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Supply Equals Success? The Sweden Democrats' Breakthrough in the 2006 Local Elections

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ABSTRACT

The Swedish party system has been one of the world's most stable, and anti-immigrant parties have been largely absent from the centre-stage of Swedish politics. It is thus peculiar that an anti-immigrant party, the Sweden Democrats (SD), made a dramatic breakthrough in the 2006 local elections, gaining representation in 144 out of 290 municipalities. The purpose of this article is to explain why the SD gained representation in almost half of the Swedish municipalities. Results indicate support for a supply-oriented argument: whether the SD ran with a formal ballot or not has a substantial and statistically significant effect on their probability of receiving representation even when a series of variables, suggested by previous research, is controlled for. The result has important ramifications, since it implies that no obvious socioeconomic factors, e.g. local 'fertile grounds', brought SDs success about. Rather, what decided its fate was whether or not the party had an organizational presence and actual candidates running for seats.

Keywords:

Anti-immigrant parties, elections, Sweden

INTRODUCTION¹

The Swedish party system has been one of the most stable in the world throughout the history of modern democracies. In fact, it has been somewhat of a textbook illustration of Lipset's and Rokkan's (1967) 'freezing hypothesis': the same five parties occupied all seats in the Swedish Parliament, the *Riksdag* between 1921 and 1988. However, after the 1988 election there has been some de-freezing at the national level. The Green Party gained representation in 1988, and even though it lost representation in 1991, the party made a comeback in 1994 and have had seats ever since. The Christian Democrats and New Democracy entered the *Riksdag* in 1991. However, the populist New Democracy lost all representation in 1994. Subsequently the organization gradually dissolved (Westlind 1996), and today, it is fair to say that the party has ceased to exist.²

In light of populist, anti-immigrant party success in neighbouring countries such as Norway and Denmark – who share many of Sweden's demographic and political characteristics – it is peculiar that anti-immigrant parties³ have had a hard time to establish themselves in Sweden (cf. Green-Pedersen & Krogstrup 2008; Green-Pedersen & Odmalm 2008; Art 2006; Rydgren 2002; Fryklund & Peterson 1981).⁴ That being said, in 2006 the anti-immigrant Sweden Democrats (SD)⁵ made a remarkable breakthrough in local elections. The party gained representation in 144 out of 290 Swedish municipalities, a substantial increase compared to the 2002 elections, when it only gained seats in 29. In the *Riksdag* election, the party did not receive enough support to get above the threshold of 4 percent necessary to obtain

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² To demonstrate that New Democracy has vanished from the political limelight in Sweden, one can note that the party got *six* handwritten [sic!] votes in the 2006 election.

³ Many researchers have dubbed these parties as 'radical right wing' parties. However, we agree with Fennema (1997) and Van der Brug and Fennema (2007) that such parties are more correctly categorized as 'anti-immigrant'. They cannot be easily fitted into the left-right divide, and their only common denominator is their attempt to sell the anti-immigrant issue to the voters.

⁴ New Democracy was undoubtedly populist, anti-immigrant and right-wing. However, they never succeeded in establishing themselves on the political scene, and organizationally, it would be hard to argue that they constituted a viable political party organization for more than one electoral period (i.e. 1991–1994).

⁵ Even before their modest success in 2002, the SD was mentioned as the 'most important political party outside the national parliament' (Larsson and Ekman 2001). The party was founded in 1988. To briefly give a feel for the party's politics, one can note that it has intimate historical affiliations to outright racist and Nazi movements in Sweden. In fact, Larsson and Ekman's (2001) detailed mapping of the party's origins leaves no doubt that those who founded the party in the late 1980s were deeply tapped into neo-Nazi networks (for example the notorious *Bevara Sverige Svenskt* [Keep Sweden Swedish] movement).

representation. However, with 2.9 percent of the votes, it got entitled to financial support until the next election in 2010.

Together with stronger finances, the attention the party subsequently received has spawned further success. When all other major parties report rapidly declining membership figures, the SD are on the rise. Allegedly, membership rose from 1.802 on January 1, 2006 to 2.913 on January 1, 2008, i.e. with 62 percent (*SD-kuriren* 14.1.2008). In addition, throughout the first half of 2008, many polls indicated that over four percent of Swedish voters would cast their votes on SD in national elections (cf. *Svenska dagbladet* 23.08.2008; *Expressen* 09.05.2008; *Expressen* 06.03.2008). If there was an election today, chances are that Sweden would get an anti-immigrant party in the *Riksdag*.

Previous research has highlighted the relative absence of anti-immigrant and populist parties from the Swedish electoral arena.⁶ The SD breakthrough in the 2006 local elections thus deserves closer scrutiny. Firstly, precisely because anti-immigrant parties have had a hard time making their way into the Swedish electoral arena, the SD success is surprising and in demand of explanation. Secondly, since anti-immigrant party success challenges popular theoretical notions within political sociology (i.e. Lipset's and Rokkan's [1967] 'freezing hypothesis' and Inglehart's [1977, 1990], postmaterialist ditto, [cf. Veugelers 1999]), we maintain that alternative theoretical tools must be employed to make the SD breakthrough in 2006 comprehensible. Thirdly, because the SD made such a dramatic increase in support from one election (2002) to another (2006), the case is well suited for developing hypotheses regarding the electoral fates of new political parties.

