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- Privilege, Pride and Prejudice –

A critical analysis of the Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Development- and Foreign Policy 2016-2020.

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Abstract

The current political climate shows an increase in misogynistic, xenophobic and right-wing radical groups and general tendencies, clearly evidenced by the language used. The recent years have showed an increased occurrence of hate crimes and a higher acceptance for what would earlier be considered hateful rhetoric. It is therefore of importance to investigate areas in which language is used to define groupings and create an 'us' and a 'them' such as the Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Foreign and Development Policy 2016-2020, hereinafter the Action Plan. The action plan delves into the relationship between Norway and other countries and organisations regarding foreign- and development policy matters. Through a close reading of the action plan, this thesis explores the language, both visual and literary, used to describe the different actors in the action plan. The analysis is based on a theoretical framework of postcolonialism, orientalism and feminist theory. The action plan will therefore be understood within this theoretical perspective.

The analysis in this thesis demonstrates how Norway, through the action plan, suggests that they are superior in matters of gender equality and women's rights. By way of language used in the action plan, Norway indicates a vertical relation between 'us' and 'them'. By examining the imagery in the action plan, it is evident that othering is also perpetuated through signs and symbols. The context in which the action plan was created, namely to be applicable in both the field of foreign affair as well as international development creates a conflict of interests in that foreign affairs aim to promote Norwegian interests abroad, while promoting development can oppose certain Norwegian interests abroad. More often than not, the national interests of Norway are prioritised and the result is a form of 'othering' the partner countries.

The analysis show the importance of questioning the use of language when discussing vulnerable topics and knowledge transfer. Furthermore, it shows the value of applying a gendered perspective on the way we use language. Through the use of the aforementioned theoretical framework, I aim to examine the production of meaning in the action plan.

Acknowledgement

Table of Contents

x

Introduction

Backgound

In the current political climate where Trump is the main character in most major news around the world, nationalism and radicalisation is of great worry. Having arguably one of the most powerful positions held by a person, spewing hate speech towards minorities, women and vulnerable groups is of great concern (Kim, 2016). Trump can say shit-hole countries and largely get away with it. Rhetoric is a tool he has mastered to serve his purpose in an effective manner. Even if its outright racist, discriminatory and false. Rhetorical tools are present even in more subtle areas of the political sphere, and it can be just as severe and deserves attention. Agent placed high in the hierarchy both nationally and internationally face the reality that with words come great power. The language one uses are crucial to the message one wants to convey. In Norway, we witnessed this first hand when the Minister of Justice, Sylvi Listhaug, was accused of *no confidence* by the Norwegian government after a she published a Facebook post with derogatory content (Regjeringen, 2018). Listhaug resigned as a result, and was forced to apologize for her post. Words matter and especially when it derives from a person of power. Siv Jensen from a far-right political party was confronted with the power of visual language when she dressed up in a native Indian costume. She faced a backlash criticising her for cultural appropriation (Svendsen & Myong, 2017, Reisjå et.al., 2017).

In Norway, The Progress Party entered the government in 2013 and are in power to this day. They want to reduce immigration, strengthen the military and have Norway only cooperate with countries that believe in Western values (Frp, 2018). The party also has top members stating their support for nationalist groups and ideology (Myksvoll, 2018). Though the party has not officially expressed support, it is very worrying to have representatives from the party, such as Listhaug, voicing derogatory content as representatives of the Norwegian government. A police report show a strong increase in hate crimes in Norway and stated that it can be expected a further increase in hate crimes "in the age of increasing presence of and accept for statements promoting alt-right, radical Christianity, nationalist, anti-gay and misogynistic ideologies and attitudes" (Oslo Politidistrikt, 2018:94)[1]. The increase is troubling and I argue that it makes it even more important to examine the ways in which language is used when discussing groups that are particularly vulnerable to hate.

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[1] My translation. Original text: "i en tid der nasjonalistiske, høyreekstreme, kristenekstreme og innvandrings-, homo- og kvinnefiendtlige holdninger kommer sterkere til uttrykk."

A large number of countries are seeing an increase in support for right-wing groups, where in Europe the increase of discrimination against migrants, LGBTQ and other minorities is widespread (UNRIC, 2016). Hate crimes and xenophobia has increased and reports find links to President Trump and the election in the US (FBI, 2016, ADL, 2016, Allam, 2016, Okeowo, 2016). Xenophobia has become a trend in many of the right-wing groups, with increasingly radical tendencies (UN, 2016, 2017). Brexit has also proven to be a driver for the xenophobic tendencies where the support for Brexit is strongly associated with xenophobia (Guerra et.al., 2017, Gabbatiss, 2017). The political climate is also influenced by the #metoo movement, where sexual harassment was brought to light. More serious crimes like murder also pose a real threat to women, two women a week is killed in UK and every other day a woman or a girl is killed in Canada (Kim, 2016, Dawson, 2018, Hayes, 2018). There is plentiful agreement that harassment of women is widespread and an immense issue all over the world (Weissbourd et.al, 2017).

In Norway the 22nd of July 2011 was a day that showed what xenophobia, white supremacy and misogyny can drive a person to do. An alt-right Christian terrorist killed 72 people, with the aim to kill as many people as possible from the Workers Party in Norway[2] (Græsvold, 2016, Jones, 2011). The alt-right terrorist had a list of people to kill, where the plan was to behead Gro Harlem Brundtland, a former prime minister, because she was the one to 'open the boarders' to immigrants (Græsvold, 2016). The alt-right has been connected to a misogynist and white supremacy mentality, and in the case of 22nd of July, the terrorist was open about having these types of attitudes (Græsvold, 2016, ADL, 2018, Jones, 2011, Russell-Kraft, 2018). It is amidst this xenophobia and misogyny that an action plan can promote changes for the better. The way issues are presented and spoken about is important at any point in time, but especially when the political climate is as described above. Both ethnic and gender motivated discrimination is an concern all over the world, including Norway (Oslo Politidistrikt, 2018). This action plan taps into both of the issues and has the potential to provide tools to improve and mitigate the situation. It becomes more important than ever to continue the efforts to promote gender equality and cross-national cooperation to ensure human rights are not violated.

The way that Norway positions itself and position others in their foreign affairs communications are important indicators of values and interests. This communication establishes the Norwegian position alongside our allies and keeps pressure on the gender and international development related side of politics, that are so often forgotten in the "larger" questions. One must remember to look inward and ask tough questions: Are they reproducing the power relations they

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[2] The Workers Party is Arbeiderpartiet in Norwegian, and is a liberal left-wing party.

are set out to change? Is the help they provide in and of itself provided with a mind-set of supremacy?

Background for the action plan.

In 2013 a new Norwegian government was elected and Børge Brende assumed the position as the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs. His experience was varied, he was the director at the World Economic Forum in the period of 2008-2009, in which he is now the president, and was the general secretary in Red Cross from 2009 to 2011 (WEF, 2018, Gjerstad, 2009). The position of Foreign Minister was previously held by Heikki E. Holmås, at the time named the Norwegian minister for development, but when a new government entered the chambers in 2013, Holmås's position was terminated. The result was a joint position where Brende would be the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs with the budget for international development included. Brende would therefore be the first in 30 years to hold responsibility for both arenas, foreign affairs and international development. Brende is a part of the Norwegian Conservative party, and Holmås resides with the Socialist Left Party. Brende was also the first person from a right-wing political party to assume the position, this was therefore a shift in political affiliation and ethos (Tømte & Røst, 2013).

Comments were made about the alteration, both of worry and of encouragement. Leiv Lunde, the former secretary of state for the Christian party in Norway, KrF, welcomed the changes with the hopes of a more comprehensive political strategy (Tømte & Røst, 2013). Among the critics were Erik Solheim, a former Norwegian Minister for International Development. Solheim was not convinced that this move was of any benefit. On the contrary, Solheim, as well as Norwegian Folk Aid, argued that this would weaken the impact Norway could have by limiting the amount of platforms Norway could participate on (Tømte & Røst, 2013, Speed & Opseth, 2013). Kjell Ingolf Ropstad, a politician from KrF continued the criticism made by Solheim by arguing that removing the position would show lack of commitment. Others were more concerned with the actual organisational aspects of the alterations. Both development and foreign affairs are large fields that require a lot of capacity, especially if only one minister is managing the two together. On the other hand, the argument for implementing this change was to create a more holistic political strategy between the two fields (Tømte & Røst, 2013). Brende has since been criticised for his job as Minister of Foreign Affairs, deeming his tenure the weakest since 2005 (Neuman, 2018).

On the 4th of September 2016 Brende presented a new action plan called Freedom, opportunity and empowerment. This was the third Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Foreign and Development Policy 2016-2020. In the presentation, Brende described the action plan as ambitious and wanting to

modernise the ways in which Norway work with gender equality (Brende, 2016). Brende described gender equality as a pressing issue, as shown by the priority of the issue by the UN, and that Norway is a superpower when it comes to gender equality. Gro Lindstad, the leader of FOKUS, said she has high expectations of the plan, but that she was afraid that it would be yet another plan to only be written, and not followed through (Vandapuye & NTB, 2016).

Gender researchers gave the action plan credit for being both focused and knowledge based **(**Dietrichson, 2016). The action plan was also described as giving agency to the women, not only seeking to "help the poor" (Dietrichson, 2016). Thomas Walle, one of the representatives in the group designed to push the gender equality work forward, gives credit to the investments made for the action plan. Yet he at the same time warned against a paternal tendency when referring to Norway as a super nation, as well as the lack of mention of the complexity of gender roles included in the action plan.

The action plan gives a unique insight into the ways in which the Norwegian government writes about gender equality in an international context. From reading all of these opinions of the action plan, I began seeing increased potential in researching the action plan as my empirical evidence. There are few documents where these issues are brought together as a compilation of strategies and focus areas by the Norwegian government. In that there are selections of what to focus on, as well as a way to see the language used when referring to different agents in both fields. The words used by Brende intrigued me and made me wonder how the action plan itself used language, and later images in the action plan.

What I have described above is the realm within which I will be examining the action plan's communication of meaning and the various ways in which this communication may be interpreted. One can communicate through a range of different mediums, but I have chosen language through texts and visual images. I am interested in the ways in which the action plan writes about different issues, and how literary tools are utilised in order to create meaningful arguments. My thesis will concentrate on the ways in which agents, meaning the different partner countries and organisations, are described and gradually presented throughout the action plan. The plan focuses on gender, international development and foreign affairs, which are areas I find incredibly fascinating. By examining the action plan my aim is to provide insight into the Norwegian position on Foreign Affairs by understanding how the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs communicates about these issues. I seek to better understand how to interpret language through applying selected theoretical framework – one of postcolonial, orientalist and feminist theory. I will argue that this action plan is one of importance to anyone that finds gender to be something of interest, as well as the ways in which Norway incorporates challenges related to gender into foreign and development policy.

Existing Literature

Previous research within this field show varied results. It actually proved difficult to find research conducted in Norway on development, foreign policy, action plans and equality. What I did find in abundance was research on Norwegian development policies, from authors such as Terje Tvedt, Olav Stokke and Arne Tostensen to mention a few[3]. This field has a large library of works, but most of them are focused on implementation, management and results. This differs from the focus on my thesis as I want to look into the ways in which these are written and the symbolism and language within each document. Tvedt is well known for his critical works on Norwegian development and foreign policy. Several works have been produced by Tvedt where he examines Norway's self-image, as well as what image Norway has of others (1995, 2009). Øyvind Østerud (2006) is also a critical voice in the field of development, with calls for a more critical view on foreign policy rhetoric and more assertive goals. These are important studies that have contributed with a good overview of the efforts Norway are making and the ways they are able to implement them, however they do not examine the ways in which actors are presented. They also lack a focus on the 'us' and 'them' dynamics between partner countries and Norway in relation to gender equality.

My thesis has a focus on gender equality and therefore the authors in this section are more relevant. What gender research within development is concerned Kari Karamè is a name worth mentioning. She has written several works on women in conflict, gender perspectives and peacebuilding (2006, 2007, 2009, 2012). Marianne Gullestad is also a strong voice in the Norwegian debate about self-image. Like Tvedt, Gullestad posed a critical stance on the hegemonic Norwegian image. A distinction between Tvedt and Gullestad is Gullestad's detailed analysis of what is to be seen as the 'Norwegian' and how the majority thinks about minorities in Norway. The work *The Norwegian seen with new eyes* (2010) examines everything from missionary historical contexts, to the ways in which words are significant. This is certainly relevant for this thesis, as it sees the Norwegian situation in historical context as well as goes into such detail. Another work that is relevant for this thesis is *Missionary Photography,* where photos from Norwegian missionaries are gathered and analysed (Gullestad, 2007). Elements such as gender, historical context, positioning and so forth are examined, and it is very relevant to the analysis of images in the action plan in this thesis. In the light of this I hope to bring a similar analysis into the realm of gender in foreign affair and international development, and in this case through a public document; an action plan. Svetlana Anistratenko (2017) conducted a master thesis on analysing images from Statoil with focus on gender and symbolism. The thesis show how

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[3] Tvedt, 1990, 2002, 2003, 2006a, 2006b, 2016, 2017. Stokke, 1976, 1979, 1987, 1992, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2005, 2009. Tostensen, 1987a, 1987b, 1992, 2004.

all elements in images can carry meaning and significance. Another work which enthused me is the work *Women in Photographs – Dressed for power*, where *"symbolic and cultural structures of meaning related to gender and authority are explored"* (Bolsø & Mühleisen, 2015:224). They really managed to explore images of women and the symbolism they encompass, while at the same time linking the symbols to a larger context (Bolsø & Mühleisen, 2015). Anistratenko, Bolsø & Mühleisen and Gullestad all provide different, yet similar ways of analysing specific images in the context of gender and culture.

In the field of gender equality in Norway, a large project was conducted to account for the history of gender equality in Norway starting from 1814 to 2013 (Danielsen et.al., 2013). It is a comprehensive and general work, and one of importance for gender equality, Norwegian history and political progress. Johannesen and Opsahl (2013) wrote a master thesis on the subject of gender equality in Norwegian politics. More specifically analysing the White paper number 44, on gender equality. Johannesen and Opsahl (2013) found that there were three dominating discourses in the White paper; gender equality is just, gender equality provides more freedom of choice and gender equality is profitable. Gender equality as just, or fair, was found to act as the foundation, while the discourse of gender equality as profitable was the most dominant. This master thesis discusses a lot of the issues of gender equality in the Norwegian context and provide a useful overview of the historical and current situation.

The Norwegian government set women and equality on the development agenda by giving out a rapport in 1997: *Strategy for women and equality in development cooperation 1997-2005*. Parallel to this, the UN Security Council unanimously approved resolution 1325, on Women, peace and security (UNSCR, 2000). As it is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs responsibility to implement this resolution, this formed the basis for the Norwegian efforts to promoting the gender perspective in foreign and development politics. Norway continues to produce public reports on the 1325 resolution, and the action plan used as empirical data in this thesis has its basis in this resolution[4]. Gender equality in international development has been on Norway's agenda for a long time and I want to explore the current situation through language and signs.

Existing research on analysing public documents, and more specifically documents with a gender perspective in relation to foreign affairs and development was less abundant. Jennifer F. Klot (2012) and Anne C. Berger (2007) have produced reputable and thorough examples of this types of analysis.

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[4] Three individual documents have been produced by the Norwegian government as action plans for women's rights and gender equality in development- and foreign policy. The first spans from 2007 to 2009, but was further extended to be effective until 2013. The previous action plan was active from 2013 to 2015. That makes three action plans available for this specific topic. Although, there are other documents that include either gender, development or foreign affairs that have been published from the government. I have chosen not to include these as it would be outside the scope of this thesis.

These works do however not focus on the language and images in the public documents, but rather on implementation, execution and results. I find it to be a gap in the literature, in relation to Norwegian public documents related to gender, foreign affairs and development, where the language used is not assessed by itself. It almost seems as though the language is just seen in context with results and not as symbols and meaning creation. I see an opportunity to add to the existing literature by examining the language through relation to postcolonial, orientalist and feminist theory. By examining language isolated from results, one can generate an impression of the ways in which Norway sees themselves and others.

Thesis question

In this thesis, I will investigate the ways in which Norway presents themselves and 'others' though the Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Foreign and Development Policy 2016-2020. In doing so, I will look at the potential differences in the language used about the different issues and look at how power is distributed. I aim to present a thesis with a critical view on the way in which gender and politics abroad are conducted by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I will have three analysis chapters where different sections of the action plan

will be explored. The main questions for the chapters are respectively;

Analysis chapter 1: In what way is Norway presented in the foreword?

Analysis chapter 2: What understanding of gender, signs and dynamics is presented in the images located in the action plan?

Analysis chapter 3: How is the main body of text, three chapters, presenting Norway and its partners through language and signs?

