



Far-right ecologism

The Sweden Democrats and the Energy Transition

Märtha Lindberg

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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU
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Märtha Lindberg

Supervisor:	Noémi Gonda, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development
Examiner:	Patrik Oskarsson, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development
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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
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Division of Rural Development

Abstract

In line with the growing need to adapt to climate change, a paradoxical phenomenon has emerged, with far-right movements appropriating environmental policies to promote their own ideology. This thesis aims to highlight this phenomenon and therefore examines how the Sweden Democrats, a far-right political party, engage with environmental issues, with a particular focus on the energy transition and renewable energy sources. The empirical material for the thesis is based on three official documents from the Sweden Democrats (SD), as well as seven interviews conducted with SD politicians. The thesis uses the theoretical approach of far-right ecologism as described by Balša Lubarda (2023) and highlights concepts such as populism, localism, and nostalgia to examine the SD's rhetoric and framing of the energy transition. The key findings of the thesis show that SD's energy policy is characterised by a nationalist ideology that emphasises self-sufficiency, centralised control, and opposition to EU influence. The party uses energy policy as a tool to promote Swedish sovereignty, emphasising nuclear power as stable and technologically superior, while renewable energy sources such as wind power are dismissed as inefficient. At the same time, a distinction is made between local environmental issues and global climate issues, reinforcing criticism of global cooperation, and emphasising national interests. The thesis shows the importance of continued scrutiny of (still) democratic states to prevent environmental policies from being appropriated to spread an exclusionary agenda. The democracy and justice aspects are central to future environmental work, especially for the energy transition, which otherwise may risk excluding and marginalising certain social groups in the transition to a more sustainable future.

Keywords: energy transition; far-right ecologism; the Sweden democrats; justice; democracy

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1. Introduction

In recent years, Sweden has experienced an increasing political polarisation as well as a rise of far-right movements, with the Sweden Democrats being the most prominent far-right actor (Forchtner 2019). Simultaneously, the global climate crisis has created an urgent need for a “green” transition away from the fossil fuel economy as well as for institutions able to govern the substantial political, economic, and social changes that such a transition requires (Fiskio 2012). Within this context, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as “far-right ecologism” has emerged, referring to far-right groups’ appropriation of environmental issues and their adaptation of these issues to their own ideology (Forchtner 2019). The emergence of far-right ecologism has created a new paradox: parties that have traditionally been sceptical of climate science and environmental policy now use these environmental issues to advance their own nationalist and often exclusionary agendas.

The rise of far-right ecologism has drawn attention to the need to re-centre democracy in debates on environmental issues in general and the energy transition in particular, to scrutinise for example how environmental policies can be used to reinforce or legitimise authoritarian and far-right tendencies and ideologies. This thesis takes this need seriously and therefore examines how the Sweden Democrats engage with environmental issues, with a specific focus on the energy transition to analyse the ideology underlying their political positions and rhetoric and how they influence the broader political discourse and democracy in Sweden. The thesis examines three key policy documents issued by the Sweden Democrats and complements the analysis with interviews with SD politicians.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of the thesis is to examine how the Sweden Democrats, a far-right political party, engage with environmental issues, with a particular focus on the energy transition and renewable energy sources.

Main research question:

1. How do the Sweden Democrats engage with the energy transition?

Secondary research questions:

2. How do the Sweden Democrats frame their stances on the energy transition in relation to broader societal and economic problems?

3. What are the ideological foundations and principles that inform the party's views on energy systems and renewable energy?

1.1.1 Limitations

This thesis focuses on understanding far-right politics in Sweden by examining a specific issue and the approach of a specific party: The Sweden Democrats' and their engagement in the energy transition. The study does not include potential political collaborators of the Sweden Democrats, such as the Moderates or the Christian Democrats, which could have provided a broader view of energy policy within Swedish right-wing politics. The analysis is limited to the three most recent official documents published by the Sweden Democrats, which does not reflect the views of individual voters. The thesis therefore does not have an individual level focus but analyses the party as a whole. Additionally, the thesis focuses specifically on the energy transition as part of the work against climate change and therefore does not analyse other parts of the green transition, such as forest policy or biodiversity, which could influence the party's general environmental policy. The thesis does not examine environmental policy as a whole, but rather uses the energy transition as an example to examine the rhetoric used by the party. Geographically, while the thesis puts the party's policy in the context of similar European parties, it does not include a comparative analysis and thus solely focuses on the Sweden Democrats in Sweden.

2. Background

This section gives an introduction to Sweden's energy transition and the emergence of the Sweden Democrats in the political landscape. This is done in order to create an understanding of today's environmental policy and of the political context in which an energy transition will take place.

2.1 Sweden's energy transition

Sweden has long been at the forefront of climate action and a fossil-free energy transition (Regeringskansliet 2019). In Sweden the green transition is closely associated with the European Green Deal, a sustainable development strategy that aims to influence the European Union's agenda in a manner that is innovative, resource-efficient and resilient (European Commission 2022). One of the main objectives of the Green Deal is to minimise pollution through the implementation of sustainable and renewable technologies, while guaranteeing that the transition is socially just and accessible to all (ibid.). As the impacts of climate change become more evident and the EU's climate policy becomes stricter, Sweden has also stepped up its efforts to transition to a more sustainable and fossil-free energy sector (Naturvårdsverket 2024).

Historically, Sweden has had a head start in transitioning to renewable electricity thanks to its strong hydropower production. But with increased EU requirements and new technological developments, Sweden has also been investing heavily in other renewable energy sources, particularly in wind power, with big onshore and offshore investments (Svensk Vindenergi 2021). More recently, nuclear power and the expansion of the nuclear industry is a major focus of Sweden's energy transition. Much of Sweden's electricity is produced in the northern parts of the country, where the majority of Sweden's hydropower plants are located. The nuclear power regions in southern and central Sweden also produce a lot of electricity, and wind power, which is currently the third largest energy source, is produced throughout Sweden, but mainly in Västra Götaland, Västerbotten, Skåne, Västernorrland and Jämtland counties (SCB & Energimyndigheten 2018).

The energy transition has in recent decades been a hot topic in the Swedish political debate. For instance, different political parties have different ideas on how fast the transition to renewable energy should be and which energy sources should be prioritised. Questions of justice and its rationalisations within energy policy are also at the crux of the discussions. Furthermore, renewable energy projects, such as wind farms, in sparsely populated areas of northern Sweden have the potential to give rise to conflicts between national climate initiatives and the interests of local

communities. Land use, the practice of Sámi reindeer husbandry and energy projects collide in Northern Sweden. After the 2022 election, when a new government constellation was formed with Moderaterna¹, Kristdemokraterna² and Liberalerna³, in cooperation with the Sweden Democrats as a supporting party, the Swedish energy policy took new directions, as clarified in the Tidö agreement⁴ (Sverigedemokraterna et al. 2022).

One of the most important changes in the energy transition under the Tidö agreement is the return of nuclear power as an important component of Sweden's future energy development (Regeringskansliet 2023; Klimatpolitiska rådet 2024). The government and the SD see nuclear power as a necessary so-called baseload source that can ensure stable and emission-free electricity production, especially in a scenario where the function and performance of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power are questioned (Elfström 2024). This approach differs from previous governments that have mainly wanted to invest in a faster expansion of renewable energy. According to Holmberg (2020), nuclear power has not historically been a right-left political issue in Sweden, but in recent years has become a symbol in discussions between the right and left blocs. Increasingly in political debate on the environment, the so-called 'nuclear question' is being mainstreamed. For example, even left-winged parties, such as the Social Democrats, are advocating for a more techno neutral energy policy within this debate. Meaning, no particular focus on one specific energy source.

2.2 The rise of the Sweden Democrats

The Sweden Democrats (SD) have in the recent decades shifted from being a marginalised political party to becoming one of Sweden's largest political powers. Their rise is a result of both political and societal changes that have affected the country since the party's formation in 1988 (Loxbo 2015). In its early years, the party was marginalised and mainly associated with extremism, racism, and xenophobia. Because of this, the SD was regarded as a radical and undemocratic party by many (Öhberg 2020). A major change occurred when the current party leader Jimmie Åkesson took over in 2005 as he wanted to distance the party from its extremist roots and to establish a 'social conservative' party yet retaining a focus on anti-immigration (Sverigedemokraterna 2023). According to Loxbo (2015), the

¹ The Moderate Party - A liberal-conservative political party and Sweden's third largest party in the 2022 elections.

² The Christian Democrats - A value-oriented ideological party with so-called Christian values.

³ The Liberals - A liberal party in the centre-right of the political spectrum with a focus on freedom and market sovereignty.

⁴ The Tidö agreement - A political agreement that forms the basis for the Moderates, the Liberals, and the Christian Democrats to create a minority government with the support of the Sweden Democrats.

SD challenged both left- and right-wing parties by articulating a message that Sweden should reduce immigration, strengthen national culture and safeguard the welfare state.

The SD had its first breakthrough in the 2010 election when the party entered the Swedish Riksdag for the first time (Valmyndigheten 2024a). Their success came as a shock to many established parties, and the SD was therefore politically isolated through a broad cross-bloc agreement, the so-called 'December agreement', which aimed to keep the SD out of effective power (Nationalencyklopedin n.d.). The other parties were also very keen to use social media and the press to distance themselves from the party (Öhberg 2020). Despite this, the SD continued to grow, and they more than doubled their support in the 2014 election, becoming Sweden's third largest party (Valmyndigheten 2024b). The party's anti-immigration approach resonated with the voters, especially during the so-called refugee crisis in 2015. The SD's rhetoric that Sweden could not cope with such high levels of immigration and that it would lead to social problems also gained traction (Öhberg 2020). In this context, the migration debate and how the different parties acted around it, has led to a significant increase in party polarisation (Weissenbilder & Lundmark 2020).

