Friend or Foe? The Role and Position of the Sweden Democrats, The Danish People’s Party and the Progress Party in Mainstream Press Editorials.

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(draft version, please do not quote without the authors’ permission)
Populist right-wing parties have particularly in the last decade fared well in Scandinavia, obtaining increasing support among voters. What primarily unites these parties is not so much their economic positions, but rather their strong opposition to immigration and to multi-culturalism, besides showing close commonalities in their discourses about the need to safeguard “the nation” and the natives from the threat represented by immigration and other cultures and religions. Scandinavian populist parties are also all welfare chauvinist and they side with common people against the elites.

However, the reactions to these parties still vary considerably and so does their influence in domestic politics. The Danish People’s Party (DPP) was a crucial support party to the mainstream-right government for ten years, 2001--2011. The Norwegian Progress Party (PP) recently entered into government in coalition with the Conservative Party. The Sweden Democrats (SD) won 20 seats in the 2010 national elections, but the party is generally shunned by political opponents and remains a marginalized reality in Swedish mainstream politics.

Differences are also characterizing the parties’ history. While the SD is a young party with little parliamentary experience and other forms of formal political power, the DPP was founded in 1995 and from 2001 until 2011 acted as support party for the Liberal-conservative government coalition. In Norway, the PP was founded back in 1973 - under a different name and inspired by the Progress Party in Denmark - the party has already a consolidated parliamentary experience but also experience from municipal governments e.g. in Oslo. The parties’ policies vary, also as to their rhetorical style. The PP has in the past explicitly distanced itself from both SD and DPP (Jungar and Jupskås 2014), and do not share the same nationalist style rhetoric of its Scandinavian counterparts. Yet all three parties are critical towards immigration, and while the DPP and PP certainly have moved beyond the stereotypical one-issue party - perhaps soon followed by the SD (Erlingsson et al. 2013) -- they still gather much of their support on this issue. Focusing on these three parties and provides a systematic comparative analysis of three parties at different stages of party development and life-course (Meret 2009) sharing a similar socio-economic backdrop, embedded in the Nordic welfare state.

We argue in this article that the three parties are striving to cross the threshold of credibility, albeit the challenges are different in the three countries. Crossing the threshold would allow them to present themselves as serious political contenders, which have moved beyond the role of pariahs and protest parties, performing a balancing act between challenging the established powers and trying to join them simultaneously. If on the one side they still are protest parties, drawing strength
from being in opposition to the mainstream and being against the elites, on the other side they are eager to counteract political opponents’ attempts at framing them as fundamentally different and morally flawed parties. In this sense, we argue that it is not enough to have what Ivarsflaten once defined as the party’s ‘reputational shields’ (Ivarsflaten 2006) – a legacy that can be used to fend off accusations of racism and extremism, to obtain and maintain electoral support. In this context, credibility represents another important threshold for these parties to overcome, to be able to consolidate their position and eventually appear as concrete political options to parliamentary partnership.

In this paper we pay closer attention to how these balancing acts work out, here analyzing the reception and mediation in the mainstream press of the populist parties. We argue that these parties need to cross a threshold of credibility in order to mobilize mainstream voters and to gain political influence. In this paper, we explicitly look at the editorial pages in the mainstream press in Sweden, Denmark and Norway, comparing how these media assets have framed and responded to the populist parties’ presence and development over time in the respective countries.

Previous research has shown the significance of looking specifically at mainstream reactions to explain the varying progress of these parties (Bale et. al 2010). However, this primarily focused on the political environment and on the response from mainstream left and rightwing parties. Sporadic research exists drawing attention on the role of the media in this regard (cf. Ellinas 2010). In this article we take the analysis one inch further, suggesting that the “new” party needs to be ‘mainstream’ enough to collaborate with others and at the same it needs to remain ‘underdog’ enough to mobilize voters on an anti-establishment and anti-immigration agenda. The issues we considered are: to what extent are there, comparatively substantial, differences in the way these parties are framed and mediatized in the three countries put into scrutiny in this study? And what are the main issues at stake?

We addressed these questions both quantitatively and qualitatively; First we argued that the tone towards the populist parties in the mainstream press editorials analysed is more negative in the case of the SD, when compared to the PP and the DPP. Previous studies suggest a strong commitment of the other ‘mainstream’ to unite in a show of repugnance towards the SD in Swedish politics (Hellström et. al 2012), however this is not the case in Denmark and Norway where the reactions nowadays at least are more mixed. Furthermore, we expect the tone and framing of editorials taking more negative positions when the issues concerned deal with national identity and immigration
We test these assumptions with the help of descriptive statistics. To also analyze more into depth what the debates are about we analyse the tone and the content of the various topics by means of a framing analysis, which allows us to be more detailed about some of the issues at stake when it comes to the representation of populist parties in mainstream press editorials.

**Crossing the threshold of credibility**

As already mentioned, we argue that gaining credibility in the political space is also about the ability of parties to reach out in the public debate with a particular political agenda to the potential voter. This is made more difficult by the lack of a stable ‘ethos-position’ in the public debate (Kjeldsen 2013), from which the party can make its voice heard and reach out to its potential supporters. In standard rational choice theories of political competition (Norris 2005) it is important for “new” political actors to approach the center; “the zone of acquiescence” to also attract the moderate voter, thus maximizing the electoral support under conditions of perfect competition. To this, Kitschelt (2013: 237) adds that: ‘parties build up a cumulative stock of perceptions that shapes people’s view of their policy position’. When translated to our mediated frame, this means that the parties ought to find the balance between radicalism and extremism. Credibility in this case has to do with the construction of *ethos-positioning* in the public debate and with how this evolves in interaction with other senders. Without a stable ‘ethos-position’ in the public debate, from which the party can make its voice heard, reaching out to potential voters becomes a more arduous task.

This approach invites to focus on the relation between politics and language, thus expanding beyond the narrowing rational definition of “the zone of acquiescence” defined by the competition on the electoral market. Considered within this enlarged perspective, the zone becomes a more flexible and changing dimension, defined also by what is depicted as extreme or normal in the public opinion eye.

