

Populism in Norwegian Office



Bachelor thesis in political science

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Abstract

In this paper I discuss the phenomenon of populism and how successful the right-wing populist party FRP have been in their time in office. The first section of the paper is dedicated to introducing populism and the ways in which populists can influence policy both in and out of office. In the second section of the paper I specifically look at the Norwegian populist party “FRP” and try to decipher how successful they have been in office.

Foreword

I would like to thank the family members and friends that helped me through the loss of a loved one during the time of writing this thesis. Mathias Kvia. 11th of May 2021.

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1. Introduction

The topic of this paper is populism, and the main question I would like to address is “How successful have the right-wing populist party Fremskrittspartiet “the progress party”, (which I will from now on refer to as FRP) been?” The paper also touches on the various ways populist parties can have political success outside of office as well. The way I have chosen to define political success in this paper is through the moving of policies in the desired direction, both in terms of outcome and law-making.

With the recent emergence of right-wing populism, I believe we ought to better understand populist parties and how they wield political power. I chose FRP as my research case because of mainly two reasons, firstly the fact that I am one of the few people in the world that speak Norwegian gives me unique insight into the Norwegian political sphere, secondly Norway is one of the best countries in the world to live in, for example in 2020 Norway score as rank 1 on the human development index (United Nations development programme, 2020). The fact that Norway is such a good country to reside in makes it even more interesting to understand its populist party. The case of FRP ended very recently with FRP choosing to leave government in January 2020. Did FRP achieve the political goals they set out with when they were elected into office? Have their political views and policies had real impact on Norwegian society? These are some of questions this paper aims to shed some light on.

2. Theory and Literature

Populism is an interesting topic within political science, the scope of research regarding populism has increased immensely over the past years. To give an example: *between 2000 and 2015, the Web of Science database included only 95 papers and books on average per year with the word populism and populist in the title. In 2016 that number increased to 266, in 2017 488 and 2018 615* (Noury & Roland, 2020). We might ask ourselves why this sudden increase in interest? There are several theories on why populism has risen in popularity, some credit Trump and the 2016 US election, some credit Brexit, some the Syrian refugee crisis of 2015, some the Great recession of 2008 (Noury & Roland, 2020), (Berman, 2020).

Some the backlash against globalism in general (Naoi, 2020), (Berman, 2020). And lastly some credit the rise of social media and the prominence of the fake news phenomenon (Gerbaudo, 2018).

These are all relatively speaking recent events. But populism itself is not new. The first political populist party can be found in the United States (the People's Party) founded in 1892. The party contested the ruling elites in the name of their constitution on behalf of the "people" (Urbinati, 2019). *This is thus the first instance of populism as a political movement that proposes itself as true representative of the people within a party system and government* (Urbinati, 2019).

Despite all the research, populism can still be quite hard to define as it is quite an ambiguous term. It has been described as an ideology, a political communication style, a project of political renewal and a political strategy (Noury & Roland, 2020). Another definition by Cas Mudde, where populism is defined as a "thin-centred" ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups "the pure people" versus the "corrupt elite", and which argues should be an expression of the general will of the people (Mudde, *The populist Zeitgeist*, 2004).

One of the reasons why we have seen an increase in populist parties recently if by populist we follow Mudde's definition of antagonistic groups, is the increase in immigration especially to western democracies, where sometimes cultures clash. A big part of populist rhetoric is that immigrants try to "force" their culture into their new country. An example of this kind of rhetoric is showcased by the former Norwegian populist party leader Siv Jensen, where she said *Det finnes en rekke eksempler på at begrepet "snikislamisering" er både korrekt og treffende.* (Jensen, 2021). Which essentially translates to "There are multiple examples where the term "sneakislamization" is both correct and fitting". This kind of rhetoric can be quite problematic as it tends to be incorrect, while it also plays on emotions of fear and distrust of immigrants, especially those of cultures that differ from the western standard.

3. Methodology

This paper is to a certain extent based on literature and research done on the topic of populism, although with the research case being FRP and the recency of their time in public

office, the paper cannot solely rely on already existing literature. Which means the paper also focuses on statistical data regarding the core policy tenets of FRP, such as immigration, elderly care, roads, and taxation & fees. In a paper such as this, perhaps the most crucial part is the process of gathering reliable information, both in terms of published research papers as well as statistical datasets. The way I approached this task was through reading and going over all relevant material I could find while also making sure the sources are reliable and peer reviewed. An additional aspect of the methodology was the selection of the most relevant sources, as I mentioned in the introduction of the paper, there is a lot of research on the topic of populism. Which meant part of the work was to phase out information that I found to be of less relevancy to the paper. If the scope of the paper was less limiting, there would of course be room to create an even better understanding of populism and its political parties. I also faced the problem of having to define the way in which I measure political success, the way I see it I had two choices, either through whether not the populists managed to get their policies across or through the improvement of living conditions of the people living under the populists' rule. As I mentioned in the introduction, I chose the former.

4. The Pillars of Populism

In this section of the paper I will try to identify and analyse the most common themes of populist parties, such as “bringing back the good old times” “making things simpler” and “defending the *true* people/culture/nation” (from external forces, like immigration, globalization and climate change). I also touch on voter ignorance and how voters interact with populism.