These are the main questions in which each of the three analysis chapters are based on. My main thesis question is the following:

> *How does the language and the images in the action plan present Norway and their partners in the document? And what understanding of gender and values does the plan communicate?*

Reading Guide

In this first chapter I have presented the foundation for the choice of topic, the purpose of this thesis and the thesis question to which I will answer. I have also discussed the environment in which the thesis is a part of and the relevance of the action plan. In chapter two I present the three different theories forming the theoretical framework for this thesis. I present each theoretical perspective respectively and why these specific theories are useful for the thesis. In chapter three I explain the methodology of the thesis. I proceed to present the analytical

tools and strategies in which I will use in the analysis section of the thesis. Furthermore, I discuss documents as empirical evidence and progress by going through the content of the action plan. I justify and clarify the choices I have made throughout this process. The selection process of the action plan will then be discussed, including more detailed selections such as which images and quotes to focus on. I end this chapter by deliberating ethical concerns and positioning the researcher. Chapter four is the first of three analysis chapters and is addressing the foreword in the action plan. The analysis is centred around the presentation of Norway and in what way Norway's sense of self is emerging through a hermeneutical analysis of the language. The following analysis chapter contains a detailed visual analysis of the images incorporated in the action plan. Here, the main focus is on the emerging sense of self and others in the images. Other focus areas are how gender is expressed, the symbolism encompassed in the image and the interpretation of the appearing visual signs. The last analysis chapter centres around the remaining three chapter of the action plan. The text is explored with the way Norway and its partners are presented in min, and how this can be further interpreted through language and signs. Chapter seven is the last chapter and contain the findings in the preceding analysis chapters. Lastly some concluding remarks are identified and future research is debated.

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

In the first section of this chapter I will present the theoretical basis and framework for this thesis. I will start by introducing hermeneutics, which is the overarching theoretical basis of this thesis. I will continue by presenting the theoretical framework of the thesis and start by introducing the theoretical perspective of Orientalism. I believe Orientalism is a beneficial perspective as it allows me to investigate the construction of the East, from a Westerncentric perspective. I go on to present postcolonialism and postfeminism. Together with Orientalism, postcolonialism and postfeminism will make up my theoretical framework. The three theories are based on the same exploration of power structures and categories. The theories also critique the production and reproduction of stereotypes, as well as the continuous 'othering' of people or groups. All three theories are either based on a Western critique or have a strand of the theory critiquing the predominantly Western perspective on the world. The theories will supplement each other by focusing on different categories such as gender and ethnicity. In this chapter, I will go further into detail about why these theories are suitable for my thesis and the tools they provide.

Theoretical Framework

Hermeneutics

The overarching theoretical basis for the analysis, and for this master's thesis is hermeneutical approach. I will now present the theoretical basis for hermeneutics and the ways in which I find it useful. My main objective is to construe the way in which meaning is produced and reproduced in the action plan. Hermeneutics derives from the ancient Greece word *hermeneuein*, and means interpret, explain and expound (Sørensen et.al., 2008). Originally, Hermeneutics was reserved for theology, but Freidrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) expanded the scope of hermeneutics to apply to the historical humankind. Schleiermacher importantly based hermeneutics in language, which would be the way that I make use of hermeneutics in this thesis (Sørensen et.al., 2008). Another important contributor to hermeneutics was the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002). He argued that all understandings are based in prejudice thoughts, structured by society. Sørensen et.al (2008) further explain hermeneutics as the pre-justice, or as the pre, before, understanding to make understanding possible. Another important concept introduced by Gadamer is the idea of a horizon of understanding; a sum of all our prejudice, and that the language we have attained also carries (Sørensen et.al., 2008). Gadamer based his analysis on a shift one makes by understanding ones' prejudices and hence making changes in our

horizon of understanding. The historical horizon of understanding that are handed down through time presents the foundation of understanding, as well as limits the foundation in which understanding is created through negative prejudices. I am very interested in exploring this perception of historical understandings that are passed on, and if this can be the case in the action plan. I find the historical aspects of any issue interesting, and find it useful to delve into the former environment in which something is created and the possibility of it being subsequently reproduced to the next generation. Gadamer was criticised for being too idealistic in the way in which he believed that it was possible to merge different horizons of understanding.

A vital part of his analysis is the idea that one can only understand parts of the text in relation to the entire work, and only understand the entirety through the individual parts of the text (Sørensen et.al, 2008). This particular approach has guided my work significantly in the way that there are different levels of understanding documents, and that these levels needs to be situated, contextualized and seen in relation to the document as a whole. Both Jürgen Habermas and Paul Ricouer criticised Gadamer for his neglect regarding the underlying interests to maintain a set of values and his general idealistic attitude. Ricouer introduced an alternative to the *hermeneutics of trust*, namely the *hermeneutics of distrust*, to examine different power structures, interests and motives (Sørensen et.al, 2008). It is this more critical version of hermeneutics I find fruitful in regards to my analysis of the action plan - a political document, due to the lack of neutrality in political documents. My objectives in using this methodological theory is to use concepts from hermeneutics to enable more systematized method of interpreting the text. With an overarching hermeneutical perspective, I will conduct an interpretive analysis of my material which I will describe in further detail in the methodology chapter.

Orientalism, postcolonialism and feminism.

In this section I will present the theoretical framework for this thesis. Whereas hermeneutic theory represents the overarching theory for the ways in which I analyse and engage with my material, the theoretical concepts presented in this section will represent the tools and the guidelines in which I see and interpret my material. I have based my analysis on three theories, Orientalism, postcolonialism and feminism. Each of which are theories that critique hierarchies, power relations and a Western hegemonic world view. I find these to be helpful for my analysis as they are all based in a critical perception of current affairs and provide an alternative to the heteronormative, Western, Eurocentric and a concentration of power. The theories seek the issues that are left out, taken for granted and/or implicit. I find that through these perspectives I can better investigate the matters that are taken for granted in the action plan, explore the power structures and expose potential stereotypes. Hopefully this thesis can contribute to the debate

about Norway's role and image regarding gender equality in both development and foreign affairs. I also think that with the tools and perspectives that these theories provide, I can possibly add a new perspective through a critical analysis of this action plan.

Orientalism

Orientalism, a critical study of Western perceptions of the Orient, also described as the theory of 'othering' the East (Ruud, 2009, Thorbjørnsrud, 2004). Orientalism is best known from Edward Said's book 'Orientalism' from 1978, though the theoretical foundation can be found emerging back in the 17th century (Ruud, 2009). Orientalism by Said, is seen as a great contribution to the scientific world, and will be relevant for decades to come. The main ideas in Orientalism is the secondary image created of the Orient: the East, by the Occident: the West. The image created of the Orient is described as an 'othering' of the Middle-Eastern, Asian, and somewhat the North African regions of the world, and the people that lives there.

The Orient was described as an exotic, barbaric and erotic culture with the firm basis in 'othering' the East from the West (Said, 1978, Young, 2003). The notion of how these narratives are created, whether it is a narrative about people, events or causes, and how these narratives contribute to our understanding of the truth and reality, is the essence of Said's work (Thorbjørnsrud, 2004). The Orientalist narrative was created through a westerner's gaze at the Oriental region, often describing what they expected to find (Young, 2003). This understanding of the West 'othering' the East can provide a sustainable starting point for investigating discourses within the action plan, where one can find orientalist sequences embedded in the language and illustrations.

In his book, Said based his analysis in that of the investigation of the creation of discourses and the maintenance of discourses (Thorbjørnsrud, 2004). Scholars argue that by introducing the concept of discourse, Said added a paradigm for the analysis of the imperial ideologies cultural forms of expression (Young, 2001). In this thesis, I will not conduct a discourse analysis per se, however, the term discourse is very beneficial when discussing the creation of societal narratives.
A discourse is a representation of a set of meanings or understandings that defines what is seen as the truth, thus forms the foundations in which we understand the world around us (Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999, Neumann, 2001, Hansen, 2006). Discourses can change, and are not stagnant representations of the world. Aspects of a discourse can change as the members of this discourse change and substitute ideas. As discourse is a representation of the world, the creation and reproduction of stereotypes therefore is large part of Orientalism (Dahl, 2004). It is in this creation of a discourse, or just a given understanding of an issue that I find interesting. I believe that political documents and official statements can serve as

a tool to reproduce and maintain discourses. Documents such as an action plan has power, especially in the context of international affairs. I want to investigate how the language of this action plan could potentially feed into different discourses, especially that of the othering of the traditional 'east' and 'south'.

In the upcoming section, I will discuss stereotypes and their importance in this thesis. I see these stereotypes as a version of a discourse. It is a perception or narrative created about an issue or people that is relatively set, but that could be changed. This is one of the ways in which I will use the concept of discourse, the other is in a more traditional sense in that it will systems of meanings and reality perceptions.

Stereotypes in Orientalism

Øyvind Dahl explains the term 'stereotypes' as the categorisation of people or groups of people with a set of common features (2004). Stereotypes can become powerful tools ~~as~~ when they are repeated for a long period of time; over time they will gain momentum and encompass a certain authority (Ruud, 2009). The stereotypes can still gain a sense of authority even if they are not based in truth or just have a slither of truth. Arild Ruud denotes the definition more by saying that it is not just the act of categorisation, but a set of assumptions about a group or its members (2009). Both Dahl and Ruud agree that it is often simple generalisations made of people with certain common features.

Stereotypes can be of both use and of harm, depending on their content and use. They are simplifications about the world and have the potential to enable people to understand a complex world through basic explanations (Ruud, 2009). A challenge with stereotypes is that they have a tendency of being assumed to be true and hence difficult to change. This can be particularly challenging if the stereotyping is of a negative character, as this can affect many people's lives in a harmful manner. Orientalism sees these stereotypes as a way of creating, maintaining and reproducing a form of 'othering' when addressing the Orient.

Orientalism is not only the study of the Orient per se, it can be translated to other regions and events as the study of the Occident's other (Thorbjørnsrud, 2004). Orientalism study what is outside the Occident, hence the Occident's 'other' and why the 'other' is different in a negative sense (Torbjørnsrud, 2004). Orientalism is therefore useful in this context, as this thesis investigates how the action plan portrays oneself - Norway, and others - the rest of the world. The action plan explains what Norway want to do in order to promote gender equality in the international arena, both through its foreign-, and development policies. Here, Norway is portrayed as an agent of change, and the arena for change is in foreign countries. One can therefor argue that by being an agent of change outside its sovereign area, an orientalist perspective can be fruitful in investigating and interpreting the way in which this relationship is exhibited in a political document such as an action plan.

Gender in Orientalism

Many scholars argue that Orientalism is one of, if not the most, important sources of inspiration for Postcolonial theory, as well as women's studies (Young, 2001, Thorbjørnsrud, 2004). A critique of Said's book *Orientalism* is the absence of gender and class, the only category that is taken into consideration is race. This is despite frequent descriptions of the feminine nature of the Orient, not only in Said's work, but in oriental texts in general (Thorbjørnsrud, 2004). The Orient was often described as irrational, emotional, illogical, immature and sensual, all in which have been used as qualities that separate women from men in the gender debate (Widerberg, 1994, Butler, 1999, Said, 1978, Young, 2003). Consequently, orientalism has had a large influence on women's studies as well, despite the lack of specific focus on gender (Thorbjørnsrud, 2004). This is something I will be aware of in my upcoming analysis chapters and is one of the reasons why I felt the need to include feminist theory in my theoretical framework, which I will get to later in this chapter. The criticism of orientalism highlights the necessity of utilising gender and the gap created when its neglected.

Postcolonialism

Trough investigating what Said calls an oriental discourse, or dominating discourse, he tries to show how different agents or actors have created this dominating discourse. Said realised and argued that the colonisation was not only in the form of militarisation of land, it was a cultural colonialization of the mind (Thorbjørnsrud, 2004). Brooks (1997) continues in line with Said and describes it as an occupation of a cultural hegemonic understanding of the world by the colonialiser. It is concerned with the power distribution and the different ways the actor are given agency. Said claims that this dominating discourse has indirectly and directly contributed to the enabling of colonisation, as well as legitimised it (Thorbjørnsrud, 2004, Said, 1978). According to Young (2001), both this idea and Orientalism in and of itself forms postcolonialism as an academic discipline. It may not have singlehandedly been the foundation for the discipline, but there is no doubt that it has contributed a great deal to the creation of postcolonial studies and theory (Thorbjørnsrud, 2004).

Postcolonial theory is an interdisciplinary study that focuses on imperialism, and the different ways in which colonialism developed within imperial ideology, as well as the postcolonial present (Thorbjørnsrud, 2004, Baaz, 2005). The postcolonial present is often addressed as neo-colonial. Critics, such as Spivak (1999), have spoken up against the tendency of placing colonialism and imperialism securely in the past, due to its contribution to the production of current neo-colonial knowledge. Brooks (1997) argue that the word *post* can be problematic in that in implies that these relations have been overcome and replaced. Other scholars argue the *post* in postcolonialism is not to claim that colonialism has been overturned, on the contrary it is engaging critically with the

effects of colonialism (Spoonly, 1995, Thomas, 1993, Hall, 1996). Postcolonialism investigates colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism (Thorbjørnsrud, 2004). Colonial and imperial rule was mostly driven by the principles that West, 'the white man', knows best and the rest follows (Easterly, 2006). Anthropological theories portraying the colonialized people as inferior, feminine, unable to look after themselves or childlike, legitimised the imperial and colonial rule (Young, 2003). Through a western gaze, the colonized people needed the aid of the West for their best interest, in a way one could see it as a paternal role (Young, 2003). This can be described as 'The white man's burden', the obligation of the West, colonialist, to help the Rest, the colonialized (Baaz, 2005). In relation to this thesis, I believe a post-colonial perspective is relevant as it highlights the ever-evolving aftermath of the colonial rule and its consequences. Postcolonial theory looks at different power distributions and the reproduction of power structures in relation to the colonial era. Even countries that were not colonialists or colonialized themselves are affected by the culture created. Norway was not a colonial power, but it coexisted in a time when this was occurring on an international level. In doing so, Norway was and still is affected by the colonial era (Gullestad, 2002, Nystad, 2003). In using postcolonial theory, we can potentially uncover some of the ways in which Norway is an agent in this postcolonial era.

Feminism

A previously mentioned, Said and orientalism was criticised for its lacking gender perspective and for using elements of gender theory, but not acknowledging the role of gender in its importance. Gender is ever so present in our society and is a powerful category and play a role in many theoretical frameworks. This thesis is no exception, as the action plan focuses on gender equality and women's rights. To supplement the previous two theories, orientalism and postcolonialism, I have included a third theory: feminism. In this section, I will present feminism and its value for this thesis.

As described previously, the Orient was often described in the same way that women would be when distancing 'them' from the West or from men. Consequently, both orientalism and postcolonialism have similar basis as feminism theory. These narratives, or stereotypes are produced, reproduced and maintained as discourses and often given authority. Further, one can argue that imperialism and patriarchy have exerted significant domination of groups of people. Women and colonialized subjects can be seen to have parallel experiences of this form of domination (Ashcroft et.al., 1999). In societies that have been colonialized, there have been intense debates regarding what form of oppression causes the most imprint on women's lives, the oppression caused by colonialism or patriarchy. Both are intrinsically entwined and it is hard to argue that one causes greater harm than the other. This has made it inevitable to say that colonial

dominance does affect the position of women within their societies (Ashcroft et.al., 1999). As a result, calls have been made to include the employment and construction of gender as a category, in the studies of imperialism and colonialism.

Language and representation have been areas of concern for feminism and postcolonialism. What ways, and to what extent they are used in the formation and construction of prejudice have been crucial to identify, in order to reclaim and subverting imperial and patriarchal power (Ashcroft et.al., 1999). In the same way that *post*colonialism critically engages with imperialism and the effects caused by it, feminism does the same but with patriarchy (Brooks, 1997). Both disciplines emphasis and explore oppressive relations. In Simone de Beauvoir's book *The second sex*, she describes the woman as the opposite of the man and as 'the other' (1952). Beauvior speaks of becoming a woman, as opposed to being born a woman, indicating that societal norms and rules that are shaping the female to becoming a woman. This all too well describes societies differentiation of the sexes, and the 'roles' that the genders are supposed to consist of. Feminist theory tries to pick these roles and expectations apart, to then examine and critique its parts.

Feminists have since investigated the theory of feminism as it grew in the nineteen centuries and scholars such as Mohanty and Hooks have criticised the feminist movement for being based on white western women (Hooks, 1981, 2000). This further created the term 'third woman', where the women of non-western decent were seen as first of all the opposite of the man, and then the opposite of the western woman. The non-western woman was consequently seen as 'the other' to both the male gender as well as their western female 'allied', creating a divide both in incentive and focus. This critique was extended to development and the language used when speaking of women of non-western decent. One can see a clear similarity to the colonial thought of the non-westerners as 'the other', but now with an additional feature: gender. Subsequently, gender and ethnicity were categories that dually oppressed non-western females. This action plan features both development and women's rights, both elements are increasing the chances of the author being subjected to difficult dilemmas in the way in which these topics are discussed. In my upcoming analysis, the postcolonial and feminist perspective is important due to its dual focus on the hierarchies and distribution of power. They investigate the ways in which Western heteronormative convictions has dictated many areas of research and created discourses accordingly. They provide a critical perspective to different arenas and unveil implicit ideas in language and meaning production that are often taken for granted.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented the theoretical framework for this thesis. the chapter was initiated with a section on hermeneutics and the ways in which it is useful for my thesis. Hermeneutics is useful in the way that is qualitative and therefore very adaptable in the ways that the material in explored. My thesis is concerned with how meaning is produced and reproduced, hence hermeneutics would be fruitful as the main idea of the theory is to interpret meaning. It is especially fruitful as it was applied to specifically language and the ways in which is constructed. Having this as my overarching approach to my material, adding theories that would make more sense of my data was beneficial. I proceeded to present the theoretical framework for my thesis, subsequently orientalism, postcolonialism and feminism. Orientalism provide a way to see if my material separate the different actors and how they ma do that. It is specifically fruitful as it looks at the ways in which the west see the 'east', and I find it to be applicable I the context of how Norway see the world, and the developing world particularly. To add a historical perspective, as the action plan is a product of a historical process, postcolonialism can provide a good way to see the context and environment in which the action plan is created and applied. Norway has a long tradition of missionary culture and development work, and postcolonialism can see the action plan in that context. Due to the importance of gender in this thesis and in the action plan accordingly, feminism serve as a helpful tool to examine the way that gender is understood both implicitly and explicitly. Together they provide a historical view of gender and international relations, with focus on different implication and the power distribution between actors involved.

