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A visual semiotic analysis of Swedish political parties' visual communication in the 2018 election

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Abstract

The following thesis utilizes visual social semiotic analysis in order to investigate the usage of images by Swedish political parties during the election campaign to the Swedish *Riksdag* of 2018. Visual semiotics is used to identify the themes and the visual methodology used in images in election posters before comparing these to posts made by the parties on Facebook the week preceding the election in 2018 in order to ascertain whether there were differences in said themes and methodology in the posters compared to the Facebook posts or not. All eight parties investigated were found to have differences in their usage of these themes to a varying extent, with the differences of the Sweden Democrats standing out when compared to the differences of the other seven parties investigated.

Keywords: Sweden, political communication, visual communication, political parties, visual semiotics, election posters, Facebook, social media

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Introduction

The following text aims to use a visual semiotic analysis with elements borrowed from multimodal critical discourse analysis in order to investigate the usage of images by Swedish political parties during the election campaign in 2018. The focus of this investigation will be on the semiotic differences between images used in election posters and images used on Facebook by the eight parties of the Swedish *Riksdag* for the election of 2018.

Understanding the means through which political parties communicate with the public lets us better understand the society in which they operate, from the parties' point of view.

Understanding how parties understand their contemporary societies in turn lets the citizens better decide which party or parties to vote for (in a democracy, at least), making the governance of society match the wishes of the citizens better.

Images, just like spoken and written language, are used to convey meaning, to communicate. “An image says more than a thousand words”, and yet the study of persuasive speaking has a name, rhetoric, while there is no such name for the science of how to persuade others through visuals (Karlsson 2017). This clearly illustrates the fact that visual communication is a relatively less studied field than spoken or written communication (Karlsson 2017: 6, Müller and Griffin 2012: 94, Schill 2011: 193). Yet images remain every bit as relevant as means of communicating today as ever (if not more so, see e.g. Müller and Griffin 2012, Kress and van Leeuwen 2006), and thus the study of how visual communication works also remains of great interest.

Political parties are major actors in modern democracies (Karlsson 2017: 6, Müller and Strøm (ed.) 1999: 2); as such understanding the way these parties communicate with their electorate is of great importance. Even if political parties were not interesting subjects to study in their own right (which, from a political science perspective, they by definition are), the way they communicate with the general public gives us important insights into the societies they operate in. As the way someone communicates is grounded in that someone's understanding of the societal context they exist and operate in (Karlsson 2017: 6, Johansson and Holtz-Bacha 2017: 17), understanding how political parties communicates with its contemporary society would thus allow us to form an idea of how these parties understand or interpret their societal context, which would, in turn, allow us to form an understanding of what that society is like. I thus adhere to what Johansson and Holtz-Bacha call the “historical school” (ibid.), assuming that, as Machin and Mayr (2012: 35) put it, “[...] language and society are deeply intertwined. They are not to be thought of as separate entities.”, with “language” for the purposes of this text being understood as modes of visual communication.

In previous works I have studied how Swedish political parties used storytelling and narrative techniques in order to construct their own identities (Karlsson and Kores 2016) and how the usage of images in election posters changed in Sweden between 1979 and 2014 (Karlsson 2017). In this thesis I aim to continue on the same track, investigating the differences between the election posters used by Swedish parties in the election season of 2018 and images used

on Facebook.¹ More specifically, I will investigate if, how, and to what extent the images used in the election posters differ from those used on Facebook. As research on related subjects is rare and far between, I aim to help lessen this gap and provide a better understanding of how parties use images to communicate.

Literature review

In this chapter I outline previous research and literature in order to ascertain what we already know and, by extension, what we do not know about how parties communicate. The overview begins on a more general level, with the super-fields of political communication and visual communication, before narrowing down the field of review to the combination of the two, political visual communication, and then further to political communication on social media. This helps discover a research gap which I fill later in the thesis.

Political communication

The study of political communication is the study of how political actors get a message across to other actors (Karlsson 2017: 9). As the usage of the word “rhetoric” for the art of persuasion illustrates, the field is (literally) ancient, dating back (at least) to the ancient Greeks (ibid.). The means to communicate with other human beings is of the utmost importance to society, as society could not possibly exist without interaction between its constituent individuals (ibid.).

It goes without saying that the subject of political communication is a very wide field indeed. Whether one talks about party discourse in Belgium (Jagers and Walgrave 2007), about identity-creating narratives of parties in Sweden (Karlsson and Kores 2016), or about the professionalization of political communication in general (Negrine et. al. (ed.) 2007) one remains in the field of “political communication”. The field must thus be narrowed down further in order to find a potential gap to investigate.

Visual communication

Visual communication as a field of study covers any means of communication humans use that uses vision to get across a message to someone else, be that art, commercials on TV, or the usage of Aldis lanterns on warships to send messages in Morse code, with the exception of written language. While this form of communication is arguably as old as humanity itself, it is also an understudied form of communication compared to oral communication or the written word (Drechsel 2009: 4-5; Schill 2012; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 21); the fact that the written word isn’t included in visual communication, despite being a means to use vision to get messages across to someone else, illustrates this supremacy of the written word.

That being said, being understudied compared to other means of communication should absolutely not be understood as lacking entirely in research; there is still a great body of research in the field of visual communication. The field can be analysed using a variety of

¹ As a continuation of my previous work, in particular Karlsson (2017), the methodology and theoretical background will largely be similar to that of the previous work. In particular, the basis for this thesis is a working paper (Karlsson 2019) prepared as an exploratory prototype for this thesis.

methods, both those originally intended to study written communication (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006) to those purpose-built to analyse visual communication (Machin and Mayr 2012). Studies of visual communication cover a very broad spectrum, including such different subjects as the study of the use of images in commercials (Messaris 1997; Berger 2011; Manca, Manca, and Pieper 2012), the use of stereotypical images in media (Martin and Ross 2003), how media reporting on hurricane Katrina in 2005 has helped shape people's memories of that event (Cook 2015), the usage and analysis of visual communication in general (Smith et. al. 2004; Kress and van Leeuwen 2005; Machin 2014), and many, many more subjects. Clearly, the field of "visual communication" as a whole is far too broad to be practical, forcing us to narrow down our search for our research gap.

Political visual communication

Political visual communication is what one gets when adding politics to visual communication (Karlsson 2017: 10). It is a field of research studying the usage of visual communication by political actors. As a sub-field of visual communication, the status as understudied vis-à-vis oral and written communication holds true here too (Drechsel 2009: 4-5; Schill 2012), as does the note on how "understudied" is a relative term. Perhaps the most famous example of the importance of political visual communication in modern time is the legendary presidential debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon where those who heard it on the radio favoured Nixon, while those that saw it on TV favoured Kennedy (Druckman 2003). Despite narrowing down the field of visual communication to strictly political communication, the field is still too large to find a gap, including such separate questions as various analyses of election posters and leaflets (Vliegthart 2012; Håkansson and Vigsø 2014; Johansson and Holtz-Bacha 2017; Karlsson 2017; Wodak and Richardson), the growing importance of images in political discourse in the Middle East (Khatib 2013), the visual history of Jim Crow laws in the US (Abel 2010) and so on. A further narrowing down is thus needed.

Political communication on social media

Despite being a relatively fresh field of inquiry, the usage of social media by political parties has already attracted some scholarship, including studies on individual countries (Bonilla and Rosa 2015; Vakaoti and Mishra-Vakaoti 2015; Klinger 2013; Baxter and Marcella 2012) or studying international political phenomena such as the Arab Spring (Wolfsfeld, Segev, and Sheaffer 2013), how populism is spread by politicians on social media (Engesser et. al. 2016) et cetera. To a certain extent, the status of visual communication as understudied (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 6) holds true here too, with the written word being preeminent over the visual. Even taking into account existing studies (Ben-David and Matamoros-Fernández 2016; Filimonov, Russmann, and Svensson 2014; Grusell and Nord 2012) that partially deal with images, the fact that they do so partially remains: there is little work done that focuses primarily on the use of images on social media. As such, there is a gap in our understanding of how political parties communicate on social media using images.

Research gap – previous research on political images in social media

From previous research we know that a multitude of studies have argued that different social media contexts means different ways of communication are preferable: Twitter is different from Facebook which is different from Instagram, or as Gerodimos (2019: 84) puts it, “different social media platforms create different communication cultures”. Grant, Moon, and Busby Grant (2010: 597) note discrepancies between what was covered in press, radio, and TV during the 2010 Australian elections compared to what was covered on Twitter, supporting this view. Further support for the view that parties tailor their messages to specific platform is provided by Kreiss, Lawrence, and McGregor (2017) who in interviews with US “digital and social media directors, or people in similarly relevant position” (Kreiss, Lawrence, and McGregor 2017: 11) found that US campaign officials are very much aware of the potential for different audiences depending on what platform they are using to communicate.

In stark contrast to this, Michael Bosetta (2018) used a combination of interviews, interviewing campaign strategists working for several of the US Republican front runners, and posts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter by three Republican candidates (Donald Trump, Marco Rubio, and Ted Cruz) and two Democrats (Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders)(Bosetta 2018: 478) to determine whether the campaign material shared by these actors on these four social media sites was the same or not, coming to the conclusion that the material was largely interchangeable.

Bosetta argues that while context-specific communication exists, one should be careful to not assume that this means that content cannot be used across multiple platforms (Bosetta 2018: 491). These findings, in opposition to an otherwise rather unanimous field, serve as a launching point for my own investigation, as it poses a number of interesting questions: do Bosetta’s findings hold only in the specific context of the US, and do they only hold in the context of comparing different social media to each other, or do they hold when comparing other countries and/or when comparing social media to other modes of communication?

Despite the above knowledge, however, there is still a vast gulf of unknowns about (visual) political communication in Sweden:

We don’t know if election campaigns tend to be uniform when comparing non-social media and social media, even in the US and certainly not in Sweden. If the results of Bosetta (2018) hold true when comparing visual communication on a social medium like Facebook with traditional offline election posters then the material used on- and offline should to a large degree be interchangeable. On the other hand, if Bosetta’s (2018) conclusions do not hold in the Swedish context, the previous literature suggests that visual communication methods on Facebook ought to be distinct from those used in election posters. Sweden as a case makes sense because there is a body of previous studies on political communication in the country. From these previous studies we know that Swedish political communication in 2014 on

Instagram was characterized by personalization (Filimonov, Russman and Svensson 2016: 9), and that negative campaigning tends to be unusual in Swedish political communication (Johansson and Holtz-Bacha 2019; Holtz-Bacha and Lessinger 2017; Karlsson 2017; Håkansson, Johansson and Vigsø 2014). This does not, however, tell us anything about the content used in different platforms by Swedish political parties, a gap that I aim to lessen.

Based on Bosetta's (2018) findings, I hypothesize the following:

H1: The visual communication used in election posters and the images used on Facebook by Swedish parties in the 2018 election campaign are interchangeable.

In order to investigate this hypothesis, I will perform a visual social semiotic analysis of the images posted by the official accounts of the parties represented in the Swedish *Riksdag* in the 2018 elections (the same parties were represented both before and after the election, no new parties were added and no parties that were already represented in the *Riksdag* lost enough votes to lose their representation) during the month leading up to the 2018 election, and on the election posters used by the same political parties during the same election. I will then proceed to compare the results of these two analyses with each other on a per-party basis.

Theory

In this chapter I elaborate on the theoretical assumptions and presuppositions I make in my analysis.² The focus of this chapter will be on ways of understanding how images or visual representations of something communicate meaning to the viewer.

The first sub-chapter will explain the underlying theoretical assumptions made in this thesis. Following this is an overview of the history of semiotics as a field and why this theoretical approach was chosen for my analysis.

Following this, successive sub-chapters delve into semiotic concepts used to convey meaning in images, such as Peirce's triad of icons, indices, and symbols, as well as theoretical concepts for how to emphasize different parts of an image to make the point you are trying to convey in a stronger manner. These concepts will later form the theoretical backbone for my methodological approach, detailed in the "methods" chapter below.

Theoretical elaboration

The underlying theoretical premise of this thesis is what Johansson and Holtz-Bacha call a "historical perspective" (Johansson and Holtz-Bacha 2017: 17); that is, the idea that political communication (in Johansson and Holtz-Bacha's case election posters) reflects the society in which the communication originates and with which it communicates. Election posters, for example, "[...] do not only reveal historical information on their producers and contractors but also on their production context and the political, economic, and social circumstances of their origin." (ibid.). Understanding what choices political parties make when communicating thus allows us to form an understanding of how said parties perceive the societal context in

² As a continuation of Karlsson (2017) much of the theoretical approach in this thesis will be similar to or the same as that found in that work.

which they operate, which in turn gives us a better understanding of what that society is like. Additionally, in light of the above, forming a better understanding of the manner in which political parties communicate also lets us form a better understanding of the nature of political parties themselves through an increased understanding of how parties act in different societal contexts.

