

The Impact of the Swedish Populist Radical Right on the Immigration Agendas of the Established Parties and their MPs

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Abstract

Although the impact of Populist Radical Right Parties (PRRPs) on public policy, so far, seems to be limited and unevenly scattered around European countries there are signs that PRRPs increasingly will find themselves in better positions. The electoral trend is positive and more often than before these parties are invited to join the executive. Moreover, while impact on public policy is rare, recent research suggests PRRPs have been more successful on lower analytical levels. Against this background this paper aims to break new ground by making a contribution to the scholarly literature on the impact of PRRP in three distinctive ways. First, a theoretical argument that holds that PRRP impact is a sequential process where impact on lower analytical levels is necessary before impact on higher level could be realized is developed and subjected to a preliminary empirical test. Second, the study goes beyond earlier research that has primarily dealt with impact on public policy and parties, by also testing whether individual politicians are influenced. Third, the empirical analysis is conducted on the Swedish case of PRRP impact on immigration agendas of the established parties and their MPs, i.e., a case, so far, only rarely studied. The empirical analysis finds that the SD has not yet been able to influence the immigration agendas of the established parties. However, there are some signs that suggest that some parties MPs has initiated a change.

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Introduction

Even though the electoral success of populist radical right parties (PRRPs) in Europe sometimes is exaggerated, few would dispute the fact that the general trend is positive and has been so for the last decades. At the same time the impact of PRRPs on public policy, so far, seems to be limited and unevenly scattered around European countries. However, although PRRP impact on public policy seems to be marginal it is too soon to rule out that that these parties matter. First, there are signs that PRRPs increasingly will find themselves in better positions. On the one hand these parties are gaining electoral ground and thereby parliamentary support. On the other hand this progress is actively acknowledged by other parties and has in some countries resulted in invitations to participate in government or to act as support parties (e.g. Akkerman & de Lange, 2012).

Second, recent research show that impact has been gained on other analytical levels. It has, e.g., been suggested that the positions of the established parties have been successfully influenced (Abou-Chadi, 2014, Han, 2015, but see Akkerman, 2015). At the same time, albeit only mentioned in passing, it has been suggested that PRRP impact is to be regarded as a sequential process in which impact must take place at lower analytical level before higher levels will be influenced (Mudde, 2013).

Against this background this paper aims to break new ground by making a contribution to the scholarly literature on the impact of PRRP in three distinctive ways. First, a theoretical argument that holds that PRRP impact is a sequential process where impact on lower analytical levels is necessary before impact on higher level could be realized is developed and subjected to a preliminary empirical test. Second, the study goes beyond earlier research that has primarily dealt with impact on public policy and parties, by also testing whether individual politicians are influenced. Third, the empirical analysis is conducted on the Swedish case of PRRP impact on

the immigration agendas of the established parties and their MPs, i.e., a case, so far, only rarely studied (however, see Bolin, Lidén & Nyhlén, 2014, Folke, 2014).

The paper proceed as follows. First, a short overview of the literature on PRRP impact is conducted in which it is argued that while PRRP impact in general, so far, is rather limited there are signs that the preconditions to attain influence are getting better. Second, the concept of impact is discussed before I present the theoretical argument in the third section that holds that PRRP impact necessarily must be attained at the lowest analytical level, i.e. individual politicians, before impact could be reached at higher levels such as parties and public policy. In the fourth section the Swedish case is presented before I go on and present the data and method of the analysis. In the penultimate section a preliminary empirical analysis of how the immigration agenda of Swedish parties and MPs has changed 2002-2014 is presented before the paper is wrapped up with a discussion and some concluding remarks in the final section.

Impact of PRRPs

While the bulk of research on PRRPs deal with how to explain their success (or failure), an increasing body of literature has instead moved on to ask questions about whether it matters that these parties actually electorally proliferate. However, although an increasing number of studies have dealt with the overarching question of whether PRRPs matter, it still seems fair to say that research in this area is in its infancy (Mudde, 2007, 277). This study aims to contribute to this second-generation of research on PRRPs (Bolin, Lidén & Nyhlén, 2014).

Reviewing the literature on PRRP impact on public policy, we find a number of successful cases (Green-Pedersen & Odalm, 2008, Zaslove, 2004). However, overall the impact seems to be rather limited (Mudde, 2013, Duncan, 2010, Akkerman, 2012). More specifically, it is argued that the general pattern towards more restrictive policies in regard to immigration and integration, that could be identified in many European countries, is not primarily a consequence of the electoral success and pressure from PRRPs but mainly a result of actions taken by the

mainstream right-wing parties (van Heerden, de Lange, van der Brug & Fennema, 2014, Mudde, 2013). However, while evidence of PRRP impact, so far, is weak and only found in some countries, a number of circumstances suggests that this relative failure potentially will not last.

First, while the party family's electoral success often is exaggerated, the long-term trend undisputedly signals that these parties are increasing their vote and seat share in many countries. All other things equal, this would also raise these parties possibility to gain impact. Second, although historically these parties has been met with fierce resistance and disgust from the established parties, relations has gradually been relaxed and, in some countries, normalized. Whereas governmental participation long was exceptional events, early instances such as the executive experiences of FPÖ (2000-2006), Lega Nord (2001-2006) and List Pim Fortuyn (2002-2003) (Akkerman & de Lange, 2012) recently has been complemented with further signs that the PRRP are increasingly invited to the mainstream. In 2013 the Norwegian Progress Party entered a coalition government with the Conservative Party (Allern & Karlsen, 2014) and in 2015 the Finns Party was invited to take place in the new Finnish government lead by the Centre Party (also including the National Coalition Party). These developments also point in the direction of increasing chances of impact.

