

Andreas Haraldstad

Between Tradition and Modernity

The Use and Understanding of the Concept of
Democracy in 1848 in Norway

Master's thesis in History with Teacher Education

Supervisor: Anne Engelst Nørgaard

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Faculty of Humanities
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Abstract

This thesis examines the uses and understandings of the concept of democracy amongst Norwegian elites in 1848. The concept changed meaning and gained new connotations in the 19th century. Multiple studies have traced this development in various European countries. However, no conceptual history of democracy has been written about Norway. The thesis aims to remedy this by providing a snapshot of how the concept was used and understood in 1848, a year which marked an important shift in the use of the concept in many countries. The source material is the major Norwegian newspapers of the time, *Den Norske Rigstidende* and *Morgenbladet*, representing respectively, the civil servant establishment and the farmer opposition. In addition, it also looks at *Drammens Adresse*, edited by Marcus Thrane, a sort of "proto-socialist" who would go on to found Norwegian worker's association movements. The research indicates that the Opposition and establishment both still operated within a traditional discourse of democracy as a constituent part of a mixed system, while Thrane, as a representative of the more radical intellectual currents of the time represented a more radical, and for us contemporary, view of democracy as a governing system linked to universal suffrage - a "pure democracy".

Sammendrag

Denne masteravhandlingen tar for seg bruken og forståelsen av demokratibegrepet blant den norske eliten i 1848. Tidligere studier har pekt på hvordan begrepet endret mening i ulike europeiske land i løpet av 1800-tallet. Imidlertid har ingen undersøkt dette i detalj i Norge. Avhandlingens mål er å rette opp i dette ved å gi et stillbilde av hvordan begrepet ble brukt og forstått i 1848, et år som førte til betydelige endringer i begrepsbruken i mange europeiske land. Kildematerialet er de norske avisene *Den Norske Rigstidende* og *Morgenbladet*, som representerer henholdsvis de regjerende embetsmennene og bondeopposisjonen. Videre ser den på *Drammens Adresse*. Denne avisen ble høsten 1848 redigert av Marcus Thrane, en slags “proto-sosialist” og grunnleggeren av en rekke arbeiderforeninger. Undersøkelsen av avisene indikerer at både etablissementet og opposisjonen fortsatt hovedsakelig forstod begrepet som en bestanddel i en blandet forfatning, sammen med de to andre begrepene monarki og aristokrati. Thrane derimot, som en slags norsk representant for de mer radikale strømningene i Europa, uttrykte en forståelse som ligner mer på den vi har i dag, hvor begrepet er koblet til allmenn stemmerett, som han kalte “det rene demokrati”.

Preface

Det føles veldig rart å endelig sitte her og sette punktum for det som nå har vært 7,5 år og 420 studiepoeng med studier. Gjennom dette studiet har jeg opplevd så mye. Rent fysisk har det tatt meg fra Trondheims gater til Berkeleys avenyer, fra Ghanas strender til Indias fjelltopper. Om mulig har den mentale reisen vært enda lengre. Historie er et vakkert fag som lar deg leve et liv langt utenom ditt eget. Du får oppdage fremmede verdener, spennende ideer og utfordrende perspektiver. Jeg har ikke lenger tall på hvor mange intellektuelle besettelser faget har gitt meg. At jeg til slutt endte opp med å skrive en master om demokratiutvikling i 1848 er på mange måter en tilfeldighet, men nå når jeg står ved veis ende er jeg glad det var her jeg endte opp og at jeg kunne gi noe tilbake til det faget jeg er så glad i. Langs veien har jeg fått mye hjelp og møtt mange utrolige mennesker. Jeg vil takke mine medstudenter på lektorstudiet gjennom alle disse årene. Bingo boys, dere vet hvem dere er. Videre vil jeg takke Skaldene, foreningen som så min fascinasjon tidlig og tok meg inn, spesielt Nistad, Jens og Synne. Av professorer vil jeg selvfølgelig takke Anne Engelst Nørgaard, som veiledet meg gjennom denne masteren, fra det spede valg av tema til den siste finishen. Jeg vil også rette en spesiell takk til Michael Geary, som har vært en uvurderlig mentor gjennom mye av studiet, spesielt når det kom til målet om å reise til USA. Jeg vil også takke Mikael for at du tidlig så at ingeniørenes verden med fakta og tall ikke var for meg og at det var fortiden og ideene som burde være min vei. Mange av dere, Mikael, Nistad, Marius og Edvin vil jeg også takke for å ha lest gjennom masteren og kommet med verdifulle tilbakemeldinger. Til slutt vil jeg

også takke alle mine andre venner. Dere ble kanskje ferdig før meg, men jeg kom i mål til slutt jeg også.

Nå nærmer både dette forordet og min tid her seg slutten. Det føles rart å snart skulle forlate akademia. Akademia er et fantastisk sted. Det er noe iboende vakkert ved en institusjon bygget rundt menneskelig selvrealisering. En dag kommer jeg kanskje tilbake. Men nå venter fremtiden og veien forover. Jeg vet ikke hvor den leder. I 7,5 år har veien vært klar. Det har alltid vært et nytt semester, en ny eksamen, en ny utveksling. Nå er det tåkete. Jeg lurere på hva som er på den andre siden.

Andreas Haraldstad

Trondheim, 29. november 2023

Didactic relevance

One of the fundamental goals of the Norwegian education system is to create democratic citizens. Such a goal suffuses the curriculum from the top to the bottom. It can be found in the preface of the law on education, in both the general and history-specific parts of the curriculum and in various specific competence aims for the history subject at all levels.¹ More specifically, the school subject “history” has the responsibility for making students realize that democracy is not universal nor inevitable.² It is not the teleological *end of history* but a political system, created and developed within a specific historical context, which it is our duty as citizens to protect and nurture.

This realization requires an understanding that democracy, both as a system and as a concept is contingent and changing over time. In that regard, working with historical material, such as newspapers, properly facilitated, could be a valuable learning experience for students. Such a task, as well as the topic of the historical contingency of the concept in general, would also help reach multiple other goals of

¹ Opplæringslova, Lov om grunnskolen og den vidaregåande opplæringa of 17 July, 1998 no. 61, <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1998-07-17-61>, § 1.1; Kunnskapsdepartementet, *Overordnet del - verdier og prinsipper for grunnopplæringen*, established as regulation by royal decree, September 2017, <https://www.udir.no/lk20/overordnet-del/om-overordnet-del/>;

Kunnskapsdepartementet, *Læreplan i samfunnsfag (SAF01-04)*, established as regulation 15. December 2019, <https://data.udir.no/k106/v201906/laereplaner-lk20/SAF01-04.pdf?lang=nno>;

Kunnskapsdepartementet, *Læreplan i historie fellesfag (HIS01-03)*, established as regulation 15. December 2019, <https://data.udir.no/k106/v201906/laereplaner-lk20/SAF01-04.pdf?lang=nno>.

² Kunnskapsdepartementet, *Overordnet del*, tverrfaglige temaer 2.5.2 Demokrati og medborgerskap.

the Norwegian curriculum, facilitating the development of historical consciousness, empathy and a critical attitude to sources.³

Whether or not I end up fashioning specific teaching material based on this thesis, working with the historical contingency of democracy has had a formative effect on me, an effect I will seek to convey also to future students.

³ Kunnskapsdepartementet, *Læreplan i historie fellesfag*, 2-3.

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1. Introduction

In modern political debate, some concepts are seen as an unquestionable good. Chief among these is democracy, which today has reached a position where it seems to be the only widely spread legitimating basis for political authority.⁴ People might, and often do, contest what “real” democracy entails, and there are widespread discussions on the “health” of democracy, but the desirability of the concept itself is rarely questioned.⁵ Today, the concept serves as both a description of a political system, what we often call representative or liberal democracy, and as a moral and political value to which one should aspire.⁶ This is an interesting development, and a relatively recent one. For most of its existence, the concept had very different connotations. The change in meaning was a gradual one, and pinpointing exact dates is difficult. However, by at least 1945 the

⁴ John Dunn, *Democracy: A History*, (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2005), 15.

⁵ In recent decades, there has been a proliferation of books on the struggles of contemporary democracy and democratic backsliding. However with perhaps an important exception in the case of the Chinese model, no other serious legitimating ideas for political authority have been proposed. For some literature on the current “struggles” of democracy, see David Runciman, *How Democracy Ends* (London: Profile Books, 2018); Steven Levitsky & Daniel Ziblitz, *How Democracy Dies* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2018); Anne Applebaum, *Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism* (Doubleday, 2020).

⁶ Liberal democracy can be seen as the combination of a representative democracy with universal suffrage with certain limits on the exercise of majority rule to protect minorities. Key amongst these limits is the rule of law and constitutionalism. More specifically it is a matter of rights such as the right to life, free speech, assembly etc, in essence, rights that protect the minority from the majority and allows them to contest future elections. In essence, it posits that democracy only can function if it is restrained by some other undemocratic ideals and norms. For a succinct definition see Rod Hague, Martin Harrop and John McCormick, *Comparative Government and Politics* (11th ed.) (Red Globe Press, 2019), 73. For other definitions and discussions on the concept see Mathilde Fasting, *After the End of History* (Georgetown University Press, 2021), 2; Sheri Berman, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe, From the Ancien Régime to the Present Day* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 374-375.

concept seems to have gained most of its contemporary connotations.⁷ On the other hand, in 1780, it had almost none of them. The major period of shift therefore seems to have been the 19th century, with all its political, economic and cultural changes. An especially important turning point in that regard seems to have come in the middle of the century, in the revolutions of 1848, where the concept in various arenas served both as a slogan, a description of a political system and as a value or goal.

Conceptual history traces these shifts in the meaning of terms⁸ and democracy has been a favored subject for conceptual historians, who have written numerous articles and monographs on the development of the concept in many countries and regions. However, one country shines with its absence, Norway. Though Norway had tenets of what we today would consider a democratic system long before most other countries, and monographs on Norwegian history often trace the development and triumph of “democracy”, no conceptual history of democracy has been written. The following thesis seeks to rectify this.

⁷ As pointed out already in 1953 by Robert R. Palmer. The First World War seems to have been the time when this understanding of democracy gained dominance. Robert R. Palmer, “Notes on the Use of the Word “Democracy” 1789-1799,” *Political Science Quarterly* 68, no. 2. (1953): 203, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2144967>; More recently, Jeppe Nevers through a case study of the conceptual history of the word has confirmed this assumption in the case of Denmark. Jeppe Nevers, *Fra Skældsord til slagord - Demokratibegrepet i dansk politisk historie* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2011). See also Moses Israel Finley, *Democracy Ancient and Modern* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1985), 9.

⁸ Throughout this thesis, I will use “concepts” when talking about the general idea, the platonic concept, while I use “terms” as the realization of these concepts in speech acts.

1.1 Research questions

Any attempt to rectify the dearth of historiography on the conceptual history of democracy in Norway will need to start somewhere. I will go into more detail in the subsequent chapters, but as briefly mentioned, 1848 seems to be an important turning point for the concept in many European countries. Consequently, this thesis aims to investigate whether 1848 marks a turning point for the concept of democracy in Norway as well. My primary research question is therefore: *How did elites in Norway use and understand the concept “democracy” in 1848?*⁹

The people who used the concept in Norway in 1848 were not a uniform group. Consequently, I will give separate consideration to the three main “political groups” at the time: The conservative civil servant regime, the Opposition (whose core consisted of farmers, but which also included more radical civil servants and academics), and the “proto-socialists”¹⁰ - the movement started and led by the radical newspaper editor Marcus Thrane. The thesis will therefore have three sub-questions:

1) *How did the civil servant regime use and understand the concept “democracy” in 1848?*

1) *How did the Opposition use and understand the concept “democracy” in 1848?*

⁹ See chapter 4.1 for an in-depth discussion of why I specifically look at “elites” and not “people” in general.

¹⁰ Whether Thrane can be labeled a socialist or not is contested in the literature. He did at times call himself a socialist and shared much rhetoric with socialist movements on the continent. However, more recent scholarship has contested this view. Consequently, I will employ the term “proto-socialists” in this thesis. However, another fitting term might have been “radicals”. See chapter nine for a more in-depth discussion on how to label Thrane and his movement.

2) *How did the proto-socialists use and understand the concept “democracy” in 1848?*

1.2 Chapter outline

This thesis consists of ten chapters. The following two chapters set the foundation of the thesis, first by delving deeper into the theory of conceptual history, then by providing a short narrative of the history of “democracy” and what has been written on it previously, both internationally and in Norway. Chapter four goes deeper into the methodology of the thesis, presenting the sources and how I use them to answer the research questions, while chapter five looks at the numbers to show why 1848 is a meaningful year to research “democracy” in Norway. The sixth chapter explains the political system in Norway as well as provides a narrative of 1848 in the country. Then follows the three main analytical chapters, seven to nine, corresponding to this thesis’s three sub-questions. In these, I first present some background information on the specific group and their corresponding newspaper, before I thematically present and analyze the various ways they used and understood the concept “democracy”, ending every chapter with a small conclusion. Finally, in the last chapter, I synthesize all these conclusions and present an answer to the main research question, followed by some concluding remarks.

2. Theory

This thesis positions itself primarily within the tradition of conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*). The field of research has its origin in the German historical tradition and is primarily linked to Reinhart Koselleck and his colleagues, and their work on a lexicon of basic political and social concepts (*Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*).¹¹ The goal of this lexicon was to catalog what they called “basic political and social concepts”, meaning those concepts which made thinking and talking about, as well as doing “politics”, in a wide sense, possible.¹² According to Koselleck, a firm definition of such concepts was a necessary precondition for all historical research.¹³

One of Koselleck’s main theses was that the advent of modernity, about 1750-1850, also saw the appearance of many of the basic concepts that constitute political life today, such as liberalism, conservatism and democracy. Basic political concepts exist at all times and in all societies.¹⁴ Koselleck wanted to establish a lexicon of the basic political concepts constructing the modern/Western world and his thesis is that these appeared in this period which he called the *Sattelzeit*, literally, “saddle time” i.e. time of movement, time of

¹¹ The lexicon appeared in eight volumes between 1972 and 1997.

¹² Reinhart Koselleck, “Introduction and Prefaces to the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*,” Translated by Michaela Richter, *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 6, no. 1. (Summer 2011): 7-8, doi:10.3167/choc.2011.060102.

¹³ Koselleck, “Introduction and Prefaces to the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*,” 8.

¹⁴ Koselleck, “Introduction and Prefaces to the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*,” 6. Reinhart Koselleck, “Begræphistorie og socialhistorie”, in *Reinhart Koselleck. Begreper, tid og erfaring. En tekstsamling*, ed. Jens Busck, Jeppe Nevers and Niklas Olsen (København: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 2009), 58.

change.¹⁵ During this period, many older concepts, such as democracy, changed in both meaning and usage, sometimes quite drastically.

This change, Koselleck divided into processes which he labeled “democratization, politicization, temporalization and ideologization”.¹⁶ Democratization entails that the concepts started to be used in different domains than those they had been restricted to in the past as well as to new people, no longer only, for example, the aristocracy or the learned. Temporalization refers to the linking of the meaning of the concepts with specific moments in time. They were no longer timeless, universal categories. Politicization means that more and more people were “addressed, drawn in [and] mobilized”¹⁷ and that the concepts increasingly were used to facilitate this. Lastly, by ideologization he meant that the concepts increasingly could be fitted into ideologies. As the concepts increasingly became used by more and more people to cover more and more phenomena, they also became increasingly more abstract.

This takes us to the core of the definition of a concept. According to Koselleck, concepts, unlike “words” or “terms”, are many-faceted; they always contain multiple meanings and these meanings can change over time. Furthermore, concepts are also inextricably linked to the society in which they function. Social and political history shape the use of concepts, but the concepts also shape

¹⁵ Though Koselleck’s lexicon specifically covers German-speaking Europe, he notes that the concepts exist within the context of traditions found in Europe as a whole. This, I would argue, means that as an ideal, they cover the modern political world as a whole, as this European tradition became the core of modernity.

Koselleck, “Introduction and Prefaces to the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*,” 8.

¹⁶ Koselleck, “Introduction and Prefaces to the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*,” 10-15

¹⁷ Koselleck, “Introduction and Prefaces to the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*,” 14.

what is possible within society.¹⁸ As an example, it is hard to envision a democratic society without a concept to describe such a society. Consequently, these basic concepts are a powerful tool. An examination and analysis of society lets us distill basic concepts. Likewise, these concepts can also be used the other way, to more fully understand society.

Conceptual history is not only a theory. It is also a method. As Michaela Richter points out in her translation of Koselleck's introduction to the lexicon, he changed his views on how to do conceptual history over time.¹⁹ The core of conceptual history is to read and investigate terms on the basis of their "sociopolitical function".²⁰ The exercise is not an etymological one - where one looks at the linguistic meaning of words. Nor is it an intellectual history of ideas. The goal is to try to distill the multiple meanings of a concept through looking at how people *actually used* the word. This necessarily requires a deep understanding of the context in which the words were uttered and used. In that sense, conceptual history is deeply historical. Once this has been done, Koselleck stresses the diachronic aspects of the study. In order to fully understand a concept, the researcher has to look at not only how a concept has multiple meanings at a set point *in* time, but also how these meanings change *over* time.²¹ I will explain further how I operationalize this method and understanding later.

¹⁸ Koselleck, "Begrpshistorie og sosialhistorie".

¹⁹ Michaela Richter, "A Note on the Translations" in Koselleck, "Introduction and Prefaces to the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*," 3-4.

²⁰ Koselleck, "Introduction and Prefaces to the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*," 18.

²¹ Koselleck, "Introduction and Prefaces to the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*," 17-18.

It is therefore clear that conceptual history is somewhat of an ambiguous term as it contains within it three intertwined meanings; it is both a theory, a method as well as a field of research at the same time. As a field of research, the term represents a sub-discipline of history, containing scholars who examine concepts and how they change over time in relation to cultural and societal changes. As a theory it is close to other post-modernist and constructivist theories such as those of Michel Foucault, which posit an inherent link between the world and the languages we use. As a method it is a set of specific techniques for how to elicit knowledge about the world.

3. Historiography and background

3.1 A short history of the concept of democracy

The word democracy comes from Ancient Greek, consisting of the words people (*demos*) and rule (*kratos*). It thus meant, literally, a system where the people ruled themselves, and it was one of many forms of governments that existed in the many city-states (*polis*) of the ancient Greek world. The most famous example of such an ancient Greek democracy was Athens, which, with a few breaks, practiced a form of democracy from about 500 BCE to 300 BCE.²² This democracy was distinct from the modern form of democracy. The system was direct, with all adult male citizens being eligible to meet in the Assembly (*Ekklesia*), and serve in the many offices of state, most of them chosen by lot.²³

This democracy served as the archetype for theorizing about forms of government by writers like Aristotle and Plato, which would have long-term repercussions as neither of them had a very positive view on democracy. For Aristotle, democracy was one of a number of possible forms of government and not necessarily the best one.²⁴

²² As pointed out by Paul Cartledge, ancient Athens was one of many democracies in the classical world, but it is the only one from which we have extensive sources. Paul Cartledge, *Democracy: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 20.

²³ For a more detailed description of the workings of Athenian democracy see Christopher W. Blackwell, "Athenian Democracy: a brief overview," in *Athenian Law in its Democratic Context* (Center for Hellenic Studies On-line Discussion Series), ed. Adriaan Lanni. Republished in Christopher.W. Blackwell, ed., *Dēmos: Classical Athenian Democracy* (A. Mahoney and R. Scaife, ed., The Stoa: a consortium for electronic publication in the humanities [www.stoa.org]) edition of February 28, 2003. https://www.stoa.org/demos/article_democracy_overview@page=all&greekEncoding=UnicodeC.html.

²⁴ In his typology, democracy was a degraded form of what he called *politeia*. In *politeia* the people ruled for the benefit of the whole city; in democracy, they ruled

Likewise, Plato saw democracy as a corrupted system, ruled by the unintelligent masses, the mob.²⁵

These classical definitions of the concept came to dominate throughout most of European history. Until the dawn of the 19th century, the word was more or less only used in learned circles.²⁶ The word was mostly unambiguous, referring primarily to the meanings given to it by the ancient Greeks, though some also started to conflate it with the Roman concept of a “republic” (*Res Publica*).²⁷ Another increasingly common way of viewing the concept was the tradition stemming back to the Roman scholar Polybius of viewing it as part of a mixed constitution. This view was especially prevalent in Britain, but also had some currency on the continent among thinkers like Montesquieu.²⁸

The crucial shift in the meaning seems to have come during the time of the Atlantic Revolutions, especially the French Revolution.²⁹ As shown by many scholars, from the time of the French revolution, the word started to accrue different meanings in different countries and

for their own benefit. Aristotle, *Politikk*, trans. Tormod Eide (Oslo: Vidarforlaget, 2007), 1279b.

²⁵ Plato famously preferred a more rigid and totalitarian system, with everyone assigned a specific place in a society ruled by “philosopher-kings”. Plato, *The Republic*, trans H.D.P. Lee (Harmondsworth: Penguin books, 1955).

²⁶ For a description of how the term was used in Europe during the medieval and early modern period, see Dunn, *Democracy*, 58-70.

²⁷ Nevers, *Fra skældsord til slagord*, 34-37; Joanna Innes and Mark Philp, “‘Democracy’ from Book to Life. The Emergence of the Term in Active Political Debate, to 1848,” in *Democracy in Modern Europe - A Conceptual History*, eds. Jussu Kurunmäki, Jeppe Nevers and Henk te Velde (New York: Bergahn, 2018), 17.

²⁸ Innes and Philp, “‘Democracy’ from book to life,” 18-19; Joanna Innes, Mark Philp and Robert Saunders “The Rise of Democratic Discourse in the Reform Era: Britain in the 1830s and 1840s,” in *Re-Imagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions. America, France, Britain, Ireland 1750-1850*, eds. Joanna Innes and Mark Philp (Oxford University Press, 2013).

²⁹ Dunn, *Democracy*, 71-118.

different social milieus.³⁰ During the French Revolution, the concept was used both as a theoretical label, a slogan and an identifier. However, other concepts such as “patriot”, “Jacobin” and “popular sovereignty” were more widely used.³¹ Nevertheless, “democracy” was occasionally used by people like Robespierre and this would tarnish the concept for some decades afterwards.³² After 1815 and the restoration in France, the concept was for many now inextricably linked to revolution, radicalism and war. As put by the historians Joanna Innes and Mark Philp, “following the fall of Napoleon, the cause of democracy seemed as dead and impossible to revive as the cause of communism would appear after the fall of the Berlin Wall”.³³ Consequently, it was not before the 1830s that the concept once again started to appear in public discourse.

