ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops,
April 2008,
Rennes.
Working paper to be presented at the workshop:
Is Populism a Side-Effect of the Europeanization of Political Competition.

"We are the Good Guys":
Europeanization of neo-nationalism, the case of Sweden.

ABSTRACT.
This article investigates the public debate on the politics and voters of the Swedish neo-nationalist party Sverigedemokraterna (SD) as it is manifest in the media coverage from the elections in September 2006 to May 2007. We firstly aim to identify ideological positions manifest in the public debate of SD-politics and their voters in the fields of democracy and culture. Secondly, we aim to abstract the results of this inquiry to a general level of societal reconfigurations of European societies. Methodologically, we use ideology analysis to (1) identify manifest messages articulated through different positions in the public debate and to (2) scrutinize rhetorical figures, which inadvertently or deliberately, sustain the messages and provide them with a certain degree of credibility. Even if representatives from the established parties seek to maintain a dichotomy between SD and the rest, the analysis of the usage of rhetorical figures reveals a net of identity relations rather than a mere distinction between "Us" and "them". SD endeavours to act at the margins of the European Grammar, which conveys, on the one hand, common values of democracy, rule-of-law and human rights and, on the other hand, a politics of fear based on a perception of the outside world as ultimately dangerous. Our findings suggest that processes of Europeanization not only indicate increased convergence between various post-national or cosmopolitan views. On the contrary, the Europeanization of neo-nationalism, somewhat paradoxically, shows proof of how also xenophobic nationalist movements have benefited from, or at least profited on the European Integration process.

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INTRODUCTION

In May 2007, the Swedish neo-nationalist party "Sverigedemokraterna" (SD) held its annual meeting in Karlskrona. The meeting was preceded by logistic turmoil. It proved to be difficult to find accommodation, since local conference arrangers were concerned about riots or simply turned down their request because of the controversial image of SD. The party secretary of SD, Björn Söder, responded that 'In Skåne[1], we long for the other side of Öresund as did the eastern Germans before the tumbling of the Berlin wall' (SvD 070520).[2] He refers to the increased tolerance of nationalist parties in Denmark, located at the other side of Öresund, as a contrast to his country of origin, Sweden.

In the small town of Karlskrona, during these days, approximately 50 journalists were commissioned to report from, not only the meeting but also from anticipated violence in the streets. There were no violent activities. However, the public debate on SD and their voters continues to be heated. The media interest on SD and their politics has grown significantly after September 2006 when the national elections were held (see appendix 1). This article investigates the public debate on SD-politics and their voters as it is manifest in the media coverage from the elections and on to May 2007. Before the elections SD was not invited to public electoral debates and there was not much of a campaign. They failed to pass the threshold to the national parliament, although the party had their greatest success this far and doubled their votes from the previous elections.

Sweden is, compared with its Scandinavian neighbour states, relatively generous in accepting asylum-seekers and the political establishment shares a joint reluctance of extremist parties. According to Christina Johansson (2008), the governmental parties mobilise support for the image of Sweden as morally superior to others through an emphasis on state policies on immigration. It is therefore interesting to analyse to what extent SD jeopardizes the image of Sweden being extra tolerant and hospital towards strangers. Our pre-understanding, in this regard, is that Sweden does not differ substantially from other European countries. The perception that SD represents an anomaly in an otherwise consensual political milieu is, from a wider European perspective, already outdated (cf. Mouffe 2005). Many European countries, such as Denmark, Austria, Norway, France, Belgium and Holland, have experienced how so-called Extreme Right Parties (ERP) had, indirectly or directly, affected governmental politics. Arguably, the politics of right-wing populism is increasingly normalized in European societies (cf. Marchart 2001)[3] and

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[1] Skåne is a county that is located in the very south of Sweden. It was also in Skåne that SD managed to attract the most voters in the 2006 general elections. In sum, SD managed to gain representation in 144 municipalities.

[2] Indeed, SD co-operates with the hitherto more successful nationalist party Dansk Folkeparti in Denmark, referred to as its "sibling party" (SvD 060922). Also, they have received financial support from the archetypical Populist Party, Front National under the chairmanship of Jean-Marie Le Pen (Larsson & Ekman 2001). Furthermore, they cooperate with other neo-nationalist parties in Europe, some of which are members of the party group "Union for Europe of nations" (UEN) that is represented in the European Parliament (Mudde 1999; Minkenberg & Perrineau 2007).

[3] A key event in the process of normalization of populism in Western Europe was, arguably, when the then fourteen member-states of the EU lifted the sanctions against Austria and its coalition government between the conservative party ÖVP (Die Österreichische Volkspartei) and the Populist Party FPÖ (Die Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs) in 2000. The bi-lateral boycott lasted for less than a years and was resolved due to a report published by a committee of the three so-called three wise men on (1) "The Austrian Government's commitment to the common European values, in particular concerning the right of minorities, refugees and immigrants and (2) the evolution of the political nature of the FPÖ" (Ahtisaari et al. 2002; cf. Hellström 2006: 189). The report confirmed that the FPÖ was a right-wing populist party, whereas their radicalism was effectively played down. In other words, the politics of the FPÖ was not thought to pose a threat to common European values on i.e. human rights and democracy.

some would say that it is only a matter of time before such a party will be represented in the Swedish national parliament (e.g. Rydgren 2002; SvD 060922).

GLOBALISATION, EUROPEANIZATION AND NEO-NATIONALISM

Much has been written about the political profiles of populist parties in contemporary Europe and how we are to explain their progress in an increasingly globalised or at least trans-national world. Manuel Castells (1993: 480) reckon that European societies face a crisis of cultural identity since supranationality blurs national identities and major cities get more entangled. In the age of information, following Castells, people who feel unsecure about who they are may turn to neo-nationalist ideologies as a collectivist response to the neo-liberalization of the world.[4] More recently, Arjun Appadurai (2006) explains current tensions between majority-populations and various minority groups through references to a "fear of the incomplete"; hence, a fear of not knowing what distinguishes "us" from "them" in contemporary societies. Neo-nationalist ideologies may, in this regard, sustain the resettlement of borders that demarcate the nation from the outside world. In relation to this, Swank & Betz (2002) have detected empirical connections between the upswing of neo-nationalist parties and globalisation (see also Minkenberg & Perrineau 2007). Scholars such as David Held (2003) and Jan Aart Scholte (2000) understand globalisation as a series of multi-fold process that brings into play policy changes that affect the fundaments how the national democracy operates, how the domestic welfare regime prevails and how ideas of a distinct national culture may handle global flows of cultural interaction.

While globalisation certainly represents a window of opportunities for a privileged few yet others would fear, or at least hesitate faced with the same processes. While some political strategies may embrace border-transgressing ventures, others would resist such adaptation and instead suggest measures to safe-guard the presumed interests of the domestic populations. Neo-nationalist parties offer the citizens a promise of protection against foreign elements that may jeopardize the sacralised link between the national demos and the national territory. In terms of solidarity, they claim to stand up for the little man in a complex world, and thus argue that the national society can not withstand much cultural pluralism (cf. Hervik 2004). They distance themselves from ideas of racial superiority and blatant racism, yet they declare that different cultures neither could nor should be fused (Balibar 1991; Gingrich & Banks 2006).

In this context, it is perhaps not strange that SD representatives turn to Huntington's thesis of the clash of civilization as a key source of inspiration (SD-Kuriren 061226). In his reputable book, "The Clash of Civilization and the remaking of world order", Huntington recognises a main cultural divide from the great schism in the 11th century and on to our days between, on the one hand Western Christianity, and on the other hand Orthodoxy and Islam. In this analysis, Islam is

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[4] To be consistent, we will henceforth use the label "neo-nationalist" to describe the politics of SD. "Populism" has increasingly been used as a label to also categorize left-wing groups that say no to everything from the EU to globalisation (see further Hellström 2006: 209). Furthermore, a division between the populists and the rest as based on the populist aspiration to speak in the name of the people is rather strange, we believe. In a representative democracy all parties strive at representing the people, which is also to speak in the name of the people, at least to some extent. Paul Taggart (2000: 1) writes in a comprehensive overview of the concept of populism: 'It has an essential impalpability, an awkward conceptual slipperiness'. As a contrast, "ERP" suggests, in our view, a too narrow label for right-wing parties that display xenophobic features. Taking into consideration the ambitions of SD to be the true heirs of the, in their view, failed Social Democratic ideology, it is not evident that they could be positioned as a typical Right-Wing party.

per definition anti-Western. Huntington has not only influenced the White House (Brown 2008: 202), apparently, his ideas reverberate in domestic affairs throughout the world. The main thesis of Huntington is that culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level should be understood as civilization identities, shape the patterns of cooperation and conflict in the post cold-war period (Huntington 2002: 20). It is evident that SD has taken the opportunity to exploit his theory to justify their scepticism against Islam (Sverigedemokraterna – homepage). They neither could nor should become like "us".