Method and Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter I present the methodological structure for this thesis. I have previously presented the theoretical framework as well as the methodological theory behind my methodology. Hermeneutics is the methodological theory I have chosen, a method based on interpreting the empirical data. I will build on this theory, by adding the methodological steps I will undertake throughout this research process.

The first part will discuss my selected approach, qualitative approach, and the ways in which it is fruitful to my thesis. I will go on to describing my empirical data, the action plan, in more depth and how this became my subject of analysis. Thereafter the process of data collection and the ways in which the specific quotes and images were selected. Then the ways in which I as a researcher is situated or positioned in the context of the thesis, and that this may affect my analysis. Building on this, the ethical concerns and considerations will be deliberated. I will end with a summary of this chapter.

Qualitative method

The methodology is the toolbox one utilise to best understand the material at hand with basis in a specific theoretical framework. The theoretical framework provides the scope in which the material is analysed, and the analytical strategy forms the way in which the material is processed. I have already presented my theoretical framework, and I will now present my methodological process. In each analytical approach lies different tools with which one sheds light on elements in the material that are significant to the thesis question. When utilising methodological processes, there are two overarching categories that are used to differentiate the different types of methods, namely a qualitative- and quantitative approach.

The two methodological understandings can also be combined – methodological triangulation – where qualitative and quantitative methods are merged to explore a phenomenon more broadly (Thagaard, 2013, Aase & Fossåskaret, 2015). I have chosen a qualitative method for my thesis, although I could have chosen to use the latter approach, I wanted a more in-depth analysis. Qualitative methods are primarily emphasizing the meaning or the significance of a social phenomenon, hence conducting an in-depth analysis (Thagaard, 2013). Questions that can best be tackled by qualitative methods are exactly these types of issues; the ones that need an in-depth analysis with the intention of understanding the contextual and social ramifications of this.

Different qualitative approaches can be understood as tools for explaining and understanding a cultural phenomenon, not just acknowledging the presence of it (Thagaard, 2013). It is these nuances quantitative research often does not find, as quantitative methods mainly focus on numbers, frequencies and distribution (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2015). With qualitative method, the researcher can describe tendencies and processes, find patterns and hence connect these to a larger societal context, but the findings made will be the outcome of that person's interpretations. With that said, the result produced by a researcher using qualitative methods will not automatically mean that the findings discovered represent this phenomenon and the understanding of it as a truth. This goes for my thesis and my process as well, I discuss the implications of my positioning as the researcher further in the section on 'positioning of the researcher and ethical considerations'.

Qualitative methods have a more adaptable and adjustable research process in comparison to a quantitative research process (Thagaard, 2013). My thesis question allows me to be very flexible in the way that I analyse, and qualitative method is especially suitable for that type of process. This flexibility, overlapping and ever evolving way of approaching the process, is one of the known characteristics of qualitative methods and is very attractive for my thesis (Thagaard, 2013). Combining flexibility and in-depth analysis, a qualitative approach works very well for my thesis.

Having an overarching hermeneutical perspective, I believe this will help me in ensuring an open and adaptable approach to my material and thesis question. An adaptable process enables the thesis to shape itself throughout the analysis. In this way, one can continuously map and decipher different patterns in the material at hand. In this methodology one is not concerned with whether or not the hypothetical analysis is correct or not, it is a way of speculating and discussing the possible understanding of the material (Sørensen et.al., 2008). A hermeneutic approach enables me to be adjustable in the way in which I interpret my data. The focus will be to try to decipher the way in which both language and imagery are used in the action plan. I will not try to understand the intentions in which the authors have created this, I will only examine the results of those intentions and present the ways in which they can be understood in the light of my theoretical framework.

While conducting a document analysis it will be supported and inspired by semiotics and symbol analysis. Aase & Fossåskaret provide a great overview of the ways in which language can be seen a system of signs, semiotics, and I will be using elements from their reflections. A part of my analysis will be to look at language as a system of signs in the like of Aase & Fossåskaret. Furthermore, seeing as symbols are polysemy, meaning they can be understood in various ways, the way in which the word is used is critical to the understanding of the symbol (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014). This is important to take into consideration

due to the diversity of the people reading this document. One will have a variety of understandings of a symbol, and this will be affected by every person's individual life experiences. The document is also in English and is an official document regarding international matters, hence a wide range of audience can be expected.

Document analysis

In order to decipher the language and to extract some type of pattern, I have found that document analysis would be the best method to achieve my objectives. Since my empirical data includes images, I will conduct a visual analysis with the support of symbol analysis and semiotics. This is a political document that has gone through a process of becoming an official document; henceforth representing a whole ministry. This is not taken lightly, and one can imagine that this process would have included several actors in getting this document ready for publication. Due to this process, one can assume that this is a document with deliberately and intentionally selected information that will convey the stance and opinions of the Norwegian government on women's rights and equality in the field of foreign affair and development policies.

My primary data consists of documents published by the Foreign Ministry. As I have not myself produced my material, it becomes important to contemplate the environment in which my material was created within. Because it is a public document representing the Foreign Ministry, the document is carefully planned and politicised. This can be deceptive and not truly reflect the opinions of the current government, as it will go through a process of many editors and political advisors, in order to fulfil certain expectations held by the people reading it. If a subject is very sensitive, the government may not include it or explicitly state their view if there is a potential backlash from that statement. The action plans will be read not only by Norwegian governmental branches, but by an international audience. As such, a second aspect I need to be aware of when engaging with my primary data is the potential risk that the action plan has been written in general terms in order to "protect" the government from any change in policies that could contradict the statements made in the plan.

I will perform a close reading of the document in order to best understand my material. Close reading is regarded by many as the core method of literary studies (Smith, 2016, Brookman & Horn, 2016). According to Smith, close reading is more a practice than a methodology in and of itself. She describes close reading as a way to read texts with "attention to their linguistic features and rhetorical operations" (2016: 57-58). Brookman & Horn adds to this definition; "To read

closely is to perform a purposeful and skilled analysis and interpretation of the structural, stylistic, and linguistic features of a literary text." (2016:249).

The action plan contains images and graphic design. I believe that these visual expressions represent an important part of the action plan. One can argue that the graphics are used as means of information adapted to and shaped around the text produced by the Ministry of Foreign affairs. Sturken and Cartwright believes that visual analysis is related to expressions of power (1999). I want to analyse these images and explore the ways in which elements can influence and being influenced, as well as intended and unintended effects (Sturken & Cartwright, 1999). The ways in which semiotics are being explored in images is something I find fascinating. It enables the researcher to find signs within the images and apply hermeneutics to interpret these signs. I will use the theoretical framework of the thesis to contextualize the images and the signs within them. These are some of the components I want to consider when exploring the visual expressions included in the action plans, and when trying to understand their meaning and purpose.

Analysis process

The preliminary analysis consisted of reading the entire document to get an overview of the material. I would then proceed to take note of sentences, paragraphs or visual elements that caught my eye. This could be due to words that would stand out or simply something I wanted to investigate further. In the first analysis chapter the examination was based on the foreword, and a more focused analysis of four selected quotes. I found it sufficient to limit the number of quotes to four, as the foreword is relatively short. Other parts of the foreword were included in the analysis as well as the foreword in its entirety. I chose to centre the first chapter around the foreword and nothing else as it contained a very specific type of language and spoke directly from the minister of foreign affairs, Børge Brende. The second analysis chapter was based in a visual analysis, but with the same tools as the analysis conducted on written text. The process was mostly based on finding elements of interest, symbols related to gender and other elements that would have a significance. I would go over the images several times, writing down observations and possible meanings. I then apply the theory to find more possible outcomes.

The last analysis chapter was focused on the rest of the text, chapter 1, 2 and 3 of the action plan. The selection process was significant as the body of text was larger. The process was similar to the previous analysis chapters, though the selection process caused a larger constraint on what was included in the in-depth analysis. I chose to map the five thematic priority areas, by going through them, looking at word count, the number of objectives and bullet points. This was to see if there were any significant differences or areas of interest. Word count was the feature that stood out the most to me, as the differences between the priority areas

varied quite a bit. I made an overview to make it more comprehendible and used it as a basis for further analysis. The process was very similar with both text and images, despite the difference between the two. I found that using an hermeneutical perspective helped me to choose the areas of interest, and to further use close reading to get into more detail in my analysis. As I mentioned, the visual analysis consisted of more or less the same process where I would note what caught my eye immediately, and then go into more depth.

Table 1. Contents of the action plan – an overview.

No	Chapter
1	• Women's rights in a changing world – policy and priorities
2	• Thematic priority areas - The right of girls to education - Women's political rights and empowerment - Women's economic rights and empowerment - A life free of violence and harmful practices - Sexual and reproductive health and rights
3	• Implementation

Table 2. Overview over the five thematic priority areas.

No	Thematic priority area	Objectives	Bullet points	Word count
1	The right of girls to education	2	10	1035
2	Women's political rights and empowerment	3	8	941
3	Women's economic rights and empowerment	2	9	1220
4	A life free of violence and harmful practices	3	7	997
5	Sexual and reproductive health and rights	3	10	1532

Documents as empirical evidence

Seeing as my empirical material is an action plan, I find the definition of a document from Webb & Webb to be very suitable in my case; "an instrument in language which has, as its origin and for its deliberate and express purpose to become the basis of, or to assist, the activities of an individual, an organisation or a community" (1932:100). Often the documents are written for a purpose different than what the researcher wants to use them for. When conducting a document analysis, one will start by looking at the references in the selected document

(Thagaard, 2013). Thereafter one will explore the references in those documents. By doing this one will get an overview of the issues that are central and the more peripheral issues related to the selected document. As the action plan does not have sources in the same way in which a peer reviewed article would, I will be looking at the documents that are mentioned in the action plan, as well as previous action plans.

I am primarily concerned with the language and images within the action plan, and their historical context and associated connotations. Therefore, my method for mapping and examining the field of related documents are a bit different. I have been very engaged in the arena of linguistics and the post-structural way of examining language. Looking at different ways of purposely using language such as the art of rhetoric and propaganda I found to be beneficial for my analysis. It may not be the focus of my analysis, it might not even be in the final product, but the ways in which language is perceived in these disciplines have shaped my understanding of the underlying intentions regarding text and images. I also delved into texts focusing on the historical role of Norway in development. Also, here the information gained through this literature search is primarily for a background knowledge and to gain a better contextual understanding of the action plan.

An action plan is a document produced by an entity, usually a type of organisation, to present an overview over the strategy the author has created to achieve a goal. The action plan may be subjected to changes as the span of an action plan is usually over several years. Government entities communicate to their citizens and others their plans through such documents. In doing so the document contain thoroughly processed and intentional assembled text. Much of the communication from the state are distributed through documents and texts, Berge et.al (2003) argues that the powerful/authority speak through these forms of communications and in examining these might provide important insight. This insight could be through interpreting the text, and examine to what extent and to what degree, issues are discussed and in what way they are discussed. Doing so can unveil power structures in the text and a possible hierarchy, and evaluate if the text is reproducing and maintaining current social disparities, or what Pierre Bourdieu calls symbolic violence (Berge et.al., 2003). While examining the text it is important to bare in mind the history of language and the ways in which this history guides and limits the authors ability to communicate their message as words have more meaning than the definition presented in the dictionary (Berge et.al., 2003). A word can have different meaning, connotation and symbolism in different cultures, location, context accordingly. Rhetorically we know the power of linguistic imagery, this also applies to visual imagery (Berge et.al, 2003).

Visual images

The images I will analyse are the respective images used in the action plan as a whole, with the exception of smaller illustrations interlaced in the text. The images are created by a company, Kord AS, unrelated to the NMFA and the Norwegian government. They are therefore not a product of the NMFA per se, but they would have to be adjusted to NMFA's requirements and guidelines in order to be approved by them. Kord AS is also responsible for the holistic design of the plan, not only the images. This is something I will have to consider throughout the analysis. As the images do not have a section dedicated to the credits of the image, I will therefore assume that the image was created by Kord AS as a part of this assignment. This is discussed further in the ethical concern section. I have chosen to place the descriptive details about each image in the chapter devoted to the analysis of these images. The reason for this decision was a more coherent presentation of the images, and to avoid repetition. Having a comprehensive and detailed description of each image is necessary in the analysis process, hence the lack of description in this section of the thesis.

In the book Misjonsbilder (2007), Gullestad presents her book as a contribution to the Norwegian sense of self or self-understanding by looking at photography and film. By looking at the images in the action plan I see similarities to the way in which Gullestad is presenting the missionary photography. In the images presented in her book the Norwegians are not the main focus, it is the 'others' depicted. The Norwegian sense of self is constructed in the way in which the 'others' are illustrated. The creator of the photo holds the camera lens, and thus has the power to portray the subjects whichever way they deem proper. In her findings Gullestad shows how a hierarchal structure is created through the missionary photos, the 'givers' and the 'receivers'. Gullestad continues to say that the creation of the paternalistic relation between 'us' and 'them' was not intentional and wanted by the missionaries themselves. In a way, the missionaries represent Norway's first development unit, though their primary objective was to spread Christianity (Gullestad, 2007:10). Norway was in 2003, the country in Europe with most deployed missionaries per capita (Tvedt, 2003: 292). According to Gullestad the missionary activities has shaped the construction of the national Norwegian self-understanding, the welfare state, the way in which the majority interact with immigrants and ethnical minorities, and the development of international relations (Gullestad, 2007:19). As Gullestad so clearly points out, the impact made by the missionary tradition in Norway is enormous. She has also supported her analysis by adding a postcolonial analytical perspective in her work.

Gendered design in society is typically separated according to colours such as pink and blue, toys such as dolls and cars, and so on. Gender is displayed and applied in these obvious ways in our day to day lives and show how we understand male and female identity (Lysbakken, 2017). Females are given a pink blanket

and a doll at birth, and males are given a blue blanket and a car. When they grow up the female will be shown make-up and clothes on her Facebook feed, and the males will have tools and cars on theirs. These are designed towards a specific gender, one being feminine and one being masculine (Lysbakken, 2017). These are the most stereotypical representations of gendered design. Gender can influence design, and design can influence gender, thus different understandings of gender are expressed in the design surrounding us (Lysbakken, 2017). Stereotypical presentations of gender can therefore be reproduced in design, and further contribute to the production of a hegemonic heteronormative society. In this chapter I want to examine how and to what extent my material is gendered.

The images are used as means of information adapted to and shaped around the text produced by the NMFA. Sturken and Cartwright argue that visual analysis is related to expressions of power (1999). They also mention the element of influencing and being influenced, as well as intended and unintended effects (Sturken & Cartwright, 1999). These are some of the components I want to consider when exploring the visual expressions included in the action plans, and trying to understand their meaning and purpose.

Primary data – The action plan in details

My primary data consists of an action plan by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Norway. At the time of publication in 2016 Børge Brende was the Minister of Foreign Affairs in a blue, right wing, government led by Erna Solbærg. The document is public and available on the Norwegian government's official page regjeringen.no. The plan was published in Norwegian as print and online version, and an English version was also published though only as an online version. The design and illustrations were outsourced to Kord AS, a Norwegian design studio (Kord AS, 2018). The document has a total of 36 pages, and consists of mainly text with some illustrations and images.

The foreword is the first text you encounter and it is signed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Børge Brende. He is a representative for the political party Høyre (means *right* in English), and was the first minister to have both the budget for development and foreign policy under his jurisdiction (Regjeringen, 2013, Bistandsaktuelt, 2013). Following the foreword, the action plan contains three main chapters respectively; Women's rights in a changing world – policy and priorities, Thematic priority areas and Implementation. The first chapter contains information about the current climate for women and women's rights, challenges and areas of special interest. It also works as an introduction for the second chapter, as it builds up information about the main challenges we face as an international community per now.

After this chapter, the thematic priority areas are presented and explained in detail. Due to the thematic priority areas, the second chapter is divided into five sections, each being one priority area. This chapter represent the main portion of the action

plan as a whole. Each thematic priority area has an information section first, following is a section with objectives and outcomes accompanied with what Norway will do presented as bullet points. Ultimately, most of the priority areas end with the relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

The headline contains each priority area and a description of the specific focus for this area. In general, there are one to three pages, the average being one and a half pages, of information about the priority area. In this information section, the sustainable development goals and relevant organisations are contextualised in the text. The text in the information box serves as an overview, contextualisation and justification of why these specific areas are so important. In a large part of the chapter, the author portrays the issues in a manner of parity and provides good information about the different thematic priority areas. In all but the first priority area, there are text boxes placed in each chapter containing overreaching information. Most of these, with few exceptions, are large bodies of text up to a page each. The second last section of each priority area contains objectives that Norway wants to reach. Each of these objectives have several bullet points describing what Norway will do to achieve each of these objectives, hence I refer to them action points from now on. The chapters end with the relevant Sustainable Development Goals for each area, with the exception of priority area 2: Women's political rights and empowerment. This indicating that there are no relevant SDG's for this priority area.

