Political Ads in the Swedish 2006 and 2010 Parliamentary Elections: Focus on the Sweden Democrats and the Role of Audiovisual Media

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Abstract
After nearly gaining representation in 2006, the nationalist right-wing party the Sweden Democrats entered the Swedish Parliament in 2010 following a heated election campaign. In their transformation from a peripheral enterprise into a Parliament party, audiovisual political ads played an under-examined yet crucial role. By analyzing the party’s use of political ads in the 2006 and the 2010 elections, this article shows that the use of audiovisual media differed drastically, in terms of budget, distribution and rhetoric, between the two elections. Furthermore, this article analyzes how the changing media landscape, from television to online video-sharing sites such as YouTube, became a central component in the negotiation of the Sweden Democrats media image. The article concludes that the Sweden Democrats, through their use of new media and the juxtaposition of different distribution platforms, further underlined their self-proclaimed outsider status in Swedish politics.

Keywords: Swedish politics, nationalism, political ads, television, new media
Introduction

In the election campaigns 2006 and 2010, the nationalist right-wing party the Sweden Democrats (SD) emerged as a difficult subject to handle not only for the parties already represented in the Riksdag (Parliament), but significantly also for various media outlets. For the former, a recurring topic of debate concerned which media strategy was most efficient: to ignore the at-the-time still marginalized party or to face their politics head-on. In press, television and online, meanwhile, the main question concerned whether SD’s advertisements were publishable or not. In the general election in 2010, SD entered Parliament after receiving 5.70 percent of the votes, much to the disappointment of large segments of the Swedish society.¹ On the day following the election night, demonstrations in Sweden’s major cities mobilized thousands of people upset with the election results (BBC News 2010). Noticeably, this was the first time since SD was founded in 1988 that it gained representation in the Parliament. During this election campaign, SD received much attention both from politicians and the media. Additionally, SD spent approximately 8 million SEK on public relations and media campaigns.² Although this puts them in the bottom half of the parties spending most on public relations, their spending is relatively high when considering that the party was not represented in Parliament at the time. In comparison, the two biggest parties outside of the Parliament, the Pirate Party (Piratpartiet) and Feminist Initiative (FeministisktInitiativ), each spent less than 300,000 SEK on their campaigns.

Public relations and media campaigns are becoming increasingly important. The fashion in which politicians act, speak, and craft their message constitutes the most central mode of persuasion in modern politics. In the book The Performance of Politics, sociologist Jeffrey Alexander astutely notes:

To enter into the state and to be in a position to pull the levers of organizational and material power, those who struggle for democratic power must first become authoritative. They gain authority by speaking on behalf of sacred values and against profane ones. By evoking such cultural valences, these claims for power gain legitimacy from citizen audiences before electoral decisions are made. (2010:282)

As the media is becoming the primary battlefield for politicians to gain such legitimacy, the fashion in which these messages are shaped is crucial to study in-depth. In this paper, I will
seek the answer to the question: how did the changing media landscape affect the Sweden Democrats media presence in the Swedish election campaigns in 2006 and 2010?

Although the political landscape at large formed the Sweden Democrats transformation from a peripheral enterprise into a Parliament party, their use of audiovisual political ads in a changing media landscape played an under-examined yet crucial role. By studying how the Swedish Democrats use filmic techniques, rhetorical devices, and different media platforms, I want to argue that by gradually going into polemics with major media actors, turning to alternative publication forms such as online media on the website www.sverigedemokraterna.se and the video platform YouTube, the party cemented their status as an alternative to the mainstream in Swedish politics.

**History of the Sweden Democrats**

Founded in 1988, the Sweden Democrats is a result of a merge of numerous nationalist and racist far-right organizations active in the 1980s. Sverigepartiet (The Sweden Party), Framstegspartiet (The Progress Party) and BevaraSverigeSvenskt (Keep Sweden Swedish) were three of the most prominent organizations in this unification (Rydgren 2004: 215), although the party also attracted members from white supremacy factions (Lodenius 2009: 15). In the mid-1990s, the party began their first attempts to wash away their ties to the Swedish national socialist movement. In fact, throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s, a large number of members with open Nazi and racist sympathies were dispelled from the party, while many left voluntarily for the more extreme far-right parties Nationalsocialistisk Front (National Socialist Front) and Nationaldemokraterna (The National Democrats) (cf. Larsson & Ekman 2001). Accordingly, this process was neither simple nor smooth.