While these developments certainly should not be seen as deterministic or irreversible, it seems possible, or even likely, that if these trends continue the impact of PRRP should increase rather than decrease. Moreover, while impact seems to be marginal in regard to public policy, several studies find that PRRPs fare better when lower analytical levels are scrutinized (Abou-Chadi, 2014, Han, 2015). Against this background, I argue the impact on these levels should be theoretically and empirically elaborated further. Hence, this paper deals with PRRP impact on the immigration agenda on two analytical levels – individual politicians and parties. While the latter to some extent has been covered in the literature, I am not aware of studies dealing with

the question of whether PRRPs influence the analytical level below – the individual politicians. Before I turn to the theoretical argument of the paper, let me first define how impact is defined in this paper.

What is impact?

Despite, or perhaps as a consequence of, the relative immaturity of the research area, there are aspects in need of clarification. First, the concept of impact sometimes suffers from a conceptual confusion in which it is only rarely spelled out that impact comes in different forms. Second, there is virtually no discussion in regard to if and how different forms of impact are related to each other.

Here, I define PRRP impact as an outcome that comes about as a consequence of the presence or actions of the PRRP (cf. Carvalho, 2014, 9). That is, counterfactually argued, if it not had been for the PRRP the outcome would not have been brought about. However, impact could take different forms. Schain (2006), for instance, argues parties could influence both directly and indirectly. While direct influence is having ‘policymaking capacities’, typically by virtue of being a part of the government, indirect influence could be described as policy change resulting from the mere existence of the PRRP. This takes place, for instance when one or more of the established parties change their positions with the goal of (re-)gaining votes from the PRRP.

While the distinction between direct and indirect influence, intuitively, appears straightforward, empirically it seems hard to substantiate what kind of, if any, impact that is observed (Mudde, 2007). Moreover, even if we buy such a dichotomy, and equate direct impact, e.g., with influence generated by being a government partner, indirect impact could be regarded to be conceptually stretched (Sartori, 1970). What is needed, I argue, is to define well-demarcated entities for analytical purpose in order to be able to empirically analyse if, and what kind of, impact that has been reached.

Such a distinction in different analytical levels is present in the literature, albeit not always explicit. While some studies, e.g., analyse whether public policy, i.e. decisions made in government, are influenced by PRRPs (e.g. Akkerman, 2012) others are focused on party positions, as for instance measured by election manifestos (e.g. Abou-Chadi, 2014). Yet others primarily deal with whether media is influenced (van der Brug & Berkhout, 2015). In his recent review on the impact of PRRPs, Mudde (2013) more explicitly, than what often is the case, apply a framework where he differentiates between four aspects of impact: influence on people, parties, policies and politics (see, also Carvalho, 2014, who distinguishes between impact on public attitudes, inter-party competition and policy). While arguably not being the main claim of his article, Mudde also seems to assert that impact on these different analytical levels are related insofar as impact on higher levels could not be reached unless impact on lower levels first has been attained. In the next section this claim is further elaborated.

Finally, there is also an important distinction between impact on position and impact on salience. That is, potentially the electoral success of a PRRP could cause changes in the position on immigration as well as how much the issue is politicized. This study will take both of these into account.

How impact comes about

One basic premise of this study is that PRRPs hold more restrictive positions on immigration as well as emphasize the issue to a further extent than all other parties. This implies that in order to detect impact we must identify change in the position and/or salience in the immigration agendas of individual politicians and parties. If no change has taken place, no substantial impact could have taken place.

In line with Harmel and Janda (1994) I argue that party change does not ‘just happen’ but must be caused by something. Although Harmel and Janda highlight that change could be a result of leadership change and/or change of dominant coalition within the party, this study primarily is

interested in the impact of the third aspect of their framework, i.e. external checks such as electoral defeats. More precisely, it will empirically scrutinize whether politicians and parties changes due to the electoral threat of a PRRP. While Harmel and Janda propose that change is dependent on the primary goals of the party, it seems reasonable to assume that all parties to some extent find electoral losses as a failure. Specifically, it seems more likely that parties that are electorally threatened by the PRRP are more inclined to induce change (e.g. Marthaler, 2008). While mainstream centre-right parties are those most frequently cited, there are also studies that suggest that also the mainstream centre-left has changed towards a more restrictive stance on immigration (Bale, Green-Pedersen, Krouwel, Luther & Sitter, 2010, Downs, 2011). In the end, however, this is an empirical question.

In theory, established parties could apply different strategies to meet an electoral challenge from a PRRP. One possible strategy is to ignore the new party. Such a ‘clean hands’ approach is based on the calculus that in doing this the challenger will not attract the attention that it needs (Downs, 2012, 32) to electorally surge, that is, it will fail to penetrate the ‘visibility filter’ (Sikk, 2006, 28). This approach is similar to the dismissive strategy of Meguid (2008), who argues that if a party refrain from taking a position on an issue this signals the unimportance of the issue to the voters. However, the established parties could also chose to engage with the PRRP and its core issues. By taking a position on immigration, the legitimacy of the PRRP core issue is acknowledged. Such an engagement strategy could either be through convergence - an accommodative strategy - or divergence – an adversarial strategy (Meguid, 2008).

Hence, drawing on Harmel and Janda as well as Downs and Meguid it seems reasonable to expect that PRRP impact comes about if, and when, an electorally threatened party changes as a consequence of a an engagement strategy. However, while an adversarial issue only raise the importance of the core issue of the PRRP an accommodative strategy does this and bring the party closer to the PRRP.

While Mudde (2013, 6) suggests that it can be assumed that influence is obtained in an order where people are first influenced, “leading to a response from the mainstream parties [...], which introduced new policies [...] and thereby possibly changing the whole political system”, he does not in any detail discuss how impact on one level is related to other levels. Neither is the assumption empirically tested. However, drawing on this rather short note it is proposed in this paper that these different types of impact is not independent of each other but instead could be interpreted as a ladder of impact. In other words, impact on higher analytical levels could not be obtained if it has not been realized on lower levels first.