We argue that the neo-nationalist party of SD feed on processes of globalisation and also on the current supra-nationalisation of the EU. Gerard Delanty & Chris Rumford (2004) suggest that we need to consider the cultural foundations of politics and the historical processes of modernity in order to apprehend the complex dynamics of the European integration process. Most scholars of European Integration (cf. Radaelli 2006; Lenchow 2006) tend to analyse processes of Europeanization as the interaction of EU- and national policy procedures in terms of institutional and constitutional changes. The contribution of Delanty & Rumford, in this regard, is that they manage to move beyond both a narrow focus on EU politics and to bring forth an understanding of Europeanization as invoking change dynamics also in the cognitive and discursive structures of European societies.[5] In this paper, we suggest that the Europeanization of neo-nationalism shows proof of how also xenophobic nationalist movements have benefited from, or at least profited on the European Integration process. This perspective allows us to move from a simple mapping of neo-nationalist parties in Europe to a wider understanding of a common European grammar of neo-nationalism that, on an estimate, is based on a politics of fear; hence, a perception of the outside world as increasingly threatening and difficult to comprehend.

THE STUDY

In this study, we firstly aim to identify ideological positions manifest in the public debate of SD-politics and their voters in the fields of democracy and culture. Secondly, we aim to abstract the results of this inquiry to a general level of societal reconfigurations of European societies. Methodologically, we use ideology analysis to (1) identify manifest messages articulated through different positions in the public debate and to (2) scrutinize rhetorical figures, which inadvertently or deliberately, sustain the messages and provide them with a certain degree of credibility (cf. Bergström & Boréus 2005: 158). Such figures are for instance "we are the true democrats"; "we are not like them" or "we are not racists, but…". These are, in general, tacitly presupposed in the argumentative structure of the message rather than explicitly mentioned. An analysis of the usage of rhetorical figures, we believe, reveals a net of identity relations rather than a mere distinction between "Us" and "them". Through the specification and analysis of certain rhetorical figures, we aim to recognize ideological positions in the public debate of the politics and voters of SD. The positions, which come as a result of our inquiry, agglomerate different views on i.e. globalisation,

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[5] Delanty & Rumford (2004: 95-102) suggests, for instance, that a common European commemoration of the Holocaust may bring European people together on European Public Sphere, surpassing narrow national affiliations and increasingly adopting a common European grammar.

multi-culturalism and European Integration. Ideology, in this regard, indicates a process of the production and re-production of meanings in the public debate (see further Eagleton 1991; Torfing 1999). In other words, the ideological positions provide a screen through which we may (1) filter the public debate and (2) abstract the results of our analysis to a general discussion on the Europeanization of neo-nationalism.

The media material represents an arena for public debate and public scrutiny in which conflicting opinions of the politics and voters of SD are articulated, including the opinions and view-points addressed by the journalists themselves. According to Oberhuber et al. (2005: 229), the analysis of mass media material is essential for conveying how certain world views are communicated in public discourse. We shall thus seek to identify how various groups of actors involved in the debates are positioned and categorised in relation to each other following the basic matrix of self-presentation and negative other-presentation (see further Reisigl & Wodak 2001: 186-94; Oberhuber et al. 2005: 234).[6] In a multiple party system, political parties react to one- another and thus constantly reshape their political profile. In analysing the media material, it is important to take into consideration that commentators tend to communicate their messages in accordance with the specific logic of a particular debate in order to, for instance, establish a difference between SD and themselves. Bearing this in mind, we contend that the material, as a whole, is appropriate for identifying fundamental values of democracy and culture, and by way of extrapolation, the coming to the fore of certain ideological positions.

The analysis is limited to the public debate about SD in the fields of democracy and culture.[7] In the first part of this paper we analyse rhetorical figures that reflect different democratic ideological positions. Which ideas of democracy are dominant in the public debate on SD and their voters? How are these ideas of democracy used by the actors involved in the debate to, on the one hand, validate a certain position and, on the other hand, to discredit other positions? In the second part of this paper we discern rhetorical figures that embed different ideological positions in the field of culture. What does it mean to be, act and think as a "real Swede"? What are the perceptions of the "new" multi-cultural Sweden? Towards the end of the article, we aim to situate the Swedish debate in a wider European perspective.

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[6] The empirical material is collected through two data bases (Presstext and Mediearkivet) that include a variety of news items and articles from major national-, regional and local news papers in Sweden.

[7] The selection of articles has been done by means of a search using the words 'Sverigedemokraterna' and respectively 'Democracy' and 'Culture' covering a time period from 1 September 2006 to 31 May 2007. In sum, we have collected approximately 200 articles and news items for each field (see further Appendix 3).

DEMOCRACY

This part of the article deals with rhetorical figures that reflect different democratic ideological positions. The ideas of democracy, in the media articles, are often used as a way to discredit the adversary and to justify ones own arguments, as well as these are founded in different normative democratic strands. Democratic values and principles are thus employed as rhetorical means in the public debate on SD-politics and their voters. All actors seem eager to embrace democratic principles. However, it is rare that these principles are specified in any greater detail.

WE ARE DEMOCRATIC VICTIMS

While the established parties seek to discredit the politics of SD as an anomaly in an otherwise unprejudiced Swedish debate, SD seeks to present themselves as a party for ordinary people. This tension grew stronger after that the established parties formed sometimes new and formerly unthinkable alliances to block SD in forums of formal influence. The Swedish democratic system, as other proportional systems, is a bargaining system. It is thus not formally incorrect to create new coalitions. However, from the perspective of the electorate it may seem dubious that a party that made such progress in the elections remains excluded from local decision-making assemblies (Exp 070413). From the eye of the voter, the elected representatives may not be considered representative of the interests and wills of the people. Accordingly, SD-representatives suggested that the rules of democracy were applied differently due to party affiliation. In more or less every article where SD party members are cited, they state that the rules of democracy are used discriminatory (eg. SDS 070410).

Before the elections, established parties decided not to engage in public debates with SD. For a long time, other parties preferred to talk about SD and not with them. On this matter, SD writes an open letter to Mona Sahlin, the Social Democratic party leader: "The main reason for them [the Social Democratic party], after years of silence, to open the debate with the Swedish Democrats is that they do not want to give us the role of the martyr. Not a word about dialogue and debate as an integral part of a vital democracy, which clearly shows the Social Democratic view on democracy" (Exp 070419).[8] The rhetorical figure, employed by the SD to defend their case in this regard, could be summarized as SD as the *democratic victims*: other parties as well as groups in society obstructed their attempts to participate in the political arena by the same rules as established political actors. From our reading of the news-articles, it seems reasonable to suggest that the other parties, probably inadvertently, sustained the validity of this particular rhetorical figure. In the written correspondence, referred to above, SD explicitly talked about their position as political martyrs. In the rhetoric of SD, backed up with references to democratic principles, it becomes a question of representation and concerns about that the rules of the game are applied differently and discriminatorily. The rhetorical figure of the *democratic victims* soon became a uniting phrase amongst fellow SD-representatives, as put by party president Jimmie Åkesson: "we are the underdogs" (Åkesson 2007).

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[8] The authors have translated all quotations from Swedish to English.

Media has an important role in a democratic society – spreading information and forming opinions. However, it is a delicate role and our analysis reveals that many were, for different reasons, discontent with media's coverage. The media, put in generalised terms, is accused of distorted descriptions of reality, for marginalizing voices and endorsing or disqualifying certain groups. SD representatives feel misunderstood and blame media for running the errands of the consensual elite (GP 070419). According to them, media use different standards when they write about SD. The media focuses on specific individuals and failures rather than paying attention to their politics. On the other side, representatives of the other parties blame media for giving SD too much exposure. A self-critical article of media's role concerning SD is presented by the journalist Pernilla Gudmundsson (HD 061025). She argues that media's framing of local news fits well with the views of SD. She argues that journalists systematically support a world view that divides people into us and them. Furthermore, ethnicity is often brought up in relation to societal problems. Even if messages manifest in the media portray SD as a xenophobic party consisting of political clowns, their coverage of society supports the SD perception of the state of affairs.

A main rhetorical divide in the debate concerns the coupling to the people, between a representative democracy and a direct, or populist, democracy. Thereby the presence of SD challenges the idea of elite rule and, ultimately, it tests the tolerance of representative politics (Taggart 2000: 114). The SD portrays Swedish politics as an elite consensual affair with a distorted coupling to the interest and will of the people (DN 060924). It seems difficult for the established parties to react to the challenges of SD in a democratically valid way. To marginalise SD in the debate is also to justify their position as *democratic victims*. A number of articles deal with this matter. Professor Björn Fryklund emphasises the necessity of an open discussion with SD guided by democratic principles. He represents the position of the moral hardliners in this debate and is more concerned about the democratic effects on the political system than with the recent progress of SD (SDS 060923).

To sum up, one common view in the material is that all parties are to be treated equally, ideally in accordance with their relative amount of votes. The basic rules of democracy should also apply to SD. Some commentators argue that other parties should mobilise to exclude neo-national parties from political influence and yet remain loyal to democratic principles. From this view, it is important to open up for dialogue with SD. In practice, though, local politicians from other parties found it more feasible to bend the rules in order to marginalise SD. This is legitimate, since they are considered qualitatively different and potentially dangerous. Such behaviour risks to sustaining the image of SD as democratic victims, though.

THEY ARE POLITICAL CLOWNS
A rhetorical figure, employed by the established parties, to discredit the politics of SD is that party members act as *political clowns*. They have no knowledge of the democratic rules and act ignorant when it comes to practical political issues. There are a number of examples where representatives of SD are ridiculed; they are portrayed as laymen not aware of the basics of

political work. They do not have representatives to fill their chairs and some of their candidates are appointed after the election. In addition to this, those who care to show up tend to misbehave and they also lack formal experiences of politics (Exp 070330). Jimmy Fredriksson writes in an editorial (GT 061130):

> Democracy is no joke, free elections are sacred and municipal assemblies are no playground… The Duckberg mentality of the Swedish Democrats has proven the democratic system weak. But this can be corrected. The contempt for democracy among the Swedish Democrats is an integral part of the party. About this nothing can be done.