Table 1 show an overview of the order of the five priority areas:

Table 1: Thematic priority areas

No	Thematic priority area
1	The right of girls to education
2	Women's political rights and empowerment
3	Women's economic rights and empowerment
4	A life free of violence and harmful practices
5	Sexual and reproductive health and rights

The last chapter in the action plan is one on Implementation. This chapter present the particulars of how the implementation process will be conducted. The chapter is three pages long, with a general information section, key elements for effective implementation and internal organisation as the last section.

Data selection

I originally wanted to write about Norad and the ways in which women are branded as peacemakers, in especially Latin America. I was given a report from Norad and the action plan by a classmate that had been to the event in which the action plan was launched. It was not until later that the action plan would become my primary data. After discussions about the criteria and themes of my thesis I relocated the action plan and began to read it. As Fekjær, (2013) discusses, it is beneficial to go back to something that you have read or considered before, even if it's just for inspiration. This was when I decided that this document fulfilled my criteria and it was discussing the topics in which I was interested: equality, foreign affairs and development. I also chose it because of the central role an action plan has and specifically this action plan. As the action plan states, all foreign public Norwegian entities must account to this document. The document was also in English, which meant that it could be read by other nationals and non-Norwegian speaking persons. I also wanted to write in English, so the action plan fit my criteria perfectly.

I considered using several action plans and compare them, but I found that I wanted to delve into too much detail and the scope would have to be widened in order to make that happen. I also have a limited space and time to execute my analysis and found that one plan would be sufficient. Having one document, allows me to go into the structures of the sentences, which was something I found very intriguing.

In terms of selecting the images, I chose to include all major images in the action plan. there are a few other smaller illustrations spread across the document, but I chose to use the images that had a whole page dedicated to them. In my preliminary analysis, the front page was the first thing I noticed and wanted to use in my analysis. Later I discovered that the other three images were parts of the front-page photo and my interest in the remaining images grew. I did consider analysing only the image on the front-page, but I decided that having only one image was not as fruitful as the impact of an analysis of all four. I also saw the four images as parts of one whole narrative, as I will delve into in the chapter on visual analysis.

I have chosen to select quotes that I analyse closely in the analysis chapters. As I would not have been able to go into such detail in each sentence, nor would it have been fruitful either, I would have to select them. The action plan is 36 pages long, so I would have to select carefully. The selection process consisted of writing down any words or phrases where Norway was described or mentioned, as well as phrases where the word 'we' was used. This was especially the case in the first analysis chapter, where the foreword will be analysed. In the third analysis chapter, I was looking for places where the 'others' where mentioned, such as certain countries and other ways in which differentiation from Norway

was alluded to. This was not purely a structural manner of selection, I also used the argument from interpretive analysis and let the material speak to me (Sørensen et.al., 2008). I also chose the quotes that I considered to use strong or firm language, whatever that would be. This is also one of the reasons I chose to use interpretive method, so that it could be flexible enough to adapt to the empirical data at hand. I felt that a more rigid structure to select quotes could have acted as more limiting than profitable.

Positioning of the researcher and ethical considerations

In my thesis, I will have a background and a preconceived notion of the world that can influence my work. There was a long-standing conviction that a researcher had the ability to become neutral in their work, a co-called positivistic conviction (Neumann & Neumann, 2012). This is now considered an unachievable goal, where being an objective researcher is no longer a topic due to the increasingly realisation that the researcher is adherently affected by the very manner of their existence (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2015, Fekjær, 2013). The reason why I specifically state 'manner of existence' is that just by being born, raised and the culture in which this is occurring, one is subjected to a set of understandings and production of meaning. Harding (1991) discusses this in depth in regards to her standpoint methodology. She talks about the ways in which you are affected by your surroundings, and in short, the many different factors that affect your understanding of the world and what the world embodies. These factors can, as I mentioned, be either just being born somewhere, or the education you have chosen. Addressing your privilege as well as your biases are also of importance (Van der Ros, 2018).

I will now discuss some of the ways in which the manners of my being can affect this thesis. I am a white, working-class, 24-year-old, cis, able bodied woman, born and raised in Norway. I believe that by being a white woman in Norway I have felt a lot of privilege, and I have also seen the consequences of this privilege. This could potentially affect my understanding of the action plan, as I have been very aware of my privilege and how it affects others. I have also studied abroad, in England, where I could for three year experience being a foreigner in another country. At the same time, it gave me the opportunity to see Norway from a different perspective. I studied International Development: with overseas experience, where the Nordic countries, and especially Norway, was often used as examples of equal countries. I was also seen as a very progressive student with egalitarian and feminist views, especially in relation to many of my peers. I also worked in Nigeria for three months on a Department for International Development funded project, where I got to experience the development industry first hand. This experience has undoubtedly affected the way in which I see development, because it was something I have experienced myself. I also consider

myself a feminist from a lower working class upbringing and associate myself with a leftist political outlook. Executing an analysis with a critical view will also cause me to be a part of the sphere that I am critical of. I will then become one of the voices in the arena, hence be a part of it. I see this as a positive thing, as the amount of critical voices in this field are lacking.

Ethical concerns

Neumann & Neumann, (2012) believes that though self-reflection a researcher enables a transparent analysis and therefore a more ethical process. This builds on what Harding (1993) speaks of in regard to achieving 'strong objectivity', where through reflection on the ways in which you are situated as a researcher. This also includes reflecting on the role of gendered knowledge. I anticipate that the previous section will cover the ways in which I myself can affect the process, but I will consider a few more ethical concerns.

Just by using the type of empirical data that I have, there are far less ethical concerns than for example through the method of interviews. Having interactions with people causes greater necessity for caution regarding ethics (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2012, Thagaard, 2003). Having a document as primary data also possess ethical concerns, and one would have to look at the ways in which the document was produced. As the production of my primary data was an official process created by an official entity, my ethical concerns are more limited than had it resided from a private author. Of course, official documents can have restrictions as to whom can access them, but in my case this is a public document, accessible for anyone. There are also two versions of this document, as I have mentioned in the description of my empirical data, a Norwegian version and an English version. Having the action plan in two version, people with lacking or no understanding of the Norwegian language can read it, makes the process more transparent, thus more ethical. I have chosen to write my thesis in English to make this analysis available to a larger audience, a choice I hope can contribute to making my process more ethical.

General respect for researchers work and referencing is vital and enables me to avoid plagiarism and other potential ethical misfortunes (NESH, 2006). In terms of publicising an image, one cannot do so before asking the copyright holder for their permission. Rose states that the biggest issue concerning ethics of imagery, is copyright (2012). In my case, the action plan has not claimed copy right and therefore I choose to publish the images. On the webpage to the government, it is clearly stated that one needs to credit the author of a given image or use one from a licenced agreement (Regjeringen, 2018*). Though the previous action plan did contain such credits to the creator of the images, I have chosen to follow the example of the current action plan (NMFA, 2013). I have also discussed who is

responsible for the images in my thesis, Kord AS, hence the likelihood of me facing any ethical issues are low.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented the methodological approach for my thesis. I have argued that the qualitative method brings more opportunities to go deeper into the material and allow me to conduct a close reading of my material. Conducting a close reading enables me to explore the language and the structure of the action plan better, and help me to best answer my thesis question. I also presented my empirical evidence, the action plan, and described the content and order. My empirical evidence contains both images and text, hence my analysis will be conducted like a document analysis, but with special consideration for the visual elements. According to the theoretical framework presented in the previous chapter, I apply somewhat the same type of analysis on both visual and textual elements. Centring the analysis around a hermeneutic interpretation of symbols applies to both forms, and facilitates an in-depth exploration of my data. I proceeded to explaining the selection process of my material, quotes and images that formed the basis for my analysis. The last parts contained positioning of the researcher and ethical concerns and considerations. Here I discussed the ways in which factors in and of my life can have an impact on my analysis. Deliberating one's position and biases there is a more transparent process and increasing validity and ethics.

- **Follow the Leader** -

Introduction

Norway has been referred to as one of the most equal countries in the world, also as the best country to live in (Usnews, 2017). There is even a known narrative surrounding Norway as the world leader of equality (Danielsen, Larsen and Owesen, 2015). Gender equality is a key feature of the Norwegian image abroad, and maybe even more so, it is an important aspect of the collective Norwegian identity (Danielsen et al., 2015, Tvedt, 2016). It is also seen as a product for export alongside the likes of oil and fish (Danielsen et al., 2015). We might see this as an old conviction, but it was not until the 1990's that the vision of Norway as the country of gender equality was truly born (Danielsen et al., 2015). Norwegians have a history of thinking of themselves as a homogeneous country, and this sense of equality or likeness is central in the process of Norwegian nation-building (Gullestad, 2002). Tvedt (2017) argues that Norway sees the world through a lens of equality that has become a form of universalism. This is also a basis adopted from the UN where the UN sees, for example, the UN human rights as universal and superior. The integration process within Norway is built on the expectation that immigrants will cast aside their differences and embody what is understood to be Norwegian (Danielsen et al., 2015, Gullestad, 2007, Thorbjørnsrud, 2003).

In this chapter I am considering in what way Norway is presented in the foreword of the action plan. Especially what types of words, symbols and literary tools that are used to create an image of Norway. This analysis will be based on only the foreword in the action plan, and as I discussed in the methodological chapter, this is the first piece of written text that the reader is exposed to. In and of itself this is an important element to consider as a stepping stone with the power to influence the reader in this early phase of reading. The part of the thesis question I will especially focus on is the production of self. In what way does the author use this textual first impression to present Norway, and what does this image of Norway consist of?

I will now present and analyse the four selected quotes from the action plan's foreword by Børge Brende. As I have discussed in more detail in the methodology chapter, I have chosen four quotes, as I find this to be sufficient for this analysis. The selection process consisted of writing down any words or phrases where Norway was described or mentioned, as well as where the word 'we' was used. I will also be considering other segments of the foreword as well, but the main-focus are these four quotes. By discussing the other surrounding sentences the quotes can be contextualized and as a means to strengthen my analysis.

The four quotes are as follow[5]:

1. *"Norway is a pioneer for gender equality. Our legitimacy as a champion of women's*
   rights enables us to take on a leading role in the efforts to promote global gender
   equality."
2. *"In fragile states and situations where people are fleeing their homes, women are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and abuse.*
   We intend to change this."
   (referring to the sometimes terrible situation in which women can find themselves in).
3. *"Norway will use its political capital, its experience and its knowledge, as well as its economic tools, to enhance the rights of girls and women."*
4. *"We are aiming high. We will keep our promise to work tirelessly to promote gender equality for all women and girls."*

Quote number 1

The first quote is one of the first sentences in both the action plan and the foreword. As the foreword is the first written text in the action plan, it serves as an introduction to the work itself and acts as a way of contextualizing the topics within the plan. It provides the reader with a first impression as well as giving an overview of what's to come. As the third sentence of the document and the foreword, the quote above therefore sets the scene for the rest of the content, and does so boldly.

> *"Norway is a pioneer for gender equality. Our legitimacy as a champion of women's rights enables us to take on a leading role in the efforts to promote global gender equality."*

Pioneer has synonyms such as innovator, founder, instigator and ground breaker (Oxford, 2017a). All these words describe a country, in this case Norway, that leads the way into the unknown, or as the one to discover something new and lead the way for others to follow. On the other hand, pioneer also has synonyms such as settler, colonist, colonizer, explorer and discoverer (Oxford, 2017a).
Using the word pioneer, seen in a postcolonialist and orientalist view, reaffirms this imperialistic sense of superiority. The colonial powers would see themselves as superior to the 'rest' of the world. In relation to this the use of the word pioneer would reaffirm this discourse, the colonial discourse. It was only the colonial rulers that could call themselves pioneers, not the colonised population. An example would be in the missionary culture where missionaries would be referred

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[5] All quotes are from page two in the action plan.

to as pioneers in magazines and papers (Gullestad, 2007). The use of words such as ´pioneer´ can therefore be interpreted as Norway positioning itself on top of the pecking order of gender equality in a way that simultaneously looks down on countries that fail to succeed with accordance to the Norwegian ideals of gender equality. Oxford Dictionary's (2017b) definition of the word 'pioneer' is "a person who is among the first to explore or settle a new country or area" and "a person who is among the first to research and develop a new area of knowledge or activity". The first being the main definition and the second as a sub-definition or alternative definition. Again, the colonial aspects are directly related to this word. The main definition is strongly correlated to the acts made by colonialist powers, both in the way that they claimed to be *the first* and *settled* in that *new* area. The sub-definition is also in and of itself imperialistic in fashion as it implicitly says that the pioneer has the capability to be the first to discover a form of knowledge, seeing that this is a natural part of being a pioneer. This sense of the West being the true keeper and creator of science is the story that has been reproduced for centuries and where 'the rest' have traditional and alternative knowledge (Gullestad, 2007, Said, 1978, Harding, 2008). Seen through a lens of orientalism, the use of the word pioneer exemplifies what Said (1978) described as the 'white man's burden', where the Europeans colonialized and modernized the East due to their obligation to civilize the rest of the world. The Europeans were helping the East, but the East had no expectation to share any knowledge back. 'The noble savage' would expect the white man to civilize them and rule over them. One can see that the words pioneer seen in an orientalist and post-colonial lens reads as a continuation of this power dynamic in the wording. Especially when used in a setting of foreign policy and development work.
The foreword can therefore be seen to present Norway as the source of knowledge when claiming to be a pioneer for gender equality, and with no mention of a reciprocal relationship. Seen from this perspective, Norway: 'We' are the first to develop and research gender equality, and 'we' are at the forefront of the field, and thus ´we´ should share this with the 'others'.

The same quote continues in line 4-5; "*Our legitimacy as a champion of women's rights*", the word legitimacy is a symbol for justification or validity (Oxford, 2017c). The conjoint use of the words legitimacy and champion creates an assumption that the position/ role as «champion of women's rights» is defendable or implicitly valid. Legitimacy or legitimate can in this case act as an index for truth, as synonyms to legitimate are lawful, just, reasonable and acknowledged (Oxford, 2017d). The role of the champion of women's rights is thereby recognised and stated as, more or less, facts. The foreword presents no basis for this other than this sentence, hence this is working as an index that this is a universal truth in the discourse he acts from. In other words, there seems to be no need to further validate this due to its status as common knowledge. Using the theory of postcolonialism, this can be linked to the lack of justification needed for

colonial powers. They were legitimised by themselves for themselves, and did not need the justification from the colonialized peoples. On the other hand, Norway has been presented and branded as an egalitarian country and therefore can use this to their advantage and build on the image presented. Norway can use the image of egalitarian Norway as a way to build relationships and to promote Norwegian interests, which is the goal for Norwegian foreign affairs.

One way of using the word champion is an index for being the best at something. Again, Brende sees no need to justify this and/or explain why Norway is a co-called *champion*. Brende further claim it is actually this role as a champion that *enables 'us'* to have a leading role in the efforts to promote global gender equality. Champion is in many ways a forceful word, especially taken into consideration the definition given by the Oxford Dictionary (2018e); "A person who has surpassed all rivals in a sporting game or other competition". Here, the *champion* is described as a winner or a victor, and these are also used as synonyms (Oxford Dictionary, 2018f). The champion is depicted as someone who is better than everyone else. Oxford Dictionary (2018e) provides another definition where the word has a slightly different meaning; "A person who vigorously supports or defends a person or a cause". By this definition, the word champion alters in a way that it takes on a more helping and aiding agent. In this way, the champion now has a role as a defender, protector or an advocate, again used as synonyms (Oxford Dictionary, 2018f). Taking these synonyms and the last definition in mind, one can therefore argue that by using the word champion, Norway wants to be perceived as only a well-intentioned nation trying to help other nations in need. Also, taking the historical definition of champion into account, champion is a knight that is fighting on the behalf of a monarch with the power vested in them. Building on the former analysis where a champion is a force that is better than others, and a protector and savior, the analogy of the knight would strengthen the interpretation of Norway as power of good. When you add to champion and look at the combination of words used in parts of the quote from the foreword, one can see a link between the Oxford Dictionary's definition and the image created in the foreword. *Champion of women's rights* can, in the light of the analysis above, be understood as Norway being the knight that is fighting for the countries that need it, in order to gain women's rights and equality. With basis in the postcolonial perspective, this can be understood as a connotation to the white man's burden. Due to the nature of how champion, legitimacy and leading role is presented, the Norwegian knight that works for the 'rest' of the world is created. Therefore, a basis for stating that the action plan is in this case reproducing the colonial mind-set or the colonial discourse can be reasoned for.

The document contains symbols and concepts that help create the image that Norway is at the very top both in terms of knowledge, power, and that this is a completely normal and valid position for Norway to be in. Again, the post-colonial sense of a Western country *coming to aid* the rest of the world's

problems, and in this case gender equality and women's rights, is in many ways problematic. It feeds in to the discourse of a Eurocentric world view where the developing world is in dire need of the West's help and cannot themselves be autonomous actors. The lack of justification for this notion is further reproducing this as the hegemonic world view.

