

# Thinking about Global Inequality in an Age of Abundance

*Debates on the New International Economic Order in Norwegian Civil Society*

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Master's Thesis in Modern International and Transnational History

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Spring 2022

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## **Preface**

While having only one author, this thesis was not written in isolation. Without the support and help from countless people, it would not have been made. I want to thank Arild Engelsen Ruud, Helge Hveem, Olav Stokke, and Ole Kristian Holthe for helpful conversations and input in the early stages of the project. A special thanks go to Helge Øystein Pharo for showing interest, answering all my questions, and commenting on parts of the texts. I am also grateful to have had Daniel Roger Maul as my supervisor. I want to thank him for providing me with valuable input, comments, questions, and encouragement. His supervision has benefitted the thesis immensely.

Thank you to all my fellow students at the reading hall. While the great social environment has made my lunch breaks longer than they should be, it has also made coming to Blindern every day a pleasure.

I also want to thank all my friends for helping me think of other things than global inequality. I especially want to thank Ingrid Lofstad, Ingrid Schou, Ragnhild Hegland, Jonas Vidhammer Berge, and Ellisiv Torvik for being kind people in general and for reading drafts of the thesis more specifically.

Lastly, the greatest thanks go to my family for always supporting and loving me.

Morten Aune Forbord

Oslo, June 2022

**Abstract**

This thesis examines debates about the New International Economic Order (NIEO) in Norwegian civil society in the 1970s. While much has been written about it from the perspective of high politics, less attention has been given to the international project's path as a transnational idea in a local context.

The thesis does this by writing an intellectual history of the NIEO in Norway. It examines the ideas of the development researchers that made up the core of the Idea Group for the New International Economic Order and some civil society organizations that were part of the idea group's network. The idea group was a group of researchers, journalists, state officials, and civil society actors that mobilized for and wrote extensively about the NIEO. It had an advisory role to the Norwegian government and actively tried to shape the public debate on the issue. The thesis shows that the international political project of the NIEO sparked extensive debates about global inequality and the north-south relationship. In addition, the discussions were accompanied by a rich world of ideas on how the international order should be changed to benefit the world's poor.

The discourses were based on some premises specific to this historical conjuncture. The ideas examined contained a global distributional aspiration of equality. Because the global wealth divide was perceived to stem from the mechanisms of international economic structures, a prerequisite to reaching this aspiration was to change the structures of the international economy. Built on these common premises, many different visions of how the new international order should look were imagined. Situated in wealthy Norway, the examined actors argued that the country, in the name of global solidarity, had to take an active role in creating the new order and take measures that could have significant economic consequences for domestic society.

## **List of Abbreviations**

AOF - The Workers' Information Association (Arbeidernes opplysningsforbund)

CMI - Chr. Michelsen's Institute (Chr. Michelsen institutt)

FIVH - The Future in Our Hands (Fremtiden i våre hender)

G-77 - Group of 77

ICDA - International Coalition for Development Action

ICFTU - International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

IMF - International Monetary Fund

LO - The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (Landsorganisasjonen i Norge)

MF - The Norwegian School of Theology (Menighetsfakultetet)

MFA - The (Norwegian) Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MKR - The Council on Ecumenical and International Relations of the Church of Norway (Mellomkirkelig råd)

NIEO - New International Economic Order

NORAD - Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

NUPI - The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (Norsk utenrikspolitisk institutt)

OPEC - Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries

PRIO - Peace Research Institute Oslo (Institutt for fredsforskning)

TNC - Transnational Corporation

UN - United Nations

UNCTAD - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

WCC - World Council of Churches

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"What is god?

Is it  
Silence  
Laughter  
Crying  
Hope?

Did we believe *it*  
could it become

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the New International Economic Order”

"Hva er Gud?

Er det  
Stillhet  
Latter  
Gråt  
Håp?

Trodde vi *det*  
kunne det bli

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ny økonomisk  
verdensordning”

Liv Haavik, "Political opinion" / "Politisk synspunkt".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Haavik, *Ord i nød og lyst*, 60.





## Chapter 1. Introduction

A priest looked toward his congregation:

Lord, your word has spoken into our time. We confess for you that we, through our affiliation with the wealthy countries, participate in maintaining the divide between poor and rich continents. We have made the developing countries dependent on exporting raw materials that are withheld from the price increase. We protect our own industry with tolls and import restrictions that affect the developing countries. We oppose new economic orders that can improve the conditions.

Acknowledging their sinfulness, the priest and congregation exhaled together: “Lord, forgive us from our sins and make us willing to liberate the oppressed.”<sup>2</sup>

This confession was made in a church service in Oslo inner mission’s chapel in Bogstadveien on April 24, 1977. Partly created by Atle Sommerfeldt, a member of Idégruppen for en ny økonomisk verdensorden (The Idea Group for the New International Economic Order),<sup>3</sup> the service was about the international political project of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) and aimed to give the congregation “new strength to active action both politically and personally” for it.<sup>4</sup> It is one of many examples both within the church and in Norwegian society of mobilization against the unjust distribution of the world’s resources in the 1970s.

During the period, simultaneously as most people had “a fat time” and forecasts predicted that Norway would “become the world’s ‘richest’ nation,” considerable attention was also given to the globally unjust situation that the “abundance society” existed within.<sup>5</sup> This was connected to an international development that forced the Norwegian public to ponder the moral and political implications of the international system that had served them well. The countries at the wrong end of the rising international inequality had become disillusioned with the post-colonial hopes of “catching up.” They made comprehensive demands in international forums to restructure the international economy with the intention of equalizing the power and wealth inequalities within it. In a “narrow and specific window of geopolitical opportunity,”<sup>6</sup> the countries of the Global South made demands of the NIEO that was adopted by the Sixth Special

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<sup>2</sup> “Rettferdigheten kan ikke vente”, all translations are my own if not stated otherwise.

<sup>3</sup> From this point forward, I will refer to the group by the translated name.

<sup>4</sup> Birkeflet et al., *Vandring: gudstjenester i forum experimentale*, 20; Sommerfeldt, “Nåde og formaning.”

<sup>5</sup> Furre, *Norsk historie 1905 - 1990*, 373; Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 161; Olstad, *Den lange oppturen*, 131.

<sup>6</sup> Gilman, “The New International Economic Order”, 1.

Session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in the spring of 1974.<sup>7</sup> The New International Economic Order (NIEO) was the catch-all slogan for many interrelated reforms to the structure of the international economy that aimed to improve the position of the developing countries in it. The NIEO became much discussed in international forums during the 1970s and was taken seriously by state leaders in both the Global North and the Global South. With the oil crisis, the relative unity of the Group of 77 (G-77), and the recent dissolution of the Bretton Woods system's international post-war economic architecture, this period had a sense of possibility in the air, in which the NIEO, for some time seemed realistic.<sup>8</sup>

While writing diplomatic and political histories of the NIEO has been common, less attention has been given to its rich history as a transnational idea in a local context. This is the space this thesis will fill in a Norwegian context. It will answer the following question:

“How was the transnational idea of the New International Economic Order understood and debated in Norwegian civil society?”

To answer this, the thesis will mainly focus on The Idea Group for the New International Economic Order and their ideas from the NIEO's proclamation in 1974 until the NIEO negotiations ended in the early 1980s.<sup>9</sup> This idea group was a network of engaged researchers, civil society actors, journalists, and politicians, who advised and cooperated with the state officials responsible for the Norwegian NIEO policy and had the ambition to inform and engage the Norwegian public about the NIEO. They were among the most important mobilizers for the NIEO in Norwegian civil society. By writing an intellectual history of this influential group and some civil society organization that was part of their network, this thesis will discuss the dominant ways of thinking about global inequality in Norwegian society in the late 1970s.

The thesis argues that there was a rich and in-depth discussion of the NIEO in Norwegian civil society, with a “NIEO imaginary,” a spirit of global reform to equalize the global wealth divide, affecting the ideas present in the public debate. The ideas about the international system dominating the discourses examined were characterized by a global distributional aspiration of

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<sup>7</sup> In the discourse of the 1970s “developing countries” and the “Third World” was to a large degree employed interchangeably. This terminology is today outdated, and Global South is a more preferred term. In the thesis, I will mostly use the Global South when writing about these countries as actors, but use the different terms interchangeably when discussing the different actors' ideas. See Dados and Connell, “The Global South.”

<sup>8</sup> Gilman, “The New International Economic Order”; for an in-depth overview of the Sixth Special Session see Nemchenok, “A Dialogue of Power,” 129–42.

<sup>9</sup> The hopes of the NIEO was then replaced by the “real New International Economic Order” of neoliberalism. Mazower, *Governing the World*, 342.

equality, making it an exception to the historically dominant development aid paradigm of emphasizing distributional sufficiency.<sup>10</sup> Fulfilling this aspiration and equalizing the international hierarchy was seen as requiring international systemic change. These ideas and the hopeful ambition to execute them stemmed from the international political project of the NIEO and a transnational discourse surrounding it, but in their translation to Norwegian, the particularities of the Norwegian context influenced them. The ideas underpinning the mobilization for a new order did not just imagine a change internationally. Instead, the necessary international restructuring was also seen as being connected to a change in the domestic political economy. In short, different worlds than the one existing at the time and the one that came were imagined as possible.

## **1.1. State of Research**

### **1.1.1. Internationally**

While the moment of the NIEO for a long time was a “historiographic no man’s land”<sup>11</sup> because of perceived insignificance and a conception of the inevitability of its failure, it has in the last couple of years gotten a renaissance that has produced a large width of literature internationally.<sup>12</sup> Some have attributed this renaissance to the post-2008 questioning of the dominant notion of “no alternative” and a subsequent motivation to explore alternative political economies, making this once-conceivable alternative to the global order again relevant in the present.<sup>13</sup>

In the historiographical literature, the NIEO is nearly unanimously characterized as a failure in the sense that the demands of the G-77 in the UN did not win through. Several authors have still emphasized its importance in other ways. Samuel Moyn has seen its relevance in creating the philosophical field of global justice, sparking for the first time mainstream philosophical debates about the worldwide distribution of goods.<sup>14</sup> Strands of the literature also argue that the pressure for the NIEO was significant for the emergence of neoliberalism through a backlash against it.<sup>15</sup> Victor McFarland claims its importance comes precisely because the ideas of the NIEO were so different from the path taken by the global economy after 1970, making it the

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<sup>10</sup> The uniqueness of the NIEO's global distributional aspirations of equality on an international scale is best argued by Moyn, *Not Enough*.

<sup>11</sup> Gilman, “The New International Economic Order”, 10.

<sup>12</sup> See especially *Humanity's* special number (Volume 6, No. 1, 2015) about the NIEO.

<sup>13</sup> Gilman, “The New International Economic Order,” 11; Venzke, “Possibilities of the Past,” 264.

<sup>14</sup> Moyn, *Not Enough*, 215.

<sup>15</sup> Gilman, “The New International Economic Order,” 2; Garavini, “From Boumediensomics to Reaganomics,” 88.

last moment when state leaders saw the global economy as a “system governed by rules that could be renegotiated rather than an automatic mechanism beyond political control.”<sup>16</sup>

Scholars have also produced different perspectives on how to understand the ideas of the NIEO. Vanessa Ogle describes it as a project of state-based rights in opposition to individual human rights and private capital.<sup>17</sup> This is echoed by Moyn, who distinguishes between distributional aspirations of equality and sufficiency. He classifies the NIEO as having a distributional imperative of equality and describes it as a globalization of distributive justice and a welfare world. Regarding the failure of the vision of material equality, he explains that it was supplanted by two emerging and competing visions of sufficiency (the revolutions of human rights and basic needs), which became popular in the Global North in the 1970s. He claims the rise of global sufficiency as a priority was “attempts to ethically outflank the more ambitious global equality that postcolonial states themselves proposed.”<sup>18</sup>

Another perspective on the NIEO is given by a strand of scholars who see the project as a continuation of the decolonization process.<sup>19</sup> Adom Getachew argues that this worldmaking project was part of an anti-colonial nationalism that believed national independence could only be achieved through internationalism. She characterizes the goal as a welfare world designed to deal with the colonial world structures perpetuating global inequality.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, some histories of alternative development ideas have emphasized the intersections between the ideas of the NIEO and other development discourses in international forums.<sup>21</sup> A few scholars have also discussed the transnational trajectory of ideas of the NIEO in local contexts. Kevin O’Sullivan coined the term “NIEO imaginary” for a “spirit of global reform” that the political project of the NIEO brought with it and argued that this “NIEO imaginary” helped shape the agenda and debates of some examined NGOs away from charity to global justice.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Carl Marklund has written a local history of the NIEO as a transnational concept. In a local intellectual history of global solidarity with the NIEO, he analyses some studies commissioned from the Swedish government because of the NIEO debates. He uses

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<sup>16</sup> McFarland, “The New International Economic Order, Interdependence, and Globalization,” 219.

<sup>17</sup> Ogle, “State Rights against Private Capital”; Burke have also described a similar conflict pattern, see Burke, “Competing for the Last Utopia?”

<sup>18</sup> Moyn, *Not Enough*, 121.

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. Benjamin, “Bookend to Bandung”; Bockman, “Socialist Globalization against Capitalist Neocolonialism.”

<sup>20</sup> Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*.

<sup>21</sup> Nemchenok, “A Dialogue of Power”; Macekura, *The Mismeasure of Progress*, 128–35.

<sup>22</sup> O’Sullivan, “The Search for Justice.”

them to argue that the NIEO agenda played an important but understudied role in shaping broader domestic debates.<sup>23</sup>

### **1.1.2. Norway**

While attention has been drawn to the many dimensions of the NIEO internationally, this has not yet been the case for the research on the Norwegian interaction with NIEO. Instead, this history has been based on the perspective of diplomatic history and high politics. In this literature, Norway is mostly represented as having a discrepancy between rhetoric and actions. This discrepancy has made Jarle Simensen call the official support “schizophrenic.”<sup>24</sup>

On Norwegian diplomatic relations regarding the NIEO, three master theses have been written. Combined, these paint a picture of a shift in the Norwegian attitude in North-South negotiations to a more South-friendly policy with the declaration of the NIEO in 1974. In these negotiations, Norway acted both as a conciliatory actor at times and antagonistic to the negotiations at other times. Ane Børrud claims that two conflicting considerations formed the Norwegian policy: an ideological wish to accommodate the NIEO demands and a consideration of Norwegian business interests. These contradictory desires led to different concrete actions in different parts of the negotiations. A supportive rhetoric and an active effort to regulate commodity markets coexisted with the negotiations on the shipping industry, where a prioritized political aim was to defeat the demands of the Global South.<sup>25</sup>

The political scientist Helge Hveem, an actor in the contemporary NIEO discourse, has written general accounts of the NIEO in Norway. He describes Norway as a “hesitant reformer,” broadly reformist, but pressured by other western countries to conform to their common interests. He attributes the gap between actions and words to the purposely fragmented policymaking process on Third World issues. While the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) considered the needs of the developing countries, the Industry Ministry considered growth in the industry, the Trade ministry considered increased export, and so on.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Marklund, “Double Loyalties?”

<sup>24</sup> Simensen, “Writing the History of Development Aid,” 173; this is not uniquely Norwegian. Both Denmark and Sweden have been represented as having comparable discrepancies in their respective national diplomatic histories. See Olesen, “Between Words and Deeds”; Södersten, “Sweden.”

<sup>25</sup> Aschim deals with the period 1964-1974 where Norway was a loyal member of the western group in negotiations. Drolsum examines the period right after the NIEO demands from 1974-1976 and finds that Norway broke with this negotiating pattern in this period and went a long way to support the NIEO demands. Børrud examines the period 1976-1980 and finds a more ambivalent picture of Norway’s officially accommodating position in the period. Aschim, “Norge og UNCTAD”; Drolsum, “Realpolitikk og idealisme”; Børrud, “Solidaritet og særinteresser.”

<sup>26</sup> Hveem, “Norway”; Hveem, “Handel, ikke u-hjelp.”

