

# COSMOPOLITANS IN THE EUROPEAN PERIPHERY

The rise of a modern, Norwegian libertarian movement, 1980-2008

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History



**ABSTRACT:** While there have been studies, albeit few, treating the rise of neoliberalism in Norway, the parallel rise of a Norwegian libertarian movement, intersecting with the former in many aspects, has received less attention. Through a social network analysis (Plehwe) of this movement and a morphological language analysis (Freeden) of select actors' intellectual output, this article shifts the focus from large-scale structural changes to individual actors. I argue that that the Norwegian Progress Party's youth wing functioned as a hub for young, liberally inclined intellectuals in the 1980s and early 1990s, painting a drastic contrast to the present guise of this party.

**KEYWORDS:** libertarianism, neoliberalism, Norway, intellectual history



## Introduction

‘In short, old gods are decaying and “new” ideas have caught the wind.’ (Nordbakken 2001 [1980]: 8). With these words, the Norwegian economist and libertarian Lars Peder Nordbakken introduced a new monthly journal in 1980, *Ideer om frihet*. He was referring to the ostensible ‘decay’ of the social democratic hegemony of the post-war period and the new rise of so-called classical liberalism, or libertarianism – the beginning of what many today would call ‘the age of neoliberalism’. Nordbakken wished to create a point of contact for ‘freedom-loving people in [Norway].’ (ibid.: 7). Twenty-eight years later, he wrote:

However, we find something else; a variegated, uncoordinated, and dynamic generation of ideas – almost a spontaneous force powered by a plethora of diverse and independent thinkers and public intellectuals, without fixed loyalty to the practical and tactical everyday life of party politics. It is scarcely an exaggeration to claim that it is precisely this intellectual liberalism that, more than anything else, has contributed to rebuild and renew liberalism outside of mainstream politics (Nordbakken 2008: 68-69).

Over these almost thirty years, there had most certainly evolved a network of ‘freedom-loving’ libertarians in Norway, mirroring developments in many other Western countries, most prominent of which was the United States. Already in 1946, the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) – the first libertarian think tank in the US – was founded by Leonard Read. The post-war period also saw the rise of such prominent libertarians as Ayn Rand (despite rejecting the label herself), Murray Rothbard and Milton Friedman. In Norway, early post-war liberalism has been associated with such names as Trygve Hoff, a founding member of the Mont Pelerin Society (MPS) and the editor-in-chief of the business magazine *Farmand*, and the liberal information agency Libertas (see Langeteig 2020). However, there was not much room for such sentiments in the social-democratic Norway of the time, and they remained on the fringes of Norwegian society. Over the course of the 1970s, liberalism got new impetus, especially with the establishment of what was to become the Norwegian Progress Party (No. *Fremskrittspartiet*).

I propose that the Progress Party should be seen as the beginning of the modern Norwegian libertarian movement. First through a social network analysis and subsequently a morphological language analysis,

I ask: How did this movement evolve and develop from the early 1980s, when the libertarian youth wing of the Progress Party was gaining momentum, to c. 2008, when it had established itself as a force in Norwegian society and got its present organisational makeup? My assumption is that many of the young libertarians in Norway formed, or at least developed, their worldview in the Progress Party's Youth, of course after having joined the party due to a liberal or libertarian disposition. As such, it makes sense to speak of a Norwegian libertarian diaspora after the split in the Progress Party at the party conference in 1994 and the subsequent ousting of the libertarian wing. This diaspora and their intellectual heirs have been indispensable in the establishment and subsequent functioning of the libertarian think tank Civita and the reinvigoration of the now liberal-conservative magazine *Minerva*.

Before I flesh out my theoretical framework, I will provide a cursory overview of the most relevant prior research. The modern American libertarian movement has been studied in such works as Brian Doherty's comprehensive *Radicals for capitalism*, in which he shows how the modern American libertarian movement came to be in the middle of the twentieth century and how it has developed since (see also Nash 2006, especially for the American fusion of liberalism and conservatism). It has been, and continues to be, an underground movement that lacks direct influence in society and see itself as an embattled minority trying to educate the public. Doherty shows the diversity of the movement, giving attention to a plethora of names not necessarily familiar to laypeople – e.g., Leonard Read and Henry Hazlitt, author of *Economics in One Lesson*, an influential book among libertarians – but five still stand out because of their intellectual footprints on the movement, namely Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich August von Hayek (Austrian economics), Ayn Rand (objectivism), Milton Friedman (Chicago School of economics), and Murray Rothbard (anarcho-capitalism) (Doherty 2007: 8-15).