From a rhetorical point-of-view, the Sweden Democrats began a process of anchoring their anti-immigration ideology with mainstream views about “welfare policy, taxation and so forth” (Hellström& Nilsson 2010:58). In other words, SD began focusing on the preservation of the Swedish welfare state widely recognized as Folkhemmet (The People's Home). In 1945, the Social Democratic Party, lead by Per Albin Hansson, was in sole majority in Swedish parliament. During the decades that followed, a welfare state was developed through a large number of reforms: raised people’s pension, universal health insurance, a comprehensive school reform and expansion of the child care system. The influence of the Social Democratic
Party during these years is widely recognized as extraordinary due to its dominance politically. Simultaneously, Sweden’s welfare society emerged as a role model both nationally and internationally (cf. Hägg 2005).

At the beginning of the 1970s, the Welfare society began to transform towards a more individualized neo-liberal society (Brodén 2008:1). While positive affirmations concerning *Folkhemmet* continued to circulate internationally during the period of transformation, a growing domestic critique was leveled against the Welfare society’s conformity and bureaucracy (cf. Salomon, Larsson & Arvidsson 2005). In the 1990s, meanwhile, the Swedish Financial Crisis (1990-1994), primarily caused by a credit bubble in the real estate market and rocketing debt among consumers, led to the welfare idea to be put under significant pressure. When Carl Bildt, Prime Minister and leader of the ruling Moderate Party, together with Ingvar Carlsson, the Social Democratic leader in opposition, co-signed an emergency plan to tackle this crisis, commentators have noted that the massive cut-downs that followed marked the end of the economic and welfare success of the welfare-state (cf. Minneryd 1996).

Today, political scientists and journalists alike highlight that nostalgia for the welfare state comprises a major part of the Sweden Democrats political rhetoric. As scholars Anders Hellström and Tom Nilsson argues, to defend the welfare state is "a strategy of good-by-association; they were good and, as we are like them, we must also be good" (2011:62). The authors further note that the reformation of SD along more moderate lines included a strong emphasis on a combination of “classic neo-Right rhetoric with a strong defense of the Social Democratic welfare model, which distinguishes it from other more neo-liberal oriented neo-Right parties” (59). According to sociologists Jens Rydgren and Anders Widfeldt the Sweden Democrats do not only emphasize immigration as a cultural threat, but centrally as a threat to the welfare-state model as a whole. For example, in the Sweden Democrats’ most recent motion concerning a reform of Sweden’s immigration politics, the assumed cost of immigration is weighed against the needs of other social groups in need of assistance:

> Mass-immigration and failed integration attempts have resulted in enormous costs. The result has been less leverage to invest in the welfare system and weakened ability to support people in real need of help in the world. (Åkesson 2011, own translation).
Rydgren and Widfeldt describe this argumentation strategy as “welfare chauvinism”, a populist approach where the needs of different groups in society are weighed against each other (2004:25).

Although the Sweden Democrats began a rebranding process already in the 1990s, the party led a peripheral existence gaining little attention in domestic politics. This is clearly reflected by their Parliamentary election results during this period: in 1994, the party gained 13,954 votes (0.25%); in 1998, they gained 19,624 (0.37%); and in 2002, they gathered 76,300 votes (1.4%). This would change in 2006 where the party had its major breakthrough on the national arena. In the next section, I will have a closer look at the 2006 election campaign and the fashion in which audiovisual media were mobilized to promote the Sweden Democrats.