From the 1830s on, “democracy” seems to once again have gained currency in political discourse. Innes and Philp point out that it started to figure “more widely and more positively than ever before in European political discourse”.³⁴ They argue that the growth of

³⁰ See Joanna Innes and Mark Philp (Eds.), *Re-imagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions: America, France, Britain and Ireland* (Oxford University Press, 2013) as well as Joanna Innes and Mark Philp (Eds.), *Re-imagining Democracy in the Mediterranean, 1780-1860* (Oxford University Press, 2018) for a description of this process in the 19th century and Jussu Kurunmäki, Jeppe Nevers and Henk te Velde, *Democracy in Modern Europe - A Conceptual History* (New York: Bergahn, 2018) for a description of the 20th century.

³¹ Ruth Scurr, “Varieties of Democracy in the French Revolution,” in *Re-Imagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions, America, France, Britain, Ireland, 1750-1850*, ed. Joanna Innes and Mark Philp (Oxford University Press, 2018), 61; 67-68; 20.

³² Innes and Philp, “‘Democracy’ from book to life,” 20.

Mona Ringvej has pointed out that Robespierre, when using the concept, redefined it from the direct system practiced in Athens to the indirect representative system of modern democracies. Mona Ringvej, *Makten og Ordene, Demokrati og ytringsfrihet fra Athen til Eidsvoll* (Oslo: Humanist Forlag, 2011), 22-23, 59-61.

³³ Innes and Philp, “‘Democracy’ from book to life,” 23.

³⁴ Innes and Philp, “‘Democracy’ from book to life,” 25.

constitutional and liberal governments after the French Revolution of 1830 and the British Reform Bill of 1832 created a new platform for debating the concept.³⁵ Likewise, they also point out that the rise of such liberal constitutional regimes also entailed that critics of such regimes needed new concepts to rally around.³⁶ Consequently, “democracy” became more widely used, both as a positive term by critics of the regime and negatively by defenders of it.

However, the meanings these new groups filled “democracy” with, were not necessarily the same we fill it with today. To be sure, some had started to use the concept in-line with our present understanding of it as including “universal suffrage”, but this was not the only way.³⁷ For many, democracy was synonymous with radicalism, either with the Jacobin-terror of the French Revolution, or the newly arisen spectre of Communism.³⁸ For others, most famously exemplified by Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, democracy was not so much a system of government, but a specific type of society. In his use of the word, “democracy” meant a more equal society, not necessarily economically, but mentally - a society without deference to nobility, or formal differences between people.³⁹ Yet for others, “democracy” was synonymous with the older concept

³⁵ Innes and Philp, “‘Democracy’ from book to life,” 25.

³⁶ Innes and Philp, “‘Democracy’ from book to life,” 25.

³⁷ Pierre Rosanvallon, "The History of the Word 'Democracy' in France," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 4 (1995), 149-151; Innes, Philp and Saunders “The Rise of Democratic Discourse in the Reform Era” 123; Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848-1851*, 2nd ed., (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 112.

³⁸ Rosanvallon, “The History of the Word ‘Democracy’ in France,” 148; Sperber, *The European Revolutions*, 80-89.

³⁹ Many scholars point out the importance of Tocqueville for mid 19th-century understanding and use of democracy. For an example, see Rosanvallon, "The History of the Word 'Democracy' in France".

of “popular sovereignty”, without necessarily meaning universal suffrage.⁴⁰ One could rule on behalf of the people without having the people rule.

All this tension came to the fore in 1848. In a session of the Chamber of Deputies, about a month before the February-revolution, Tocqueville famously remarked that European society and its governing classes seemed to be “at this moment sleeping on a volcano”.⁴¹ This citation proved ominously true in regards to the revolutions of 1848, but it also rang true for “democracy”. The revolutionaries in France proclaimed the new system a “democratic republic” (*république démocratique*), ensuring that as the news of the revolutions spread, so did the concept.⁴²

“Democracy” thus became one of the key concepts used during these revolutions. Naturally, like in the previous revolutions, it was one of many concepts, and people often advocated and fought for practices we today would label as democratic without necessarily employing the concept. However, many more than earlier also explicitly did so. In Germany, Democratic Societies sprung up, especially in the south and factions in the Frankfurt parliament explicitly referred to themselves as democratic.⁴³ Likewise, in Denmark, multiple groups contested the term and tried to appropriate

⁴⁰ Innes and Philp, “‘Democracy’ from book to life,” 31.

⁴¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville*, trans. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1896; Project Gutenberg, Oct 31, 2011),

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/37892/pg37892-images.html> , 14.

⁴² Innes and Philp, “‘Democracy’ from book to life,” 30.

⁴³ Innes and Philp, “‘Democracy’ from book to life,” 30-31.

it as their own during the constitutional struggles of 1848 and 1849.⁴⁴ Consequently, as put by Innes and Philp, by 1848, democracy had gone “from Book to Life”.⁴⁵

The result is that the transformation from a classical Greek concept to the more universal description of “good” which it serves today took a long time, and was not a linear process. Multiple scholars have noted that it was not before the 20th century that the concept had gained most of its modern connotations and also became widely used by large swathes of the population. Nevertheless, the 1848 revolutions marked an important turning point.

3.2 International historiography

Many articles, edited books and monographs have been written on the conceptual history of democracy in various different countries. The real breakthrough on the research of the concept came with the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*. However, though Koselleck claimed that the research on the concepts to some degree were valid in the Western world in general, his lexicon’s primary focus was the German speaking world.

However, the rest of western Europe has also been duly covered. Already before Koselleck, in 1953, the historian of the Atlantic Revolutions, Robert Roswell Palmer had written an overview of the use of the term between 1789 and 1799. However, as he wrote before the school of conceptual history had been established, the paper

⁴⁴ Anne Engelst Nørgaard, “A Battle for Democracy. The Concept of Democracy in the Constitutional Struggle, Denmark 1848-1849,” *Archiv Für Sozialgeschichte* 58, (2018): 69-81.

⁴⁵ Innes and Philp, “‘Democracy’ from Book to Life,” 18.

mostly provides some remarks on the different use of the word in a select few countries during the revolutionary decade.⁴⁶ He does not put it into a wider context and he restricts his writings to the Atlantic World and Italy.⁴⁷

The Atlantic world is also the setting for a book by Joanna Innes and Mark Philp, *Re-imagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions*, covering the US, France, Britain and Ireland.⁴⁸ In this book, the authors seek to challenge the preconceptions of how the concept developed, making it clear that democracy was not “imagined” once and then diffused.⁴⁹ Rather, working with the same heritage, multiple understandings of what democracy was and entailed were constantly created throughout this period.

This book is part of a wider project under the label “re-imagining democracy” where they gather multiple authors and scholars to provide a fresh look at the development of democracy, both meaning and practice in the 18th and 19th century. Within this project, they have also published a book focused on the Mediterranean, where they look at the more “forgotten” parts of Europe, examining the development of democracy in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece and the Ottoman Empire, including their North-African holdings. The 19th century was an unstable period of change in this region, and they investigate how the concept was negotiated and understood within this

⁴⁶ Anne Engelst Nørgaard, “Demokratiet og kampen om Junigrundloven, En undersøgelse af demokratibegrebet i den danske grundlovs-kamp 1848-49” (PhD Diss., Aarhus Universitet, 2016), 26.

⁴⁷ Palmer, “Notes on the Use of the Word “Democracy” 1789-1799”.

⁴⁸ Innes and Philp (Eds.), *Re-imagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions: America, France, Britain and Ireland*.

⁴⁹ Joanna Innes and Mark Philp, “Introduction,” in *Re-imagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions*, eds. Joanna Innes and Mark Philp (Oxford University Press, 2013), 7.

milieu.⁵⁰ Likewise, they have quite recently published another work covering Latin America, and the Caribbean between 1780 and 1870,⁵¹ and they are currently working on a new project featuring central and northern Europe.⁵²

Similarly to Innes and Philp, the scholars Jussi Kurunmäki, Jeppe Nevers and Henk te Velde have edited a book on the conceptual history of democracy. This is part of a wider collection of books that investigate the conceptual history of some key modern concepts in Europe. Like Innes and Philp, Kurunmäki, Nevers, te Velde and their contributors seek to write a comparative work, showcasing how the debates around the term differed across countries. Unlike them, however, they do not primarily focus on the *Sattelzeit*, but instead investigate the second half of the 19th century as well as the 20th century.⁵³

Outside of these anthologies, another seminal article in the field is Pierre Rosanvallon's 1995 essay, "The History of the Word Democracy in France". Building upon the framework of the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, he sketches the development of the concept in France from the Ancien Régime and up to the revolutions of 1848. His article is widely referenced in all later works on the

⁵⁰ Innes and Philp (Eds.), *Re-imagining Democracy in the Mediterranean, 1780-1860*.

⁵¹ Eduardo Posada Carbó, Joanna Innes and Mark Philp (Eds.), *Re-Imagining democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1780-1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

⁵² Re-Imagining Democracy, "Re-Imagining Democracy in Central and Northern Europe" last accessed November, 27, 2023, <https://re-imaginedemocracy.com/2022/10/31/re-imagining-democracy-in-central-europe/>.

⁵³ Jussi Kurunmäki, Jeppe Nevers and Henk te Velde, *Democracy in Modern Europe: A conceptual history* (New York: Bergahn, 2018), 8.

conceptual history of democracy as he sketches a concise narrative of its development from a scholarly term, to a radical term, a sociological term and finally the many-faceted but “positive” term it is today.

There are also books which, rather than restrict themselves to specific countries, favor a more general synthetical approach. One example is John Dunn who has written the book *Democracy: A History*, where he traces the development of why exactly this concept has become the “single word-wide name for the legitimate basis of political authority”.⁵⁴ His main argument is that the concept democracy has become so successful because it has been able to fuse with capitalist society in a mutually beneficial relationship where the former legitimizes the latter, while the latter provides at least some credence to democracy’s claim to create a more equal society.

Closer to home, a lot has been written on the conceptual history of democracy in Denmark. Jeppe Nevers has published the book *Fra skældsord til slagord* where he examines the development of the term democracy in Denmark from the early modern period and until shortly after the First World War. His main argument is that, in Denmark, it was in the interwar period that the term “democracy” really took on its modern hue as the ultimate political good.⁵⁵

In this same vein, Anne Nørgaard has written extensively on the use of “democracy” in the specific instance of 1848.⁵⁶ Her main argument is that, even though “democracy” did not become a central

⁵⁴ Dunn, *Democracy*, 15.

⁵⁵ Nevers, *Fra skældsord til slagord*.

⁵⁶ Nørgaard, “Demokratiet og kampen om Junigrundloven; Nørgaard, “A Battle for Democracy. The Concept of Democracy in the Constitutional Struggle, Denmark 1848-1849”; Anne Engelst Nørgaard, “Times of Democracy - The Unavoidable Democracy of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Denmark,” *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 14, no. 2. (Winter 2019): 23-45.

concept before after the First World War, it was still heavily contested and widely politicized during the Danish constitutional struggles of 1848. In these struggles, both more conservative, moderate and radical voices contested the term and what it meant before the radicals “won”, thus pushing the term out of the moderate mainstream for another half a century.

3.3 Conceptual history of democracy in Norway

No direct conceptual history has been written on “democracy” in Norway. As modern Norway is a liberal democracy, the development of this system naturally occupies a large part of most histories of 19th century Norway. Both Jens Arup Seip and Francis Sejersted have aspects of what we today consider democracy as the structuring core of their narratives on 19th century Norway, with Seip focusing on the rise, consolidation and eventual overthrow of what he calls the “civil servant’s state” (*embetsmannsstaten*) between 1814 and 1884, and Sejersted on the development of a state based on the rule of law (*rettsstat*). However, though both of them focus on democracy, none of them pay much attention in their grand narratives, to the concept of democracy and how the people figuring in their narratives understood it.⁵⁷

This is also the case for Ernst Sars’ 1899-1904 book *Norsk Politisk Historie, 1815-1885*, where he traces the history of political development and debates in Norway from independence until the

⁵⁷ Jens Arup Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet 1814- ca. 1860* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1997), Jens; Arup Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet ca. 1850-1884* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1997); Francis Sejersted, “Den vanskelige frihet” in *Norges Historie, bind 10*, ed. Knut Mykland (J.W. Cappelens Forlag, 1986).

introduction of parliamentarism.⁵⁸ The structuring theme of Sars' narrative is a dichotomy between what can be labeled liberal-democratic-nationalists and bureaucratic-aristocratic-unionists. He sketches how different iterations of these two broad camps battled each other throughout all major political and cultural episodes in 19th century Norway, until the eventual victory of the "liberals" in 1884 (a party for which Sars was a main ideologue). This must be seen as part of Sars' sketch of Norwegian history as a battle between "two cultures", the domestic and the "foreign".⁵⁹ Sars often uses the word democracy in his work primarily in two ways. Firstly as the opposite of the aristocrats/civil servants and secondly as a term that denotes various degrees of *folkestyre* (rule of the people). Sars is not a conceptual historian and his works do not examine the term in any greater length.

The same goes for many other works on the 19th century in Norway. Tore Pryser, Jan Eivind Myhre, Merethe Roos and Anne-Lise Seip have written general overviews on the history of Norway in the 19th century.⁶⁰ Though all comment on the practice of democracy, they do not dwell much on the way the people of the past used or understood the concept. Myhre does mention that few in the 1850s

⁵⁸ Johan Ernst Sars, *Norges Politiske Historie 1815-1885 med 144 Illustrationer* (Kristiania: Oscar Andersens Bogtrykkeri, 1904).

⁵⁹ Jens Johan Hyvik, *Tokulturlæra i norsk historie*. (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget), 21-22.

⁶⁰ Jan Eivind Myhre, *Norsk Historie 1814-1905* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2012); Tore Pryser, *Norsk historie 1814-1860, Frå standssamfunn mot klassesamfunn* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1999); Merethe Roos, *En kort introduksjon til Norge på 1800-tallet* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2020); Anne-Lise Seip, "1830-70: Nasjonen bygges." in *Aschehougs Norges Historie, bind 8*, eds. Knut Helle, Knut Kjelstadli, Even Lange and Sølvi Sogner (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1997).

were “democrats in the sense that they wanted universal suffrage”, but he does not explain further in what other ways they might have been “democrats”.⁶¹ This also goes for Øystein Sørensen’s work on the history of ideas in Norway in this period. The topic democracy rarely appears in his book and is not given specific consideration as an idea before around 1884 and after.⁶² The topic is consequently not covered as a concept either. There is little to no consideration of the way people used the term.

Democracy is given more consideration in an book edited by Hilde Sandvik called *Demokratisk teori og historisk praksis*. The book primarily covers democratic preconditions and practice in Norway. Amongst other things they look at the extension of suffrage, the role of the peasant and the freedom of the press and of expressions.⁶³ The concept of democracy is mentioned occasionally in the chapter on Athens. However, this chapter does not specifically cover Norway. It focuses on the reception-history of the concept of democracy and how people at the time redefined the concept *away* from Athens, thus making what would originally have been a contradiction in terms: *representative democracy*, possible.⁶⁴

⁶¹ “...men blant framstående politikarar i 1850-åra fanst det knapt nokon som var demokratar i den forstand at dei ønskte allmenn stemmerett, ikkje eingong for menn.” Myhre, *Norsk Historie 1814-1905*, 144.

⁶² Sørensen does focus on many related themes and topics such as independence, constitutionalism and nationalism but democracy is only really covered in the seventh chapter on the “national-democratic project of the Left” and then more as an idea than as a concept. Øystein Sørensen, *Kampen om Norges sjel. Norsk idéhistorie, bind III* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 2001).

⁶³ Hilde Sandvik (ed.). *Demokratisk teori og historisk praksis. Forutsetninger for folkestyre 1750-1850* (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press and Spartacus forlag, 2010).

⁶⁴ Mona Ringvej, “Athen som argument,” in *Demokratisk teori og historisk praksis. Forutsetninger for folkestyre 1750-1850*, ed. Hilde Sandvik (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press and Spartacus forlag, 2010), 22-23.

This is not to say that nothing has been written on the topic in Norway. As Nevers' narrative of the development of the term in Denmark before 1814 necessarily also covers Norway, we have some understanding of how it was understood amongst the elites in the 18th century. In general, it does not seem to have differed much from the general use of the term elsewhere in Europe. For the most part, the term was also in Norway primarily used in learned circles to denote a classical Greek form of government, unsuited for modern times.⁶⁵ At best, "democracy" was seen as something that could be included in a mixed constitution, but even then, many of the Oldenburg-realm's theorists still professed absolutism as a superior form of government.⁶⁶

Nevers also covers 1814. Looking at the letters and diaries of the men gathered at Eidsvoll, he points out that, with a few exceptions, democracy was not part of the political rhetoric at the time.⁶⁷ In accordance with tradition, the term was mostly used negatively, now with the added scorn of the radicalism of the French Revolution.⁶⁸ In that sense, the men at Eidsvoll (at least the learned ones) were typical of their times. As men of the Enlightenment, they professed beliefs in tenets such as human rights, civil liberties and separation of powers, but saw no link between these and the concept of democracy.⁶⁹

Mona Ringvej agrees with this assessment. According to her, "the concept of democracy was something that sneaked itself on to the

⁶⁵ Nevers, *Fra skældsord til slagord*, 29-64.

He also points out that it increasingly was starting to become conflated with the other classical concept "republic". However, this is still a learned concept, restricted in use to a literary elite.

⁶⁶ Nevers, *Fra skældsord til slagord*, 43-52.

⁶⁷ Nevers, *Fra skældsord til slagord*, 80.

⁶⁸ Nevers, *Fra skældsord til slagord* 71.

⁶⁹ Nevers, *Fra skældsord til slagord*, 82.

constitution over time as a result of discussions on concepts in the 1800s and 1900s.”⁷⁰ None of the people at Eidsvoll would have seen it as democratic. They were working within the tradition of separation of power from Montesquieu and popular sovereignty from Rousseau. The suffrage established in the new constitution, though extensive, was not seen as a tenet of democracy.⁷¹ They wanted the government to be on behalf of the people and to have its legitimacy from them, but not actually have them rule, which was what they understood democracy to mean.⁷² Consequently, they referred to the constitution as a “free” constitution (*fri forfatning*), not a “democratic” one. By “free” they meant that the system rested on popular sovereignty, as expressed through the elected *Storting*.⁷³ Democracy, when it appeared, was as a negative or as part of the traditional triumvirate of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy.⁷⁴

According to Ringvej, this started to change in the 1830s. At this time, the constitution started to be labeled as “democratic”, an aura she claims it has had ever since.⁷⁵ She is here basing herself on an older comment made by Rune Slagstad in his seminal book *De Nasjonale Strateger*, where he also claims that it was around 1830 that

⁷⁰ “... demokratibegrepet var noe som smøg seg på grunnloven over tid, som resultat av begrepsdiskusjoner ut over 1800- og 1900-tallet.” Mona Ringvej, *Makten og Ordene*, 133.

⁷¹ Ringvej, *Makten og Ordene*, 128.

⁷² Ringvej, *Makten og Ordene*, 132.

⁷³ Mona Ringvej, *Marcus Thrane. Forbrytelse og straff* (Pax Forlag, 2014), 93.

The *Storting* is the name of the Norwegian parliament. In modern standard written Norwegian (bokmål and nynorsk) it is written *Storting*, but throughout this thesis I will employ the 1848 spelling: *Storthing*, though I will use *Storting* in the footnotes when talking about the institution in general.

⁷⁴ Ringvej, *Makten og Ordene*, 132.

⁷⁵ Ringvej, *Makten og Ordene*, 167-169.

“democracy” first started circulating.⁷⁶ However, Slagstad provides no reasoning or sources for this claim. It seems like he is basing himself on the writings of Frederik Stang who, at the time, labeled the system created in 1814 as “democratic-monarchic”.⁷⁷ Slagstad does not point out how Stang or others understood the term, merely noting that the label fit the reality of extensive suffrage established in 1814, thus using a more modern notion of democracy as linked with suffrage, which they did not necessarily have at the time.

Francis Sejersted also makes similar comments on the development. Though he does not discuss “democracy” conceptually in his general narrative of 19th century Norway, he does so in his more in-depth essays on democracy and the rule of law.⁷⁸ In his model, the *rettsstat* created in 1814 was the antithesis of absolute monarchy. By depoliticizing decisions and making them rule-bound and automatic, one avoided the arbitrariness and possible despotism inherent in absolute rule. An important point Sejersted makes is that the civil servants would have had the same view of democracy, as a possible venue for despotism. Like Ringvej, Sejersted also points out that “democracy” was not used in 1814. In the constitutional tradition the men at Eidsvoll were working within, democracy was a negatively loaded term.⁷⁹ They created what contemporaries would call a constitutional state.⁸⁰ “Democracy”, in his view, only started entering the lexicon in the 1830s, about the same time as in the US.⁸¹ Here, like

⁷⁶ Rune Slagstad, *De nasjonale strateger* (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2015), 30.

⁷⁷ Slagstad, *De nasjonale strateger*, 30.

⁷⁸ Francis Sejersted, *Demokrati og Rettsstat. Politisk-historiske essays*, (Universitetsforlaget, 1984).

⁷⁹ Sejersted, *Demokrati og Rettsstat*, 55.

⁸⁰ Sejersted, *Demokrati og Rettsstat*, 53.

⁸¹ Sejersted, *Demokrati og Rettsstat*, 55-56.

Slagstad, he specifically notes the comments on the constitution written by Frederik Stang.⁸²

Looking more deeply at the 1830s, Ringvej also refers extensively to a 2010 master thesis by Maren Dahle Lauten that looks more closely at the law on local government of 1837. These laws established more local government in Norwegian municipalities with elected councils (*representantskap*) and commissions (*formannskap*). Lauten traces the development of this law from its inception in the early 1820s. Here, multiple options were presented. Most notable was the contest between a direct and indirect understanding of democracy. Her argument is that, even though people at the time rarely used the term “democracy”, by choosing the path of “indirect democracy”, they nevertheless provided what she calls “modern democracy” with a content.⁸³ Put in other terms, she argues that this choice created a path dependency, removing “direct democracy” as an option as Norway became more democratic later in the century.