Forceful words are used throughout this quote with the exception of the use of the word promote. Brende goes from words such as champion to promote, and this word seem to be very subtle in manner and can act as a way to create an ambiguous word for action. To promote something can refer to a wide range of actions, with everything from speaking about a topic, to actually enforcing change. This type of rhetoric can help a politician or a political institution to create the illusion of action without any explicit commitment being made. This can be interpreted as an example of impression management, where the foreword is producing an image of Norway as an active agent without clearly stating how their intentions are followed through.

Quote number two:

> *"We intend to change this." (referring to the sometimes terrible situation in which some women find themselves in).*

This sentence is the beginning of a paragraph in the foreword. In the paragraph previous to this quote, the foreword outlines a sequence of the terrible conditions women face today. This way, the foreword is isolating the problems to the previous paragraph and thus creating a clear statement that we intend to change this, with this referencing to all the previously stated issues. The foreword could have included the specific conditions to which he was referring to in the sentence, but chose to keep them in two separate paragraphs. By doing this, he is separating the issues from 'us'/'Norway', and highlighting the role 'we/Norway' wants to have, namely the positive agent. Building on the postcolonial theory, an interpretation of this quote is that '*We*' are changing this, not '*them*'. The cooperation is not as visible as the 'leading role that Norway want to take on'. Having a parity cooperation would suggest a process of many agents that are equally empowered, but in this quote, not all agents are made visible. Also, by saying this, 'we'/'Norway' are taking on the role as the saviour, the qualified actor or with reference to the previous quote: the champion. Giving this impression, or interpretation, can be harmful in the way that the cooperation that Norway say they want, is not really a cooperation. It can also present a hierarchy of actors in the 'cooperation' and potentially founding the relationship in imparity. The action plan addresses the importance of cooperation, and would therefore benefit from a presentation of this cooperation in a manner of parity.

Based on the postcolonial and Orientalist theory's view on power, one can say

that the missionary mindset has imprinted on the Norwegian national identity to the point where 'we' feel obligated to help 'them'. It is 'us' that has the knowledge and are the resourceful ones, and it is 'them' that are the pitiful and the needy, again linked to the white man's burden. 'We' have competence, power and knowledge, they have culture and religion (Gullestad, 2007). It is even stated in the plan; *We intend to change this. We cannot allow religion or culture to be used as an excuse for the discrimination of women.* These sentences are implying that the subjects in which 'we' shall aid, are driven by culture and religion, thus are the missionary and colonial state of mind further perpetuated. A point Gullestad makes in her book is that 'culture' is very often used as a word to insinuate differences between 'Norwegians' and 'others'. Through the 1970's and 1980's the debates on Norwegian development contained rhetoric using competence as something 'we' have, and culture as something 'they' have (Gullestad, 2010). Cultural differences are now used as a seemingly valid argument in political settings, as a way to justify stricter regulations on immigration and the importance of preserving Norwegian values. One reason why this is particularly relevant today is the results of a survey conducted by Pew Research Center. In this survey, the majority of the Norwegian participants answered that Norwegian culture is superior to others (Pew Research Center, 2018). Culture and religion are words usually associated with foreigners in the Norwegian public life. As this sentence to my understanding is referring to people outside of Norway, non-Norwegians, this sentence has the probable potential to reproduces ideas of difference and superiority.

Furthermore, the use of the word *intend* and not a more productive and active word such as *will* or *shall* does not indicate srong sense of action. Intention shows that this is something Norway really wants to change, however, intention does not equal action. There is a will behind these statements, and *we,* Norway, wants to change this. The word *intent* can work as an index for a desire for a better world. On the other hand, the foreword is showing intent and not 'actual' action, and the word *intent* is made to look more forceful by separating and highlighting it. The reader is consequently led to think that they in fact will actively make a change. *Intent* can therefore be seen in this context as an index, suggesting more action than the word in and of itself is a symbol of.

Quote number 3:

> *"We will work to reverse the setbacks in area of women's rights that we have seen in certain countries. Norway will use its political capital, its experience and its knowledge, as well as its economic tools, to enhance the rights of girls and women."*

Here, the capacity of Norway is perceived to be something that can *enhance the rights of girls and women.* The capacity however is specified in concepts such as

political capacity, experience, knowledge and economic tools, and they are very important factors that a country can possess. Political capacity insinuates, and can work as an index for, that one has a politically stable environment. Experience and knowledge can be indexes for a country that is highly skilled and have authority in these areas. Economical tools are vital in the capitalistic world we are a part of, as well as being an image of success and it is perceived as one of the most important parts of the development strategy as of now. Economics, politics and knowledge are modern concepts primarily seen to be created as we know them by the West (Harding, 1986, Gullestad, 2007). The models that are applied in most countries are models such as democracy, capitalism and an example of the 'Western' knowledge system; 'western medicine'. These are applied all over the world and are renowned for their supreme status, despite criticism and alternative models used in non-western areas. That is not to say that these systems are inherently bad, it is just to specify that these are more or less unchallenged theories and that they are produced in a 'Western', and predominantly masculine context (Harding, 1998, Said, 1978). Gullestad (2007) talks about the Norwegian society's conviction that 'we' are a civilization of science and technology, and that 'their' knowledge is perceived as traditional and middle-aged. These concepts work as indexes for superiority when considering the postcolonial and orientalist theory and perspective.

Going back to the word e*nhances*, the assumption that with the capacity that Norway holds, 'we' will improve the rights of girls and women. This is a very bold statement in and of itself, but it is also implicitly saying that Norway's understanding of human rights is a better one than the current understanding. Hence Norway is stating, through its international representative Brende, that 'we' are superior. This sense of superiority and entitled wish to help becomes stronger when you take into account the first sentence of this quote where it says 'we' will work to reverse setbacks in certain countries. By itself this is not provoking, but in combination with the focus of Norway's great capacity and possible enhancement of rights, it can come across as innately postcolonial.

Quote number 4:

> *"We are aiming high. We will keep our promise to work tirelessly to promote gender equality for all women and girls."*

'Work tirelessly to promote' is strong rhetoric that implies effective action to achieve a goal. ´Tirelessly`, ´promise` and ´aiming high` are all working as symbols for the creation of an image of Norway engaging in productive change. It is also a protestant and capitalistic ambiance to the word tirelessly. The idea that if you only work hard enough everything will improve. In doing so, the action plan is simplifying a very complicated process. The quote is also one of the last

sentences, line 27 and 28, and therefore will act as an indicator for future work. An action plan should show the intent for action, and I interpret this piece of text to serve as the reference point to convey that 'we' are dedicated to make real change.

The foreword is demonstrating that Norway is prioritising equality and that this is high on the agenda. It also works as a symbol for the continuation of the work that 'we' have previously bound ourselves to and leaves the reader with no doubt about the intention to promote equal rights. This quote is in some ways different as it is not only focusing on the superiority as it tended to do in the others. It strongly indicates that Norway will work for it and indicates the importance of the topic. This is not to say that the other quotes lacked this aspect in total, but the emphasis is different. This quote leaves us feeling like Norway really would do all in their power to achieve the goals. Postcolonial theory could be applied in the way that again the agency is given to Norway, hence saying that 'we' are the ones to make change. The other actors are left out, thus again failing to promote and present cooperation and parity in the process of development.

Summary

We can compare Norway's need to present itself as a champion of development and the pioneer of women's rights to the way in which missionaries felt the need to legitimize their work 'out in the field' (Gullestad, 2007). The missionaries created texts and presented images with the focus on what 'us' and what 'our missionaries' were doing. By creating this strong sense of self, they also created an image of the other. 'The other' is all the things that 'we' are not. The missionaries also focused on the way in which they were helping and producing this image of Norway, or Norway's missionaries, as the 'good Samaritan'. In the foreword, one can see a few of the same trends in the way the image of Norway is shaped and its role in development issues is created.

The statements in the foreword seen in an orientalist and postcolonial perspective can be interpreted as Eurocentric and imperialistic. All of the above indicate that it is maintaining and reproducing a discourse with the understanding that Norway is in fact the champion of women's rights, 'we' have the knowledge that can help 'them' and that the 'others' cannot do it alone. The foreword can in other words contribute to the postcolonial world view and reinforce the 'us' and 'them' mentality. I am not considering the intentions behind these statements, though by applying interpretive text analysis with postcolonial theory and Orientalism, this is one interpretation. Keeping in mind that this is only one small part of the action plan and the foreword, my master thesis will go on to investigate these interpretations further and by doing so gain a more in depth understanding of the empirical data.

- Images of power difference -

Introduction:

In this second chapter I will be conducting a visual analysis of four photos located in various sections the action plan. The visual analysis will contain symbol analysis, influenced by semiotics, and will be inspired by Gullestad's analysis in Misjonsbilder, Missionary Photography (2007). The analysis will be employing components from the following theoretical frameworks; postcolonial theory and orientalism. This chapter will begin by introducing the images, their placement in the action plan, their origin and their significance.

The chapter has four sections where I will be presenting four individual images and then proceed to analyse them. The images are then contextualised in relation to the surrounding text, as well as the action plan as a whole. I will analyse the images in the order that they appear in the action plan. The front page is therefore analysed first, and the other images respectively. The following three images have a whole page dedicated to them, working as a separation between chapters. The three images are larger versions of elements of the image on the front page. The chapter will end with a summary of findings and concluding reflections.

By analysing images one can see the different implicit meanings each element portrayed can have. This action plan is written in English and one can therefore assume that it will also reach a non-Norwegian audience. The action plan therefore can reach a variety of readers in various countries, and can be relevant for the analysis. This is a way for Norway to convey their intentions and interests in the field of woman's right and gender equality, not only through writing, but also through images.

Due to the history of Norwegian missionary activities, this is an important element to consider, as the historical background shapes todays reality. Norway presents themselves as a global leader in gender equality, thus the images and the remaining text should portray this accordingly. Norway have branded their national identity as a country of equality, not only when it comes to gender (Danielsen and Larsen, 2015). Equality is in Norway often extended to cover other areas such as persons with disabilities, socio economic status, ethnicity and so on.

Focus area 1

The image above is the on the front page of the action plan. I discussed the role of the foreword as the first impression in chapter 1, but it is clear that a first impression will be affected by this image as well. The front page can represent what the content is like and therefore has a large role to play design wise. The image consists of various grey, purple, white, black and pink shades. The accent colour is pink and the style of the image is modern graphics.

The colour combination is very feminine with a combination of more masculine lines. I argue that having pink as the accent colour reproduces the narrative constructed around the female category. The darkest colour in this image is given to the woman in the suit and the pants worn by the man. And by having a darker colour, one will attract more attention in the image as they create a large contrast. The overall look of the front page is that it is predominantly feminine with masculine white lines in contrast.

In the bottom-right corner are three adult women of different ethnicities, Asian, Caucasian and black, showing a peace sign. Above them is a speaking bubble containing the symbol of the female gender. They look relaxed and happy in their stance and expressions. Here there is a diverse group of women, though very attractive and 'western' clothed. The Asian woman is wearing a hat with a strong French appeal to it, and it is similar to the hats worn in England in the eighteen-hundreds. This could be because adding traditional attire to the different nationalities would also reproduce stereotypical ideas about other ethnicities. For all we know, all three women are from the same country. The group is festive and

is very inclusive in nature. As mentioned above, there is a speaking bubble above them with a female gender sign in it. The action plan is predominantly considering issues related to women, but in doing so, the plan stresses the need for men to get involved in these issues. Men's challenges are also mentioned in the plan. Including different gender identities and expressions are mentioned in the action plan, so one could argue that the front page should therefore reflect these values. In the bottom-left corner there are two dark-skinned/black girls in a seated position looking at a book in the oldest girl's lap. They both look positive in their expression, and it seems as the older girl is teaching the younger girl something from the book. To the right of the young girls is a ladder with broken steps leading up to a city with what looks like a court of law building, a university and tall skyscrapers. Here I interpret the ladder as a symbol for the journey of the girls to the city and/or education. The ladder is broken and therefore harder to climb, but their education will help the climb it. Their expression acts as an index for an excitement to learn, to develop and to eventually climb to the city or university.

A possible additional element to this narrative is that seen through a postcolonial lens the narrative would be considerably different. In this alternative narrative, the girls are at the bottom of the ladder and the girls need to work hard to be able to climb the ladder to civilisation. The ladder could symbolise a struggle they must go through due to their position in the society. The ladder as a means of transportation from the bottom to the top is a ladder and it implies that they are at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder and thus below 'us'. This can lead us to ask who makes this ladder so difficult to walk? Is it a symbol of a structural problem? If this image portrays the current state of affairs for dark skinned girls, why is it so? In a way, the ladder can be seen as a symbol of a patron-client relationship that was formed under the colonial rule. The colonialized countries were 'helped' by the colonial powers hence improving the 'impoverished' and 'underdeveloped' South. A ladder and a book is also very traditional symbols, and they are held by, and close to the children in the left corner. In contrast, the modern technology is in the hands of the white woman by the desk, thus it does not apply to the girls in the left corner.

As mentioned earlier, the buildings can be seen as state buildings such as a university and a court of law. One can interpret this as a way to show that the intent is to get women into the parliaments and to become an active agent in decision-making. The action plan stresses the need to get more women into these positions of power, hence this is a very likely interpretation as women often do have a harder time getting into these positions. On the other hand, one can see this as the girls being far from the civilised world and creating a clear distance between girls and places of power. The cloud placed above the buildings in the city can symbolise the sky, and could further represent the sky being the limit.

Above the city is what seems to be a white hetero couple holding hands next to the contours of a house. Next to the house is a plant and a sun. When looking at the couple one can see this as them gazing into the future holding hands and imagining a future together. Beside them is a house being constructed with a flower in the garden and the sun is shining. This could symbolise the couple building a family home together and having a bright fruitful future ahead. This perpetuates the perspective that the family is in the centre, both in terms of building a future and building a home. One can therefore argue that in this image, a bright future is one of family and a shared home. Most religions see this image of a future to the 'right' path, the marriage of the man and the woman and reproduction; the creation of a family. Yet again this propagate the idea of the ideal future being a man and a woman creating a family together.

The heteronormative narrative is being reproduced in this image despite the positive story created in this image. This is not to say that the image created of a man and a woman building a life together is a negative one. Though Norway is in this action plan described as a pioneer of gender equality. Hence this role could enable Norway to consider showing a progressive alternative that would challenge the heteronormative narrative that is often projected. A progressive alternative is in this thesis seen as one that question the current understanding of something and lead with an inclusive perspective of the world seeking progress. Feminism promotes acceptance of every form of expression of gender identity and sexual preference. Taking this into account, the action plan is in this case reproducing this hegemonic and heteronormative way of expressing gender and sexuality. This is problematic in the way that it can act as an agent of exclusion in an area where inclusion, diversity and empowerment is a main objective. This notion can further be seen as a symbol or an index that it is women and men, preferably heterosexuals, that are the focus of this action plan.

In the top right corner is a white woman wearing a suit standing next to a desk with a computer next to her. She is standing with her hands wide a part, leaning on the desk. The woman's stance suggests an authoritarian attitude, and a position of a person with responsibility, like a boss or a leader. Her placement in the image suggests that she is important and that this woman is a central element in the symbolism in this image. This is a strong contrast to the seated girls I the lower left corner, as this woman is standing firmly by her desk, thus further strengthening her empowering appearance. The understanding that low is negative and high is positive can be argued to reside in bodily experiences (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2015). According to this argument, one connote being ill with laying down or being seated. The same goes with standing up, one is then perceived to be healthy thus connoted with something positive. Aase and Fossåskaret continues this train of thought to God is up and the devil under, one can feel excited and upbeat or feel a bit down and sad (2015). These resides from

bodily experiences and can affect the ways in which we interpret things around us, also images. This theory is further discussed by Lankoff & Johnson in several works (1980, 1999) According to this notion, an interpretation of this dual relationship between the woman in the suit and the seated children is that the standing woman is seen as better than the girls. To add to this contrast, left and right has their own connotations as well. Right is seen as traditionally strong, masculine and positive. While the left has been associated with weakness, negativity and femininity. This symbolism goes back to the bible as well as other holy books, where references are many and apparent[6]. Having positive elements such as placed the woman standing up in the top right corner, makes the association to power even stronger when contrasted to the girls. The girls are seated in the lower left corner. The contrast in skin colour can again be associated to the light and dark dichotomy, where light or white is seen as positive and dark or black is seen as negative (Zack, 1997, Fredriksen, 2001, Gilman, 1985). Taking all these symbolisms into consideration, the impression of 'us' and 'them' emerge.

In the centre of the image is a woman holding a child on her hip. This figure is only made of lines, and is not a real person. This could symbolise that this could be any woman in the world, and that this concerns everyone. It also suggests that it is indeed the mother that is the centre. It could be that this was not her child and that it represents childcare and symbolises the caring nature of a woman and the family. When combining the line drawings in the middle, it creates a triangle consisting of a home, a city and the family. By adding these elements together, it can be understood that these are the elements one wants to aspire to have and what you need to be able to live a full life.