The rhetorical figure of SD as *political clowns* thus indicates that SD does not only lack cohesive political ideas, they also lack necessary proficiency in formal political proceedings. Following this line of thinking, commentaries tend to rely on two main explanations for the attraction of SD. Firstly, the voters turn to SD as a way to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the established parties rather than they are drawn to the ideology of SD. If you are discontent with the politics of the consensual elite, some would argue, there is no alternative but to vote for SD (Exp 060923). It is worth mentioning that SD-voters rarely are accused of being racists. This is a way to discredit SD without discrediting (all) their voters. Professor Hjerm supports this view and refers to a survey that confirms that Sweden is one of Europe's least xenophobic countries (ibid.). Instead, the growing attraction of SD signifies an attempt to put pressure on the other parties. This explanation can be summarised in the rhetorical figure of: *SD-voters are dissatisified with the political establishment.*

Secondly, there is a wide-spread sympathy of the SD view on Swedish integration politics as a complete failure (Exp 060922; DI 070209; GT 070421). Noteworthy is the lack of research to back up such statements. Everyone seems to agree that the system has failed. This view appears to be a common truth and no one questions its correctness. Rather than referring to comparative studies, anecdotes are told to prove the failure of integration politics.

In general, it seems that most commentators are careful not to blame the voters. A strong "faith of rationality" is reflected in the texts where voters are regarded as rational but not racists and therefore there *must* be other reasons for the SD-votes. A strong emphasis on the failure of integration thus comes in handy. It is tempting to here paraphrase the famous utterance of Bertolt Brecht (1960) from the play "The Threepenny Opera" that if the people have forfeited the confidence of the government, you need to "to dissolve the people and elect another". Indeed, to ridicule the SD political party is also to belittle the voters who actually decided to vote for them in the previous election. The public debate on these matters can be summarised with the following rhetorical figure: *SD party members are stupid but SD-voters are not*

In paying attention to what SD themselves say, we can add another aspect of the rhetorical figure of *political clowns*. Jimmie Åkesson, the party president, told a story about his local political work at the party's annual meeting (Åkesson 2007). The other parties, including the bureaucracy, had hindered him from fulfilling his political duties for nine years. He said that he had experienced problems with meeting the constituency and answering questions, since he was

denied access to channels of political information (Åkesson 2007). This argument connects the description of SD-representatives as political clowns to the former discussion about SD as *democratic victims.* They are made to act as clowns because they face discrimination in their daily political work.

Many analysts of Swedish democracy describe it as an out-put oriented view on democracy; some would label it as a service democracy. This is due to the strong coupling between ideas of democracy and ideas of the welfare state (Nilsson 2005). Therefore democratic discussions also include an element of the question of governability and effectiveness. Here the rhetoric figure of political clowns finds a natural place, as well as the emphasis on the naïveté of SD. Furthermore, the messages communicated in the news material indicate that they will say almost anything to attract voters, no matter how unrealistic their proposals may seem (Exp 070330). Some experts express a rather dystopian view on the function of democracy, if the voters do not value performance and vote for "political clowns" this shows proof of a democratic deficit. Leif Pagrotsky, a former Social Democratic minister, is critical of the present party system and suggests that Sweden ought to adopt a two-party system. By doing so, there will be no space available for SD, he infers (GP 070418).

In conclusion, SD party members are criticised for not being competent enough to handle regular political work. In relation to this, concerns are raised about the political system at large; it is problematic if political clowns are not punished by the electorate. We can not replace the voters, so perhaps the political system should be changed. These discussions risk to underpinning a separation between the people and the elite.

THEY ARE DEVILS IN DISGUISE

Another widely spread rhetoric figure is that SD represents a *devil in disguise*. SD has during the last years built a democratic surface, but beneath they are said to be undemocratic, racist and violent (GT 061107; SDS 070225). It is striking that most criticism against SD in the field of democracy concentrates on the dark history of the party; party-representatives where proven to be involved in Nazi-like organisations and also over-represented in the crime registers (see further Larsson & Ekman 2001). Therefore SD can, quite conveniently, disregard it as obsolete criticism, since they nowadays are a reformed party that has made up with its past.[9] The former party leader of the Christian Democrats, Alf Svensson, writes in a major newspaper: "The Swedish Democrats must be put in the light, undressed and revealed, and their nationalistic egoism and their undemocratic views on humans shall be apparent in all its pitiableness" (Exp 070425).

During the time period put into scrutiny in this article, though, it is SD that has been victims of violence rather than the other way around. Many SD meetings have been under attack during which several party members were injured (Exp 070413). Nevertheless, political representatives from the established parties seek to reveal these dark features of the party, to show the

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[9] See also interview (Purvis & Leuker 2000) with the then chairmen of the Austrian neo-nationalist party FPÖ, Jörg Haider, who implies that maybe the established parties suffer from links to a shady history, whereas "we" represent a new modern political alternative relieved of the burdens of the past.

constituency the "true nature" of their ideology; they are thus *guilty-by-association*. This rhetorical figure typically connects them to the Nazis. A former Social Democratic minister declares that "fanatic and sick views led to war, misery and inhalation. SD's views of anti-Semitism and xenophobia today are closely connected to the evil and the crimes of the Nazis" (SvD 070225).

In invoking this rhetorical figure SD-antagonists seek, between the lines, to justify perhaps dubious democratic means to counteract them. More often, though, a more deliberative strategy is put forward as an alternative to dismantle the politics of SD. The democratic system, as such, features appropriate safe-guard mechanisms against undemocratic movements. In this view, which gained further resonance after the elections, the remedy to the populist challenge is a deliberative democratic system that focuses on dialogue and arguments. The Social Democratic party also decided to participate in a televised debate, where the party president Mona Sahlin debated with the chairman of SD, Jimmie Åkesson. Finally, SD had gained access to the ball-room of the political debate.

In conclusion, some would argue that a democracy has to be alert and ready to protect itself from undemocratic and racist parties. SD has a racist track-record and is thereby not to be trusted, even if they pay lip service to democratic principles. SD prefers to shift the focus from the past to the present and, repeatedly, adhere to democratic principles. For them, a more accurate description would be that they challenge the status quo, therefore the elite seeks to discredit them and their politics.

WE ARE THE TRUE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

Surveys show that SD gained a lot of votes from people who previously voted for the Social Democratic party (Exp 070420; Exp 060922). In their own rhetoric, SD adheres to the more traditional version of social democracy than the Social Democrats themselves. Their position could be summarised in the rhetorical figure of that: *we are the true Social Democrats*. SD returns to Per-Albin Hansson (Prime Minister in Sweden from 1932 to 1946) as a key inspiration for their political agenda (Exp 061215). Per-Albin Hansson is known as the chief architect of the transformation of post-war Sweden into a "people's home" (Hall 1998). This metaphor has now been employed by the SD to summarise their nostalgic politic vision of a homogenous political system for all the *Swedish* people (Exp 061215). In invoking this popular metaphor, the SD may be seen as a valid alternative for those who tend to resist the development of the Social Democratic party towards a more liberal political agenda. It is also a strategy of *good-by-association*; they were good and we are like them and therefore we are good. Indeed, there are many disappointed Social Democratic voters that long back to a more communitarian and integrative past. In this context, SD takes a clear position against internationalization, neo-liberalisation, globalisation and related buzz-words of our time. Therefore, SD has a potential to attract voters from disillusioned Social Democrats who fear immigration and globalisation (cf. Exp 061215; cf. Minkenberg & Perrineau 2007). In addition, many people may experience that the difference between the established parties have shrunk to the degree that it does not really

matter what you are voting for. In relation to this, Slavoj Žižek (2000) argues that the neo-nationalists have successfully employed this political vacuum to present themselves as the only viable political alternative to the disrupted consensus-oriented political elite[10]

It is a well known strategy among populist parties to discuss democracy as an affair between the people and the elite, although these concepts rarely are specified in any greater detail (Taggart 2000:109). Although, from the perspective of SD, it is primarily the Social Democratic party that represents the political elite. For SD, therefore, the Social Democrats (of today) are the political and democratic significant other. In a debating article the two leading members of SD write: "the Social Democrats have mismanaged this country during the last years, betrayed the elder, resigned to crime, undermined the foundation of the welfare model, and, not least, put more than a million people in a wasting exclusion" (Exp 070419).

In conclusion, SD argues that the Social Democratic party has betrayed their ideological roots and the people. Also, the Social democratic party, as all the major traditional parties, has a positive outlook on globalisation and its consequences. This positiveness is due to the fact that it gains the elite – not the people. Interestingly, there has not been much debate of this rather controversial view point, except a general tendency among all traditional parties to address differences between themselves and SD. A position more in line with the rhetorical figure of: *they are not like us - in any way, shape or form.* The rhetorical figure of SD as *the true Social Democrats* remains uncontested.