**Setting, data material and methods**

Why do we look at editorials? Editorial writers only represent a fraction of the total voices heard in the public debate. There is in fact a multitude of other sources of information and opinion making. And as the discrepancies between negative framing in the mass media and electoral success repeatedly have demonstrated, such elite opinion makers mean little in influencing popular opinion towards these parties. Nevertheless, if a party gains credibility by such elite opinion makers, can be considered a *test* of the parties’ ability to cross that threshold of credibility we introduced above.
Editorial writers are opinion makers that act as mediators, communicating messages from elite arenas to the reader/s. Such a ‘mediated space of appearance’ (Silverman 2007: 30), provides in our view ‘the setting where such judgments and decisions are presented and represented, debated, and sometimes, to all intents and purposes, made.” (ibid.). Actions and opinions are set in train at this particular space. According to Zaller (2002: 36) ‘the flow of information in elite discourse determines which considerations are salient’. What editorials represent is a small fraction of this reality, but nevertheless influential. These opinions are important and recognizable voices in the public debate and today are widely and further circulated via social media as twitter and facebook to other mediators (such as journalists in local newspapers, blog writers and so forth). What is written in the editorial pages, in short, does not merely affect the readers but many more people who may be otherwise exposed to framed versions of the original article. To fully understand the correlation between opinion poll fluctuations and media representations, it is not enough to look at the editorials to assess the credibility and thus further studies need to also engage with other arenas in the public debate that the voter might turn to find more positive framing of the party. It could thus be anticipated that what counts as credible thus differ between different fragments of the electorate.

Nevertheless, to be recognized as salient and relevant political actors, not simply as “political clown” or “devil-in-desguise” (Hellström and Nilsson 2010), the political party cannot simply be dismissed as political foe that need to be debarred and contained by the “mainstream society”, but as relevant enough to have a direct effect on domestic policy making.

Our comparative analysis on Sweden, Denmark and Norway also represents different approaches to immigration policies. Scholarly research often describes Sweden as being the most liberal with respect to asylum and immigration policies, whereas Denmark has the most stricter rules on immigration (e.g. the 24-years rule). Among the three, Norway is positioned somewhere in between, not as liberal as Sweden and developing in the direction of Denmark, without going all the way (cf. Brochmann & Hagelund 2012; Bak Jørgensen and Meret 2013).

Sweden, Norway and Denmark were during the post-war period characterized by high political stability, universal welfare states, similar party families and parties with close links to social class groups (Demker and Svåsand 2005). Between the 1930s and the 1960s, the party system remained
essentially “frozen” (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Besides, the three countries share many common socio-political settings, thus a similar plot in which national identity is being formed.

The Scandinavian model combining strong and active welfare states together with market economy reforms under Social Democratic governance constitutes the socio-political historical context in which the SD, the DPP and the PP today operate. Some scholars suggest that with the emergence of the ‘new’ populist right party family (Jungar and Jupskås 2014: 19), we are today witnessing a “re-freezing” of the model on the Lipset and Rokkan articulation.

In relation to the bulk of data material analysed, it consists of 871 articles in four Swedish newspapers, 1979 articles in four Norwegian newspapers and 663 articles in four Danish newspapers. The timespan considered stretched from 2009 until 2012, thus covering (at the time of data collection) the more recent parliamentary election in each country. The articles were sampled by entering the name of the respective parties into the database search string. The articles were sampled from the relevant digital national media archives (the Swedish Retriever Mediearkivet, the Norwegian Atekst, and the Danish Infomedia). As the search engines were unable to distinguish between editorials and other types of articles, the selection was done manually going through all the hits and ordering the published editorials.

Our criterion of selection of newspapers is primarily based on the largest newspapers in each country with a nationwide cover range, also focusing on including one Social Democratic paper in each country and thus not only “independently liberal” newspapers. In the Swedish case we have selected two morning-papers and two tabloids. The former are Dagens Nyheter, which is independently liberal and Svenska Dagbladet, which has a liberal-conservative profile. The tabloids are the independently liberal Expressen and the social democratic Aftonbladet. The selected Norwegian tabloids, VG and Dagbladet, have a nationwide circulation and are also the second and third largest paper in the country (2012). Dagbladet is a liberal paper, while VG, although politically independent, has historically been more conservative. The morning papers are the largest paper Aftenposten, which historically has a conservative profile, but less pronouncedly so today. The last paper, Oslo-based Dagsavisen, is not among the largest in the country, but is selected to

\footnote{Swedish national (and local) elections were held in 2010. In Norway there was a national election in 2009 and regional and local ones in 2011. The last general election in Denmark was in September 2011, whereas local elections took place in 2009. Norway has since held a new general election in September 2013. We have referred to the media coverage of the PP also after the election, but not gathered new data in an equally systematic manner.}
include a social democratic paper\(^2\). For the Danish case, *Politiken* and *Jyllands Posten* have been chosen as the main morning papers in the country. *Politiken* has a liberal progressive and moderately leftwing position, whereas *Jyllands Posten* (JP) is characterized by neo-conservative and more traditionalist positions. It was JP that in 2005 published the controversial Mohammed cartoons (see further Hervik 2011). *Ekstra Bladet* and *BT* are the two largest tabloids in the country, with *Ekstra Bladet* being indicatively politically more left of center than BT.

All sampled editorials were coded by using a shared coding scheme that was developed and improved in inter-dialogue between the involved researchers, their assistants and the material at hand. Also, an initial pilot test coding was done on a sample of 53 articles from Swedish newspapers, to control the reliability of the variables and values used in the analysis. On the basis of these results, the coding instructions were refined and amended. Codes included whether the party constituted a major or minor topic in the editorial; what was the main issue at stake; and whether the tone applied to the party was positive, balanced/neutral or negative.

For the qualitative framing analysis the sample material was delimited by only selecting the editorials where the populist parties plays a major role. We also concentrated on two sets of issues that had proved significant in the quantitative analysis. The first was public opinion and parliamentary affairs. On these issues the tone was more balanced. The second concerned migration policy and social cohesion. These issues tended to be characterized by a more negative tone.

**Quantitative analysis – issues and tone**

We tested two main hypotheses in the quantitative analysis. First, we expected the tone towards the parties in the editorials to be more negative in Sweden compared to Norway and Denmark. There were two main reasons to expect this: SD is a new party on the political arena in Sweden, thus it is reason to expect that its presence has not been normalized to the extent that one might expect in Norway and Denmark. Further, Sweden is characterized by a comparatively liberal stance on immigration, while the SD is based in strongly formulated anti-immigration claims. Thus the distance between the SD and the mainstream parties may be expected to be particularly wide in Sweden. Second, we expected that the tone towards the parties is affected by the topic discussed in the editorials. More specifically, when the article deals with the topic of ‘migrations politics’ we

\(^2\) Alternatively we could have sampled the number fourth paper *Dagens Næringsliv*, which has a strong business profile. This would probably have given fewer negative framings of the PP.
expect attitudes towards the party to be more negative in all the three countries, since the difference between the parliamentary parties are highly pronounced on these matters in all investigated countries. The anti-immigration issue has been crucial for these parties’ electoral success and matters pertaining to immigration and social cohesion are ethically sensitive in all the countries.

