

Political Communication in the 2018 Swedish Election Campaign

Henrik Oscarsson & Jesper Strömbäck

Introduction

In many respects, Election Day is the most important day in an electoral democracy. Not only does it symbolize the essence of democracy: that each and every person has one and just one vote, equal for all (Dahl 1998). Election Day is also the day when the people, as a collective, decides the distribution of political power and hence exert its collective influence on policy-making during the upcoming term. In most established democracies, elections are furthermore still the most significant collective events in society.

A precondition is however that elections are free and fair, and that they are preceded by free and fair election campaigns where political parties and candidates campaign to win support and where there is a meaningful choice between different parties and candidates. Furthermore, elections require campaigns where the media devote resources and space to covering the issues at stake in a fair and balanced manner, and where voters have ample opportunities to and an orientation towards learning about the issues at stake, comparing the parties and candidates running for office, and hold elected representatives accountable for past performances and political results. In that sense, “the quality of elections hinges on the quality of election campaigns” (Strömbäck 2016: 275). Tellingly, while there are 132 electoral democracies around the world (International IDEA 2018: 7), only 86 are considered to be fully free in terms of political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House 2019: 8).

The importance of election campaign places *political communication* – in simple terms, the exchange of political messages and symbols between political actors, media, and citizens – at the heart of democracies and electoral processes (Blumler & Gurevitch 1995). Without free and fair political communication, there are no free and fair election campaigns, and without free and fair election campaigns, there are no free and fair elections, and without free and fair elections, there is no democracy.

Henrik Oscarsson works at the Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg. Jesper Strömbäck works at the Department of Journalism, Media and Communication, University of Gothenburg.
E-mail: henrik.oscarsson@pol.gu.se; jesper.stromback@jmg.gu.se

For this special issue on the 2018 Swedish election, we thus decided to focus on political communication in the 2018 Swedish election campaign. In January 2018, we launched an open Call for Papers, where prospective authors were invited to submit abstracts. Based on the submitted abstracts, authors were invited to submit full manuscripts. These were discussed during a day-long workshop in January 2019. All manuscripts then underwent a peer review process. The end result you will find in this special issue, the first of *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift* to focus on political communication.

The purpose of this introduction is twofold. First, for readers less familiar with Swedish politics, we will briefly describe the Swedish political and electoral system, and discuss the significance of the 2018 election. Second, we will provide fresh and mainly unpublished data with respect to key aspects of Swedish citizens' media behavior and electoral behavior. These data will be drawn from opinion polls published during the election period 2014–2018, the 2018 National Election Survey, the 2018 National Campaign Panel Study, and the 2018 Media Election Study.

This article will proceed as follows. In the next and second section, we will describe the Swedish political and electoral system and the main trends in electoral behavior, in order to put the 2018 Swedish election in perspective. In the third section, we will describe the election result in 2018. In the fourth section we will focus on the media and how citizens used media and other means to keep informed about politics during the 2018 election campaign, also in a historical perspective. In the fifth section, we will address the hotly debated question whether news media in Sweden is fair and balanced. Finally, in the sixth section, we will introduce the articles selected for this special issue.

The 2018 Swedish Election in Perspective

In terms of the political system, Sweden is a parliamentary democracy with proportional elections and a fixed election calendar with concurrent elections at the local, regional and national level the second Sunday of September every four years. To gain representation in the Swedish Riksdag, a party needs to win at least 4 percent nationally or 12 percent within a county.

For large parts of the 20th Century, Sweden was characterized by a very stable party system, heavily dominated by the Social Democrats (Aylott 2016). Between the 1920s and the 1988 election, the same five parties were represented in parliament, namely the Social Democrats, the Left Party (formerly the communist party), the Liberal Party, the Moderates and the Centre Party. Only in 1988 did a new party – the Green Party – manage to win representation. They lost their representation in 1991, however, when two other parties – the right-wing, populist New Democracy and the Christian Democrats – entered the parliament. New Democracy lost their representation in 1994, however,

when the Green Party re-entered parliament. The five-party system had been transformed and stabilized into a more fragmented seven-party system. That held until the 2010 election, when the Sweden Democrats – a radical right populist party – won parliamentary representation for the first time. Since then, eight parties are represented in parliament.

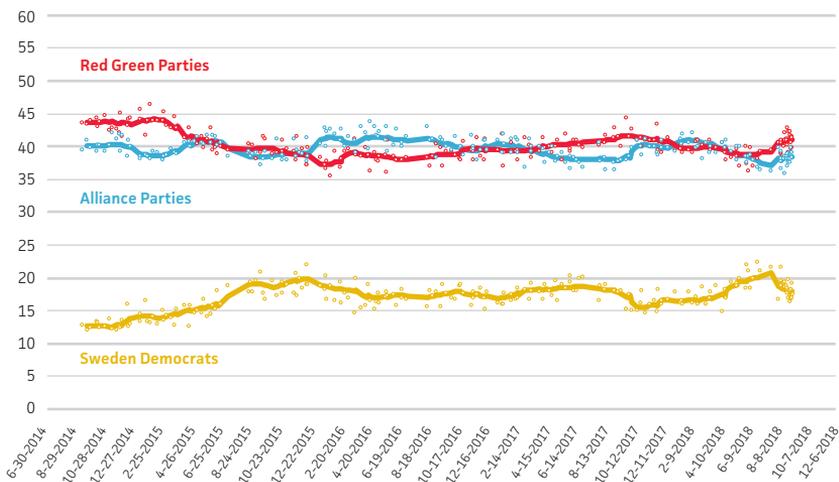
In terms of government, between 1936 and 1976, the Social Democrats continuously held government office, either alone or in coalition with other parties. Only in 1976 did the non-socialist parties – the Moderates, the Liberal Party, and the Centre Party – manage to break the Social Democrats' hold on governmental power. That held for two terms, between 1976 and 1982. The election 1982 saw the return of the Social Democrats to government, which it held on to until 1991. Then a new non-socialist government, now joined by the Christian Democrats – was formed. In 1994, the Social Democrats again returned to power, which it held on to until 2006.

The year 2006 represents a transformative change of Swedish politics. Before that election, the non-socialist, bourgeois parties, formed what was labeled the “Alliance for Sweden”, which represented a much closer cooperation and collaboration between the Moderates, the Liberal Party, the Centre Party, and the Christian Democrats than ever before. Under the leadership of the party leader of the Moderates, Fredrik Reinfeldt, the Alliance won two successive elections, in 2006 and 2010, and was – policy differences notwithstanding – widely recognized as having been more successful than any non-socialist government before. This changed the dynamics of the Swedish party system, or, in the terms of Sartori, “the system of interactions resulting from inter-party competition” (Sartori 2005: 39). Among other things, it forced a situation where all parties – including the Social Democrats – were expected to declare before Election Day what other parties they would like to form a government with. Put differently, if Swedish politics used to revolve around the Social Democrats, it turned towards revolving around the Alliance for Sweden.

Things started to change anew, however, in 2010, when the Sweden Democrats entered parliament with 5,7 percent of the votes. Being a radical right, populist party (Mudde 2007) with its roots in extreme right-wing and racist movements (Rydgren 2006; Widfeldt 2008), the other parties wanted nothing to do with the Sweden Democrats. They thus became subject of a *cordon sanitaire* (Jungar 2015; Strömbäck et al. 2016). That did not stop them from further electoral gains, however. In 2014, they won 12,9 percent of the votes and became the third largest party, while the parties in the Alliance for Sweden won 39,4 percent and the red-green parties 43,6 percent. Thus, neither the Alliance or the red-green parties could form a majority government on their own, while neither wanted to collaborate with the Sweden Democrats. In the end, the Social Democrats formed a minority government with the Green Party for the election period 2014-2018.