4.1 Voter ignorance and populism

When we hear the phrase “the good old times” in regard to populism, most of us will likely think of the sentence “make America great again”. Make America great again was the arguably the main slogan for Trump and the republican party during the 2016 election. Trump played on the feelings of the national myth and history. Whether America was in fact greater or better before isn't relevant to the slogan, it is only relevant that people *believe* it was greater before. More and more political scientists agree that elections aren't about logic and rational decision making, they are about emotions. I will borrow the words of professor and author Yuval Noah Harari to explain this. *You might object that people are asked “What*

*do you think?” rather than “What do you feel?”, but this is a common misconception. Referendums and elections are always about human feelings, not about human rationality. If democracy were a matter of rational decision-making, there would be absolutely no reason to give all people equal voting rights – or perhaps any voting rights. There is ample evidence that some people are far more knowledgeable and rational than others, certainly when it comes to specific economic and political questions. You might as well call a nationwide plebiscite to decide whether Einstein got his algebra right, or let passenger vote on which runway the pilot should land on.” (Harari, 2018, s. 45). If we accept this view that elections are no longer about what any given voter thinks, but rather *feels*, we can begin looking at populist parties in a new light. Populist parties are largely the best political parties to play on people’s emotions, in some sense they run more modern campaigns than traditional political parties. Traditionally political parties and political scientists followed in the footsteps of John Stuart Mill, in as far as engaging in politics makes one more virtuous, a better person and more knowledgeable. Jason Brennan makes the exact opposite argument in his book “Against Democracy”, he also argues that Mill would agree with him if he was alive today. His argument is built on the fact that we have several decades of information that shows people tend to become more hateful and ignorant when they engage in politics. This as I mentioned is something that populists have noticed and started playing to, in order to obtain votes and followers.*

4.2 Ambiguity and simplicity

“The simple life” is often something that populist parties strive to integrate as part of their political agenda, an example of this such as FRP which uses the slogan “En enklere hverdag” (Fremskrittspartiet, 2018) which translates to “A simpler weekday” Another example can be found in the Danish social democrat part, where they use the slogan “Det Danmark, du kender” (Socialdemokratiet, 2015) which translates to “The Denmark, you know”. I believe both examples refer to keeping things simple.

Mudde in his 2004 “The Populist Zeitgeist” describes two dominant interpretations of the term populism. The first one *A highly emotional and simplistic discourse that is directed at the “gut feelings” of the people. In more prosaic terminology, populists aim to crush the Gordian knot of modern politics with the sword of alleged simple solutions.* Mudde also makes a point out of the fact that it can be hard to empirically measure when something is “simplistic” rather than “serious”. Which makes it hard to correctly judge the “simple”

policies of populist parties. The second interpretation of populism, Mudde explains is used to describe opportunistic policies with the aim of quickly pleasing the voters before an election to “buy” their support. Rather than actually looking rationally for “the best option” the voters might buy into the promise of short-term personal gain. A common example is promising financial advantages to everyone without additional costs, or just general tax cuts. (Mudde, *The populist Zeitgeist*, 2004)

Brennan who I mentioned earlier, also argues a similar point where he proposed (Like Harari) that there are some *correct* answers to political questions, and that voters who do not spend time studying and understanding politics make the wrong choices and makes them lightly, based on short-sighted promises made (often by populist) politicians. Brennan holds that most people should not partake in political debates because there is no way the average person has time to intimately understand every nook and cranny of the political sphere. (Brennan, 2016) An example could be of how we should morally and ethically govern future biotechnology? Biotechnology along with topics such as universal basic income, wealth and income inequality, climate change and renewable energy are all very ambiguous topics. Ambiguity is one of the greatest enemies of populism, which is why populist politicians often try to simplify ambiguous problems. The reason is often to take power back from the elite and give it to the people, the problem is that the world is becoming more and more specialized and the average person cannot make educated decisions regarding myriad highly specialized problems.

Populist voters tend to be misinformed nationalists, but it's not to say that populist voters are stupid, they just realized the cost versus benefit of obtaining political information is not worth it for them. People usually seek political information for 2 reasons, either they enjoy learning and understanding the political landscape of the world, or they some sort of social pressure to be knowledgeable about politics. (Brennan, 2016) This social pressure can come in the form of work relationships, family ties or romantic relationships. Your co-workers, your partner or your mother might expect you to be politically informed, which in turn incentivises you to seek this information. Populist politicians play to this cost/benefit analysis as well, they recognize that advanced political information takes time and effort, they in turn as I mentioned above use this to conjure a simpler view of the world. Because of this, problems of great complexity that goes beyond the national borders are often portrayed as either fake, incorrect, something not to worry about or in the worst cases conspiracies by the elite used to scare and control people.

Lastly, non-populistic parties might present for example climate change as a real threat and problem, whereas a populist politician will tell you climate change isn't a problem you need worry about, which in turn somewhat absolves your own obligation to the environment. This feeling of absolution can be quite attractive for voters, especially voters that would rather focus on problems in their life as opposed to global issues.

5. Political Influence

How successful are right-wing populist parties at influencing policies? What are the mechanics available to them? Both outside and inside of office. How does mainstream parties respond? This is what chapter 5 aims to explore. Understanding political influence is crucial when trying to understand the impact of right-wing populists' parties.

5.1 Outside of political office

There are several ways that a political party can influence political decision-making. Right-wing populist parties often follow a strategy which involves increasing the salience of issues that are important to them, often by saying that the mainstream parties' politics are too weak on the given topic. The topic is usually immigration. A good way of understanding the influence of a rising populist party is through the lens of the way mainstream parties respond to a populist party. Established mainstream parties have 3 ways of responding to the rise of a populist party within their political sphere (Meguid, 2005).