Social semiotics

This thesis draws most heavily on ideas from the social semiotic school of thought, especially on the work of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen in their seminal book “Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design”. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 4) note, their approach is very much grounded in a “Western” context. Their approach to semiotics is thus founded in an attempt to understand how “Western”, or European, visual communication functions. Kress and van Leeuwen explicitly reject the idea that visual communication, what they call “visual language” (ibid.) is universal and argue instead that it is specific to a given culture (ibid.), a view that Messaris (1997 ch. 3.) also agrees with.

This is further evident by the fact that a social semiotic approach’s main focus is on the way language is used to create society (Machin and Mayr 2012: 17): in this approach language is understood not as a system but as a resource, to be used in a manner “apt for the expression of their meaning” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 8). It is focussed on studying signs (more on this below) with the understanding that the choice of sign made (or not made) by the sign-maker helps create society and lets us understand the way the sign-maker conceptualises the thing they are trying to communicate. As Machin and Mayr put it:

“In a Social Semiotic approach we are concerned with the underlying available repertoire of signs and their uses in context to communicate wider ideas, moods and attitudes and identities, and we are interested in why specific means were used to create these”. (Machin and Mayr 2012: 19)

In other words, the underlying assumptions of the approach match up with the historical approach to visual communication (see “theoretical elaboration” above).

Semiotics

The field of semiotics is the study of signs: that is, the means by which humans make themselves understood to each other, and the rules governing these signs (Moriarty 2004: 227). Of note is the study of the choices made by various actors when communicating, their usage of so-called “semiotic resources” (Ledin and Machin 2018: 16) which will be described in greater detail below: this makes for an excellent tool for studying party communication from a historical perspective (see above).

Semiotics as a field grew out of the work of American philosopher Charles S. Peirce (Moriarty 2004: 229) and Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (Moriarty 2004: 228; Ledin and Machin 2018: 34). In semiotics, the central object of study is the sign, defined as “anything that stands for something else” (Moriarty 2004: 228). A sign, however, means different things depending on whether one uses a Peircean or Saussurean approach. I will begin by briefly describing the Saussurean and the Peircean approach before comparing the

two and arguing that a Peircean approach is more suitable for my investigation than a Saussurean one.

In the Saussurean sense, a sign is a combination of a signifier, which carries meaning, and a signified, the concept which the signifier is supposed to communicate (Moriarty 2004: 228). The sign is thus a composite of both its message and the means it uses to communicate this message. Further, Saussure argued that the connection between the signifier and the signified was arbitrary (*ibid.*), using the example of a tree: there is no motivated link between the word “tree” and the concept of “treeness”, the word “tree” in English fits just as well as “arbre” in French or “träd” in Swedish (Ledin and Machin 2018: 34).

In the Peircean sense, a sign corresponds to what Saussure called signifier, a carrier of meaning (Moriarty 2004: 228-229). While Saussure came at the concept from a linguist’s point of view, Peirce came up with his model of signs as a way to understand human thought, arguing that all human perception of reality is realized through sign-making (Moriarty 2004: 228). In the Peircean tradition, unlike in Saussure’s definition of signs there is no analogue to an overarching sign: instead, Peirce relates the sign to an Object (roughly analogous to Saussure’s signified) and an Interpretant, the mental idea of the object that arises in the recipient of the communication (Moriarty 2004: 228-229). Going with Saussure’s example of the tree, Moriarty (2004: 228) points out that what a tree is, or what constitutes “tree-ness” can vary from person to person, with one person imagining a tree as a flowering sakura tree, whereas another might imagine a tree as a gnarled fir tree. Both of these mental images, the Interpretant part in Peirce’s conceptualisation of how signs relate to communication, are entirely valid imaginations of trees.

Notably, the Peircean notion of a sign, unlike the Saussurean, is never arbitrary or unmotivated, but, rather, always based on the sign-maker’s idea of what properly represents the concept they are trying to communicate; Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 7 ff.) use the example of a three-year old boy drawing circles on a paper and declaring “this is a car”, identifying the circles as “wheels”. For this child, the essence of “car-ness”, i.e. the Interpretant, is expressed through “having wheels” (*ibid.*). The Object in this case is a car, which in the child is connected to “wheel-having”, where the sign that communicates this “wheel-having” is a number or circles. Peirce’s underlying assumption that humans perceive reality through signs (see above) is clearly visible here: the child in this example understands the concept of “car” as involving “having wheels” and thus draws something that for him makes complete sense as a representation of having wheels, in this case circles. In this understanding, there is always a reason for why the sign-maker chose a particular sign to communicate meaning (Ledin and Machin 2018: 35; Moriarty 2004: 231); “sign-makers use the forms they consider apt for the expression of their meaning, in any medium in which they can make signs” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 8).

Taking the above into account, the Peircean understanding of a sign is thus more useful as a tool for studying images than the Saussurean one. As Moriarty (2004: 231) notes, the Saussurean model’s origins in linguistics limits its applicability to other means of communication than written or spoken language, as the logics that govern these two forms of

communication are different than those used when communicating through images, as the choice of what images to use are far more obviously motivated (as opposed to arbitrary) than communication through language. Further, the Peircean understanding of a sign lines up more neatly with the so-called historical perspective of political communication (Johansson and Holtz-Bacha 2017: 17) mentioned above, which argues that studying political communication lets one understand the context in which this communication was made (ibid.); this would be much harder, if not impossible, if one used the Saussurean notion of an unmotivated sign.

Denotation and connotation

Closely related to the concepts of Object and Interpretant (see above) are the concepts of, respectively, denotation and connotation, building on the work of Roland Barthes (1977). Denotation, just like it sounds like, describes what an image denotes, what is actually, objectively depicted (Ledin and Machin 2018: 47; Machin and Mayr 2012: 49; Moriarty 2004: 231) or, at least, a description that everyone can agree on (Johansson and Holtz-Bacha 2017: 46). To continue with the example of a tree, photograph of a tree is a photograph of a tree whether that tree is a sakura tree or a fir. Such a photograph can thus be said to denote a tree. Notably, however, an image never simply denotes something; there is no way to create an image that “objectively” describes something as a choice of what to depict and how always has to be made (Ledin and Machin 2018: 48).

Connotation, on the other hand, is the subjective meanings carried by the denoted, very close to Peirce’s concept of Interpretant. Connotations are the ideas, concepts, values, or meanings that are being communicated (Ledin and Machin 2018: 48; Johansson and Holtz-Bacha 2017: 47; Machin and Mayr 2012: 50; Moriarty 2004: 231). To continue the example of the tree, a flowering sakura is intimately connected to Japan, carrying connotations of Japan-ness and Japanese culture as a symbol of Japan (more on symbols in its own sub-chapter below), whereas a gnarled fir tree can carry connotations of old age, stubborn survival, or harshness depending on how it is denoted. Despite both being denotations of trees, they thus evoke vastly different connotations because of their respective cultural baggage, further emphasizing Kress and van Leeuwen’s point mentioned earlier that “visual language” is subjective rather than universal (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 8).

As evident by this last remark, denotation to a certain extent drives connotation in that what you denote impacts what you connote. Consider two paintings of the same dog in the same context, but where the dog is snarling in one painting and is not in the other. Despite depicting the same dog in the same place the meanings of the two are drastically different. As such, care must be taken when describing what an image denotes lest the connotations of the image be distorted. Identifying what an image denotes is thus an important step in identifying what it connotes.

Peirce’s triad – icons, indices, and symbols

Having dealt with the object and Interpretant in the concepts of denotation and connotation, we return to Peirce’s concept of the sign. The Peircean notion of the sign is further subdivided into three types of signs: icons, indices, and symbols (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 8;

Moriarty 2004: 229 ff.). These three concepts help specify more clearly in what manner the sign in question carries meaning.

A symbol or symbolic sign is a sign that carries meaning strictly through social convention (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 8; Moriarty 2004: 230). A symbol thus “represents something other than itself; something present that is also absent” (Cornell et. al. 1999: 311, my translation). An example of such a sign could be a flag consisting of a yellow cross on a blue background being symbolic of Sweden not because of any inherent quality in the flag, but because social convention is such that the blue-and-yellow flag is understood as standing for Sweden. Do note, however, that this does not imply that a sign-maker that chooses to use the flag of Sweden is doing so arbitrarily; while the flag’s symbolic properties may be arbitrary, the choice to use them based on one’s understanding of what constitutes “Swedishness” are not.

An icon or iconic sign is the opposite of a symbolic sign, and is thus one that carries meaning based on (perceived) conformance to reality, or through mimesis of reality (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 8; Moriarty 2004: 230). An icon thus “carries associations or connotations to existing objects with qualities that are inherent, rather than socially constructed” (Karlsson 2017: 13) whereas a symbol does the opposite. Continuing the example of the Swedish flag above, a picture of a Swedish flag could be iconic in the sense that it is a symbol showing the presence of flags at a political rally. The main contrast to a symbol is that there is some obvious logical connection between an icon and what it is a sign of. Again, note that this is distinct from the motivation of the sign-maker in using any particular sign, as discussed in the “semiotics” sub-chapter above.

An index or indexical sign is, in a sense, related to the iconic sign. An index represents or stands for something through inference or through indicating the existence of something else (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 8, Moriarty 2004: 230). Again using the Swedish flag as an example, a Swedish flag billowing in the wind would be an index in the sense that it illustrates the fact that there is wind present in the depiction, despite the fact that the wind itself is invisible. Similarly, a shadow being cast across an image by someone stood just outside the image’s frame of reference would be indexical of that person’s existence despite the person not being in the image proper.

Indices are notable because the media being studied itself often constitutes indices in themselves. For example, a photograph is inherently indexical, as the mere existence of the photograph in question directly indicates the existence of the camera and person who took the image in the first place. It is worth elaborating on the indexical nature of photographs in particular.

Photographs and indexicality

Messaris (1997 ch. 4) dedicates a whole chapter to discussing the indexical role of photographs. Since a photograph captures a snapshot of reality, a photograph inherently carries a stronger persuasive value than an image that was created using some other means. Messaris (1997: xvi ff., 130) uses the example of a celebrity endorsing a specific candy brand; a photograph of said celebrity endorsing the candy brand is far more persuasive of its

truthfulness than a painting of the same would be, since photographs are inherently more indexical than paintings.

That is not to say that photographs are always wholly truthful of the circumstances they depict; the inherent indexicality of photographs can easily be exploited to lend credence to depictions that mislead or deceive. Viewers of a photograph do not know if the photograph was staged or not, and various techniques for image manipulation mean what is depicted in a photograph might not be as indexical of reality as it seems. Messaris (1997: 142 ff.) noted the increasing prevalence of computer-edited images in commercials since the 1980s; considering the rather significant developments in computer technology over the 22 years since Messaris wrote his book there is little reason to believe his observation is any less relevant today.

The inherent indexicality of photographs is reason enough to examine the frequency of usage of photographic images (in contrast to non-photographic images) more closely. The degree of usage of photographs by the parties in my examination will tell us about to what degree the sign-makers (in this case the parties) believe their intended audience understands the existence of things in reality through these things' implicit existence.

Participants and Vectors

Having defined Peirce's triad of signs, I now turn my attention to the concepts of participants and vectors in images. These two concepts together are used to make elements of images interact with one another and are thus important for interpreting the meaning of images, as they together with settings and salience (see below) create the means to focus the viewer's attention on certain parts or elements of an image.

A participant in the semiotic sense is someone or something (including abstract concepts) that is involved in a semiotic act (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 47 ff.). Kress and van Leeuwen (ibid.) split participants into two different categories: interactive participants and represented participants. In their definition, an interactive participant is the person or persons who is/are communicating with each other, while the represented participants are the various things being communicated about, such as the things or people depicted in an image (ibid.). Represented participants are distinguished through various techniques for creating salience (see above); not every object depicted in an image is a participant (ibid.). While Kress and van Leeuwen (ibid.) further elaborate their definition of participants that elaboration has no bearing on this thesis and will as such be left out. The primary reason for the concept's inclusion in this thesis is because of its bearing on the concept of vectors.

A vector is an oblique line formed by elements depicted in an image, often a very strong diagonal line (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 59). When two represented participants are linked together by a vector, they are represented as doing something to or for each other in what Kress and van Leeuwen (ibid.) call a "narrative". Such narratives represent something happening and are contrasted by "conceptual" patterns where there are no vectors involved (ibid.). Narratives, Kress and van Leeuwen argue, "serve to present unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements" (ibid.) whereas conceptual patterns "represent participants [...] in terms of their generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence" (ibid.). The participant from which a vector departs is called an "Actor"

(Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 59, 63), while the participant toward which the vector is directed is called a “Goal” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 64).