Similar studies have not been conducted with regards to a Norwegian libertarian movement, but the concept of neoliberalism has received some attention. In the anthology *Nyliberalisme – ideer og politisk virkelighet*, a number of political scientists attempt to 'operationalise' neoliberalism as an analytical term and through this lens analyse several sections of Norwegian society. They are concerned with the trend towards neoliberal reforms and political change – a kind of new consensus – but not necessarily the explicit followers of such ideas in Norway (Mydske, Claes, and Lie 2007: 11-21), i.e., those that I call libertarians in this article. Norwegian historian Ola Innset criticises the authors for conflating

neoliberalism and laissez-faire liberalism, making the concept less analytically useful (Innset 2020: 18-19). In *Markedsvendingen*, he emphasises the role of the Norwegian Labour Party (No. *Arbeiderpartiet*) in what he describes as ‘the turn towards the market’ that started at the end of the 1970s. As such, he rejects the idea of a Norwegian Margaret Thatcher or Ronald Reagan (ibid.: 126). He does not necessarily downplay the role of the Conservative governments of the early 1980s, which are understood to have accelerated the process, introducing new neoliberal policies, but seldom as an opposite to the Labour Party. Innset stresses that changes in the world economy made it impossible to maintain the social-democratic regulatory system, and that changes in the field of economics, due especially to the Chicago School, offered solutions to the problems therein (ibid.: 128). ‘The turn towards the market’ was, in other words, initiated by pragmatic politicians and not ideological neoliberals or libertarians. At the end of the decade, market economy was understood as realism and there was, as such, no alternative (ibid.: 144). Hence, a substantial part of the uniquely Norwegian development of liberal, or libertarian, ideas in the same period falls outside the scope of Innset’s narrative, notwithstanding instances where these actors are mentioned.

In particular, the Norwegian Progress Party cultivated libertarian ideas for a period in the 1980s and 1990s. However, studies of the political party tend to focus on its current populist guise, be it the transformation from anti-welfare libertarians to anti-immigrant populists or comparisons with other populist parties in contemporary Europe, but rarely on the actual libertarian period of the party (see Bjørklund 2003 and 2007). Similarly, Innset frames the Progress Party of the 1980s and early 1990s as followers of Milton Friedman’s simplified version of neoliberalism, i.e., suspicion of government. However, in his master’s thesis, Sindre Lunde Holbek sheds light on the intellectual treatment of ‘(neo-)liberal’ ideas that took place in the libertarian wing of the party in the period 1984–1994. His focus is primarily on the internal politics of the party as it appeared in their official newspaper, *Fremskritt*, and the conflicts between the libertarians and what he calls the ‘illiberal’ faction (cultural conservatives and populists) of the party (Holbek 2014: 31-32). The Progress Party of the 1980s attracted young, intellectually inclined libertarians who came to dominate the youth wing of the party, and Holbek’s emphasis is on the role that the Progress Party’s Youth played in the party’s policy development (ibid.:

39). He does not, however, necessarily focus on the internal logic of the libertarian faction of the party, as his emphasis is on the conflict.

## Theoretical framework and methodology

I treat the movement as a network and will conduct a simple historical social network analysis to make sense of the different actors and the organisations with which they are or have been affiliated, as well as to determine how they are connected and, equally important, not connected. In the introduction to *The Road from Mont Pèlerin*, German historian Dieter Plehwe presents a way to study and trace the development and evolution of neoliberalism through network analysis. Plehwe makes use of the Mont

