematised in connection with war and conflict, or with reference to Norwegian humanitarian efforts. Such references to refugees were in line with the prevailing humanitarian national self-image (Witoszek, 2011, p. 191): When Norwegians are encouraged to assist refugees, the latter are made subject to 'our' goodness and reliant on 'us'. However, this image also depends on our ability to assist: 'we' also depend on 'them'. That refugees should be helped in their homelands reflects an attitude typical of early Norwegian refugee policy (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p. 181). Then in 1979, the thematisation of immigration changes, with references to the Vietnamese boat refugees:

The year 1979 has been characterised by refugee tragedies on a scale that the world has never before witnessed, and whose unimaginable human suffering seems to surpass even the refugee problem that followed in the wake of the Second World War. [...]. Some might be able to return to their homeland, others will find a new existence in the countries that open their borders for them, but it must be assumed that most of them will still be subject to a rootless existence, dependent on the help that others and more fortunate nations will be requested to give them, and which the Norwegian people responded to so convincingly through the recently completed action Refugee 79 Telethon. (King Olav V, 1979)

The use of phrases like 'refugee tragedies', 'unimaginable human suffering' and 'painful migrations' indicates a change from earlier references to a refugee *problem*. This shift is related to the greater prominence of the refugees' situation, and the wording draws on serious imaginary. As with the parallel drawn to the Second World War, where the current situation is placed in a familiar framework, King Olav is probably attempting to create solidarity. He then turns to the refugees' future in Norway:

[The refugees] come to a society that is completely different from the one they left – to a country with a foreign language, different customs and with a climate that few of them have experienced before. Let us accept them in the spirit of Fridtjof Nansen; let us all do our bit so that life is worth living for them and so that they may find their way and have a meaningful existence ... (King Olav V, 1979)

In describing Norway as 'different', exemplified by foreign language, customs and climate, the king takes an *outsider* perspective, emphasising their perceptions of 'us' as different – not 'our' perceptions of 'them'. This underpins the invitation to 'receive them in the spirit of Fridtjof Nansen'. That King Olav took such a positive perspective at a time when refugees were increasingly viewed as a problem may be connected with the state broadcasting's Telethon campaign that year, 'Refugee'79'.

Positive references to immigrants continue four years later, in the 1982 New Year's speech: 'Dear compatriots. Let me first say that, with these old, familiar words, I mean

all my compatriots, including those who have become Norwegian citizens and hence our compatriots, having chosen Norway as their new homeland. The relationship of equality between immigrants and the majority population differs from the previous relationship of dependency. The emphasis on a subjective membership criterion – *choice* – means that membership in the nation is not given, but is something that immigrants can achieve, as active and autonomous actors. The emphasis is on Norway as a *Staatsnation* rather than a *Kulturnation* (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 19), where inclusion is through citizenship, not descent. The emergence of this definition, following the King's specific inclusion of women as compatriots the previous year, indicates a need to clarify the scope of the national community. However, the 1982 speech also notes tensions between multiple membership criteria:

For me personally, 1982 was enriched by my trip to the USA, which gave me the opportunity to greet our Norwegian-American friends, new and old. It is always touching to see that Norwegian traditions are kept so vividly alive, far from their origins. (King Olav V, 1982)

The reference to 'Norwegian-Americans' as 'friends' rather than 'descendants' suggests a *friendship relation* rather than a *kinship relation* with the majority population in Norway. Kinship, reflected in shared 'Norwegian traditions', is implicitly present. The emphasis on one type of membership criterion in relation to immigrants and another kind in relation to 'Norwegian-Americans' indicates that 'Norwegianness' varies according to whom the King is attempting to include.