2006 Election Campaign
In the 2006 election, the Social Democratic Party, often described as a “hegemonic force in Swedish politics”, lost the election to a Centre-Right Alliance comprising of four political parties: The Moderate Party (Moderaterna), The Liberal People’s Party (Folkpartiet), Centre Party (Centerpartiet) and The Christian Democrats (Kristdemokraterna) (Agius 2007: 585). Notably, in the 2006 election we witnessed an unprecedented increase of minor parties with parliamentary ambitions, even though none of them managed to actually secure seats in the Parliament. For instance, the Euroskeptic party The June List (Junilistan), which had managed to procure 14% of the Swedish vote in the European Parliament elections in 2004, gathered 0.5% of the 2006 vote. Whereas the Pirate Party (Piratpartiet), striving for reformed copyright laws, collected 0.6%, the Feminist Initiative (FeministisktInitiativ) gathered 0.7% of the vote. However, the party making the highest climb was the Sweden Democrats who gathered 2.93% of the vote, missing a seat in the Parliament with approximately 100,000 votes. According to the political scientist Christine Agius, “the proliferation of new parties contesting the election could also be seen as an example of dissatisfaction with the normal political blocs” (2007:599). In other words, the relative success of these parties could be interpreted as a protest against the traditional political opposition between the Left and Right-blocks.

In this section, I will investigate how the Sweden Democrats promoted their politics in the 2006 election. Specifically; I will focus on how the party made use of audiovisual media. It is
important to note two important shifts taking place around 2006: political advertisements became permitted on Swedish television and the video-sharing site YouTube became a factor for the distribution of political campaign ads. In contrast to many European countries where political campaign films are aired on the national broadcasting system as a public service, Sweden’s public service television station Sveriges Television (SVT) disallows commercials altogether. Whereas commercial Swedish television channels such as TV3 and Kanal 5 are based in Britain and follows British laws, which forbid political advertisements, a reform of the transmission permit for the Swedish commercial television network TV4 allowed them to air political campaign films already in 2006 (Borås Tidning 2006). Notably, there are no limitations regulating the amount of money parties can spend on political campaign ads for circulation in commercial networks such as TV4, much similar to the situation in the United States rather than the rest of Europe.

Concurrently, the birth of YouTube in 2005 constituted another novelty coinciding with the 2006 election campaign. In fact, already in July 2006, two months prior to the Swedish general election in September 2006, an article in US Today indicated “more than 65,000 videos are now uploaded daily … [and] YouTube boasts nearly 20 million unique users per month” (2006). However, YouTube’s role in Swedish politics was still quite peripheral which the fact that none of the parties in Swedish Parliament had established YouTube channels at the time of the election clearly indicates: the Moderate Party YouTube channel was launched in September 2006, the Left Party and the Centre Party followed in November 2006, the Social Democratic Party commenced in February 2007, the Green Party in July 2007, the Christian Democrats in September 2008, the Liberal People’s Party in October 2008, while the Sweden Democrats launched a WebTV service via YouTube as late as early 2010. Before this, SD’s videos were primarily circulated through their own website.

According to the magazine Expo, which the bestselling author Stieg Larsson co-founded to "counteract the growth of the extreme right and the white power-culture" and that the Millennium-trilogy revolves around, the Sweden Democrats spent, for a party outside of the Parliament, record-breaking 10 million SEK on promotion during the 2006 election campaign. However, as the Sweden Democrats Press Secretary Eric Myrin notes in an interview with the author, merely 100,000 SEK was spent on the production and marketing of audiovisual media, making up less than 1% of the total marketing budget (2012).
Nonetheless, as an element of the 2006 campaign, the Sweden Democrats created an audiovisual political ad, although given the relatively small sum invested in advertising the film, it neither gained widespread distribution on TV4 nor on online video-sharing services such as YouTube. Instead, the ad premiered on Thursday 31 August 2006 as part of TV3’s primetime investigative journalism program *Insider’s* special feature on parties outside of the Parliament before the general election on September 17. This clip differs from some of their other ads in the sense that the party itself produced it, and therefore it seems important to examine it in greater detail. The ad is a forty-five second segment consisting of 10 stills with various iconic shots of the Swedish landscape: in the first four shots, the Swedish archipelago, cairns, a yellow field of oilseed rape, and a sailboat with a lake in the foreground are seen. These images are followed by a medium-shot of a kitten sitting in front of a Falu red cottage (wooden houses traditionally colored with a deep red paint), a clear-blue beach, a pier, a close-up of a *Gärdsgårds*-fence, and lastly the Swedish yellow-blue flag against a clear-blue sky.

