RECLAIMING ACTION — PROGRESSIVE STRATEGIES IN TIMES OF GROWING RIGHT-WING POPULISM IN DENMARK, NORWAY, SWEDEN AND GERMANY

Edited by Christian Krell, Henri Möllers and Niklas Ferch

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Right-wing populist parties are on the rise almost everywhere in Europe. In the Scandinavian countries, too, where Social Democracy has had the most decisive influence on the development of a solidary society and an inclusive and emancipatory welfare model, policymakers face increasingly substantial difficulties in forming government coalitions vis-à-vis aspiring competitors who have emerged on the far right in recent decades. In light of the remarkable rise of right-wing populism in Germany and its growing presence in parliaments and discourses, the volume at hand contextualizes and compares the growth of right-wing populism in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany. Based on the identification of ideal-typical strategies applied by progressive parties towards right-wing populist parties in the past and in the present, the authors evaluate the success of various strategies and develop recommendations for progressive and sustainable actions to »reclaim action« against right-wing populist parties. In doing so, the volume addresses both scientists and policymakers as well as the interested public.

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TABLES OF CONTENTS

05 LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

06 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS TO THE ADVISORY BOARD

07 INTRODUCTION
Henri Möllers, Christian Krell and Niklas Ferch:
The Reclaiming Action Project: Progressive Party Strategies in Times of Growing Right-Wing Populism

14 RIGHT-WING POPULISM AND COUNTERSTRATEGIES IN DENMARK, NORWAY, SWEDEN AND GERMANY

15 Susi Meret:
Denmark - Rise, Consolidation and Mainstreaming of Right-Wing Populism and the Failure of Counterstrategies

38 Ketil Raknes:
Norway – How to Deal with the Petropopulist Fremskrittspartiet in Office?

53 Anna-Lena Lodenius:
Sweden – The Fast Growth of Right-Wing Populism and the Consequences of Coordinated Isolation for Progressive Strategies

75 Jasmin Siri and Madeleine Myatt:
Germany – Conditions for the Recent Establishment of Right-Wing Populism and Progressive Responses

97 CONCLUSION

98 Niklas Ferch and Henri Möllers:
Comparison of Past, Present and Possible Future Strategies Against Right-Wing Populism in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany

127 Christian Krell and Henri Möllers:
Conclusion – What is Success and What to Learn for a Successful Strategy?

142 ANNEX

143 Fact-Sheets on Past, Present and Possible Future Strategies Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany

146 About the Authors

148 Acknowledgements

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

17 **Table 1**: Electoral support and mandates at parliamentary elections and European elections for the DF from 1998 to 2015

22 **Table 2**: Attitudes toward immigration among voters for the DF and other Danish parties

23 **Table 3**: Voters' opinions on stricter laws for immigration and asylum

24 **Table 4**: Responses to the statement that »Refugees and immigrants should have the same rights to social support as Danes, even if they are not Danish citizens«

106 **Table 5**: Mainstream parties' responses to right-wing populist parties (RWPP)

144 **Table 6**: Mainstream parties' responses to right-wing populist parties (RWPP) (including empirical examples)

16 **Figure 1**: Electoral support for right-wing populist parties in the four Nordic countries

40 **Figure 2**: FrP's support in parliamentary elections from 1973 to 2017

43 **Figure 3**: The market value of the Government Pension Fund Global from 1996 to 2016

44 **Figure 4**: Government spending of oil revenue as measured by the structural, non-oil budget deficit, and the expected real return of the Pension Fund from 2001 to 2017

143 **Figure 5**: Present strategy positions of progressive parties against right-wing populist competitors

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Henri Möllers, Christian Krell and Niklas Ferch

THE RECLAIMING ACTION PROJECT: PROGRESSIVE PARTY STRATEGIES IN TIMES OF GROWING RIGHT-WING POPULISM

In the twenty-first century, the overly idyllic tale of Social Democracy's decades-long success story in Scandinavia has begun to show considerable cracks. Figuratively speaking, the iconic bright red paint of the typical Swedish houses has begun to fade and sometimes shades of brown appear. Right-wing populist parties have become established all over Scandinavia and pose a massive threat to the renowned egalitarian, inclusive and progressive societies of the North. On the one hand, right-wing populist parties[1] use their rhetoric to address classic issues of social democracy such as social justice and social welfare, or to address the concerns of the »ordinary people« in general. On the other hand, the right-wing populists' political agenda is in fact often the opposite of traditional social democratic politics. Social justice is framed by right-wing populists as anti-elitist resentment, social welfare is framed as welfare only for »us« and not for »them« and »ordinary people« are defined all too frequently along ethnic and cultural dividing lines. Hence, in contrast to their rhetoric, right-wing populist politics and policy suggestions ultimately involve the dismantling of the welfare state and the labor market through neoliberal policies, seek to poison the political climate and ultimately present a dire threat to liberal inclusive public discourse and pluralistic democracy in general.

The development of the political culture in the three Nordic countries of Denmark, Norway and Sweden since the 1980s demonstrates this in an impressive way. For instance, the originally dominant radical tax-cut positions of the Danish Dansk Folkeparti (DF) and the Norwegian Fremskrittspartiet (FrP) from the 1980s have developed towards much stronger nationalist and racist rhetoric and have captured discourses on the welfare state. The severity of this development can be observed in particular in the corresponding discourse shifts in central, formerly genuinely »social democratic« policy fields, and manifests itself not least by the active (Norway) and actively supporting (Denmark) involvement of these right-wing populist parties in center-right governments. In Sweden, the Sverigedemokraterna (SD) is still kept away from any direct involvement in parliamentary affairs (for the time being?), but its right-wing ideology from the 1990s onwards has become entangled in the political discourse and drives the actions of the ruling Social Democratic party. The rise of the German Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in numerous state parliaments and in the Bundestag indicates that this fundamental dual character of right-wing populism – between populist rhetoric and neo-liberal policy positions – has arrived in Germany as well.

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[1] Even though some of the right-wing populist parties considered here evolved from right-wing extremist groups and still retain some of their agendas or newly incorporated extremist views, in a writers' workshop it was agreed to subsume these parties under the term »right-wing populist« – though being aware of the various conceptual and definitional differences and overlaps of right-wing populism and right-wing extremism (see e.g. the seminal contribution by Mudde [1996]).

These insights are not new and have been highlighted by numerous contributions to the existing and valuable body of literature on the issue of right-wing populist parties. But what about the Social Democratic parties? How have they reacted to the right-wing populist forces that are affecting them severely? What kinds of strategies are observable, and have these strategies been effective and successful? Are there lessons to be learned in producing progressive strategies that reclaim action instead of running after right-wing populist competitors?

Hence, the aim of this volume is to contextualize and to compare the situations in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany not only to understand the growth of right-wing populism, but more specifically to determine which strategies against right-wing populist parties have been applied by progressive parties in the past, which results are evident at the moment and which actions might be worth considering for the future. Based on this comparison and its findings, criteria for successful approaches or strategies to challenge right-wing populist parties will be proposed, followed by recommendations for progressive and sustainable actions against such parties. Essentially, the report aims at contributing answers to the question of how Social Democratic parties can reclaim action in times of growing right-wing populism.

COUNTRIES OF INTEREST: DENMARK, NORWAY, SWEDEN AND GERMANY

The reason for choosing Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany for a systematic comparison is that these countries share a similar context: formerly strong progressive parties, in particular Social Democratic parties, that are increasingly confronted with electoral difficulties due to the presence of a growing right-wing competitor. Further essential similarities are that these countries are established liberal post-war democracies with comparable political systems and relatively similar party spectrums, which distinguishes them from countries in the Central Eastern and Southern parts of Europe. Furthermore, the aggregate socioeconomic climate is generally better in those four countries than in the rest of Europe, with comparative happiness ratings among the highest in the world, while trust in government and the state as the organizer of society remains at a high level and, even though some aspects of the welfare state have been dismantled, its most important parts are still alive and kicking.

However, there are important differences, which are heuristically interesting: whereas right-wing populists in Norway are minor partners in the two-party governmental coalition and in Denmark provide active support to the minority government, the Swedish SD – even though part of the parliament since 2010 – are mostly isolated and excluded from political cooperation. The German case is special in the sense that the AfD has expanded extremely rapidly and managed to enter the German parliament only recently in the 2017 election. Furthermore, the right-wing populist parties mentioned represent a broad and diverse spectrum of right-wing populist movements: in Sweden, SD can easily be traced back to right-wing extremist groups and organizations, while both the Norwegian FrP and the Danish DF emerged from radical tax-criticism. The AfD, in turn, started off as an anti-Euro single-issue party and then drifted to the far right in the following years. Denmark represents the most dramatic convergence between established political parties and right-wing populism. Accordingly, a discussion of the Danish case will be revealing.

THE GUIDING ISSUES: PARTIES, POLICIES, MEDIA, LANGUAGE AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORKS

In order to approach the goal of analyzing progressive parties' strategies for challenging right-wing populist forces, this volume includes extensive country studies of each of the four countries in question. The approach of the overall volume is the product of a productive process of exchange between the case study authors, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's project coordinators and an external advisory board. In workshops with the authors, which accompanied the course of the project, four central fields of interest and connected guiding questions were developed:

First, the general development of the central actors is highlighted by describing the origin and development of the right-wing populist parties. Context is provided by noting the role played by progressives and especially Social Democratic parties, as well as that of major right-wing parties in these developments.

Second, drawing on the fact that right-wing populist parties successfully place issues favorable to themselves at the center of the political debate, the contributions note the centrality of certain policies and political issues in the debate and how progressives react to them. What effects and consequences can be seen from the placement of specific political issues regarding voter patterns, movements and central policies and issues for voters' decisions – both from a progressive and a right-wing populist perspective? In addition to that, a first attempt is being made to identify whether there have been conscious policy strategies against the right-wing populist competition on the part of the progressives and if these suggest particular policies and agendas.

Third, the placement of political issues is strongly connected to the channels of communication used by political actors and to the platforms of political debate that are central for influencing the wider public and possible voters. Furthermore, a shared public space, in which different opinions can meet, is a fundamental element of a liberal democracy. These channels and platforms have undergone massive changes and become transformed, even as trust in the established media has decreased considerably. Hence, two guiding questions are: How has media coverage and access to »alternative« media developed in recent years? And: What are the consequences of digitization for public debate and a constructive and progressive political dialogue? In looking at how parties have dealt with these developments, the authors attempt to find recommendations on what progressives should do in this changed public sphere in order to foster a more favorable discourse environment.

Connected to this, lastly, is of course political language. Right-wing populists profile themselves through a specific use of language and rhetoric. On the one hand, they develop and activate a concept of constant threat and fear. On the other hand, right-wing populists are often successful in activating existing values and conceptions of reality and societal problems. This conscious use of language is a core element of the right-wing populists' success story and thus provides a central field of counteraction for progressive actors. How are groups of »we« and »the others« constructed and contextualized? Which social divisions have been politicized by central political actors in recent years? Finally, another central question is what progressive actors can learn by looking at the way right-wing populists construct identity and linguistic antagonisms, so as to then gain trust and salience for a progressive agenda of their own.

As another central outcome of the workshops, the individuals involved in the project agreed to apply an even more systematized view of past, present and possible future strategies, based on the empirical evidence of the country studies on Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany. In order to account for the diversity and complexity of the right-wing populism phenomenon and the reactions to it in these countries, the comparative chapter turns to the existing scientific literature and develops an analytical framework for comparing the strategies towards right-wing populist parties that were and are still being applied by progressive parties in the countries under examination. In turning to commonly cited contributions to political science literature, the framework provides for a comparison based on a more analytically fine-grained scheme along Weberian ideal-types of strategic response to the existence of a right-wing populist party. These ideal-types range from strategies of banning and isolating the right-wing populist competitor up to the adoption of policies and finally collaboration – all of which can be found among the countries being examined. The analytical distinctions are key to evaluating whether the applied strategies turned out to be valuable for the formulation of a progressive strategy or whether they could be considered part of the problem. These issues as well as the central question of how to measure the »success« of political strategies are addressed in the concluding chapter, which also outlines suggestions for genuine progressive strategies to combat right-wing populism.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The volume is structured as follows. To begin with, Susi Meret, in her contribution on the Danish case, provides an in-depth view into a political environment where the comparatively long-lasting presence of a right-wing populist party has led to a profound normalization and mainstreaming of the positions, policies and frames of DF – without its ever being part of a government but as a steady supporter of center-right minority governments. In doing so, she displays an intriguing case, in which the counterstrategies have embraced, over time, the full range from isolation in the beginning up to policy adoption and collaboration in the present – progressive parties not exempted. Having stated these bleak prospects, Susi Meret discusses the importance of civil society as a source for future progressive strategy development.

In the contribution on Norway, Ketil Raknes features an established right-wing populist party, the Fremskrittspartiet, which is now in its second consecutive term in government together with the center-right party Høyre. He highlights the different strategies that were applied by all established parties against the FrP and points to the difficulty of attacking a political chameleon that knows how to use the Norwegian-specific Petroleum Fund to develop a salient narrative in the central policy fields of progressive parties, such as the welfare state. By giving a recent example of how to recover an objective political culture from a polarized and populistic discourse, he stresses the importance for progressives of having their own framings.

In her contribution on Sweden, Anna-Lena Lodenius traces the development of the Sverigedemokraterna as an also relatively new party that nevertheless is historically deeply rooted in right-wing extremism, as well as the relation of the established parties to SD's entrance into national politics in 2010. She describes how the coordinated and comprehensive isolation of SD by all established parties and especially by the Social Democrats in the December Agreement of 2014 led to the massive increae in support for this party, revealing the apparent fragility of this strategy. By stressing a combination of socioeconomic and cultural inclusion into credible narratives, she presents prospects for progressive strategies for the upcoming elections in 2018.

Finally, Jasmin Siri and Madeleine Myatt provide a case study on Germany, where the right-wing populist party Alternative für Deutschland is a comparatively new player in the political arena. Nevertheless, the AfD has grown and transformed rapidly while the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) has had limited room to maneuver against it. In their contribution, the authors shed light on the process that led to the entrance of the AfD into parliament, examining factors both within this party but also within the established parties from the center-left to the center-right. Their central hypothesis is that clear-cut differences between the major parties vanished due to the continued history of grand coalitions, leading to tendencies within these parties that established a favorable discourse environment for right-wing populist narratives. By stressing the importance of non-silencing but inclusionary narratives, they give a best practice example from progressive German politics.

In the analytical chapter by Niklas Ferch and Henri Möllers that follows, the theoretical framework is introduced. Taking this as an analytical tool for the case studies presented, the entire range of possible strategies is identifiable. While some countries exhibit a slippery slope towards the normalization of right-wing populist positions, others display a variety of strategies with varying results, while still others appear to be currently at a crossroads.

In the conclusion, Christian Krell and Henri Möllers take the findings from the country studies and the analytical chapter and try to develop first indicators for a successful progressive strategy against right-wing populism, with a focus on five dimensions of success. Central to these dimensions are electoral, coalitionary, normative, discursive and material aspects of conceptualizing a strategy. Drawing on these dimensions and the results of the previous chapters, the conclusion presents recommendations about what to do and what not to do in strategic responses to the danger of right-wing populism. All in all, the overarching aim is to reach a better understanding of the modern political challenges and to contribute to the progressive formulation of strategies against the biggest challenge to liberal and inclusive democracy.

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RIGHT-WING POPULISM AND COUNTERSTRATEGIES IN DENMARK, NORWAY, SWEDEN AND GERMANY

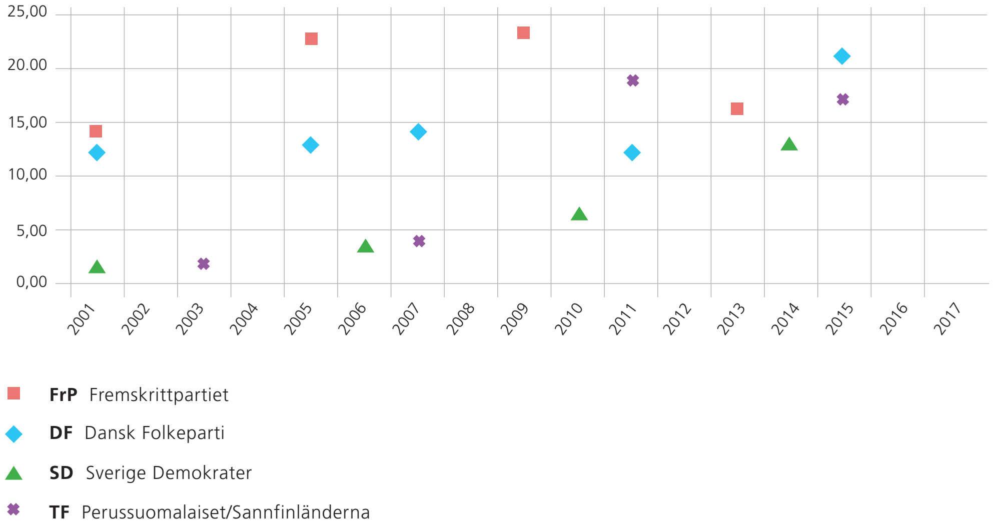
Susi Meret

DENMARK – THE RISE, CONSOLIDATION AND MAINSTREAMING OF RIGHT-WING POPULISM AND THE FAILURE OF COUNTERSTRATEGIES

Populist right-wing parties have done very well in the Nordic countries, particularly in the last two decades (see Fig. 1). Electoral support for radical, right-wing populist parties has increased in the past decade in all four Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden). Within this context, Denmark represents a paradigmatic case for the study of the rise, consolidation and mainstreaming/normalization of radical, right-wing populist positions. The success of populist parties in elections over the years has triggered country-specific and comparative studies (cf. Bergmann 2017; Hellström 2016; Jungar and Jupskås 2014). This chapter examines some of the structural, political and institutional factors that can help explain the rise and consolidation of radical, right-wing populism in Denmark. Furthermore, the chapter aims to consider the counterstrategies that have been employed over time by the traditional mainstream parties to address the challenges right-wing populism poses to Danish politics and society.

Some of the existing scholarly literature addresses specific features, when considering the rise and mainstreaming of populism in politics, such as: a welfare state under pressure (Brochman and Hagelund 2012); the belief that national identity and culture are threatened (Hellström et al. 2012); increasing concerns about gender equality issues (Meret and Siim 2013); and the rise of identity politics (Hervik 2011; Yilmaz 2016). All these studies suggest that history, social context, and political transformations and opportunities play a significant role in explaining the emergence and consolidation of right-wing populism, as well as the process of its normalization (Siim and Meret 2016). Furthermore, the aim is to look at what counterstrategies have been employed over time by the traditional mainstream parties to address the challenges of right-wing populism in Danish politics and society. The paper is organized as follows: First, it summarizes the history of the Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti,* DF), accounting for its rise and development, particularly from 2001 to 2018. This roughly corresponds to the progressive stages of the party's legitimization, consolidation and normalization in Danish politics. Second, the main strategies to counter right-wing

FIGURE 1: *ELECTORAL SUPPORT FOR RIGHT-WING POPULIST PARTIES IN THE FOUR NORDIC COUNTRIES*



populism that the mainstream parties of the center-left and center-right have put in use over time will be investigated. Third, the attitudes and opinions of the electorate, and the role of the mainstream media, will be considered. Finally, the chapter deals with the use of language in politics and the way populist appeals and messages may have influenced political discourse. The overall aim is to give an overview of right-wing populism in Denmark, the strategies used to counteract populist appeals and demands, and the developments in politics and society that have ensured the accommodation of right-wing populism in the country.

RIGHT-WING POPULISM IN DENMARK: CONTEXT AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The DF was launched in 1995 by Pia Kjærsgaard (DF leader from 1995 to 2012), along with a few other former members of the Danish Progress Party (*Fremskridtpartiet,* FrP). Kjærsgaard was the first woman to establish and lead a new political party in Denmark. She was also the first female leader of a populist, right-wing party in Europe (Meret 2015). The DF changed the neoliberal and anti-tax agenda that had characterized the FrP into a pro-welfare stance, with the aim of safeguarding the welfare state for »native« and »ethnic« Danes. The party's chauvinist positions on welfare correspond to a xenophobic, anti-immigration and anti-Islamic agenda. According to the DF, immigration – particularly from Muslim countries – gravely endangers the welfare state and Danish national identity and culture. Islam is considered to be socially, politically and culturally incompatible with the values and principles that are cherished by Danish society (Meret 2010; Betz and Meret 2009). As a result, the party maintains that immigration from Muslim countries needs to be restricted, since it endangers the country's social cohesion, identity and security.

The DF's electoral breakthrough came as early as the 1998 election. The party made it into the Danish Parliament with 7 percent of the votes and 13 seats, which secured the DF solid parliamentary representation (see Table 1). The party was met with general hostility and in parliament the phrase delivered by former Social Democratic Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen (1993-2001) at his opening address to the 1998 Parliament is still famous: »In my view you will never be presentable« *(Set med mine øjne stuerene bliver I aldrig).* In the years from 1998 to 2001, the DF contributed to the strong polarization of attitudes and positions in Danish politics and within public opinion, particularly on immigration, issues related to asylum and Islam.

The decade from 2001 to 2011 was in many respects crucial to the legitimization and consolidation of the party. In 2001 the DF received 12 percent of votes and 22 parliamentary seats (out of 179). By allowing the DF to support the Liberal and Conservative minority cabinet in 2001, the center-right clearly legitimized the DF within Danish politics and contributed toward strengthening the role the party played. In return, the center-right received the support of a segment of the electorate that would other-

TABLE 1: *ELECTORAL SUPPORT AND MANDATES AT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS (FV) AND EUROPEAN ELECTIONS (EUP) FOR THE DF FROM 1998 TO 2015 (FIGURES IN PERCENT)*

	1998	**1999**	**2001**	**2004**	**2005**	**2007**	**2009**	**2011**	**2014**	**2015**
FV	7.4 %		12 %		13.3	13.9 %		12.3 %		21.1 %
MPs	13 %		22 %		24	25 %		22 %		37 %
EUP		5.8 %		6.8 %		26.6 %	15.3 %		26.6 %	
MEP		1 %		1 %		4 %	2 %		4 %	

wise not have supported the Liberal and Conservative agenda, an electorate which comprised, in particular, lower-educated blue-collar (skilled and non-skilled manual) workers, a group that was also concerned about the impact and consequences of immigration. The DF won over the support of many Danish workers, who had previously cast their votes for the Social Democrats, through its combination of anti-establishment views, tougher anti-immigration positions and a populist rhetoric targeted at the preservation of the Danish welfare state against the threats of globalization and immigration (Rydgren 2012; Borre 2016). A distinctive feature of the DF's electorate, which still applies today, is that it is overrepresented by manual workers with comparatively lower levels of educational attainment.

The role of supporting the center-right government brought also significant political influence. Such influence was obtained from an auxiliary position, without the obligations and responsibilities of holding office. It is beyond doubt that over the years the DF has been able to exploit fully the opportunities inherent within two apparently conflicting roles: those of »government maker« and »government shaker« (Thesen 2012). These strategies have paid off significantly both in the past and present, and their tactical application has allowed the DF to achieve significant results on immigration and the politics of asylum in particular, but ultimately in other political domains as well. As early as 1997, the DF's Declaration of Intent *(Principprogram)* clearly stated that the party's main goal was »to give the Danish voters a real alternative to the politics pursued by the existing political parties«, but it also suggested that such an alternative should »play an active role in parliamentary life« by trying to achieve »political results through collaboration with other parties« with the goal of realizing »as much of the party's politics as possible« (Dansk Folkeparti 1997). For the party this also entailed choosing to remain outside the government, should this offer better opportunities for stronger political influence than would be the case in government.

Significant political changes, which had been anticipated by the DF, were implemented during the first years of the center-right government led by Anders Fogh Rasmussen of the Liberal Party (Venstre, V). The tightening of asylum law and the introduction of stricter criteria for obtaining Danish citizenship were passed as early as 2002, for example. Their implementation indicated a shift toward a muscular, identity-based politics, which considers ethnic and religious diversity to be a growing threat to social cohesion, Danish national culture and security.

The publication of the infamous Muhammad cartoons in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005 further ignited the already explosive rhetoric used against Islam and Muslims. It increased the toxicity of the narrative targeting Islam in Denmark and abroad, which portrayed Muslims as being incapable of integration and holding undemocratic values. The ideological work of radical right-wing ideologues, such as Søren Krarup and Jesper Langballe, contributed to the development of the DF's discourse based on the idea of a clash of civilizations, which constructs the West and Islam as incompatible and conflicting worlds. Islam is portrayed by the DF as an illiberal, undemocratic, backward-looking and male chauvinist culture, a culture that deprives individuals and groups (particularly women) of their individual free will. The former leader of the DF, Pia Kjærsgaard, said something that was clearly in this vein in her 2001 post-election speech in parliament, maintaining that »there is not a clash of civilizations; in fact there is only one civilization and it is ours«. Later, these toxic, identity-based narratives were regulated by the party's leadership and »corrected« by instead deploying strategic discourses that attacked Muslims on gender-based positions (Meret and Siim 2012). Notably, since the 2000s, the issue of the Muslim hijab has been used by the DF as a clear symbol of political Islam, seen by the party as the religious and cultural foundation of the oppression of women. This is considered to clash with Western liberal democratic values based on gender equality and the promotion of women's rights. For several DF MPs, the party has for a long time stood alone in its warnings about the threat that Islam poses to Danish society:

> *The DF stands alone in terms of articulating the threat that Islamic immigration poses to Denmark. There is no other party taking this issue up; we are the only ones. […] My position is that all immigration from Muslim countries should be stopped, including family reunions, since it is for this reason that we still have streams of immigration. When we let refugees in, we must be selective. We ought to decide the UN's refugee quota ourselves, select those with higher potential for integration and avoid Muslims, as they have greater difficulty integrating in Denmark.* (Interview with DF MP at the Folkemødet, RAGE project, June 2013)

The years 2001-2007 were consequently dominated by center-right politics and by Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen in his role of accommodating and normalizing populist demands and rhetoric. It coincided with a period of relatively large economic upswing and lower interest rates; the country's economy was still booming and the government introduced a generous tax policy through which they froze taxes, increased public spending and gave tax cuts to the better-off. This was implemented in combination with tougher policies on migration, asylum and integration, as well as the circulation of an anti-elitist and anti-intellectual discourse that attracted support among broad swathes of the population. The prominence that was given to »values« in politics intensified the »struggle over values« approach and underpinned the idea that solutions to policy problems should be based on moral conviction rather than on policy-oriented knowledge and experience. This understanding gained traction, particularly after the controversial 2001 New Year Address by Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen in which he maintained that

> *We do not need experts and »arbiters of taste« to decide on our behalf. […] There is a tendency toward an expert tyranny that risks suppressing our free public debate. […] Experts can be useful for giving us factual knowledge. But when we have to make personal choices, we all are experts.* (quoted from Jørgensen 2015: 283)

This explicit position contributed toward the validation of arguments for value-based policymaking that disregards evidence-based research and experience-informed policymaking. This partly also explains the turn toward policy developments based on policing, deterrence and control, which also developed with the principal goal of prohibiting people from taking certain actions.
In 2005 Helle Thorning-Schmidt was elected as the new Social Democratic leader. She was the successor to Mogen Lykketoft, who lost the 2005 election to the center-right. But the change in leadership was not enough to win the elections that were expected and were indeed held just two years later. In 2007 Fogh Rasmussen accepted an appointment as NATO Secretary General and suddenly exited from Danish politics. He was followed by fellow party member Lars Løkke Rasmussen.

In 2007 the center-left appeared to be split internally and in a state of disagreement, particularly on questions concerning immigration and asylum, such as the 24-years-of-age rule that stopped family reunions if one of the spouses was younger than 24 and the »start-help regulation« that gave a lower basic income to new immigrants and refugees. While the Social Democrats declared that they would not change the measures approved by the center-right, the Danish Social Liberal Party (*Radikale Venstre,* RV) was on a different page, and its members remained outspoken critics of the nationalist and anti-immigrant positions of the center-right government and the DF.

The Social Democrats eventually won the 2011 election and formed a center-left coalition with the Social Liberals and the Socialist People's Party (Det Socialistiske Folkeparti, SF). The coalition's manifesto program included the decision that a general assessment of the immigration and integration regulations, which had been passed under the center-right government, would eventually occur while the coalition was in government. This meant that the evaluation and debate of such a thorny issue was strategically delayed until the period after the election. The 2011-15 center-left interregnum began on weak premises, and the Social Democrats and the Socialist People's Party did not attract the anticipated support that would have allowed them to govern without the Social Liberals. Additionally, the post-election years of the SRSF government were beset with the challenges of several economic downturns and unpopular decisions that were primarily related to economic issues, such as the labor-market negotiations, the center-left government tax reforms and the difficulties the government had in addressing the consequences of the economic crisis.

At the 2015 parliamentary election the DF received 21 percent of all votes, which placed the party second only to the Social Democrats (on 26 percent). The Liberals got 19.5 percent and formed a minority cabinet with the Liberal Alliance (7 percent) and the Conservatives (3.4 percent). In spite of the numbers, the DF did not ask for, and did not expect to be offered, a role in the government. On the contrary, Kristian Thulesen Dahl reckoned that the DF would once more be better served in supporting the government from the outside. This affected not only the political path the DF followed and the strategies it adopted, but also the reactions to the party from the government and the opposition parties.

PUBLIC OPINION AND THE DEBATED POLITICAL ISSUES IN DENMARK

Since at least the late 1980s and the 1990s, the value dimension of politics *(værdipolitik)* has become a significant and influential force in Danish politics (Borre 2016: 118). Questions pertaining to immigration and asylum, the environment, LGBTQI rights and other areas have contributed to the polarization of political debate and public opinion. As early as the 1980s, the Danish immigration system was deemed by many to be too generous and liberal in comparison to the other Nordic countries. At the same time, discriminatory and exclusionary populist stances were already making the headlines (Togeby 1997). Surveys indicated that there was increasing prejudice and levels of concerns among Danes in relation to issues concerning immigration, which indicated polarization but also highly ambivalent positions. Narratives about immigration were fueled by the media, but also by the anti-immigrant and Islamophobic campaign of the Progress Party.

Recent surveys (see e.g. Tryghedsmåling 2017) have suggested that the future of the welfare state is a matter of general and deep concern among Danes. Fears that there are »too many asylum seekers and migrants coming into the country« and anxieties about what has been seen as the migrants' unsuccessful integration into society are mentioned by at least two out of three respondents. Danes worry about immigration and integration more than, for instance, environmental issues and global warming. In addition, the tightening up of immigration and asylum laws has been met with the

TABLE 2: *ATTITUDES TOWARD IMMIGRATION AMONG VOTERS FOR THE DF AND OTHER DANISH PARTIES. PDI (PERCENTAGE DIFFERENCE INDEX: STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE TO DISAGREE/STRONGLY DISAGREE)*

Immigration is a threat to national culture	**SF**	**S**	**RV**	**V**	**K**	**DF**
2001	-66	-66	-81	9	-6	73
2005	-60	-60	-66	16	-6	76
2007	-55	-55	-81	20	-15	69
2011	-60	-60	-74	6	-37	72
2015	-35	-35	-58	41	32	83

SF = Socialist People’s Party; **S** = Social Democrats; **RV** = Social Liberals;
V = Liberals; **K** = Conservatives; **DF** = Danish People’s Party

Source: Danish Election surveys, 2001-2015.

support of the majority of Danes. However, this position varies over time, and it can be influenced by both specific events and the political and media discourse in the short term. For example, if in 2011 voters still deemed stricter immigration rules to be politically reasonable, many nonetheless wished to stop giving a lower level of social security benefits to refugees, which they considered to unfairly discriminate between Danes and others. Additionally, during the 2015 European so called ‘refugee crisis’, after the sight of hundreds of refugees walking along a superhighway in a bid to reach a place of refuge, public opinion shifted positively in the direction of a common and solidarity-based European asylum policy and led to support for the possibility of accepting more refugees from Syria and Iraq in particular.