An image where there is both an Actor and a Goal contains a “transactional process”, or is “transactional” in nature (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 63). In such an image the Actor is the participant that is instigating movement; in an image of a man pointing at a bird the man would be the Actor and the bird the goal, as the man is the one creating the vector. Two notable exceptions exist to the above. Firstly, in an image where one participant is looking at another, the participant looking is not labelled as an “Actor”, but as a “Reactor”, and the participant being looked at is a “Phenomenon” as opposed to a “Goal” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 75). Secondly, in an image where two participants are simultaneously Actors and Goals of vectors emanating from each other, such as in an image of two people pointing at each other, these two participants are defined as “Interactors” rather than “Actors” to emphasize the fact that they are engaged in a mutual action (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 75). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) do not mention any particular nomenclature for participants who meet the criteria of being labelled as both Reactors and Interactors (as would happen in an image where two people are looking at each other); for the purposes of this thesis I will refer to such participants as “Interreactors” in a manner analogous to “Reactor” in the way of Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) formation of “Interactor” from “Actor”.

In images where there the Actor is the only participant, the structure of the image is “non-transactional”; the Actor does things, but there is no Goal for it to do things to. Kress and van Leeuwen use the example of a diagram of the Gulf Stream to illustrate the point; “the water of the Gulf Stream does not move *something*, it just moves” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 63). In images where the opposite is true, and there is a Goal but no Actor, the process is called an “Event” (ibid.); something is happening to a participant, but we as interactive participants cannot see where the vector in question is originating from.

In addition to these there are a number of specialized forms of vectors that are only relevant in very specific kinds of images, such as thought bubbles in cartoons or specific types of diagrams (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006 ch. 2). As these will not be part of my investigation I will not further detail these and be content with mentioning that they exist.

Settings and salience

Aside from vectors, there are other ways of drawing attention to the main participants in an image. The concepts of setting and salience are closely related to one another.

Settings are related to denotation and connotation as well as to the concept of vectors, with different settings helping to create connotations out of denotations. Like vectors, settings relate the different participants in the images with one another, but unlike vectors settings can be taken away “without changing the basic proposition realized by the narrative pattern” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 72) although “their deletion would of course entail a loss of information” (ibid.). In essence, the setting of an image is the background or foreground, the context in which the main participants are being depicted. One way or another the setting differs somehow from the main participants in the image, whether this be through differences

in colour, saturation, differences in size between setting and main participants, differences in exposure (in photographs), differences in lighting etc. (ibid.).

These differences in the way settings are denoted compared to the main participants of an image is what Machin and Mayr (2012: 54) call salience. The concept of salience, then, is the various ways in which a setting can be differentiated from the main participants of an image. Machin and Mayr (2012: 54) list a number of ways of creating salience, with all of these except the first also being mentioned in Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 74):

Potent cultural symbols, such as a stethoscope being intimately connected to medicine.

Size, with larger elements of an image being more salient.

Colour, whether this be richer vs. more muted colours or contrasts in colour.

Tone, or differences in brightness in the image.

Focus, with more salient participants being in focus while the setting is out of focus.

Foregrounding, where the more salient participants are put at the front of the image.

Overlapping, much like foregrounding, involves putting more salient participants in front of less salient participants, although not necessarily in the foreground.

Settings matter in that they provide what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 72) call a “locative circumstance”, a way of adding additional information about what the main participants in an image are doing and why. As an example, imagine a man firing a machine gun against a completely white background. The man would be our main participant (technically an “Actor”, see above) and there would be no setting in which to place him. By filling the blank background with something we can create vastly different meanings despite having the same man-with-machine-gun as the main participant; a backdrop of screaming children would lead to drastically different interpretations than a background of other men in a trench alongside our main participant.

Syntactic indeterminacy and accompanying text

While images can be used to communicate a great deal of things (“an image says more than a thousand words”, after all), one thing that is impossible to do through visual communication is to make an explicit argument. As mentioned above, I agree with the school of thought positing that the understanding of images is culture-dependent, and cannot be said to be of a universal nature (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 4; Messaris 1997 ch. 3). The concept of syntactic indeterminacy is a further logical development of this idea. As an image possesses what Messaris (1997: xvii ff.) calls “syntactic indeterminacy”, or the inability to make an explicit argument about “causality, analogy, or any relationships other than space and time” (Messaris 1997: xviii), understanding of an image is by necessity a subjective thing (as further evident by the Peircean concept of Interpretant, see above).

This is not necessarily a negative, however: as both Messaris (1997: xix ff.) and Machin and Mayr (2012: 31) note it is possible to get away with some messages in images that would

never be acceptable if they were communicated more explicitly through text. Machin and Mayr (ibid.) use the example of an image of a woman wearing traditional Muslim clothing and how such an image could be placed in different contexts to create different arguments about culture and values in a way that would not be possible through language. Messaris (1997: xix) meanwhile uses the example of cigarette advertisements, arguing that while it would be unthinkable for cigarette companies “today” (1997 at the time of his writing) to claim that smoking is good for your health such commercials still use images of “vigorous outdoor activity” (ibid.) to communicate the same. Further, Messaris (1997: xviii) also makes the point that by engaging the viewer in the meaning-creation of the image a greater connection is established with the image than if the message was spelled out explicitly, once again touching on Peirce’s notion of the Interpretant (see above) as part of the way humans make sense of signs. To avoid such syntactic indeterminacy, accompanying text explaining how the image is supposed to be interpreted can be used (Messaris 1997: xviii), but (obviously) at the cost of some of the advantages of syntactic indeterminacy mentioned above. The way accompanying text is used to counteract syntactic indeterminacy can thus greatly affect the message of the image. Consider an image of a wolf; accompanying text reading “save the wolves!” would have a distinctly different meaning from the same image with accompanying text reading “save us from the wolves!”, despite the image being literally the same.

In summary, the usage of text in order to make an explicit argument is a means of explaining how the sign-maker wants the image to be interpreted. As such, I argue, it is for all intents and purposes a way of creating salience (see above) that is outside the normal rules of image communication.

Specified aim and research question

Based on the above theoretical concepts and ideas, I aim to investigate the difference (or lack thereof) in image use between election posters and the official party Facebook pages of the eight parties represented in the Swedish *Riksdag* in the 2018. I aim to answer the following questions:

1. What differences, if any, were there between the election posters and the Facebook posts in regard to the subjects depicted in the images used?
2. What differences, if any, were there between the election posters and the Facebook posts in regard to the usage of saliency-creating methods?
3. What differences, if any, were there between the election posters and the Facebook posts in regard to the usage of vectors and various forms of Participants?
4. What differences, if any, were there between the election posters and Facebook in regard to the usage of signs (i.e. icons, indices, and symbols)?

Method

This chapter describes the means through which I will answer my research questions. In it I will describe and motivate my choice of analytical methods, my choice of data, and how I intend to analyse said data.

Research design and case selection

As my investigation deals with the differences and similarities between election posters and Facebook posts, it is by definition a comparative study. Such a study entails “[...] the comparison of two or more cases in order to illuminate existing theory or generate theoretical insights as a result of contrasting findings uncovered through the comparison (Bryman 2012), the theoretical insights in this case being whether the Swedish parties use images differently in election posters compared to Facebook posts.

A mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods will be used in order to answer my research questions. The semiotic concepts outlined in the theory chapter above deal heavily with individual interpretation of visual images (cf. the concept of “Interpretant”) and thus almost by definition require a qualitative approach. Once these concepts are identified in an image, however, it is fairly straightforward to pivot to a quantitative approach and identify the frequency with which the various concepts are used. Bryman (2012) notes that qualitative methods usually take the researcher’s point of view as its starting point, whereas quantitative methods usually focus on the subject’s point of view. My approach matches this, with my own interpretation of images forming the basis for an investigation into the usage of these images by those that made them.

“Swedish parties and Facebook” as a case

The choice of Swedish political parties’ usage of images on Facebook as the subject of investigation is motivated by several reasons:

Firstly, the choice is justified by the fact that there is plenty of pre-existing research on political parties in Sweden. The Swedish political scene is well-studied, from studies on party organization (Katz and Meir (ed.) 1994) to confidence in political parties (Miller and Listhaug 1990) to election news coverage (Strömbäck and Dimitrova 2006) to election campaigning and media (Petersson et. al. 2006) and many more. Even when narrowing down the scope to focus on political communication there is plenty of previous research apart from the abovementioned Strömbäck and Dimitrova (2006) and Petersson et. al. (2006); studies and books by Håkansson, Johansson, and Vigsø (2014), Johansson and Holtz-Bacha (2017), and myself (Karlsson 2017) all concern election posters in Sweden (or, in the case of Johansson and Holtz-Bacha (2017), the entire world), while Filimonov, Russmann, and Svensson (2014) deal with the Swedish parties’ usage of social media platform Instagram during the 2014 election. Strömbäck and Dimitrova (2011) investigate the mediatisation of election coverage in Sweden (2006) and the United States (2008) while Grusell and Nord (2012) investigate the role of social media platform Twitter in the 2012 Swedish elections. Sweden as a case is thus well-studied, but lacking in studies on image communication by political parties and visual semiotic analyses, making the case interesting for this study.

Secondly, as noted by Filimonov, Russmann, and Svensson (2014: 2), the Internet penetration in Sweden is high, with a 96.4% penetration rate as of the 23rd of September 2019 (Internet World Stats 2019). Further, in 2018 more than half the Swedish population used social media every day; Nordicom (2019: 7) finds that 71% of Swedes between 9 and 79 years of age used social media on any given day, while Internetstiftelsen (2018: 48) puts the number at 63%. As such, social media on the Internet is a major presence in the everyday lives of Swedes, making an investigation into what is done with and on these social media platforms relevant to study if one wants to understand Swedish society. Investigating this in a country with less Internet penetration or less usage of social media would risk skewing the results as the people that are actually on the social media platforms would be less representative of the country's population as a whole.

Thirdly, Facebook is the largest social media platform in Sweden, with 71% of Swedish internet users using the service (Internetstiftelsen 2018: 48). Further, the importance of Facebook as a source of news for elections increased from 2008 to 2014 (SVT 2019: 30). Despite this, Facebook remains understudied in regards to how Swedish political parties communicate on the platform. While Filimonov, Russmann, and Svensson (2014) investigated Swedish political parties on Instagram and Grusell and Nord (2012) investigated the usage of Twitter, there is a lack of studies on Facebook. Gustafsson (2012) deals with the Swedish electorate's political participation on Facebook, coming at elections from the opposing end of the spectrum (investigating the electorate rather than the parties), while Larsson (2017) compares Swedish parties on Twitter and Facebook during the 2014 election, but no studies have been made specifically on the usage of images on Facebook by Swedish political parties. There is thus an opportunity to help fill this gap.

Data selection

For the purposes of this thesis I will treat the election posters used by parties represented in the *Riksdag* in 2018 and the Facebook posts made by the same parties the week leading up to the 2018 election (2-9 September 2018) as individual cases and then code these for the presence or absence of my identified variables (see below). The images will further be coded on a per-party basis to allow for comparisons between the parties in regards to differences in their differences (again, see more on this below). As all eight parties that were represented prior to the 2018 election remained represented in the *Riksdag* after the election, with no new parties obtaining representation, there are no "missing" parties in the data. Likewise, there is no party being included in the study that became irrelevant after the election.

Limiting myself to studying the parties represented in the *Riksdag* is motivated by the *Riksdag* being the legislative body of Sweden and thus the entity that creates the laws that society operates under. Including smaller niche parties would not add to our understanding of how Swedish society works. Similarly, 2018 is the most recent election and is thus the most relevant in order to understand contemporary society. While a study comparing elections over time could have merit to investigate whether the parties have changed their approach to social media, such a study would require significantly more resources and time than I have available to me, and would also be premature before we know if there even is a difference between the usage of election posters and social media or not in the first place.

The choice to limit myself to analysing only the Facebook posts made during the last week (3rd-9th of September 2018) of the eight parties in question, as opposed to studying a longer time period or studying multiple different social media platforms, is motivated by time constraints. Even with my limitations in place the analysis material consists of more than 350 images; adding further data points would not be feasible within my time constraints.

Method of analysis

In order to answer my research questions, I make use of the concepts outlined above in the theory chapter in order to analyse the election posters and Facebook posts mentioned in the data selection sub-chapter. As a semiotic analysis, my analysis of the images in question reflects my understanding of them, my Interpretant of the messages being communicated.

The analysis will be carried out in three steps, illustrated by figure 1 below. In the first step, I will investigate the election posters in order to identify which of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) semiotic concepts are used, or not used, in the posters. In the second step I will use these results to create binary variables in order to investigate whether the same semiotic techniques that I identified in the election posters also exist in the Facebook posts or not and then check each Facebook image for the presence or absence of these variables, in essence coding for the presence or non-presence of the semiotic concepts present in the election posters identified in step 1.³ In the third step, I will use a chi-square test of independence where my threshold value is $p < .10$ in order to determine whether or not there is a statistically significant difference between this presence/non-presence in the Facebook images compared to the election posters. Any variable with a value lower than .10 will thus be seen as indicating a statistically significant difference in the usage of the variable in question.