The first strategy is to be dismissive towards them. The dismissive strategy essentially means just ignoring the populists. This usually only works if the issue the populist party is focused on is unimportant or a fleeting problem. The strategy might also work if the party is very new and likely to quickly fade away. However if one is to implement the dismissive strategy in the wrong circumstance, it means the established mainstream party simply gives up ownership on the issue(s) being raised by the populist party (Meguid, 2005).

The second strategy is to be adversarial towards the populist party. This involves showing clearly that you as a mainstream party oppose the populist party. This strategy can of course backfire, a gift that the established mainstream party gives their populist opponent by vociferously opposing them, is the fact that the salience on the issue(s) put forward by the populist party increases quite a lot. This for better or for worse will make the electorate focus on the policies of the populist party. Keeping the issue at the forefront of political debate will

also give another gift to the populist in as far as it will help strengthen the ownership that the populist party holds over the issue. This means that using the adversarial strategy can be quite dangerous to the established party, and that it should only be used if the established party is confident that they will not lose their voters. Berman also raises a theoretical situation that might occur when an established party oppose new populist parties. The theory says that a mainstream party could make an educated gamble in vociferously opposing the populist party in order to raise the salience on say immigration, in order to make it's opposing mainstream party lose more voters than what it would lose itself. For example, a left established mainstream party might indirectly help a right-wing populist party by constantly keeping the issue of immigration at the forefront of the political arena, in order to make anti-immigration voters leave a centre-right party for the populist newcomer (Berman, 2020). Berman also points out that this works the other way around with the issue of environmentalism on the left (Meguid, 2005) (Berman, 2020).

The third strategy is for the establishment to be accommodative towards the rising populist party. This strategy is most often used if the established mainstream party fear that the issue the populist party is bringing forward is something that a large part of the electorate is concerned with or is likely to be concerned with. Using this strategy requires established mainstream parties to move their own politics closer to or more in line with the populist party's politics. By doing this the mainstream party hopes to keep their own voters and limit defection to the populist party. Meguid mentions that this usually only works when a populist party is new and rising, once the party has achieved ownership on the issue it becomes very hard for the established party to change their policies to be more in line with the populist party without losing a lot of voters to the party, as they will be perceived as slow or less knowledgeable about political issues. Meguid also points out that there is some evidence that suggests that when established mainstream parties get out ahead of a rising populist party in such a way, the populist right parties tend to be less successful (Meguid, 2005).

Grzymala-Busse in her study of the rise of populism in Europe also focuses on the established mainstream parties and on their failures to properly follow these strategies and get out ahead of populist parties. *“Mainstream parties on both the centre-left and the centre-right have failed to represent constituencies, to articulate their needs, and to propose distinct policy solutions. The centre-left has abandoned its traditional social-policy commitments, and the centre-right has often failed to contain xenophobes and nativists. For voters these failures validated populist claims that the political status quo amounted to rule by a corrupt,*

self-serving elite cartel and that only radical solutions could ensure real representation of “the people”. (Grzymala-Busse, 2019)

With the emergent rise of social media populists have gained another very effective way of influencing policy mainly through direct communication with the electorate. This has been extremely prominent in the case of Donald Trump and his Twitter account. Gerbaudo sums up the relationship between social media and populism quite well: *On the one hand, the design of social media as self-publishing platforms where ordinary people can express themselves has provided a suitable venue for populist movements to rally anger against what they denounced as the “pro-establishment bias” of mainstream news media. On the other hand, the aggregative functionalities of social media, embedded in its algorithmic architecture and “filter bubble” effects, have allowed disgruntled individuals embracing ideas regarded as improper by liberals to find each other and form online crowds. These crowds have played a crucial role in supplying militant support for anti-establishment candidates* (Gerbaudo, 2018). What Gerbaudo essentially gets at is the fact that social media is a space where one can express oneself without being fully judged by the whole of society, and that it is a place where one can find likeminded individuals and form what is known as “echo chambers”. An echo chamber in this case is a place where the same ideas and views are regurgitated and reinforced through repetition. Gerbaudo also touches on the fact that these individuals tend to be disgruntled and have improper ideas, this means that if they didn’t find each other through social media their ideas might never have been large enough to form movements that can impact policy in their given country. These individuals might harbour ideas and political beliefs that are more extreme than that of the right-wing populists, but the right-wing populists’ policies still come the closest to that of their own, and if the right-wing populist party weren’t an option they have abstained completely from voting. This all leads to the theory that social media might have unlocked the door to a part of the electorate that previously never voted.

5.2 Inside of political office

When a right-wing populist party is elected into public office, they are very often a supporting party in a coalition. One of the most common coalitions that contain right-wing populist party is one formed by the leading conservative party where the conservative party might already have shifted some of their political rhetoric closer to that of the populist party,

such as taking a firmer stance on immigration or crime. These kind of coalitions gives the right-wing populist party a chance at pushing some of their policies through, although more often than not the policy comes out in a much lighter manner than what the rhetoric might suggest, this is usually because the coalition partner reins in the populist party.