Concerns about immigration and asylum are undoubtedly widespread among voters across the political spectrum from left to right (DF: 74 percent; RV: 77 percent; V: 68 percent; Unity List [Enhedslisten]: 63 percent), although such concern can have different sources in terms of understanding the »problem« and its solutions. As already noted, opinions fluctuate over time and across different socioeconomic groups. Attitudes can be ambivalent at times, and also very polarized (see Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4). If, on the one hand, Danish public opinion supports social solidarity, foreign aid and respect for human rights, on the other it is influenced by generalized fears that connect immigration to deeper societal conflicts and threats to the welfare

TABLE 3: *VOTERS' OPINIONS ON STRICTER LAWS FOR IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM*

	2001	**2005**	**2007**	**2011**	**2015**
Not strict enough	55.7	22.6	19.1	15.9	40.3
Sufficient	28.6	47.0	31.9	37.3	28.4
Too strict	11.1	26.8	46.0	37.3	22.8
Don't know	4.6	3.7	2.9	9.5	9.6
TOTAL	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
Percentage Difference Index *(too strict to not strict enough)*	-44.6	+4.2	+26.9	+21.4	-17.5

Source: J. Goul Andersen (2016: 157). Danish election surveys and YouGov.

state, culture and identity, and national security. These stances are not new and can be tracked back to the 1990s, a pattern that also suggests the strong influence these attitudes have had on party choice and voting behaviour (Goul Andersen 2016: 150-60), although they are not the only determining factor. Voters who hold more negative and prejudiced attitudes toward immigrants and refugees are more likely to vote for the DF than those who do not.

My earlier statements in this chapter might suggest that »talking tough« in relation to immigrants and refugees helps to win elections. In reality, this is not necessarily the »winning formula«, for at least four good reasons: 1) attitudes toward the further tightening up of immigration laws have varied from one election to another and are still ambivalent; 2) voters who prioritize harsher regulation and have negative attitudes toward immigrants continue to have a preference for the party with the most clear-cut, anti-immigration agenda; 3) drawing on similar frameworks and strategies does not help to create viable alternatives to address the appeal of exclusionary and populist tactics, as radical, right-wing, populist parties across Europe have issue ownership in this area; and 4) migration policies based on strict, national interests prevent the construction of European-based approaches focused on solidarity that can help tackle migration flows on a larger scale and with long-term results.

TABLE 4: *RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT THAT »REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS SHOULD HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS TO SOCIAL SUPPORT AS DANES, EVEN IF THEY ARE NOT DANISH CITIZENS« (PERCENTAGE DIFFERENCE: DISAGREE TO AGREE)*

PARTY	2001	2005	2007	2011	2015
	-67	-41	-70	-42	-14
Socialist People's Party **SF**	-28	-22	-32	-11	13
	12	3	-4	21	32
Social Liberals **RV**	-27	-22	-35	-2	-4
	52	38	44	58	70
Conservatives **K**	44	38	41	46	67
	.	.	.	46	62
Danish People's Party **DF**	77	68	71	76	83
	29	**18**	**16**	**32**	**46**

Source: Danish Election Surveys, 2001-2015.

COUNTERSTRATEGIES – FROM ISOLATION TO COLLABORATION

William M. Downs (2012) mentions a number of strategies that mainstream parties in Europe have adopted to respond to the societal and political threats, as well as democratic challenges, that are represented by the radical and populist right. He gives a few options: ignoring, banning, co-opting or collaborating. Similarly, Tim Bale et al. (2009) suggest a few other options for policy reactions that can be used by progressive parties to respond to right-wing populism: holding, defusing or adopting. Through »holding«, the mainstream party »sticks to its guns« and holds on to its positions, maintaining its principle strategy for electoral competition. By »defusing«, the party can engage in an effort to lessen the impact of the new issue by simply putting its own ideas forward. Finally, in »adopting«, the party can simply adopt or co-opt the competitor's positions, in the sense of: »If you can't beat them, join them«. Additionally, the choice of what strategy to follow is also influenced by factors such as: 1) the overall strategy of the parties on the mainstream right; 2) the level of internal consensus/disagreement within the progressive party; and 3) the strategy adopted by other potential coalition partners.

In terms of the situation in Denmark, strategies have shifted from isolation to accommodation, collaboration and co-optation. Back in the 1980s, the Progress Party was virtually alone in its anti-immigration and anti-Islamic stances. Anti-immigration positions resonated with some groups in society, but center-right governments at that point did not as yet have any interest in them, nor did they have any reason to promote issues that did not pertain to the economy, particularly considering their dependence on the Social Liberals (RV), who strongly supported a liberal approach to immigration policy. A similar strategy was adopted to counter the DF surge in 1995 – Poul Nyrup Rasmussen's statement deeming the DF's entrance into parliament to be unacceptable can be read in this way. This strategy was possible as the DF still held a relatively marginal position at that time, and it was facilitated by the internal structure of and still relatively new organization of the party. However, it did not work in the longer term – on the eve of the 2001 election there was a sudden change. The DF declared that it would support the center-right block, and, by allowing this endorsement, the Liberal and Conservative minority cabinet contributed toward legitimizing the DF's positions and politics. From 2001 to 2011, and again since 2015, the DF has served as the main parliamentary basis for the Liberal minority coalition.[2] As Bale observes (2003: 67), this move was »engineered by a center-right willing to rely on former pariahs for legislative majorities«. Arguably, in the Danish context, this was also done due to a lack of available alternatives, considering that the RV had made a clear commitment to the center-left block. In terms of the politics of values, the time was also right, and by adopting some of the populist right's themes, the center-right increased the importance of the DF. Once in office, the center-right demonstrated its commitment to being tough on immigration, crime and the abuse of the welfare system. Such politicization was very much the result of a stronger focus on immigration from the mainstream right-wing parties (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008), which were no longer encumbered by the RV and had no reason not to use the issue to garner electoral support.

The Social Democrats tried initially to defuse the issue, but this option became increasingly difficult, since immigration and integration are often listed among the main concerns of the electorate. The Social Democrats were also internally split and in a state of disagreement; not only did the party have to deal with the managing of the coalition (and particularly with the RV), but the party itself was also internally divided. Since at least the 1980s, mayors from the Aarhus and neighboring Copenhagen municipalities had called for a radical change of direction within the party and the media (see, e.g. Jensen 2000). The mayors' complaints about having to bear the burden at municipal level in terms of refugees and immigration ignited a controversy, which included sharp criticism of the perceived failure of Muslim immigrants to adjust to and integrate into Danish society. The mayors accused the »guest workers« who had come to the country in the 1970s of misusing the welfare system, a circumstance which was attributed predominantly to their cultural background (Yilmaz 2016: 126). The mayors' position generated both criticism and support within the party's rank and file, but ten years of a center-right government propped up by populist, radical, right-wing support ultimately weakened the critical voices. In 2007 a new party, the New Alliance (Ny Alliance) – a forerunner of today's party in government, the Liberal Alliance – made efforts to stem the tide of anti-immigration policies and to counter the spread of anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic rhetoric in general. The New Alliance tried to mobilize against the main political bloc by gathering under the slogan »Enough is enough« *(Nok er nok),* addressing the DF's increasing political influence on issues related to immigration and integration. Despite the high expectations generated by opinion polls, the New Alliance achieved a vote share lower than 3 percent. After this it is worth noting that the New Alliance changed both its program and its name, to Liberal Alliance, and since late 2016 it has joined the current three-party, center-right, minority cabinet coalition (VLAK). Similarly, the Social Democrats, under the leadership of Mogens Lykketoft, tried in 2007 to keep the immigration issue to the margins of electoral campaigning but without much success.

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[2] These were minority cabinets formed by the Liberal and Conservative parties (VK) in the period 2001-11. The Liberals, Liberal Alliance and the Conservative Party have formed the government since 2015 (VLAK).

At the 2011 elections, which were won by the center-left, the issues of immigration and asylum played only a minor role. The consequences of the economic crisis brought other more important issues to the fore of the electoral agenda (Goul Andersen 2016: 142). The strategy of the center-left was to try to defuse the issue, bringing in other topics such as labor-market reform and a future program for socioeconomic development up to the year 2020. To the extent that it was possible, issues related to immigration and asylum were put off as post-election decisions, thus also delaying possible conflicts with the Social Liberals. The government encountered difficulties soon after the elections (Olsen 2013: 138) as a result of the compromises on welfare and the economy that the left-wing (S and SF) had made to enter into government with the Social Liberals. Tax reform, failed collective wage agreements in 2013 and the issue of unemployment benefits *(dagpengereform),* which had been curtailed under the previous government with the support of the Social Liberals, undermined the center-left government's popularity.

With the election of 2015 in sight, the Social Democrats opted for stricter positions on immigration and asylum policies. The party launched a campaign that simultaneously addressed refugees and economic migrants coming to Denmark and the issue of social dumping. The party's posters linked Helle Thorning Schmidt to the slogans: »Tighter asylum regulations and more obligations for immigrants« or »If you come to Denmark, you must work«. To win back some of the votes lost to the DF, the Social Democrats made use of terminology and rhetoric that frequently associated the triad of Denmark, the Danes and the welfare state vis-à-vis foreigners and those considered not (or not yet) belonging to the community. However, this approach was arguably already squarely in the DF's territory, and the Social Democrat's strategy appeared to be an onerous task for them, both in terms of trying to win voters over and in shaping a more inclusive understanding of the people and the nation.

Under the leadership of Mette Frederiksen, who succeeded Helle Thorning Schmidt after defeat in the 2015 election, the Social Democrats' shift to the right became even more explicit. The current strategy of the Social Democrats relies on both adopting and collaborating. Frederiksen has, for example, publicly asserted that Danish policies for integration are flawed. She publicly declared that the mayors were right when they complained about Muslims being »incapable of integrating«. This took the Social Democrats a step closer to the DF. Additionally, the Social Democrats have accepted the decision taken by the center-right to ultimately reject UN refugee quotas, to give the country time to integrate those already in Denmark. The party also suggests that the influx of immigrants should be stopped by making border controls permanent and helping refugees in their neighboring countries. The classic Social Democratic motto of »Duties before rights« is today primarily used to address immigrants and ethnic minorities. The emphasis here is arguably on duties, while rights seem to come in second place and do not attract the same degree of concern. Additionally, individual rather than collective duties and rights have gained traction in the Social Democratic political action frame. In this vein, the Social Democrats have fully embraced a workfare position that is based on an idea of a homogeneous society with limits to solidarity and inclusiveness, which is potentially threatened by racial, ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. Such an outlook concludes with the idea that refugees should be helped, but predominantly in their own countries, and can come here only when they can be integrated into Danish society. This concept is formulated by Mette Frederiksen as follows (Frederiksen quoted in Information 21.01.2016):

> *Do your duty, claim your rights – but precisely in this order: this is the prerequisite for successful integration. When you come to Denmark you must do your duty – and thereafter you can demand your rights. But this has been turned around, and*

> *we must be honest with ourselves and say that a lot of people have claimed their rights, but without doing their duty. This has had huge consequences for our society, not just socioeconomic but also cultural and in terms of values.*

The choice of what policy position to pursue on questions of immigration and asylum has not only polarized ideological positions between parties, but also within them. Today the Social Democrats' value positions seem not to differ significantly from those of the right-wing parties. Up until this point, however, this rightward turn has not yet been electorally successful, or at least not to the extent that some within the party might have hoped. For instance, it has not done much to stop the populist right's command of the issue of immigration. To win back power it seems that it is still necessary to avoid or counter-frame issues relating to immigration and focus on other policy fields, such as welfare, the challenges of the global economy, and social and economic inequality. Here the center–periphery cleavage seems to have regained importance; people at the geographic and social periphery feel themselves to be further away from what is decided centrally. Reinvesting economic and political resources at the local level could contribute toward closing this gap, particularly if this also involves forms of participatory and more inclusive democracy.

The Danish case speaks to the normalization and accommodation of radical, right-wing populism. Across the political spectrum, approaches to immigration and asylum, which were earlier championed primarily by the DF, are today largely exploited by the Liberal Party and Conservatives on the center-right, but increasingly also by the Social Democrats on the center-left. The Social Liberals can still be considered the antagonists in this narrative when it comes to immigration and asylum, but support for them has dropped and the party's positioning on economic issues is unlikely to appeal to populist voters. The political influence of the new party Alternative and of the Unity List is also still too marginal to make a difference. The efforts of the mainstream parties to keep exclusionary, identity-based politics at bay in Denmark have been timid and short-lived, but neither normalization nor adoption have helped to shake the DF from its position. The party is solidly consolidated within the current Danish political landscape, something few would have predicted at the end of the 1990s.

MEDIA COVERAGE AND NEW CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION IN DANISH POLITICS

Research conducted between 2009 and 2012 on the editorials and opinion pieces of the main newspapers in the four Nordic countries (Hellström, Hagelund, Meret and Petterson, forthcoming) has revealed that the Danish mainstream printed press has moved from a critical/negative tone to a generally positive tone on the role played by the DF in Danish politics and society. The DF is today considered by most of the Danish press to be a normal and widely accepted political actor. Critical positions are still taken toward the party when it holds views that are deemed too radical in relation to immigration and Islam. These reactions are also prompted by concerns about the country's reputation on an international level, as, for instance, became an issue in the wake of the controversial »jewelry law«, which allowed the police to seize valuables worth in excess of 10,000 kroner from newly arrived asylum seekers to help pay for their stay. Another example of negative international attention occurred when the Minister for Immigration, Integration and Housing, Inger Støjberg, advertised in Lebanese newspapers that Denmark had reduced the amount of social benefits given to newly arrived refugees and had further tightened the rules for family reunion *(Politiko,* 9.7.2015).

The relationship between the DF and the mainstream media, and in particular the state-owned media, has always been rather strained. As the DF's Morten Messerschmidt has said, the public Danish radio and television broadcasting company Danmarks Radio (DR) »misuses Danish taxpayers' money mainly to broadcast left-leaning TV and radio« and »DR is an institution that in its work is completely detached from reality« *(Berlingske,* 8.21.2017). According to Messerschmidt, who back in 2002 launched the Association of Critical DR License Payers, of which he was also the chairman, the DR's budget needs to be »put on the financial law agenda«. This is eventually what was suggested in the »media agreement« *(medieforlig),* which is presently under discussion between the government and the DF and is awaiting support from the other parties. The points being discussed include a budget cut for DR, which will see the economic support it receives reduced by 20 percent over the next five years. At the same time, the public media license is to be abolished and replaced by an income tax contribution. This will strongly affect the DR's finances and arguably also the quality of the broadcasting media. Although the measure was achieved with the agreement of the parties of government and the DF, it is difficult not to see this as yet another success for the DF. Over the years, DF politicians have been among the most outspoken critics of the public media. Back in 2003, when DF parliamentarian Søren Krarup had been appointed as the political member of the

DR board, he declared that he would »do anything in his power to counterattack« what he saw as »one-sided DR propaganda« and the use of »insults continuously addressed against critical voices« in politics and society (Krarup, quoted in *Berlingske* 2.25.2003). Recently Søren Espersen attacked the DR's managing directors for broadcasting radical, left-wing propaganda in relation to the screening of the popular TV series *Denmark's History* (Historien om Danmark, see Espersen 2017). The agreement, which was mainly framed by the government as a measure to streamline the budget for publicly owned media and enhance market competition, will arguably also benefit the DF in other ways.

Many right-wing, populist parties have been early and innovative social media users. The use of online media was initially for the DF a strategy for gaining visibility, not least considering the difficulties of bypassing what the DF considered the general mainstream media disfavor. Additionally, radical right and right-wing populist politicians have successfully utilized digital media, intuiting the potential of digital communication as it has become increasingly relevant. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have provided them with effective, low-cost, and readily available tools through which politicians can share messages, criticize the establishment and interact with followers virtually undisturbed.

The DF was, for example, among the first parties in Denmark to develop a party homepage. As early as the late 1990s, they used the Web to facilitate information-sharing, dissemination, issue campaigning and so on. However, when it comes to the use of the digital media, populist parties and actors have been much less receptive to new participatory and democratic communication strategies and potentials in social media. Apart from the wish to control both in- and outgoing communication, there have been very few attempts to initiate and enhance forms of diffuse interactivity and dialogue by means of the Web. Instead, the use of digital media by the party seems to function as a guarantor of existing party hierarchies, top-down approaches to political communication and exclusionary messages. A DF member of parliament (Interview at the Folkemødet on Bornholm, June 2013) declared the following, for example:

> *I use Facebook every day. I write what I mean. Sometimes a journalist brings [the message] up and writes more on the same issue. In this way, I am perhaps asked to join a media debate at a later point. Consequently, social media has some power, and it is also interesting to read what people write. There are also many crazy people (on the Internet), but I generally do not comment on my Facebook profile. There are some who are knowledgeable, but very many are not.*

A fellow member of the DF (interview at Folkemødet, June 2013) commented that social media platforms are for him a tool from which »to start a debate«, although »traditional media can still reach out to many more people. […] Four thousand friends on Facebook is very little compared to a public media debate, where there are maybe up to 150,000«.

Right-wing populist parties use the Internet as a tool for self-promotion and to disseminate their own messages rather than as an alternative platform from which to establish a broader and more participatory democratic debate that includes contributions from below. Social media is not used to question the centralized and hierarchical communication strategies of these parties, which are still managed and controlled by the party's central organs. But taking a closer look, the decentralized and anti-hierarchical approach also does not characterize the other mainstream parties' use of social media (Pajnik and Meret 2017: 36-52).

The potential for the mobilization of citizens and their participation through the Web 2.0 remains largely unexplored by mainstream progressive parties as well. These have not yet, or not sufficiently, appreciated the potentials and also the pitfalls of social media use. This means that social media represents a useful platform for counteracting right-wing, exclusionary, populist messages and activity, and it can also reach various sections of the population. This also includes the need to set up and make use of educational programs that can help inform and educate, particularly the younger generations, about civic responsibilities and how to combat discrimination and racism on the Web.

LANGUAGE AND POLITICS – THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATION, PEOPLE AND THE WELFARE STATE

Danish politics builds upon the intimate ideological and semantic relationship between nation, people and the welfare state. This nexus dates back to the 1930s, when the governing Social Democratic Party contributed toward the redefinition of which people belonged to the nation by linking the idea of »homeland« to »the people's« struggle for democracy and social welfare. This reframing contributed toward creating and consolidating the consensus around the meaning of »the people«, which, as it is understood in national discourse, refers at one and the same time to the nation, democracy and social questions. Particularly during the first half of the twentieth century, the combination of nation, democracy and welfare was used to resolve conflicts across the social classes through investing in the growth of the Danish welfare state. The Social Democratic Party played a key role in this political project.

In the 1930s the Social Democratic Party negotiated a national agreement with the Liberals, which at that time represented in particular the strong peasant organizations; the »Kanslergade Agreement« *(Kanslergadeforliget)* introduced reforms that helped to establish the Danish model for the welfare state, as we know it today. The Social Democratic motto was »Denmark for the people« *(Danmark for folket),* which was quickly also echoed by the Swedish Social Democratic Party in their slogan »the people's home« *(folkhemmet)*. The Nordic Social Democrats thus transformed from a class-based party into a »people's party«, aided by nationalism with a social base, which is also called »welfare nationalism«. Arguably, this approach contained some of the seeds that developed into restrictive and exclusionary understandings of the community of people, belonging and social cohesion. The Danish case illustrates well how discursive struggles over how to understand the terms »the people« and »the nation« may lead to conflicting interpretations in different historical periods and national contexts. Through examining the recent Social Democratic campaigns, it is clear that the struggle still revolves around the construction of concepts or signifiers such as Denmark, Danishness *(Danskhed)* and the Dane, which occurs today in the context of a globalized and increasingly internationalized world. It is notable, however, that when strictly ethnic and national components win out over other more inclusive understandings of social bonds and bridges within a national community, it is difficult to create alternative counter-frames that function successfully. As I mentioned in the previous sections, the Social Democrats have lots to gain (or lose) in this area. As the historian Ove Korsgaard observes (2004: 422),

> *The Social Democratic understanding of the nation and the national community is not bound up with being born into the national community, but in being part of the social community. And the relationship between the social and the national in the community only exists if you always consider yourself to be both a part of the nation and a member of the community.*

This quite clearly illustrates the limits of the ethnonational approach and the necessary complementarity of the national and the social. In this sense, the emphasis should not be placed so much on »being born into« but rather »becoming part of« the nation. Such an understanding would also benefit greatly from a discursive shift of focus away from what makes us different, incompatible and oppositional toward what connects us, qualifies us and allows us to exist within the community.

Another area of political and discursive struggle, as well as political antagonism, is gender. The close relationship between gender and the universal Scandinavian welfare state has also become a subject that has attracted populist exclusionary interpretations, namely when gender is used to attack Islam as a backward-looking, oppressive, patriarchal, and male chauvinist religion and culture. The DF's 2007 Working Program (DF 2007) assigns a whole section to gender equality, in which the party promises to stand up for equal rights between men and women and the equal rights of gays and lesbians. At the same time, the party unequivocally opposes any form of gender ma instreaming, gender-based quotas or affirmative action to achieve further progress on promoting equal rights for women and gays and lesbians in the country. The DF is, for instance, explicitly against same-sex marriage and the use of medically assisted reproduction and of adoption by same-sex couples. Considerable space was also devoted in their program to addressing what they see as the specific problem the Muslim community presents in relation to women's and gay and lesbian rights. This shows that the DF's interest in and commitment to these rights has some inherent contradictions (Meret and Siim 2013). Questions pertaining to gender roles and gender equality seem to be inconsistent with some of their views on the family and associated values, which are still supported by the party and mainly correspond to the heteronormative family model *(kernefamilie)*.

Scholars have often interpreted the turn toward gender libertarianism by right-wing populists as an expression of new forms of nationalism, but they have come to differing conclusions. The modernization of values in relation to homosexuality and gender equality has been seen as an expression of liberalism, although feminist scholars have advanced alternative interpretations, such as the identification of exclusionary intersectionality (Siim and Mokre 2013). Exclusionary intersectionality can be found in the support of women's rights to primarily target women from ethnic minorities. This approach has recently been conceptualized through terms such as »homonationalism« (Puar 2007) and »femonationalism« (Farris 2017). The concept of homonationalism, which was introduced by the queer studies scholar Jasbir Puar (2007), describes the new ways in which LGBTQI rights have strategically been used to mobilize against Muslims and to racialize non-Western others. Homonationalism is an analytical category that is used as a means to understand and historicize how and why it has suddenly become desirable for nations to be seen as LGBTQI-friendly, a shift that has also been promoted among nationalist parties and movements. Femonationalism (Farris 2017) describes how the dominant explanations of right-wing populism are unable to account for right-wing parties' support for women's rights, and in some cases also gay and lesbian rights. According to Farris, populism should not be understood as a master signifier of contemporary right-wing politics vis-à-vis women and non-Western migrants, but rather as a political style or a rhetorical device whose conceptual signifier is situated within nationalism and nationalist thinking and its historical (racist) institutions. Here right-wing nationalist, anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic campaigns give gender issues a newly central position; these campaigns have started to adopt the language of women's rights and gender equality, which are seen as central to national or European/Western values and civilization. Femonationalism is not only present in right-wing populist discourses, but it is also widely used by nationalists, neoliberals, anti-Islamic (and anti-immigrant) campaigns, as well as by certain feminists and women's organizations as well as top-ranking bureaucrats in state gender equality agencies - often termed »femocrats« - in the process of stigmatizing Muslims (Farris 2017; 3). The broader definitions of homo- and femonationalism risk losing their critical edge when one studies women's and homosexual rights within specific right-wing, populist organizations, but by studying these aspects one also see the dangers that can confront those who try to inhabit, and also directly contend, with such discursive frames.

CONCLUSION

Right-wing populism has been accommodated and normalized within Danish politics. This has made counterstrategies and counter-frames less readily available and more difficult to construct for progressive forces in politics and in civil society. This chapter has argued that the present political situation is partly the result of a more than decade-long cooperation between the center-right parties and the Danish People's Party. From 2001 until 2011, and then again from 2015, the Danish People's Party acted as the supporting party for the governing minority coalition. This has given the party the favorable double role of government maker and government shaker. The two roles only appear to be in opposition, and the combination allowed the Danish People's Party to apply considerable political pressure to achieve several concrete policy results. This also allowed the party to continue to criticize the political system and status quo without being perceived as inconsistent due to the party's involvement with and active support of the government's politics. Interestingly, from this position the Danish People's Party has also been able to appeal to social-democratic voters by arguing that the party is the only real representative of the social-democratic spirit and tradition of supporting welfare. The Social Democrats have responded by using different counterstrategies, trying to either ignore or defuse the appeal of the populists' anti-immigrant, identity-based political and anti-Islamic positions. However, the previous sections of this chapter suggest that this has been done without the strength that was anticipated, and perhaps also without the necessary conviction. In its place, the Social Democrats have in recent years preferred to co-opt and accommodate right-wing populist and exclusionary positions. These tend to reinforce narrow understandings of the Danish community and social cohesion, which is based on ethno-nationalist criteria that have serious implications for welfare and civil rights. By trading on similar discursive and narrative patterns used by the right-wing populists, the Social Democrats have contributed toward normalizing these attitudes and politics, and they have also moved a further step away from their historical role as supporters of a universal welfare model.

But while political alternatives to populism seem to be going through difficult times, parts of civil society are acting against passivity (Siim and Meret 2018, forthcoming). Pro-migrant, anti-discrimination and solidarity-based groups, for example, have emerged in response to the discrimination and lack of solidarity that are often embedded within the stricter immigration, asylum and integration regulations that have been approved by past governments. Supporters of migration, as well as anti-racist and solidarity-promoting activists, are some of the louder critical voices against exclusionary, right-wing populism and social and economic inequality in today's political climate. Their activities and voluntary engagement at the local level have brought up relevant questions about how Nordic welfare states in the present and future can learn to deal with issues of differentiated citizenship, basic rights and recognition based on practices that promote interactions between Danish citizens and the inclusion of immigrants, refugees and of other marginalized groups within society. This entails using new methods to work against the spread of fear and anxiety about how some of these groups are threatening the country's welfare state, social cohesion and national culture and identity. If, on the one hand, the mainstreaming of identity-based and populist-driven discourses within the neoliberal socioeconomic order is currently thriving, the various opportunities developed from below can help to redefine solidarity and cohesion within a context of increasingly diverse and pluralist societies. This calls for the creation of a more audacious political project by the progressive parties that is able to generate frameworks and inclusive visions that offer an alternative to the current hegemonic neoliberal model.

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Ketil Raknes

NORWAY – HOW TO DEAL WITH THE PETROPOPULIST FREMSKRITTSPARTIET IN OFFICE?

The political scientist David Art (2011) points out that the greatest challenge for the right-wing populist parties has been themselves. The history of right-wing populism is full of parties that have been destroyed by factional struggles, an inability to get rid of racist and criminal elements, and a weak and poorly educated membership base. Initially many observers dismissed the Progress Party *(Fremskrittspartiet,* FrP) as a short-lived protest party. However, since the mid-1990s the party has become increasingly institutionalized and has experienced a long period of electoral success (Jupskås, 2015). The persistent strengthening of the party is the main reason why FrP is considered one of the strongest right-wing populist parties in Europe today (Art 2011).

Part of the reason for FrP's success is that it was not initially a right-wing populist party. Unlike the Danish People's Party and the Sweden Democrats, FrP gradually developed from a libertarian tax-revolt party into a right-wing populist party during the 1980s. The libertarian roots of FrP still impact FrP's political profile and have strengthened the party's »reputational shield«, enabling it to fend off accusations of racism and Nazism (Ivarsflaten 2006). Even though immigration is the most important issue for FrP and its voters, the party has been able to avoid becoming a single-issue party and has gradually expanded its portfolio of attractive policy positions. FrP has considerable issue ownership on issues such as health care, taxes, transportation and care for the elderly. Thus, the party is able to pull off decent election results even when the immigration issue is not very salient.

FrP's success has partly been built on opposition to and relentless critique of the established parties. Consequently, many observers expected FrP to go into rapid decline after the party entered the government in 2013. Up until the refugee crisis the price of power was considerable for FrP, and their coalition partners prevented them from pushing through a more restrictive immigration policy. The local elections in 2015 gave FrP a miserable 10 percent.

After the refugee crisis, FrP's fortunes changed and the party was able to gain from their ownership of the immigration issue. Furthermore, the party was able to develop the »one foot in, one foot out« strategy further, with the parliament group repeatedly protesting the decisions of their own ministers in order to keep the base happy. This strategy has been exercised by right-wing populist parties all over Europe with considerable success (Zaslove 2012).

The debate around FrP in Norway can be summed up in two words: Sylvi Listhaug. Sylvi Listhaug, who took over the position of Minister of Migration and Integration in December 2015, has been a massive public relations success for FrP. Listhaug has polarized the debate on immigration and »normalized« right-wing populist rhetoric in a way that has given her a segment of strong followers. When she became Minister of Justice following the election in 2017, the debate intensified as to the kind of rhetoric that could be tolerated from a government minister. Thus, with Listhaug, FrP has strengthened its position as the »indecent other« and most of the discourse around the party revolves around the limits of political decency (Hagelund, 2003). From an electoral viewpoint, this situation is probably favorable for FrP, and in the aftermath of the election, support for FrP has been steady at around 14 percent. However, Listhaug's last clash with the rest of the political elite concerning an offensive Facebook post has weakened her political standing considerably. The controversy forced Listhaug to leave her position as Minister of Justice and created an enraged debate on the limits of democratic discourse in Norway. The main argument against Listhaug, which she was never able to fend off, was that her accusation that the Labor Party »thinks terrorists' rights are more important than the nation's security« crossed the line into the realm of right-wing extremism and conspiracy theories. For the parliament majority that supported a no-confidence vote against Listhaug, the issue was to set a standard for Norwegian political culture. Thus, the case of Sylvi Listhaug is an important reminder that challenging the discourse of right-wing populists could be a powerful counter-strategy.

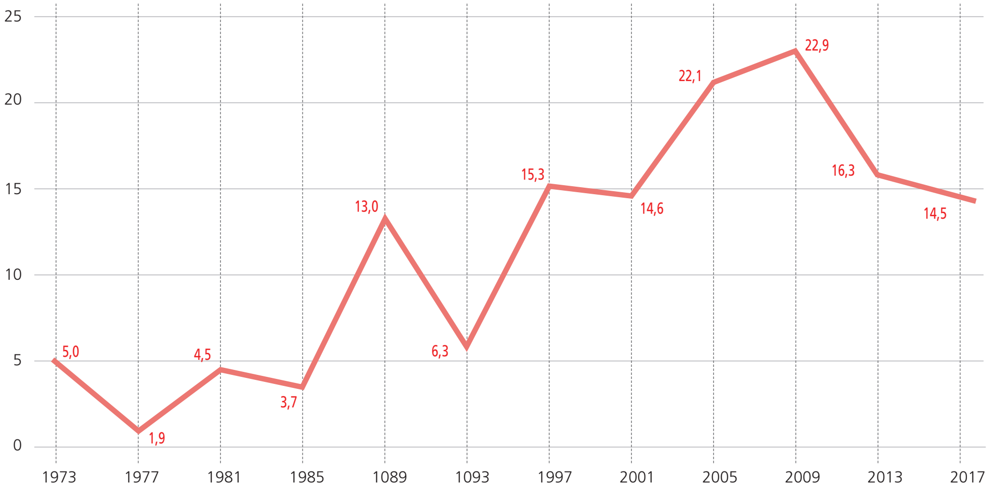
THE FREMSKRITTSPARTIET - FROM THE MARGINS INTO THE MAINSTREAM

The Progress Party was founded at a meeting at the cinema Saga Kino in Oslo on April 8, 1973. The main address was given by Anders Lange, for whom the party was named *Anders Lange's Party for a Strong Reduction in Taxes, Duties and Public Intervention,* commonly known as Anders Lange's Party, and abbreviated ALP. After Anders Lange`s death in 1974 Carl I Hagen became chairman of the party and in 1977 it changed its name from ALP to FrP

Since its founding in 1973 FrP has been controversial, but it has gradually been integrated as a legitimate actor in the Norwegian party system. Unlike in countries such as Sweden and Germany there has never been any effective »cordon sanitaire« against the FrP. Thus, already in 1987 FrP started to cooperate with other political parties at the local level. Furthermore, due to its liberal roots the party has been able to attract members with political ambitions and university education (Art 2011).