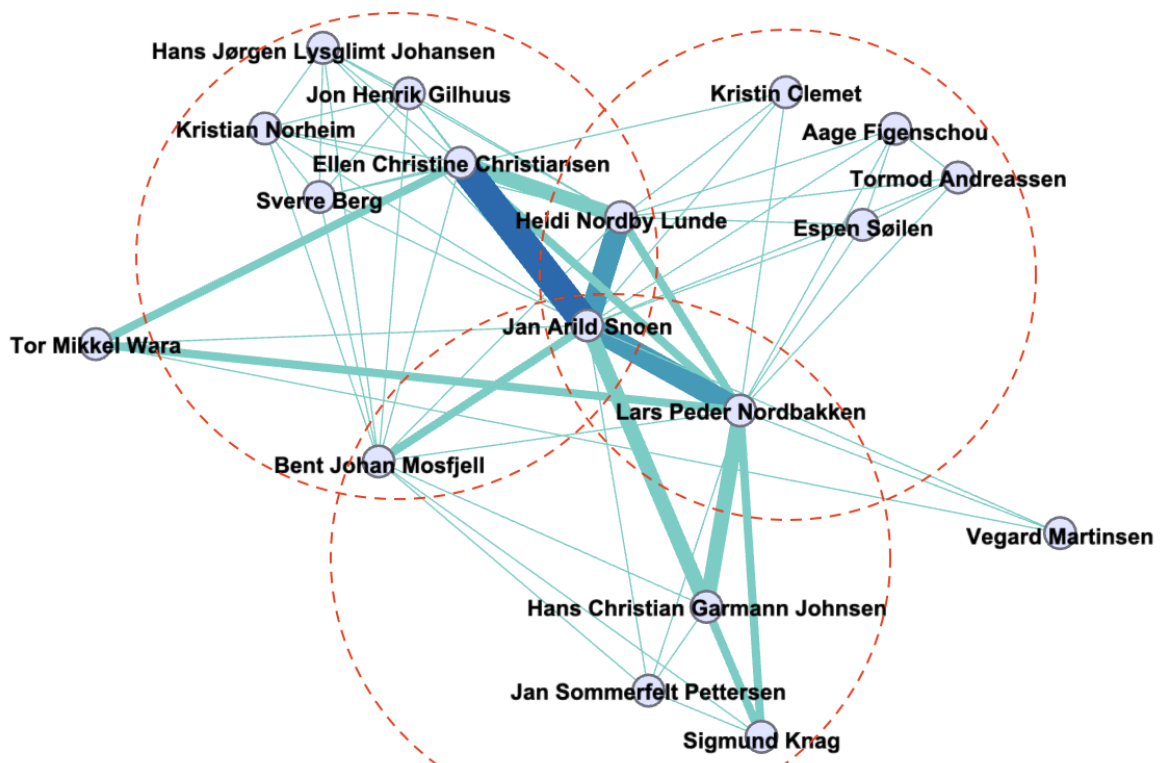


Figure 1: Simplified presentation of the network of the modern, Norwegian libertarian movement. The thicker the line, the more connections between the actors. The graph was made using the open-source software Gephi.

Pelerin Society (MPS) as well as a network of related neoliberal think tanks as a heuristic starting point to identify relevant actors, organisations, and institutions (Plehwe 2009: 4). Owing to its ‘novel structure of intellectual discourse’ that ‘[...] has been designed to advance and integrate various types of specialized knowledge within and across the confines of philosophy, academic research in economics, history, sociology, and applied policy knowledge in its various forms’, Plehwe claims that the MPS can ‘[...] serve

as a directory of organized neoliberalism [...]’ (ibid.: 5). Inspired by Plehwe’s method, I will make use of historical social network analysis to identify a libertarian network in Norway in which some actors have eventually ended up with connections to the MPS and related think tanks. The network consists mostly of people who had been central to, or had had prominent positions in, *Ideer om frihet*, the Free Democrats, and LIFO/Civita.

A simplified graph like this needs to have a few caveats. In this graph (see fig. 1), a connection is a formal relation between two actors that could entail exchange of ideas, etc., but not necessarily so, which means that their significance can be overstated. For instance, I deem Ellen Christine Christiansen less significant than Lars Peder Nordbakken, as her intellectual output is smaller and less relevant than his, despite her being, seemingly, as well-connected as he is. Moreover, a network like this would constantly be changing, actors making, losing, strengthening, and weakening connections over time. As such, it can only be understood as a heuristic, an overview of actors who have had the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas about the world, help each other financially, etc. A study not taking into consideration the history of the movement, focusing instead on its current guise, would necessarily look different.