Hallvard Svenbalrud has claimed that the underwhelming results of the Norwegian NIEO policy could be partly attributed to a lack of discussion of its political and economic consequences. Instead, he argues that the Norwegian debate was based on a moral argumentation disconnected from the national and international political situation.<sup>27</sup> Arild Engelsen Ruud and Kristen Alsaker Kjerland give a similar explanation of the limits of the Norwegian engagement. They claim the Norwegian engagement for a new order transitioned from a “high banner to a wet mop” as soon as the program’s consequences became clear and heavy actors and interests in Norwegian politics felt threatened.<sup>28</sup>

The reasons for the official Norwegian support of the NIEO are also addressed in the existing literature. Tamnes identifies several factors and especially emphasizes the tactical reasons for supporting it because of its popularity among the electorate, certain power-political considerations, and ideological reasons. Ideologically, he claims, the ruling Labor government and state officials saw the NIEO as a continuation of the philosophy already dominant in the national sphere. Some also saw the NIEO as a continuation of the necessary historical process of eliminating the colonial system. There were also more *realpolitik* reasons for the support of the NIEO, with a fear that international inequality could spark a confrontation between rich and poor countries. This would be bad for the self-interest of a small country with a high dependence on foreign trade.<sup>29</sup>

Outside of high politics, even less has been written about the NIEO. Ruud and Kjerland highlight the popularity of the NIEO among the public by referencing polls that showed broad support. They attribute the support to the recent increase in prosperity that made a large part of the population think that the Norwegian living standards had become too high, with the older generation still having a puritan view of consumer society and the oppositional younger generation developing post-material values. Throughout the discourse, they find that the argumentation for obligations to help the developing countries highlights this perceived unnecessary abundance.<sup>30</sup> While Ruud and Kjerland provide a good starting point for exploring the NIEO in public discourse, they still only scratch the surface. They do not give any intellectual history of the more sophisticated writings on the NIEO nor show how the “NIEO imaginary” influenced civil society. There is, in other words, much to be explored.

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<sup>27</sup> Svenbalrud, “Fundament og ornament.”

<sup>28</sup> Ruud and Kjerland, *Norsk utviklingshjelps historie 2*, 31.

<sup>29</sup> Tamnes, *Oljealder 1965-1995*, 415-416; Balsvik, *Norsk bistandshistorie*, 61-62.

<sup>30</sup> Ruud and Kjerland, *Norsk utviklingshjelps historie 2*, 47-49.

## 1.2. Method and Sources

The thesis is built on the approach of Marklund's local intellectual history of the NIEO agenda and O'Sullivan's concept of the "NIEO imaginary" in a Norwegian context to illuminate how the NIEO, and the spirit that came with it of desiring global justice through systemic changes, shaped debates and ideas within Norwegian civil society. It is a transnational intellectual history in the sense that the discussions on the NIEO and the "NIEO imaginary" was a transnational phenomenon happening all over the world, trickling down from the concrete international project of the NIEO. The national discussions of global inequality came both as a consequence of the material pressure from the Global South's demands and from the transnational discourses which served as intellectual influences on the different actors. The same story could be written in other countries, and the result would be similar in some ways. However, the specificities of the Norwegian context also imprinted the debate and differentiated it from other national histories of the NIEO.

As the approach is one of intellectual history, it is the ideas and imaginations of a specific set of actors, separated from their real historical impact, that are the focus of the inquiry. However, these actors are chosen *because* of their prominent role in Norwegian society and their extensive writing about the NIEO. It is the ideas of The Idea Group for the New International Economic Order, and especially the researchers that made up the core of it, that will be examined, as this group had an influential role in both politics and public discourse. In addition, the ideas of some parts of civil society that were connected to the idea group will also be examined. These are The Future in Our Hands (FIVH), the Church of Norway, and the Trade Union movement. These are discussed because of their influential positions in Norwegian society at the time, their connection to the idea group, and because they all engaged actively in the NIEO discourse. Their inclusion shows the broad reach of and variation within the "NIEO imaginary." While not discussing the idea group's influence, the focus will be on the congruence and difference of how the "NIEO imaginary" influenced their ideas.

When discussing the researchers' ideas, the sources will be the different individual writings of the members of the idea group in journals, books, and various publications. The sources used from the discourse they participated in are incomplete because of the large number of relevant writings and the fluent borders between different discourses. The various texts about the NIEO were at times written *reactively* about specific topics and at times written *actively* with more *a priori* discussions. Still, the thesis will connect the different types of texts to a common discourse that highlights the variations and commonalities in the ideas that dominated the idea

group. Various actors' complete intellectual histories will not be included; instead, they are primarily used as representatives of ideas present in the discourse. A similar approach is also used in the examination of civil society, but with more weight being placed on the official attitudes of the organizations and the actors as representatives of these organizations.

While much of the writing was about the mundane and changing realities of concrete negotiations, the thesis will largely ignore this. Instead, it will focus on the parts of the texts that reveal a broader imagination and normative visions of the global hierarchy and economy, and Norway's role in this. Moyn's framework of distributional aspirations will be of particular importance as an interpretative lens. Therefore, it is essential to see the perspective of this thesis as *an* intellectual history of some specific discourses, not as *the* intellectual history of the NIEO in Norwegian society.

As to not write a history of ideas separated from the historical context and structures they were created within, the thesis also contextualizes the debates of the idea group and the different civil society organizations. To get a sense of their activities, I have accessed the idea group's collection at The Norwegian Labor Movement Archives. This collection includes a wide range of material, including correspondences, reports, applications, minutes, membership lists, and more. Combined, this material has been important to mapping the idea group's activities and network. In addition, I have used the National Library of Norway's digitalized collection to access a broad array of books, papers, and news articles from the period. To earn a deeper understanding of FIVH's ideology and its relation to the NIEO, I have accessed their member magazine *Ny livsstil* (1974-1979) in their offices. I have also drawn on a range of secondary literature to contextualize the discussions of the idea group and the civil society organizations.

### **1.3. Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is structured into three main chapters exploring different aspects of the NIEO debate. Chapter 2 discusses the historical role of the idea group and its structural role in the public debate and policymaking. The chapter contextualizes the intellectual history of the idea group that the rest of the thesis consists of. Chapter 3 is an intellectual history of the researchers of the idea group. It focuses on how they interpreted the current international order, imagined a new order, and thought about Norway's role in the new order. Chapter 4 is an intellectual history of the NIEO in some civil society organizations connected to the idea group. It shows how the NIEO was discussed in these organizations, and how the various NIEO discourses had both shared and particular features.



## **Chapter 2. Development Researchers against Global Inequality**

At the Sixth Special Session of the UN General Assembly, the Norwegian government sent a politically heavy delegation. With representatives from all foreign policy research institutions and all major political parties present, the delegation expressed a positive attitude towards the declaration of the NIEO at the conference.<sup>31</sup> While the state officially made significant commitments internationally with potentially far-reaching consequences, the Norwegian debate about this was almost non-existent. Only after a group of engaged development researchers started to mobilize for the NIEO did the debate begin, and the concept of the NIEO became a well-known idea among the public. This chapter will show how researchers and civil society mobilized for the NIEO into The Idea Group for the New International Economic Order, and discuss the role this group had for Norwegian policy and debate about the NIEO.

### **2.1. The “NIEO White Paper”**

While the government officials involved in the Norwegian NIEO policy took the issue seriously and thought it might have consequences for domestic and international society, the NIEO demands were barely mentioned in Norwegian media during 1974. In 1975, there was an increase in references in newspapers and media, but not any significant discussion, even as the Norwegian government issued a white paper that signaled support for the demands to restructure the international economy. The public debate first started sometime after the official Norwegian policy had been decided in white paper nr. 94 (1974-75), popularly called the “NIEO white paper,” about “Norway’s economic interaction with the developing countries.”

The “NIEO white paper” has been described as the “Norwegian catechism of the NIEO idea.”<sup>32</sup> It had a broad political consensus behind it and was, to a large degree, the guiding document of the Norwegian policy for the following years. It was significant as it was the first time the structures of the international economy became a topic of development policy, with all previous policy debates having been limited to development aid.<sup>33</sup> It signaled a change in Norwegian policy towards the developing countries to a more accommodating line. While it showed support for most of their demands in the UN, there were some areas it made reservations and took a more cautious line.

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<sup>31</sup> Drolsum, “Realpolitikk og idealisme,” 34–36.

<sup>32</sup> Bull, “Norsk Nord-Sør debatt fram til i dag”, 11; The white paper was formulated by a small group of government officials, including Arne Arnesen, Martin Huslid and Knut Frydenlund, but had the full support of the government.

<sup>33</sup> Bull, “Norsk Nord-Sør debatt fram til idag”, 11.

A moderate form of dependency theory influenced the white paper. The first page stated: “Even though the developing countries have liberated themselves from colonialism and become independent states, they still find themselves in a relation of economic dependency to the rich world through a property-, work-, and power distribution which hinders full economic and social liberation.” Because the acute problems of poverty, hunger and inequality stemmed from this dependency relation, it was “understandable that the developing countries gather together on the demands of redistributing economic power and influence in world society.”<sup>34</sup> With a further moral argumentation, it was stated that Norway supported the need for a new international economic order, even though it meant having to accept a “lower rate in our own growth of standards in favor of people lacking the most basic material prerequisites for a human existence.” Of concrete positions towards the NIEO declaration, the white paper stated that Norway supported demands of the right to nationalize, to better and more stable incomes for commodities, to ease market access for developing countries, to increase the developing countries’ share of the world’s industrial production, to more influence and representation in international financial institutions, and to increase transfers of financial resources from developed countries.<sup>35</sup> With this, it seems that those in charge of the foreign policy bought the premises set by the Global South of a structural explanation of the lacking development and international inequality.<sup>36</sup>

Similar explanations were also present in the development studies research community of the time, which had been influenced by different forms of dependency theory since their conception in the late 1950s and early 1960s. While these research communities had little to do with policy-making for some time, there was a shift in the MFA’s receptiveness to scientific knowledge from outside the state bureaucracy in the early 1970s. This made the development researchers closer to the official policy.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Stortingsmelding nr. 94 (1974-75), Norges økonomiske samkvem med utviklingslandene, 10-11.

<sup>35</sup> Stortingsmelding nr. 94 (1974-75), Norges økonomiske samkvem med utviklingslandene.

<sup>36</sup> Drolsum also claims this in her analysis of the preparation of the Norwegian delegation to the UN General Assembly’s Sixth Special Session. See Drolsum, “Realpolitikk og idealisme”, 34.

<sup>37</sup> In a review of the “NIEO white paper” PRIO researcher Helge Hveem stated that it only a few years earlier was “almost impossible” to discuss Norwegian development policy with state officials the way it was done now, and calls it an concession to the researchers who had long pushed for a more structural explanatory framework. See Hveem, “En ny internasjonal økonomisk orden og norsk politikk overfor u-landene”; Fonn and Sending, “Forskningen og utenrikspolitikken,” 167–68; Stokke, “Utviklingsforskningen i Norge gjennom 50 år,” 503–4; Reinertsen, “Norge til verden eller verden til Norge?,” 86; Drolsum, “Realpolitikk og idealisme,” 42–43.

## 2.2. Expert Mobilization

With an international project in line with their developmental ideology seemingly a realistic possibility, positive signals from the government on the international project, and the public being unaware of the issue, the development studies research community engaged in a significant mobilization for the NIEO. The upcoming United Nations Conference on Trade and Development IV (UNCTAD) in Nairobi in May 1976 was seen as the first real test of the staying power of the NIEO demands, and it was in the direct preparation of this that the debate about the NIEO came to have a less fragmented and more visible form. With direct inspiration from a similar organization in the Netherlands, on the initiative from the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), and the United Nations Association of Norway (with Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) being a “corresponding member” of the working committee from Bergen), different organizations working on the subject was called into a meeting to cooperate on informational measures with regards to UNCTAD IV and the NIEO. As the debate had the potential to have “considerable conflicts of opinion together with an obvious lack of insight into complex issues,” there was a need to inform and create debate about Norway’s relation and attitude to the Third World’s demand for the NIEO.<sup>38</sup>

On the initial meeting on January 7, 1976, around 50 people representing 21 different organizations met to discuss the NIEO, UNCTAD IV, and how to coordinate various informational measures. There were participants from the mass media, research institutions, state administration, the labor movement, the church, youth parties, and various civil society organizations. From the meeting, there was created an “information bank” where the various organizations could get both informational material and an overview of different seminars and available lecturers. Some kind of communication strategy was also developed.<sup>39</sup> After this meeting, the discussion and attention given to the NIEO and the North-South negotiations intensified. This certainly cannot be attributed to the meeting and coordination alone, as much had already been planned, but many of those present at this initial meeting were also drivers behind the debate on the NIEO both leading up to UNCTAD IV and in the years following it. Necessary for this uptick in awareness was the state’s support, with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) giving financial support to different informational measures and even sponsoring group tours for journalists to UNCTAD IV.

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<sup>38</sup> Idegruppen Nord/Sør, Saksarkiv - D – 0001, Arbeidsutvalg for informasjon om UNCTAD IV og NØV, 1976.

<sup>39</sup> Idegruppen Nord/Sør, Saksarkiv - D – 0001, Arbeidsutvalg for informasjon om UNCTAD IV og NØV, 1976.

Many of the researchers who had been active in the debate were also consulted by the Norwegian delegation during UNCTAD IV. Here, Norway took a high profile and promised to give 25 million dollars towards the to-be negotiated common fund, as the only developed country with a binding promise.<sup>40</sup> On the initiative of PRIO leader Ole Kristian Holthe, a group of researchers, journalists and NGOs started an “idea group” in the immediate aftermath of the conference to follow up on the conference and contribute to forming an active Norwegian effort for the NIEO. This was done in dialogue with the well-connected Thorvald Stoltenberg, who had daily morning briefings with many of the researchers and journalists involved during the Nairobi conference and had wanted a consultation apparatus for a long time.<sup>41</sup> The first meeting of The Idea Group for the Follow-up of UNCTAD IV was held on June 17, 1976, only two weeks after UNCTAD IV, and could be seen as a continuation of the Nairobi morning briefings. Among those present were not just many of the researchers and journalists from the January meeting but also Stoltenberg and Martin Huslid from the MFA, who were in charge of the Norwegian NIEO policy and negotiations.<sup>42</sup> With financial support from the MFA to hire a secretary on a part-time basis, the idea group, which soon changed its name to The Idea Group for the New International Economic Order, became an organization. At its formation, the idea group became a member of The International Coalition for Development Action (ICDA) and gained an international cooperation network. ICDA’s headquarters close to UNCTAD in Genève provided the idea group with much information directly from the UNCTAD secretariat, and the coalition of Global South countries behind the NIEO demands.<sup>43</sup>

The rationale behind the group’s creation was multi-faceted. First, it was supposed to council and help form the Norwegian NIEO policy, as the active and “future-oriented” foreign policy Norway planned to carry out in the North-South negotiations would place “particularly high demands and expectations to abilities, capacity and new thinking” on this issue.<sup>44</sup> This informal role was based on the goodwill of Stoltenberg, and gave both the researchers and their contacts in the MFA a space to air and discuss ideas. This happened both through formal meetings, informal coffee meetings with the most active in the idea group at the house of Stoltenberg, in

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<sup>40</sup> For a discussion of this see Drolsum, “Realpolitikk og idealisme,” 100–109.

<sup>41</sup> Frydenlund, *En bedre organisert verden*, 255; Børrud, “Solidaritet og særinteresser,” 49–50.

<sup>42</sup> Among the researchers who was part of the idea group from the start was Helge Hveem, Erik Rudeng, Valter Angell, Tore Linne Eriksen, Olav Stokke, Ole Lundby, Martin Sæther, Tertitt Aasland, Arve Ofstad, Just Faaland and Ole Kristian Holthe. Because the geographical distance to Bergen limited their participation, the CMI researchers Ofstad and Faaland from 1977 stopped being members. Idegruppen Nord/Sør, *Saksarkiv – D- 0001*, “Korrespondanse 1976-1977.”

<sup>43</sup> Idegruppen Nord/Sør, *Saksarkiv - D – 0001*, “Søknader om støtte 1976-1977.”