A Christian cultural nation in an increasingly diverse world

Until the mid-1980s, the speeches featured religious words and phrases implying a shared Christian context. Such phraseology continues after 1985, but now with an explicitly Christian self-image as contrasted with an undefined group of 'others':

Other faiths have their big days, but for us Christians, Christmas has always been the greatest of all feasts. The danger is that, in the midst of gift-giving and home companionship, we may forget what it's all about. Today, a Christmas without Christmas decorations and traditional Christmas food is almost unthinkable. But the Christmas spirit is just a frame. It's what's inside that counts. (King Olav V, 1986)

This reference to 'other faiths' marks the boundaries of the national community, distinguishing between those who are included (Christians), and those who are not ('non-Christians'). This contrasts with the above-noted compatriot image: now it is the *Kulturnation* and not the *Staatsnation* which is emphasised (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 19). In a population of people with different religious backgrounds, such statements are exclusionary: by the mid-1980s, immigration had entered the political debate as a controversial topic (Hagelund, 2002, p. 405). However, by saying that people of 'other faiths' have 'their' holidays, King Olav also acknowledges religious diversity, although with an us/them distinction between Christians and 'others'.

King Olav fears that 'we' might forget the religious content and that only the outer framework will remain (food, decorations and gifts) – reflecting concern at the materialism of the contemporary 'yuppie period' (Dahl, 1991, p. 98). He directs attention toward religious practice and 'superficial' Christmas practices, perhaps also attempting to unify the majority population. There is, however, an implicit nativism in these statements (see Jones, 1997,

p. 294). The reference to ‘we’ indirectly refers to people who were born and have lived most of their lives in Norway and who are Christians. Perhaps this is not accidental: when homogeneity is threatened, it becomes important to remind the population about the Christian foundations of the Norwegian Constitution.

Culture, virtually absent in the New Years’ speeches until the early 1980s, is increasingly emphasised throughout the decade. The fact that culture is highlighted may indicate its importance as a national marker. In 1992, Harald V links Christianity with culture:

Together with millions of people around the world, we have just celebrated Christmas. This holiday season appears, more than any other, as a bearer of tradition in our Christian culture. [...] We feel that our Christmas is Norwegian. Such a framework is essential for a nation. (King Harald V, 1992).

By connecting ‘us’ to the millions of others, the King indicates that ‘we’ are part of a larger Christian community. With reference to the Norwegian Christmas, however, he builds a national framework, conveying uniqueness and distinctiveness. He also calls Christmas a bearer of tradition, linking Christianity and culture. Interesting here is the pairing of two nation-building elements that have different ‘qualities’. Religion has a prominently subjective character, because *believing* in a religious message is a central element in religious belonging, usually associated with the experiences and feelings one actively endorses: it is not ‘given’ in an objective sense. Culture, however, has a significantly objective quality, often associated with something that surrounds ‘us’, something ‘we’ have with ‘us’. When King Harald associates Christianity and culture, Christianity is given unbiased qualities, ‘infinite’ and detached from religious affiliation – emerging as a more absolute nation-building element than before. This emphasis on Christianity can be understood in light of fears of the possible disintegration of shared Norwegian references. When Christian culture appears as an ‘objective’ feature of ‘us’, common characteristics of ‘what is Norwegian’ are also attributed to it.

From the 1980s and onwards, various trends and developments are introduced in the speeches as a kind of ‘contemporary diagnosis’. Fragmentation is prominent. In 1992, King Harald says ‘[...]in this diversified and exciting era, we in many ways have lost some of our common frames of reference’. He expresses concern at such tendencies; and in 1996 he stresses the importance of returning ‘[...] back to our spiritual and cultural roots in an era of change’. By emphasising stability, spiritual and cultural roots, along with a deeper understanding of the present, he seeks to counter tendencies toward fragmentation – however, in a rather exclusionary manner. Here there is no focus on diversity: ‘spiritual and cultural roots’ point to the idea of a homogeneous past.

Along with the concern over fragmentation, the more explicit thematisation of Norwegianness in the late 1980s indicates a perceived ‘threat’ to the nation. This period – with the end of the Cold War, greater European integration, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and wars in Yugoslavia – brought new power constellations, challenges to traditional nation-state responsibilities, and a new era of migration. In response, both national borders and national identities became actualised (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, pp. 320–322).

