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Delegitimizing multicultural education

Populist politicians in Norway and the weaponizing of the autobiographical genre

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Abstract

The rise of populism in Norway has witnessed sustained efforts at undermining multicultural education. Given their distrust of established and mediated channels of public communication, several populist politicians seem to favour the autobiographical genre as a medium amenable to their rhetoric of “direct communication with the grassroots”. This study employs critical autobiographical research to four populist politicians’ autobiographical writings. It explores the discursive use of autobiography in undermining immigrants and the multicultural in a country that has experienced rapid demographic change. Drawing upon Stuart Hall’s discourse on race and difference, the study unpacks a discourse that delegitimizes the multicultural by conflating it with determinist, xenophobic tropes – immigrants refuse to integrate, learn the language and espouse liberal values, among others.

Keywords Autobiographical research, multicultural, education, Norway, Stuart Hall, populist politicians,

Introduction

This study considers the manner in which prominent populist politicians in Norway seek to undermine the multicultural through the autobiographical genre. Wiggen (2012, p. 586) contends that, “In the Norwegian case, it is the populist right-wing party, the Progress Party, that is seen to be the most xenophobic anti-immigration party, but other parties are not dramatically different”. While the phenomenon of populism has witnessed a surge in the western world in recent years, Wiggen (2012) emphasizes the particular burden that Norway carries in light of the horrendous terrorist attacks perpetrated by Anders Behring Breivik in 2011. Breivik explicitly mentioned multiculturalism as the most lethal threat facing Norway and perceived himself as an “anti-Muslim crusader” (Wiggen, 2012, p. 585).

Populism is a political approach that preys upon the discontent and marginalization felt by segments of the population. Populists operate with clear-cut solutions to complex societal problems, such as immigration and integration, have well-defined enemies and friends, offer themselves as custodians of a mythical, national past that is under threat and promise security and preference to those who belong – the return of autochthony (Guibernau, 2013; Stanley, 2018; Kaufmann, 2018). Panizza (2005) favours a symptomatic approach to populism that draws upon elements of an empiricist and historicist approach. According to him,

This approach understands populism as an anti-status quo discourse that simplifies the political space by symbolically dividing society between “the people” (as the “underdogs”) and its “other”. Needless to say, the identity of both “the people” and “the other” are political constructs, symbolically constituted through the relation of antagonism, rather than sociological categories (Panizza, 2005, p.3).

The adversarial “other”, he argues, maybe distilled in economic, political, ethnic or religious terms (Panizza, 2005, p. 4). Conceiving of populism as a symptomatic approach appears best suited to make sense of the Norwegian Progress Party’s policies since its founding in 1973. The party has sought to position itself as the primary anti-tax, anti-immigration and anti-establishment party (Bjerkem, 2016). In addition to Panizza’s (2005, p. 3) relation of antagonism between “the people” and “the other”, Laclau (2005) observes that populism waxes and wanes depending on the degree to which the leader or the movement is able to weave together the diverse social demands (chain of equivalence) into a coherent whole.

But the logic of that division is dictated, as we know, by the creation of an equivalential chain between a series of social demands in which the equivalential

moment prevails over the differential nature of the demands. Finally, the equivalential chain cannot be the result of a purely fortuitous coincidence, but has to be consolidated through the emergence of an element which gives coherence to the chain by signifying it as a totality. This element is what we have called empty signifier (Laclau, 2005, pp. 43, 44).

The Norwegian Progress party is the most successful populist party in Scandinavia (Bjerkem, 2016). This, among others, is due to charismatic leaders, such as the former leader Carl I. Hagen's adroit handling of the struggle between moderates and extremists in the party. Commensurate with Laclau (2005), the equivalential moment has prevailed over the differential nature of the demands. As a junior member of the ruling coalition since 2013, the party has paid a high price for making compromises related to the intake of Syrian refugees and the party's failure to challenge and defeat new laws that have seen a steep rise in the cost and number of road toll stations in the country. The party was polling at 6% and lower but managed to secure 8.2% of the votes in this year's (2019) local election, which is down 1.3% from the 2015 local election (NrK Valgresultat 2019).

The biggest selling political autobiographies between 2006 to 2013 were those written by Hagen's wife, Eli Engum Hagen (*Married to Carl* (55,000 copies)), and Carl I. Hagen's *Honestly Speaking* (45,000 copies) respectively (Lygre, 2013). The then Foreign Minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, and now leader of the largest party, the Labor party, was in third place with 30,000 copies sold, followed by the former Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik (22,000 copies). In regard to the question of who reads these autobiographies, and hence their political influence, some political editors and commentators, such as Harald Stanghelle, suggest that a defining characteristic is to have a good story, that is well-told and is talked about by the "man in the street" such that the story is spread (Lygre, 2013). Stanghelle also argues that such stories must resonate with people outside the political party.