<sup>44</sup> Idegruppen Nord/Sør, *Saksarkiv - D – 0001*, “Møtereferater 1976-78.”

the creation of different working groups and reports, and in the faxing of relevant articles directly to the “NIEO office” in the MFA. As Tamnes has claimed, the relationship between Norway and the Third World was the first area of foreign affairs where independent social scientists were drawn into the broader policy-making process. This made it a forerunner of a new development in the interaction between applied science and foreign policy.<sup>45</sup> In addition, another aim of the idea group was to be a forum for information transactions for the members and to distribute this information to get “the broadest possible support within public opinion.”<sup>46</sup> In minutes from the first meeting, it is stated that not getting the support and participation from *opinion-forming sectors* when executing the international reform policy would be “directly dangerous,” as it could lead to a “backlash both for the policy and those who today design it.”<sup>47</sup>

### **2.3. The Idea Group Network and its Influence**

With this role in pushing the debate about the NIEO in a particular direction, it should be mentioned that the goodwill of Stoltenberg that made up the basis of their existence was not just about getting good advice but because he needed a pressure group to help him with the sector politics within the MFA. While the so-called “NIEO office” of Stoltenberg and Huslid wholeheartedly worked for the approved NIEO policy from a reformist line, other sectors within the MFA were more critical. Especially the “shipping office,” which was more in line with the more powerful pressure group of The Norwegian Shipowner Association, was more antagonistic against both the NIEO and the “developing countries’ mafia in the MFA.”<sup>48</sup>

While this tight connection to official policy formation made some researchers positive to the Third World choose to stay out of the idea group, the coalition behind it still consisted of both pragmatic reformists and altruists, social democrats and radicals, who together worked for the world to move in the same general direction.<sup>49</sup> The connection to Stoltenberg and the pragmatic reformists in charge of the policy was certainly essential for the idea group’s role in setting the terms of the NIEO debate. The idea group’s attempt to sway public opinion might also have been helpful for those creating the policy, as it contributed to public support for the NIEO and, therefore, the official line. This does not mean that the idea group was an uncritical cheerleader. Throughout the period, it worked as a pusher for the principles of support to the NIEO lined out

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<sup>45</sup> Tamnes, *Oljealder 1965-1995*, 453.

<sup>46</sup> Idegruppen Nord/Sør, Saksarkiv - D - 0002-, “Søknader om støtte 1976-1977”; Stoltenberg, *Det handler om mennesker*, 155–56.

<sup>47</sup> Idegruppen Nord/Sør, Saksarkiv - D - 0001, “Møtereferater 1976-78”.

<sup>48</sup> This characterization comes from correspondence within The Norwegian Shipowner Association as quoted by Børrud. Børrud, “Solidaritet og særinteresser”, 50, 86-89; Frydenlund, *En bedre organisert verden*, 255.

<sup>49</sup> Hveem, “Norge - En vakkende reformist”; Hveem, “Norway.”

in the “NIEO white paper” but also as a watchdog who criticized both action and inaction on the subject.

The idea group’s influence on the public debate came in several ways. Firstly, the group was a forum for discussing and getting information about the NIEO. Through an information flow from their contacts in ICDA and international institutions, and from the research of the different researchers involved, one aim of the idea group was to distribute relevant information quickly. This happened through the redistribution of collected documents and articles to its members, meetings on particular subjects, and the distribution of the independent writings of its members. Critical was the building up of a large amount of media contacts who could communicate the information to a broader audience. In the beginning, information material was systematically distributed to scientists, journalists, and other media contact, and the idea group did things like organizing media seminars on the NIEO. In a few years, the membership lists of the group had grown its journalistic segments, with members and contacts from all major newspapers.<sup>50</sup> A run-through of different newspapers’ writings on the NIEO shows that these journalists connected to the idea group often were the ones holding the spark of discussion alive. The issues raised in articles often came from subjects discussed and raised in the idea group, and experts and actors from the idea group were prominent actors and interview objects in the papers.

In addition, the group quickly expanded its members beyond the twenty-five, primarily researchers, present at the first meeting. While a small group of researchers continued to make up the group’s core, by 1982, around 180 individual members participated to a varying degree.<sup>51</sup> Many of these had influential and prominent roles within civil society, public administration, and politics and can be viewed as *opinion-formers*. The idea group subsequently became a meeting place for many actors engaged in the issue. Through the group, a “developing countries’ coalition” of the Future in Our Hands, the Council on Ecumenical and International Relations of the Church of Norway (MKR), and all youth parties was formed and existed for some years.<sup>52</sup> This coalition of forces, with some political tensions between themselves on the issue of the NIEO, became an outspoken group on the NIEO and development policy, both individually and together. Press statements with critiques of Norwegian policy positions,

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<sup>50</sup> Idegruppen Nord/Sør, *Saksarkiv - D - 0002*, "Administrasjon/medlemslister 1978-1982".

<sup>51</sup> The membership lists included e.g. influential politicians such as Reiulf Steen, Kaci Kullmann Five, Arne Arnesen, Gunnar Garbo and Jakob Aano. Idegruppen Nord/Sør, *Saksarkiv - D - 0003*, "Styringsgruppa 1982".

<sup>52</sup> With the exception of The Progress Party's Youth and Red Youth (though members from Red Youth did participate in some meetings).

written by the idea group but signed by the organizations in this coalition, were several times distributed to the idea group's many media contacts.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to the many organized initiatives by the idea group pressing forward a discussion on the NIEO, the independent initiatives of the different individual members and their organization were essential for the idea group's impact. The various members, especially the researchers, carried out extensive communication activities to the public. They reached a broad audience by writing in many different forums - both academic and popular - being outspoken and visible in the media and having many lectures at varying gatherings on the subject. It is telling that almost all books written on the NIEO in Norway had individuals involved in the idea group behind them in some way.

As a 1982 master thesis examining attitudes on the NIEO put it, the concept was "marketed" from especially three sources: official documents, politicians, and researchers.<sup>54</sup> While the civil society organizations mobilizing for the NIEO around the country and the normative motivation of many journalists seem to suggest that reality was a bit more complicated, the researchers' visibility and influence seem broadly correct. The 1982 thesis does not discuss the researchers' indirect influence over the debate through the network of NGOs, journalists, state administrators, and politicians in the idea group, which suggest that their influence might have been even more omnipresent. It should also be mentioned that some experts and intellectuals were unaffiliated or peripherally connected to the idea group that participated in the debate. The idea group did not encompass the whole development research community but was certainly the most publicly visible and active part of it.

The aim of the idea group to obtain broad support for and bring attention to the NIEO in the public was seemingly successful. There was considerable discussion in the Norwegian public sphere, with the NIEO becoming a popular idea among the public, without the initially feared backlash emerging. Helge Ole Bergesen even claimed in 1981 that the public, in fact, was "more developing country friendly than the politicians on this" and that "Norway is probably the only country in the West where the parties compete to show the most 'developing countries friendly' profile ahead of an election."<sup>55</sup> The idea of the NIEO lived on in the public sphere long after it

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<sup>53</sup> Idegruppen Nord/Sør, *Saksarkiv - D - 0003*, "Korrespondanse 1981"; Idegruppen Nord/Sør, *Saksarkiv - D - 0003*, "Korrespondanse 1982."

<sup>54</sup> Nergård, "Norske eliter og ny økonomisk verdensordning.", 19.

<sup>55</sup> Bergesen, *Norge mellom rik og fattig*, 62–63; Whether Bergesen is correct is another subject. While there is little room to go into detail here, my own interpretation of the polling on the issue is that the NIEO definitely was well-known among the public and that there was some sympathy for the demands. However, the subject

was out of vogue in both international forums and other comparable states. As late as 1985, the broad political NIEO consensus still stood, and most political parties still included the NIEO as an important part of their political manifestos for the next four years, even as the *right wave* had washed over Norway's internal politics and deregulation and privatization dominated the domestic agenda.<sup>56</sup> Even though it is beyond the scope of this paper to make any certain conclusions about the idea group's influence, the longevity of discussion might at the very least partly be attributed to the tenacity of the idea group.<sup>57</sup>

#### **2.4. Chapter Conclusion**

For some time, the idea group and its members had a close connection to the official Norwegian policy creation and contributed to a wide-ranging debate in the Norwegian public about the NIEO. Through the network of the idea group and the extensive public communication that many of its members engaged in, their reach within the public sphere was large. This engagement happened with the structural encouragement from the Norwegian government and was in line with aims to create support for the official political position on the issue. The group's close relationship with the state and their support for the official aims of the "NIEO white paper" did not stop them from being independent and critical of state policy. Instead, their ideas were often at odds with the state's actions.

As the next chapter will show, the researchers who made up the idea group's core were not a monolith. While the debate was based on some common premises unique to this historical conjuncture, the coalition that participated in the idea group used this basis to discuss and promote a wide range of often-conflicting ideas of how the new order could look.

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was also perceived as difficult with many having inconsistent and ambiguous views, making Bergesen's claims seem somewhat exaggerated. See Nergård, "Norske eliter og ny økonomisk verdensordning"; Ringdal, *Folkemeininga og den tredje verda*.

<sup>56</sup> "Handlingsprogram for Kristelig Folkeparti 1985-89"; "Arbeidsprogram for Sosialistisk Venstreparti, 1985-1989"; "Arbeiderpartiets arbeidsprogram 1986-1989"; "Høyres partiprogram 1985/89"; "Senterpartiets valgprogram 1985 - 1989"; "Venstres valgprogram 1985 - 1989."

<sup>57</sup> The idea group had in the middle of the 1980s also some influence on policy and the momentum of discussion by pushing the concept of "the mini-NIEO", a selective and geographically limited realizing of the principles of the NIEO in deals between some progressive western countries and poorer developing countries. See Hveem, "'Selective North-South Approaches: A Room for Mini-NIEO?"; "Mini-NØV."



### Chapter 3. The Ideas of the Idea Group

Much of what researchers of the The Idea Group for the New International Economic Order wrote about the NIEO was about the stalling negotiations on commodity markets in UNCTAD. However, their writings also contained ambitious reimaginations of the international order beyond the actual negotiations and the shifting hopes surrounding these. This chapter will discuss the ideas and imaginations of the researchers of the idea group. As shown in the last chapter, this is important as the idea group had a structural role that made them influential in shaping public conceptions of the NIEO. However, the focus will not be on these influential experts' communication but on the discourse and ideas in themselves, separated from their societal impact. This will give an insight into the specialized debate the researchers engaged in. It will show that the “NIEO imaginary” made possible many ambitious suggestions to realize global redistribution by changing international economic structures among those “who made a living out of the world’s misery.”<sup>58</sup>

#### 3.1. The Old International Economic Order

There was considerable agreement in the expert community about the global development problems. After decades of developing countries trying to replicate the development of the industrialized countries, hunger and poverty were still widespread. In addition, inequality between the rich and poor countries had increased, instead of the poor countries catching up. This inequality between peoples and states, which the NIEO now addressed, was presented as a problem *in itself* in the discourse, not just because of the poverty that came with it.<sup>59</sup> When discussed explicitly, there was, in addition to a focus on its unfairness, a widespread view that the inequality created conflict and political instability and therefore was an unsustainable situation in international affairs.<sup>60</sup>

While these problems for a long time were explained by internal causes in the developing countries, the literature in the wake of the NIEO argued, often explicitly, against this previous view that they claimed saw poverty as a “deficiency disease.”<sup>61</sup> Instead, variants of dependency theory were the most important explanatory framework in the development research community at this time. These highlighted the structural position of developing countries in the world

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<sup>58</sup> Bergesen, “Bokspalte”, 107.

<sup>59</sup> Bergesen, *Fattig og rik i samme verden?*, 9; Jervell, *Vår velstand og vekst til debatt*, 25.

<sup>60</sup> Isachsen, “Økonomiske betraktninger omkring den nye økonomiske verdensordning”, 139; Lundby, “Utviklingslandenes plass i den fremtidige verdenshandel”, 2-3; Bergesen, “Verdikonservativ tenkning ved en skillevei”, 51.

<sup>61</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 16; Aasland, *Innledningsforedrag om nord-sør-problemene*, 3.

economy as hindering development, in contrast to “deficiencies” internally to the country. There were people within the idea group inspired by both more moderate and radical strands of these dependency explanations. The differing theories of the causes to the problems of the international system are important as they implicated wildly different solutions. In reality, the more radical and moderate dependency theories certainly overlapped, and many of the researchers in the debate drew inspiration from both.<sup>62</sup>

NUPI economist Valter Angell might illustrate the more moderate view. Angell coordinated the idea group for a time and was among the writers who featured most heavily in the public debate on the NIEO. He based his analysis mainly on traditional trade theory, comparative advantages, and neoclassical economics. Still, he concluded that the structures of world trade had created “what for many is the most severe international economic problem today,” global inequality.<sup>63</sup> This stemmed from an uneven growth rate of different regions and commodities in the old order and the “structures of some region’s exports.”<sup>64</sup> The commodities that had fallen behind were those that many developing countries were most reliant on, as “the growth in trade [of different commodities] was proportional to the commodity’s level of processing” in the 1960s.<sup>65</sup> In addition, the prices of these commodities were often unstable with declining terms of trade, which certainly did not provide the countries with a predictable income. The low share of the world trade and bad terms of trade of many developing countries had created the unevenness. He explained this with the fact that the system had been built on the premises of the rich Western countries and that the liberalization that did happen in the old system did not create equal terms of competitiveness in all commodities markets. While industrialized commodities had been liberalized in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the same had not happened with the raw materials that developing countries often exported.<sup>66</sup> Among the

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<sup>62</sup> Illustrating this is a course held by Just Faaland at the Norwegian School of Economics (NHH) about development economics in 1977, where he discussed the more liberal and moderate Prebisch, Singer and Söderberg in a lecture on the theory of development, but also dedicated a full lecture in the course exclusively to Samir Amin’s theory. While Faaland claimed that it was important to meet these new and more radical dependency theories with a “critical attitude”, they should also be taken seriously, as they could help create some important lasting ideas. See Faaland, Spjeldnæs, and Stenersen, *Utvikling av fattige land*.

<sup>63</sup> Angell, *Internasjonal økonomi*, 4.

<sup>64</sup> Angell, “Utviklingen av verdenshandelen etter 1945,” 32, 46.

<sup>65</sup> Angell, “Utviklingstendenser i internasjonal økonomisk politikk.”

<sup>66</sup> Angell did on many occasions also problematize the traditional trade theory, and while he was critical to the radical dependency theory, he did incorporate some of the characteristics of the more radical theory, such as the integration of some power analysis and historizing. He did also credit them for highlighting the dependency relation that had been created through trade, and how it was exploited by the strongest in bilateral relationships. See Angell, “Utviklingen av verdenshandelen etter 1945”, 40-41; Angell, “Mot en ny internasjonal økonomisk orden?”

researchers within the idea group, many developing countries being disadvantaged by the international trade structures seem to have been the lowest common denominator and mostly have been taken as a given.<sup>67</sup>

Built on many of the analyses of more moderate dependency theorists, the new and more radical dependency theory took the structural analysis of the problems further. For them, the old international order did not just create an uneven growth or hinder development; it actively created and perpetuated underdevelopment. Interestingly, the more radical explanations took a more visible form in the specialized writings than the moderate school.<sup>68</sup> While this strand of literature was based on kinship to a Marxist tradition, it was also embraced by people from most of the political spectrum within the idea group, with both social liberals such as Helge Hveem and Olav Stokke and conservatives such as Helge Ole Bergesen being swayed by *parts of* the radical theory.

One important feature was the focus on the historical context. The essence of this focus was encapsulated in a chapter title by Hveem, that “the underdevelopment has a prehistory.”<sup>69</sup> This history of underdevelopment especially highlighted the integration of the “conquered” areas into the capitalist world system, which happened violently through colonialism. This created the wealth of Europe through the exploitation of the south. After the end of formal empire, neo-colonialism followed in the “conquered” areas. This continued exploitation fueled the growth and development of the regions of the “conquerors,” linking the former's underdevelopment with the latter's wealth. These patterns of exploitation and this classic international division of labor have continued to perpetuate the unequal development of the core and periphery and put the “conquered” in an asymmetric relationship of dependency. It was not seen as a static relationship but as a process constantly creating development for the center and underdevelopment for the periphery. The dependence was not one of genuine interdependence, but according to Hveem, more like a dependence likening to the one between a “horseback rider

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<sup>67</sup> Jervell, *Vår velstand og vekst til debatt*, 13–14; Gulbrandsen and Løvbræk, *Råvarer og ny økonomisk verdensordning*, 4–6; However, outside of the idea group there seems to have been some disagreement. E.g. economics professor Preben Munthe problematized the idea of falling terms of trade. Munthe, “Verdenshandelen - Struktur og institusjoner,” 17–18.