In her biography on Marcus Thrane, Ringvej brings this narrative further, stating that by Thrane’s time, “democracy” or “representative democracy” had replaced “popular sovereignty”.⁸⁴ This is further corroborated by Erik Rudeng, who in his book on the history of the newspaper *Morgenbladet* claims that with the rise of the Thrane-movement, “democracy” was for the first time frequently used

⁸² Sejersted, *Demokrati og Rettsstat*, 55.

⁸³ Maren Dahle Lauten, “Borgeraand utvikler sig kun almindelig der hvor hver Enkelt har Leilighed til politisk Virksomhed. Framveksten av eit moderne demokratiomgrep under debatten om formannskapslova av 1837” (Ma. Diss., Universitetet i Oslo, 2010), 131.

⁸⁴ Ringvej, *Marcus Thrane*, 93.

as a “univocally positive expression of the ideals of *folkestyre* (rule of the people).⁸⁵

According to these authors then, democracy started entering the political lexicon in the 1830s and became frequent in the aftermath of 1848. That being said, this does not necessarily mean that “democracy” had arrived at our current understanding and use of the term. Writing about the revolutions of 1848 and the Norwegian opposition movements, Seip does point out that “democrat” and “ultrademocrat” were used to describe the most politically radical.⁸⁶ Later in his narrative, as he covers the run-up to the parliamentary “coup” of 1884, he once again dwells on “democracy”. He now points out that it had been discredited by the 1848-revolutions and was consequently mostly used as a derogatory term. “Self-government” (*selvstyre*) and “rule of the people” (*folkestyre*) were the main slogans of the opposition movement that would eventually form the political party *Venstre* and overthrow the civil servant’s regime.⁸⁷

Based on this examination, it is clear that many scholars have touched upon the issue, but no one has written a work about Norway where the concept of “democracy” takes center stage.

⁸⁵ Erik Rudeng, *Morgenbladet. En historie for seg* (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2021), 159.

⁸⁶ Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet 1814- ca. 1860*, 177.

⁸⁷ Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet ca. 1850-1884*, 177-178

4. Methodology

4.1 Source material

In order to answer the research question, I have used Norwegian newspapers published from January to December 1848. As made clear by the literature, 1848 marked an important turning point in the usage of the concept of democracy in many European countries. In chapter five, I will show that this also seems to be the case in Norway, at least quantitatively. Nevertheless, these dates are still somewhat arbitrary. The revolutions in Europe were not confined to only this year.⁸⁸ In the same vein, the year marks no discrete turning-point in Norway.⁸⁹ Consequently, the choice of time-period is therefore mostly a pragmatic one, providing a snapshot of how democracy was used in Norway during the most tumultuous year of the revolutionary upheavals in Europe.

Within this time-period, I focus on three newspapers, corresponding to the three main political “groupings”. These are *Morgenbladet*, *Den Norske Rigstidende* and *Drammens Adresse*, which figured as mouthpieces for, or at least were heavily biased towards, the Opposition, the civil servant establishment and the

⁸⁸ The first inklings of the revolutions of 1848 appeared in Italy already in late 1847 and the revolution continued also after 1848. The uprisings in Hungary were not crushed until Russia intervened in 1849, while in France, the “revolutionary” period could be said to have lasted all the way until Louis Napoleon’s coup of 1851. See Sperber, *The European Revolutions* for an overview of the revolutions of 1848 and their aftermath.

⁸⁹ Seip considers the whole period from 1844 to 1851 as part of what he labels “the third opposition” against the civil servant regime. Likewise, Thrane’s movement, though inspired by 1848, was not started until 1849 and its most active period lasted until 1851.

Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet 1814- ca. 1860*, 158-175.

“Proto-socialists”, respectively. *Morgenbladet* and *Rigstidende* are chosen as they were two of the major nation-wide newspapers at the time.⁹⁰ They were both situated close to the political center in the capital of Christiania⁹¹ and they had a clear political bias. *Drammens Adresse* was not situated in the capital. Nevertheless it was one of the major newspapers of the time. In the second half of 1848 it was edited by Marcus Thrane, a self-professed radical who later went on to create Norway’s first worker movements.

When using newspapers, one has to be aware of their limitations. I am not primarily interested in what the newspapers can tell me of events or happenings, rather I aim to investigate, through the newspapers, how people used certain concepts and what that can say about their understanding of such concepts, i.e. a discourse analysis or concept-historical analysis. Consequently, when using the newspapers as sources, I am primarily interested in how they can serve as expressions of the society in which they operate.⁹²

When doing so, I am primarily looking at the elites. Though literacy in Norway was relatively high, newspapers were still primarily an elite medium.⁹³ Most newspapers were quite expensive, and

⁹⁰ Though it is important to note that the majority of their subscriptions were in the capital.

⁹¹ Christiania (later Kristiania from 1877) was the name of the capital of Oslo until 1925.

⁹² The German and Scandinavian historical tradition differentiates between using sources as narratives (*beretning*) and as remains (*levning*). This thesis primarily uses them as the latter. Leidulf Melve and Teemu Ryymin, “Kildekritikk - en kort historikk,” in *Historikerens Arbeidsmåter*, ed. Leidulf Melve and Teemu Ryymin (Universitetsforlaget, 2018), 37-38.

⁹³ A limited form of literacy was widespread in Norway by 1800. Jan Eivind Myhre, *Norsk Historie 1814-1905*, 50, 68, 185, 194, 244, 301; Lis Byberg, “Leseferdighet og skolevesen 1740-1830, Pietister, “potetprester” og et ungt norsk Storting,” *Heimen, tidsskrift for lokal og regional historie* 45, (2008). However, I would question whether most people had the means or the leisure to read much in Norway in 1848.

subscription numbers low.⁹⁴ Though a single newspaper might be read by multiple people and there existed a culture of reading them aloud, the readership would still have been relatively limited. Accessing them also required not only literacy, but the ability to understand a very literary form of written Danish, filled with metaphors and classical references. Furthermore, one must assume that it is unlikely that concepts, such as “democracy”, had suffused much into the lower strata of the population. In 1849, when Thrane created *Arbeiderforeningens Blad*, a newspaper specifically aimed at the lower classes, he wrote in a simpler language and often included explicit explanations of difficult terms such as democracy.⁹⁵ Consequently, I read the newspapers primarily as representations of an elite opinion, understanding and worldview. These are the people who were most likely to use “democracy” in their discourses. They were also the people who would have been most influenced by the global political and cultural trends of the *Sattelzeit* and were those who most clearly shaped and were shaped by the political situation in Norway.

⁹⁴ The newspapers had a limited circulation, the largest one, *Morgenbladet* did not reach 3000 subscribers outside the capital until 1860. Sverre Steen, *Drømmen om Frihet*, (Oslo: J. W. Cappelens Forlag, 1973), 101.

The two most popular periodicals of the time, *For Fattig og Riig* and *Almuevennen* did have quite a wide circulation, but the first one never used the word “democracy” between its founding in 1848 and 1860 and the latter, in the same time period, used it very rarely.

⁹⁵ Oddvar Bjørklund, *Marcus Thrane - sosialistleder i et u-land*. (Oslo: Tiden Norsk Forlag, 1970), 153-154.

For Thrane’s explanation of democracy see: *Arbeider-Foreningernes Blad*, 19..05.1849, no. 3, 1.

4.2 Method and approach

Summed up in short, as a method, conceptual history entails looking at how concepts have been used by various actors through time and space. However, as shown by Anne Nørgaard, the method can be fruitfully employed also in a more restricted temporal setting.⁹⁶ Though her examination of Denmark covers a more tumultuous period, there are still similarities. Also in Norway in 1848, different groups with different views used “democracy” for different reasons. Consequently a conceptual analysis might also here bring meaningful insights.

In practice, this entails combing through the issues of the newspapers within the set time period and looking at how various actors used the term and by doing so, based on the specific context in which the term appeared, as well as the general context of the time, trying to elicit what this says about their understanding of the concept. Consequently, the conceptual analysis is primarily a qualitative investigation, though I use a more quantitative approach to show why 1848 is interesting.

The newspapers have been digitized and are readily available through the national library.⁹⁷ The national library also allows you to search through the documents for words and variants of those words. By using an asterix (*) behind the stem of the word, the program gives you all the various versions, inflections and permutations of that word. For example, inputting *demokrat** makes the program locate words

⁹⁶ Anne Engelst Nørgaard, “Demokratiet og kampen om Junigrundloven”.

⁹⁷ The last week of December in *Morgenbladet* has not been digitized. According to *Nasjonalbiblioteket*, this appears to have been an oversight as they do exist as microfilm. However, I have not been able to read them and consequently have not been able to check these last issues for “democracy”.

such as *demokrat*, *demokrati*, *demokratisk*, *demokrater* etc. Doing this, gives a total of 282 issues where variants of the word “democracy” show up at least once in the period in the three papers.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ There were instances during the readings, where the word democracy showed up without the program having been able to notice them. It is therefore possible that the word showed up in other issues not investigated. However, quantitatively, this is unlikely to impair the trend as the percentage of times the program were not able to pick up on the word should be relatively similar across the years. For the qualitative parts, “democracy” showed up at least once in relation to all major events and discussions during the year. These events and discussions are sketched out in chapter six.

5. Quantitative approach

5.1 Prevalence of the term democracy in Norway

Even though the revolution did not come to Norway, 1848 marked a clear shift in the quantitative use of the word democracy. During that year, variants of the word democracy (“demokrat*/democrat*”) appeared in 680 out of a total of 3113 newspapers available through the national library. This entails that “democracy” in some form or another appeared in 22% of the newspapers that year. Beneath are similar numbers for other years.

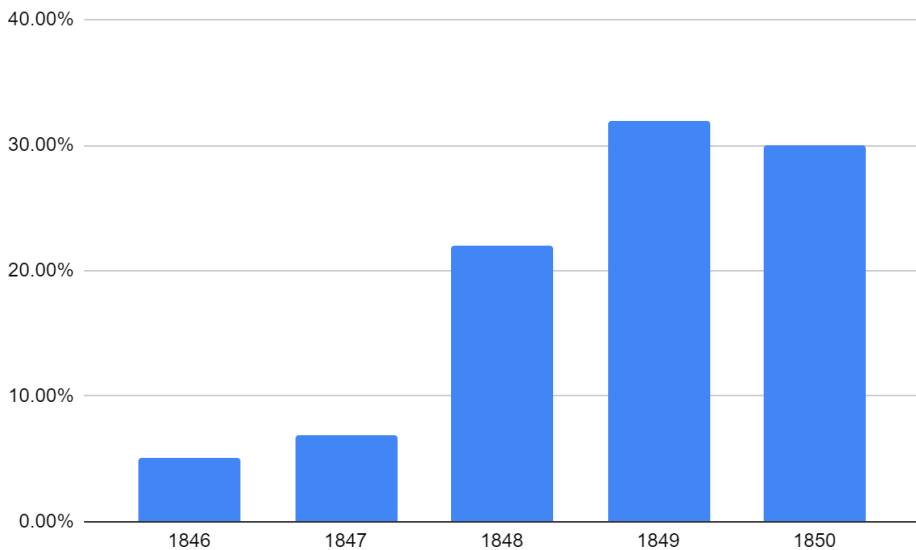


Figure 1: The appearance of the word “democracy” in Norwegian newspapers as a percentage of total newspapers published that year.

The figure shows the increase in the usage of the word through all the digitized newspapers. The trend is also apparent in the aforementioned three newspapers. In *Morgenbladet*, issues including the term democracy went from 59 in 1847 to 112 in 1848. Likewise, *Den Norske Rigstidende* went from 56 to 116 and *Drammens Adresse* from 16 to 54.⁹⁹

This increase in the usage of the word in these three newspapers represent a general trend. As can be seen in *figure 2* and *figure 3*, the appearance of both “demokrat*” and “democrat*” increased drastically within this period.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ I am here looking at the whole year. However, when doing the qualitative analysis, I will only look at the time period from the 1st of August until the end of the year, which is the period where Thrane served as editor. Only focusing on this last half of the year, reduces the number of times the term appeared to 7 in 1847 and 40 in 1848.

¹⁰⁰ These graphs have been procured by using Ngram, a statistical service from the National library. It looks at how often a string of words appear in the digitized texts, in this case, Norwegian newspapers. The service can be accessed through *Nasjonalbiblioteket*. “Ngram,” *Figure 2*, accessed December 29, 2023, link [https://www.nb.no/ngram/#1_1_2_demokrat*_1_1_3_1810%2C2021_2_2_2_12_2](https://www.nb.no/ngram/#1_1_2_demokrat*_1_1_3_1810%2C2021_2_2_2_12_2;); “Ngram,” *Figure 3*, accessed December 29, 2023, https://www.nb.no/ngram/#1_1_2_democrat*%2C%20demokratisk_1_1_3_1810%2C2021_2_2_2_12_2.

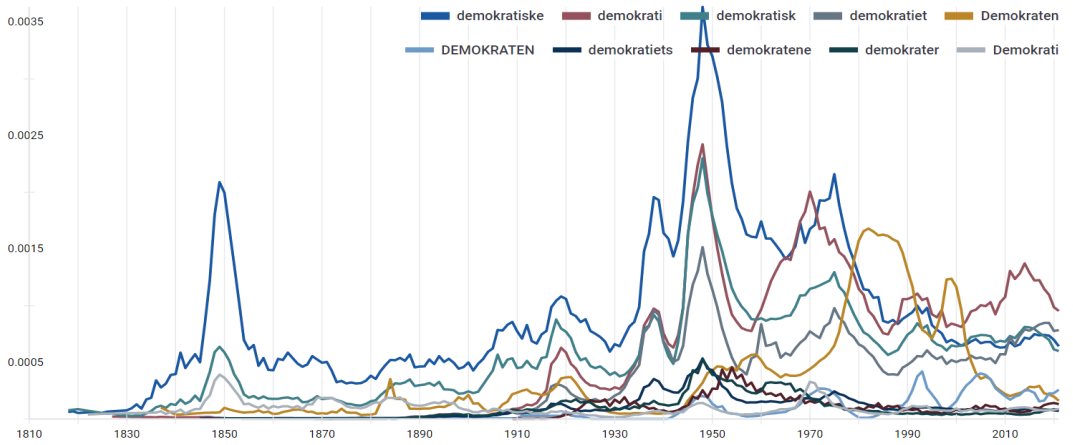


Figure 2 The appearance of the word “demokrat*” in Norwegian newspapers.

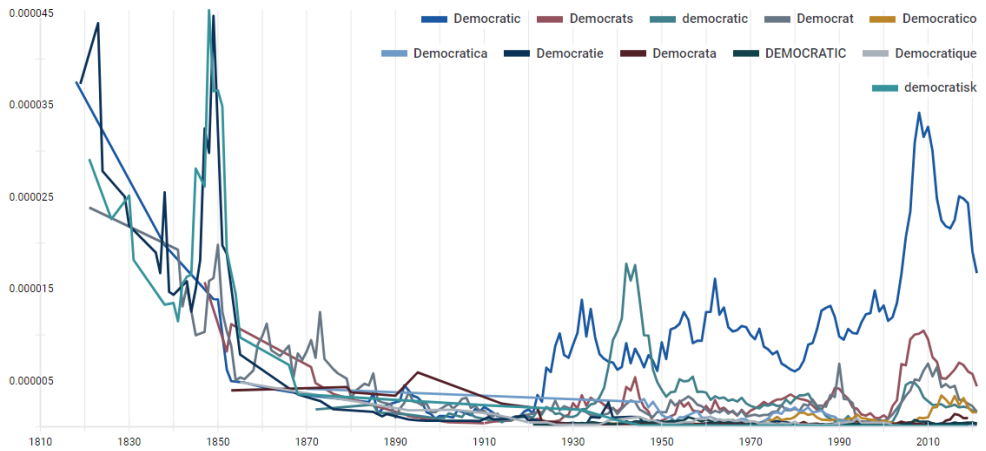


Figure 3 The appearance of the word “democrat*” in Norwegian newspapers.

5.2 Foreign and domestic

In all the investigated papers, there was a split between the domestic and the foreign section. Most of the uses of democracy in 1848, in all of the three newspapers, came in the section called “foreign intelligence” (*Utenlandske Efterretninger*). Of all the 112 issues of *Morgenbladet* in 1848 that contained the word democrat, 76 had it just in the foreign section, 30 just in the domestic section and 6 in both sections. See *figure 4* for the similar spread in *Rigstidende* and *Drammens Adresse*.

Even though the majority of appearances were in the foreign section, I have chosen to primarily focus on the domestic articles. This is partly due to time constraints and partly due to methodological reasons. When it comes to the foreign section, it is hard to say anything definite about the Norwegian understanding of the term. The newspapers subscribed to a host of foreign newspapers from various countries and would “copy and paste” information from these into their daily briefings.¹⁰¹ Often they would provide direct citations, while at other times, they were more vague. It is therefore hard to say to what degree the newspapers were reflecting the foreign uses of the word or to what degree they themselves chose this word to describe foreign developments. As an example, in many of the cases in *Morgenbladet* the newspaper was referring to the names of various organizations and groups, such as “the German democrats” or “the democratic association in Hamburg” and it is hard to know whether this was a description these actors used for themselves or whether this is how *Morgenbladet* interpreted them. The same applies to the other

¹⁰¹ Rudeng, *Morgenbladet*, 49, 142.

newspapers, *Rigstidende* and *Drammens Adresse*. This is not to say that the foreign section had no influence. As I will show in chapter nine, Thrane was clearly influenced by the developments on the continent and it is very likely that also the other newspapers were influenced by these developments at least to some degree.

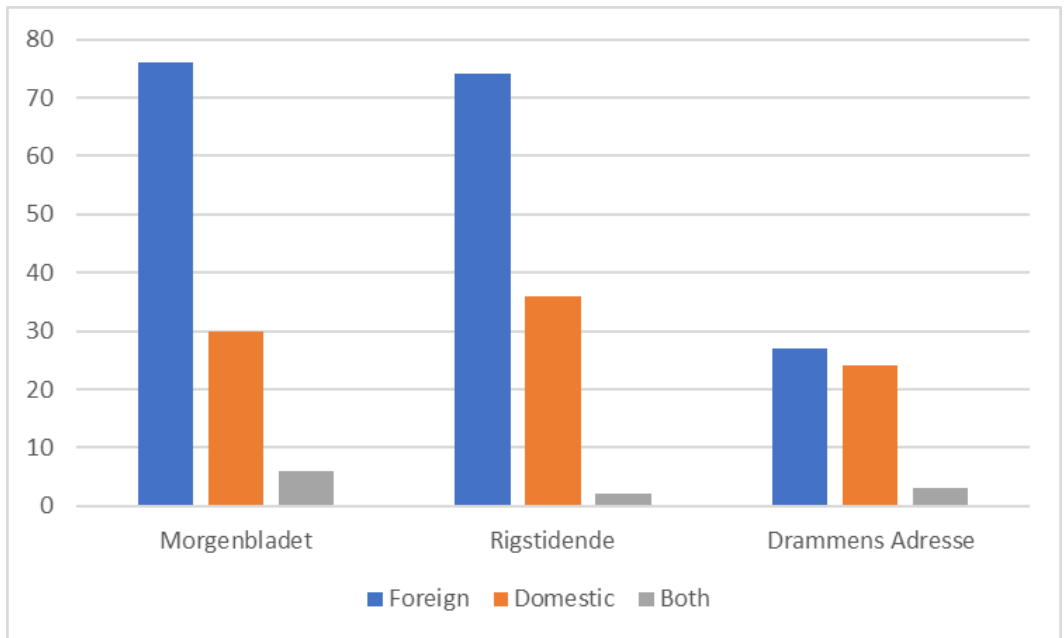


Figure 4 The spread of the appearance of variants of the word “democracy” between the foreign and domestic section.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Though I have not investigated this in-depth, the majority of the increase seems to have come in the foreign section. In 1847 the percentage of issues where “democracy” appeared in the foreign section or both was 45.76%, while in 1848 it was 73.2% consequently, the increase in 1848, at least in *Morgenbladet* came primarily in the foreign section and it is likely that this was the case for the other papers as well.

6. Norway and the political context

6.1 The Norwegian political system since 1814

As a result of the Napoleonic Wars, Norway became detached from Denmark in 1814 and was, after a short bout of independence, forced into a personal union with Sweden. The union, however, was through the person of the monarch and the country still kept an adjusted form of its 1814 constitution. As per this constitution, executive power was vested in the monarch and through him, his ministers, legislative power in the *Storting*, which gathered every third year, and judicial power with the courts. The personal power of the monarch varied considerably through this period, but in general there was a downward trend in this period as Norwegian elites in both government and *Storting* closed ranks to defend the constitution.

The period from 1814 to 1884 has famously been called the civil servant's state.¹⁰³ The term was not used at the time, but manages to encapsulate the extremely strong position civil servants had in the Norwegian political system. Norway had little nobility and few burghers, especially after the old wood-patriciate collapsed in 1815.¹⁰⁴ Before 1814, the country was mostly rural with civil servants educated in Copenhagen filling the administration at both a regional and local

¹⁰³ This term was coined by the historian Jens Arup Seip to describe the political system in Norway. It became part of a larger structure where he divided Norwegian history from 1814 into distinct periods based on the configuration of political power. Jens Arup Seip, *Fra embedsmannsstat til ettpartistat og andre essays*. (Universitetsforlaget, 1963); Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet 1814-ca. 1860*; Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet ca. 1850-1884*.

¹⁰⁴ Jan Eivind Myhre, "Carriers of knowledge," in *Making a modern university, the University of Oslo 1811-2018*, ed. Jan Eivind Myhre and Kim Helsvig (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2018), 261.

level. This came to be reflected in the constitution, which gave suffrage to all current and previous civil servants and also made it impossible for the king to fire them. Once they had been given a position, most of them could only be removed by a legal proceeding.¹⁰⁵ The constitution also gave considerable suffrage to farmers,¹⁰⁶ but at least in the first decades, these mostly elected their local civil servants (such as the priests) to the *Storting*.¹⁰⁷ The result was that after 1814 civil servants controlled both the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government.

5.2 1848 in Norway

1848 was a *Storting-year*.¹⁰⁸ Besides approving the budget, the *Storting* also discussed policies and law changes. Many of these were recurring topics that had been raised in multiple previous *Storting*, often centering on the fault line between the farmers and the civil servants. Important examples were: *Lendsmannsloven* - who had the authority to appoint the local tax and police authorities, *Veiloven* - who were responsible for building and maintaining roads, *Vernepliktsloven* - who should serve as conscripts and lastly, *Jødesagen* - should Jews

¹⁰⁵ Grunnloven, § 22, 1814..