However, since Mudde equates ‘people’ with public opinion, one important revision of his claim is proposed. While political parties in many normative accounts are expected to be responsive and articulate the will of the people (e.g. Dalton & Wattenberg, 2002), there are both theoretical and empirical reasons to dispute that impact on parties only could take place after impact on public opinion has been realized. Theoretically, of course, a party is not in any legally sense obliged to follow the attitudes of the people. Empirically, there are many accounts of parties diverging from the opinions of the voters. This holds especially if it concerns issues, such as immigration, that is weakly related to the left-right political dimension (Widfeldt, 2014, 1)

Nonetheless, based on premises drawn from methodological individualism explanations must ultimately be anchored in actions taken by individuals (Elster, 2007, 36). Hence, while people, as in ‘public opinion’ is not the primary subject of this study, arguably another ‘people’ must necessarily be influenced before change in the agendas of parties takes place. This is, of course, the politicians of the party. If no one within the party proposes changes, certainly the party will not change. While Harmel and Janda argue change of party leadership could be a driver of agenda change, recent findings suggests that also existing leaders can impose change as a consequence of a change of mind (Bale & Partos, 2014). However, potentially, proposals and

actions by all politicians at a higher level might affect the party stance in the longer run. This line of reasoning fits nicely with how others have noted how parties are constrained by its members. While, of course, the constraints put on the party leadership varies across parties, by default parties are influenced by the opinion of its members. Nonetheless, some scholars have noted that parties that are more constrained by its members are less likely to react to new challenges from other parties (Meyer, 2013, 25). As a consequence, we should expect that, all other things equal, member-oriented parties, typically mass parties, would react to electoral threats less swiftly than parties where the leader(s) have more of discretion.

In sum, based on the elaboration of different theoretical contributions above, this study sets out to empirically test the sequential model of PRRP impact which holds that if no change in the agendas of MPs take place, nor will the party alter its position or salience on immigration.

In order to empirically test this proposition we first need to identify which party or parties that could be expected to change its agenda, i.e. are electorally threatened by a PRRP. This is done in the next section where also the Swedish case is presented.

What to expect from the Swedish case?

Sweden was for a long time a deviant case in terms of PRRP electoral success. Despite one of the most generous immigration regimes of Europe, a large inflow of immigrants, and a significant share of voters sympathizing with more restrictive immigration laws, PRRPs was absent from the national political scene. While the neighbouring, often regarded most similar, countries of Denmark and Norway saw the formation and electoral successes of the right-wing populist Progress parties in the beginning of the 1970s, Sweden was still after the 2006 election virtually without any experience of PRRPs at the national level. While the New Democracy party managed to enter the national parliament in 1991 its demise and disappearance from the political scene was as fast as its rise. After being formed only six months ahead of the 1991

election, internal disruptions before the next election of 1994 made the party more or less obsolete.

However, already early on, research on the failure of PRRPs found the conditions to be rather favourable (Rydgren, 2002). Still, however, a number of important obstacles remained. On the demand-side, the economic left-right dimension, to a larger extent than in many other countries, continued to structure voting behaviour which meant that other political dimensions has been of minor importance (Bergman & Bolin, 2011). Hence, although a large minority of the Swedish voters is, and has been, sceptical of Swedish immigration policy (Sandberg & Demker, 2014), the issue was for long not extensively politicized (Dahlström & Esaiasson, 2011). Further, and equally important, the absence of a competitive PRRP also indicates that for long there was a shortage of supply. Recent research corroborates this as it finds that the organizational development of the SD has been crucial for its increased electoral success (Bolin & Loxbo, 2014, Erlingsson, Loxbo & Öhrvall, 2012).

The SD was formed in 1988 by a merger of different outright racist movements and was during its first decade a marginalized party unable to even win one per cent of the votes nationally (Larsson & Ekman, 2001). Although the party managed to win scattered parliamentary inroads at the local level, it was not until 2002 it won more than 1 per cent of the votes nationally (see Table 1). While failing to enter the national parliament in 2006, its 2.9 per cent of the votes nationally and, even more importantly, the fact that the party won seats in almost half of the local councils, are by many regarded to be their first real electoral breakthrough (Bolin, 2012, Widfeldt, 2015).¹ In the following 2010 election it also gained its first (20) seats in the parliament. In the last election, 2014, the party was hugely successful and was able to win almost 13 per cent of the votes and thereby becoming the third largest party in Sweden (Aylott

¹ Sweden holds elections to the national, regional and local on the same day, the second Sunday in September every four year.

& Bolin, 2015). In sum, the electoral development of the SD is remarkable. The share of votes has virtually been doubled in each election.

Table 1: Election results of the Sweden Democrats, 1988-2014

	1988	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2014
Votes, parliament	0.02	0.09	0.25	0.37	1.44	2.93	5.70	12.86
Seats, parliament	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	49
Seats, local parliament	0	2	5	8	49	266	612	1324

Since the 2010 parliamentary entry of the SD and its successful 2014 election the PRRP now seriously challenges the established parties. Still, however, we do not know much about to what extent, if any, the rise of the SD has had any impact on the established parties. In order to theoretically derive expectations for an empirical evaluation we also need to assess *who* could be expected to be influenced and *when*.