Figure 1: Three steps of analysis

³ For the purposes of this investigation, the preview images of any video clips used on Facebook will be treated as individual images, but the video clips themselves will not be analysed.

In the first step, I will apply the following template, adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) outline of semiotic resources (see theory chapter above), to the election posters of each party:

Depiction: What does the image objectively depict?

Saliency-creation: Includes the below:

Accompanying text: What text is included with the image?

Size: Are some elements bigger than others in order to draw attention to them?

Colour: Does the colour/colours of some elements clash with the rest of the image or parts of it, drawing attention to them?

Tone: Are parts of the image brighter than others in order to draw attention to them?

Focus: Are parts of the image in our out of focus?

Foregrounding/Overlapping: Are parts of the image placed in front of or overlapping other parts?

Narratives: What narratives are used in the image?

Signs: What icons, indices, and symbols are present in the image?

Having answered the questions of the above template, I will proceed to step two of my investigation and use the answers from step one to create a series of binary variables to check the Facebook posts of each party for. As an example, if a party's election posters were found to contain transactional narratives, I would code the Facebook posts of that party for "transactional narrative", with a 1 representing the presence of one or more transactional narrative(s) and a 0 representing the absence of the same.

While coding the Facebook posts, I will also take note of the categories of the template above and add any significant semiotic resources used in the Facebook posts that are not present in the election posters as its own category to be coded. If this were not done, there is a possibility that differences in usage of semiotic resources that consist in the Facebook posts having additional resources while still using all the ones found in the posters would be missed, leading me to conclude that no differences exist when they in fact do.

In step three I will perform a chi-square test of independence on each of the variables from step two, comparing its presence in the election posters to that in the Facebook posts of the same party, in order to identify any variables that meet my threshold of $p < .10$ for statistical significance. Any variable for which $p < .10$ will be judged as indicating a difference between that party's election posters and Facebook posts, whereas one where $p \leq .10$ will be judged as not containing a difference.

In the interest of transparency, a detailed example of steps two and three of this investigation for each party will be available in the appendix of this thesis.

Weaknesses of design

As with all methodological approaches, the design described above has several weaknesses and flaws.

Firstly, while I have taken into account the fact that differences might consist in semiotic resources that are present in the Facebook posts but not in the election posters, being only human I might miss such an element. This could in turn lead to differences that are present being overlooked, skewing the results of my investigation.

Secondly, the choice to compare each party to itself through party-unique categories means that a comparison between the parties on anything other than a meta-difference comparison (i.e. the difference between the differences of the parties) becomes statistically dubious, as the comparisons would not be using the same criteria for both the posters and the Facebook posts. The focus is on the each individual party's differences, not on the differences between the posters and Facebook posts of the parties as a whole.

Thirdly, in semiotic terms the Interpretant is inherently subjective, as it is an individual's interpretation of an image. As such, my analysis is just that: my analysis. Although I will explicitly describe the parts I identify in each image through the use of my template (see above) and strive to be as transparent as possible, it is still possible that someone else would interpret the images in a different way than I, leading to a different result.

Ethical concerns

As this thesis investigation of publicly available material, purposefully created for public consumption, the consent of the various parties involved is more or less inherent in the material. As such, I see no ethical objections to analysing the material mentioned above.

On a more abstract level, it is possible that knowledge of how to communicate with the public could be used for nefarious ends to mislead or manipulate the public. This, however, is also an argument in favour of why research in this field is necessary, since a greater understanding of political communication also helps us discover such attempts at manipulation.

Analyses and results

This chapter contains summaries of the analyses as described in the Methods chapter above. The eight parties of the *Riksdag* will be listed individually and the results of my investigation of each party described. The full results, arranged in the template-form described above, can be found in the Appendix of this thesis.

The first party to be shown, the Christian Democrats (“Kristdemokraterna”) will be more explicitly described than the other seven parties in order to give my application of my method more transparency. The other seven parties have, of course, had the same methodology

applied to them, but in the interest of preserving the readability of this thesis I have chosen not to include every step of the process for every party.

Kristdemokraterna (KD)

Kristdemokraterna, or the Christian Democrats, used five election posters for the election in 2018 and posted 17 Facebook posts in the week leading up to the election. As mentioned above, this segment will include a more in-depth overview of my coding process, showing each of the party's individual election posters and how I applied my methodological template to each of them.⁴

Election poster 1



Depiction: The image depicts the head and upper torso of party leader Ebba Busch Thor looking at the viewer. The left third of her face, including her left eye, is just outside the image's border. She is wearing a white shirt or blouse and the hint of a smile. The background is a uniform light blue-grey. To the left of Busch Thor is yellow text reading "DU SKA KUNNA LITA PÅ SVERIGE"⁵. In the bottom right of the image is a white "K" and "D" above a line in a square against a blue background.

Saliency-creation:

Accompanying text: The text mentioned above is the only accompanying text in the image.

Size: N/A

Colour: The yellow text stands out against the blue-grey background.

Tone: N/A

⁴ The "N/A" sometimes used in the template is short for "not applicable", meaning the concept in question was not present in the image.

⁵ "You should be able to rely on Sweden".

Focus: N/A

Foregrounding/Overlapping: The text and the “K and D” overlap Busch Thor.

Narratives: Busch Thor is the Reactor in a non-transactional narrative, with the viewer as the Phenomenon.

Signs:

Busch Thor’s hinted smile connotes happiness, friendliness, and general positivity.

As party leader, Busch Thor is herself a symbol of the Christian Democratic Party, with her image representing more than just herself.

The “K” and “D” above a line in a square is the party symbol of the Christian Democrats.

Since the image is a photograph it is inherently indexical.

Election poster 2



Depiction: The image depicts the head and torso of a woman looking at the viewer. The left third of her face, including her left eye, is just outside the image’s border. The woman is wearing a hospital gown and oxygen tubing. The woman’s mouth is closed in a downward-facing curve. The background is a blurry, indistinguishable blue-grey. To the left of the image is text reading “INGEN SKA BEHÖVA DÖ I KÖN”⁶ and below that in a smaller font “AVSKAFFA LANDSTINGENS SJUKHUSANSVAR”⁷ and yellow text stating “DU SKA KUNNA LITA PÅ SVERIGE”⁸. In the bottom right of the image is a white “K” and “D” above a line in a square against a blue background. In the bottom left of the image is an image of a smartphone with a white arrow pointing down towards it with the text “DEN HÄR AFFISCHEN KAN BLI LEVANDE. LADDA NER VÅR APP – KD 2018” and the text

⁶ “No one should have to die in the queue”

⁷ “Abolish the hospital responsibilities of the Landstings”

⁸ “You should be able to rely on Sweden”

“Google Play” and “App Store in two squares, the first accompanied by a right-pointing multi-coloured triangle and the other accompanied by a different image of a smartphone.

Saliency-creation:

Accompanying text: The text mentioned above is the only accompanying text in the image.

Size: The text in the top left is much larger than the text in the bottom left.

Colour: The yellow texts (“Du ska kunna lita på Sverige” and “Den här affischen kan bli levande”) stand out from the rest of the image as they are the only two yellow elements of the image.

Tone: N/A

Focus: The woman is in focus, while the indistinct background is out of focus.

Foregrounding/Overlapping: The text and the “K and D” overlap the woman, as does the text and the images in the bottom left of the image.

Narratives: The woman is the Reactor in a non-transactional narrative, with the viewer being the Phenomenon. The white arrow pointing at the smartphone is the Actor and the smartphone the Goal in a transactional process. The multi-coloured triangle pointing right is the Actor in a non-transactional narrative.

Signs:

The oxygen tubing and hospital gown are symbols connoting healthcare and hospitals, but at the same time they are also icons of the same, as they are used in specific cases of healthcare.

The woman’s frown is symbolic of something being wrong or unacceptable.

The “K” and “D” above a line in a square is the party symbol of the Christian Democrats.

The right-pointing multi-coloured triangle is the symbol of Google Play, while the white smartphone in the black square is the symbol of Apple’s App Store. The white arrow pointing at the smartphone is an icon, as it represents the act of downloading information to your smartphone by pointing down at a smartphone.

Since the image is a photograph it is inherently indexical.

Election poster 3



Depiction: The image depicts the head and upper torso of an older man looking at the viewer. The left third of his face, including his left eye, is just outside the image's border. The man is wearing a grey shirt or t-shirt. The man's mouth is closed in a downward-facing curve, while his forehead is creased. To the left of the image is text reading "TVINGAD TILL ENSAMHET"⁹ and below that is text in a smaller font reading "BYGG FLER ÄLDREBOENDEN"¹⁰ and yellow text stating "DU SKA KUNNA LITA PÅ SVERIGE"¹¹. In the bottom right of the image is a white "K" and "D" above a line in a square against a blue background. In the bottom left of the image is an image of a smartphone with a white arrow pointing down towards it with the text "DEN HÄR AFFISCHEN KAN BLI LEVANDE. LADDA NER VÅR APP – KD 2018" and the text "Google Play" and "App Store" in two squares, the first accompanied by a right-pointing multi-coloured triangle and the other accompanied by a different image of a smartphone.

Saliency-creation:

Accompanying text: The text mentioned above is the only accompanying text in the image.

Size: The text in the top left is much larger than the text in the bottom left.

Colour: The yellow texts ("Du ska kunna lita på Sverige" and "Den här affischen kan bli levande") stand out from the rest of the image as they are the only two yellow elements of the image.

Tone: N/A

⁹ "Forced into loneliness"

¹⁰ "Build more elderly care homes"

¹¹ "You should be able to rely on Sweden"

Focus: N/A

Foregrounding/Overlapping: The text and the “K and D” overlap the man, as does the text and the images in the bottom left of the image.

Narratives: The man is the Reactor in a non-transactional narrative, with the viewer being the Phenomenon. The white arrow pointing at the smartphone is the Actor and the smartphone the Goal in a transactional process. The multi-coloured triangle pointing right is the Actor in a non-transactional narrative.

Icons, indices, and symbols:

The man’s frown and creasing forehead is symbolic of something being wrong or unacceptable. The “K” and “D” above a line in a square is the party symbol of the Christian Democrats.

The man’s greying hair and wrinkled face are icons of old age. The white arrow pointing at the smartphone is an icon, as it represents the act of downloading information to your smartphone by pointing down at a smartphone.

Since the image is a photograph it is inherently indexical.

Election poster 4



Depiction: The image depicts the head and upper torso of a woman looking at the viewer. The left third of her face, including her left eye, is just outside the image’s border. The woman is wearing some sort of grey garment of which only a shoulder strap is visible. On the woman’s cheek leading down from her eye is a line of make-up and on her lip is a single teardrop. The edge of her eye is red. Her mouth is closed in a line. To the left of the image is text reading “SKYDDA HENNE, INTE FÖRÖVAREN”¹² and below that is text in a smaller font reading

¹² ”Protect her, not the perpetrator”

“SKÄRP STRAFFEN FÖR VÅLDS- OCH SEXUALBROTT”¹³ and yellow text stating “DU SKA KUNNA LITA PÅ SVERIGE”¹⁴. In the bottom right of the image is a white “K” and “D” above a line in a square against a blue background. In the bottom left of the image is an image of a smartphone with a white arrow pointing down towards it with the text “DEN HÄR AFFISCHEN KAN BLI LEVANDE. LADDA NER VÅR APP – KD 2018” and the text “Google Play” and “App Store in two squares, the first accompanied by a right-pointing multi-coloured triangle and the other accompanied by a different image of a smartphone.

Saliency-creation:

Accompanying text: The text mentioned above is the only accompanying text in the image.

Size: The text in the top left is much larger than the text in the bottom left.

Colour: The yellow texts (“Du ska kunna lita på Sverige” and “Den här affischen kan bli levande”) stand out from the rest of the image as they are the only two yellow elements of the image.

Tone: N/A

Focus: N/A

Foregrounding/Overlapping: The text and the “K and D” overlap the woman, as does the text and the images in the bottom left of the image.

Narratives: The woman is the Reactor in a non-transactional narrative, with the viewer being the Phenomenon. The white arrow pointing at the smartphone is the Actor and the smartphone the Goal in a transactional process. The multi-coloured triangle pointing right is the Actor in a non-transactional narrative.

Icons, indices, and symbols:

The teardrop, makeup streak, and redness of the woman’s eyes are symbolic of distress, extreme unhappiness, and wrongness, while at the same time also being iconic of someone feeling these feelings. They are also indices of crying: we don’t need to actively see the woman cry to understand that she has been crying.

The “K” and “D” above a line in a square is the party symbol of the Christian Democrats.

The right-pointing multi-coloured triangle is the symbol of Google Play, while the white smartphone in the black square is the symbol of Apple’s App Store. The white arrow pointing at the smartphone is an icon, as it represents the act of downloading information to your smartphone by pointing down at a smartphone.