The purpose of this article is to answer why the SD gained representation in 144 out of 290 municipalities in the 2006 local elections. We do this by complementing the dominating approaches in the field by outlining a supply-oriented argument. As it turns out, we demonstrate that our supply-oriented approach constitutes an important factor if one wants to understand the SD breakthrough in 2006, *even* when 'usual suspects'-variables are controlled for.

The article proceeds as follows. First, we present a review of the dominating perspectives on new party emergence and success in general, and anti-immigrant ditto in particular. Here,

⁶ From here on we simply call these parties 'anti-immigrant parties'.

we criticize previous research for overestimating the power of demand-oriented explanations, and conversely for underestimating the role played by anti-immigrant organizers and campaigners, i.e. those actually supplying anti-immigrant programs to the voters. Secondly, we present our supply-oriented argument, and formulate the theoretical expectations it implies. Thirdly, we empirically test how well our supply-oriented argument fares at explaining SD success in the 2006 election. Lastly, we conclude by summarizing, drawing out our main conclusions and briefly engaging with some alternative explanations we are not able to account for here.

COMMON EXPLANATIONS AND THEIR LIMITATIONS

Several individual studies have tried to explain the emergence of, and success for, new parties in general. A subgenre within this field has tried to do the same for anti-immigrant parties. Running the risk of treating the many nuances in the literature unfairly, we will nevertheless sort the dominating approaches in the literature into three main categories:

- Institutional explanations
- 'Existing supply' explanations
- Demand-oriented explanations

Institutional explanations generally relate to Duvergers (1954) 'law', which emphasizes that electoral systems have decisive effects on the structure for party competition, and hence on the composition of party systems (see also Sartori 1976). Electoral systems applying plurality rule in single-member districts are expected to tend towards the domination of two large parties, whereas proportional (PR) electoral systems will have a propensity of generating a larger number of parties. These expectations find support in empirical studies (e.g. Farrell 1997; Lijphart 1994; Taagepera & Shugart 1989). Willey (1998) uses these instruments, and concludes that new parties are more likely to emerge in PR-systems with large districts, while PR-systems with small districts tend to have more stable party systems. In a similar vein, Bolin (2007) finds that electoral systems are important factors when explaining why new parties enter national parliaments.

In line with this reasoning, several scholars have concluded that the degree of proportionality in the electoral system affects the fates of anti-immigrant parties (e.g. Golder

2003). According to Jackman and Volpert (1996) high electoral thresholds, and low degrees of proportionality in the electoral system, dampen the prospects of anti-immigrant parties to gain representation, whereas more proportionality increases their possibilities. Furthermore, Arzheimer and Carter (2006: 423) maintain that the territorial organization of states – i.e. the degree of centralization – is another institutional variable that explains the long-term fate of anti-immigrant parties. More centralized political systems seem to decrease the likelihood of their success.

But can such instruments be used to answer our particular research question, i.e. to explain why SD made their way into 144 out of 290 local councils in the 2006 local elections? It is important to note that institutional theories are first and foremost capable of explaining *spatial variation at one point in time* between political systems with *different institutional configurations*. However, longitudinal changes *within the one and the same political system* seem to escape the scope of inquiry of the institutional perspective. In order for this perspective to be able to explain why the SD made their breakthrough in the 2006 local elections, one would have to demonstrate that relevant institutions – e.g. rules regarding the electoral system – have undergone changes, so campaigning and working within a non-established party became less costly and/or more lucrative. However, no evidence supports such assertions. Although institutional perspectives have proven successful at explaining spatial variation, and the varying fates of new parties under different institutional settings, we conclude that these theories are *not* the most appropriate tools when it comes to answering the research question at hand.

Theories emphasizing *the failure of established parties*, i.e. **‘existing supply’ explanations**, are widespread when it comes to attempts to explain the fortunes of anti-immigrant parties. Katz’s and Mair’s (1995) description of the emergence of the cartel party probably represents the most famous version of this notion (cf. Blyth & Katz 2005). Cartelization of the established parties implies that they have distanced themselves from civil society, and subsequently lost touch with party members as well as voters. As a result, the gap between parties and their constituencies widens. According to Katz and Mair (1995: 24) this gap runs the risk of being filled by so called anti-system parties, such as anti-immigrant parties exploiting anti-immigrant sentiments (cf. Blyth & Katz 2005: 55). The established parties, thus, are on a potential losing streak, and the secluded cartel of parties is continuously

threatened by party entrepreneurs looking for new issues, not addressed by the cartel, to exploit.

When explaining the emergence and success of anti-immigrant parties, it is hard to disregard explanations that refer to the premise that established parties, at least in some respect, are failing. This notion is hard to disregard because the primary argument on which it is based is so intuitive, i.e. that new parties emerge when established alternatives fail (e.g. Lawson & Merkl 1988; Hauss & Rayside 1978). The failure, or sheer unwillingness, of old organizations to change and adapt to new demands, opens up spaces between the established organizations. These spaces – in turn – may become exploitable sites for new organizations.