In the 2018 elections, the SD became the second largest party in the Riksdag and, although they still faced opposition from other parties, they started to have a direct influence on the political debate, especially on issues related to immigration and law and order (TT 2018). According to Öhberg (2020), the political arena in Sweden changed, and several parties started to move closer to the SD's position on immigration. There also has been a change in the SD's sympathisers, from being a group of so-called 'angry young men', to being the common people who support the SD (Öhberg 2020). After the 2022 elections, the party's growth continued, and the SD is now an important part of the right-wing bloc in Swedish politics. Consequently, its influence over policy-making has increased significantly, e.g. including in the Tidö Agreement (Klimatpolitiska rådet 2024).

3. Previous research

This section situates the thesis in relation to existing research on the far-right and the environment, the polarisation of the political landscape, the role of the media in the reproduction of stereotypical roles, and the role of the rural in polarising debates in Sweden. This is done in order to provide an understanding of the construction of environmental policy, the energy transition and the rhetoric used to motivate it.

3.1 Far-right politics and the environment

Climate change adaptation and mitigations as well as the rise of the far-right movements, have both been the subjects of considerable research and are highly relevant to today's society. However, only recently a field of research that looks at their interconnections has emerged (Forchtner 2019; Enninga 2023; Lubarda 2023; Conversi 2024). Within this research field, eco fascism, eco authoritarianism, far-right environmentalism, far-right ecologism and Alt right ecologism are at the centre of the attention (Forchtner 2019; Taylor 2019; Wodak 2019; Lubarda 2023). What these strands of research have in common is that they look at how far-right and authoritarian politics intersect with environmental governance, including the governance of climate change.

The concept of "green authoritarianism" or "eco-fascism" is inherently contradictory, given that far-right movements have historically denied climate change and contributed significantly to the exploitation of natural resources and land, which now demand urgent intervention (Conversi 2024). While traditional far-right discourse has focused on themes like populism, alienation, immigration, and a resistance to progressive change, a new form of environmental politics is emerging within these movements (Lubarda 2023). This shift has been facilitated by the normalisation and growing acceptance of right-wing extremism in media and political spaces, creating opportunities for these groups to adopt and promote environmental policies (ibid.).

However, there is significant variation in how far-right parties and movements approach environmental issues, even though certain patterns are distinctive. For instance, many of these parties show resistance to specific renewable energy sources, particularly wind power (Ottene & Weisskircher 2022). Additionally, their environmental positions are often framed within a populist rhetoric that aligns with their broader ideological narratives (Lubarda 2023). This rhetoric and policy positioning reveal an evolving but still fragmented approach to environmental issues within far-right politics.

The current body of research on this topic is burgeoning (Taylor 2019; Wodak 2019; Benoist 2023; Lubarda 2023; Conversi 2024). What they increasingly highlight is how contradictory far-right environmental politics can be: they marginalise in the name of emancipation; they exploit natural resources in the name of their protection (Gonda & Bori 2023).

3.2 Populism and the polarisation of politics in Sweden

In far-right studies, issues of populism and polarisation are common. Populism is a political strategy and ideology that emphasises a dichotomy between the "real people" and the "elite". Populists often claim to represent the interests of the general public and that the elite or opposition is corrupt and/or detached from the genuine needs and concerns of the people. Populism itself is not centred on either the right or the left on any political scale. However, it often employs rhetoric that simplifies complex issues and promises rapid solutions. The rise of right-wing populism in the world has become more prominent in recent decades, partly as a reaction to global economic crises, wars, inequality and dissatisfaction with established political parties (Mudde 2007). The dynamics of populism and its impact on democracy and political processes are central topics of current research (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017; Wodak 2019; Morris 2022).

An example of one such differentiation between "real people" and a global elite could be seen in research on the US elections and how the media manages and fuels polarisation in the society (Morris 2022): by using narratives of exclusion, fearmongering, and 'othering' in their reporting on environmental policy.

The role of the media in reproducing polarisation and shaping public opinion and belief systems has been a long-standing area of interest within far-right studies. Camauër et al. (2006), state that the media is one of the most significant contemporary sources of knowledge about contexts and discourses with which we are not personally familiar. As observed in the US, the media has the potential to cultivate an 'us and them' mentality, which for example can be associated with discourses on rural and urban areas (Morris 2022). This can serve to intensify existing and historical conflicts within society between different groups. For example, the media plays an important role in producing a sense of political exclusion, which can in turn lead to the formation of social groups that gravitate towards movements espousing anti-establishment and more radical right-wing views (Erlingsson et al. 2020).

Affective polarisation plays an important role in political debate in Sweden, meaning that party supporters tend to categorise supporters of other parties as either good or bad (Weissenbilder & Lundmark 2020). One potential explanation for this phenomenon, may be the increasing heterogeneity of society and the growing

fragmentation of the media landscape, which may result in information/misinformation on specific issues becoming more obtainable to individuals whose views already align with those issues (ibid.). Mudde & Kaltwasser (2017), add to this, arguing that this type of division makes it more difficult to cooperate when the different parties feel a strong distrust of each other and to the other parties' supporters. In the Swedish context, the emergence of single-issue parties can also be attributed to the intensification of polarisation within the political landscape. Furthermore, the migration issue is an example of a political issue that has increased party political polarisation during the 2000s (Martinsson 2020).

3.3 'The debt to the countryside' - The rural as a rhetorical tool

The gap between urban and rural areas (both imaginary and material) is an aspect discussed across scholarship on the far-right, populism, and environmental politics (Gonda & Bori 2023; Woods 2011) The rural is seen, for example, as a place for traditional views that may be linked to far-right voting behaviour or as a place of political alienation in the sense where the urban ideas interpose creating a divide between urban and rural voters. At the same time, the rural areas are emphasised as a place for providing solutions to specific environmental challenges, mainly linked to the energy crisis e.g., energy transition with wind farms (that are mostly located on rural lands).

This gap between urban and rural areas has gained increasing traction in political discourse with rural areas being highlighted as economic, social and environmental victims in the processes of global development (Eriksson 2008; Woods 2011; Erlingsson et al. 2020; Stenbacka et al. 2020). Simultaneously, the notion of an advanced, electronically enhanced rural future, perceived as a potential salvation for the forthcoming era, is emerging. Woods (2011), highlights here that rural communities' adaptation to and mitigation of climate change in the global north has only recently become the subject of academic research. Further Woods (2011), states that, over the recent decades, the remaking of the rural north has begun to lead to the enrolment of rural lands in the service of a so-called sustainable urbanism. Furthermore, this urban intrusion in a post-oil society challenges the rural identity, as traditional rural lands with its characteristics of a rural idyll and agricultural land are remade in accordance with renewable energy sources, e.g., the wind power developments. As a result, the rural and urban divide becomes evident in the discourse (ibid.).

The concept of rural emancipation has emerged as a response and resistance to right-wing populist movements, particularly in countries such as Hungary, under

the regime of Prime Minister Orbán (Bori & Gonda 2022). By portraying himself as the champion of the "common people" in rural areas, Orbán emphasises the significance of a rural identity as a fundamental aspect of Hungary's national identity. This concept is used to distinguish between the "authentic" values of the rural, which are defined by family, tradition and hard work, and the urban elites and progressive ideas often associated with the liberal left and the EU. The agricultural politics and rural development strategies used by Orbán in Hungary have used a so-called pro-peasant propaganda, in order to garner electoral support among rural voters through e.g. the provision of financial subsidies and the articulation of a discourse emphasising the safeguarding of national sovereignty and traditions from perceived external threats (Gonda & Bori 2023). This has, however, resulted in a strategic positioning of national oligarchs in the rural development and the energy transition sector rather than the realisation of rural emancipation. Simultaneously, this strategy is employed to portray the EU as an antagonist, representing a threat to Hungary's culture, identity, and sovereignty. Similarly, Benoist (2023), writes how the rural and notions of localism are used by the far-right in France to pursue an exclusionary policy where the values of French identity and ecology are put in relation to each other. Thus, the utilisation of a political rhetoric that differentiates between the 'true people' and an 'environmental globalist elite' serves to advance a specific political agenda, which can be observed to shape discourses of political alienation and political exclusion and reproduce discursively the urban-rural divide. This also shows how environmental policies and particularly those relating to low carbon are usually seen as threats to rural people and the countryside.

A key aspect in the way rural areas are talked about is linked to nostalgia and identity (Urry 1995). The concept of rural romanticism, that idealises the rural as a place of authenticity and harmony, plays a significant role in contemporary discourse surrounding nature (Woods 2011). Even within populist narratives, this nostalgia is employed to critique modernity and globalisation, and to emphasise a longing for a supposedly better past e.g., Trump's campaign 'Make America Great again' (Van Prooijen et al. 2022). Consequently, the use of nostalgia and rural romance becomes a potent cultural and political strategy that reinforces sentiments of belonging and national identity.

The rural space can thus be used as a rhetorical tool in the energy transition, often framed either as a site of exploitation or as a saviour of the environment. By invoking traditional far-right rhetoric, such as the populist narrative of "true people" versus an elite, rural areas are positioned as central to both environmental policy discourse and ideological battles. This framing allows parties like the SD to garner support among those in rural areas who perceive themselves as victims of injustice. In doing so, they utilise the rural not just as a physical space but as a symbolic one,

projecting their ideological principles on to environmental policy development in Sweden.

4. Theoretical and Methodological Framework

This section constitutes the methodological and theoretical part of the thesis. The section presents the thesis theory: far-right ecology and its themes of populism, localism, and nostalgia. This section also outlines the thesis' choice of method, empirical material, ethical considerations, and strategy for analysis.

4.1 Far-right ecology

The analysis in the thesis is based on the theoretical approach known as Far-Right Ecology, described by Balša Lubarda (2023) in the book *The Far-Right and the Environment: Politics, Discourse and Communication*. The thesis employs concepts associated with far-right ecology, including populism, nostalgia, and localism.

