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Mainstreaming the Sweden Democrats

Mapping changes and continuities in party ideology 1989-2019 through discourse analysis

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Abstract

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*Much academic literature has explained the success of radical right parties across Europe in the last few decades through the increased importance of the sociocultural, conceptualised as the GAL-TAN, or libertarian-authoritarian, scale. The late rise of the Sweden Democrats, long considered an exception to the rule, as a successful radical right party, has attracted some academic interest and various explanations on what may have caused this sudden success. This study looks at discursive changes happening in the party programs (*principprogram*) 1989-2019, especially in the context of mainstreaming/moderation of ideology, using discourse analysis with reference to literature on supply and demand factors for radical right success. The study also looks at continuities in the program, to explore to what extent the Sweden Democrats can be considered a typical TAN-party, that has reached success by being the only sociocultural-authoritarian party in Swedish politics. The results show significant ideological flexibility which can be interpreted as a supply-side factor for party success, and which points to problems with the GAL-TAN scale in the case of the Sweden Democrats, in the sense that there is too much movement happening on the sociocultural dimension for the party to be pinned down, and such conceptualisation overlooks the creative ways in which the ideology builds on successful mainstream discourses to construct Swedishness in a way that is acceptable for the electorate. The identified continuities reinforce the entanglement with mainstream discourse and incompatibility with the GAL-TAN scale through the identified centrality of the local concepts* 'trygghet' *and the people's home (*Folkhem*).*

Keywords: radical right, Sweden Democrats, GAL-TAN, flexibility, normalisation, authoritarianism, trygghet, people's home,

Popular science summary

For a long time, Sweden was considered an exception to the rule when it comes to the increase of radical right populism across western European countries. The success of the radical right in other countries has in much research been explained through the increased importance of *sociocultural* rather than *socioeconomic* conflicts in politics. More than left versus right, political conflicts are increasingly being played out on a value dimension, conceptualised by scholars as the GAL-TAN scale (Green Alternative Libertarian - Traditional Authoritarian Nationalist) or the libertarian-authoritarian scale, where the radical right is positioned at the TAN/authoritarian end of the scale. A potential explanation then becomes that the radical right has succeeded because they are the best representative for certain (TAN/authoritarian) values, and the importance of values are increasing for the electorate. A potential explanation for the lack of radical right success in Sweden was that the sociocultural had not 'taken over' there as it had elsewhere. Many were then surprised by the sudden exponential success of the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*) in the last ten years, especially considering their extremist background in comparison to their Nordic counterparts. This has led to questions regarding what could have caused the increase in electorate demand for the radical right in Sweden, or what has changed in party supply (i.e., in the Sweden Democrats) that suddenly made them so successful. This study looks at the changes happening in the Sweden Democrats' party programs (*principprogram*) 1989-2019, using discourse analysis, with special attention to mainstreaming or normalisation. The study also looks at continuities in the program, to explore to what extent the Sweden Democrats can be considered a typical TAN-party, that has reached success by being the only sociocultural-authoritarian party in Swedish politics. In short, the study explores continuity and change in the party programs since the party was formed. The results show significant ideological flexibility in the programs, for example changing from a radically conservative gender discourse to one that considers gender equality a given fact of Swedishness; and a significant 'localness' of the continuities in the discourse through the importance of the concepts *trygghet* and 'the people's home' (*Folkhemmet*). The continuity of the law-and-order narrative also holds potential to legitimise the Sweden Democrats as the original tough party as the tone hardens across the political spectrum. These findings present an argument against the applicability of the GAL-TAN scale in the case of the Sweden Democrats, and for a redirection of focus to their connection to mainstream nationalist discourses and their construction of Swedishness.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 An unexpected contender

I think that the Sweden Democrats' rhetoric has changed a lot in recent years. They have expanded politically and are participating much more seriously in parliamentary work. I think they have been serious and constructive in the conversations we have had with them regarding for example criminal policy, immigration policy and part of energy policy.

Ulf Kristersson, leader of the Swedish conservative party *Moderaterna* (SVT 2021)

In 2006, with the Swedish general election approaching, the Swedish current affairs show *Insider* broadcasted a collection of home-made video presentations and a subsequent debate between 'the small parties that have a very small chance of ever reaching parliament yet aim to do so' (TV3 2006). Amongst those participating were Unika Partiet, a party formed and led by reality TV persona Linda Rosing; Rikshushållarna, advocating a removal of all taxes; Palmepartiet, led by a man who called himself Santa Claus; Skånepartiet, advocating for an independent Scania separated from the rest of Sweden; and the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*). Fifteen years later the Sweden Democrats are not only an established party in parliament, but increasingly accepted as a serious one by other parties, as the quote above indicates. The mainstream parties have shifted from a strict cordon sanitaire to increasingly opening up for collaboration. The Swedish conservative party, *Moderaterna*, were the first to do so, and were subsequently accused of creating a 'blue-brown mess' (Wingborg 2016), followed by the Christian democratic party *Kristdemokraterna* (SVT 2019) and the liberal party *Liberalerna* (SR 2021a). The Sweden Democrats have gone from an extreme party existing in the periphery, to a pariah in parliament, to in all likelihood being accepted as a part of a conservative bloc (SR 2021b). Regardless of the specific political outcomes, it is safe to say that boundaries are shifting in Swedish politics.

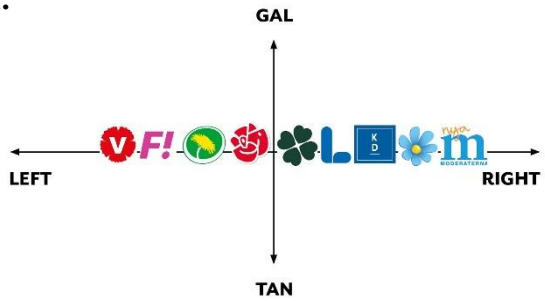
The murky origins of the party is what led many to doubting any future success for them. Widfeldt (2008:267-268) describes how, after the extreme right was widely discredited

in the earlier post-WWII years, a fresh generation of racists/neofascists/neo-Nazis emerged in the 1980s, who were more aggressive than their predecessors. The organisation Keep Sweden Swedish (*Bevara Sverige Svenskt, BSS*), and the loose network White Aryan Resistance *(Vitt Ariskt Motstånd, VAM)* were two early examples of this; both relatively short-lived and failing to attract a large following, but successful as 'brand names' of the extreme right during a time when a neo-Nazi and militant racist subculture was growing. In 1986 BSS merged with the right-wing populist Progress Party to form the Sweden Party (*Sverigepartie*t), Internal conflicts led to a split and the BSS faction formed the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*); formally changing the name at the annual meeting of the BSS faction of the Sweden Party in 1988. At the time of their formation, the Sweden Democrats consisted of a younger generation with criminal records and extremist connections (including the first party leader Anders Klarström), as well as an elder generation of Nazi veterans with background in inter-war/wartime groups (Widfeldt 2008:268). Outlining the party history, Widfeldt (2008) suggests that the high number of members with comprising backgrounds hindered a political breakthrough for the Sweden Democrats, but these members contributed with organisational experience and unapologetic public speaking (2008:269). The party image was also damaged by its links to openly extremist groups. Klarström was unseated in 1995 and replaced by the less controversial and less charismatic Mikael Jansson, after which members with criminal records and Nazi-connections slowly began to drop. In 2001, two successful but extreme activists were expelled together with 150 sympathisers and formed the more radical National Democrats (*Nationaldemokraterna*), and in 2005, the current party leader Jimmie Åkesson took over after having led the youth organisation since 1997; paving the way for political reform for the Sweden Democrats (Widfeldt 2008:270-272). Due to the extremist origins of the party however, Widfeldt predicts in 2008 that the party will not reach national success, even though significant organisational and ideological change followed the exodus of the most extreme activists (Widfeldt 2008:272-4). Despite this prediction, matched by other theorists (Art 2011, Rydgren 2005) the Sweden Democrats have gone through a 'spectacular rise' in the last ten years, doubling their percentage of votes four consecutive elections in a row (Bolin & Aylott 2019:28, Swedish Election Research Program 2018:29). How they got there is a subject of debate in Swedish media, politics, and academic research.

1.2 Political conflict dimensions in social research

Much analysis on radical right parties and their success focuses on shifting political conflict dimensions – where the socioeconomic dimension puts workers against capital and is concerned with the role of the state and distribution of resources, and the sociocultural dimension puts liberal values against authoritarian values (Rydgren 2005:25) – and the increased importance of the sociocultural. Kriesi (2010) argues for a new *political cleavage* based on values, caused by the fragmentation of social structure in contemporary society and the de-structuration or *dealignment* of traditional links between social groups and political actors expressing their interests (2010:674). In short, individuals are more guided by the values they adhere to than socio-structural categories (Kriesi 2010:677-78). This value-based cleavage can be conceptualised as the GAL-TAN scale (Hooghe et al 2002), which stands for (G)reen (A)lternative (L)ibertarian - (T)raditionalist (A)uthoritarian (N)ationalist, or Libertarian-Authoritarian scale (Kitschelt 1994); where libertarian/GAL parties favour extended personal freedoms (such as access to abortion, same-sex marriage and increased democratic participation) and authoritarian/TAN parties reject these values whilst prioritising order, tradition and stability (Bakker et al 2012:144). These scales are applied as variables in quantitative studies that map political parties/opinion and have also appeared in political analysis in Swedish media (SOM institute 2017a, 2017b; SR 2018, SVT 2018). In such analyses the Sweden Democrats are placed at the far-end of the TAN-scale, see figures below.

1.



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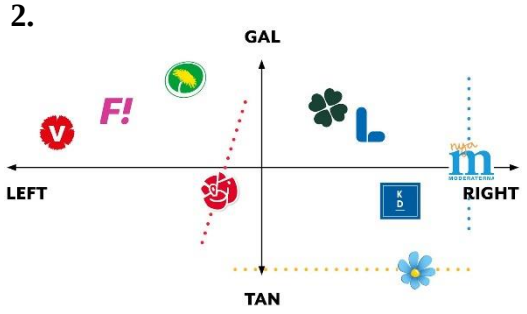

Figure 1 shows Swedish political parties on the left-right political conflict dimension. Figure 2 shows the left-right and the GAL-TAN conflict dimensions. The Sweden Democrats' party symbol is the blue anemone. Potential movement is indicated by dotted lines. Source: SOM institute, SVT

In 2005, Rydgren argued that The sociocultural dimension has become increasingly important in structuring politics in western Europe and created a space for environmental and radical

right parties, *except for in Sweden*; where the socioeconomic dimension for a long time stood unchallenged by things like linguistic, religious or ethnic conflicts; its strong position exacerbated by the unique dominance of the Social Democratic party (2005:47) and the strong union movement (2005:105); meaning that traditional (socioeconomic) collective identities had not yet been eroded. The Swedish exceptionalism (Rydgren 2005, Rydgren & Van der Meiden 2019, Schierup & Åhlund 2011, Bin & Yi 2015) consisted in the fact that other than the very short-lived New Democracy, represented in parliament 1991-1994, for a long time no radical right party was successful in Sweden despite the supposedly 'favourable conditions' (Bin & Yi 2015:264, Rydgren 2005:133-134). The late rise of the radical right in Sweden has been called 'exceptional if not abnormal' (Bin &Yi 2015:265).

Mudde (2016) considers the (populist) radical right the most successful party family in post war Europe and the most significant challenge to its liberal democracies (2016: 295,298). However, he maintains that the success of such parties will not lead to a transformation of the political system but rather to a radicalisation of mainstream values (2016:303). Arguably, Mudde's warning of a radicalisation of mainstream values is mirrored by a mainstreaming (or normalisation, surface-polishing, moderation, legitimisation) of radical values (indicated by the opening quote), as the narratives of the radical right are toned down to a level that is more acceptable for the electorate as well as the mainstream parties. As the literature review will show, some theorists identify change as a necessity for success (Widfeldt 2008) and argue that the process of normalisation is what got the Sweden Democrats over the threshold of respectability (Bin & Yi 2015).

1.3 The present study

The aim of this study is to map the discursive changes taking place in the party programs alongside this 'exceptional rise', using discourse analysis with reference to literature on the supply and demand-side factors to success. The analytical focus will be *change*, to explore the mainstreaming/moderation of the party; as well as *continuity*, to explore an ideological core and to what extent it matches the TAN- ideology on the cultural conflict dimension. In short, the study explores continuity and change in the party programs since the party was formed. The subsequent research question is: *how has the ideology reflected in the Sweden Democrats' programs changed in the period 1989-2019?* This introductory chapter will be followed by a

theory and methodology chapter, followed by methods, a literature review, results, and finally a discussion and conclusion that will bring the results back into a theoretical context to enable a dialogue with existing literature.

2 THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 An integrated approach

This study takes an integrated approach to discourse analysis (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000) by using analytical strategies from both post-Marxist discourse theory (Laclau & Mouffe) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough), building on a critical realist theory of science. The benefit of an integrated approach is that central analytical concepts from discourse theory can be applied without fully committing to the ontology that nothing exists outside of discourse. Similarly, central concepts from critical discourse analysis can be used without committing to explanatory critique. The following section will briefly outline the ontological and epistemological commitments of these perspectives and how they can be applied for the purpose of this study, looking first at critical realism, followed by discourse theory and CDA.