WE ARE THE TRUE DEMOCRATS
One of the primary aims of SD has been to reform the party along more moderate lines. The transformation of SD is in many ways similar to the strategy of moderation successfully employed by the Danish People´s Party (Karpantschof 2002). One important ingredient in this transformation is a new and strong emphasis on democracy. This is also evident in the material where the representatives of SD often take democracy as a starting point in their argumentation. A good example of this is the homepage of SD where they ask the question: "Everybody say they are democrats, but who are the real democrats and who are the anti-democrats?". Thereafter they present a list of "objective" criteria to help the reader to judge actors and their behaviour as regards to democracy (Sverigedemokraterna – homepage, see also appendix 2). Their list of criteria is underpinned by the rhetorical figure of that *we are the true democrats*. The implicit criticism is that the political establishment is less democratic, or even anti-democratic. The established parties do neither promote dialogue nor freedom of speech. This may also be a reason for SD's newfound emphasis on democratic principles as a means to establish a comfortable distance to a democratically shady past. Thereby, they seek to convince the electorate that they should not be falsely accused of being *devils in disguise*.

The list makes it clear that SD:s view on democracy is placed within a liberal framework with influences of deliberative or participatory democracy. Especially evident is this in their references

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[10] Interestingly enough, also the Conservative Party, Moderaterna, nowadays present themselves as the new Workers Party. In this political manoeuvre the political spectrum becomes even more crowded.

to the people and that the will of the people should have a political impact. They promote a kind of democracy where the category of the people is at centre of politics. Accordingly, the elite has diverged from the will of the people, and the membership of the European Union can serve as one example of this. SD is on the ground of national autonomy a firm opponent of the idea of the European Union. They state in their action programme that: Sweden should be a sovereign and an independent state […] to abolish a nation state and jeopardise the survival of a culture is something awful (Sverigedemokraterna - home page).

SD seeks to portray themselves as *the true democrats* and the adequate heirs of the traditional Social Democratic heritage. Furthermore, SD-representatives have been able to nurture their position as democratic underdogs, since until recently none of the other parties have been willing to speak to them. By being side-stepped, they have been able to portray themselves as *friends of the people* and, at the same time, sharp critics of a consensual elite that neglects engaging with democratic dialogue and deliberation with SD.

The message is that the political elite are concerned with special interests rather than with the general will, and thus solely devoted to remain in power. SD argues that the democratic system has become bureaucratized and an affair for a political elite. Even if their criticism concerns the fundamentals of Swedish politic, in policy-matters, it is hitherto limited to questions of immigration, integration and the European Union.

In conclusion, the position of SD is that politics should, more intimately, embody the will of the people. It is only the political elites that will gain advantages if politics diverge from the interests of the people. In the Swedish system, the main channel for citizens' participation goes through the parties. The will of the people thus takes the form of representation. However, there are no defenders of a pure Schumpeterian view on representation according to which democratic participation is limited to the election of representatives (Schumpeter 1943: 270). SD can thus quite conveniently communicate their message of more direct citizens' participation as a complement to existing representative politics.[11]

IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS IN THE SWEDISH DEBATE

SD presents themselves as the good democrats and they purport an anti-elitist version of democracy, influenced by liberal and deliberative democratic views. However, their position on democracy also conveys integrative and communitarian elements. The foundation of a good democratic society, in this view, is a community that features mutual cultural understanding. For a democracy to function well, a common set of distinct values and preferences is essential (Avineri & de-Shalit 1992).

Populist parties see themselves as the true democrats (Rydgren 2002: 269, reiterated in Hellström 2006: 204). Underpinning this is the description of the party as *friends of the people*

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[11] See also Taggart (2000: 3) who captures this view quite well: "The accoutrements of representative politics, including parties and parliaments, are all too often, distractions and unnecessary complications. It is a profound dilemma for populism that while representative politics is treated with hostility, it is only under such a form of politics that populism finds systematic expression and the possibility of mobilization as a political force".

and opponents to the political elite that time after time have "let the people down".[12] These arguments, though, never really specify who are to be included in the people – even if it seems as cultural Swedes have precedence. SD has changed from a focus along ethnic lines to an emphasis on culture, and impermeable cultural difference. The reference to a distinct category of "the people" in cultural terms (will be more thoroughly dealt with in the next section) and the self-representation of the party as guardians of the public interest also implies a specific view on democracy.

From a communitarian ideological position, it is important to foster a sense of community feeling with shared values attached to it. Decentralization and participatory democratic institutions may foster a sense of belonging and moral meaning. Reading the home page of SD, it is evident that their ideological position shares semblance with the ideological position of communitarianism centred at the nation-state as the prime source of identification, as they write on their homepage:

> What makes the nation-state superior regarding prerequisites for a democratic evolution is foremost that it secures a necessary value community for a lively and enduring democracy. It provides a political community where there are no disputes about rules, procedures and institutions. It also makes communication possible and enables citizens to discuss and understand each other languagewise and socially, which opens up for possibilities of common solutions and compromises.

Apparent in the material is that no one is explicitly defending the existing democratic principles of representative democracy. SD communicates their political message through references to an idealized notion of "the people". From this position, they plead for direct and unfiltered impact of citizens preferences. It seems as these arguments are difficult to counter, at least without reinforcing the image of a dual society consisting of a gap between people and elite. It is likewise difficult to discharge their emphasis on the importance of democratic process values. The only way to counter these arguments, as it seems, is to refer to substance values and argue that SD's (real) values can not be accommodated in an open and democratic society. Since, they are racists, and probably enemies of democracy; they do not deserve the same respect as other parties or groups. SD is qualitatively different to other parties, their shady past and flirts with neo-Nazism, shows proof of this.

In conclusion, the discussions evolve around the instrumental rules of democratic processes and more substantial democratic values. Democracy, from a procedural perspective focuses on the fairness of the democratic system. SD adheres to such a view and emphasises, strongly, that they ought to be treated as any other party and the rules must be the same for all parties. On the other hand, SD antagonists argue that democratic values should be the starting point for any discussions on democracy. Procedures are, primarily, means to realise democratic ends, such as equality, freedom or solidarity. From this position they question the basic commitment of SD and

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[12] Interestingly enough, Jean-Marie Le Pen (chairman of Front National) uses the same wording to describe their political agenda (Front National 2002).

their party members to democratic values and norms. SD is democratically dubious due to its history of neo-Nazi tinges and outspoken racism.

Another common debate concerns the relationship between the rulers and the ruled. SD promotes a more direct form of democracy. By way of illustration, they suggest a frequent usage of referendums so as to strengthen the link between the people and the government. There are no real objections to this view. Instead SD antagonists discredit individual party members of SD and portray them as unqualified for political work. Thereby, an elitist view on democracy is presented that emphasises political professionalism.

CULTURE

"The vision of what Sweden should be like in the future is not due to party politics, Luciano Astudillo says. And the whole of Europe is tackling the same problem, the identity. That question is larger than the question of immigration. The image of our self-image." (GP 061105). Astudillo, Social Democratic member of the parliament, addresses key concerns of this article; hence, how the public debate about SD and the politics on i. e immigration connote to more fundamental issues of how we picture ourselves as individuals and collectives in a an ever-changing world. The journalist Ingela Lind (DN 060919) maintains that the election campaign suffered from a severe lack as regards cultural politics: "Culture is not tactics, which Goebbels knew and which Sverigedemokraterna know. Persson and Reinfeldt also know. But both of them have acted as timorous populists during the past months". According to Lind, culture politics is about values, perspectives and ideologies that relate to major political events such as the crisis in the Middle-East, the fear of terrorism, the enlightenment versus fundamentalism and nationalism versus internationalism. "The politicians have not realized that culture is not merely about recreation, but rather about everything that matters. Everything from dreams and ideology to form and politics", she concludes.

This section deals with ideological positions in the field of culture as manifest in the public debate on SD-politics and their voters. If democracy was used as a rhetorical means to present a positive self-image of SD (or negative other-representation), culture works as a vehicle to mobilize societal cohesion in Sweden, involving taken-for-granted assumptions about a specific way-of-life allegedly natural for Swedes who have grown up in Sweden. On the one hand, in the rhetoric of SD, culture connotes abstract assumptions on a mythical core of Swedishness with roots long back in history. On the other hand, culture appeals to deep emotional attachments experienced by Swedes on a regular basis. Theoretically, the Swedish national culture – like any collective point of identification – is a fantasy (Dahlstedt 2005: 101), an 'imagined community' to paraphrase Benedict Anderson (1996). Nonetheless, to address the significance of the need of a distinct national culture appeal to people's emotions and may thus, potentially, attract voters. Perhaps this is extra relevant when intellectuals like Eric Hobsbawm (1992) or Jürgen Habermas (2001) celebrate the relative diminishing, and in the long run, the total dissolution of particular national cultures in the global village. It is certainly not evident that people and political representatives, rooted in nations, comply. Mike Featherstone argues (2000: 119) that: "The visibility and vociferousness of 'the rest in the west' … means that cultural differences once between societies now exist within them". We thus contend that the discrepancy between multi-culturalism and mono-culturalism is somewhat illusive, since all cultures already are multi-cultural in the sense that, in practice, cultures always convey internal divergences that inhibit their complete closure (cf. Sayyid 2000).