Since the 2014 election, the question of how to treat the Sweden Democrats and what the governing alternatives were have been key issues, shattering the old division of Swedish parties in two blocs and permeating Swedish politics. In the election period 2014–2018, most electoral volatility was triggered by events associated with the so-called refugee crisis in 2015 or discussions of whether or not to cooperate with SD, and in what form. In spite of some turbulence in the Moderates, leading to change of leadership and loss of support to other Alliance parties and to the Sweden Democrats, the overall support for the red-green and Alliance parties were quite stable in the election period, although the blocs were taking turns in being ahead in the polls (see Figure 1). It is clear that most of the Sweden Democratic upsurge transpired early in the election period, in the year following the 2014 election. In the three years before the 2018 election, the support for SD hovered between 15–20 percent.

Figure 1. Support for the Alliance (C, L, KD, M), the Red-Green Coalition (V, S, MP) and the Sweden Democrats According to Demoskop, Ipsos, Novus, SCB and Sifo Opinion Polls from September 2014 to September 2018 (percent)

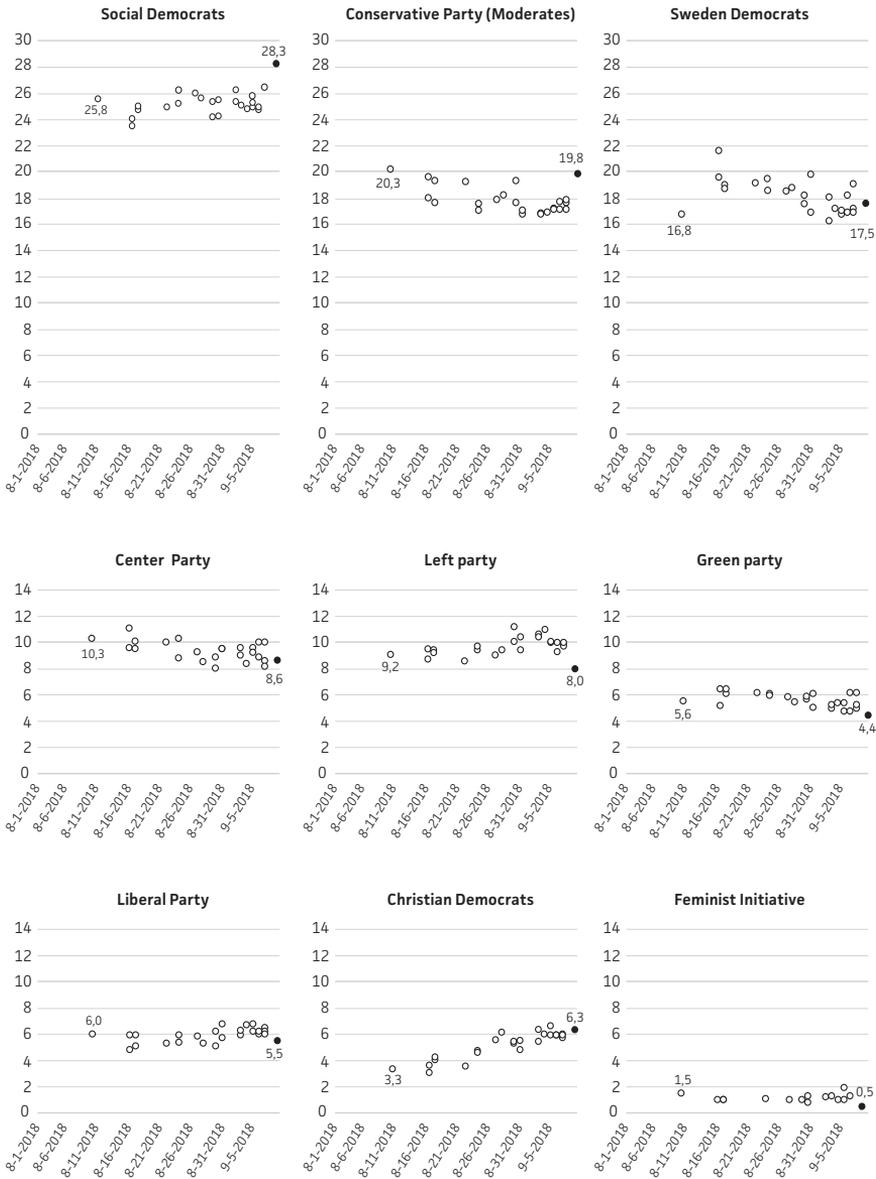


Note: The data shows the estimate of support for the red-green parties (Left, Social democrats and the Green party), the Alliance parties (Centre party, Liberal party, Christian Democrats, and the Moderates), and the Sweden Democrats. The estimates are based on a weighted poll of polls – local polynomial smoothing – of monthly polls from Demoskop, Ipsos, Novus, Statistics Sweden, and Kantar Sifo. For more information, and a table with all data, see Andersson (2018) from which the graph has been taken.

The results in Figure 1 underscore some key conclusions from previous analyses of the evolution of party support in Sweden: The most important formative moments shaping the power relations between parties most often take place not during the intense election campaigns, but rather in the periods in-between elections. Based on previous experiences from a large number of elections, once the election campaigns are about to begin, one would not expect large aggregated gains or wins for any of the parties (Oscarsson 2016) in spite of the fact that a good majority of the electorate nowadays claim to decide their party choice during the election campaign (Oscarsson & Holmberg 2016). Systematic comparisons of pre-election vote intentions and post-election vote recall show that the largest aggregated gain for a party during the Swedish election campaigns 1968–2014 was +4,1 percentage points (Liberal party in 2002).

As the parties entered the final stages of the election campaign, around one month before the 2018 Election, the polls showed that about 37 percent intended to vote for one of the Alliance parties, about 41 percent for one of the red-green parties, and about 18 percent for the Sweden Democrats (see Figure 2). Thus, there were still no fundamental changes in party support for the three blocs compared to the years before. In fact, at that time, it had been obvious for a long time that none of the traditional governing alternatives would be able to form a strong minority government, let alone a majority government. Still, in the final hours of the campaign, the coalition signaling from the red-green and the Alliance parties were set on forming governments based on the two established blocs.

Figure 2. Polling Results for Nine Swedish Parties During the 2018 General Election Campaign August 1st–September 9th 2019, and Final Election Result in the Election (percent)



Note: The data shows the estimate of support for the Red green parties (Left, Social democrats and the Green party), the Alliance parties (Centre party, Liberal party, Christian Democrats, and the Moderates), and the Sweden Democrats. Data come from publicized polls from Demoskop, Ipsos, Novus, Statistics Sweden, and Kantar Sifo in the period August 1st–September 9th, 2019. For more information, and a table with all data, see Andersson (2018) from which the graphs has been taken.

According to the polls, there were only small aggregate changes in party support for most parties during the 2018 campaign. While some parties seem to have suffered smaller gradual loss of support in public opinion in the weeks ahead of the election – such as the Green party, the Centre party, and also the Sweden Democrats – the Christian Democrats was a clear winner with a steady positive trend all through the campaign. The Christian Democrats almost doubled its support between August 10th (3,3 percent) and Election Day (6,3 percent). Why? Although the analyses of the reasons why are not yet fully completed, evidence suggests a combination of strategic voting mainly from Moderate voters that wanted to push the party over the four percent threshold (which is a long-standing tradition among right-wing voters in the case of the Christian Democrats), and a successful campaign message criticizing the incumbent parties for long waits for hospital care in combination with health care being the most important issue for Swedish voters in 2018 (see table 3 for more details) (see also Fredén 2019).

The two big parties, the Social Democrats and the Moderates, both scored a stronger election result than what the polls had predicted before the election. During the campaign, the Social Democrats polled around 26 percent but ended up with an election result of 28,3 percent of the votes. The Moderates had a weak negative opinion trend in the weeks before the election and polled around 17 percent in the days before the election, but picked up to 19,8 percent come Election Day. A tentative explanation for the late wins for the large parties may be the focus on the parliamentary situation and the coming government process. Another interpretation is that the two large parties were systematically underpolled (for an analysis of polling accuracy in the Swedish election 2018, see Oleskog Tryggvason 2018).