<sup>68</sup> E.g. Østerud, *Utviklingsteori og historisk endring*; Eriksen, *Underutvikling*; Amin and Frank, *På vei mot 1984*; Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*; These theories did also meet critique. Within the idea group, especially Angell criticized them. Outside of the idea group the economic historian Tore Hanisch polemically stated in a book review of Hveem that these explanations “should not be taken seriously anymore in serious research millieus” and argued that an export driven strategy was not a problem within the current order. See Hanisch, “Helge Hveem om økonomisk utvikling.”

<sup>69</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 16; Gulbrandsen and Løvbræk, *Råvarer og ny økonomisk verdensordning*, 3.

and a horse,” where the first dictates the path of the other.<sup>70</sup> This explanation of underdevelopment as being connected to the wealth of Europe also made the basis for moral argumentations of the rich countries’ responsibility towards the poverty of the Global South.<sup>71</sup>

While the great innovation in dependency theory vis-à-vis earlier development theory was its focus on external structures, not just as a positive help for development but as an obstacle, this did not mean that a focus on inner state structures disappeared. While many claimed that the international structures influenced the internal state structures, the state was still given some agency in the development process. While inequality between states was the center of focus, it was also noted that there were huge inequalities within states.<sup>72</sup> This was not seen just as a result of the international structures but also of power relations within states, where many elites “primarily are busy with themselves.”<sup>73</sup> While these internal problems were highlighted, the radicals also diligently pointed out their origins in colonial history.<sup>74</sup> Some researchers with a more moderate disposition also pointed out that some developing countries had managed to develop through an export-oriented strategy, setting some questions with the determinism implicit in some of the more radical explanations.<sup>75</sup>

In addition to these explanations of underdevelopment, some also contrasted the underdevelopment of the developing countries with its counterpart, the overdevelopment of the industrialized countries. This was put in the context of perceived natural limits to the economy, a popular framework in the aftermath of the Club of Rome’s influential study of *The Limits to Growth*. Some saw this as a secondary issue that would not be a pressing problem in the near future. However, some, especially Hveem and Bergesen, took it more seriously. They drew on an international discourse that connected the problems of development and environment and argued that it was the overdeveloped society that caused both.<sup>76</sup> By occupying resources, others’ possibilities for development, and the whole workforce of international society for its consumption, it directly caused resource waste, rising inequality and suffering, abuse of power,

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<sup>70</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 14; Jervell, *Vår velstand og vekst til debatt*, 11-17.

<sup>71</sup> Isachsen, “Økonomiske betraktninger omkring den nye økonomiske verdensordning,” 138.

<sup>72</sup> Angell, “Administrasjon av priser og råmarkeder i råvaresektoren”, 8; Stokke, *En ny økonomisk verdensordning*, 70-73.

<sup>73</sup> Underdal, “Utvikling gjennom markedsmakt.”

<sup>74</sup> Eriksen, “Ytre avhengighet og indre hindringer for utvikling.”

<sup>75</sup> Stokke, *En ny økonomisk verdensordning*, 70-71.

<sup>76</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*; Bergesen, *Fattig og rik i samme verden?*; Poleszynski, “Norden og den nye økonomiske verdensordning”; For some of the discussion about this in international forums, see e.g. “The Cocoyoc Declaration”, *What Now?* and Tinbergen et al., *Reshaping the International Order*.

and exploitation. In addition, it was not even good for the people living in it. On ecological, societal, and individual levels, the economic growth that came within the overdeveloped society reduced the life quality of its inhabitants.<sup>77</sup>

### **3.2. Visions of the New Order**

With a common diagnosis of global inequality and poverty as a symptom, though with some differences in the underlying disease causing it, the cure laid out by the states of the Third World of the NIEO was interpreted as a positive by most researchers. However, there were also many critiques of the Third World's demands and visions of different new international orders. While the concrete demands often were dealt with *as is*, the accompanying "NIEO imaginary" also created the space for other ambitious reimaginings of the structures of the international order.

As the NIEO consisted of numerous reforms that went in several directions and touched on different aspects of the international economic and political structure, many underlined the importance of seeing it as a package. The individual demands such as bettering the terms of trade or giving more voting power to Third World countries in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) did not in itself have any real transformative effect, but put together it could have a large impact. In addition, the demands were seemingly interpreted more as part of a process "that can be driven further by its own weight" rather than demands which signaled an endpoint.<sup>78</sup>

Different researchers put different weight on various aspects of this package and process. Still, the interpretation of the effect and goal of the NIEO was similar in the expert discourse throughout the period. Bergesen explicitly called it a "radical redistribution both of economic goods and political power."<sup>79</sup> Hveem called it "changes in the power relations in the world to the developing countries' benefit."<sup>80</sup> The aim was not just more regulation of the international economy to achieve development, unconnected from the world's distributional inequities of power and wealth. Instead, the NIEO was interpreted as a project for redistributing power and wealth from the Global North to the Global South.<sup>81</sup> A normative commitment to this interpreted aim was a common feature of the whole idea group. To a large degree, this was also the criterion

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<sup>77</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 40-46.

<sup>78</sup> Jervell, "Debattinnlegg", 19; Sæter, "Konfliktforhold i tilknytning til en ny internasjonal økonomisk ordning", 6; Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 9-10; Aasland, "Debattinnlegg", 19.

<sup>79</sup> Bergesen, *Norge mellom rik og fattig*, 16.

<sup>80</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 13.

<sup>81</sup> Sæter, "Konfliktforhold i tilknytning til en ny internasjonal økonomisk ordning", 3-6; Underdal, "Debattinnlegg", 25.

the NIEO was evaluated on, with its critics claiming that it did not fulfill these hopes of redistribution. The distributional aspiration was one of equality.

In the interpretations of the NIEO and especially in the argumentation for it, a typical framing of the NIEO was as an extension of the Norwegian political system. Several researchers pointed out that a libertarian market economy without any distributional considerations was not accepted domestically; here, political considerations of distributional justice were seen as more important. They argued that the same considerations should guide the international economy, as there in principle was no difference between these levels. Martin Sæter called the NIEO a “global welfare policy”.<sup>82</sup> Arve Ofstad claimed that the measures suggested and the argumentation to organize and control the markets were “very parallel” to the politics of Scandinavian social democracy. While he recognized that the comparison had some faults in other regards, he claimed the NIEO still could be characterized as a “social democratic international order.”<sup>83</sup> Angell explicitly said that Norway should see it as a “natural task” to work for more equality between “the type of governing we have nationally and the one that is going to regulate the world economy”, and claimed, “most of the discussed elements of a new international economic order are also well-known in Norwegian politics.”<sup>84</sup> The NIEO became in these analogies a globalization of the existing egalitarian aspirations of the nation-state.

Some also compared the Third World countries to the historical working class of Europe. Both were an exploited and resource weak underclass which tried to improve their position by getting more influence in the governing bodies and demanding justice. All who made this comparison also made disclaimers, as the developing countries did not have the same power that came from strikes nor any comparative authority to the democratic state to address their demands.<sup>85</sup> Still, the frequent mention of this comparison might be read both as a moral justification of the Third World’s demands and a belief that the imperative for change was latent in the material conditions and would have staying power even as the concrete negotiations halted.

### **3.2.1. The NIEO as it was laid out**

The demands of the NIEO were, to some degree, inconsistent. In both the actual demands and the Norwegian debate, we can find two conflicting strategies of how the new order should improve the conditions of the developing countries: Integration and self-reliance. Many of the

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<sup>82</sup> Sæter, “Konfliktforhold i tilknytning til en ny internasjonal økonomisk ordning,” 3.

<sup>83</sup> Ofstad, “En ny økonomisk verdensordning,” 15.

<sup>84</sup> Angell, “Etter UNCTAD IV,” 20.

<sup>85</sup> Bergesen, *Norge mellom rik og fattig*, 91–92.

concrete demands aimed to improve the terms that the developing countries participated on in the world economy, and therefore implicitly signaled continued integration into the system of world trade. However, part of the NIEO was also to move away from the dependence on, and ‘interdependence’ with, the rich First World countries and instead pursue a strategy of self-reliance and collective self-reliance within the Third World. The difference and tension between these strategies stemmed from political differences within the Third World coalition. While many of the demands from the start were seemingly targeted at self-reliance, the actual negotiations, which were quite modest compared to the demands, after 1975 moved into measures aimed at continued integration into the western market economy system, though on better terms than previously. However, in the Norwegian debate, both strategies were established as premises for the differing visions of a new order.<sup>86</sup>

The integrationist part of the Third World’s demands was, in some ways, to continue liberalization of the aspects of the international economic system that benefitted them and, in some ways, to change the libertarian system where it disadvantaged them.<sup>87</sup> A significant way the current order was detrimental to their interest was the issue of export prices for raw materials. Subsequently, much of the discussion on the NIEO focused on commodity prices, with especially negotiations on *the integrated program for commodities* and a *common fund* being central. This program encompassed 18 different primary products that the Third World were leading exporters of, intending to control the flow of these commodities and, in turn, stabilize and increase their value.<sup>88</sup> While this was in line with the aims of redistribution through trade, the concrete measures were criticized by members of the idea group for not fulfilling this. In two contributions in response to Norway’s chief negotiator Martin Huslid in the wake of UNCTAD IV in 1976, Ole Kristian Holthe and Valter Angell criticized the negotiated program for not contributing sufficiently to redistribution in the international system. While they agreed that it could stabilize incomes, this was judged as insufficient. Holthe claimed that a “[p]assive common fund with price stabilization as the only goal, will only serve the old order’s economic interest groups.”<sup>89</sup> Necessary for the new rules and institutions were instead to secure a systematic increase of the value of the products and services of the Third World. Angell similarly claimed that stable prices were important, but to get redistribution, there was a need for increased export incomes. “An integrated program without this element will be a

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<sup>86</sup> Ofstad, “En ny økonomisk verdensordning,” 17; Stokke, *Norge og den tredje verden*, 30–31.

<sup>87</sup> Isaksen, “Norsk teko-industri”, 2.

<sup>88</sup> Gulbrandsen and Løvbræk, *Råvarer og ny økonomisk verdensordning*.

<sup>89</sup> Holthe, “Etter UNCTAD IV,” 12–13.

continuation of the old order, yes, not even that.”<sup>90</sup> Three years later, Stokke stated, after the negotiations on the integrated commodity program and the common fund had been dragged out (and watered down) for a longer time, that it was “more suited to stabilizing existing prices and production patterns than to raise prices and to break up patterns of production and trade that have worked against the states of the Third World.”<sup>91</sup>

With this critique of the main focus of the negotiations, the positive vision that these idea group members envisioned encompassed higher prices to the commodity producers, with an openness to how to achieve it. For Angell’s neoclassical framework, these “economically too high” prices would create inefficiencies in the market, but “a lot seems to suggest that it must be accepted inefficiency in production to achieve a politically acceptable distribution.”<sup>92</sup> Another measure suggested by the G-77 to get higher prices for their exports was indexation, a linking of the price development of raw materials to the price development of manufactured goods. This was rejected by most western countries, including Norway, whose critique of it was primarily technical. Hveem recognized the practical and political problems with indexation but questioned whether there was any way “outside it if one wants to maintain the international trade system.”<sup>93</sup>

However, obtaining higher prices for raw materials was not seen as the only thing needed in the new order. Stokke claimed that higher prices for their raw material exports might positively affect many Third World countries but still was not the most crucial part of achieving economic redistribution. More important was to change the whole international division of labor.<sup>94</sup> Based on the analysis that the structural position as raw material exporters disadvantaged the Third World countries, the aim was not just to get better prices for their raw material exports but also to get a larger share of the industrial production. As quantified at the United Nations Industrial Development Organization’s conference in Lima in 1975, a significant demand was for developing countries to account for 25% of the world’s production of manufactured and semi-manufactured products by the year 2000.<sup>95</sup>

The way to achieve this was, in some ways, the opposite of the raw material exports. Stokke claimed that to promote redistribution there was also a need for liberalization of the

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<sup>90</sup> Angell, “Etter UNCTAD IV,” 19.

<sup>91</sup> Stokke, *Norge og den tredje verden*, 26-27.

<sup>92</sup> Angell, “Utviklingen av verdenshandelen etter 1945”, 46.

<sup>93</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 108-109.

<sup>94</sup> Stokke, *Norge og den tredje verden*, 88-89.

<sup>95</sup> Stokke, *En ny økonomisk verdensordning*, 30.



international economy, especially to give Third World producers better access to the First World markets “where the trade barriers increase with the degree of processing.” In addition, developed countries needed to actively contribute to industrialization through technology transfers and *structurally adjusting* their internal economies. For this industrialization to contribute to redistribution, it was necessary to secure a larger share of the export income for the exporting states rather than the transnational corporations (TNCs). Doing this required that the Third World states engaged more actively in the production and marketing processes.<sup>96</sup>

While there was broad agreement on the need for industrialization in the Global South and liberalization of market access in the Global North, there were disagreements among the experts on the shape of this industrialization and the new division of labor.<sup>97</sup> The economists Angell and Arne Jon Isachsen both stated that through specialization in the most labor-intensive parts of the industry, the least profitable and well-paying sectors of the industrialized countries, could the developing countries use their comparative advantage to increase their share of industrial production and global income.<sup>98</sup> However, this notion was criticized by Hveem, who pointed out that this would still provide the developed countries with the upper hand in the international economy by having the most capital demanding and technology-intensive industry in the new international division of labor. There was a danger that industrialization and processing on the “profit-oriented foreign interests’ premises” would contribute to continued underdevelopment. Still, he agreed that *some* export-oriented industrialization could increase export and wage incomes, and the spread of knowledge and technology. But this industrialization still needed to happen in a way that subordinated this interaction with industrialized countries to an independent development aimed at fulfilling the local populations’ own needs.<sup>99</sup> To do this, he argued for the importance of controlling the TNCs. This had been part of the NIEO demands, through the state’s right to nationalization and a ‘code of conduct’ for the TNCs, but had been increasingly tuned down as the negotiations progressed. Even though some, such as Angell, were more doubtful, many in the idea group put much weight on the TNCs’ role and the need for countries to industrialize on their own premises and for their own needs.

Though the slogan of the NIEO program famously was “trade not aid,” the demands also contained more direct forms of resource transfers. Both debt forgiveness and increased,

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<sup>96</sup> Stokke, *Norge og den tredje verden*, 88-89.

<sup>97</sup> E.g. Isachsen, “Økonomiske betraktninger omkring den nye økonomiske verdensordning,” 127-35.

<sup>98</sup> Angell, “Debattinnlegg”; Isachsen, “Norges handel med u-land - en analyse og et forslag.”

<sup>99</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 94, 171-174.

depoliticized, and more automatic development aid was part of the Third World's demands. However, this was less discussed among the idea group, with structural changes being the main focus of debate. But as Stokke claimed in 1979, the NIEO did not mean the end of development aid. It was still a qualitatively better mechanism for resource transfers, which could reach those who gained the least from the NIEO changes.<sup>100</sup>

In addition to the different measures envisioned to reduce international inequalities, another important aspect was to transfer political power to the Third World. Part of this increase in power would happen through the redistribution of wealth and an increased share of production, which by itself would change the power relations. The demands also included measures to increase the political power of the Third World within the IMF and the World Bank and, in that way, have increased influence over the international monetary policy. For Hveem, this monetary policy change could give more and more automatic access to credit, but most importantly, liberate the developing countries from the dependency that resulted from the pressure from industrial countries and "their finance institutions" to add political and economic terms to credit infusions. Independent of these pressures, the countries could better decide their development path, with decisions more grounded in their interests.<sup>101</sup>

### **3.2.2. The Critique**

While nobody in the discourse or the idea group was fully content with everything 'the package' of the NIEO encompassed, most contributions to the discussion seemed to come from a premise that the change implied by the NIEO demands was positive. However, it did meet some more fundamental critiques from development experts on the radical left as the discussion progressed. These critiques were not caused by a significant difference in the analysis of the injustice of the current system but because they did not see the NIEO as meaningfully solving the problems. Samir Amin and Andre Gunder Frank's critiques of the NIEO were certainly an inspiration here, with a translation of their work to Norwegian in an anthology of articles with a preface from Johan Galtung in 1979. Though the demands of the NIEO were partly based on their Marxist diagnosis of dependency, the solution's articulation within a liberal political economy caused Amin and Frank to be critical. The integration would only entail an internationalization of capitalism where the new bourgeoisie in the developing countries could reproduce what the bourgeoisie of the developed countries already enjoyed. The result would be an even larger part of the world being put under the logic of capitalism. The part of the critique with the most

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<sup>100</sup> Stokke, *Norge og den tredje verden*, 167–70.