It is apparent that culture plays an important role in the make-over process of the party, from a "party of skin heads to a party of older bold-headed men" (Exp 061212). On 30 November 1993, the Swedish Democrats arranged a manifestation to celebrate the late king of Sweden, Karl XII. It ended with chaos and violence. Approximately 1000 people joined the manifestation. In the front

of the crowd, the Nazi flag dangled next to the national Swedish flag. This night in Stockholm, the whole city-centre could hear the manifestation crowd shout: "Sieg Heil" (See further Tamas 2003). Certainly, the rhetoric has changed dramatically since then and party members who are too xenophobic or aggressive are sometimes thrown out from the party.

Today, SD conceives of multi-culturalism as the source of all evil without denying other peoples their right to reside in their distinct cultural enclaves: "The party distances itself against multi-culturalism, racism and doctrines that predict ethnic origin to be the only determinant for national belonging" (Sverigedemokraterna – homepage). Accordingly, multi-culturalism and thus too much immigration poses a threat to this singularized notion of a Swedish identity. In a recent program on immigration politics (ibid), the party defines what they mean by Swedish identity: "Swedish applies to the one who has a principal Swedish identity, and is from her own perspective and by others regarded as Swedish. The party does, however, establish a sharp distinction between national belonging and citizenship, stating that all Swedish citizens must adhere to equal rights and obligations". The rhetorical figure underpinning this message is based on the well-known dichotomy of that: *we [the Swedish] are not like them, ['the non-Swedes'].* Accordingly, they purport the argument that it is important to know who you are, to where you belong, and especially so in insecure times. By way of illustration, Jimme Åkesson (SDS 070422) argues that the minaret, a tangible symbol of the "new" multi-cultural Sweden generates a feeling of insecurity among the Swedish people who risk feel foreign in their own country. The idea of a distinct Swedish culture, albeit vaguely defined, provides the glue that knit Swedes together. This image of a long lost homogenous Swedish society clings to the myth of a common ancestry, and an original home, to which all "real Swedes" should and could relate to also today.[13]

The party is aware of that not too many voters are apt for voting for a party that pursues blatant racist rhetoric in terms of ideas of racial superiority or the supremacy of a distinct civilization. However, their politics is, at least to our days, depicted controversial and some party members have even lost their jobs due to their party affiliation. According to the official party doctrine Swedishness is today constituted by culture, and not by race. The party members do not seem to share a clear idea of what constitutes this well-appreciated Swedish culture, though, other than some peculiar traditional dishes, the midsummer parties with their traditional folk dances, whereas all their concerns about problems in contemporary Sweden is attributed to "other cultures", and most predominantly Islam. Some of the more moderate party representatives such as Stefan Olsson, the head of the local department in Landskrona (HD 070509), could simultaneously affirm that perhaps the immigrants could tell their fellow-students about "their cultures". This move could foster mutual understanding in the class room, he thinks. In the end, he adds that "we, the Swedes" have a particular right to "our own culture", though. Björn Söder, party secretary, prefers assimilation to integration, since the latter would imply that we have to "renounce of way of life" (SDS 061212). Again, these kinds of messages relates to the neo-nationalist doctrine of the existence of entirely different cultures, suggesting that the Swedes share a predestined right to their own "Swedish culture".

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[13] This perception is a key-component of ethnic nationalisms (see further Smith 1991; Eriksen 2004).

We shall now turn to discuss how this rhetoric has been interpreted and discussed among different actors in the public debate on SD in the field of culture. The head of the local SD department in Malmö, Lars-Johan Hallgren, claims that immigration is the single most revolutionary event in the Swedish history (Svd 070505). Following this perception, SD has taken upon themselves to safe-guard the demands and interests of common Swedes during this period of change. Mattias Karlsson, party secretary, adds that it is probably among the working-class that these concerns are mostly wide-spread, whereas the societal elites put their faith in cosmopolitan, likewise, norm disrupting commitments. Paolo Roberto, previously a well-known Swedish athlete and nowadays a popular public spoke-person, visits Orsaskolan in Mora (MT 070126 "The immigration entails that Sweden faces its hitherto most significant change. Several cultures are to be united." To this, he adds, that those who believe that a vote for SD would stop this development are simply "losers". Apart from sharing the assumption that the immigration to Sweden in our days constitute the most significant challenge ever in history, this common perception also indicates that cultures are distinct separable entities that should either merge (his view; see also HN 061021) or be kept separate (SD). Culture, as a concept, remains ambiguous. Perhaps matters will grow clearer when we confront the issue what it means to be Swedish, and to belong to the Swedish culture in some greater detail.

THEIR SWEDEN IS NOT MINE
In an interview, Jimmie Åkesson, was asked what SD meant by "ethnic resemblance" (DN 060914). Åkesson responded that:

> Ethnicity is not only about biology, but about that people, to as large extent as possible, should identify with one- another and with the Swedish society. It is about culture, religion, historical background, your perception, your comprehension of the system of social codes.

The journalist, then, suggests that all these elements could easily apply for "cultural unity", so why this emphasis on ethnicity, she asks? Åkesesson responds that he actually does not know, stating that it is probably only a matter of semantics. Actually, half a year after this interview the term "ethnicity" is downplayed in their new program for immigration policy and replaced with "culture". The question remains, what does it take to be part of the cultural community of Sweden?

In an interview in national Swedish radio, Mattias Karlsson declares that the famous football player Zlatan Ibrahimovic is not Swedish (KvP 070308) "I do not apprehend him as Swedish as to the way he thinks, acts and talks. He displays an attitude that in many ways does not feel typical Swedish … He displays a body language and a language in general that I do not really apprehend as Swedish". In addition to this, Jimmie Åkesson referred to him as a mercenary soldier in the Swedish national soccer team (SDS 070422).[14]

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[14] This debate certainly echoes the discussion on the French national team who won the world championship in soccer back in 2002 (see i.e. SvD 061005).

This statement provoked a series of critical responses among journalists, and was even used against Åkesson in the broadcasted debate between him and Mona Sahlin. Anja Gatu writes in a chronicle (SDS 070309) that: "I wonder what Sweden they are referring to? It is certainly not mine /…/ I continue to gobble up falafel, to love Latin Kings[15] and rejoice to see the beautiful concrete in the suburbs. To enjoy the development of the verbal communication.." This counter-position relies on the rhetorical figure of: *Their (SD) Sweden is not mine*. Perhaps sharing the assumption that Sweden is nowadays a multi-cultural country, this fact is by many perceived as something positive. And from this position, the image of Sweden that is presented by SD has barely existed, not in the 1950s and certainly not today.

We may also recognise a third position in this debate, though. Whereas Gatu is not explicitly talking about "cultures", others would emphasis the positive aspects of immigration and appreciate the values of multi-culturalism, while continuously referring to the problem with a "lack of integration". In the same newspaper, Sydsvenska Dagbladet, the political editor in chief, Heidi Avallan (070526), says that it is unfeasible to isolate Sweden from the outside world as SD suggests, since "Sweden is multi-cultural". However, she concludes that:

> The only reasonable solution is to gather around a core of fundamental values. Democracy, humanism, equality, human rights and respect for the law. Pluralism, secularism – religions belong to the private sphere.

Without further specifying what is meant by these positively loaded concepts, she infers that cultural relativism, religious dogmatism, structures of patriarchy and musty ideas of Swedishness would come as a result if we do not secure this common core of fundamental values. This third position here represented by Heidi Avallan, both cherish the values of multi-culturalism and at the same time it also emphasises the need of safe-guarding a common core consisting of a set of distinct values. In relation to this position, we recognize another rhetorical figure, *a lack of integration nurtures racism and nationalist ideologies*. This figure is commonly invoked by those who tend to blame the Social Democratic party for their failure in the area of integration politics.[16] The failure of integration argument has become a common mantra among those who seek to explain why so many people voted for SD (see e.g. SDS 061213; SDS 061008). Johan Söderman (BT 070326) accuses Mona Sahlin – who was before minister for integration politics – for having "refused to see the connection between culture and violence". He also suggests that the Muslim organisations in Sweden should, officially, condemn all violent activities that are committed in the name of religion or culture. He concludes that it is perhaps no coincidence that the local SD-department in his municipality recently made proposals about education and culture related violence. Certainly, the article of Söderman makes a school-book example of the rhetorical figure of *blaming the victim* in combination with the previously mentioned figure of *a*

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[15] Latin Kings is a famous hip-hop band from a suburb to Stockholm. See Dahlstedt (2005: chapter 5) for a discussion on the relation between popular culture in general, and Latin Kings in particular, and changing national self-images in Sweden.
[16] Certainly, other commentators are more critical of the new conservative government and the recently appointed minister for integration, Nyamko Sabuni from the People's party. Kianzad Behrang (KvP 061015) asserts that: "… for me it is unintelligible that Sabuni makes critical remarks about SD … The language demand is another neo-nationalist initiative that fuses language and nation".

lack of integration nurtures racism and nationalist ideologies. Following this debate, we may formulate two preliminary conclusions. It appears to be a tacitly agreed view that Sweden is nowadays a multi-cultural country. Whereas SD depicts this development as an immanent danger to intra-community cohesion and basic ideals of solidarity (*first position: "mono-culturalism"*), others would contradict this argument instead emphasising that there is no need turning back to nostalgic visions of a homogenous community, but to embrace the new Sweden with all its characteristics (*second position: "cosmopolitanism"*) or to find ways of combining ideals of multi-culturalism with efforts to gather around a core of values and norms liable to all inhabitants; hence, to improve the integration of new immigrants into the Swedish Society (*third position: "multi-culturalism"*).