The Election Result

The Swedish general election 2018 resulted in a defeat for the two incumbent parties, the Social Democrats and the Green party (5,3 percent). However, since the Left party gained votes at the same time as the Alliance parties also suffered defeats, the red-green parties came out as the larger of the two traditional blocs in Sweden. Once the seat allocation in parliament was completed, the Red-green parties had a 144-143 advantage over the Alliance parties.

In Table 1, the final election result is described, affirming that Sweden has entered a new era characterized by three features: (1) that none of the traditional governmental alternatives (red-green parties versus the traditional Alliance or non-socialist parties) are close to reaching a majority of the voters, (2) that the Sweden Democrats have established itself as one of the major parties, and (3) that the system of interactions among the parties is in upheaval. Noteworthy in this respect is that it took more than six months after Election Day to form a

government. Before the current government, formed by the Social Democrats and the Green Party, could be affirmed, it was more or less forced into a formal agreement – *Januariöverenskommelsen* – to cooperate with the Centre Party and the Liberal Party on a number of policy issues. Also noteworthy is that the old centre-right four-party coalition “Alliance for Sweden” in effect does not exist anymore. The new government consisting of Social Democrats and the Green party took office on January 21, 2019.

Table 1. Election Results in the 2018 National Election

	Number of votes	Share of votes	Change 2014–2018	Seats in parliament 2018	Change 2014–2018
Left Party	518 454	8.00	+2.29	28	+7
Green Party	285 899	4.41	-2.47	16	-9
Social Democrats	1 830 386	28.26	-2.75	100	-13
Centre Party	557 500	8.61	+2.49	31	+9
Liberal Party	355 546	5.49	+0.07	20	+1
Christian Democrats	409 478	6.32	+7.75	22	+6
Moderates	1 284 698	19.84	-3.49	70	-14
Sweden Democrats	1 135 627	17.53	+4.68	62	+13
Feminist Initiative	29 665	0.84	-2.67		
Other parties	69 472	1.10	+0.10		
Valid votes	6 476 725	100.00			
Invalid votes – blank votes	53 084	0.84	-0.08		
Invalid votes – non-registered parties	2 120	0.03	+0.03		
Invalid votes – other	3 342	0.05	+0.02		
Turnout	6 535 271	87.18	+1.38		
Number of eligible voters	7 330 432				

Source: Oscarsson et al. 2018; val.se.

The election result 2018 confirmed some of the most visible and durable long-term trends in electoral behavior in Sweden. Voter turnout climbed for the fourth election in a row to the highest level (87,2 percent) since 1985. As the large parties suffered defeat at the same time as some of the smaller parties gained votes, there was also a new record with respect to the fragmentation of the Swedish party system, measured as the effective number of parties (Nord et al 2018:13). Furthermore, according to the Swedish Television exit poll (SVT/Valu), the 2018 election showed a record high voter volatility (40 percent), while the SOM-survey 2018 estimated the proportion of split ticket voters to a record high 33 percent (see Berg, Erlingsson & Oscarsson 2019). In addition,

preliminary analyses of the National Election Study point towards a record low level of strong party identifiers (13 percent).

As many recent analyses of political change in Sweden has pointed out (Oscarsson 2018; Demker & Oscarsson 2018), the rising salience of a cultural value dimension – sometimes referred to as the GAL-TAN dimension – is currently reshaping one of the most unidimensional party systems in the world into a two-dimensional issue space. This puts a lot of stress on the system and its actors. This development is the root cause of many developments currently in motion: increasing party polarization, internal party division, prolonged government formation processes, and unorthodox collaboration between left and center-right parties.

Things happening after Election Day notwithstanding, this was the political context in which the 2018 election campaign took place. In the following sections, we will therefore describe and analyze some key features of the 2018 election campaign in more detail, and in – where appropriate – a historical perspective.

The Media in the 2018 Election Campaign

The media occupy a key position in any political communication system (Blumler & Gurevitch 1995), traditionally constituting the main source of political information for the electorate, the main channel through which political actors can reach large segments of the electorate, and the main arena for public political debates. Modern politics has thus been described as *mediated* (Asp 1986; Shehata & Strömbäck 2014).

THE NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE IN 2018: THE MEDIA AGENDA

In every election, major Swedish news media devote significant space and resources towards covering the campaigns. That held true for 2018 as well, although research suggests that the amount of election news has declined since the 1980s (Asp & Bjerling 2014). However, such comparisons do not take the expansion of traditional news media's online presence, including various online-only formats, into account, making comparisons of the total election news supply across time complicated. For example, in 2018, both the leading tabloids *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen* had broadcast news, interviews with party leaders and party leader debates on their online-only TV channels. For those interested in politics, there was certainly no shortage of election news in 2018.¹

1 In this section, all results come from the Media Election Study 2018. The content analysis includes the following news media during the last four weeks before Election Day: *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen* (tabloids), *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet* (morning newspapers), *Rapport* (public service TV news program), *TV4 Nyheterna* (commercial TV4's news program), and *Ekot* (public service radio news program).

From an electoral perspective, one of the most important aspects of the media's election news coverage is related to the media agenda. By focusing more on some issues rather than others, the news media influence not only what issues people consider important (*agenda-setting*), but also what issues people make use of when comparing and evaluating the political parties (*priming*) (Iyengar & Kinder 1987; McCombs 2014). It is also well-established that political parties gain advantages when the news media coverage focus on issues that the parties have *issue ownership* of (Kiousis et al. 2015; Petrocik 1996; Walgrave et al. 2014). Thus, the parties fight hard to put their issues on the agenda and bring the debate to their home field.

In 2018, there were four issues that gained at least ten percent of the news media coverage and that can be considered top issues: health care, immigration, law and order, and the environment (see Table 2). What is striking when comparing different types of media is the high degree of similarity across media groups. More detailed analyses also show a high degree of similarity between individual news media. This supports the notion that news media largely function as *an institution*, which is an important aspect of mediatization theory (Esser 2013; Strömbäck & Esser 2014).

Table 2. The News Media Agenda in the 2018 National Election (percent)

	All news media	Morning newspapers	Tabloids	Broadcast news
Health care	15	13	16	15
Immigration	13	13	14	12
Law and order	10	8	9	12
Environment	10	8	10	12
Taxes	7	3	9	7
Education	7	11	4	7
Family policy	4	6	4	4
Economy	4	4	3	4
Social issues	4	1	7	4
Equality	4	2	5	4
Other issues	22	31	19	19
Percent	100	100	100	100
N	2 335	778	977	580

Comment: Morning newspapers=Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Tabloids=Aftonbladet, Expressen, Broadcast news=Dagens Eko (SR), Nyheterna (TV4), Rapport (SVT). Source: Media Election Study 2018; Johansson & Strömbäck 2019. The category "other issues" include a number of different issues that individually received less than four percent of the coverage.

In this context, it is worth noting that health care was an issue that the Christian Democrats campaigned on, while immigration is the preferred issue for the Sweden Democrats. Law and order were top issues for both the Sweden Democrats and the Moderates, while environment was a top issue primarily for the Green Party.

As always, the news media agenda was more or less mirrored in the results for Swedish voters' most important issues for their vote in the 2018 election. According to the National Election Study 2018, the most important issue for the voters when making up their minds on how to vote was, indeed, health care (32 percent) and immigration (30 percent). Schooling and education came on third place (23 percent), followed by environment (18 percent) and elderly care and pensions (15 percent). Interestingly, spontaneous mentioning of *law and order* as an important issue for party choice seem to have been comparatively less salient among the voters (7th place) than in the media's election campaign coverage (3rd place).²

Table 3. Swedish Voters' Ten Most Important Issues for Party Choice in the 2018 National Election (percent)

	All	SNES Pre election survey	SNES Post election survey
#1 Health care	32	35	29
#2 Immigration and integration	30	28	31
#3 Schooling and education	23	26	19
#4 Environment	18	20	16
#5 Elderly care and pensions	15	17	13
#6 Societal problems	13	13	12
#7 Law and order	8	9	7
#8 Economy	7	6	8
#9 Unemployment	6	6	6
#10 Taxes	4	4	4

Note: Results come from both pre- and post-election surveys. Only the top-ten categories are listed. The question wording was: "Are there any political issues that [are/were] important to you when it comes to what party you [are going to/voted for] in the Riksdag election September 9th". The total number of respondents in the analysis is n=7 070.