2.2 Critical realism

Bhaskar (1978:18) writes that our understanding of society is necessarily theoretical in the sense that 'like a magnetic field', it is unperceivable and cannot be empirically identified independently of its effects, it can be *known* but not *shown* to exist. Rather than a collection of separable events and sequences, society is a complex totality, which must be studied in theory and cannot be read straight off the empirical world (1978: 24). This position against empirical generalisation (in favour of underlying causal mechanisms) reflects an ontological commitment to the *transcendental*. Relations and processes can be generative of social life but unavailable to direct inspection by the senses (Bhaskar 1978:22). Bhaskar (2008:2) therefore distinguishes between the domain of the *real* (causal mechanisms/structures/potentials), of the *actual* (events that take place) and of the *empirical* (our perceptual experience of the events). For example, an earthquake might have causal mechanisms that have been present but inactive for years (real), and when the earthquake happens (actual) the event reaches beyond the human perception of it (empirical). Similarly, things happen in the social world that should be understood as real, but beyond our direct perception. In addition to being 'unperceivable', the objects of study for sociology are only manifested in *open systems*, i.e. without invariant empirical regularity

(Bhaskar 1978:18 -19). In contrast to experimental conditions that attempt to isolate cause and effect, an event in 'the outside world' cannot with certainty be traced back to a single cause because of the multitude of things that might play in and are happening at the same time. This means that social scientific theory is necessarily incomplete (Bhaskar 1978:21). The position that the social world is transcendental (beyond empirical perception), and that our knowledge of it is necessarily theoretical and incomplete forms the ontological and epistemological basis of this study. After an introduction to discourse theory this chapter will address how critical realism and discourse theory can be combined.

2.3 Post-Marxist discourse theory

Laclau (in Dreyer-Hansen & Sonnichsen 2014) explains discourse as a link made between social elements where each element, in isolation, is not necessarily linked to the other (2014:257). *Articulation* is the basic form of relation-making and is central to discourse theory. For Laclau & Mouffe (1985:105) articulation is any practice that establishes a relation among elements so that their identity is changed as a result; and the 'structured totality' that follows is the discourse. In other words, the discourse can be understood as the sum of the articulations. Discourse theory rejects the distinction made between the discursive and non-discursive (Laclau & Mouffe 1985:107), meaning that nothing is understood or made sense of by humans outside of discourse. Laclau & Mouffe (1985) argue that a closer analysis of 'the so-called non-discursive complexes', i.e. institutions, techniques, social identities and so on, would only reveal more or less complex forms of discursive articulations. This does not mean that there is no outside world, external to thought. Returning to the earthquake, the event in itself is real but whether it is constructed as a natural phenomenon, or the wrath of God depends on the structuring of a discursive field (1985:108). Discourse theory opposes the dichotomy between an objective 'outside' without any discursive intervention, and a discourse that is only the expression of thought (Laclau & Mouffe 1985:108), meaning the idea that the discursive versus the material world (or thought versus reality) are mutually exclusive. A consequence of breaking this dichotomy is that articulation is not only a linguistic phenomenon, but 'must instead pierce the entire material density of the multifarious institutions, rituals and practices through which a discursive formation is structured' (Laclau & Mouffe 1985:109). Ideas are materially embodied, and nothing is free from representation. It follows that the categories that have been previously understood as exclusive to one or the other must be

rethought/reinterpreted (1985:110). Following the tradition of Laclau & Mouffe, Howarth (2018:381) summarises that discourse is an articulatory practice which modifies and transforms the elements that are connected; with the important addition that such elements include a range of phenomena, including linguistic and non-linguistic objects, as well as cultural and natural things. Discourse theory, like critical realism, commits to the real/outside world; but holds that it is always mediated by discourse.

Alongside articulation, an important contribution from discourse theory is that of partial fixation, or *nodal points.* Similarly to how critical realism views knowledge of the social as necessarily incomplete, discourse cannot (according to discourse theory) assume a final form, it is impossible to fix an ultimate meaning. However, there must be partial fixation of meaning, because in order for people to disagree they must have some sense of shared meaning if the social world is to be at all intelligible. The privileged points of partial fixation are called nodal points (Laclau & Mouffe 1985:111-112). Articulation can be understood as the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning (1985:113). Another contribution from discourse theory is the *floating signifier*, a name that supports some form of articulation and can link up with a variety of different projects (Laclau 2013, in Moraes 2014). Different political/antagonistic forces can fill the content of the name and thereby (partially) fix its signification (Laclau 1993:287). For example, *democracy* is open to contestation and articulation in radically different political projects, having one meaning for one group and the opposite meaning for another (Moraes 2014:30); *race* is relational and unfixed, subjected to endless processes of redefinition/appropriation/re-signification in different cultures, historical formations and moments of time (Hall 1997). Importantly, nodal points can also be floating signifiers, solid in one discourse but floating in the struggle between different discourses (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000:35).

The most important points of convergence between critical realism and post-Marxist discourse theory are the critique of empiricism (e.g. the problem of induction, collecting observations without causality); and the belief in transcendental (as opposed to empirical) realism (Laclau 1998:9-10). The problem with critical realism for Laclau is how the transcendental is understood, and he takes issue with the idea of intransitivity (Laclau 1998: 9-10) i.e., the independence of an event from the experience of it (Bhaskar 2008:16). This leads to an

ontological disagreement on whether or not things can be non-discursive, i.e. exist outside of discourse. Despite this disagreement, both perspectives can be considered for the purpose of this study because of their shared commitment to the real but unperceivable (transcendental realism), to the openness of the social, to the infinitude of meaning-making and therefore incompleteness of social knowledge.

2.4 Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) partly builds on a critical realist ontology in the sense that natural and social life are understood as an open system in which events are governed by simultaneously operative mechanisms (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999:19). Although CDA also uses some concepts from discourse theory (most importantly articulation), a central distinction between CDA and discourse theory and CDA is the demarcation line drawn in CDA between discourse and 'other social elements' like power relations, ideologies, institutions and so on (Fairclough 2013:9), whereas in discourse theory there is no such distinction. CDA focuses on the connections between the semiotic/linguistic and other aspects of the social world, which allows for the inclusion of other social theory to complement discourse analysis (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999: 113). An important contribution from CDA is *interdiscursivity*, i.e., the combination of different discourses and genres (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999:146); a communicative event might draw from different discourses and work them into particular articulations (Fairclough 2013:12) in a creative way. This can be traced back to the hybridity of late modernity (what Bauman calls liquid modernity), where boundaries between social fields (and therefore between language practices) are weakened and redrawn in complex interactions (1999:13,59). Because hybridity plays a big part in modern discourse, interdiscursivity and shifting articulations of/between discourses becomes an important analytical focus (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999: 59,153; Fairclough 2013:19), particularly the struggles over meaning making.

The problems with fully adopting a CDA approach for this study are its explicit commitments to normative and explanatory critique. Although this study (as any social research) is not free from normative judgement, it is not set out to 'evaluate realities and assess the extent to which it matches up to certain fundamental values' (Fairclough 2013:9). Neither is it explanatory in the sense that it 'beyond describing existing realities seeks to explain them by showing them to

be effects of certain structures, mechanisms or forces' (Fairclough 2013:9). Based on these commitments CDA suggests an operationalisation (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999:60, Fairclough 2013:13) that is not fully applicable for the purpose of this study (e.g., focus on a social wrong, identify obstacles to address the social wrong and possible ways past the obstacles). With that said, the focus on interdiscursivity as an analytical tool is highly relevant for the purpose of this study, as is the commitment to combining discourse analysis with other social theory, which aligns with critical realism and its emphasis on theory.

2.5 Methodological implications: an integrated approach II

The methodological implications of combining these perspectives are the analytical focus of the constitution of the social world through discourse, using articulation, nodal points and floating signifiers from discourse theory; and the complementation of discourse analysis by other social theory, as well as the focus on interdiscursivity, from CDA. The literature review refers to quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods and discourse studies to gain an overview of the academic field that studies the radical right. Epistemologically I subscribe to the incompleteness of knowledge of the social world and its causal mechanisms, and do not attempt to draw any definite conclusions on cause and effect. I have attempted a middle ground; to avoid extending discourse to encompass everything in the social world (discourse theory) because I want to use other social theory based on the perception of academic knowledge as a communal effort; but also to avoid making too strong claims on an objective reality and 'correct' conceptualisation (CDA). Rather, I want to show how the Sweden Democrat(ic) worldview has been constructed in different, and similar, ways throughout the years, and what discourses it builds on to legitimise its claims. Methodologically, I started out with an overview of the research on this topic (how is the radical right and its success explained); followed by a semi-inductive approach, reading close to data; followed by bringing this back to theory (what does research say about these themes); combining my results with other voices to attempt a dialogue within the study. Arguably, the attempt to stay close to the data reflects a discourse theory epistemology, and the attempt to dialogue represents a critical realist epistemology.

3 METHODS

3.1 Data and coding

The data for this study was collected from the Swedish National Data service (*Svensk Nationell Datatjänst*, SND), a search engine containing a collection of Swedish political parties' election manifestos and party programs, including the Sweden Democrats programs 1989-2014. The 2019 program was downloaded from the Sweden Democrats official website. The choice to analyse party programs stems from an intention to reach somewhat of a core of the Sweden Democratic worldview that cannot be attributed to individual party members, i.e., an official presentation. At SND, the Sweden Democrats have a collection of both election manifestos (*valmanifest*) and what could be called party/ideology programs (*principprogram*), hereafter *programs.* The manifestos consist of short paragraphs of free text followed by bullet points of specific policy suggestions that mirror the preceding text; the programs consist of free text only, which elaborates on the party's ideology and worldview (a presentation of 'who we are'). Initially, data analysis included both manifestos and programs, but focus was narrowed down to programs only, in order to enable a more in-depth analysis, as they were considered a more elaborate representation of the 'Sweden Democrat ontology'. The following programs have been analysed:

Sverigedemokraterna principprogram 1989
Sverigedemokraterna principprogram 1994
Sverigedemokraterna principprogram 1999 med justeringar 2002
Sverigedemokraterna principprogram 2003
Sverigedemokraterna principprogram 2005
Sverigedemokraterna principprogram 2011
Sverigedemokraterna principprogram 2019

The research was conducted with a semi-inductive/abductive approach. The first cycle of coding was descriptive, codes were developed based on headings and phrasings used in the programs through in vivo coding, to enable closeness to data and the Sweden Democrats' representation of reality (Saldaña 2015:91). The coding was done manually with printed

programs and coloured highlighting. This resulted in 46 codes, many of which were later merged or removed with the help of code maps. Written memos described the programs with minimal analysis of the findings. This was followed by an engagement with existing theory on some of the topics that appeared in the first cycle. After this a second cycle of coding was conducted, with reference to the literature, which included some versus coding (Saldaña 2015:115) to identify central conflicts in the Sweden Democrats worldview and how these varied throughout the years (i.e. what conflicts disappeared and what new conflicts emerged). Based on this a list of changes and continuities were identified, some of which were (again) merged (for example, the changes on abortion, adoption, homosexuality and gender equality were merged into one 'gender' theme). This was followed by more memo writing and code maps with reference to literature which formed the basis of analysis. The final themes were divided into changes (*green discourse, gender, populism*); and continuities (*authoritarianism/law and order, the people's home,* trygghet), with *immigration as a threat* conceptualised as an overarching theme that is present in the subtext of all the other themes.

3.2 Reflexivity and axiology

Harding (2004:37-40) points out that in a world of social inequalities and competing interests, scientific arguments are not exempt from being culturally and historically situated, and they are inevitably socially engaged. Bourdieu (1990) highlights the specific located-ness of thinking from an academic space, 'the scholastic point of view', and that sociologists should resist the temptation of claiming the role as 'neutral referee' (Bourdieu in Wacquant 1989:34). Social and political locations affect the research questions asked and not asked, the design, the methodology, the theoretical framework, interpretations and analyses, presentation of findings and so on (Harding 1986, 1987, 1991 in Guillemin & Gillam 2004:274-275). Reflexivity involves self-reflection on what kind of knowledge is produced, how it is generated and the ultimate purpose of the knowledge.

As mentioned, this study has taken a semi-inductive/abductive approach to enable closeness to data, which partly involves counteracting previous assumptions and prejudice. My own social position as a researcher, from an intersectional feminist standpoint, has informed the object of research as well as the analysis. The initial object of interest was the shifting boundaries in public discourse and increased inclusion of the Sweden Democrats (as can be seen in the quote

on the first page), i.e. the 'mainstreaming' of the party. Discourse analysis was chosen as the best method to enable an intervention to identify trends (and changes) in narratives over the years. The analysis is partly guided by previous knowledge of feminist literature and critical social theory (e.g., on normative exclusion, gender tropes, symbolic violence, and shifting targets in the xenophobic discourse). However, many of the initial assumptions of what might appear in the material have since been abandoned. The analytical viewpoint can be understood as change/continuity; rather than looking at the discourse from the analytical viewpoint of gender, or authoritarianism, or the GAL-TAN scale, it asks the more overarching question of what has changed and what has not changed since the mainstreaming/moderation process began; and why it matters. Following the logic of critical realism, both change and continuity can be considered important causal mechanisms for their success, although this cannot be concluded with certainty.