Far-Right Ecology (FRE) explores the complex interrelationship between far-right ideologies and environmentalism, drawing upon nationalist and populist tendencies. Lubarda (2023) analyses how these movements, particularly in post-socialist contexts such as Hungary and Poland, repurpose environmental concerns in order to advance their broader political objectives. These movements frequently advocate a vision of "pristine nature" that reflects their ideals of cultural or ethnic purity, thereby integrating environmental protection into their broader nationalist agenda. This ideological framework draws upon historical examples of fascism and populism, but it does so in a way that aligns these concepts with the demands of contemporary environmental politics. Lubarda (2023) observes that these movements advocate localism, and self-sufficiency, positioning environmental protection as a means of safeguarding national identity from the impact of globalisation and external threats.

Lubarda (2023) places FRE within a broader populist framework, emphasising its 'thin-centred' nature. Far-right movements frequently use a populist rhetoric to frame environmental degradation as a consequence of corrupt elites or globalism. This enables them to position themselves as defenders of the people and their national environment. This is often exclusionary, by promoting the interests of a homogeneous national community rather than international or global approaches to environmental crises (ibid.).

Another central theme in FRE is the focus on localism and self-sufficiency. According to Lubarda (2023) far-right movements have a tendency to link localism to both environmental preservation and national sovereignty. By portraying global

environmental policies and climate change agreements as threats to national independence, they instead advocate decentralised, locally based solutions that align with their nationalist values. FRE also draws on nostalgia for a perceived better pre-modern past, where societies lived in harmony with nature, free from the potential influences of other cultures and modernity. This nostalgic vision is inherently exclusionary, linking environmental pristineness with a cultural homogeneity.

FRE as an analytical approach is used in this thesis to understand how far-right movements in Sweden, with the example of the SD, use environmental politics and more specifically the energy transition to push their own political agendas.

4.2 Empirical material and sampling

This chapter presents a detailed account of the selection process, outlining the rationale behind the chosen interviewees, the methodology employed in conducting the interviews and the sources of data used. It also outlines the methodology employed in collecting the data and the techniques used to analyse it.

4.2.1 The example of the Sweden Democrats

The choice of using the Sweden Democrats as an empirical example in this thesis of far-right movements is based on that the party's ideology and political rhetoric contain many of the characteristics most often associated with far-right populism, such as nationalism, criticism of immigration, and scepticism of international cooperation (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017). This is further emphasised by the mainstream media, the general public and previous research on the party (Loxbo 2015; Öhberg 2020; Jungar 2022). The SD's political platform is based on a form of nationalist populism that seeks to prioritise a particular version of Swedish interests over international commitments, which is typical of far-right movements. It is therefore crucial to analyse the SD's impact on democratic processes, especially as the party has become an increasingly important political force in Sweden. Their rise in the political arena has led to a frequent polarisation of political debates, including environmental and climate discussions. In relation to environmental issues, the SD often takes a position that differs from the broader consensus on climate change and sustainability, emphasising their far-right profile (Martinsson 2020).

The SD's influence on democratic processes is also essential to analyse as their rhetoric sometimes undermines trust in democratic institutions. For example, by criticising climate scientists and authorities such as SMHI⁵, they have tried to

⁵ The Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute

undermine the scientific basis for Sweden's climate policy (SvD 2017). This can affect how democratic decisions on environmental measures are made, and risks weakening the long-term sustainability required to address climate change.

4.2.2 The party programmes

The empirical material of the thesis is based on a collection of official documents, party programmes from the SD, political manifestos from both national and EU elections, interview material and other relevant communication from the SD, such as official statements and text from the SD politicians.

The chosen political documents from the SD consists of The Programme of principles from 2023, The European Parliament election manifesto of 2024, and the Sweden Democrats' Election Platform for 2022. I have chosen to use the SD's most recent material as it gives a current picture of the party's ideology. Although the historical development of the SD is interesting to analyse, it is not necessarily relevant to this particular study, which focuses on how environmental issues and the energy transition are presented, what arguments are used and how these relate to the party's broader political goals. In addition to official party programmes, recent SD-statements in the media have also been used to create a better understanding of the party's position. These may come from official press releases in the media, as well as general statements in the press and on the Sweden Democrats' official media pages.

4.2.3 The interviews

Together with the party programmes, interview material is also used as a basis for discussion. The methodology for the interviews is semi-structured, which means that a questionnaire⁶ has been created as a basis for the interviews, but that the questions can vary and be adapted depending on the direction of the conversation. According to Harboe & Larson (2013), this method is useful for capturing nuanced perspectives and allows respondents to develop their answers based on their own experiences and views. A total of 7 interviews were conducted via digital tools such as Zoom and Skype. In a few cases, interviews were also conducted by telephone. The interviewees are all SD politicians at either municipal, regional, or national level and come from different parts of Sweden. I found all the interviewees via the Sweden Democrats' own channels. In the analysis, the interviewees are referred to only as SD politicians, regardless of their level, to ensure anonymity and because their role has no significance for the analysis. The interviewees are in the analysis named as e.g., (SD politician October 2024). I have also chosen not to mention

⁶ Appendix 1

which geographical areas the interviewees come from because of the sensitive nature of the subject.

The material from the interviews is not representative due to its scope but is used to complement the official documents. To ensure high ethical standards, most interviews were recorded (5/7 interviewees) with the consent of the respondents, and prior to the interviews all participants were informed about the purpose of the study and how their responses will be used. Recording the interviews and obtaining informed consent ensures both reliability and transparency in data management. In the cases where the interviews were not recorded, notes have been taken but the interviewees have not been quoted in the analysis, even though the material has been used to create a basis for my understanding of the Sweden Democrats' approach. The interviews are then analysed to identify recurring themes and patterns. The semi-structured approach thus becomes a valuable tool to gain a deeper understanding of the topic and to allow the respondents' genuine opinions to be heard in an ethically responsible way (Harboe & Larson 2013).

4.2.4 Ethics

When analysing a political topic such as the Sweden Democrats' position on the issue of Sweden's energy transition, particular attention must be paid to research ethics, especially with regard to transparency and the role of the researcher. In order to present an unbiased representation of the party's views and their politics surrounding the energy transition, it is crucial that the language used is not characterised by prejudice or biases. Given the polarised nature of the topic and the strong emotions it can evoke, both within the academic community and the general public, transparency becomes a key aspect. This means that all chosen perspectives, sources, and methodological decisions are clearly presented, so that the reader can understand the research process and assess possible bias for themselves. As the official documents and interviews have been conducted in Swedish, I have tried, during the translation process, to choose a language that is as close to neutral and consistent as possible. The researcher's own role and personal beliefs should also be reflected upon to avoid personal opinions influencing the analysis and results of the thesis. Although my political views do not coincide with the chosen party, as a researcher I have placed great emphasis on providing as neutral and fact-based presentation as possible. Remaining transparent in the thesis is very important in order to provide a credible and neutral discussion on the impact of the Sweden Democrats on Sweden's energy transition.

4.2.5 Strategy for analysis

The thesis employs thematic coding as a methodology for the analysis and categorisation of the selected material. Thematic coding aims to build a basis for

further analysis of empirical data. The codes have been developed through what Creswell & Creswell (2018), refer to as ‘predetermined codes’ where the purpose of the thesis and the focus on the environment and energy transition have formed the basis for the codes that are seen as relevant to investigate. However, the overarching purpose of the thesis has remained flexible, allowing for adjustments in line with the evolving direction of the material. The predetermined codes are, in addition, to focus the thesis on the energy transition, based on the theory of Far-right ecologism and concepts linked to the theory, such as localism, nostalgia and populism.

When processing the empirical data, the material has thus been coded into the following four themes: ‘Nationalism and Anti-immigration’, ‘Control and power’, ‘Self-determination’, and ‘Subjective and objective science’. The theme: ‘Nationalism and Anti-immigration’, includes arguments about immigration linked to the environment, narratives about Swedish nature, and arguments about nature conservancy (but only in a Swedish context). The theme also includes rhetoric surrounding a rural and urban divide and how and if it is used as an instrument for arguing in favour of certain energy sources. The ‘Control and power’ theme includes codes that mention industry, arguments linked to economic conditions, and the mention of a controlled green transition. The theme lifts the balance between economic growth with social and cultural values. As well as notions of sovereignty and political autonomy. The theme: ‘Self-determination’ includes the party's position on Swedish sustainability and the framing of a sustainable energy supply and different energy sources. The theme also includes codes related to international climate agreements and co-operation, narratives and representations about global actors, and narratives about global environmental problems. The theme: ‘Subjective and objective science’ includes codes relating to science, institutions of knowledge, emotions, and attitudes towards different energy sources. These have later been re-categorised into two main categories in the analysis: ‘Climate and energy justice’ and ‘Control’.

5. Findings and analysis

5.1 Climate and energy justice

In the official documents as well as in the interviews, it emerges that the SD's climate politics is characterized by a nationalism that prioritizes national interests over global solutions. By questioning the role of the EU and portraying it as an elitist and undemocratic force, the SD re-enforces a distrust of supranational institutions. This criticism of the EU is linked to a narrative about Swedish sovereignty. By pointing out external forces as responsible for economic burdens and injustices in the energy transition, the space for a democratic and inclusive dialogue on climate justice is reduced. The party's rhetoric thus contributes to undermining trust in supranational institutions and making international cooperation more difficult, which risks delaying necessary measures for a fair and sustainable energy transition.