In returning to the case of Zlatan Ibrahimovic, we could possibly add some facets of this debate. Firstly, Zlatan symbolises something more than the actual football player. Zlatan himself does rarely talk to the Swedish Press. He has become a symbol, or an identity split between those who welcome him as a Swede and those who do not. Secondly, the message given by the SD-representant, Mattias Karlsson, is perhaps less funny in the context of preceding sport journalism on Zlatan. Numerous reports on Zlatan portray him as being brilliant and artistic at the same time as he said to suffer from problems adjusting to the collective style of Swedish football culture. Zlatan has often been referred to as playing football in an un-swedish way (cf. Karlsson & Wegerup 2007). In other words, the ground was already prepared for Karlsson to communicate such a message to the radio-listening Swedish public. From this discussion we learn that it is not always what you say that matters the most, but who you are and from what position you are speaking (cf. Hellström 2006: 19). In using Zlatan as an example, SD both expose themselves for protests, but they also address a discussion that may appeal to peoples' affections. The discussion on what it takes to be a Swede, and how he or she ought to behave, has of course been going on for ages, however with the presence of SD in the daily political life this discussion has now made its path through to the public debate on the "new" multi-cultural Sweden.

GOOD-BY-ASSOCIATION
In the local newspaper of Nerikes Allehanda, a series of debating articles was published on SD politics on culture and immigration. A local SD representative, David Kronblad (NA 070224), expresses the view that the criticism against SD is unfair. One of the main reasons, he thinks, is that also immigrants are members of the party: "If our party was racist, xenophobic or nazist as some would argue, how is that we allow immigrants in our party?[17] In fact, he argues that many immigrants in Sweden are concerned about the anti-swedishness, represented by the political establishment. Kronblad explains that he has lived abroad for ten years and he knows, by experience, the necessity of smooth adjustment of immigrants in the majority community. He suggests all new immigrants to be offered an introduction to the religion, language and history of

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[17] He further argues that the media has made up stories about SD being xenophobic. Solveig Baudin (SD) from the petite municipality of Orsa (MT 061220) explains that in her compounds there is a guy from Africa who sometimes helps with carrying groceries from the super-market. She thinks that he is a good person and thus concludes that: "I have nothing against immigrants".

Sweden so that they could more easily assimilate in the Swedish society; to learn the social codes to which they must actively choose to adhere to. It is in the end, the immigrants themselves who are to make this fundamental decision even if the Swedish state obstructs these ambitions in their appraisal of multi-culturalism. On the same day, Lars Ströman writes in the editorial of Nerikes Allehanda that this kind of rhetoric is mumbo jumbo talk, since he both appreciates Swedish traditional cooking and also celebrates national holidays. The message here is that Ström is both proud of being Swedish and positive to multi-culturalism (*third position*). Kronblad, on the other hand, articulates a message that he has experienced several different cultures and yet appreciates the distinctiveness of the Swedish culture. From this standpoint, he asserts that it is fundamental for new immigrants to assimilate well into the Swedish society (*first position*). Kronblad also tries to justify his views from the perspective of the immigrants; they too, he says, are concerned about the lack of consistent cultural values. In this way, he clings on to the rhetorical figure of *good-by-association*.[18] To sum up: both positions (*one* and *three*) share allegiance and a sense of belonging to the Swedish culture, the difference concerns the way that multi-cultural elements are apprehended and defined.

In general, it has been important for those engaged in the debate about culture and immigration to clarify what distinguishes them from the SD-party representatives. The journalists Anders Malmström and Kalle Kniivilär (SDS 061914) had discovered that the SD-representatives in the municipalities tend to vote with the Christian Democrats more than with any other party. Per Uvgård, local SD-representative thinks that the result is simply a coincidence and that they prefer the old social-democracy of Tage Erlander and his emphasis on social justice rather than the politics of the conservative camp. On the other hand, another local SD-profile, Anders Westergren, claims that: "at the bottom, they are also a culture-conservative party". When we turn to the Christian Democrats themselves, they contradict this thesis, though. In a series of debating articles in the Christian Democrat news paper, *Dagen*, party members aim to explain what separates them from SD.

Ella Bohlin, head of the youth department of the Christian Democrats, says in a debating article in Dagen, 9 March 2007 that:

> The Christian Democratic ideology is based on the Christian view of human nature. It is based on the love of your sister and solidarity; on the thought that we all share a common responsibility to one-another, no matter what colour of the skin /…/ The difference between this and the so-called Christians ethics of Sverigedemokraterna could barely be more significant.

She pursues this argument further and addresses the common link between cultural mysticism, the passion for the national-state and theories of race. The Christian Democrats represent the very opposite to this kind of thinking. The same message is given by the municipality commissioner, Lennart Bondesson, also a Christian Democrat, in Nerikes Allehanda on 30 November 2006:

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[18] In another context, the *I walked with Martin Luther King* figure has been used, according to Teun van Dijk (1993), by U.S employers who are less willing to employ people from minority groups and yet detach themselves from any criticism of discriminatory action, since they in their earlier days used to march with Martin Luther King to propagate for civil rights; hence, they are *good-by-association*.

"Many of the forerunners of democracy, such as Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, turned against this principle of nationalism and have instead been guided by a view of human nature that is inspired by the Christian cultural tradition". For him, the Christian culture provides the core that could tie different cultures together; hence, a means to facilitate the implementation of multi-cultural politics. The debate about what distinguishes the average SD-voter from the rest of the electorate soon became a prevalent theme on the cultural section in the southern regional newspaper, Sydsvenska Dagbladet, and especially so after that the reputable Swedish author, Fredrik Ekelund, entered the debate in October 2006.[19]

THE IMMIGRANTS ARE THE CRIMINALS, THE SWEDES ARE THE VICTIMS
In a debating article in Sydsvenska Dagbladet (061004), Ekelund renders a conversation he had with some older friends about politics just before the general elections. The discussion reveals that some of his "decent friends", with working-class background, have decided to vote for SD. Ekelund claims that we need to understand the attraction of SD from a bottom-up perspective. He then turns to recap violent assaults committed by immigrant gangs in Malmö during the past years. It is strange, he thinks, that no journalists or politicians from the established parties have been engaged with the racism against Swedes, while many of his friends and people in the street discuss reverse racism on a daily basis. He asks, rhetorically, why it is wrong to worry about the expansion of Islam, since this religion, according to him, has not experienced the Enlightenment ideas of secularism. To this controversial argument, he adds that the working-class that built cities like Malmö and Landskrona were ideologically united through references to a common culture of prudence. He, then, suggests that the new immigrants should adjust to this culture and adhere to secular norms on i. e gender equality. He concludes that the SD-voters are no monsters, but common people who are fed up with the reverse side of integration.

Not surprisingly, many were infuriated with Ekelund's article. Adrian Kaba is spokesperson for the organization "Malmö against crime" (SDS 061005) and he argues that Ekelund relies on the rhetorical figure of that: *the immigrants are the criminals, the Swedes are the victims*. All these crimes that Ekelund mentioned in this article, Kaba continues, have sustained an atmosphere of discomfort and fear among all those people living in Malmö, including the immigrants. Kaba indicates that Ekelund helps SD to mobilize their politics through "established truths" about the postulated criminal, racist and fundamentalist image of the immigrants who are to be blamed for all societal problems. Olle Svenning, editor in chief and author, is likewise quick to rebut Ekelund's article (SDS 061005). He states that Ekelund bases his analysis on the same kind of arguments that have been employed by Pia Kjaersgaard, the inimitable leader of Dansk Folkeparti. They both, erroneously, posit the prudent worker of a past homogenous Swedish society (or Danish) against that of the criminalized immigrant and the new, ethnically diverse

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[19] In a debating article (KvP 060929), Schuman confirms that the views of SD are to be considered perfectly permissible even though he personally rejects them. And he also reminds the reader that xenophobic viewpoints are common among the grass-roots in almost all the parties, something which some SD representatives also are quick to notice. Sten Andersson, before member of the Conservative Party and now active as a SD-representative in the municipality of Malmö, suggests some measures to reduce immigration in his home town of which he believe most are a blue-print of what the Social Democratic party already had addressed in Malmö (SDS 061122).

Sweden (or Denmark). This message is, arguably, based on the rhetorical figure of *guilty-by-association*, used to discredit the arguments of Ekelund: "Ekelund and his new friends of thought raise a monument of the victims of society – "the ethnic Swedes". Svenning concludes that this victim myth may sustain obscure culture mythology, feelings of revenge and a growing contempt of the deviant others. Only a few days after, three sociologists seek to balance the debate (SDS 061010). They address the significance of being serious about the experiences and worries of ordinary common people and thus avoid turning the question of culture and immigration into a subject of taboo. Indeed, a common element in neo-nationalist and populist rhetoric is to exploit popular feelings of that the political elite avoids to *speak the truth* and thus frame sensitive political matters such as immigration as taboo (see further eg. Reisigl & Wodak 2001). No SD-representative is heard of in this heated discussion even if it would be hard to think of such a debate without their achievements in the previous election.

In the response to his critics, Ekelund (SDS 061006) defends himself through the rhetorical figure of *good-by-association*: "I have been working professionally for 25 years, and I have never received so many positive reactions to something which I have written /…/ All these belong to the left …". Ekelund thus predicts that left is morally superior to right. He also declares that he always have stood up for the multi-cultural Malmö. Indeed, one of the most prevalent elements in neo-nationalist ideologies is the strong rejection of racism following the rhetorical figure of: *I am not a racist, but* (see further van Dijk 1993). Through this disclaimer, the speaker may justify his or her critical remarks on immigrants and immigration without risk being accused of racism.