3.3 Potential weaknesses.

A potential weakness of this study is the issue of subjectivity and validity. Hammersley (2008) discusses validity in qualitative research, including whether it could or should adopt similar epistemic criteria as can be found in quantitative research, such as measurement, generalisation, and variable control (2008:43). Some theorists argue that it should, whilst others suggest that epistemic criteria are replaced by practical, ethical and/or aesthetic considerations (2008:46). Hammersley suggests a fallibilist epistemology that recognises that absolute certainty is never justified, without necessarily equating this to all knowledge claims being treated as equally doubtful (2008:46). This aligns with a critical realist ontology that considers knowledge/theory as necessarily incomplete, without subscribing to relativism. A potential weakness of this study is that it is based on one person's interpretation. For example, the focus on certain themes at the expense of others is a subjective decision, based both on how much it appears in the and the perceived theoretical relevance (e.g., to what extent it converges/diverges with existing literature). Specifically, some removed topics that might have theoretical relevance are *the discursive representation of the elderly population, decentralisation, the politicisation of culture,* and *left-right economic conflicts*. Consequently, another researcher might have identified a different ideological 'core' than that which is identified in the present study. Going back to reflexivity, knowledge is based on historical bias, and the themes highlighted here might turn out to be less theoretically relevant as perceived, or not hold much explanatory power over

time. Even so, I would argue that the mapping of discourse over time holds inherent value and can be understood as a partial truth. Another potential weakness is methodological nationalism, i.e. treating countries as the natural unit of study, equating society with the nation state, and confusing national interests with the purpose of social science (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2003:576). This is a highly relevant accusation for this research. The national focus is partly based on my personal standpoint and worry for the political development in Sweden, as well as an analytical interest for the end of (perceived) exceptionalism in Sweden. My hope is that the lessons learned can be applied elsewhere despite this national focus.

4 LITERATURE REVIEW: EXPLAINING THE RADICAL RIGHT

The analyses of radical right success in relation to conflict dimensions are often formulated in a context of (party-) supply and (electorate-) demand. The following chapter will outline arguments for demand, arguments for supply and explanations that go beyond supply and demand.

4.1 Conflict dimensions and voter demand

Demand-side explanations for radical right party success places focus on the conditions in wider society that might be favourable for such a party to grow – such as increased anti-immigration sentiment, or disillusionment with the established parties – rather than the conditions within the party itself (Widfeldt 2008:265). For example, Inglehart & Norris (2017) argue that cultural backlash explains the proximate *cause* of contemporary support for what they call authoritarian populism in western Europe, whilst existential insecurity explains the *magnitude* of support (2017:447). This makes it an issue of economic inequality as well as a cultural conflict dimension, or what Kriesi (2010) calls the new cleavage (see introduction). The authors claim that non- economic issues have dominated the political stage since the 1980s', and that 'the electorate has shifted from class-based polarisation to value-based polarisation' (2017:447). At the same time, economic growth is not matched with a raised standard of living for all, due to what the authors call a 'winner takes it all' economy (2017:451), which creates disillusionment and resentment amongst the electorate. In short, the increase in support (or demand) for the

radical right is due to cultural backlash (sociocultural conflict dimension), and economic insecurity (socioeconomic conflict dimension).

The two conflict dimensions can also be used to explore differences between political parties and electorate. Based on a quantitative study of party positioning in western Europe, Van der Brug & Van Spanje (2009) argue that party positions have only one dimension (left-right), whilst the electorate has two dimensions (left-right *and* cultural/value-based), meaning that there is a mismatch and a problem of representation in the political arena. According to them, immigration, which lies at the heart of the cultural debate, has largely been absorbed by the right-left dimension in politics. Their quantitative analysis finds strong correlation between economic issues (left-right) and positions on immigration (soft-tough) (2009:323). According to their study, virtually no parties exist that combine right wing positions on cultural issues with a left-wing position on socioeconomic issues (2009:325), suggesting that the cultural conflict dimension has little relevance for party positioning. However, a closer look at their results show that the Sweden Democrats stand out as an exception to the rule in Van der Brug & Van Spanje's model. Although the authors do not elaborate on this, it might explain the findings of Oskarsson & Demker's (2015) study. Following Rydgren (2005) and Kriesi (2010), Oskarsson & Demker (2015) point to dealignment and the decline of class voting in Sweden (2015:631), declaring that the historically strong Social Democrats have lost their grip on the Swedish working class (2015:636). They argue that left-right polarisation has decreased amongst the main parties in Sweden, and that most parties are ideologically/culturally libertarian. This has created a space for an authoritarian ideological positioning on the cultural dimension which the Sweden Democrats have utilised (2015:646). Oskarsson & Demker's quantitative model confirms authoritarian-libertarian ideological leanings as an important factor for Sweden Democrat sympathy amongst voters, with no significant relationship for left-right positions, which for them confirms that the Sweden Democrats mobilise along the authoritarian-libertarian dimension rather than the left-right dimension (2015:645); in contrast to the parties in Van der Brug & Van Spanje's (2009) model. Hellström et al (2012) somewhat triangulate the mismatch thesis between party and electorate in a discourse analysis. They argue that party competition before the 2010 election in Sweden was centred on the socioeconomic cleavage, but beyond the party arena – in public debates – the authors find signs of realignment towards socio-cultural issues, which they suspect the Sweden Democrats capitalised on to enter

parliament in 2010 (2012:205). Following these demand-side arguments taken together overall, it can be speculated that *if* the importance of cultural issues is increasing in Sweden as elsewhere, *and* the working class is de-aligned *and* has authoritarian values, *and* radical right parties like the Sweden Democrats are the only parties that express authoritarian values, *then* this might explain their electoral success.

Interestingly however**,** in a comparative study of 13 west European countries including Sweden, Abou-Chadi & Wagner (2020) find no support for the hypothesis that an increase in progressive values leads to decreased support for social democratic parties. This goes against the idea that progressive positions on issues like gender equality and immigration alienates the social democratic core constituency, the working class, who then find a new home with populist radical right parties (2020:247). The authors investigate how social democratic positions on the cultural dimension (and EU integration) affect parties electoral support, and find that more conservative positions do not seem to increase support among the less educated and working class voters (2020:247-8). They also find that members of the working class are not less likely to vote for more progressive social democratic parties (2020:257). Such findings are relevant when considering the classist potential of the dealignment/realignment argument (that suggest an authoritarian working class has found a new home in the Sweden Democrats), which will be addressed shortly. Finally, the authors also point to the complexity of linkages between economic and cultural dimension politics, e.g., how radical right parties frame economic issues as 'immigration problems' through welfare chauvinism (2020:260).

To summarise, according to the theories outlined so far, the electorate demand for radical right parties is affected by things like modernisation and globalisation (Kriesi 2010), and the increased importance of cultural issues (Van der Brug & Van Spanje 2009, Oskarsson & Demker 2015). However, such structural approaches can be challenged on several accounts: a) they ignore the agency of the parties, b) they ignore the difference in results across similar societal circumstances, and c) they assume that the ideology of the radical right is an anomaly that only appears in certain circumstances. In reference to the last point, Mudde (2010) suggests a paradigm shift that focuses on supply-side factors, i.e., the conditions of the parties themselves.

4.2 Supply-side factors

Mudde (2010) criticises the dominant view in literature on (populist) radical right parties that consider them an anomaly to mainstream western values - 'the normal pathology' thesis. This position holds that the radical right is a pathology in western society which only becomes politically relevant under extreme conditions - i.e., crisis (Mudde 2010:1167-1170). As has been discussed, this theoretical assumption leads to the methodological focus on demand-side explanations, such as large scale socioeconomic and sociocultural changes in order to answer the question 'why does a popular demand for a populist radical right party exist?' at a given time. Some scholars find the answer in different variations of the 'losers of modernisation' thesis (Kriesi 2010). Paraphrased, rapid and fundamental changes in society lead to perceived winners and losers of the new society, and the losers turn to the radical right or populist messages out of frustration. Mudde challenges the normal pathology thesis on both ideological and attitudinal level, i.e., he questions whether the core ideology of radical right parties stand in opposition to other basic values of western society, and also whether the opinions linked to radical values are only held by a small minority of the European population (2010:1173). In opposition to the normal pathology view and the subsequent demand-side focus, Mudde proposes a paradigm shift, suggesting that radical right (populist) parties radicalise existing prevalent mainstream values of western democracy (the 'pathological normalcy' thesis) with the methodological implications that research should focus on the supply-side factors to explain radical right success, looking at things like organisation, leadership, propaganda, and the struggle over issue salience (2010:1179-1180). The next section will look closer at the ideological core of the radical right and its connection with the mainstream, using Mudde (2010) with support from other research, before looking closer at some supply-side explanations.

4.3 Radical right ideology - a pathological normalcy

Mudde defines the (populist) radical right ideological core as nativism, authoritarianism and populism (2010:1173). Although notably, no party self-identifies as populist radical right, and scholars tend to disagree on the classification (Mudde 2016:297). In this study the Sweden Democrats will be referred to as a radical right party, but Mudde's analysis on populism is useful to understand the results. *Populism* considers society dichotomously separated into the pure people versus the corrupt elite, and holds that politics should above all represent the

(homogenous) will of the people (Mudde 2010:1175). The claim of populist radical right politicians tends to be that they alone represent the will of the people, whereas mainstream politicians represent the will of an elite, or are 'in cahoots' with each other (Mudde 2016:296). However, there is a 'normalness' to populism that points to its connection with mainstream values. For example, anti-establishment sentiments and the general assumption that power corrupts (Mudde 2010:1175) is not unique to populist messages. Mudde (2010) also quotes Canovan (1999) who describes the redemptive side of democracy that coexists with its more pragmatic side, i.e. its 'faith in secular redemption' (2010:1175). This can be understood as the more romantic promise of democracy to carry out the will of the people, in contrast to the somewhat dry every-day functioning of democratic institutions. In this sense populism can be considered part of the ebb and flow of democracy.

Nativism can be understood as a combination of nationalism and xenophobia (Mudde 2016:296), arguing that states should be inhabited by members of the nation group, and that heterogeneity is a threat to the nation state. Mudde (2016:296) notes that nativism has largely shifted from a nationalist to religious-cultural discourse, specifically singling out 'Muslim immigrants'. This is strongly linked to ethnopluralism (Widfeldt 2008:272, Rydgren 2005:16, Art 2011:11), which holds that different cultures can formally be considered equal but should not be mixed. Although nativism is not the same as nationalism, the former is impossible without the latter. Following Fairclough's interdiscursivity, it can be argued that the salience of nationalist discourses strongly facilitates the use of nativist messages. Regarding its connection to the mainstream, most European states use 'banal nationalism' (Billig 1995), i.e. everyday ideological habits that enable the established nations of the west to be reproduced, through daily reminders of their national identity (Mudde 2010:1173-1174). For example, Hellström et al (2012) illustrate how negative reactions to the Sweden Democrats are formulated in a nationalist framework. This is not to say that all actors in the debate are equally nationalist, but that there is continuity in imagining the nation as a distinct community (Anderson 1983) and claiming certain values (e.g., hospitality and tolerance) as part of that community, to 'reify the symbolic boundaries of the nation' (Hellström et al 2012:203-4). In other words, to oppose the Sweden Democrats nationalism by claiming that *my Sweden* is a tolerant place, is also a reflection of nationalism; albeit considered 'good' nationalism. Following Billig (1995), Hellström et al write that nationalism can be 'banal, non-violent and possess a reassuring

normality' (2012:191). Defining nationalism as something only bad people do ignores the 'common-sense' nationalism of our everyday life. Supporting Mudde (2010), Hellström (2010:16,24) argues that the Sweden Democrats radicalise already-established notions of Swedishness and foreignness that pre-exist in mainstream politics, rather than introducing completely new ideas (2010:16,24). Again, this highlights the importance of interdiscursivity.

In the aftermath of the Sweden Democrats entering parliament in 2010, Hübinette & Lundström (2011) point out that the Sweden Democrats mourning of the loss of 'old Sweden' and anti-racist and feminist fearing the loss of 'good Sweden' have more in common that one might suspect, as the two images of Sweden are dependent on each other, with *Swedish whiteness* as the fundamental object under attack (2011:43). The authors warn against the hubristic image of Sweden as a post-racial utopia and anti-racism as an integral part of Swedish (white) identity (2011: 44,46); as well as the conflation of gender equality, national identity and whiteness. Although they have radicalised this notion, Hübinette & Lundström claim it would be wrong to consider the Sweden Democrats and their sympathisers 'the only racists in Sweden' (2011:49).