<sup>101</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 139.

resonance outside the radical left was the pointing out how the change and redistribution within the new order only were *between* states, with no mechanisms for distributing the increased profits *within* the states.<sup>102</sup>

Many in the debate underlined this last point. The radical historian Tore Linné Eriksen, who was part of the idea group for some time, expressed in 1978 that the few measures in the NIEO that carried with them a hope of redistributing the “goods of world society,” such as nationalization and constraining the powers of TNCs, was quickly watered down in the actual negotiations. For him, national liberation from foreign domination was certainly necessary to break out of underdevelopment. Still, without profoundly changing the power and property relationships inside most developing countries, the gains of reforming the international system would not reach those who needed it the most. In addition, without this happening first, there was no guarantee that the current elites of the developing countries would do anything to fight for a radical restructuring of the world economy.<sup>103</sup>

A similar critique was made by the Danish professor Knud Erik Svendsen in the Norwegian journal for development studies *Forum for utviklingsstudier* in 1978. He added that in addition to not reaching the poorest within states, it would not benefit the poorest states. The reform of the system would only benefit the middle-income countries within the developing countries coalition, as these were the countries that were ready to capitalize on the new exporting opportunities.<sup>104</sup>

In a reply to Svendsen, NUPI researcher and idea group member Tertit Aasland addressed all these points of critique of the NIEO demands. She agreed with Svendsen that the demands favored middle-income countries and attributed this to the package of demands being a result of the different interests and power relationships between the states. She also accepted that there was no guarantee that the change in the system would better the situation for the poorest, as the change affected the relationship between states. However, this was for her not a good enough reason to reject them, as the measures would give more redistribution than in the current order, improve the position of the developing countries in relation to the developed countries and change some of the framework that hindered development under the current system. Even if you thought the developing countries’ integration into the international economic system had not been to their benefit nor saw integration as a good solution, she argued that you would have

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<sup>102</sup> Amin and Frank, *På vei mot 1984*.

<sup>103</sup> Eriksen, “Ytre avhengighet og indre hindringer for utvikling.”

<sup>104</sup> Svendsen, “En ny økonomisk verdensorden: Myter og virkelighet.”

to contend that to the degree developing countries do participate in international trade, they should do it on better terms.<sup>105</sup>

All expert participants in the idea group seemingly acknowledged the flaws and limitations pointed out by these critics, with the NIEO not being seen as a solution to all problems of the old order. Instead, many of the visions and ideas had a *yes, and* approach to the NIEO. The NIEO was accepted as limited as it was, but through imagining it together with ideas drawn on from alternative development discourses, other more comprehensive visions of the new order more in line with the underlying aim of global redistribution were imagined.

### **3.2.3. Alternative Development Strategies**

The *yes, and* approach to the NIEO in the writings were based on the limitations acknowledged about the NIEO as it was laid out and a varying degree of skepticism about a trade and export-driven development model. Especially three aspects of alternative development strategies were prominently part of the different visions of the NIEO: Basic needs, self-reliance, and ecologically sound development. In the writings, they were brought together and were seen as complementing the flaws of the NIEO. These strategies were often vaguely laid out and seemingly laden with different definitions and uses, but neither was seen as contradicting the NIEO.<sup>106</sup>

#### *Basic Needs*

Simultaneously as the NIEO was much discussed in international forums, another shift in global development thinking occurred. From 1975 to 1977, basic needs “took the United Nations system by storm” and became a much-discussed development strategy there. While the concept was vaguely and differently defined, it signaled a shift from prioritizing national growth toward reaching individuals directly with their needs.<sup>107</sup> As many actors in the discourse pointed out, the basic needs strategy was used cynically by some western countries opposed to the NIEO in order to prioritize internal rather than structural changes.<sup>108</sup> However, the way basic needs were used in the Norwegian discourse, it was seen as complementing the structural changes. Stokke pointed out that there was no necessary contradiction between the two strategies and that basic needs could heal some of the flaws of the NIEO. If redistribution were the point, then basic needs would help further redistribute wealth to the poorest nations and the poorest within

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<sup>105</sup> Aasland, “Debattinnlegg.”

<sup>106</sup> These alternative development strategies stemmed from a rich international discourse. For a good account of these and their intersection with the NIEO, see Nemchenok, “A Dialogue of Power.”

<sup>107</sup> Moyn, *Not Enough*, 129–33; Unger, *International Development*, 140.

<sup>108</sup> Stokke, *En ny økonomisk verdensordning*, 73-74.

nations.<sup>109</sup> The same view was laid out by Bergesen, who in his 1981 book *Norge mellom rik og fattig* argued that basic needs needed to be the focus of foreign aid and that the developing countries should be pressed to prioritize this internally as part of the NIEO negotiations. This would make sure that a new order would benefit the poorest.<sup>110</sup> There was seemingly broad agreement that the Third World countries needed to have this prioritization in their development activities. Still, only Bergesen argued that it had to be a condition for the NIEO.<sup>111</sup>

One of the more ambitious proposals from the Norwegian development community was presented by Ole David Koht Norbye. While not using the term basic needs, his approach and aims were similar. In a paper written in 1976 before UNCTAD IV in Nairobi, but which was circulated in the idea group one year later, he rejected the demands put forward in the UN as “too modest” and on the familiar ground that they only affected the relationship between states. His suggestion was instead a global welfare program through the UN. By requiring the rich countries to make compulsory payments to the UN of 3-4% of their GNP, there would be enough funds to finance a large variety of welfare programs such as free schooling, libraries, and health stations. These could more easily be targeted at poor states and people, especially in rural areas, and would better equalize the wealth disparities of the world. They would raise living standards directly and give villages a new flow of income through wages for those running the welfare programs.<sup>112</sup>

### *Self-Reliance*

Another prominent development strategy in the Norwegian discourse was self-reliance, which had been part of the Third World rhetoric but downplayed in practice. With predecessors in strategies of import substitution industrialization in the 1950s and 1960s, the new aspects of the self-reliance strategy were the emphasis on production to cover the needs of the locals instead of competing in and targeting the demand of the international market.

While it differed from the dominant strategy of the Third World countries of export-driven development, it was in the discourse not seen as contradicting the NIEO changes of the trade system and its redistribution of wealth and power.<sup>113</sup> While the trade and export-driven strategy had some adherents, such as Angell, a more self-reliant development strategy was also popular

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<sup>109</sup> Stokke, *Norge og den tredje verden*, 159.

<sup>110</sup> Bergesen, *Norge mellom rik og fattig*, 108.

<sup>111</sup> Gulbrandsen and Løvbræk, *Råvarer og ny økonomisk verdensordning*, 2.

<sup>112</sup> Koht Nordbye, “Mer vidtgående forslag til en ny internasjonal økonomisk ordning.”

<sup>113</sup> Aasland, “Debattinnlegg”, 22; Jervell, *Vår velstand og vekst til debatt*, 41; Gulbrandsen and Løvbræk, *Råvarer og ny økonomisk verdensordning*, 2.

in the idea group. One comprehensive vision of this self-reliant development strategy with the NIEO was presented by Hveem in his 1977 book *Ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*. He drew inspiration from different international reports and rejected visions of free trade and Ricardian comparative advantage.<sup>114</sup> In his positive development strategy, local societies should instead produce for their own needs first and be self-reliant on basic needs *before* engaging with the international system. This was crucial to get away from the dependency relations of the international system. “The periphery, the poor developing countries, must become their own center.” Only then could trade and a genuine interdependence happen on equal terms.<sup>115</sup>

When imagining a new order based on this principle, he differentiated between four levels of interaction. The first level of local society was the most important, and basic needs should be fulfilled here as far as possible. Developmental measures that demanded the mobilization of significant resources, equalization of the access to resources within and between local society and different segments of society, conflict solution internally, and safety externally made national coordination also necessary. Some measures were so resource-demanding that they would require regional cooperation, such as developing industries where the national market is too small to support industrialization. Only in the last circle was the discussion of the NIEO coming into question; it was here essential to have international regulations of issues of global character.<sup>116</sup>

This, and other visions of self-reliance present in the writings of the idea group, had implications for the distributional aspirations they associated with. While all those who argued for this had egalitarian distributional aspirations, their visions of self-reliance relied on a decentralized distribution of power and wealth. The question of distribution was a “reflex of the main problem”, the lack of control and participation in production.<sup>117</sup> Hveem claimed that international measures would be needed for “a transitional period” to redistribute and help nurture development, but plainly stated that “they must create development for themselves, it can never be given”.<sup>118</sup> How this development would happen must be up to the local

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<sup>114</sup> He explicitly references the UNEP and UNCTAD sponsored Cocoyoc symposium and the report *What now?* from the Dag Hammarskjöld foundation, which both laid out similar visions. See “The Cocoyoc Declaration”; *What now?*; Nemchenok, “A Dialogue of Power”, 155-232.

<sup>115</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*.

<sup>116</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 145-147.

<sup>117</sup> Hveem talks specifically about food in this quote, but it can be extrapolated to the broader distributional aspirations of his vision. Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 153-54.

<sup>118</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 11, 147.

communities. What the international community could do for development was instead to remove all structural obstacles to this.<sup>119</sup>

#### *Ecologically Sound Development*

While the Third World countries put no weight on the idea of ecological limits in their demands but instead seemed to put indefinite economic growth as a premise, the idea of ecologically sound development and natural limits was undoubtedly part of the Norwegian specialist discourse on the NIEO.<sup>120</sup> That a limited number of resources had to be distributed more equally made many argue that this had to affect the material wealth of rich countries. Bergesen and Underdal stated that the international society needed to put “upper limits” on how large the consumption of societies can be, as “‘the cake’ that is going to be shared cannot grow indefinitely.”<sup>121</sup> Poleszynski argued that “the rich and poor countries could meet on the golden middle way between overdevelopment and underdevelopment.”<sup>122</sup> Hveem similarly claimed there are enough resources for the whole world to live a *good enough* life, but not for everyone to live *the American lifestyle*. For him, the prevailing resource use in developing countries to export instead of fulfilling their own basic needs created this waste and overexploitation of resources. Therefore, his focus on self-reliance and basic needs would solve this and make a more sound ecological development.<sup>123</sup>

### **3.3. Consequences for Norway**

However, these many discussions on the NIEO were not solely about the abstract international order but often happened in connection to what Norway’s place in the order should be. A common and striking feature in the writings of the idea group was that they consistently pushed for Norway to take an active role in creating the NIEO instead of waiting for the new order to materialize automatically.<sup>124</sup> The different writers recognized that Norway was a small state with minor influence on its own. The NIEO’s success depended on the largest western powers, but they still contended that this “cannot be an excuse for inaction.”<sup>125</sup> Instead, Norway should push for their ideals in the negotiation, and act according to them in domestic policy. Bergesen even stated that there was a “missionary heritage in our [Norway’s] national character” and

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<sup>119</sup> Several members of the idea group had similar views on self-reliance, See Jervell, *Vår velstand og vekst til debatt*; Poleszynski, “Norden og den nye økonomiske verdensordning”; Bergesen, *Fattig og rik i samme verden?*

<sup>120</sup> Macekura, *The Mismeasure of Progress*, 128–32.

<sup>121</sup> Underdal and Bergesen, “Felles løsninger på felles problemer”, 50.

<sup>122</sup> Poleszynski, “Norden og den nye økonomiske verdensordning,” 146.

<sup>123</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 143.

<sup>124</sup> E.g. Hanssen, “Ny økonomisk verdensordning.”

<sup>125</sup> Bergesen, *Norge mellom rik og fattig*, 103.

claimed in 1981 that Norway should keep these ideals to continue to advocate for the NIEO, even as its prospects were bleak.<sup>126</sup> The focus on action in domestic policy seemed to stem from a view that “the necessary reforms must come from within the rich societies themselves.”<sup>127</sup> While there might have been a pessimism of the intellect of the possibilities to realize the NIEO, there was at least an optimism of the will.

### **3.3.1. Bettering the Terms of Trade**

An important aim of their vision of the NIEO was, as we have seen, to better the terms of trade of the Third World. However, while the government favored bettering the terms of trade through multilateral agreements on the condition that there was an international agreement for it, the experts of the idea group advocated a more action-oriented approach. Holthe, Angell, Hveem, and Bergesen, who all coordinated the idea group at different times, pointed out that Norway could better the terms of trade on their imports from the Third World unilaterally without waiting for international agreements. However, no one thought Norway improving the terms of trade in itself would have much impact on their incomes. A problem with Norway’s trade with the Third World was that it was too small, so an important aspect would also be to open up the markets and increase the import of Third World goods.<sup>128</sup> However, the small trade could make it relatively easier to take on the commitments, and it should therefore “be no excuse” not to do so right away.<sup>129</sup> The argumentation for Norway to take this role was that it would represent a consistent political approach and have a symbolic effect that could influence the negotiations. Hveem also mentioned that Norway should team up with all sympathetic western countries to better the terms of trade.<sup>130</sup>

That Norway should take this and other measures that might have negative economic impacts domestically was often justified by reference to Norway’s wealth. With the newfound oil riches, there was a self-awareness in the discourse of the potential abundance that came with this. As the divide between the rich and poor countries grew, Norway “is advancing into the top tier of the richest countries in the world.”<sup>131</sup> Norway’s role as part of a “rich minority living in abundance” simultaneously as “a large part of the world’s population has material suffering”

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<sup>126</sup> Bergesen, *Norge mellom rik og fattig*, 123-124.

<sup>127</sup> Bergesen, “Bokanmeldelse”, 265.

<sup>128</sup> Isachsen, “Norges handel med u-land - en analyse og et forslag.”

<sup>129</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 168.

<sup>130</sup> Holthe, “Debattinnlegg”; Angell, “Debattinnlegg”; Bergesen, *Vesten og u-landene*, 39-41; Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 110-111.

<sup>131</sup> Ofstad, “En ny økonomisk verdensordning,” 8.



created a moral appeal for redistribution.<sup>132</sup> In addition, the new and overwhelming wealth meant that Norway “could afford to experiment” and “meet the challenge.”<sup>133</sup> As Hveem stated in 1977:

The forecasts say that we are becoming the world’s ‘richest’ nation. We have a relatively enlightened and democratic political system and a relatively equalized society, socially and economically. Therefore, it should be possible to contribute to the sacrifices that a new international economic order demands from us.<sup>134</sup>

### **3.3.2. Industrial Restructuring**

Another way that rich Norway could and should adapt to the NIEO was through an increase in imports from southern countries, which were low compared to that of other northern countries. The opening up of the domestic market was also much discussed in connection with the NIEO and the new division of labor. In addition, it created a discussion regarding if and how adaption to the NIEO would impact domestic business interests and how it would necessitate an industrial restructuring. Here the clash seems to have been between those who argued for the vision of collective self-reliance and those who argued for continued integration based on comparative advantages. As the export-driven development model was the one the NIEO provided the basis for, it was broadly acknowledged that an essential part of the NIEO’s implementation would mean that commodities from developing countries would take a larger share of the market and that domestic industries subsequently would meet more competition. To adapt to the new division of labor, where developing countries were supposed to have at least 25% of industrial production, there was much debate about how Norway should concede an industrial restructuring.

In particular, the textile and ready-made garment (teko) industry was much debated. Jan Isaksen called the teko industry a “touchstone” for Norway’s attitude to the NIEO in a 1976 paper in *Forum for utviklingsstudier*. As it was a labor-intensive industry low-wage countries could have comparative advantages in; Isaksen saw moving the production to developing countries as happening automatically in a situation of free competition. As the industry only survived through subsidies and protectionism, he argued that it needed to be closed down for Norway to fulfill its commitment to the NIEO and the new division of labor. He also saw it in a long-term view of the NIEO, where this process of industrial restructuring would be the mechanism that

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<sup>132</sup> Isaksen, “Økonomiske betraktninger omkring den nye økonomiske verdensordning,” 138.