According to the Professor of Political Marketing Bruce I. Newman, a successful campaign necessarily communicates “a singular message that establishes the product’s or the president’s major virtue. It must convey this message in a distinctive way so that it is not confused with similar messages from competition” (1999: 93). In the case of this political ad, the final shot delivers the Sweden Democrats message in a clear fashion, with three intertitles reading: first, “Sweden is worth defending”; second, “Let Sweden remain Sweden”; and lastly, “The Sweden Democrats – Safeness and Tradition”. In contrast to the history of US election campaign films, which Joanne Morreale notes center much on establishing “a [Presidential] candidate’s character or credentials”, Swedish political campaigns tend to focus less on individual leaders and more on a distinctive singular political concept that the party in question desires to promote (1993:27). By relating iconic images of the Swedish landscape, nature and culture with the Sweden Democrats’ rhetoric, this film attempts to highlight the party as a safe keeper of “Swedishness”. Notably, the film uses images to capitalize on nostalgia for a Sweden that now is changing due to the transformations of the welfare state. Meanwhile, SD does not identify the threat against this idyllic place, but clearly mark that there indeed is a threat against this vision of Sweden. Moreover, the focus of the 2006 film correlates with the new party doctrine identified by Hellström and Nilsson:
According to the official party doctrine, Swedishness is today constituted by culture and not by race. Here SD has switched its focus from ethnicity to an emphasis on culture and impermeable cultural differences (2011: 61).

By focusing more on symbolically charged images and on the importance to preserve, it seems that this film becomes yet another sign of the rebranding process of SD’s anti-immigration rhetoric.

That a reverence of Swedish culture constitutes one of the major cornerstones in the Sweden Democrats politics is further signified by the music accompanying these images. The score for this film is the iconic Swedish hymn “Den blomstertid nu kommer” (Now the time of blossoming arrives), commonly referred to as an unofficial national anthem and often played in schools at Graduation Day and at other official ceremonies. Significantly, one must note that the Graduation Day ceremony nowadays rarely takes place in churches, emphasizing that Sweden is a secular state. Similarly, the last verses of this hymn, which have a clear Christian message, tend to be excluded when this song is performed in relation to these kinds of ceremonies. This has been met with sharp criticism from SD. By using a symbolically powerful song with connotations to official ceremonies and rituals, then, a sense of nostalgia is coupled with the Sweden Democrats politics. Additionally, there is no copyright law protecting the hymn, written by Israel Kolmodin and first published in 1695, and as such use of the song falls under public domain. This is important because artists, such as the winner of the Swedish round of the Eurovision Song Contest Roger Pontare, have previously attacked the Sweden Democrats for unlawfully distributing their music through the SD online web shop and using it in promotional material (Expo 2003). By using Kolmodin’s hymn, SD effectively eliminates the risk of critique from artists themselves.

Lastly, one must further note the poor production value of this election campaign ad; it does not include any original film material, but rather the short clip consists of a collage of still images. As we shall see in the following section, the 2010 election campaign highlights an altogether different philosophy of the importance of production value, for instance in terms of shooting, editing and distribution. Given that this was the first election in Swedish history in which television commercials were allowed, comparatively few parties focused on the television medium to run targeted ads, including SD. As we shall note in the next section,
however, there was a significant shift in 2010 where audiovisual media, published synchronously on both television and the Internet, became an important factor in the Swedish election, as all of the major Swedish parties began accommodating these media.