Another key aspect to keep in mind while discussing right-wing populist parties in government is the fact that they are populists, they thrive on elections and the support of the people, which is two crucial parts of the democratic system. This leaves populism intertwined with democracy. Scholars of right-wing populist parties often perceive right-wing populist parties to be a big threat to democracy, but especially from cases we've seen of right-wing populism in government democracy still stands. Minkenberg's aptly summarized the impact of right-wing populist parties in office: *The "government of the people, by the people, for the people" is not at stake, but the concept of the "people" is* (Minkenberg, 2001). Minkenberg stresses that one of the most influential effects of the right-wing populists on European democracies has been the redefining of the people or rather the re-redefining of the people in the manner that they had always been defined in pre-multicultural society, as ethnically homogeneous (Mudde, Three decades of populist radical right parties in western europe: so what?, 2013).

5.3 What can we expect to find in the case of FRP?

Based on the theory of chapter 5, I suspect we can find strategies or cases that have helped increase the salience of the topics that are important to FRP such as Strict(er) immigration policy, safe eldercare, good hospitals, lower taxes and fees, and good roads (Fremskrittspartiet, 2021). These will also be the topics in which I try to analyse FRP's political success (Which I do in chapter 7). When taking into account that FRP's time in office did consist of a mostly 2 party coalition (2013-2018), where the other member was Høyre (the Norwegian conservative party). I suspect we can find examples of where the actual policy has been a lighter version of what FRP's rhetoric might suggest, due to Høyre reining them in a bit. Social media as mentioned is also a key aspect in today's political landscape. I do suspect we can find examples of FRP politicians or FRP's official social media accounts where the rhetoric is a bit harsher than what we can expect to see in a more formal setting. I also suspect some of the social media posts might be more directed at echo chambers of people that hold even more radical ideas, in order to try and obtain their support.

6. Measurements of success

The way in which I will try to measure the success of FRP is through the lens of political achievements such as either fully achieving a policy they have laid out or in the moving of policies towards the desired direction, both in terms of outcomes and law-making. One of the core issues of radical-right populist parties is immigration (Mudde, Three decades of populist radical right parties in western europe: so what?, 2013). Therefore, immigration will function as the main measurement of the success FRP as a major part of their rhetoric is directed at immigration policy.

7. The Case of “FRP”

FRP was founded April 8th, 1973 and has been growing since then. The party has always had populist tendencies such: as resistance to the established parties, anti-immigration policy, lesser interest in environmental issues and lower levels of taxation. As with most modern-day parties FRP also have a party program where we can find more in-depth examples of all their policies. Their current party program is called “prinsipp- og handlingsprogram” which translates to principle- and action program. If we look through it, we can find clear examples of populist policy. In their 2013-2017 policies program for example, there is a line under the immigration section that says “Det er grunn til å frykte at en fortsatt innvandring av asylsøkere, av bare tilnærmet det omfang som man har hatt i senere år, vil føre til alvorlige motsetninger mellom folkegrupper i Norge. Det er etisk uforsvarlig å ikke stramme inn denne innvandringen for å forebygge konflikter i det norske samfunn.” (FRP, 2013) This translates to *There is reason to fear that continuous immigration of asylum seekers like we have seen in the later years, will lead to dangerous differences between groups of people in Norway. It is unethical not to tighten this immigration to prevent conflicts in the Norwegian society.* This citation showcases clear and classic FRP policy, it plays mostly on fear, yet it seems to resonate with enough voters to put FRP into government.

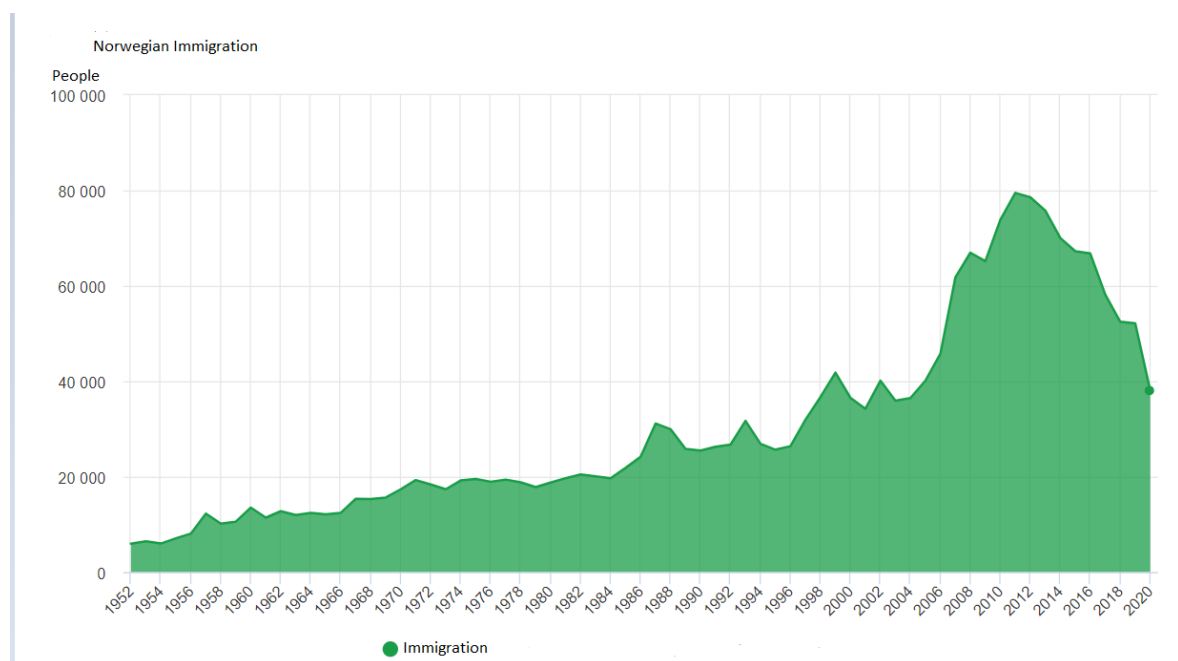
7.1 FRP in government

FRP's time in government stretched from October 2013 to January 2020, although they did not rule alone. From 2013 to 2018 the government consisted of the right-wing party “høyre” and FRP in 2018 the party “venstre” also entered government and in 2019 “kristelig folkeparti” joined the government, this meant from January 2019 to January 2020 the