Since the image is a photograph it is inherently indexical.

¹³ “Increase the punishments for violent and sex crimes”

¹⁴ “You should be able to rely on Sweden”

Election poster 5



Depiction: The image depicts a swollen belly. A right hand is placed on top of the belly, while a left hand supports the bottom of the belly. The person to whom the belly belongs is wearing a grey garment on their upper body and something black on the legs. To the left of the image is text reading “BB, VAR GOD DRÖJ”¹⁵ and below that is text in a smaller font reading “INFÖR GARANTERAD BB-PLATS”¹⁶ and yellow text stating “DU SKA KUNNA LITA PÅ SVERIGE”¹⁷. In the bottom right of the image is a white “K” and “D” above a line in a square against a blue background. In the bottom left of the image is an image of a smartphone with a white arrow pointing down towards it with the text “DEN HÄR AFFISCHEN KAN BLI LEVANDE. LADDA NER VÅR APP – KD 2018” and the text “Google Play” and “App Store” in two squares, the first accompanied by a right-pointing multi-coloured triangle and the other accompanied by a different image of a smartphone.

Saliency-creation:

Accompanying text: The text mentioned above is the only accompanying text in the image.

Size: The text in the top left is much larger than the text in the bottom left.

Colour: The yellow texts (“Du ska kunna lita på Sverige” and “Den här affischen kan bli levande”) stand out from the rest of the image as they are the only two yellow elements of the image.

Tone: N/A

Focus: N/A

¹⁵ ”Maternity ward, please hold”

¹⁶ ”Introduce guaranteed maternity ward spots”

¹⁷ ”You should be able to rely on Sweden”

Foregrounding/Overlapping: The text and the “K and D” overlap the belly, as does the text and the images in the bottom left of the image.

Narratives: No narratives are present in the image, meaning the image contains a conceptual pattern as opposed to a narrative.

Icons, indices, and symbols:

The image of a pregnant woman (as identified by the text) connotes new life, motherhood, and childbirth. At the same time it is an index of pregnancy; we do not have to see the child in the woman’s womb to know that it is there.

The hands, held protectively around the belly, are icons connoting safety, protection, and maternal love.

The “K” and “D” above a line in a square is the party symbol of the Christian Democrats.

The right-pointing multi-coloured triangle is the symbol of Google Play, while the white smartphone in the black square is the symbol of Apple’s App Store. The white arrow pointing at the smartphone is an icon, as it represents the act of downloading information to your smartphone by pointing down at a smartphone.

Since the image is a photograph it is inherently indexical.

Summary of election posters

Depiction: One of the five posters depicted party leader Ebba Busch Thor. All five images depicted humans. Three of the five posters had monochromatic backgrounds, while the remaining two had backgrounds that was visibly something, but too blurry to be made out.

Four of the five images contained the arrow pointing at a smartphone.

All five images contained the “K” and “D” in a blue square.

Saliency-creation:

Accompanying text: All five election posters contained some type of saliency-creating accompanying text.

Size: All five of the images contain only one participant each. Size is thus a non-factor in the election posters.

Colour: The only use of colour contrast was to put emphasis on the line “Du ska kunna lita på Sverige”.¹⁸

Tone: Tone was not used as a saliency-creating method in the election posters.

¹⁸ “You should be able to rely on Sweden.”

Focus: As mentioned above, in two of the images the background is so blurry that you cannot distinguish what they depict. Otherwise focus as a saliency-creating method was not used.

Foregrounding/Overlapping: Text and symbols overlapped the rest of the images in all five images. Otherwise the only case of overlapping was one person's hair in one of the images.

Narratives: All five images contained at least one non-transactional narrative in the Google Play symbol. Other than this, the fifth image contains no narratives in the image proper, making it an example of a conceptual image. The first four images contained a non-transactional narrative with the person being depicted being the Reactor to the viewer's Phenomenon.

Icons, indices, and symbols:

Busch Thor, being a symbol of the party in her capacity as party leader, was present in one of five images.

All five images used the party logo of a "K" and "D" in a blue square.

As mentioned above, three of the images contained symbols of negativity or distress, while one contained a smile.

Four of five images included the Google Play and Apple App Store symbols, as well as the "arrow and smartphone" icon.

All five images used photographs, meaning that all of the images had something with indexical properties in it. Apart from this, the only other indices used were the red eyes, tear, and smeared make-up in poster four.

Coding template

Having identified the various techniques present in the election posters, I once more used my template in order to define what to look for in the Facebook posts. This coding template, presented below, can also be found in the Appendix along with those of the other seven parties, for the sake of consistency.

Depiction: All five election posters depicted humans. As such, I coded the Facebook posts with "depicts humans", with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .709, meaning a difference was not found.

Further, four of the five posters contained no party official(s), while the fifth did. As such, I coded the Facebook posts with "party official(s) present" with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. This included looking for party officials of any party, not just the Christian Democrats. While I could have coded for "party official(s) absent" with the numbers reversed in the interest of consistency I did not. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .196, meaning a difference was not found.

Saliency-creation:

Accompanying text: As mentioned above, all five posters contained the same kind of overlapping text. I thus coded the presence of “overlapping text” in the Facebook posts with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .176, meaning a difference was not found.

Further, all eight of the posters included the text “Du ska kunna lita på Sverige.” As such, I coded the presence of this text in the Facebook posts, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .000396, meaning a difference was found, clearing the $P < 0.10$ limit established by more than two orders of magnitude.

Size: Four of the five posters used size to make one part of the accompanying text more salient than the other. Other than this, size was not used to create saliency. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual size difference”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .489, meaning a difference was not found.

Colour: The only use of colour contrast was to put emphasis on the line “Du ska kunna lita på Sverige”¹⁹ in all five posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual colour contrasts” with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .072, meaning a difference was found.

Tone: Tone was not used as a saliency-creating method in the election posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of any usage of tone as a saliency-creating method at all, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was, just like “colour” above, .072, meaning a difference was found.

Focus: Focus was placed on people in all five posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “focus on people”, with a 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .519, meaning a difference was not found.

Foregrounding/Overlapping: The accompanying text overlapped the image in all five posters, but this is already measured above in the “accompanying text” segment. Further, people were in the foreground in all eight posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of “people in the foreground”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. . The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .609, meaning a difference was not found.

Narratives: The first four images (80%) contained a non-transactional narrative with the person being depicted being the Reactor to the viewer’s Phenomenon. As such, I coded the

¹⁹ “You should be able to rely on Sweden.”

Facebook posts for the presence of “viewer as Phenomenon”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .019, meaning a difference was found.

Signs:

The party symbol was present in all five of the posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “party symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .416, meaning a difference was not found.

Four of the five posters had variations of the “play” symbol or similar to signify that one could interact with the image through digital means. As such I coded the Facebook images for “interaction symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. . The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .602, meaning a difference was not found.

Four of the images contained symbols that connote of either sadness/negativity (crying/frowning) or happiness/positivity (smiling, pregnant woman caressing stomach). As such I coded the images twice, once for “negative symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence, and once for “positive symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. . The result of the chi-squared test for the first of these variables (“negative symbol”) was .001, meaning a difference was found, whereas the result for the second of these variables (“positive symbol”) was .594, meaning a difference was not found.

All five images used photographic images, which are inherently indexical. As such I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of “photographic images”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .709, meaning a difference was not found.

Results for the Christian Democrats

Differences meeting the $p < .10$ threshold were present in five of the sixteen criteria investigated for the Christian Democrats. Of these, three were related to saliency-creating methods (differences in accompanying text, tone, and colour), one was a difference in how narratives were used (differences in usage of the viewer as Phenomenon), and one was a difference in the usage of symbols (difference in usage of symbols connoting negativity). Notably, the colour difference was in the usage of contrasts to create saliency for text, meaning two of the three saliency-creating methods that displayed a difference dealt with the accompanying text somehow. Figure 2 below illustrates in which categories these differences were found.

	Depictions	Saliency-creation	Narratives	Signs	Total
Differences	0/2	3/7	1/1	1/6	5/16

Figure 2: Proportion of differences identified compared to the total number of variables in each category for the Christian Democratic party.

Since there was no statistically significant difference in the depictions of the images, I conclude that **H1** holds true in regards to the depictions of the Christian Democrats; the depictions were interchangeable between the posters and the Facebook posts.

As almost half the investigated means of saliency-creation (three of seven categories) contained statistically significant differences, I draw the conclusion that **H1** is falsified in this regard; the saliency-creating methods of the election posters were not interchangeable with those of the Facebook posts.

In regards to Narratives, the usage of non-transactional narratives where the viewer was the Phenomenon was different enough that it is statistically significant. The election posters contained people looking at the viewer, while the Facebook posts contained people (mostly) doing other things. As such, **H1** is falsified in this regard; the usages of Narratives in the election posters were not interchangeable with those of the Facebook posts.

Finally, one of the six variables in the category of Signs was found to have statistically significant differences. As such, I draw the conclusion that **H1** is falsified in regards to the usage of Signs by the Christian Democratic party, since the usage of these were not interchangeable between the election posters and the Facebook posts.

Socialdemokraterna (S)

Socialdemokraterna, or the Social Democrats, used eight election posters for the election in 2018 and posted 75 Facebook posts in the week leading up to the election.

Differences meeting the $p < .10$ threshold were present in five of the fifteen criteria investigated for the Social Democrats. Of these, three were related to ways of counteracting syntactic indeterminacy (two means of saliency-creation and one symbol, the “play” symbol), one was a difference in the usage of non-transactional narratives, and one was the usage of specific text (“Ett starkare samhälle. Ett tryggare Sverige.”) in the election posters. Figure 3 below illustrates in which categories these differences were found.

	Depictions	Saliency-creation	Narratives	Signs	Total
Differences	0/2	2/9	1/1	2/3	5/15

Figure 3: Proportion of differences identified compared to the total number of variables in each category for the Social Democratic party.

Since there was no statistically significant difference in the depictions of the images, I conclude that **H1** holds true in regards to the depictions of the Social Democrats; the depictions were interchangeable between the posters and the Facebook posts.

Two of the nine categories of saliency-creation that I investigated contained statistically significant differences between the election posters and the Facebook posts. In this regard, I draw the conclusion that **H1** is falsified in this regard; the saliency-creating methods of the election posters of the Social Democrats were not interchangeable with those of the Facebook posts.

In regards to Narratives, the usage of non-transactional narratives where the viewer was the Phenomenon was different enough that it is statistically significant. The election posters contained people looking at the viewer, while the Facebook posts contained people (mostly) doing other things. As such, **H1** is falsified in this regard; the usages of Narratives in the election posters were not interchangeable with those of the Facebook posts.

Finally, two differences were found in the usages of symbols: smiles and the play symbol. Smiles were used to a much greater degree in the election posters, while the play symbol was used exclusively, and prominently, in the Facebook posts. As such, **H1** is falsified in regards to the usage of signs; the usage of signs by the Social Democratic party was not interchangeable between the election posters and the Facebook posts.

Centerpartiet (C)

Centerpartiet, or the Centre party, used seven election posters for the election in 2019 and posted 17 Facebook posts in the week leading up to the election.

Differences meeting the $p < .10$ threshold were present in seven of the seventeen criteria investigated for the Centre party. Of these, five were related to saliency-creating methods (differences in accompanying text, tone, and colour, as well as the way backgrounds were used), one was a difference in depiction (usage or lack of usage of composite background), and one was a difference in the usage of the play symbol. Figure 4 below illustrates in which categories these differences were found.

	Depictions	Saliency-creation	Narratives	Signs	Total
Differences	1/4	5/7	0/2	1/4	7/17

Figure 4: Proportion of differences identified compared to the total number of variables in each category for the Centre party.

Since there was a statistically significant difference in the depictions of the images, the use of composite backgrounds, I conclude that **H1** is falsified in regards to the depictions of the Centre party; the depictions were not interchangeable between the posters and the Facebook posts.

Five of the seven categories of saliency-creation that I investigated contained statistically significant differences between the election posters and the Facebook posts. In this regard, I draw the conclusion that **H1** is falsified; the saliency-creating methods of the election posters of the Centre party were not interchangeable with those of the Facebook posts.

In regards to Narratives, neither transactional nor non-transactional narratives met the $p < .10$ threshold for difference, with transactional narratives having a perfect match in usage ($p=1$). As such, I draw the conclusion that **H1** holds true regarding the usage of Narratives by the Centre party: the usages of Narratives in the election posters were largely (or entirely) interchangeable with those of the Facebook posts.

Finally, the only difference in the usage of signs that met the $p < .10$ threshold was the usage of the “play” symbol. Three of four tested examples of usage of signs (usage of the party symbol, icons linked to accompanying text, and photographic images) did not differ enough

between the posters and Facebook posts in order to meet the $p < .10$ threshold. As such, I draw the conclusion that **H1** holds true regarding the usage of signs by the Centre party: the usages of signs in the election posters were interchangeable with those of the Facebook posts.