2010 Election Campaign

Having gained momentum in the 2006 election, gathering 2.9% of the vote, the Sweden Democrats became a hot potato in the election campaign 2010. On the one hand, the seven parliament parties were faced with the difficult question of whether or not to address the Sweden Democrats politics head-on, thus affording them attention from both the media and the public. On the other hand, a vibrant debate within the media community itself centered on the question of which of the Sweden Democrats’ views were indeed publishable within Swedish law. In print-media, for instance, the tabloid Aftonbladet published a debate article on 19 October 2009 written by SD’s leader Jimmie Åkesson that subsequently spurred controversy as the facts of the article were disputed and the Chancellor for Justice received complaints about Åkesson committing racial agitation.\(^6\) In the radio sector, the channel SBS Radio rejected SD’s commercial spot because of the use of the phrase “pull the emergency break on immigration” (Sverigedemokraterna 2010). On Twitter, the hashtag #svpol, short for Swedish politics, was overwhelmed with debates between the pro-SD and the anti-SD camps. Most attention, however, was warranted the controversy associated with the distribution of the Sweden Democrats 2010 election film on television.

On the 27\(^{th}\) of August 2010, TV4, Sweden’s biggest television network next to the national public TV broadcaster SVT, decided not to grant the Sweden Democrats airtime to screen their new political ad. Jan Scherman, CEO of TV4 and legally responsible publisher, took the ultimate decision to turn SD down. In a comment, Gunilla Gidefeldt, Director of Communications at TV4, says the channel made the judgment that the film most certainly breaks the radio and television-law’s democracy paragraph and most likely the racial agitation law as well. Gidefeldt clarifies: “We believe that there is a risk that we are breaking the law screening this film. We have communicated this to the Sweden Democrats and asked them to produce a new version of the film. We have not turned them down as advertisers” (Svedjetun2010, own translation). At the same time, according to the online magazine Dagens media, the advertising agency Alamo that produced the film, a one-man enterprise, received fierce critique from colleagues in the advisement industry. For example, Daniel Collin, CEO
of the agency MEC, commented: “The film is provocative. If I had been the legally responsible publisher, I had not taken on this project” (Schori 2010, own translation). In a comment, Anders Königsson, the man behind Alamo, responded to the criticism: “Yes, I stand behind the film but I do not support the message. I was only doing a job.” (Kärrman 2010, own translation)

In stark contrast to the 2006 election campaign, the Sweden Democrats invested well over 1,000,000 SEK on the production and circulation of audiovisual media in 2010 (Myrin 2012). According to the Sweden Democrats’ Press Secretary Eric Myrin, the films were produced for distribution via television, through TV4, and the Internet via their own website and their YouTube-channel (2012). With SD’s audiovisual advertisement budget being increased, the production value contrasts strongly with the 2006 low-budget approach to audiovisual advertisement. In 2010, the ad uses original film images, professional lighting, a detailed set, swift editing, multiple camera angles, and a range of professional actors. In the first shot, there is an intertitle showing a rapid countdown of the national budget, going from 500 billion SEK down to 100 million SEK in a matter of seconds.

The narrator comments: “Politics is about priorities. Now the choice is yours”. Following this, a medium shot showcases two separate piles of money. Whereas one pile is marked administration of pension funds, the other pile is marked administration of immigration. Furthermore, one must note that while there is a pile of 100 SEK bills behind the sign labeled immigration, there is nothing behind the label senior citizens. When the camera zooms out, a medium-shot shows that there is a huge stack of boxes on the side labeled administration of immigration, whereas on the other side comparatively there is relatively little paper work; this further symbolizes the view that immigration puts a strain on Swedish society. Following this, a red light is lit while a siren goes off indicating that the budget has hit a crucial low-point. In this sense, it seems that the main message of this film is to pit the needs of senior citizens against the needs of immigrants while emphasizing that the situation is rapidly becoming an urgent issue that requires political action. In the following shot, the camera angle and the lighting further juxtapose the two groups of senior citizens and immigrants. Whereas the former, represented by one elderly woman, wearing a beige coat, slowly pushing a walker in front of her, is cast in a bright, shiny light with close-ups of her facial expressions, a group of Muslim women, wearing Burkas and Niqabs covering their faces, is cast in a dim light. In this
sense, this shot brings forward the clichéd opposition between brightness and darkness, typically associated with the notion of good and evil.