Norwegian government consisted of 4 ruling parties. Where especially the policies of FRP and kristelig folkeparti clashed quite a bit. This means we can find most meaningful results of their policies from 2013 to 2018 where they only had one other party with them in government. The political ambitions of this coalition of Høyre and FRP can be found in writing in the “Sundvolden-plattformen” (Regjeringen, 2013).

7.2 Immigration

When analysing FRP’s success I will follow their own definition of which policy areas they care the most about, with the first one being immigration. As I mentioned FRP is a radical right-wing populist party with a large focus on immigration, if we look at immigration numbers from the last 70 years, but more specifically focus on the years in which FRP was in office (2013-2020), we can clearly see a sinking graph:



(Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2021)

Even though we had a global refugee crisis in 2015 the immigration numbers to Norway was still sinking, this clearly shows the impact of FRP in government. We can also take note of the fact that the graph started sinking in 2012, which is a year earlier than when FRP entered government, this could be the effect of indirect political power from FRP using some of the mechanics mentioned in chapter 5.1. Phillip Lutz mentions in his 2019 article that: *Despite electoral success of the radical right, the polices regulating the admission and integration*

of immigrants have tended to become more liberal over the last three decades (Lutz, 2019). I would like to point out that we have seen the opposite in Norway, yes, the last 3 decades have brought about liberal policy regarding immigration, but when the radical right entered office this turned around. Lutz is of course talking in broader aspects about several radical right populist parties across Europe, but I believe pointing out this turn in Norwegian policy makes a strong case for FRP's success as a radical right-wing populist party. We can also see the impact of FRP's policy in direct law-making. On June the 15th 2018 the government ratified changes in the "Introduction law". The changes are directed at asylum seekers, where the new version of the law states that asylum seekers over 16 years of age that are staying at a Norwegian asylum reception, have a duty to learn Norwegian and Norwegian culture (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018).

In chapter 5 I also mentioned the importance of social media when it comes to populist rhetoric. In 2018 there was a large debate around a political statement posted by Sylvi

Listhaug who at the time was the minister of justice. The post showed armed men with masks, and the text said, "AP thinks the rights of terrorists are more important than national security". The AP that Listhaug is referring to is the Norwegian labour party "Arbeiderpartiet" (Svaar, 2018). Listhaug herself said that her post was meant to spark debate about the proposition that FRP and Høyre gave to the parliament regarding citizenship of Norwegians that left to fight for ISIS. The proposal would let the government take away citizenship in case the person in question is deemed a national threat by the police (Helljesen, Strand, & Svaar, 2018). In accordance with Gerbaudo's theory of social media usage, we can view this post by Listhaug as an attempt at sparking the interest of individuals that hold disgruntled and improper political views, as well as rallying the support of right-wing echo chambers.

Another important thing to note regarding immigration is government decision that ultimately led to FRP leaving office. The question concerned a Norwegian woman who in 2013 travelled to Syria to fight for the Islamic caliphate ISIS. In 2019 she pleaded with Norwegian officials where she asked for help. The help was mostly directed at her children, especially her son who weighed 12 kilos at the age of 5. FRP refused to help the woman. Former (at the time current) party leader Siv Jensen said to the woman: *I have no sympathy for you. I think we should not even lift a finger in order to get you back* (Vege & Lilleås, 2019). The government at the time consisting of Høyre, FRP, Venstre and KRF

decided in October 2019 to allow the woman and her children to return home to Norway. She arrived in Norway on the 17th of January 2020 and on January the 20th Siv Jensen held a press conference where she said it is time to take FRP out of the government. Jensen's reasoning was FRP is unable to implement enough of its policies and that it is not worth the political losses to stay in office anymore (NRK, 2020).

If we view FRP's exit through the lens of Mudde's theory that coalition parties tend to rein in the populist party, I think we can see a case of FRP's coalition partners stepping too hard on the policies of FRP, so much so that FRP likely felt that the only option they had was to exit office.

7.3 Elderly care

The next policy area FRP mention as important to them is safe eldercare, the number of elderly people in Norway is increasing every year and with elderly people generally being more sceptical towards immigrants this is a good part of the electorate for FRP to focus part of their policy in order to get more voters. However, how successful have their eldercare policies been during their time in office? One of the more prolific policies that came up under the Høyre/FRP coalition regarding eldercare is the reform called "leve hele livet" (live your whole life). The reform started taking form in 2017 and was in May 2018 approved by parliament. The reform is aimed at improving the quality of life for the elderly in Norway, this is supposed to happen through a tighter fusion of the already existing healthcare system, so that there is less bureaucracy between the various healthcare institutions. The reform is also aimed at higher participation of the elderly, in such a way that they may choose their own care to a higher extent. The government also hopes that this will indirectly cause less elderly to stay at nursing homes but rather them choosing to stay in their own homes, but with more help there. This is more cost efficient for the government while also granting the elderly more dignity, says the reform (Regjeringen, 2017).