According to one critical review of Listhaug's autobiography, "She is only concerned with her own audience" (Rydje, 2018). The book is not intended to engage with critique from commentators, political opponents or attempt to convince any potential voters who are ambivalent about her politics, according to the review. "The language reminds one of a blog rather than literature" (Rydje, 2018). Despite the derision, one can gauge the significance of these autobiographies by the number of copies sold with commentators, the politically interested and the party faithful among those who purchase these books. Listhaug's book ranked second in the bestselling list of *Bokforhandlerforeningen* (13,400 copies) in 2018.

Such was the demand that a new edition was published with a total of 18,400 copies within two weeks (*Sunnmørsposten*, 2018).

It is significant that a right-wing political party has risen in recent years to become the third largest party in Norway in 2013 and is a coalition partner in the current government given that Norway has been ranked number one in the United Nations Human Development since 2001 (except for 2007 and 2008) (UN Development Programme, 2018). This discounts an economic explanation behind the rise of populism. It is argued that the machinations behind this surge are better approximated through the writings of cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall (2007, 2017, 2017b) and his discourse on race and difference.

Methodology

As a paradigm of research, Cresswell & Poth (2007) state that educators such as Clandinin and Connelly first perceived the potential inherent in autobiographical analysis and offered rigorous critique and relevance of this genre to the field of education. Part of the salience of narrative or autobiographical analysis is the “undisturbed”, intimate and authentic setting from which researchers extract data. Other advantages include the fact that autobiographies need no transcription or ethical approval as they already are in the public domain (Ravenek, 2017). While autobiographical writing goes as far back antiquity, it is only in the last few decades that it has become a “distinct genre of literary research that is an essential component for examining critical debates and controversies of a range of concepts including ‘authorship, selfhood, representation and the division between fact and fiction’” (Anderson, 2001, p. 1).

This study is interested in the manner in which populist politicians seek to frame the multicultural in their autobiographies. As politicians, whose career prospects are entwined with the degree to which they successfully sway the electorate to identify with their ideology, their autobiographical writings represent what Eakin (2008, p. 148) has aptly called “the art of the future”. As such, populist autobiography can usefully be perceived as a mode of political campaigning where the reader ought not to expect a factual, retrospective account of the lives of public figures, but discursive, strategic positioning with an eye on the corridors of power.

Researching autobiographies obviously encounters some challenges. Decisions must be made about which populist politicians’ autobiographies to include, what to do when a book/s is missing themes the researcher needs for purposes of comparison and the inability to interview the authors in further probing issues (Ravenek, 2017). In coding themes, questions such as what they say about the emergence of a multicultural Norway were salient. The four populist

politicians selected are among the most influential in the Progress Party. Below, a brief rationale is forwarded for the selection of the four autobiographies in this study. It is clear that they are not fringe elements with no influence in the country, but central political figures with high-level government portfolios and several responsibilities. All translations from Norwegian to English are the author's.

Carl I. Hagen (born 1944) is considered the true architect behind the colossal rise of the Progress Party from 1978 to 2006. He has held the prestigious office of Vice-President of the *Storting* or Norwegian Parliament between 2005 - 2009. During this period, the party has gone from being, in his own words, "leprous" (Hagen, 2007), to the third largest today. His autobiography is entitled *Honestly Speaking: Memoirs 1944 – 2007* (2007) and is 561 pages long.

Per Sandberg (born 1960) has held a string of high-powered positions, such as Minister of Fisheries (2015-2018) and member of the Norwegian Parliament since 1997. His tenure as Minister of Fisheries was cut short "after breaching security protocol during a holiday to Iran last month with his Iranian-born girlfriend" (BBC, 2018). In 2003, he is quoted as stating, "... different races, religions and cultures should not mix if we are to have a harmonious society in Norway" (Utrop, 2003). His autobiography, *Against My Will: Clarification of a Political Life* (2013) is 448 pages long.

Christian Tybring-Gjedde (born 1963) has been a senior civil servant, is currently a member of the Norwegian parliament since 2005, and headed the Oslo chapter of the Progress Party between 2010 and 2014. His book is anomalous in that it reads more like a xenophobic tirade against immigration, the media and elites whom he alleges undermine Norwegian values rather than a chronological retrospective reflection. The aforementioned conspiracy allegation is evident in the title of his 229- page book, *While the Orchestra Continued to Play* (2014), comparing Norway to the sinking *Titanic*, while the elites entertain themselves.