In the final shot, a race transpires between the elderly woman and the large group of Muslim women, who simultaneously push a number of baby carriages in front of them. The fact that the women in the video not only are superior in number to the senior citizen, but also quite literally push a new generation of kids in front of them, draws on the aforementioned rhetorical trope that has become typical of SD in which immigration is highlighted as a threat to the welfare society. During the race, bombastic music, reminding of the music archetypically heard in action-packed film trailers, is playing, and further emphasizing a sense of urgency. In the final shot, two emergency brakes become visible, all the while the female narrator urges the voter to “pull the emergency brake on immigration”. That the ad includes a large amount of women clad in traditional religious garments ties into the Sweden Democrats rhetoric on a culture clash between “Swedish” culture and the immigrants’ culture. However, the fact that one religious group in the form of Muslims is singled out—identified through the distinctive garments the women in the film wear—was also the fundamental reason the Sweden Democrats election film was deemed unlawful and not publishable by the directors at TV4.

When the Sweden Democrats released their election film at a public press conference on August 26th, party official Erik Almqvist noted that the film would air for twelve days between September 6th and 17th, two days prior to the election, on TV4 and two other subsidiary channels called TV4 Fakta (Fact) and TV4 Sport (Sports) (SDwebbTV 2010). Synchronously, the film was published on YouTube. The controversy following this publication was immediate. For instance, Mona Sahlin, the leader of the Social Democratic Party in the 2010 election, commented on the film: “The film is atrocious, of course. It is the Sweden Democrats in a nutshell” (Baas 2010, own translation). The Press Secretary MajaFröman at the senior citizens organization PRO (PensionärernasRiksorganisation), which is politically independent, called the ad “horrible” and added that “there is no opposition between senior citizens and immigrants” (Skarin 2010, own translation). On August 27, the day after the Sweden Democrats held their press conference presenting the film to the public, TV4 made their decision not to allow distribution of the commercial. In an interview with the major daily newspaper Expressen, Jimmie Åkesson complained: “When there are three weeks
left until the election, and we have the chance to gain representation in the Parliament, it is remarkable that a television executive can arbitrarily decide which information the voters should receive” (Baas 2010, own translation).

On the editorial pages of Sweden’s leading daily newspapers, the Sweden Democrats’ ad was a major topic of debate. Whereas certain commentators centered on how the Sweden Democrats’ advertisement affected the debate climate in Sweden, others suggested that SD deliberately constructed a provocative film in order to become censored and stir debate. Five days later, on September 1, TV4 decided to allow a reedited version of the film. In terms of content, SD decided to remove the entire race between the elderly woman and the immigrants. Instead, a text appears on a blurred background, reading: “Censored by TV4. Watch the uncensored film at www.sverigedemokraterna.se”. This image lingers for over ten seconds, making up approximately one third of the total airtime of thirty seconds. By relocating the viewers from television to the Internet, the Sweden Democrats not only criticized the policies of the mainstream media in one of their main outlets, but also further emphasized their party as an alternative to the political norm.

With the 2008 US election campaign fresh in mind, and particularly President Barack Obama’s successful mobilization of social media, covered intensely in Swedish media, the Swedish Parliament parties all spent significantly more on their web presence than they ever had done before. For instance, by contrast to the 2006 election, all of the seven Swedish parliament parties were represented on YouTube at the start of the election campaign in 2010. Yet, when comparing the amount of views the eight Swedish Parliament parties’ most widespread election films received, it seems that the Sweden Democrats was by far the most successful one in attracting attention through this new media outlet. In fact, none of the films produced by the Moderate Party, the Liberal People’s Party, the Centre Party, the Green Party, the Christian Democrats or the Left Party managed to procure more than 100,000 views. Besides SD, the Social Democratic Party was the only party to do so, collecting 128,758 views for one single ad. This contrasts strongly with the attention paid to SD’s election film. Not only did it engage the highest number of likes, dislikes, and comments, but it also gathered more views than all of the other seven most popular ads combined. Notably, this table does not take into consideration the views gathered on the parties’ own websites.
Table 1. 30-second election films on YouTube. Statistics collected 2012-08-07