Given that research, so far, only have found limited support for PRRP having impact on public policies and politics, a focus on lower analytical levels seems to be wanted. This specifically holds in the Swedish context since the country for a long time has been regarded to have a consensual tradition of generous immigration policies (Abiri, 2000). As a matter of fact, this pattern was reinforced after the entry of the SD in the national parliament when a framework agreement on a liberalization of Swedish immigration policy was concluded between the centre-right government and the Green Party. According to the then Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt of the Moderate Party one reason to strike a deal was to prevent xenophobic forces from

influencing migration policy (Bolin, Lidén & Nyhlén, 2014).² Paradoxically, hence, although the SD, not only won its first national seats but also the crucial balance of power position between the now two well-established political blocs (see, Aylott & Bolin, 2007), immigration policy in some parts changed in a more generous direction. Therefore, arguably it seems as if no substantial PRRP impact on public policy has taken place. Still, however, we cannot rule out the electoral fortunes of the SD have influenced lower analytical levels.

Long were there no reactions from the established parties to the electoral inroads of the SD. Instead, the first reactions could best be described as a dismissive strategy where SD was ignored as, e.g., illustrated by the fact the SD was not invited to participate in public debates with any of the established parties.³ Although the Social Democrats as early as 2003 begun to discuss how to strategically meet the SD, it openly declared its strategy was to silence the SD. Initial responses from the other big party, the Moderates were similar (Kiiskinen & Saveljeff, 2010).

The dismissive strategy was accompanied with little interest from the media. One study, e.g., shows that the SD was given less publicity during the 2006 election campaign than other parties without national representation that even failed to reach 1 per cent of the votes (Asp, 2006).

The SD election result of 2006, however, seems to have had repercussions on the strategic considerations of the established parties. While individual politicians already during the election campaign voiced demands of more active opposition towards the SD, it was not until during the parliamentary period 2006-2010 the ignore strategy officially was changed to one of engagement. As a consequence of the continued electoral surge of SD both the Social

² Already in 2008 did the centre-right government and the Green Party struck a deal that liberalized the rules regarding labour immigration (Widfeldt 2014).

³ An important exception, however, was the debate between Lars Leijonborg, the leader of the Liberal Party, and Sten Andersson, a former Moderate MP who just had changed party to the SD and thereby became something of a front figure in the 2002 election. Leijonborg, however, was severely criticised for doing this as it gave them publicity (Kiiskinen & Saveljeff 2010)

Democrats and the Moderate Party had to acknowledge that the ignore strategy had been unsuccessful. Instead, the PRRP had to be actively responded in debates (Kiiskinen & Saveljeff, 2010). The electoral surge was also mirrored in the sharp increase in interest from the media (Bolin, 2012, 240). Also, while debates between representatives from the established parties and SD people had been held on single occasions it was during this period that it became a quite common feature of Swedish Politics. Party leader Åkesson, e.g. was given the chance to debate against party secretaries from both the Moderate Party and the Liberal Party as well as the party leader of the Social Democrats on national television (Bolin, 2012, 239). Overall, it is fairly obvious that the former dismissive ignore strategy had been abandoned at the expense of engagement. Still, however, cooperation with the SD was not a real option. Instead, all other parties from left to right was united insofar as the PRRP should be held at an arm's length.

In general this position also did prevail during the next parliamentary term. Although the inflow of asylum seekers was the highest since the early 1990s and opinion polls continuously revealed that the support for SD was increasing, public policy remained generous. Only a month ahead of the 2014 election PM Fredrik Reinfeldt held a controversial speech where he urged the people of Sweden to 'open their hearts' to the large inflow of refugees seeking asylum in Sweden. He also found it important to note that this would put a strain on Swedish economics which meant no costly election pledges could be made. While the speech was widely criticized for confirming the view of the SD and therefore to favour its position in the campaign, it seems as if the speech did not in any significant way influence the electoral results (Hellström, 2014). Also during this parliamentary period a tacit cordon sanitaire was upheld, where discussion of compromises on single issues was out of the question.

Arguably a change has taken place in the aftermath of the 2014 election. Essentially the election was a party with seven losers and one winner (Aylott & Bolin, 2015). The electoral success of SD arguably has had repercussions on the public debate. Much of the post-electoral debate has

been about why the SD went so well and how the established parties could change in order to neutralize the progress of the PRRP. Primarily, immigration and integration policies has been widely debated and there are now signs that could be interpreted as if the previously united front no longer is upheld. While, still being work in progress, three out of the four centre-right parties (the Centre Party being the exception) has publicly discussed different proposals that essentially are restrictions of current rules. Against this background we are to expect, if the hypothesized sequential model should be empirically substantiated that changes in the immigration agendas of MPs should have taken place prior to these discussions.

This qualitative assessment could also be complemented with data on parties vote losses to the SD. In table 2 both data on the share of voters leaving from a party to SD from previous election and the actual number of voters are presented. From these figures we can tell that the 2014 election stands out in this respect since all parties to some extent loss votes to the SD. However, some parties made significant losses already earlier on. The Social Democrats lost substantial number of votes in 2006 and 2010 while the Moderates, and to some extent the Centre Party, loss votes in 2010.

Table 2: Vote losses to the Sweden Democrats, 2006-2014

Party	2006		2010		2014	
	Share	Votes	Share	Votes	Share	Votes
	(%)	(1000)	(%)	(1000)	(%)	(1000)
Moderate Party	0	0	2	17	11.4	204
Centre Party	0	0	4	14	4.6	18
Liberal Party	0	0	2	3	8.2	34
Christian Democrats	0	0	1	0	7.3	24
Social Democrats	1	17	1	25	7.0	128
Left Party	1	5	1	3	4.5	15
Green Party	3	9	1	3	2.5	11

Sources: Oleskog Tryggvason (2014), Oscarsson and Holmberg (2008, 2013)

Of course these data does not give a clear-cut picture of what to expect. Overall, however it seems reasonable to assume that both the Moderates and the Social Democrats are electorally threatened after the 2014 election.

Based on the qualitative and quantitative data above hence, it seems as if change in the immigration agendas of the parties is to be detected it is primarily after the 2014 election while changes in the agendas of MPs should have taken place prior to this. However, both the Social Democrats and the Moderate Party could reasonably be acknowledged to be threatened earlier. Also, since opinion polls are continuously conducted also during parliamentary terms potential vote losses are to some extent known before the election day.