There are several contours of persons in the background, creating a layered effect. It appears large parts of the background consists of these almost shadows of people in different colours. To the left a shadow seems to be a person holding a child on their hip. In the centre, it is a woman with what looks like dreadlocks and a typical African hairdo, facing down. In the middle of this woman is a shadow of the same woman, only smaller. On the right, there is a shadow of a person wearing a dress. The person seems to have their hair up and a lot of stands of hair hanging down from their head. By layering these shadows, one creates a narrative with many people's stories being the background. There are many different people with different stories, experiences and lives. It can symbolise the diversity of people and create an including environment. The shadows appear to be of different ethnicities, positions and given different shades of colour. This is creating variety and inclusion.

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[6] See for example: Ecclesiastes 10:2, Matthew 26:64, Psalm 20:6, Matthew 25:41 in the Bible.

Focus area 2:

This image portrays portions/elements of the front page. The two girls are now placed in the middle, taking up half of the image, with the 'city' in what seems to be far behind them. The background consists of the shadow of the two girls merging into shades of blue. The focus is on the two girls, then the 'city' and ultimately the shadow is the last layer. The lines creating the city are now black and not white, hence are more defined and create more of a contrast to the blue colours in the background.

The city has now changed location from above the two girls to being on the same level, and the ladder is removed. By moving these main elements in the image, a change in hierarchy has occurred. In keeping the girls realistic and the city a graphic and fictional appearance, the focus is still on the girls and the city can be a part of their story and their future. The girls seem closer to their 'goal' of having an education. The fact that the illustrator has chosen two dark-skinned girls for this image can support the notion that it is people of colour that need education and development. Seen in contrast to the white woman in the suit, this can be very unfortunate way of portraying 'us' and 'them'. These symbols have been used in the theory of orientalism through the descriptive language of the Orient, through postcolonial theory in the way that the colonialized was described, as well as the ways in which the female gender is portrayed. The theories advocate the importance of symbols and agency. The girls are not like 'us' in this image, they are on their way to becoming like 'us'. Depicting coloured girls in such a way can perpetuate this exotic notion of 'the other', similar to the ways of describing the Orient, and their bodies become a symbol of that (See Solheim 2007).

On the other hand, this symbolism can paint a different story. The girls are seated together and reading a book. This can be seen as a way for girls to come together and build each other up. The book can symbolise education and work as an index for creating a future and a better life. The book can also work as an index for agency, placing the power in the hands of the girls. These are symbols of empowerment and strength. Together with the buildings in the background, it can in a feminist perspective, be interpreted as females working together for positions of power in society. Reading is synonymous to education and work, thus symbolise hard working girls. As feminist scholars and historians have pointed out throughout the years, girls have not been encouraged and prioritised when it comes to school. Hence this image can show that it this has changed and girls are getting an education.

Focus area 3:
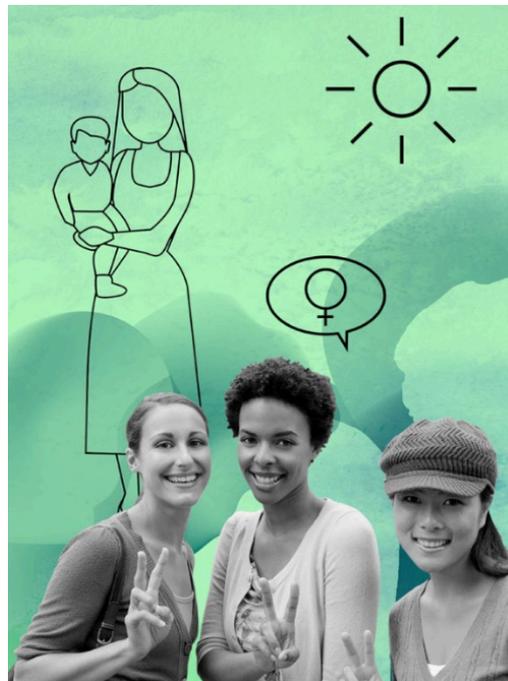
The three women that were positioned in the bottom right corner of the front page are now the focus of this image. Consequently, the speaking bubble is now in the centre of the image. The woman with a child on her hips and the sun are also incorporated. The woman and child take up a large part of the image, though the lines she consists of are thinner than the other linear features. Hence the sun has thicker lines and takes up the space in the top right corner. Having the lines in various thickness and the different linear and realistic features, creates an illusion of layers. The focus will be directed first towards the girls, then the sun and the speaking bubble, and ultimately on the woman and child. The woman and child can symbolise the future of the women in the front, the sun suggest a bright positive outlook and the speaking bubble can symbolise the importance of speaking about issues related to women. Only having the symbol for the female gender is also very restrictive in an equality sense. The prominence of gender

inclusion is vital for gender equality to be reached and having only one symbol can act excluding. A large shift is happening in the understanding of gender, gender identity and gender expression, a progressive stance would be more inclusive and reject former stagnated ways of understanding gender. Gender inclusion would therefore be one that promotes various interpretations of gender, diverse gender expressions and gender identities.

Reserving such a large part to the woman and child can be problematic as women are often seen as 'the mother', 'the carer', responsible for the upbringing of children and firmly places in the household. Not having other elements challenging this notion, one can face the consequence of reproducing this notion. Women are also known to be very good peacemakers and taking on a larger role as peacemakers. By showing the peace sign and having a happy expression in this way, the women can symbolise the good job women are making for peace. The sun can symbolise the force that creates life, and the woman is also a symbol of the creator of human life. The sun, warmth and nature are other symbols for women that are used frequently (Solheim, 2007).

Focus area 4:

The flower, a computer and the assertive woman is combined in one image. One can argue that the layering effect created with the background consisting of several contours or shapes and the more visible elements consisting of black lines as a sharp contrast to the yellow background. Both of the linear features, such as the flower, what seems to be a desk and the computer are in the same frontal layer due to the thickness of the lines. The woman is the focus as she is depicted as an icon in semiotic terms; a realistic representation of a woman, and not a drawing. The computer is a linear graphical representation of an artefact for her to use, and can also be a symbol of technology, modernity and innovation. Technology holds

a great deal of power in this day of age, and can be a symbol of knowledge. The computer is placed next to her and is in close reach. Technology can be seen by many as the future, and following this narrative, in this image the future is held and controlled by the white woman. Her stance depicts a leader, strong and firm, and the computer depicts knowledge and power. Hence one could argue that this woman is a leader as well as the holder of knowledge and power.

Behind her is the flower blooming. This can represent the future and be a symbol of growing development. The woman is wearing a dark suit and a white shirt. These are typically seen as a masculine uniform created for the business sphere (Ambjörnsson, 2011, Stadin 2010). An article by Bolsø and Mühleisen (2015) tells the story of the role of the suit as a way for a woman to incorporate the masculine features and thus gain authority. Women wear a suit to be able to fit into predominantly male domains. The suit has now become a worldwide symbol of power, authority and prosperity (Ambjörnsson, 2011, Stadin, 2010). Her shirt is open down to mid chest area, but cut short as the suit is buttoned up. This can be a way of making the suit a more feminine attire and to highlight the female features at the same time as one presents a powerful image (Bolsø & Mühleisen, 2015). The woman is wearing her hair up, and this is typically worn in a more formal setting.

Her stance is, as described with the front page, one of authority and power. Authority is often connoted to masculinity and one can therefore argue that the stance is one of masculine nature (Bolsø & Mühleisen, 2015). When compared to the other persons depicted in the various images, they appear to be illustrated in a more feminine manner. They are either seated, wearing a dress, next to an outline of a woman carrying a child or underneath a female gender symbol. In being portrayed in such a way, it can create a contrast and possibly one of symbolic contrast in agency (Nakayama & Martin, 1999). Solheim (2007) speaks of different forms of gender symbolism. She also discusses how this can be problematic in various environments and contexts. Rafaeli et.al. (1997) speaks of how being too feminine is seen as a negative trait in large organisations, hence further perpetuating this mentality of masculine superiority. This mentality however has changed significantly over the years, especially in recent years. This is not to say that these symbols and connotations cease to exist. It may be less apparent over time, and we may have more and more diverse representations of authority. For the time being, masculinity is arguably connoted to power and authority.

This image is placed in the introduction to the chapter on implementation. Implementation is a word full of agency and suggests that the person implementing something has power. The image above fits into this mind-set very well as it appears to be a strong and confident person depicted here. Implementation is mainly focused towards the ways in which Norway can implement this action plan. The person in this image looks like a stereotypical

Norwegian woman, and as it is a Norwegian action plan one can understand why one would choose someone that looks like a 'Norwegian'. Lysbakken (2017 argues that designers often create images that represent something that is similar to themselves and their surroundings. This provides an interesting thought as the company that created this image, KORD AS, has an all-white staff, led by two white Norwegian males (KORD, 2018). As Lysbakken (2017) continues, the design process should be one that can challenge power and be one of inclusion. One can therefore question the decision to select a white woman for this position when diversity and equality is the main objective of the document in which it resides. Being white has an inherent power and has a dominant position in the world , and that should be taken into consideration (Nakayama & Martin, 1999). The designer has great power to influence, and an action plan would be a good place to challenge ideas of the hegemonic state and to do so in a manner of parity and empowerment. Building further on the notion of a white woman being depicted with the section on implementation, the further along in the plan you go, the more agency the text refers to and the lighter the skin of the persons portrayed in the images. It is the Norwegian public bodies that will be held responsible for the different action points in the plan. On the other hand, the action plan clearly states that the responsibly to implement the different plans and charters lay with each state.

Summary

Through the analysis of these images, it is apparent that the gender perspective shown in the images is of heteronormative character. The understanding of gender displayed is a two-gender perspective, despite the action plan writing that it includes trans persons in their efforts. The images portray women mostly in a stereotypical way, the one exception being the women wearing the suit. I have argued that having a white woman being the one 'anomaly' in the presentation of women is recreating the form of feminism that Mohanty among others have criticised for favouring white women and excluding coloured women. The dynamic that is created between this woman and the rest of the women depicted in the image, reproduces in many ways this divide between the 'West' and the 'rest'. This idea is again strengthened when regarding the foreword and the presentation of Norway as the leader. Presenting the other women in positions of seemingly less power reinforces this idea of Norwegian supremacy. Furthermore, the analysis show signs of postcolonial heritage and a set of ideas of 'the others'. An example of this is the coloured girls in the bottom-left corner, that are seated in front of a ladder to the 'city of civilisation'. This is further strengthened when in the adjacent corner, top-right, a white woman in a suit is depicted in a power stance by a desk. I argue that these images do not represent parity and equal

empowerment, consequently the images are not promoting an impression of cooperation.

I will say that all the interpretations above are intertwined understandings fuelled by one-another. It is the combination of elements that are creating grounds for criticism, not one unique element. Having chosen pink as the main colour of the action plan is not in and of itself problematic, neither is the choice of having an image of a white woman in a suit. It is the context in which those elements find themselves, hence the symbolism and meaning creation. And it is this holistic impression that the reader and viewer will reside with after completing this document.

– The realm of the experts –

Introduction:

In this chapter I will continue the conversation regarding parity and Norway as 'the frontrunner' by introducing the term technocracy to describe some of the ways in which the action plan delves into the sphere of expertise. I want to see if the plan has a technocratic perspective and/or focus. When writing an action plan for foreign and development policy, one would have to consider the void in interests and focus areas in these two arenas: foreign policy and development policy. Foreign policy is directed towards any foreign interaction that Norway is a part of. This entails that Norway will be interacting with countries with different economic, cultural and historical background. An important part of our foreign policy is to promote Norwegian interests abroad and make sure that the Norwegian point of view is communicated collectively in international forums (NMFA, 2018).

Development policy is mainly directed towards countries that are scoring poorly on international quantitative measurements on how they perform in various areas, such as inequality, poverty levels and economic growth. These countries are often presented as developing countries, third world countries and have also be referred to as the global south. The interests and focus areas in these fields have historically been to improve the scores on international ratings such as Human Development Index, Gender development Index, Multidimensional Poverty Index, and the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index. These two interests, development and foreign policy, are not conflicting per se, but they are indeed distinctive and requires different focus areas.

Clarification of the concept technocracy

In this thesis, I will primarily base my understanding of technocracy as the "*rule by the skilled*" by Gilly (1972:10), and the Store Norske Leksikon's definition *realm of experts* (2018). In doing so, I will able to apply it to the context of a political document and not a discussion about governmental, or organisational, structure. The term technocracy seems to have first been coined in 1919 by the American William Smyth. He advocated for a new system of government consisting of experts, and where the experts would be making all political and economic decisions (Centeno, 1993). The expert must hold specialised knowledge, be in a position of responsibility and be a part of a body of power (Larson, 1972). This body, or apparatus, of power could be either private or public. Larson (1972) argues that technocrats see their specialised expertise as a tool that can tackle problems that are increasingly more global in character. Expertise can justify the use of power as the technocrats' world view allows them to act as polyvalent actors.

Technocracy is used in various and often loose ways that makes it hard to generalise and define (Centeno, 1993, Ginty, 2012). The term depends on the context and the authors perception as the term has both negative and positive connotations depending on the subject being analysed (Centeno, 1993). It may be a long list of features that can be depicted as 'technocratic', but I find the term to be helpful in its versatile form. I will make use of the concept in a general fashion, as I find it to be beneficial to point to technocratic tendencies. As first stated, my understanding of technocracy is *"rule by the skilled"* by Gilly (1972:10), and the Store Norske Leksikon's definition *realm of experts* (2018).

Chapter 1 in the action plan:
Women's rights in a changing world – policy and priorities.
This is the first chapter in the action plan and begins by talking about Norway's aim to improve women's situation world-wide and the reasoning behind the following five thematic priority areas. In this chapter, the basis for the plan is also laid out with a foundation in other papers released by the Norwegian government. The following quote is found in the second and last paragraph:

> "*It also reaffirms the long-standing commitment to promoting gender equality in Norwegian foreign policy.* " (p.5)

This quote links the five priority areas to the Norwegian foreign policy. Long-standing commitment to promoting gender equality is emphasised and the action plan is stated to be reaffirming this notion. In stating this, the reader is given the impression that Norway's commitment to promoting gender equality is something that has been central in its foreign policy for a long time. In doing so, Norway is again promoted and constructed as a champion of gender equality and continue to build on the statements from the foreword. By using the word *commitment*, it creates a sense of safety and security in that this is a priority. Being committed to something implies dedication and devotion, which are both words attached to love and relationships. Hence leaving the impression that the author is credible and takes this mission seriously. One can almost interpret it as the Norwegian government feel a sense of duty to improve women's situations and promote gender equality based in what Norway believes are its own successes with equality.

Page six gives an overview of the five bullet points describing what Norway wants to promote in order of the thematic priority areas. The sustainable development goals are then situated in the plan and explained, and the focus is then placed on the most marginalised and the importance of inclusion. The following quote is the only free standing text on the page, as the remainder of text is either in bullet points or as presented as an information box.

"The Sustainable Development Goals adopted by all UN member states in 2015 form the backdrop for the Action Plan. Gender equality is a key component of the 2030 Agenda. The overarching aim is to ensure that no one is left behind, to reach the most marginalised, and to ensure that everyone can benefit from development. This means that we need to focus more on inclusion and non-discrimination of women in fragile situations, as well as marginalised groups of women such as women with disabilities, indigenous women, and lesbian, bisexual and transgender women." (p.6)

In this paragraph, the focus seems to be on the importance of inclusion and the making sure that everyone benefits from development. Having inclusion as the focus can create a perspective based on parity, and the idea of acknowledging that the need to include everyone is crucial for development. Saying that *no one is left behind* may also denote that the author is implicitly saying that we are in the front thus that others are behind us, and we are making sure they are not left there. This may or may not be true, but it does not follow the parity perspective discussed above.

Categorising, or specifying, marginalised groups can in one way be helpful in instances where specific legislation etc. want to refer to a document to prove the importance of their cause. For example, if a group want to promote transgender women's rights, they can refer to this action plan and say that transgender women are included in an action plan for gender equality and therefore their cause should be supported. On the other hand, it can be limiting in the way that if a group is not mentioned, they are implicitly not as 'important' and is not in need of the same emphasis.

Cooperation partners are then presented and their roles explained, first EU, UN and the UN system. A paragraph on civil society follows with surprisingly strong language in reference to their firm role in the process of change. Information about the EU, their policies and how Norway interacts with them, is enclosed in a box separated from the rest of the text. This is the same method as the author has used in the previous page, and continues to do throughout the document. I have interpreted these as an information box where the content is related to the topics discussed on the page, but in a way to contextualise the issue at hand.

The first paragraph focus on cooperation and Norway's partners in the field of gender equality. The EU and UN system is highlighted as main actors in these efforts, but when the area of responsibility is discussed, it is stressed that it is member states that hold the primary responsibility for implementation;

"It is the member states themselves that are responsible for the implementation of these rules and policies with support from UN funds and programmes, the multilateral development banks and other partners. " (p.7)

The author portrays the member states as the active agent and holder of *power* to implement the legislation. Norway's role in this is somewhat elusive in that Norway is intermittently referred to as having a leading role in the efforts for gender equality, but in this quote the responsibility is given to the member states. Realistically Norway would have little real influence in the implementation of legislation, it is not mentioned any examples of that being the case. Thus, it would be unnatural for the action plan to depict that Norway has this kind of power. On the other hand, the opposite is not very overt in the way that the member states are not discussed in a parity perspective. In this case I interpret the member states to be referring to the member states in need of support hence the reference to multilateral banks, support and funds. When taking this into consideration, these member states are presented as having no real power until it comes to the implementation in the way the author presents the text. Though it is clearly stated that the member states can get support from the UN and partners in the implementation process. In one way, this can be seen as a statement made with parity in mind, but on the other hand one can criticize it by saying that there is not given any attention to the autonomous states and their role for gender equality. The paragraph as a whole just focus on certain member states need of help, thus not describing them as able and empowered.