However, at least two objections can be raised against what we here call the ‘existing supply’-approach. Firstly, since the explanation is so intuitive, it almost becomes tautological. If the party organizations already occupying the market for political parties are *perfectly adaptive* to changes in voter preferences, and do *handle public resources* in competent manner, there would be no incentives for individuals to form new parties or for the electorate to vote for non-established parties. Secondly, theories concerned with the failure of established parties are silent about the micro foundations of the purported explanation, for example concerning the motives of party entrepreneurs. Even if established parties fail (*do not* adapt to changing preferences, *do not* canalize public demands to operative political decisions, and *do not* handle public resources optimally), with the consequence that demands for new political parties arise in the electorate, there is still no good reason for individuals to invest money, time, energy and social status in the high cost (and often socially stigmatizing) project of forming a new anti-immigrant party. The free-rider problem appears (Olson 1971), and thus, in order to avoid functionalist reasoning, the proponents of this perspective need a theory that *highlights the role of individuals organizing new parties*. The failure of established parties cannot, by themselves, explain the emergence and success of new political parties, such as the SD. The failure of established parties must therefore be seen as a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for a new anti-immigrant party to gain success.⁷

What about **demand-oriented explanations**? When explaining the emergence and success of new parties in general, scholars typically relate to Inglehart’s (1990) studies on post-material

⁷ One of the few scholars who takes micro foundations seriously in this context, and truly remedies the neglects of the ‘existing-supply’ perspective, is Hug (2001), who applies a game-theoretical approach to party emergence.

values, i.e. the upsurge of demands for freedom, self-expression, and quality of life (cf. Kitschelt 1995; Harmel & Robertsson 1985).⁸ Explanations with this particular focus, however, often presuppose that value change in the electorate automatically generate parties based on post-materialist, and anti-authoritarian, values (i.e. neoliberal, environmentalist and/or feminist parties). These theories are terribly ill suited to explain the success of anti-immigrant parties (e.g. Veugelers 1999).

On the other hand, there are several demand-oriented explanations that are tailor-made to explain the fortunes of anti-immigrant parties. These typically focus on resentments, and frustrations among the voters (cf. Betz 1993). The emergence of social problems as a consequence of, for example, increasing immigration and rampant unemployment, have made many scholars believe that voters will be increasingly prone to make new, not seldom outright xenophobic, anti-liberal, anti-system and anti-immigrant demands (e.g. Coffé et al 2007; Kestilä 2006; Jesuit & Mahler 2004; Golder 2003; Rydgren 2002; Lubbers et al 2002; Karapin 1998). Moreover, the dynamics of globalization and demands for welfare retrenchment have been considered to be a major source of frustration, and hence of new and potentially radical demands from frustrated segments of the electorate (Betz & Swank 2003).

In empirical research, the independent variables of demand-oriented explanations are thus often associated with structural conditions and socio-economic factors of various sorts. Typically, the share of immigrants, crime- and unemployment rates and education levels are held to be 'usual suspects' believed to explain the differing fortunes of anti-immigrant parties (cf. Kestilä 2006). As explanations to the success of new parties, however, they seem flawed. They cannot account for the relative failure or relative success of radical anti-immigrant parties, at least not by themselves. As Rydgren (2002) points out, in the 1990s Sweden experienced both high levels of immigration and unemployment, without seeing any successful anti-immigrant parties. In fact, such demand-oriented variables fall short of explaining why the SD made their huge breakthrough in 2006, and not in 2002 or in 1998. In the 1990s, Sweden got larger shares of immigrants and the unemployment rates rose but the upswing of the SD occurred in 2006. There is no reason to believe that the demand for SD-like policies in the electorate were significantly different at the 2006 election compared to previous ones (e.g. Demker 2004, 2005).

⁸ Inglehart has, to our knowledge, never explicitly analyzed party emergence or new party success, although a hypothesis along this line of reasoning is suggested in Inglehart and Flanagan (1987: 1300f).

What was different in 2006 was that there now was a viable supply of an anti-immigrant party to vote for in many of the municipalities, i.e. there was a product on display on the market for votes with a potential to attract dissatisfied voters, and there were actually local campaigns trying to sway voter preferences in an anti-immigrant direction. Consequently we maintain that demand-oriented variables should, at best, be seen as necessary conditions for anti-immigrant parties to gain representation. To gain *de facto* representation, however, there has to be such an organization in place, setting up formal ballots and actually running for election, so that the electorate has a *de facto* chance to vote for it in the first place. Thus, we strongly maintain that one needs to complement the demand-side explanation with a supply side ditto.⁹

All in all, the demand-oriented explanation is narrowly focused on structural, socio-economic, variables relating to different characteristics in the electorate. However, these explanations tend to ignore the supply-side of the story, i.e. the campaigners and movement organizers who *de facto* organize, and make the anti-immigrant parties available to the voters. Demand-oriented explanations are also limited, since they do not take into account that established political parties are able to *control* the political agenda and *adapt* to changing preferences in the electorate (e.g. Mair 1983). Lastly, demand-oriented explanations are sort of functionalist in the sense that they do not take into account that since political parties are producers of collective goods, groups demanding political parties face a collective action problem. Hence the free-rider problem appears, and reminds us that we should not expect every new political cleavage in the electorate to have its own political organization.

Although some of the arguments within the *institutional explanations*, the '*existing supply*' *explanations* and *demand-oriented explanation* are relevant, their respective shortcomings do not qualify them as theoretical points of departure for the empirical investigations required to answer our question, i.e. why SD gained representation in 144 out of 290 municipalities in the 2006 local elections. The causal mechanisms argued to be at work in these streams of literature will not take the centre stage in our own attempt to explain the success of SD.