Methodological discussion and data

Methodologically the study of PRRP impact faces, at least, two challenges. First, it is hard to assess whether change in the agendas of political parties and MPs has taken place. There are a multitude of methods available in order to estimate party positions and salience, all of which suffers from different shortcomings. The approach here advocated is to include several different measures of party positions.

Second, although change in agendas could be determined it is hard to assess why this change came about. Mudde (2013), e.g., argues that while a change in a more restrictive direction could be seen in many countries, the presence of PRRPs are, at best, a secondary cause. Instead restrictions are primarily implemented by mainstream right-wing parties and caused by changes in public opinion, media salience or/and level of inflow of immigrants. In order to deal with these potential problems this is accounted for in two ways. First, a deductive approach has been undertaken where qualitative and quantitative data has been used in order to derive (preliminary) expectations of who and when impact will come about. Second, as changes in the immigration agendas of parties and MPs could be a consequence of other processes also this has to be controlled for. For instance, it has been suggested that the inflow of large number of immigrants would lead to calls for more restrictive immigration policies (Abou-Chadi, 2014). Others however, argue, it is not the real level of immigration but how media reports about it that matter (van Klingeren, Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart & de Vreese, 2015, Morales, Pilet & Ruedin, 2015). Hence, descriptive data on these matters are also surveyed along with data on agenda change.

Determining agenda changes

Assessment of agendas is becoming a minor industry. There are, by now, a multitude of methods used in order to systematically make it possible to compare parties in relation to each

other and over time. In this study I differentiate between two elements: salience and position. While salience measures how important a political issue is, position is an assessment of how parties relate vis-à-vis each other on certain issues. In order to investigate whether a PRRP has been successful in gaining impact both change in salience and position is of importance. While a change in position towards the PRRP arguably must be seen as the most straightforward sign of impact also salience is important. Given the fact that the core issue of PRRPs, immigration, for a long period of time was hardly not politicized at all any raised importance of the issue is welcomed by the PRRP. While raised salience not necessarily means that the position of the PRRP is acknowledged or legitimized by the other parties, it is by now well established that higher salience of issues is advantageous also for those parties that profile themselves on this particular issue. Especially this is the case if the PRRP is the issue owner. While recent research show PRRP not generally are the owners of immigration (Abou-Chadi, 2014), data from Swedish opinion polls find that SD is the second most mentioned party when voters are asked about who has the best refugee- and immigration policies (DN/Ipsos, 2015).⁴

In order to measure the agendas of political parties two different sources are used. First, and in accordance with prior research on the impact of PRRP, the election manifestos of the established parties will be analysed (Volkens et al., 2012, Bergman, Backlund, Bolin & Sandström, 2015). Manifestos are widely seen as authoritative statements of the party leadership and how these like the party to be perceived by the voters. Also important to note is that research holds that Swedish parties are prone to stick to election promises once made (Naurin, 2014). Still, arguably manifesto data suffers from other shortcomings. Of specific interest in the context of this study is the fact that there is no category that singlehandedly deals with immigration. This has been acknowledged by several scholars. As a consequence also

⁴ The results from the opinion poll conducted 12-26 January 2015: Social Democrats 22 per cent, Sweden Democrats 15 per cent, Moderate Party 12 per cent, Christian Democrats 7 per cent, Left Party 5 per cent, Green Party 5 per cent, Liberal Party 4 per cent and Centre Party 2 per cent.

different ways to get around this has been proposed. Following recent research (Abou-Chadi, 2014, Han, 2015), the categories of multiculturalism is used as a proxy for immigration. More specifically party position is calculated by subtracting the share of negative statements from the share of positive statements while the salience is measured by the sum of shares of statements (Han, 2015).⁵

A second way to assess the agendas of parties is to ask experts. In this paper I have employed data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al., 2015).⁶ In all there has been four rounds conducted in which Sweden is included. The last, in 2014, is not fully completed yet but some of the data has been made available to the author. Since the CHES in addition to position also ask the experts about salience, this source is used in order to survey change in both elements of agenda.

Unlike previous research this study do not only gauge potential impact on the agenda of parties but also include MPs. In order to measure whether these have changed their agendas three different measures are included. First, data from The Swedish Riksdag Parliamentary Survey is included. From this survey one item is used in the analysis, namely the question where MPs are asked about their opinion on the proposal “Accept fewer refugees into Sweden”. The respondents are prompted to answer on a scale from 1 (‘Very good proposal’) to 5 (‘Very bad proposal’). The position of MPs are than calculated as the arithmetic mean for each party. While the survey cannot be employed to measure salience, its impressive response rate (about 90 per cent) makes it a very solid measure of MPs position on immigration.

⁵ Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup (2008), offers a more complex measure as there proxy for salience is calculated as the sum of the shares devoted to six different categories. As this additive measures arguably include many issues statements that do not deal with immigration it was not used in this study.

⁶ In addition to the publicly available data file that includes data for 1999-2010, this study also includes a beta version of the 2014 data kindly provided to the author by Jonathan Polk of the CHES team. Importantly, however, since the 2014 round is not fully processed yet there is no information on salience available.