Thematising community when immigration enters the political debate

Immigration had long been a non-issue in Norway. Then, from 1985 to 1987, came a sharp rise in the number of asylum-seekers; and the former consensus on immigration policy was

challenged by the radical right Progress Party (Hagelund, 2002, p. 405). After the passing of Olav V, his successor was apparently willing to comment more directly on controversial issues like immigration. In his 1992 New Year's speech, Harald V links the nation's approach to immigration in conjunction with the national self-image as a humanitarian peace-loving nation and a call for inclusion and solidarity '[...] with people who have been forced to flee from their homeland and have settled among us'.

The 1995 municipal elections showed that a growing proportion of the population felt unease and scepticism towards immigrants. It also became more acceptable to convey such concerns publicly: there was talk of 'integration problems' and the minority population's 'unwillingness' to integrate into Norwegian society (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, pp. 257–358). Thus it may seem surprising that the 1995 New Year's speech makes positive mention of people with different 'cultures' living together, although balancing this by noting that conflicts may arise:

Norway is a small dot on the world map [...], but we nevertheless expect other nations to respect us. [...] With our firmly established basic values, we should be able to live with those who do not share our views. A healthy society should have room for a minority with traditions and attitudes that differ from those of the majority. If we are secure within our own frameworks, we must be able to accept differences. Conflicts may arise when people with different cultural backgrounds live together. Those who come to live in a foreign country for a shorter or longer period have a common need: a place to live in safety where they may work and thrive. [...] As in a marriage, it's about having a bilateral relationship where both sides must be able to make demands on each other. (King Harald V, 1995)

Although Norway, numerically speaking, is small compared to other nations, King Harald argues for 'our' expectation of respect, the right to be different and to have our own perception of what is right. Norway's position towards other nations is thus described through a 'minority perspective'. The subsequent description of Norwegian's position vis-à-vis immigrants through a 'majority perspective' thereby creates a connection between 'our' expectations as an international minority nation and what 'we' must expect of national minorities. This can be seen as a call for inclusion.

King Harald mentions the necessity of accepting differences, as long as we feel secure within our own traditions and attitudes. This phrase recurs in conjunction with diversity and community. In her analysis of the Norwegian immigration debate, Gullestad (2006) notes that this 'secure-within-our-own' mantra is often meant to be inclusive and well-intentioned towards immigrants. However, as it is difficult to know who 'we' refers to, what 'our own' is and what it means to be secure within 'our own' (Gullestad, 2006), it is unclear what King Harald *really* means with this phrase.

In 1998, the positive references to diversity change. King Harald now links diversity with violence and crime – increasingly in focus as a 'problematic' aspect of immigration (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p. 359), perhaps offering greater leeway to thematise the topic. '[Violence and crime] occur in the society in which we live, which undermines the firmly established perception that we live a protected and safe existence'. Admitting that violence and crime are gloomy themes for the New Year's speech, the King justifies this because '[...] the facts are so grim – and the grief and despair that follows the evildoer's footsteps reach deep'. He goes on to link violence and crime with failed integration:

Part of the violence comes from children and youth from other cultures. [...] We must be allowed to say that the integration process has not yet been successful in every field. The

addition of foreign cultures undoubtedly carries many positive elements, but we have not managed to solve all the challenges that arise when the second generation of our new citizens grow up. They have problems that their parents did not have. The collision between different cultures can easily lead to an identity crisis that is impossible to cope with. Many young people are asking themselves: 'Who are we?' 'Where do we call home?' They have problems at school and need to assert themselves in other ways. Often their anxiety and uncertainty lead to aggressive crimes. (King Harald Olav, 1998)

A four-component causal chain is indicated, placing 'diversity-related' violence and crime within a 'meaningful' frame. First, King Harald implies that cultures may collide, in turn implying they are something solid, unified and contradictory. Collision may lead to identity crisis, leading to trouble at school and a corresponding need to assert oneself in other ways. In the third component, anxiety and uncertainty lead to aggression and criminal acts which, fourthly, affect 'our' perception of living in a safe society. By explaining why crime and violence occur and why people feel unsafe, the argument establishes a shared understanding of cause and outcome. However, only individual explanatory factors (identity crisis, anxiety and uncertainty) are mentioned: nothing is said of structural factors like class background, poverty, xenophobia, prejudice, discrimination – factors that might reflect negatively on the majority population.