Healthcare Key Numbers				
		2019	Percentile Change	
			2018 - 2019	2015 - 2019
Homecare Services (Selected Services)	Users	31.12.		
Help with daily tasks (Home-help)		78 493	-0,8	-6,6
Healthcare Services At Home		163 231	3,6	12,7
User-controlled Personal Assistance		3 604	4,1	14,6
Care Support		10 213	0,6	5,0
Percent of inhabitants over 80 that also uses homecare services		30,0	-3,8	-9,1
Nursing Homes	Spots	31.12.		
Number of Spots in Total		39 466	-0,3	-0,5
Percent of Private Spots		9,5	-3,0	-14,2
Institutional Services	Inhabitants	31.12.		
Long-term Stay		32 105	-0,4	-4,3
Limited Stay		9 784	8,0	5,2

(Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2021)

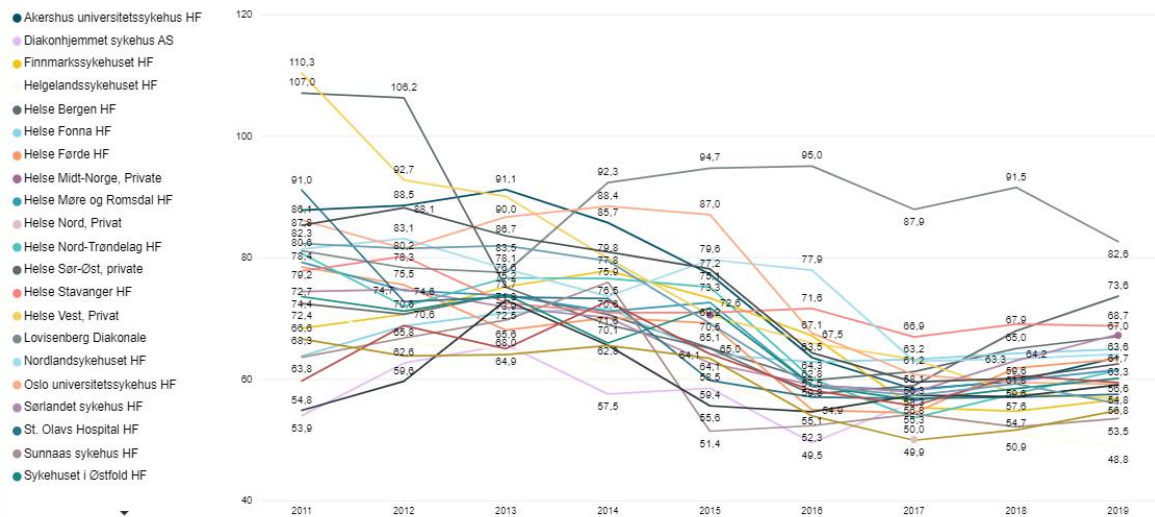
This graph shows the changes in the homecare and nursing home care. I have outlined 3 of the stats with red arrows, the first red arrow shows a 12,7% increase in homecare help from healthcare professionals from 2015-2019, this increased by 3,6% from 2018-2019 we can only attribute the 3,6% increase to the reform, whether this is due to the reform or if it is just following a previous trend is hard to say, but most likely it is due to a previous trend. The 2nd red arrow shows a 14,2% decrease in privately owned nursing homes. This is somewhat strange as both FRP and Høyre is largely in favour of privatisation of the healthcare system (along with most other national systems). The last red arrow points out an increase in limited time stays at nursing homes. This is most likely a direct impact of the policy of FRP and Høyre as they both prefer having less people stay in nursing homes. We can see that from 2015-2019 the increase was 5,2% and in 2018-2019 it was all of 8%. The 8% increase could be the result of the reform, but it could of course also just be as impact of the general policy of FRP and Høyre.

7.4 Hospitals and healthcare

The next platform FRP say is important to them is “good hospitals”. In order to measure whether not hospitals in Norway became “better” during FRP’s time in office I have chosen to look at several factors, the first factor is the number of authorisations of healthcare personnel, such as doctors, ambulance drivers, healthcare secretaries, nurses, psychologists and so on. For example, in 2013 there were 20747 authorisations of healthcare personnel done by the Norwegian health directorate, we can also note that most of them happened before Høyre and FRP took office in October, with the highest month being June. Since Høyre and FRP took office the average amount of authorisations dropped by 3593 per year