Based on this network, I argue that the Progress Party’s Youth of the 1980s and early 1990s was central in the making of a modern libertarian movement in Norway, owing especially to the breadth of their involvement in other parts of the network, both during and after the ‘libertarian’ period. I have been able to select two nodes, or actors, as representatives of the movement that are well-connected, have been a part of it for a long time, and who have published extensively enough to make a diachronic analysis possible. These two are the already mentioned Lars Peder Nordbakken and Jan Arild Snoen. Making use of Michael Freeden’s morphological approach to the analysis of ideologies, I attempt to flesh out the development of the movement’s ideology through a selection of their publications in the libertarian journal *Ideer om frihet* and from the two think tanks the Progress Party’s Research Institute and Civita, spanning three decades.

Freeden’s approach takes as its premise the internal structure of ideologies by looking at the relationships between the concepts they contain (Freeden 2003: 51). According to Freeden, all ideologies arrange a set of concepts according to particular patterns, and these patterns determine how the concepts, as well as

the ideologies at large, are to be conceived. He distinguishes between three relative positions that a concept can have in an ideology: cores, adjacencies, and peripheries; although the distinction between the latter two can be difficult to discern with the small amount of material that I make use of in this article. In the core you find the key concepts that are indispensable to the cohesion of the ideology – concepts without which the ideology would cease to be that very ideology, e.g., liberalism without some concept of liberty (ibid.: 61). Adjacent concepts help reducing ambiguity surrounding the core and develop the core concepts in a more concrete direction while the peripheral concepts are more loosely connected and consequently more exposed to variation and change – temporally and geographically. At the same time the peripheral, and to a lesser extent the adjacent, concepts are important in making the ideologies tangible, as the main objective of ideologies is, ultimately, to gather support for some cause (ibid.: 62-63). The following section presents the making of the modern movement.

### The making of the movement

There are many organisations and people that could claim to be part of a Norwegian libertarian movement, and the story of this movement could certainly begin much earlier than what I have chosen to do in this article. For instance, both MPS and Libertas was founded already in 1947. The MPS in Switzerland by a group of libertarian scholars, and Libertas by major actors in the Norwegian business community. Libertas was originally meant to be a business organisation but was soon, following a scandal, restructured into a libertarian information agency. The MPS intended for their project of reinventing liberalism to be long-term, potentially spanning several decades (Plehwe 2009: 15), and although Libertas had a shorter-term agenda, the ideas and policies that was advocated by these organisations had marginal influence in the social-democratic Norway of the post-WWII period, notwithstanding a few cases in which Libertas had some influence in Norwegian politics (see Langeteige 2020). As such, it makes more sense to begin the story of the Norwegian libertarian movement in the 1970s when a transformation of the political landscape was under way – not only in Norway but in the whole Western world – in which these ideas were able to gain a foothold among a larger part of the Norwegian public (Sejersted 2011: 333-34).

A few months before the 1973 general election, the political agitator Anders Lange founded *Anders Lange's party for the severe lowering of taxes and duties* (ALP), renamed the Progress Party in 1978. Much to the surprise of the political class, the party received 5 percent of the votes and four seats in parliament. The party was, as the name clearly suggests, founded as an anti-establishment protest party against the paternalistic welfare state (No. *formynderstaten*) (Bjørklund 2003: 130-31). In 1983, the party's new leader Carl I. Hagen declared the party ideologically libertarian, and from 1984, the youth wing of the party came to play a significant role filling this ideological role in the party. The Progress Party's Youth was to become a major arena for young, Norwegian libertarians over the next decade, albeit marked by almost constant conflict with the opposing 'illiberal' faction of the party (Holbek 2014: 32). Despite the size of the 'illiberal' faction, the libertarians enjoyed a strong position in the party, owing to their high intellectual capacity, and were able to set the agenda in the official party newspaper *Fremskritt* (Ibid.: 33-34).

Snoen and Nordbakken were at the time active in the journal *Ideer om frihet*, which was a project initiated by Nordbakken and friends of his in 1979 during their university years at the Norwegian School of Economics (NHH) in Bergen (Knag 2001: 10-11). This journal was to exist until 2000 and featured many young intellectuals, including Hans Chr. Garmann Johnsen and Sigmund Knag. Because Snoen, who did not study at NHH, became a contributor to, and even editor of, *Ideer om frihet*, it is safe to assume that the Progress Party, and especially the youth wing, was an arena where Norwegian libertarians could meet, make connections, and exchange ideas. The journal's significance for the movement is confirmed by Norwegian historian Øystein Sørensen in his 1986 book *Ideer om frihet* (which has nothing to do with the journal as such) in which he recommends the journal for people interested in Norwegian libertarianism (Sørensen 1986: 114).