⁹ Already in 2002 Rydgren implied precisely this, and wrote: 'an upcoming protest party [...], with sufficient appeal, might very well change this situation', that is Sweden's status as a country without influential anti-immigrant parties (Rydgren 2002: 46). Obviously, in retrospect, Rydgren seems to have been proven right. The mechanisms bringing this change about, nevertheless, are invisible through the lenses of a demand-oriented perspective, and needs to be complemented by a supply-oriented one.

ANTI-IMMIGRANT PARTY SUCCESS: A SUPPLY-ORIENTED APPROACH

A fictive example serves as a starting point for the formulation of our argument. Picture a society where there are 290 supermarkets. In these supermarkets, only seven brands of soft drinks have been on display in the cold counter throughout the years up to some year (say, t_0). Ergo, not surprisingly, only these seven brands are sold – with varying degrees of popularity – to the customs in all supermarkets. At t_1 , however, a new soft drink producer decides to establish its brand, but does only have the financial resources to deliver it to, and advertise it, in 132 of the 290 supermarkets. Subsequently, after t_1 , between four and ten percent of the customers in these 132 supermarkets begin buying the new soft drink. In the remaining 158 ones the customers do not know about the new brand through advertisement, and are not even physically given a chance to buy it. Thus, the customers continue to buy one of the good old seven ones that always have been supplied in the remaining 158 supermarkets.

If we'd ask you to give your first best shot at explaining why four to ten percent buy the new brand in 132 of the 290 supermarkets, what would your answer be? If we are correct in our assumptions about how most people think about these things (that is, in a simple, straightforward manner) chances are that your answer would be something like: 'Well, the new brand has its relative success because it constitutes a *real alternative* in 132 supermarkets, and not in the other 158.' As far as simple and parsimonious explanations go, we think that they do not have to be more complicated than this. And, in line with Poppers (1992) credo, we think one ought to try to keep explanations as simple as they possible can.

This brief example illustrates the thrust of our argument. We do not doubt the prerequisites drawn by the demand-oriented perspective. Needless to say, customer preferences *are* indeed often important. There most likely has to be some, real or potential, demand for anti-immigrant parties in order for such parties to gain electoral success.¹⁰ In Sweden, like

¹⁰ We write 'most likely' because it is not self-evident that there has to be an *ex ante* demand for new political parties for them to succeed. There are reasons to believe that, for example, advertisements, campaigning by cajoling and persuading, and/or charismatic leaders can influence voter preferences. Two influential scholars – Schattschneider and Schumpeter – have made similar arguments when stressing politicians' abilities to affect voter preferences. Schattschneider (1960: 66, 69, 102) developed the concept 'mobilization of bias' to underscore that social scientists ought not to analyze political parties as solely mirroring the political conflicts that may exist between social classes in a given society. Instead, political parties and politicians must be analyzed as *active subjects* with the ability to mould public opinion. Schumpeter (1976: 270), on his hand, used the concept 'the manufactured will'

elsewhere in contemporary Western Europe, there appears to be at least some kind of market for anti-immigrant programs. For example, in 2007, 23.3 percent of the Swedes reported that they would be willing to support a political program that restricts immigrants' rights, and 30 percent of them maintained that ethnic Swedes should take precedence over immigrants when allowances and jobs are distributed among Swedish inhabitants (*Integrationsbarometern* 2007). However, as necessary as these prerequisites may be, we argue that they are *not sufficient* in order to understand why anti-immigrant parties emerge and gain electoral support. There must be an organization in place that supplies an anti-immigrant program and local campaigning for the demand for such politics to have electoral consequences.

How is it possible to make our simple and intuitive supply-oriented argument researchable? How can we test if our approach provides an explanation to the SD breakthrough 2006? In the following, we make the case that what contributes to the explanation of SD-representation in local councils after the 2006 is whether or not they ran with a formal ballot. Hence, we maintain that an important factor in the explanation of SD representation in a local council is that they actually had an organization in the municipality, and *not* that there is anything 'socio-economic' that distinguishes the municipalities where SD got representation from the ones where they did not gain seats.

EXPLAINING THE SWEDEN DEMOCRATS' SUCCESS IN 2006

Does our theoretical story hold for empirical scrutiny? We want to examine whether the SD is more likely to reach council representation in those municipalities where they ran for election with a formal ballot, e.g. where they actually had a ballot with nominated candidates. Theoretically, running with a formal ballot should increase the probability for electoral success because it is:

- A signal to the voters that there is a *de facto* supply of physical SD candidates ready to take place in local councils in the municipality
- A proxy for whether or not the SD had a formal organization in place locally actually campaigning and actively trying to affect voter preferences.

to capture a related phenomenon, i.e. that political parties actively can affect and mould the public opinion.

In the 2006 elections, the SD ran with formal ballots in 132 out of 290 municipalities. The party gained representation in 79 percent of them. At first glance, this lends initial support to our proposed argument. Among the municipalities where the SD ran with a ballot *without* nominated candidates, they only gained seats in 25 percent of them. This suggests that running with a formal ballot increases the probability that the SD acquires representation in the municipal councils.

Still – at least this is what advocates of the demand-oriented perspective would lead us to believe – it could well be the case that the SD only chooses to run with a formal ballot in municipalities where the demand for an anti-immigrant party is more profound than elsewhere. Consequently one would suspect that, after all, it is resentments among large segments of the electorate that causes anti-immigrant parties to run with a ballot. Therefore, if the demand-oriented perspective is right, one would find that representatives of the SD decide to run with formal ballots where demand for anti-immigrant policies is believed to be high.