5.1.1 Nationalism

From a historical perspective, nationalism can be seen as a central part of the SD's ideology and permeates their entire programme of principles and their other official documents. They see the nation as the most natural community for individuals and emphasise that the Swedish nation should be united by culture, language, and traditions. In the Programme of Principles, the SD states: "*The Sweden Democrats define the Swedish nation in terms of loyalty, shared identity, shared language and shared culture (Sverigedemokraterna 2023:11)*". The nationalistic tendencies are a recurring theme in the SD's environmental policy too that emphasises that Swedish nature is part of the country's cultural identity. The SD links nature conservation and environmental issues to nationalism, where the protection of Swedish nature becomes a symbol of preserving the country's sovereignty. The party expresses concern that globalisation and immigration may threaten the Swedish environment and links these issues to a broader nationalist message.

The idea of a default Swedish identity, deeply tied to the nation's cultural and territorial borders, is a recurring theme in the SD's rhetoric, particularly in their portrayal of rural areas. By intertwining national identity with the rural, the SD constructs a nostalgic vision of Sweden where rural life and natural landscapes serve as the heart of Swedish heritage and authenticity. In the election platform from 2022 the SD states:

Sweden's nature and the rural areas are part of our people's soul, and policy must create the conditions for them to be utilised and preserved. The rural areas exist first and foremost for the people who live and work here, and not for city dwellers to have

somewhere to go on holiday or as a refuge for people who are tired of urban culture (Sverigedemokraterna 2022:25).

The rural thus becomes a symbol of the nation and is contrasted with urban modernity and multiculturalism. Similar ideas are seen in far-right movements across Europe, where rural landscapes and traditional ways of life are seen as threatened by globalisation and migration (Benoist 2023). By presenting nature conservation as a matter of national responsibility, the SD reinforce the link between national (rural) identity and environmental conservation. This expresses a discourse in which Swedish nature is presented as unique and something that must be protected from external threats, including e.g., immigration or EU policies. The rural areas must remain intact for the ‘true people’ and the Swedish people’s soul and must exist on its own terms. The SD’s rhetoric about the rural areas and nature reinforces an idea of a Swedish identity rooted in the local and the traditional. By portraying the countryside as part of the national Swedish soul, a link is established between the territorial and the cultural, where nature becomes not only a matter of environmental preservation but also a symbol of national belonging and tradition. The rhetoric places the rural area as a central arena for ‘true’ Swedish culture, in contrast to the modernity and diversity of the urban. This is where authentic Swedish values are expected to flourish - in harmony with nature, on their own terms, and without interference from outside forces.

In relation to the energy transition, the SD's criticism of wind power, which emerged both in the interviews and in public documents, may be a way of attracting voters in rural areas. Like many other debates, such as the wolf issue and the discussion on forests⁷, opposition to wind power has become a watershed in society where a discourse on the division between urban and rural areas is brought to a head. The ‘Not in my backyard’ phenomenon and the relationship to being a spectator or user of nature is emphasised in arguments about wind power, for example. This idea of protecting the rural areas against the diverse changes of the urban and external interests e.g., installing wind power on rural land or and the discourse of an uncontrolled environmental policy, can also be compared to Orbán's rhetoric in Hungary. Similarly, to the SD, Orbán’s party FIDESZ uses the revival of the rural areas and ‘The debt to the countryside’ as rhetorical messages used to justify their political positions and their opposition to foreign and left-liberal democratic interests (Bori & Gonda 2022).

In the Programme of Principles, the party sees the nation and national identity as central to a well-functioning society and democracy:

⁷ Two topics that are often part of the discourse on the urban-rural divide.

We regard municipal self-determination as a central part of democracy, but at the same time we realise that the municipalities' natural interest in seeking their own solutions and setting their own priorities must always be balanced against the principle that all Swedish citizens should have the right to equal welfare and public services (Sverigedemokraterna 2023:22).

This perspective goes hand in hand with the party's view of national identity as a necessary condition for social structure and democracy. By emphasising the importance of municipal self-determination - but at the same time insisting that this must not undermine a unified, national welfare - the SD strikes a balance between local empowerment and national control. Undesirable influences, such as immigration and new cultural trends, are seen as threats that can upset the balance that the rural and nature are said to represent. This reinforces the idea that Sweden is unique and needs to be protected, not only through strict immigration policies, but also by actively safeguarding the geographical and cultural boundaries that shape the nation's identity.

The SD's rhetoric around immigration and national identity can also be extended to their stance on environmental justice, particularly in relation to the Sámi people and the ongoing energy transition in Sweden. While the SD emphasises the importance of preserving Swedish land and cultural identity, their policies always exclude the Sámi, whose cultural and economic traditions are deeply tied to the land. The party has historically been reluctant to support expanded rights for the Sámi, framing such measures as a threat to national unity and portraying the Sámi's territorial claims as incompatible with broader Swedish interests (Institutet för mänskliga rättigheter 2023).

This discourse becomes particularly evident in the context of the energy transition, where Sweden's ambitions to increase renewable energy production directly impact Sámi lands. The Sámi are for instance not mentioned in any of their policy documents, which shows how the relationship to protecting Swedish land does not coincide with the pressures that, for example, the energy transition would have and has on Sámi territory. The SD's nationalist rhetoric prioritises the nation's energy independence and economic growth, but by doing so also side-lines the Sámi's rights to their ancestral lands. The SD's framing of Swedish land as central to national identity creates a tension between their environmental priorities and the inclusion of indigenous voices in decision-making processes. By advocating for an energy policy that serves the "Swedish people" defined in such an exclusionary way makes invisible the unique needs and rights of the Sámi: the SD reinforces a selective vision of justice that prioritises a homogeneous national identity that has no place for Sámi people. This selective approach mirrors their views on Muslims and connects to broader far-right trends in Europe, where nationalist parties often invoke environmental or cultural protection to exclude certain groups from their

definition of “the people.” For instance, in Norway, far-right groups have similarly downplayed the Sámi’s role in land management and resisted their claims to cultural and environmental justice, framing them as obstacles to national economic interests (Mörkenstam et al. 2022). The meeting of nationalism, energy policy and justice highlights the limitations of the SD's vision of conservation and sovereignty, where the benefits of conserving land and resources are unevenly distributed, favouring a narrow definition of Swedish identity while neglecting the rights of others who call the country home.

5.1.2 Sovereignty (from the EU)

A central theme in the SD's rhetoric is a nostalgia for a past Sweden, seen as cohesive and culturally intact. This nostalgia is set against the backdrop of societal changes driven by globalisation, migration, and international cooperation. The SD frames these changes as threats to Sweden’s identity and sovereignty, positioning these perceived changes as forces that risk undermining the nation’s independence (Sverigedemokraterna n.d.). This perspective forms the basis for their critique of international collaborations, such as Sweden’s EU membership, and their resistance to policies perceived as jeopardising national unity. This argument shows a discourse of fear of a certain development that the SD believes will come from the integration of other cultures and norms in Sweden. The SD's rhetoric risks hindering Sweden's energy transition because of a discourse that Sweden is being undermined by foreign interests. This is even more evident in the way the EU is presented as an economic burden for Sweden. The rhetoric is highly critical of how Swedish resources are used to support other countries' economies within the EU. A key quote from the EU election manifesto reads:

Being a member of the EU is expensive for Swedish taxpayers, never before has Sweden paid as much money to the Union as we do today. Since 1995, we have paid over 800 billion SEK to the EU to finance other countries' failing economies (Sverigedemokraterna n.d.:3).

It portrays Sweden's financial contribution to the EU not only as wasteful, but as a direct threat to the national economy and welfare. The criticism points out that the EU's supranational rules, such as the Fit for 55⁸ climate pact, risk leading to increased costs for Swedish households and businesses, which in turn could hamper Sweden's economic growth. The SD expresses strong opposition to the EU's economic policy and wants to limit Sweden's economic involvement in the Union. The economic consequences of the environmental policy are presented as particularly problematic in the manifesto. The SD emphasises that the EU's radical climate policy risks leading to financial burdens for Swedish households and

⁸ A consensus that by 2030 the EU's net greenhouse gas emissions should be reduced by 55% compared to 1990.

businesses, without generating significant environmental benefits. They argue that Sweden's prosperity and growth should not be sacrificed for symbolic climate measures that shift emissions to other countries rather than reducing them globally. They express this clearly in the EU election manifesto by saying:

There is an imminent risk that radical climate policies will lead to high costs for the households while jobs, growth and emissions are shifted to other countries without benefit for the global climate work (Sverigedemokraterna n.d.:6).

The quote criticises the EU by describing its interference as radical, while at the same time recognising the need for effective international climate action. Their criticism of EU climate action reinforces their opposition to giving up economic sovereignty for the sake of global or European goals. While the criticism of the EU is motivated by economic principles, there is an underlying rhetoric of hostility towards foreign countries and a vision of preserving the Swedish landscape, as can be seen in the following illustrative quote from the EU election manifesto:

There are plans to restore huge areas of land to their former state. While we need to continue with sustainable Swedish forestry to transition to a fossil-free economy, EU policy is moving towards sabotaging the potential for viable Swedish forestry (Sverigedemokraterna n.d.:6).

In the EU election manifesto the SD can be seen to be clearly critical of the EU's role in increasing the concentration of power at the expense of national self-determination. The SD expresses their concern about how the EU has evolved from a free trade project to a centralised power centre. This is also visible here in the EU election manifesto: “*The old dreams of free states cooperating on fair terms have long been forgotten in Brussels, replaced by bureaucracy, centralisation and corruption* (Sverigedemokraterna n.d.:3)”. The quote highlights a certain rhetoric that can be seen as anti-globalist and that portrays the EU as an aggressive actor that undermines Sweden's sovereignty. E.g., the party wants to highlight what they see as a lack of legitimacy by emphasising perceived issues such as a centralisation and corruption within the union. For the SD, the EU framework is not only ineffective but also characterised by an unhealthy concentration of power that threatens fundamental democratic principles and national independence.

This criticism is not exclusive to the SD but is shared by other far-right political movements in Europe, e.g., with Orbán in Hungary (Lubarda 2023). The party's rhetoric is undermining trust in both national and supranational institutions, thus making international cooperation more difficult. This risks delaying necessary measures for a just and sustainable energy transition. By pointing out these external ‘forces’ as responsible for the economic burdens and injustices in the energy transition, the SD are reducing space for a democratic and inclusive dialogue on climate justice.