Authoritarianism is the belief in a highly ordered society where infringements on authority are severely punished, leading to strict policies on law and order; criminalisation of 'social problems' like drugs, abortion and prostitution; and more discipline in schools (Mudde 2016:296). Notably, the respect for authority is not unique to the radical right ideology but 'a core staple of conservatism' as well as in religious thinking (Mudde 2010:1174). Peterson et al (1993) attempt to examine the relation between 'authoritarian aggression' and social issues linked to real/perceived threat at the time of writing. For example, links could be drawn between authoritarian aggression and punitive attitudes on AIDS and drug abuse, presumably because these issues involve conventional morality, a severe threat and an identifiable out-group (1993:175); and accepting institutional control and violence regarding women's sexuality and reproduction (1993: 180). Duckitt et al (2010) conceptualise and measure right wing authoritarianism (RWA) as a set of three distinct but related ideological attitude dimensions: *conservative*, opposing change in the social status quo; *authoritarian*, favouring tough punishment of deviance and/or nonconformity; and *traditionalist*, favouring traditional, old-fashioned lifestyles, behavioural norms, and values (2010:692). The authors find substantial independence between these attitudes (2010:698), which suggests that the concept

of authoritarianism must be carefully debunked in political analysis, especially considering the importance ascribed to authoritarianism on the socio-cultural conflict dimension in explaining radical right success.

Mudde (2010) also points out that the radical right overlap with prevalent mass attitudes, based on Eurobarometer surveys reporting high (or relatively high) percentages in affirmative responses for questions like whether the country has reached its limits in taking in certain minority groups, if immigrants committing any crime should be repatriated, if they are proud to belong to a certain nationality, if criminals should be punished more severely, if they have little trust for politicians and so on (2010:1175- 11778). This leads him to argue that the populist radical right is both well connected to mainstream western ideas/ideologies and in tune with broadly shared attitudes and policy positions (2010:1178), with the methodological implications that analyses on the radical right should not be so concerned with what conditions create demand for these parties, but rather assume that a demand exists and focus on what supply-side conditions within the party lead to their success.

Following this logic, Widfeldt (2008:265-266) argues that a successful political party needs ideology, policies, organisational/campaign strategies, and leadership in order to break through, particularly when the party is facing accusations of extremism. Put simply, the party must be able to present itself to the electorate as a legitimate political alternative. Bin & Yi (2015) argue that the Sweden Democrats managed to overcome a barrier of non-respectability after an intense normalisation/legitimisation process (referring to various endeavours aimed at escaping social ostracism); after which they could appeal to the parts of the electorate that were anti-immigration but wary of the party's extremist roots. The authors trace the normalisation process and highlight the leadership factor from Jimmie Åkesson and modifications of the party manifestos (2015:269). Key steps towards normalisation are listed in a table, such as public renunciation of Nazism, a new party symbol, a professionalised language, changes in the manifesto format, and extending to issues beyond anti-immigration (2015:270,274). Regarding leadership, Bin & Yi (2015) accredit Åkesson with somewhat single-handedly lifting the party from pariah to acceptable, as he raised the party's profile and gave it a respectable and professional image while toning down the racist extremism; and became an icon of the party (2015:272). The authors statistical interaction models suggest that the independent variable

'Åkesson's charm' contributed to voting choice when it interacted with anti-immigration attitudes (2015:280-281).

However, Bolin & Aylott (2019) test the 'exceptional leader hypothesis' and find little evidence to support it. For example, the continued rise in support when Mattias Karlsson took over during Åkesson's temporary leave in 2014 due to exhaustion suggests that Åkesson was 'not entirely indispensable' (2019:35). For the authors, it cannot be concluded that Åkesson's leadership was a necessary condition for the party's remarkable success although most likely a significant contributory factor (2019:36-37). This leads the authors to return to demand-side explanations for party success, arguing that Åkesson's entry as a party leader coincided with changing political conditions like the financial crisis 2008 and increased asylum applications (2019:28). The authors suggest an issue-specific (immigration) mismatch between mainstream parties and electorate, culminating with the near collapse of Sweden's immigration control 2014-2015 under which circumstances a party of the Sweden Democrats type 'would have prospered whoever was in charge' (2019:36-37). As previously outlined however, this demand-side focus comes with its own problems. A potential way around this somewhat circular discussion is that the focus should not lie on Åkesson as a person/icon but on the discursive changes brought under his leadership; together with other 'moderates' of radical right activism.

4.4 Beyond supply and demand: extremists, moderates and micropolitics

The demand-side factors previously outlined could be argued necessary but insufficient for radical right party success (Art 2011:12). Neither convinced by supply-side analysis only, Art (2011) makes a case for *micropolitical* analysis*;* seemingly insignificant political choices can produce radically different outcomes in societies that are all facing the same basic set of large-scale transformations (2011: ix). As mentioned, part of the problem with demand-side explanations to the rise of radical right parties is the wide variation in results across similar societal/structural conditions. Art argues that the internal life of radical right parties is shaped by the nature of their *activists;* distinguishable from *voters* as the people who work actively on the parties' behalf, ranging from members to council representatives to party leaders (2011:19-20). Activists vary in their ideological motivations, divided by Art into *extremists, moderates* and opportunists (2011:32-33). *Extremists* are revolutionary and believe in building a new authoritarian order, representing the most radical element of the party. *Moderates* adhere to

ethnopluralism (equality but separation of cultures) rather than biological racism and defend nation and culture rather than race. They reject violence and condemn Nazism and fascism, and they condone the holocaust but often compare it to atrocities committed by other states like Stalinist Russia. *Opportunists* differ from the other two as they normally do not come from far-right subcultures and are more interested in career advancement than in the radical right ideology. Activists can also be categorized by socioeconomic status (e.g., education) and political experience (2011:33). The attributes of activists affect the party's *cohesion, competence*, *legitimacy* and *flexibility* (2011:33-40); which are identified as key features that affect electoral performance. The types of activists that are attracted, in turn, depend on historical legacies and societal conditions, and the permissive or repressive reactions from other parties and civil society (e.g., social sanctions). Using an interaction of supply and demand factors, Art's model can be summarised as (1) historical legacies and pre-existing conditions and reactions to the radical right (permissive or repressive) affect the (2) types of activists attracted to the party, which affects the (3) party development (size, cohesion, competence, legitimacy and flexibility) which affects the (4) electoral success or failure of a radical right party (2011:31).

Art defines the Sweden Democrats as a failed radical right party, because they do not pass his criteria of reaching over 5% of votes during three consecutive elections at the time of writing. Similarly to other researchers (Rydgren 2005, Widfeldt 2008), he predicts that the legacy of history and the strength of norms against anti-immigrant parties will be too difficult to overcome in Sweden, and that it is unlikely that the Sweden Democrats will ever match the success of its neighbouring radical right parties (2011:87), as it emerged from a right wing extremist subculture (outlined in the introduction). According to Art the strong association to neo-Nazism reinforces the repressive political and social reaction to the party and its activists (2011:91) e.g. through social sanctions. This is partly confirmed by Art's interviewees who admit to him that the Sweden Democrats only attract people 'with little to lose' (2011:95). Although the Sweden Democrats are defined as a failed radical party in Art's analysis, his model is highly significant for the purpose of this analysis, due to the analytical importance given to the 'moderates' of the radical right and to ideological flexibility. Published in 2011, Art's research took place during a crucial turning point for the Sweden Democrats, after significant discursive changes but before their exponential electoral success. Åkesson has

referred to ‘the gang of four’ who met at Lund University, consisting of himself, Richard Jomshof, Mattias Karlsson, and Björn Söder and claim that they essentially took over the Sweden Democrats when it was highly unorganised and ‘became’ the party (Expo 2018). This could be read as a core group of moderates who steered the party away from extremism and towards acceptability together, which then affected cohesion, competence and legitimacy in line with Art’s (2011) model.

4.5 Beyond supply and demand: ‘the devil is in the lexical detail ‘

It can also be argued that radical right (populist) parties must be understood in their local contexts, ‘spatially thought through as [they] employ territorial metaphors and imagery to construct the people’s identity and express grievances’ (Lizotte 2019, in Airas & Truedsson 2020:2). In other words, there are socio-cultural factors that make the rise of the Swedish radical right unique. Airas & Truedsson (2020) caution against reference to a ‘global rise of populism’ given the variations that national contexts give rise to (2020:2). Instead, they suggest that ‘the devil is in the lexical detail’ (2020:2), arguing that language and discourse are key to understanding the variations of populism, and that the cultural significance of ‘the people’s home’ (*Folkhemmet*) and its associated *trygghet* is what makes the Swedish case unique (2020:5). This approach does not necessarily stand in opposition to Art’s (2011) model, as one of Art’s criteria is ideological flexibility, which takes place through discursive practices. Airas & Truedsson’s study also supports Hellström’s (2010) argument that the Sweden Democrats employ *already-established* narratives. The people’s home can be summarised as a societal metaphor that emerged in Swedish 1930’s socialism, to be understood as a society for all swedes with the implication of downplaying class politics (Khayati 2013:89-90). *Trygghet* is often translated to *security,* but this translation can be argued misleading as it can encompass much more. For the authors, *trygghet* is a ‘lacuna’ or lexical gap. They write (2020:3):

> *Devoid of its political-discursive manipulations,* trygghet *is an experiential knowledge that has both an individual and a shared understanding of well-being, calmness, and a warm, comforting sense of place. The enveloping sense of safety that Swedes associate with* trygghet *emphasises Medby’s point that the embodied and affective “are intrinsic to language” (2020, p. 152). Put differently, the concept’s affective resonance given its cultural and linguistic connotations is what renders it untranslatable.*

In short, *trygghet* can be summarised as an affective linguistic device that refers to an *enveloping sense of safety* for self and community. Feeling *trygghet* is the essence of the project people's home (2020:3). Researching the discursive battle leading up to the 2018 Swedish election, Airas & Truedsson (2020) argue that a central combat was which party really stands for, and can provide, *trygghet* for the Swedish people. This also includes a struggle over what *trygghet* really is about, and/or what really threatens it. For the Sweden Democrats, it is threatened by immigration, which upsets the status quo of the social contract; and create 'un-*trygghet'* (*otrygghet*) in terms of the welfare state, crime, sexual violence and a general decline in trust (2020:5). Whereas the Sweden Democrats have fundamentally positioned themselves as the party of *trygghet* (threatened by immigration), the social democratic party argues that worker's *trygghet* is threatened by the Sweden Democrats. Their strategy for the 2018 election was to reclaim their role as the original architects of the people's home (and thus *trygghet*), by claiming that a vote for the Sweden Democrats would undermine economic *trygghet* (2020:6-7); i.e. attempting to shift the battleground from immigration to economic issues. In doing so, they return to their traditional stance as proclaimed protectors of the people's home, placing the real threat to *trygghet* in right wing economic policies (2020:9-10). This argument is in turn ridiculed by the Sweden Democrats who understand *trygghet* as reaching far beyond its economic dimension (reflecting the affective resonance of the word). A recurring narrative from the Social Democratic activist respondents in their study was that the Sweden Democrats capitalise on economic insecurity and make people vote against their own interests (2015:7). Airas & Truedsson argue that this argument carries a classist attitude, also prevalent amongst liberal academics who explain away support for the Sweden Democrats through reference to uneducated lower-class voters 'susceptible to being attracted by demagogues' (Mouffe 2005:65, in Norris & Inglehart 2019).

To summarise, much literature on radical right success address the interplay of socioeconomic and sociocultural conflict dimensions, with much focus on demand side factors, like an increased importance of cultural values for electoral behaviour (Kriesi 2010), cultural backlash and economic inequality creating a perfect storm for radical right demand (Inglehart & Norris 2017), a mismatch between the parties representing one conflict dimension and the electorate 'demanding' two, and left-right convergence creating a demand for authoritarian ideologies

(Oskarsson & Demker 2015). Other theorists suggest that this focus is misleading, and that radical right views exist in the mainstream making the demand for them less puzzling (Mudde 2010, Hellström et al 2012, Hellström 2010, Hübinette & Lundström 2011); which leads to a focus on party supply factors (Widfeldt 2008), or a combination of supply and demand (Art 2011). Other researchers formulate arguments outside of supply and demand and maintain that the radical right must be understood in its national context with focus on local discursive struggles (Airas & Truedsson 2020, Hellström 2010). As mentioned in the introduction, the present study reflects an attempt to map the discursive shifts, the changes and the continuities in Sweden Democrats' ideology 1989-2019 to explore both the 'radicalness' and 'normalness' of their discourse over time.