SD communicates their neo-nationalist message of the incommensurability of different cultures and their strong resistance towards multi-culturalism from a mono-culturalist ideological position. The analysis has also identified two different ideological positions from which actors have opposed SD politics in the field of culture. From a multi-culturalist position, several commentators state that the messages of SD are much too nostalgic and not adjusted to a modern society where many cultures co-exist, albeit the different cultures need to converge on common principals of i.e human rights, democracy and gender equality. From a cosmopolitan position, everyone who wants to, access the right to share allegiance to the "new" diverse Swedish culture whatever that is taken to signify.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this article we have analysed the public debate of the politics and voters of the Swedish neo-nationalist party SD with special emphasis on the fields of democracy and culture. We have identified a number of rhetorical figures that have been used, although rarely explicitly mentioned, to sustain a certain ideological position and/or other discredit the position of the opponent. These rhetorical figures further connote to more general discussions on the role of the democratic state in view of processes of Europeanization and globalisation. In this regard, we have presented the argument that the public debate in Sweden does not differ much from ongoing debates that are taking place in other countries in Europe and for that sake, the European Union. We now turn to summarise our main findings.

RHETORICAL FIGURES AND IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS

In the field of democracy a powerful rhetorical figure to sustain the credibility of SD as legitimate political actor is the self-image of SD as the *true democrats* and the related figure of SD as *the democratic martyrs.* These figures indicate a split between, a consensual political elite alienated from the people, and a party that struggles for a democratic role of the people. To present their case, SD employs the classic distinction between an elitist representative democracy and a popular participatory democracy; hence, they are the self-proclaimed *friends of the people.* The rhetorical figure of SD as the *true democrats* implies a further deliberative dimension. SD situates the criticism of integration politics on the political agenda and accuses the political elite for having neglected this question, which is problematic due to that many people share a deep concern for this question. This line of reasoning is underpinned by the rhetorical figure of that *SD-voters are dissatisfied with the political establishment.* In relation to this, SD claims to represent the views of the ordinary man and relies on the rhetorical figure of *speaking the truth* that is "saying what everybody knows" (Wodak 2002*).*Their message is that we need to speak freely and frankly about the problems of integration and immigration, and they encourage the political elite to admit that they have failed on this matter. SD thus aspires to act as the true heirs of a long tradition of protecting the people within the delimited territory of the nation state; hence, they are *good-by-association*. Certainly they endeavour to put a gloss on a popular notion of "the people" that refers back to nostalgic images of a long lost people's home. In this rhetorical manoeuvre, we suggest, SD relies on the rhetorical figure of that *we are the true Social Democrats.*

Interestingly enough, turning to field of culture, journalists and politicians from the established parties tend to reinforce SD criticism through the rhetorical figure of that *a lack of integration nurtures racism and nationalist ideologies.* This view is predominantly articulated by those who tend to blame the Social Democrats for the upswing of neo-nationalism in Sweden. The problem herein is that the immigrants tend to be coupled with new kinds of social ruptures in the Swedish society and they thus risk victimisation and unfair treatment. This way of reasoning relates to the rhetorical figure of *blaming the victim.*

Returning to the field of democracy, SD employs a strategy of moderation to convince the electorate that they have cleaned out their closet and, by now, should be regarded as the most viable democratic alternative. Certainly, the political establishment was quick to rebut this view. Through the employment of the rhetorical figure of *SD as political clowns,* commentators sought to discredit the ability of SD to act in accordance with formal democratic procedures. Other actors referred to the dark past of SD to display their involvements in Nazi-like organizations and to highlight the criminal background of many leading Swedish Democrats. From this perspective, SD is believed to be d*evils in disguise* and thus *guilty-by-association.* In a more general sense, the public debate in the field of democracy tends to maintain a division between two ideological positions of (a) democracy as an elite affair and (b) a more participatory democracy. In the latter case, all political initiatives are articulated through a discourse of the people and SD manages rather well to present themselves as a party that defends the democratic values of the ordinary man. Certainly, the established parties respond with bringing up the deplorable past of the party and also to ridicule the possibility of SD to become a serious political alternative. However, the political manoeuvring of debarring them from formal local political forums strengthens the image of SD being discriminated. Perhaps more important, this strategy risks to belittle the voters of SD. Certainly, many commentators became aware of this trap and employed the rhetorical figure of: *SD party members are stupid but SD-voters are not* to communicate their messages. In addition to this, however, to claim that SD acts as *political clowns* may further trigger feelings of frustration among the electorate, since it implies that not everyone is capable of participating in the Swedish democracy. The related figure of *SD as the democratic martyrs* indicates that it is the elite that has failed in the field of democracy and that SD stands up as the *true democrats*.

Turning to the field of culture, though, we note that SD experienced problems in presenting their case. To mention but one example, Mattias Karlsson tried to describe, in a nationally broadcasted radio interview, why he did not consider the famous football player, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, to be a "real Swede" This statement was effectively refuted in subsequent articles and radio shows by commentators who, from a cosmopolitan ideological position (which does not presuppose the pre-eminence of cultural differences), could infer that *Their (SD) Sweden is not mine.* In addition to this, none of the SD representatives seemed able to clarify what, in more precise terms, they meant by a "Swedish culture" other than some peculiar midsummer dances or national dishes. However, we shall be careful not to jump to conclusions. To focus on matters related to culture and cultural politics is also to engage with questions like "who we are" as to "where we are heading" that may, potentially, appeal to people's affections. From yet another ideological position, commentators could, on the one hand celebrate the values of multi-culturalism and yet, on the other hand, declare the importance of all people residing in Sweden to adhere to common norms on i.e secularism, rule-of-law and democracy. From this multi-culturalist position it seems difficult to confront SD opinions about problems with integration and the assumption that people's real fears need to be accommodated. We infer that this way of reasoning approaches the rhetorical figure of that it is *the immigrants who are the criminals, and the Swedes who are the victims*. The excessive focus on the problems with integration and the

social ruptures that result from the "new" multi-cultural Sweden as manifest in the segregated cities, the importation of labour from the new member states of the EU (something which the previous Prime Minister Göran Persson referred to as "social tourism") and the fear of trans-national crime (ranging from smuggling of goods to trafficking of women), risk nurturing the perception that the outside world is both closer to us than ever before and also ultimately dangerous. Also people who chose not to vote for SD, as the Swedish author Fredrik Ekelund, could distinguish between foreign elements and a Swedish national culture of prudence hinting at the rhetorical figure of that *I am not a racist, but.* To sum up, while many commentators criticised and ridiculed SD representatives for their nostalgic image of a people's home that never has existed; few endeavoured to challenge the basis of the politics of fear that SD, from their mono-cultural ideological position, employs to safe-guard the interests of the ordinary man.

IDENTITY POLITICS REVISITED

The two fields of democracy and culture represent two distinct logics with their own ideological positions and rules of the game. In the field of democracy, SD had much possibility of presenting their case while, in the field of culture, it proved to be more difficult to come up with a liable position. However, taken together we note that the strong commitment of SD to a popular participant democracy with deliberative features is based on a narrow, and likewise idealized notion of the people that relies on a mono-culturalist understanding of who belongs to the Swedish culture. Clearly, the neo-nationalist perspective of democracy is not only based on popular participation and deliberation, it also relies on an idealized, likewise excluding notion of the national demos. Although the language has shifted from race, to ethnicity and on to culture, the introversion and exclusion of their ideological position in the field of culture also spill over to the field of democracy, albeit this was not apparent in the public debate of SD-politics and their voters.

It is not always that SD-representatives are the key actors of the public debate about their politics. Different actors may speak from different ideological positions depending on the adversary. On the one hand, multi-culturalists rebut the SD aspiration of returning back to a people's home, which never has existed. On the other hand, the multi-culturalist position could also acknowledge that the Social Democratic failure on integration politics has prepared the ground for the neo-nationalist to exploit people's concerns about segregation and deviant cultural traditions. In general, though, our analysis of the fields of democracy and culture suggests that it has been more important to establish a distance towards SD than to clarify what distinguishes the different established parties from one- another. Everything equal, the most important thing was to communicate a message to the electorate of not belonging to the neo-nationalist camp, thereby indicating that *they are not like us - in any way, shape or form.* One clear example was when the Christian Democrats put much effort to convince the reader of the enormous gap between their interpretation of the Christian message and the politics of SD. The high amount of energy put into this debate (or rather monologue) and the deep commitment to this issue shows proof of the importance of not being placed in the same boat as SD and their voters. Overall, this

argumentative logic may be interpreted as a case of identity politics; hence, the making of differences (what makes "us" different from "them") alongside the making of similarities of what knit "us" together as a group in contrast to "them". No matter the accuracy of the Christian Democratic rhetoric (our ambition has not been to specify the exact difference between the different positions), the manifestation of identity politics features its own logic and is clearly present in the public debate of SD-politics and their voters.

Although much of the debate in the fields of democracy and culture clearly is based on the dichotomy between SD and the rest, our analysis also reveals a net of different ideological positions that are played out against each other. One example is the Ekelund dispute in which no SD-representative was heard of in the debate, albeit commentators articulated themselves through rhetorical figures that relied on distinct ideological positions. In this regard, we confirm the values of a more nuanced approach to research on identity politics than is generally allowed for within the limited analytical frame of the "Us-/Them" divide.