A key theme within the concept of self-determination in SD's policy rhetoric is the emphasis on self-sufficiency as a means of achieving greater political autonomy. The discourse of self-sufficiency is also linked to criticism of EU's climate and environmental policies, where the SD see the tough environmental rules as an obstruction to Swedish traditional industry and agriculture. They emphasise the need to preserve national resources such as forests and agriculture from EU influence, by stating in the EU election manifesto:

Nor can we allow the EU to violate Swedish property rights, which are constitutionally protected, and we currently see many examples of landowners being squeezed when they are denied felling (Sverigedemokraterna n.d.:8).

The party emphasises the importance of Sweden's self-sufficiency when it comes to energy supply and not being dependent on international energy markets or imported solutions. This is clearly linked to the party's commitment to nuclear power as a domestic, fossil-free energy source. They write in the Election Platform for 2022:

Our fundamental position is that energy policy should be geared towards ensuring a long-term competitive and reliable energy supply, for both households and industry. The policy we support aims to enable Sweden to maintain a high level of international competitiveness and standard of living. Sweden has historically had a power supply system that is exclusively fossil-free with a high level of security of supply. The background to this is that we invested early on in a large-scale expansion of nuclear power and hydropower, which serves and has served us well. [...] Sweden needs an energy policy that can deliver sustainable and fossil-free electricity production that is reliable all year round and that helps to strengthen Swedish competitiveness (Sverigedemokraterna 2022:24).

By framing self-sufficiency as both a practical and ideological objective, the party aims to redefine Sweden's role in the EU on its own terms. This sceptical attitude towards globalism can be seen to be linked to a fear of national traditions and political autonomy being undermined by supranational organisations and international agreements, e.g. The European Union. The position of the SD reflects a discourse that sees globalism as a threat to national unity and cultural identity. They believe that decisions should be made as close to the citizen as possible and oppose international regulations that may affect national interests.

5.1.3 Othering

The SD uses rhetoric that clearly divides the world into 'us' and 'them,' which permeates both their views on migration and environmental policy. Similarly, to other far-right parties, the SD motivates aspects of populism based on economic incentives while simultaneously concealing an exclusionary agenda. In the quote from the Election Platform for 2022, the SD writes:

Our Nordic countries form a family with deep relationships and shared values. The Nordic countries rest on deep historical roots and many common cultural markers. The Nordic region is the eleventh largest economy in the world. We are important trading partners to each other, but also cross-border labour market regions and exchanges of ideas. The Sweden Democrats regard Sweden as part of a Nordic, European, Western, and global community, in descending order. In line with this, we want to work in particular to strengthen the Nordic community and broaden and deepen Nordic cooperation. With important building blocks such as the Scandinavian understanding of languages and shared values around the welfare state and social safety nets, a developed Nordic co-operation rests on a stable and secure foundation, but there is room for higher ambitions (Sverigedemokraterna 2022:58).

Like other nationalist movements, the SD often emphasises that Sweden is part of a larger historical and cultural context, in this case the Nordic sphere, which is believed to be characterised by common values, norms as well as economic incentives. The argument about Nordic cooperation and cultural closeness can be interpreted as an effort to emphasise the similarities between the Nordic countries in order to legitimise a more exclusionary attitude towards other cultures and international cooperation. This attitude creates an image of the Nordic countries as a "family" with "deep relationships and common values," which helps to strengthen the arguments for the exclusion and othering of outside groups. Such rhetoric, which focuses on cultural and economic context, hides an exclusionary dimension, where the effort to protect the Swedish identity against foreign interference and investment becomes a driving force for a more closed societal perspective.

The focus is on the collective values where each individual's loyalty to the nation is fundamental to the community. But rather than envisioning sovereignty as an outcome of building a collective around commons, 'othering' is at the centre of building such a collective. According to the SD, national identity must be protected and preserved as it is a common cultural heritage and a linguistic community that are the significant components of the Swedish nation. This nationalist approach is also linked to the party's views on immigration from Muslims countries and integration of a more multicultural society. In the EU elections manifesto the SD states: "*As a result of mass immigration from Muslim countries, Islamism has managed to take root in Sweden and on the continent* (Sverigedemokraterna n.d.:12). For the SD, immigration policy becomes a matter of protecting national identity, with the prevailing view being that too much cultural diversity can lead to a fragmented society with less social harmony. From this perspective, nationalism emerges as a conservative force that seeks to preserve and strengthen a unified national identity, while also signalling a critique of today's more global and multicultural trends. By upholding this worldview, the SD's position themselves as defenders of what they see as a threatened national identity in a rapidly changing world.

In the environmental policy area, the nationalist rhetoric emphasises the need to maintain Swedish control over its natural resources and production capacity. The SD e.g., criticise EU interference in issues such as forestry and agriculture, arguing that these resources are part of Swedish national identity, traditional industry, and self-sufficiency. For example, they write in the EU election manifesto that:

Swedish forests are a key factor in the EU's green transition, raw materials from the forest are needed to replace fossil materials, which creates more climate benefits than leaving the forest standing. In addition, reduced logging in Sweden will lead to increased import needs and it is rarely good for the climate to choose something that is not produced in Sweden. Nor can we allow the EU to violate Swedish property rights, which are constitutionally protected, and we currently see many examples of landowners being marginalised when they are denied felling. This is unacceptable (Sverigedemokraterna n.d.:8).

This quote reflects how environmental policy can be linked to nationalistic values, where Swedish forests are seen not only as a resource but as part of Sweden's cultural heritage and economic independence. The SD emphasises that environmental policy should not only be about protecting nature, but also about protecting Swedish interests against supranational regulation. The positioning of the EU as a threat to Swedish property rights and the emphasis on 'we cannot allow' reinforces the SD's sentiment that Sweden should be protected from external interests and threats. This anti-EU rhetoric and mentality in the SD's policies bears several similarities to how other far-right movements and parties in Europe justify their policies and management of the national state.

This idea of the SD being the sole protectors of the Swedish people and Sweden's interests is also reflected in the following quote from the party's leader:

The establishment hates us because we challenge [them]. We are challenging not only positions of power and the definition of reality, but above all the kind of society we want. We simply do not want the divided, segregated - soulless - society that the social liberal establishment has created for us. We fight it. That's why they hate us. That is why they are fighting us. Let them keep it up. It is only natural that a falling autumn leaf is frightened by a rising wind (Åkesson 2013:284).

The dichotomy between 'us' and 'them' is a central aspect of the SD's rhetoric. The imagery positions the SD as a revitalising force fighting to restore Sweden to a unified and authentic state. The enemy in this framing is not only the social liberal establishment but also the societal transformation it is accused of pushing through - a transformation that is seen to undermine Sweden's traditional identity. Already in the quote, the notion of an 'enemy' is clear. Åkesson's words highlight the SD's framing of an external and an internal 'them' - those who impose foreign ideas and values and threaten to deprive Sweden of its identity and resources. This reflects a key feature of right-wing populist discourse: the creation of a clear division between

a pure, virtuous ‘us’ that must be protected from a corrupt, invasive ‘them’ (Lubarda 2023). The rhetoric aims to unite ‘the people’ under a shared sense of loss and resistance, building a narrative of defence against forces that seek to diminish what is ‘truly Swedish’.

The EU election manifesto features a discourse of othering in its anti-immigration rhetoric, by emphasizing Sweden’s right to control its migration policies without interference from the EU. While this stance is primarily focused on migration and national sovereignty, it also has clear implications for environmental and energy transition policies. The manifesto criticizes the EU’s handling of migration and border control, by stating:

The migration to Europe and Sweden remains high and it is clear that the EU's borders are not working. We have seen how the EU allows people to literally waltz into Europe without being stopped. This has led to an insecure Europe where Brussels has lost control over who is inside its borders (Sverigedemokraterna n.d.:10).

This kind of language reinforces an othering mind set, framing migration as a source of chaos and instability. Migrants are not only depicted as cultural and economic threats, but this narrative also influences how environmental and energy transition issues are discussed. For instance, the same criticism directed at the EU for being ineffective and complicit in uncontrolled migration is echoed in how its climate policies are described (Sverigedemokraterna n.d.). Both are framed as threats to Sweden’s autonomy, suggesting that addressing global challenges - whether migration or environmental issues - shifts resources away from national needs. This perspective creates a kind of zero-sum narrative, where tackling migration or even the global climate crisis is seen as undermining Sweden’s prosperity. This rhetoric doesn’t just marginalise migrants; it also limits the scope of environmental and energy transition policies by prioritising narrow nationalist goals. In the process, it risks slowing down progress on crucial global climate objectives.

5.2 Control

A central theme in the SD’s documents and in the interviews is the idea of control and how this control is justified. The party emphasises the importance of Sweden being able to decide on its own environmental and energy policy without external pressure. By focusing on national interests and energy security, the SD wants the transition to take place at a pace that does not jeopardise the country's competitiveness or the national economy. Their rhetoric often emphasises the importance of politics taking back control from what they see as ideologically driven initiatives. The SD states in the EU election manifesto:

The Sweden Democrats have an ambitious climate policy and want to see a phasing out of fossil fuels, but this must be done in a balanced way so that we make a real contribution to reducing emissions and do not simply transfer wealth and emissions to other continents. That's why we want to tear up the EU's climate pact. A prerequisite for the rest of the world to follow the EU and work for a green transition is that the EU succeeds in maintaining competitiveness and growth so that households' living standards are not adversely affected. In Sweden, the Tidö Agreement has given us a new direction towards an effective and popularly supported environmental and climate policy. We wish to take this work forward to the European Parliament and abolish the environmentalist politics at EU level as well (Sverigedemokraterna n.d.:6).