5 RESULTS

5.1 An overview of the programs

The programs published in 1989, 1994 and 1999 are highly similar. Within this time frame, some sections are extended, some are added and some removed, but they all stem from the same foundational text. These could be called 'the doom and decay years' (following Elgenius & Rydgren 2017, 2019), but are mostly referred to as 'the early programs' throughout this chapter. The 2003 program marks a discursive shift, where the rhetoric changes from doom and decay to defending the nationalistic principle (ethnopluralism) as a positive value that they aspire to. The 2005 program is almost identical to that of 2003, but with a few formative changes: the logo is changed from a burning torch with the Swedish flag - a common fascist symbol directly copied from the British National Front logo (Gestrin 2007: 129, 145,154) - to a blue anemone, following a tradition amongst Swedish political parties to use flowers as party symbols; a new slogan is introduced (*trygghet* and tradition); and it has a new font, a front page, and a table of content. The 2005 program also includes a paragraph on the centrality of the UN declaration of human rights for the party's ideology, and their rejection of discrimination based on gender, religious and ethnic affiliation or ethnic background (2005:4). The 2011 program builds on the ideas presented in 2003, but with an increase from 7 to 48 pages, making it more elaborated. The 2019 program is almost identical to that of 2011 except for some moderations made in two sections (*human nature* and *family politics)* that have little effects for the text as it appears but

significant changes for party ideology. For this reason, the early programs (1989-1999), the 2003 program, and the 2011 program will be the main units of analysis in the text. Having broadly outlined the general shifts in the programs throughout the years, the next section will take a closer look at thematic changes and continuities in the rhetoric. Changing themes are *green discourse*, *gender discourse* and *populism*. Continuities are *law and order*, *trygghet*, and *the people's home,* with *immigration as a threat* as an overarching theme that is present in all others. The themes will be reported in the present chapter, and then brought into dialogue with existing research in the discussion.

5.2 Changes

5.2.1 Green discourse

5.2.1.1 Energy sources

The Sweden Democrats' position on environmental issues arguably reflects one of their most dramatic transformations. In 1989-1999, ecological awareness is highlighted as one of their fundamental values together with national cohesion and democracy (1989:4, 1994:5, 1999:4), and the dystopian image of population explosion and consumption society (1989:3, 1994:4, 1999:2) aligns with the general imagery of decay and destruction.

> *The Sweden Democrats' environmental-political goal is to achieve a society where all enterprise that damages our environment and health is ceased (1989:10).*

Several suggestions are presented that appear radically green, such as that environmental awareness should be taught in school (1989:10, 1994:9, 1999:11), and that pollution and waste that harms our environment must be stopped (1989:3, 1994:4) or radically reduced (1999:2). Any use of substances that damages the ozone layer must also be prohibited (1989:10). In 2003, ecological awareness changes from a core value to becoming a part of the *management idea* (2003:3), i.e. the idea that the father country (*fädernesland*) is a heritage from older generations to be carefully managed in various aspects. The management perspective includes cherishing the economic and natural resources as well as the cultural legacy (2003:5-6). Green values are still part of the Sweden Democrats' ideology but not one of their *raisons d'etre* and without the radical policy suggestions previously outlined. In 2011 the party holds a sceptical perspective, stating that Sweden cannot solve the climate problems alone, that

environmental political interests must be balanced against other societal values, such as care for culture, landscape, animal life and biodiversity. Furthermore:

> *While new forms of energy are developed we must accept that we use fossil fuels* (2011:40-42).

In this sense the importance of environmental issues has seen a sharp decline in the party ideology, and different environmental values are positioned against each other (such as renewable energy versus biodiversity). In the later documents, the party also suggest a refurbishment of nuclear power which was strongly opposed in the early documents.

> *Nuclear power should be phased out at the rate allowed by the reactors' natural operating time (...) Research to develop environmentally friendly energy alternatives must be given high priority* (1989: 11)

> *(...) nuclear power should be phased out at a pace that is economically and ecologically sustainable for society (....)* (1999: 13*)*

> *(...) for the foreseeable future, nuclear power and hydropower will form the backbone of Sweden's electricity production. The Sweden Democrats welcome a further development of nuclear power technology* (2011: 40)

5.2.1.2 Animal life

However, if the care for animal life is to be considered part of environmental values, the decline is not as straightforward. Animal protection is mentioned somewhat sporadically and with varying force. The 1994 program dedicates a section to animal protection with the same title, outlining a number of suggestions like stricter punishments for animal abuse and the prohibition of products manufactured through animal abuse (1994:10). In 1999 it is clarified that such products include kosher and halal-butchered meat (1999:13). In 1999 a section on societal planning also declares that:

> *Islam is not only a religious movement but also has social and political ambitions that we do not consider desirable in Sweden. For example, the view on women and animals that is found is Islam is unacceptable to us (1999:5).*

The 2003 program does not mention animal protection. The 2011 program repeats the call to restrict – although not prohibit – the import of goods produced by exposing animals to unnecessary suffering (2011:31).

We consider the care for animals a measurement of how developed a society is and strive for a society where no animals are exposed to unnecessary suffering (2011:42).

In other words, the Sweden Democrats' call for animal protection appears mostly when positioned against something 'foreign', the emphasis lies on the import of goods rather than domestic production that causes animal suffering.

To summarise, the data shows a sharp decline in emphasis on environmental issues in 2003 and onwards. Whereas in the early programs environmental destruction is part of a decay narrative, suggesting severe punishment for the emission of fossil fuels and other harmful substances, as well as educating environmental awareness in the early ages; the later programs suggest a more realistic approach, which admits that Sweden cannot be responsible for the whole world's environmental problems, and green values must be weighed against other values. However, this decline is not matched on the topic of animal care/protection, which appears somewhat sporadically in relation to a range of topics, including to expose Islam as an animal-hostile religion and political movement (1999); to ban the import of kosher and halal meat (1999); to ban any foreign product that causes unnecessary suffering (1994, 1999); and to state that the development of a society can be measured by how well they treat their animals (2011). In 1989 and 2003 it is not mentioned at all.

5.2.2 Gender Discourse

Gender discourse will here refer to any reference to gender differences, gender (in)equality, sexuality, sexual reproduction, and the societal role of the family.

5.2.2.1 The family friendly society

The early programs are largely focused on the family friendly versus the family hostile society. For example, it is argued that the family hostile politics of the Social Democrats has forced

women out into the workforce at the expense of the children, losing the *trygghet* and traditional norms that have been passed down through generations (1989:2). Furthermore, the family is identified as:

> *(...) the basic element around which society is built (...) Family kinship and a good home environment for our children has a positive impact on our whole society and strengthens the spirit of the people's home (...) Family policy must be designed to encourage family formation and promote families with many children (1989:8)*

Two things are important in the quote above. The first is the symbolic role of the family, as the basic unit of social relations and as strengthening the people's home. It is also used metaphorically as society should function as a family where the experienced adults (the state) guide the young (the population); and the moral and ethical values of the family and society and its organisations must align (1989:13). The 2003 program repeats the important role of the family as 'the inner nucleus of society', and the relationship between a man, woman and their child is a precondition for human reproduction, which is the foundation of every nation's survival (2003:4-5). In short, the family = the nuclear family = the nation. In 2011, the family is deemed the most important and foundational form of kinship in society through its nurturing, culture-conveying, and disciplining role (2011:24-25), making this rhetoric a constant in an otherwise changing theme. The second thing to note in the quote above is the explicit commitment to promote certain kinds of family formations over others. The commitment to the family friendly society leads to a number of policy suggestions, including a number of tax reductions for larger families, introducing family education in school to prepare for family formation, and stricter laws on abortion to counteract the increased disrespect for human life (1989:8-9). The last suggestion is part of their call for a moral resurgence, arguing that a pregnancy should be the result of a steady relationship between a man and a woman.

> *The number of abortions in Sweden has been scandalously high for decades - almost 39 000 in 1988 - and it is mainly Swedish women who seek abortion. This demands information and enlightenment combined with a new family policy to deal with the problem (1989:9).*

Note here the emphasis that it is mostly 'Swedish' women who seek abortion. After clarifying that exceptions can be made in the case of rape and special medical reasons (although this is unspecified), the section concludes that:

> *the link between abortion-wishes and adoption-needs should be explored to combat unnatural elements in population policy.*

Looking only at the 1989 program leaves some questions on what this might refer to, but this is elaborated on in the 1994 program, where the Sweden Democrats explicitly link abortion, immigration and adoption to paint the picture of a 'population political chaos' (1994:11). Additions that have been made to the 1989 text (which still forms the basis) are that the high numbers of abortions are almost at the same levels as the mass-immigration; and that the prospect to adopt Swedish children should increase while the prospect to adopt 'non-Nordic' children should be strongly limited (1994:11).

5.2.2.2 Sexuality

The 1999 program introduces the Sweden Democrats' opposition to same-sex marriage in a section titled *sexual deviance.* After stating that the harassment of 'sexually deviant' people is criminal and should be punished, the section continues:

> *Outlets for sexually deviant desire may take place provided that no one suffers from it. The glorification of the homosexual lifestyle in e.g. mass media creates unhealthy references for young people who are in the process of building their adult identity* (1999:9-10)

The first thing to note here is the articulation that links certain sexuality to predatory behaviour by arguing that it may take place *if* no one suffers from it, which also alludes to the possibility that it is illegalised. The second thing to note is the opposition to glorifying the homosexual lifestyle, suggesting that homosexuality is inherently wrong, as well as contagious, and should be treated as such. Furthermore, same-sex couples should not be allowed to register for partnership, to inherit from their partners, or adopt children (1999:11). The 1999 program provides no reason for these suggestions, but in 2003 (in a section on the biological differences between men and women) it is elaborated that men and women complement each other, and therefore every child should have the right to a mother and father (2003:5). Because this section

does not explicitly mention adoption, this could also be interpreted as an argument on the right to shared custody in cases of divorce. However, the 2011 program solidifies the Sweden Democrats' opposition to same-sex adoption by stating that the complementary nature of men and women makes the nuclear family the best suited condition to provide children with stability and *trygghet* (2011:24); it follows that every child should have the right to a mother and father, which leads them to oppose state sanctioned adoption by single households, same-sex couples and 'polyamorous groups' (2011:24-25). The section concludes that other than this, sexual minorities should have the same rights as everyone else. It is noteworthy that although a step away from sexual deviance, the referral to any other sexuality than heterosexuality as a *sexual minority* reproduces the binary image of norm versus deviance; thus reiterating it as an abnormality. The opposition to same-sex adoption is removed from the 2019 program, which declares that although the Sweden Democrats are of the conviction that the nuclear family provides the best environment for children, they are aware that this does not work for everyone (2019:15).

5.2.2.3 Gender equality and bad cultures

At the discursive shift in 2003, the Sweden Democrats highlight ethnopluralism which they call *the nationalist principle*, protecting cultural diversity on a global level, through the logic that in order to maintain global diversity the individual national cultures must be kept intact (2003:3-4). The opposite of this, for the Sweden Democrats is cultural imperialism, i.e. coerced cultural meetings and influences.

> *Sweden belongs to the swedes. This does not mean we Swedes are better than others but that this is the only place on earth we have an absolute right to be and develop our own uniqueness and identity (2003:4).*

> *Islam and especially its strong political and fundamentalist branch is the religious view that has shown most difficulty in harmoniously coexisting with Swedish and western culture. The influence of Islamism on Swedish society should therefore be discouraged to the greatest extent possible; and immigration from Muslim countries with severe elements of fundamentalism should be very strongly limited (2011:27).*

In the quotes above, the Sweden Democrats are not arguing that Swedes are better but that they, like other cultures, have their own uniqueness that must be kept unique. The problem with Islam (defined as culture rather than religion) is not necessarily that it is *bad*, but that it 'shows difficulty in coexisting with Swedish and western culture'. However, in 2011 *cultural relativism* is added alongside cultural imperialism as ideologies that the Sweden Democrats fundamentally oppose (2011:19-20). Opposing cultural imperialism for the Sweden Democrats means that no state or nation has the moral right to deliberately try to change or abolish another nation's culture. The 2011 program adds that:

> *This does not, however, mean that all cultures are equally good. It is obvious that some cultures are better than others at guarding basic human rights, creating democracy and material affluence, having good healthcare, high educational levels, and equality before the law. This means that these cultures, in our eyes, are better than those cultures that are unwilling or unable to create good living conditions for the people who live within them (2011:20)*

> *(...) The widespread practice of female genital mutilation in some countries can be cited as a concrete example of such a destructive aspect. We hope that the countries that practice this barbaric custom gets rid of it, and confront the women-hostile ideologies that it is founded on (2011:20)*

In short, some cultures are better than others at equality, and the bad cultures must get rid of their barbaric customs and women-hostile attitudes. This is a central shift that not only radicalises them in comparison to 'mainstream' radical right ideology (which subscribes to ethnopluralism) but it also discursively builds on the 'good Sweden' brand, which will be addressed in the discussion.

> *(...) For the Sweden Democrats, it is a given that men and women have exactly the same value and that both sexes should have the same rights, be equally before the law and feel* trygga *and respected* (2011:25)

Simultaneously, this discourse is balanced against a discussion on the nature of gender differences, that there are de facto biological differences between men and women that cannot be traced down to social constructions, nor seen by the naked eye, which leads to the argument that men and women behaving differently and living in different situations could be a result of

life choices and not necessarily of systematic oppression (2011:7). Such invisible but real biological differences are referred to as an example of a 'hereditary essence' in every human being that cannot be interminably repressed. Some aspects of this essence are shared by all humans, some are unique for some groups, and some are unique for the sole individual. This phrase has also been interpreted as thinly veiled biological racism (Elgenius & Rydgren 2017, 2019), and is removed from the 2019 program. Instead of subscribing to the worldview that there exists gendered oppression in Sweden, the Sweden Democrats advocate a 'formal equality', where neither men nor women receive special treatment on the basis of their gender (2011:25).