The support for FrP in Norwegian elections has increased steadily over time (see Figure 2). This support reached its highest levels in the elections in 2005 and 2009, with 22.1 and 22.9 percent respectively. FrP's growth has caused considerable strategic problems for both the Conservative Party and the Labor Party. For a long time the Conservative Party tried to isolate FrP and resisted cooperation on the national level. However, in order to stop the bleeding of voters the solution for the Conservatives has become to »tame the shrew« by inviting FrP into the government (Jupskås, 2016). The counterstrategies of the Labor Party have been both moral outrage and adoption of some of FrP positions on the immigration issue. Particularly under the red-green government from 2005 to 2013 the Labor Party managed to neutral-

FIGURE 2: *FRP'S SUPPORT IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS FROM 1973 TO 2017 (IN PERCENTAGE)*



ize FrP through a stricter immigration policy. FrP's continued pressure on the immigration issue has forced both the Conservative Party and the Labor Party to move their policy positions in a more restrictive direction (Simonnes, 2013). Even though they have made political concessions they have not made any rhetorical and strategic concessions. They have not tried to imitate FrP's nativist discourse and refrain from politicizing the immigration issue during election campaigns.

The 2017 election was an unexpected success for FrP. Even though the party lost two percent compared to the 2013 election it managed to hold on to all its seats in the parliament. One of the main reasons for this electoral success was the ability to keep the immigration issue[3] at the center of the campaign even though the number of asylum seekers was at a record low. Here Sylvi Listhaug turned out to be a valuable asset for FrP. In the middle of the campaign she orchestrated a trip to Rinkeby in Sweden pretending to warn Norwegian voters about the long-term consequences of a liberal immigration policy. Rinkeby is prominently displayed in international media coverage as one of the segregated areas in Sweden with high unemployment rates and occasional clashes between adolescents and police. The trip garnered massive media attention in both Norwegian and Swedish media and shifted the agenda in the election to more favorable terrain for FrP.

The 2017 election was a disaster for the Labor Party, which had its second worst election since the Second World War. The reasons for the electoral defeat are manifold but the inability to handle the political and rhetorical challenges from FrP is part of the explanation. The party was solidly outmaneuvered on the immigration issue. The most striking change from 2013 to 2017 was the increased salience and importance of the immigration issue. The number of voters who thought that immigration was the most important issue in the election more than doubled, from 12 to 28 percent. At the same time the Labor Party lost confidence on the issue even from its own voters. The election in 2017 was the first time the immigration issue had been the most important issue for Norwegian voters. Thus, if this trend continues the prospect of an electoral comeback for the Labor Party is bleak. At the same time the Labor Party suffered from a loss in confidence on several other issues such as the economy, education and health care. A major strategic blunder for the party was that it gambled that the economic downturn for the petroleum industry would still continue during the election. However, just before and during the election the economy improved considerably and the unemployment rate fell. Thus, the Labor Party's crisis message was not credible and the party was forced to shift strategy during the election.

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[3] The full report from the Norwegian Election Study has not yet been published. The data here is from a preliminary analysis by Karlsen and Bergh (2018).

FREMSKRITTSPARTIET - THE POLITICAL CHAMELEON

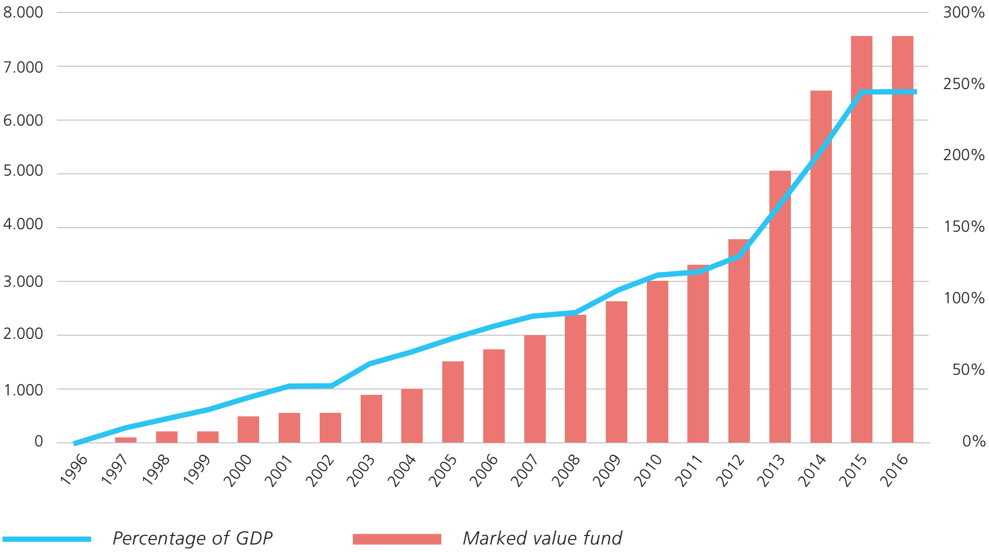
What, then, is the basis for FrP's continued success in Norwegian politics? Part of the explanation can be found in the immigration issue. The immigration issue is the most important issue for FrP's voters and the party has consistently held on to the ownership of the immigration issue. Consequently, each time the immigration debate flares up, FrP usually increases its standing in the polls. Opposition to immigration has been framed in non-racist terms and the most common frames are immigrants as an economic burden, welfare exploiters, cultural threat, security problems and the challenge of illiberalism (Jupskås 2015). The large number of frames employed by FrP shows the flexibility of the issue and FrP has been clever in exploiting these in order to keep the immigration issue salient.

However, the immigration issue tells only half the story. FrP's continued success is also due to the party's ability to broaden its profile and avoid becoming a single-issue party. FrP has considerable issue ownership on issues such as health care, transportation and care for the elderly. Furthermore, it has kept its profile as the party for low taxes. Thus, both in 1997 and 2005 the FrP had successful elections even though the immigration issue was not at the center of the campaign.

Unlike many other European countries Norway has experienced a long period of economic growth and macroeconomic stability. Norway was hardly affected by the financial crisis and the Norwegian state controls the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, popularly known as the Petroleum Fund. The Petroleum Fund has a value of 7900 billion NOK (826 Billion EURO) and the mandate is to safeguard and build wealth for future generations, by investing Norwegian petroleum revenues in international capital markets. The Fund is crucial in financing the Norwegian welfare state, and transfers from the Fund accounted for 17.2 percent of the national budget in 2017.

When the Fund started growing, from 1996 onwards (see Figure 3), FrP was quick to move the debate about the Fund into the public sphere. The visibility of a fortune in financial savings changed the terms of the political debate in Norway. FrP's current leader, Carl I. Hagen, and its health policy spokesperson, Jon Alvheim, perfected a rhetoric where they would link any visible shortcoming in Norwegian public services to the fact that Norway was now – in terms of both GDP and financial

FIGURE 3: *THE MARKET VALUE OF THE GOVERNMENT PENSION FUND GLOBAL FROM 1996-2016 (IN BILLION NOK)*



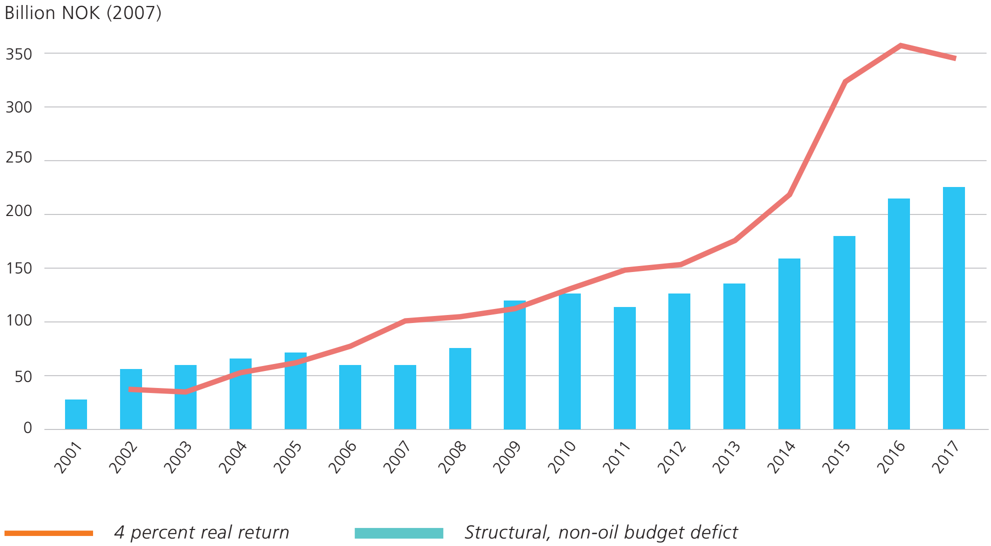
Source: National Budget 2017

savings – one of the richest countries in the world. This message was picked up by sections of the electorate, rewarding FrP, while the Labor Party suffered in the polls. When FrP spectacularly became Norway's largest party in the polls, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg realized that »the more money was in the Fund, the more difficult it was to explain that we could not use any of it«.

The counter-move from the Labor Party and Stoltenberg was to launch the so-called »fiscal rule« in 2001. The new fiscal rule declared that the annual non-oil deficit should, on average over the economic cycle, be limited to 4 percent of the Fund. This was agreed upon by a large majority in Parliament. The figure of 4 percent was at the time assumed to be the long-term real return on the Fund, and the target came with some room for discretion. The only party that opposed the fiscal rule was FrP.

The Petroleum Fund has been the gift that keeps giving for FrP and has made it possi-

FIGURE 4: *GOVERNMENT SPENDING OF OIL REVENUE AS MEASURED BY THE STRUCTURAL, NON-OIL BUDGET DEFICIT, AND THE EXPECTED REAL RETURN OF THE PENSION FUND FROM 2001 TO 2017 (IN BILLION NOK)*



Source: National Budget 2017

ble for the party to develop a petropopulist message that resonates with voters. While other European right-wing populist parties have to choose between welfare and tax cuts, FrP has said that both can be done at the same time. In each election since 2001 the party has argued that the fiscal rule should be broken in order to increase public spending. The position has had considerable support. In each election since 2001 between 35-50 percent of the population has agreed that more money from the Fund should be used on public expenditures.

Once in government FrP has continued to be an eager proponent of increased public spending. Since 2013 the Fund's share of the state budget has increased significantly (see Figure 4). A downturn in the Norwegian petroleum industry in 2015 has also legitimized increased public spending the last two years. The fiscal rule is flexible and opens up for counter-cyclical spending in order to avoid recession. Thus, FrP's »petropopulism« has made it more difficult for the Labor party to attack FrP on welfare issues.

COUNTERSTRATEGIES OF CONSERVATIVES AND PROGRESSIVES AGAINST THE RIGHT-WING POPULISTS

The Norwegian parties have tried several lines of reasoning when trying to counter the arguments and issues raised by FrP. The most common counterstrategy against FrP is to employ the decency/failed integration frame and accuse the party of creating conflicts that make it harder to integrate immigrants (Hagelund 2003). Particularly after Sylvi Listhaug entered the government the debate focused on what kind of rhetoric on the immigration issue was appropriate for a Norwegian minister. Another strategy is to label FrP as the »party of the elite« and not the party of »the common man« because the FrP's policies lead to increased inequality. This left-wing populist strategy was used by the Socialist Left Party in the last election. A long-standing critique of FrP that was developed by the Labor Party, especially from 2000 onwards, is that FrP's economic policy will lead to disastrous consequences in the long run, with the increased use of money from the Petroleum Fund leading to increased inflation and destroying the stability of the Norwegian economy. This was former prime minister Jens Stoltenberg's favorite line of attack when he confronted FrP in election debates. The advantage with this strategy was that it moved the focus on immigration issues from the cultural to the economic arena. However, the immigration issue is also an economic issue. Two official Norwegian reports in 2011 and 2017 outlined the long-term economic consequences of high immigration.[4] The reports conclude that non-Western immigration, in particular, has a negative impact on Norwegian state finances because non-Western immigrants have a very low participation rate in the work force. These reports have thus had an impact on the general debate on immigration and have raised the salience of the »economic burden« frame when immigration is debated.

What should progressive parties do?

The research literature on right-wing populist parties is ripe with analyses that try to estimate the effect of different counterstrategies against right-wing populist parties (see e.g., Bale et al. 2010; van Spanje and Weber 2017; van Spanje and de Graaf 2018). Ostracism only seems to have an effect when the right-wing populist party is in an early phase and still has a weak organizational basis. Once the party has moved beyond this phase ostracism is counterproductive and probably contributes to strengthening such parties. Ostracism is one of the major reasons the Sweden Democrats are Sweden's largest party in the polls these days (van Spanje and de Graaf 2018; van Spanje and Weber 2017).

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[4] These reports are popularly known as Brochmann 1 and 2; see https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/jd/organisation/councils-and-committees/innstillinger/innstillinger-fra-utvalg/innstillinger-2017/committee-on-the-long-term-consequences-of-high-immigration/id2468501/.

Once a right-wing populist party has established itself in the party system, there are basically three strategies progressive parties can use (Bale et al. 2010):

a) Hold on to your own position and communicate this position more clearly.
b) Defuse the issues and avoid engaging in debate and hope that other parties will do the same. The idea here is to play down the salience of the immigration issue and maintain the socioeconomic issues at the center of the agenda.
c) Adopt by closing down the issue space on the authoritarian-libertarian dimension and arguing for, for example, limited immigration and better integration.

In Western Europe, all these strategies have been used by progressive parties with limited success. In Denmark, the Social Democrats defused the issues for a long time and were gradually forced into a position where they had to adopt the rhetoric and policy solutions of the Danish Peoples Party. Even though the Social Democrats in Denmark have a strong standing in the polls these days the party has been in power for only four years in the period from 20012018. Furthermore, when the Social Democrats buy into the frames offered by the right-wing populist parties on the immigration issue, there is no turning back. In Sweden, the established political parties have refused to give any concessions to the Sweden Democrats, but the result has been continued growth for the Sweden Democrats. Germany has followed a similar path.

It is obvious that neither diffusion nor adoption are credible strategies for progressive parties. The challenges with regard to immigration and integration are real and defusing them will just legitimize the frame of »political correctness« that the right-wing populist parties are pushing. Thus, progressive parties need to reframe the debate on integration and immigration on their own terms. They need to have credible solutions to the dilemmas of multiculturalism and increased immigration.

THE MEDIA AND RIGHT-WING POPULISM IN NORWAY

The growth of populism in Western democracies is also a consequence of a changing media landscape in which the forces of polarization have gained increased leverage (Hameleerset al. 2017; Aalberg et al. 2016). The Norwegian media landscape is still quite stable despite growing pressures from digitization. The national broadcaster, NRK, still has a dominant position in the media landscape and is the most trusted news provider. Norwegian journalists, like journalists in other countries, tend to be liberal in their political preferences and nearly none of them vote for FrP. Thus, media critique has always been a central part of FrP's populist arsenal. Carl I. Hagen, who led the party from 1978-2006, famously labeled NRK as "the broadcaster of the Labor Party." In his autobiography he summed up 25 years of experience with Norwegian media in Trumpian terms: »the socialist program creators have continued their political propaganda activities« and »unbiased and neutral program managers are a scarce commodity« (Hagen 2008).

After FrP joined the government in 2013 its war with the media intensified. Anders Anundsen, who was Minister of Justice from 2013-2016, posted a picture of a burning newspaper on his Facebook page during the election campaign in 2013 because he disliked its coverage of FrP. The former Minister of Justice, Per Willy Amundsen (FrP), called a local newspaper »Pravda« and »fake news« during the latest election campaign. A lot of FrP's voters and sympathizers are dissatisfied with how the traditional media covers the immigration issue. Consequently, Norway has seen a growing number of anti-immigrant websites that present news and commentary on this issue. Some of these sites, such as rights.no, resett.no and document.no, are steadily growing in influence. Even though there have been few studies on the impact of non-traditional media in the Norwegian context, the perspectives and frames from these alternative news sites are slowly seeping into the traditional media's coverage.

Right-wing populists are masters of setting agendas and creating frames and rhetoric that confirm their worldview. These parties are often helped by an increasingly commercial news media. Even though journalists do not vote for these parties they give them extensive coverage, mostly of the conflict and controversies these parties manage to create (Ellinas 2018). In recent years FrP has been quite successful in its social media strategy. Sylvi Listhaug, in particular, has used Facebook effectively to communicate directly with voters and establish an impressive group of online supporters. In an interview from January 2017 she admitted that she understood that people were skeptical towards the news media and underlined that »the news media does not have a monopoly on giving information to ordinary voters«. Effective use of social media was part of the reason for FrP's success in the recent election campaign. Seven of the ten most shared news stories in the election campaign were controversial policy suggestions from FrP ministers on crime and immigration.[5] The peak of this campaign was Sylvi Listhaug's trip to Sweden, which dominated the media coverage for several days.

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[5] See Klassekampen, September 17th, 2017. »Frp ble mest likt og delt«. http://www.klassekampen.no/article/20170913/ARTICLE/170919985.

In the Norwegian context, the immigrants are the most important »out-group« for FrP and a lot of their policies are aimed at limiting the ability of immigrants to get welfare benefits – a truly welfare chauvinistic framing. Since 2001 the anti-immigrant rhetoric has become increasingly focused on the issue of Islam. However, FrP's rhetoric against the Muslim minority is much less inflammatory than that in, for example Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and Germany.

Several studies show that right-wing populist voters are driven by a perception of a fall in status (Gest et al. 2017). They feel that something has been taken away from them and that the current elite bears the responsibility for their loss. Thus, a lot of their slogans try to revive the idea of a glorious past such as »make America great again« (Trump), »take our country back« (UKIP), and »when Sweden was Sweden« (Sweden Democrats). Right-wing populist voters also tend to feel that they have little influence of their own life and to be pessimistic about their future prospects.

FrP stands out as one of the least nostalgic or pessimistic right-wing populist parties in Europe. This is partly because of the Norwegian Petroleum Fund and the strength of the Norwegian economy. Norway was hardly affected by the financial crisis at all and wages have continued to grow. Thus, the political space for nostalgia is limited, in stark contrast to many other European countries.

What to do about populist communication?

Progressive parties face a grave challenge when the public sphere disintegrates, since most of their voters have high confidence in traditional media. However, polarization is a two-way street and progressive politicians frequently engage in name-calling and moral outrage when they debate with right-wing populists. As long as the progressive parties frame the immigration issue as a question of »good vs. evil« the right-wing populist parties will continue to grow and move the debate in the direction they want to.

The way progressive politicians in Norway have faced the challenge of Sylvi Listhaug is a good example of this. Moral outrage has replaced debates on policy and makes it easier for the right-wing populists to portray themselves as victims of a condescending elite. In a recent interview the vice chairman of the Labor Party, Hadia Tajik, claimed that the Labor Party has to take the center in the immigration debate and frame the debate on the party's own terms. That is sensible strategy.

It is of particular importance not to buy into the frames and rhetoric that the right-wing populists use on the immigration issue. When progressive parties do that they tend to lose both credibility and control over the issue. Progressive parties need to come up with an inclusive vision of citizenship that also includes some shared values that both immigrants and non-immigrants can associate themselves with. When voters have lost faith in the future, rhetoric won't bring their future back.

One of the most complicated areas in the research on right-wing populist parties is the nostalgia and sense of loss felt by right-wing populists (Gest et al. 2017; Gidron and Hall 2017). The challenge for progressive parties is that these feelings are driven by socio-cultural rather than socio-economic forces. If you feel that you are losing your country, raising the minimum wage does not really address the problem you are struggling with. In his brilliant book *After Europe* Ivan Krastev (2017) argues that the new populism »represents not the losers of today but the prospective losers of tomorrow«. Furthermore, Krastev points out that what »populists promise their voters is not competence but intimacy. They promise to re-establish the bond between the elites and the people«. Thus, progressive parties have to offer not only credible policies but also a credible storytelling that addresses the sense of loss that these voters feel. Progressives cannot afford to avoid the difficult questions of national identity and belonging that these voters struggle with. What this remedy should be goes beyond the scope of this paper, but David Goodhart (2017) offers some interesting ideas in his book *The Road to Anywhere.* According to Goodhart, progressives have to allow more room for what he calls »decent populism« in the political conversation. Basically, he is arguing for a compromise between liberals and populists where both sides have to give and take.

SYLVIE LISTHAUG'S FAMOUS LAST WORDS

As mentioned in the introduction of the paper, the debate on populist rhetoric in the public sphere has taken an unexpected turn in Norway. Early in March 2018, Listhaug posted a photograph of masked Al-Shabab militants with the text: »Labor thinks terrorists' rights are more important than the nation's security. Like and Share«. The post was a comment on a government bill allowing the state the right, without judicial review, to strip individuals suspected of terrorism or of joining foreign militant groups of their Norwegian citizenship. The Labor Party and the rest of the opposition did not oppose the bill in itself but they opposed to allow the Ministry of Justice to withdraw a person's citizenship without a court ruling. However, the post was seen as an attack on the Labor party and several of the survivors of the terrorist attack on July 22, 2011 were furious over Listhaug's accusations. On that date, far-right extremist Anders Behring Breivik killed eight people in downtown Oslo with a car bomb and then shot dead 69 people, many of them teenagers, at a Labor party camp on Utøya Island. Listhaug's comments triggered a political storm and Listhaug was asked to apologize but refused. Thus, pressure on the government increased and the Prime Minister was forced to apologize on behalf of the government. At a press conference the Prime Minister promised that Listhaug would offer and unconditional apology in the parliament the following day. However, only after being pushed several times by the party leaders of the opposition did Listhaug concede and made an unconditional apology.

Listhaug's lackluster appearance provoked the opposition to move on a no-confidence vote against Listhaug. Since the election in 2017, the Christian Democratic Party has withdrawn its support for the Solberg government and supports it on a day-to-day basis. Eventually it was the Christian Democrats that forced Listhaug's hand by threatening to sink Solberg's government unless Listhaug resigned. On the morning on March 20, 2018 Listhaug announced that she was resigning as Minister of Justice. During her press briefing Listhaug delivered a blistering attack on her political opponents, calling the process against her a »witch-hunt«, comparing Norwegian politics to »a kindergarten« and saying that the leader of the Labor Party, Jonas Gahr Støre, was unfit to govern Norway. As Listhaug went down in flames, FrP increased its standing in the polls by up to 20 percent support. At the same time, there is a growing unease inside FrP that Listhaug's »take no prisoners« style will make it more difficult in the future for FrP to gain influence in Norwegian politics. With Listhaug being the favorite to take Siv Jensen's place when she resigns, the party risks becoming ostracized if Listhaug continues her populist offensive.

The debate around Listhaug shows the importance for progressives of not buying into and accepting the frames offered by right-wing populists. Listhaug's fate will make it more difficult for other right-wing populists to cross the line into right-wing extremism in public debate.

CONCLUSION

FrP is considered to be one of the strongest right-wing populist parties in Europe and the party has been in government from 2013 to the present. As in most other countries, the immigration issue has been a major factor in the party's success but FrP's strength is that the party has managed to build issue ownership on issues such as health care, taxes, transportation and care for the elderly.

Norway's liberal political culture has been important in moderating FrP and its policy positions. The party is today considered a legitimate political actor both at the local and the national level. One important lesson progressive parties can learn from Norway is that there is a difference between buying into some of policy positions of the right-wing populists and adapting to their nativist political discourse. There is a broad agreement in Norway that the country should have a quite restrictive immigration policy and a principled integration policy. However, there is also a strong agreement that Norway should be tolerant towards immigrants and welcome new immigrants into its communities. Thus, progressive parties in Norway have tried to reframe the debate on integration and immigration on their own terms. The issues of immigration and integration are here to stay and cannot be defused.

Norway also shows the importance for progressive parties of holding on to non-populist democratic discourse in the age of social media. The right-wing populists thrive on polarization while progressive parties are forced on the defensive. Listhaug's fall from grace in Norwegian politics shows that polarization and extremism will ultimately prove toxic. For progressive parties, avoiding populist rhetoric and sticking to their principles will provide the best way forward.

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Anna-Lena Lodenius

SWEDEN – THE FAST GROWTH OF RIGHT-WING POPULISM AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF COORDINATED ISOLATION FOR PROGRESSIVE STRATEGIES

The main approach towards right-wing populist parties in Sweden has always been to implement a *cordon sanitaire:* to maintain a clear distance and isolate them. The main radical right-wing populist party in Sweden – Sweden Democrats (SD) – differs from similar parties in neighboring countries, as it was partly set up by members of neo-Nazi groups. This is one important reason why it took so long, some 22 years after its foundation in 1988, before SD entered the national parliament. An important part of the common strategy against SD has been to keep the memory of its Nazi background alive.

In 2015 the Swedish red–green government changed immigration policies, and Sweden went from being one of the countries receiving the most migrants to a remarkably lower level. Despite the previous approach of generous immigration policies, which had been embraced by all traditional parties, this change was generally well received amongst the voters (with some exceptions, most notably for the Green Party, the minority power of the governing coalition, which consequently lost support from its voters in opinion polls). SD was not part of the decision and experienced a slight decline in support, according to opinion polls.

The effect of a cordon sanitaire weakens as SD grows larger and gains more working-class votes. This makes it even more important to find new ways of dealing with the party. The main tools should be a respectful dialogue and an emphasis on own progressive visions and solutions, rather than merely painting the enemy black. There should be a stronger emphasis on socio-economic issues.

SETTING THE SCENE – BACKGROUND AND REPRESENTATION OF THE SWEDEN DEMOCRATS

Sweden used to have a dominant Social Democratic and trade union movement that organized a majority of the workforce and had strong ties to the party. Recently, however, the Social Democratic party in Sweden has suffered significant losses, much like similar parties in other European countries. When the Social Democrats lost the 1976 election it was the first time in more than 40 years, and they were replaced by the first majority government consisting of serious right-wing parties since universal suffrage was introduced in Sweden. Since then the majority governments have changed rapidly. Since 2014 Sweden has had a Social Democratic minority government under the leadership of Stefan Löfven, with the Green Party as a minor supporting party and the Left as passive support. This construction is fragile, to say the least, and this will be described in further detail later.

The Swedish political scientist Jens Rydgren has described how a weakened class identity could lead voters to lose interest in progressive parties. Rydgren has noted how a majority of Swedes long identified themselves as left wing, much longer than in many other countries in Europe, partly because of the strong trade unions and the extended dominant position of the Social Democratic party. During the past several decades, according to Rydgren, a growing part of the population has been exhibiting less loyalty toward old parties and less willingness to follow in the footsteps of older generations (cf. 2004). A significant group of »volatile voters« (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944), who remain undecided until the last minute, evidences a growing flexibility, which leaves more space for late political developments in the electoral movement (Statistiska Centralbyrån 2016). The changes in voting behavior first became apparent in an increase in working-class votes for right-wing parties.[6] Later the working class (partly the same voters who opted earlier for right-wing parties) became more attracted to right-wing populism.

The topic of immigration was long of little importance to most Swedes and received little attention in election campaigns. Right-wing populist parties were too weak to gather any substantial portion of the voters. Sweden had a neo-liberal populist and xenophobic party in the national parliament – New Democracy *(Ny demokrati)* – from 1991-1994, but it failed to live up to expectations, mostly due to internal conflicts, which probably left voters less interested in parties with a similar agenda for the rest of the 1990s.

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[6] Right-wing parties shaped governments in 1976-82, 1991-1994 and 2006-2014.

The roots of Sweden Democrats *(Sverigedemokraterna,* SD) can be found in Keep Sweden Swedish *(Bevara Sverige Svenskt,* BSS), a campaign against immigration that first appeared in 1979. Some of the most active members of this group were simultaneously members of neo-Nazi or fascist groups, but all agreed not to display swastikas or similar symbols. Following a period of intense political and personal conflict and various attempts to start new political parties, a group of nationalists finally put together SD in 1988 (cf. Lodenius and Larsson 1994). It is particularly difficult for parties with roots in the neo-Nazi and fascist movement to transform themselves into established radical right-wing populist parties with a representation in national parliament and the prospect of influencing national politics. SD lacked what Elisabeth Ivaarsflaten describes as a *reputational shield,* an advantage enjoyed by the populist parties in neighboring countries (cf. Ivaarsflaten 2006).

The first leader of SD was a former Nazi, but from the middle of the 1990s SD tried to reduce the number of skinheads, uniforms and the worst expressions of violent extremism. Nonetheless, new connections to Nazi-groups and activities continue to be exposed even today. In 2005 the present leader Jimmie Åkesson was elected, and a group of young academics from southern Sweden took over the leadership of the party. No other Swedish party excludes as many members as SD does, often for political reasons (cf Lodenius and Larsson 1994; Lodenius and Wingborg 2009).

After the quick disappearance of New Democracy in 1994, SD was more or less the only choice for voters interesting in expressing anti-immigration views, if they wanted to avoid groups with an openly neo-Nazi agenda. SD got its first few local representatives already in 1991 but made only slow progress at first. In 2010 SD almost doubled its votes and entered the national parliament having received 5.7 percent of the vote. In local elections the same year SD managed to win 612 representatives, from 256 out of 290 local communities. 2014 was an even bigger success for SD, with 12.86 percent of the votes and representation in all but five local communities. Since then the party has continued to rise in opinion polls, with more than 20 percent at the peak of its popularity (cf. Sifo 2018).[7]

SD has a stronghold in southern parts of Sweden, probably due to a different political climate partly influenced by the political landscape in Denmark (cf. Lodenius 1999). Most of the present leadership of SD attended the same southern university in Lund.

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[7] Lately the figures have gone down slightly (most notably SCB suggesting SD would have gotten 14.6 percent of the votes if an election had taken place in November 2017).

The difference to other regions was less pronounced in the 2014 election. Since 2014 SD has also had representation in all the regional councils *(Landstingen)* that oversee mainly local transportation and the health and welfare sectors.

In the meantime SD has also established a few strongholds in the middle of Sweden, often predominantly working-class areas formerly or sometimes still ruled by Social Democrats.[8] SD has had a pivotal position in 71 local communities since the 2014 election (cf. Hannes 2016; Carlsson 2017).

HEADING TOWARDS THE 2018 ELECTION – HOW TO DEAL WITH THE SWEDEN DEMOCRATS?

Since entering the national parliament in 2010, SD has become an established part of Swedish politics in a way few expected. This is partly due to long-term preparations and the earlier education of representatives in local politics. But this recent growth has also led to problems with finding enough representatives in local politics and keeping the party together. There have been complaints about the management being too centralized, but some representatives think that the central party should intervene more often to deal with local problems (cf. Kvällposten 2017; Hannes 2017).