The EU's centralised decisions are perceived as a threat to national self-determination and are seen as a political overreach that reduces the freedom of member states to shape their own policies. For the SD, it is not just about managing the climate, but about how power and legitimacy are distributed in the relationship between national and European levels. One of the central arguments in their rhetoric is that Sweden should have its own strategy for the transition to fossil-free energy that is not governed or based on various EU directives. The SD states in the EU election manifesto:

The Sweden Democrats have an ambitious climate policy and want to see a gradual phasing out of fossil fuels, but this must be done in a balanced way so that we really contribute to reducing emissions and not just shift wealth and emissions to other continents. [...] Today, the EU countries account for 7% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions and this share has decreased significantly in recent decades. Europe's ability to contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions globally depends on whether it can set an example for the rest of the world. This is not the case today, where radical climate policies are combined with stagnant growth (Sverigedemokraterna n.d.:6).

When it comes to environmental policy, the SD are sharply critical of the EU's centralised and supranational climate policy. Their position is that the EU's environmental policy initiatives, such as the 'Fit for 55' climate pact, are an example of a globalist overreach that seeks to dictate how member states should manage their own resources and energy policy. They express concern that these regulations undermine Sweden's autonomy and emphasise the need for a nationally adapted environmental policy suited to Swedish contexts. A quote from the EU election manifesto that highlights their view on this is: "*With the Fit for 55 climate pact, Brussels wants to fundamentally reform the European economy, with unforeseeable consequences* (Sverigedemokraterna n.d.:6)". The quote portrays the EU's climate policy as a globalist agenda that does not consider national interests or economic realities, but instead prioritises supranational goals at the expense of Swedish competitiveness and self-determination. The SD expresses interest in wanting to withdraw from the agreement and instead focus on a policy that integrates environmental responsibility with Swedish national interests (SVT Nyheter 2024). The language in the quote also shows that the EU as a political actor

is questioned in terms of competence and legitimacy. This is in line with a certain rhetoric of self-determination where Sweden alone should decide for itself and have control over the situation.

5.2.1 Nuclear as a centrally controlled energy source

In the interviews and in the official documents, the SD appears to be a strong supporter of nuclear power. The party emphasises the benefits of nuclear power as a stable and reliable source of energy that can supply the whole country with electricity without causing major carbon emissions. According to the SD, nuclear power is necessary both to meet Sweden's growing demand for electricity and to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and more uncertain energy sources such as wind power. This can be seen in The Programme of principles from 2023:

For the foreseeable future, nuclear power and hydropower will form the backbone of Sweden's electricity production. We are in favour of expanding nuclear power and further developing nuclear power technology. Our pristine national rivers must be preserved from further hydropower expansion. [...] When developing renewable power sources such as wind, solar, wave and hydropower, great consideration must be given to cultural and landscape values, as well as to wildlife and biodiversity. An environmental mind-set and awareness must guide energy policy (Sverigedemokraterna 2023:31).

In an interview with an SD politician, different energy sources were discussed. The goal of reducing nuclear power was mentioned as an example of an environmental policy failure of the previous government. The SD-politician stated:

We are a strong advocate of nuclear power in particular. Sweden has historically had a well-functioning energy system. We have had a robust, stable, and affordable energy supply. We have seen that it has become a more volatile energy market - due to the growing share of weather-dependent energy sources. It's good to have a mixed mix. We need all forms of energy. But fundamentally, in order to build a more robust system, it is nuclear power that is needed. That is the issue that we at the national level are advocating (SD politician September 2024).

In line with this, the party highlights nuclear power as a key solution to maintain a fossil-free energy production that is stable and economically sustainable. They emphasise in the Election Platform for 2022 that nuclear power must be part of Sweden's energy mix to ensure a reliable energy transition:

Sweden needs to invest in plannable and fossil-free electricity production. Nuclear power is central to this, and policy must actively work to create the conditions for new modern and environmentally friendly nuclear power in Sweden. There are currently regulations in need of change that prevent new construction and make modern smaller reactors impossible in Sweden. We must make use of the nuclear power expertise that exists in Sweden when it comes to new nuclear power. More resources must be invested in developing solutions for the fourth generation of nuclear power. Technology and

expertise that we can then help to spread throughout the world. Access to predictable and fossil-free energy is crucial if we are to reduce emissions in the world (Sverigedemokraterna 2022:24).

Through this, the party wants to ensure that the energy system is reliable and that the transition does not negatively affect Swedish competitiveness. This reflects the discourse of a controlled green transition, where the party advocates a slower transition to preserve both economic stability and industrial competitiveness. In an interview a SD-politician states:

In any case, I have concluded that I think nuclear power is good in Sweden. If you look instead at what the equivalent is when you shut down nuclear power. Look at Germany [as an example]. They mine a lot of coal instead [...] Why did they do that? Well, because they had to close down nuclear power. If you look at the environmental side, what is best? Burning coal or splitting atoms, which is actually extremely energy efficient (SD politician November 2024)?

By highlighting Germany's reliance on coal, the party strengthens its case for nuclear power, framing it as the more sustainable choice. The politician reinforces this point by stating the rhetorical question: "What's the alternative? An environmentally harmful one." In Sweden, where coal isn't widely used, the comparison shifts to other energy sources like fossil fuels and renewable options such as wind and solar power. Their critique targets not only these alternatives but also the political decisions - both in Sweden and within the EU - that have pushed for them.

5.2.2 Control of economic growth

A central theme highlighted in the various official documents is the different ideas and discussions surrounding economic growth. Economic growth as a concept is emphasised both from a sustainability perspective, where the focus on Sweden's growth must not be hampered by environmental choices, and from a policy perspective, where Swedish identity and lifestyle are challenged if economic growth is hampered. In the Programme of Principles, the SD states:

The economy is not made up of uniform, anonymous production units, but of thinking, feeling and culturally characterised people. Habits, customs, norms, and values have a major impact on the economy and vary from culture to culture and from nation to nation. Major cultural and demographic transitions within a state thus affect all aspects of the economy and its ability to generate growth (Sverigedemokraterna 2023:24).

The SD's discussions on growth are often intertwined with ideas of conservation and change. This rhetoric reflects broader trends on the European far-right, where economic and social growth are often framed as a dualistic struggle (Forchtner 2019). On the one hand, growth is emphasised as crucial to ensuring national prosperity and competitiveness in a globalised world. On the other, it is described

as a force that threatens to erode cultural values and challenge national identity. By framing growth as something that must be carefully managed to protect the Swedish nation, the SD joins a broader transnational movement that advocates controlled change and the defence of what is perceived as the 'core' of the nation state.

In the Programme of Principles, the SD emphasises the importance of a responsible and sustainable economic policy that does not jeopardise the welfare and independence of the nation. The SD states:

Growth is necessary to sustain our prosperity but must be balanced with important societal values such as public health, cultural heritage, the environment, social capital, and national independence (Sverigedemokraterna 2023:24).

It is clear that they consider economic growth and sovereignty to be fundamental to Sweden's long-term welfare. They are opposed to strong economic dependencies that can arise from international cooperation, and instead favour economic solutions that promote national growth and ensure that Swedish resources are used to improve the lives of Swedish citizens. The connection between culture, norms, and economy in relation to the protection of Swedish independence shows how a nationalist rhetoric can be the basis for their justification in other issues such as environment and climate. The SD states in the Election Platform for 2022:

Sweden's economy and labour market are entirely dependent on the vitality of its industry and business sector. There are many signs that Swedish competitiveness is weakening relative to other countries and in a global market that is increasingly exposed to competition from rapidly growing economies around the world. As a result of policies pursued, barriers to raw material extraction and reliable supply chains have increased, access to reliable and cost-effective electricity supply has deteriorated, and transport and travel infrastructure between different parts of the country is under threat (Sverigedemokraterna 2022:20).

The election platform emphasises that climate measures must be economically justifiable and not burden industry or Swedish households. The party is particularly critical of climate measures that increase costs for Swedish companies and argues that the transition must be gradual and consider the needs of industry. The perceived sense of internal and external threats, such as Sweden's competitiveness, and the loss of control linked to environmental policy and the energy transition strengthen the SD's rhetoric about being the sole party that can contribute to a controlled energy transition that does not jeopardise voters or the needs of the Swedish people.

5.2.3 The role of “objective” science as opposed to “subjective”, unruly emotions (hard vs soft)

The SD's approach to science on environmental issues can be seen as part of a wider discourse within the far-right on a global scale, where climate and environmental

science is often questioned or twisted to suit a nationalist agenda. For example, in the following quote from the Election Platform for 2022 the SD says: “*Environmental policy must always be checked against new scientific evidence and based on facts rather than emotions* (Sverigedemokraterna 2022:22)”. By claiming that emotions rather than facts govern today's environmental policy, it undermines the science and the institutions and authorities that govern Sweden's environmental policy. Like some right-wing groups in the US, for example, which have used pseudo-scientific claims to undermine climate science, the SD emphasises that there is insufficient research to support established solutions such as wind power for example. The SD can therefore be seen to use a rhetoric that frames environmental policy as a matter of national interest rather than global cooperation by discrediting scientific consensus. This strategy is similar to the radical right's practice of downplaying or ignoring science-based knowledge in favour of populist or nationalist narratives (Edis 2020). This can be seen in the EU election manifesto:

The EU must stop opposing nuclear power and instead work strategically to develop a regulatory framework that favours research. In this way, the EU can help to stimulate more nuclear power in Europe and the world (Sverigedemokraterna n.d.:6).