To summarise, in the earlier documents the gender discourse is presented as part of the moral decay of Swedish society. Women have been forced out into the workforce by social democratic governments, and abortions are likened to crimes that must be combatted. Their position on abortion is also racially charged as it is clarified that it is mostly *the Swedish women* who have abortions, contributing to a 'population chaos' (1989,1994,1999) which is also linked to immigration and adoption, as non-Nordic adoption is discouraged. The early documents describe homosexuality as sexual deviance and call for the end of glorifying the homosexual lifestyle. Opposition to same-sex adoption is maintained until 2019, but for the sake of the *trygghet* and wellbeing of children. At the discursive shift in 2003, the opposition to abortion, non-Nordic adoption, and homosexual 'glorification' is removed; whilst elaborations on the biological differences between men and women are added, along with gender equality as an inherent part of Swedishness (a given) that can be contrasted to Otherness ('women-hostile ideologies'). The important role of the nuclear family as metaphor, basic kinship of society and convenor of culture and discipline remains a constant.

5.2.3 Populism

5.2.3.1 'Those politicians'

In the early documents one indication of populism is the distinction made between the Sweden Democrats and other politicians. It is declared that the Sweden Democrats were formed with the purpose to change the irresponsible politics that have been practiced by both social democratic and conservative governments (1989:3); that internationalism has had its full breakthrough within the traditional political ideologies (1994:3); and unqualified individuals

reach high positions by belonging to the 'right' party, which proves the existence of corruption and deception (1994:3). In 2003, most of these accusations have been removed, and they no longer position themselves against *the politicians*. However, they still place themselves outside of mainstream politics by stating that – because they are ideationally inspired by both the social democratic idea of the people's home, and the national conservatism from the turn of the last century – the party is 'not easily placed on the classic left-right scale' (2003:1). The most crucial shift in regard to populism happens in 2011, when the party moves away from an antagonistic relationship between the Sweden Democrats and the mainstream (although moderated in 2003), to embracing a combination of what they consider to be the best of left and right ideologies respectively (2011:3):

> *The party's ambition is to combine the best elements from the traditional right- and the left ideologies. We affirm law and order, community building traditions, societal institutions and proven well-functioning natural communities in the form of the family and the nation*.

5.2.3.2 The people's rule

Another populistic narrative is the antagonistic relationship between the people and the politicians, who are in collusion with the media. The early programs state that the nation is in the hands of politicians who do not put Swedish interests first (1989:2); that the power holders ignore public opinion and try to silence critics through legal measures, forcing the swedes to adapt to the new society (1999:14); that an extremely like-minded mass media together with politicians create an opinion dictatorship and opinion suppression through hate campaigns against anyone who dares to question prevalent immigration politics (1989:3). In opposition to this, the Sweden Democrats want to safeguard true democracy by increasing the people's participation in decision making. Increased participation includes public debates preceding important political decisions; and more binding and consultative referendums on national, municipal and local level (1989:3). In 2003, the accusations of opinion suppression and collusion between the politicians and media are removed, but the need for increased democracy, e.g., through more consultative and binding referendums, is maintained (2003:1,6). This is repeated in 2011, with the addition that democracy should not be defined as a synonym to one's own political views but rest on the majority principle and freedom of speech (2011:5-6). There is also a new development in the 2011 program:

Democracy means people's rule and the Sweden Democrats' view is that one cannot fully circumvent the word "people" in people's rule and that the people's rule in the long run risks becoming very problematic to sustain in a state populated by several people(s) where there is no consensus around who should count as the people and where there might not even be an arena for debate because the inhabitants of the state might not even speak the same language (2011:6).

Through this logic they link ethnicity to democracy, by arguing that common national and cultural identity is a precondition for a functioning democracy. It is alarming that they question who would count as 'the people' in a state inhabited by a diverse population, opening up for new articulations that separate *The* people from *Other* people.

To summarise, the populistic discourse in the programs have gone through significant changes in 1989-2011, from using politicians as a derogatory term; to positioning themselves outside the left-right political dimension; to finally declaring that they aim to combine the best elements of left and right ideology, thereby significantly decreasing the antagonistic relationship between them and the mainstream, moving towards becoming a party amongst others. Therefore, it could be argued that the discourse at this point has become too moderate or refined for them to be classified as a populist party. However, traces of populism remain in their discourse through the people's rule narrative that argues for increased direct democracy, which is also linked to ethnicity as they argue that having many 'different people(s)' in a state hinders democracy.

5.3 Continuities

5.3.1 Authoritarianism

5.3.1.1 Law and order

In the early programs, high crime rates are explained by moral dissolvement, unlimited immigration and lenient punishments (1989:2). The 1994 program suggests a complete reform of the legal system to combat what they call the grotesque 'dopeyness' and coddling of the last few decades, a decay which started when the penal code changed in 1962 to the detriment of the citizens' judicial *trygghet* (1994:12-13). The Sweden Democrats suggest that a modified version of the old penal code (the 1864 *Strafflagen*) should be put into place while a new one

is formulated. Reforms include (1994:12-13): victims of crime receiving compensation directly from the perpetrators rather than from the state; the possibility of penalty labour, as opposed to community service; a 'three strikes you're out' system, where the perpetrator will be automatically sentenced to a lifetime imprisonment at the time of their third crime; and the death penalty. Crimes that should lead to the death penalty include premeditated murder, murder of children and elderly, and high treason. Finally, the section concludes that:

> *Deportation should be the normal sanction when an immigrant has served a prison sentence for a serious crime (1989:13).*

Similarly, in 1999, the section on population politics states that:

> *When it comes to immigrants who have committed crimes, the Sweden Democrats believe that they have abused our hospitality and must be returned to their homelands. The same goes for people who have obtained their residence permit and citizenship on false grounds, stated false identity or the like (1994:14).*

Note here the removal of the word *serious* before the word crimes, opening up for a completely different kind of deportation politics and hierarchy of citizenship. Other than this, the section on criminal justice is almost identical to that of 1994, with the same suggestions, but without the explicit call to return to the penal code of 1864. In the 2003 program criminal justice policy is understood as an extension of *trygghet* under the watchwords *without* trygghet *no freedom*. The Sweden Democrats' tough position has not changed but they have significantly moderated their language. Here, they simply state that the interests of de facto and potential victims of crime must be put before those of the criminals; and that to maintain respect for the law, offences must be swiftly and severely punished, and laws must align with public perceptions of justice (2003:4). There is no call for complete reform, and no suggestion to reintroduce the death penalty. This is largely repeated in 2011, with the moderation that offences should be swiftly and consistently (not severely) punished (2011:7).

5.3.1.2 Authoritarian values?

The importance of respecting authority also appears in segments outlining the education system, which similarly to society at large is marked by lenience and a lack of discipline. Although the language and suggestions are moderated, this position remains a constant throughout the years.

> *Fair and course-related grades must be set from the fourth year in all subjects, including order and conduct (....) Society should see to it that education provides all students with norms and good discipline; ethics and morals should be added as a subject so that the students learn cooperation, consideration, comradery and honesty* (1989:9, 1994:9, 1999:10)

> (...) trygghet *and a peaceful study climate for well-behaved students must always superordinate the needs of disorderly students (2011:35).*

The above quote from 2011 can be likened to how the interests of crime victims must be prioritised over the interests of criminals in the sections on criminal justice policy, assuming a mutually exclusive relationship where one must be protected at the expense of the other. If authoritarianism is also to be conceptualised through conservative and traditionalist attitude dimensions, i.e. opposing change in the social status quo and favouring traditional norms and lifestyles (Duckitt et al 2010), then an analysis of authoritarian discourse should pay attention to references to conservative and traditional values. Much of the Sweden Democrats' traditional values in the early programs falls under their gender ideology, which has been outlined in the gender theme. Other policies that can be argued to fall under this form of authoritarianism are the calls in the early programs to combat alcohol and drug use, which can be called the war on drugs narrative.

> *Abortions, crime and moral decay can be curbed through guiding efforts at home and in school (1989:4)*

> *Preventive criminal policy efforts must be implemented in homes, schools and youth activities, e.g. within the sports movement (...) aiming for a healthy and sound people's home (1989:13,1994:13,1999:17)*

Special resources must be put into the fight against drugs (...) and addiction shall lead to coerced care (1999:17)

The ruthless exploitation of street prostitutes will be terminated by coerced care of the drug addicted women (1999:18).

In the criminal justice section, it is declared that an HIV-positive person who is aware of their condition and still has unprotected sex with an uninfected person should be sentenced for manslaughter or murder (1999:18). The fact that policy on HIV is found in a section on crime rather than on health policy adds to the criminalisation of the disease.

As value-conservatism is made an explicit ideological base in 2003 it is also significantly moderated, and there is little reference to morality, discipline, alcohol, drugs, or the *healthy and sound* people's home (although as will be discussed in the next theme, the people's home metaphor remains). The Sweden Democrats do not elaborate on their understanding of value-conservatism until 2011, where they combine it with the people's home metaphor to profess *social conservatism*. Presumably the word *social* in social conservatism refers to the commitment to basic economic equality as part of the people's home. For the Sweden Democrats, social conservatism represents:

(...) the endeavour to replace class struggle and hatred with fraternization and national solidarity; anarchy and societal dissolution with trygghet*, high morals, and law and order. We also share the early European social conservatism's analysis that nationalism and the strengthening of cohesion on the basis of national identity, common culture and history is perhaps the most important means to achieve the above-mentioned aspirations (2011:11)*

Here we see the return of morality coupled with law and order, and thus arguably the return of discipline. It is emphasised that nationalism, cohesion and common culture is a precondition to achieve this. Or, as put in 1999:

An advantage of ethnic homogeneity is that it disciplines and creates empathy in a similar way that healthy families do (1999:14)

Although the quote from 2011 is not as strongly worded as that from 1999 and does not explicitly refer to ethnicity, the causal links placed between cohesion, common cultural/historical identity, morality and law and order points to a significant consistency in the underlying worldview of the party, where sameness equates to morality and discipline which equates to *order*.

To summarise, the authoritarian discourse goes through some drastic changes in 1989-2011, from reintroducing the 1864 penal code (including the death penalty) to assuming a *trygghet*-perspective that strives for a population that feels affinity and trust towards each other. However, something that remains constant is the presentation of a party that is tough on crime, and that considers previous crime policies far too lenient. Authoritarianism can also be understood through conservative and traditionalist attitudes, such as the early programs' war on drugs rhetoric and coerced treatment for drug addicts, most of which are abandoned after the discursive shift 2003. However, the links made between cohesion and discipline in 2011 echoes the earlier programs, partly through the people's home metaphor of which conservative values and morality are an important part. The next theme will take a closer look at the use of people's home metaphor.

5.3.2 The people's home

5.3.2.1 Nostalgia for the past

The analysis of authoritarian discourse in the programs suggests that the Sweden Democrats' vision of a society with cohesion, discipline and morality is partly made sense of through the people's home metaphor. Looking back at the use of the metaphor over the years, the earlier programs mourn the loss of a once-achieved people's home, a near-utopian society that made Sweden a country to look up to, which is contrasted to the new broken society. The people's home represents a better time, a utopian *before* (before Social Democratic prime minister Olof Palme, before internationalism, before extensive immigration etc.), which is contrasted to a dystopian *after*.

Before:

(...) We gained a welfare state to be proud of. Sweden was an ideal, something of a model country for other countries to look up to. The people's home became – by and large – a reality (1994:3)

A prosperous free people in a homogeneous Swedish state. This was the basis for our strength and crucial for the opportunity to democratize Sweden (1989:1)

After:

(...) honourable concepts like the nation, the family, and the individual were dragged in the dirt and the people's home marched towards a broken violent society under the false banner of international solidarity (1994:3).

It is noteworthy that part of the success of the people's home is explained through the homogeneity of the Swedish people, again linking democratisation to ethnicity.

5.3.2.2 Visions of the future

Beyond painting the imagery of a utopian versus dystopian Sweden, the people's home is brought up in several policy areas in the early programs: family kinship and a good home environment has a positive effect on society and the people's home (1989:8); the elderly must be protected because they have helped build the people's home (1989:13); preventive efforts on crime, alcohol and drugs should aim for a healthy and sound people's home (1989:13); youth at odds with justice must be placed in care in order to be re-established as good citizens of the people's home (1989:13) and so on. The people's home is in this sense not only used nostalgically to describe what once was, but also the overarching-end goal towards which most if not all policies are directed. Although the definition of the people's home varies slightly throughout the years, its privileged position as the society to strive for remains constant.