<sup>133</sup> Isaksen, “Norsk teko-industri,” 16; Angell, “Debattinnlegg,” 19.

<sup>134</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 161.

would create a new division of labor. This made the teko industry “an important case study” that could create valuable practical experiences and maybe even spark the international process. What separates Isaksen’s vision from the later globalization-driven industrial restructurings that did happen a few decades later is that he argued for the importance of sharing the burden throughout the whole society so that the teko workers did not have to bear the entire burden. As Norway was a “rich country that is getting richer,” it could afford to experiment with how best to do these structural adjustments.<sup>135</sup>

This suggestion of sharing the burden throughout the whole society was also part of the NIEO demands from the Third World, as they saw that not meeting too much resistance from the populations within the rich countries was essential. This was also part of government policy and supported by the whole idea group. Angell claimed that shared over the entire society, the burden caused by the industrial restructuring was “manageable,” but admitted that it was something else for it to be accepted politically.<sup>136</sup>

Isachsen argued similarly to Isaksen for the necessity of letting developing countries get their fair share of production in the teko industry. This would create “faster economic growth” for these countries and an international specialization guided by comparative advantages. He argued that this could benefit Norway in the long run, as restructuring resources to more productive sectors could contribute to higher economic growth also for Norway. The teko industry’s problems were more because of the import from EC and EFTA countries, not from the “low cost” developing countries that only had a 10% market share. But because Norway had free trade agreements with these trade partners, that could not be changed. Therefore, developing countries had paid the price, with their exports being limited by trade quotas. This had to be removed, and subsidies could instead protect the domestic industry. The developing countries could then increase their market share at the expense of developed countries simultaneously as the domestic industry could continue.<sup>137</sup>

Hveem agreed that there should be an industrial restructuring, but his normative framework of self-reliance on basic needs instead of maximizing trade made his thoughts on the shape of the restructuring differ. He argued that if the developing countries only took over the low-productive industries, like the teko industry, it would maintain the existing international order

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<sup>135</sup> Isaksen, “Norsk Teko-Industri”; Isaksen was not part of the idea group but illustrate similar visions of industrial restructuring were also argued by idea group members such as Holthe, “Oppfølging av UNCTAD IV,” 132; Angell, “Debattinnlegg,” 19; Hanssen, “Ny økonomisk verdensordning,” 105.

<sup>136</sup> Angell, “Debattinnlegg”, 19; Gulbrandsen and Løvbræk, *Råvarer og ny økonomisk verdensordning*, 26.

<sup>137</sup> Isachsen, “Norges handel med u-land - en analyse og et forslag.”

and hierarchies. Norwegian industrial policy should not be based on profitability and having the more capital demanding and technology-intensive industry as Norway's natural share of a new international division of labor. Instead, Norway should use other, broader criteria of "societal benefit" or "development effect" to decide its industrial faith, and restructure its economy to be self-reliant within the global system. This meant that the teko industry should be kept. This was because it was green, would be part of his vision of global self-reliance and local production, and would conserve many jobs. On the other hand, the Norwegian aluminum industry did not satisfy Hveem's demands and had to be abandoned. This industry was dependent on raw material supplies from the outside, with developing countries extracting over 50 % of the world's Bauxite. Instead, the developing countries should refine it themselves, with Norway actively helping with financial and technical assistance. He also argued that the Norwegian shipping industry could be shut down. Even though it was not environmentally harmful and employed many, the government policy of saving it in a situation with overcapacity internationally was against the demands of the Third World and principles of solidarity.<sup>138</sup>

### **3.3.3. Overdevelopment and Economic Growth**

The NIEO was, as shown, accompanied by aspirations of global distributional equality for many of the researchers of the idea group. While these aspirations at times happened in the abstract, some researchers also more explicitly connected them to consequences for the logic of the domestic political economy beyond higher prices and some industrial restructuring. Especially those with visions that emphasized collective self-reliance and tied together the economic and environmental agenda also argued for a radically new development style domestically. Many argued for this point with explicit inspiration from a discourse within UN forums.<sup>139</sup> The debate about environmentalism and its building of a society on post-material values that happened unconnected from the NIEO was put in a global context and connected to visions of global solidarity.

The ecological limits to growth and the link between the underdevelopment and overdevelopment of the world, made several within the idea group argue that Norway had to

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<sup>138</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 171–78; Poleszynski also argued for a similar vision and suggest that the Nordic countries could band together to form a self-reliant unit in response to the NIEO. See Poleszynski, "Norden og den nye økonomiske verdensordning"; Poleszynski, "Et irrasjonelt økonomisk system - overutvikling og underutvikling."

<sup>139</sup> Poleszynski, "Norden og den nye økonomiske verdensordning," 147.

move away from economic growth to the “equilibrium society.”<sup>140</sup> The new society, which would be built on less resource-intensive lifestyles, would enable a radical new resource distribution in a limited world. By consuming fewer resources domestically, more of the world’s limited resources could be used by developing countries.<sup>141</sup> Bergesen pointed out that reduced consumption did not automatically benefit the poor, as it in isolation would mean less production in exporting countries and subsequently less economic income for them. It had to be put in connection with changed production patterns in the Third World, where they had to produce for their own needs. In addition, the surplus resulting from reduced consumption needed to be channeled into international organizations and be redistributed to the poor and hungry. Bergesen even claimed that the developed and developing countries had a “common interest” on this point. It was in developed countries’ self-interest to move away from material overconsumption and create a more “human-friendly societal form,” with lower priority to material consumption. This development would again ease the pressure on the limited natural resources that developing countries needed to satisfy minimum demands for living standards.<sup>142</sup>

This vision was a significant part of the expert discourse but was not wholly dominant in the idea group. Most writings on the NIEO’s consequences focused on much more limited visions, never mentioning these significant domestic consequences. Some, such as the more moderate and empirically oriented Angell, did not buy all the premises of causal connections between underdevelopment and overdevelopment that made the equilibrium society necessary. However, also he claimed that the equalization of inequalities that the new division of labor would entail would be premised on “large differences in the economic growth of poor and rich countries” without ever specifying what this would concretely entail. But he did state that “we are however rich and can afford to meet this challenge.”<sup>143</sup> In other words, even amongst those who did not concur with the premises completely, was there a conception that the fulfillment of the NIEO potentially could have significant impact on the domestic economy.

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<sup>140</sup> The term was a part of the national environmental debate. Hveem claimed that not putting it in the context of the fight for a new international order would be “politically and morally reprehensible.” Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 43.

<sup>141</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 43; Poleszynski, “Norden og den nye økonomiske verdensordning,” 149.

<sup>142</sup> Bergesen, *Fattig og rik i samme verden?*, 14-16, 35-36; Bergesen, “Verdikonservativ tenkning ved en skillevei”, 51-52.

<sup>143</sup> Angell, “Debattinnlegg”, 19.

### 3.4. Chapter Conclusion

While much of the writing from the researchers in the idea group was descriptive as to enlighten about the facts, a normative commitment to political change characterized much of what they wrote. Terje Tvedt exaggerates when he says, “the potential of science for persuasion overrode the potential of science for truth”<sup>144</sup> in these research milieus. Still, a weaker assertion that some of the experts’ writings blurred the line between the empirical and normative certainly holds true. With the “NIEO imaginary” influencing the experts, many of their ideas were characterized by a global distributional aspiration of equality and a premise that this had to happen through changes in international economic structures.

The identification of structural changes as a necessity to achieve redistribution had to do with the dominance of different forms of dependency theory and structural explanations within the research community. The NIEO’s structural solutions fit in with this view and were interpreted as a bid to equalize the international power and wealth inequalities. Most researchers seemed to interpret the aspirations of the NIEO in light of the domestic welfare state. The aim was a welfare world, where the worst consequences of unbridled free markets would be regulated away. While they shared the distributional aspiration, there were different visions on how international structural changes could achieve it. Some researchers envisioned that the developing countries would continue their export-oriented integration into the international trade system, but on better terms. However, some saw this as a flawed strategy and drew on alternative development discourses to complement the NIEO. Their alternative vision of the new order was an international system built on local self-reliance on basic needs within the planet’s ecological limits. Even with a wide range of differing ideas and visions of how the new order should look, the researchers still agreed on a crucial point. The international structural change had to affect domestic society and be pursued even with negative consequences to the national self-interest. To realize a new and more just international order, Norway had to take an active role.

The idea group’s active role in the public debate made their views have some definitional power to the public’s conception of the NIEO. As we shall see in the next chapter, many of the views that the researchers of the idea group had about global inequality and north-south relations were also present elsewhere, with the “NIEO imaginary” deeply affecting parts of Norwegian civil society.

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<sup>144</sup> Tvedt, *Utviklingsforskning - Vitenskap eller politikkenes fortsettelse med andre midler*.

## **Chapter 4. Ideas of the New International Economic Order in Civil Society**

The “NIEO imaginary” was expressed differently outside the research community. Several civil society groups that also had some connection to the idea group engaged with the NIEO discourse and mobilized for the idea in different ways. The connection to the idea group was at times loose, with the paths of influence from the idea group being uncertain. They had their own spin on the NIEO, reflecting their different institutional purposes and idiosyncrasies. This chapter will examine how the Future in our Hands, the Norwegian Church, and the Trade Union Movement discussed the NIEO and global inequality. As civil society organizations, their ideas reflected not just the singular views of some intellectuals but also the views of a large number of members, giving them a far reach into Norwegian society. As the chapter will show, the “NIEO imaginary” also made its mark here, with the same aims of international structural change to achieve global redistribution characterizing their ideas.

### **4.1. The Future in Our Hands**

One visible group in the public debates on Norway’s relationship with the Global South was the grassroots movement of the Future in Our Hands (FIVH). The “people’s movement” was established in 1974 after its founder, the ad-man Erik Dammann, had published a book with the same title as the ensuing movement two years earlier. In the book, he had connected the abundance of the industrialized countries with the poverty of the developing countries in an “unusually clear way,” and made a strong appeal to the readers to take the future in their hands and mobilize against the unjust distribution of resources and ecological imbalance of the world. With the rise of the new left, post-material values, and disillusionment with consumer society that happened in all western industrial societies at the time, Damman’s message resonated with the zeitgeist. After the book had created a considerable public debate and had gotten much positive feedback, and with the public support from many prominent personalities, including Gunnar Myrdal, Georg Borgström, Thor Heyerdahl, Erik Bye, and Arne Næss, the newly-established FIVH started with much momentum, public attention, and fast-rising membership numbers. On the foundational meeting in Nadderudhallen on April 25, 1974, simultaneously as the NIEO demands were discussed in the Sixth Special Session of the UN General Assembly, 3000 people participated. By 1974 6000 people had become members, and by the end of 1977, this number had risen to 20 000, with local groups popping up around the country.<sup>145</sup> While FIVH’s coming into existence and growth happened simultaneously as the debates on the NIEO, it was initially unconnected to the international project. Instead, the initiative was an

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<sup>145</sup> Hansen, “Oppbrudd fra forbrukssamfunnet,” 16–34.

internal one, with a theory of change that firstly advocated for internal changes in rich countries. When the NIEO initiative got much attention, which implicated a model of change starting through negotiations between diplomats, the emerging movement actively engaged with this discourse.

The societal analysis and visions of Dammann and FIVH were similar to many of the more radical researchers in the idea group, especially to the strand of thought that Hveem represented. This was also recognized by Hveem, who stated that FIVH's message has "a lot going for it."<sup>146</sup> In the idea group, some FIVH members also participated at different times and vice versa. Like many of the radicals within the idea group, FIVH's analysis was based on the connection between the abundance of the rich and the widespread suffering of the world's majority. Because of an unjust distribution of resources, most of the world lacked enough resources to survive while a small minority was tormented by consuming too much. To solve the problems of both groups in a world of limited resources, what was needed was a redistribution that required the rich countries to move away from the imperative of economic growth and instead invest the superfluous resources that were in their "private overconsumption" towards solving "the developing countries' hunger- and poverty problems, as well as our own and the world's environmental problems."<sup>147</sup> The future society that was the aim, where "10 billion people can be given reasonable living conditions," would have to be based on a fair distribution of resources, local self-reliance throughout the world, and a change in the aims of world trade in itself, towards satisfying the basic needs of the population instead of the "demand of the wealthy."<sup>148</sup>

With this vision of a future world, the position of FIVH and Dammann on the NIEO reflected much of the radical critique. Dammann claimed the NIEO would bolster the "developing countries elites," not "reduce the multinational corporations' properties and power in the developing countries," and be built on an international market economy that "would contribute to a large increase in the global industrialization and growth of large-scale operation, with the resource depletion and the ecological consequences this could entail." However, this did not mean a total rejection of the NIEO, as it could be "one of many simultaneous steps on the way towards a world with equal rights for all. But only one step."<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Hveem, *En ny økonomisk verdensorden og Norge*, 42.

<sup>147</sup> Dammann, *Fremtiden i våre hender*, 134.

<sup>148</sup> Dammann, *Ny livsstil - og hva så?*, 111–12; Dammann, *Revolusjon i velstandssamfunnet*, 45–48; *Ny livsstil no. 3b/1978*.

<sup>149</sup> Dammann, *Revolusjon i velstandssamfunnet*, 45–48.

The future vision of FIVH's new order was seemingly quite close to the visions several people in the idea group promoted. An ecologically sound development, self-reliance, and basic needs were all part of FIVH's vision. However, while the NIEO and the idea group mostly saw this vision and global redistribution coming through structural changes to the economy, FIVH instead favored increased direct transfers of funds as the means to do this. They pointed out that "if we advocate that the funds the developing countries need should come from the commodity trade, we are counting on this trade not being reduced; then the transfer of funds would go down!"<sup>150</sup> The developing countries would through the trade-based redistribution become even more dependent on the continuation of the industrialized countries' wasteful consumption. The problem with development aid had not been the measure itself but its limited amount. Through many doubled direct transfers of resources and a gradual replacement of the current international division of labor with a new order with "the highest possible degree of national self-reliance," real global redistribution could happen.<sup>151</sup> If all rich countries used "the economic and resource reserves that lay in our private and public overconsumption, it would undoubtedly be sufficient to solve the developing countries' hunger- and poverty problems, as well as our own and the world's environmental problems." If Norway alone would give away their "overuse reserves" that were deemed as not necessary for a quality life, Dammann claimed that it would "equal more than half of today's total public aid from all rich countries!"<sup>152</sup>

While having some disagreements on the concrete measures, FIVH's theory of change and analysis of the state of the NIEO negotiations made them further critical of the process. To illustrate their view on the Norwegian position on the NIEO, they several times quoted Gunnar Myrdal that "[t]he blunt truth is that without rather radical changes in the consumption patterns in the rich countries, any pious talk about a new world economic order is humbug."<sup>153</sup> The NIEO's lack of results and the noncommittal attitude of the Norwegian (and other rich countries') government stemmed from a faulty theory of change. "Unfortunately, the power [of the NIEO demands] does not stretch further than what the rich countries are willing to accept". As long as the rich countries required that the economic order secured their "uninterrupted growth of wealth" would "any new international order only represent a flick on the old one –

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<sup>150</sup> Dammann, *Ny livsstil - og hva så?*, 144, While Dammann stands as the author of this book he claimed in the preface that the book was "more than just the authors personal opinion", but instead "an attempt to give a systematic expression of the people's movement's basic viewpoint".

<sup>151</sup> Dammann, *Ny livsstil - og hva så?*, 152–53.

<sup>152</sup> Dammann, *Fremtiden i våre hender*, 134.

<sup>153</sup> Dammann and Bomann-Larsen, *Partiene ved skilleveien*, 7; *Ny livsstil no. 3b/1978*.



and thus not create any new opportunity to solve the majority's problem of deficiency."<sup>154</sup> The theory of change FIVH instead based their mobilization on saw the needed change as having to come from within rich countries primarily and especially on these countries' mentality towards economic growth. The problem with the NIEO negotiations was that they started in the wrong direction.