¹⁰⁶ As per the 1814 constitution, all men over 25 that either owned or rented land, burghers in the cities, people that owned urban property over a certain value and all current and previous civil servants were given suffrage. In total, this equated to about 40% of the adult male population, though this percentage would decrease in the decades after 1814, with the growth of a new rural and urban underclass. Myhre, *Norsk historie 1814-1905*, 16.

¹⁰⁷ This did not really change until *bondestortinget* in 1833.

¹⁰⁸ Its members gathered on the 1st and the *Storting* was formally opened on the 9th of February. This year, the composition was 39 farmers, 50 civil servants and 16, who were more difficult to place, mainly merchants as well as people in more “free professions”. The civil servants thus had 48% of all seats in the *Storting*, an increase from the previous years and a number they would never later match. Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet 1814- ca. 1860*, 161.

be allowed to enter the country. Another seminal and important discussion was whether government ministers should be allowed to enter into the *Storting*, which the Opposition were against as they feared it would strengthen the executive, a position that would change in later decades. Lastly, monetary questions also appeared frequently in 1848. The revolutions in 1848 were partly caused by years of bad harvests and economic problems.

However, there would be little time for these plans as on the 8th of March, news of the revolution in France hit the Norwegian newspapers.¹⁰⁹ This led to a weekend of street-unrest in the capital. The exact details of what came to be known as the “March-days” are unclear, as the sources give somewhat conflicting accounts.¹¹⁰ The unrest seems to have started on Friday the 10th of March. In their issue of the day, *Morgenbladet* had published an article praising the revolution going on in France. This led students, lower functionaries and other conservative supporters of the regime into the streets where they loudly expressed their indignation in front of the house of the editor of *Morgenbladet*, Adolf Bredo Stabell. On the next day, this was met by a counter-protest by the Opposition, with a large crowd praising Stabell and other opposition (and non-opposition) leaders. On the third day, fearing large scale revolts, the police mobilized. They were attacked and had to seek refuge in the military castle forcing the military to go out and restore order, which they did by arresting over

¹⁰⁹ *Morgenbladet*, 08.03.1848, no. 68, 2; *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 08.03.1848, no. 68, 1.

¹¹⁰ Tore Pryser, “Mars-urolighetene i Kristiania 1848,” *Tidsskrift for arbeiderbevegelsens historie* no 1 (1981): 20.

50 people.¹¹¹ In the end, little came out of the March Days, which were benign compared to the massive street riots going elsewhere in Europe.¹¹²

The revolutions in Europe also gave impetus to opposition within the *Storting*. Seip has called the period from 1842 to 1851 the “years of address-politics”.¹¹³ Through these years there was a movement by the Opposition to craft addresses from the *Storting* to the king/government where they outlined their political wishes. This was part of a struggle by the Opposition to gather more power in the legislative branch, which they saw as the legitimate representative of the popular will. The last attempt had been shut down in 1845, but the revolutionary situation in 1848 made the situation seem ripe for a new attempt. On the 24th of April, a group of opposition politicians headed by the farmer-leader Ole Gabriel Ueland proposed an address calling for the “will of the people” and “local emancipation” and calling for a shift in government. This was further taken up by his allies in *Morgenbladet*, calling for a change in the whole system.¹¹⁴ *Morgenbladet* did not hold back the rhetoric, and Sars has pointed out that it would be hard to come up with “a more open and straightforward declaration of war”.¹¹⁵ However, this is somewhat

¹¹¹ Odd Arvid Storsveen, “Democracy and Elections: The Norwegian Experience 1830-1850,” *REVUE D’HISTOIRE NORDIQUE* no. 10 (2010): 104.

¹¹² Seip called the whole situation “laughable” and a “leaderless crowd”. Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet 1814- ca. 1860*, 183.

However, it is worth noting that the social makeup of the people taking to the streets were similar to those revolting elsewhere in Europe and that things might have been very different if this “revolutionary energy” was attached to a clear program posited by liberal and/or radical elites.

¹¹³ Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet 1814- ca. 1860*, 166.

¹¹⁴ Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet 1814- ca. 1860*, 167.

¹¹⁵ “Det var en Krigserklæring saa aaben og ligefrem som man kan ønske sig den”, Sars, *Norges Politiske Historie 1815-1885*, 392.

hyperbolic. The rhetoric was fierce, but as soon as the attempt met resistance in the *Storthing* and in the newspapers both *Ueland* and *Morgenbladet* quickly backed down and downplayed their wish for a “change in system”.¹¹⁶ The address was therefore sent to a committee, where it “died” in August.¹¹⁷

The Opposition did, however, manage to implement some changes. As part of the address they had also clamored for a change of ministers. Governor Løvenskiold, pushed along by the ambitious Frederik Stang, realized that in order to preserve public peace: “something had to be given”.¹¹⁸ Two ministers were changed on the 19th of April and more came later in the year.¹¹⁹

Like in the rest of Europe, 1848 also led to the creation of more radical movements and voices outside of the established system. In August 1848, Marcus Thrane took over as editor in the newspaper *Drammens Adresse*. Here he advocated for more radical changes and for workers, cottagers and others on the lower rungs of society to create their own worker associations (*Arbeiderforeninger*). Thrane would later go on to create these associations himself towards the end of the year, as well as starting up his own newspaper in 1849. As will be discussed more in the section on Thrane, these associations eventually grew to become the largest in the country, leading to a reaction from the government and Thrane’s arrest in 1851.

¹¹⁶ Myhrvold, “*Morgenbladet*” og bondeopposisjonen, 59-60; Storsveen, “Democracy and Elections,” 105-106.

¹¹⁷ Hans Fredrik Dahl (ed) et al, *Norsk Presses Historie 1-4 (1660-2010)* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2010), 246.

¹¹⁸ Dahl (ed) et al, *Norsk Presses Historie*, 246.

¹¹⁹ Anne-Lise Seip, “1830-70 - Nasjonen bygges,” 250.

7. The Opposition “The Democracy”

*Man har begyndt at ane, at disse juridiske Vidløftigheder kun tjene til Forhalinger og opløse sig i Intet, at det er Bureaokratiets divide et impera, hvorved Folkevillien skal dysses i Søvn.*¹²⁰

- Adolf Bredo Stabell

7.1 The history of opposition up to 1848

Between 1814 and 1884, various groups opposed the rule of the civil servants, both their specific policies as well as their legitimacy. As mentioned earlier, Sars collects the various shifting constellations of opposition into the broad label of “liberal-democratic-nationalist-peasants”. That does not mean that such a coherent and self-conscious party existed through most of the time period investigated. In many ways Sars is projecting the *Venstre* party of the 1870/1880s back in time. However, what the label encapsulates is that there was a more or less continuous opposition to the regime and that the ideas and ideals this opposition fought for generally followed these broad trends. Various constellations of everything from liberal civil servants to nationalists poets and conservative peasants opposed the regime at different times.

Seip divides the history of opposition into three broad periods which he calls: “The old opposition” 1815-1824, “The peasant

¹²⁰ “One has started to suspect, that this juridical minutiae, only serve to delay and are dissolved into Nothing, that it is the divide et impera of the Bureaucracy, with which the Popular Will is to be lulled to sleep.” *Morgenbladet*, 27.05.1848, no. 148, 5.

opposition” 1830-1836 and “the third opposition” 1844-1851.¹²¹ The first and second opposition are not directly relevant for this thesis. However, they help give context to the more relevant third opposition. The first opposition against the civil servant’s regime can be seen as a challenge to the makeup of the newly established state. Especially the harsh economic problems at this time challenged both the legitimacy of the regime and the newly minted union with Sweden. This opposition joined together both bourgeoisie, artisans, farmers and some radical civil servants. Many challenged the economic policies of the civil servants and some advocated for, in Seip’s words, a more “direct democracy”, aiming for more local self-government and channeling the still percolating republican undercurrents of the 1790s.¹²² The clearest expression of this opposition was the peasant insurrection of 1818, where a group of farmers marched towards the capital, only to be stopped by the military. The movement eventually fizzled out as the economic conditions improved, people started to get used to the new system, and the political elite started to unite against the attempts to gain more power by the Swedish king.¹²³

Whereas the first opposition managed to gather many disparate forces, the second was a more unilateral affair. The *Storthing* of 1833, in many ways marked the farmers’ full entry into the political system and has also ever since been dubbed “the farmer’s *Storthing*” (*bondestortinget*). The farmers had, at this time, made peace with the constitution as they seemed to realize the power and influence it awarded to them. Their chief political aims were lower taxes and more

¹²¹ Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet 1814- ca. 1860*, 144-175.

¹²² Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet 1814- ca. 1860*, 146-147.

¹²³ Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet 1814- ca. 1860*, 147.

power to local governments. In 1836-37 this resulted in a dual victory, both the removal of direct taxation and the passing of the law on local government. Seip has characterized the latter as an expression of their desire for a “direct democracy”.¹²⁴ Though, as argued by Lauten, this term might be pushing it a bit too far, it is clear that the farmers wanted and achieved more power for themselves and their communities and less for the state.

Last is the third opposition, which in this thesis will go under the label of “the Opposition” or “the democratic party”. According to Seip, the movement was a brokered one. The core of the Opposition was the traditional farmer’s opposition, led by Ueland, now a “firm fixture” in the political system.¹²⁵ In general, the farmers still wanted to control more of their local affairs and keep more of their money as opposed to having everything controlled by civil servants and the state.¹²⁶ They were less interested than the civil servants in matters of principle such as the constitutional arrangements or the relationship with Sweden. When it came to values, they were generally quite conservative. Some of the main “cultural” questions of the time were about religion. In this regard, the farmers were happy to abolish the old restrictions on laymen gatherings, but were more skeptical and opposed to allowing religious dissenter movements or allowing Jews to enter the realm.¹²⁷

The chief marker of this period, however, was the attempt by what can be labeled “liberal civil servants or liberal academics” to

¹²⁴ Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet 1814- ca. 1860*, 155.

¹²⁵ Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet 1814- ca. 1860*, 158

¹²⁶ Anne-Lise Seip, “1830-70 - Nasjonen bygges,” 247-248.

¹²⁷ Anne-Lise Seip, “1830-70 - Nasjonen bygges,” 192-196.

gather these forces into a more solid opposition, akin to the British system. Their goal seemed to be to create a sort of alliance combining the particular interests of the farmers with the goal of increased autonomy for Norway in the union and increased power to the *Storting* in relation to the government. Such a feat had already been attempted twice, first by Jonas Anton Hielm and later by Ludvig Christensen Daa.¹²⁸ Lastly, and most relevant for 1848, a third attempt was made by the editor of *Morgenbladet*, Adolf Bredo Stabell who managed to create a sort of alliance with the farmer faction and turn the newspaper into the “main organ of the opposition”.¹²⁹ In the end, none of these succeeded. The political system in Norway proved surprisingly adept at absorbing and neutralizing wishes for major reforms.¹³⁰ The decades after 1848 would be another high point for the civil servants’ state and it was not until the 1880s and the creation of *Venstre* under Johan Sverdrup that the goal of creating a solid party on “the left” was achieved.

7.2 *Morgenbladet*

The thesis’ main source for the Opposition movement’s usage of, and view on, democracy is *Morgenbladet*, which in 1848 was the oldest and largest daily newspaper in Norway. The newspaper was created by Nils Wulfsberg in 1819 and was from the beginning intended to be a daily newspaper covering “all types of content”.¹³¹ This entailed that it aimed to be unbiased, or as put in the words of the time “neither

¹²⁸ Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet 1814- ca. 1860*, 156-158.

¹²⁹ Rudeng, *Morgenbladet*, 79.

¹³⁰ Storsveen, “Democracy and Elections”.

¹³¹ Rudeng, *Morgenbladet*, 39-42.

ministerial nor oppositional”.¹³² Nevertheless, the newspaper had a relatively clear, though changing, bias throughout its lifespan.¹³³ By the 1840s, the paper had become clearly left-leaning, before it in the 1850s started to lean more and more towards the right, which seemed to have been partly a response to Thrane’s worker’s associations.¹³⁴

In 1848, the paper was considered to be the main opposition newspaper.¹³⁵ At the time, it was edited by Adolf Bredo Stabell, one of the leading men of the Opposition and president of the “lower chamber” of the *Storting* (*Odelstinget*).¹³⁶ When people marched in Christiania during the March Days, they marked their position by protesting either for or against “his Majesty Stabell, king of the opposition”.¹³⁷ In the periods where Stabell was occupied in the *Storting*, editing was handled by his radical co-editor Rolf Olsen, whom Pryser describes as “the intellectual heavy-hitter of the left around 1850” for his polemical writing style.¹³⁸

¹³² Rudeng, *Morgenbladet*, 46.

¹³³ In its first years, Wulfsberg’s close connections to the royal court made the newspaper a target for allegations of being “pro-swedish”. In the 1820s, the paper followed the mainstream “patriotic liberal” sentiments, though with some more radical expressions at times. In the cultural debates of the 1830s under the editor Rasmus Hviid, the paper fell squarely on the side of Henrik Wergeland and his romantic notions of the people and the emotions as the source for both political legitimacy and the arts. See the first two chapters of Rudeng, *Morgenbladet*.

¹³⁴ This political bias would continue until it took on a more neoliberal bend in the 1970s. The paper still exists today as a weekly newspaper with more of an “intellectual” bent.

¹³⁵ Rudeng, *Morgenbladet*, 11.

¹³⁶ The *Storting* has since its inception been a unicameral institution with representatives based on one election. However, until 2009, the members of the *Storting* would divide into two chambers, *Odelstinget* with $\frac{3}{4}$ of the members and *Lagtinget* with $\frac{1}{4}$ of the members when passing laws.

¹³⁷ Seip, *Utsikt over Norges historie - Tidsrommet 1814- ca. 1860*, 172

¹³⁸ “... venstresidas intellektuelle slugger rundt 1850” Tore Pryser, *Gesellar, rebellar og svermarar. Om “farlege folk” kring 1850* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1982), 100.

That Stabell was the chief editor of the newspaper was an open secret.¹³⁹ The newspaper still maintained the old tradition, stemming from a time with more stringent censorship, of having anonymous editors. In addition to these practical reasons, there was an ideal that the identity of the writers were superfluous as the “reason of the arguments” would speak by themselves.¹⁴⁰ However, that Stabell was the man behind the newspaper was widely known, even though the newspaper kept denying it. But it does create the practical problem that it is impossible to truly know what issues of the newspaper were edited by Stabell and which were edited by Olsen.¹⁴¹

In 1848, there was an issue of *Morgenbladet* every day. Most of them followed a relatively similar structure. They usually included “domestic news”, summarizing events in major Norwegian cities, and “foreign news”, covering other, mostly European, countries. These might stand on their own, but usually they came after an editorial, where the newspaper presented its anonymous editors' views on various topics. Occasionally, they would also feature submitted articles.¹⁴² The newspaper usually ended with advertisements and announcements. Additionally, the paper also had the right to post the official minutes from the *Storting* debates. They often took up a lot of

¹³⁹ Sars, *Norges Politiske Historie 1815-1885*, 376.

¹⁴⁰ Rudeng, *Morgenbladet*, 99.

¹⁴¹ According to both Rudeng and Dahl et al, Olsen took over as editor in 1848 while Stabell served in the *Storting*. However, as Myhrvold points out, we cannot truly know which articles were written by, or at least influenced by Stabell, and which were fully the work of Olsen.

Rudeng, *Morgenbladet*, 146; Dahl (ed) et al, *Norsk Presses Historie*, 245-246; Myhrvold, “*Morgenbladet*” og *bondeopposisjonen*, 57.

¹⁴² Though the bias was clear, *Morgenbladet* would at times also print differing opinions, especially at those times they were more dependent on submissions for content. Myhrvold, “*Morgenbladet*” og *bondeopposisjonen*, 11.

space. The papers were usually four pages, but could also include attachments (*tillægg*), increasing their length to six or eight pages, which happened 45 times in 1848, primarily to accommodate the *Storthing*-minutes and discussions on them.¹⁴³ The term democracy did not appear in the paper everyday. Out of the 357 issues digitized from 1848, variants of the word “democracy” appeared in 112 of them.¹⁴⁴

7.3 The Opposition’s use and understanding of “democracy”

7.3.1 The Democracy - a party label

The most frequent way “democracy” appeared in 1848 was as a party label, a synonym to the much used term “the Opposition”. Formally, there were no parties in Norway. The ideal was that the members of the *Storthing*, were to make decisions for the whole of the country based on their own convictions and the soundness and logic of the arguments. In the prevailing ideology of the time, parties were seen as conflict ridden factions, working in the shadow to promote particular interests. In modern political science jargon, the representatives were seen as trustees.¹⁴⁵ The elections gave them legitimacy, but they were not considered to be beholden to either their electors or any party. Some people tried to remedy this picture, by distinguishing between parties and what they called coteries, claiming that the first worked for

¹⁴³ This happened in 45 of the newspapers in 1848.

¹⁴⁴ This includes both *demokrat** 111 and *democrat** 1.

¹⁴⁵ Edmund Burke was the first to distinguish between what he labeled the trustee and the delegate mode of representation. See Suzanne Doviš article in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy for a more thorough description. Suzanne Doviš, “Political Representation,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* last modified August 29, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/political-representation/#DeIVsTru>.

the implementation of overarching ideas and ideals while the latter favored group interests.¹⁴⁶ This did not, however, really stick, and no full-fledged parties were created in Norway until *Venstre* was established in 1884.

However, there were still factions and different groups in the *Storthing* and society working towards different goals. Chief among them was what Seip described as the third opposition, gathering around the farmer leader Ueland and the editor of *Morgenbladet* Stabell. This faction was frequently referred to with various versions of the term democracy. Sometimes this was very explicit in articles consciously discussing factions and parties. As *Morgenbladet* was itself an organ of this democratic faction, but rarely acknowledging it, the references were usually in the third person. They were usually also indirect. There are almost no examples where *Morgenbladet*, or any of the other newspapers, explicitly discussed democracy and what it meant.¹⁴⁷ Its meaning comes through context.

The reference to the party or faction could have many forms. The most explicit ones were the times where *Morgenbladet* referred to the democratic party, the democratic faction, the democratic opposition or democracy-minded members of the *Storthing*. An example of this

¹⁴⁶ This distinction between parties and coteries comes from the ministerial paper, *Rigstidende*. However, the terms are used in multiple articles also from *Morgenbladet* in 1848, always with a negative slant on coteries, but never explained in-depth. *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 06.03.1848, no. 66, 1-2.; *Morgenbladet*, 19.02.1848, no. 50; *Morgenbladet*, 28.04.1848, no. 119, 1.

¹⁴⁷ In all these newspapers, I could only find two examples of them in any way explicitly explaining democracy. One example is from *Morgenbladet* which reviews a book which says there is a difference between liberalism and democracy. The other example is from Thrane in *Drammens Adresse*, who states that Democracy means the dominion of the people (*folkeherredømme*). *Morgenbladet*, 18.09.1848, no. 262, 1; *Drammens Adresse*, 10.08.1848, no. 96, 1.

was on the 11th of March when they were discussing university teacher salaries. The Opposition wanted to reduce these salaries in order to be able to hire more teachers. In this example the paper pointed out that the Ministerials opposed this and argued partly based on cost arguments which quipped *Morgenbladet* to respond:

One speaks of stolen beddings and an inappropriate focus on Money amongst the democratic faction and the Farmers on the Storthing when they are reasonable enough to not approve any foolish Demand for Funding to the Benefit of Individuals, or to the type of Projects which the Administration has shown itself incapable of implementing.¹⁴⁸

Another was on the 18th of May 1848. The pro-government paper *Rigstidende* had written about the necessity of enlightening the people and that one should strive for the moderate development of the people's freedom. This *Morgenbladet* found strange as the Governmental party for a long time had heaped insults against the rightful aspirations of the Democratic party.¹⁴⁹

However, in general, these terms were quite rare, probably due to the negative connotations of terms like “party” and “faction” which *Morgenbladet* wanted to avoid. A much more common way of using the term was “The Democracy” (*Demokratiet*). This term can be

¹⁴⁸ “Man taler om Styversænger og upassende Pengehensyn hos den demokratiske Fraktion og Storthingets Bønder, naar disse ere fornuftige nok til at ikke indrømme ethvert taabeligt Forlangende om Bevilgning til Gunst for Enkelte, eller til saadanne Prosjekter, som Administration har vist sig uduelig til at gennemføre.” *Morgenbladet*, 11.03.1848, no. 71, 5.

¹⁴⁹ *Morgenbladet*, 03.05.1848, no. 139, 3.

ambiguous, such as in this utterance from the 28th of April when *Morgenbladet* came with an article on the address and wrote:

And we repeat, that we are of the Conviction, that it is not the case that some Persons should step down only to be replaced with Others of the same political coloring, the most eager opponents of The Democracy and Freedom of the People in the *Storthing*...¹⁵⁰

Here, the term can be understood in multiple ways. A more contemporary form of understanding “democracy” would be to see it as a label for a political system or perhaps a value which one can be for or against. However, given the context, it is clear that *Morgenbladet* here was writing about the faction in the *Storthing* to which the government and their supporters were an opponent. This was a very common way for *Morgenbladet* to use the term. They almost always used the term with a definite article in front “The Democracy”, and with a capital letter, indicating a noun in the orthography of the time.¹⁵¹

There are multiple other examples of this. Many of them comes from the same issue as the previous quote, linked to the address, which was the main project of the Opposition that year and where they wrote about “the Democrats in the *Storthing* and in the Press”, the governments reactionary politics to “subdue the Democracy” and that

¹⁵⁰ “Idet vi gjentage, at vi have den Overbeviisning, at det ikke blot er enkelte Personer, som bør aftræde og at ikke Andre af samme politiske Farve, Demokratiets og Folkefrihedens ivrigste Bekjæmpere i Storthinget, bør indtage de Aftrædendes Plads,...”*Morgenbladet*, 28.04. 1848, no. 119, 3.