The overarching goal of the Sweden Democrats' policy is to create a wellbeing society - a people's home - characterized by trygghet, *harmony and solidarity (2003:1)*

(...) we hope to recreate a people's home marked by trygghet, *welfare, democracy and a strong inner solidarity; this is the overarching goal of all the party's operations (2011:3)*

In contrast to much other rhetoric, the people's home metaphor is not abandoned at the discursive shift in 2003. There is significantly less utopian/dystopian imagery, but the

formulation of a wish to *recreate* the people's home suggests that it was once a lived reality. The 2003 program dedicates several pages (the majority of text) on elaborating on the preconditions for a people's home (the nationalistic principle, i.e. ethnopluralism; and 'the ripple effect', i.e. family and community); and visions of what it could look like (including *trygghet*, a balance between left and right politics, and a national solidarity that rests on common identification). Much of this has been previously outlined in the gender, populism, and authoritarianism theme, but one important development here is the formulation of the importance of national solidarity in the people's home.

> *It is the Sweden Democrats' conviction that solidarity depends on identification. We tend to feel more in solidarity with those we can identify with (2003:7).*

The fact that this quote can be found in the section that envisions a modern Swedish people's home reinforces the importance of common identity (previously ethnic homogeneity) for the Sweden Democrats.

5.3.2.3 The people's home and welfare

In 2011, the people's home is not awarded its own section but mentioned in relation to social conservatism and welfare. On welfare, the Sweden Democrats write that their politics on welfare is guided by the vision of a reinstated people's home where affinity is based on national belonging rather than class, and where all citizens are guaranteed a high level of physical, economic, and social *trygghet* (2011:34). The party proposes a welfare model founded on solidarity (which, as the 2003 program states, rests on common identification).

> *(....) In order to, in the long run, safeguard the idea of the people's home and the welfare state, one must also safeguard national cohesion. There must be a common identity at the bottom, in order for those who have more to be willing to share with those who have less. For this reason, there is an inherent antagonism between welfare and multiculturalism* (2011:34).

This final sentence makes explicit what has been previously mostly alluded to, especially in the quote from 2003 on common identity – that the need for common identity to create solidarity means that there is a conflict between a people's home with generous welfare (a society that

looks after all its citizens) and a diverse population; meaning, in turn, that the people's home cannot and should not be open to everyone.

5.3.2.4 The people's home and social conservatism

The Sweden Democrats' understanding of social conservatism is outlined in the authoritarianism theme, but it is important to note its connection to the people's home metaphor.

> *(...) several decades before Per Albin Hansson's famous people's home-speech, Swedish social conservative debaters had formulated ideas on a welfare state and coined the term people's home (2011:11)*

This means that although widely known as a social democratic idea, as explicitly stated in the 2003 program (2003:1), the Sweden Democrats' people's home is conservative. This is relevant for an analysis of their positioning on the left-right political dimension, as it can be argued that advocating a big welfare state but with conservative values puts them in the niche, at least rhetorically, of economic-left and cultural-right (what some theorists call a new 'winning formula'). It can also be interpreted as a way for them to circumscribe the left-right dimension, by advocating a generous welfare state, but only for some parts of the population. Finally, the emphasis on value alignment between the family and the societal organisations; the idea that society should function as a family; and that the family is the foundational element on which society is built - coupled with the declaration that the nuclear family is the best form of family formation - suggests that the people's home is a gendered, normative metaphor. The importance of the (nuclear) family is also identified as one of the preconditions to achieve a modern people's home in 2003.

To summarise, the early programs use the people's home metaphor to symbolise a utopian past that is contrasted to the dystopian present, while simultaneously presenting it as the society to strive for. The people's home metaphor 'survives' the discursive shift in 2003, once more identified as the overarching goal (a vision of an ideal society). The nationalistic principle and 'the ripple effect' (family and community) are preconditions to achieve the people's home, suggesting that it is a gendered normative concept. Visions of what it would look like include *trygghet*, a balance between left and right politics, and a national solidarity that rests on common identification; thereby drawing a line around the people's home inside which only

truly Swedish people are welcome. This is a central part (if not the core) of their ideology that remains constant throughout the years, mostly alluded to but also explicitly stated in 2011 – that there is an antagonistic relationship between a people's home and a multicultural society. The next theme will address *trygghet,* another local (affective) linguistic device that is closely tied to the people's home project.

5.3.3 Trygghet

5.3.3.1 Trygghet and gender

As mentioned in the literature review, *trygghet* can be understood as an affective linguistic device associated with an enveloping sense of safety (Airas & Truedsson 2011). Feeling *trygghet* is a central part of realising the people's home, and like the people's home metaphor, it appears in a wide range of topics. As mentioned in the gender theme, the early documents state that children and youth need the *trygghet* and traditional norms that only the nuclear family can provide (1989:1,3), and that a family friendly society can offer its citizens *trygghet* and good upbringing (1989:8). In other words, the population's *trygghet* can be threatened by norm-breaking family formations and a family hostile society.

5.3.3.2 Trygghet and law and order

Trygghet is also closely linked to law and order. In 1989, the section on criminal justice policy is titled 'criminality' but in 1994-1999 the section with the same text is titled 'judicial *trygghet'*. The 2003 program states that citizens in the people's home should feel *trygghet*, physically as well as socially (2003:5). The section on criminal justice declares that *trygghet* is a prerequisite for freedom, and that violence and instability follows in the wake of *otrygghet* (un-*trygghet*), which is why the interests of crime victims must be put before those of criminals and offences must be severely punished (2003:6). In short, the need for *trygghet* is used to legitimise increased state authority. It is argued that apart from maintaining the nation's survival the most important task of the state is to guarantee the *trygghet* and security of its citizens (2003:6). Similarly, in 2011 social conservatism is claimed to replace class war and anarchy with *trygghet* and law and order (2011:11).

5.3.3.3 Trygghet and economic policy

In the employment market, employees' *trygghet* is weighed against the discretion of employers and economic growth opportunities. However, the Sweden Democrats argue that a good supply of jobs gives employees both *trygghet* and freedom of choice, meaning that employer and employee share the overall interest of stability and growth and their relationship is not solely antagonistic (2011:31-34). Similarly, in the welfare section they argue that Sweden needs strong welfare because social injustice threatens *trygghet* and cohesion - but *trygghet* is also economic growth and the existence of jobs (2011:32). This is relevant for a discussion on the Sweden Democrats' positioning on the left-right political dimension. Economic *trygghet* can be considered a nodal point (Laclau & Mouffe 1989) in left wing political discourse that connotes a strong welfare and worker's right. Through this formulation the Sweden Democrats somewhat transform left-wing discourse to fit the Sweden Democratic world view, stating that *trygghet* is also a growing market. Similarly to how the attempt by the Social Democrats to reclaim the word *trygghet* failed because it was considered a simplification that only focused on the economic dimension (Airas & Truedsson 2020); this suggests that beyond expanding the meaning of *trygghet* beyond economics, the Sweden Democrats also redefine economic *trygghet* from left-wing to right-wing policy.

5.3.3.4 Trygghet and immigration

Arguably, *trygghet* must be most paid attention to when it is positioned against other interests, and/or when it is presented as being under threat. As mentioned in the authoritarianism theme, part of ensuring the *trygghet* for well-behaved students is to prioritise their needs over those of disorderly students; and part of feeling judicial *trygghet* is knowing that criminals are severely punished. The 2011 program also elaborates on how *trygghet* is threatened by multiculturalism, because its two potential outcomes - that individual cultures become dissolved or that they segregate society into separate cultural enclaves - both lead to a deteriorated social climate with rootlessness, segregation, antagonisms, reduced welfare and *otrygghet* (un-*trygghet*) as a result (2011:21). Therefore, immigration should be kept on such a level that it does not threaten the national identity, welfare, or *trygghet* of Sweden (2011:23).

To summarise, *trygghet* is an important part of the people's home and appears frequently in the programs throughout the years. In the early programs threats to *trygghet* include norm breaking

families and a family hostile society, unequal economic distributions and lenience in education and in the criminal justice system. In 2003, the main threat to *trygghet* is lenience. *Trygghet* is mentioned in the criminal justice policy section and in descriptions of the people's home. In 2011, it once again appears in a wide range of topics; threats to *trygghet* include economic stagnation (because the more jobs the more *trygghet*), class conflicts, lenience in education and criminal justice system, and multiculturalism. Put bluntly - *trygghet* is used to represent whatever it is the Sweden Democrats want it to represent, but a recurring line of argument is that the *trygghet* of the Swedish population is on various levels threatened by the lenience of the state, and by immigration.

5.3.4 Ever present - immigration as a threat

One underlying theme that is ever present throughout the programs and permeates the other themes is the presentation of immigration as a threat, to whatever it is that is in need of protection. It is a threat to gender-equality through the importation of women-hostile ideologies; to the functioning of democracy by hindering the people's rule through diversification; to the welfare systems and thus the people's home because solidarity rests on common identification; and to the *trygghet* of the Swedish people on multiple levels. The threat to *trygghet* can be argued especially important because it represents a more elusive and deep-rooted psychological fear that resonates with the Swedish electorate.

5.4 Conclusion results

Significant changes in discourse can be found in the topics environment, gender and populism. The changes in environmental and gender discourse are significant because they show the ideological flexibility within the party discourse, as well as the discursive weaponization of green/gender equality values as a construction of Swedishness to be positioned against 'women-hostile' or 'animal-hostile' cultures, presented as a threat from the outside. The changes in populist discourse are relevant to debates on whether or not the Sweden Democrats should be classified as a populist party, the results show that although mostly abandoned, some traces of populism remain in the calls for increased direct democracy through the 'people's rule' narrative. In later programs, this narrative is also racialised through the argument that to enable a people's rule, a nation cannot have too many different people(s). The continuities reveal somewhat of an ideological core to party discourse. Continuities include authoritarianism

(through the law and order rhetoric), the people's home, and *trygghet*. Immigration as a threat is ever-present throughout these themes. It is significant that two of the constants are highly local to the Swedish context, one an affective linguistic device, one a nostalgic societal metaphor, suggesting the importance of interdiscursivity with mainstream discourse (or its 'normalness'). The fact that immigration as a threat is a constant may come as no surprise, but it is important to note this continuity in the rhetoric throughout all its moderation. The next chapter is a discussion that places these results in a theoretical context.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Overview of findings

The results show significant ideological flexibility on a general level, and specifically in the green, gender and populist discourse. The changes in gender discourse are theoretically relevant due to the production of Otherness versus Swedishness through gender equality, and to a lesser extent through animal care. The results also suggest somewhat of an ideological core through continuities in the material - law and order, *trygghet* and the people's home. Building on this, it can be argued that the results overall suggest a slight incompatibility between the Sweden Democrats discourse and the GAL-TAN (or libertarian-authoritarian) scale of political positioning on the sociocultural conflict dimension, due to its flexibility and the 'localness' of its continuities (the people's home and *trygghet*). The next section will bring these results back into a dialogue with theory.

6.2 General ideological flexibility

The findings of this study suggests that the Sweden Democrats are highly ideologically flexible. Most of the radical ideological positions and policy suggestions that have caused controversy have been removed, such as: their argument to restrict abortions (especially by 'Swedish women'), the human essence paragraph, their opposition to 'non-Nordic' adoption, their opposition to same-sex marriage and adoption, and their argument for the death penalty. In this sense, if a researcher would attempt to map the radicalness of the party and take their most controversial policy suggestions as empirical proof to show what the party is really about, or uncover their 'true' ideology, it is likely that this proof might have been removed by the next

election program. For this reason, an analysis of their discourse should not only focus on their most radical propositions. This flexibility can also be an argument against uncritically adopting the GAL-TAN scale when conceptualising the Sweden Democrats, or perhaps any model based on the lumping together of a number of sociocultural dimension issues. Using the GAL-TAN scale, the Sweden Democrats can be argued to have moved from a radical (G)reen to anti-(G)reen; and from radically (T)raditional to moderate in their gender discourse. However, they express care for nature and animal life through the argument that the development of a society can be measured through its treatment of animals and use green discourses on animal rights to position Swedishness against Otherness. Similarly, to conceptualise their positioning on gender ideology as either (T)raditional or (A)lternative /moderate risks overlooking the production of Swedishness through gender equality, which can be argued a central discursive weaponization in contemporary radical right discourse, as well as in mainstream discourse. (A)uthoritarian values can be argued a constant through the law and order narrative. At the same time, significant changes have happened in other authoritarian values/areas, such as removing the criminalisation of HIV, the war on drugs narrative (including coerced care of drug addicts and sex workers), and homophobia. In other words, there is too much movement happening in various political and ideological areas (or issues) for the Sweden Democrats to be conceptualised as a TAN party. Art (2011) suggests ideological flexibility is a key determinant of the success of radical right parties and contrasts those who tailor their message to attract more votes (whilst retaining their nativist core) to those who value ideological purity over votes and are unwilling to compromise (2011:38-39), where the former is more likely to succeed. Following Mudde's (2010) suggestion on a paradigm shift that focuses on supply-factors of radical right success rather than demand-factors caused by socio-structural changes, the ideological flexibility shown in these results could be one such supply-side success factor. Furthermore, the use of interdiscursivity as an analytical focus can complement Art's (2011) model in showing *how* different discourses are implemented beyond stating the existence of ideological flexibility. Arguably, Art's analysis in 2011 underestimated the ability of the moderates within the Sweden Democrats to mainstream the party by building on acceptable and/or already-accepted discourses.