Sverigedemokraterna (SD)

Sverigedemokraterna, or the Sweden Democrats, used nine election posters for the election in 2018 and posted 27 Facebook posts in the week leading up to the election.

Differences meeting the $p < .10$ threshold were present in seven of the fifteen criteria investigated for the Sweden Democrats. Of these, three were related to saliency-creating methods (differences in colour, focus, and foregrounding/overlapping), two were differences in depiction (presence of party officials, and blank backgrounds), one was a difference in the usage, or lack thereof, of the party symbol, and one was a difference in accompanying text (referencing third-party sources). Figure 5 below illustrates in which categories these differences were found.

	Depictions	Saliency-creation	Narratives	Signs	Total
Differences	2/3	4/8	0/1	1/3	7/15

Figure 5: Proportion of differences identified compared to the total number of variables in each category for the Sweden Democrats party.

Since there were two statistically significant differences in the depictions of the images, the presence of party officials and blank backgrounds, I conclude that **H1** is falsified in regards to the depictions of the Sweden Democrats: the depictions were not interchangeable between the posters and the Facebook posts.

Three of the eight categories of saliency-creation that I investigated contained statistically significant differences between the election posters and the Facebook posts. Additionally, my post-analysis category identified a difference in the usage of accompanying text (references to third-party images) that also falls under the category of saliency-creation. In this regard, I draw the conclusion that **H1** is falsified: the saliency-creating methods of the election posters of the Sweden Democrats were not interchangeable with those of the Facebook posts.

In regards to Narratives, non-transactional narratives dominated both the election posters and the Facebook posts. As no difference meeting the $p < .10$ threshold for difference existed, I draw the conclusion that **H1** holds true regarding the usage of Narratives by the Sweden Democrats: the usages of Narratives in the election posters were interchangeable with those of the Facebook posts.

Finally, the usage of signs contained one variable, presence of the party symbol, that met the $p < .10$ threshold of difference and two, the presence of photographic images and the presence of symbolic clothing, that did not. As such, I draw the conclusion that **H1** holds true regarding the usage of signs by the Sweden Democrats: the usages of signs were interchangeable with those of the Facebook posts.

Liberalerna (L)

Liberalerna, or the Liberal party, used nine election posters for the election in 2018 and posted 49 Facebook posts in the week leading up to the election.

Differences meeting the $p < .10$ threshold were present in four of the fourteen criteria investigated for the Liberal party. Of these, one was related to depictions, one was related to saliency-creation (textual colour contrasts), and two were related to the usage of specific symbols. Figure 6 below illustrates in which categories these differences were found.

	Depictions	Saliency-creation	Narratives	Signs	Total
Differences	1/3	1/7	0/1	2/3	4/14

Figure 6: Proportion of differences identified compared to the total number of variables in each category for the Liberal party.

Since the depictions differ between the posters and the Facebook in one of the two depiction-related criteria, I draw the conclusion that **H1** is falsified regarding the subjects depicted by the Liberal party: the depictions were not interchangeable between the posters and the Facebook posts.

Of the seven categories of saliency-creation used in the election posters by the Liberal party that I investigated, only one, the use of contrast to create saliency for text, met the $p < .10$ threshold for statistical significance. As such, I draw the conclusion that **H1** holds true in regards to the saliency-creating methods of the Liberal party: the saliency-creating methods used in the election posters and the Facebook posts were interchangeable.

In regards to Narratives, no statistically relevant difference was found, leading me to conclude that **H1** holds true in regard to the usage of Narratives by the Liberal party: the Narrative techniques used in the election posters and the Facebook posts were interchangeable.

Finally, the usage of signs differed in that two prominent symbols, a yellow warning triangle and the party logo, were much more common (or omnipresent, in the case of the party logo) in the election posters compared to the Facebook posts, with difference in presence for both meeting the $p < .10$ threshold for both (absurdly so in the case of the warning triangle, with a chi-squared value of $3.37E-06$) while the differences in the usage of photographic images, inherently indexical, did not meet the $p < .10$ threshold. As two of the three differences investigated met the $p < .10$ threshold, I conclude that **H1** is falsified in regards to the usage of signs of the Liberal party: the signs used by the Liberal party in their election posters were not interchangeable with those of the Facebook posts.

Miljöpartiet (MP)

Miljöpartiet de gröna, or the Green party, used six election posters for the election in 2018 and posted 41 Facebook posts in the week leading up to the election.

Differences meeting the $p < .10$ threshold were present in five of the fifteen criteria investigated for the Green party. Of these, two were related to saliency-creation (text rotated 90 degrees and overlapping symbols) and three were related to the usage of symbols

(presence/absence of the party symbol, the play symbol, and of symbols connoting negativity). Figure 7 below illustrates in which categories these differences were found.

	Depictions	Saliency-creation	Narratives	Signs	Total
Differences	0/1	2/7	0/2	3/5	5/15

Figure 7: Proportion of differences identified compared to the total number of variables in each category for the Green party.

Since the elements depicted did not display a statistically significant difference in any of the categories I investigated, I draw the conclusion that **H1** holds true regarding the subjects depicted by the Green party: the depictions were interchangeable between the posters and the Facebook posts.

Of the seven categories of saliency-creation used in the Election Posters by the Green party that I investigated, two met the $p < .10$ threshold for statistical significance. As such, I draw the conclusion that **H1** is falsified regarding the usage of saliency-creating methods of the Green party: the saliency-creating methods used in the election posters and the Facebook posts were not interchangeable.

In regards to Narratives, no statistically relevant difference was found, leading me to conclude that **H1** holds true in regard to the usage of Narratives by the Green party: the Narrative techniques used in the election posters and the Facebook posts were interchangeable.

Finally, the usage of signs differed in that the party symbol, the play symbol, and negative symbols were present to a much larger degree in the election posters than in the Facebook posts, both differences clearing the $p < .10$ threshold. As three of the five differences investigated regarding signs met the $p < .10$ threshold, I conclude that **H1** is falsified in regards to the usage of signs of the Green party: the signs used by the Green party in their election posters were not interchangeable with those of the Facebook posts.

Moderaterna (M)

Moderaterna, or the Moderate party, used six election posters for the election in 2018 and posted 44 Facebook posts in the week leading up to the election.

Differences meeting the $p < .10$ threshold were present in three of the seventeen criteria investigated for the Moderate party. Of these, two were related to accompanying text, while the third one related to the usage of black-and-white images. Figure 8 below illustrates in which categories these differences were found.

	Depictions	Saliency-creation	Narratives	Signs	Total
Differences	0/2	3/9	0/2	0/4	3/17

Figure 8: Proportion of differences identified compared to the total number of variables in each category for the Moderate party.

Since the depictions does not differ between the posters and the Facebook in either of the two depiction-related criteria, I draw the conclusion that **H1** holds true regarding the subjects

depicted by the Moderate party: the depictions were interchangeable between the posters and the Facebook posts.

Of the eight categories of saliency-creation used in the election posters by the Moderate party that I investigated, three categories met the $p < .10$ threshold for statistical significance; two different accompanying texts²⁰ were repeated in the election posters but almost never in the posters, while the third difference was in the usage of black-and-white photographs, where the same conclusion was found as for the text. As such, I draw the conclusion that **H1** is falsified in regards to the saliency-creating methods of the Moderate party: the saliency-creating methods used in the election posters and the Facebook posts were not interchangeable.

In regards to Narratives, no statistically relevant difference was found, leading me to conclude that **H1** holds true in regard to the usage of Narratives by the Moderate party: the Narrative techniques used in the election posters and the Facebook posts were interchangeable.

Finally, no statistically significant difference was found in the usage of signs by the Moderate party, leading me to conclude that **H1** holds true in regard to the usage of signs by the Moderate party: the signs used by the Moderate party in their election posters were interchangeable with those of the Facebook posts.

Vänsterpartiet (V)

Vänsterpartiet, or the Left party, used five election posters for the election in 2018 and posted 43 Facebook posts in the week leading up to the election.

Differences meeting the $p < .10$ threshold were present in six of the nineteen criteria investigated for the Left party. Of these, four were related to accompanying text, while the remaining two were related to usages of narratives. Figure 9 below illustrates in which categories these differences were found.

	Depictions	Saliency-creation	Narratives	Signs	Total
Differences	0/2	4/11	2/2	0/4	6/19

Figure 9: Proportion of differences identified compared to the total number of variables in each category for the Left party.

Since the depictions does not differ between the posters and the Facebook in either of the two depiction-related criteria, I draw the conclusion that **H1** holds true regarding the subjects depicted by the Left party: the depictions were interchangeable between the posters and the Facebook posts.

Of the eleven categories of saliency-creation used in the election posters used by the Left party that I investigated, four categories met the $p < .10$ threshold for statistical significance; three different text-techniques for creating saliency and one specific type of accompanying text exhorting the viewer to vote for the Left party. As such, I draw the conclusion that **H1** is falsified in regards to the saliency-creating methods of the Left party: the saliency-creating methods used in the election posters and the Facebook posts were not interchangeable.

²⁰ “Nu tar vi tag i Sverige!” and ”moderaterna.se Lika för alla!”

In regards to Narratives, both the categories of Narratives investigated (transactional narratives and Events) met the $p < .10$ threshold for statistical significance. As such, I draw the conclusion that **H1** is entirely falsified in regards to the usage of narratives by the Left party: the narratives used in the election posters and the Facebook posts were entirely non-interchangeable.

Finally, no statistically significant difference was found in the usage of signs by the Left party, leading me to conclude that **H1** holds true in regard to the usage of signs by the Left party: the signs used by the Left party in their election posters were interchangeable with those of the Facebook posts.

Discussion and conclusions

Before delving into my conclusions, I would like to reemphasize that the point of this thesis is to look at differences within individual parties, not to compare parties to each other. My methodology is strictly supposed to be used for intra-party comparisons; since the variables investigated differ from party to party based on what was present in their election posters any attempt to compare one party's individual categories to another based on my results is going to be flawed from the outset.

This warning notwithstanding, there is still value in looking at the eight parties of my investigation as a whole, in the "differences between differences" as it were. Figure 10 below is a composite of figures 1-8 above and illustrates the internal differences of all eight of the parties investigated.

	Depictions	Saliency-creation	Narratives	Signs	Total
Kristdemokraterna	0/2	3/7	1/1	1/6	5/16
Socialdemokraterna	0/2	2/9	1/1	2/3	5/15
Centerpartiet	1/4	5/7	0/2	1/4	7/17
Sverigedemokraterna	2/3	4/8	0/1	1/3	7/15
Liberalerna	1/3	1/7	0/1	2/3	4/14
Miljöpartiet	0/1	2/7	0/2	3/5	5/15
Moderaterna	0/2	3/9	0/2	0/4	3/17
Vänsterpartiet	0/2	4/11	2/2	0/4	6/19

Figure 10: Proportion of differences identified compared to the total number of variables in each category for the eight parties in my investigation.

As can be seen, even the Moderate party, being the party with the least amount of differences between their election posters and their Facebook posts, included differences meeting the $p < .10$ threshold. I thus conclude that, overall, **H1** does not hold, since the election posters and Facebook posts are not entirely interchangeable for any of the eight parties studied.

Further, as can be seen in figure 10 above, only saliency-creation had differences in all eight parties, with the other three categories only displaying internal differences in some of the parties. This suggests further studies into how the usage of semiotics of political actors differs

between different platforms would do well to focus on the different means of saliency-creation, at least in a Swedish context.

To tie the result back to the semiotic theory, all of the parties except the Sweden Democrats had depictions of the same subjects in their posters and their Facebook posts, with only the Liberal party and the Centre party having one statistically significant difference in a variable. Excepting the Sweden Democrats, the remaining seven parties thus, from a semiotic point of view, conceived the depictions of their images in the same way in both the election posters and the Facebook posts, with the communications being about the same things in both the election posters and the Facebook posts. Instead of relying on depicting different subjects, these parties used different saliency-creating methods and/or narratives to place the depicted subjects in different contexts in order to create their messages. To once again use the example of the dog from the theory chapter as an analogy, the Sweden Democrats depicted a dog in one case and a cat in another, whereas the other seven parties depicted the same dog doing different things.

This difference in the Sweden Democrats is significant; as explained in the theory chapter, the choice of Depiction drives Connotation. Choosing to depict different subjects thus creates different Connotations. Further, as outlined by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 7 ff.) the choice of how to represent something is always motivated, rather than arbitrary. It thus follows that a difference in depiction means that the one doing the depiction, in this case the Sweden Democrats, is wanting to communicate something different, as they would otherwise have used the same semiotic choices, or Objects, to communicate their Interpretant. As none of the other seven parties had more than a 1/3 difference in their Depictions, with a majority (five of eight parties) having no statistically significant differences at all, it can thus be assumed that, from a semiotic point of view, these parties used different messages with the same core Objects, whereas the Sweden Democrats did not. Obviously, differences still existed in all eight parties, but there is a difference in the nature of these differences.