Together with party leader Hagen, the libertarians founded Norway's first think tank, the Progress Party's Institute for Policy Research<sup>1</sup> (FUI), in 1988 with Snoen as its leader and, until 1990, only staff. FUI only managed to produce and publish a small number of reports and studies before it was closed down in 1994. Most of them were produced by Snoen, but from 1990 other young intellectuals also contributed,

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<sup>1</sup> This is my own translation of *Fremskrittspartiets Utredningsinstitutt*.



including Johnsen, Knag and Nordbakken – all of whom were, as mentioned, contributors to *Ideer om frihet* as well. The libertarians were allowed to produce material that was uncompromisingly libertarian.

Despite the establishment of FUI, the libertarians' days in the party were now numbered. The libertarian wing of the party had influenced the manifesto a great deal before the 1985 general election, but at the 1989 party conference, many of their positions were indirectly rejected (ibid.: 43). Furthermore, the youth wing was principally for free immigration, which was at odds with the mother party that, starting with some unfortunate racist remarks during the 1985 election, was developing the anti-immigration platform that the party represents today (ibid.: 40). This also shows that it was in value-related questions that the libertarian wing and the 'illiberal' wing of the party, especially represented by the cultural conservatives, had the most disagreements – after all, the party at large still supported economic liberalism.

In 1992, Snoen chose to step down from his position at FUI on the grounds that he could not continue without the necessary trust in and respect for the party leadership (ibid.: 47). His departure severely weakened the libertarians' position in the party; they were, for instance, no longer able to set the agenda in *Fremskritt*, as they had done since 1984 where the cultural conservatives and populists now got more influence over which articles the newspaper chose to print. Finally, after a showdown with Hagen at the 1994 party conference, four libertarian members of the parliamentary group were expelled from the party, including deputy leader Ellen Wibe and Ellen Christine Christiansen, Snoen's wife. This marked the end of the Progress Party's libertarian era (ibid.: 50-53).

The four expelled members, who still had their seats in parliament, founded a libertarian political organisation, the Free Democrats (No. FRIdemokratene), and represented it in parliament until the next general election in 1997; the organisation had no other representatives elected to parliament before it disbanded in 2006 (Christensen 2006). However, despite the lack of direct political success, the organisation was central in organising initiatives for the libertarian movement in Norway, including the online newspaper *Liberaleren* and the libertarian bookshop Bauta Bøker that continued to operate, even after the organisation disbanded. Snoen said to the socialist newspaper *Klassekampen* in 2004 that the Free Democrats were '[...] real, pure 100 percent libertarians. The circle is not big, but it gathers people from the Conservative Party (No. *Høyre*), Progress Party, Liberal Party (No. *Venstre*), and independents.'

(Marsdal 2004). The organisation had eight leaders before it disbanded, including Ellen Christine Christiansen, Heidi Nordby Lunde, Bent Johan Mosfjell and Hans Jørgen Lysglimt Johansen. Snoen was also an active member of the organisation as the quote above shows; in 2004, he also received the organisation's Freedom prize (No. *FRIhetsprisen*). He received the prize for his 'many years of work for a free society', which, according to the Free Democrats, included his work as leader of the first think tank in Norway, i.e., FUI, where he 'established himself as the libertarian chief ideologue' in Norway, as well as his work as a writer, having written articles for numerous publications (Mosfjell 2004). It seems that the Free Democrats, especially after it stopped having members stand for elections, most of all was a place where a variety of libertarians were able to meet like-minded people to discuss everything from day-to-day issues to ideology and libertarian theory. Torbjørn Røe Isaksen, who held several ministerial positions in Erna Solberg's conservative governments from 2013 to 2021, was a member of the Free Democrats at the same time as being leader of the Conservative Party's Youth (Marsdal 2004).