By using words like 'foreign cultures', the King accentuates the 'unknown', marking a distance from the majority population, and maintaining an image of a unitary majority culture. Terms like 'second-generation new citizens' have also been criticised. Døving (2009) shows that the definition of 'new citizens' seems exclusionary to those who '[...] have not been compatriots elsewhere ...' (p. 33), and who have grown up in Norway, born of immigrant parents. Still, the term was probably meant to be inclusive, because it incorporates first-generation Norwegians, although the 'new' also establishes a differentiation. Seen today, these statements may appear controversial, but they may have been intended to unify.

The 1999 New Year's speech marks a transition from clearly Christian-cultural Norwegianness to recognition of the nation as more diverse:

The birth of Jesus is the starting point of our era. The essence of the Christian message is still as basic, and it is our joint responsibility to bring that heritage into a new millennium. Another legacy – our culture in all its richness – can help to strengthen and develop our awareness. In these times of greater religious and cultural diversity in our country, we must show tolerance and inclusiveness. Here, Norwegian common values are of great importance. It is essential to have roots and identity. Whoever feels rooted can more easily feel responsible for others. (King Harald V, 1999)

The terms 'rooted' and 'roots' indicate that identity and values are something permanent and place-bound, in turn indicating that King Harald is mainly speaking to the majority population in referring to Christianity and culture as a legacy. Christian culture emerges as a kind of predetermined national destiny that creates stability and predictability, despite changes. When the 'secure-within-our-own' mantra is presented, roots – 'our' shared Christian-cultural inheritance – emerge as a precondition for the majority's tolerance and inclusive attitudes in 'the era of diversity'.

Multiculturalism as part of a new national self-image

From around the turn of the century, the Christian-cultural self-image is replaced by the image of Norway as diverse and multicultural. With diversity at the core of the national

identity, it becomes essential to talk about what unites 'us' as a nation. The monarch appears as both reassuring and constructive in addressing aspects of citizenship: what is needed from 'us' to live with differences, what 'we' have in common, and how 'we' can create national unity.

This links in with the change in public attitudes towards immigration and 'integration'. In connection with the 1999 municipal elections, there was greater talk about immigrants as a resource, and both immigration and integration were discussed in more positive terms (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p. 360). Such changes form the backdrop to the 2002 New Year's speech, in which King Harald describes Norway as a multicultural nation. After declaring that 'the community requires inclusion ...', he highlights the importance of ensuring '[...] that those who have fallen outside can reclaim the belief in themselves', using lonely, elderly people as an example:

How other cultures care for the elderly reminds us of our own traditions that are about to be lost. We have become a multicultural society, which must be founded on mutual respect. We must try to teach ourselves to respect otherness and not turn our backs on the unknown. Success requires effort, and I have no doubt that we can make it. New attitudes are being formed. In towns and in the countryside, people of different backgrounds now come together for activities of all kinds. There is great multicultural interaction in choirs, orchestras, 'multicultural football'; and children learn what 'fair play' means in practice. This creates a mutual understanding of each other's differences. We are over 4 million people in Norway who are to live and work together. Without respect for each other and each other's opinions, this will not work. (King Harald V, 2002)

Here King Harald for the first time offers a concrete example of 'other cultures' in Norway, noting how they can bring positive developments to 'our' culture. He mentions football as an arena for learning about each other's differences (and not similarities, which could be an equally valid description). In general, we can note a 'softening' compared with the wording in the previous period. Instead of using specific concepts like 'foreign cultural background' and 'second generation', he now speaks more generally about 'other cultures', 'the unknown' and 'otherness', reducing the sharp distance between 'the majority' and 'minorities'.

The various components of the quote above indicate that the monarch is addressing several audiences, perhaps attempting to balance between 'new' and 'old' perceptions of Norwegianness. In referring to Norway as *having become* multicultural, he alludes to a past that was different. The image of an earlier 'mono-cultural' community excludes both the minorities living in Norway at that time and today's minorities. Here he is mainly addressing the majority population with this image. However, he then goes on to address today's population as a whole, noting the differences not only between the majority and minority populations, but also between urban and rural ones. The majority population as such is no longer seen as a homogeneous representation of 'Norwegianness'. Despite the challenge of difference, King Harald shows optimism, conveying a unifying view of the future.