A fourth autobiography included in this study is that of Sylvi Listhaug (born 1977). Sylvi has held several important posts, such as Minister of Agriculture and Food (2013-2015), Norway's first Minister of Immigration and Integration (2015 - 2018) and Minister of Justice, Public Security and Immigration. Currently, she is Minister for the Elderly and Public Health and First Deputy Leader of the Progress Party, and is seen as a likely successor to Siv Jensen as party leader. She had to step down as Minister of Justice in 2018 after posting a message on her *Facebook* page alleging that the Norwegian Labor party is of the opinion that the rights of

terrorists are more important than the nation's security. The Labor party, which was the main target of Anders Behring Breivik in the 2011 Utøya terrorist massacre, took this calumny very seriously and galvanized sufficient cross-party support to bring down the coalition government in a vote of no confidence. This was avoided when Sylvi Listhaug decided to step down. Her autobiography is entitled *Where Others Keep Silent* (2018) and is 251 pages long.

Findings

Carl I. Hagen (2007)

They [the electorate] saw that immigrants often had an entirely different attitude and behavior than that which is normal in Norway, and that their integration into the Norwegian society does not function (Hagen, 2007, p. 140).

In addition, our Sami policy received publicity. The context was that Tana municipality [in the extreme northeastern county of Finnmark] had passed a resolution stating that the Sami curriculum would form the basis for all teaching in school, including ethnic Norwegian children. The Progress Party's position was simply that everyone in Norway as much as possible should be treated equally. We therefore wished to shut down the Sami Parliament. The principle was actually the same as that behind the old apartheid system in South Africa. A minority would rule over a majority with another ethnicity (Hagen, 2007, p. 298, 299).

The national conference meeting adopted the resolution that teachers' wages should be contingent upon their pedagogic abilities to implement a good learning environment in the class and pupils' exam results, in other words, reward efficient teachers more than the less efficient ones or the useless ones (Hagen, 2007, p. 324, 325)

We also advocated a system that penalizes parents who do not ensure their children born in Norway speak Norwegian before starting school. I thought it was a very sensible proposition, and if it had been implemented, would have contributed to a better integration policy at an earlier stage (Hagen, 2007, p. 325).

In the first citation, Hagen (2007) is persuaded that immigrants are so different from what the electorate considers "normal" Norwegian behavior, that attempts to integrate them are futile. There is clearly a sense of stasis underpinning Hagen's views towards integration of immigrants in Norway. In the second citation, the Progress Party condemns the very existence of the Sami Parliament and publicly calls for its closure. The Sami Parliament was established to safeguard the rights of this historically oppressed national minority in Norway and finds parallels in, for instance, Canada's *Indigenous Services Canada* (Government of Canada, 2019) created to empower First Nations, Inuit and Métis. As such, Hagen's conflation of the Sami parliament with apartheid in South Africa is a gross distortion of history.

In the penultimate citation, Hagen brandishes his neoliberal credentials in advocating monetary rewards for teachers and testing regimes convinced this would enhance academic achievement. This, to his mind, would weed out the “useless” teachers. Finally, the neoliberal faith in the redemptive power of “law and order” (the Progress Party has often styled itself the “law and order” party) is once again palpable in Hagen’s call to penalize immigrant parents who apparently impede their children’s acquisition of Norwegian. This last point contradicts the earlier deterministic view that immigrants’ “integration into the Norwegian society does not function”. Nevertheless, it is apparent to the reader that such propositions aimed at better integration are vacuous assertions given that Hagen publicly cited the following statements, albeit from the writings of another prominent Norwegian public figure: “Only a society without ethnic minorities is a society in harmony” and “racism increases with the square root of minorities” (Hagen, 2007, p. 303).

Per Sandberg (2018)

Those responsible for the politics in parliament in the period I have been there will in a few years have to explain to our children and their children why they failed to take responsibility. Someone is gambling carelessly with Norway’s future (Sandberg, 2018, p. 201).

When we in addition allow extreme forces to use the educational institutions to recruit youth for Islam, it is not difficult to see that this will go wrong (Sandberg, 2018, p. 202).

How many come with an education that can land them a job directly here in Norway? How many have to learn Norwegian first? How much of this education do we actually need in Norway? Every time a non-western immigrant comes to Norway, the state and taxpayers shoulder a future net cost of 4.1 million kroner [roughly half a million USD]. These figures destroy the myth and lie that immigration has been or is profitable for Norway (Sandberg, 2018, p. 206).

When the husband comes to Norway, the girl’s education is wasted because she will stay at home, produce children and care for her in-laws (Sandberg, 2018, p. 213).