The second paragraph has strong rhetoric when describing the role of civil society both nationally and internationally. Civil organisations are particularly successful at mapping women's needs as well as promoting women's rights. The paragraph starts with the following;

> "*Women's organisations and other civil society initiatives are at the forefront of efforts to realise women's rights in Norway, in our partner countries and in international arenas. Civil society plays an important role in setting the agenda and ensuring that authorities are held accountable.* "(p.7)

The language in this paragraph is very strong and specific in describing what the civil society contributes with. Civil society is portrayed as an essential agent for promoting gender equality. The organisations are described as a fact checkers and that they hold authorities accountable. As this is a vital part of democracy, holding authorities accountable, their role is even more fundamental. Acknowledging civil society as a close partner, even describing them as key partners, demonstrate that the relationship between them is based in parity.

Page 8 is dedicated to a list of "old and new challenges" where "*The situation varies across countries and regions, but some key challenges are clearly identifiable*". In that last quote, I interpret that *key challenges* refer to collective challenges that we face as an international community. The list gives the reader an overview of the current state in the field of gender equality and helps provide

information to readers that are not so informed and up to date on areas in need of special attention. There is no mention of how the key challenges are identified and selected, not even a source of further information about why these particular areas are pressing. The list contains issues that *clearly identifiable* even though there are variations. Clearly identifiable by who and how is not addressed in the text and left open. There is no need to justify the list it seems, that when using the word *clearly* one can just say it is obvious and need no explanation. In a way, the author presents a very strong and firm faith in their own judgments and information. The author may say these issues are so overt and anyone can point these specific challenges, especially the Norwegian government. Could it be because Norway has so much experience and knowledge on the topics, we are in no need of aids such as other sources or further justification?

I only selected two out of ten bullet point from the list on page 8. The first is as follow;

> "*In many places, control of women is woven into the social fabric and culture through harmful traditional practices such as early marriage and female genital mutilation.*" (p.8)

I selected two quotes I found to be a diversion from the mean, and the mean in this case being global key challenges. The mean being described as such due to, as I mentioned above, I interpreted the list to be a list of common challenges where we as an international community face together. Control over women through tradition, culture and social structures are indeed issues we face as a global community, few would attest that fact. Presenting this as an issue itself could be described in a manner of parity in the way that this is a general problem any country, region or area are facing. When adding *in many places* the author creates a focus towards specific places and not a general problem. This has the potential to portray the *key challenge* to be a *place specific challenge* as it takes away the global community aspect of the issue. There is an issue at hand, but not everyone has this problem. This is further strengthened when adding *traditional practices such as early marriage and female genital mutilation* which are strongly connoted to the religion of Islam and regions such as Middle East, Africa and Asia (WHO, 2018, UNICEF, 2016). The focus has gone from key global challenges that could be true in any country, to a focus on specific countries and religions that have the challenges that the rest of the international community are worried about. Female genital mutilation is by no means an issue that should be swept under the rug, that is not the argument I am making. My argument is that by shifting the focus to specific areas of the world, the list is not as general as it should be. One could argue that it strengthens the already established view the West has on the *South*. Deducting *'in many places'* and *'such as early marriage and female genital mutilation'* from the sentence, would not lose the authors argument that control over women is an issue, and that tradition, culture and social structures can

contribute to this. This is unless these two issues undoubtedly are the largest topics in enabling control over women in the world. The challenges are with these specifications limited to a few regions in the world, hence deviating from the objective of common challenges. As a reader without any prior knowledge or expertise, one cannot make out whether or not this is the case as there are no sources given to actually situate these issues in the larger scope of things.

The same argument can be applied to the second quote;

> "*Globally, the gap between women's and men's participation in the labour market has only seen a marginal reduction over the last 20 years. In most countries, women still earn far less than men.*" (p.8)

The first part of the quote is directed towards a global trend continuing the focus on a communal challenge, women's lack of participation in the labour market. Adding *globally* makes this a general statement with an indication that this is an issue we all need to work on as an international community. The issue of gendered pay gap is a well-known problem and it is vital to discuss this in any discussion on promoting gender equality. It is acknowledged in this bullet point, though the addition of *in most countries* separates this issue from the global, and creates the impression that it is a problem of the few. I believe this is a well-known fact that there is large gender pay gaps all over the world, including Norway (SSB, 2017, 2018). The last sentence has the emphasis on *far less*, again by adding these words, one can say in *most countries* instead of *globally* - as it is natural variations around the world. Some countries will have women earning far less than men, and some will have women earning less than men. Creating this distinction enables the author to use *most countries* as not all countries have women earning far less. The author is discursively placing this issue with most countries, when the sentence could have been a general global issue. Ex. Globally, women still earn less than men. This sentence is based on parity, where the international community recognises the issue as a global one with local/regional variations.

On this page, the list from page 8 is contextualised and it is paired with the international framework for women's rights. The first, and only, freestanding text is the following;

> "*This list gives a picture of some of the challenges and needs, and forms the basis for Norway's efforts. We cannot solve all these challenges alone, but we will play an active part in the joint effort to achieve global gender equality. The main responsibility, however, lies with the authorities in the countries concerned.* " (p.9)

Here, the list from page 8 describing new and old challenges, is contextualised in the form that its relevance is highlighted; it forms the basis of Norway's efforts.

In saying that this form the basis for which the Norwegian efforts are being prioritised and focused around this list is curious without any more context to the sources and the context around each issue. On the other hand, this is an action plan where we can say that the plan should be kept in short and not go too much into detail. Although if this list forms the basis for Norwegian efforts, more discussion could be expected. The language in this sentence is more general in the way that it states that the *list gives a picture of some challenges and needs* and it does not claim to be a complete list of the challenges the world faces. This would again assume that there has been a selection of challenges and needs before the list was written in this plan. If these are some, then what are the other challenges and what qualifies these challenges and needs in particular in making it on the list? These are questions that are not answered in the plan. One can argue that this is insignificant, but on the other hand one could argue that because this list forms the basis for the Norwegian efforts that it should be discussed in more detail. One can sense that the author finds no need to describe or discuss the process of selection. The author does not need to go more into detail because their selections and decisions are of such quality that it would not be questioned. This is first and foremost a governmental document, and it may demand the trust of its readers with no, or very little, explanation of the how's and why's.

The text goes on to discussing how we will solve the challenges on the list previously presented. The challenges cannot be solved alone, and the international community will work together to achieve gender equality. This can be perfectly true, but the way in which the sentence is structured can give of a sense of assumption that Norway could indeed solve some of these challenges alone. of change in the field of gender equality that they could indeed solve some of these alone. This could also be seen as an attempt to emphasise that 'we' are just one of many actors that work to promote gender equality. Norway is a part of the international community that will work together as a unit to work for women's rights. The author is thereby connecting Norway's efforts to the world community, thus creating a sense of common purpose and will to change. The action plan, like I mentioned in the methodology chapter, is especially in English a document that would be read by engaged people that are most likely to be a part of a government agency, an NGO or another organisation or person with interest in the topic of gender equality. This sentence could then portray Norway as a *team player* and not a single-working agent.

The last sentence of the quote puts the focus on the autonomy of the countries in question. It would seem as though the phrase; *countries concerned,* points to countries that needs to implement legislation and measures to promote gender equality. Norway and the international community can do what they can to promote gender equality, but it is the countries themselves that hold the responsibility to make real change. This could be interpreted as an attempt to show that Norway cannot force change in the countries that needs to take measures in

order to gain gender equality. Norway can only promote gender equality and it is up to the countries themselves to implement change. An alternative to this interpretation is that the author is pulling focus away from Norway having to take real responsibility of their intentions of implementing change. With this sentence, Norway cannot be proven to not achieve the goals set in the action plan, because it is not Norway's responsibility to implement it in each country and cannot be held accountable for the lack of 'positive' change. The sentences: *"This list gives a picture of some of the challenges and needs, and forms the basis for Norway's efforts. We cannot solve all these challenges alone, but we will play an active part in the joint effort to achieve global gender equality."* before combined with this sentence: *"The main responsibility, however, lies with the authorities in the countries concerned"* can therefore be interpreted as it is a joint effort until it comes to implementation of change in each individual country. In the end, it seems that Norway can only urge other countries to adopt the Norwegian way, but it is up to the country concerned to in fact enact the changes. This can tie into the technocratic tendency where Norway act as the skilled or the expert, but when push comes to shove, it is the countries themselves following through with implementing the solutions *"promoted"* by Norway. This reinforces the postcolonial idea of the linear relationship of knowledge going from the *West* to the *rest*. It reproduced the notion that the *rest* is required to make changes to become more like the *West*: more developed.

Chapter 2 in the action plan:
Women's rights in a changing world – policy and priorities.

Chapter two in the action plan is mostly focused on the issues Norway wants to fix and the issues are presented through five separate thematic priority areas. The five thematic priority areas are presented and the justification for them. A significant part of this chapter is devoted to information regarding the sustainable development goals, the EU and international framework. The order of the thematic priority areas could have a significance regarding which areas are prioritised and the importance of each issue. There is no introduction to the thematic areas in this section, but the first chapter seem to work as an introduction to the thematic priority areas. The first chapter in the action plan is therefore necessary in order to fully understand the context of the priority areas presented in chapter 2. There is no mention of the structure of the priority areas in chapter 1, though a political document of this character can be expected to have some preferences when it comes to what order the five priority areas are listed.
There are some areas that are lengthier, both in the information section, as well as more and longer action points. The two priority areas that are the most substantial are 'Women's economic rights and empowerment', and 'Sexual and reproductive

health and rights'. The most extensive being Sexual and reproductive health and rights, where the difference is 591 words, or two pages between the shortest priority area: Women's political rights and empowerment. As the material is quite extensive, I find it more helpful to pick two of the priority areas and investigate these further. I will therefore look closer at the priority areas Sexual and reproductive health and rights and Women's political rights and empowerment. The two represent the lengthiest and the shortest priority areas out of the five listed.

2: Priority area two,

consist of two pages with information, and one page with objectives and action points. The total word count in this priority area is 931, of these words 724 being information, of this information 296 words are presented in a text box, the remaining 206 of these are objectives and action points. A large part of the focus throughout the action plan in general is the basis in which the Sustainable Development Goals have for this plan. The UN goals are said to the *backdrop for the action plan*, and further explain gender equality as *a key component* to the 2030 Agenda. As the SDG's are of such importance to the action plan as whole, I question why priority area number two does not have any relevant SDG's mentioned? Is it so that Women's political rights and empowerment does not have any relevant SDG's? As I went through the UN webpage on the SDG's, I found several relevant goals, goal number five being most apparent. Goal number five is described in the first part of the Thematic priority areas, as *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. I will not go further into what I found to be many more relevant goals, that is not the observation I find most interesting. The observation I want to emphasise is the absence of relevant goals in this priority area. All other priority areas have at least two relevant goals in their sections.

Another aspect to this particular chapter is as mentioned; the length. The word count is the lowest of the priority areas, combined with it having the lengthiest textbox. This text box contains almost half of the information word count, and a third of the total designated word count. Word count does not necessarily have a correlation to the scope and competence of a text, but it can serve as an indicator, or in semiotic terms an index, for a possible reflection of priority or significance. I have chosen two quotes from this priority area, one from the free-standing information text, and one from the text box of information.

"It is also important to increase awareness of the positive effects of gender equality. There are men all over the world who recognise the benefits of gender equality for men, and for society as a whole. This knowledge and awareness need to be shared, and norms need to be developed, so that communities see that gender equality is not a threat to men, but a means of creating a better life for everyone."(p15)

This quote is the fourth paragraph on the first information page in the section for priority two. The first part of this quote is specifying the importance of men understanding and sharing the benefits of gender equality. Showing that men also are can be agents for change is one of great importance in the work for gender equality. This has also been mentioned previously in the action plan, in the first chapter on Women's rights in a changing world – policy and priorities. Including this aspect shows inclusion and a parity perspective. Especially when stating that it is *men all over the world* and not limiting this to countries, regions or categories as previously done in the action plan.

Arguably, recognise does not imply any form for positive recognition or appreciation for gender equality, opening the possibility of interpreting it as men understanding that it is beneficial, though not necessarily linked to something positive. Recognising something can have connotations to 'admitting' something, thus implying that the result is not something that oneself has developed an understanding of for oneself, but been proven wrong. Combining recognise and benefit can help make this more of a positive position. Although these are in essence two separate elements as they recognise something, and benefits of gender equality is one element. Leaving the positive position reserved to gender equality.

The last part of the quote addresses the need to share the knowledge and awareness of those men that recognise the benefits of gender equality. The holder of the knowledge are the men that already recognise the benefits of gender equality. Who is responsible for spreading this knowledge and awareness is not specified, neither is how this should be executed. Needing to share something indicates that the author holds the competence of the substance being shared, in this case knowledge and awareness. Norway can therefore again be perceived as the holder of knowledge.

The next quote is from the text box containing information on the UN resolutions on women human rights defenders. The selected sentences are the final part of the text box, and the mark the end of the information section.

"Strong political leadership will be needed to ensure compliance and implementation in practice, and Norway will play a leading role globally, both through its participation in the UN and by supporting various initiatives in different parts of the world. "(p16)

Here, strong political leadership is emphasised as a critical element in the process forward. Norway is presented as the country that will play on a leading role. The author has chosen not to write that Norway would take on *this* leading role, indicating that Norway will play a leading role though not necessarily in a strong political sense. Nevertheless it is clear that Norway will take on a leading role globally. Norway will according to this quote will through participation in the UN and supporting initiatives be able to fulfil this role. The UN and the initiatives are here portrayed as tools in which Norway will employ in order to be, and qualify as, a global leader. Using the phrase *to ensure compliance and implementation in practice* can be interpreted in an array of ways. One way could be that 'ensure compliance' can indicate a wish to convince and ensure that something is completed. Compliance is also an index in the way that it implies that an agent would seek that others would comply to its principles or intents. One can continue with this train of thought and suggest that the agent, here represented as a leader, holds the right principles that the 'others', represented as all others than the leader, would have to obey or submit to. In combination with implementation, this would seem increasingly likely as it is indicated that the author would want 'others' to 'comply and implement' their principles. On the contrary, compliance and implementation could be a way to specify that the agents are desired to be in an agreement and thus implement whatever has been agreed. Compliance is a very powerful word and one can assume this has been used to show strength in the action plan.

5: Priority area five,

consist of three pages of information, and two pages of objectives, action points and relevant SDG's. The total word count in this priority area is 1532, of these words 1076 being information; of this information 359 words being presented in two separate text boxes, and the remaining 452 words are objectives and action points. In this priority area, the first notable feature is the extent of this priority area in relation to the others. It is the last priority area and it is a prominent difference in the scale of this when reading the document. As it is the last priority areas one have read the others and have material to compare with. Reproductive rights are in most cases related to and restricted to women's reproductive rights. This priority area focuses a great deal on family planning and the right to abortions. These issues are heavily debated all around the world, even the Norwegian laws of the right to abortions have been subject to resistance in the near past. In 2013, a proposition was put forward arguing for doctor's rights to denying abortion and prevention to patients (SNL, 2017). Only in 2015 was the proposition deemed unlawful and doctors could no longer deny abortion. This is to show that this priority area is indeed in need of prioritisation. Inclusion of all gender identities and sexual orientation contribute to making this section of the

plan inclusive and forward thinking. An element that acts as a limitation in this arena is the focus on Female Genital Mutilation as the only example of harmful practices as well as forced marriage. Every time harmful and/or traditional practices are mentioned, female genital mutilation is with no exceptions given as the only, or one of two, examples. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, using FGM as the only example, causes only specific areas of the world to be in focus. Combining this with forced marriage, the Islamic world is often seen as a connotation to these two examples. Hence perpetuating an already stigmatised group. This is not to say it should not be included in the plan. The issue is of significant concern, but other examples of harmful practices needs to be addressed in addition to this. Leaving FGM as the single problem of harmful practices makes it seem as though no other issues exists.

The two quotes I have chosen from this priority area are taken from the text box on FGM, and from the action points in the end. The first being from the text box:

> *"The active support of local and religious leaders, as well as the knowledge-based engagement of health workers, teachers, the judiciary and the media, is also crucial."(p.27)*

Separating religious leaders from the rest of the professions insinuate that the religious leaders are not a part of the knowledge-based engagement. Religious leaders are here described as crucial, but not because of their knowledge. The other categories on the other hand are qualified as knowledge-based. Using the media and not religious leaders as examples of knowledge-based engagements can be questioned in the way that there are vast differences between media outlets, just to give an example. Teachers can be religious leaders and health workers at the same time. Thus, by separating religious leaders into one sphere outside the realm of knowledge can depict them as more of a problem and not a sufficient solution. I say this because continuously in the action plan the argument is anchored and justified in the name of knowledge and experience. And yet again the argument of knowledge can be seen as a technocratic tendency as it is encompassing this knowledge that is seen as the solution to the problems.

