In our presentation we will address the ambiguity of linguistic diversity in its social and political dimensions. Using Norway as a case, we aim to question the assumption that linguistic diversity is inherently valuable, and the often accompanying thought that there is a natural fit between diversity and democratic egalitarianism. Norwegian society is relatively speaking very liberal in its attitudes to language variation. Communication among Norwegians is often polylectal with regional dialects enjoying high status. Dialects are widely used in everyday contexts, both formal and informal, and there are two written norms of Norwegian (Bokmål and Nynorsk). A historically rooted sense of inter-Scandinavian identity yields expectations of mutual intelligibility among speakers of the Scandinavian languages. Nonetheless, there is tension within this apparent sociolinguistic paradise. Several factors converge to make the linguistic situation complicated and unstable. On the one hand, old minority languages (e.g., Sami and Kven), while officially recognized, remain relatively marginalized, and the use of Nynorsk is declining. On the other hand, globalization has altered the Norwegian linguistic landscape, and learning ”Norwegian” for new speakers actually means acquiring competence in a wide span of linguistic diversity, including other Scandinavian languages. Globalization has, moreover, introduced a number of new minority languages and led to the increased use of English. This situation creates disturbances for both old and new speakers in the country. The conversations we present will give voice to various ”strangers” in Norway’s ”linguistic paradise” as they address the complexity of linguistic diversity in society today. These conversations are important to highlight among Norwegians, as questioning the value of linguistic diversity runs contrary to the very grain of democratic ideals in Norway. The conversations, furthermore, open up for the discussion of the ”dark sides” of linguistic diversity among sociolinguists.

Keywords: dark side of linguistic diversity, globalization, polylectal communication.