Sandberg’s (2018) memoir is peppered with xenophobic pronouncements. To his mind, the immigration policy pursued during his time in parliament will bequeath a conflict-filled future fuelled by ethnic tensions and will jeopardize Norway’s future. Furthermore, any linkage between education and immigrants is a poisoned chalice, according to him: immigrants are waiting to be recruited by radical Muslims at Norwegian educational institutions and any education they bring with them is of no value to Norway. It is obvious to the reader that “immigrant” is synonymous with non-westerners and “Muslims” in particular. On the bottom

rung of the hierarchy of subjugation, as envisioned by the likes of Sandberg, is the Muslim female who apparently disinvests herself of her education and is sacrificed on the altar of the extended family. One calls to mind Gayatri Spivak's (2006) subaltern and the manner in which western criticism constructs the Third World Woman as distilled in the phrase "White men are saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak, 2006, p. 33).

Christian Tybring-Gjedde (2014)

An ethnic Norwegian can in the meantime never become multicultural. There are so many prejudices in the term that in reality it means a person who is not ethnic Norwegian and does not have his origin from a western country. This could include illiterates from Mogadishu or Islamists from Islamabad. Both are multicultural. And multicultural is as we know is better than monocultural (Tybring-Gjedde, 2014, p. 129).

It is alleged that non-western immigrants struggle to enter the labor market, and that Norwegian companies overlook their competence ... It is seldom made clear that private firms have an overarching interest to safeguard. They must make money. There is therefore no incentive for a private company not to employ the best-qualified applicant, regardless of sexual orientation, gender or ethnicity (Tybring-Gjedde, 2014, p. 131, 132).

Pupils in Norwegian primary and secondary school should not be taught in the so-called mother tongue, but Norwegian. Change the Education Act [*Opplæringsloven*] to make it mandatory to learn the Norwegian language (Tybring-Gjedde, 2014, p. 264).

Immigrants must uproot themselves from their countries of origin and plant them in Norway. They must put the past behind them and look forward. Immigrants must want to be a part of us (Tybring-Gjedde, 2014, p. 268).

In his writings, Tybring-Gjedde denigrates the term multicultural. He frames the term as one that is exclusive and discriminatory against the majority, understood as white, ethnic Norwegians. He seeks to delegitimize multicultural by coupling it with the crude and reductionist "illiterates from Mogadishu and Islamist from Islamabad". In doing so, he glosses over the fact that the term has traditionally encompassed white feminists and the LGBT community, the majority of whom are white. In the next citation, the neoliberal convictions of the Progress Party are once again on exhibit. The underlying argument is that if non-western immigrants have the best qualification, private firms will no doubt hire them. Tybring-Gjedde refuses to countenance the several examples in the Norwegian media over the years where ethnic Norwegians were preferred over their equally qualified non-white counterparts in the job market. His statements appear to be inspired by a social Darwinist, survival of the fittest worldview.

In proscribing and calling for the expunging of the right to mother tongue education, he nullifies the prodigious research findings that underpin the salient role of mother tongue education in supporting target language acquisition and overall academic proficiency (Cummins, 2000; Ramirez, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 1995). The last citation leaves the reader in no doubt about the Progress Party's assimilationist mindset. Employing metaphors from gardening, Tybring-Gjedde takes it upon himself to demand that immigrants uproot themselves from their countries of origin and plant themselves in Norwegian soil. The degree to which Norwegian soil is hospitable towards and accommodates this agrarian relocation is not fleshed out. Populism by definition is willfully oblivious to such complexities. The author's own research among Norwegian youth from non-western backgrounds demonstrates a sense of conflicted belonging brought on by episodes of direct racism - e.g. authorities denying military conscription to Norwegian students with backgrounds from Iraq, Afghanistan etc. - and xenophobic statements in the media by members of the Progress Party, to name a few. The students would enroll in schools where the majority-minority configuration would be reversed, what we called a "Third space of belonging" (Thomas et al., 2016).

Sylvi Listhaug (2018)

Listhaug's autobiography weaponizes statistics with the aim of delegitimizing immigrants and Muslims in particular.

- I have said that Knut Arild Hareide [former Chairman of the Christian Democrats party] "licks the backs of imams" in a radio debate during the election in 2017. It was not a good expression, and I could have chosen other words ... Worst of all was when the Christian Democrats Deputy leader, Kjell Ingolf Ropstad, said in the election in 2017 that 10,000 to 15,000 new Muslims in the country was not problematic, given that secular Norwegians threaten Christian values. That is an absurd logic, and one needs to just visit vulnerable districts in Oslo, such as Mortensrud or Haugenstua, so one can observe that Norwegian and Christian values are under pressure (p. 149).
- Immigration will cost us more than 60 billion Kroners annually in 2060 (p. 64).
- Half of those who receive social help in Norway have immigrant backgrounds ... and individuals from immigrant backgrounds comprise 43 per cent of those in poverty (p. 65).
- One example of this is how first and second generation immigrants in Sweden comprise 17 and 5 per cent of the population respectively, but account for 53 per cent of all longer prison sentences, 54 per cent of the unemployed and 60 per cent of those receiving social help (p. 65).
- In 2017, ca. 20, 000 immigrants came to Norway; the majority through family reunion ... Family reunion has become the backdoor into Norway, which makes it possible for those who came here first to bring in many family members without having a job or being able to care for them (p. 97).