¹⁵¹ In Norwegian and Danish, the definite article is attached as a suffix and in the Danish orthography of the time, all nouns start with a capital letter. Consequently, the Democracy would be *Demokratiet*.

the opinion in the people demanded the “most serious energy from the Side of the Democracy”.¹⁵²

However, the term appeared throughout the rest of the year as well, for example on the 12th of March when *Morgenbladet* wrote about the unrest during the March Days. That weekend, people had gone to either cheer or jeer at the home of the editor of *Morgenbladet*, Stabell. *Morgenbladet* stated that they supported the people’s right to express themselves, but noted that Stabell was far too closely associated with the paper for them to “recommend the Readers to praise The Democracy through him.”¹⁵³

In another example towards the end of the year, *Morgenbladet* noted that it had previously been common to label farmers with more wealth and education as “proprietaries” but that more recently it had become common to lump them all together under the term farmer (*bonde*). *Morgenbladet* pointed out that for “the democracy”, this was considered a good thing, even though the foes of “the democrats” used it derogatorily.¹⁵⁴

Another indication that they were referring to a party are the few times the term was used in a seemingly indefinite form, and they were speaking just of “democracy”. Most of these came in the foreign sections and were just examples of the word where the definite article had been moved to the front or was expressed in some other way. Examples are when the paper was discussing “the danish democracy”,

¹⁵² ... Demokraterna i Storthinget og i Pressen...”; “... underkue Demokratiet...”; “...den alvorligste Energi fra Demokratiets Side...”*Morgenbladet*, 28.04.1848, no. 119, 2.

¹⁵³ “...oppfordre Publikum til at vise Demokratiet sin hyldest gennem ham.”*Morgenbladet*, 12.03.1848, no. 72, 3.

¹⁵⁴ *Morgenbladet*, 21.11.1848, no. 326, 2.

“the american democracy” or “the prussian democracy”.¹⁵⁵ Some other examples are “the moderate democracy” or “the democracy of the capital”.¹⁵⁶ In all these examples, they were still referring to a specific group or faction, though it can be a large part of the people, not only a small faction in the parliament. Some other examples were from France, where at least in one instance they seem to be talking more about a system,¹⁵⁷ but these are direct quotations from the French National Constituent Assembly and do not seem to have influenced *Morgenbladet*’s usage of the word.

That the term was primarily used as a party label does not mean that it did not have any inherent qualities or referred to a phenomenon. The Opposition did have some specific causes for which they fought and they did have an understanding of democracy as something more than only an empty label. They were quite adamant, that the constitution and the Norwegian system was to be guided by what they called democratic principles

7.3.2 Democratic principles - the core of the constitution

Another major context where democracy appeared was to refer to the political system in Norway (*forfatningen*) or to the constitution and its

¹⁵⁵ *Morgenbladet*, 13.02.1848, no. 44, 1; *Morgenbladet*, 31.07.1848, no. 213, 2; *Morgenbladet*, 24.08.1848, no. 208, 2. Note that the second example is once-removed, as the reference to “the American democracy” is through an extract from a French paper, again showing the uncertainty of using the foreign section.

¹⁵⁶ *Morgenbladet*, 10.10.1848, no. 284, 3.; *Morgenbladet*, 05.10.1848, no. 279, 2.

¹⁵⁷ Lamartine argued that France did not need two chambers for the new legislative assembly as it was not a federation like the US and did no longer have an aristocracy like the UK. Consequently, France was a democracy and needed only one chamber. Democracy here seems to refer to a system, but again, it was seen in comparison to aristocracy and used to argue that in France, the people, “the democracy” were the most significant constituent. *Morgenbladet*, 09.10.1848, no. 283, 2.

democratic principles. *Morgenbladet* frequently pointed out that Norway had a democratic constitution, one that was both revered and loved by the people.¹⁵⁸ By this they do not seem to suggest that Norway was a democracy in our current understanding of the term, but that the constitution, among other things, contained “democratic principles”. This last term they used explicitly at multiple occasions.

One such incident was during the article on the address. The essence of the address was the Opposition’s wish for more power to the *Storting* vis-à-vis the government. They argued that the spirit of the constitution was built upon popular sovereignty and freedom and that the government, rather than acting in accordance with the majority in the *Storting*, was acting in accordance with a limited group of people in society, certain civil servants. They accused them of trying to subvert the will of the people through a strictly juridical reading of the constitution, rather than the spirit of the constitution which they claimed was based on “democratic principles”.¹⁵⁹ They actually go as far as to say that such bickering about who specifically should have the prerogative to do certain things might be appropriate in states with constitutions given as gifts by monarchs, but not in a constitution such as the Norwegian one “which has its Origins and roots in Popular Sovereignty and where The Democracy prevails absolutely”.¹⁶⁰

Here, the “The Democracy” referred not to a faction, but to an aspect of the constitution and the political system. It referred to the “democratic principle”. This principle was something one could have

¹⁵⁸ *Morgenbladet*, 14.03.1848, no. 74, 4.

¹⁵⁹ *Morgenbladet*, 28.04.1848, no. 119, 2.

¹⁶⁰ “..., der har sin Oprindelse og Rod i Folkesuvereniteten og hvori Demokratiet er aldeles forherskende”. *Morgenbladet*, 28.04.1848, no. 119, 2.

more or less of, as *Morgenbladet* pointed out in October when they noted that a Swedish paper called the Norwegian constitution too bureaucratic, which *Morgenbladet* stated was the same as saying “that the democratic Principle in it had not been sufficiently implemented”.¹⁶¹

These are the only two examples where the term “democratic principles” was used directly, but *Morgenbladet* often referred to the same concept, with slightly other terms, such as “*grunnsætninger*”¹⁶², a synonym to principles, or by referring to “our democratic constitution’s principles.”¹⁶³ The term also showed up occasionally in previous years, most importantly in the fall of 1847 where *Morgenbladet* provided something akin to a definition:

The Democracy, or the democratic Principle, as an Expression of the Idea of Freedom, rests originally and absolutely in all Societies, that have constituted themselves without any positive Limitation. Popular Sovereignty is the Original, which against are challenged positive provisions to engender that which is aristocratic or monarchic, and these cannot be implemented without the Consent of the General Will.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ “...at det demokratiske Princip i den ikke er tilstrekkelig gjennomført.” *Morgenbladet*, 21.10.1848, no. 295.

¹⁶² *Morgenbladet*, 25.04.1848, no. 116, 2.

¹⁶³ “En demokratisk Konstitutions Principer...” *Morgenbladet*, 10.06.1848, no. 162, 2.

¹⁶⁴ “Demokratiet eller det demokratiske Princip, som Udtrykket for Frihedsideen, hviler oprindeligt og absolut i ethvert Samfund, der har konstitueret sig uden positive Indskrænkninger. Allmeenvilliens Ret er det Oprindelige, hvor imod der udfordres positive Bestemmelser til at frembringe hvad der er aristokratisk og monarkisk, og disse Bestemmelser kunne igjen ikke tænkes iaktsatte uden med Almeenvillien Samtykke.” *Morgenbladet*, 08.10.1847, no. 281, 1.

Here *Morgenbladet* claimed that the foundation of all constitutions was the democratic principle, but that they could be augmented also with other principles, aristocracy and monarchy. This is important, because in most of the settings where they wrote on the democratic aspects of the constitution, this was done in relation to monarchy or aristocracy.

Usually, when the term “democratic principles”, or phrases such as “the democratic aspects of the constitution”, were used, it was in a context where *Morgenbladet* discussed its opposites. This could be indirectly, where the term democratic cropped up when they were writing about things which they considered its opposite, such as aristocracy, monarchy or bureaucratism. Other times it was more explicit, such as during a debate in the *Storting* where they were discussing whether the cabinet ministers should get access to the *Storting*, and whether this would lead to a majority-government. Here the delegate Fougstad conceded that a system with majority government worked well in England, but pointed out that: “In England it is a necessity that it be like that; because there the Monarchy has to be liberal and agree with the Democracy, because if not, both would be engulfed by the powerful Aristocracy”¹⁶⁵

Whether the constitution was democratic or monarchic was one of the chief ideological cleavages between the Opposition and the Ministerials. As is clear from the previous quote, *Morgenbladet* saw

¹⁶⁵ “; i England er det en Nødvendighed, at det er saaledes; thi der maa Kongemakten være liberal og enig med Demokratiet, fordi ellers begge vilde opluges af det mægtige Aristokrati” *Morgenbladet*, 20.08.1848, no. 233, 6. This specific quote is by someone from the ministerial faction, however, he is here condoning a point often made by the Opposition.

the democratic principle to be the basis of the constitution. For them, the goal of the constitution was the realization of the general will.¹⁶⁶ In their view, all power and prerogatives not specifically given to the king and thus the government, belonged to the people, represented through the *Storting*. This, they argued, was the fundamental democratic principle of the constitution and the Norwegian state.¹⁶⁷ When saying this, they were basing themselves on an influential book on the constitution from 1845 by Peder Gaarder, whose chief argument was that one had to look not only at the lettering of the constitution, but also its “spirit” and that this spirit was popular sovereignty.¹⁶⁸ This was in direct opposition to the ministerial view, which was most concisely distilled by the ministerial lawyer Bernhard Dunker who pointed out that the first paragraph of the Constitution established that Norway was a monarchy and thus every power not explicitly given away belonged to the king.¹⁶⁹

What we seem to be dealing with here is the old notion of the mixed system. Based on surviving Greek sources and their antipathy to the direct democracy of Athens, democracy was long seen as something that should or could only exist as part of a mixed system. The Roman system was seen as stable because it included a mix of monarchy (the consuls), aristocracy (the senate) and democracy (the tribunes). This ancient understanding came to influence how the

¹⁶⁶ *Morgenbladet*, 10. 06.1848, no. 162, 2-3.

¹⁶⁷ *Morgenbladet*, 14.11.1848, no. 319, 1.

¹⁶⁸ Jul Myhrvold, *Morgenbladet” og bondeopposisjonen* (Oslo: Johan Grundt Tanum, 1949), 52. See also Peder Gaarder, *Fortolkning over Grundloven og de øvrige Love, som danne Norges Riges offentlige Ret* (Kristiania: J. Chr. Abesteds Officin., 1845).

¹⁶⁹ *Morgenbladet*, 14.11.1848, no. 319, 1; Bernhard Dunker, *Om den Norske Constitution : Bemærkninger, foranledigede ved P. K. Gaarders "Fortolkning over Grundloven"* (Christiania: P.J Hoppes Forlag hos Chr. Schibsted, 1845), 4-8.

British saw their system, which later became an explicit influence on Montesquieu and his system of separation of powers. As Nevers pointed out, this mental model also existed among the intellectuals of the Oldenburg realm.¹⁷⁰ It seems to have done so still in 1848 in Norway.

7.3.3 Democracy as the people - culture war

Both when it came to the party label and as a principle, *Morgenbladet* usually referred to, and seems to have envisioned, democracy as something that existed in relation to other things, whether they be another party/faction, another constitutional principle or another group in society. There was a constant dichotomy at play where the democratic party was seen as the opposite of the ministerial party and where the democratic principle was seen as the opposite, or at least something that existed in relation, to monarchical and aristocratic principles.

Accordingly, there was a division between the democratic party, representing “the people” and fighting for the democratic principles in the constitution and the ministerial party, representing the civil servants and fighting for the aristocratic and monarchical principles in the constitution. This is summed up nicely by a quote from Nicolai Wergeland the father of Henrik Wergeland, whose book *Tanker og Bekjendelser* was published in 1848 and reviewed by *Morgenbladet* in September. He stated that:

¹⁷⁰ Nevers, *Fra skældsord til slagord*, 43-52.

In all christian, well even non-christian Realms, there is in our Days a Struggle between two Spirits, two opposite public opinions, labeled with the Party names: Liberalism and Servilism, Reformatism and Conservatism, Democratism and Aristocratism, Opposition and Ministerials etc.¹⁷¹

Morgenbladet seems to very much have shared this view of there being two sides. For them, labels such as “democratic-aristocratic” were oxymorons.¹⁷²

On the one side of the dichotomy stood the people, or the majority. However, interestingly, this was an understanding of democracy that *Morgenbladet* itself never used explicitly. They often claimed that what they wanted was for the system to represent the people and the people’s will (*folkevillien*) but they never referred to the masses as “the democracy”. It was reserved to the political faction. However, this was very much a way of using “democracy” that existed in Norway at the time. *Morgenbladet* frequently used this term in the foreign section, often quite ambiguously so that it is hard to say whether they referred to a group or to the people at large “the masses”. As I will show later, putting an equal sign between democracy and the masses was often done by *Rigstidende* and the ministerial faction when speaking about *Morgenbladet* and the mob. Likewise, Thrane also occasionally used democracy as a synonym for the people and

¹⁷¹ “I alle kristne, vel endog ikkekristne Riger, er der i vore Dage kamp mellem tvende Aander, to modsatte Opinioner, betegnende med Partinavnene: Liberalisme og Servilisme, Reformatisme og Konservatisme, Demokratisme og Aristokratisme, Oppositionelle og Ministerielle, m.v.” *Morgenbladet* 18.09.1848, no. 202, 1.

¹⁷² *Morgenbladet*, 04.09.1848, no. 248, 3.

pointed out that *Morgenbladet*'s view of the "people" was just as elitist as *Rigstidende*.

What was clear in *Morgenbladet*'s rhetoric however, was who were *not* part of the people. Throughout the year, the civil servants were painted as the other, as foreign, elitist and perhaps even unnational. Most importantly, however, they stood against the democratic principles. *Morgenbladet* pointed out that the social structure of Norway in addition to the democratic principles of the constitution meant that there would be more farmers, traders and low-level clerks in the *Storting* compared to most parliaments.¹⁷³ This, they pointed out, made many civil servants fear the democratic principle:

Thus many liberal Civil Servants became doubtful and started asking whether there in the Constitution itself perhaps was a seed of Democratism which, taken to the extreme, could lead to the Dissolution of the State, and Other, that never had been truly enthusiastic about our democratic Form of Government, or that were politically indifferent, found it beneficial, that one through interpretations tried to prove that the Constitution in many regards was less democratic, than one had so far assumed...¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ *Morgenbladet*, 07.09.1848, no. 251, 1-2.

¹⁷⁴ "Saaledes bleve nu flere liberale Embedsmænd tvivlsomme, om der ikke i selve Forfatningen laa Spiren til en Demokratisme, der, udvidet til sin yderste Grændse, kunde lede til Statens Opløsning, og Andre, som enten aldrig havde været vor demokratiske Regjeringsform oprigtig hengive, eller som vare politiske indifferentister, fandt det fortjentligt, at man ved Fortolkninger søgte at godtgjøre, at Grundloven i mange Stykker indeholdt en mindre demokratisk Mening, end man hidindtil havde antaget..." *Morgenbladet*, 07.09.1848, no. 251, 2.

In addition to their opposition to the democratic principles of the constitution, *Morgenbladet* also attacked the profession of the civil servants. Most of the civil servants were educated as lawyers and *Morgenbladet* continuously used “juridicism” and “bureaucratic reading of rules” as the opposite of the constitution and its democratic principles.¹⁷⁵ This they saw as the antithesis of democratic rule, “the Bureaucracy’s divide et impera, with which the People’s Will is lulled to sleep”.¹⁷⁶ Consequently, as they pointed out in relation to the changes in government ministers in April, just changing one civil servant for another was not enough; they wanted people with political principles, one must assume, preferably their own political principles.¹⁷⁷

Likewise, *Morgenbladet* attacked their culture. On the cultural front, they often portrayed the civil servants as elitist, and criticized their affinity to Denmark and their Scandinavism, an idea at the time that sought closer cultural and political integration in Scandinavia.¹⁷⁸

Another angle of attack was against the civil servants’ education. Their hallmark as a class, in addition to their positions, was their university education, after 1814, through Norway’s only university in Christiania. *Morgenbladet* heaped scorn on this institution for not “fulfilling the role expected of it in a constitutional country”.¹⁷⁹ According to them, the university was nothing but an

¹⁷⁵*Morgenbladet*, 28.04.1848, no. 119, 1; *Morgenbladet*, 27.05. 1848, no. 148, 5; *Morgenbladet*, 13.07. 1848, no. 194, 2; *Morgenbladet*, 08.09. 1848, no. 252, 1.

¹⁷⁶ ...”Bureaukratiets divide et impera, hvorved Folkevillien skal hysjes i Søvn.” *Morgenbladet*, 27.05. 1848, no. 148, 5.

¹⁷⁷ *Morgenbladet*, 25.04.1848, no. 116, 2.

¹⁷⁸ *Morgenbladet*, 13.07.1848, no. 195, 2; *Morgenbladet*, 12.09.1848, no. 256, 4; *Morgenbladet*, 24.09.1848, no. 268, 3.

¹⁷⁹ “... ingenlunde svarer til de Fordringer der maa oppstilles for en saadan Institution i et Konstitutionelt Land.” *Morgenbladet*, 11.03.1848, no. 71, 5.

overgrown civil servant school and not an institution of true science and learning.¹⁸⁰ *Morgenbladet* also criticized the philosophical underpinnings of the civil servants. They were educated in a classical mold with Latin and Greek and in a philosophy dominated by the German humanist tradition. Against this, *Morgenbladet* wanted a more realist, “useful” and “British” philosophical tradition.¹⁸¹ In this regard, the civil servants responded in kind, with long rebuttals against *Morgenbladet*’s view on the university¹⁸², and two years earlier, a long lecture, in Latin, on the excesses and dangers of democracy.¹⁸³ Again, *Morgenbladet* was especially attacking the focus on examinations and the civil servants as rigid followers of the law, blocking the sovereignty of the people.

All in all, *Morgenbladet* seems to have seen the philosophy of the civil servants, their university education and their whole mode of being as an opposite to their view of the Norwegian people. What we seem to be dealing with here is a precursor to the so-called *Tokulturslæra*. An intellectual current in 19th century Norway that became especially salient after 1850 and which posited that there were two cultures in Norway: the indigenous farmer culture and the foreign civil servant/city culture.¹⁸⁴ *Morgenbladet* says as much when they talk about the “deep Cleavage, that in our Society separates the Civil

¹⁸⁰ *Morgenbladet*, 11.03.1848, no. 71, 5.

¹⁸¹ *Morgenbladet*, 25.04.1848, no. 116, 1.

¹⁸² *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 14.04.1848, no. 105, 2-3; *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 17.04.1848, no. 108, 1-2; *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 20.04.1848, no. 111, 1-2; *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 21.04.1848, no. 112, 1-3; *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 24.04.1848, no. 115, 1-3.

¹⁸³ Anne-Lise Seip, “1830-70 - Nasjonen bygges,” 186.

¹⁸⁴ For an updated and concise explanation of this current, see Hyvik, *Tokulturlæra i norsk historie*.

Servant from the Burgher and Citizen...”¹⁸⁵ This view was also clearly expressed in a fictional letter *Morgenbladet* wrote to an idealized farmer in the Dovre-mountains and printed in their paper. In this letter to the “soul of the nation” they complained that “the higher classes hate Morgenbladet and its democratic politics.”¹⁸⁶

7.4 Conclusion

The Opposition, as expressed through *Morgenbladet*, seems to primarily have used “democracy” in three interlocked ways. The first and most frequent use of the term was to refer to a party or a faction, one of many ways to refer to the Opposition in the *Storting*. *Morgenbladet* often pointed to the “democratic faction”, the “democratic party” or just “the Democracy”. The term served as one of many terms for the Opposition together with terms such as “reformers” or “liberals”, usually appearing together with their opposites such as “the Ministerials”, “the serviles” , “the conservatives” or “the Civil Servants”.

On a deeper level, the term was used when distinguishing between the “people” and the “elite”. The term frequently appeared to distinguish one part of the population, the democracy, against the other, the aristocracy/the civil servants. As Norway had no real aristocracy and just a small bourgeoisie, which the Opposition wanted to ally, not push away (there were no attacks on them in any of the issues containing the word democracy) the distinction was primarily cultural, not economic. These cultural aspects were made explicit in

¹⁸⁵ *Morgenbladet*, 13.07.1848, no. 195, 2.

¹⁸⁶ “Den fornemme verden hader Morgenbladet og dets demokratiske Politikk;” *Morgenbladet*, 21.03.1848, no. 81, 2.

the attacks on the university and on Scandinavianism. The Opposition rejected the classical education of the civil servants and their “scandinavian” and “european” sentiments.

Lastly, the term seems to also have referred to a system. *Morgenbladet* frequently pointed out how Norway had a democratic constitution, with “democratic principles”. However, this principle was often put forward as an opposition to an “aristocratic” or “monarchic” constitution. Likewise, it was never used to describe concrete mechanisms of governance. It did not refer to suffrage or the system of elections. Rather, it seems to have been another way of describing a system where the people, as represented through the *Storting*, was the dominant part. In a sense then, what we are dealing with here seems to be the old idea of a “mixed system”. Nevers has pointed out that this understanding of the term circulated among elites in the old Oldenburg-realm, and it seems to still have been part of the mental fabric half a century later, only now, with democracy as the leading part and with the Opposition framing this as a good thing.

What is also apparent in this discussion is the idea of the “two cultures” (*Tokulturslæra*). This was an ideological current in 19th century Norway which proposed that Norway had two distinct cultures. On the one side was the countryside and the farmers, with an unbroken lineage back to medieval Norway and beyond. On the other, the cities and the civil servants with their foreign lineages and European culture. As Hyvik points out, this idea did not fully form until the 1850s with the rise of *landsmål* as an alternative written form

of Norwegian,¹⁸⁷ but there were important precedents for example in the cultural struggles of the 1830s.¹⁸⁸ More concrete, Hyvik points out that Ludvig Kristensen Daa in his book *Varsko* from 1846 foreshadowed much of the later debates.¹⁸⁹ Much of this foreshadowing is apparent also in *Morgenbladet*, especially in their attacks on the university and the culture of the civil servants. In the 1880s, Tokulturlæra would become one of the primary tenets of the *Venstre* movement. The struggle for “Norwegian/farmer culture”, *landsmål*, parliamentarism and democracy. In many ways, a precursor to this was apparent already in 1848 with the dichotomy between “democrats” and “aristocrats/bureaucrats”.

This conflict between the democratic opposition and the juridical civil servants can also be seen as a Norwegian expression of a more general contradiction in the modern concept of liberal democracy. Liberal democracy is the coming together of democracy, which has come to mean the decision of the majority in an indirect election with universal suffrage, and liberalism, which can be seen as limits on this majority, creating constitutional channels through which it can operate and individual rights which it cannot breach. The last one is an outgrowth of the European concept of individual rights and rule of law. Francis Sejersted has argued for the civil servants’ regime as an expression of this ideal, of the *rettsstat*.¹⁹⁰ In that sense, the struggle between the Opposition and the civil servants can be seen as a

¹⁸⁷ A written standard based on various Norwegian dialects, the precursor to today’s *Nynorsk*.

¹⁸⁸ Hyvik, *Tokulturlæra i norsk historie*, 33-77.