We therefore obviously need to control for proxies for anti-immigrant demand, i.e. local contextual socioeconomic factors that, according to previous research, increases the probability of success for anti-immigrant parties. If we perform such a test, do we still find that a formal ballot increases the likelihood of SD receiving council representation? The purely demand-oriented theories suggest that once we control for these factors, the effect of SD running with a formal ballot would if not disappear, at least diminish considerably.

In order to carry out the task at hand we estimate a statistical model using data from the Swedish municipal elections in 2006. Hence, the units of analysis are Swedish municipalities. There are several reasons why municipalities are well suited for this kind of analysis. Since the electoral system is the same in all municipalities, and the legal framework is identical in other relevant respects as well, we keep the most interesting institutional aspects constant. Moreover, Swedish municipalities are homogeneous in other theoretically relevant aspects, most importantly, perhaps, when it comes to political culture, at least compared to differences between nations. This should further aid us to isolate the effect of running with a formal ballot.

The dependent variable in our model is whether the SD reached council representation or not, since it is *actual political representation* we are interested in. We argue that this is the most interesting, politically relevant variable, since it is the actual *presence* of the SD in local councils that has potential to have actual political implications.¹¹ The reference category for ‘The SD ran with a formal ballot’ is that they did not run with a formal ballot, and the variable is based on information provided by the Election Authority in Sweden (*Valmyndigheten*). Since the dependent variable is dichotomous, the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables is not linear, and therefore logistic regression is applied.

The probability that SD gains municipal representation is thus assumed to be a function of the variables in the model. However, the non-linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables makes it somewhat more difficult to interpret the estimates. This is due to the fact that the effect of a change in one independent variable on the outcome probability depends on the levels of all other independent variables. Yet, this is of lesser concern in this case since we are primarily interested in the effect of one independent variable, namely the effect of running with a formal ballot (1=yes, 0=no). The other independent variables are mainly included in the model in order to control for other potential causes for the success of the SD. The rationale is to expose our supply-oriented argument to a test by including some variables that have been deemed important in previous studies.

In the literature review above, we briefly outlined the logic behind the demand-oriented perspective. Which variables, then, have been discussed in previous explanations of anti-immigrant party success?

- Firstly, the share of immigrants in a given society is commonly seen as an important explanatory variable (Arzheimer & Carter 2006; Rydgren 2002; Kitschelt 1995). The share of the population born outside the Nordic countries is therefore included as a control variable. Information about country of birth comes from the Swedish population register (Statistics Sweden) and is based on the population 18 years and older in 2006.

¹¹ However, our choice of this dependent variable does not acquit us from *also* checking if our argument has bearing on the continuous variable ‘percentage of votes for the SD in the 2006 elections’. As illustrated by table 2 in the appendix, our argument fairs quite well here as well.

- Secondly, a society's crime rate has typically been seen as a factor fostering success of anti-immigrant parties, since these often campaign on issues such as 'safer neighbourhoods'. Furthermore, they often frame the problem of crime as an issue solely caused by immigrants. Although this explanation is most often put forward by public commentators rather than in scholarly work, it has been mentioned in academic studies as well (cf. Smith 2004, Bauer et al 2000). Therefore, 'number of reported crimes per 1000 inhabitants' is included in the model.
- Thirdly, formal education is thought to be a pertinent factor influencing the willingness to vote for anti-immigrant parties (Kitschelt 1995). The so-called 'losers of modernity' – i.e. people without higher education, which have a hard time competing on an increasingly globalized labour market – are hypothesized to be more likely to support such parties than others (Kestilä 2006; Betz & Immerfall 1998). Thus, *lack of higher education* is included as a control variable. The operationalization is based on the share of the population with post-secondary education, between 18 and 74 years of age, according to Statistics Sweden's education register in 2006.
- Fourthly, 'losers of modernity' generally have low-skilled, and most of the time, low-paid jobs. People with lower incomes (often so called 'blue collar workers') could thus be assumed to be more prone to support anti-immigrant parties than high paid workers (cf. Gilljam & Holmberg 1993: 203). The share of the population with low incomes is therefore included in the model. The variable is operationalized as the percentage of the population from 18 years in the first income quintile, according to Statistics Sweden's income- and taxation register of the year 2005.
- Fifthly, the share of unemployment is also an obvious 'usual suspect' in the demand-oriented literature. Even though previous research is unclear about the effect of unemployment (cf. Arzheimer & Carter 2006), Kestilä and Söderlund (2007) find conclusive evidence that unemployment indeed fosters a demand for anti-immigrant parties. Accordingly, this variable – based on data from Swedish statistics from 2006 – finds a place in our model.

Theoretically, then, higher rates of unemployment, foreign-born persons, low-income earners and reported crimes would be expected to increase the probability for SD to gain council representation. If we look at these control variables, four of them are expected to have positive effects. However, a larger share of highly educated people would, according to previous research, give a lower probability for SD reaching municipal councils. Our own theoretical argument does, however, maintain that *SD running with a formal ballot* will have a strong effect even when these variables are controlled for. What we now want to see is how our own proposed argument fairs when the 'usual suspects' identified in previous studies are controlled for.