- I am not the only one skeptical to a development in which Norwegians will in the long run become a minority in their own land, as researcher Asle Toje has shown (p. 93).

There is a not-so-subtle allegation that Muslim immigrants are lazy in contrast to “Norwegian, Christian values” with echoes of a Weberian Protestant ethic under threat. Furthermore, crime is racialized as a foreign import now threatening “vulnerable” districts of Oslo, such as Haugenstua and Mortensrud. Listhaug and her fellow party members have recently made it a point to follow closely with statistics from Statistics Norway that monitor immigrants with the aim of “exposing” what so-called left-wing politicians are apparently concealing or tolerating. The last two candid citations reveal, however, that Listhaug fears becoming a minority in her own country. It is this fear of being supplanted by an ethnic and cultural “other” which appears to fuel her xenophobia.

Theoretical framework

The Jamaican-born, British sociologist, Stuart Hall (2017), understands racial discourse as a system for the representation of one of the great facts of human society, what he calls “the fact of difference” (Hall, 2017, p. 48). He goes on to state, “This is to understand race as a trope of ultimate, irreducible difference between cultures” (Hall, 2017, p. 48). Hall borrows the term a “chain of equivalences” from Ernesto Laclau to consider the manner in which hegemonic forces wed together diverse strands of unrelated issues, across time and history, to discursively construct a particular representation of reality. Nature and culture are juxtaposed to produce what Marx called:

“the naturalization effect” that arises when discourses about culture and history, which are variable across space, time and circumstances – and, which, because they are socially variable, are thus amenable to change – come to represent themselves as warranted, guaranteed in place, and hence permanent, fixed, unmovable, an transhistorical by virtue of nature” (Hall, 2017, p. 58).

The “chain of equivalences” that Hall forwards as a framework in understanding race as a floating signifier is germane in shedding light on the Progress Party’s views in their autobiographies. Their statements clearly arise from a poorly concealed belief to the effect that immigrants – i.e. non-western ones – possess cultures not susceptible to change, and hence unassimilable. In this sense, culture translates into “nature”. In addition, market forces are valorised and absolved of responsibility for structural inequalities that may disadvantage immigrants. A system of monetary remunerations for “efficient” teachers is a case in point. In his co-authored book, *Policing the Crisis* (1978), Hall researched the machinations behind the

construction of the term “mugging” and the manner in which it became a synecdoche for deviance and crime exploited for political purposes by neoliberal forces in Britain. According to Hall (1978), a sense of moral panic and breakdown of social order was created by the media, and Margaret Thatcher in particular, that scapegoated youth from Caribbean backgrounds. Hall writes, “Even today, the market/free enterprise/private property discourse persists cheek by jowl with older conservative attachments to nation, racial homogeneity, Empire and tradition” (Hall, 2011, p. 713). Hall’s (1978, 2011) observations are germane with respect to populist politicians’ strategies in Norway. Indeed, several of them profusely praise Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher; Carl I. Hagen calls them “strong role models” (p. 84) and mentions policies gleaned from the economist Milton Friedman (p. 84). Further back, the aforementioned party’s founder, Anders Lange, warned against an “invasion of Jews” in Norway and supported South Africa’s apartheid regime until his death in 1974 (Møllersen, 2017). Hence it comes as no surprise that the party racializes crime and then positions itself as the “law and order” party that is strong on crime – what Hall calls “authoritarian populism” (Hall, 2011, p. 713).

Finally, one can add the Progress Party’s unflinching faith in the power of “law and order” to drill desirable values – understood as “Norwegian” values – into the deviant immigrants. The three strains outlined - essentialised immigrant cultures, market forces and law and order, give expression to Hall’s (2017) chain of equivalences, which are discursively conflated to produce the immigrant as the “other”.