Source: Swedish National Election Study, 2018.

2 The annual SOM-survey, fielded just after the election, asks the standard question of the most important problem. In 2018, the SOM-survey showed the following rank order: #1 Health care, #2 Immigration and integration, #3 Schooling and education, #4 Environment, #5 Law and order, #6 Elderly care, #7 Societal problems, #8 Unemployment, #9 Democracy and rights, and #10 Economy".

It is rare in election research to have access to pre-election survey data. With the SNES we are fortunate to be able to compare voters most important issues for voting before the election, temporally close to when they made up their minds on how to vote, and after *fait accompli* when the election results is known (see table 3). In the data collected during the election campaign, the *health care* issue was clearly on top of the voter's agenda (35 percent), but was mentioned by fewer voters in the post election surveys (29 percent). The same goes for the categories *schooling and education*, dropping from 26 percent before the election to 19 percent after the election, and *environment*, dropping from 20 to 16 percent. None of these changes affects the overall ranking of the categories, but suggests that the voters' agenda during the election campaign was more concentrated to the top five categories.

BEYOND THE ISSUES: THE FRAMING OF POLITICS AND MEDIA INTERVENTIONISM

Beyond the issues at stake and on the media agenda, one recurring feature of Swedish election news is a strong tendency to frame politics as a strategic game rather than as issues (Nord & Strömbäck 2018). This is of course not unique to Swedish news media (Aalberg et al. 2012, 2017), but was nevertheless apparent also in their coverage of the 2018 campaign. Overall, an issue frame was dominant in 43 percent of all news stories, a strategic game frame in 46 percent, and a scandal frame in 11 percent. There was significant variance between different news media, however, with the daily public service radio news show *Ekot* framing politics as issues in fully 71 percent of their news stories – compared with just 33 and 29 percent in the tabloids *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen*, respectively (Johansson & Strömbäck 2019). Another pattern that is familiar from earlier election campaigns (Nord & Strömbäck 2018) is that the commercial *TV4 Nyheter* framed politics as an issue less often (44 percent) than the public service TV news program *Rapport* (60 percent) (Johansson & Strömbäck 2019).

Another pattern is that the news media's election coverage is highly, and in a longer-time perspective increasingly so, influenced by “media interventionism” and “news media logic”. Briefly, *media interventionism* refers to a media-centered reporting style in which journalists actively shape how the news is covered instead of more passively function as an arena and neutral transmitter for political and other social actors (Blumler & Gurevitch 1995; Strömbäck & Esser 2009; Strömbäck & Dimitrova 2011). Similarly, *news media logic* refers to how the news media shape their coverage to fit their own format characteristics, production and dissemination routines, norms and needs, and standards of newsworthiness (Altheide & Snow 1980; Asp 2014; Hjarvard 2008; Strömbäck & Esser 2014). The framing of politics as a strategic game is but one example. Another example is related to the news media's use of opinion polls. During the 2018 election campaign, the Swedish news media published 92 poll

reports, and in 78 percent of the cases, the media publishing the poll report had also commissioned the poll. By commissioning polls and then reporting them and interpreting the results, the news media get almost exclusive control over the news (Oleskog Tryggvason & Strömbäck 2018; Petersson et al. 2006). Furthermore, most of these polls – 83 percent – were so-called horse race polls, meaning that they focused on the political game (Strömbäck & Johansson 2019). Thereby, they both constitute a part of and contribute to the framing of politics as a strategic game.

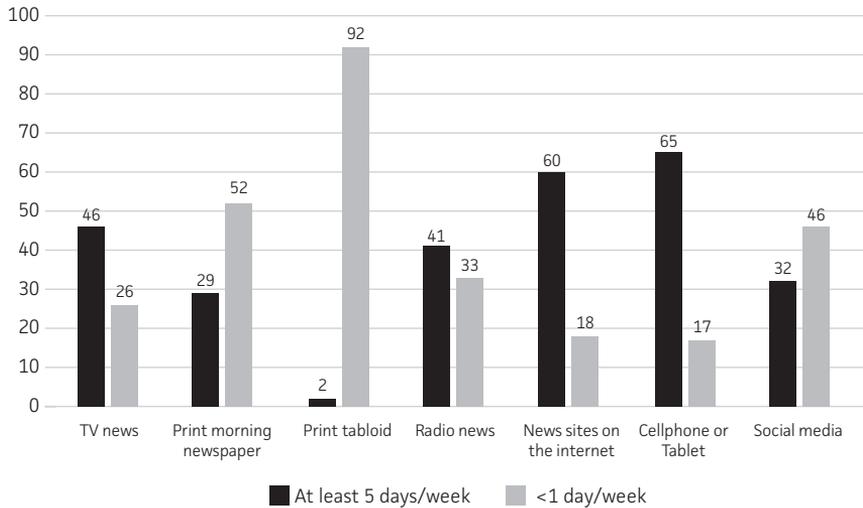
Other indicators of media interventionism and news media logic are a high degree of journalistic visibility, a quite frequent use of value-laden words, and different forms of journalistic interpretations. For example, altogether 19 percent of all TV news stories included a segment where a journalist – acting as an analyst – was interviewed by the anchor. As another example, 51 percent of all news stories included at least one clearly value-laden comment or phrasing from journalists (Johansson & Strömbäck 2019). Altogether, the Swedish news media coverage of the 2018 election thus show clear signs of mediatization, with the partial exception of the radio news program *Ekot* (Johansson & Strömbäck 2019). Compared to the Swedish news media's coverage of earlier campaigns in the 21st century (Nord & Strömbäck 2018), it cannot be claimed however that the degree of mediatization of election news increased in 2018.

MEDIATED AND DIRECT CONTACT WITH POLITICS IN THE 2018 ELECTION

One important aspect of political communication is related to how citizens get in contact with and learn about politics. That includes direct contact as well as indirect contact, through their use of various media – news media, digital media and social media. Historically, mass media have constituted the most important source of political information (Shehata & Strömbäck 2014), with direct contact with political parties being rarer (Oscarsson & Holmberg 2016). Much has changed though, with the rise of digital and social media and the declining use of news media (Mitchell et al. 2016; Newman et al. 2018). The decline is particularly apparent for print newspapers, although many continue to read newspapers online (Andersson 2018).

We will begin this section by investigating how often people use different means of following news about politics either regularly (at least five days/week) or almost never (less than one day/week). The results are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Political News Consumption on Different Platforms (percent)



Source: Election Campaign Panel Study 2018. Percentages rounded off. Results refer to Wave 1, in field between April 12 and June 6. The exact question wording was: “How often do you follow the news about politics by...”, and the exact response alternatives were: “Watching TV news”, “Reading print morning newspaper”, “Reading print tabloid”, “Listen to news on the radio”, “Visit news sites on the internet”, “Taking part of news on the cell phone or tablet”, and “Taking part of news through social media such as Twitter or Facebook”. N = 4293–4372.

The results show that the most important sources of political news were cell phone or tablet, followed by news sites, TV news and radio news. Compared to the 2014 election, these results suggest quite marked changes. Then, 55 percent followed political news on TV at least five days per week, while 41 percent used morning newspapers in print (Strömbäck 2015). Both these media platforms have thus become less important (see also Shehata & Strömbäck 2018). On the other hand, the share using news sites have increased from 44 percent, while the share for cellphone or tablet and for social media have increased from 38 and 21 percent, respectively (Strömbäck 2015). In short, traditional news media in their traditional formats have – with the exception of radio – thus become less important, while digital and social media have become more important.

At least this holds true in terms of using different platforms. This is however not the same as using different types of media. In fact, most political news is produced by traditional news media, the most important online news sites are those of traditional news media, and most of the news that are disseminated through social media have their origins in traditional news media (Bright 2016; Newman 2011; Newman et al. 2018).