The overall tone towards the party in each of the articles sampled was coded on a scale from 1 to 3; the lower the score the more negative the overall position expressed in the editorial (1= negative, 2=neutral/balanced, 3=positive). We also distinguished between articles where the respective parties played a major part and articles where they played a minor role in the texts (for example as one of several parties whose positions on an issue were discussed).

As shown in figure 1, the tone towards the SD in the Swedish editorials is far more negative than in Norway and Denmark. None of the Swedish editorials apply a positive tone, and only a few portray the SD in a neutral manner. That the tone is more negative when the parties play a major role seems quite logical, as an editorial writer is more likely to apply a neutral tone to actors who only play a minor role in the article.

This suggests that the SD operates in a more ‘repressive’ political environment than it is the case for the DPP and the PP. By ‘repressive’ we mean that Swedish editorials are comparatively more negative in the coverage of the SD in Sweden. In Denmark and Norway, the tone used is less polarized and it is influenced by the topic discussed. This is not a normative assessment of whether it is good or bad to be more balanced, but refers to the empirical observation, here indicating that the tone towards the SD is more negative in the Swedish editorials than in both Norway and, to an even higher degree, Denmark. The generally negative tone used in the Swedish editorials might encourage (or reflect) a more polarized discussion and ill-disposed climate towards the SD, in the sense that the difference between those who love to hate the SD and those who actually feel affiliated with the party is greater in Sweden than in Denmark and Norway (cf. Hellström et. al 2012). This might encourage people disagreeing with the positions expressed by mainstream media editorials to find other means, i.e. counter public/s (Fraser 1990) to express their loyalty with the party and find more sympathetically framed sources of information and opinion making elsewhere.
We will now consider what topics are important in the editorials where the populist parties play a major role. Our concern is also to look whether there is a correlation between the topic discussed and the tone that is applied to the party.

Looking at Table 1 below, we can observe that populist parties play a major role in articles with a different range of political issues, but also that there is considerable variation between the three countries with respect to what issues attract most attention. The span in topics is more limited in Sweden, than is the case in Norway and Denmark. Here, articles about social cohesion and migration make up more than a half of all the sampled editorials. Also in Denmark, however, these issues constitute about 40 per cent of the total sample. The focus on these issues in relation to the Norwegian PP is instead surprisingly low. Norwegian editorials are highly concerned with what we coded under the topic of parliamentary affairs. Political commentators in Norway have in the years leading up to the 2013 election (when the PP entered government) spent much energy on discussing future government constellations, and the prospective role played by the PP in such constellations have been a crucial issue in all such speculations. “Parliamentary affairs” is also an important topic in the Danish sample, again reflecting the significant part played by DP in the parliament and as a support party for the government.

Table 1. Key topic in editorial articles where the parties play a major role, per centage distribution (and absolute figures).
Interestingly from the sample considered are the results from the mean value of the tone considered for each topic in each country. Although we must be careful when comparing these figures as the number of observations in each cell is small, table 2 indicates that editorial writers are clearly most skeptical to these parties when the issues discussed are either social cohesion and/or migration politics. It is seemingly easier to adopt a more neutral or balanced tone towards the party when government coalitions or welfare policy are up for debate. This is the case in all three countries. However, the general tendency observed above remains, showing Swedish editorials still as the most negative. Within this picture, Danish editorials are the least negative and the Norwegian placed in the middle.

In short, our quantitative analysis suggests that there are national differences with respect to how the populist parties are discussed and perceived by the mainstream media elite. The SD encounters a more repressive political environment than its Scandinavian counterparts. This can be understood in light of the party’s more radical positions on certain issues and its history, which is short of parliamentary experience and tainted by neo-nazi connections. But it could also be related to a generally highly sensitive debate on immigration and the multicultural society in Sweden. However, in all three countries the populist parties’ positions on migration and social cohesion are clearly contentious.

Table 2. Mean tone by topic in editorial articles where the parties play a major role.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terror and Violence</td>
<td>1.30 (0.48)</td>
<td>1.50 (0.65)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Opinion</td>
<td>1.04 (0.21)</td>
<td>1.68 (0.56)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary affairs</td>
<td>1.12 (0.33)</td>
<td>1.71 (0.51)</td>
<td>2.03 (0.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandals</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>1.30 (0.52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare and Economy</td>
<td>1.18 (0.40)</td>
<td>1.26 (0.51)</td>
<td>1.62 (0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life-style issues and family</td>
<td>1.38 (0.74)</td>
<td>2 (0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture politics</td>
<td>1.34 (0.61)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration Politics</td>
<td>1 (0)</td>
<td>1.16 (0.52)</td>
<td>1.41 (0.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU/European Integration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and Order</td>
<td>1.43 (0.76)</td>
<td>1.67 (0.49)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.09 (0.29)</td>
<td>1.47 (0.58)</td>
<td>1.71 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Qualitative analysis**

In this second part of the comparative analysis, the concept of *framing* is used to detect and summarize the messages channeled by the debates on the SD, DPP and PP in mainstream editorials. Framing refers to the manner in which the media organizes communication in order to invoke a certain interpretation in the reader, such as voter support. Since framing is selective and varies in the saliency assigned to stories, we take it that framing operates differently in the Danish, Norwegian and the Swedish news media.

While the quantitative overview provides the backdrop to our analysis, the attention now will be explicitly directed at how the issues are discussed in the editorials: What is the problem represented to be (cf. Bacchi 2009)? What diagnoses, motivations to act and prognoses are outlined in the articles? Diagnoses relate to the nature of the party and how meanings are attributed to this on the editorial pages. Motivations to act correspond to how the party ought to be contained and by whom now, and in the future, what in the literature has been referred to as prognosis (e.g. Entman 1993).

As noted above, we were particularly interested in articles that concerned parliamentary affairs and public opinion or migration and social cohesion. Thus we looked specifically into the issues that made the parties appear in a mostly negative light, but also the issues where more balanced presentations occurred most frequently. We will present each country separately, before we turn to a concluding comparative discussion.

**Sweden**
It is clear that the editorials in our sample describe the party in very negative terms. While the SD in recent years continually has worked to polish its image, these attempts are bluntly discredited by the editorials.

The negative tone towards the party in the editorials escalated after the SD made its entry into the national parliament in September 2010. The overall message is that the SD is a racist party; even if it tries to present a decent face and “pretends” to be like any other party.