Links to previous research

While Bosetta (2018) found that the two parties in the US largely shared the same content on different social media platforms, my investigation suggests the same does not hold when comparing election posters and Facebook in Sweden. Whether this is due to the difference in political systems in the US compared to Sweden, the greater differences between posters and Facebook compared to different social media sites, because Bosetta (2018) compared more content than images, or some other factor or combination of factors is beyond the scope of this thesis. I am content to state that the differences exist in my case. At the same time Bosetta (2018: 491) is open to the idea that specific channels of communication could have content tailor-made for it, but cautions that:

“Scholars should therefore exert caution in assuming that the content posted to a particular social media is unique to that platform” (Bosetta 2018: 491)

Based on my results, I argue the same holds true when comparing the usage of images in various modes of communication (not just social media). While numerous differences in image usage were identified, even the party with the most differences, the Sweden Democrats,

had statistically significant differences in less than half of the investigated variables. On the other hand, the vast majority of the parties used the mostly the same or entirely the same Depictions, relying instead on the other investigated categories in order to communicate their Object. Thus, while there are certainly differences that one should be aware of, there are also plenty of similarities between the posters and Facebook posts as well. As such, despite coming to a different conclusion in my investigation than Bosetta (2018) did in his, I heartily agree with Bosetta's (ibid.) words of caution about assuming that usages of images are different and unique just because they exist in a particular media.

Future avenues of research

In closing, I believe my results point toward a number of possible future avenues of research.

The first of these is a comparison between the case of Sweden and other countries; are my results true in Sweden but not elsewhere? Are there differences between different parts of the world, or between countries with different political systems, in how images are used in different modes of communication? Such a study could help us better understand how different political systems create different communication practices, in turn allowing us to form a better understanding of these political systems and the differences between them.

The second of these is a longitudinal study of the differences in visual semiotics between different modes of communication in Sweden. As social media are still in their infancy, other modes would have to be studied, such as a study of differences between TV and newspapers over time. Such a study would help us better understand how Swedish society has changed over time through mapping how the Swedish political parties have related to said society.

A third possible future avenue of research would be an investigation into differences in the usage of visual semiotics by political parties between other social media than Facebook and other modes of communication, alternatively following in the footsteps of Bosetta (2018) and investigating the differences in the usage of semiotic techniques by political parties between different social media. Such a study would focus on social media, helping us better understand how political parties use these new modes of communication to reach out to their electorates.

Declaration of conflicts of interest

The author of this thesis is not aware of any conflicts of interest that would affect the integrity of the work.

Appendix

Note: any translations listed in this appendix are my own unless otherwise explicitly noted.

Template, Christian Democrats

Depiction: All five election posters depicted humans. As such, I coded the Facebook posts with “depicts humans”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .709, meaning a difference was not found.

Further, four of the five posters contained no party official(s), while the fifth did. As such, I coded the Facebook posts with “party official(s) present” with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. This included looking for party officials of any party, not just the Christian Democrats. While I could have coded for “party official(s) absent” with the numbers reversed in the interest of consistency I did not. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .196, meaning a difference was not found.

Saliency-creation:

Accompanying text: As mentioned above, all five posters contained the same kind of overlapping text. I thus coded the presence of “overlapping text” in the Facebook posts with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .176, meaning a difference was not found.

Further, all eight of the posters included the text “Du ska kunna lita på Sverige.” As such, I coded the presence of this text in the Facebook posts, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .000396, meaning a difference was found, clearing the $P < 0.10$ limit established by more than two orders of magnitude.

Size: Four of the five posters used size to make one part of the accompanying text more salient than the other. Other than this, size was not used to create saliency. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual size difference”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .489, meaning a difference was not found.

Colour: The only use of colour contrast was to put emphasis on the line “Du ska kunna lita på Sverige”²¹ in all five posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual colour contrasts” with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .072, meaning a difference was found.

Tone: Tone was not used as a saliency-creating method in the election posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of any usage of tone as a saliency-creating method at all, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was, just like “colour” above, .072, meaning a difference was found.

²¹ “You should be able to rely on Sweden.”

Focus: Focus was placed on people in all five posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “focus on people”, with a 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .519, meaning a difference was not found.

Foregrounding/Overlapping: The accompanying text overlapped the image in all five posters, but this is already measured above in the “accompanying text” segment. Further, people were in the foreground in all eight posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of “people in the foreground”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. . The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .609, meaning a difference was not found.

Narratives: The first four images (80%) contained a non-transactional narrative with the person being depicted being the Reactor to the viewer’s Phenomenon. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of “viewer as Phenomenon”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .019, meaning a difference was found.

Signs:

The party symbol was present in all five of the posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “party symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .416, meaning a difference was not found.

Four of the five posters had variations of the “play” symbol or similar to signify that one could interact with the image through digital means. As such I coded the Facebook images for “interaction symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. . The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .602, meaning a difference was not found.

Four of the images contained symbols that connote of either sadness/negativity (crying/frowning) or happiness/positivity (smiling, pregnant woman caressing stomach). As such I coded the images twice, once for “negative symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence, and once for “positive symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. . The result of the chi-squared test for the first of these variables (“negative symbol”) was .001, meaning a difference was found, whereas the result for the second of these variables (“positive symbol”) was .594, meaning a difference was not found.

All five images used photographic images, which are inherently indexical. As such I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of “photographic images”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .709, meaning a difference was not found.

Additional post-analysis category: Having coded the images based on the above, it is clear that a great deal of the Facebook images (13 of 17) included formal clothing (such as suits or coloured sashes with party logos) that connotes power, authority, and professionalism. As such, I also included “formal clothing” as a coding category, with 1 for presence and 0 for

absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .164, meaning a difference was not found.

Template, Social Democrats

Depiction: All eight election posters depicted humans looking at the viewer with text overlapping the image. As such, I coded the Facebook posts with “depicts humans” with 1 for presence and 0 for absence, with the texts and narratives being dealt with in their own segments below. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .459, meaning a difference was not found.

Further, as five of eight posters contained party officials I also coded the Facebook posts with “party official present” with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. This included looking for party officials of any party, not just the Social Democrats. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .397, meaning a difference was not found.

Saliency-creation:

Accompanying text: As mentioned above, all eight posters contained the same kind of overlapping text. I will thus code the presence of “overlapping text” in the Facebook posts with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .190, meaning a difference was not found.

Further, all eight of the posters included the text “Ett starkare Samhälle. Ett tryggare Sverige.” As such, I coded the presence of this text in the Facebook posts, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .015, meaning a difference was found.

Size: Seven of the eight posters used size to make one part of the accompanying text more salient than the other. Other than this, size was not used to create saliency. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual size-difference”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .099, meaning a difference was (barely) found.

Colour: Colour was used to make the accompanying text stand out in all eight posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual colour contrasts” with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .121, meaning a difference was not found.

Tone: Tone was not utilized as a saliency-creating method in any of the posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of any usage of tone as a saliency-creating method at all, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .384, meaning a difference was not found.

Focus: Focus was placed on people in all eight posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “focus on people”, with a 1 for presence and 0 for absence. .300, meaning a difference was not found.

Foregrounding/Overlapping: The accompanying text overlapped the image in all eight posters, but this is already measured above in the “accompanying text” segment. Further, people were in the foreground in all eight posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of “people in the foreground”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .190, meaning a difference was not found.

Narratives: All eight posters had a Reactor in a non-transactional narrative looking at the viewer. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of “viewer as Phenomenon”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .012, meaning a difference was found.

Signs:

In seven of the eight images at least one participant was smiling. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of “smiling” in the participants, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .000142, meaning a difference was found by several orders of magnitude.

Seven of eight posters used clothing to connote properties of the participants depicted, with six of these seven either connoting “power, authority, and professionalism” or its opposite in “casualness”. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “symbolic clothing”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .368, meaning a difference was not found.

Further, the party symbol was present in all eight posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “party symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .190, meaning a difference was not found.

All eight images used photographic images, which are inherently indexical. As such I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of “photographic images”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .488, meaning a difference was not found.

Additional post-analysis category: Having coded the images based on the above, it is clear that a great deal of the Facebook images (43 of 75) included the ubiquitous “play” symbol, while none of the election posters did. As such, I also included “play symbol” as a coding category, with 1 for the presence and 0 for the absence of play symbols. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .031, meaning a difference was found.

Template Centre party

Depiction: Four of the seven posters used by the Centre party used a green background with a smaller image insert in the top and bottom right corners. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “composite background”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .0019, meaning a difference was found.

Further, four of the seven posters depicted humans in some way. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “depicts humans” with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .308, meaning a difference was not found.

All eight posters contained the same kind of overlapping text. I will thus code the presence of “overlapping text” in the Facebook posts with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .894, meaning a difference was not found.

Finally, three of the seven posters used by the Centre party depicted party leader Annie Lööf. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “contains party official(s)” with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. This included looking for party officials of any party, not just the Centre party. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was 0.2, meaning a difference was not found.

Saliency-creation:

Accompanying text: Three of the seven images were the same image with different superimposed accompanying text. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “recurring image”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. Any image that occurred more than once, in whole or in part, was counted as recurring. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .426, meaning a difference was not found.

Size: All seven posters used size to make one part of the accompanying text more salient than the other. Other than this, size was not used to create saliency. As such, I will code the Facebook posts for “textual size-difference”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .050, meaning a difference was found.

Colour: Colour was used to make the accompanying text stand out in all seven posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual colour contrasts” with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .026, meaning a difference was found.

Further, the colour green was present in the background of each of the seven posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “green in background”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .012, meaning a difference was found.

Tone: Tone was not utilized as a saliency-creating method in any of the posters. As such, I will code the Facebook posts for the presence of any usage of tone as a saliency-creating method at all, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .020, meaning a difference was found.

Focus: Focus was only used as a saliency-creating method in four of the seven posters, and always for making people more salient. As such, I coded the

Facebook posts for “focus on people”, with a 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .308, meaning a difference was found.

Foregrounding/Overlapping: The accompanying text overlapped the image in all eight posters, but this is already measured above in the “accompanying text” segment. Other than this, four of the seven posters had a flat green background overlapping an image of some kind. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “uniform background overlapping image”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .002, meaning a difference was found by an order of magnitude.

Narratives: All seven images contained a transactional narrative in the form of the party symbol. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “transactional narrative”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .461, meaning a difference was not found.

Further, four of the seven images contained a non-transactional narrative in the form of the triangle-shape pointing right, while the three remaining posters contained a non-transactional narrative in the form of Löf looking at the viewer. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “non-transactional narrative”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was 1, meaning a complete similarity between the Facebook posts and the election posters in regards to the presence of non-transactional narratives.

Signs: All seven posters used the party symbol. As such, I coded the Facebook images for “party symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .136, meaning a difference was not found.

Four of the seven images used icons linked to the accompanying text. As such, I coded the Facebook images for “icon(s)”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .104, meaning a difference was not found.

All seven images used photographs, which are inherently indexical. As such, I coded the Facebook images for “photographic image”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was 1, meaning a complete similarity between the Facebook posts and the election posters in regards to the presence of photographs.

Additional post-analysis category: Having coded the images based on the above, it is clear that a great deal of the Facebook images (13 of 17) included the ubiquitous “play” symbol, while none of the election posters did. As such, I will also include “play symbol” as a coding category, with 1 for the presence and 0 for the absence of play symbols. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .021, meaning a difference was found.

Template Sverigedemokraterna

Depiction: Seven of the nine election posters used by the Sweden Democrats depicted humans in some way. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “depicts humans”, with 1 for

presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .547, meaning a difference was not found.

Seven of the nine election posters used by the Sweden Democrats contained either party leader Jimmie Åkesson, one or more candidates for the *Riksdag* for the party, or both. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “contains party official(s)”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. This included looking for party officials of any party, not just the Sweden Democrats. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .053, meaning a difference was found.

All nine election posters used a flat white background. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “blank background”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was 2.03E-07, a number so many orders of magnitude lower than the $p < .10$ threshold that it is essentially as close to a statistical certainty as one can get, meaning a difference was most certainly found.

Saliency-creation:

Accompanying text: Accompanying text was used in all nine posters. When the text read “SD2018” the text overlapped people depicted in the image, whereas when the text read something else it did not overlap anything. As such, I (separately) coded the Facebook posts for both “overlapping text” and “non-overlapping text” with 1 for presence and 0 for absence in both cases, with images with non-overlapping text being those in which text appears but does not overlap anything. The result of the chi-squared test for the “overlapping text” variable was .801, meaning a difference was not found. The result of the chi-squared test for the “non-overlapping text” variable was .873, meaning a difference was not found.