¹⁸⁹ Hyvik, *Tokulturlæra i norsk historie*, 73.

¹⁹⁰ Sejersted, *Demokrati og Rettsstat*, 15-89.

strand in this struggle, in a time before the idea of liberal democracy had fully solidified.

However, whether talking about the mixed system or *Tokulturslæra*, it is somewhat difficult to say whether these uses of the term were purely a representation of their mental horizon or whether they represented a conscious choice for the Opposition and for *Morgenbladet*. Other uses of the term, such as calling for direct democracy and increased suffrage or the more radical uses on the continent would have been against the interests of both the land-owning farmers and the liberal academics in the Opposition. The farmers enthusiastically supported more power to the local municipalities, which they could dominate, but were reluctant to suggestions that would reduce their power in the *Storthing*. More specifically, it would also have been against the interest of Stabell as a wealthy man and since 1841 not only editor, but also co-owner of *Morgenbladet*.¹⁹¹ This probably also goes a long way to explain why *Morgenbladet* turned to the right in the years after 1848, faced with other ways of using the term in the Thrane-movement.

¹⁹¹ Rudeng, *Morgenbladet. En historie for seg*, 87.

8. The establishment “the Ministerials”

*De kunde føle sig som de selvskrevne Herrer i Landet - i Frihedens Navn, ligesom de forud havde været det i den enevældige Konges Navn.*¹⁹²

- Johan Ernst Sars

8.1 The history of the civil servant’s regime up to 1848

To a large degree, the civil servants constituted a self-recruiting class. They were never many. From 1814 to 1884 their numbers remained stable at about 2000 people, while at the same time, the population at large doubled from about one to two million.¹⁹³ The chief marker of the civil servants was their university education, which they had either from Norway’s only university or from a war college. In order to be accepted to the university, one needed to have gone through high school and received an artium. Going to university was thus an opportunity reserved for the few.¹⁹⁴

Among the civil servants, there had been a shift in the 1830s/1840s. Before the 1830s, more or less all civil servants were united in a common conservative program to defend the constitution against incursions from the king. However, in the 1830s, cultural splits

¹⁹² “They could feel like the natural Lords of the Land - in the Name of Freedom, like they before had been so in the Name of the absolute King.” Sars, *Norges Politiske Historie 1815-1885*, 214.

¹⁹³ Slagstad, *De nasjonale strateger*, 28.

¹⁹⁴ Until about 1870, over half of all students were the sons of civil servants. Of the rest, about a quarter were the sons of merchants and businessmen while the majority of the population, the functionaries, artisans and especially the peasants, filled the last 25 percent. Myhre, “Carriers of knowledge,” 262-263.

appeared among the civil servants. Young ambitious university students started developing other ideas on how the country should be governed. At the time, this was most felt in the cultural sphere in battles between Henrik Wergeland who represented a more left leaning, romantic and patriotic cultural tradition and Johan Sebastian Welhaven representing a more European and cosmopolitan outlook.¹⁹⁵ However, Welhaven was only one person in a larger movement. This movement, often called *Intelligentsen* (the intelligent) or *Troppen* is relevant as from the 1840s onward, they and their ideology increasingly came to dominate the state.

The civil servant faction was not a uniform group. As I have shown, *Morgenbladet* operated with a dichotomy where they tended to conflate the government, the faction in the *Storting* supporting their actions, which they called “the Ministerials,” and the civil servants as a class in general. This is somewhat deceptive as multiple of the people, like Stabell, with their university education, would themselves fit into this “class”. It is therefore important to note that when I use “the Ministerials” as a term and analytical object, I am investigating a group created by *Morgenbladet*. In reality, most civil servants would have objected to being grouped together into something akin to a party or a faction, whether in the *Storting* or outside, as they considered themselves to be “men of conviction” (*overbevisningsmenn*).

Though not a uniform group, the civil servants in the *Storting* and in the government can be said to have followed two intellectual currents: conservatism and liberalism, both modified to suit the Norwegian situation. The conservative current was the older one. This

¹⁹⁵ Rudeng, *Morgenbladet*, 116-130.

was linked to the defense of the constitution against the king in the 1820s. An important aspect of this current was a strict legalistic outlook, to the ire of *Morgenbladet*. These civil servants saw their role as following the exact lettering of the constitution. An example of this that we have already encountered is Dunker and his more monarchist reading of the constitution. However, the civil servants could also be quite liberal in other aspects, such as on the economic front, where old restrictions and privileges were rescinded.¹⁹⁶ In general, these civil servants would probably have been considered quite liberal in a European context. However, there were also more traditional conservative characters, such as the governor Severin Løvenskiold, an old civil servant of noble background, and the closest thing Norway had to a reactionary.¹⁹⁷ Seeing the revolutions taking place in Europe, he actively fought to make sure nothing similar happened in Norway through allowing some reform, turning the police on protestors, and actively breaking up the Thrane-movement once it appeared.

The other current amongst the civil servants was the more explicitly liberal one. In this camp we find men like Anton Martin Schweigaard and Frederik Stang. From the 1840s to the 1870s/80s, these two men dominated the Norwegian political system, Schweigaard from the *Storting* where he was elected to every session between 1842 and 1869, and Stang in the government, where he served as minister of the interior and later prime minister. Coming

¹⁹⁶ Economic liberalization was long relatively limited and really got going only from the late 1830s and early 1840s with easing of privileges in crafts and trade. This was a transition period between the more traditional “conservative” civil servants and the more activist and “liberal” ones epitomized by Schweigaard and Stang. For a discussion on trade liberalization, see Pål Thonstad Sandvik, *Nasjonens velstand, Norges økonomiske historie 1800-1940* (Fagbokforlaget, 2018), 41-42, 72-73.

¹⁹⁷ Ringvej, *Marcus Thrane*, 162-165.

from the previously mentioned youth movement: *Intelligentsen/Troppen* both men generally believed that intelligent men like themselves could and should direct the affairs of state. In general, they were liberals, but they had a strong belief in the state's ability to direct the modernization and development of the country, an ideology that Rune Slagstad has called "planned liberalism"¹⁹⁸

Schweigaard had a strong belief in the ability of the state, based on science and statistics, to better and modernize social conditions. As Rune Slagstad puts it, to use the state to create capitalism. Similarly, Stang wanted to reform the way the government operated. Rather than mere clerks, mechanically following a system, he wanted the cabinet to be a separate sphere of power and the ministers to act not only as bureaucrats, but politicians and statesmen. Rather than just following or resisting changes in society, they should actively direct and plan them. In a curious mix of beliefs, which Slagstad has termed "democratic elitism", he believed that the will of the people should be the governing principle, but that it had to be moderated and refined through encounters with knowledge, expertise and constraints, which he wanted the government to provide.¹⁹⁹ This is why he, in the 1840s, advocated strongly for the cabinet getting access to the *Storting*. His belief was that this not only would allow for better coordination, but also more fruitful encounters between ideas.

¹⁹⁸ This is an ideology Slagstad claimed had a long afterlife, being, in one way or another, the dominant underlying ideology for the next 150 years, with all subsequent government believing in the power of the state to shape society and the economy within a liberal or social democratic framework. Slagstad, *De nasjonale strateger*, 16-17.

¹⁹⁹ Slagstad, *De nasjonale strateger*, 29-34.

Both these traditions existed side by side in 1848, and there was a lot of overlap between the ideas of many of the ministerial civil servants and people in the Opposition, especially the more moderate ones.²⁰⁰ After 1848, the system became more and more dominated by Stang and Schweigaard, with the system they refined not falling until the introduction of parliamentarism in 1884, and many of their ideas lingering on also long after this.

8.2 *Den Norske Rigstidende*

The main source for how the Ministerials used the term “democracy” is *Den Norske Rigstidende*, *Rigstidende* for short. The newspaper was established already in 1815 by Niels Wulfsberg, the same man who would later go on to form *Morgenbladet*.²⁰¹ With him were also some other people, most notably Jørgen Herman Vogt, one of the central government ministers in 1848. It is ironic that the two newspapers which most characteristically defined the two opposing sides in 1848 were created by the same man. However, they were not established for the same purpose. Whereas *Morgenbladet* was explicitly created to be a daily newspaper, *Rigstidende* was created to come out only twice a week and primarily act as a notice board for the government.

For a long time, *Rigstidende* continued primarily in this role as a biweekly newspaper, though it gradually increased its issue

²⁰⁰ This was the case for Stabell who had as one of his primary goals, a rationalization of the country’s monetary system. It also applied for earlier “leaders” of the Opposition like Daa who sought to reform the country’s bureaucracy and transportation infrastructure. Rudeng, *Morgenbladet*, 99-106; Slagstad, *De nasjonale strateger*, 42-43.

²⁰¹ It was a continuation of another newspaper, *Tiden* which Wulfsberg had published between 1808-1810 and 1813-1814. Dahl (ed) et al, *Norsk Presses Historie*, 195-198.

frequency after 1835. At the time, another paper, *Den Constitutionelle* was the main organ of the precursors to the Ministerials.²⁰² This was a daily paper, created in 1836 explicitly to be an alternative to *Morgenbladet*. It was from here that *Intelligentsen/Tropfen* attacked Wergeland and published their ideas on culture and how Norway should be governed. In 1847, *Den Constiutionelle* was absorbed into *Rigstidende* and the paper went on to continue its formats and style, now as a daily newspaper.²⁰³ The same year, the newspaper also absorbed *Norsk Handels-Tidende*, a newspaper focusing on trade, economy, stocks and ship lists.²⁰⁴ By 1848 then, *Rigstidende* in many ways was the primary government and ministerial paper.²⁰⁵

Rigstidende in 1848 had much of the same content as *Morgenbladet* with both domestic and foreign news as well as announcements and advertisements. However, structure wise, the newspaper differed, with *Rigstidende* having no clear distinctions between “foreign” and “domestic” news like *Morgenbladet* did. The paper would more or less go on as one continuous text with new sections only indicated by a bold word. Lengthwise, most issues were four pages, but some could be six, eight or even longer with attachments. In 1848, this happened 33 times. In addition to articles and excerpts from the *Storthing*, the paper would also often contain formal announcements from ministries and institutions. Amongst other things *Rigstidende* published the accounts of the government treasury

²⁰² Dahl (ed) et al, *Norsk Presses Historie*, 220, 240.

²⁰³ Dahl (ed) et al, *Norsk Presses Historie*, 268.

²⁰⁴ Odd Arvid Storsveen, “Den Norske Rigstidende”.

²⁰⁵ The paper kept its political bias, but became gradually less important in the 1850s and the following decades before it shut down in 1882. Odd Arvid Storsveen, “Den Norske Rigstidende”.

as well as announcements to debtors. In 1848, variants of the word “democracy” showed up in 106 issues of the newspaper.²⁰⁶

In addition to *Rigstidende*, there was also another “ministerial” paper, *Christianiaposten*. This had its first issue on the 17th of May 1848 and intended to place itself between the Ministerials and the Opposition. However, in reality, the paper generally took the ministerial side, and often in a more polemical fashion than *Rigstidende*. This paper has been excluded due to time constraints.

8.3 How the Ministerials used the term

8.3.1 Common ground - factions, parties and the democratic principle

Though *Rigstidende* used, and likely to some degree understood, the term democracy differently from *Morgenbladet*, there were notable similarities. Like *Morgenbladet*, *Rigstidende* and the Ministerials also recognized and frequently referred to the Opposition as the “democratic party” or the “democratic faction”.²⁰⁷ A good example of this is from the 23th of October, discussing the *Lendsmannslov* and the differences in opinion this engendered between the government and the *Storthing*. As the cause of this, they blamed the “so-called democratic Party”.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ 49 with the variant “demokrat*” 46 with the variant “democrat*” and 10 where both forms were used in the same issue.

²⁰⁷ *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 06.03.1848, no. 66, 1-2; *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 02.05.1848, no. 125, 2-4; *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 21.05.1848, no. 142, 2-3; *Den Norske Rigstidende* 11.08.1848, no. 224; 2-3; *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 23.10.1848, no. 297, 1-2.

²⁰⁸saakaldet demokratisk Parti...” *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 23.10.1848, no. 297, 1.

However, it is worth noting that *Rigstidende* was somewhat skeptical of the term, believing the label “parties” to not be applicable to Norway and that if one used the term, one should be salient that they were not parties in the British or French sense, representing vastly different electorates (democratic or aristocratic) and fighting for control of the government. Rather, they argued, both parties were liberal, but the democratic party had abandoned this term in order to paint the Ministerials in a worse light.²⁰⁹

Interestingly, however, *Rigstidende* very rarely used the term “the democracy” which was so common in *Morgenbladet*. Almost every time it appeared in *Rigstidende* it was either in the foreign section or a direct quote from *Morgenbladet*.²¹⁰ This might entail a different understanding of the term, however, it could also be that *Rigstidende* preferred the more derogatory “party” and “faction” label to describe *Morgenbladet* and the Opposition.

Like the Opposition, *Rigstidende* also frequently pointed to the democratic principle and clearly saw this as part of the constitution. However, as they made clear towards the end of the year in a discussion on the *Lendsmannslov*, separation of power was for them the chief principle in the constitution.²¹¹ Consequently, they argued that the right to appoint lower bureaucrats should be the prerogative of the

²⁰⁹ *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 06.03.1848, no. 66, 1-2; *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 21.05.1848, no. 142, 2.

²¹⁰ The only exceptions were on the 11th of October when they were mocking the Opposition with an imagined prayer and on the 4th of April when they were presenting a speech that had been held in the Masonic Lodge in Christiania on the 4th of April. *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 04.04.1848, no. 95, 3; *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 11.10.1848, no. 285, 1.

²¹¹ *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 23.10.1848, no. 297, 1-2.

king and government. This was different from the Opposition which saw popular sovereignty as its chief principle and guiding spirit.

Rigstidende did not deny that the democratic principle was, and should be, part of the constitution and the Norwegian system. However, they questioned how large a role it should take. They saw some role for the democratic principle as key to a people's wellbeing and happiness, as they made clear when they praised the new Danish constitution on the 5th of February, though noting that the Danes would likely have a stronger role for the monarchy than in Norway.²¹² However, it could also have too large a role as they pointed out during the March Days:

We had become accustomed to the Thought, that in this country people esteemed and loved our constitutional System, that people held the Monarchy, resting on a democratic Foundation, like with us, to be the best Way to organize the governing of the State, at least in Europe and under the present Development. We had heard so many enthusiastic praises of our Constitution, that we had hoped that it, still for some Time, would be considered sufficiently democratic and good enough.²¹³

²¹² *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 05.02.1848, no. 36, 1-2.

²¹³ "Vi havde vænt os til den tanke, at man hertilands agtede og elskede vor constitutionelle Forfatning, at man holdt Monarchiet hvilende paa et demokratisk Fundament, saaledes som hos os, for den bedste Maade at ordne Statens Styrelse paa, ialfald i Europa og under den nuværende Udvikling af Forholdene. Vi havde hørt saamange enthousiastiske Lovtaler over vor Grundlov, at vi havde haabet at den endnu en Tid vilde ansees for tilstrækkelig demokratisk, og for god nok." *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 12.03.1848, no. 72.

In the same vein, they criticized the address for taking the democratic principle too far. They called the arguments presented in the address “ultra democratic Theories”.²¹⁴ Here they referred to the address’ principle that all power should be exercised through the *Storting*, as the representative of the popular will. According to it, the king should only be given power over those matters which the *Storting* could not take care of since it was only gathered every third year, as well as the powers necessary to maintain his dignity as monarch. The address claimed that more or less all interpreters of the constitution agreed on this. The ministerial paper naturally saw this as an attack on both the separation of powers and the dignity of the king, blaming the address for essentially proclaiming a republic with an inherited and more nicely dressed president.

On the second of May, *Rigstidende* came with more articles, both by their own editorial staff and by contributors, denouncing the address. Like previously, they considered it an attack against the constitution which they pointed out had both a monarchic and a democratic principle and that in their democratic eagerness, those who had proposed the address sought to destroy the former. The way they saw it, the address wanted to make the government into the servants of the *Storting* and thus destroy the separation of power. If that were to become the case, they mused whether *Morgenbladet*, would become more open to the idea of ministers meeting in the *Storting* as in such a situation they would come with “‘beating hearts’ and trembling Knees; they would humble themselves in front of the Majesty of the

²¹⁴ “...ultra demokratiske Theorier...” *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 30.04.1848, no. 121, 2.

Sovereign People, Revealed in the Assembled Storting”,²¹⁵ Here they are clearly evoking the fear of the French Revolution. In a sense then, they saw the democratic principle as part of the constitution, but if taken too far, it could lead to radicalism, “pure” democracy and perhaps even the tyranny of the masses. This leads us to some uses and understandings of the term which differed significantly from *Morgenbladet*.

8.3.2 Democracy as mob rule

In addition to the familiar ways of using democracy, *Rigstidende* also used it in ways opposite of *Morgenbladet*. *Morgenbladet* frequently criticized the civil servants for being undemocratic, elitist and removed from the people. *Rigstidende*, arguing in the same debate, but from the opposite position, criticized the democratic party for courting the masses. They explicitly labeled *Morgenbladet* as an ochlocratic press (ochlocracy: mob rule).²¹⁶

In *Rigstidende*'s view, democracy seems to have been linked to the masses in a way that *Morgenbladet* did not see it. *Morgenbladet* and the Opposition argued for an increased role for the *Storting* as the representative of the popular will, but they did not argue for a broader franchise nor more influence for the lower classes outside of the landowning peasants. This preference for the peasants, who constituted the bulk of the Opposition members is something

²¹⁵ “...“bankende Hjerter” og skjælvende Knæer; de skulle ydmyge sig for det souveræne Folks Majestæt, aabenbaret i Stortingets Forsamling...” *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 02.05.1848, no. 125, 3.

²¹⁶ *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 17.04.1848, no. 108, 1.

Rigstidende picked up on as strange given their label as “the democratic party”, noting that:

Perhaps it is still worth remembering that the democratic Party as a Rule is very prohibitive when it comes to the Setting of the Tariffs, something one rightly should not expect given their Party Name.²¹⁷

What *Rigstidende* here is pointing out is that the democratic party had been advocating, and succeeded in raising the grain tariffs.²¹⁸ This benefited the farmers who got higher prices for their grain, but disadvantaged the working poor in the city. Crucially, they saw this as being strange considering their name, revealing a link between the label “democratic” and the masses.

Rigstidende also criticized the democratic party for what they saw as an inappropriate chase after popularity. *Morgenbladet* often called the Ministerial party “the serviles”, meaning that they sought to flatter and serve whoever was in power.²¹⁹ *Morgenbladet* and the Opposition saw this as being the king and the government. *Rigstidende* turned this argument upon its head, claiming that actually, *Morgenbladet* was the most servile newspaper. According to them, in monarchies, serviles will mindlessly serve the monarch while in Republics, they will mindlessly serve the people. In limited monarchies or monarchical democracies, the serviles will carefully

²¹⁷ “Fremdeles fortjener det maaske her at erindres at det demokratiske Parti i Regelen er meget prohibitivt ved Bestemmelsen af Toldsatserne, noget man rigtignok ikke skulde vente efter Partiets Navn.” *Det Norske Rigstidende*, 06.03.1848, no. 66, 1.

²¹⁸ Sandvik, *Nasjonens velstand*, 64-65.

²¹⁹ *Morgenbladet*, 26.04.1848, no. 117, 1; *Morgenbladet*, 18.09.1848, no. 262, 1-2.

consider where most power is amassed, and since in Norway, *Rigstidende* claimed, the greatest share of power was among the people, serviles would try to make themselves popular amongst them.²²⁰ It is not clear exactly who *Rigstidende* referred to here. Likely it was the land-owning farmers, but it could also apply to the mob, as later in the article, *Rigstidende* accused *Morgenbladet* of also excusing the worst excesses of the mob even when they followed and pestered a civil servant so much that he slipped on the ice and broke his clavicle.²²¹

Also in the realm of culture, *Rigstidende* lamented this persistent effort to gain popularity with the mob. On the 15th of January they issued an article where they commented on favorable reviews *Morgenbladet* had given to a play in December of the previous year called *Salonen eller Intrigen i Kræmmerhuset*. This play made fun of the higher classes and their party culture and had been very favorably received by the masses, though the literary critics had been more skeptical.²²² The play was written by one of the editors of *Morgenbladet*, Rolf Olsen, and consequently, it is very likely that he wrote his own reviews and defended himself against the criticism from *Rigstidende*. As always, the authors in *Morgenbladet* were anonymous, but it is clear from the tone and the subtle hints *Rigstidende* came with, that they knew, or at least suspected, that he wrote the article. They especially made fun of him referring to the author as a Norwegian J. L. Heiberg (a Danish dramatist who had brought the genre of Olsen's play to Scandinavia). When commenting on the differences,

²²⁰ *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 21.05.1848, no. 142, 2-3.

²²¹ *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 21.05.1848, no. 142, 3.

²²² Erik Rudeng, *Morgenbladet. En historie for seg* (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2021), 140.

Rigstidende noted the national influence. They pointed out that Heiberg, as a Danish man, was raised and formed in an absolute monarchy and thus wrote from the principle of a “higher unity” that by necessity looks down. On the other side, they noted, stood:

The democratic Norwegian; he is the representative of Freedom, the Independent parts and Diversity. Like all Power and Wisdom for him has its Origin from the Masses, likewise must, according to his Views also in the Realm of Art, the Masses be the only one entitled to vote, the Ruling.²²³

They further noted that *Morgenbladet*'s author came with real democratic expressions when he attacked the critics and the “men of taste” and instead praised the common man and their “natural instincts”.²²⁴ It is clear that *Rigstidende* considered this somewhat shameful, and saw it as no coincidence that the common man liked the play, as both it and the writings in *Morgenbladet* catered to them by constantly praising them.

8.3.3 Democracy as radicalism

Linked to this view of democracy as linked to the masses, was another way of viewing democracy largely absent from *Morgenbladet*: the association between democracy and radicalism. As already pointed

²²³ “...den demokratiske Nordmand; han er Frihedens, de Uafhængige Deles. Mangfoldighedens Repræsentant. Saaledes som al Magt og Vidsom for ham har sit dybe Udspring af Massen, saaledes maa efter hans Anskuelse ogsaa i Kunstens Rige Massen være det ene Stemmeberettigede, det Regjerende.” *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 15.01.1848, no. 54, 3.