Sweden will have an election in September 2018, and the outcome is extremely difficult to foresee. The majorities are shifting in the opinion polls, and a few of the old established parties on both right and left are in danger of losing their places in the parliament. Even more importantly, SD might become the second largest party in Sweden. There are few prospects of one bloc getting enough votes to form a majority government without the votes of the SD, so there is a danger that SD will once again (as in the present election period) become the pivotal party between a red-green or a center-right power bloc, in a minority position. This means that one bloc will need to move closer to SD, or else the blocs will have to find better ways of cooperating with one another in excluding SD.

Confronting the Sweden Democrats in national politics

As previously noted, since 2014 Sweden has had a minority government with the Social Democratic party together with the Green Party. After the election SD immediately announced that they would reject any budget that didn't lead to reduced numbers of immigrants. This would have led to a governmental crisis every year when the budget was presented. All other parties, except the Left Party *(Vänsterpartiet),* promised to passively support every budget presented by the government to reduce the impact of SD – the so-called December Agreement. But the Christian Democrats *(Kristdemokraterna)* soon declared that they wanted to break the agreement, which was actually supposed to last until 2022, and not long afterwards the agreement collapsed (cf. Aftonbladet 2015). Even without a formal agreement, SD remains isolated from power, since there is no active vote against the government from the remaining parties, which in turn keeps the budgetary power, under Sweden's model of negative parliamentarism[9], in the hands of the red-green minority government.

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[8] See Valmyndigheten www.val.se. The biggest of those are Borlänge in Dalarna, where SD got 18.77 percent of the votes in 2014, Eskilstuna in Södermanland – 16.38 percent and Söderhamn in Hälsingland – 15.41.

It is very likely that Sweden will again get a minority government after the next election, either red-green or center-right. This implies a need for the governing parties to shore up every decision with at least one party from the other bloc. It is also very likely that one of the small parties will fail to meet the threshold, which will make it even more difficult to determine which side might govern, most likely the Christian Democrats. If the conservative parties invited SD they would have an increased possibility of achieving a majority, but that scenario is very unlikely. The Center Party *(Centerpartiet)* and the Liberals *(Liberalerna)* would prefer some form of cooperation with the Social Democrats rather than rule with the support of SD.

The Green Party has also lost a lot of support from its voters during its time in the government, partly due to its support of decisions to reduce immigration, and is also in danger of losing its place in the national parliament.[10] This places the prospects for a red-green government in jeopardy, to say the least. The Social Democrats have never invited the Left Party to be part of the government, but it is considered as a passive supporter.

A possible alliance between parties from the left and the right bloc will certainly face the same difficulties as in many other countries in Europe, as the differences between the poles in politics becomes less apparent. This might lead to a more favorable position for SD in the election in 2022, as they will be able to present themselves even more emphatically as the only true opposition.

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[9] Negative parliamentarism describes a parliament where the ruler or the ruling party does not need the explicit acceptance of the majority to remain in office but just needs to be tolerated. To remove a person from office the majority needs to vote against him or her, abstentions are counted as tolerating votes in favor of the person in question.

[10] A marginal decline for the red-green parties was shown in Demoskop opinion polls in January 2018, of 39.4 percent (-0.1). Support for alliance parties increased slightly to 39.1 percent (+0.3). The bloc difference was a modest 0.3 percentage points (cf. Demoskop 2018).

Will the Sweden Democrats remain isolated in parliament?

A situation with two more or less equally strong political blocs invites speculation as to which party is going to be the first to invite SD to join them. So far no such attempts have been openly discussed, but there have certainly been attempts to at least initiate discussions, in order to predict where SD might place its vote before the parliamentary elections.

In autumn 2017 the news exploded in the media that the liberal-conservative Moderate Party might start more open communications with SD. The negative reaction of voters was immediately evident in opinion polls. Not long afterwards the leader of the Moderate Party, Anna Kinberg Batra, was forced to step down. The idea had obviously been not to start cooperating and possibly rule with support of SD after next election, but rather to establish an exchange of information (cf. Bjereld et al. 2016). At the beginning of October 2017 the Moderate Party elected a new leader, Ulf Kristersson, who has made it clear that the doors are no longer open to SD for now (cf. Ramnewall 2017). Still, there is probably support among members of the Moderate Party for a closer relationship with SD. According to a poll by Public Service Television in 2016 more than half the local politicians (54 percent) in the Moderate Party think that an alliance with right-wing parties after the next election should include SD, since it would otherwise be impossible to replace the present Social Democratic-Green government (cf. Kasurinen 2016).

During its first period in parliament SD voted eight times out of ten with the then center-right minority government. After the Social Democrats won power in 2014 the pattern slightly changed, and from now on the SD votes with the new government more often. It has been suggested this is not actually a change of opinion but rather a consequence of the parties' general adjustment to SD policies. The traditional parties, both the red-green and the center-right, make sure that their proposals are supported by at least one party in the other bloc, meaning that more policies are already shaped as compromises even before the proposals are presented to the parliament (cf. Sundell 2015).

ISSUES IN THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE – FROM ANTI-IMMIGRATION FRAMES IN WELFARE TO CULTURE

In the run-up to the election campaign of 2018 it is obvious that immigration will be thoroughly discussed, probably more than in any previous election campaign. An opinion poll published in February 2017 shows that 38 percent of respondents think that immigration and integration are the most important issue. But in second place is health care (32 percent) and in third place education (28 percent). These issues are in some ways connected since the growing number of newcomers places pressure on both the health care sector and the educational system (cf. Rosén 2017).

SD remains, to a large extent, a single-issue party, and its critical view of immigration is part of almost every discussion the party brings about, no matter if it is criminality, the welfare system, the labor market or even environmental issues. The idea of protecting the Swedes and Swedish culture will always be at the heart of the party.

Immigration

All established parties in Sweden have at least rhetorically promoted generous immigration policies, open-ended residency permits and openness toward family reunification. To be more precise, the progressive parties have generally been more generous than the right-wing parties toward refugees, while the right-wing parties have been more in favor of work-related immigration. SD thus stood out as the only party talking openly about reducing the overall number of refugees to a minimum (cf. Hellström and Lodenius 2016). The increased flow of migrants to Europe beginning in 2015 prompted Sweden to implement several restrictions, such as border controls and the issuance of only temporary permits, even for unaccompanied children (cf. Svensson and Stiernstedt 2015). Sweden thus went from being one of the most generous countries to one of the hardest countries to get into.

SD now has further demands, such as that immigrants, regardless of status, should be sent back to their countries of origin and that any who commit crimes should be stripped of their citizenship. According to its political program SD wants to severely restrict family immigration by placing clear demands on relatives to support related newcomers. SD will agree on a limited amount of work-related immigration, mainly highly skilled, if there is a need in the labor market. SD is the only party to talk about assimilation, not integration, of newcomers.

Criminality and terrorism

Pointing to the alleged connection between immigration, criminality and a lack of security in local neighborhoods is a main theme in SD politics, as is propaganda from various racist and xenophobic groups (there is no statistical correlation between immigration and crime per se). Women, in particular, but also elderly people, are presented as victims of crimes, especially those committed by foreigners. SD presents figures about an increase in rape and claims that this is an effect of increased immigration from Muslim countries. However, there are no statistics showing a connection between Muslims and rape, and the figures for rape have not risen in line with the increase in the number of Muslim immigrants.

The terrorist attack in Stockholm in May 2017 indirectly heightened racism and xenophobia. SD made the choice not to speak out about it, but since SD had talked so much about Islam and terrorism in earlier years, there was probably no need to stress the point further. SD had presented a program against terrorism already in 2015. The content was not so different to what other parties were discussing; all parties support stricter legislation and better tools for the police to investigate crimes. SD has previously suggested that those convicted of terrorist offenses who have dual citizenship should have their Swedish citizenship revoked. Moreover, SD also wants to introduce the possibility of revoking citizenship even if doing so would leave a person stateless.

Social welfare

Already in the election campaign of 2010, SD made some attempts to change its image by presenting the party as a protector of welfare. SD has announced that welfare will be a main theme also in the 2018 election and has particularly emphasized the situation in the healthcare sector (cf. Lodenius 2015). The suggestions in the programs presented by SD are well known from trade unions, such as the right to work full time and without unpaid interruptions in the middle of working hours. According to an unpublished report by an author at Kommunal (the trade union for public sector employees) few tangible suggestions can be found in SD policy when it comes to improving the welfare system, the public sector, etc. on either the national or regional level. Welfare is a word that is used mainly for rhetorical purposes (cf. ibid.).

SD is certainly reaching out to the elderly and trying to get their votes by talking about bringing back the old-time Social Democratic vision, but the proposals often lack substance (cf. ibid.). SD has also highlighted problems related to the situation of children. In Almedalen in 2015 the SD launched a child policy program that was a direct response to the fact that the Social Democrats previously wanted to debate measures against child poverty. However, in SD’s child policy programs, there is not much room for efforts to support the most economically and socially vulnerable children.

Cultural identity

A core theme in SD propaganda is the protection of Swedish culture, language and traditions. While SD is not a particularly religious party, there is an interest in also presenting the National Christian Church as part of Swedish culture and a wish to use the church as a way of protecting certain aspects of Swedish culture. Central ideological aspect of the SD is the belief that multiculturalism leads to cultural clashes, fragmentation and segregation. This is a nostalgic approach, and the SD narrative paints a picture of a golden era in the 1950s, when no large groups of immigrants entered the country and when most mothers stayed at home with their children. Since the Social Democratic party ruled for such a long time it is also considered as part of a golden past. "Folkhemmet" – The Home of the People – was an important part of the Social Democratic Vision and the idea was a strong welfare state protecting all citizens, and the most vulnerable in particular. Leaders of SD are often referring to old Social Democratic leaders and particularly to the concept of Folkhemmet, but with a more nationalistic and ethnocentric approach. The welfare state should protect the true Swedish people, not the foreigners. According to SD the Social Democrats sold out the people and the welfare state in allowing migrants to enter the country in large numbers.

VOTING PATTERNS – SD DRAWS FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

SD has practically no direct political impact on the national level of politics since no other parties are willing to make alliances with them. But it has an indirect impact on other parties, as it forces them to make agreements among themselves to prevent SD from using its pivotal position. Locally SD might have slightly more impact, since more and more local councils have invited it to participate.

SD attracts voters both on the right and on the left, mainly from the Moderate Party and the Social Democrats. In the election of 2014 SD gained most of its votes from the Moderates, but the Social Democrats had the second biggest loss. Altogether the center-right lost almost three times as many voters as the red-green parties. SD also got a lot of votes from groups that had not previously voted (cf. Statistiska Centralbyrån 2016).

SD can be considered as a reaction against globalized liberalism, the so-called globalization hypothesis that has dominated right-wing politics for many years, but also as a new choice for conservative workers, foremost blue-collar, who traditionally voted for the Social Democrats, despite little interest in feminism, sexual equality and multiculturalism.

The number of workers voting for SD has increased, but the proportions are different within the different associations of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO). Workers in the female-dominated public sector unions have been more negative to SD, while some federations dominated by men, such as the Construction Workers and the Transport Trade Union, have long had a share of SD voters that has been well above the average. In the 2014 election, SD had an outspoken strategy of focusing on blue-collar workers, women and citizens in large towns. The number of both female votes and sympathizers in Stockholm and other major cities increased slightly in the election of 2014.

In March 2014, SD was the second most popular party among members of the LO, according to an opinion poll conducted by the LO. In June 2017, SD passed the Social Democratic party for the first time as the largest party among working class men in this poll. According to a poll presented by Public Service Television, 27.6 percent of men would vote for SD (cf. Marmorstein 2017).

PAST AND PRESENT COUNTERSTRATEGIES AGAINST THE SWEDEN DEMOCRATS

The other parties, not only the progressive ones, have used a cordon sanitaire as their main strategy ever since the rise of SD, and it remains their main strategy. To cross the barriers and get closer to SD is still somewhat of a taboo in Swedish politics, as noted earlier. Most progressive parties point to SD's Nazi connections and the past when they criticize the party (cf. Svensson 2016; Jeppson 2016).

Information campaigns have been another tool in dealing with the extreme right and SD. The focus is on emphasizing the past, while also bringing up more recent Nazi connections. Most of the progressive political parties and trade unions financially support the antiracist organization Expo to do the research. Expo frequently lectures all over the country, as well as offering advice, producing written material and, more importantly, helping to shape counter-strategies.

The exclusion of SD means that the representatives of the party are not invited to discussions between the other parties. This goes not only for occasions when immigration and similar issues with connection to SD's main policies are discussed. As noted, the situation has changed slightly on the local level. Right-wing parties, in particular, tend to invite SD more frequently (cf. Eriksson 2014). Apart from that, most trade unions in LO do not accept active members in SD as elected representatives, but they generally do not exclude SD members. However, the Transport Workers Union is the strictest in this regard and even other trade unions in LO exclude SD members (particularly those who agitate and openly promote SD policies).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMING 2018 ELECTION

As the national elections of 2018 approach, it is important to suggest useful strategies for progressive parties. Swedes vote simultaneously at the national and local level, and also in Landstingen (the regional boards for a good deal of the public transportation and health care, among other services). There is a strong likelihood, as already shown in national surveys, that a xenophobic agenda will dominate the debate, a situation that is entirely new for Sweden. This could lead to a situation like that in Denmark starting from the end of the 1990s, with a distinct turn towards more nationalistic and negative attitudes to immigration in most of the political parties in the national parliament. But so far there is little sign of such a development.

Focus on socio-economic issues

Using the GAL/TAN-scale, first presented by Hooge et al., it is clear that the right-wing populist parties would be less in the center of the debate if other parties paid more attention to this classic socio-economic scale (cf. 2002: 965-89). It is a fact that the other political parties have converged and are gathered more at the middle of the socio-economic scale, meaning that they present a somewhat similar idea of, for example, the level of taxes and the size of the public sector. SD and other right-wing populist parties have the advantage in the debate if softer values and issues such as gender, immigration and security dominate the discussion.

To focus on the socio-economic scale could also be a way to try to gain back some of the working-class voters who defected to SD. A fight for economic and social rights brings the progressive parties somewhat back to their roots and must be considered as equally important today, given the growing economic gaps and increasing inequality.

Focus on human rights

It may go without saying, but progressive parties must stand up for individual and equal rights. It is important to remain skeptical of the negative stereotyping of certain groups of immigrants. Immigrants must firstly be considered as individuals with individual rights, no matter their ethnic background. Disrespectful actors should be exposed and confronted, whether found amongst representatives of the majority or minority.

The shift from the idea of generous immigration to a stricter view of immigration policies needs to be discussed. Is this a permanent shift or might it change if the number of migrants sank to a level closer to pre-2015? How does it affect the overarching idea of equal rights in the progressive parties and the workers' movement in general? What are the dangers of a more nationalistic approach in progressive parties and trade unions? There are no clear answers, but it is still important to raise these issues.

Focus on your own strengths

It is generally an advantage to focus on one's own strengths rather than the other's weaknesses. The old political programs for a better and more equal society contain some of the answers as to how to come to terms with right-wing populism. The labor movement needs to be united and »color-blind« to gain strength, and this is just as true for the trade unions.

It is often better to talk about what can be done rather than to get stuck in negative perceptions of problems with, for example, immigration or the labor market. Trade unions, in particular, have an opportunity to present a program for the rights of workers, no matter their ethnic background. An increasing labor force is needed and can be welcomed, but to avoid widening inequality, better conditions and decent wages are needed. New migrants also need an education with high qualifications to meet the needs of employers.

Try to establish a dialogue

Dialogue should be a cornerstone in the struggle against right-wing populism, where it can help to reduce the polarization. The important thing is first to listen and to establish a dialogue with persons that sympathize with right-wing populism, then to suggest alternative ways of viewing the situation, and finally to point to solutions.

To have all the facts before beginning a discussion is not always necessary; it can be just as useful to raise a question from an ideological or moral point of view. The easiest way to start might be a simple question, rather than giving away all the answers. It is important to try to respect people, even when they initially present opinions that are not very respectful of others. The important thing is not to »win« every debate but to plant a seed of thought, which will hopefully grow.

The progressive parties should take advantage of being a movement with members from different levels of society. The important part of this work could be done face-to-face between people with a natural connection in everyday life, such as at the same workplace or in the same neighborhood.

Expose the anti-feminist agenda

Men dominate in most right-wing populist parties, and anti-feminism is a central part of the agenda. Even SD is clearly opposed to gender equality, although the leadership talks a lot about attracting female voters (SD gets significantly fewer female votes, 30 percent from women and 70 percent from men).[11]

Some SD representatives were accused of sexual harassment during 2017. This is not the first time, and cases such as this provide an opportunity to discuss the party's anti-feminist policies. But just as important is to show how the welfare state is essential for women's prospects for a decent life where they can combine having children with a career. It needs to be pointed out to all women and men that right-wing populist parties are the worst choice for anyone longing for equal wages, better working conditions in female-dominated sectors of the labor market and less gender-based discrimination (cf. Lodenius 2015).

HOW TO TACKLE THE PUBLIC SPHERE - MEDIA COVERAGE AND ALTERNATIVE MEDIA

SD has always had a lot of media coverage but has usually appeared in articles with the clear intent of exposing the party in a negative way. There were severe restrictions in the way the party could present itself in traditional media, SD could not advertise, and the representatives had a hard time getting their debates posted. But over time, journalists and media companies started to question whether this was the right way, mainly out of professional considerations (cf. Häger 2012).

The negative attitudes towards SD were clearly shown in a report written by the author of this paper with the political scientist Anders Hellström, which investigated editorials in four Nordic countries (Finland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden) (cf. Hellström and Lodenius 2016). The editorials in the Swedish media were remarkably more critical towards SD compared with how the media treated comparable parties in the other countries. In fact, there was almost no positive coverage to be found. Finnish and Danish media, in particular, provided quite a lot of articles with almost neutral portrayals of the True Finns and Danish People's Party (cf. ibid.).

Since SD's entry into the national parliament the party has been treated in a more neutral way. Occasionally SD might even be asked to comment on politics, but a substantial amount of media coverage is about political maneuvering, particularly since 2015 (cf. Garcia 2017). SD politicians are more frequently invited by the media and are present in all sorts of printed media, radio and television, and even though some journalists can probably still be considered biased, there is less of a difference with how other politicians are treated than used to be the case.

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[11] Gender data from the national election 2014: Valmyndigheten.se.

Social media and its increasing impact

The Swedish media has changed a lot recently. Social media is expanding, the share of citizens subscribing to a daily newspaper have gone down dramatically, as has the number of individuals getting their news from the traditional media altogether (including TV and radio). The public broadcasting services want to attract a younger audience, leaving less space for serious debates and nuanced information, and often refer to social media, making it the central arena for important movements and changes in society. All kinds of media tend to be consumed on the internet or streamed, rather than presented in a certain context (cf. Strömbäck 2015: 205pp). All this has changed basic concepts: what is media and what is news; what is important and for how long? A discussion of such themes is beyond the scope of this report.

SD presents a populistic idea of an oppressing elite favored by the traditional media, making potential SD voters skeptical and turning them to alternative channels of information. SD and racist networks, websites, etc. are focusing entirely on social media and have done so for quite some time, including back when they did not have access to traditional media. Social media provided opportunities when there was a shortage of money and a somewhat controversial message, and remains the site of free-speaking zones for individuals who feel excluded from the establishment.

How parties can make use of new media

Social media requires more knowledge than financial resources, but it must be considered that most platforms are designed for grassroots groups rather than authorities, companies or national organizations. Still, there are huge possibilities for initiating debates, distributing information and having an overall presence. Many politicians and members in the progressive parties are making use of new technology in a clever way. It often has a better impact when many individuals share their thoughts.

There is always the danger of them talking to their own people and failing to reach outsiders. Even progressive parties shape their own filter bubbles and need to learn more about breaking beyond them. It is easy to quarrel with racist individuals who intentionally provoke others on common social media such as Twitter. But how do we find other arenas inhabited by people worth talking to, who might share some of our values, or at least are interested in listening to what we have to say?

Vital discussions rapidly move to new platforms, when, for example, Twitter and even Facebook lose impact, and young people in particular easily find new ways of communicating. It takes a certain effort to be where the important discussions take place.

The racist right-wing extremist alt-right movement is but one actor using humor as a tool for spreading political propaganda in social media. SD also often elaborates pictures and short messages with a certain twist, which easily can be distributed in social media. This method can of course be adopted, and we can also learn to react rapidly to events and items that garner attention in social media.

Recommendations

It is a valid question as to whether it is good or bad policy to treat SD like any other party. It is not as stigmatizing to join SD as it used to be and more people dare to admit they agree with the positions of SD. This has the effect that the polarization lessens, which might be for the better. SD gained considerably from the image of an underdog party being neglected and ridiculed by the establishment. If the perception of the party becomes more neutral, and the focus will be more on politics, some people might turn from SD as they realize the political suggestions are not appealing to them.

SD consists to a large extent of people triggered by polarizing ideas and convinced of a conspiracy of the elite. It can be a tricky thing to reach out to someone with such prejudices. Many of them used to vote for progressive parties before. They changed their minds partly for irrational reasons such as emotions and a longing for protest, but also because they felt that the progressive parties had failed to deliver what they had expected them to.

Facts are not always needed to establish a discussion. The way that progressive parties present themselves is essential. It is important to establish a dialogue, as already mentioned, as well as to provide alternative explanations rather than claiming to present the only true explanation. Ideally this dialogue can be continued both in social media and in real life.

Digital communication can be effective, as described, but cannot replace all other forms of dialogue; it might be considered rather as a complement. Meetings in a neighborhood or in a trade union might be useful places for discussions. SD tries to do what the labor movement always used to, getting out and talking to people. There is no substitute for a face-to-face meeting.

LANGUAGE AND POLITICS – THE POWER OF USING APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

It is extremely important to find new ways of dealing not only with SD but also with xenophobic and racist ideas in general, which are often presented as nationalism, as well as to develop a new workers' movement based on a new realistic approach, in contrast to what is often described as old-fashioned, idealistic and naive politics.

The presence of a cordon sanitaire used to make politicians somewhat more careful with the words they were using and the proposals they were making in connection with immigration. But the ways things are described by SD and groups with a similar agenda has obviously slipped into mainstream media and the common debate. Such vocabulary cannot be described as openly xenophobic or vulgar in any way, but rather expresses a subtle shift in ways of picturing the situation.

One important point is that immigration has been established as a single issue rather than many separate issues: asylum-seekers; migration for work, studies or marriage; and family reunification. Immigration is usually described as a problem that needs to be solved, even though most of the immigrants are in fact no problem to society at all. It is also widely assumed that there is a limit as to how many immigrants Sweden can embrace without getting into serious trouble, and that this limit is fast approaching (cf. Lodenius 2012).[12]

The racist and xenophobic debate, particularly on social media, has also managed to set a negative agenda towards Muslims. Negative perceptions of Islam rise easily under the perceived constant threat of terror motivated by radical jihadism. It has recently become more mainstream to intentionally equate radical violent jihadism with Islam in general.

Social media are highly important in contributing to changes in language used by both mainstream media and politicians. The previously mentioned report on how editorials treat right-wing populist parties also investigated the language on a website with strong links to SD.[13] The articles were focused on people who used to vote for traditional parties but now vote for SD (cf. Hellström and Lodenius 2016).

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[12] An example was when the TV program Agenda 2012 held a debate with all the leaders of the political parties and asked: »How many migrants can Sweden cope with?« (cf. Lodenius 2012; Priftis 2012).

The predominant framing pattern of such articles is split into a »we« (Swedes) versus »the others«. The »we« comprises not only of those of a certain ethnic background, but are also primarily the »ordinary« and »realistic people« who have the unfortunate position of always having to give away things to others who don't deserve it. The »others« are described as »idealistic people«, considering themselves as somewhat »elite«. But they are also the ones taking advantage of others and gaining all the benefits. Sometimes there is also a distinction between a few (assimilated) good immigrants and the majority of per se bad immigrants (cf. Hellström and Lodenius 2016).

The concept of Swedish culture is commonly used by politicians of all political parties to assert that there are certain things in other cultures or religions that should not be accepted in Sweden. But the idea of Swedish culture needs to be problematized, as I have already discussed. Sweden has long been a secularized country and the impact of Christian values should also not be overestimated. Sweden is a liberal democratic and modern society, like many other countries.

Most of what is often described as Swedish culture could equally describe universal human rights and refer to the UN declaration. The law in Sweden is not that different from the law in most other similar countries, and a citizen in any country is of course expected to follow the law.

Recommendations

Politicians must pay attention to the use of words. A certain way of choosing words can have much larger effects and can be a tool for changing attitudes in public and even, in the longer term, for changing policies.

It is particularly important to expose the expressions used by right-wing populist parties and xenophobic and racist groups. It is not only a matter of staying away from the most vulgar and extreme expressions. Seemingly everyday language can implement an undemocratic and discriminating way of viewing a situation or certain groups and individuals. Politicians should particularly watch out for stereotypes and generalizations. We need to tackle immigration as a multidimensional, not a single, issue. People are moving to Sweden for many reasons and should be treated as individuals.

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[13] The online news site *Avpixlat* was not formally a part of SD but was administrated by members of the leadership of SD. It later changed name to Samhällsnytt – News from the Society.

The concept of foreign cultures as well as Swedish culture must be problematized. A more multidimensional concept of cultures shows us that they consist of various local cultures, they vary over time and space and change rapidly. Migrants should not be judged by stereotypical ideas of certain cultures, and likewise there is no such thing as a common Swedish culture shared by all Swedes and only by ethnic Swedes.

On the other hand: there is such a thing as a universal idea of human rights. Refugees are coming from countries which often lack respect for, for example, women's rights, sexual freedom and freedom of speech. Still, they are using the human right to migrate to another country, and we should protect them.

The changes in immigration policies in Sweden have been presented as something made necessary by circumstances, not by a shift in opinions. But some of the proposals made formerly only by SD and similar groups are now being presented by traditional parties. In order not to be totally marginalized on the political front, SD has moved forward with further demands on restrictions in immigration policies.

CONCLUSIONS

The progressive parties must have a reliable vision of a modern global and multicultural society. Some of the center-right parties have moved closer to the right-wing populists in both language and politics. It is extremely important for the progressive parties to go beyond everyday politics and embrace a different idea that can attract voters and lay the groundwork for future governing.

Right-wing populist parties are trying to be portrayed as the workers' movement of today. The progressive parties must challenge this description and show that the workers of today need other solutions. But it's important to avoid contributing further to the polarization. Progressive parties must distinguish between fighting against negative policies and against single individuals, particularly in connection with sympathizers and those elected at lower levels of the party.

SD and other similar groups should not set the agenda for the discussion and should not always be in the focus of the debate on immigration. Progressive parties must have an independent way of dealing with themes such as immigration and integration.

A global society is not a matter of choice; globalization is something we must deal with. People will continue to move to often distant places to find a better way of life. There have never in history been more people moving away from their countries of origin, and the number of people crossing at least one border to stay permanently in a new place has more than doubled in the last 25 years. According to the UN there were 258 million migrants in the world in 2017, almost 26 million of whom were refugees, with the others moving for various other reasons (cf. United Nations 2017). Progressive parties should resist a nationalistic and ethnocentric approach. Contrary to what is reported on social media this is the realistic way – in fact, the only way.

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Madeleine Myatt and Jasmin Siri

GERMANY – CONDITIONS FOR THE RECENT ESTABLISHMENT OF RIGHT-WING POPULISM AND PROGRESSIVE RESPONSES

The results of the German federal election of 2017 present challenges to the German party-political landscape. The first of these is organizational, since with the return of the Free Democratic Party *(Freie Demokratische Partei*, FDP) from non-parliamentary opposition and the emergence of the AfD – located far to the right on the political spectrum – as a political force, the parliamentary arena has turned into a six-party system. Second, the strength and electoral success of the AfD over the past years will, in particular, have an enormous impact on the content of party-political debate in Germany.

The developments and tensions within the German political landscape have not arrived out of the blue. They can be traced back to eight years of a strong »grand coalition« between the CDU/CSU and SPD, which resulted in a relatively weak opposition (cf. Federal Election Commissioner 2017).

Although the CDU and SPD have gained most votes in the federal elections of the past and have alternated taking the chancellorship since 1949, it is important to note that coalitions between the two parties, the so-called *Volksparteien* (People's Parties),[14] are historically very unusual in the German political landscape.

It is only within this context, and at a very late stage in comparison to other European countries, that a right-wing party could successfully emerge. Since the mid-1980s different political groups and parties, which can be categorized as either right-wing or of the far right, have claimed periodic attention and electoral success.

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[14] In this context, the translation »People's Parties« is used intentionally, as it refers to the role and conceptualization of the »People« as a constitutive element of self-description, especially at the beginning of the evolution of these parties. In contemporary discourses, the term »catch-all parties« is often used instead.

This success had been limited to the regional level and different state parliamentary elections.[15]

After mapping the party-political landscape in Germany in section 1, we will go on to discuss the political issues that are relevant to contemporary right-wing populism in Germany (section 2) and those that pertain to questions concerning the electorate (section 3). In a fourth section, we will discuss the structural transformation of the public sphere and its effects on political discourse. The last chapter discusses the need for self-reflection and counter-strategies in the social-democratic arena.

MAPPING THE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE GERMAN PARTY-POLITICAL AND DISCOURSE LANDSCAPE

Within this context, the year 2013 marked a turning point in the foundation and growth of the AfD. In the German federal elections in 2013, the party did not achieve the five-percent threshold, which it only missed by a small margin. This narrow miss was, however, followed by a notable electoral success during the 2014 European Parliament election in which it won 7.1 percent of the votes in Germany (cf. European Parliament 2014). Moreover, it is clear that they were now following a path of continuing success when they crossed the five-percent threshold in three eastern state parliamentary elections in the second half of 2014 (Saxony, Brandenburg, and Thuringia) and successfully entered the federal state parliaments of Hamburg and Bremen (cf. Landeswahlleiter 2014, 2015) in the first half of 2015 (cf. Decker 2017; Giebler and Regel 2017).

The foundation of the AfD in 2013 did not take place in a vacuum. It was influenced by existing political and social support structures, not only on the right-wing political spectrum. It was also shaped by the developments within the conservative political camp and influenced by the general political discourse that had circulated over the previous two decades.

The foundation and electoral success of the AfD can in part be attributed to systematic developments within the established parties of the conservative political camp in Germany. In this regard, developments within the CDU and CSU, as well as the FDP, are of particular relevance.

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[15] Examples are the far-right National Democratic Party of Germany (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands, NPD), the German People's Union (Deutsche Volksunion, DVU) or the right-wing Party for a Rule of Law Offensive (Partei Rechtsstaatlicher Offensive), commonly known as the »Schill party«.

In terms of the CDU, a turn away from what had formerly been core positions in different policy fields took place after Angela Merkel took over the position of party leader in 2000 (Decker 2016: 3). Initial indicators of a change in the party's political direction had already become clear during the party's conference in Erfurt in 1999 at which the CDU's self-description as a party of the center (Erfurter Konvent, final declaration: 2) was emphasized.

Accordingly, the original and »classic« Christian template of the family, as well as core socio-political positions, among other aspects, were modified in the years that followed. From the first legislature session (2005-9) of the grand coalition (CDU/CSU and SPD), the political measures that were implemented under the Federal Minister of Family Affairs, Ursula von der Leyen (CDU), may serve as a good illustrative example here: programs such as parental leave and benefits, the extension of all-day childcare, in contrast to a traditional allocation of roles within the family and according to gender, the recognition of homosexual partnerships, and the introduction of a quota for women in management positions were all implemented. Similar developments can be found in the policy fields of migration, integration and economics (Decker 2016; 2013). These developments have often been referred to as the »social democratization of the Christian democratic parties«. The orientation of European politics and the management of the Eurozone crisis have also been the subject of heated debates within the Union parties. Since both the SPD and the CDU/CSU were in agreement within these policy fields, windows of opportunity opened up for right-wing populists.