In 2004, the libertarian think tank Civita was established with funds from the Liberal Research Institute (LIFO). LIFO had been established as a successor to Libertas in 1988, with all of Libertas' funds being transferred to the new organisation. Notwithstanding a magazine, *Kulturelt fremskritt*, the organisation has used their funds exclusively to finance other activities that are in keeping with their objective (LIFO n.d.), namely 'to strive for intellectual freedom, freedom of trade and commerce, and political freedom as a basis for a decent standard of living for all' (Nordbakken 2007: 4). Civita is a member of the Atlas Research Network in which a membership, according to Plehwe, is a litmus test to determine whether or not a think tank is neoliberal and has connections to the MPS (Plehwe 2009: 4). For instance, Nordbakken is an active member of the MPS (Nordbakken 2020). Former Conservative politician and minister Kristin Clemet has been managing the think tank since 2006. Nordbakken has been an active member of the think tank since it was established in 2004 and is also on LIFO's board together with Snoen, Lunde, and others. LIFO also funds the one-time conservative turned liberal-conservative magazine *Minerva* which today shares office space with Civita. Snoen was a co-founder of Civita and is today a regular writer at *Minerva*. Many libertarians of the diaspora from the Progress Party have later joined other liberal right-wing parties such as the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party. Nordbakken is a member of the Liberal Party (Venstre n.d.), Snoen joined the Conservative Party in the late 1990s

but left it again in 2016 (Torgersen, 2016), while Heidi Nordby Lunde has been a member of parliament for the same party since 2013 (Stortinget n.d.).

There are three clusters in the network presented in figure 1: one centred around the Free Democrats; one around LIFO and Civita; and one around *Ideer om frihet*. Jan Arild Snoen is the best-connected actor and is a part of all three clusters, and Nordbakken, despite not being present in all three clusters, is well-connected and has had a significant intellectual output. Most of the central actors mentioned in this article, who were active in the Progress Party's Youth, seem to have left politics after 1994 and are, as such, not visible in figure 1. The only four who can be confirmed, based on Holbek's account of the debates in *Fremskritt*, are Nordbakken, Snoen, Tor Mikkel Wara, and Vegard Martinsen; the latter two actors are only connected to each other and to the former two through the Progress Party's Youth. Wara also left politics in the 1990s, but has been kept in the network, as he re-entered politics in 2006 (Tvedt and Pettersen n.d.). Martinsen has, among other things, been leader both of Foreningen for Studium av Objektivismen, an association dedicated to Ayn Rand's philosophy, and of the Liberal People's Party, but these being minor organisations, he has been isolated from the other libertarians (Garvik n.d.). Of course, there might be, or most certainly are, connections I am not aware of that could alter the network in interesting ways. The following section will explore Norwegian libertarianism from the 1980s to the 2000s through texts written by Nordbakken and Snoen, who I deem the most representative actors of the libertarian network.

## Individuals, markets, diversity – Norwegian libertarianism?

In this section, I will analyse a selection of Jan Arild Snoen and Lars Peder Nordbakken's publications. I will treat them separately, starting with Nordbakken, before briefly discussing them together. As briefly touched upon above, Nordbakken wrote a short piece in the first issue of *Ideer om frihet*, named 'La ideene spres' ('Let the ideas spread'), in which he expressed a wish to establish a point of contact between like-minded libertarians in Norway. He advocated for an active dissemination of libertarian ideas, much in the spirit of Hayek and the MPS and the libertarian movement at large. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that he used the words 'libertarianisme' and 'libertarianistisk' as opposed to the more mainstream 'liberalisme' and 'liberalistisk' (Nordbakken 2001 [1980]). If not simply to be provocative,

by making use of the former pair, Nordbakken brings to mind the USA, and by also referencing libertarian actors either from the USA or associated with the American libertarian movement, such as Hayek, Mises, Friedman, Rothbard, Leonard Read and Israel Kirzner, it is clear where these ideas are to come from. Curiously enough, in many of his later writings, Nordbakken has made use of the latter pair instead.

In 1990, he co-wrote the report *Kultur uten politikk – Kamp for verdier i et fritt samfunn* (*Culture without politics – The struggle for values in a free society*) with Hans Chr. Garmann Johnsen and Sigmund Knag at FUI. In Nordbakken's contribution, he advocated for a liberal perspective on cultural policy, i.e., open, free from political control, voluntary and based on private efforts (Nordbakken 1990: 31). He accused the Norwegian government of pursuing a 'state expansionist cultural policy' in which personal freedom and responsibility were reduced in favour of state control, thus taking away personal engagement and private initiative (ibid.: 33). This limited diversity in the cultural sector (ibid.: 34), as artists were forced to appeal to those who could pay, i.e., the government, instead of the audience they were supposed to serve (ibid.: 36). He rejected the notion that private cultural production in a free society necessarily had to be profit-oriented and suggested giving '[...] control of the cultural sector back to individuals by virtue of their freedom to supply and demand cultural goods as individuals [...]' (ibid.: 36-37). As such, Nordbakken suggested that a market for the cultural sector based on consumer choice and voluntary trade would promote tolerance and respect for minorities, which could not be prioritised in a state-controlled system (ibid.: 38).