Going into more detail into how often citizens used specific news media during the 2018 election campaigns shows that the most frequently used news media – putting the threshold at using the news media at least five days per

week – were *Ekot* (38 percent), followed by *Dagens Nyheter* (36 percent), *Rapport* (32 percent) and *Aftonbladet* (30 percent). The least frequently used news media were *TV4 Nyheterna* (19 percent) and *Svenska Dagbladet* (13 percent) (see Table 4). Thus, there is a mixture of print and broadcast media at the top and at the bottom, with public service broadcast media being used more frequently than commercial broadcast media.

Table 4. News Media Use in the 2018 Election Campaign (percent)

	Daily	5-6 days/w	3-4 days/w	1-2 days/w	More seldom	Sum
Aftonbladet	25	6	8	14	47	100
Expressen	16	4	7	12	62	101
Dagens Nyheter	31	5	7	10	47	100
Svenska Dagbladet	10	3	6	12	69	100
Aktuellt	15	13	18	21	33	100
Rapport	19	13	17	19	32	100
Ekot	28	10	13	13	36	100
TV4 Nyheterna	11	8	13	17	51	101

Source: Election Campaign Study 2018. Percentages rounded off. Results refer to Wave 5, in field between September 10 and October 1. The exact question wording was: “During the last week, how often have you taken part of news from the following news services (on paper or via the Internet” for newspapers and “During the last week, how often have you taken part of the following news programs (via traditional channels or via the Internet” for broadcast media. N = 3023–3040.

How does this compare to the use of digital and social media for getting information about politics and societal affairs? While direct comparisons are difficult to make – not least since much of the political news that circulate on social media come from traditional news media (Newman 2011), interesting in itself is to study voters’ internet activities during the 2018 campaign. The results – in terms of various self-reported internet activities – are reported in Table 5.

Table 5. Swedish Voters' Internet Activities During the 2018 Election Campaign (percent)

	Several times a day	Daily	5-6 times/w	3-4 times/w	1-2 times/w	More seldom	Sum
Took part of news about politics	21	19	7	8	8	37	100
Took part of information from the parties on social media (such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram)	6	8	3	5	6	72	100
Saw a film clip or ad from the parties	5	8	5	7	12	63	100
Reacted on a posting by 'liking' or 'hearting'	2	3	1	2	5	87	100
Shared political information to friends in your social networks	1	1	1	1	4	92	100
Posted texts about politics, parties, or the election	1	1	0	1	2	95	100
Commented on political issues or politicians	1	1	1	1	2	94	100

Source: Swedish National Election Study 2018. Percentages rounded off. The exact question wording was: "How often have you done the following on the Internet in conjunction with this year's election campaign?" The category "more seldom" in the table includes the response alternatives "more seldom", "never" and "no internet". About 18 percent of the respondents in the SNES 2018 considered themselves not Internet users. N: 2 738–2 749.

The results paint a picture where voters in general mainly use the Internet to take part of news about politics, and to some extent information from the political parties, but do not engage much beyond that. Thus, 47 percent took part of political news at least five days per week during the election campaign, while the corresponding share for taking part of information from political parties on different social media was 17 percent. Just a few percentages were active themselves in terms of sharing political information, posting political information, and commenting on political issues, suggesting that these interactive features of online internet activities among citizens during the election campaign were quite limited in 2018. Although the exact percentages cannot be strictly compared, these results are similar to what research on the political usage of the Internet during the 2014 election campaign found (Strömbäck 2015).

A similar pattern is shown in terms of whether voters used social media to follow any politician, party, journalist or news service during the election campaign (see Table 6): most people do neither. The most common form of

following politicians, parties, journalists or news services are on Facebook, while Twitter, Instagram and blogs are less frequently used. In fact, blogs – once so lauded and cutting edge – appear to be a media of yesterday in terms of the extent to which they are used by voters to follow political and media actors.

Table 6. Swedish Voters' Use of Social Media During the 2018 Campaign (percent)

	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Blogs	Other social media	No
Any politician	11	3	4	1	3	65
Any party	11	2	3	0	4	64
Any journalist	6	3	2	1	3	68
Any news service	11	2	3	1	13	56

Source: Swedish National Election Study 2018. Percentages rounded off. The exact question wording was: "During this year's election campaign, did you follow any of the following on the Internet?". The row percentages do not sum to 100 percent since the respondents can tick all alternatives. The percentage base are the entire Swedish electorate, including the 17 percent of the respondents that are self-reported non-users of internet (n=4 503).

Further insights into how voters use social media to follow news and politics is provided by the Election Campaign Panel Study 2018, in which voters were asked how often they – during the last week – had used social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for a number of different purposes. The results again suggest that voters mainly use them to follow news about politics and societal affairs, with 25 percent during this at least five days per week (not displayed in tables). Other, more active forms of usage, are rarer. Interestingly, considering that social media allow people to follow news from other providers than traditional news media, and that criticism towards traditional news media is a key part of so-called alternative media's messaging and justification, just 6 percent state that they use social media "to take part of news that provide another depiction of Swedish politics than traditional media" at least five days per week, and with 11 percent doing it at least 3-4 days per week (the results refer to the 5th panel wave).

Taken together, these results hence suggest that voters mainly rely on traditional news media to get information about politics and society, and that digital and social media are used to complement rather than substitute for the use of traditional news media. Hence, the label "alternative media" that is often used to describe digital media with more or less explicit and party-affiliated political agendas seems misplaced and misleading. Furthermore, the overall low magnitude of social media use in the electorate during the otherwise very intense Swedish election campaign is a challenging find to the "conventional wisdom" that there are nowadays large potential effects of on-line activities per se.

This is not to say that direct contacts between parties and voters do not happen, neither that voters rely solely on different forms of (mass)mediated information. This is evident from Table 7, showing the share of voters that report different forms of direct contact with parties or campaign exposure during the election campaigns 1982–2018.

Table 7. Swedish Voters' Activities During Election Campaigns 1982–2018 (percent)

Campaign activity	1982	1985	1988	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2014	2018
Direct communication from parties to voters											
Watched televised party ads	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	69	85	80
Read election pamphlets	56	58	52	56	59	60	59	56	52	56	60
Read party manifestos	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	53
Visited parties' homepages	–	–	–	–	–	8	9	14	19	20	26
Exposed to parties on social media	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	13	27	–
Attended campaign meetings	13	12	10	12	11	10	10	9	8	6	7
Subjected to party canvassing by house call or phone call	4	4	2	2	8	10	3	4	8	18	10
Work place contacts	9	8	8	8	7	7	7	5	5	4	5
Other campaign exposure											
Watched party leader debate in SVT	72	69	64	70	65	61	60	57	57	55	58
Used a voting advice application	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	27	28	47	55

Source: Swedish National Election Study 1982–2018. Percentages rounded off. The exact question wording was: "Before this year's election, did you do any of the following...?". Cell entries represent the share of respondents who self-report "yes, several times" + "yes, once" combined. The number of respondents vary substantially across time. The estimates from 2018 are based on 2 000–2 500 respondents.

As can be seen, the most common form of campaign exposure is watching televised ads, followed by reading election pamphlets. In terms of direct contact, 7 percent attended at least one campaign meeting, while 10 percent were called or visited by some party or parties and 5 percent had contact with the campaigns at their workplace. Looking at changes across time, there is a long-term if not linear increase in contacts through phone calls or canvassing at people's houses, in terms of visiting parties' homepages and in the use of voting advice applications, and a decreasing share who attend campaign meetings, have work place contact, and that watch the final party leader debate in Swedish Television. Of course, it has to be kept in mind that these numbers

represent self-reports, as is the case for the use of news media as well as digital and social media.

Fair and Balanced News Media?

One key question in every election campaign, and a recurring debate after each election, is whether the news media's coverage was fair and balanced. Not least on social media, there are recurring accusations leveled again news media for favoring one side or the other, with the most vocal critique coming from the political right, accusing Swedish news media for being leftist (Widholm & Mårtensson 2018). Among (extreme) right-wing partisan media, it is also common to accuse the news media for being biased to the left (Holt 2016a). This is similar to the U.S. situation, where Republicans for decades have criticized what they label "the liberal media" (D'Alessio 2012; D'Alessio & Allen 2000; Watts et al. 1999). In Sweden, research also shows an increasing polarization in media trust. While general media trust is quite stable at the aggregate level, it is much lower among those who sympathize with the Sweden Democrats (Andersson & Weibull 2018; Strömbäck & Karlsson 2017). This is a quite recent development: During the course of the 2014-2018 election period, trust in media in general, and public service in particular, became more politicized in Sweden.