Table 1: *What explains SD-representation in local councils after the 2006 elections?*¹²

Independent variables	Parameter estimate	Changes in probability	95% confidence interval
(i) The SD ran with a formal ballot	2.99*** (0.38)	+0.63	+0.52- +0.74
(ii) Percent born in other than the Nordic countries	0.05 (0.04)	+0.36	-0.14- +0.86
(iii) Number of reported crimes in 2005	0.01* (0.01)	+0.53	+0.12- +0.94
(iv) Percent with post secondary education	-0.11*** (0.03)	-0.74	-0.87- -0.61
(v) Percent with low incomes	0.12* (0.06)	+0.42	+0.04- +0.79
(vi) Average unemployment in 2006	-0.57*** (0.16)	-0.68	-0.91- -0.44
Constant	-0.77 (1.43)		
Log Likelihood	-138.63		
Pseudo-R ²	0.31		
N	290		

Note: * Significant at the 0.1 level, ** significant at the 0.05 level, ***significant at the 0.01 level. Parameter estimates are unstandardized logit coefficients. Entries in parentheses are standard errors. Changes in probability are the estimates of the discrete changes in probability for SD receiving representation when an independent variable changes from its empirical minimum to its empirical maximum while all other independent variables are held constant at their mean. The 95 % confidence interval concerns the estimates of changes in probability. Odds ratios are (i) 19.85, (ii) 1.05, (iii) 1.12, (iv) 0.90, (v) 1.01, (vi) 0.57.

The results of the statistical model are presented in table 1.¹³ The effects of the independent variables are presented as coefficients and changes in probability (associated odds ratios are presented in the note to table 1).¹⁴ A positive coefficient means that a higher value of the independent variable leads to higher probability of the outcome, i.e. that SD receives representation. In the table, we also present estimates of the discrete changes in probability for SD receiving representation when an independent variable changes from its empirical minimum to its empirical maximum, while all other independent variables are held constant

¹² To check if there is a problem with multicollinearity, we have estimated the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The VIF ranges between 1.2 and 2.2 for the different independent variables. There is no consensus for when the VIF is too high. However, a common rule of thumb is that if VIF is below 5 (some have proposed 10), no serious problem with multicollinearity exists. Our estimated VIF is well below that threshold.

¹³ Descriptive statistics for the independent variables are found in table 3 in the appendix.

¹⁴ An odds ratio above 1 means a positive effect, and below 1 means a negative effect on the outcome.

at their mean. These estimates are of course theoretical constructions that in some cases could seem a bit far-fetched (e.g. it is not likely that the share of highly educated would change from the empirical minimum to the empirical maximum without affecting the share with low incomes). Still, the estimates of discrete changes in probability will hopefully help to shed some light on the potential magnitude of the variables included in the model.

The model lends support to the supply-oriented argument i.e. that running with a formal ballot raises the probability for the SD to obtain council representation. If all other independent variables are kept constant at their mean levels, the probability that the SD gains council representation increases from 21 to 84 percent if they run for election with a formal ballot. In other words, as table 1 demonstrates, the model estimates an increase in the probability by 63 percentage points when the party ran with a formal ballot. Thus, even when local contextual socio-economic variables are controlled for, the effect of SD running with a formal ballot has a substantial effect on their probability to gain representation.¹⁵ The associated odds ratio (presented in the note to table 1) is 19.8. This means that the odds for the SD of getting representation are almost 20 times bigger if it runs for election with a formal ballot compared to if it does not.¹⁶

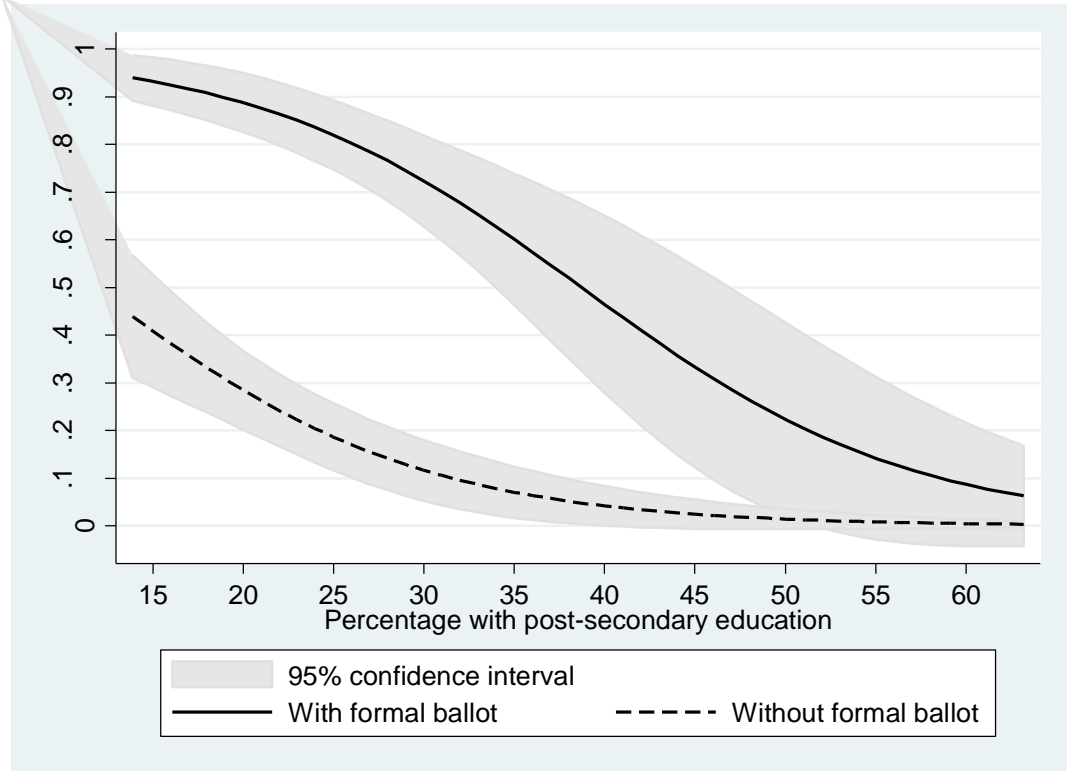
With one exception, all other variables have estimated effects in the expected direction. The model indicates that larger proportions of non-Nordic residents increase the probability for SD to gain representation. However, the effect is far from significant. The number of reported crimes and the share of the population with low incomes seem to have a positive effect on the likelihood of SD gaining representation. The changes in probability are quite big, but both effects are only significant at the 0.1 level. The effect of unemployment is, however, not in the expected direction. Our model indicates a relationship in the opposite direction. In fact, the model indicates that a higher rate of unemployment has a negative effect on the probability of SD receiving representation.