The recurrent theme of how 'we' should live together is partly linked to voluntary work in Norway, humanitarian work abroad, and communal arenas and meeting places. Also conveyed are various approaches to promoting fellowship. Central citizenship virtues include being welcoming, inclusive and understanding, along with 'being there' for each other, talking together, and meeting one another:

Next year cultural diversity will be a key focus in our country. 'Cultural diversity is as essential for humankind as biodiversity is for nature', according to the UNESCO declaration. Let us hope that the year will see outreach to a broad audience – and the development of spaces where people can meet and find new expression. The year of diversity [European Year of Multicultural Dialogue 2008] may thus help to create good meeting-places for people of different backgrounds and spur important dialogue across established boundaries. (King Harald, 2007)

Dialogue and joint meeting places are seen as something that can break down barriers and create mutual understanding, respect, trust and tolerance. The king emphasises these values, perhaps because they are fairly general. He does not talk of immigration, but of the broader need for *tolerance* – thereby turning a potentially controversial issue into something that can be shared by much of the population: in other words, 'common-places' (Billig, 1988a, p. 215).

The prominence of common-places during this period indicates that ideas of nationhood have become more disputed than before, requiring greater emphasis on uncontroversial shared features for the monarch to preserve his non-political role while simultaneously conveying unitary notions of Norwegianness. This is also evident when he speaks of culture as a *means* for creating common meeting-points and thus community. Other understandings of culture also appear, but the *instrumentalist* cultural understanding is prominent, in contrast to the earlier emphasis on *the intrinsic value* of culture. This shift indicates a greater orientation towards what can be shared among the minority and majority populations, instead of focusing on what is unique. Here we may note his words in the 2012 New Year's speech, 'I hope we are better able to search for what unites us as human beings.' The idea of being unifying has broadened in scope, as has the criterion for national belongingness.

Corresponding to the lack of a distinct cultural self-image, King Harald refrains from characterising 'us' as Christian. This is interesting, because there has otherwise been a 'religiousification' of differences, especially after the events of 9/11 – for example, persons previously described as 'Pakistani' are now referred to as 'Muslim', perhaps indicating that religious differences have become more important and more central to the 'Norwegian self-image' in general (Moxnes, 2011, p. 122). However, the New Year's speeches have moved in the opposite direction, explicitly stressing religious diversity and commonalities across different religions. Still, we find implicit allusions to Christianity:

The philosopher and bishop Aurelius Augustine, who lived in the 400s, wrote something very wise: 'Firmness in the central, freedom in the peripheral, love in everything'. Perhaps we should try to meet each other with this generosity – and look at what indeed is central and what is peripheral – simply, what is big and what is small. All nations, cultures and religions have expressions for charity. And everyone has an understanding of what dignity means. This is key, and it unites us. (King Harald V, 2010)

The quote from St Augustine illustrates what is important and unimportant in a community. Charity and dignity are indicated as things that 'we' can agree on across differences, and are important because they unite 'us'.

The Christian frame is evident in the 2011 New Year's speech, which coincides with changes in the Norwegian state church system. From 2012, the monarch was no longer the formal head of the Norwegian Lutheran Church, and his statements would therefore not represent the official state religion. Article 2 (on state religion) in the Constitution was replaced with a value statement: 'Our values will remain our Christian and humanist

inheritance.’ As Moxnes (2011, p. 122) points out, that formulation presupposes a ‘we’ who share the heritage, which may seem exclusionary to non-Christians. For the monarch, these changes entail balancing conflicting perspectives. On the one hand, he must take into account the value statement and his obligations to profess the Evangelical Lutheran faith personally. On the other hand, he must also safeguard the right to the free exercise of religion, religious diversity, and his unifying role. Whether his choice of words after 2011 is related to such tensions is hard to judge, but balancing these different perspectives has certainly become more challenging.