Second, two different measures of what MPs do while being parliamentarians are included. Following Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup (2008), potential change is estimated by analysing interpellations posed in the parliament as well as private member bills. Both of these prerogatives of the MP could be interpreted as ways to promote their own personal (in contrast to their party's) agendas. Interpellations are questions posed directly to ministers and followed by a plenary debate. Private member bills are, although formally propositions to introduce or change law, very seldom passed in the parliament (Bergman & Bolin, 2011). In theory both interpellations and private member bills could be analysed in regard both to position and salience. However, while salience is based on quantitative content analysis, i.e. counting the number of occurrences, estimation of position also involves a qualitative judgement. Since this is yet to be done, interpellations and private member bills are only measured in regard to salience in this paper. Specifically, the share of interpellations and private member bills that deal with immigration related issues are recorded to see whether temporal change has taken place.⁷

Empirical results

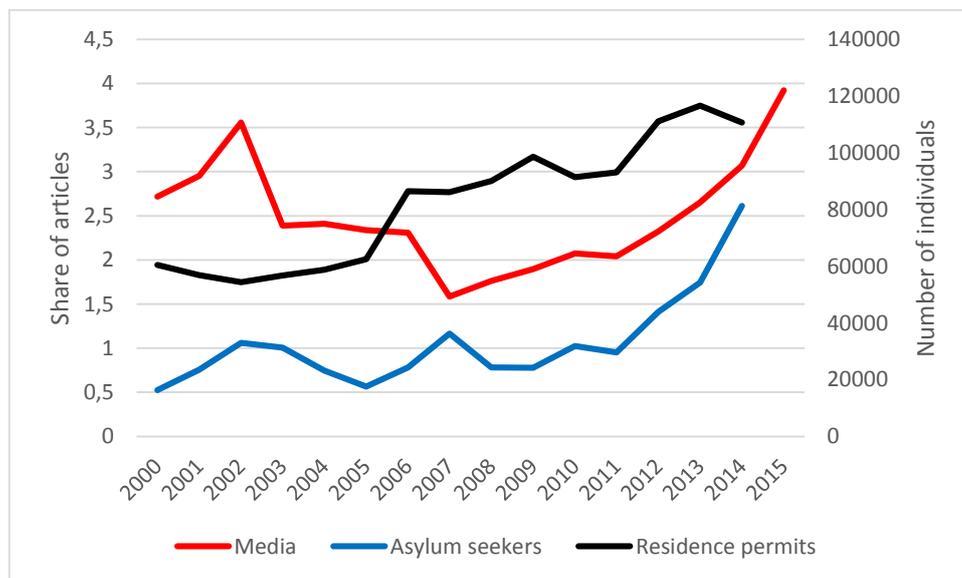
The empirical section is divided into three parts. In the first part data on some environmental conditions that prior research has highlighted as alternative explanations or drivers of change in immigration agendas are presented. Second data on some important party change is presented. The third part deals with whether change could be detected in the agendas of Swedish MPs. The longitudinal data is presented using line graphs. In order to make it possible to identify changes over time in an illustrative manner I have chosen to only include data for the two biggest parties, the Social Democrats and the Moderate party and the average value for all parties in the figures although other parties are discussed in the text as well.

⁷ Calculated as immigration related events are those that in their title include any of the words migr*, asyl*, flyktning*, invandr* which corresponds to the English words of migration, asylum, refugee and immigration

Environmental conditions

While restrictions in immigration agendas has been detected in many countries, these has been argued to be implemented by established parties, without the influence of PRRPs. Instead it is argued that other, environmental changes are the drivers behind this trend. In order to control for this figure 1 displays the trend in some of the aforementioned causes. First two measures of immigration are presented – number of asylum seekers and number of residence permits issued. These data reveals rather similar pattern. During the first years of the century the variation is rather marginal. However, during the last couple of years a rather marked increase could be detected. Second, there is also a trend since 2005 of increased politicisation of immigration as measured by the share of articles in the press that mentions immigration (see footnote 8)

Figure 1: Environmental conditions

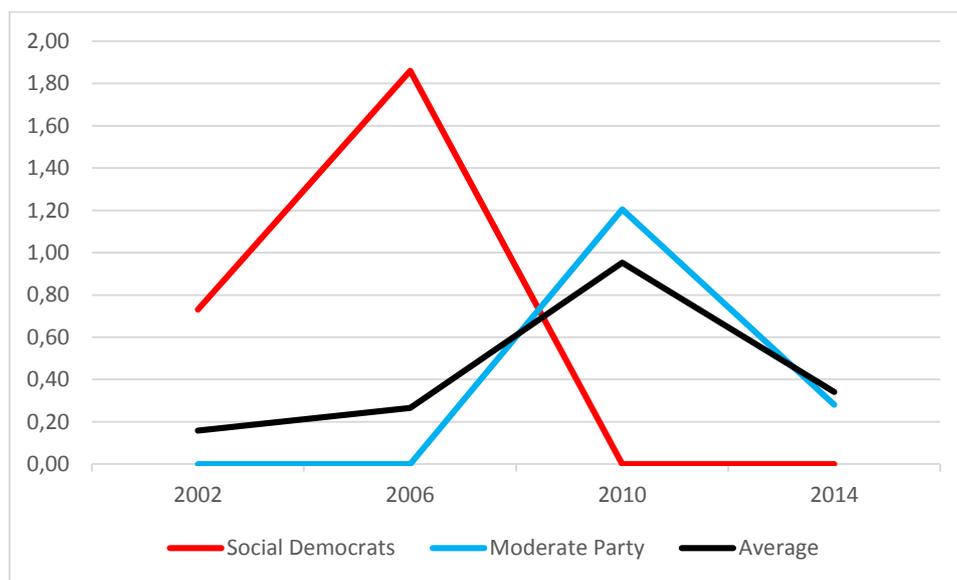


The immigration agenda of Swedish Parties

In figure 2 data on salience on immigration is presented. The first thing to note is that immigration is not a much politicised issue. Actually the highest share of arguments in any of the parties (SD excluded) surveyed in a single manifesto is 2.75 per cent (Christian Democrats in 2010). Second, even though no clear trend could be identified, it does not seem like parties

has responded to the electoral success of the SD by emphasizing immigration. Rather the opposite. While the Social Democrats peaked in 2006 the Moderates did so in 2010 similarly to the average of all parties. Remarkably the manifestos of 2014 do not hardly mention immigration at all. While the Social Democrats has no arguments on immigration, the Moderates mentions immigration only four times.