In terms of Swedish voters' perceptions of the news media, results from the National Election Study 2018 shows that the share of voters that trust the media's election coverage far outweigh that of those who do not trust it. Interestingly, they also show a *declining* share trusting the news media's election coverage *during* the campaign. In the pre-election study, 49 percent expressed very or quite high trust in the media's election coverage while 12 percent expressed quite or very low trust (the others had neither high nor low, or no, opinion). In the post-election study, the share of voters expressing trust had fallen to 43 percent while the share of voters expressing low trust had increased to 20 percent.³ Similar patterns of decreasing media trust during election campaigns were found in research on the 2010 and 2014 election campaigns (Strömbäck & Shehata 2013; Nord & Strömbäck 2018).

It does not appear too far-fetched to assume that this pattern of declining media trust at least to some extent reflects different perceptions among voters in terms of what parties were disfavored or favored by the media. If someone perceives that the news media have treated his or her preferred party in an unfavorable and unfair manner, this is likely to have an impact on the level of media trust. This holds particularly among those who are strong supporters of a

3 The exact question wording was: "Generally speaking, to what extent do you trust the media's election coverage".

party. Whether it is objectively true or not matters less, as suggested by research on the *hostile media phenomena* (Hansen & Kim 2011; Perloff 2015).

A key question then is to what extent Swedish voters perceive the news media to have favored or disfavored the different parties in the 2018 election campaign, and whether there are any changes across time. The results are presented in Table 8. It should be noted though that the question asked about “TV” in the election campaigns 1982–1991 and about “mass media” in the election campaigns 2010–2018, so the results pertaining to 1982–1991 versus 2010–2018 are not fully comparable.

Table 8. Swedish Voters' Perceptions of Whether the News Media Favored (+) or Disfavored (-) the Political Parties in the Election Campaigns 1982–1991 and 2010–2018 (percent)

	1982		1985		1988		1991		2010		2014		2018	
	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
Left Party	7	12	8	6	9	6	2	13	9	13	9	8	16	6
Social Democrats	22	5	33	2	20	6	12	6	12	24	18	4	20	6
Green Party	6	25	1	59	25	18	3	29	21	3	17	2	15	14
Centre Party	11	5	7	9	10	5	4	6	13	4	13	3	26	1
Liberal Party	7	8	25	3	9	10	10	1	14	3	9	4	8	2
Christian Democrats	4	22	7	28	8	29	16	1	21	3	5	6	25	3
Moderates	18	3	22	9	8	7	21	0	35	3	19	6	18	3
Sweden Democrats	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27	36	21	39	23	34
Feminist Initiative	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27	13	4	26
Average	11,1		15,6		12,1		8,9		15,1		12,4		13,2	
N (min-max)	848/949		743/850		728/775		733/765		814/853		598/650		2455/2533	

Source: Swedish National Election Study 1982–2018. Percentages rounded off. The exact question wording 1982–1991 was: “Do you think that the total supply of programs on TV favored or disfavored any or some of the parties”, while the exact question wording 2010–2018 was: “Do you think that the mass media favored or disfavored any or some of the parties during this year’s election campaign”. The response alternatives were the same throughout the period: “Has been favored in the media”, “Has neither been favored or disfavored”, and “Has been disfavored in the media”.

The results show that some parties are perceived to have been more favored versus disfavored than others in each election campaign, but also that the party being perceived as being most (dis)favored varies across campaigns. For example, in 2010, the party most perceived to have been favored in the media was the Moderates (35 percent), while in 2014, it was the Feminist Initiative. The only consistent result during the last three election campaigns is that Sweden Democrats is the party that most perceive to having been disfavored in the media. Whether or not this reflects the rhetoric from the Sweden Democrats and partisan sites sympathetic to them and critical towards mass media (Holt 2016), and whether it has been influenced by the same rhetoric, is an open question.

Perceptions aside, the question is whether Swedish news media actually do favor or disfavor different parties. A crucial distinction in this context is related to the difference between being favored or disfavored *in* versus being favored or disfavored *by* the news media. A party embroiled in scandals is for example highly likely to be disfavored *in* the media, but the reason is not the media but the scandals. Hence, such a party is not necessarily disfavored *by* the media. Similarly, if a party receives a lot of criticism and attacks from other parties, this is likely to be reflected in the media coverage, causing that party to being disfavored *in* but not necessarily *by* the media. It is only when the media exacerbate negative coverage or positive coverage, and treat different parties with different standards, that a party can be said to be favored or disfavored not only *in*, but also *by*, the media (Asp 2011; Johansson & Strömbäck 2019; Niven 2002). Hence, the media coverage can be unbalanced without this necessarily indicating some sort of partisan bias. It might also reflect *structural bias*, i.e., that the circumstances of news production, prevailing news values and events on the ground at a certain point in time favor or disfavor a particular party (Hofstetter 1976). In the latter case, any imbalances should be unsystematic, meaning that different parties are (dis)favored at different points in time, while partisan bias should manifest itself by certain parties being systematically (dis)favored.

In the Swedish case, research on the media's treatment of the political parties have been done ever since the election in 1979 (Asp & Bjerling 2014). To summarize the media coverage of the parties, these studies rely on an actor treatment index that ranges from -100 to +100. In brief, this index captures how often a party appears in the news media as an actor plus how often and how the same party is being spoken about by other actors. Thus, high visibility plus praise lead to higher values while low visibility and criticism leads to lower values (Asp 2011; Johansson & Strömbäck 2019). As visibility is one key part of the actor treatment index, normally parties receive positive values: hence, positive values do not reflect an absence of the well-established negativity bias in political news (Esser et al 2017; Harcup & O'Neill 2017; Strömbäck & Shehata 2018).

What this research shows is that some party or parties do get better (or worse) treatment in the media in every election campaign – but also, that *different* parties get better (or worse) treatment in different election campaigns (Asp 2011; Asp & Bjerling 2014; Johansson 2017). Moreover, different media tend to cover different parties in similar ways, and over time, the media's coverage of different parties has become more alike. Hence, there are few traces of systematic biases. In each and every election campaign, some parties are disfavored while others are favored, but it appears to be driven by structural biases, (dis) favoring some parties in one election campaign and others in another campaign. Unbalanced coverage may for example be the result of real-world events, what parties are embroiled in scandals, the parties' standing in the polls, and

how effectively the parties' campaign and manage the news media, in conjunction with prevailing news values.

Turning to the 2018 election campaign, data from the Media Election Study shows that some parties fared better in the media than other parties did. Overall, the party that received the most favorable coverage was the Liberal Party (+41), followed by the Left Party (+36), the Christian Democrats (+33) and the Centre Party (+32) (see Table 9). The party that fared the worst was the Sweden Democrats, followed by the Social Democrats. Among both the parties that fared the best and the worst, we thus find parties to both the left and the right, indicating that the explanation for the results has to do with structural rather than partisan biases.

Table 9. The Treatment of the Political Parties in the 2018 Election Campaign (actor treatment index)

	All media	Morning newspapers	Tabloids	Broadcast news
Left Party	+36	+38	+38	+31
Social Democrats	+9	+19	+7	+11
Green Party	+26	+48	+21	+35
Centre Party	+32	+47	+30	+46
Liberal Party	+41	+55	+42	+50
Christian Democrats	+33	+48	+33	+39
Moderates	+18	+23	+16	+27
Sweden Democrats	-4	-4	-6	+2
Average	+24	+34	+23	+30

Source: Media Election Study 2018; Johansson & Strömbäck 2019. Entries show values on the actor treatment index.