²²⁴ *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 15.01.1848, no. 54, 3.

out, the Ministerials acknowledged and accepted the democratic principles in the constitution, but thought that they could be taken too far, and this is exactly what they accused the Opposition of doing. As already shown, the Ministerials portrayed the address almost as a coup against the king, intended to establish the supremacy of the *Storting* over the king and government and thus destroy the separation of power.

On the other hand, *Rigstidene* claimed that the Ministerial party wanted the calm and moderate development of the constitution and its principles in all its aspects. This included the principle of “freedom”, which *Rigstidene* claimed that the Opposition wanted to develop in solely one direction - communal self-government. Taken to its extreme, this would entail the dissolution of the country into “400 Republics”.²²⁵ Similar arguments were repeated throughout the year. The Opposition was accused of wanting to take the country in a “one-sided ‘democratic’ Direction”.²²⁶

They saw this as a shame. As they saw it, Norway had achieved, already in 1814, the constitutional monarchy and liberal rights which the moderate revolutionaries of 1848 were seeking, and the Ministerial party was still working to preserve and develop this system. According to *Rigstidene* it was not they, the Ministerials, who had changed, but the Opposition.²²⁷ Norway had, according to an anonymous contributor to *Rigstidene*, shown that monarchy and democracy could coexist and be stable. This, the contributor claimed,

²²⁵ *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 06.03.1848, no. 66, 1.

²²⁶ “... eensidig ‘demokratisk’ Retning.” *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 02.05.1848, no. 125, 3.

²²⁷ *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 06.03.1848, no. 66, 1-2.

could prove a huge boon as Europe's rich and powerful would want a safe haven to deposit their capital, "which is threatened by the raised Claws of Communism."²²⁸ as he put it:

While the Democracy is overthrowing and crumbling all the Thrones into Dust, the State, where a democratic system in more than a human age now not only has tolerated, but found itself happy under a monarchy, may seem to provide the greatest Guarantees for Order and safety of Property, and this Trust in the Stability of our Institutions, - which, hopefully, imitating Demagogues with their Addresses on cabinet changes and similar things, will not be able to shake - will, not unlikely, direct the gaze of those Capitalists threatened by Communism to Norway, as a secure Haven, and where their saved Fortune can be expected to be beneficially put to use.²²⁹

The only hindrance towards this, he claimed, were the democratic demagogues in the Opposition.

If taken far enough, some in the ministerial faction clearly saw the Opposition as a possibly radical force. During a series of articles

²²⁸ "... som trues af Communismens opløftede Kløer..." *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 09.07.1848, no. 191, 6.

²²⁹ "Medens Demokratiet styrter Thronerne i Grus, maa desuden den Stat, der med den meest demokratiske Forfatning, en Menneskealder ikke alene har taalt, men fundet sig lykkelig under Kongedømmet, frembyde de største Garantier for Orden og Eiendomssikkerhed, og denne Tillid til vore Institutioners Stabilitet, - som det forhaabentlig ikke vil lykkes efterabende Demagoger ved Adresser om Ministerskifte eller deslige, at rokke - vil, ikke usandsynligen, lede de af Communismen truede Capitalisters Blikke paa Norge, som et sikkert Tilflugtssted, og hvor de for deres reddede Formue kunne vente den fordelagtigste Anvendelse." *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 09.07.1848, no. 191, 6.

defending the current university against attacks from *Morgenbladet*, *Rigstidende* said that *Morgenbladet* was going so far as to seemingly want the university to turn into a public school, rather than a center for science and higher education. However, *Rigstidende* conceded that *Morgenbladet* fortunately had not gone as far as it could have as:

Yet, it has in its Efforts not yet gone so far that it has been able to begin the Implementation of the to the absolute Democracy's belonging Tenet, that the Offices of the State and its Honour and Benefits should as far as possible alternately be given to any Citizens of the State and that accordingly there should be no conditions for the Acquisition of these Offices other than the Possession of Suffrage.²³⁰

This is an interesting quote as it seemingly says that the ultimate hallmark of democracy is that offices should be given by lot, like in Ancient Athens. This could imply that, at least the author of this article saw democracy as still containing these ancient meanings. However, given the polemical context and constant mockery of *Morgenbladet* it could also have been a deliberate tactic, where he confronted them with the traditional understanding of the term. Whichever is the case, it is clear that the author, like many others in the ministerial camp, at least saw the possibility for “democracy” to be inherently radical.

²³⁰ “Thi der er i sine Bestræbelser endnu ikke kommet saa vidt, at det har kunnet tage fat paa Gjennemførelsen af den det absolute Demokrati tilhørende Grundsætning, at Statens Embeder og den dermed forbundne Ære og Fordeel skal saavidt muligt tourviis tildeles Enhver Statens Borger, og at der følgelig til Erholdense af disse Embeder ikke skal kræves anden Betingelse end Besiddelse af Stemmeret.” *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 17.04.1848, no. 108, 1.

However, there were also other views. In the second half of the year, many articles in *Rigstidende* seems to argue for the opposite: the Opposition being conservative.

8.3.4 Democracy and suffrage

Towards the end of the year, something interesting happened with *Rigstidende's* rhetoric towards *Morgenbladet* and the Opposition and their use of “democracy”. Increasingly, they focused on the Opposition not being true democrats, but rather a party of the aristocratic land-owning peasants. One of the reasons they claimed this was that the Opposition was not calling for suffrage. As they pointed out in an article on the 11th of October, comparing the Danish “Democracy” with the Norwegian opposition:

It is correct that The Norwegian Opposition operates more calmly, by as far as possible avoiding all demands for real Freedom for the People (*Folkefrihet*). We also find them unoccupied with that which one elsewhere consider endeavors fitting a People's Party, like the Expansion of Suffrage, Removal of obstacles in the Constitution or Election Law for a more enlightened and popular Representation, a more equal Distribution of the Tax Burdens, an easing in the conditions of the Workers etc. On the contrary, we find the Opposition fighting for an Aristocracy's, for the Peasant Aristocracy's interests, for an Increase in its political Power, in addition to the largest possible reduction in Tax Burdens.²³¹

²³¹ “Den norske Opposition gaer forsaavidt meget sindigere tilverks, idet den saavidt mulig undgaaer alle Fordringer, der sigte til egentlig Folkefrihed. Vi finde den saaledes aldeles ubeskjæftiget med det, som man ellers betragter som Bestræbelser

Here we see a rare example of *Rigstidende* calling for increased suffrage, seeing it as part of democracy. That this article came in October is likely not coincidental. The rhetoric mirrored that of Thrane, which I will discuss more in chapter nine, and came at a time when Thrane was engaged in polemics with *Morgenbladet*. That is not to say that *Rigstidende* did not view suffrage as a possible aspect of democracy, such ideas were prevalent in Europe at the time. However, in this case, it appears to have been more of a strategic choice to criticize *Morgenbladet* than anything else.

However, this use of “democracy” became even more present towards the end of the year in December. In an article where they summed up the revolutionary year, *Rigstidende* outlined how it had started in France with a call for the people to have an increased influence and quickly morphed into a wish for an expanded suffrage. When the governing classes later tried to suggest some reforms it was too late, the people yearned to be active citizens and would now only accept “...a pure and unadulterated Democracy, which does not diminish the Citizens Rights down into Bits and Pieces based on Age, Wealth and Birth...”²³² In an ominous comment, most likely to *Morgenbladet*, they commented that no system which was based on

passende for et Folkeparti, saasom Udvidels af Valgrette, Udsløttelse af hindringer ved Grundloven eller Valgloven for en mere oplyst og folkelig Repræsentation, en ligeligere Fordeling af Skattebyrderne, Lettelse i Arbeidernes kaar o. s. v. Tvertom finde vi Oppositionen kjæmpe for et Arisotcratiets, for Bondearistocratiets Interesser, for Forøgelse i dets politiske Magt, i Forening med det størst mulige Befrielse for Skattebyrde." *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 11.10.1848, no. 285, 1.

²³² ... end et reent og uforfalsket Demokrati, der ikke afmaaler Borgerens Rettigheder i Stumper og Stimler, efter Alder, Formue og Fødsel..." *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 21.12.1848, no. 356, 1.

keeping the large majority outside of politics would survive in the long-run.

8.4 Conclusion

Rigstidende used the term “democracy” more varied than *Morgenbladet*. However, the core and the mental universe within which they understood it seems to have been quite similar. Like *Morgenbladet*, *Rigstidende* primarily used and probably also saw the term relative to other terms such as aristocracy, monarchy and civil servants. Like the Opposition, they referred to the “democratic party” which existed in opposition to the “Ministerial party”. And like the Opposition they frequently referred to the democratic principle of the constitution, together with other principles like the monarchical one.

However, *Rigstidende* also used it in ways that differed from *Morgenbladet* and the Opposition. Most importantly, they associated democracy and the masses/mob. This is an example of another traditional way of using the term democracy, harking back to Ancient Greece, that *Morgenbladet* did not use. This does not necessarily entail that this use was not part of *Morgenbladet* and the Opposition’s understanding of democracy, but if it was, it was an aspect they chose to ignore, as it carried a lot of negative connotations.

This attention to the mob must also be seen as part of *Rigstidendes* larger linkage between democracy” and radicalism. *Rigstidende* accused the Opposition of arguing for “ultra democratic theories”, of wanting to take the democratic principle to the extreme and destroy the other parts of the constitution such as the monarchy.

Some even went as far as to link this to communism and the even more radical tendencies in Europe.

However, in this regard, *Rigstidende* vacillated. At times, they painted the Opposition as red radicals, favoring mob rule and the destruction of the principle of separation of power. At other times, they do the opposite and portray the Opposition as a conservative faction, working for the interests of the landed peasant aristocracy and refusing real influence to “the people” through measures like suffrage. Interestingly, this is an example of *Rigstidende* starting to point out that increased suffrage naturally falls together with “democracy”. The route seems to be that democracy is the part of the system existing for the masses and those calling themselves democratic should thus be advocating measures benefiting them, of which increased suffrage is one. Here, they were approximating Thrane’s position. This was most likely not a coincidence, as there was a growing relationship between Thrane and the ideas and movement he was increasingly advocating at this time, and the Ministerials, the common denominator being their antagonism towards the Opposition. This clearly shows that tactical consideration, using radical rhetoric to delegitimize their main rival, also influenced the use of the concept.

9. The Thrane-movement “Proto-socialists”

*Et demokrati hvor den Fattige negtes Indflydelse, er visselig den meest beklagelsesværdige og meest demoraliserende Regjeringsform.*²³³

- Marcus Thrane

9.1 The Thrane-movement

The third “movement” appearing in 1848 and the following years were the “proto-socialists”. On the 1st of August 1848, the declassed patrician Marcus Thrane took on the role as editor for the newspaper *Drammens Tidende* in the city of Drammen.²³⁴ Thrane had earlier made a note of himself through an anonymous article in *Morgenbladet* where he had protested against formal Norwegian involvement in the Slesvig War. As he saw it, this would only entail unnecessary death and suffering for the Norwegian peasants and workers, who were the ones who would actually have to do the fighting.²³⁵ This article is probably what got him noticed and eventually hired by *Drammens Adresse*.

Throughout the fall of 1848 he wrote multiple articles in the newspaper, urging for political and cultural reform. In December 1848

²³³ A democracy where the Poor is denied Influence, is truly the most deplorable and most demoralizing Form of Government.” *Drammens Adresse* 10.08.1848, no. 96, 2.

²³⁴ Thrane’s family had been part of the wood patriciate that more or less collapsed in the recession following 1815 and the end of the Napoleonic Wars. However, the immediate cause for the downward mobility was that his father had ruined the family’s finances and reputation through embezzlement and risky speculations. However, his high class background meant that Thrane had an education and a richness of perspective that most working class agitators did not. Bjørklund, *Marcus Thrane*, 14-15.

²³⁵ *Morgenbladet*, 13.05.1848, no. 134, 5.

he formed the first worker association in Drammen before he subsequently left the paper. The next years of his life were dedicated to establishing more worker associations and agitating for political reform. The associations quickly grew in number, at their greatest height there were up about 400 local chapters, totalling between 25 000 and 30 000 members,²³⁶ an unprecedented number in 19th century Norway. The associations were not strictly “worker” associations in the modern sense. A large percentage of the members were cottagers or other members of the “underclass” in the Norwegian countryside.²³⁷ These had been especially hard hit by the years of economic downturn preceding 1848 throughout most of Europe.²³⁸ In addition, there were also more long-term structural changes. This was a time of rapid population growth, increasing industrialization and monetization of Norwegian society, a process often dubbed The Great Transformation (*Det Store Hamskiftet*).²³⁹ In general, the associations attracted those growing subsets of the population created by this process as well as those already established groups feeling the pressure of the changes. In general, those who did not have an established role in the old society and those negatively affected by the changes.²⁴⁰

These large numbers gave strength to the associations’ agitations. At first, the organizations attempted a petition to the king.

²³⁶ Tore Pryser and Mona Ringvej, “Marcus Thrane,” in *Store Norske Leksikon*, last modified August 16, 2023, https://snl.no/Marcus_Thrane.

²³⁷ Tore Pryser also points out that quite a few also were relatively well-off farmers with their own property. Pryser, *Norsk historie 1814-1860*, 272-276.

²³⁸ Pryser, *Norsk historie 1814-1860*, 271.

²³⁹ This transformation, which literally translated means “the great skin shed” is a staple in the literature on 19th century Norway. For the origin of the term, see Inge Krokann, *Det store hamskiftet i bondesamfunnet* (3rd ed.) (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1942).

²⁴⁰ Ringvej, *Marcus Thrane*, 26-32.

The petition included demands for lower tariffs, less trade restrictions in the countryside, measures against the heavy use of spirits, better schools, a jury system, universal conscription, measures to better the life of cottagers and most importantly, universal male suffrage.²⁴¹ The biographer of Thrane, Oddvar Bjørklund has described sending the petition to the king as a shrewd move, which both played on the lower classes traditional esteem for the king, as well as on the relatively more benign reception the associations had gotten from the Ministerial papers compared to the Opposition”.²⁴² The petition was handed in in May of 1850, but eventually rejected on the urging of governor Løvenskiold.

Their next attempt came in 1851. The previous summer, they had held a large gathering in Christiania where they drafted a request to the *Storting*. The demands here were similar to those earlier broached to the king. In order to put force behind their words and urge the *Storting* to accept the request, they once more gathered in the capital in the summer of 1851, in what has famously been dubbed *Lilletinget* (the little thing). Here, allegedly, the rhetoric turned revolutionary.²⁴³ The result was that the *Storting* angrily rebuked the request and the next month, most of the leaders of the association, including Thrane, were arrested. Thrane sat years in jail before he was convicted in 1855.²⁴⁴ After having served his time, Thrane went to America where he eventually died in 1890.

²⁴¹ Ringvej, *Marcus Thrane*, 102.

²⁴² Bjørklund, *Marcus Thrane*, 146.

²⁴³ Bjørklund, *Marcus Thrane*, 241-247; Ringvej, *Marcus Thrane*, 227; 251-258.

²⁴⁴ Ringvej, *Marcus Thrane*, 251-254.

There are multiple ways of interpreting Thrane's movement. The traditional view has been to position Thrane in the genealogy of the worker's movement.²⁴⁵ Here, his movement has been viewed as the first example of organized labor in Norway and a precursor to the Labour Party, established in 1888. An example of this is Bjørklund, who focuses on the organizational aspects of Thrane's movement as well as the fact that he called himself a socialist.²⁴⁶

Mona Ringvej has a different view of Thrane and his movement. Rather than see him as some sort of socialist, Ringvej sees him as a continuation, though a more radical one, of the liberal and democratic tradition in Norway. She argues that those labeling him as a sort of socialist or communist are reading the sources with a heavy bias.²⁴⁷ In her view, if one reads what Thrane actually wrote and said, he becomes a much less radical figure. His project was not socialist or revolutionary, but political and legalistic. His main goal can be split in three. The first goal of his movement was to give a voice to the workers so that they could participate fully in the society in which they lived. The second was for them to use this voice to pressure the government to pass reforms. Thirdly, these reforms were to ameliorate

²⁴⁵ Ringvej, *Makten og Ordene*, 183.

²⁴⁶ To what degree Thrane can be labeled a socialist is a contested issue. He did at times call himself a socialist and Bjørklund points out that he gradually approached the term and its ideas more and more over time. However, by 1848, Thrane had most likely not read Marx, and thus his agitations did not contain many of the tenets that would later become historical materialism and Marxism. Thrane was, however, influenced by earlier socialist thinkers such as Proudhon, Saint-Simon, Louis Blanc and Wilhelm Weitling. One of course does not have to be a Marxist to be a socialist and the concept did not have the same connotations as today. There was also a large overlap between radical democratic ideas and various socialist ideas. Bjørklund, *Marcus Thrane*, 45, 48, 49, 77-78, 124, 129, 263, 328, 336; Ringvej, *Marcus Thrane*, 71.

²⁴⁷ Ringvej, *Marcus Thrane*, 108.

the workers' conditions, such as the lack of proper education and the unstable position of the cottager class in the countryside. Consequently, the views of Thrane were not especially radical. Taken in a European context, some of his policies, especially his wish for universal suffrage, would have put him outside, or at least on the fringes of respectable politics. But he would not have been considered amongst the radical socialists or communists. A close comparison would be the chartist movement in Britain. Like them, Thrane did not preach revolution, but reform.

One thing is clear, however, whichever case fits, Thrane represented something new in the Norwegian setting. This was the first time that the lower rungs of society, the cottagers and the burgeoning urban working classes, were truly brought into organized politics.²⁴⁸ Thrane introduced a new political reality and we can expect his use of the term “democracy” to reflect this.

9.2 Drammens Adresse

There are two primary sources one can use to try to discern Thrane's (and his movement's) views on democracy. The first is *Drammens Adresse* where Thrane was the editor between the 1st of August 1848 until late December of the same year. The other is *Arbeider-Foreningernes Blad* which he went on to found and publish from May 1849 until 1851.²⁴⁹ Of these, I have chosen to focus on

²⁴⁸ I am here consciously ignoring other means of political agitation such as petitions, strikes, riots and revolts. For examples of this type of “politics” see Knut Dørum and Hilde Sandvik (Eds.), *Opptøyer i Norge, 1750-1850* (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2012).

²⁴⁹ Control of the paper became part of the leadership conflict within the workers association. After 1851 it was edited by multiple people, including for a while Thrane himself and also his wife, before it was shut down for good in 1856.

Drammens Adresse. This is primarily a choice based on the limits and scope of this thesis. Given its intended audience *Arbeider-foreningernes Blad* could have a more radical and distinct use of the term democracy, but given that it does not start being published until May 1849, it has been kept out of this analysis.

The main source for Thrane and the “proto-socialists” view and usage of democracy is thus *Drammens Adresse*. This newspaper was founded in 1840 by Ole Throndsen Steen, who had trained under the previous editor of *Morgenbladet*, Rasmus Hviid, again showing the close connection between newspapers at the time.²⁵⁰ This was a time where newspapers started to appear also outside the capital and major regional cities.²⁵¹ *Drammens Adresse* was considered quite radical and liberal, compared to the other newspaper in the city, *Drammens Tidende*, and the two fought in fierce polemics reminiscent of those between *Morgenbladet* and *Rigstidende* in the capital. It is therefore no surprise that when their previous editor died in 1847 and they were on the lookout for a new one, the choice fell on Marcus Thrane. After Thrane left, the paper, like *Morgenbladet*, changed towards a more conservative position in the 1850s.²⁵²

Unlike *Morgenbladet* and *Rigstidende*, which were daily newspapers, *Drammens Adresse* usually came out three times a week,

²⁵⁰ Dahl (ed) et al, *Norsk Presses Historie*, 299.

²⁵¹ Dahl (ed) et al, *Norsk Presses Historie 1-4*, 275-278.

²⁵² Coinciding with this, the paper also changed its name to *Drammens Blad*. Though switching between party loyalties, the paper kept its relatively conservative views until it shut down in 1937.

Fredrik Lyngås Pedersen, “Drammens Blad,” in *Store Norske Leksikon*, last modified May 13, 2021, https://snl.no/Drammens_Blad.

on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.²⁵³ Other than the frequency of publication, the paper shared a lot of structural similarities with the aforementioned papers.²⁵⁴ Like *Morgenbladet* and *Rigstidende*, *Drammens Adresse* usually consisted of four pages and contained a mixture of domestic and foreign news.²⁵⁵ It usually started with news from Drammen, followed by an editorial and ending with announcements and advertisements.

Thrane did not take over as editor in the paper until the 1st of August. I will therefore only focus on the newspaper after this date in order to see how the “proto-socialists” used the term. Between August and the end of the year, the term democracy appeared in 40 of the 63 issues. This was an increase from the six months before Thrane took over, where it had only appeared in 13.

9.3 Thrane and the concept of democracy

9.3.1 Democracy as the rule of the people

In Thrane’s view, democracy meant the rule of the people. Already in his first series of articles in August he explicitly pointed out that the word democracy meant the dominion or rule of the people (*folkeherredømme*). As he put it: “a democrat can be understood as a

²⁵³ Occasionally, the paper would skip some days, consequently the total number of issues for 1848 was 140, not 159 which would have been expected if three issues were published every week.

²⁵⁴ This was a common feature of the local newspapers. Rather than “reinvent the wheel”, they often copied the structure of the “national papers”. This also had practical applications as few outside the capital subscribed to these papers. The national papers thus filled the local demand for national and international news. Dahl (ed) et al, *Norsk Presses Historie*, 292-294.

²⁵⁵ In 1848 there were 6 issues that contained extra appendixes. These were usually connected with the municipal council in Drammen, containing things like suggestions and budgets.

Man that Advocates the People's Right to govern itself, and not be governed."²⁵⁶ This view seems to be at the core of Thrane's understanding of the term. Next year, in 1849, he defined the term in a glossary for his readers as:

Democratic, i.e. loves the people, people minded, that defends the People's Rights. A Democrat i.e. a Friend of the People, a Friend of Freedom, a Friend of Equality. The opposite of a Democrat is an Aristocrat; and thus: the opposite of democratic is aristocratic.²⁵⁷

Importantly, when talking about the people, Thrane referred to the whole population of Norway, including those without property. This leads us to one of Thrane's main points throughout the year: the Opposition was not a true democratic party. In Thrane's view, the Opposition called themselves democratic because they advocated for more influence to the *Storting* and consequently those with suffrage, i.e. the propertied classes. The Opposition and *Morgenbladet* frequently claimed to be fighting for the people and popular sovereignty, but Thrane noted that when they talked of the people, they were primarily advocating for more power to people like themselves, excluding the masses.