In the case of the FDP, two points are of relevance concerning the evolution and success of the AfD: the FDP's core economically liberal orientation and a missed opportunity to position itself as a Eurosceptic (not anti-European) political force.
The FDP traditionally has a fixed political stance that weds liberal economics and civil rights (cf. Decker and Best 2017: 44-7) and is situated at the secular polar opposite to the CDU/CSU. Due to its frequent participation in government with the Union parties, the FDP was often labeled the junior partner. Its core championing of liberal markets gives the party its unique selling point (USP) when viewed in competitive relationship to the other parties within the German political landscape.

In contrast to the developments in the programs of liberal parties in Europe, such as Scandinavia, Belgium or the Netherlands, which demonstrate a much stronger orientation toward conservative positions on sociocultural issues (Decker 2016: 13), the FDP has remained faithful to its core positions. Therefore, the party did not develop an image of itself as an alternative political force with a wider offer across the political spectrum in a sustained way, with one exception. When the Eurozone gave financial support to Greece, Eurosceptic voices (rather than anti-European ones) became louder and formed an opposition within the party. However, the leading figure, Frank Schäffler, was not successful in his bid to offer a members' vote on the issue. Instead, the AfD successfully jumped into the debate and seized the topic, leading to a movement of members from the FDP and CDU/CSU to the AfD. As the AfD shifted more and more toward the extreme right, the FDP was able to (re)claim and defend both its USP as an economically liberal political force and its position on issues of economic policy.

In terms of the SPD, a direct competitive relationship can be disregarded, as the AfD does not demonstrate a strong concept of social equality in its central political guiding principles. Moreover, the AfD's economic arguments are primarily from the neoliberal template and equality is not a central aim for the party. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned and specified here that in light of the AfD's strategy to make its presence felt across society and its institutions in a broad and extensive way, it has targeted what had been previously been core voters for the SPD. This is not only evidenced by the increased percentage of AfD voters within trade unions, but also in the considerable increase in the infiltration of work councils by groups close to the AfD, who aim to challenge trade-union representatives in light of the party's well-known anti-establishment and systemic critique. Additionally, the AfD's arguments concerning social justice are shaped by a unilateral and anti-internationalist approach, which has an emphasis on the German national interest and what is deemed the »unfair« distribution of German resources.

Be that as it may, the element that still casts a shadow over the SPD's attempts to gain and stabilize voter support, on the one hand, and create and communicate a clear image of the party as a social-democratic force, on the other, is »Agenda 2010«, introduced by the former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. Although, a social-democratic understanding of statehood and sociopolitical culture has always been the core component of the party's identity, several stages of adjustment and change have taken place. The party's current sociopolitical orientation is not simply the result of the party's time in government between 1998 and 2009. It is, moreover, traceable to the 1980s and 1990s, and the prevalence of neoliberal ideas of a »slim state«, the championing of less state intervention, and the belief in the regulative force of the market and the privatization of risk (Butterwegge 2013b: 332). This was all ideologically inspired by the philosophy of a »third way« (Schröder and Blair 1999; Giddens 1998). This discourse shaped the development of the sociopolitical landscape and linked policy decisions on welfare and economics in a sustainable manner. The controversy over the »Hartz concept« and »Rürup commission« has left scars not only within the internal ranks of the party, but also among the party's members and the wider electorate. On the Left, the Electoral

Alternative for Social Justice *(Arbeit und Soziale Gerechtigkeit – Die Wahlalternative,* WASG) attracted many disappointed members from the SPD. The WASG and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) later united to form the Left Party *(Partei Die Linke)*.

This watering down of leftist and social-democratic positions was furthered by the political reality of an enduring grand coalition between the SPD and the CDU/CSU. From an organizational and theoretical perspective, it is not surprising that grand coalitions lead to the convergence of the actors involved and, moreover, to a lack of critique and creativity within the structure. Concerning the SPD, this tendency toward discipline and conformity is often associated and invoked by the semantics of *staatspolitische Verantwortung* (responsibility for state policy). Factional and organizational discipline and the dynamics of government lead to a complete lack of communication over new ideas, open discussion or critique.

It is important to note that populism as a political strategy in German politics has in no way been independently created by a new, right-wing, populist party. A prime example of populist sentiments is the controversial statement made by the CDU politician Jürgen Rüttgers during the state election in North Rhine-Westphalia in 2000, which has become famous for the short slogan »Kinder statt Inder« (approximate translation: »Children first, instead of Indian migration«). In his statement, Rüttgers referred to the Green Card Initiative of the »red-green« coalition government (SPD and the Green Party), which aimed to foster and stimulate the immigration of IT experts from India. Rüttgers's critique was linked to a call for more investment in IT education in German schools. Another important example is the debate in relation to Thilo Sarrazin, SPD member and former chair of the German Federal Bank, who in books and public statements focused on the alleged »failure« of the German migration and integration policy. Racist patterns are evident in his line of argumentation (cf. Lewandowsky and Siri 2011). Long before the AfD's emergence on the political scene, politicians such as Sarrazin »tested« and suspended the boundaries of German public discourse relating to racism, anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-political correctness. His statements and arguments have been picked up and supported by right-wing activists. Sarrazin, a Social Democrat, also introduced the familiar strategy of self-victimization when he was challenged on his racist and chauvinist writings by other political actors: to him and his supporters, critique was taken as proof of the decline of free speech.

Both examples demonstrate the presence of a right-wing, populist sounding board in two ways: there is an alignment with populist argumentations and messages, to an unlimited extent, first within the established parties and, second, among parts of the population. This exposes the persistence and widespread distribution of stereotypical attitudes, as well as the susceptibility to them to a significant extent within the center of German society (cf. Decker et al. 2012; Zick et al., 2017)

Fundamentally, politicians such as Sarrazin must be identified for having opened the door to right-wing discourse and policies. Since Sarrazin was even allowed to read from his book in the SPD's Willy Brandt House, his rhetoric marks the symbolic crossing of former red lines concerning public racism and nationalism. The role that the party affiliations of these »discourse openers« play must not be underestimated.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE AFD: FROM FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENT TO A RIGHT-WING POPULIST FORCE

The party's name is a label and positions it within the party-political system as a counterweight. It refers to a phrase spoken by Angela Merkel and her ministers, which called the government's policies »alternativlos« (without alternative).[16] This raises two questions: First of all, what are the points of reference for the label *Alternative,* and, second, how is this declared alternative status constructed? To answer both questions, a differentiation of the phases in the party's evolution is required. This additionally makes it possible to provide a systematic illustration of internal party disputes, related changes in the directions of their programs, but also the persistence of an ideological and thematic center.

The first phase covers the period between the foundation of the AfD in 2013 and the escalation of internal factional disputes in summer 2015, which ultimately favored the right-wing camp in the party.

A previous and relatively unknown forerunner of the populist party formation at the German federal level was the Eurosceptic party, the Federation of Free Citizens *(Bund freier Bürger,* BfB) founded in 1994 by former FDP member Manfred Brunner (Bebnowski and Förster 2014). As the BfB arose from the protest movement against the Maastricht Treaty, and its former members later joined the AfD, the overlap in the construction of the EU as the enemy and patterns of argumentation is not surprising. The AfD's immediate predecessor, the »Election Alternative 2013«, did not adopt the organizational form of a party. Instead, the members stood as candidates for the state election in Lower Saxony through the electoral role of Free Voters *(Freie Wähler)*. Their lack of success was a driving force behind the AfD's foundation in 2013. The process was initiated by a group of liberal economists, including Bernd Lucke (former CDU), Konrad Adam (former CDU), Joachim Starbatty (former BfB), Hans Olaf Henkel (former IBM manager and chair of the Federation of German Industry [BDI]) and the former CDU politician Alexander Gauland. Apart from the political issue of the Eurozone crisis, the party's foundation was also supported by a diverse network of economic as well as sociopolitical structures, such as the Hayek Society and the fundamental Christian campaigning network the Civil Coalition *(Zivile Koalition),* which was launched by Beatrix von Storch. The latter is also a prime example of the party's national conservative base.

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[16] The »there is no alternative« (TINA) rhetoric was used, for example, in the discussion of German participation in relation to military operations in Afghanistan, health reform and EU politics. In 2010 the term »alternativlos« was chosen as the non-word *(Unwort)* of the year by the Society for German Language.

In the founding phase, the economic liberal wing around Bernd Lucke was dominant in the party's leadership. This orientation of the party's program was above all visible in the policy guidelines that were laid out during the federal election of 2013 and the European Parliament election of 2014 (Franzmann 2014: 115-24). This is important for the German case because – due to its history – a clear classification of a political force as far-right will serve as an obstacle (Decker 2007: 205; 2012). The foregrounding of content related to the topic of the Eurozone, which was connected to a (neo)liberal economic orientation, made it possible to go on the offensive and act and argue in line with an anti-establishment position without exposing oneself to being labeled as a right-wing force in political discourse (Berbuir et al. 2015). Therefore, its classification as a right-wing populist party was controversial, especially at the beginning (ibid.; Arzheimer 2016). A closer analysis uncovers the links between the different ideological and program-related streams of thought: liberal economic, national conservative and right-wing populist (Arzheimer 2016). It is especially the AfD's creation of an image of itself as a protective body for German prosperity and interests that offers a surface onto which multiple points of connection can be projected. Furthermore, surveys in the context of the federal elections of 2013 have demonstrated the presence of right-wing populist sentiments among AfD candidates (Lewandowsky et al. 2016).

The second phase, which began with the exit of Bernd Lucke and several members of the economically liberal wing from the party, extends the path the party had taken and is characterized by a steady stabilization in the adoption of typically right-wing stances on a range of topics, and in rhetoric and political communication strategies. In this context, »classic« right-wing topics are given prominence. Here, the party profits from the refugee crisis, which generates societal polarization and stops the downward trend of the party.

In relation to its organizational structure, the AfD follows a pattern at the cost of charismatic individual leadership, which has been visible across the internal party developments of other European right-wing populist parties in recent years (Decker 2016: 8). In the German case, the Constitution and Political Parties Act (Bundestag 2017, cf. section 2: §7-15) sets out a legal framework for institutionalization and requirements for democratic party organization (Decker 2016: 8), including a vertical organizational structure, the implementation of co-determination processes and participatory rights. Within this context, the AfD demonstrates a plebiscitary understanding of democracy. The emphasis on procedures of direct democracy is reflected internally in the form of the decision-making at party conferences, as part of which members rather than delegates are frequently allowed to vote (see, e.g., Meny and Surel 2014: 71). At the level of the leadership, the adoption of a dual or tripartite structure, a model that dominates within the left parts of the political spectrum, serves as a hallmark of progressive self-image creation.

In relation to the most recent developments in the party (Frauke Petry's announcement of her resignation after the federal elections of 2017) and those that are ongoing – the partly media-staged internal party disputes – a continuing orientation in its program toward an extreme-right position is likely, but a final prediction of the party's destination can only be speculative at this stage.

AfD's Connection to the Far and Extreme Right

As far as the party's connection to the far right is concerned, a dual perspective should be adopted to reflect the following: first, the localization of support on a political and ideological scale and, second, possible attempts at differentiation carried out by the AfD. Over the last couple of years, a shift toward more extreme-right positions is apparent but a fragmentation of different orientations and positions located on a right-wing spectrum is a characteristic feature of the party (Siri and Lewandowsky 2015). Internal conflicts are best illustrated by the manner in which the internal party has handled its members (and also leading figures), who have aroused public interest by taking clearly far-right positions and establishing contacts with far-right parties (like the National Democratic Party of Germany, *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands,* NPD) and movements (cf. Decker 2016: 12).

A current example can be found in the developments around the AfD state association of Saxony-Anhalt, known as »AfD Leaks«. A transcript was leaked for a chat within an organized WhatsApp group, which served as a communication platform and also included board members. The disclosed transcript contains, among other aspects, open calls for a »takeover of power« *(Machtübernahme),* a ban on media that is »against the People« *(volksfeindliche)* and a glorification of Sturmabteilung (SA) leader Ernst Röhm. In this context, the regional chairman of Saxony-Anhalt, André Poggenburg, stood out in his use of the NPD slogan »Germany for Germans« *(Deutschland den Deutschen)*.

Furthermore, the relationship between the AfD and social movements that are located on the right-wing and far-right pole of the political spectrum are of crucial interest in developing an analytical view of social and political structures. In this regard, the party's connection to Pegida (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West [Occident], *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes)* and the Identitarian Movement of Germany *(Identitäre Bewegung Deutschlands,* IBD) seem to be influential. The latter is the German spin-off of Le Bloc Identitaire, which was inspired by the French New Right *(Nouvelle Droite)* (Camus 2015) and is showing evidence of increased activity in Germany. These movements and related regional groups stand, among other aspects, for the preservation of national identity and »Western values«, and against immigration and Islamic ideas; they therefore serve as an ideological melting pot and driving force, carried forward by emotions as well as the mobilization of fears and feelings of insecurity. Both have shown open support for the AfD in different contexts. In the other direction, individual AfD members have given support to the other groups' activism and ideological core beliefs. For instance, when it was announced that the activities of the IBD would be put under surveillance by intelligence services, AfD members trivialized the news and expressed the sentiment that this was a suppression of political activism.

At least officially, the national AfD party distances itself from Pegida, the Identitarian Movement and other far-right movements and organizations. This official line is expressed in declarations of the party's incompatibility with these groups.[17] But an individual assessment can be provided. If a »double activist« wants to join the AfD and has provided information about their involvement in other groups, the final decision is made by the regional party associations (a two-thirds vote is needed). This political maneuver has three functions: (1) it is a reference point in public debate during the course of a confrontation that has political components; (2) it helps to prevent internal conflict in relation to positions within the internal party's national conservative camp; and (3) it does not shut the door entirely to these groups, and so a link to the support and mobilizing force of these movements can be maintained.

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[17] The AfD's declarations of incompatibility, available online: https://afdkompakt.de/2017/05/15/zusammenfassung-der-beschlusslage/ (accessed on 9.30.2017).

In summary, the connections are apparent in relation to individual party members and supportive circles. In particular, overlapping memberships and involvement in activism (including organizational support) foster the stabilization of far-right positions within the AfD.

Central Political Issues – From Migration to Euroscepticism

Within populism, especially in its right-wing manifestation, the successful placement and framing of issues can be observed in the linking of perceptions of crisis and modernity (Decker 2007; Spier 2006: 33; Meny and Surel 2014; Priester 2005). In relation to the rise of the AfD, the following crisis phenomena and dynamics are especially relevant: the financial and Eurozone crisis, the refugee crisis, the Eurosceptic, xenophobic, anti-Muslim and anti-multicultural position, as well as national conservative ideas of family and gender. These are the main and overarching points of reference.[18]

Migration and integration

The migration and integration policy of the AfD is closely linked to the refugee crisis and revolves around the accusation that there has been governmental failure in terms of crisis management. A dominant line of argumentation alleges the following: Chancellor Merkel has breached the law in relation to the political decisions that have been made in response to the movement of refugees in form of the suspension or, even, deviation from the Dublin III Regulation. This argument is closely linked to an emotional appeal to feelings of insecurity. Another important core position is the prioritization of family and demographic policies with a chauvinistic template for migration and integration. In this context, different anti-multicultural and xenophobic forms of rhetoric are strategically used to construct a dichotomy of »us« and »the Other« using reasoning about cultural incompatibility and the danger of »foreign infiltration«. The denial of asylum as a fundamental human right is presented as a core political demand. According to the AfD, asylum should depend on »the benefits for the German state«. The party opposes the right to family reunification (AfD election program, federal elections 2017: 28-31).

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[18] A graphic on the general discourses and strategic issues of German politics in the 2017 election is available online: www.fes.de/de/internationale-politikanalyse/aussen-und-sicherheitspolitik/monitor-soziale-demokratie/strategiedebatten-global/strategiedebatten-deutschland/ (accessed on 11.3.2017).

Public safety and security

To turn to the question of public safety and security, the AfD's position is closely linked to the policy areas of migration and integration. They place a strong emphasis on the perceived connection between migration and the rise of criminality *(Ausländerkriminalität)* and terrorist infiltration, which they allege has been generated, in particular, through the »opening of the borders«, supported by a naïve red-green establishment. The AfD uses this reasoning to create an image of itself as the only »guardian« of the rule of law and an »effective« law and order policy. Therefore, the development of effective border controls is one of the party's core demands, in line with expansion of security forces (ibid.: 17-19, 33, 65). In contrast, radicalization and extremism of the far right is a blind spot and in general marginalized. Moreover, this image of the party is sustained through additional activism at the regional and local levels to reach out to, connect with and extend the supporter base locally. Here, the AfD also tried to establish alternative security products, including apps (cf. AfD Schleswig Holstein, safemyplace-app), citizen's watch groups and strategies to launch social media protest initiatives. All these activities are of course aligned with anti-establishment rhetoric and the accusation of governmental failure.

Gender and political culture

Although sociocultural policies did not play a significant role in the foundation period of the AfD, gender and society serve as important points of reference within the party's political communication. Since 2013, anti-gender statements such as »Against the gender delusion« *(Gegen den Gender-Wahn)* were published on social media accounts and closely linked to the AfD (Berbuir et al 2015: 165f.). Since then, the party has become part of a complicated European network that brings together fundamentalists from Christian churches and activists from the far right and the masculinism movement. »By addressing the ›gender trouble‹ of modern societies and the loss of the traditional (German) family as a major problem, the AfD refers to a Christian-conservative, anti-equality discourse that we find not only in Germany but also in France (manif de tous) or in eastern European countries« (Berbuir et al. 2015: 167; Siri and Lewandowsky 2015). The image of a German mother, which is closely linked to völkisch narratives, is hereby reiterated (Siri and Lewandowsky 2015). In this context, one important pattern within the AfD's reasoning comes to the fore in the linking of neoliberalism, anti-Muslim resentments and nationalist, *völkische* ideas of race and national identity. As part of this, gender and national identity coalesce to form narratives, such as the »potent but jobless Arab man« that creates an image that inspires fear and the obliteration of the (failing) »German mother«. The latter figure became famous when Frauke Petry demanded that every German woman should bear four children (Siri 2015: 250 f.). This demand was staged and visualized in the 2017 election campaign in form of a poster that showed an image of Petry and her newborn baby alongside the slogan: »And what is your reason to fight for Germany?« A shift also happened in AfD's position in relation to LGBTQI rights. While, on the one hand, the party describes itself as an open and liberal party, with, of course, an affinity to national conservative values, the outlines of its program are anti-LGBTQI. In some speeches, there are even more extreme statements, such as a demand for a »census« of homosexuals (cf. Klages 2015) or the insinuation that queer parenting promotes pedophilia: the keyword for this misrepresentation is »early sexualization« *(Frühsexualisierung)* (cf. TAZ 2016). In 2016, one AfD politician even called, in a state parliament, for the imprisonment of homosexuals.[19] Consequently, the party is a forerunner of homophobia in Germany's party system.

Euroscepticism: The EU as enemy and the politics of no alternative

Euroscepticism is an essential part of the party's identity, and although the importance of this topic is to some extent relativized, it is still an underlying and widely relevant theme. The negative image of the current European Union still serves as a negative point of reference in the party's general line of argumentation. The Eurozone crisis and the connected failures in crisis management on the part the EU and the member states are viewed as the main causes of the damage to democracy, the rule of law, separation of powers and the social market economy (AfD election program, federal state election 2017: 16-17). Moreover, the EU in its current state is considered to have breached the original idea behind it and its founding treaties. Within this context, the party advocates for an exit from the monetary union and the Eurozone, as well as a reintroduction of the national currency (the German mark). The declaration of the government's political path as the »politics of no alternative« (a quote from Chancellor Merkel) is labeled »old-fashioned«, a breach of the law and is contrasted with the image they have created of themselves as a revolutionary, progressive and anti-mainstream force. In accordance and cooperation with other European right-wing populist parties, an alternative concept of the European Union has been introduced: a »Europe of sovereign nations« or »fatherlands«. Here, the party's plebiscitary idea of democracy and fostering of direct democratic procedures are evident. Following the logic of the slogan of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) »take back control«, they have called for a referendum based on the Brexit model (AfD election program, federal state election 2017: 8).

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[19] This episode also took place in the state parliament of Saxony-Anhalt. See: http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/sachsen-anhalt-afd-politiker-homosexuelle-ins-gefaengnis-stecken-1.3019169 (accessed on 10.1.2017).

Voters and Sympathizers of the AfD: Voting Patterns in the 2017 Election

The voter and sympathizer landscape, as well as how it is localized, is complex. The emotional component of the perception of social phenomena and political developments plays a key role and often correlates with fears of a potential social and economic loss of status, feelings of being powerlessness, as well as not being represented by political elites and institutions in a sufficient manner (cf. Survey of the Hans-Böckler Foundation, Working Paper 44, August 2017: 26-47). Up until now, all studies show that the narrative of the dying German »Volk« appeals most to male sympathizers (Berbuir et al. 2015; Giebler and Regel 2017). A recent study on queer voters by de Nève et al. (2017) showed that even though AfD politician Alice Weidel was the only openly homosexual frontrunner in the election, only 2.7 percent of queer voters intended to vote for the AfD. Among lesbian voters it was an even smaller number: 1.2 percent (ibid.).

In the aftermath of the 2017 election the AfD's numbers are stable, even though the party has shown itself to be full of discord, internal struggles and scandals since the day of the election. To understand this situation, we need to take a closer look at the party's voters. Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck, who has analyzed previous elections up to 2017, argues that the electorate of federal and state elections is composed of two groups: »a minority of instrumental issue voters that were drawn to the AfD by its emphasis and positioning on the Eurozone crisis, and a majority of ›late supporters‹ that made their decision close to election day and were moved more by expressive motives, most notably xenophobic sentiments, such as those identified in other European countries, as a main source of support for right-wing populist parties« (Schmitt-Beck 2016: 124). The median AfD voter in the 2017 election is male, older than 30, relatively wealthy and of average educational level. The findings concerning a negative gender trend in outcome for women and LGBTQI people were addressed before; studies have shown a robust effect in all recent elections (Berbuir et al. 2014; Giebler and Regel 2017: 18). In all recent elections, the AfD succeeded in appealing to non-voters. In the 2017 election, this trend progressed, with 1.2 million former non-voters voting for the party. One out of four voters comes from the conservative CDU's electorate. Giebler and Regel, who analyzed sociodemographic data and individual patterns in voter decisions in seven state elections, argue that there is no robust effect of place of residence (such as rural or urban) or poverty/wealth on voter decision. Although the AfD's results vary greatly in the different states, there is no clear geographical pattern or rural/urban difference to be found (Giebler and Regel 2017: 13f.). Undoubtedly, the AfD is not the party of voters in precarious social situations. Still, a higher educational level reduces the likelihood of voting for the party by about 11 percent (ibid.: 17).

The Public Sphere: Communications Patterns, Strategies and Media Relations

Digitalization and the crisis of established news media outlets are global phenomena (Trappel et al. 2015; Meyer 2015). Still, digital change has not penetrated the general awareness of German society. On the one hand, Germans' trust in established media (TV, radio, the written press) is much higher than trust in internet broadcasting (cf. MIS 2015). On the other hand, a discourse of severe criticism of the media has emerged, which predominantly concerns the discourse on refugees and migration (Klöckner 2016). The right-wing camp argues that the established media is covering things up by lying constantly about the harm that has been done to the German people, such as in connection with political decisions and policy developments carried out by the elite. On these occasions, the label »lying press« *(Lügenpresse)* was created as an essential element of their political communication.

Self-victimization and media coverage

Self-victimization, in the sense of being excluded from the established media discourse, has been an important AfD strategy in electoral campaigns since the foundation of the party. The party's representatives often criticize the media for misrepresenting and misinterpreting their political goals or statements. On this point, AfD members make use of staged TV show exits in the middle of political broadcasting formats or interviews. This strategy of using what are often referred to as »walkouts« is accompanied by the use and development of alternative channels of communication and the critique of what is labeled the »state media«, which is accused of lying about the AfD anyway. This specific framing and construction not only denies the predominant, declared role of the media as an independent institution for oversight and a driving force for political opinion formation within democratic societies. Ironically, the party's critique of the media has led to an overwhelming preoccupation among the news media channels with the party and its provocations. Therefore, the coverage of the federal elections and the campaigns was very much focused on the AfD, its representatives and the political issues they have placed on the agenda. As a consequence, the AfD has been an enduring theme in news coverage from the past few years.

Crisis of political journalism

More seriously, we can observe a lack of professional journalism, especially concerning political coverage. The stock character of an informed »specialized journalist« *(Fachjournalist)* has left the stage of established German media in favor of TV moderators and generalist opinion journalists. For example, the TV debate between Chancellor Merkel and Martin Schulz was moderated by four journalists who had not mastered the variety of the fields of politics addressed in their questions.

Therefore, the debate was focused on limited and selected topics. This general development leads to a loss of confidence in the fairness and correctness of political broadcasting among the elites as well as in civic society. It is important to point to the loss of quality in the established media and political news coverage before we look into the realms of digital political communications. Observers tend to correlate a loss of quality in the media to new media formats and digitalization (Puppis et al. 2012: 9ff.). The example of the AfD clearly shows that this correlation does not exist and that the dynamics of the »old« media of TV, printed press and radio have led to a crisis of their own, which predates the emergence of new media (cf. Habermas 1990).

The AfD's social media strategy

As a new party, the AfD makes extensive use of social media to communicate with members and sympathizers (Siri and Lewandowsky 2015). Social media is used to test topics, analyze the party's environment and to create contact with other activist groups, such as fundamental Christians, neo-Nazi and identitarian groups, masculinists, conspiracy theorists and activists in other countries (Siri 2015). The consequent internationalization could well be one of the major differences to older forms of right-wing activism. The AfD (as well as other right-wing parties and forms of activism) is interested in sharing ideas and experiences with other right-wing parties and activist groups around the world. Internally, social media channels work as a testing ground for new ideas and arguments that are later adopted in the organization's communication (ibid.).

It is insufficient to point to digitalization to explain the rise of extreme discourse in the German political landscape. It would be more accurate to say that arguments from the digital sphere move over into the established media and democratic parliaments. This is not only because the right-wing strategy works so well but is also a result of the de-professionalization of the press and the democratic parties' lack of preparation to deal with a new form of provocative political appeal. Since the AfD is overrepresented in media discourse, it would be incorrect to attribute its success to social media echo chambers and filter bubbles. Nevertheless, we can observe crossover effects between social media and the established media through strategic provocative communications, such as insulting members of the parliament on social media, which make their way into the news coverage.

Language and Politics

While right-wing extremist parties link the arguments of historical National Socialism to the AfD directly, the party itself takes a more subtle stance, in line with other moderate right-wing populists throughout Europe, referring to the supposed incompatibility of different cultures and to alleged taboos in a non-liberal society. As we have seen, this difference in emphasis does not discount the finding that the AfD is highly compatible with right-wing voters' attitudes. Instead, the AfD builds a link to a discourse of threatened national identity and »super-alienation« or »foreign infiltration« *(Überfremdung)* that has diffused into the mainstream of German political discourse. As an example, the TV debate between Merkel and Schulz had to engage with the »dangers« of migration for about an hour. Mainstream TV coverage, the famous *Bild* newspaper and even left-wing newspapers reiterate the strong narrative of alienation. Consequently, these views have had a lot of positive feedback in neoconservative and right-wing journals and groups such as Junge Freiheit, Compact or Politically Incorrect.

Relocating the Political Agenda – How to Respond to the AfD Progressively

One huge achievement of the AfD in the year 2017 is the relocation of the political agenda on the right wing. The issue of refugee and migration politics was omnipresent in public and political discourse during the 2017 campaign, and other prominent issues were marginalized. Considering German history and the sensitivity of large parts of German civil society and the media, the strategy of excluding far-right parties had worked quite well until the rise of the AfD. In this party, »softer« members are placed in the limelight, in terms of being ready to give media statements in the established media, and neo-Nazi statements are likely to be considered »individual cases« *(Einzelfälle).* This is how the party uses the breaking of taboos to please their sympathizers and, at the same time, claims that antithetical and contradictory positions and self-descriptions in the party are a sign of openness and tolerance.

The AfD has also challenged the other parties with several subversive and provocative strategies of media communication (Ruhose 2018: 3). This is not only done in social media communication but also through the idiosyncrasy of party members in solely addressing voters and sympathizers, without taking interest in the actual media format or the discussions in which they were taking part. If one can succinctly define the AfD strategy, its slogan could be, »Attack! Move the borders of discourse to the right! Deny and appease!«

This mélange calls for the rethinking of counterstrategies and arguments on the democratic Left, especially concerning the following issues:

- Considering the question of shunning and exclusion, as well as the proper handling of self-inflicted martyrdom and scandalization on the part of AfD politicians, the 2017 election has shown that a strategy of framing AfD sympathizers as Nazis or attempts to shame AfD politicians is not sufficient to counter their electoral successes. It leads, moreover, to a release of unifying power within the right-wing camp and is used for narratives of martyrdom and exculpation (cf. Ruhose 2018: 1). The same dynamic also applies to interactions in parliament. As Fedor Ruhose (2018) argues, this refers to the use of »procedural tricks« in the form of an instrumentalization of parliamentary rules for the given purpose (5). The latter just reinforces the AfD's self-victimization strategy and undermines democratic ideals. Instead, active inclusion provides the best starting point to challenge the AfD by constantly uncovering a lack of arguments and ideas and providing alternatives in return. In this sense, debate can be used to the advantage of progressive parties.

- The situation calls for a more unemotional, impersonal debating culture in public arenas, as well as in parliaments, to undermine the AfD's constant collision course with other parties for the purpose of self-dramatization. The history of the AfD shows that a first necessary step is to engage with the parties' successful process of image-building and the public perception of them as an »alternative«. Many of the AfD's objectives in their program are either inconsistent or immature. Since the AfD party has gone a long way in focusing on its USP, migration policies (Ruhose 2018: 4), challenging them on other and diverse policy fields is crucial. In this sense, social-democratic actors need to focus on setting their own agenda instead of merely reacting to provocations (ibid.: 2,3).

- In this context, gaining a stronger and clearer profile of the programs of the established parties is recommended to foster differentiation. This is even more important since the AfD will take the historically important role as the opposition leader in the Bundestag (ibid.: 2). A visible variety of conceptual solutions in political debates would help to gain more interest in finding suitable alternatives within the moderate political spectrum. This leads to the question of whether continuing with a grand coalition between CDU/CSU and SPD is likely to strengthen the narrative of there being »no alternative«, and therefore only the Right. Even if the grand coalition continues, there is a serious need for differentiation from the social-democratic side, which could be provided through taking distinct social-democratic positions in ministries and internal party discourse, as well as by the differentiation of ministerial positions and party leadership. Particularly on this latter point, a renewal process should be based on open and integrated opportunities for participation.

To counter the AfD's consistent habit of triggering public fears concerning security and public safety, alternative and reliable positive encounters are needed. Agenda cutting, as Ruhose puts it, is not a solution (ibid.: 6). Emancipatory policies concerning gender or migration have to be defended rather than downplayed due to fear of attacks from the Right.