It is worth noting though that in terms of the actor treatment index, the Sweden Democrats fared the worst not only in the 2018 election campaign, but also in the 2010 and 2014 election campaigns (Asp 2011; Johansson 2017; see also Nord & Strömbäck 2018). This mirrors the perception among voters that they have been disfavored in these election campaigns. At the same time, in both 2010 and 2014, they received much more coverage than warranted by their size, and in 2014, they were favored in the sense that their favorite issue – immigration – was at the top of the media agenda. More detailed analyses of the 2018 election campaign also show that most of the criticism against the Sweden Democrats came from other parties rather than journalists or the media (Johansson & Strömbäck 2019). As a right-wing populist party, it was criticized by the parties to the left as well as by some parties that used to be part of the Alliance, and this is reflected in their – relatively speaking – low value on the actor treatment index. The – again relatively speaking – low value for the Social Democrats

similarly reflects that it was the target of criticism not only from the parties in the former Alliance but also from the Sweden Democrats. In essence, being in a position of fighting battles on two fronts results in more criticism and attacks from opponents, and this gets reflected in the media coverage.

Altogether then, the results show that some parties in every election campaign are disfavored *in* the news media while others are favored, but being (dis)favored *in* the news media does not equal being (dis)favored *by* the news media, and there are very few traces of any kind of systematic partisan bias in terms of how the political parties are covered.

The Contributions of the Special Issue

Beyond this introduction, this special issue include six articles. Three of these focus on different aspects of party communication during the election campaign. In the first, Niklas Bolin and Kajsa Falasca investigate Swedish parties' assessment of different communication channels in the last three national elections, 2010–2018. That is followed by an article by Constanza Sanhueza Petrarca, Maria Tyrberg and Steven Lloyd Wilson, where they investigate how Swedish parties and candidates used Twitter during the 2018 election campaign. The third article, by Alexandra Feddersen, also focuses on party communication, and more specifically the influence of party communication on Swedish voters' opinion on asylum.

The fourth article, by Linn Sandberg and Karoline Andrea Ihlebæk, shifts the focus toward the interaction between right-wing so-called alternative media and social media during the election campaign, and investigates – among other things – links shared on Facebook and engagement around these links. The fifth article, by Emma Ricknell, also focuses on alternative media, but a more obscure form than Facebook and Twitter. More specifically, Ricknell in her article investigates how the 2018 Swedish election was debated on the anonymous discussion board 4chan and its sub-forum “Politically Incorrect”.

The final article in this special issue turns the attention toward one key – but too seldom investigated – group in the Swedish electorate, namely immigrants. In this article, Nora Theorin investigates and explores media use and media perceptions among immigrants during the 2018 election.

Altogether, we believe this special issue brings many new insights into contemporary political communication during election campaigns in Sweden, hopefully of interest not only to those interested in Sweden but also to those interested in political communication more generally. For better or worse, political communication systems and patterns are in many respects in upheaval across democracies around the world, making it both very interesting and important from a societal perspective to understand contemporary political communication during election campaigns.

References

- Aalberg, Toril, Strömbäck, Jesper & de Vreese, Claes, 2012. "The Framing of Politics as Strategy and Game: A Review of Concepts, Operationalizations and Key Findings", *Journalism* 13(2), p 162–178.
- Aalberg, Toril, de Vreese, Claes & Strömbäck, Jesper, 2017. "Strategy and game framing", p 33–49 in de Vreese, Claes, Esser, Frank & Hopmann, David Nicolas (eds), *Comparing Political Journalism*. New York: Routledge.
- Altheide, David L., & Snow, Robert P., 1979. *Media Logic*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Andersson, Dennis, 2018. "Partiernas opinionsutveckling under mandatperioden 2014–2018." Arbetsrapport 2018:10. Göteborgs universitet: Valforskningsprogrammet.
- Andersson, Ulrika, 2018. "Det prasslar inte lika mycket om tidningsläsningen som förr", p 213–231 in Andersson, Ulrika, Carlander, Anders, Lindgren, Elina & Oskarson, Maria (eds), *Sprickor i fasaden*. Göteborg: SOM-institute.
- Andersson, Ulrika & Weibull, Lennart, 2018. "Polariserat medieförtroende", p 71–92 in Andersson, Ulrika, Carlander, Anders, Lindgren, Elina & Oskarson, Maria (eds), *Sprickor i fasaden*. Göteborg: SOM-institute.
- Asp, Kent, 1986. *Mäktiga massmedier. Studier i politisk opinionsbildning*. Stockholm: Akademilitteratur.
- Asp, Kent, 2011. *Mediernas prestationer och betydelse. Valet 2010*. Göteborg: JMG, University of Gothenburg.
- Asp, Kent, 2014. "News Media Logic in a New Institutional Perspective", *Journalism Studies* 15(3), p 256–270.
- Asp, Kent & Bjerling, Johannes, 2014. *Mediekratin – mediernas makt i svenska val*. Stockholm: Ekerlids.
- Aylott, Nicholas, 2016. "The Party System", p 152–168 in Pierre, Jon (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Swedish Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Berg, Linda, Erlingsson, Gissur & Oscarsson, Henrik, 2019. "Rekordhög röstdelning", in Andersson, Ulrika, Rönnestrand, Björn, Öhberg, Patrik & Bergström, Annika, (eds), 2019 (forthcoming), *Storm och stiltje*. Göteborg: SOM-institute.
- Blumler, Jay G., & Gurevitch, Michael, 1995. *The Crisis of Public Communication*. London: Routledge.
- Bright, Jonathan, 2016. "The Social News Gap: How News Reading and News Sharing Diverge", *Journal of Communication*, 66(3) p 343–365.
- D'Alessio, Dave D., 2012. *Media Bias in Presidential Election Coverage, 1948–2008*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- D'Alessio, Dave D. & Allen, Mike, 2000. "Media Bias in Presidential Elections: A Meta-Analysis", *Journal of Communication* 50(4) p 133–156.
- Dahl, Robert A, 1998. *On Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Demker, Marie & Oscarsson, Henrik, 2018. "Nya, gamla och nygamla skiljelinjer. Partisystem och samhällskontrakt då och nu", p 369–385 in Holgersson, Ulrika & Wängnerud, Lena (eds), *Rösträttens århundrade. Kampen, utvecklingen och framtiden för demokratin i Sverige*. Stockholm: Makadam förlag & Riksbankens Jubileumsfond.
- Esser, Frank, Engesser, Sven, Matthes, Jörg & Berganza, Rosa, 2017. "Negativity", p 71–91 in de Vreese, Claes, Esser, Frank & Hopmann, David Nicolas (eds), *Comparing Political Journalism*. New York: Routledge.