The question many of the editorials revolve around is about the true nature of the party. Here we also see some signs of divergence between the editorial writers. Is the SD a racist party or does it (only) exploit racist and xenophobic sentiments in certain segments of the electorate? The majority of the articles lean towards the former position. The dominant diagnostic frame in the editorials is thus that the SD is a racist party, striving to deceive the voters into voting for what is in fact not a respectable party, but it a devil-in-disguise. The message is that ‘the racism has not been washed off’ (Aftonbladet 2 April 2010), or: ‘… the bitterness and hatred, the will to separate between people and people, is written in SD’s DNA’ (Expressen 13 July 2010).

When the SD convened for its’ annual meeting in 2011 to present a more moderate image of the party, the editorial writers were certainly very skeptical:

A party with its roots in neo-Nazism and neo-fascism strive to broaden itself and become house trained. The participants can look in the stars after these efforts /…/ What makes the Sweden Democrats to be racists is not whether they choose to label themselves as either “social conservative” or “nationalist”. It is their racist view on human nature, which is the problem. (Aftonbladet 24 November 2011).

The risk, according to the editorial articles, is that the SD’s negative views about immigrants, will spill over to other “normal” fractions of the society: ‘The tip toeing around the SD has paralyzed the debate in the society /…/ This is obvious when nowadays also other voices than the SD claim you cannot discuss immigration or integration’ (Dagens Nyheter 30 June 2012). The argument in this article is basically that the main problem for the public debate around the SD is not the party as such and its electoral fortunes, but rather that other more credible voices in the debate also talk about immigration in terms of profitability and warns of the dangers associated with immigration and integration in e.g. immigration-dense suburbs.
The second source of disagreement in the sample concerns whether the SD always has been and is a racist party, or if it is by now a (more) respectable party, sharing views with larger fractions of the electorate.

_Svenska Dagbladet_ stands out from the other papers in the sample in the sense that it was not as extremely negative as the others were. After the scandal with the scaffold pipes (Hellström 2012), however, also _SvD_ joined the others with a mutual resistance towards the party: ‘No one is surprised by the filthy behavior’ (16 November 2012).

A third disagreement concerns the relation between the SD and the other parliamentary parties: is the SD uniquely extreme among the political parties or can it actually be compared to the Left Party? Proponents of the governing mainstream-right coalition argue that the SD is deeply welfare-chauvinistic and thus a perverted consequence of long-lasting Social Democratic governance in Sweden. On the other side, representatives from the Social Democratic opposition conversely argue that SD has authoritarian and conservative ideas, and clearly belong to the right-wing camp (ibid). In a sense, the general message is that you should avoid “sleeping with the enemy”.

If anything, the debate about the SD has accentuated contrasting notions of what it means to be, act and think as a Swedish person today. In an editorial in the tabloid _Aftonbladet_ (12 June 2009), the ambition to debar the SD from influence is also a battle of Swedishness, which share deep roots:

> Sweden might not today be a country satisfied with itself – or satisfied with its’ own future /.../ But Sweden will never become a country that allows itself to be defined by fear. We have a history of openness and optimism that we always will defend. We shall never let the real political challenges drown in the racist background hum.

Most importantly, the editorials are convinced that the battle of Swedishness, although important, should never be allowed to be monopolized by the SD. History teaches us that opinions about what constitutes a “real Swede”, easily, risk being abused (_Expressen_ 16 November 2012; _Dagens Nyheter_ 24 October 2009).

After that the SD crossed the electoral threshold to the national parliament, some editorials recognize that the European trend towards greater acceptance of anti-immigration parties, and even anti-immigration policies, now has come to Sweden as well. As a consequence, “we” need to become more realistic (see e.g. _Aftonbladet_ 22 September 2010).
The development can go in another direction, though. Many editorials are in this regard confident about the eventual decline of xenophobic attitudes in the Swedish society (see e.g. *Expressen* 25 May 2010).

In sum, the dominant diagnostic frame in the Swedish editorials is that the SD represents a *devil-in-disguise* who should be (or rather should have been) stopped from having any influence in parliamentary affairs. Yet, the SD is by now in the national parliament. Different solutions and questions of how the containment should take place and by whom, will be discussed in the next section.

*MOTIVATION TO ACT*

Before the national election in 2010, the editorials worried about the growth of the party as it, according to the polls, approached the threshold to the parliament and eventually rose above it. The suggested tactics was to take an unequivocal position against the party and continue to discuss socio-economic issues, in which the SD had little to say, since: ‘[i]f the main conflict dissolves and there is no opposition worthy the name, then an even larger space opens up for a party like the SD.’ (*Expressen* 24 November 2009).

In the end, as we know, the SD got into the parliament and gained 20 seats in the parliamentary assembly. The general framing in the editorials emphasized that it was a shame that Sweden now has such a party in the parliament. Its views must be resisted and the other parties should avoid “sleeping with the enemy” in order to steal back lost votes. At the same time, as many editorials argue, it is important not to alter the ordinary rules for parliamentary work, such as decreasing the number of seats in the parliamentary committees, to minimize the SD influence.

One of the rather rare circumstances when the SD is not treated totally negatively is when the SD party-representatives are being physically attacked (*Expressen* 15 July 2009). The dominant message is that no matter your opinions about the SD, you should always refrain from violating rules for decent democratic conduct (*Svenska Dagbladet* 15 September 2010). The democratic procedures for decision-making are never to be compromised.

In general, the recipe devised to contain the SD is to treat the party as a “normal” party in the daily parliamentary work, but also to bring the party into the light; i. e to sharply rebut its opinions related to e. g. migration.
The editorials take on the role as watch-dogs, and argue that politicians should focus more on the breeding ground that enable the SD to attract dissatisfied voters to vote for the party, and less on the SD itself. Otherwise, as is repeatedly noted in the editorials, Sweden risks becoming like Denmark (Aftonbladet 15 January 2011).

In sum, the framing of the SD in terms of motivation to act refers to the SD’s democratic right, as newly elected parliamentary party, to be treated with due respect. That is to respect democracy and the common democratic heritage. This frame thus suggests that the SD voters must be respected. A second frame notes that it is important to bring ”the enemy” (the SD) into the light in order to reveal its’ murky opinions regarding immigration, integration and national identity. This frame thus says: bring the SD out in the light. A third frame conversely suggests that we should avoid talking about immigration and other socio-cultural issues, since this strategy only risk to attracting new voters for the SD.

PROGNOSIS

What will the party look like in the future and will it continue to grow?