6.3 Changes in gender discourse

The results from this study show that the gender discourse in the Sweden Democrats party program has gone through significant changes, from deploring that women have been forced out into the workforce and suggesting increased restrictions on abortion (especially by 'Swedish women'), to presenting gender equality as a given fact of Swedishness which is now threatened by women-hostile ideologies coming in from outside. Violence against women is accredited to inherently violent cultures with barbaric customs. On sexuality, the heteronormative discourse has shifted from speaking of the sexually deviant to sexual minorities, and from deploring the glorification of the homosexual lifestyle to supporting same-sex adoption in 2019. Gender equality is presented as an achieved and finished project in Sweden, whilst at the same time claiming that there are biological differences that cannot be seen by the naked eye and every difference is not necessarily systematic oppression (thereby ruling out the need for a feminist project). Putting this in a theoretical context, Towns et al (2014) call this 'the equality conundrum'; where the Sweden Democrats are caught between gender conservatism and gender equality as a distinct Swedish trait. Similarly, in Mulinari's (2016) qualitative study of women and migrants in the Sweden Democrats, the female respondents have a split relation to gender equality – on the one hand, gender equality is perceived as something Swedish in the context of (racist) beliefs about other cultures; on the other hand, gender equality should not be exaggerated, but it must be based on what is perceived as natural gender differences (2016:152). The 'Swedishness' of gender equality within Sweden is not a discursive invention by the Sweden Democrats. In an anthology edited by Martinsson et al (2016), eleven authors outline the institutionalisation of gender equality in Sweden and the production of nationalism through gender equality. For example, de los Reyes outlines how, as equal opportunities for women and men became institutionalized, gender equality was also established as a demarcation line vis a vis immigrants (2016:27-28). Discursively transformed from an ongoing political project to a distinctive national characteristic, gender equality became a national essential attribute closely connected to the idea of Swedish supremacy (2016:33). Writing from the perspective of place branding and public diplomacy (with sources including official branding policy documents, the official website Sweden.se, official branding strategy reports etc), Jezierska & Towns (2018) show that gender equality (and to a lesser extent LGBTQ rights) is a central pillar in the 'progressive Sweden' brand, which presents Sweden as a unified actor that shares behaviour and goals, writing out discord and political struggle (e.g. feminism) from the narrative

(2018:56). The authors add that 'the stakes' for this brand (emerging in the mid-1990s) rises in the context of the international re-emergence of nationalism, xenophobia, and right wing populism (2018:61), and warn that that present branding practices feed into nationalist representations of gender equality, portraying equality as a matter of Swedish values threatened by immigration, by presenting Sweden as a coherent whole unified behind gender equality, which helps the case for those who want to distinguish Swedes from Others when it comes to women's rights (2018:61). The conflation of gender equality, Swedishness, and goodness illustrates the entanglement between the Sweden Democrats' nationalist discourse and mainstream nationalist discourse in Sweden, which was also addressed in the literature review (Hübinette & Lundström 2011, Hellström 2010, Hellström et al 2011). In short, the Sweden Democrats double positioning on gender taps into salient nationalist discourses that equate Swedishness to Goodness, and could be argued a valuable discursive resource which is overlooked if they are pigeon-holed as 'traditionalists' only.

6.4 Authoritarianism

The results show significant continuity in some aspects of authoritarian discourse through the law and order narrative, and simultaneously, significant changes in what can be called authoritarian values.

Values. Duckitt et al (year) suggests a distinction between conservative, authoritarian and traditionalist social attitudes in relation to authoritarianism; several of which can be found in the earlier programs through the call for a moral resurgence, the war on drugs narrative, the criminalisation of HIV, coerced hospitalisation of drug addicts and sex workers, strict laws on abortion and increased discipline in schools. In this sense the earlier programs show authoritarian tendencies on several attitude dimensions, or on both law and order and a value dimension. Similarly, Peterson et al (1993) identify a number of authoritarian values that align with those in the early documents. In the later programs, these positions are abandoned (with the exception of discipline in school which is moderated), and although they self-define as a value conservative party, they do not elaborate further in what ways this manifests politically. In the literature review, it was speculated if the increased importance of cultural issues as a political conflict dimension and the dealignment of the (authoritarian) working class has led to increased support for the Sweden Democrats as the only party that expresses

authoritarian values. Based on the findings of this study it could be argued that because the Sweden Democrats have abandoned much of their authoritarian discourse, i.e. their authoritarian discourse has decreased whilst their popularity has increased, the importance of authoritarian values for the electorate might have been overestimated. With that said, an important part of the authoritarian discourse is the law and order narrative, which remains a constant.

Law and Order. This narrative appears as one of the most solid narratives throughout the years. Although significantly moderated in later programs, the fundamental problem formulation that high crime rates are caused by lenience and that the Sweden Democrats will reverse this trend if given the chance remains constant. Airas & Truedsson (2020:3) note that the 2018 election discourse was dominated by demands for law and order, and that there was a hardening tone across the political spectrum. The results from this study shows that the law and order narrative has been a constant in the Sweden Democrats' discourse since 1989, although varying in form and force. If the mainstream political parties in Sweden are increasingly following this line, this increases the legitimacy of the Sweden Democrats and their position as the 'original tough party'. The next section will address the increasing articulations made between *trygghet* and law and order in mainstream Swedish politics.

6.5 *Trygghet*

The results from this study have identified the people's home and *trygghet* as two recurring linguistic devices or 'constants' in an otherwise highly flexible discourse. *Trygghet* is discursively positioned in an antagonistic relation with other values; and its meaning is transformed depending on the context. For example, *trygghet* for employees means secure employment conditions (i.e., workers' rights, a nodal point in left wing discourse) but it also means the increase of jobs (i.e., economic growth, a nodal point in right wing discourse). Perhaps most importantly, the *trygghet* of the Swedish population is presented as under threat by state lenience and immigration.

As mentioned in the literature review, Airas & Truedsson (2020) have shown that *trygghet* played an important role in the election discourse 2018 (for both the Sweden Democrats and Social democrats), and the present research triangulates its centrality for the party discourse

over time. Rönnblom et al (2020) have edited an anthology that addresses *trygghet* from the perspectives of various disciplines (ethnology, gender studies, cultural geography, social work, urban studies, political science etc.) to explore what the concept means in contemporary Swedish society (2020:13, 19). The authors understand *trygghet* as closely intertwined with power relations and base their theory on this assumption. Perhaps most importantly, there is power in who is allowed to define *trygghet* and fill the concept with meaning, which relates to who is allowed subjectivity and agency. There is a struggle of meaning-making happening around the concept, as it is filled with different meanings and attributes by different people, groups and political arenas (2020:8-9). The authors also argue that *trygghet* has a governing function in society; declaring something *trygg* or un-*trygg* (*otrygg*) creates notions about who and/or what should be protected. Some individuals and groups thus become worthy of protection while others are understood as a problem, a threat to *trygghet* (2020:10). In the context of discourse theory, *trygghet* can be understood as both a nodal point and a floating signifier, because of the powerful symbolic and affective value it holds, and because of how it changes meaning both between and within discourses. The changing political meanings of *trygghet* in Sweden is illustrated in a chapter by Olsson & Rönnblom (2020), whose study of election manifestos 2010- 2018 illustrate a discursive shift across the political spectrum. Whereas it has previously been closely linked to welfare policy issues and socioeconomic security, *trygghet* is increasingly being related to three political issues: crime prevention, immigration and national defence (2020:26). The 'Sweden is unwell' narrative (characteristic for the Sweden Democrats but increasingly adopted by other parties) paints a picture of Sweden as a chaotic and dangerous place where *trygghet* is threatened, and the political parties can offer a recreation of the *trygghet* that has been lost (2020:40-41). Although the identified threats to *trygghet* (and thus the solutions) differ amongst the parties, a common *trygghet*-discourse is developed that is characterised by repression, increased control and supervision (2020: 45). By focusing on the (subjective) experience of *trygghet* for the individual, this discourse also shifts focus away from social power relations and political solutions. *Trygghet* is formulated as something that is created when the Other disappears. Although beyond the scope of this paper, the articulations that create links between immigration, *trygghet*, and a strong state can be put in context with the vast existing literature on securitisation, i.e. taking an issue out of politics – or the established 'rules of the game' – and framing it as a security threat (Anderson 2014; Buzan et al 1998: 23,26); especially the securitisation of migration (Bigo 2002). For the purpose

of this argument, suffice to say that the dangers of the *trygghet* discourse are that a) it securitises parts of the population which risks reducing their rights and b) it legitimises increased state power. Therefore, social research must pay close attention to who is presented as a threat to *trygghet* and who is deemed worthy of protection (arguably reflecting a '*trygghet*-isation').

6.6 The people's home

The people's home is used nostalgically (in the early documents) and as a political goal. The results suggest that the Sweden Democrats' people's home is ethnically exclusive (because of its explicit antagonism to multiculturalism and because it is based on 'common identity'); and also has a gender-normative dimension (because it builds on 'the family', understood as a hetero-nuclear family). Norocel (2013) argues that the people's home is 'strikingly familiar to the German *heimat* in that it synthesizes references to the home and the homeland' (2013:9), and that Swedish heteronormative masculinities are at the heart of the people's home metaphor. Theorists have argued that the people's home, even as a social democratic metaphor, was *always* normative and exclusionary. Norocel (2013) argues that the concept is deeply embedded in Swedish political discourse and has played a key role in modern Swedish history; despite its universalistic claims, the people's home historically exhibited a restrictive and disciplining nature, drawing clear demarcation lines between those who were included in the community and their duties, and those who were deemed unworthy of it (2013:7). Hellström (2010:106-108) writes that the usefulness of the people's home as a political metaphor is that it is potentially both inclusive and exclusive; functioning as a sorting instrument that decides who is allowed/welcomed and who is not. Khayati (2013:83) argues that the discrimination of immigrants is inherent to the project and thereby to the Swedish democratic institutions, which display a strong ethnic overtone. Some theorists argue that project people's home is closely linked to Swedish eugenics and biopolitics (playing a leading role internationally), as the social democratic pride of *the good society* existed in parallel with four decades of sterilisation of society's 'undesirables' (Runds 1998:11). Hübinette & Lundström (2014:427-429) outline three phases of hegemonic whiteness in Sweden, of which the first was the white purity phase in 1905-1968, closely connected to the social democratic 'golden age' and project people's home, a combination of racialised nationalism and reformist socialism (Dahlqvist 2002, in Hübinette & Lundström 2014:248). The nostalgic power of the people's home metaphor for the authors partly lies in that it was a home for 'all' white swedes, regardless of class and

sex. During the first half of the 1900s, as a result of the successful lobbying of scientists and ideologists (such as the Swedish Society for Race Hygiene) and with the backing of the Social Democrats, many laws were passed to uphold the perceived purity of the Swedes, of which the principal one was the sterilisation law (the most effective in the democratic world, sterilising over 60,000 people). As the results show, the early programs echo such racialised biopolitics in the 'population politics' sections, which are removed from later programs. Whether or not the Sweden Democrats have completely abandoned the racial demarcation of the people's home cannot be concluded from the results of this study. There are some indications that they have not, such as the antagonisms articulated between democracy and multiculturalism, as well as welfare and multiculturalism. However, their focus has largely shifted from common *ethnicity* to common *values* and *identity*, which are not straightforward concepts; and it is likely that the language around these issues is purposely vague.

6.7 **CONCLUSION.**

The general ideological flexibility shown by the Sweden Democrats in the results of this study can be understood as a supply-side factor for radical right success. Going into the changes happening within the specific themes, the flexibility in gender and environmental discourse shows important examples of interdiscursivity, which risks being overlooked if the Sweden Democrats are conceptualised as a 'TAN' party. The gender discourse also shows entanglement with mainstream nationalist discourse through the Good Sweden narrative. The authoritarian law and order narrative can be understood as a constant, despite the moderations made in tone or force; but authoritarian value-discourse has gone through significant changes. If the Sweden Democrats are to be conceptualised as an authoritarian party, it must be clarified what this means. If it means being tough on crime, this places them in a position of the original 'tough' party, and increased toughness (or authoritarianism) amongst mainstream parties is likely to further legitimise their agenda. The centrality of the local concepts *trygghet* and the people's home is another reason why the GAL-TAN scale might be too blunt of a theoretical tool to capture their ideology, and also reinforces their entanglement with mainstream discourse. Overall, following Mudde's (2010) paradigm shift (away from demand-side explanations that consider radical right ideology a pathology to the normal) this analysis of the Sweden Democrats' discursive changes and continuities over time reveal several 'pathological normalcies', including the equation between gender equality and Swedishness, authoritarianism

legitimised by the need for *trygghet*, and the exclusionary mechanisms of the Swedish people's home. This discourse must be brought into a conversation with mainstream discourse in order to shed light on the racist undertones in Swedish society and the construction of Swedishness.

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