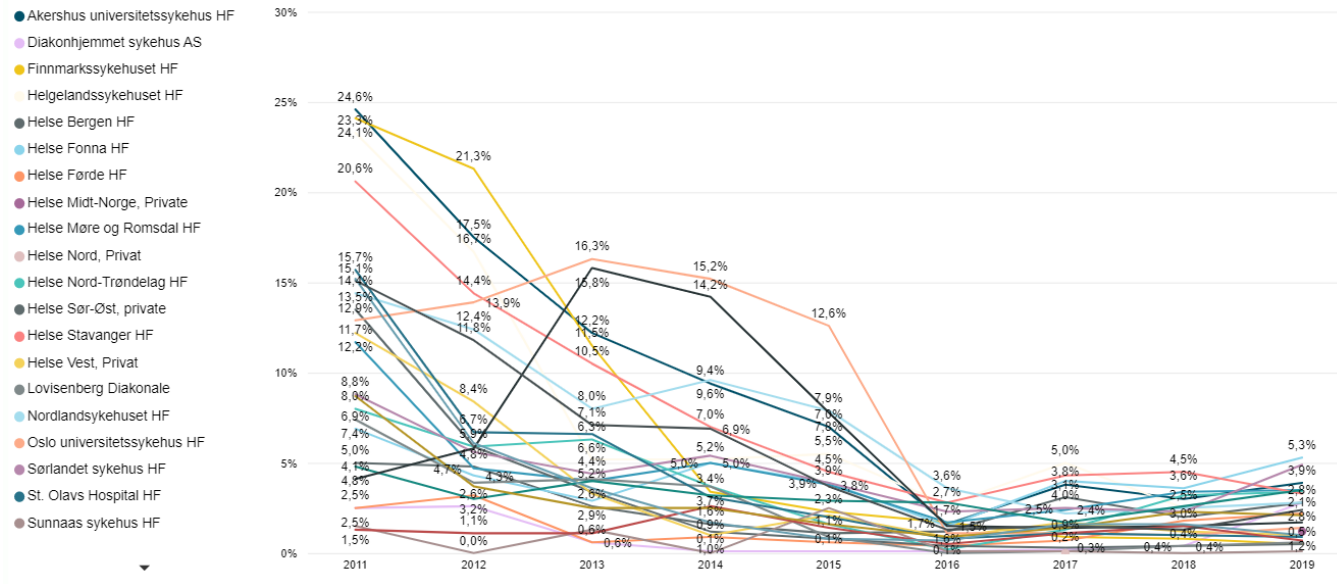
from 2014-2019 (Helsedirektoratet, 2019). This indicates that Høyre and FRP put less value on training and obtaining new healthcare personnel for the Norwegian healthcare system. I would argue that this negatively impacts the value of care that Norwegian patients get at hospitals as well as other healthcare institutions. It also indirectly helped cause the still ongoing general practitioner crisis (fastlege krisen), where municipalities are struggling to recruit doctors (Theie, Lind, Haugland, & Skogli, 2018).

Another momentum to consider is the amount of days that patients must wait to get a somatic (physical injuries) hospital spot, the following graph shows this in the form of average wait time (in days). As we can see since Høyre and FRP took office in 2013 the average wait time has generally trended downwards.



(Helsedirektoratet, 2020)

Another thing to consider when trying to understand how the policy of FRP has affected hospitals is through the violation of deadlines by healthcare institutions regarding patient care. The next graph will showcase a solid decrease in the percent of these deadline violations, which further strengthens the argument for FRP’s policy having a positive impact on the hospitals.



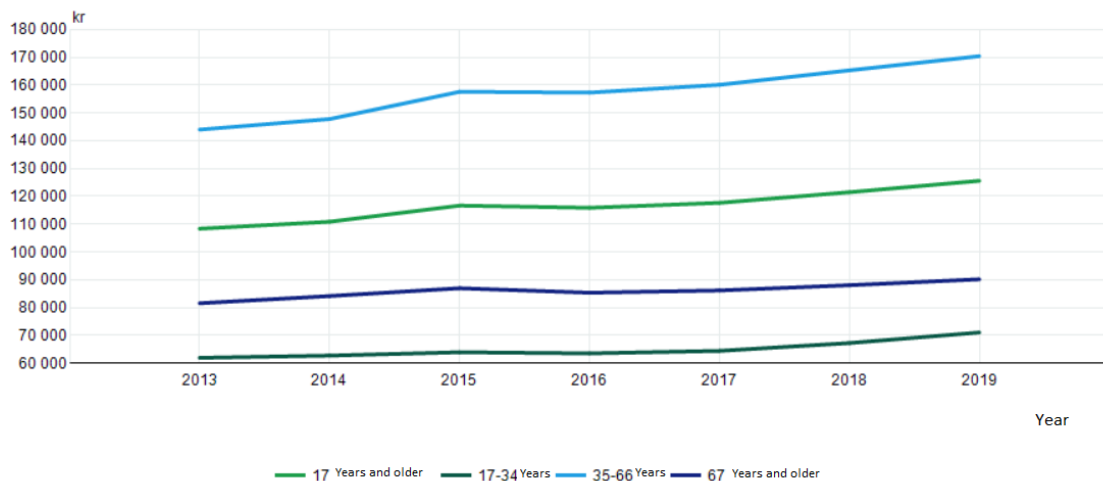
(Helsedirektoratet, 2020)

Overall FRP’s policy can be seen across the Norwegian healthcare system, which leads me to believe that they generally achieved their policy goals in this part of their political agenda. I do however think it is important to mention that medicine and healthcare are two rapidly growing fields in terms of research, which means that some of the credit given to FRP’s policies should be viewed through the lens of modern scientific progression.

7.5 Taxes and fees

Next up on FRP's list of primary policies are taxes and fees specifically lower taxes and fees. The lowering of taxes and fees are a very common political stance for radical right populist parties, and it usually helps them gain support in the short term. The following graph shows the average amount paid to taxes in Norwegian kroner per year divided into age groupings.

10941: Main postings from tax settlements for people 17 and older, after age and year. Gross margin, Average for everyone in Norwegian Kroner (kr).



(Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2021)

The starting year of the graph is 2013, which previously mentioned is also the year FRP took office. As we can see the graph slightly increases overtime, which means the average amount paid to taxes each year also increased, this graph is however not adjusted to represent changes in inflation. Although despite not being adjusted for inflation it is safe to conclude that taxation for the average citizen did not decrease under the reign of FRP.