¹⁵ As mentioned earlier, the SD received representation in 79 percent of the municipalities where they ran with a formal ballot and in 25 percent of the other municipalities, i.e. a discrete change in probability of approximately 54 percentage points.

¹⁶ Another way to examine if there is something to our theoretical argument is to see whether or not running with a formal ballot in local elections *also* increases the support for the SD in the 2006 national elections. Table 4 in the appendix presents such a model. Indeed, it turns out that running with a formal ballot locally strengthens the support for the SD even in parliamentary election. This lends further support to our basic argument, that supply, i.e. party entrepreneurs and/or local activists should not be neglected when trying to explain the success for new political parties.

In line with results from previous research, the percentage with post-secondary education has a clearly significant effect on whether the SD gained representation or not (even at the 0.01 level). It appears as the higher the share of people with educational attainment in the population, the less likely it is that the SD gains representation in municipal councils. The model estimates that changing the percentage with higher education from the empirical minimum to the empirical maximum decreases the probability by 74 percentage points, when all other independent variables are kept at their mean. Although this indicates a strong effect, it should be noted that a change from the empirical minimum to the empirical maximum is an enormous change. In this case it refers to an increase of the percentage with higher education from 14 to 63 percent. It is thus difficult to compare the effect of SD running with a formal ballot with the effect of higher education in the population. This is partly due to that one of these variables is dichotomous whereas the other is continuous. Nevertheless, figure 1 illustrates the effect of these two variables on the probability of SD receiving representation, and the relationship between them.

Figure 1. Probability of the SD obtaining representation by percentage with post-secondary education and if the SD ran for election with formal ballot or not



Comment: the probability is predicted using the model presented in table 1 and keeping all other variables constant at their mean.

Figure 1 illustrates the effects of education, and running with a formal ballot simultaneously, while keeping all other independent variables at their mean. The mean value of the

education variable is 24 percent. Around that value the effect of SD running with a formal ballot is profound, as mentioned earlier. Furthermore, in 90 percent of the municipalities the percentage with higher education is less than 35 percent, i.e. they are in the left hand side of the figure where the effect of SD running with a formal ballot is, as displayed by the figure, still strong.

CONCLUSION

The thrust in the argument we have presented here is that previous research on the emergence and success of new parties has underestimated the role of activists, campaigners, organizers and agitators in the initial electoral success of new parties (cf. Anheier 2003; Hedström et al 2000). To demonstrate this, we analysed a surprising empirical development in one of the worlds' most stable party systems, the Swedish one where the anti-immigrant Swedish Democrats made sudden breakthrough in the 2006 election and obtained representation in 144 out of 290 municipalities.

To test if there is anything to our argument, we maintained that an important, yet overlooked factor, in explaining the SD breakthrough, is whether or not they ran with a formal ballot, *regardless* of any socioeconomic local prerequisites. It turned out that our argument fares well. The party gained representation in 79 percent of the 132 municipalities where they ran with a formal ballot. Even when relevant demand-oriented, socioeconomic variables (i.e. income-levels, employment rates, education-levels, non-Nordic residents, crime-rates) were controlled for, the effect of running with a formal ballot is still an important explanatory factor. We maintain that these results are found because formal ballots not only are (i) a crucial signal to the voters that there *de facto* are physical SD candidates ready to take place in local councils in the municipality, but also (ii) a proxy for whether or not the SD had a formal organization in place campaigning and articulating the anti-immigrant program.

But what does our result really say? Isn't it borderline-tautological to state that running with a formal ballot will increase the chances for representation? Our answer is negative. We maintain that the ramifications of our proposed argument, and the results supporting it, are much more important than one might believe at first glance. To be precise, it implies that public commentators, and many social scientists that have had opinions in this matter, may

have underestimated the true potential of anti-immigrant programs in Sweden. Bear in mind that the SD only ran with formal ballots in 132 of Sweden's 290 municipalities. We argue that running with a formal ballot is a crucial signal to the voters that there is a local supply of physical SD candidates, and it can also be viewed as a proxy for the local presence of local campaigning and anti-immigrant policy articulation. At the time of the 2006 election, the formal supply of SD programs and local campaigning was only present in less than half of the municipalities. Given our results, there seems to lay some grain of truth in the suspicion that demand for anti-immigrant politics may have exceeded the *de facto* supply of them.