As a result, we'd like to conclude with a »best practice« example from recent German politics, namely from the campaign of the reelected social-democratic Minister-President of Rheinland-Pfalz (Rhineland-Palatinate), Malu Dreyer. During her reelection campaign, Dreyer was attacked for her »refugee-friendly« record by the AfD and also by members of the CDU. In particular, her CDU contender Julia Klöckner tried to bring in the right-wing agenda by talking about burkas and Muslim men, who allegedly refuse to shake women's hands. Instead of getting involved in this discourse of fear and homogeneity, Dreyer chose to take a different path by stressing the positive effects of migration in relation to the living environment of the people of Rhineland-Palatinate. She took a calm and prudent stand in relation to the critique and referenced people's fears by stressing that poor Germans do not have to be afraid about being forgotten and highlighted positive examples of migration. Her counteroffensive against her critics was characterized by a good dose of humor, such as when she asked where and when Klöckner had ever seen a woman wearing a burka in the mostly non-burka-wearing population of Rhineland-Palatinate. On this occasion, Dreyer gained a lot of positive responses but also criticism from the Left for engaging with the theme of German fears of being disadvantaged.

This leads us to the next point on the counterproductivity of dishonesty and concealment in migration discourses. Migration is linked to high monetary investments by the state. The rhetoric of the recurring mantra – spoken by Angela Merkel – »We can do it!« *(Wir schaffen das!)* is insufficient in imparting how the associated challenges will effectively be addressed in terms of policy development. Especially in areas that have been neglected for decades, persuasive efforts need to be made to convince citizens of the importance of international solidarity. The example of Dreyer shows a profound understanding of these mechanisms and the ability to address critical segments of the population without moralizing narratives that may only work in left-wing, urban segments of the population. She instead spoke about real families and did not get involved in a fight over political correctness. Avoiding that, Dreyer focused on her own image of the country. This positive image resonated with the electorate and Dreyer won, despite the increasingly and essentially negative mood toward migration and refugees.

Even though the example is taken from a dispute with the CDU rather than the AfD's communication strategies, it refers to the general sounding board of right-wing populism. Therefore, the example Dreyer provides could serve as a model for social-democratic actors concerning message discipline, objectiveness and the refusal to react to multiple provocations that address fears and insecurity within the electorate. Dreyer's example also shows that an open and content-focused culture of discourse is needed, including dealing in a transparent way with mistakes and the objective costs of policies. To put it in a nutshell: scandalization and moralization should be sidelined to reclaim agenda-setting and interpretative power.[20]

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CONCLUSION

Niklas Ferch and Henri Möllers

COMPARISON OF PAST, PRESENT AND POSSIBLE FUTURE STRATEGIES AGAINST RIGHT-WING POPULISM IN DENMARK, NORWAY, SWEDEN AND GERMANY

Based on the compelling and diverse perspectives on the development of right-wing populism in the Nordic countries of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, as well as in Germany, we would like to go one step further and take a more systematic look at this phenomenon through different country-based studies in order to identify past, present and potential future strategies to combat right-wing populism, with a special emphasis on progressive parties. In doing so, we will make reference to a theoretical framework derived from two contributions to political science scholarship; we and the people involved in this project view these contributions as being of central importance, and they are commonly drawn upon when one analyzes the actions and reactions of established parties to right-wing populist competitors.
To begin and to provide the central conceptual foundations of our work, we will summarize and present the works of Tim Bale et al. (2010) and William M. Downs (2012) in order to consolidate them into a scale of eight ideal-typical strategies, which range from banning and isolation to collaboration with a right-wing populist competitor. While we are aware of the conceptual unorthodoxy here, and the difficulties related to this, including the issue that it is rare to encounter individual types and combinations, we do think that these types provide us with a more fine-grained analytical scheme that also takes different aspects, such as reactions at the policy, polity and political levels, into account. After presenting a summary of our analytical scheme, we will turn to the analysis of individual countries through studies of Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany. This will provide us with a systematic view on past, present and possible future strategies for combating right-wing populist parties. In doing so, we will particularly concentrate on progressive parties; we will not, however, turn a blind eye to center-right competitors, since their behavior provides the context for progressive parties’ positioning as well. First, we will analyze Denmark in relation to the astonishing dynamics in the country’s party landscape and the role that one right-wing competitor has played within this system for at

least the past 17 years. We will then turn to Norway with a case in which a right-wing populist competitor never became stigmatized as a pariah, as was the case in the other Nordic countries. The analysis of Sweden that follows will describe a case, where the enduring status quo evidenced in the reaction to the comparatively new phenomenon of right-wing populism, represented by the Sweden Democrats, appears to have reached its limit. In relation to the German case, we wish to conclude the analytical section at the point where the newly elected government demonstrates the first signs of pursuing strategic reactions to a right-wing populist pariah.

Finally, in the last part of this chapter, we will conclude and discuss our findings without going into a great deal of detail about what should be done. What we can show, however, is that while some strategies have their weaknesses and are hard to maintain and others contain the potential danger of leading to a slippery slope in problematic directions, there still remain other strategies that may provide thought-provoking alternatives.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ESTABLISHED PARTIES' STRATEGIC RESPONSES TO RIGHT-WING POPULIST PARTIES

As a leitmotif for this volume, the editors have chosen two particular studies that identify the strategic responses of social-democratic and/or progressive parties to right-wing populist parties (Bale et al. 2010; Downs 2012). These studies will be presented in the following section and will provide a framework for the analysis of strategies to combat electorally successful right-wing populist parties, strategies which are applied by established parties in general and social-democratic parties in particular, as indicated in the country studies presented here.

In a journal article published in *Political Studies* in 2010, Tim Bale, Christoffer Green-Pedersen, André Krouwel, Kurt Richard Luther and Nick Sitter explore social-democratic parties' strategic options for responding to populist, radical right-wing parties in Western Europe. In their comparative analysis of developments in Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway, they identify three major strategies that social democrats can pursue to combat these extremist parties: *hold, defuse* and *adopt* (Bale et al. 2010). In theory, these strategies are applied in stages: The *hold* strategy is understood by the authors as the default strategy for any social-democratic party, in which it sticks to its guns, holds on to its principles and in this way tries to win the argument (Bale et al. 2010: 412). The *defuse* strategy is only applied when a new issue raised by an extremist party is perceived to be a serious electoral threat to the social-democratic party in question; in this case, the social-democratic party will try to lessen the impact of the issue(s) the extremist party raises by talking about the issues that it “owns” instead (ibid.). Finally, the *adopt* strategy is only expected to be undertaken by a social-democratic party if the extremist party contributes toward a center-right party taking office (Bale et al. 2010: 414). In this case, and only then, a social-democratic party can radically change its position and adopt the position of the right-wing extremist competitor, following an »if you can’t beat them, join them« logic (Bale et al. 2010: 413).

The authors’ empirical analysis, however, resulted in mixed evidence: most parties would end up »mixing and matching […] in the hope that they can stay competitive without surrendering too many of their values and too much of their credibility« (Bale et al. 2010: 423). Apart from individual values and credibility, Bale et al. state that the choice of a strategy (or even multiple strategies pursued at the same time) was furthermore influenced by: the strategy of the major center-right party (usually as the main competitor of a major social-democratic party in Western Europe); the level of internal consensus on the strategy within the social-democratic party; and the strategy (or strategies) of the left, liberal and green parties with whom the social-democratic party competes or eventually attempts to form a coalition (Bale et al. 2010: 414, 421). Ultimately, political leadership and general preconditions related to polity (such as the frequency of minority governments in the Nordics) are also said to play a role in social democracy’s search for an appropriate strategy to deal with a right-wing extremist competitor (Bale et al. 2010: 420).

In a similar vein, William M. Downs, in his 2012 monograph on political extremism in democracy, proposes a framework for classifying the responses of mainstream parties to threats from – what he calls – »pariah parties« (Downs 2012). In total, he maps out four strategies on a matrix along two axes: »tolerance of intolerance« and »extent of strategic engagement« (Downs 2012: 31). If a mainstream party is tolerant of the intolerant pariah party, but remains disengaged from it, Downs calls this the »do-nothing approach« of *ignoring* pariah parties (ibid.). Where mainstream parties not only refuse to engage with the pariah, but more aggressive, »militant« strategies are adopted, Downs speaks of an *isolation* or even a *banning* strategy. However, mainstream parties might also strategically engage with extremist parties. Where such an engagement is paired with militancy, policy *co-option* is a possible outcome. If, though, strategic engagement and tolerance coincide, mainstream parties might even begin to *collaborate* at the electoral, legislative or executive levels (Downs 2012: 31, 46).

As Downs (2012: 47 48) notes, the decision to pursue one of these strategies also generates »important propositions about political and strategic risk« for both the particular party and the democracy itself. Nevertheless, the strategies outlined by Downs are not limited to progressive parties but the »mainstream political establishment in a given polity« (Downs 2012: 30) in general.

At first sight, the strategies identified by Bale et al. (2010), on the one hand, and Downs (2012), on the other, might appear to overlap to some degree. In general terms, we can state that the framework outlined by Bale et al. (2010) focuses more on policies, while Downs (2012) puts an emphasis on politics and the overall polity in which both policies and politics take place. Nevertheless, during the writing of this volume and the associated workshops led by the authors, we recognized the sometimes subtle but important nuances that distinguish the strategies from each other. In what follows, we summarize each of the strategies outlined in this section in more detail and arrange them on a continuum from *banning* to *collaboration* in the manner of Weberian ideal types; these will serve as points of reference for the subsequent discussion and the concluding chapter of the volume.

Ban

Within William M. Downs' (2012) framework, *banning* is the most militant ideal-typical strategy for attacking populism (Downs 2012: 34). The strategy comprises all »legal attempts to isolate, restrict, repress, and even ban the offending pariah« (Downs 2012: 31) and can occur in manifold ways. However, the main idea is »to change the rules of the game« (Downs 2012: 34). The most common instruments are, on the one hand, imposing legal restrictions on expression, assembly and financing and, on the other, altering the electoral threshold and other legal rules connected to a party's participation in elections or parliament. The first may also comprise legal restrictions on party names, symbols, slogans, music, publications and assembly (Downs 2012: 37), while the latter may include issues related to ballot access, eligibility for state campaign funding, deposit requirements and/or entitlement to media time (Downs 2012: 35). An actual party ban, however, is only considered to be the »last card« (Downs 2012: 38), since it violates the right to associate freely in political parties and freedom of expression (ibid.). As »the most intolerant disengagement strategy« (Downs 2012: 38), banning an extremist party can be highly dangerous. Apart from the idea of the ban as posing a threat to democracy itself, legal prosecution to silence an already electorally successful extremist party can also backfire and further strengthen support for the pariah – especially if the effort to ban the party fails (Downs 2012: 43).

Isolate

If the attempts to isolate or restrict an extremist party are merely political, the *isolation* strategy is applied.[20] Such political isolation can manifest itself both in formal or informal cooperation before elections (for example, through electoral cartels or the coordinated construction of party lists) or in a cordon sanitaire, especially in processes of post-election government formation when the mainstream parties come together in the interests of broad anti-extremist »blocking« or »grand« coalitions (Downs 2012: 36). In contrast to the *banning* strategy, the *isolation* strategy enables »clean hands« to prevail (Downs 2012: 31), since »anti-pariah pacts« can be seen as »a clear democratic front in opposition to extremism« (Downs 2012: 36). Nevertheless, a cordon sanitaire is said to be »put to the greatest test […] [w]hen election results fail to produce a single-party majority and a pariah party holds the balance of power« (ibid.), as is now often the case in fragmented, multi-party parliaments.

Hold

Regardless of the political context, the »default« strategy of a progressive, social-democratic mainstream party is said to be one in which the party can »hold its position« and »maintain its present strategy for electoral competition« (Bale et al. 2010: 412 13), despite the challenges it faces from a right-wing populist challenger. The ideal-typical *hold* strategy entails a social-democratic party, based on its historical and ideological principles, »stick[ing] to its guns, hold[ing] on to its principles and tr[ying] to win the argument« (Bale et al. 2010: 412) by reinforcing its policy position and communicating this position more clearly to its core electorate (Bale et al. 2010: 413). Therefore, the hold strategy stresses that progressive parties and politicians should believe »in their power, to persuade voters, to shape their preferences rather than accommodating them by« (ibid.). This obviously provokes no internal disunity, nor does it require any innovation; thus, given the mainstream parties' inertia, it can be understood as a progressive party's »easiest initial response« (Bale et al. 2010: 422) to right-wing extremism. However, the application of the *hold* strategy can also be difficult or even risky, since it entails progressive parties openly promoting tolerance of migration and multiculturalism in an age of media-fueled concerns about terrorism, crime and the abuse of welfare (cf. Bale et al. 2010: 413).

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[21] It is worth mentioning here that, after some debate in an authors' workshop in Copenhagen in late 2017, we decided to treat Downs' (2012: 34ff.) ban/isolate strategy as two discrete strategies: isolation thus describes a strategy that »only« pursues political ostracism, a »cordon sanitaire« and the broad anti-extremist »blocking« of the major mainstream parties (Downs 2012: 36), while banning is reserved for legal restrictions, the altering of electoral rules and an actual party ban, which is democracy's »last card« (Downs 2012: 38).

Ignore

Due to the current media environment, ignoring right-wing populist challengers may also be a strategy progressive parties consider so as to keep their hands clean (Downs 2012: 32). This ostrich-like »do-nothing approach« (Downs 2012: 31) can be understood as the strategic path of »least resistance« (Downs 2012: 32) and follows an »ignore it, and it will go away« logic. The rationale here is to withhold from an offending extremist party the attention it craves (ibid.) in the hope that the »deafening silence« will suffocate the right-wing populist party if it is denied the oxygen of publicity that it needs to flourish (ibid.). Again, this strategy also entails considerable risks, since ignoring an electorally successful party also always means ignoring the underlying policy concerns it is voicing (Downs 2012: 32). Thus, the ignore strategy can also be read as a strategic »dereliction of democratic duties« (Downs 2012: 33) that might further jeopardize voters' fidelity to the political establishment (cf. Downs 2012: 32).

Defuse

As opposed to the *ignore* strategy, political actions that aim to *defuse* the competition posed by right-wing populists in elections are proactive, and they can be an »effective pre-emptive strategy« (Bale et al. 2010: 422). Here, the progressive parties seek to decrease the salience and relevance of the issues the right-wing challengers raise by talking about other issues, which in the best scenario are those that they believe themselves to »own« (Bale et al. 2010: 412). The goal here is to reset the political agenda, especially on socioeconomic issues, while simultaneously avoiding any engagement in a debate with the other parties about an issue that is »owned« by the right-wing populists (Bale et al. 2010: 413). A prime example of this would be a consensus on a »conspiracy of silence« over immigration and integration policy among the major mainstream parties (ibid.). Notwithstanding this consensus, the strategy may lead to an obvious problem, namely that the other parties may not want to follow agenda-setting initiatives championed by the Left; furthermore, the neglect of issues raised or emphasized by right-wing competitors might lead to the very same problem that has already been mentioned in relation to the *ignore* strategy, namely that it is highly difficult for competing parties to ignore the media and the »real-life concerns of voters« (Bale et al. 2010: 413) in relation to a topic as salient as immigration.

Co-opt

Once the mainstream parties have reached this point, they might seek to *co-opt* the policy position of the right-wing populists to »woo back those voters who drifted to the fringe to voice their protest« (Downs 2012: 44). In this case, »the political establishment pulls its head of the figurative sand, engages the pariah directly on the issue fueling its electoral success, and tries to aggressively combat the threatening party« (Downs 2012: 31) by recapturing the policy space the mainstream parties had previously abandoned, before they moved to the center and thereby left a vacuum at both the extreme left and the extreme right of the political spectrum (Downs 2012: 44). In concrete terms, mainstream parties that co-opt right-wing populist policy positions adjust their own positions »only enough […] to persuade extremist rank and file […] that the democratic establishment is serious about addressing core societal concerns« (ibid.). This rationale results in efforts »to outbid the extremes« (Downs 2012: 45) in party campaign manifestos, campaign rhetoric and coalition negotiations (ibid.). Without a doubt, this strategy of combating right-wing populism and extremism also involves serious risks. First of all, such a shift in both policy position and rhetoric might venture too far from the center and the »average« voter, and thus cost the party its core constituents (Downs 2012: 45). Second, such a shift could also cause long-lasting changes to both the party's policy agenda and the relative placement of all parties in the given system (ibid.).

Adopt

The ideal-typical *adopt* strategy, which Bale et al. (2010: 413 14) identify as being similar to the *co-opt* strategy described by Downs, is even more far-reaching in our understanding, however. In their conceptualization, mainstream parties that follow the *adopt* strategy not only engage their right-wing competitor on an issue the latter »owns«, but also simply adopt their position (Bale et al. 2010: 413). Following an »if you can't beat them, join them« logic, the mainstream party then directs all its attention toward maximizing votes, giving less priority to policies as such (ibid.). An example of this, which is again related to the immigration debate, would be to close down the space for the issue within the authoritarian-libertarian context and simply argue that migration must be limited and multiculturalism tempered, in order to gain as many voters as possible (ibid.). Of course, this strategy, if employed within the context of a progressive mainstream party, would be connected to a substantial loss of credibility, voters and political capital (cf. Bale et al. 2010: 422) and is highly likely to trigger internal dissent (ibid.). Finally, there is also a risk that the strategy could fail completely, since the »original« right-wing populist or extremist parties already by definition »own« these issues and positions, and voters tend to vote for the party that originally advocated for them (Bale et al. 2010: 414).

Collaborate

Finally, mainstream parties can pursue a *collaboration* strategy through »constructive engagement« with a right-wing populist party (Downs 2012: 46). This engagement can then lead to collaboration in the electoral, legislative and/or executive arenas (ibid.). It can take the form of formal or tacit agreements or joint decisions not to present competing lists, and even the establishment of cartels on a common list in certain constituencies prior to the election or of coordinated support after the election. The latter is the most recognizable case of collaboration; mainstream parties to the right of the center, in particular, may buy the support of a right-wing pariah party to gain office (ibid.). However, this strategy is ambivalent in its allegiances. As Downs states (2012: 31), such collaboration does not necessarily mean the main party is in agreement with any of the right-wing populist party's positions at all. Instead, it is also possible that such collaboration stems from a »strategic calculus that with collaboration comes responsibility which [...] can induce moderation« (Downs 2012: 32), meaning that (former) pariah parties can be pressured to tone down their radicalness or forced to prove how inept they are when in office (Downs 2012: 46). From the point of view of democracy theory, collaboration with an electorally successful right-wing populist could also »reflect an unwillingness to ignore the will of the electorate« (Downs 2012: 31). Whatever the actual strategic or ideological considerations that are factored into the mainstream party's collaboration with the right-wing pariah, such engagement »entails significant drama for the party system and for the democracy« (Downs 2012: 46) as a whole. To the electorate, this might look as if the democratic mainstream has »sold out its ideological soul to the exigencies of gaining power« (Downs 2012: 47).

CHARACTERIZING PAST, PRESENT AND POTENTIAL FUTURE STRATEGIES IN DENMARK, NORWAY, SWEDEN AND GERMANY

Table 5 provides an overview of the strategies outlined in the previous sections. For the remainder of the chapter, these will serve as points of reference in the form of ideal types. In the next part of the chapter, we attempt to summarize briefly and compare past, present and future strategies to combat right-wing populism in Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Germany, as they are traced and analyzed in detail in the case studies contained in this volume.

Denmark: A complete continuum from isolation to co-optation and collaboration

In her contribution to this volume, Susi Meret highlights why – among the countries that are analyzed and compared here – Denmark serves as the case that demonstrates

TABLE 5: *MAINSTREAM PARTIES' RESPONSES TO RIGHT-WING POPULIST PARTIES*

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION
ban	• legal attempts to isolate, restrict, repress, and even ban offending RWPPs • altering the »rules of the game«: e.g. thresholds and other electoral rules; legal restrictions on symbols, voice, assembly and financing; party ban as »last card«
isolate	• political quarantine/cordon sanitaire • broad anti-extremist »blocking« or grand coalitions
hold	• »stick to one's guns«, hold on to own principles to win the argument • hold own position and maintain original principled strategy for electoral competition • believe in own power to persuade voters and to shape their preferences
ignore	• »do-nothing approach« of ignoring RWPPs • attempt to not to grant RWPPs the attention they seek (»deafening silence«) • »ignore it, and it will go away« logic
defuse	• lessen the impact of the RWPPs issue by talking »own« issues • »reset« the political agenda • avoid engaging in debate over RWPPs issues (e.g. »conspiracy of silence« on immigration issues)
co-opt	• engage RWPPs directly on the issue(s) fuelling their electoral success by co-optation of their position(s) • recapturing the policy space lost by shift to the middle
adopt	• change own position/strategy/rhetoric and comprehensively adopt that of the RWPP • »if you can't beat them, join them« logic
collaborate	• electoral, legislative, and/or executive collaboration • formal or tacit agreements, coordinating support, establish cartels on a common list, buy the support of a RWPP to gain office

Source: Bale et al. (2010); Downs (2012) – with modifications.

right-wing populism's furthest evolution from its origins as a tax-protest movement in the early 1970s to having now consolidated itself as one of the most electorally successful parties in Denmark's current political landscape: the Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF). At the moment, this right-wing populist party is propping up a center-right minority government led by the Liberals (Venstre, V) for the sixth time since 2001. The Danish mainstream parties have applied most of the strategies outlined earlier to deal with the DF since the party entered the Danish Parliament for the first time in 1998. As Meret (p. 25) states, »the strategies have shifted from isolation to accommodation, collaboration and co-optation«. In her chapter, she traces how the DF's predecessor, the Progress Party (Fremskridtspartiet, Z), was isolated by the mainstream parties because of its anti-immigration and anti-Islam positions as early as the 1980s (ibid.). Even though anti-immigration positions already existed at this point within society, and also within some of the mainstream parties (including the Social Democrats [Socialdemokratiet, A]), Meret (p. 25f) shows that for some Social Democratic mayors of the suburbs of the largest Danish cities, the center-right government showed no interest in engaging with these positions and, instead, most likely due to coalition-based constraints, *ignored* them. Later, when the DF entered the Parliament, the Social Democratic Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen denied that the DF parliamentarians had the requisite maturity to be members of parliament in his opening address (see p. 17). This hostile verbal attack can be seen as a prime example of what Downs (2012: 36) calls the »cordon sanitaire«, part of the *isolation* strategy, which hints at an at least moral anti-extremist blocking of the right-wing »intruders« into parliament on the part of the mainstream parties. However, as the DF established itself in Danish politics and the party system became more fragmented during the 1990s, the party managed to proactively put itself into the mix for the political dynamics of government formation after its success in the 2001 election, while it simultaneously increased the salience of its anti-immigration positions. At this point, at the turn of the century, the mainstream parties in Denmark started to pursue diverging strategies concerning how to react to the increasing success and salience of the Danish People's Party. As Meret shows, the time was ripe for the major center-right party, Venstre, to accept the DF's offer to prop up a center-right minority government, which, as Meret (p. 25) states, »contributed toward legitimizing the DF's positions and politics«. Meret (p. 18) therefore observes significant changes in the area of »a muscular, identity-based politics, which considers ethnic and religious diversity to be a growing threat to social cohesion, Danish national culture and security« as early as the first few years of this collaboration between Venstre and the Conservatives (Det Konservative Folkeparti, KF) and the DF. Since this V–KF minority government depended on the DF's legislative support in parliament, the governing parties not only agreed on parliamentary collaboration, but furthermore adopted some of DF's major positions to ensure the DF's continuing support. Apparently, this mix of a joint *adopt* and *collaborate* strategy was particularly electorally successful for Venstre, since this specific mode of governance, enabled by DF's support for a Venstre-led minority government, ensured that the party could govern for most of the period since the turn of the century (from 2001 to 2011, and again since 2015).

In the first years of this collaboration, the opposition parties of the left and center pursued strategies with the intention of *holding* on to their principles and tried to *defuse* the new challenge posed by the center- and far right. In this regard, Meret (p. 26) points to the role played by both the Social Democrats and the New Alliance (Ny Alliance, Y) in trying to limit the salience of the anti-immigration issues raised by the DF by setting the agenda for other issues. In 2011, this *defuse* strategy, as applied by the leftist bloc, proved successful, and Helle Thorning-Schmidt (a Social Democrat) was able to form a minority government with the Radical Left (Radikale Venstre, RV) and the Socialist People's Party (Socialistisk Folkeparti, SF). Though issues pertaining to immigration and integration usually play a prominent role in Danish politics, during this election campaign the center-left parties managed to defuse these issues and framed the debate around labor-market reforms and socioeconomic development instead. However, Thorning-Schmidt's minority government remained split on issues pertaining to economic and labor-market reform, resulting in the withdrawal of SF in early 2014 and eventually in the party's defeat in the 2015 election. However, even before the election (and also before the peak of the refugee crisis in summer 2015), the Danish Social Democrats changed their strategy from *defuse* to *co-opt*, if not even to *adopt*.

As Meret demonstrates, the Social Democrats launched a campaign with a strong, nationalist workfare emphasis (»Kommer du til Danmark, skal du arbejde« [»If you come to Denmark, you have to work«]) and tightened immigration and asylum policies when they were still in office. The goal of this strategic change was obvious: to win back typical working-class voters lost to the DF by stressing a triad of the nation, the people and the welfare state. By doing so, the Social Democrats competed directly with the Danish People's Party, but on an issue that the DF already owned (see p. 27). As Bale et al. (2010: 414) predict, this is a typical pitfall of the *adopt* strategy: voters tend to vote for the »original« owner of an issue, no matter how hard other parties try to recapture a certain political space.

Defeat in the 2015 election also saw Helle Thorning-Schmidt's resignation. Her successor as leader of the Social Democrats, Mette Frederiksen, is now pushing forward the Social Democrats' shift to the right. At the same time, Venstre and the Conservatives have also, to a great extent, *adopted* the Danish People's Party's positions on immigration, asylum and integration. This is not a surprise, given that the incumbent Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen (V) has for almost three years now governed with a mandate of only 19.5%, and is therefore heavily reliant on the DF's support (keep in mind that in the 2015 election the DF even surpassed Venstre with 21.2% of the votes, but the party decided not to try to form a minority government on its own).

Across the political spectrum in Denmark, positions that were formerly exclusively taken by the Danish People's Party are nowadays »tamed«, to refer back to Poul Nyrup Rasmussen's famous speech, in the Parliament. Within less than thirty years, Danish mainstream parties to the right *and* left of the center have moved away from *hold* and *defuse* strategies for dealing with radical right-wing populism toward *adopt* and *collaborate* ones. Apparently, the *adopt* strategy alone, which is at the moment being pursued by the Social Democrats, is not overwhelmingly successful in terms of election results. The Liberal party Venstre's *adopt* and *collaborate* strategy, which has been applied since 2001, has kept the party in office for most of the time since the Danish People's Party offered to prop up a Venstre-led minority government. However, this comes at a high price for Venstre. Today, the party and its coalition partner(s) have largely acceded to the right-wing populists' demands to buy their parliamentary support. This collaboration also comes at a high price for Danish democracy; Danish politics have through the years contributed to the mainstreaming of the populist right-wing exclusionary and discriminatory positions. The current political climate has made counterstrategies less available and more difficult, as Susi Meret shows in her contribution.

Norway: The center-right shift from isolation to collaboration and progressive co-opting while holding

In his study of Norway, Ketil Raknes illustrates how the Norwegian right-wing populist party, the Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet, FrP), is something of a paradox in its position as an established anti-establishment party, with a far deeper and diverse program underpinning it than most of its European, single-issue sister parties. Raknes additionally shows how the FrP can be regarded as a »petro-populist« special case in which the absence of historically established right-wing extremist roots, combined with a deeply anchored liberal tax-revolt populism, provided a »reputational shield« (Ivarsflaten 2006), which allowed it to move from a systematic and discursive radicalism, albeit a modern one, into government participation. The successful application of a »one foot in, one foot out« strategy in a government coalition served to counter the hopes of both conservatives (and progressives) that *collaboration* and the assigning of responsibility to right-wing populist parties in government would dispel their anti-establishment and populist attraction. As Raknes points out, an effective cordon sanitaire such as the *isolation* strategy has never been applied at the local level against the FrP in Norway by other political parties since the 1980s, which, in a way, contrasts with the early cases of Sweden and Germany (see p. 38). Still, at the national level, the Conservative Party, Høyre, attempted to *isolate* the FrP and to withstand formal or informal *collaboration,* thereby trying to keep a potentially politically concurring competitor out of the game. The progressive parties excluded the FrP from collaboration as well, which led to what was essentially an *isolation* strategy against the FrP at the national level, even if it wasn't coordinated.

This situation gradually changed with the steady growth of the FrP into a pivotal party, which caused strategic dilemmas for both the Conservative and the Labour Parties. Both partially *co-opted* the FrP's policy positions, above all in relation to immigration policy. Here, when leading two consecutive red–green coalition governments from 2005 to 2013, the Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet, AP) attempted to neutralize the FrP's agenda by *co-opting* some of their stricter immigration policies. At the same time, they *defused* the immigration issue by more or less stopping it from being politicized during electoral campaigns, *held* on to their own rhetoric, using frameworks and policy positions for many policy fields, while also not engaging in the weakening of economic policy on one of the central issues in Norwegian politics: the Oil Fund's role in the national economy. One of the AP's core counterstrategies to combat the FrP and *defuse* the immigration issue was, particularly, to *hold* on to their positions in this area, according to Ketil Raknes (see p. 43). They pointed out that the FrP's demand for the extensive use of Oil Fund money for both tax cuts and (chauvinist) welfare expansion endangered the economic stability of the Norwegian economy and the sustainability of the fund as such. Turning the focus away from the immigration issue toward the economic arena appears to have been a reasonable strategy to *defuse* the FrP, but it could turn out to be a blunt instrument in a situation when the overall economic situation is sufficiently stable and the discourse on immigration policy has gained an economic twist. Both of these situations applied in Norway. First, the economy was performing very well, which reduced the salience of the economic issue. Consequently, the less sustainable use of Oil Fund money by the conservative–right-wing populist governments of Erna Solberg did not lead to considerable economic turmoil or the collapse of the Fund as such, thereby essentially neutralizing the AP's defuse strategy. In addition, the framing of immigration as not just a »moral« but also as an economic issue by the FrP further weakened the AP's defuse strategy, both in office and in opposition. Therefore, Raknes argues that neither *adoption* nor *defuse* strategies are viable or credible options for progressive parties. He argues for a credible reframing (co-option) of the debate on immigration and integration »on their own terms. They need to have credible solutions to the dilemmas of multiculturalism and increased immigration« (see p. 46).

This partial *co-option* strategy, pursued by the AP, was thwarted when the Conservative Party, who were already turning away from their *isolation* strategy and were *co-opting* several policy positions in opposition, decided to form a coalition government with the FrP in the two subsequent consecutive legislative periods. Apart from the strategic considerations of gaining power, a major idea behind the involvement of an essentially anti-establishment party in a coalition government with Høyre may have been to »tame the shrew«, as Raknes puts it (p. 40). This strategy of »hostile collaboration« to reduce the credibility of the anti-establishment discourse did not turn out to be very successful, as the election results after the first four years in power revealed. Despite minor losses, the FrP was not only able to maintain its electoral support to some degree but to expand its role in the follow-up to the conservative–right-wing coalition government that ran from 2017/18. In this expanded relationship, *collaboration* was augmented by allocating to the FrP, in addition to the central post of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Justice, Public Security and Immigration, which was also created for the party. While the first ministerial post already played into the FrP's unique policy agenda that combines a slim state with an expanded welfare agenda in Erna Solberg's initial cabinet, effectively counteracting progressive *defuse* strategies, the second has the potential to become a command post for extensive, right-wing, populist agenda-setting and has provided everything that is needed for the expansion of polarizing cultural discourses.