Only when the rich countries changed their national economic aims, away from "a steady growth in our national economy and in our private and public consumption," towards "setting the solution of the problems of the world's majority as our most important goal," could any substantial redistribution happen. And only after this redistribution had improved education and living conditions in the developing countries could they restructure their internal societies in line with the vision of "the future society." To get to this point of redistribution, change from above, as the NIEO presupposed, was unfeasible. No politician in any wealthy country could do the necessary political restructuring before the "majority of the population frees themselves from artificial growth of needs and accepts that global solidarity goes before their own growth. [...] As long as the electorate is dependent on regular growth in real income, it is in other words little the politicians can do to change their national economic growth objective." Only when the population was ready could the superfluous production capacity of the rich countries be redirected towards the needs of the poorest.<sup>155</sup>

To get to a point where a majority of the electorate demanded this, someone needed to go before the rest and "concretize" and "realize" the new lifestyle. "All change must spring out from someone beginning." Dammann claimed that most Norwegians actually wanted to break free from the "carousel of consumption," but because of societal norms and pressure was unable to do this. If a large enough group managed to break "the norms of high consumption," then it would be possible to create new, more globally conscious norms. However, to create a sufficiently large enough group that lived with the new lifestyle, there needed to be an organized community that could "support the individual [...] in the attempt to resist the consumption norms that still apply to the rest of society." This is where FIVH came in, as the organization of the community that wanted to create a "new lifestyle" to change the world.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Dammann, *Ny livsstil - og hva så?*, 154.

<sup>155</sup> Dammann, *Ny livsstil - og hva så?*, 144–85, quotes from p. 147-48, 177, 185.

<sup>156</sup> Dammann, *Ny livsstil - og hva så?*, 173–99, quotes from p. 179, 186, 194.

Much of the rhetoric and messaging of the “people’s movement for a new lifestyle and a just distribution of the world’s resources”<sup>157</sup> was about this “new lifestyle,” which connected the environmental movement and alienation with consumer society together with global solidarity. The new lifestyle and development away from the materialism of consumer society would not just create a fairer world but also solve the many problems of overconsumption and stress in modern consumer society. In the members’ magazine *Ny livsstil*, much of the writing was about tips and motivation to reduce consumption and waste, with discussions of getting rid of “unnecessary” and “unhealthy” consumer goods such as TVs, cars, and luxury foods together with the positive alternatives of biking, public transit, and *friluftsliv*. This concrete new lifestyle was through simultaneous informational efforts aimed to build a sense of “global responsibility” tied to a notion of solidarity with the world’s suffering.<sup>158</sup> The “new lifestyle” was then seen to create global redistribution, a healthier life more in line with “the real values,” and an ecologically sound society and world.

The new lifestyle was to be combined with political measures nationally to remove the pressures of consumer society and international system change. But to start these mutually influencing processes, efforts were first required to emerge from below. Dammann claimed that Norway would be the ideal country to start the process of necessary change that could influence the whole rich world. “If one country manages to execute this kind of restructuring, it is reason to believe it will get a deciding significance in the whole rich world.” He claimed that similar discussions and currents were present in all rich countries. If one country managed to make the transition, it could no longer be rejected as “unrealistic, economically irresponsible or simply impossible.” As a small country, on its way to becoming “the world’s richest nation” with good economic stability in the near future – “as oil-Norway,” it would be suitable for this. “To the degree, we succeed, we have all reason to believe that our development model would be of decisive significance also to the global development.”<sup>159</sup>

#### **4.2. The Church**

Another important mobilizer for the NIEO in civil society was the state church. Since the 1960s, there had been a change in the development ideology of the church. The traditionally conservative politics of the church was replaced with sympathy toward international structural changes for the benefit of the poor world. This shift had especially two sources. Firstly, there

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<sup>157</sup> *Ny livsstil*, no. 1/1974, 20.

<sup>158</sup> Dammann, *Ny livsstil - og hva så?*, 184.

<sup>159</sup> Dammann, *Ny livsstil - og hva så?*, 156.

had been a rise of Christian socialism in the wake of the student revolution of the late 1960s that had broken the traditionally polarized relationship between the church and the labor movement. The Christian socialists were often the best educated and most well-read on development issues within the church, and therefore took leading roles and got much definition power in the discussions of social ethics.<sup>160</sup> The other important influence on the politics of the church was the ecumenical movement. Through its membership in the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Lutheran World Federation was a supportive attitude to the poor world's aspirations of structurally changing the international economy transmitted. Especially the WCC had the increasing representation from the Global South created a paradigm shift in ecumenical theology in the 1960s and 1970s more oriented towards Latin American liberation theology and a general anti-colonial ideology, with much focus on a radical social ethic.<sup>161</sup> These discourses affected the Norwegian engagement with development issues through the in The Council on Ecumenical and International Relations of the Church of Norway (MKR), the primary transmitter of ecumenical thoughts into the Norwegian church.<sup>162</sup> MKR had a close connection to the idea group, with many of those most active in the church debate participating there. However, MKR did meet some skepticism within the more conservative lay movement. This was based on a skepticism towards the ecumenical movement and MKR's connection with it, as it was perceived to have a "theologically liberal and politically radical" profile.<sup>163</sup> However, within the bodies of the official church, it seemed like the MKR line and the structural explanations of the world's poverty were hegemonic, with the whole debate and statements having a clear sympathetic stance towards the project of the NIEO.

Many different church bodies published resolutions on the NIEO throughout the period. Amongst others, MKR, several bishoprics meetings, individual bishops, and the teacher's council of the Norwegian School of Theology (MF) all published strong statements in favor of the NIEO. The church's developing countries' information also published much material. There were created prayers, sermons, and study programs about the NIEO, and it became a part of the agenda of churches around the country. In different forums, there were theological debates about Christian social ethics, the Christian duty towards the world's poor and the relation of this duty to the systemic changes that the NIEO represented. In relation to UNCTAD V in

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<sup>160</sup> Nergård, "Norske eliter og ny økonomisk verdensordning," 58–59.

<sup>161</sup> Kunter, "Is the East-West Political Bipolarity the Foundation of the Ecumenical Movement?," 41; Kunter, "Revolutionary Hopes and Global Transformations," 344–45; Bouwman, "Between Dialogue and Denunciation," 27.

<sup>162</sup> Bakkevig, "Ny økonomisk verdensorden og kirken," 5–6.

<sup>163</sup> Nergård, "Norske eliter og ny økonomisk verdensordning," 74.

Manila in 1979 even the highest body of the church, the bishops meeting, stated that “the whole Norwegian people” should support the NIEO and “contribute to the injustice of world society being defeated.”<sup>164</sup>

The structural explanations given were consistently similar throughout all church publications, with a radical dependency theory overshadowing more moderate explanations and a focus on internal structures in the underdeveloped countries. One example of this came in a statement in response to the “NIEO White Paper,” where MKR claimed that the world was in a “comprehensive crisis” created by international political and economic structures. The “accelerating economic growth and increase in the material living standards for the populations of the rich countries” has happened “at the expense of the strongly increasing populations in the developing countries, which continue to lag behind in the struggle for a human existence.” This talk of a “crisis” in the world and the moral harm of the material suffering of the world and increasing international inequality was a common thread, with the structures of the international economy being called out as responsible for this.<sup>165</sup> As stated by the Bishop of Agder Erling Utne, “The most severe aspect of the existing international economic order is that the longer it endures, the larger the divide between the poor and the rich part of the world gets.”<sup>166</sup>

The NIEO, as a response to this, was mostly interpreted as being a structural change that would give economic redistribution. The MFs teacher council called it “a demand that the poor countries should get their share of the resources.”<sup>167</sup> With this interpretation of the NIEO, most of the argumentation was concentrated on moral and theological arguments for working against suffering and inequality instead of the concrete measures that the NIEO contained. There was some problematization of the concrete political project of the NIEO outside its role as a slogan for justice and redistribution, with writers connected to MKR discussing some of its critiques. However, they still concluded that it was a worthwhile project. In a publication from MKR about “The Church and the New International Economic Order,” Odd Jostein Sæter finished a critical discussion of the NIEO by concluding that it was “if not a sufficient prerequisite, then it is to a large degree a necessary prerequisite to global justice.”<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> “Bispemøtets uttalelse,” 9.

<sup>165</sup> “Uttalelse om Norge og u-landene.”

<sup>166</sup> Utne, “Hyrdebrev til menighetene i Agder bispedømme.”

<sup>167</sup> “Det økonomisk ansvar overfor verdens fattige nasjoner.”

<sup>168</sup> Sæter, “Kritiske moment til ny økonomisk verdensordning”; Bakkevig, “Ny økonomisk verdensorden og kirken.”

The suffering of “billions” was rhetorically effectively contrasted with the “abundance society” of Norway, “one of the richest countries in the world.” Tor Wennesland described the challenge as not to be “alienated by all kinds of consumption effects in the circus flicker of wealth” but to let the demands of the Third World make people remember Jesus’ words that “the poor you will always have with you.” Being wealthy in an unequal world was seen as a problem in itself, with reference to “[h]ow hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.” For Wennesland, this meant that, “Christian faith has consequences, not just for the stewardship of what we own, but also for what and how much we own.”<sup>169</sup> However, the wealth was not just a problem in itself, but also because it affected the world. As the idea group member and son of Bishop Utne, Stig Utne stated, “experts and scientists mostly agree about pointing out the industrialized countries as guilty for today’s underdevelopment-misery.” More concretely, these abstractions meant for Utne that “we are to blame.”<sup>170</sup>

This blame created moral obligations for those who had this economically privileged position. The active role of the Church stemmed partly from a moral and theological argumentation of the Christian duty to work against suffering and inequality. In a statement from the MFs teacher council, they argued that God’s word created an obligation for the rich in this situation. “As Christians in one of the world’s richest countries, we must take God’s word’s harsh warning to the rich, and the urgent words about not exploiting the poor, seriously.”<sup>171</sup> While there was much theological debate about social ethics, especially two lines of argument were pervasive in the Christian argumentation for the rich’s responsibility. These were the Christian duties of stewardship of the world God created and to “love thy neighbor.” Combined, they were perceived to have radical implications. Sverre Smebye argued that “the wealth and opportunities of God’s creation” must be used to the best for “all the earth’s humans of all countries and to the human universally, that means the human also in coming generations.”<sup>172</sup>

This universalization of moral responsibility made global redistribution and reducing the world’s misery a duty. While helping to reduce the suffering through development aid and the mission since the 1800s had been part of Norwegian Christianity, what was new was the recognition that “the duty cannot be fulfilled only with relief efforts or with humans’ volunteer and idealistic effort. It is necessary with deep-rooted changes in the international economic

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<sup>169</sup> Wennesland, “Solidaritet med de fattige.”

<sup>170</sup> Utne, “Krise og skyld.”

<sup>171</sup> Lærerrådet ved Menighetsfakultetet, “Det økonomiske ansvar overfor verdens fattige nasjoner.”

<sup>172</sup> Smebye, “Norge og oljen i globalt perspektiv.”

system”.<sup>173</sup> Even the Norwegian Church Aid tellingly started an ad by saying that “we do not believe in charity as a measure to solving the world’s problem of suffering.”<sup>174</sup> This recognition had consequences for the view on the imperative of national politics. The teacher council of MF stated that “national egoism” had been governing individual countries’ economies for too long. “This must be replaced by a targeted international work to improve the living conditions for the suffering in the poor countries.”<sup>175</sup> National self-interest had to be replaced by global responsibility.

With this starting point, Smebye argued that God owned the newfound oil and that the Norwegian stewardship of it needed to be used in the interest of the world’s poor countries. As it was the “only wealth we have that could mean something radical in a global context,” to hold it outside of the national NIEO policy meant that the official talk of justice just became empty words. The vast amounts of wealth in this oil could push forward the NIEO and help the struggling developing countries. For example, it could pay the developing countries’ crippling debt and finance the common fund for raw materials way better than the “symbol act” of 25 million \$ that Norway already had promised.<sup>176</sup>

Smebye’s discussion of oil fits in a pattern of the church debate. With the theological duty to work against global inequality and suffering, radical altruism became a premise in the Christian discussion of what should be done to materialize the NIEO. The different concrete NIEO measures and their effects on Norwegian society were discussed and mostly accepted, but most weight in the statement was instead given to how the new order should affect the abundant lifestyles and consumption habits of domestic society. The diocese of Borg claimed that to help the poor in a world of limited resources meant that redistribution must have “consequences for our own standard of living.”<sup>177</sup> Doing this meant not only political changes from above but, just as FIVH had concluded, also required changes in the personal lives of all Christians. The diocese of Sør-Hålogaland stated in 1977 that “we cannot settle with gifts from our abundance. More important is the work for a change of attitude in the individual when it comes to lifestyles and consumption.” The “worldwide responsibility” necessitated that Christians started the work for justice through “personal example.”<sup>178</sup> Wennesland argued that “to conserve our Christian

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<sup>173</sup> Støylen, “UNCTAD IV angår oss alle.”

<sup>174</sup> *Ny Livsstil* 1/1976.

<sup>175</sup> Lærerrådet ved Menighetsfakultetet, “Det økonomiske ansvar overfor verdens fattige nasjoner.”

<sup>176</sup> Smebye, “Norge og oljen i globalt perspektiv.”

<sup>177</sup> “Resolusjon vedtatt av bispedømmemøtet for Borg i Fredrikstad 23. - 25. September 1976.”

<sup>178</sup> “Uttalelse fra Sør-Hålogaland bispedømmeråd.”

identity, we must liberate ourselves to the largest possible degree from a rich man's lifestyle, his habits, and consumption. We shall live in simple frugality. This is not just a Christian freedom, it is also his personal solidarity with the poor."<sup>179</sup> A statement from the bishops' meeting of 1979 claimed that the church congregations could be essential spaces for "a new attitude to be helped forward" liberated from a "forced pressure of living standard and high consumption."<sup>180</sup> This attitude towards the effects of the NIEO on the consumption patterns of the individual and of domestic society was persistent in the Christian discourse, with no real counter voices within church bodies. That the Government did not see the same implications of the NIEO for the Norwegian wealth made MKR criticize them, claiming that they still had not "reached the necessary conclusion of the principal analysis."<sup>181</sup>

In other words, the Christian vision of the NIEO was not just a passive one negotiated between diplomats. With a similar theory of change to FIVH, they saw personal changes and pressure from public opinion as necessary preconditions for structural change to happen. In addition, the Church had a self-conscious role as an opinion former. Bishop Utnem thought this role meant that the work for a more just international order "must become a matter close to the heart for Norwegian Christians" and must mobilize the Christians of his diocese. This meant that "where God's people gather to worship and meet, I urge that it will be made intercessions for all governments and politicians to get an ever-increasing perception of the poor world's just demands."<sup>182</sup> The bishopric meeting for Borg in 1976 similarly urged their congregations "to work, sacrifice and pray for a new total effort in the struggle for a just distribution of the world's resources."<sup>183</sup> This call for grassroots mobilization was a significant part of resolutions from the different church bodies.

The broad support of the official church bodies and the grassroots mobilization also met some resistance. Especially some of the larger lay organizations were skeptical, though they still mostly held a low profile. But as stated by the frustrated NIEO supporter Bishop Lislerud about the skeptics in the grassroots, "they fear a kind of communism! [...] They fear a secularization theology that will make the gospel of God's kingdom to a social-ethic program."<sup>184</sup> This skepticism present in Norwegian churches and *bedehus* also showed itself more publically at

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<sup>179</sup> Wennesland, "Solidaritet med de fattige."

<sup>180</sup> "Bispemøtets uttalelse," 9.

<sup>181</sup> "Uttalelse om Norge og u-landene."

<sup>182</sup> Utnem, "Hyrdebrev til menighetene i Agder bispedømme."

<sup>183</sup> "Resolusjon vedtatt av bispedømmemøtet for Borg i Fredrikstad 23. - 25. September 1976."