In addition to the “chain of equivalences” described above, Hall was also concerned with the manner in which globalization had a dislocating effect on national and tribal identities. According to Hall (2017, p. 103), “Such space-time compressions, or disjunctions of distances and temporalities, are among the most significant features of globalization with a direct bearing on questions of identity and culture”. These dislocating forces have rendered identity increasingly “homeless”, Hall (2017, p. 109) contends. Commensurate with this analysis, this study argues that the increasing fragmentation and proliferation of differences triggered by globalization has spawned terrains of contestation in which culture has become the ground zero of this conflict, a terrain which populists such as the Progress Party seek to monopolize. Hall presciently broached the contemporary rise of populism half a century ago:

Since cultural diversity is, increasingly, the fate of the modern world, and ethnic absolutism a regressive feature of late-modernity, the greatest danger now arises from forms of national and cultural identity – new or old – which attempt to secure *their* identity by adopting closed versions of culture or community and by the refusal to

engage ... with the difficult problems that arise from trying to live with difference. The capacity to *live with difference* is, in my view, the coming question of the twenty-first century (Hall, 1993, p. 361).

Hall (2007, p. 151) further argues that “multiculturalism is a peculiar kind of way of trying to manage the problems which globalization created”. In his “multicultural question”, Hall (2007, p. 150, 151), asks how people from different cultures, backgrounds, languages, religious beliefs and a host of other diverging ways of being, who are pitted together in the same symbolic worlds, can coexist harmoniously. While acknowledging the commonalities we share, Hall nevertheless points to the dissimilar historical trajectories that produce individuals. “I can’t pretend to be you. I don’t know your experience. I can’t live life from inside your head. So our living together must depend on a trade-off, a process of translation” (Hall, 2007, p. 151). This “trade-off” is encapsulated in Hall’s question, “If I give up my burka will you give up your union jack?” (Hall, 2007, p. 152). Unfortunately, and as the statements in the autobiographies of populists evince, difference is to be eradicated, not discussed or negotiated.

The impossibility of reifying identity is the theme that underpins Hall’s own autobiography with the oxymoronic title *Familiar Stranger* (2017b). In it he reflects over his arrival in Britain from Jamaica in the 1950s and the ambiguity induced by his British passport which declared him to be a “subject of – and so subject to – the British Empire and Crown” (Hall, 2017b, p. 14). That race is a floating signifier can be gauged from the fact that the designation “Black” was not something yet coined at the time. It was discursively constructed or, as Hall puts it:

In my case (although it surprises people when I say it), black as a personal identity had to wait for decolonization, the Alabama bus boycott, the Notting Hill riots, US Civil Rights, Martin Luther King’s “I have a Dream”, Sharpeville, Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Angela Davis, and then later, in the 1970s, black resistance politics in Britain, Rock Against Racism, roots music, reggae, Bob Marley ... (Hall, 2017b, 16).

Discussion

Hagen’s (2007, p. 140) utterances are clearly not aimed at exploring ways of building bridges with minorities from non-western countries in Norway. As was previously mentioned in the findings, he claims to speak for the electorate who believe “that immigrants often had an entirely different attitude and behavior than that which is normal in Norway, and that their integration into the Norwegian society does not function” (Hagen, 2007, p. 140). Employing Hall’s (2017, p. 48) “fact of difference”, it is obvious that Hagen secretes a particular racial

discourse that understands “normal” as signifying white, ethnic Norwegians alone. In such a discourse, the majority from minority backgrounds who are law-abiding and productive members of society are willfully ignored in favor of a tiny, ill-adjusted few who are made to represent the entire minority population. It is in the interstices of such distortions that Hall’s understanding of race as a “trope of ultimate, irreducible difference between cultures” (Hall, 2017, p. 48) is apt.

The machinations of populism, where aberrations are passed off as “authoritative” representations of the majority, are once again evident in Sandberg’s pronouncement: “When we in addition allow extreme forces to use the educational institutions to recruit youth for Islam, it is not difficult to see that this will go wrong” (Sandberg, 2018, p. 202). One detects what Hall refers to as the “chain of equivalences” in Sandberg’s modus operandi: unrelated issues are weaved together to construct a pseudo narrative or what Marx has called “the naturalization effect” (Hall, 2017, p. 58). The information he divulges adroitly skirts around factual issues, such as who these “extreme forces” are, which educational institutions they have infiltrated and the numbers involved. The objective is to sustain a sense of gloom and doom until the multicultural is put beyond the pale. One must keep in mind that populist Norwegian politicians such as Sandberg are not fringe figures, but was until recently Minister of Fisheries and deputy leader of the Progress Party.