The overall ambition in the editorials was to solve the puzzle of why the SD continues to grow in such, on the surface, a tolerant country: ‘A xenophobic, and nazist according to Expo, coloured party has impeded the Swedish legislative assembly /…/ That there actually is a hold for the Sweden Democrats’ values … - that is the worst thing’ (Aftonbladet 22 September 2010).

Several editorials claim that the party thrives on latent xenophobic sentiments in the population. In a chronicle, the editor-in-chief for the magazine Neo, Paula Neudung, says (Svenska Dagbladet 1 December 2012):

Here is thus a growing group of Swedes who see the SD as the solution to insecurity and alienation. These people are wrong to trust the SD. But there is reason to be humble about the actual insecurity and alienation.

There is an idea that the mainstream parties are partly to be blamed the SDs success as they have not taken seriously the problems many ordinary Swedes feel impede their everyday lives. One obvious simple solution is to cut down on immigration. This is the solution offered by the SD. The editorials do not agree with this solution, for sure, but they seemingly share a diagnosis of the society where Sweden is deeply disturbed by heavy cleavages in the society. The argument is that
the watering down of traditional welfare state privileges and values (i.e. “the People’s Home”) risks attracting more dissatisfied people to choose the SD. These voters suggestively prefer nostalgic perceptions of that it were better before and feeling discomfort with changes associated with the “new multi-cultural society”. They are the “losers of modernization” and victims of processes of economic re-structuring (Betz 1994).

After the scandals in the party ranks, the SD opinions polls have gone up: ‘The Sweden Democrats endures their worst crisis ever. Everybody hates the party. Everyone, except the voters’ (Dagens Nyheter 30 November 2012). This apparent paradox is much debated in the editorials. In the above-referred article, the author infers that the voters are more offended by “the establishment” than they are by the SD, which recently had suffered from a series of racist scandals (ibid).

The general conclusion is that the party’s hard core cannot be reached. This is made up of people who already made up their mind. On the other hand, it is important not to give up hope on reaching and converting the generally dissatisfied voters (Svenska Dagbladet (30 November 2012)

So, the prognosis of the party seems to follow recognizable patterns: the party will remain in the parliament if it manages to attract the alienated voters who dislike the establishment even more than the SD. If the voters who suffer the most from the current economic crisis choose to turn to the party, this may enable the party to continue to rise in the opinion polls despite (or perhaps thanks to) all the scandals that have impeded the party, and being negatively framed by the (elite) opinion makers.

In sum, the dominant frames in the material related to the prognosis of the party are thus that the SD will continue to grow if the politicians neglect the soil that feed their popularity.

By being exposed in the media, the party is visible for the audience and the prospective voters who are, presumably, tired of the established parties and the mainstream press. Nevertheless, the party has to balance the tightrope right, between radicalism and extremism in order to cross the threshold of credibility and thus access the zone of acquiescence before it can make an impact on domestic politics. The mediation of the party, given our sample of editorials, suggests that the party has certainly not (yet) succeeded.

Norway

DIAGNOSIS
How is the phenomenon of the Progress Party being diagnosed in the editorial articles? Is it a serious and detrimental condition? Or rather an ordinary mundane ailment? Or in fact, nothing pathological at all?

Obviously, given the range in tone, the diagnosis varies between articles and which topics are being discussed. In some contexts the party appears (almost) as an ordinary party – a party that wins or loses at the polls, a party with hardworking and talented politicians, a party that manoeuvres to find support for its key issues and to gain positions. In other contexts it is clear that it is still not a completely ordinary party. Some editorial writers use expressions such as *seg selv likt* (“like itself”) thus underlining the idiosyncratic character of the party (*Dagsavisen* 7 November 2012), they stress differences in political cultures between parties (*Aftenposten* 12 February 2010), they portray its voters as outsiders: ‘These are people who feel they have been politically and culturally abandoned, that they are marginalised, overlooked or given up’ (*Dagbladet* 22 May 2009).

The editorial writers portray the PP as a party striving to be a serious and normal party: ‘*[t]here is little doubt that the Progress Party is now doing its best to appear as a serious collaboration partner after a possible red-green defeat at the parliamentary election’* (*Aftenposten* 23 April 2012). Other parties just *are* normal; the PP must undertake serious efforts to achieve it. This work done to be acceptable can be described through outlining specific policy changes, such as the turn to a more moderate use of oil revenue (*Dagsavisen* 16 November 2009).

A vocabulary of flirting and mating is explicitly made use of when describing the party’s strategies for establishing political alliances: ‘*[t]he Frp-leader is thus making herself attractive for the Conservative leader Erna Solberg’* (ibid.). Some editorials wonder if the party eventually became too successful in being alike the Conservatives, thus explaining its relative decline in the polls later in the period (*Dagsavisen* 11 May 2011). Others maintain that there are limits to how far it is willing to move politically in order to obtain positions (*Dagsavisen* 24 January 2012).

The tone, and thus the diagnosis, towards the party tend to be more negative when the immigration issue is on the agenda than when the government question is discussed more generally. The party, or more precisely claims made by its representatives, are characterized as morally unacceptable, as when an op.ed. writer in Aftenposten (18 July 2009) refers to a claim made by the party’s immigration policy spokesperson as ‘respectless, indecent, immoral and unrealistic’. The party is also blamed for using the immigration issue in order to attract votes. Immigration is not so much
portrayed as an issue on which the PP holds strong views and where they want to achieve societal change, it is described as an issue they exploit to obtain electoral support: ‘But we can with regret note that the party this time is more busy with arming itself instead of constructively solving the difficult problems with the Norwegian integration politics’ or ‘The purpose is anyway to pander to Norwegians’ xenophobia’ (Aftenposten 18 July 2011). Other negatively loaded expressions which are used are “fishing for votes”, “double message” and “obscure” – all indicating a party which is strategically maneuvering to attract the immigration critical vote at the same time as they are cultivating a respectable image. Finally, in some articles the implications of the party’s rhetoric are described as being detrimental to society in the sense that it risk to ‘nourish xenophobia and racism’ (VG 23 February 2009). However, the party itself is hardly described as being racist or xenophobic. It is immoral because it is using such sentiments strategically, not because it embodies it.

Thus the main diagnostic frame that appears is one of a double-faced party: On the one hand, it is a normal party playing its part in the political games and power struggles. It has to work for its ordinariness in a way that other parties are exempt from. There is a dangerous side to it, that party management strives to contain, but which it can also strategically apply. This is the immoral, indecent party, which is strategically exploiting xenophobia and ignoring real societal problems in order to strengthen itself.