When speaking of diversity, King Harald encourages inclusion and caring for one another, expanding the scope of ‘accepted differences’ and thus ‘normality’. Minorities, immigrants and first-generation Norwegians are an important element here:

We’ve probably all at one time or another experienced being a stranger, an outsider [...]. Twice I had important childhood experiences of being a stranger – when I arrived in America as a refugee during the war and when I returned to Norway five years later. In such situations, it’s good to have someone who cares and who asks how it’s going. [...] It hasn’t always been easy to be strange and different in Norway. Our laws have repeatedly been changed to protect tolerance and human dignity. Let me mention the ‘Jewish clause’, whereby Jews for many years were denied access to the country. Today there are other groups who may feel unwanted and discriminated against. (King Harald, 2007)

By referring to being a stranger as a common experience and using himself as an example, King Harald normalises difference. However, by using the subjective term ‘feel’, the King does not take a stance on actual exclusion, as when he mentions the ‘Jewish clause’. As with the emphasis on individual factors when diversity, violence and crime were connected in the 1998 speech, the wording here indicates that he avoids talking about those who discriminate, which would probably have put the majority population in an unfavourable light. Regardless, it is not easy to talk about exclusion without simultaneously maintaining a distinction between ‘familiar’/‘foreign’ and ‘us’/‘them’. The King’s choice of words can thus also be seen as an attempt not to express such divisions.

In the thematisation of ‘outsiders’, all members of society appear as important and valuable contributors to the national community. In 2010, for example, King Harald states that everyone has ‘[...] resources that can be used in our community – regardless of nationality, health status, life experience, age and social conditions’. He goes on to express the hope that employers will increasingly come to appreciate ‘[...] the multicultural expertise that many in our country possesses’. Norwegian youth born of parents of different cultural backgrounds have experiences and insights increasingly important for us in a small world.

These positive descriptions of diversity differ radically from the negative aspects emphasised in 1998. The change is also evident in the King’s phraseology: he now emphasises the Norwegianness of the young people, relating ‘different cultural backgrounds’ to the parent generation.

In addition to the various thematisations of citizenship virtues, the national community is also connected to human rights, democracy and the Constitution. These are presented as the foundation and boundaries of the nation. The 200th anniversary of the Norwegian Constitution was celebrated in 2014, and the 2013 New Year’s speech focused on its significance to the nation. We find major differences when comparing this with the 1964 New Year’s speech, where the Constitution’s 150th anniversary was mentioned in only one paragraph. In 2014, the Constitution is front and centre:

Love is a place to fix your gaze. It gives direction and something to steer towards. It gives us value as human beings, and something to live for. Just as love is a foundation of human life, the Constitution is a foundation for the nation of Norway. (King Harald V, 2013)

The parallel between love, which evokes feelings of warmth, care, belonging and solidarity, and the Constitution creates an emotional bond to the nation. The nation becomes a constant frame in life, giving 'us' values and purposes. The Constitution is important because it ensures '[...] the rights of the Norwegian people ...', such as freedom of expression and religion. It underpins a community based on give and take. Indicating the Constitution as the basis of his position, King Harald says:

New Norwegian citizens may also take an oath of allegiance to the Constitution, human rights and the democratic values on which we build our country. This happens in a solemn ceremony marking citizenship. It warmly welcomes each person into the pluralist community that forms today's Norway [...] to live well together, we need a common foundation to stand on. If we have this, our differences will flourish without anyone feeling threatened. (King Harald V, 2013)

Loyalty to the Constitution appears as both historically continuous and natural when the King indicates the similarities between the 'new citizens', himself and his ancestors. This gives substance to citizenship status as a membership criterion. A variant of the 'secure-within-our-own' mantra is also conveyed, with the Constitution explicitly referred to as both a prerequisite for and a limitation on the diverse community. This is reinforced when he draws up historical lines:

The 112 men who formed the National Assembly at Eidsvold represented various strata of society; they came from opposing political poles and spanned a broad range of ages. Some were highly educated; others could neither read nor write. All of them were allowed to speak, and all played a part in laying the foundations for an independent Norway. (King Harald V, 2013)

Although 'diversity' at the 1814 Constitutional Assembly was limited to differences among white males, King Harald's description creates historical continuity between a past diverse community and the current one. He implies that today's diversity emerges as a natural continuation of the past, that diversity has always been part of Norwegian nationhood. It is normalised and rendered 'safe'. By stressing that everyone in the diverse community of the past helped to 'lay the foundations for an independent Norway', King Harald is speaking to today's community, implicitly promoting the inclusion of all.