Portraying today's politics as not grounded in scientific research shows how the SD wants to maintain a discourse about how the environmental movement and its so-called emotional expression have influenced today's politics. This can also be seen in the party's rhetoric about the environmental agenda as being unnecessarily expensive and inefficient and only influenced by international actors. In the 2022 election platform, the SD writes:

Swedish climate policy is currently contradictory and cannot be said to fulfil the requirements for a cost-effective climate policy that helps to make a difference at global level. The climate is a global issue where national borders are irrelevant. Swedish climate policy has instead been transformed into a costly poster policy where it is more important to spend a lot of tax money, introduce new taxes and introduce oversized regulations than to make a real difference (Sverigedemokraterna 2022:22).

By referring to the notion that Sweden accounts for a very small share of the world's total emissions, the party argues that national climate measures that deviate from the global norm risk weakening Sweden's competitiveness without creating any major global environmental improvement. But through their arguments, a discourse of de-legitimization of today's environmental policy and thus the science and authority behind it is visible.

The SD often emphasises the importance of basing energy policy on what they describe as 'objective' science, rather than 'subjective' emotions or ideologically driven decisions. Their rhetoric contrasts scientific facts, such as technical solutions and economic analysis, with what they see as emotionally driven and symbolic

investments in renewable energy. Nuclear power is promoted as a 'hard' and rational solution - stable, predictable, and technologically advanced - while wind power is sometimes dismissed as soft options, characterised by unrealistic hopes from the opposition and a higher degree of uncertainty. The party believes that decisions on energy transition must be based on measurable effects, cost-effectiveness and energy security, and that emotional arguments or political ambitions must not lead to risks for Swedish industry and household electricity bills. This narrative reinforces the SD's image as stewards of a rational and technically based energy policy, while suggesting a rejection of what they perceive as the ideologically driven symbolic policies of other parties.

This way of emphasising hard and soft values can be put in the context of the concept of petro masculinity (Daggett 2018). Daggett (2018) highlights a link between fossil fuels and a specific form of masculinity that emphasises dominance, control, and resistance to change. This masculinity often manifests itself in narratives that emphasise 'hard' and technologically advanced energy solutions, such as nuclear power, while dismissing 'soft' alternatives as symbolic, inefficient, or associated with emotional values. By emphasising 'hard' solutions as rational and rejecting 'soft' solutions as irrational, the SD thus reproduces a form of petro masculinity that is not only tied to nuclear but also to a broader cultural narrative of technological neutrality and economic self-determination. This serves not only to legitimise the party's priorities in regard to energy sources, but also to reinforce an identity that puts masculinity and scientific rationality against what are presented as the emotional and symbolically driven policies of other parties.

5.2.4 Control and the politics of scale

A central feature of the Sweden Democrats' official policy documents and the interviews conducted with the politicians is the way in which control over the energy transition is justified at different political scales. In particular, a clear link emerges between issues of national sovereignty and energy supply, with the SD emphasising the importance of reducing dependence on external actors and ensuring Swedish control over energy resources.

5.2.4.1 *Environment versus climate*

In line with this, the party's political representatives have emphasised a linguistic and conceptual distinction between 'environment' and 'climate', linking these concepts to different scales and political priorities. The rhetoric points to a national environmental policy that is seen as practical and concrete, in contrast to a global climate policy that is perceived as vague and ineffective. A quote from an SD politician highlights this division:

Environment and climate [policy] are also very often confused. Both consciously and unconsciously. People don't have the will or the knowledge to make a distinction between them. I myself am not a person who jumps for joy when I hear the word climate. But when it comes to environmental issues, I find them all the more important. I love environmental issues. I find it genuinely interesting and genuinely fun. And there is a lot to do on it. For instance, what can even the region do to avoid releasing antibiotic resistant bacteria [on a global scale] (SD politician October 2024)?

Through this separation, the SD seeks to create a national environmental discourse that connects to everyday issues and subnational initiatives, while distancing itself from global climate goals and internationally agreed measures. The energy transition thus becomes more of an economic and tangible issue, where global climate change on the other hand is harder to grasp. The party's focus is on bringing in more voters and to focus on the so-called wicked problem of climate change is neither beneficial for increasing the number of voters nor in line with the party's general position on environmental politics. This reflects the party's overall critique of globalisation and the emphasis on national self-determination.

The consequence of this linguistic separation is that climate policy risks being deprioritised in favour of a more local and nationally influenced environmental policy. This could result in Sweden's contribution to global climate solutions being lessened in priority, while resources are instead focused on issues that are perceived to have a direct national importance. At the same time, they emphasise the importance of international cooperation on other issues, for example, the SD writes as follows in the Election Platform for 2022:

The situation regarding eutrophication and toxins in the Baltic Sea is serious. In this context, more focus must be placed on international co-operation between the Baltic Sea countries, as Sweden alone cannot help to resolve the situation. Our marine and aquatic environment must be prioritised more clearly over overly intensive fishing and extensive wind power development (Sverigedemokraterna 2022:22).

The SD's ambiguous approach to EU cooperation reflects a strategic selectivity and the need to gain more votes based on tangible, easy to understand arguments (the energy transition being more concrete than climate change for “lay” people). While rejecting supranational climate initiatives that threaten Swedish sovereignty or entail high costs, they simultaneously support cooperation that provides direct national benefits, e.g., measures to address environmental problems in the Baltic Sea. Criticism of EU climate policy attracts voters who dislike global solutions, while support for certain collaborations avoids portraying the party as isolated. This reflects a broader strategy of right-wing populism: international cooperation is accepted when it serves national interests but rejected when it threatens the nation's sovereignty. This can showcase the ambiguity of the far-right rhetoric, similarly to other studies on the topic (Lubarda 2023).

5.2.4.2 *Localism*

The party uses localism to emphasise the importance of national control over natural resources and production, which is portrayed as necessary to maintain national security and economic stability. Similar ideas about nationalism and the environment are found in far-right groups in Europe (Lubarda 2023). This approach effectively merges ecological and nationalist concerns into a single narrative of localism, similarly to the SD in Sweden. For example, they argue that a national and achievable environmental policy is necessary to ensure that Sweden is able to remain self-sufficient and not become dependent on imports from foreign countries, particularly in terms of food and energy.

This approach reflects their focus on combining environmental responsibility with economic sustainability and local production, where self-sufficiency is seen as a strategy to reduce Sweden's vulnerability in the event of international conflicts or crises. The discourse of self-determination can thus be seen in the discourse of Sweden 'losing wealth to other countries. They oppose EU's climate policy initiatives and see them as a potential threat to Swedish industry and self-sufficiency. Instead, they favour an environmental policy that promotes local production and national solutions, especially in energy and forestry, which they consider important for Sweden's green transition. They argue that environmental action should be based on national needs and circumstances rather than global commitments which they believe can be financially damaging. The following quote shows SD's focus on localism and their rhetoric about how previous governments have mismanaged Swedish land and its vital potential. The SD states in the Election Platform for 2022:

The value of minerals in the soil, of forests and the potential for recreation and tourism is huge in rural areas. The government's strategy over two terms has sought to shut them down. Mines are not allowed to start up, fish farms are moved to neighbouring countries and forests are taken out of production against the wishes of landowners. Sweden needs a policy that recognises the value of rural areas and makes it easier to create more businesses, jobs, and increased growth in combination with well-balanced environmental considerations (Sverigedemokraterna 2022:25).

By emphasising the importance of local production, both in energy and food, the party strengthens the discourse of localism. This stance contributes to their overall message that Sweden should protect its resources and independence from global markets and foreign political forces. The SD sees the energy transition as an issue where the national and local level should have the biggest influence, rather than being determined by global or international decisions. A SD political states in an interview that:

China is building coal-fired power stations while we are taxing our population. This is a problem. We should be working on processes that bring industry back to Europe. We

have an opportunity to improve energy sources and our environmental work (SD politician October 2024).

This clarifies the party's rationale of promoting localism and how the energy transition is a national and European responsibility. They believe that energy policy should directly benefit Swedish citizens and prioritise solutions that work in practice here and now. They therefore emphasise nuclear power and hydropower as reliable and controlled energy sources that meet Sweden's needs. At the same time, they are critical of large investments in wind power, which they say can create problems for local communities affected by the landscape without providing equally stable energy. By opting for national solutions, the SD wants to decide the energy transition in a way that is sustainable for both the country and local communities, while rejecting what they see as a mix of international actors.

6. Discussion

This thesis has examined how the Sweden Democrats, as a prominent actor in Swedish right-wing politics, engage with environmental policy in general and the energy transition in particular. Five key findings will be discussed here:

- 1) the ambiguities surrounding the so-called ‘Sámi issue’ and its role in the party's discourse over the energy transition, and;
- 2) a politics of scale that pays lip service to local perspectives while promoting the need for centralised control, thereby justifying for example the party's support for nuclear power.
- 3) The energy transition as a battleground for the Sweden Democrats.
- 4) The relationship between petro-masculinities and far-right ecologism
- 5) The reliance on contradictions.

Overall, the findings of this thesis show that Sweden, despite its long tradition of democratic principles and commitment to environmental justice, is not immune to the rise of far-right ecologism that is currently observed across the globe.

6.1 The “Sámi question” and the politics of scale

The SD's definition of “the Swedish people and the Nordic community” excludes marginalised groups such as the Sámi in their political message. This is further emphasised in their view of the energy transition. Indeed, the Sámi and their territories are disproportionately impacted by energy transition projects, particularly through wind power projects and mining initiatives on their cultural lands. Rather than advocating for a fair and inclusive energy transition that would include the perspectives and the case of the Sámi, for the SD, multiculturalism in the Swedish society is a threat. Thus, Sámi people in Sweden are discursively put at similar rhetoric levels as immigrants and their “issues”. Divisions are deepened over the debate on national self-determination. Stakeholders with legitimate claims such as the Sámi are at best made invisible.

This marginalisation is intensified by the fact that justice is not seen as a self-evident priority in the energy transition politics (either by the SD as seen in the official documents or by other political parties in the Swedish Riksdag (United Nations 2024)). By framing the transition as a primarily economic and technical issue, the voices, and rights of marginalised groups like the Sámi are ignored, while their territory is exploited. Addressing this requires a political shift to prioritise equity and inclusion as core principles of a just energy transition.