**MOTIVATION TO ACT**

In this section we look for frames that answer to the question of how the party is to be contained and by whom. This type of frame hinges on a basic problematization of the party’s very existence. In Norway, the majority of editorials have little to say about how the PP as a political party should be contained. In contrast to Sweden, the party has a long history in parliament and the fact of its parliamentary presence is no longer described as objectionable or scandalous as such.

What remains a contested issue is how to deal with the party’s government ambitions. This is precisely the question that has plagued the other parties on the right – the Conservatives, the Christian Democrats and the Liberals. The relationship to the Progress Party has at times been internally controversial in all the parties, and also the editorial writers hold opinions on this. Dagsavisen, which is very critical to the PP, warns the Christian Democrats of joining forces with the PP suggesting that this would threaten the party’s moral integrity: ‘We will on our behalf be both surprised and disappointed in the Christian Democrats enter government with the Progress Party. Then the party’s slogan about ‘human worth in the centre will have lost its meaning’
VG has however taken a very different position, arguing that ‘It is petty and mean of the Christian Democrats and the Liberals to relate to the Progress Party as if it should be Hamas or Taliban’ (VG 21 January 2009). The government frame thus exists in two contrasting versions. One where the Progress Party must be prevented from entering government, and where other parties should not contaminate themselves by enabling such a coalition government. Another frame suggests instead that this moral distancing and othering of the Progress Party is irrational and unfair.

One of the issues that tend to make government collaboration appear as a truly problematic endeavour – both to other parties and for media commentators – is immigration (Hagelund 2003). It is when immigration is on the agenda that the need to contain the PP seems to be most explicitly pronounced. This is also in line with the results presented in the quantitative analysis; when the topic of concern is related to migration, the tone is comparatively more negative. The second containment frame thus concerns immigration policy and how the other parties actively need to construct better policies on immigration and integration in order to contain the PP.

In this frame other parties are criticized for moving too close to the PP on matters of immigration and integration. A number of editorials are explicitly critical towards the Labour Party and argue that the party-in-government has been more concerned with winning back the voters lost to the PP than in developing constructive immigration policies. An op-ed writer in Dagbladet suggests that the Labour Party is copying PP’s integration policy and thus effectively ‘whitewashing’ (10 February 2011) it – executing similar kinds of policies but without suffering from the same kind of moral tarnishing that hampers the PP’s policy. Aftenposten also calls for greater clarity from the other right-wing parties on immigration:

> The conservatives and the other parties must tell the voters what integration policy which should be led as an alternative to the message of intolerance that the PP more or less directly is hammering in. One must not allow an impression to stick where only the PP takes the challenges of integration policy seriously. If the other parties get more concerned with fighting the PP than shaping their own policies in this demanding field, the PP will win. The rest of Norway will not benefit by that (Aftenposten 25 February 2009).

When the PP had its electoral breakthrough in Norway in 1987 there were many warnings against allowing immigration to become an issue in the election (Hagelund 2003). Current editorials frame the containment message quite differently. They call for a less PP-focused voice on immigration and integration issues from the other parties. They acknowledge that ‘There are many problems that might occur when two cultures meet’ (VG 23 February 2009), but parties must construct policies to deal with this independently of the PP. The desired containment strategy seems to be more talk of...
immigration, integration and other difficult matters, but in a manner where the PP plays a less central part. Thus there is also an implicit (and unacknowledged) nod of agreement to the radical right parties’ claim that the immigration issue must not be allowed to be swept under the carpet.

Two frames have been identified. One revolves around the government Issue and the relationship that other parties should form with the Progress Party. This is a contested issue where editorials in different newspapers take opposing views on whether it is commendable to reject the party a place in a Centre-Right government coalition. The second frame challenges all the mainstream parties to formulate responses to the genuine problems related to immigration and integration, but in a way that is not directed by the desire to win back voters lost to the PP.

**PROGNOSIS**

The final type of frame we are looking for responds to the question of what makes the party attractive and how it will develop in the future. Obviously, the short-term prophecies tend to vary with variations in the opinion polls. In the spring of 2009, the party polled extremely well, repeatedly hitting figures around 30. Four years later results were more moderate. This affected the editorials’ depictions of future success or failure.

Looking at the more long-term projections of the party’s development, these tend to be linked to the double-face-theme discussed under “Diagnosis”. As the party is working to be normal, is it also changing? Many of the analyses presented in editorials revolve around the tensions between the party’s unique roots in popular mistrust and its (more or less successful) attempts at building itself as a normal party vying for power.

Several editorials observe that the party has been through a formidable party-building exercise. There is talk about a ‘more mature approach than former PP-promises of ‘more to everything’ *(Aftenposten* 23 April 2012), a party that has never been ‘better trained and more unified than now’ *(Aftenposten* 25 May 2009), which is ‘well prepared to enter the government offices’ (ibid.), a party which may even have become ‘too similar to the Conservative Party’ *(Dagsavisen* 11 May 2011). On the other hand, according to the editorials, the party never seems able to rid itself of its past, its popular heartland and the strong – but dangerous – sentiments on which its success is built:

Here we can sense the contours of dissatisfaction – or at least impatience – that the progress of the PP seems to have come to a stop. Under the façade of responsibility and moderation, there is a pressure cooker now letting out damp. It is not surprising, but has for a long time been efficiently camouflaged by the ongoing modernization of the party. From being a rather scruffy collection of local protest leaders loosely organized, the PP has developed into an efficient organization with well-trained representatives. Its parliamentary group is
Several editorials devote space to analyzing the transition from Carl I Hagen’s to Siv Jensen’s chairmanship of the party. Hagen has always been a controversial figure, but looking back many editorials acknowledge the successful way in which he transformed an erratic protest movement into a strong and sizeable political party. In 2011 he attempted a political comeback as candidate for Oslo mayor, a comeback that failed spectacularly — not least following his failure to grasp the general public sentiments following the terror attacks on July 22. The tensions between Hagen and Jensen epitomize the tensions that characterize the PP. These are the tensions between the old and the new PP, between populism and responsibility, between protest movement and government contender, between the party, which is indecently flirting with xenophobic sentiments, and the normal party, which is simply formulating policy responses to significant issues.

At the time of writing the Progress Party has recently taken a place in a coalition government together with the Conservative Party. Again this image of the double faced party — crucial in so many of the editorial texts we have analyzed here — is at the heart of the public debate. For the Progress Party and its potential coalition partners it is currently essential to substantiate the image of the party as a normal one, with few affinities to radical right parties in other European countries. Even its labelling as a right wing populist party has become contested. So far, the media as well as its political opponents seem far from convinced. The double-faced framing seems to be stuck to the party for years to come.