Hall’s (2017, p. 58) “chain of equivalences” is once again germane in unravelling Hagen’s denouncement of the Sami Parliament which he compares to apartheid in the old South Africa (Hagen, 2007, p. 298, 299). Scher (2014, pp. 328-347) outlines some cornerstone policies of apartheid enacted by South Africa’s Prime Minister D. F. Malan’s government in 1948: the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949; the Immorality Act of 1950 prohibiting sexual relations between white and black people; the Group Areas Act of 1950 making residential separation between the races compulsory; the race-based separation of public facilities enshrined in the Separate Amenities Acts of 1953 and the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which Hendrik Verwoerd justified on the basis that,

It served no useful purpose to teach a black child a curriculum that was traditionally European. He went on to say that it would be unnecessary and even absurd to teach a black child mathematics, because he would never use it in practice (Scher, 2014, p. 333).

In light of the above, Hagen’s comparison of the Sami Parliament and education curriculum to apartheid in South Africa is perverse. The Sami have never attained anything close to the

totalitarian powers the Afrikaners did. Of note is also the fact that all the autobiographies of the politicians in this study extol the virtues of neoliberals such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher while failing to acknowledge that these politicians persistently opposed the United Nations adoption of trade sanctions against apartheid South Africa (Verhoef, 2014, p. 475). The “chain of equivalences” carefully selects and juxtaposes unrelated historical events (e.g. Sami education act and apartheid) which are in turn racially weaponized to distil a particular discourse amenable to populist objectives.

Tybring-Gjedde (2014, p. 264) advocates the proscription of mother-tongue education in the belief that this will augment first language acquisition – Norwegian in this case. This contradicts the findings of scholars in the field of bilingual education, such as Cummin’s (2000, p. 191) “Common Underlying Proficiency” (CUP) hypothesis that, among others, demonstrates the “interdependence of concepts, skills and linguistic knowledge that makes transfer possible”. Cummins warns that the verbal skills of children learning a new language may often appear conversationally fluent but betray underlying academic weaknesses. To his mind, a minimum of about five years (and frequently much longer) is required for such children to catch up with native-speakers in academic aspects of the language.

[...] this hypothesis suggests that a child’s second-language competence is partly dependent on the level of competence already achieved in the first language. That is, the more developed the first language is, the easier it will be to develop the second language.” (Del Valle, p. 2003, p. 223).

It appears, from the writings of Tybring-Gjedde (2014), that a serious consideration of academic findings – e.g. bilingual education – is antithetical to his anti-multicultural animus. There is no desire whatsoever to adopt an empathetic outlook reminiscent of Hall’s statement: “I can’t pretend to be you. I don’t know your experience. I can’t live life from inside your head. So our living together must depend on a trade-off, a process of translation” (Hall, 2007, p. 151). Rather than acknowledge the need for finding sustainable inter-ethnic and intercultural solutions to the problems that globalization has thrown up, as Hall puts it, Tybring-Gjedde decrees an ultimatum: “Immigrants must uproot themselves from their countries of origin and plant them in Norway. They must put the past behind them and look forward. Immigrants must want to be a part of us” (Tybring-Gjedde, 2014, p. 268). In addition, in absolving the markets of any responsibility for the high rates of unemployment among immigrants, he lends succor to Halls’ observation about neoliberalism persisting cheek by jowl with older conservative attachments to nation, racial homogeneity, Empire and tradition (Hall, 2011, p. 713).

Listhaug's rhetoric is aimed at portraying a Norwegian, Christian society that has capitulated to an alien religion encapsulated in the vulgar "lick the back of imams". According to her, the fact that Christian Democrat leaders, such as Knut Arild Hareide and Kjell Ingof Ropstad, are apparently the ones who "lick the back of imams", Christian voters ought to abandon the Christian Democrats and throw in their lot with her party, which clearly portrays itself as the champion of a Christian Norway facing an existential threat. Listhaug, commensurate with Hall's "chain of equivalence" marshals diverse issues – Christian leaders appeasing imams, the neoliberal penchant for calculating the cost of immigration, poverty among immigrants, crime among immigrants and the fear of ethnic Norwegians becoming a minority in Norway to delegitimize difference. Müller (2017, p. 3) reminds us that populists are not only anti-elitist, but also always anti-pluralist. He goes on to identify populists as representing a symbolic idea of "the people" which is not empirical, but moral.

The idea of the single, homogeneous, authentic people is a fantasy; as the philosopher Jürgen Habermas once put it, "the people" can only appear in the plural. And it's a dangerous fantasy, because populists do not just thrive on conflict and encourage polarization; they also treat their political opponents as "enemies of the people" and seek to exclude them altogether (Müller, 2017, p. 4).