Taxation however is not the only issue regarding the wallet average citizen, one of the core issues in the fees area for FRP has been road pricing (bomringer). Road pricing has been a large topic in Norway in the last couple of years as the government have implemented something called “bypakkene” (the city packages) which is an environment package that surrounds the big cities of Norway with road pricing stations. This means that if you wish to cross into the city with a regular car you will have to pay a fee. You will also have to pay on your way out again if you spend more than a set number of hours inside the city. In addition, there is also increased fees if you pass through the road pricing stations during peak hours

of traffic. This is usually between 07.00 to 09.00 and 15.00 to 17.00. There is currently also a reduced fee if you pass through in an electrical car. These new fees caused a lot of discontent in the population. Even to such an extent that there was a political party created whose purpose was to oppose the new road pricing policies (Folkeaksjonen nei til mer bompenger, 2020). The party has since grown and updated their policies to reflect politics outside of only road pricing, which only goes to show how many people that were truly upset with the road pricing output from the government.

The two most common arguments against these fees are that some people live in places where they must cross the road pricing stations just in order to get to a grocery store. The other strong argument is that this is a fee that directly impacts the poor a lot more than the rich. This is because as I mentioned that electrical cars may drive through for a lower fee (for some time it was also free). Generally, the wealthier a person is the higher is the chance the person owns an electrical car or possesses the means to obtain one without significant impact on personal economy. Most Norwegians do agree that electrical cars are desirable when it comes to environmental policies. For example the Norwegian “medborgerpanel” at the university of Bergen showed in an examination from 2018 that about 66% of Norwegians are positive towards electrical cars (Amundsen, 2018). However not everyone can afford to drive one and the people who can't afford it are therefore even more impacted by the road pricing stations. For example, an examination done by TNS Kantar on behalf of NAF (Norwegian Automobile Federation) showed that close to 40% of those with lowest income levels will face challenges with an increase in road pricing of under 500 kroner per month. The same examination showed that in the years of 2017-2019 the intake from road pricing increased by around 2,5 billion Norwegian kroner (Ryste, 2019).

If we unpack these arguments in the light of FRP we can see a failure in outputting policy that reflect their political goals. first of all, FRP's slogan is “an easier weekday” and having to deal with new road pricing systems does not make the weekday easier. Secondly the new road pricing system is something FRP has opposed for a long time, but while in government failed to stop. It also directly contradicts their policy of lowering taxation and fees, as the new road pricing system is a direct increase in fees for the average citizen.

7.6 Roads

Lastly FRP mention “good roads” as one of their core policy tenets. We can find signs of FRP’s influence in the national transport plan 2018-2029. This policy plan was developed in the years 2016-2017, meaning Høyre and FRP were alone in government when this plan was conceived. The plan shows a significant increase in planned budget spending across all of the transportation sector, but also on roads. The following image shows exactly this.

Road Purposes	35 100	44 669
Railway Purposes	18 272	26 578
Costal Management	1 485	2 644
Special Transport Measures etc.	1 806	3 445
New NTP-Measures	-	412
Sum of State Funds	56 663	77 748
Other Financing (Appropriations)	8 500	10 900

(Regjeringen, 2017)

The image shows the budget spending on transportation for 2017, and then planned budget for 2018 and onwards to 2029. The numbers are in the Norwegian currency for kroner, and in the millions, for example in 2017 the government spent 35 100 million kroner on roads and the planned budget in 2018 I 44 669 million kroner. This increase in spending on roads has sparked some research into the efficiency of these road projects, both “Transportøkonomisk institutt” and the “Concept-programme” at NTNU has concluded that a majority of road projects have been sub-optimal in accordance to cost benefit analysis’, especially when comparing Norwegian road projects to neighbouring countries Sweden and Denmark We must however take into account the Norwegian topography, which does account for *some* of the differences, however both rapports does also conclude that the spending has been reckless to a certain extent, they attribute this to Norwegian wealth and rushed spending by the government. There has also been very little follow-up documentation once the projects have been completed. (Halse & Fridstrøm, 2018) (Welde, Tveter, & Mork, 2020). Another thing that Welde, Tveter and Mork emphasises in their rapport is the fact that there is an absence of negative impact assessments in the official documents regarding the road projects. There is however a lot of mention of positive impacts such as: increased

tourism, linking regions together and expanding the labour market. In closing, the roads have gotten more funding. However, the cost to society has been needlessly large.

8. Conclusion

Has FRP been a successful right-wing populist party in Norwegian office? They served in office for 6 years 2 months and 20 days. That is quite a feat, and for first 4 years they served with only one other coalition partner, this means that FRP had a very good chance of getting their policies across both in terms of law-making and outcome. When looking over all the data I believe we can conclude that FRP has been quite successful as a populist party in office, especially when it comes to outcomes. Their attempts at law-making did sometimes get stifled such as the one mentioned in 6.2 regarding citizenship and national security. They did also suffer quite the disappointing outcome in terms of road pricing, especially when considering their strong position against increased road pricing fees. They did however succeed quite a lot with regards to hospitals, elder care, immigration, and roads. They successfully increased hospital efficiency especially in relation to waiting lines. They achieved the wanted outcome regarding elder care, through the increased usage of homecare. Which is one of the core tenets of the “leve hele livet” reform that they and Høyre implemented. FRP did also meet their goal in terms of achieving an increased road budget. Their time in office has had a noticeable impact on Norwegian society and I believe having societal impact ought to be a sign of success for any political party. On a last note, I will say that political success does not always mean that the policy is *good*, that would have to be the topic of a different thesis.

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