- Fredén, Annika, 2019. "Strategisk röstning i riksdagsvalet 2018". Valforskningsprogrammets rapportserie 2019:2. Göteborg: Statsvetenskapliga institutionen, Göteborgs universitet.
- Harcup, Tony & O'Neill, Deidre, 2017. "What is News? News Values Revisited (again)", *Journalism Studies* 18(12), p 1470–1488.
- IDEA, 2018. *The Global State of Democracy. Exploring Democracy's Resilience*. Stockholm: International IDEA.
- Iyengar, Shanto & Kinder, Donald R., 1987. *News that Matters. Television and American Opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Freedom House, 2019. *Freedom in the World 2019. Democracy in Retreat*. Washington: Freedom House.
- Hofstetter, Richard C., 1976. *Bias in the News. Network Television News Coverage of the 1972 Election Campaign*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Johansson, Bengt, 2017. "Medievalrörelsen 2014", p 22–57 in Johansson, Bengt & Truedson, Lars (eds), *När makten står på spel – journalistik i valrörelser*. Stockholm: Institutet för mediestudier.
- Johansson, Bengt & Strömbäck, Jesper, 2019. *Kampen om mediebilden. Nyhetsjournalistik i valrörelsen 2018*. Stockholm: Institutet för mediestudier.
- Hansen, Glenn J., & Kim, Kyunjung, 2011. "Is the Media Biased Against Me? A Meta-Analysis of the Hostile Media Effect Research", *Communication Research Reports* 28(2), p 169–179.
- Hjarvard, Stig, 2008. "The Mediatization of Society. A Theory of the Media as Agents of Social and Cultural Change", *Nordicom Review* 29(2), p 105–134.
- Holt, Kristoffer, 2016. "Alternativmedier?" En intervjustudie om mediekritik och mediemisstro", p 113–149 in Truedson, Lars (ed.), *Migrattonen i medierna – men det får en väl inte prata om?* Stockholm: Institutet för mediestudier.
- Jungar, Ann-Cathrine, 2015. "Business as Usual: Ideology and Populist Appeals of the Sweden Democrats", p 41–65 in Kriesi, Hanspeter & Tappas, Takis S. (eds), *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession*. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Kiousis, Spiro, Strömbäck, Jesper & McDevitt, Michael, 2015. "Influence of Issue Decision Salience on Vote Choice: Linking Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Issue Ownership", *International Journal of Communication* 9, p 3347–3368.
- McCombs, Maxwell, 2014. *Setting the Agenda. Mass Media and Public Opinion*. 2nd Edition. London: Polity.
- Mitchell, Amy, Gottfried, Jeffrey, Berthel, Michael & Shearer, Elisa, 2016. *The Modern News Consumer*. Washington: Pew Research Center.
- Mudde, Cas, 2007. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Newman, Nic, 2011. *Mainstream Media and the Distribution of News in the Age of Social Discovery*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Newman, Nic, Fletcher, Richard, Kalogeropoulos, Antonis, Levy, David A. & Nielsen, Rasmus Kleis, 2018. *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.
- Niven, David, 2002. *Tilt? The Search for Media Bias*. Westport: Praeger.
- Nord, Lars & Strömbäck, Jesper, 2018. *Svenska valrörelser. Väljare, partier och medier under 2000-talet*. Stockholm: Santérus.

- Nord, Lars, Grusell, Marie, Bolin, Niklas, Falasca, Kajsa, (eds), 2019. *Snabbtänkt. Reflektioner från valet 2018 av ledande forskare*. Sundsvall: Mittuniversitetet. (<http://www.snabbtankt.se>)
- Näsman, Per, Oscarsson, Henrik & Holmberg, Sören, 2018. *Results from the Swedish Television Exit Poll*. Presentation from the press conference September 11th, 2019. Stockholm: Swedish Television. https://www.svt.se/omoss/media/filer_public/5c/17/5c17fc91-31c4-4e0a-a17f-b42318edf4a4/valresultat_riksdagsval_pk_2018_vagda_0912.pdf
- Oscarsson, Henrik & Holmberg, Sören, 2016. *Svenska väljare*. Stockholm: Wolters Kluwer.
- Oscarsson, Henrik, 2016. *Flytande väljare*. Demokratistatistik rapport 21. Stockholm: Statistiska centralbyrån.
- Oscarsson, Henrik, 2018. "Älska din nästa! Partiernas sympatikapital inför 2018 års riksdagsval", p 177–191 in Andersson, Ulrika, Martinsson, Johan, Oskarson, Maria & Rönnerstrand, Björn (eds), *Sprickor i fasaden*. University of Gothenburg: SOM Institute.
- Oscarsson, Henrik, Andersson, Dennis, Falk, Elisabeth & Forsberg, Jonathan, 2018. *Förhandlingsvalet 2018. Analyser av valresultatet i 2018 års riksdagsval*. Göteborg: Valforskningsprogrammet, Göteborgs universitet.
- Oleskog Tryggvason, Per, 2018. *Polling accuracy in the Swedish general election 2018*. SNES working paper 2018:5. University of Gothenburg: Swedish National Election Studies Program.
- Oleskog Tryggvason, Per & Strömbäck, Jesper, 2018. "Fact or Fiction? Investigating the Quality of Opinion Poll Coverage and its Antecedents", *Journalism Studies* 19(14), p 2148–2167.
- Perloff, Richard M., 2015. "A Three-Decade Retrospective on the Hostile Media Effect", *Mass Communication & Society* 18(6), p 721–729.
- Petersson, Olof, Djerf-Pierre, Monika, Holmberg, Sören, Strömbäck, Jesper & Weibull, Lennart, 2006. *Media and Elections in Sweden*. Stockholm: SNS.
- Petrocik, John R., 1996. Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study", *American Journal of Political Science* 40(3), p 825–850.
- Rydgren, Jens, 2006. *From Tax Populist to Ethnic Populism. Radical Right-Wing Populism in Sweden*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Sartori, Giovanni, 2005. *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Shehata, Adam & Strömbäck, Jesper, 2014. "Mediation of Political Realities: Media as Crucial Sources of Information", p 93–112 in Esser, Frank & Strömbäck, Jesper (eds), *Mediatization of Politics. Understanding the Transformation of Western Democracies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Shehata, Adam & Strömbäck, Jesper, 2018. "Learning Political News from Social Media: Network Media Logic and Current Affairs News Learning in a High-Choice Media Environment", *Communication Research*, online early.
- Strömbäck, Jesper, 2015. *Demokratin och det förändrade medielandskapet. Mot ökade kunskapsklyftor och deltagandeklyftor?* Stockholm: Regeringskansliet.
- Strömbäck, Jesper, 2016. "Swedish Election Campaigns", p 275–293 in Pierre, Jon (red.), *The Oxford Handbook of Swedish Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Strömbäck, Jesper & Dimitrova, Daniela V., 2011. "Mediatization and Media Interventionism: A Comparative Analysis of Sweden and the United States", *International Journal of Press/Politics* 16(1), p 30–49.

- Strömbäck, Jesper & Esser, Frank, 2009. "Shaping Politics: Mediatization and Media Interventionism", p 205-224 in Lundby, Knut (ed.), *Mediatization. Concept, Changes, Consequences*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Strömbäck, Jesper & Esser, Frank, 2014. "Mediatization of Politics: Towards a Theoretical Framework", p 3-28 in Esser, Frank & Strömbäck, Jesper (eds), *Mediatization of Politics. Understanding the Transformation of Western Democracies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Strömbäck, Jesper & Karlsson, Michael, 2017. "Sjunkande förtroende för svenska medier? En analys av hur medborgarnas medieförtroende och betydelsen av partisympati har förändrats mellan 2014 och 2016", p 84-99 i Truedson, Lars (ed.), *Misstron mot medier*. Stockholm: Institutet för mediestudier.
- Strömbäck, Jesper & Shehata, Adam, 2013. "Kampanjeffekter under svenska valrörelser", p 207-238 in Strömbäck, Jesper & Nord, Lars (eds), *Kampen om opinionen. Politisk kommunikation under svenska valrörelser*. Stockholm: SNS.
- Strömbäck, Jesper & Shehata, Adam, 2018. "Political Journalism", p 1-27 in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Strömbäck, Jesper, Jungar, Ann-Cathrine & Dahlberg, Stefan, 2016. "Sweden: No longer a European Exception", p 68-81 in Aalberg, Toril, Esser, Frank, Reinemann, Carsten, Strömbäck, Jesper & de Vreese, Claes (eds), *Populist Political Communication in Europe*. London: Routledge.
- Walgrave, Stefaan, Lefevre, Jonas & Tresch, Anke, 2014. "The Limits of Issue Ownership Dynamics: The Constraining Effect of Party Preference", *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties* 24(1), p 1-19.
- Watts, Mark D., Domke, David, Shah, Dhavan V., & Fan, David P., 1999. "Elite Cues and Media Bias in Presidential Campaigns: Explaining Public Perceptions of a Liberal Press", *Communication Research* 26(2), p 144-175.
- Widholm, Andreas & Mårtenson, Fredrik, 2018. "Mediekritik driver Twitteraktivitet. Om journalistik som resurs för politisk kommunikation i sociala medier", p 104-135 i Truedson, Lars (ed.), *Fejk, filter och faktaresistens - hotar sociala medier demokratin?* Stockholm: Institutet för mediestudier.
- Widfelt, Anders, 2008. "Party Change as a Necessity: The Case of the Sweden Democrats", *Representation* 44(3), p 265-276.