Conclusions

This article has analysed royal speeches in a period marked by increasing diversity in Norway. While the Norwegian monarch is expected to be apolitical, his speeches are suffused with moral importance because of his role as the official symbol of the nation. As Snickars (2009, p. 132) has argued, 'even if the king has an official and apolitical role, the Swedish monarchy is certainly an institution with influence on many levels'. Writing on 'banal nationalism', Billig (1995, p. 8) noted, 'routine and familiar forms of nationalism have been overlooked'. Our examination of the annual New Year's speeches of the Norwegian monarch as examples of the construction of national identity and nationhood shows that the approach chosen varies between underlining the *Staatsnation*, as when speaking

of 'our new compatriots', and the *Kulturnation* as when speaking of 'our Christian culture' (see Wodak et al., 2009).

King Olav V reigned in a period when immigration was not controversial. When he took up the issue of refugees back in the 1960s, he could appeal to the people's goodness, with reference to the nation's own hardships during the Second World War. His speeches thus confirmed the national image of Norway as a peace-loving and tolerant nation (Witoszek, 2011). When the number of asylum-seekers increased in the late 1970s, King Olav took the outsiders' perspective, and encouraged the population to welcome the refugees 'in the spirit of Fridtjof Nansen'. Later, however, when immigration became a heated political issue in the mid-1980s (Hagelund 2002, p. 50), there was no mention of the topic in his annual speeches.

From 1991 and onwards his son, Harald VI, chose a less non-political role, specifically calling for tolerance at a time when tolerance was not always applauded in the public debate. However, we find variations: when, for example, juvenile lawbreakers from other countries featured in the news one year, he took up the problematic side of immigration as well. Thus, Norway's current monarch has sought to balance between positive and negative aspects of immigration, as reflected in the public debate. Both kings have tried to balance their speeches in ways intended to be inclusionary, while performing their role as outlined in the Constitution, which stipulates that the monarch is to follow Protestant Christian beliefs. With the population changing through immigration, the growing diversity makes it challenging to find unifying commonalities (or 'common-places': Billig, 1988a) that include all 'Norwegians'. Although Harald V has chosen a more direct approach to issues like immigration than his father, Olav V, both disseminate beliefs about 'Norwegianness'. While such imaginaries may be both inclusive and exclusive, they can be understood as attempts to create the solidarity on which society depends.

Additionally, these annual royal speeches implicitly aim at maintaining, or even defending the continued importance of, national identities. In Billig's (1995, p. 8) terminology, having a national identity involves being situated physically, legally and socially, as well as emotionally, and it means being situated in a homeland. It is in this sense we see the kings' speeches as representations of banal nationalism: they serve to legitimize the continued importance of national identity, constructing it based on myths of Norwegianness in a time when the Norwegian population includes more and more people from other countries – persons not situated in their 'homeland'. Will the constructed national identity prove open enough for them to identify with it? Such a question reflects the concern expressed by Skey (2009, p. 342), that we should be aware of 'the manifold ways in which different groups are addressed (or ignored) when a national framework is utilised'.

Norway's relatively short history as an independent nation serves to contribute to a latent nationalism (Blain & O'Donnell, 2003) to which the monarchs speak in their annual addresses. They use this as a way to legitimise the importance of staying together and maintaining cohesion as a source of stability, strengthening the nation against potential threats from the outside. Today, however, such threats are often viewed in connection with immigration. Here we see the balancing act most clearly, with the monarch calling for tolerance and inclusiveness from the people, while also citing instances showing the problematic lack of integration. Although Norway's continuing support of the monarchy and

the monarch as a symbol of the nation may indicate that ‘banal nationalism’ is still alive, the monarch himself can also take the role of a moral educator, calling for tolerance and greater awareness of the diversity among people in times when diversity makes national unity less self-evident.

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