<sup>184</sup> Lislerud, "Kirken og en ny økonomisk verdensorden," 51.

times. When the Bishop Utne of Agder sent a pastoral letter to his diocese about UNCTAD IV, with strong condemnation of the lack of action from the rich world's leaders at the conference, it met a mixed reception. Half the priests omitted reading the pastoral letter from the highest authority in the diocese to their congregations.<sup>185</sup> Missionary secretary Gudmund Vinskei in The Norwegian Lutheran Mission claimed in the wake of Utne's pastoral letter that it was not the church's role to make statements on concrete political models and warned of politicizing the church and the mission. He claimed that missionary activity never has and should not aim to solve the societal problems of the developing countries but "to win people for God. If they become new people that search for God's Kingdom first, then they will also become good citizens." On the issue of the NIEO he warned that it would demand a "world government," which made him think of an "end-time perspective with a world ruler named anti-Christ." As he interpreted God's word, it instead said that "God has created borders and separates between country and races. He has done this for each to develop their distinctive character in God's honor."<sup>186</sup>

While skeptics such as these were in the conservative grassroots, the different church bodies' engagement seemed to have influenced the average Christian. Polls showed that "active Christians," for the most part, were more positive to development issues than the average person, but without any similar outcome for "personal Christians."<sup>187</sup> While there were some critics, it is important not to exaggerate the tension within the church. Its normative commitment was mostly in line with the title of a pamphlet laying out ecclesiastical views on the NIEO:

"There shall be equality."<sup>188</sup>

### **4.3. The Trade Union Movement**

Also within the movement that had created the "new national economic order" of Norway did ideas of the NIEO make a presence. On International Workers' Day in the late 1970s, parades for the NIEO and "solidarity with the developing countries" was flagged in rallies around the country, and speakers called for the "necessity for the New International Economic Order" to solve "the most serious problem our world face" of global inequality.<sup>189</sup>

The positivity towards the NIEO might partly be explained by the Norwegian trade union movement's close political and ideological connection to the ruling Labor party. In addition,

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<sup>185</sup> Grimstad Adressetidende, 13.01.1977; Aftenposten, 08.01.1977.

<sup>186</sup> Vårt Land, 22.01.1977

<sup>187</sup> Ringdal, *Folkemeininga og den tredje verda*, 199–207.

<sup>188</sup> *Det skal være likhet*.

<sup>189</sup> Østlandets blad, 02.05.1978.



many saw the NIEO as a continuation of the labor movement's historical and ideological focus on international solidarity. The NIEO became part of the official policy of the trade union movement, and there were many efforts to both inform and mobilize for it within the movement. Much of the information on the NIEO in the movement had its offspring in the idea group, where several representatives of the Workers' Information Association (AOF) were involved and actively tried to create dialogue within the trade unions on the issue.<sup>190</sup> However, within the movement, there were also differences in what they interpreted content and consequences of it should be.

One important early contribution to the debate was made by the idea group member Sverre Jervell. In a 1976 debate book titled *Vår velstand og vekst til debatt* [Lit. *Our Wealth and Growth to Debate*] he argued for a comprehensive vision of the NIEO that would have significant consequences for domestic society and the labor movement in the name of international solidarity. AOF published the book, and two years later supplemented by a course pamphlet made in "a simple language" designed to be discussed in study groups around the country.<sup>191</sup>

In the book, Jervell compared the situation and strategy of the developing countries to the historical labor movement he was writing to, by saying that the domestic working class had also changed their situation by putting power behind their demands for fairness and created a "new national economic order."<sup>192</sup> The implication was that the movement in solidarity should support efforts to internationalize the domestic welfare state they had created.

Like FIVH and the church, he connected the national environmental debate of a new economic growth policy with the imperative to reduce global inequality. The NIEO aimed to "execute changes in the economic system so that the developing countries can get a more just share of the world's wealth." This necessitated an "alternative growth policy" domestically in a world of ecological limits. The distributional implications of the NIEO were not just to give a minimum level, a "floor," for the poorest societies but also a "roof" on the consumption and growth of the wealthy societies. To reduce the overconsumption and waste in the country, which in a few years probably will "become the country in the world which lay claim on the most amount of resources per capita," was therefore necessary. Domestic policy should be changed

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<sup>190</sup> Idegruppen Nord/Sør, *Saksarkiv - D - 0003*, "Korrespondanse 1980"; LOs international secretary Kåre Sandegren was also a member of the idea group, see Idegruppen Nord/Sør, *Saksarkiv - D - 0003*, "Administrasjon/medlemslister 1978-1982".

<sup>191</sup> Jervell, *Ny økonomisk verdensordning*.

<sup>192</sup> Jervell, *Vår velstand og vekst til debatt*, 25.

to the benefit of the Third World, with limitations in production and consumption in those areas that cost too much for both society and the rest of the world, replaced by a “selective growth.” There should e.g. be limitations to the consumption of meat because of its resources demanding nature, with the corn used to feed animals redirected to cover the acute needs of the hungry in developing countries.<sup>193</sup>

Highly relevant to the labor movement’s goals, the NIEO could also have consequences for jobs in Norwegian industry. “But if one takes into account the consideration of developing countries in the long term plans, then it should be able to execute a more painless restructuring. In this way, it could be possible to share these burdens with the whole Norwegian society. One should be careful to exaggerate the problems of restructuring.”<sup>194</sup>

While Jervell’s more radical views on the consequences of the NIEO for economic growth were not actively followed up, the belief that some material consequences resulting from the international restructuring were acceptable had some resonance within the trade union movement. In the 1977 action program of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), the largest umbrella of trade unions in Norway with a membership number of over 660.000, the NIEO was included. It stated:

The divide between poor and rich countries is deeply unfair and a danger to humans. The trade union movement must take responsibility for the development of the Third World and, in its international work, contribute to reducing the divide between poor and rich. This necessitates the New International Economic Order. The trade union movement is in favor of increased transfers of resources, a more open and wider relation of cooperation with the developing countries, and market access for developing countries’ commodities. This must be tied to an active industrial policy.<sup>195</sup>

In a lecture, the LO economist Per Brannsten expanded on their understanding of how the NIEO should influence domestic society and the trade union movement. He claimed that the most important effect on the trade union movement would be through increased market access, but that LO “in principle” was “positive to some restructuring of our industry, to open the possibilities for an industrial development in the developing countries.” Simultaneously, this

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<sup>193</sup> Jervell, *Vår velstand og vekst til debatt*, 24–89, quotes from p. 25, 49, 71.

<sup>194</sup> Jervell, *Vår velstand og vekst til debatt*, 48.

<sup>195</sup> Landsorganisasjonen i Norge, “Handlingsprogram 1977-81,” 66, the same action program still accepts economic growth, seeing no contradiction between this and the global redistribution, see 3-4.

had to be done in a way that “mitigates the effects for Norwegian employees.”<sup>196</sup> To hurry the industrialization of the developing countries, LO was “prepared to sacrifice something.” However, it had to be “a gradual and cautious restructuring” based on a principle that “any loss of jobs is compensated with others” and that the burden is “shared throughout the whole industry.” In stark contrast to the church and FIVH, Brannsten claimed that a prerequisite for Norwegian action should be that other industrial countries also made the same changes, as “this is not restructurings that Norway should carry alone.”<sup>197</sup> While supporting the NIEO and the need for it in principle, the concrete action LO was willing to take was more cautious.

From 1978, there was, however, a change in the vision that LO promoted. Through its connection with The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), LO adopted its alternative vision of the NIEO of the New International Economic and Social Order adopted in ICFTU’s development charter of 1978. This vision replaced the previous support of the NIEO demands and became the official line of LO, with many courses and study groups being completed on this subject.<sup>198</sup> In a pamphlet distributed by LO in 1980, they put forward their view of a changed economic and social order.<sup>199</sup>

Based on a normative *social* development goal of basic needs, first formulated at the International Labor Organization's World Employment Conference of 1976, the solutions of the NIEO were perceived to be unsatisfactory. “The trade union movement has in the last few years realized that it is not sufficient to create a just distribution between the countries of the world. It is just as important to achieve a just distribution within the countries.” However, many of the concretely proposed measures were still similar. “A considerable reduction of the industrialized countries’ customs and other trade barriers towards semi-finished and finished products from developing countries is necessary.” These increased imports should still not put jobs in danger, with an active industrial policy domestically to secure this. The new was that another prerequisite was made for the concrete measures to be taken. Because the labor rights of many developing countries were so bad, the increased export benefitted the TNCs and not the workers or the general population. Therefore, what was needed was that the exporting

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<sup>196</sup> Brannsten, “Fagbevegelsen og ny økonomisk verdensordning,” 115.

<sup>197</sup> Brannsten, “Fagbevegelsen og ny økonomisk verdensordning,” 121-122.

<sup>198</sup> Landsorganisasjonen i Norge, “Beretning 1979,” 169.

<sup>199</sup> Landsorganisasjonen i Norge, *Fagbevegelsen og u-landene*.

countries "fulfill demands of minimum wage and working conditions" for the increased imports.<sup>200</sup>

In short, the alternative vision did not mean a rejection of the need for an international economic restructuring to equalize the distribution of the world's wealth and resources. However, it did mean that more prerequisites were established to execute this redistribution, making the professed ideals of global redistribution further away from the concrete reality.

#### **4.4. Chapter Conclusion**

This intellectual history of Norwegian civil society shows that the "NIEO imaginary" also made its mark here. Just as among the development researchers, the normative aspirations of global equality and the desire to restructure the international economy to achieve this were present in the ideas of the church, FIVH, and the trade union movement. However, there was some difference in their willingness to take concrete measures to fulfill the aspiration.

The Church and FIVH based their thought on a globalized moral responsibility. They argued for this enlightened attitude to be governing both the daily life and politics of the newly oil-rich Norwegian society. Both individual actions and political structures within the "abundance society" had to be changed from focusing on national economic growth to instead taking into account the situation of the world's needy. The rich did not exist in a vacuum, but at the top of an international hierarchy in an unequal world. If the rich took their responsibility seriously, it had to have consequences for their daily life. Some within the trade union movement had similar thoughts, but the official attitude here was more cautious. Tension between the ideology of international solidarity and the perceived interests of their members, made the consequences they were willing to undertake in the name of global equality more vague. Even though a radical altruism did not have the same grip on the trade union movement's ideas, the aim was still the same as in all discourses this thesis has examined. Global redistribution and international system change.

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<sup>200</sup> Landsorganisasjonen i Norge, *Fagbevegelsen og u-landene*, 17; Hegre, *Global utjamning*, 128–29.

## Chapter 5. Conclusion

After 17 years of the New International Economic Order being an explicit political aim for the Norwegian government, it launched in 1992 a new white paper on North-South policy. Here the NIEO policy was criticized as having a too large discrepancy between its ambitions and results. The Government's new guidelines for international solidarity in the 1990s did not contain any demands of changing the structures of the international economy. Instead, they were built on a "realism" of what could be achieved. Norway should "continue the work for a more just international economic order," but the work should now be within the current "international rules of the game."<sup>201</sup> A "neoliberal imaginary" replaced the "NIEO imaginary's" grip on Norwegian policy. Under the "neoliberal imaginary" aims of distributional sufficiency achieved within the international economy's current game rules became the hegemonic way of thinking. As the international economic system became taken as a given and distributional sufficiency replaced equality in policy, the NIEO soon also fell out of public memory and debate. Without any international project to equalize the unjust distribution of resources, the spirit of such a project also fell through. The differences in imaginaries of the different historical conjunctures makes the discussions of the NIEO period worth examining. They might serve as a basis for reflections on what have been lost in the contemporary imaginary.

This thesis has focused on the network of The Idea Group for the New International Economic Order in the conjuncture of the "NIEO imaginary". The idea group was formed by development researchers with a tight connection to an official policy with an accommodating aim and large ambitions. They counseled those in charge of the official policy and tried to influence public opinion. Through a large network of opinion formers and extensive communication activities, they reached widely and had a significant role in the public debate. They could have such an influence partly due to a close connection to and support from the Government, who were more moderate than many in the idea group, but benefitted from its attempts to influence the public.

The ideas that dominated among the researchers active in the idea group, who also made up a large portion of the wider development research community, were characterized by some traits that came with the "NIEO imaginary." Even though there was considerable variation in the ideas of the idea group, the shared premise was a normative commitment to redistribution to

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<sup>201</sup> Angell, "Hvor er det blitt av NØV?," 15; Bye, "En strukturtilpasset norsk Nord-Sør-politikk," 39–42; Stortingsmelding nr. 51 (1991-92), Utviklingstrekk i Nord-Sør forholdet og Norges samarbeid med utviklingslandene.

equalize the global wealth divide by restructuring the international economic order. This shared premise of the “NIEO imaginary” made a vast range of different ideas possible.

Outside of this, the ideas of the researchers of the idea group had significant variation between them in analysis, means, and ends. The common belief in the necessity and desirability of changing the international structures was related to the hegemonic development paradigm of dependency theory. It was the structures of the international economy that created and perpetuated the divide between the industrialized and developing countries that had to be changed.

The visions of changing the system split into two strands of strategies. The first was the integrationist vision of continued and increased international trade on better terms. This was in line with the actual NIEO demands. However, due to many critiques of this strategy’s insufficiency, many in the idea group also subscribed to alternative development strategies to counter the faults of the integrationist vision. Instead of seeing the solution in expanding the international trade system, they drew on alternative development discourses that emphasized a strategy based on an entirely other logic. Local, national, and regional entities should not produce to export in the market but to fulfill their populations’ basic needs within the world’s ecological limits. To get out of the power relationship between the core and the periphery, it was not just necessary to redistribute wealth but also to decentralize production. These two visions of the future world society were mutually exclusive. However, many of those supporting the alternative vision still saw the actual NIEO measures as contributing to the redistribution of wealth and power.

The aspirations of a world of redistributed wealth and power had consequences for Norway, one of the world’s wealthiest countries. The researchers argued that Norway had to take an active role in negotiations and help the Global South through unilateral measures. It had to increase imports, increase the prices of the imports, and restructure those domestic industry sectors that competed with the developing countries’ industries. Through this, Norway could contribute to redistribution and inspire the larger western countries to show that action was possible. Some also saw the redistribution from an environmental perspective and claimed that the necessary redistribution would require reduced economic growth in Norway. Though there were differences in the concrete measures imagined, in line with the different visions of the new order, common for the researchers in the idea group was an eagerness for Norway to prioritize global redistribution and the needs of the Global South above material self-interest.

The same spirit of the “NIEO imaginary” also reached civil society organizations connected to the idea group. In FIVH, the church and the trade union movement a distributional aspiration of global equality and a desire to change the logic of the international economy to reach this aspiration characterized their ideas. FIVH and the church echoed the radical researchers and focused mainly on the connection between the living standards of the rich and poor countries. Norway had to redistribute the superfluous resources that were in their unnecessary abundance. With a theory of change starting from the grassroots of the rich countries, they hoped to mobilize for change from below with individuals reducing their consumption. The trade union movement’s ideas were less mobilizing and had a more cautious approach to the consequences. Still, there were also variations in ideas within the trade union movement, with some strands promoting radical consequences.

In all the discourses examined in this thesis, a common characteristic was the ability to imagine a wide variety of visions of how a more just world should look. Global inequality was seen as a pressing problem, and how it should be solved was the center of these debates. The solutions often imagined significant consequences also for domestic society. A policy of solidarity with the world’s suffering was not just a small budget post, but something that had consequences for the logic of the whole political economy.

However, it must be concluded that the rich world of ambitious ideas that accompanied the “NIEO imaginary” lost in conflict with the self-interest of different segments of Norwegian society. In reality, the Norwegian contribution to creating a new order based on the interests of developing countries was both mixed and modest. The active role that was imagined for Norway in the many ambitious ideas never resulted in any significant action. FIVH’s grassroots mobilization against consumer society never reached the critical mass necessary for a policy change that firstly prioritized poor subjects outside the nation-state. Nor did the hopes of idea group members to increase imports from developing countries, give their imports higher prices, and restructure domestic industry materialize into anything concrete.

Svenbalrud called this failure partly a product of a lack of discussion on the consequences of the NIEO. This thesis has hoped to show that the double moral did not come out of ignorance. People with concrete ideas of active change to the benefit of the Global South existed in close proximity to those with power, criticized them explicitly on this ground, and took a visible role in the public debate. Politics is about decisions, and the concrete political decisions taken by Norway did little to fulfill the aspirations of equality, even with a wide range of ideas available.

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