Both in her Facebook post where she alleged the Labor Party prioritized the rights of terrorists more than the Norwegian people, and in the loaded caricature of Christian Democrat leaders "licking the back of imams", Listhaug exhibits classic populist characteristics of moral superiority, anti-pluralism and the exclusive claim to represent the "real" will of the people that Müller (2017) highlights. Habermas' people, who can only appear in the plural, is silenced in Listhaug's autobiography. Her book can only see the emergence of a multicultural Norway in terms of race, crime, conflict, capitulation, economic cost and as an existential threat. Müller (2017, p. 23) also identifies "producerism" as another feature of populism. Political morality is understood in terms of work and corruption. "Populists pit the pure, innocent, always hardworking people against a corrupt elite who do not really work" (Müller, 2017, p. 23). It is significant that all four politicians' autobiographies in this study go to great lengths to portray themselves as hard-working, self-made individuals who received no handouts from the state in contrast to recent immigrants who, to quote Listhaug: "Half of those who receive social help in Norway have immigrant backgrounds".

Of particular concern in Listhaug's autobiography is the manner in which she consistently and discursively employs what Hall (2017) has called the "naturalization effect". "Immigrants"

are coterminous with “Muslims” and “non-westerners”. These are presented as “permanent, fixed, unmovable, and transhistorical by virtue of nature” (Hall, 2017, p. 58). Hall is fearful of the capacity for violence that such racial discourse can engender. This is salient in a country which has witnessed two major attacks by individuals motivated by hatred towards Muslims in the last decade. A serendipitous intervention by Mosque attendees thwarted the last attack in Bærum just outside of Oslo by Norwegian Philip Manshaus this August (2019).

Hall (2017, p. 103) reminds us that one particular feature of this era or disjuncture of globalization is the manner in which identity, culture and belonging are destabilized and rendered increasingly “homeless”. This is crystallized in Sandberg’s statement, “Those responsible for the politics in parliament in the period I have been there will in a few years have to explain to our children and their children why they failed to take responsibility. Someone is gambling carelessly with Norway’s future” (Sandberg, 2018, p. 201). Tvedt (2017, p. 112) analyses the seismic demographic shift in Norway from 1963 (when the population was 3.5 million) to 2013 when the immigrant population grew from 3,500 to 850,000 in 50 years. The proportion of ethnic Norwegians declined from 99.9% in 1963 to about 75% in 2016. According to Tvedt (2017, p. 112), “And in no other country was the proportion of the majority population reduced as fast as in Norway”. Clearly, the growing research into the field of global migration indicates that the trends will only continue for years to come. Given this trend, it is argued that there is an even greater need for multicultural educators to lock horns and seek to shape the debate rather than abdicate the public space to populist fear mongering. It goes without saying that statements such as “When the husband comes to Norway, the girl’s education is wasted because she will stay at home, produce children and care for her in-laws” (Sandberg, 2018, p. 213) can only serve to dehumanize and polarize. Multicultural education, according to Hall, is an attempt to explore ways of negotiating the challenges thrown up by globalization - Hall’s “capacity to live with difference” which he identified as “the coming question of the twenty-first century” (Hall, 1993, p. 361).

Conclusion

This study has considered some of the arguments against the multicultural as marshalled by members of the right wing, populist party, The Progress Party, as crystallized in their autobiographies. The findings evince the use of crude, often racist, language aimed at delegitimizing the multicultural. While purporting to offer constructive solutions to integrate immigrants with respect to employment, the need to learn Norwegian and the rights of immigrant females, populist politicians’ statements expose sentiments that in reality seek to

purge Norway of the presence of non-ethnic Norwegians – a wistful yearning to turn back the clock to a pre-immigration Norway. This incongruity is evident in Hagen’s statement: “They [the electorate] saw that immigrants often had an entirely different attitude and behaviour than that which is normal in Norway, and that their integration into the Norwegian society does not function” (Hagen, 2007, p. 140). This is commensurate with Hall’s observation that race is often perceived as a “trope of ultimate, irreducible difference between cultures” (Hall, 2017, p. 48).

In an era where the multicultural is coming under sustained attacks due to the rise of populism worldwide, we argue that a scrutiny of populist, anti-multicultural discourse unpacks a precarious digression that must be confronted and defeated before the serious work of exploring ways of living together with differences can begin. As Hall (2007) reminds us, globalization has created a world with a cornucopia of ethnicities and cultures living in close proximity – multicultural education is one viable way to grapple with the challenges that globalization has thrown up. There is nothing in the autobiographies of populists that engages constructively with the growing phenomenon of what Blommaert (2013) has referred to as the “architecture of superdiversity” – districts in western cities with recent arrivals of immigrants with multiple-origins, socio-economically differentiated, from diverse origins and transnationally connected. Not least, there is a need for multicultural theorizing to go beyond the traditional focus on traditional minorities to incorporate the reconfiguration of power relations – whether real or felt – as a result of shifting demographics (e.g. decline of white populations) in some western countries (Kaufmann, 2018).

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