Size: Six of the nine posters used size to emphasize part of the accompanying text. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual size-difference”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .123, meaning a difference was not found.

Colour: Colour contrasts were used to make text stand out (or, in some cases, to barely be visible) in all nine posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual colour contrasts”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .085, meaning a difference was found.

Tone: Tone was not utilized as a saliency-creating method in any of the posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of any usage of tone as a saliency-creating method at all, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .249, meaning a difference was not found.

Focus: Focus was not utilized as a saliency-creating method in any of the posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of any usage of

focus as a saliency-creating method at all, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .017, meaning a difference was found.

Foregrounding/Overlapping: The only usage of foregrounding or overlapping to create saliency was in three of the nine posters, where the text “SD2018” overlapped people depicted in the same image. This is already measured above in the “accompanying text” segment. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the usage of foregrounding/overlapping outside of overlapping text, with 1 for presence and 0 for presence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .025, meaning a difference was found.

Narratives: Five of the nine posters contained non-transactional narratives where the viewer was the Phenomenon, while another two contained non-transactional narratives where Jimmie Åkesson was the Reactor. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “non-transactional narrative”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .233, meaning a difference was not found.

Signs: All nine posters used the party symbol. As such, I coded the Facebook images for “party symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. This included any party symbol of the eight parties in the *Riksdag*, not just that of the Sweden Democrats. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .000231, meaning a difference was found by several orders of magnitude.

Seven of the nine posters used symbols of power, authority, and professionalism or relaxedness and casualness (or both). As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “symbolic clothing”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .174, meaning a difference was not found.

Seven of the nine posters used photographic images, which are inherently indexical. As such, I coded the Facebook images for “photographic image”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .915, meaning a difference was not found.

Additional post-analysis category: Having coded the images based on the above, it is clear that a great deal of the Facebook images (16 of 27) used accompanying text that made clear that the image shared was not chosen by the party itself, but rather part of a news article that the party had shared from a third party. As this did not occur in any of the election posters, I included “third-party image reference” as a coding category, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .021, meaning a difference was found.

Template Liberal party

Depiction: Six of the nine images depicted white text on a solid blue background. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “text on monocoloured background”, with 1 for presence and 0

for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .000102, meaning a difference was found by several orders of magnitude.

Three of the images depicted party leader Jan Björklund. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “contains party official(s)”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. This included looking for party officials of any party, not just the Liberal party. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .404, meaning a difference was not found.

Saliency-creation:

Accompanying text: In the three posters depicting Björklund the accompanying text overlapped him. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “overlapping text”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .527, meaning a difference was not found.

Size: All nine of the posters emphasized some text over other text through using size to create saliency. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual size-difference”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .192, meaning a difference was not found.

Colour: All nine posters used colour as a saliency-creating method to draw attention to text. As such, I coded the Facebook pots for “textual colour contrasts”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .096, meaning a difference was found.

Further, all of the nine posters used colour contrasts to draw attention to one or more symbols (a yellow triangle with an exclamation mark and text and/or the party’s stylized “L” logo). As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “contrasting symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .674, meaning a difference was not found.

Tone: Tone was not utilized as a saliency-creating method in any of the posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of any usage of tone as a saliency-creating method at all, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .138, meaning a difference was not found.

Focus: Focus was not utilized as a saliency-creating method in any of the posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of any usage of focus as a saliency-creating method at all, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was, like Tone preceding it, also .138, meaning a difference was not found.

Foregrounding/Overlapping: The yellow triangle symbol overlapped text in six of the nine election posters, while the party symbol overlapped Björklund in the remaining three posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “overlapping symbol(s)”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of

the chi-squared test for this variable was .582, meaning a difference was not found.

Narratives: All nine posters contained non-transactional narratives. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “non-transactional narrative(s)”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .448, meaning a difference was not found.

Signs:

The yellow triangle with an exclamation mark and text in it, a warning symbol connoting danger or hazard, appeared in six of the nine posters, with one of these six also containing a yellow square with black-striped border connoting the same. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “warning symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was 3.37E-06, a number so many orders of magnitude lower than the $p < 10$ threshold that it is essentially as close to a statistical certainty as one can get, meaning a difference was most certainly found.

All nine of the posters contained the party symbol of the Liberal party. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “party symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .062, meaning a difference was found.

Three of the nine posters contained photographic images, which are inherently indexical. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “photographic image”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .101, meaning a difference was not found.

Additional post-analysis category: Having coded the images based on the above, it is clear that a great deal of the Facebook images depicted people, whereas only a third of the election posters did. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “depicts humans”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable, just like “Photographic image” before it, was .101, meaning a difference was not found.

Template Green party

Depiction: All six election posters depicted text overlapping an image. As such I coded the Facebook posts for “overlapping text”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .438, meaning a difference was not found.

Saliency-creation:

Accompanying text: All six of the election posters depicted white text reading “Nu. Klimatet kan inte vänta”²². As such I coded the Facebook posts for “Nu. Klimatet kan inte vänta” with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. For the purposes of this coding, both the phrase in full and either a prominent “Nu” or “Klimatet

²² “Now. The climate can’t wait.”

kan inte vänta” was counted as presence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .141, meaning a difference was not found.

Further, all six posters contained white text rotated 90 degrees. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “rotated text”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was 1.52E-10, a number so many orders of magnitude lower than the $p < 10$ threshold that it is essentially as close to a statistical certainty as one can get, meaning a difference was most certainly found.

Size: All six posters used size to create saliency for text. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual size-difference” with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .141, meaning a difference was not found.

Colour: Contrasts in colour was used to create saliency for text in all six posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual colour contrast”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .438, meaning a difference was not found.

Tone: Tone was used to make people more salient in three of the six posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “brighter people”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .145, meaning a difference was not found.

Focus: Focus was used to make people more salient in two posters and a polar bear more salient in one poster. Further, one poster was entirely out of focus in order to make the accompanying text out of focus. As there was no uniform way of using focus, I simply coded the Facebook posts for “focus”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .506, meaning a difference was not found.

Foregrounding/Overlapping: Other than the overlapping text dealt with in “depiction” above, all six posters contained the stylized dandelion symbol of the Green party overlapping the image. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “overlapping party symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .041, meaning a difference was found.

Narratives: Four of the posters contained non-transactional narratives. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “non-transactional narrative”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .529, meaning a difference was not found.

Further, three of the six posters contained transactional narratives. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “transactional narrative”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .546, meaning a difference was not found.

Signs:

Three of the six posters used icons connected to the environment. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “environmental icon”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .968, meaning a difference was not found.

Three of the six posters used symbols connoting negativity or distress. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “negative symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .000192, meaning a difference was found by a margin of several orders of magnitude.

The stylized dandelion symbol of the party was present in all six posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “party symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .056, meaning a difference was found.

All six posters used photographs, which are inherently indexical. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “photographic image”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .863, meaning a difference was not found.

Additional post-analysis category: Having coded the images based on the above, it is clear that a great deal of the Facebook images used the play symbol, whereas none of the election posters did. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “play symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .095, meaning a difference was found.

Template Moderate party

Depiction: Five of the six posters depicted party leader Ulf Kristersson. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “contains party official(s)”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .875, meaning a difference was not found.

Further, five of the six posters depicted humans. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “depicts human(s)”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .969, meaning a difference was not found.

Saliency-creation:

Accompanying text: Five of the six posters contained the text “Nu tar vi tag i Sverige!”. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “Nu tar vi tag i Sverige!”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was 1.31E-06, a number so many orders of magnitude lower than the $p < 10$ threshold that it is essentially as close to a statistical certainty as one can get, meaning a difference was most certainly found.

All six posters contained the text “moderaterna.se Lika för alla”. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “moderaterna.se” and “Lika för alla”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. Any of the two phrases being present was coded as presence, regardless of whether the other half was present or not. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was 3.28E-11, a number so many orders of magnitude lower than the $p < 10$ threshold that it is essentially as close to a

statistical certainty as one can get, meaning a difference was most certainly found.

Size: All six posters used size to make text more salient. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual size-difference”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .649, meaning a difference was not found.

Colour: All six posters used colour contrasts to make text more salient. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual colour difference”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .472, meaning a difference was not found.

Five of the six posters used black-and-white images. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “black-and-white image(s)”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .006, meaning a difference was found.

Tone: Only one of the images used tone as a saliency-creating method at all. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of any use of Tone as saliency-creating method, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .409, meaning a difference was not found.

Focus: Kristersson was in focus in five of the six posters, sometimes along other people and sometimes on his own. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “focus on people”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .969, meaning a difference was not found.

Foregrounding/Overlapping: Five of the six posters used text overlapping an image. As such, I coded the Facebook images for “overlapping text”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .340, meaning a difference was not found.

Further, five of the six posters also contained the party logo overlapping the image. As such, I coded the Facebook images for “overlapping party symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .340, meaning a difference was not found.

Narratives: Three of the posters contained non-transactional narratives, while two of the posters contained transactional narratives. As such, I coded the Facebook posts twice, once for “non-transactional narrative” and once for “transactional narrative, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence in both cases. The result of the chi-squared test for the “non-transactional narrative” variable was .408, meaning no difference was found, while the result of the chi-squared test for the “transactional narrative” variable was .619, meaning a difference was not found there either.

Signs:

The party symbol, the stylized “M” with the word “nya”, was used in all six posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “party symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .274, meaning a difference was not found.

Four of the six images used symbolic clothing connoting authority, power, or professionalism. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “symbolic clothing connoting power”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .780, meaning a difference was not found.

Five of the six posters used photographs, making the images inherently indexical. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “photographic image”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .897, meaning a difference was not found.

Additional post-analysis category:

Having coded the images based on the above, it is clear that a great deal of the Facebook images used the play symbol, whereas none of the election posters did. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “play symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .221, meaning a difference was not found.

Template Left party

Depiction: All five posters depicted multiple humans. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “depicts 2+ humans”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .117, meaning a difference was not found.

Further, party leader Jonas Sjöstedt figured in two of the five posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “contains party official(s)”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. Note that the presence of party officials of any party, not just the Left party, was counted as presence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .262, meaning a difference was not found.

Saliency-creation:

Accompanying text: All five images used underlined text to emphasize part of the message. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “underlined text”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .000142, meaning a difference was found by several orders of magnitude.

Further, all five posters contained the phrase “Rösta på Vänsterpartiet den 9 september.” As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual exhortation to vote for V”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was 1.42E-06, a number so many orders of magnitude lower

than the $p < .10$ threshold that it is essentially as close to a statistical certainty as one can get, meaning a difference was most certainly found.

Four of the five posters used strikethrough text to indicate something undesirable. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “strikethrough text”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .000832, meaning a difference was found by several orders of magnitude.

Size: All five posters used size to make text more salient. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual size-difference”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .229, meaning a difference was not found.

Colour: All five posters used coloured strikethroughs and/or underlines to make text more salient. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual colour emphasis”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. This includes all means of using colour for creating saliency for text that isn’t having the text itself contrast with its surrounding (this is covered below). The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .000142, meaning a difference was found by several orders of magnitude.

Further, all five posters used colour to make text contrast with the rest of the image, making the text more salient. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “textual colour contrast”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .752, meaning a difference was not found.

Finally, the stylized poppy, the party logo of the Left party, contrasted with the rest of the image in all five posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “contrasting party logo”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .538, meaning a difference was not found.

Tone: Tone was only used at all in one of the five posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for the presence of Tone as a saliency-creating method at all, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .294, meaning a difference was not found.

Focus: People were in focus in all five of the posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “people in focus”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .709, meaning a difference was not found.

Foregrounding/Overlapping: Text overlapping the image was used in all five posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “overlapping text”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .580, meaning a difference was not found.

The party symbol overlapped the images in all five posters. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “overlapping party symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .623, meaning a difference was not found.

Narratives: All five posters contained transactional narratives. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “transactional narrative”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .095, meaning a difference was found.

All five posters used the same Event, a downward-sloping line toward the party symbol. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “Event”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was 1.42E-06 a number so many orders of magnitude lower than the $p < .10$ threshold that it is essentially as close to a statistical certainty as one can get, meaning a difference was most certainly found.

Signs:

All five posters contained smiles, symbols of positivity, happiness, and general rightness. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “smiles”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .229, meaning a difference was not found.

All five posters used the stylized poppy symbol of the Left party. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “party symbol” with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .794, meaning a difference was not found.

All five posters used photographs, which are inherently indexical. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “photographic image”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .837, meaning a difference was not found.

Additional post-analysis category:

Having coded the images based on the above, it is clear that a great deal of the Facebook images used the play symbol, whereas none of the election posters did. As such, I coded the Facebook posts for “play symbol”, with 1 for presence and 0 for absence. The result of the chi-squared test for this variable was .187, meaning a difference was not found.

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