To make a simple calculation, based on the assumption that supply of SD formal ballots is more important than socioeconomic factors, and that the SD actually would have had the organizational power to supply formal ballots in all of them, SD might have gained representation in ca 230 municipalities rather than the 144.¹⁷ Our argument that supply (e.g. formal ballots) matters for success therefore says something crucial about (a) the importance of local political activists that locally *organize, pack and present* real political alternatives for the electorate to actually vote for, and (b) that the voters that are attracted by SD politics may not be so socioeconomically marginalized and politically extreme as suggested by previous research.¹⁸

A few words of caution. There are two objections that that we haven't been able to engage with sufficiently in this article. Firstly, a representative for *the failure of established parties*-perspective could ask if we really can take the failure of established parties for granted as a necessary condition for new party-success. What if there is a substantial local variation between the Swedish municipalities in the way established parties (a) manage their mandates, (b) handle the public resources, and (b) manoeuvre the threats posed by local, anti-immigrant parties? And what if it is actually *the varying qualities* of local, established parties to take care of these things that, when all is said and done, decide the fortunes of anti-immigrant parties?'

¹⁷ In fact, if we assume that SD would have run with a formal ballot in all municipalities, *ceteris paribus*, the expected value of our predicted probabilities suggests that they would have received representation in 232 out of 290 municipalities.

¹⁸ In fact, this is what Sannerstedt (2008) concludes in his pioneering, explorative analysis regarding the characteristics of the typical SD voter. SD voters are not socially marginalized: they have a rather good income, a gymnasium degree and are likely to be married or in a relationship. Furthermore, they seem to place themselves in the middle of the left-right divide.

Secondly, Christopher Green-Andersen and colleagues (Green-Andersen & Krogstrup 2008; Green-Andersen & Odmalm 2008) have presented analyses on why immigration became an important political issue in Danish national politics in the 1990s, but not in Sweden. They explain this by saying that the different strategic situation of the mainstream right-wing parties in the two countries determines whether or not the immigration issue becomes politicized. They reason like this: Typically, a focus on the immigrant issue leads to a conflict within the centre-right cluster. In Sweden, a politicization of the immigrant issue would undermine mainstream right-wing attempts at winning government power. On the other hand, in Denmark, Social Liberals governed with the Social Democrats in the 1990s, and this configuration made it attractive for mainstream right-wing parties in Denmark to bring the immigration issue to the fore. Hence, they increased their chances to win government power based on the support of anti-immigration parties. This, in turn, paved the way for success for the latter parties. If this argument is transported to the Swedish local context in 2006, Green-Pedersens argument might be that SD success depends on whether or not established centre-right parties deliberately have tried to politicize the immigration issue in the municipalities where SD gained representation.

Our response to these two objections is that they seem to be valid arguments. However, to our knowledge, there is at present no good way to reliably measure these things, i.e. the varying 'failures' of established parties between the municipalities, and whether or not centre-right parties have politicized the immigration issue in some municipalities but not others. Until someone has collected reliable data that can measure these things in the 290 municipalities, so that these potential important factors can be included in a statistical model, we maintain that our supply-side argument is an important explanatory factor if we want to understand why the SD managed to gain their relative success in the 2006 election.

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Appendix

Table 2: *What explains SD share of votes in 2006 local elections? Estimates from OLS-regression.*

Independent variables	Parameter estimate
(i) The SD ran with a formal ballot	0.026*** (0.0029)
(ii) Percent born in other than the Nordic countries	0.001** (0.0003)
(iii) Number of reported crimes in 2005	0.0 (0.0)
(iv) Percent with post secondary education	-0.0008*** (0.0002)
(v) Percent with low incomes	0.0008 (0.0005)
(vi) Average unemployment in 2006	-0.0021 (0.0013)
Constant	0.0086 (0.0128)
Adjusted R ²	0.31
N	290

Table 3: *Independent variables: Descriptive statistics.*

Independent variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
(i) The SD ran with a formal ballot	0.46	0.50	0	1
(ii) Percent born in other than the Nordic countries	6.79	4.74	1.52	36.07
(iii) Number of reported crimes in 2005	99.39	29.64	36.92	216.64
(iv) Percent with post secondary education	23.81	8.22	13.89	63.18
(v) Percent with low incomes	19.85	2.57	12.88	28.01
(vi) Average unemployment in 2006	3.41	1.14	1.2	7.2

Table 4: *What explains SD share of votes in 2006 elections to parliament? Estimates from OLS-regression*

Independent variables	Parameter estimate
(i) The SD ran with a formal ballot	0.012*** (0.0020)
(ii) Percent born in other than the Nordic countries	0.001*** (0.0003)
(iii) Number of reported crimes in 2005	0.0 (0.0)
(iv) Percent with post secondary education	-0.0009*** (0.0001)
(v) Percent with low incomes	0.0009** (0.0004)
(vi) Average unemployment in 2006	-0.0034*** (0.0009)
Constant	0.0304*** (0.0086)
Adjusted R ²	0.28
N	290