| Party                          | Views   | Likes / Dislikes | Comments        |
|-------------------------------|---------|------------------|-----------------|
| The Moderate Party            | 68,367  | 186 / 67         | 0 (disabled)    |
| The Liberal People’s Party    | 54,833  | 47 / 28          | 93              |
| The Centre Party              | 80,560  | 197 / 82         | 223             |
| The Green Party               | 34,808  | 68 / 29          | 97              |
| The Christian Democrats       | 31,295  | 40 / 36          | 0 (disabled)    |
| The Left Party                | 18,048  | 46 / 19          | 59              |
| The Social Democratic Party   | 128,758 | 169 / 339        | 10              |
| The Sweden Democrats          | 976,874 | 3346 / 3002      | 938             |

While the amount of views indicates that the Sweden Democrats did manage to distribute their commercial successfully, one must note that a significant part of both the comments and the likes were negative. In the article “Filmic experience”, film theorist Francesco Casetti notes that the act of watching movies is increasingly becoming an act of “doing” given that a central aspect of the experience is the building of a network of “sharing and exchange” (2009:64). Casetti continues, “choosing a film is, increasingly, a declaration of belonging … the spectator increasingly possesses the chance to manipulate the text that she/he is consuming” (64). Drawing on the vast amount of negative comments and the number of dislikes, to engage with the Sweden Democrats election film seems to have been of great importance even to individuals opposing their politics. In a sense, as media scholars Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau suggest in the introduction to their book The YouTube Reader, YouTube emerges as a “laboratory” in which users’ behavior and sentiments are recorded and projected back to them immediately (2009:16). Related to this notion, it is interesting to note that the Sweden Democrats film led to a number of ‘parasitical’ films being created both commenting on and remixing the original film’s content. For instance, many used YouTube as a way to counterattack SD using humor and instant web distribution as a distribution form. For instance, in a three-minute clip, uploaded on the 27th of August 2010, young stand-up comedian Melody Farshin sits in front of her computer while making jokes directed at the aesthetic and thematic structure of SD’s election ad. More specifically, her jokes centers on the stereotypical portrait the ad paints of Muslims. The video clip received over 100,000 views and almost 2,000 comments and the commenters’ field thus became yet another arena for debate between Internet users engaged for or against the Sweden Democrats. Another widespread YouTube-clip poking fun at SD, gaining well over 400,000.
views, capitalized on the “Hitler Reacts to…”-meme, with sound and images from the war film *Downfall* (*Der Untergang*, 2004, Oliver Hirschbiegel) intermingled with captions made by the user HumanistisktSverige (A Humanist Sweden). The clip shows Adolf Hitler (Bruno Ganz) intensely telling off his closest henchmen. This scenario is juxtaposed with sarcastic remarks about the Sweden Democrats chances in the election, following the publication of the ad, and in that sense showing their “true colors”. Moreover, other users uploaded remixed clips where multiple changes had been made to the original form of the ad. One clip published shortly after the election, claiming to be the “uncensored version” of the ad, manipulates the film in several ways: first, the iconic swastika symbol has been edited into the film; second, the non-diegetic texts have been edited to contain references to Nazi Germany; and lastly, the background music has been replaced with speeches by Adolf Hitler. While none of these clips surpassed the original film in terms of views, comments and likes, they did manage to procure a view count in par with the established political parties’ election films.

**Conclusion**

When comparing the election films in 2006 and 2010 based on Aristotle’s different modes of persuasion—ethos, pathos, and logos—it seems the ads’ rhetorical strategies strongly contrasts (Kennedy1991). First of all, the 2006 ad relies heavily on *ethos* to establish the reliability of the Sweden Democrats. For instance, by celebrating various aspects of Sweden, from the landscape to traditional forms of housing such as the Falu red cottage, SD showcases a reverence for Swedish culture and vows to protect it. When taking SD’s extreme right-wing past into consideration, it seems that SD uses *ethos* to persuade the voters that the party has an honest esteem for Sweden rather than an aversion for other cultures. This rhetoric contrasts strongly with the 2010 election film which predominately centers on using *pathos* to convince the audience. By pitting the needs of senior citizens against the needs of immigrants, SD’s message signals that the situation is unjust in today’s politics. By further leaving out concrete facts and figures altogether, instead using filmic techniques such as uneven lighting, grandiloquent music, and swift editing to enhance this rhetoric, it seems that the *pathos* of the film is enhanced whereas the *logos* appeal is basically non-existent. As documentary film expert Bill Nichols argues, “Once we embark upon the presentation of an argument, we step beyond evidence and the factual to the construction of meaning” (1991:117). In the case of the Sweden Democrats use of audiovisual media in the 2006 and 2010 Swedish election
campaigns, this paper serves as an indication of how these different rhetorical devices can be mobilized serving distinct political purposes.