**Denmark**

**DIAGNOSIS**

The quantitative analysis on the Danish editorials highlighted that even though the DPP has achieved a degree of recognition and legitimization in mainstream politics, editorial press coverage can still be critical.

However, what the quantitative part of the analysis is not able to tell us, is in what way the DPP is framed and what the negative tone is about. One of the key issues outlined by mainstream editorials is for example whether and how the DPP deals with the increasing importance gained by the economic dimension, considering the relevance that value and culture politics has always meant to the DPP “identity” and electoral support. The economic and welfare agenda is often portrayed as...
the party’s “Achilles’ heel”; a domain where the DPP has difficulties in maintaining its promises, delivering policies and being consistent with the image uphold by the party as guarantor of the welfare state and of the economic interests of the “common ethnic Dane”. Besides welfare chauvinist positions, emphasizing the economic costs of immigrants and refugees and a few accomplishments improving the living conditions of the retired people, mainstream editorials blame the DPP for lack of support to major reforms necessary to tackle rising unemployment rates and the economic downturn. Particularly, the DPP is considered fastened to strategies and methods that mainly benefit the party interests, but no longer respond to the real needs of society.

Criticism is not limited to the DPP; several editorials hold the Liberal and Conservatives partly responsible for being “voluntary hostages” in the hands of the DPP. The failure of mainstream politics to “put a threshold” to the demands of the DPP, is also considered among the reasons for the sizeable, almost uncontrollable political influence gained by the DPP in the years 2001—2011. The “block politics” initiated in 2001, offering virtually no alternative to inter-party agreements with others than the DPP is in essence what editorials argue being the main reason for a gridlocked situation, in which minor parties supporting the minority cabinet are given virtually unlimited political influence, compared to their effective direct involvement in government activity.

Several editorials are also critical towards the attempts of the DPP to “revive” the debate on immigration and integration in times of economic crisis by means of “excessive”, “imaginative” and “bottomless” proposals on migration politics. When the topic of concern was oriented towards migration politics in the editorials, similarly to the Swedish and Norwegian newspapers also the Danish ones tended towards a comparatively more negative view towards the party.

Widespread and more general frames also strengthen the reading that, although the DPP has become a permanent political actor and a legitimate member of the Danish parliamentary that needs to be dealt with, the party still represents a political anomaly in Danish politics. This position emerges when editorials discuss for example the need of the government to realize major welfare reforms, which would require broader intra-party agreements, as well as when the DPP law proposals on migration matters are considered unwarranted and potentially damaging the functions and image of the parties at government. These positions of course vary according to the period of editorial writing and to newspapers, but if Politiken is clearly the most negative when it comes to frame the DPP, other editorials do not spare the party their critique.
MOTIVATIONS TO ACT AND PROGNOSTIC FRAMING

Settled that the DPP is considered a legitimate party with parliamentary representation that endorses and respects democratic and constitutional rules, the debate rather revolves upon who and how to contain the DPP political influence, to avoid situations in which the party is formally put in a position to exert a virtually unlimited political pressure, on the basis of a few decisive parliamentary mandates.

In this sense, the motivation to act is directly related to the articulation of proposed solutions to the problem, also generating a correspondence between diagnosis and prognostic solutions (cf. Benford and Snow 2000). In relation to this, some of the editorials consider the direct involvement of the DPP into government activity (literally to ‘get into the machinery’), as a solution to prevent the party from coming with radical proposals, thus generating a self-regulative and “taming” effect via full-institutionalization and mainstreaming of the party.

Evidence for the efficacy of this practice is sometimes given by reference to the “taming” effects observable in relation to the recent participation of the Socialist People’s Party in government. Other mainstream editorials advance instead the hypothesis of a “physiological” and self-regulative normalization process-taking place within the DPP, where time is considered the pivotal factor. The party leadership shift and a few other organizational and strategic changes are greeted for example in a few editorials as signals that the DPP is slowly but constantly developing towards a mainstream format (e.g. BT 9 March 2012), expressing at the same time concern for what opportunities this process can open up at the extreme fringes of rightwing politics and voting behavior.

The opposing frame is based on the opinion that the DPP will not further “normalize”. In this case, a way to prevent it from gaining political influence is by exposing the party in what it is “not good at”, namely the economy, or to ignore it “by accepting it”; basically acknowledging the party parliamentary legitimacy and representation, but avoiding to conform to it. As expressed in one of Politiken’s editorials:

"The latest experience in Denmark suggests that the most pragmatic and most effective way to weaken [a populist party] is to quickly involve it in decisions that have to do with economic politics, which are on the agenda of most European countries. From the Danish perspective the answer is: do all what you can to weaken [it] (Politiken 11 June 2010)."
On similar lines, another prognosis for the DPP containment is to prevent a consolidation of block-politics as happened in the past. Larger inter- and intra-party agreements are considered ways to break-up rigid and narrowly defined political configurations, avoiding at the same time to give too much power away to single parties outside government. This, however, postulates the “availability” of other political forces, which are willing to supply the required support in the case of minority cabinet formations. This role, ascribed in the past to the political “middle” of Danish politics, of which the Social Liberals are today the only significant representatives, is considered to require a significant change of paradigm in the way politics are dealt with in today’s Denmark.

**Concluding discussion**

We have discussed how the editorials in Sweden, Denmark and Norway mediate the political messages from the senders, which in our case was tantamount to the three nationalist-populist parties in each country. We suggested that the tone differed towards the three parties involved in this study. More specifically, we found that the tone employed towards the SD was comparably more negative. We also found that the tone, in general, was more negative when the article topic was “migration politics”. In the subsequent frame analysis we studied the text corpus by means of identifying dominant frames in the debate, as summed up in table 3. Concerning the diagnosis, the dominant frame in the Swedish case was that the SD is a *devil-in-disguise*. The message is that the SD might have tried to polish its façade, for instance it has launched a zero tolerance against racism within the party ranks but underneath they are the same racist sect as they always have been.