Figure 2: Party salience on immigration according to Manifesto data



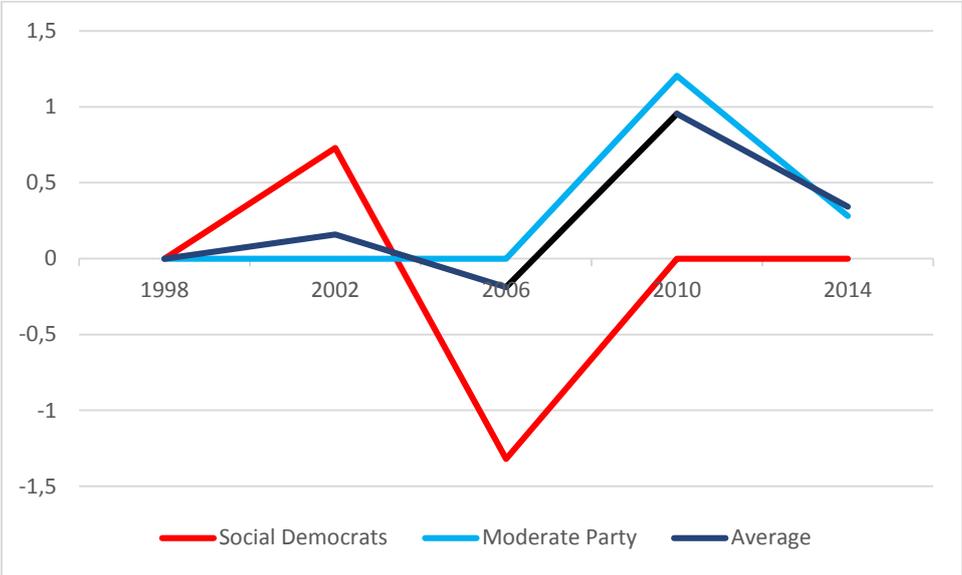
While CHES data on salience, to date, only are available for 2006 and 2010, the pattern from the manifesto analysis is largely supported. On a scale from 1 to 10, salience decreases from 6.6 in 2006 to 5.5 in 2010 (for comparison SD has a salience score of 9.6). Moreover the trend holds for all parties, i.e., according to the experts there was no party that emphasized immigration more in 2010 than in 2006.

Let us now turn to question of whether party position has changed.

In figure 3 the difference between the share of positive and negative statements on immigration in the election manifestos is illustrated. Similar to figures on salience in manifestos there is hard to find specific patterns. The manifesto of the Social Democrats was most negative in 2006.

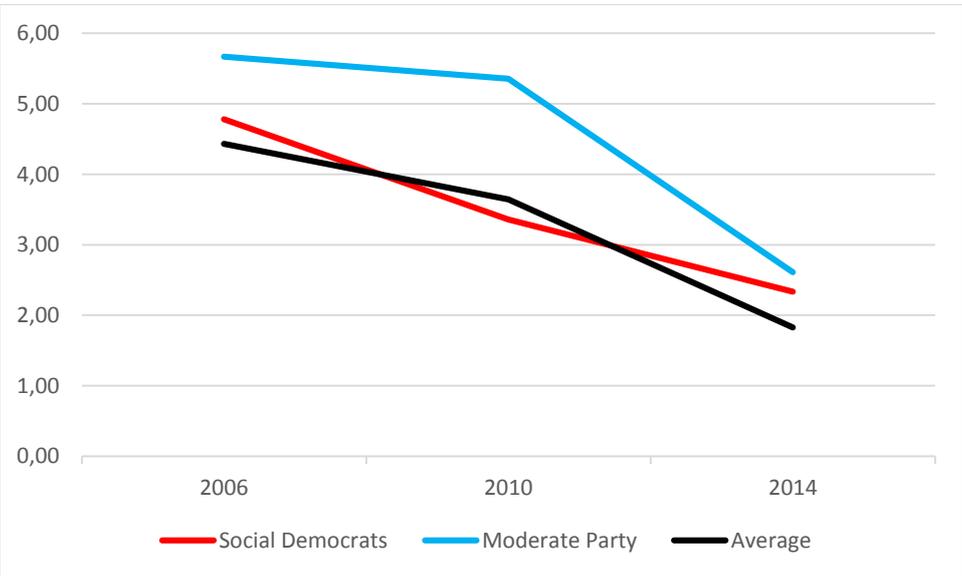
Since no statements in regard to immigration was made neither in the 2010 nor the 2014 manifesto the position recorded is neutral.

Figure 3: Party position on immigration according to Manifesto data



When experts are asked about the position of the parties on immigration the trend is rather clear (see figure 4). Without exception have all parties become less restrictive. In fact what is seen is a convergence, where all parties except the SD are estimated to hold very liberal immigration positions.