THE EUROPEAN GRAMMAR OF NEO-NATIONALISM

The analysis has been limited to the public debate in Sweden. Although, taking into consideration other research on neo-nationalism in European societies we recognise several common denominators. In a recent study on the success of seven ERP parties in Western Europe, Elisabeth Ivarsflaten (2008) concludes that these parties unite in their capacity of mobilizing grievances of immigration in their political programme. Other factors such as grievances of economic changes, political disillusionment of political elites showed to have less significance measured as progress at the polls. In this study, we have extended the analysis to not only deal with the manifest messages of SD, but more precisely the public debate of SD-politics and their voters in the fields of democracy and culture. In doing so, we have managed to identify several different ideological positions that are communicated also by more established parties. This may lead us to a path through to comprehend the growing attraction of neo-nationalist parties and neo-nationalist ideologies in West-European democracies.[20]

In the case of SD, they endeavour to act at the margins of the European grammar and thus be considered radical enough to challenge the agenda of the political elite and yet avoid accusations of racism. In this manoeuvre, they seek to justify their politics and appear as legitimate representatives of the people, as heirs of a long tradition of mobilizing popular democracy. They aspire to be the rightful successors of guardians of the people's home, a metaphor previously monopolized by the Social Democrats. Certainly, also SD seeks to mobilize support for their political agenda through references to a grievance of immigration. However, this strategy can not alone explain the progress of SD in the general elections. If considered as a catalyst of already existing streams of thought in the Swedish society, we also need to pay attention to how other commentators in the public debate tend to grieve about the lack of integration, problems with multi-culturalism and, in general, give voice to a fear of the border-transgressing ventures

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[20] In relation to this, Jens Rydgren (2003) suggests that xenophobic Radical Right Populist Parties may cause an increased acceptance of xenophobia because they influence other political actors, and also – in more general terms – people's frames of thought.

associated with globalisation. To depict SD-voters as victims of our age of globalisation is also to justify their position as a valid political alternative. Otherwise, the political establishment risks to fall into the trap of defending an elitist version of democracy.

Several studies show that leading politicians throughout Europe, including in the EU, have tended to not only praise the possibilities of higher flows of migration, but they also articulate increased concerns for the need of surveillance of external borders and enhanced cooperation to combat trans-national crime and terrorist groupings (eg. Huysmans 2001; Shierup et al. 2006; Bauman 2004; Hellström 2008). This development, we believe, is an explanatory factor as to why neo-nationalists in Sweden and other countries manage to feed on a *politics of fear* that already is a prevalent theme in much public debates around Europe (Bauman 2004; Hellström 2008). Lately, election campaigns in Europe have been directed at the management of diversity. In turn, established parties have suggested proposals that encourage assimilation (Shierup et al. 2006). To mention but one example from the supra-national level, Romano Prodi who was before president of the European Union Commission, said in a speech in Milan on 15 July 2002: "Recently the issue of security has been increasingly linked to immigration. I am not convinced that the two should be linked, but it would be dangerous to ignore people's real fears". This excerpt is interesting for two obvious reasons. Firstly, Prodi distances himself from those who actually link together security and immigration, while at the same time he does not completely refute it. Secondly, he justifies EU directives that suggest increased measures to boost security within the EU from the fact that the people (in this case the European people) are afraid. It is precisely this political manoeuvre that can be referred to as a politics of fear; hence, the employment or even exploitation of a perception of that people are afraid to sustain political ambitions to securitize the policy fields of migration and immigration (cf. Huysmans 2001).

Returning to the European grammar that, potentially, may unite neo-nationalists in Europe, this grammar conveys, on the one hand, common appraisals of democracy, human rights, and citizenship rights and, on the other hand, a politics of fear based on assumptions of what the people really think. The neo-nationalists use a similar terminology and thus refer to the same grammar, however exploiting it to safeguard the interests of the nationals residing inside finite state borders. The EU differs, in this regard, and focuses instead on the necessity of greater convergence between EU countries, since no state alone is believed to tackle challenges of globalisation (Official Journal of the European Union 2007). From both positions, it is important to articulate a message of that *we are the good guys*; to safeguard the pursuit of a common interest, to know what people want and to define what peoples needs are. One important difference between the public debate in Sweden and in, for instance, the neighbouring country of Denmark, though, is that SD hitherto has failed to act on the "right" side of this grammar. Their language and behaviour have, from the perspective of a majority of the voters, diverged too much from the European grammar as it is manifest on the national level in the case of Sweden. However, if SD succeed in being the good guys at the same time as they employ the politics of fear successfully in the game of identity politics during the next election campaign, also Sweden may have to face the spectre of neo-nationalism in the national assembly.

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APPENDIX 1: MEDIA COVERAGE OF SD IN THE FIELDS OF DEMOCRACY AND CULTURE.
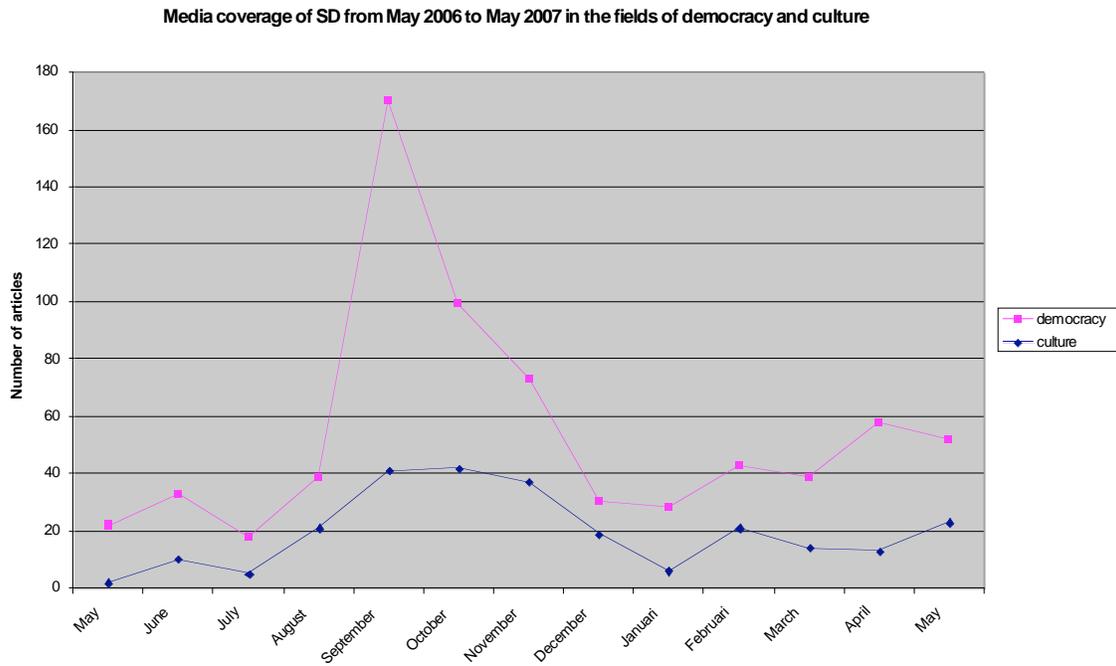
Media coverage of SD from May 2006 to May 2007 in the fields of democracy and culture

APPENDIX 2: DEMOCRATIC CRITERIA OF SD

1. Who act openly – who act anonymously?
2. Who use insults – who do not?
3. Who follow up their arguments with facts – who do not?
4. Who promote dialogue and are ready to meet their opponents in public debates – who do not?
5. Who wants the people to get diverse information – who do not?
6. Who emphasise freedom of speech even for their adversaries – who want to restrict freedom of speech for their adversaries?
7. Who are willing to acknowledge new facts and arguments – who is not?
8. Who think that the will of the people should have an impact – who thinks not?
9. Who take a firm stand against violence – who do not?
10. Who emphasise equal value for every human – who do not?

APPENDIX 3: LIST OF NEWSPAPERS CITED IN THE TEXT

Abbreviation	Full Name	Political Profile	Circulation 2006	Type
BT	Borås Tidning	Conservative	49 200	Morning paper Regional
Dagen	Dagen	Christian Democrat	17 100	Morning paper National
DI	Dagens Industri	Independent	118 500	Morning paper National
DN	Dagens Nyheter	Independent Liberal	339 700	Morning paper, National
Exp	Expressen	Liberal	193 700	Evening paper, national
GP	Göteborgsposten	Liberal	245 000	Morning paper Regional
GT	Göteborgstidningen	Liberal	53 500	Evening paper Regional
HD	Helsingborgs Dagblad	Independent	79 800	Morning paper Regional
HN	Hallands Nyheter	Center	31 200	Morning paper Regional
KvP	Kvällsposten	Independent Liberal	55 800	Evening paper Regional
MT	Mora Tidning	Independent	13 400	Morning paper Regional
NA	Nerikes Allehanda	Independent Liberal	63 500	Morning paper Regional
SD-kuriren	SD-Kuriren	Swedish Democrat	--------------	National
SvD	Svenska Dagbladet	Independent Conservative	195 200	Morning paper National
SDS	Sydsvenska Dagbladet	Independent Liberal	121 900	Morning paper Regional