*Table 3. Summary of the frame analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>What is the nature of the party?</em></td>
<td>Devil in disguise</td>
<td>A double-faced party</td>
<td>Normalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exploiting xenophobia</td>
<td>Limits to normalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to act</td>
<td>Respecting the voters</td>
<td>Relationship issues: a party to be courted or not?</td>
<td>Prevent excessive influence through mainstreaming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How is the party to be contained and by whom?</em></td>
<td>Bring it into the light</td>
<td>Debating immigration without the PP</td>
<td>Or through distancing from the party’s inherent populism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoiding the immigration issue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prognosis</td>
<td>Never to be like Denmark</td>
<td>The potential emergence of a normal party vs its legitimate party with populist elements that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How will the party evolve</em></td>
<td>Blame game</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Norway, the diagnosis was split between two partly contrasting frames. Firstly, the PP is seen as a *double-faced party*. On the one hand they are conceived as a normal party similar to the other parties engaged in the political game. On the other hand, there is a more dangerous side to it and the party board needs to contain these elements. The second frame is that the party exploits xenophobic sentiments in the Norwegian society to gaining votes. Particularly for the centre parties these frames in 2013 contributed in making a four-party coalition agreement hard to reach, and the Christian Democrats and the Liberals opted to stay outside of the government. The Conservatives on the other hand presented a different frame where the PP was considered a normal party, with little resemblance to rightwing populist parties elsewhere. The two parties have now proceeded to form a minority coalition government.

In Denmark, diagnostic frames infer on how to prevent the party from having too much power. Two alternative interpretations emerge from the mainstream editorials: on the one side, some editorials suggest a maximum engagement of the DPP in government activity, also by means of direct government responsibility, on the other side; the best antidote to resist the DPP influence is to accept its presence, but to expose its limits. While the first approach draws on an interpretation of increased “normalization” by means of further inclusion, the second hints at a limit to normalization of the party, but at the same time does not question the idea that the DPP is a political party that “has come to stay” in Danish politics.

Concerning *motivation to act*, a number of editorials in our material noted that the SD voters must be respected. The authors of these editorials were clear that democracy should never be compromised with and therefore the SD, as any other parliamentary party, enjoys the same democratic right to make their voice heard. A second frame, commonly combined with the first, is that the mainstream parties and the mainstream opinion makers must *bring the SD out in the light*. This means a sincere commitment to resist all claims that the SD articulates in their profile area. Most importantly, the other parties should resist any kind of collaboration with the party. A third frame, however, suggests that the immigration issue should be avoided. Even if you win the debates with the SD, they receive much attention, which in the long run affects their voting figures positively.
In Norway, we have again been able to identify two dominant frames in the material. Firstly, several articles deal with the government question, frequently framed as a relationship issue. Different editorials had different opinions as regards to whether or not the party should be allowed to participate in a Centre-right government. As the period of study was 2009-2012 and the party has since actually entered government, the situation probably looks somewhat different today and future studies may test if this is the case. The second frame challenged all the mainstream parties to engage with the immigration issue without trying to steal back votes from the PP.

In Denmark, the motivations to act closely correlate with prognostic framing. Editorials tend to agree on the excess of political influence attained by the DPP in the years under the Liberal and Conservative government. There is agreement on the need to prevent this to happen again in the future. However, frames differ when it comes to assessing to what degree and whether the party now can be considered a mainstream party and be treated like “all other parties”. While some editorials suggest that the initiated mainstream process will continue also in the future, operating on those residual elements of the party that still characterize it as “populist”. Other dismiss this prospect and assert the need to evoke a distance towards the DPP most contentious politics, underlying the fact that the DPP remains inscribed in the wave of national populist and xenophobic demands that can also be registered in the rest of Europe.

Concerning the prognosis the voices heard in the Swedish debate were ambivalent. There was a dominant frame stressing that the overall development in the Swedish society with e.g. increased class ruptures and differences in terms of living conditions between e.g. the natives and the immigrants constitutes the feeding ground for the SD, rather than the party as such. This situation needs to (better) tackled by the establishment (and the established parties), otherwise the SD will continue to grow. The general perception is, however, that Sweden is different from e.g. Denmark and therefore the SD shall never become such a decisive factor for Swedish politics, compared to the role played by the DPP in Danish politics. To avoid this to happen, many editorials claimed, the “decent” parties should take their responsibility to tackle the challenges in the Swedish society; otherwise the SD will continue to grow.

Depending on party affiliation and political colour the various editorials had different views considering who should be blamed for the SD’s progress in the polls. This blame game is thus the dominant frame in the Swedish material. In these cases, commonly, the diagnosis of the problems was similar between the SD and their antagonists whereas the solution was very different.
In Norway, there was some ambivalence related to the ability of the PP to change and in the long run become a reliable partner in future government constellation. On the one hand, the party was considered as having developed into a mature party organization with well-equipped party representatives. On the other hand, the party was judged by some editorial writers a being unable to rid itself of its history as single-sighted protest movement. This tension is personified through the tensions between Siv Jensen’s chairmanship and the legacy of the past chairman of several decades, Carl I. Hagen.

In Denmark, positions are divided between those considering the party a legitimate and potential government partner, albeit still with populist elements that need to be regulated and controlled, and editorials that count the party as a legitimate parliamentary representative of segments of the Danish electorate, but with an ideology and heritage that still make it a populist anti-immigration and Eurosceptic political force in Danish politics.

The SD acts in a far more repressive political environment, compared to the other two parties. It is repressive in the sense that the tone used in the editorials is heavily negative. However, the negative writing about the party did not seem to hamper its support. Indeed there is no clear-cut causal relationship between opinion poll fluctuations and media representations to be detected in our material. On the contrary, the polls went up after the scandals that struck the party in the fall 2012. The SD and its’ antagonists alike invest strong emotions in the public debate around the SD and its’ politics and activities. We can furthermore conclude that the public debate is extremely polarized. Indeed our material, which focused on the establishment side of the debate is certainly consensual in its’ negative attitudes towards the SD. But also considering e.g. the growth of the SD in opinion polls, the public debate in a broader context is seemingly polarized, between those who love to hate these parties and those who conversely share affiliation with them, and often against the establishment.

To cross the threshold of credibility and balance the tightrope between radicalism and extremism a “new” party needs to address the relevant audiences to advance on their politics. The SD has failed to do so in the sense that the mainstream editorials yet regard the party as an unwelcome foe in the Swedish debate that needs to be debarred from influence with whichever means. The situation is different in Denmark and Norway, as the editorials in our material drift between the view that these parties have to be lived with and the view that it is even possible to befriend them; i.e. forming a coalition government with them.
Are our results only a matter of time? Will the borders of normality increasingly converge between the three countries? Does political power hamper the success of “our” parties as we might see in Norway with the PP in government and will the SD remain pariah, below the threshold of credibility, also after the next parliamentary elections in Sweden in September 2014? Are the previous anti-establishment parties now part of the establishment?

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