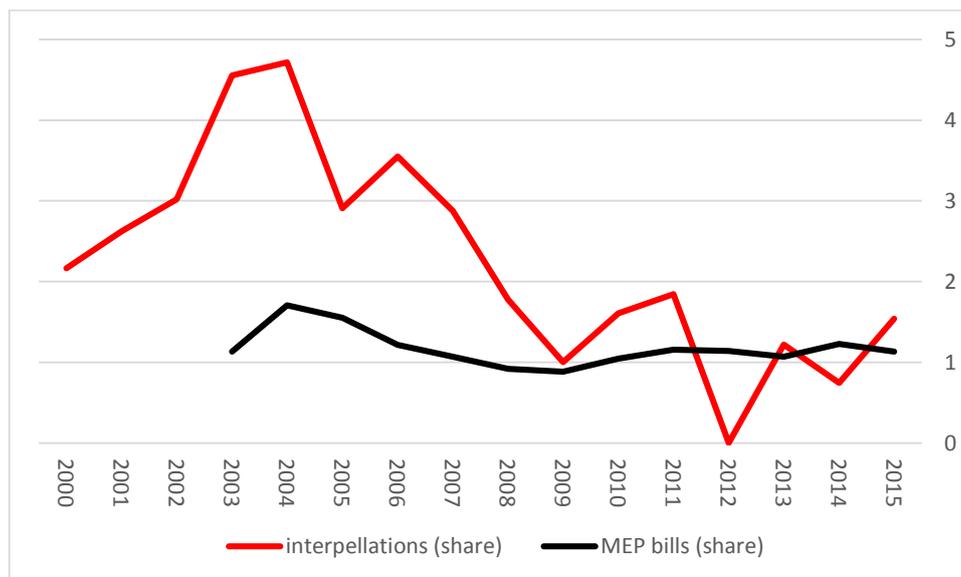
Figure 4: Party position on immigration according to Chapel Hill Expert Survey



The immigration agenda of Swedish MPs

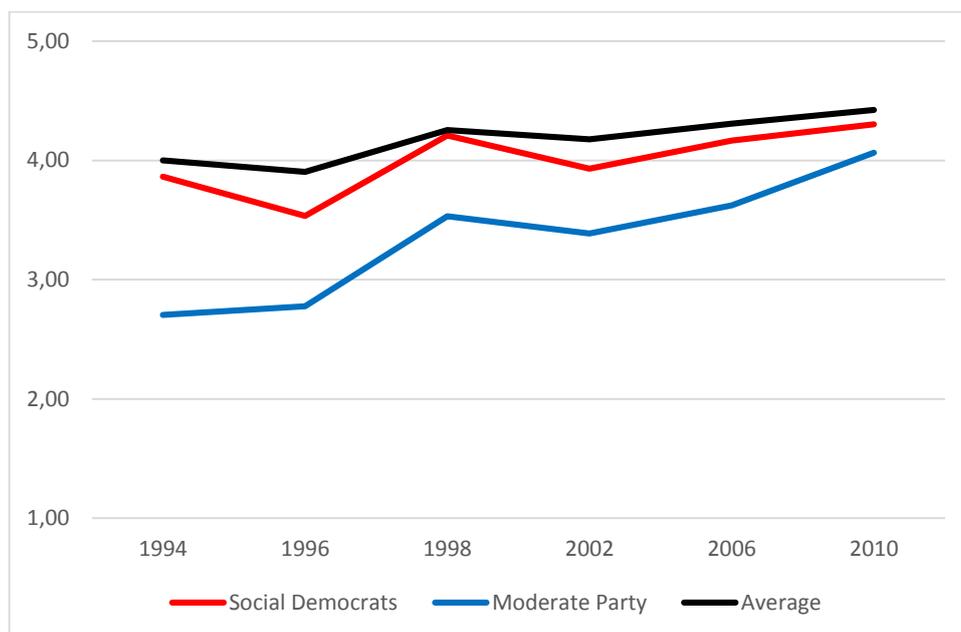
Turning from the parties to the MPs, figure 5 displays the salience of immigration related issues in two distinctive ways. First, in regard to the share of private member bills there is no real trend. When it comes to the share of interpellations that deals with immigration, however, it is possible to discern two phases. First, the share of interpellations decreases from the top year 2004 where almost 5 per cent of them was about immigration to 2012 where none of the established parties filed an interpellation dealing with immigration. Since then the trend is increasing.

Figure 5: MP salience on immigration according to interpellations and private member bills



Finally, the immigration position of the MPs are gauged using aggregated data on how they have responded in the Swedish Parliamentary Survey. The trend is similar to what could be spotted when experts were asked about party position, i.e. there is an increasingly liberal trend. However, important to note, data is only available to 2010.

Figure 6: MP position on immigration according to Swedish Parliamentary Survey



Conclusions and discussion

In this paper it has been argued that while PRRP impact still seems to be rather limited there are signs that this will change. Specifically it seems as if impact on public policy is rather rare. On party level, however, several recent studies find that PRRP has been more successful. These findings together with earlier unelaborated claims about impact being a sequential process have been developed and put to a preliminary empirical test.

Overall, it seems as if the SD, despite its electoral success in recent years, have not yet been able to influence the other parties in regard to their immigration agendas. Despite rather favourable conditions in terms of increased politicisation and higher levels of immigration during the last couple of years, only limited PRRP impact could be detected. First the empirical analysis finds that SD has *not* caused the established parties to change their priorities in regard to how much emphasis should be put on immigration. In fact, if any pattern is possible to detect it is a decrease in salience in recent years. Similarly, neither changes in party position reveal

any impact of the electoral progress of the SD. While manifesto data do not show any clear tendency, data based on expert surveys rather points in the direction of a more liberal change.

If we instead turn to the MPs, we do not find any clear-cut trend. While there are some signs of an increased salience of immigration – specifically in regard to interpellations since 2012 – the share of private member bills more or less do not vary over the years. In regard to position only very preliminary answers are given in the analysis. First, interpellations and private member bills has not yet been coded in regard to position. Second, there is no data after 2010 for the other measure of MP position, drawn from the Swedish Parliamentary Survey.

Overall, hence, the sequential model of PRRP impact that has been theoretically elaborated have not been fully supported. However, based on the empirical analysis nor are there any reasons to reject the theory. While no impact could be detected on the party level, there are signs that suggest that the individual level is going through a change. Lack of data to some extent hampers the possibility of more far drawn conclusions. Moreover, based on, still allegedly rather anecdotal, evidence of the post-election debate it seems as if some parties are drawn towards more restrictive stances by leading politicians.

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