The next quote is the first action point under the outcome of 'international acceptance for sexual rights and right to abortion':

> *"Take a cross-regional and knowledge-based approach to promoting a common understanding of sexual rights in the broadest possible sense, and the inclusion of these rights as an integral part of human rights."(p.28)*

This action point states that Norway will take a knowledge-based approach to promoting sexual rights. This could mean that the previous tactics were not based so firmly in knowledge. In a technocratic perspective one would see this as the best way. The author is placing themselves in the realm of knowledge, thus the realm of experts. The author saw is necessary to include *knowledge-based* in the sentence. This can be a way of stressing that the efforts are not random, but a structured and thorough process. *Promoting a common understanding of sexual rights* can be interpreted as a way of specifying it is a wide spread agreement on what sexual right are. This has a unifying effect, as it can imply cooperation leading to a joint understanding. Norway will with this interpretation promote this joint understanding, seemingly based in a parity perspective.

Another understanding could be that using the word common can spark a notion of common in the sense that it is Norway's common understanding. Building on this notion, Norway's understanding of sexual rights seems only common to Norway as a nation, though not common to the 'rest' of the world; as Norway needs to promote this specific understanding. This can be further amplified when combining this with the previous stated '*knowledge-based approach'*. Ultimately, this argument would consist of the notion that Norway will with a knowledge-based approach promote its common understanding of sexual rights to the world. In a post-colonial perspective, this interpretation would be seen as one of Western-centrism and imperialistic in the sense that Norway spreads its 'correct' knowledge to the world. Correct in the way that Norway's knowledge is understood as correct in Norway's terms, because it is highly unlikely that a country would spread what it sees as incorrect knowledge. Finally, taking the sought outcome into consideration, 'international acceptance for sexual rights and right to abortion', the previous interpretation is again strengthened as the objective is to get international acceptance. Seeing international acceptance implies that Norway already holds this view, and that it is only a matter of convincing the 'rest' of the world to hold the equivalent view.

Action points: Support & promote

As one begins to closely read the action points, one finds that over half of the action points uses support or promote as the word describing the form of action. Of the forty-four action point presented in the action plan, twenty-eight of those containing support or promote. The most repeated word in the action points are support, being used eighteen times to describe method of action. Support and promote are two words that are synonyms to each other. Support has a connotation of someone helping and is used to describe construction elements, such as a support beam. The beam is supporting the weight of the house, working as an index for the beam being vital for the achievement of a strong construction. Support can therefore work as a way to demonstrate Norway's commitment, as mentioned earlier, to the cause.

The word promote has connotations to commercials, as promoting something is often used to describe the act of encouraging the use of for example a product. It is also used when describing when a person is given a higher position than they previously held, a promotion. Hence the word promote is mostly given a positive connotation, often in a sense of making something better and displaying an improved product. Another way of describing it can be a way of showing a better way. One will only promote something that is better than something, offering a better alternative to what has been. This understanding can be transferred to the action plan, where Norway is offering a better understanding of gender than many other understandings. Thus, Norway is offering, promoting, gender equality.

Chapter three in the action plan: Implementation

The last chapter in the action plan is called implementation, containing one page of information, one on the key elements of effective implementation, and finally one page with two paragraphs on internal organisation. This chapter explain the process of implementation of the action plan, who will implement it and how this will be executed. Implementation has synonyms such as carry out something, fulfil and put something into effect. These synonyms suggest action as a means of completion. There is an end goal, but there are certain things that needs to be done in order to achieve this goal. This chapter serves to present the way in which Norway will complete, or implement, this action plan in all relevant sections of the Foreign Ministry, missions abroad, Norad and other public bodies administering Norwegian funds. As the action plan is on gender equality and women's rights, this is the end goal for implementation.

I have chosen one quote from the information section and one from the section on key elements of effective implementation. The first paragraph explains who will be implementing the action plan, the second goes on to stress the important aspect that it is each country's individual responsibility to fulfil their international commitments. These commitments are specified through various conventions and platforms. The second paragraph ends by stating that external factors will determine what priorities are made. The third paragraph states the importance of coherent and coordinated implementation of policy documents. The following quote is located as the last sentence on the third of four paragraphs forming the information section:

> *"This Action Plan builds to a considerable extent on previous experience and evaluations of Norway's aid in support of gender equality."(p.31)*

Norway's experience is exhibited as something of considerable extent, thus further upholding the argument of a technocratic tendency in this action plan. It

is presented here as it is the Norwegian experience that enables their leading role, as presented in the foreword by Brende. It is the *rule by the skilled* (Gilly, 2017), or in this case *lead* by the skilled, that can be seen in this and other sections of the action plan. It is the first time that the author mentions Norwegian aid, or any aid for that matter. Only in one other instance is this mentioned, also this in the chapter on implementation. In this context aid is in the context of support for gender equality.

The second quote is from the first of five key element for effective implementation, namely 'gender equality for development'. The subsequent sentences form the last part of the paragraph on this key element:

> *"It will draw on Norway's experience in the field of gender equality, and combine this with good aid practice. Priority will be given to women's economic and political empowerment, as Norway has gained particularly relevant experience in this area. The programme will include knowledge transfer, awareness raising and cooperation between relevant institutions."(p.32)*

Terms such as experience, knowledge transfer and awareness raising stand out as I preform the first close reading. The terms are all based within the realm of experts, indicating high levels of competence within the topics discussed in this section. The word experience is in both cases mentioned in reference to Norwegian experience. Knowledge transfer and awareness transfer is not written to overtly specify Norway as the holder of these, such as with experience. Though the programme in which the terms are referenced to is the programme LIKE, which is further based on Norway's experience. This can therefore be interpreted as that the knowledge and awareness is held by the Norway and that the transfer hence is only in one direction. This is not based I a parity perception, perpetuating the post-colonial and technocratic tendencies mentioned earlier.

On the other hand, having knowledge transfer, awareness raising and cooperation together could strengthen an argument of that it stems from a parity perspective. A strong argument against this can arise when taking into consideration that *good aid practice* is included in this section. Aid is traditionally seen as a one way transaction, where in the past this would primarily be a transaction from one rich Western country to a 'developing country' in the south. One reason for why this argument can be seen as a strong one at that, is that the action plan is said to be drawn on Norway's experience and combine it with *good aid practice*. having these two factor being mentioned as more or less a foundation of the action plan, it would be highly likely to conclude that these are vital element of the formation of the programme LIKE, thus the Norwegian efforts.

Summary

The analysis in this chapter show the ways in which Norway present themselves in the forefront by using a technocratic approach. Through descriptions and narratives of expertise, knowledge and experience, Norway is presented as 'skilled'. In placing guidelines for action in other countries and by only speaking of their own skills, it becomes 'rule by the skilled'. IT is Norway that will guide the way, and the rest will follow the leader. In efforts to bring cooperation to the front scene, they are met with the accounts of Norwegian or Western knowledge and the partner countries are not discussed as carriers of knowledge. It thus produces a linear relationship of knowledge transfer, Norway to others, and the result is not one of parity. It becomes increasingly so when considering the language used when discussing the global issues. They are often reduced to issues in *some countries* and *some regions* instead of addressing these issues as a part of a global trend. This causes the divide between 'developed' nations and 'undeveloped' nations to deepen. It is apparent that there are issues regarding gender all over the world in varying forms, so we should speak of them as such. The understanding of gender and sexuality is also shown here to be limited to the two-gender system and a heteronormative idea of sexuality. There are mentions of trans people and LGBTQ people, but it is not reflected in the language elsewhere in the action plan.

Discussion and concluding remarks

Discussion

In this thesis, I have explored the different ways the action plan for women's rights and gender equality have portrayed different actors in the plan. I have analysed the language in which is used, both literary and visually. In doing so, I have used the postcolonial theory, orientalism and feminist theory to guide the perspective in which the language is analysed. In addition to the theory I used a hermeneutical approach to make sense of my data. This enabled me to investigate different signs and their meaning. As mentioned, signs are polysemy and can have many meanings, I present therefore possible interpretations and understandings of the signs identified. With that said, I argue that the thesis show how the interpretations of signs within this action plan are valid and applicable.

When discussing the area of development one faces a lot of problems in order to speak in a manner of parity. In and of itself, development has been a discipline evolved for the purpose of nations, primarily western nations, to give aid to countries in 'need'. What 'need' embodied/meant was defined by the 'giving' countries and the receiving countries had to abide by the criteria's set by the giver. This is of course only in general terms, but most situations were in various degrees situated in this category. To be able to then discuss development in a manner that is based in parity, is very difficult and complex, as one can argue that development is in and of itself inherently based in non-parity. One would ideally want to assign the receiving party more agency and discuss their position in an empowered manner, but it is difficult when the main notion of development is traditionally a linear knowledge or money transfer from one party to another. By taking away the element of empowerment, one is left with the Western country with the knowledge and experience, and the developing country to be perceived as a traditional and helpless. The power relations are skewed and this requires a particular focus on caution of what way language is used.

When pressing issues and challenges are discussed in the action plan, there is only three times where the 'whole world' was the subject for these issues. The remaining issues are written in relation to *some*, *many* or *certain countries*. The issues discussed in this action plan are never completely restricted to a country and their respective boarders. There is not a country in the world that can say that equal pay is not an issue in their country. One cannot deny that all countries have traditions, religions or cultural elements that discriminate a certain group of people, and often women are subjected to these harmful practices. It may not be to the same extent and to the same degree, but in a foreign policy context one

would think that the focus should be globally and not only in a limited set of countries. Of course, one can focus on countries or areas where this issue at hand is particularly relevant. The disparaging element here is built on the notion that these issues are not global, and that they do not apply to developed nations. Developed countries are only mentioned once in the 36 pages that is the action plan. As mentioned above, *globally* and *all countries* is only mentioned once.

My findings suggest that Norway is throughout the action plan presented as a leader, and especially so in the foreword. Whether or not Norway is entitled to be represented as such is not the aim of this thesis, though it suggests caution in presenting oneself in a leading position without greater justification. In this first analysis chapter, there can be seen a formation of a pattern of an assumption that Norway is indeed in the forefront of gender equality and has made new discoveries. A section of this assumption has foundations in colonization and connotations to a colonial power can be generated as a cause. I argue that when postcolonial theory is applied, Norway is seen to reproduce supremacy tendencies and colonialist ideas through their presentation of themselves as a leader. Gullestad (2007) describes postcolonialism as something that cannot just be referred to as 'after colonialism', but that one is referring to an analytical perspective where ideas and practises that are influenced by imperialism and colonialism are studied. This is also discussed in more detail in the chapter on theoretical framework. I repeat this to illustrate that one does not have to be a colonial power to hold ideas and practises that are influenced by imperialism and colonialism. Norway was indeed not a colonial power, but Norway existed in the environment of colonialism and imperialism.

Norway in way reproduced the colonial and imperial mind-set when sending missionaries, to mainly African countries, to convert people to be more like 'us'; Christian and more 'Western'[7] (Gullesatad, 2007,2010). There are many variables in the colonial discourse and the role of missionaries as cultural agent are just one (Gullestad, 2007). Though, I will argue that the relationship between the Sàmi population and the Norwegian government was not far from a colonial one when considering the endurances suffered by the Sàmi people (Hellesvik, 2017). There was a long period where the Norwegian government wanted to 'Norwegianise' the Sàmi population and forcing them to take on the Christian faith and convince them that the Sàmi traditions were inherently evil (Hellesvik, 2017, Gaski, 2017).

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[7] *When using the term 'Western' I refer to the way in which schools and education facilities, infrastructure projects, and other projects were set up to develop the population in the colonies. Missionaries and the act of mission work cannot be separated from colonialism and the modernisation process in the way in which they acted as a social agent (Gullestad, 2007). Because we must not forget that it was a cultural project as well as a project of resources and wealth.*

It is also important to consider this element when addressing Norway's position in relation to colonialism.

In the context of the field in which the action plan is concerning, the field of development and foreign affairs, the notion of presenting oneself in this light can be unfortunate. The document is emphasising the role of cooperation, specifically development cooperation. I raise the question as to how one can build a successful cooperation when the other party is presented in a manner of non-parity? This is based on the presentation of the partner countries, and the international community with focus on less developed countries throughout the action plan. When Norway is presented as a teacher, the partner is presented as the student as a result. Through a postcolonial perspective, this becomes more problematic. Norway does not have a history as a colonial power, but acted in its environment and reproduced its notions through for example the missionary culture. Taking this element into consideration and adding the action plan into this context, I argue that the presentation of Norway vs others is problematic.

Orientalism can also be of use in this case as I showed when analysing the coloured girls seated with a book in their hands. They are on the front page depicted as 'the others' when they are at the bottom of the ladder. Norway is depicted as on top of the ladder, ala the woman in the suit, and that makes the coloured girls appear to be the opposite. Feminist scholars have for years argued that the white woman is seen as above the coloured women. This context perpetuate the image of 'us' and 'them' even further. It requires more caution to the depiction and language used when referring to coloured, especially female, people in these action plans. Coloured people were depicted as people in *need* and that they are lacking something that 'we' can give them (See Gullestad 2007).

I have analysed the action plan for 2016-2020, and as I described in previous research I have also read the previous action plans. In these documents, one describes more thoroughly that the issues at hand are universal and that Norway need to learn from their partners (NMFA, 2007;2013). Both the images and text in the previous action plans are more neutral and humble in their language, and rightfully so.
I also see disparities between the different parts of the action plan, the forewords, the images and the rest of the body of text. The foreword is focused on presenting Norway as the leader and a country in the forefront of gender equality. It is very much obeying to the Norwegian Foreign Ministry's objective, where promoting Norway's best interest are the main-focus. The second part, the images, show a more stereotypical depiction of the female gender. I want to emphasise that the absent of a more diverse expression of gender is troubling. It is troubling in the way that the stereotypical and hegemonic way of expressing gender, in this case the female gender, is projected in all the images and reproduces this limited way

of doing gender. This is an important criticism, because gender equality should consider everyone, including genders outside the hegemonic two-gender model. Trans people were mentioned in the plan, but the images does not reflect that statement. People that are doing gender differently as well as queer people are at even more high risk in the world today. An example being Russia and USA, were we see shootings and other violence intentionally targeting these groups. I argue that an action plan for gender equality from 2016-2020 should be more inclusive in nature.

The body of text provided us with an overview of Norwegian efforts to promote and support women's rights and gender equality. I have argued that in this section, Norway was presented as the keeper of knowledge and the teacher. The action plan is supposed to be covering issues around the world, through the language used mostly focus on *certain countries* and not the whole world when referring to these challenges. It is true however, that the international community is struggling more with certain issues in some regions of the world than others, but we still face challenges related to gender equality all over the world. Therefore, I argue that by using such literary tools, one projects the issues over to 'them' and not 'us' as an international community. It raises the question of parity that I have been discussing earlier in this section.

When considering the differences between the two fields in which this action plan is assigned to, development and foreign affairs, the motivation and goals are differing from one another. As I have mentioned before, the ministry of foreign affairs aim to promote Norway's interests, while the field of development's main objective is helping the poor (Lie, 2018). These aims and objectives can come in conflict with one another. I argue that this action plan is an example of that. In this thesis, I have criticised the plan for presenting Norway in a way that reproduces the idea of the *West* and the *rest*, or 'us' and 'them'. It may seem as if one reason for this is that these objectives and aims are clashing in terms of motivation. Presenting this image of Norway may be positive in the way that this will be what Norway will be famous for and continue to reproduce the notion of Norway as a country of equality. On the other hand, it is problematic for the field of development due to the many reasons I have mentioned earlier. As Lie (2018) imply, in most cases the Norwegian self-interests weigh more than the consideration for impoverished countries. This can be one reason why the action plan uses language in the way that it does, but it does not change the fact that the analysis show that it can be problematic.

Concluding remarks

My findings show that the language in the action plan reinforces and reproduces colonial perspectives and ideas of the world. The tendency to generalise and form stereotypes are present throughout the action plan. The findings also show how a heteronormative and hegemonic perspective is promoted through the lack consistent inclusion of other perceptions. Furthermore, is the two-gender model that is the basis for the action plan, and thus further perpetuating the often-times excluding nature of understanding gender. The findings show a conflict of interest between the foreign and development fields, hence creating situations where one is prioritised over the others. As the analysis show, the Norwegian interests are more often than not prioritised. The result is that Norway, through the action plan, reproduces and maintains hegemonic and colonial ideas that perpetuates the divide between the 'West' and the 'rest'.

The way forward

Going forward it would be very interesting to compare and contrast the existing action plans for women's rights and gender equality. I think that this would bring out a potential pattern and explain some of the developments in policy and language over time. This could be transferred to other documents containing gender related issues and examine the ways in which gender and agency is portrayed. Through my analysis I was taken by the amount of times I would go back to the context in which the action plan is created in. The element of history and colonial heritage is very intriguing, and I would want this perspective to be increasingly included in academic work in Norway. There have been a few articles speaking about how the colonial heritage is still present in the academia today (Lilleslåtten, 2018, Birkvad & Horst, 2018). Including the history of the Sámi people and the Norwegian government is also something that would be interesting to connect to the issues of Norwegian colonial heritage.

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