Raknes shows that the installment of Sylvie Listhaug as the Minister of Justice, Public Security and Immigration did indeed put the FrP at the forefront of establishing a genuinely right-wing populist discourse and weakening a political culture which, despite the usual antagonistic parliamentary conflicts between the government and the opposition, was characterized by a high degree of consensus (see p. 39). Furthermore, in setting up a right-wing populist and fundamentally polarizing discourse from the position of government, Sylvie Listhaug was granted a legitimacy that was not just dangerous but also strategically negative for all the other parties. Above all, the AP in its very composition, since it is still the largest catch-all party, does have a strategic interest in pursuing less polarization in political agenda-setting.

For this reason, the AP and other parties further away from the center, all the way to the leftist opposition, maintained decency in political discourse, which became the cornerstone of their call to unsettle Sylvie Listhaug from her position as minister. Sticking to the *hold* position in terms of sustaining civil discourse, they argued for the need to achieve an appropriate non-populist framing of integration, especially for the minister who was responsible for this area.

The success of this strategy, and the potential strategic win made possible by a favorably progressive discursive environment, highlight Raknes's sense of the importance for progressives to set up their own frameworks and – despite *adopting* and *co-opting* some of the FrP's positions – to *hold* onto and enforce progressive and nonpolarizing standards of discourse in order to lessen the structural impact of right-wing populist rhetoric (see p. 41). Furthermore, it shows that the »if you can't beat them, join them« logic does not apply to Norwegian progressives in the archetypical sense. Nonetheless, the Norwegian case shows, in general, that strategies to both *ban* or *isolate* the populists were not evident and that strategies to *defuse* and *ignore* them were present for a long time in national politics and had limited, if not adverse, effects. At the moment, strategies of *co-option* take up a considerable share of progressives' counter-strategies, even though they are actively trying to defend the *hold* position – when it comes to the strategic value of sufficient and appropriate discourse and language in some policy fields – and are refraining from adapting anti-humanist and nativist frameworks. This might prove to be a point of distinction from the main conservative competitor, which went far beyond this form of engagement to indulge in open *collaboration* with the populists, which apparently works neither for the conservatives nor the progressives.

Sweden: Long-term coordinated isolation and the first signs of its dissolution

In her case study on Sweden, Anna-Lena Lodenius expertly depicts the relatively late but rapid development of the main right-wing populist competitor – the Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna, SD) – from an overtly neo-Nazi party into a right-wing populist party who were installed in the Swedish parliament in 2010 (with 5.7% of the vote), as well as their subsequent growth (gaining 12.9% of the vote in 2014) to become the pivotal party between the center-right and center-left party blocs. It is due to the SD's past that all the established parties from both blocs were able to depict the party as separate and extreme for a long time, effectively denying them a »reputational shield« (Ivarsflaten 2006). In clear connection to this, the dominant strategy of all parties to combat the SD has been a coordinated cordon sanitaire in order to isolate the SD, distancing them from having any decisive influence on decision-making in the national parliament.

In a governmental system where, due to negative parliamentarism, minority governments are the usual form of government, and where neither one bloc nor the other has a majority, a pivotal party is able to unsettle the government by threatening to vote with the opposition against proposals such as the governmental budget, even though the opposition does not want to destabilize the government through the votes of the pivotal party. In the case of Sweden, the center-right and center-left blocs would not let the SD decide who could form the government, so they *coordinated* their *isolation* strategy in a non-formal and non-binding December Agreement reached in 2014, which applied for the subsequent legislative periods until 2022 and attempted to distance the right-wing populist competitor from power. This was in addition to the already established and – at least for a somewhat consensus-based political work culture – atypical coordinated isolation of the SD in parliamentary affairs and committee work, in cases where it touched upon the central issues raised by the SD, such as migration and immigration. Despite the December Agreement not being in place for long, as it was unilaterally revoked by the Christian Democrats, *isolation* is still effectively the dominant strategy adopted by all established parties to combat the SD. The case of Anna Kinberg Batra's resignation as party leader in 2017, following subtle attempts to establish more open forms of exchange between her party and the SD, show that within the party establishment and the liberal-conservative electorate, continued isolation is seen as the best way of dealing with the right-wing competitor. But the fact that a narrow majority of liberal-conservative delegates was in favor of some form of collaboration nonetheless shows that containment through isolation is gradually starting to be challenged within the party (see p. 58).

The continued strategy of *isolation,* according to Lodenius, has had the problematic effect that politicians from all camps have become more sensitive about the words they use within the context of immigration (see p. 68). This had positive effects in terms of the correct use of non-discriminatory language, although it might have led to a negation of the topic as such and the lacking application of own positive framings. Consequently, voices raising the issue of immigration were unsuccessfully »silenced« in the policy field related *ignore* strategy, and the SD managed to steadily increase the salience of the issue over a period of time, which contributed, at the height of recent so called Refugee Crisis, to the steady growth in the party's standing in the polls. According to Lodenius, in addition to this, these developments particularly affected the progressive parties, as huge numbers of the working-class segments of the population, who were former closely affiliated with their parties, turned their back on them and voted for the right-wing populist party, which was, moreover, able to establish strongholds in formerly »red« areas (see p. 54).

Though they did not officially give in to the right-wing populist cause, blaming it directly on failed solidarity with the refugees in Europe and indirectly on restrictive neighboring countries (such as Denmark), the Social Democratic Party and their coalition partner the Green Party announced a temporary departure from a liberal migration, asylum and border-control policy in 2015 and *co-opted* more restrictive policies in these policy fields, as some of the smaller center-right parties also did, since they were part of yet another agreement to keep the SD from exercising its power in these policy fields.[22]

Taking a look at this year's election, in her essay Lodenius gives detailed recommendations to progressives. On the one hand, she finds it advisable to maintain the strategy of *isolation* in relation to the SD when it comes to xenophobia, anti-feminism and nationalism, but, on the other hand, she recommends *defusing* the salience of the issue of immigration by focusing on socioeconomic and welfare issues, in collaboration with the trade unions, while simultaneously engaging in honest and personal face-to-face dialogue on the migration and integration issue with voters from the working classes (see p. 64). She also warns progressives against adopting nationalistic and ethnocentric approaches, since these are bound to lose and are outdated in an increasingly mobile and global world. She instead suggests holding onto progressive ideas of equality by stressing the importance of the UN Declaration of Human Rights as »the common ground« of all people living in Sweden, thereby actively preventing the country from sliding toward nationalistic and intrinsically exclusionary questions of »Swedishness« in the future (see p. 69).

Finally, there is reason to conclude that Sweden evidences the failure of a comprehensively coordinated *isolation* strategy. One reason for this might be the ways in which individual center-right parties have flirted with the right-wing populist competitor. Another reason for this might be that the partial *co-option* of the populists' agenda has destroyed the need for the legitimacy of a solid and coordinated agreement. Another more profound reason might be that strong coordination between the established parties creates the picture of an »establishment cartel«, a complete gift for an anti-establishment party like the SD. This situation might even strengthen the populists' loud claims to have agenda-setting power, in addition to their claim to provide the »only alternative«. The numerous *co-opting strategies* of nearly every established party (the Left Party exempted) in several policy fields can be read as a direct consequence of this strengthened, agenda-setting power, and hence a failure of isolation. To what extent the recommended defuse (with partial co-option) strategy serves the case at hand remains to be seen. Skepticism is at least needed when it comes to the focus on socioeconomic issues as a partial *defuse* strategy, since right-wing populist parties have the gift of both welfare-state nostalgia and easily applicable welfare chauvinism, which may backfire on progressives if there is not a genuine and inclusionary framework on migration and integration policy that is actually able to win people over. Progressives who turn to *co-option*, and hence exclusionary policies, in

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22 The most recent announcements from the Social Democratic Party in the context of this year's election, which call for prolonging restrictions and even their escalation, indicate that the Social Democratic Party has turned to the co-option strategy in these policy fields. Additionally, the recent cooperation between the liberal-conservative party and the SD in the Justice Committee, on the issue of penalties for public begging, are the first signs of collaboration.

this field may encounter difficulties in presenting themselves as convincing and non-contradictory actors. And if this does not work, there is then the risk of infecting even progressive, socioeconomic policies with discourses of welfare chauvinism. As a result, Sweden currently finds itself at a crossroads where, in one direction, the continuation of policies of *isolation* appears more and more unlikely and, in the other, the dangerous *adoption* of right-wing policies by progressives, and/or even *collaboration* between the liberal conservatives and the SD, is not impossible.

Germany: The first signs of isolation are undermined by defuse and co-opt strategies

Germany is in many respects a different case to the three Nordic countries that have been discussed thus far. While Germany has had quite a few radical right-wing, neo-fascist parties over the decades, they have always failed to clear the 5% threshold needed to gain a seat in the national parliament, the Bundestag. It was only in the most recent general election of autumn 2017 that the Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland, AfD) – founded in 2013 as a neoliberal, Eurosceptic party and having remarkably quickly become a right-wing populist party – managed to surpass this threshold with a striking 12.6% of the vote. Before this, the AfD had entered one parliament after the other at the German state level, attracting a great deal of attention from the media and polarizing political debate among the German public. With its emergence and sudden electoral success, the AfD radically changed the German party-political landscape, turning the parliament(s) into a six-party system and, consequently, making coalition formation more and more complicated within a polity and a political culture characterized by stable, highly formalized governmental coalitions.

In contrast to the case studies on Denmark, Sweden and Norway, the analysis of the German mainstream parties' strategies for dealing with the new, right-wing populist Alternative for Germany can only make observations over a period of five years. Nevertheless, the chapter by Madeleine Myatt and Jasmin Siri identifies several acts of strategic (re)positioning within the German mainstream parties, both before and after the emergence of the AfD. The starting point for this story is the gradual shift of both the Conservatives (Christian Democratic Union/Christlich Demokratische Union, CDU; Christian Social Union in Bavaria/Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern, CSU) and the Social Democrats (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD) toward the center of the political spectrum from 2000. The Conservatives gradually accepted increasingly progressive positions and policies after Angela Merkel became leader of the CDU in 2000. They consented to parental leave, the extension of all-day childcare, the recognition of homosexual partnerships (which progressed to same-sex marriage in 2017), the introduction of a quota for women in management positions and the introduction of a statutory minimum wage during the most recent »grand coalitions« with the SPD (2005 2009; 2013 2017; 2018 present). This added to the phenomenon of what is now commonly referred to as the »social democratization of the Christian democratic parties« (see p. 77).

In a similar vein, the SPD, under the leadership of chancellor Gerhard Schröder (1998 – 2005), adopted increasingly neoliberal, »slim state« policies within the framework of the »Agenda 2010«, which radically reformed the German labor market and the social-security system. By introducing cutbacks to passive social-assistance benefits and harsh activation policies for the long-term unemployed and opening up the market for labor leasing and »mini jobs« free from social contributions, the Agenda regime is considered to be one of the main reasons for the disastrous halving of the German Social Democrats' share of the vote between 1998 (40.9%) and 2017 (20.5%). As Myatt and Siri (see p. 79) argue, this »watering down of leftist and social-democratic positions« was the other side to the »social democratization« of the CDU/CSU, with the enduring grand coalitions inevitably leading to the convergence of the two main political parties, leaving space for radical populist parties on both ends of the political spectrum.

This drift toward the center may sooner or later seduce the CDU/CSU in particular into recapturing the policy space they had abandoned to the right of the political center by co-opting the AfD's positions (see Downs 2012: 44). At the moment, with the more traditional Bavarian CSU facing state elections in October 2018, some attempts to co-opt the AfD's policy positions and rhetoric on Islam and migration are already becoming apparent.

Nevertheless, now the German mainstream parties are mainly *holding* on to their ideological principles. As Myatt and Siri state (see p. 77), it is remarkable, especially by making international comparisons, that the German liberal Free Democratic Party (Freie Demokratische Partei, FDP) »remained faithful to its core positions« and did not move toward much more conservative positions on sociocultural issues as their Scandinavian, Belgian and Dutch equivalents did (ibid.). In addition, the other mainstream parties in Germany, and in particular the SPD, have so far tended to *hold* on to their pro-immigration and pro-refugee positions and have not done that much to attack Angela Merkel's controversial »open border« politics of autumn 2015. This is fairly remarkable, given that the AfD managed to keep the issue of refugee and migration policies in the foreground and omnipresent in the general political discourse of the 2017 campaign (see p. 87). In contrast, the established parties in Germany did not miss any opportunities to accuse the AfD and its sympathizers of being Nazis (although it has to be acknowledged that the leading figures within the AfD did not miss any opportunities either to polarize people and push the limits of civilized discourse even further).

For these reasons, one can irrefutably identify a shared strategy among the German mainstream parties to *isolate* the AfD and to apply a cordon sanitaire around AfD politicians in the media and in parliament. In addition, with the AfD entering the state parliaments and the Bundestag, the established parties also made use of »procedural tricks« in the sense of »altering the rules of the game« (Downs 2012: 34); for instance, some of the state parliaments decided to reduce the size of their standing committees to lower the number of seats occupied by the AfD, and thus their influence. When the AfD was about to enter the federal parliament, the grand coalition of the CDU/CSU and the SPD of summer 2017 altered the rules of procedure in the Bundestag; before this, the oldest member of the parliament would open the new legislative period by delivering the first speech after the election. Since it was likely from the party lists, which had already been published, that a newly elected AfD politician would be the oldest member of the new Bundestag and therefore deliver the speech, the ruling parties changed this procedure in favor of the oldest-serving member of the parliament. Similarly, most AfD candidates running for leadership positions in the Bundestag's standing committees failed to meet the necessary threshold, breaking with the parliament's informal rules, according to which these positions are usually distributed among the parliamentary groups on the basis of the election result.

However, this dominant *isolate* strategy, which has been applied by most of the German mainstream parties, reinforces the AfD's already strong and successful self-victimization strategy, as Myatt and Siri (see p. 88) outline. For this reason, they suggest instead that the progressive parties in Germany, in particular, need to pursue a *hold* and *defuse* strategy (see p. 91), since »active inclusion provides the best starting point to challenge the AfD by constantly uncovering a lack of arguments and ideas and providing alternatives in return«. After the complicated and historically well-established process of government formation in Germany resulted in another grand coalition of the weakened CDU/CSU and the SPD, it remains at least questionable whether these coalition partners actually have the strength to engage actively with the strong, right-wing populist party into which the AfD has evolved over this period.

DISCUSSION OF DIFFERENT STRATEGIES TO COMBAT RIGHT-WING POPULIST PARTIES

Thus far this chapter has, first, provided a theoretical framework for analyzing strategies for handling right-wing populism in general and, second, summarized the most important strategies that have been pursued in the past and present in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany, as discussed in depth by the authors of the four case studies in this volume. Taking into consideration the diversity of strategies that can be identified in relation to not only progressive parties but also center-right parties, which comprise the main competitors for social-democratic parties in all four countries, the remainder of this chapter incorporates a comparative component to the analysis by outlining similar and divergent trajectories for dealing with the right-wing populist threat. Again, the eight ideal-typical strategies taken from the works of Tim Bale et al. (2010) and William M. Downs (2012) serve as the main points of reference here.

In accordance with Bale et al. (2010: 412), we believe that progressive parties by ideology and disposition – and thus by default – position themselves as strongly oppositional to right-wing populist parties' policy and rhetoric. Rhetorically and in relation to policy, their default strategy is thus to *hold* on to their principles, arguments, policies and rhetoric, perhaps combined with attempts to *ignore* the right-wing populist challengers and/or to try to defuse their arguments. Depending on the prominence and success of right-wing populism, progressive parties eventually shift to other strategies; they might give in to temptations to *co-opt* and *adopt* the right-wing populists' policy positions and rhetoric – or even decide to *collaborate* with them (Bale et al. 2010; Downs 2012). In a way, all these strategies can be located on a continuum that ranges from total denegation to cooperation, however in practice parties often combine at least two strategies. This makes sense, given that most of the aforementioned ideal-typical strategies relate to the policy level, while others – such as *isolation* or *banning* – instead refer to variants of political culture and parliamentary or media procedures.

By taking the »real cases« of Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany, we can empirically observe rather interesting and sometimes divergent trajectories among the mainstream parties who deal with right-wing populist intruders in these countries. Taken as a whole, Denmark and the Danish Social Democrats seem to represent a case in which the development away from the initial *hold* position has progressed the furthest since the emergence of right-wing populism in the 1980s. Due to this, Denmark can be considered to be »a paradigmatic case for the study of the rise, consolidation and the mainstreaming/normalization« (Meret, p. 15) of right-wing populism. Danish Social Democracy plays a pivotal role here. After experiencing a degree of success through a combination of *isolation* and *defuse* strategies in the 1990s and 2000s, when the Danish People's Party (DF) managed to establish itself in parliament in the first place, the Social Democrats gradually deviated from their initial »clean hands« position, and thus incrementally shifted to the right, both in terms of policy and rhetoric. So, what has happened? As predicted by Bale et al. (2010: 414), the positioning of the major center-right party is crucial for the strategic choices of the (center-)left.

The Danish case perfectly illustrates this claim, and at the same time also provides possible template scenarios for both Sweden and Norway in the future. Danish Social Democracy's shift to the right – a development that can be analytically framed as *co-option,* made most apparent in the 2015 nationalist workfare campaign (»Kommer du til Danmark, skal du arbejde« [If you come to Denmark, you have to work]) in combination with the serious tightening up of migration and asylum law – can be regarded as the strategic response to the long-term *collaboration* of Venstre, the major center-right party in Denmark, with the Danish People's Party. Given that the Danish polity usually leads to the formation of minority governments, *collaboration* to some degree inevitably entails the *adoption* of the supporting party's policy demands. As Meret (p. 17) finds, by allowing the Danish People's Party to support the Venstre-led minority governments (2001 2011; 2015 present), »the center-right clearly legitimized the DF within Danish politics and contributed toward strengthening the role the party played«, resulting in a normalization of right-wing populism in everyday Danish politics. At least with the 2015 election in mind, the Social Democrats also *co-opted* populist claims to undermine the right-wing populists' success.

This situation is currently of great relevance for both the Swedish and Norwegian cases. Although the Norwegian case is somewhat different, given the Norwegian Progress Party individual historical roots when compared to those of the Danish People's Party and the Sweden Democrats, the positioning of the center-right parties in both Sweden and Norway is crucial for the Labour parties in both countries. Unlike Denmark and Sweden up until the 2000s, and Germany at present with the recent entry of the AfD into the Bundestag, Raknes points out that a cordon sanitaire-style *isolation* strategy has never been applied in relation to the Norwegian Progress Party. This made it easier for the major center-right party in Norway, Høyre, to form a minority government with the now right-wing populist Z in 2013, which eventually got reelected in the recent 2017 election. While the preceding Norwegian left-wing government (2005 –13) had successfully employed what was principally a *hold* and *defuse* strategy (albeit with some concessions, which would make the case for identifying tendencies toward a *co-opt* strategy too), the Norwegian right at the same time shifted from *isolation* to *collaboration.* As Raknes (p. 40) states, »in order to stop the bleeding of voters the solution for the Conservative has become to ›tame the shrew‹ by inviting FrP into government«. However, as the 2017 re-election of the Norwegian center-right–populist-right coalition shows, one conceivable reason for a center-right party's *collaboration* with a right-wing party – the »strategic calculus that with collaboration comes responsibility which [...] can induce moderation« (Downs 2012: 32) – has proven to be empirically wrong, at least for the Norwegian case.

In relation to Sweden and the upcoming elections in autumn 2018, the incumbent Swedish center-left government led by the Social Democrats is now in a situation similar to that in which their Norwegian sister party found themselves back in 2013. At the time of writing, it remains unclear how the opposition-leading Moderates will position themselves in relation to the right-wing populist Sweden Democrats on matters of principle. In particular due to the ongoing debate on migration and asylum, which has been strongly framed by the Sweden Democrats in a xenophobic manner, the right-wing populists have gained higher levels of support from the electorate. This is also in part attributable to the »conspiracy« of *holding* on to pro-immigration stances that have been employed to date by the political mainstream, and the *ignore, hold* and *defuse* strategies that have been applied by the center-left government, which have apparently not convinced the majority of voters. Until now, members of Swedish parliament have refused to collaborate with the Sweden Democrats across all party boundaries, most obviously in the December Agreement (see p. 57), and thus the system has been characterized by broad anti-extremist blocking, the strongest variant of the *isolation* strategy (Downs 2012: 36). Nevertheless, Downs acknowledges that such a cordon sanitaire is »put to the greatest test […] [w]hen election results fail to produce a single-party majority and a pariah party holds the balance of power« (ibid.). The latter was the outcome of the 2014 election and is the most likely one for the 2018 election too, at the time of writing. Therefore, the progressives in Sweden are now (once more) running into the danger of giving in to the anti-immigration stances of the right, and thus *co-opting* too much of their policy and rhetoric during the course of the campaign.

This creates links back to the Danish case, where the Social Democrats, under the leadership of Helle Thorning-Schmidt and her successor and current leader Mette Frederiksen, pursue(d) a substantial *co-opt* strategy. Against the backdrop of the Danish Social Democrats remaining the strongest party in the 2015 election, but nevertheless being unable to form a government, and the right-wing populist Danish

People's Party becoming the second strongest party, even surpassing the main center-right party Venstre, we have to consider the implication of the electoral »success« of such a *co-opt* strategy. Especially in an environment that is characterized by minority governments and multi-party parliaments, there is in the long run – aside from all the moral implications of strategies such as these shifting progressive parties to the right – no sense in major center-left parties trying to play the same game as right-wing populist parties. Since as early as 2015, long before the peak of the Refugee Crisis, the Danish Social Democrats lost one of its supporters in the Socialist People's Party (Socialistisk Folkeparti) in a dispute, even though this was due to economic policies. There is no reason to believe that the formation of a government, especially with potential supporting parties on the Left, will become easier for the major center-left parties of the Nordic countries, if they venture down the slippery slope of *co-opting* and *adopting* the right's arguments and rhetoric.

Additionally, if one takes recent developments in Sweden into account, where the Social Democrats have essentially *co-opted* the migration and asylum policies of the SD, initial polls (Dagens Nyheter 2018), as well as a recent report (Rydgren et al. 2018, forthcoming), suggest that there will be considerable losses of both rather liberal and egalitarian sympathizers to the Left Party and conservative sympathizers to the »original« SD, which will put the lead in the polls of the Social Democrats at stake. In addition to this, their coalition partner, the liberal and human-rights dominated Green Party, lost so much support and faced such internal disarray as a result of these shifts, that they lost credibility with the electorate and therefore fear they may miss the 4% threshold. The remaining potential – though always hesitant – partner for issue-based cooperation, The Left Party (Vänsterpartiet), voiced a strong critique of the Social Democrats' shift to the right, which could fundamentally reduce potential for coalition and cooperation.

Finally, the German case differs from that of the country's neighbors in the North since it was in the most recent election of September 2017 that a right-wing populist party made it into the German parliament for the first time since the Federal Republic was founded after World War II. Against the backdrop of Germany's Nazi history, the success of the increasingly radical AfD has historical roots, but at the same time it pushes all the major German parties to adopt the *isolate* strategy by default, a move mainly driven by moral outrage. At the same time, the process of government formation after the defeat of the second grand coalition between the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and the Social Democrats (SPD) has never taken as long in the history of the Federal Republic. Here, the AfD now also plays an important role, as it has become the third largest party after the CDU/CSU and the SPD with 12.6% of the votes, less than five years after its foundation. In the years before the 2017 election, the AfD entered 14 of the 16 state-level *(Länder)* parliaments in Germany in stages, with the two remaining ones (Hesse and Bavaria) likely to follow suit in autumn 2018.

However, as Myatt and Siri point out (p. 76), the foundation of the AfD »did not take place in a vacuum«, but should rather be regarded as one of the consequences of the remapping of the party-political landscape in Germany since the turn of the century, and thus be seen in the context, most prominently, of the severe neoliberal Agenda 2010 reforms implemented by the Social Democrats and the Greens under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD) in the early 2000s and the ongoing »social democratization« carried out predominantly by the CDU under Angela Merkel's leadership, who succeeded Schröder as chancellor in 2005.

In recent years, the centrist government led by Merkel has pursued a combined strategy of *hold* and *defuse,* most clearly apparent in the »open borders« politics often summed up by Merkel's now-famous claim that »Wir schaffen das« (We can do it). Despite this, within the unique configuration of the »union« between Merkel's CDU, which stands for election in all German states apart from Bavaria, and her sister party CSU, which only stands for election in Bavaria, the latter acts as a kind of traditionalist, often populist sidekick to the larger CDU. Now, with elections at the state level coming up in October 2018, the CSU – which now occupies the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Homeland and has successfully had its demand to add the word »homeland« *(Heimat)* to the department's name granted during the long coalition-building process – will most likely shift further to the right. Appealing to the CSU's chairman of the time, Franz-Josef Strauß, who in 1986 famously claimed »there must be no […] party right of the CSU«, the party is currently adopting many of the AfD's policy positions on internal security and migration and is thereby barely rhetorically distinguishable from the AfD. Even during the previous grand coalition (2013 – 2017), the CSU constantly pushed for tighter immigration and asylum laws and eventually integrated its main demand during the 2017 national campaign – a statuary annual ceiling for migration (the so-called *Obergrenze)* – into the coalition agreement with the CDU and the SPD. As a result, and also in the follow-up to the 2015 decision to leave the German borders open, the grand coalition has incrementally tightened up German asylum law, making the case for a kind of covert *co-opt* strategy, since the official narrative (»We can do it«) has remained unaltered. However, it remains unclear how the new »coalition of the losers« (the CDU/CSU and the SPD jointly lost around 16 percent of their vote share in the 2017 election) will react to the new political environment in which the AfD acts as the leader of the opposition in the Bundestag. Here, a final remark should be made concerning a strategy that has not often been applied in the Nordic context, but which does play a role in German politics: *banning*. The SPD-led red–green government, the Bundestag and the federal states jointly brought a party ban case before the Constitutional Court in 2001 against the radical-right National Democratic Party of Germany (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands, NPD), which got rejected in 2003. The federal states brought forward a second case in 2013, which was again rejected by the Court in 2017. Apart from these failures, the German mainstream parties have actually altered »the rules of the game« on many occasions in order to combat right-wing populist or extreme-right parties. In terms of the AfD, not only has the Bundestag altered its rules of procedure as it was the case with the opening ceremony of the new legislature, but also many of the state parliaments have, for instance, with the support of virtually all the other parties (thus providing another example of anti-extremist blocking in Downs's [2012: 36] terms) limited the size of their standing committees to isolate AfD members within these committees..

To sum up, the mainstream parties in Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway have both historically and in recent years pursued various strategies in response to the growth of right-wing populist parties. Sometimes taking similar, sometimes taking different paths, the progressive parties in all four countries have to varying degrees departed from their initial positions to *hold* on to their own ideology and rhetoric. The most radical change has occurred among the Danish Social Democrats, who for many years pursued a *hold* and *defuse* strategy, but eventually gave in and *co-opted* positions and rhetoric, especially in the areas of immigration, asylum and welfare, that were formerly the preserve of the Danish People's Party. On the other side, the main center-right party Venstre has demonstrated no inhibitions in *collaborating* with the right-wing populists and thus keeping the Social Democrats in opposition. However, neither strategy has proven to be a successful way of lessening the right-wing populists' appeal in Denmark. This is an important finding for the progressive and, especially, the social-democratic parties in both Sweden and Norway, which up to now have broadly refrained from *co-opting* the positions and rhetoric of the right. Nevertheless, Sweden seems to be at a turning point in the run-up to the 2018 election, in which the social-democratic Prime Minister Stefan Löfven may feel threatened by *collaboration* between the center-right Moderates and the right-wing populist Sweden Democrats in the future. The conditions are different in Norway, where the Labour Party remains in opposition after the center-right party Høyre was able to continue in a coalition with the right-wing populist Fremskrittspartiet after the 2017 election. Germany, finally, represents a very different case. It is only since the 2017 election that the mainstream parties have faced the challenge of the new right-wing populist AfD in the German Bundestag, which immediately radically changed the party landscape at the federal level and has led to the longest-lasting process of government formation in German history thus far. As a result, the two mainstream parties of the center, who lost a considerable portion of their former vote – the CDU/CSU and the SPD – will continue in their previous grand coalition, thereby making the AfD the leaders of the opposition. Up until now, the German mainstream parties have tried to *isolate* the AfD as much as possible by altering the rules of the game in parliamentary procedures, while most of the parties have stuck to their principles and tried to *defuse* and unmask the new right-wing populist intruder. However, against the backdrop of the slump in vote share in the 2017 general election, and with some important elections at the state level coming up in October 2018, some forces, especially among Christian Democrats, mainly within the CSU, are showing significant signs of *co-opting* and *adopting* the AfD's positions and rhetoric.

In this case, the German progressives, and especially the CDU/CSU's coalition partner SPD, should, according to Siri and Myatt, stick to their inclusive policy guidelines, without silencing discussion of the most salient issues, and not give in to the policy agenda of right-wing conservative and right-wing populist parties. The provision of realistic and credible visions for an equal, non-exclusionary society, which does not single out or discriminate against any of its members, is the way to establish an individualized and strong concept for future development, without running the risk of being caught up in a reactive and slippery slope toward the *adoption* of right-wing populist policies. Raknes stresses, in the same vain, that progressives need to develop their own frameworks for immigration and multiculturalism, without buying in to the rhetoric of the right-wing populists. With his insight into Norway, where progressives have had the enduring experience of being stuck in opposition to a center-right and right-wing populist government, he cautions that neither *isolation* nor moral outrage appear to work for different reasons. Even though this might lead to a seemingly partial *co-option* of issues and policies, credible policies and discourses should be applied, but within individualized frames. Additionally, whenever possible, it may be strategically important to unsettle the central actors in the right-wing populist parties in government in order to establish a less polarized political discourse and political culture and, in connection with this, to raise the prominence of more nuanced and less exclusionary politics.

In relation to Sweden, Lodenius recommends similar solutions to the dilemmas progressives face and recommends refraining from attempting to ignore the immigration and asylum issues, in particular, by using one's own framings and visions. In applying the UN Convention on Human Rights as the basis for »the common ground«, she proposes that there is a way out of this dangerous discourse connected to nativist and racist attempts to reframe the meaning of »Swedishness«. Furthermore, simultaneously focusing on the unique selling points of the socioeconomic aspects of society and welfare-related issues should *defuse* the agenda-setting power of right-wing populist parties. Concerning this strategy, it is nevertheless of central importance to have credible solutions and narratives ready in case right-wing populist issues evolve into discourse about the economic aspects of immigration and humanitarianism. Empty-handed progressives, in this case, can either fuel right-wing populists' own distinct »there is no alternative« agenda or – as might be the case at the time of writing – the *adoption* of the right-wing populist agenda due to a lack of one's own progressive frameworks and narratives. That being said, in the Danish case, Meret shows the metamorphosis of the Social Democratic party from *isolation* to *adoption* of the right-wing populist competitor's policies and rhetoric, and even potential *collaboration*. With this loss of the core ideological foundations of social democracy, such as humanitarianism and non-exclusionary equality, the question arises whether the Danish example can provide good and successful examples for progressive strategies against right-wing populist parties or whether it is instead an example of how *not* to (re)act. When these central ideological foundations are abandoned, Meret emphasizes, the still prevalent progressive values that are nevertheless held by large shares of the population provide the incentive for civil society organizations and initiatives to uphold these values. These organizations actively embody solidarity and – despite their currently marginalized position and the hardships associated with this condition for both Danes and non-Danes – provide society with a reservoir of progressive values that will endure and could serve as the basis both for future, individual progressive politicization and, especially, as a laboratory for the active and progressive formulation of unique and credible frameworks. Even if it seems to be clutching at straws, the situation in Denmark is both on the one hand a warning signal about where the slippery slope may lead to and on the other hand an indication of where progressive parties should turn to in order to formulate own credible progressive policies and narratives.