6.2 Far-right ecology's politics of scale

Far-right ecology's politics of scale underpins in general the SD's approach to environmental policies, for example by minimising Sweden's responsibility in the global climate crisis and prioritising national concerns such as protecting the Swedish economy and national sovereignty. This approach to environmental issues is not only a reaction against the global climate movement, but also part of their broader critique of political and scientific institutions that they consider threatening national interests. Through scalar politics (i.e., prioritising issues that happen at a certain scale over other issues that occur at other scales and ignoring – at least in the discourse - scalar interactions), the Sweden Democrats use environmental and energy politics as a tool to legitimise populist tendencies and ask for central control. This observation is key as such politics of scale over environmental issues can become a tool for a transition from right-wing extremism to right-wing mainstreamisation in a seemingly legitimate way.

6.3 The energy transition as an emerging battleground for the Sweden Democrats

The study emphasises how crucial it is to look into how far-right parties in currently (still) democratic countries handle energy transition and environmental challenges. Sweden has historically been an advocate of green politics and is seen as a global leader in sustainable development. The SD's strategy and rhetoric on environmental issues and the energy transition from their nationalist and exclusionary perspective, shows how environmental policy can become a battleground for ideological conflicts that extend beyond traditional party politics.

By linking the energy transition to local and national interests, the SD emphasises the importance of centralised energy solutions, such as nuclear power, which they see as a stable and controllable form of energy. This contrasts with their scepticism towards decentralised and more 'soft' energy solutions such as solar and wind power, which are then associated with former opposition governments and supranational cooperation such as the EU. The SD's favouring of certain energy sources such as nuclear power can also be seen in light of the concept of 'fossil fuel masculinities', where fossil-fuelled energy systems represent an ideal of strength and stability (Daggett 2018). In this case the focus is on nuclear power, not petroleum or gas: yet the nuclear source is seen as 'hard', stable, backed up by 'objective' science, - a sort of power that fits well with hegemonic masculine rule.

Furthermore, the battleground emerges through a dichotomy discursively established between what is "ours" (energy sources, know-how, history, tradition, certain people) and an undesirable other. The SD's policy approach builds very

much on this dichotomy. By emphasising the need for energy security and independence from international agreements and climate initiatives, the SD reinforces their nationalist rhetoric and reproduce a dichotomy between ‘their own (the Swedish nation and the emphasis on the collective with common ‘Nordic’ norms and values) and “the others (both the EU but also elements of multiculturalism)”. This makes environmental issues an effective tool to garner the support of voters who feel threatened both by globalisation and the perspective of losing a sense of community and national self-determination.

Sweden is not a unique case where far-right ecologism is rising based on a strategic use of contradictions, scalar mismatches, and dichotomies. Yet, how energy transition politics help strengthening the rise of the far-right in a country in which such democratic traditions are still mostly unnoticed in the literature. And yet, Sweden’s strong democratic traditions are now being challenged by a party that uses legitimate political issues (in this case the energy transition) to push forward exclusionary and nationalistic agendas in the name of a necessary decarbonisation. The Swedish political model, which has historically been characterised by progressiveness and cooperation, is at risk of decline as certain political actors polarise the debate and amplify conflicts between different social groups (anti-immigration; the urban-rural divide; the Swedish people and the Sámi). This has implications not only for national politics but also for Sweden's international reputation as a recognised defender of democracy, justice, and environmental sustainability. This thesis contributes to a greater understanding of the slippery slope towards far-right ecologism that Swedish politics are facing.

The mainstreaming of far-right politics in environmental governance does not only challenge democratic norms, but can also lead to a degradation of fundamental freedoms and rights. When exclusionary rhetoric and nationalistic messages become accepted by society and within environmental policymaking, it makes Sweden's democratic processes vulnerable. This dynamic risks creating a space where authoritarian forces can take root through the call for central control of energy sources; the legitimisation of political forces that prioritise loyalty to the nation and; exclusionary policies over democratic obligations.

6.4 Gender and far-right ecologism

Another theoretical contribution is the analysis of how gender norms and energy policy are intertwined. The concept of ‘petro-masculinity’ highlights how fossil fuelled energy systems, and their association with masculine ideals, can be used to legitimise conservative and nationalist policies. This is particularly relevant in the context of the SD, where a clear division between the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ are central. By emphasising self-determination and technical superiority as ideals, the party

reinforces a gendered political discourse that marginalises alternative voices and perspectives, e.g., wind power. Other examples of this separation of unruly emotions (seen as feminine and soft) and objective science (seen as masculine and hard) are the linguistic distinction between climate and environment. Energy knowledge politics is gendered: science and emotions can be manipulated to serve far-right purposes. For example, by selectively using scientific arguments, to promote nuclear power as a solution to the climate crisis, while undermining trust in global climate science, the SD creates a narrative that reinforces their populist ambitions. This phenomenon of selective use of science can be linked to a broader trend of post-truth and fact resistance that undermines trust in democratic institutions.

Recognising this gendered dynamic provides a deeper understanding of how language can be weaponized to advance exclusionary and gendered narratives in energy policy and how far-right ecologism is embedded in and imbued by hegemonic masculine rule.

6.5 Contradictions underlying far-right ecologism

This thesis deepens the understanding of far-right ecologism, as described by Lubarda (2023). Like Lubarda (2023), this thesis identifies contradictions of far-right environmental politics by parties that have historically been sceptical of climate science, and are now using environmental issues to push their ideological agendas. This paradoxical relationship between energy politics and far-right rhetoric has so far received limited attention in the literature, especially concerning Sweden.

At the centre of contradictory environmental politics stands the interpretation of the concept of ‘justice’, as presented in e.g., the EU Green Deal. Indeed, justice seems to be easily appropriated by far-right forces. By reinterpreting justice as something that protects the ‘own’, rather than as a global and inclusive concept, these forces can use the justice claims to reinforce their nationalist rhetoric, and eventually injustices. An important illustration of this can be seen through how Sámi questions are ignored and/ or associated with foreign immigration related issues by the SD. Through such contradictions, environmental policies can not only become ineffective but also dangerous for the future of democracy and sustainability. At the global level, we see similar patterns emerging in other democracies, with right-wing populist movements undermining international environmental agreements with arguments of national self-determination and justice for their own citizens (Sverigedemokraterna 2022; Van Prooijen et al. 2022; Benoist 2023).

7. Conclusion

This thesis examines how the SD engages with environmental issues, particularly in relation to Sweden's energy transition and renewable energy sources. The SD's approach reflects a clear alignment with exclusionary nationalism, emphasizing centralised control, self-sufficiency, and resistance to external influences of the EU.

One of the central themes is the party's framing of ambitious environmental politics, which is closely tied to nationalist ideals. For the SD, energy policy becomes a tool to promote Swedish sovereignty, focusing on domestic production and energy independence, while side-lining environmental justice and inclusive solutions. This is evident in their pro-nuclear stance, which positions nuclear power as a symbol of technical superiority and stability, while renewable energy sources such as wind power are often dismissed as ineffective and disruptive.

The SD's approach extends beyond technical arguments. They distinguish between "climate" and "environment" to justify a localised focus, where climate issues are seen as global and abstract, while environmental concerns are framed as immediate and tied to local communities. This distinction allows the party to critique the EU for overreaching control over Sweden's energy policies, further framing global cooperation as a threat to Swedish sovereignty.

The ideological foundations of the SD are deeply rooted in nationalism and anti-immigration rhetoric. Like other far-right parties across Europe, they reject globalism and promote self-sufficiency, which reinforces exclusionary practices and marginalises alternative perspectives. Their energy transition policies are therefore not only about technical solutions but also about maintaining control and preserving traditional Swedish values in the face of perceived external threats.

This thesis underscores the importance of critically examining how far-right parties engage with environmental issues. By linking energy policies to exclusionary ideologies, the study highlights risks to democratic institutions and the need for inclusive and just environmental policies that safeguard democratic values.

Further research should be directed towards a more detailed examination of the individual perspective of the Sweden Democrats' voters, with a particular focus on their understanding of the energy transition and the underlying motivations behind their objectives. A comparative study between the Nordic countries would also be a valuable addition to the research, as it would allow for the analysis of potential differences in far-right politics within a comparable context.

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Appendix 1

Interview guide for key informants: SD politicians (translated to English)

The purpose of the interviews is:

- 1) to understand how the Sweden Democrats approach Sweden's energy transition;
- 2) to understand the motivation behind the party's behaviour regarding the energy transition;
- 3) to understand the ideological/principled foundations that permeate their views on the energy transition, renewable energy, and various energy alternatives.

Main questions	Secondary questions	Important topics to cover (checklist)
1. Tell me about yourself and your work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your role here and how did you end up in this role? 2. What does your role/work consist of? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Role(s) of the person 2. Person's duties 3. Role as a party member 4. Information about the party.
2. What is your position on Sweden's energy transition (after the new budgeting)?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What areas do you/you think are important? 2. Are there any aspects you would like to work on more? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Processes of change 2. Attitudes 3. Motivations
3. How would you describe the SD's goals for today's energy transition?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How will you achieve your party's objectives? 2. Which energy source is relevant? 3. Why are you doing this? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The party's agenda 2. Vision and goals 3. Approach to different energy alternatives
4. What opportunities and challenges can you identify around the energy transition?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who is affected by these? 2. What are the decisive factors? 3. Why do you think it is a concern / opportunity? 4. How will you work on these? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Potential difficulties/opportunities 2. Future prospects 3. Climate factors (what, how and why) 4. Economic factors (what, how and why) 5. Political factors (what, how and why) 6. Social factors (what, how and why) 7. Cultural factors (what, how and why)
5. Do you know anyone else who might be interesting for me to interview?		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact information

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