The year after, in 1991, he wrote an analysis at FUI named *Krisen i norsk økonomi* (*The crisis in the Norwegian economy*) in which he attempted to explain a downturn in growth in the Norwegian economy in the period 1987-1991, a period which saw strong growth in the international economy, and which Nordbakken claimed was the result of "systemic failure" that for a long time has characterised the economic policies that changing socialist and conservative governments have pursued.' (Nordbakken 1991: 3). It was 'a crisis of interventionism, made possible by political power over the central bank and characterised by strong inflationary monetary and credit policies in the preceding years. In other words, it was by no means a consequence of free market forces or inherent tendencies in a market-economic society (ibid.: 59). His solution, as well as his explanation, was explicitly based on Austrian economics

and included a stable monetary framework, i.e., a monetary system protected from political manipulation, and a vitalised supply side in the economy, by prioritising free markets, free trade, lower taxes, and a smaller public sector as well as liberal reforms that would enable a change in attitudes and values that would promote so-called material and cultural value creation (ibid.: 60).

In *Muligheter for alle (Opportunities for everyone)* published at Civita in 2006, Nordbakken discussed potential economic challenges, especially in relation to globalisation, and how future growth would depend on how the Norwegian economy would manage market dynamics, entrepreneurship, and innovation in an increasingly open and dynamic world (Nordbakken 2006: 12). According to Nordbakken, the Norwegian economy was driven by innovation and its productivity, and to achieve economic growth, growth in productivity was needed. This could be achieved through three areas within the framework of a liberal market economy: competition and market dynamics, innovation and productive creativity, and institutions and values (ibid.: 16). These values included '[...] liberality, toleration, independence, civilian courage, and the will to take personal responsibility.' (ibid.: 251). Values was also a recurring topic in Snoen's publications.

In 1989, Snoen published the report *Privatisering av kommunale tjenester (Privatisation of municipal services)* at the Progress Party's Research Institute in which he argued that '[...] private management is significantly cheaper than having the public sector do it.' (Snoen 1989: 4). The report was meant to be a general introduction to '[...] the wave of privatisation we are witnessing today and its practical results.' (ibid.: 5). In the report he refers to privatisation as a relatively new term at the time, associated particularly with Margaret Thatcher's policies in the United Kingdom, and based on public choice theory and its study of bureaucracy, invoking such names as Gordon Tullock and James M. Buchanan, but curiously enough not William Niskanen, despite discussing the budget-maximising model (see Niskanen 1973). He argued that through its incentives, the private sector could more efficiently manage municipal services through competition on the market (Snoen 1989a: 8-9). The same year, Snoen also published a report on the privatisation of airports in Norway. In this report, *Privat flyplass (Private airport)* his main argument was that building a new main airport would involve significant risk, and by letting private actors handle it, avoid risking the taxpayers' money (Snoen 1989b: 5, 55).

In a 1999 article in *Ideer om frihet*, Snoen attempted to explain the difference and points of intersection between liberalism and conservatism. The article implicitly criticised the current developments in the Progress Party, and, more importantly, justified him joining the Conservative Party, which he described as liberal conservative. The criticism in the article was not aimed at the latter, but rather at the Christian Democrats (No. *Kristelig Folkeparti*), the Centre Party (No. *Senterpartiet*) and of course the Progress Party (Snoen 2001 [1999]: 207-8). By focusing on liberalism versus another ideology, the article clearly fleshed out Snoen's understanding of liberalism. According to Snoen, the fundamental principles of liberalism were the freedom of the individual (both politically and economically), democracy, and the rule of law. Liberalism had a favourable attitude to change (through trial and error and with a lot of diversity), was driven by individual choices and based on meritocracy and not inherited privileges. Liberalism promoted voluntary communities (not an atomised society) that individuals chose to enter themselves. This was in opposition to conservative, involuntary 'automatic communities', e.g., neighbourhood, family, class, nation, and gender, which Snoen described as 'tribalist', and which was the reason for opposition to immigration and immigrants. Furthermore, liberalism and conservatism agreed in their opposition to value pluralism but not on which values that were important. According to Snoen, libertarians supported a few values that made a free society possible, i.e., respect for life, property, and liberal freedoms. Lastly, the market was inherently moral, as it was based on voluntariness (ibid.: 208-12).