At the same time, the meaning of the films is not merely shaped by how rhetorical devices are employed, but the fashion in which the films are distributed, censored, commented upon and remixed also plays an integral part. As I have shown, SD gradually shifted attention from whitewashing the party’s past to exploiting their outsider status in Swedish politics. In this process, the changing media landscape had a crucial role for the media image of the Swedish Democrats. First of all, in 2006, SD relied on the television media, producing an uncontroversial commercial that ultimately received limited attention from the public. In 2010, however, SD utilized the publisher’s qualms about distributing their film through the mainstream television channel TV4 by urging audiences to relocate to the Internet. As a result, their film received almost 1,000,000 views, a unique feat in the history of Swedish election campaign ads. While it remains unsure how the swiftly transforming media landscape will look in the general election 2014, the Press Secretary Eric Myrin has reported that the party will continue its investments in the production of audiovisual media: “We will and the money spent will increase” (2012). Drawing on this analysis of political ads in the 2006 and 2010 elections, one can conclude that the Sweden Democrats’ changed use of audiovisual media further underlined their self-proclaimed outsider status in Swedish politics.

Notes
1. SD gained 339,610 votes in total making them the sixth largest party out of eight in Swedish parliament. For further information, see: Sverigedemokraterna. 2012. Valresultat. In Sverigedemokraterna, 6 August. https://sverigedemokraterna.se/vart-parti/valresultat.
2. According to the newspaper SvenskaDagbladet, The Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokraterna) spent 72 million SEK, The Moderate Party (Moderaterna) spent 54 million SEK, The Liberal People’s Party (Folkpartiet) spent 33 million SEK, Centre Party (Centerpartiet) spent 33 million SEK, The Christian Democrats (Kristdemokraterna) spent 17 million SEK, The Green Party (Miljöpartiet) spent 16 million SEK and The Left Party (Vänsterpartiet) spent 7 million SEK. 1 million SEK is equal to approximately 150,000 USD. For further information, see: Gudmundsson, P. 2010. S förlorade trots störstreklambudget. In SvenskaDagbladet, 28 October.
3. In Sweden, a country with approximately 9.5 million inhabitants, a party needs to gain 4.0% of the vote to secure representation in Parliament. If a party reaches more than 12% in one district, it will gain representation even if it fails to gather 4% on the national level. For more information on the Swedish election process, see: Valmyndigheten. Elections in Sweden - In English. In Valmyndigheten(database online). Accessed 8 August 2012. http://www.val.se/in_english/general_information/index.html.

4. For further information on the Sweden Democrats in the 2006 election, consult: Expo. "Sverigedemokraterna." Expo. Web. 07 Aug. 2012. <http://skola.expo.se/sverigedemokraterna_107.html>.

5. "About Expo.” Expo. Web. 09 Aug. 2012. <www.expo.se>. For information on the Swedish Democrats expenditure on the campaign, consult: Expo. Sverigedemokraterna. In Expo. Accessed 7 August 2012. http://skola.expo.se/sverigedemokraterna_107.html.

6. The Chancellor of Justice did not decide to investigate the complaints. For further information, see: Justitiekanslern. Innehållet i en artikel i Aftonbladetharinteansettsutgörahets mot folkgrupp. Rep. no. 6460-09-31, 23 October 2009. Accessed 1 August 2012. http://www.jk.se/beslut/XmlToHtml.asp?XML=Files/6460-09-31.xml&XSL=./xsl/JK_Beslut.xsl.
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