In his view, the notion of who the people were had changed. In a clear reference to Ancient Athens, he claimed that 2000 years ago

²⁵⁶ "...saa er ved en Demokrat at forstaa en Mand, der paastaar Folkets Ret til at regjere sig selv, og ikke lade sig regjere." *Drammens Adresse*, 10.08.1848, no. 96, 1.

²⁵⁷ "(*) Demokratisk d. e. folkekjær, folkeligsindet, som forsvarer Folkets Retigheder. En Demokrat d. e. en Folkeven, Frihedsvæn, Lighedsvæn. Det modsatte af en Demokrat er en Aristokrat; og altsaa: det modsatte af demokratisk er aristokratisk." *Arbeider-Foreningernes Blad*, 19.05.1849, no. 3, 1.

the people used to be understood as everyone in the polity, but that today, the Opposition and other elites primarily used the term to denote “those who have the means to be well and nicely dressed and “act properly””.²⁵⁸ The people had thus, according to him, been split into what he called “the conditioned” (a term used at the time to denote the wealthy and sophisticated) and the mob (*pøbelen*) and what the Opposition was doing was really just to advocate for a bit more political influence for “the conditioned”, not for the mass of the people. Consequently, he pointed out, most Democrats in Norway, by way of worldview, were really Aristocrats, and this applied not only to the civil servants, but also the farmers.

This way of understanding the concept he expanded to also include the constitution:

It is a common Opinion, that in this country, the People are in Power, but this is far from the Case. It is said that we have a democratic system; but as the Constitution denies the Non-wealthy and Poor Suffrage, and this in a way legitimizes the Great and Wealthy’s biased Opinion on what one should understand by the People, and thus the non-wealthy, which are the largest Part of the Nation, are not admitted more than the smallest influence on the legislation, then it is with weak right that one calls our system democratic.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ “... dem, der have Midler til at gaa godt og peent klædt og til at “opføre sig”...” *Drammens Adresse*, 10.05.1848, no. 96. 1

²⁵⁹ “Vel er det en almindelig Mening, at hertillands Folket selv har Magten; men dette er langtfra at være Tilfældet. Vel hedder det, at vi have en demokratisk Forfatning; men, da Grundloven, idet den negter den Ubemidlede og Fattige Stemmeret, saaledes paa en maade hjemler de Stores og Riges skjæve Mening om hva man bør forstaa ved Folket, og da saaledes de Ubemidlede, der er den største Deel af nationen, ikke

Consequently, in Thrane's view, not only were the Opposition not really democratic, neither was the Norwegian system which the Opposition had called democratic due to the prevalence of the democratic principle, i.e. power of the *Storting* in the mixed system. Thrane did not see democracy in this way. For him, democracy entailed influence for the people at large, and as I will point out later, this meant universal suffrage.

This break with the Opposition led Thrane into conflict with *Morgenbladet* and into a rapprochement with *Rigstidende*. In October, he denounced *Morgenbladet* and the Opposition for not being true democrats after they were skeptical of his calls for reform associations (an idea that would gestate into the worker associations). To his surprise, *Rigstidene* and the Ministerials were much more open to this idea and it was around this time we also saw *Rigstidene* espousing some of Thrane's ideas on suffrage and blaming the Opposition for being aristocrats.²⁶⁰ This seems to have reaffirmed Thrane's previously mentioned skepticism towards the Opposition and an earlier comment from August where he had claimed that "from now on the so-called opposition is not synonymous with, just like so-called ministerial not unconditionally is the opposite of democratic".²⁶¹ *Morgenbladet* tried

ere tilstaaede den mindste Indflydelse paa Lovgivningen, saa er det nu med svag Ret, at man kalder vor Forfatning demokratisk." *Drammens Adresse*, 10.05.1848, no. 96, 2.

²⁶⁰ This reception is probably partly responsible for why Thrane, once he starts the association and the petition movement, as Bjørklund points out, initially turns to the king and not the *Storting*.

²⁶¹ "... da fra nu af oppositionelt saakaldet, ikke just er synonymt med, og ministerielt saakaldet ikke ubetinget det Modsatte af demokratisk;" *Drammens Adresse*, 31.08.1848, no. 105, 1.

to apologize,²⁶² which Thrane accepted, but he also further stated: “You have to accept that there, next to the old Parties, gets established a third party: The Democratic or People’s Party”.²⁶³

This last part is important. Thrane at multiple times lamented that there were no real parties in Norway, i.e organizations fighting for specific ideas.²⁶⁴ Throughout the year he seems to put it on himself to create such a party or such a movement. This movement he called “new democratism” to distinguish it from what he called the “old democratism” of *Morgenbladet*.²⁶⁵ It is never completely clear whether he wanted to create a party in the political sense, or whether he merely sought reform movements. One of his goals seems to have been that these reform movements should have an enlightening effect on the people. This is a role, in his mind, newspapers should also have, but which he claimed that the current newspapers did not.²⁶⁶ This led him, towards the end of the year, to write a letter to all local political newspapers, which he printed in *Drammens Adresse*; here he urged them to band together in a democratic movement, because, as he wrote:

If in this way, we succeed in creating a pure-democratic Association of Newspapers, then it will soon also be possible to

²⁶² Not wanting to lose a possible ally against *Rigstidende* and the Ministerials.

²⁶³ *Drammens Adresse*, 10.10.1848, no. 122, 2.

²⁶⁴ *Drammens Adresse*, 01.08.1848, no. 92, 2-3; *Drammens Adresse*, 05.08.1848, no. 94, 2-3; *Drammens Adresse*, 31.08.1848, no. 105, 1; *Drammens Adresse*, 14.10.1848 no. 124, 1.

²⁶⁵ *Drammens Adresse*, 10.10.1848, no. 122, 1-3; *Drammens Adresse*, 05.12.1848, no. 146, 2.

²⁶⁶ *Drammens Adresse*, 23.09.1848, no. 115, 1; *Drammens Adresse*, 16.12.1848, no. 151, 1-2.

succeed in creating a pure-democratic Association of Persons, and - the Game is won.²⁶⁷

9.3.2 Pure democracy

What Thrane wanted, is what he called “pure democracy” (*det rene demokrati*). This was a term he started to employ towards the end of the year, in December.²⁶⁸ This term is multifaceted, but the core seems to be threefold. Thrane wanted universal suffrage. He wanted the people to start electing candidates from their own class and he wanted the representatives in the *Storting* to start acting on the mandates given by the people, and not based on their own convictions.

The term is also occasionally used by *Morgenbladet* and *Rigstidende* to describe a radical form of government. *Morgenbladet* used it in a domestic article where they were explaining the situation in Europe. In this article they pointed out that what they called the “constitutional-monarchic” party had taken power in Frankfurt and that they represented the “calm Middle Estates that basically fears violent upheavals, fears the pure Democracy, which it sees as the Starting point to Communism...”²⁶⁹ Since it was considered radical, *Rigstidende* also used it in their polemics against *Morgenbladet*, accusing them of being pure democrats and working in the interests of

²⁶⁷ “Kan det saaledes lykkes os at faa bragt istand en reen-demokratisk Forening af Aviser, saa vil det ogsaa snart lykkes at faa istand en reendemokratisk Forening af Personer, og - Spillet er vundet.” *Drammens Adresse*, 16. 12. 1848, no. 151, 2.

²⁶⁸ *Drammens Adresse*, 05.12.1848, no. 146, 2; *Drammens Adresse*, 12.12.1848, no. 149, 1; *Drammens Adresse*, 16.12.1848, no. 151, 1-2; *Drammens Adresse*, 23.12.1848, no. 154, 1.

²⁶⁹ “...den rolige Middelstand, frygter i Grunden voldsomme Omvæltninger, frygter det rene Demokrati, hvilket det anseer for Begyndelsen til kommunismen,” *Morgenbladet*, 23.10.1848, no. 297, 1.

the pure democracy.²⁷⁰ Another term they used, which seems to indicate similar notions, was the previously mentioned “ultra democrats”.²⁷¹ This is a term Swedish newspapers also used in polemics with *Morgenbladet*, clearly referring to Thrane, prompting him to write that he was proud to call himself a radical.²⁷²

Of the three aspects Thrane seems to have ascribed to the term, the first one, universal suffrage was something he called for throughout the five months he served as editor of *Drammens Adresse*. Already in his first articles he pointed out that a real democracy entailed the participation of the whole people. In his view, universal suffrage would be necessary to create a closer alignment between the *Storthing* and the people.²⁷³ Here he was clearly influenced by Europe. He claimed that in the rest of Europe, almost everyone had now stopped considering money and wealth and given suffrage to every “honest man” and that the struggles of the times were not between king and people, or Aristocrats or Democrats as it used to be, but between rich and poor.²⁷⁴

Both as a good in itself, and as a means to achieve universal suffrage, Thrane implored people to not only elect people from the “conditioned” (the bureaucrats and the wealthy farmers). In local elections, he praised calls to have more workers elected to the

²⁷⁰ *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 18.02.1848, no. 49, 1; 11.08.1848, no. 22 *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 11.08.1848, no. 224, 2.

²⁷¹ *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 30.04.1848, no. 121, 2.

²⁷² *Drammens Adresse*, 19.12.1848, no. 152, 1.

²⁷³ This is something that is said in an article by an anonymous author signed “A Democrat” in *Rigstidende*. However, it is clear that this author is Thrane, as he refers to having been more well-received in *Rigstidende* than in *Morgenbladet* during his conflict with them, which is going on at the exact same time. *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 09.10.1848, no. 285, 2-3.

²⁷⁴ *Drammens Adresse*, 10.08.1848, no. 96, 2.

municipal boards, something he saw as ““a happy evidence that the pure Democracy finally is starting to move also in our conservative country.”²⁷⁵ In other municipal elections, and one must assume this also applied for national elections, he implored the middle estate to elect more people from their own midst. Ideally, he said, no estate should be in power: “power should be with everyone and no one”.²⁷⁶ However, since there was no universal suffrage he encouraged the middle estate to gain as much power as possible so that we “step by step may get closer to pure Democracy, in a calm and appropriate way”.²⁷⁷ He sincerely hoped that once the middle estate came to power, they would also extend power to the lower classes, because in his mind, a system where *some* had power was the worst kind of system. Either, he thought, everyone should have power or all power should be in one hand.

Lastly, once people had been elected to positions, he wanted them to start acting differently. As pointed out earlier, the prevailing notion at the time was that the members of the *Storthing* were elected as trustees, acting based on their own conviction. This was linked to the dominant view at the time, that politics was about truth, not interests, the same sentiments that fueled the antipathy towards parties.²⁷⁸ Thrane, on the other hand, wanted the representatives to act more like delegates, acting explicitly in the interests of those who elected them. Thrane wanted the people to put more stringent demands

²⁷⁵ “som et glædeligt Beviis at den rene Demokratisme endelig begynder at røre paa sig ogsaa i vort konservative Land.” *Drammens Adresse*, 12.10. 1848, no. 149, 1.

²⁷⁶ “Makten bør være hos alle og ingen.” *Drammens Adresse*, 16.10.1848, n. 151, 1.

²⁷⁷ “Ville vi lidt efter lidt nærme os det rene Demokrati paa en lempelig og hensigtsmæssig maade,” *Drammens Adresse*, 16.10.1848, n. 151, 1.

²⁷⁸ Sejersted has called this notion “the liberal theory of representation”. Sejersted, *Demokrati og Rettsstat*, 39.

on their representatives, because, as he put it, when commenting on a post in a Danish newspaper: “We could, in fact, not fathom, how a System, where the People’s Opinions are not deciding, could be called democratic; and a democratic Form of Government is what we were intended to have.”²⁷⁹

As we have seen in the other chapters, both *Morgenbladet* and *Rigstidende* presented an understanding of democracy as something that existed as part of a mixed system, a classic triumvirate of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. Thrane’s use of the word “pure democracy” can be seen as an attempt to describe a system outside of this framework, a system with only democracy. In doing this, he was clearly influenced by what was happening in Europe. He said so at multiple times himself, even pointing out that the only places this pure democracy was absent was in the archconservative England and in Norway.²⁸⁰ Thrane thus can be seen as a Norwegian example of the radical currents in Europe.

9.3.3 Democracy as populism and anti-elitism

Like *Morgenbladet*, Thrane also saw democracy as part of a cultural struggle. Like them, he frequently attacked and condemned juridicism, exams, bureaucratism and all the other paraphernalia of the Ministerials. To him, these things were an anathema to pure democracy. A good example of this is where he commented on an article in *Christianiaposten* which wanted architects to discard wooden

²⁷⁹ Vi kunne nemlig ikke begribe, hvordan en Forfatning, hvor ikke Folkets Meninger ere de afgjørende, kan kaldes demokratisk; og demokratisk Regjeringsform er det jo Meningen, at vi skulle have.” *Drammens Adresse*, 12.09.1848, no. 110, 3.

²⁸⁰ *Drammens Adresse*, 23.12.1848, no. 154, 1.

panels and all other foreign refinement that hid the true Norwegian structure of buildings. Likewise, Thrane wanted to remove bureaucratism, juridicism, examinations and all the other veneers of the “Intelligence” faction and reveal what he called “true democratism”. This, he said, was the spirit of Democracy in its purest manifestations, the ancient Greek one.²⁸¹ Thrane claimed the people would rule themselves better once all the laws and regulations inhibiting it had been removed.

Another important issue for Thrane was Scandinavism. His entry onto the newspaper scene in May was marked by his opposition to this cultural current in relation to the Slesvig War. In *Drammens Adresse* he continued to express his opposition, highlighting that all Ministerials, and also some democrats were Scandinavists. He argued that this was due to them pining after Danish culture and frivolities, which they considered to be more refined. This had created the, to him, absurd situation that the Scandinavists supported the Danish state against the people in Slesvig wanting to secede. Here he probably saw their struggle as similar to the Norwegian struggle four decades earlier.

The most important cleavage for Thrane, however, was not between the Opposition and the Ministerials, or the farmers and the civil servants. As he made clear, he considered both groups to be a form of aristocracy. As previously mentioned, for him, the only distinction that really mattered was between rich and poor, which at the time was also a political cleavage, between those who had suffrage and political influence and those who did not. Democracy to him meant a voice for the poor in society. Consequently, as he made clear

²⁸¹ *Drammens Adresse*, 05.12.1848, no. 146, 2.

throughout his articles, Norway was not democratic and the Opposition were not democrats, because: “A democracy where the Poor is denied Influence, is truly the most deplorable and most demoralizing Form of Government.”²⁸²

9.4 Conclusion

Thrane seems to have used democracy in two distinct ways. First was the familiar way from *Morgenbladet* and the Opposition. Thrane constantly attacked the civil servants and the Ministerials, and their way of life and culture. He claimed they hid themselves behind exams and jurisprudence, and what the country needed was less of this, and more influence to the people.

However, Thrane also had a more distinct and “radical” way of using the term. From his very first issue in August, Thrane constantly argued for a greater voice for the people. In his view, *Morgenbladet* was just as aristocratic as the other newspapers, and though they called themselves democratic, they were, in reality, only advocating for more power for the *Storthing*, and thus, in practice, only a slightly larger percentage of the population than previously. The same criticism he applied to the constitution and its “democratic principle”. When Thrane used the term, he referred to the rule of the “people” broadly understood. He called for universal suffrage and the uplifting of the poor.

Towards the end of the year, Thrane’s thoughts seem to become more refined. He now made a clear distinction between himself and

²⁸² “Et demokrati hvor den Fattige negtes Indflydelse, er visselig den meest beklagelsesværdige og meest demoraliserende Regjeringsform.” *Drammens Adresse* 10.08.1848, no. 96, 2.

what he considered his “new democratism” and the Opposition and their “old democratism”. To describe his view he started using the term “pure democracy” and his goal as the “dominion of the people”. To achieve this, he started urging people to vote for people from the middle estate and the working class, in the hope that they could bring gradual reform to the system.

Both of Thrane’s ways of using the term fits into the same mental universe as that of the Opposition. The idea of the mixed system also seems to appear in Thrane’s thinking as the framework for which “democracy” originally could be understood. However, not pleased with making “democracy” a more dominant part in the system, he seems to have wanted to make it the only, or at least the clearly favored part - a “pure democracy”. This seems to have come from a sense that the current system in reality was some form of aristocracy. Here, Thrane did not make a distinction between the civil servants and the farmers. He did criticize the civil servants and used many of the same tropes as *Morgenbladet*, criticizing their Danophile and Scandinavist sentiments. In that regard, he also played on the same ideas as *Morgenbladet*, present in *Tokulturslæra*. However, Thrane did not spare the Opposition either, seeing also the wealthy farmers as exploitative aristocrats.

Thrane’s criticism and anti-elitism is familiar from contemporary populist movements that see democracy as majority rule and attack the liberal aspects of liberal democracy. Sejersted uses this constant struggle within liberal democracies (a term he does not use) as the framework for understanding 19th century Norwegian history.²⁸³

²⁸³ See Sejersted, *Demokrati og Rettsstat*.

According to him, 1884, though not the eradication of the latter, was the victory of the democracy aspect over the rule of law aspects in the Norwegian system. The movement that achieved this victory was heavily allied to an anti-elitist culture movement. Their rhetoric and this movement is clear in Thrane's rhetoric, strengthening Ringvej's argument of seeing him as part of the democratic tradition in Norway.

It is, however, also clear that Thrane took a lot of inspiration from the revolutions on the continent. He explicitly stated that he saw these as the culmination of the idea of freedom and equality and he justified his call for universal suffrage through the fact that it had been instituted in other countries, most notably France. In a sense then, Thrane is a Norwegian example of the more radical currents in 1848, those not pleased with only a somewhat more liberal system, but who wanted more radical political, and perhaps also social, reforms.

10. Conclusion

10.1 “Democracy” in Norway in 1848

Having looked at all the three different groupings in 1848 in Norway and thus answered all the subquestions, it is time to have another look at the main research question: *How did people in Norway use and understand the concept “democracy” in 1848?*

Like all concepts, democracy, as it was used by elites in Norway in 1848 was many-faceted. There was no fixed meaning and different people used the term differently. However, some themes seem to stand out. The first is that the ways the term was used suggests a more “old-fashioned” understanding. This is evident in the way all the newspapers wrote about parties and about the Norwegian constitution and political system. The papers wrote about the “democratic party”, but this was always seen in opposition to the other party, the “Ministerial”, “the civil servants” and “the aristocracy”. “Democracy” in this sense, only existed in relation to its opposite “aristocracy”; mixing the two was an oxymoron.

The same was evident when they wrote about the political system. The way they framed it, political systems could be either monarchic, aristocratic or democratic or a mix of these. Both the Opposition and the Ministerials seem to have considered Norway to be a democratic-monarchy where democracy had a leading role, though some as Dunker saw it primarily as a monarchy. What exactly it meant that the country was democratic seems to have varied. The Opposition saw it as linked to the *Storting* and thus, as they saw it, the will of the people. *Rigstidende* on the other hand, at times used it in a way that

suggests a more explicit, and not necessarily positive, link to the masses. They were also more susceptible to see it as radicalism.

However, when it comes to Thrane and the “proto-socialists” we start to see a different way of using the concept. To him, democracy was linked to the “dominion of the people” and in order to achieve this he wanted to make democracy not only an aspect of the system, but the clearly dominant principle, what he called “pure democracy”. For him, this entailed both universal suffrage, and a delegate model of representation as well as a system which sought to ameliorate the living conditions for the poor.

Lastly, “democracy” in 1848 was also inherently linked up with an ongoing “culture war”. Both Thrane and the Opposition attacked the culture and lifestyle of the civil servants, seeing them as both “undemocratic” and “un-national” in a way that foreshadowed the later cleavages posited in *Tokulturslæra*. Thrane took it a step further, seeing also the Opposition and the land-owning farmers as aristocratic in nature. To him, the cleavage between the poor and rich was just as important.

All in all then, “democracy” in 1848 seems to have contained both old and modern ways of understanding the concept. Koselleck claimed that the basic political concepts were useful because their changed usage registered the changes of modernity, but that in the process, in the *Sattelzeit*, they became janus-faced, pointing both backwards and forwards.²⁸⁴ This seems to be the case with democracy in Norway in 1848. Thrane represented a more “modern” version of

²⁸⁴ Koselleck, “Introduction and Prefaces to the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*,” 9.

the concept, but the prevailing understanding was still the “traditional” one.

10.2 Final remarks

This thesis opens up many interesting avenues for future research. Thrane’s different use of the word suggests that the year might mark a shift in the way the concept was used and understood. However, to check whether this was the case would require a more longitudinal approach to see whether 1848 truly marked a change in the use of the word. The Thrane movement died quickly; that may also have been the case for their understanding and use of the concept.

The thesis also opens up for other examinations. “Democracy” has not been widely examined in Norway and the same method I have used in this thesis could fruitfully be employed to look more closely into other seminal years in Norwegian 19th century history. As more and more years are examined, it might even be possible to write a larger synthesis, akin to what they have in other countries like Denmark. Hopefully then, this thesis will mark the start of what could be an interesting new avenue of research for Norwegian historians.

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11.2 Newspapers

Almuevennen

Arbeider-Foreningernes Blad

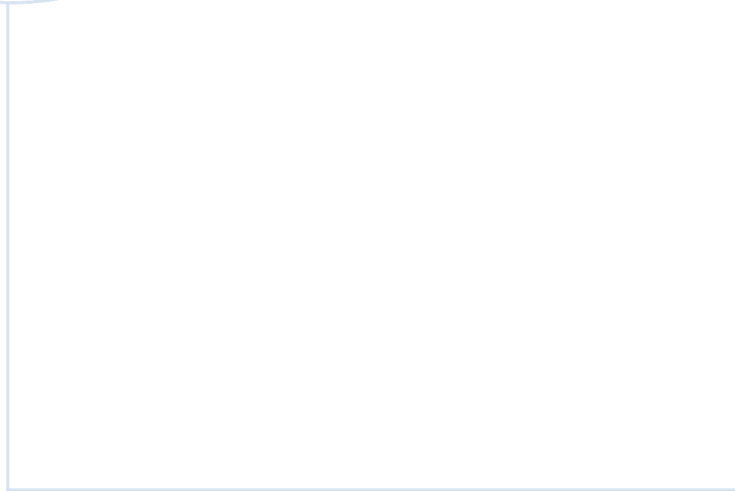
Christianiaposten

Den Norske Rigstidende

Drammens Adresse

Morgenbladet

For Fattig og Riig



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