Snoen was editor of and main contributor to the 2004 book *Åpen verden: et forsvar for globaliseringen* (*Open world: a defence of globalisation*) at Civita. His motivation for writing it was '[...] to create a counterbalance to the very much one-sidedly negative picture of globalisation that many hold by presenting the best and newest of the extensive research on the topic.' (Snoen 2004: 7). Snoen challenged the fact that the critics of globalisation embraced 'cultural globalisation', i.e., the spread of 'Western' ideas such as democracy, human rights, free speech, environmental protection, and opposition to discrimination based on gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, and so on, but rejected (global) economic integration. Snoen claimed, conversely, that the two were necessarily connected – you could not have the one without the other (ibid.: 162-93). 'There are degrees of globalisation, and nation-states have great freedom in choosing what they wish to take part in, as long as they are willing to pay the price, for example in the form of lower economic growth or reduced opportunity for innovation and

technological development.’ (ibid.: 197). A world with less globalisation, i.e., liberal market economy, would be a world in which states got more power at the expense of the individual, a less democratic world, a less diverse world, and more corrupt and perhaps even polluted world (ibid.: 207).

Although these are different types of texts, from practical reports to philosophical and ideological exegeses, albeit always with intentions of advocating or explaining a libertarian perspective, as a basis, they say that the individual was the most important unit in a free society based on an open market in which participation had to be voluntary; these concepts stayed the same throughout their publications, either explicitly or implicitly, and should thus be understood as core concepts. Snoen also posited that democracy and rule of law were fundamental principles of liberalism and must, as such, likewise necessarily be understood as core concepts. Diversity was understood as a positive phenomenon and was, among other things, viewed in connection with globalisation and immigration, but also culture, fostering tolerance and respect for minorities. These more value-based concepts can be understood as adjacent and were clearly understood by Nordbakken and Snoen to foster the necessary culture for a libertarian society. These socially libertarian arguments, if you will, were of course accompanied by economically libertarian arguments, based on competition, innovation, privatisation, property rights, choice, and so on, which also takes an adjacent position. Especially Snoen seems to have advocated for ideas and values that stand in stark contrast to the anti-immigrant sentiment of the current Progress Party, but also Nordbakken, despite his obvious focus on economic issues, focused on such values as toleration and diversity in most of his works. Nordbakken and Snoen represent a Norwegian libertarianism that embraces the economic as well as the social aspects of the ideology and challenges the idea that libertarianism is a right-wing doctrine (van der Vossen 2019). However, as Doherty’s book on the American Libertarian movement shows, and my network analysis suggests, the movement is immensely diverse and has gone in many different directions, some progressive, some moderate, and others reactionary and perhaps even dangerous (see Tromp 2018).

## Conclusion

In this article I have shed light on the making of the modern, Norwegian libertarian movement. The story of this movement started in 1973 with the establishment of ALP, continued in the Progress Party

and the introduction of the youth wing and its ideological approach to libertarianism. In the Progress Party's Youth, despite constant conflict with the other wings of the party, young libertarians were able to exchange ideas and make connections with other like-minded people. At the same time as the libertarians' hold on the Progress Party was beginning to diminish, the old, infamous stronghold of libertarianism in Norway, Libertas, renewed itself under their new name LIFO. Several actors in the libertarian diaspora from the Progress Party later obtained positions at LIFO and the LIFO-financed libertarian think tank Civita, which has great influence in Norwegian society today and has shaken off the bad reputation that once surrounded Libertas, and the liberal-conservative magazine *Minerva*. Developing a populist, anti-immigrant platform, the Progress Party became uninhabitable for the ideologically pure libertarians. They are today for all intents and purposes independents in the mainstream political landscape but not necessarily on the fringes, influencing politics and policies in other ways.

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