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Christian Krell and Henri Möllers

CONCLUSION: WHAT TO LEARN FOR A SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY? AND WHAT IS SUCCESS?

The situation is dramatic. Right-wing populist parties are on the rise in many European countries. In some countries they are the relevant political forces. Not only in Central and Eastern Europe, but also in some of the EU's core countries, right-wing populists have become a decisive factor in political developments. In northern Europe too, right-wing populist forces have established themselves over the past decades and have had sometimes significant influence on public discourse and concrete policy formulation. Over the same period, progressive forces have lost importance in almost all parts of Europe.

For the established as well as the younger democracies of Europe this development is a considerable challenge. A modern understanding of democracy, as developed theoretically in the progression of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and also established in practice in the nation states of the twentieth century, is based on the equality of all who belong to a political community. This equality applies both to participation in the democracy – one member, one vote – and also to equal rights for all citizens. Thus it is all about equal rights of participation for all and the equal treatment of all before the law.

Right-wing populist ideas and parties – despite the diversity of the individual parties – stand fundamentally opposed to this equal treatment. Their rhetoric and actions are usually based on a discriminatory distinction between different parts of society. In their politics and their discourses, they generally distinguish between »them and us«; however the »we« is constituted, it is in opposition to »the other«. Who the others are – immigrants, gender activists, refugees, people wearing hijab, homosexuals, Islam – is varied and also fluid. It is clear, however, that these others, however defined, should not be granted the same rights in »our« societies as »we« are. This tendency to view people unequally thus stands in fundamental contrast to the normative foundations of liberal democracies.

This fundamental contradiction was an essential starting point of this volume. If right-wing populist forces challenge democracy, then the aim is to identify strategies to tackle these challenges and determinedly defend the achievements of a liberal, pluralistic democracy. The focus of the present volume is on progressive parties. First, because they represent the normative foundations of democratic equality; furthermore, because they are particularly affected by the rise of right-wing populist forces. Almost everywhere where there has been a rise of right-wing populist forces, there has been a decline of progressive parties committed to Social Democracy.

Accordingly, we have examined the strategies that progressive parties have chosen in order to respond to the challenges posed by right-wing populist forces. The subjects of the investigation were Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany. In this chapter, we will conclude by examining which strategies of progressive parties were particularly successful in dealing with right-wing populism. The aim of this comparison is also to derive concrete recommendations for action from these findings.

However, before we can narrow down which strategies were successful in a particular way, it is necessary to determine more precisely what »successful« actually means in this context from the perspective of progressive parties. When exactly can it be said that a certain form of action or reaction was or is successful in dealing with right-wing populist parties? Is it simply a matter of election results? What role do ideological and ethical orientation play? Or is the crucial issue rather the material results of concrete policies?

WHAT IS A SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY? FIVE DIMENSIONS

At least five dimensions can be distinguished to gauge the success or failure of progressive parties in dealing with right-wing populist forces.

Electoral Dimension

An easy-to-measure and at the same time obvious benchmark for assessing the success of a strategy in dealing with right-wing populist forces is election results. Are right-wing populist parties gaining approval at the ballot box? And how do the election results of progressive parties compare accordingly? This dimension is highly relevant; after all, the approval or rejection of voters is not only the most traditional yardstick for the success of a political grouping, but it also determines – to varying degrees, depending on the electoral system – parliamentary strength, government participation and thus real power options for the implementation of policies.

Normative Dimension

Political parties, with all the differences in detail, are usually organized around a normative core. The importance and scope of this core is controversial. Otto Kirchheimer's thesis of a catch-all party (Kirchheimer 1966) suggests that this core tends to dissolve in modern democracies. The parties try harder and harder to appeal to as broad a voter-base as possible, leaving them ready to abandon their own value orientations. Nevertheless, there seems to be an enduring importance of normative orientations for political parties. In particular progressive parties – once characterized by Max Weber as »Weltanschauungspartei« *(ideology-driven party),* in contrast to the dignitary party – are still characterized by the fact that they are constructed around an ethical orientation. Often value orientations such as Freedom, Equality, Justice or Solidarity form this normative core and are important for the motivation of the members of a political association as well as for distinctiveness in the market for electoral votes. The preservation of this normative core – in the course of increasingly important contemporary modernizations – is understood here as a second criterion for the success of a political strategy. Thus, if a political strategy succeeds in the market for votes, but at the same time abandons the normative core of the party, then its effort is ultimately unsuccessful, because one of the party's essential purposes – the pursuit of the normative core – has been lost.

Coalitionary Dimension

In none of the countries surveyed and only in a limited number of European countries are one-party governments common or even predominant. On the contrary, even in the Nordic countries, which allow or even promote minority governments within a specific institutional and political-cultural setting, parties depend on coalitions or other forms of cooperation to form a government and attain power. In order to assess the success of a strategy in dealing with right-wing populist parties, one must therefore also examine whether this strategy enables or makes it more difficult to form coalition governments (excluding cooperation with right-wing populist forces). For progressive parties this question has particular relevance. Whereas parties from the center-right have a relatively closer proximity and thus potentially higher likelihood of building a coalition with right-wing populist parties, a coalition between progressive and right-wing populist parties is relatively unlikely since it would be far more difficult to present to members and voters, both politically and ideologically. The success of a strategy in dealing with right-wing populist forces must thus also be measured by whether (government) coalitions without right-wing populists become more feasible or less achievable for progressive parties within the framework of their strategy.

Discursive Dimension

Political agenda-setting is far from being based solely on numerical majorities or parliamentary processes. Of equal importance are public discourses that establish the frame of what can be said or what cannot be said, and thus also of what is feasible and non-feasible (cf. Schmidt 2010). The success of a political strategy is therefore also measured in how it affects the dominant discourses in a public space or how it changes the discursive frame. Does a certain strategy in dealing with right-wing populists make policies that are oriented towards the normative core of progressive parties more or less likely? To what extent do changed public debates facilitate or complicate progressive politics? Discursive shifts that accompany the struggle with right-wing populists must therefore also be taken into account in order to evaluate the success or failure of a strategy.

Policy Dimension

Ultimately, politics aims to change the real living conditions of people in an existing context. The fifth criterion for success should therefore be the material dimension of the policy results. Is it possible to realize a policy and to translate it into measures, laws and daily reality, based on the normative orientation described above? Is it possible to achieve more social equality, freedom or solidarity? Or is there more depreciation, exclusion or aggravation of inequalities? Such a strategy would not be successful from a progressive perspective, since it would ultimately undermine the normative core of progressive parties with regard to both content and policy dimensions.

The success criteria proposed here are at different levels and can – if used for strategy development – have effects in different directions. One can debate whether all criteria can or must be pursued equally. Does greater electoral success justify the deferral of normative orientations? Is it even possible to devise a strategy that can optimize all criteria at once, or is it not ultimately up to the progressive forces to decide which criterion needs prioritization? This question cannot be dealt with conclusively here and must be decided by the political actors. However, it seems obvious that a more cohesive, electoral, discursive, normative and material dimension is needed if a successful strategy is to be developed. Otherwise – for example, if a party seeks to maximize votes a with contradictory discourse on value-based politics or to pursue a material policy that does not correspond to its own normative core – there is the danger of a mixed-message situation: it becomes unclear what the party actually stands for. A coherent and credible narrative of its own presupposes that the criteria used here are taken into account equally.

For progressive parties this seems to be a particular challenge, not least because of the heterogeneous electorate and supporter alliances on which they are founded.

The literature increasingly refers to the analytical cleavage of »cosmopolitanism« versus »communitarianism« to describe this challenge (see Merkel, 2017). The central idea is that a part of the classic electorate of progressive parties prefers the communitarianist isolation of their community and the (cultural) homogeneity within that community. Another part of the electorate of progressive parties, on the other hand, sees itself as cosmopolitan, more urban-oriented and open to cultural diversity.

The interpretation of the differences between the two groups is heuristically valuable. From the point of view of strategy development, however, it is important to identify points of contact and common interests. Instead of considering the categories cosmopolitanism and communitarianism as mutually exclusive groups, we should focus on possible connections between the two within the context of the recommendations.

It is worth considering attempts to overcome the conceptual antagonism of this alleged estrangement of a cosmopolitan elite from the classical electorate of progressive parties, by utilizing the crucial aspect of experiences of political and social self-efficacy. (see e.g. Rosa 2016). If there is a possibility – in both groups – of negotiating and deciding their own concerns, rather than being simply at the mercy of these concerns as of a force of nature, then there are greater chances for establishing a successful progressive strategy.

SEARCHING FOR SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES IN DENMARK, NORWAY, SWEDEN AND GERMANY

Anyone considering the strategies and approaches of progressive parties in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Germany in light of these success criteria will note that there is no case in which a comprehensive success can be identified. In Denmark, perhaps the most notable case of this comparison, almost all strategies have been attempted in real terms, as ideal-typically characterized in Table 5. The attempt to isolate the right-wing populist party was as unsuccessful in the long run as were efforts to place issues other than migration and integration at the forefront of public debate. The approach that has been taken by the progressive party for some years now – to include Danish People's Party issues and positions and to present these as Social Democratic – must also be seen as a failure, given the above criteria. Admittedly, with regard to the electoral dimension, the right-wing populist Danish People's Party has not gained much ground in current polls, nor in the local elections in 2017, in which the Social Democratic Party gained 2.9% to reach 32.4%, while the Danish People's Party lost 1.3% (8.8%) (KMD 2017). In almost every other dimension, however, no success is evident. The gradual adoption of discriminatory rhetoric has significantly changed the normative core of Danish Social Democracy, as well as affecting public discourse. Furthermore, the coalition options for the Danish Social Democrats have tended to narrow (at least as long as there is no prospect of a coalition of the Social Democrats with the Danish People's Party). Undoubtedly, the failure of these approaches is not due solely to the attitude of the progressive party. On the contrary, it becomes particularly clear how demanding and challenging a successful strategy development is. It depends, as Susi Meret points out (see p. 25f), citing Bale et al. (2010) amongst others, on how the other parties in the right and left political camp behave towards the right-wing populists, on how unified the progressive party is, and on what strategies potential coalition partners of the progressive parties develop. In Denmark, for example, the conservative party opened up comparatively early to the right-wing populists for collaboration. From 2001, the Danish People's Party supported the conservative minority government without wanting to be part of the government coalition, thereby retaining their favorable position as a »government maker and government shaker«. In addition, the party competition remains rooted in the climate of public debate, media and business structures, civil society actors and much more. This means that it is not only up to the parties to combat right-wing populist forces but also to numerous actors and actor constellations.

The case of German Social Democracy is very different. The discursive changes brought about by the Alternative for Germany are (still) not as far-reaching as in the Danish case, and all the established parties also maintain a very clear distance from AfD or isolate them. At the same time, no comprehensive success of a progressive counter-strategy can be seen. The AfD is represented in almost all state parliaments and since September 2017 also in the Bundestag, with stable or slightly rising poll numbers at the time of writing. Here, too, from the perspective of the authors, an interaction of various factors and actors is responsible for the continuing success of the AfD to date, or at least for the increasing lack of contour of the large, established political forces due to the ongoing grand coalition between the SPD and the CDU/CSU. At the same time, however, there are also signs of a successful strategy at the level of the federal states, for example in the »refugee-friendly« campaign of the (re-elected) Rhineland-Palatinate Prime Minister Malu Dreyer. She succeeded during the election campaign in drawing attention to socio-economic issues and emphasizing their social relevance, in order to shift the focus from cultural and identitarian points of contention (such as the burqa ban and the question of whether male Muslims avoid shaking hands with women), as Jasmin Siri and Madeleine Myatt write (see p. 92f). In her political rhetoric outside of the election campaign, Dreyer also appears to pick up an »identity-politics«-oriented pattern of discourse while at the same time making a progressive turn. In relation to the growing debate about the concept of »homeland«, which is used from a right-wing populist perspective to exclude, she countered with a humorous and inclusive phrase: »There is enough homeland for everyone«. (»Es ist genug Heimat für alle da!«, Tagesspiegel 2018). In the German context, therefore, at least individual contributions of a progressive strategy are evident in dealing with right-wing populist forces.

The Norwegian case is similar. Again, there is no fully successful strategy, but there are promising and inspirational examples. At the same time the Norwegian case is characterized by its unique features. The Norwegian right-wing populists have succeeded in developing their thematic profile – Petrocik's concept of »issue ownership« comes to mind here (1996) – which is broader than is commonly the case with right-wing populist parties. In addition to issues of integration and immigration, the Fremskrittspartiet has added a socioeconomic dimension to its profile, with topics such as health and welfare policy, even as the Norwegian Labor Party has lost much of its issue ownership in these areas. Established political forces thus seem to have left open a political space that the right-wing populists have successfully invaded. As a result, the Fremskrittspartiet has also been successful when issues of integration and immigration in the public debate have clearly lost relevance. For a counter-strategy, progressive parties are advised to maintain their classic areas of competency. As in Denmark, the right-wing forces in Norway, though incorporating official posts in the governmental coalition, have managed both to be involved in the government from 2013 onwards, but at the same time to criticize the government. Here, Ketil Raknes refers to the formulation of Zaslove's »one foot in, one foot out« (2012) policy. The strategy of hoping that the right-wing forces' involvement in government will lead to voters' becoming disenchanted with them does not seem very promising.

The case of Justice and Immigration Minister Sylvie Listhaug of the Fremskrittspartiet, dismissed after an opposition-initiated motion of no confidence, shows that the participation of right-wing populist parties gives them privileged access to discursive agenda-setting. Listhaug, as the embodiment of the »anti-establishment party in the establishment«, was able to unite official government policy with polarizing right-wing populist rhetoric from a legitimizing superior position, thus contributing to the continued success of the party in the conservative right-wing populist government. However, the inadequacy of her discourse was undermined when both the majority-seeking support parties and the unified opposition seized upon her rhetoric with reference to »professional inappropriateness« as well as societal polarization. We thus see that a coordinated approach with realistic chances of success against the protagonists of right-wing populist government makes sense from a progressive point of view for two reasons: First, not only can right-wing populist power-knowledge be removed, but a less polarizing, simplifying culture of fair discourse becomes more probable. And second, for progressive parties and especially the catch-all parties, this fair discourse represents a more advantageous discourse environment – and, for right-wing populist parties, a more hostile one.

Of the analyzed cases at hand, Sweden is the case that was probably shaped by the most consistent pursuit of an isolation strategy. In response to the clearly right-wing extremist origins of the Sweden Democrats, all other parties placed a »cordon sanitaire« around the party and, over the past 30 years, have rejected any form of cooperation. This isolation was not successful from an electoral perspective. The Sweden Democrats have grown steadily during this period. They also benefited from seeing themselves confronted by an »elite cartel«. The strategy of isolation has allowed the party to describe itself as a victim and at the same time present itself as the force that, against an alleged »taboo« of all other parties, addresses issues of extremely high social relevance. It is clear here that a pure isolation of right-wing populist forces is not a promising strategy. In the current election debate (May 2018) at the time of writing this analysis, repositioning measures regarding isolation are appearing. While parties of the political right are at least thinking aloud about forms of cooperation with the Sweden Democrats, the Social Democrats have seen a reorientation in the policy field of integration and immigration. The demand for much more restrictive immigration rules points to a discursive approximation to the position of the Swedish Democrats and thus to the lack of an independent discourse strategy of the Swedish Social Democrats in the policy field of migration and immigration.

WHAT TO LEARN FROM THE STRATEGIES AT HAND? RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DO'S AND DON'TS

A comparative study of the four cases shows that there is no clear strategy for successfully addressing right-wing populist parties. In all cases, in recent years and sometimes decades, there has been a marked electoral gain for right-wing populist forces, a discursive shift in their themes and demands, and at the same time a weakening of progressive forces both in terms of immediate election results and their coalition options. Nevertheless, there are numerous starting points for concrete recommendations for action, which can be promising in the context of the success criteria mentioned above – as well as sometimes in the context of the failures.

DON'TS

Don't ban or isolate

As the examples of the Sweden Democrats and the Alternative for Germany show, one-dimensional ascriptions of right-wing populist parties as Nazi parties or worse, and a concomitant isolation in political competition, are unsuccessful. On the contrary: moralization or the active exclusion of right-wing populist forces from political processes tends instead to support these parties in their narrative of defending a position suppressed by all other established political forces. »Against those above«, »against the establishment«, »against the ›party cartel‹« – this heroic self-description of right-wing populists should not be strengthened by progressive forces. In addition, isolation always carries the risk of losing sight of the ignored party and its positions. Those who ignore right-wing populist forces do not develop proactive strategies for dealing with them.

Don't take them into the government

In some progressive strategies there is also the expectation that right-wing populists can lose their allure and be unmasked by government participation. As soon as they become involved in mundane responsibilities and face the challenges of realpolitik, the theory goes, the inappropriate positions of the right-wing populists will be revealed.

The empirical evidence here does not confirm this hope. In both the Norwegian and the Danish case, right-wing populists have succeeded in being part of the government and/or being tolerating by it, thus exerting considerable influence on material policies. At the same time they have been successful in criticizing the government – occasionally even criticizing their own minsters. The popularity or support of these governments has not been affected by the involvement of the right-wing populist parties. Of course, this shows the importance of the party landscape as a whole. After all, it was the conservative forces that brought the right-wing populists into the government.

Once in government, nonetheless, sometimes a clear and effective criticism of right-wing populist ministers and the realistic aiming at their unsettlement by progressives and a connected opposition party-alliance might prove to be a viable strategy to throw a spanner into the populist machine.

Don't give up your turf

Right-wing populist movements function primarily through a demarcation of cultural identity between »us« and »the other«. Their primary starting point in the political debate is thus to be sought on a cultural level, not on a socio-economic level. It is above all progressive parties that address questions of social welfare, social security and material and democratic equality. It becomes particularly problematic for progressive parties when right-wing populist parties also push into this classically Social Democratic sphere of competence. In the studied cases, Norway, for example, shows that the right-wing populists, with their profile enhancement in the area of health and welfare state protection, have advanced into policy fields that are classic domains of progressive parties. For progressive parties, therefore, it is not about abandoning these classic fields of competence, but rather about being active in them and leading the way.

Don't co-opt or adopt

The Danish case, which is particularly memorable in this comparison – but also the general tendencies in the other Nordic countries in terms of adapting progressive parties to the issues, demands and discourses of the right-wing populists and sometimes assuming their positions – has little promise, both from a normative and a coalition perspective. With regard to the normative perspective, approaching right-wing populist positions inevitably relativizes one's own programmatic orientation to equality (see above). But even from a power-strategic perspective, this approach is questionable, because even if short-term electoral gains are made, left-center parties lose their coalition partners in the political spectrum to the left. Real power capacity – at least if it is not to come about through a multi-party coalition election program – is thus unlikely in the context of an adoption of right-wing populist positions.

Don't talk about groups of people but about human beings and individuals

Language shapes politics. It awakens emotions and creates a framework for evaluating facts and data. This is the language that decides what is feasible and what does not seem feasible. Right-wing populist parties have been successful in all the cases described here over the past two decades, using not only gradings but also recommendations for action with their language patterns. This is exemplified by the description in all four countries of refugees as a threat, for example as a »wave of refugees«, »stream of refugees« or »flood of refugees«, or even a »refugee tsunami«. This achieves two things. Firstly, the right-wing parties reduce the discourse to groups instead of individuals, whose fates and individual challenges need individual answers, and secondly, they can suggest an immediate answer (»against a flood, you have to build dams«) that corresponds to their own political positions.

Accordingly, progressive actors need to be concerned with avoiding stereotypes and generalizations and not adopting the language patterns of right-wing populist forces. This means, among other things, to speak not of groups but about individual people and individual problems. Language is important for transmitting one's own values – especially for progressive parties.

DO'S

Stick to your guns – consciously!

All authors of the case studies emphasize to varying degrees that for a successful strategy of progressive forces it is important to emphasize socio-economic issues. This point is as obvious as it is relevant. After all, it is the socio-economic division along which the workers' movement has emerged and of which their parties still have issue ownership.

At the same time, diverting the discourse from value-based to socio-economic issues is not without prerequisites. After all, at least some right-wing populist forces also operate successfully in the socio-economic field, often with a mélange of backward-looking nostalgia and exclusionary welfare-state chauvinism. Progressive forces must develop their own socio-economically oriented narrative, which corresponds to their own normative core (i.e. non-exclusionist policies) and does justice to the claim of equality within Social Democracy. Here, the crucial difference to other political forces remains a unique selling point of progressive forces.

Be effective!

In the cases examined here, with the exception of Norway, the progressive parties at the beginning of the millennium have presented themselves as forces that may mitigate, but ultimately cannot avert, the consequences of major economic transformations. Globalization is in full swing and, from a neoliberal perspective, often requires adjustments that in fact often mean a reduction in welfare state benefits and rights. An active re-design of these processes, as it is the present »there-is-no-alternative« narrative of our present times, is not possible. By contrast, the narrative conveyed by many right-wing populists, and not only in the Nordic region, places the alleged possibility of re-shaping globalization in the foreground. The recovery of (nation-state) control and sovereignty, for example via national borders, but also via the national welfare regimes is an important component of their rhetoric. In the Swedish case, the Sweden Democrats, for example, claim to be the protective power against globalization and liberalization (see p. 61), although in fact they usually call into question welfare state protection mechanisms and criticize labor rights in their policy proposals.

The nativist slogan »Keep Sweden Swedish« from the early years of the Sweden Democrats is still a basic ideological component of the party, which uses glorifying and nostalgic references to the golden days of the Social Democratic welfare state and the »people's home« in which Sweden had no immigration and no involvement in the European Union (see p. 55).

For progressive political forces, this implies in turn that a political agenda appearing to offer only helpless damage control is unconvincing. Without using populist simplifications, it is important to assign meaning to one's own political actions and to convince the population that the societal and economic circumstances are man-made and, accordingly, subject to political decision-making. When it becomes clear that a political movement can actually be effective, that it is possible to change the circumstances in which one lives, then there is a reason to turn to the respective party. Otherwise not.

Be recognizable in democratic pluralism!

The best way to clarify the importance of a functioning competitive party setting from the right to the left is to look at the German case. Through a »social democratization« of the Christian Democrats with a simultaneous convergence of the Social Democrats toward neoliberally inspired economic and social policies, the diversity of positions within the established party spectrum appeared exhausted. This apparent similarity among the established parties gave room for actors that presented themselves as fundamental alternatives to traditional political parties. Accordingly, the recommendation – and not only for progressive parties – is to take a clearly recognizable and definable position in the party competition, with a return to one's ideological and normative core.

Provide inclusive visions for identification!

As we have seen above, progressive parties usually address socio-economic issues. At the same time, it is also important for them to create opportunities for a cultural offer of identity from a progressive perspective, for example in the form of an enlightened, civil and inclusive patriotism (see Bröning, 2018). In contrast to the exclusionary identity offer of the right-wing populists, it is of crucial importance that this offer of identity is open and inclusive, that it does not depend on ancestry, blood or ethnicity, but on the potential for anyone to become and be part of the common. Therefore, it is not about a common origin, but about deciding together in favor of a shared future. The phrase used in the German case of the Rhineland-Palatinate Prime Minister Malu Dreyer – »There is enough homeland for everyone« – presents just such an open range for identification.

Provide an own frame for migration and integration!
The topic of migration and integration is and has been relatively small compared to many other policy fields. Nonetheless, it is the most salient issue in current party competition and can be considered the home turf of right-wing populist parties. Taking over the discourses and narratives is thus problematic, if differentiation from the political opponent is needed to survive in the present party competition. Since ignoring this topic cannot be considered a successful strategy and co-opting/adopting the policies also cannot work, there is a need for genuinely progressive, coherent and credible frames. And a rich source for these is the normative core. The basic components of these cores, such as Solidarity, Justice and Equality, can serve as the basis of such a framing – taken both on their own and in their interconnectivity.

It is important that an interpretation of the cores is genuinely framed progressively. It is far too dangerous – lacking progressive frames of one's own – to attempt a short-term and short-sighted interpretation along the prevalent lines of discourse set mostly by right-wing populist parties. Hence, Solidarity is defined not as exclusionary welfare-chauvinism, but as internationalist-oriented human-to-human support in a world in which migration has always been the rule rather than the exception; Justice is defined not primarily as the hard-line prosecution of illegalized people by the rule of law but as a fair chance for integration and effective participation in society without discrimination; Equality is defined not as cultural assimilation to the *Leitkultur* – a right-wing ideology core – but, for example, as the entanglement of economic equality with the post-materialist »equality in differences«, which is basically the realization of Freedom.

This volume concludes with these concrete recommendations for action, knowing that this does not answer all the questions that arise with regard to the strategy development of progressive parties in times of strong right-wing populist forces. In particular, the integration of the various dimensions of success into a coherent strategy with a genuinely self-developed and therefore credible narrative is one of the major challenges facing progressive forces. Above all, the question of prioritizing certain strategy dimensions vis-à-vis others, and the associated compromises, will certainly arise and will provide both opportunities as well as obvious dangers for the development of successful and thereby progressive strategies against right-wing populist parties. Organizing this process as inclusively, creatively and successfully as possible is another major challenge that needs to be addressed and prioritized.

This strategy-building process should be based on the widest possible empirical evidence. The current discourse in Germany and the short-sighted strategy shifts in

Sweden with regard to the upcoming elections in the autumn of 2018 underline the fast pace of political strategies. For a further underpinning of the analytic findings and a further increase in evidence, it would also be valuable to analyze other European countries and the ways in which their progressive parties deal and have dealt with right-wing populism.

Apart from political parties, it also seems worthwhile to focus on other political and civic forces. After all, right-wing populist forces are emerging in a complex social situation and, accordingly, broader social alliances will be needed to push them back. In this sense, the end of this book is merely an inspiration to policymakers on the one hand and citizens on the other to understand the broad and comprehensive challenges posed by emerging right-wing populism to a liberal and pluralistic democracy.

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ANNEX

FACT-SHEETS ON PAST, PRESENT AND POSSIBLE FUTURE STRATEGIES DENMARK, NORWAY, SWEDEN AND GERMANY

FIGURE 5: *PRESENT STRATEGY POSITIONS OF PROGRESSIVE PARTIES AGAINST RIGHT-WING POPULIST COMPETITORS*

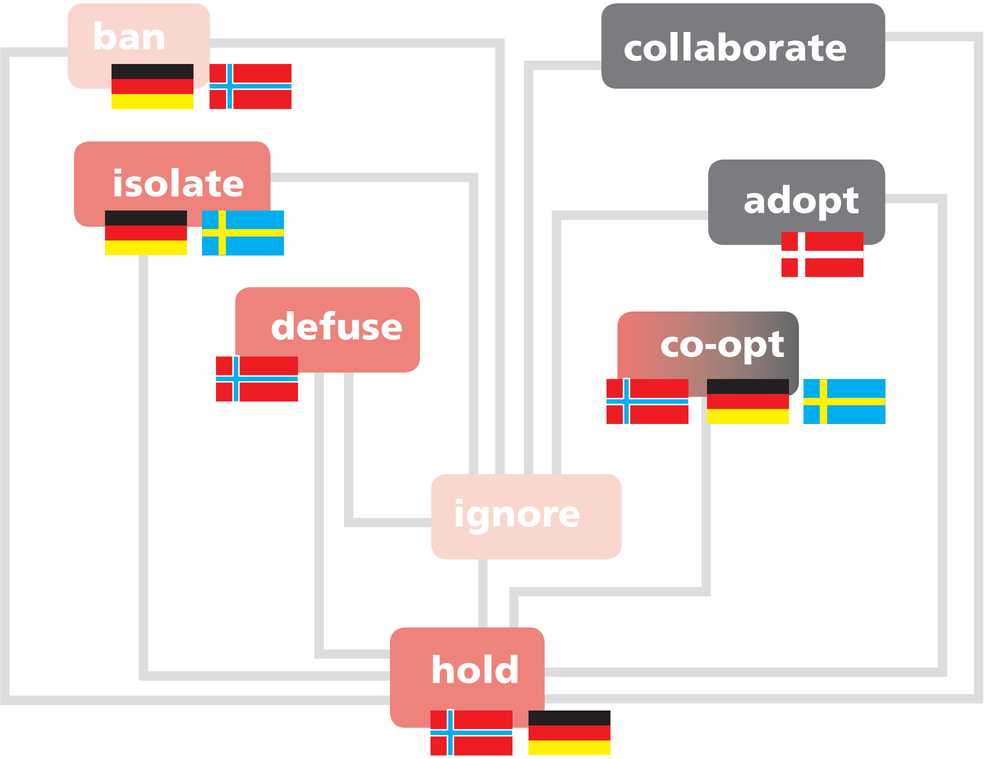
ban
collaborate
isolate
adopt
defuse
co-opt
ignore
hold

TABLE 6: *MAINSTREAM PARTIES’ RESPONSES TO RIGHT-WING POPULIST PARTIES (RWPP) (INCLUDING EMPIRICAL EXAMPLES)*

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	EMPIRICAL EXAMPLES
ban	• legal attempts to isolate, restrict, repress and even ban offending RWPP • altering the »rules of the game«: e.g. thresholds and other electoral rules; legal restrictions on symbols, speech, assembly and financing; party ban as »last card«	**NOR**: Broad vote of no-confidence against FrP minister in 2018 **GER**: Occasional attempts to change the rules of the game on federal and national level, supported by most parties
isolate	• political quarantine/»cordon sanitaire« • broad anti-extremist »blocking« or grand coalitions	**DK**: All mainstream parties and especially Social Democrats in the 1990s **NOR**: Conservatives in the 2000s **SWE**: All mainstream parties since 2010 (see e.g. December Agreement) **GER**: All mainstream parties until today
hold	• »stick to one’s guns«, hold on to own principles to win the argument • hold own position and maintain original principled strategy for electoral competition • believe in own power to persuade voters and to shape their preferences	**DK**: New Alliance in the 2000s **DK**: Social Democrats in the 2000s **DK**: Center-left government 2011-2014 **NOR**: Center-left government 2005-2013 **NOR**: Social Democrats until today **GER**: »Grand Coalitions« since 2013
ignore	• »do-nothing approach« of ignoring RWPPs • attempt to deny RWPPs the attention they seek (»deafening silence«) • »ignore it, and it will go away« logic	**DK**: All mainstream parties in the 1980s **SWE**: Mainstream parties until 2010

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	EMPIRICAL EXAMPLES
defuse	• lessen the impact of the RWPP's issues by talking about »own« issues • »reset« the political agenda • avoid engaging in debate on RWPP's issues (e.g. »conspiracy of silence« on immigration issues)	DK: Center-left government 2011-2015 NOR: Center-left governments 2005-2013
co-opt	• engage RWPPs directly on the issue(s) fuelling their electoral success by co-optation of their position(s) • recapturing the policy space lost by shift to the middle	DK: Center-left government 2014 DK: Social Democrats since 2015 NOR: Center-left governments 2005-2013 NOR: Center-right governments since 2013 SWE: All major parties since 2015 (except for the Left party including center-left governments since 2015) GER: »Grand Coalitions« since 2013
adopt	• change own position/strategy/rhetoric and com prehensively adopt that of the RWPP • »if you can't beat them, join them« logic	DK: Center-right governments 2001-2011; and again since 2015 NOR: Center-right governments since 2013
collaborate	• electoral, legislative and/or executive collaboration • formal or tacit agreements, coordinating support, establish cartels on a common list, buy the support of an RWPP to gain office	DK: Center-right governments 2001-2011; and again since 2015 NOR: Center-right governments since 2013

Sources: Bale et al. (2010); Downs (2012) – with modifications. Empirical examples: see country studies and analytical chapter in this volume.

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