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# The other other. Representations and rhetorical estrangement of anti-immigration positions in Scandinavian print media, 1970 – 2016

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## ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative text-analytic study of the discursive representations of anti-immigration positions in Scandinavian press 1970–2016. Our study shows how immigration critics textually are estranged and constituted as *an other* throughout the period. We examine how three main categories of immigration critics are estranged: extremists, populist politicians, and critical citizens. Within these categories, we find manifest estrangement through demonizing and ridiculing. We call this category of rhetorical work for *conspicuous estrangement*. However, we also find more subtle hints of illegitimacy or alienation in the portrayals. We call this category of rhetorical work of marginalization for *inconspicuous estrangement*. While other studies have argued that such forms of soft oppression may prepare the ground for forms of hard oppression and increased marginalizing, our study demonstrates that representations instead move toward legitimization, indicating a normalization of populist politics and anti-immigration attitudes in Scandinavia. Our findings thus support research arguing that a mainstreaming of the radical right has occurred.

## 1. Introduction

Immigration has become one of the most contentious political issues of our time and a frequently debated issue in the media. Considerable literatures have emerged on the portrayal of migrants and migration in the media (e.g. [Benson, 2013](#)) and on the discourses and rhetoric of those who oppose immigration (e.g. [Wetherell & Potter, 1992](#); [Wodak, 2015](#); [Yilmaz, 2016](#)). Many of these studies show that the discourse of immigration critics contributes to the constitution of immigrants as “the other” and conceptions of “us” and “them”.

However, while the study of right-wing extremism, populism and immigration critics is a fast growing field, we know surprisingly little about how the media represent such actors, especially studies of multimodal representations in the press are absent. This is peculiar given that one of the developments that makes immigration such a difficult issue to deal with for mainstream political actors is the question of how to relate to growing anti-immigration movements. Should they be moderated by collaboration, appeased by restrictive immigration policies, or cordoned off from respectable politics through isolation? For anti-immigrationists and right-wing populists, the narrative of how their views are being silenced and excluded from the media and mainstream institutions is a core part of their discursive repertoire ([Brubaker, 2017](#)). The question, however, is not whether they are visible or not in the public, but *how* they

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are made visible.

Thus, this paper empirically addresses how the newspaper media in Norway, Sweden and Denmark portray anti-immigration actors in text and imagery in the period 1970-2016. We conduct a qualitative text analysis of articles drawn from a representative sample of newspaper articles in the period, based on the following research question: *How have immigration critics been textually constituted in Scandinavian newspaper media?* By textually, we mean the whole newspaper layout, including graphics, photographs and imagery.

We find that the textual constitution of immigration critics happens in two ways. First, and most obviously, by the ways immigration critics are depicted, described, quoted, characterized and categorized in the texts. We identify a considerable variation in modes of portrayal, many directly hostile, but also some that are partly sympathetic or neutral. Second, and less commonly observed, the texts about immigration critics make implicit assumptions about who the readers of the articles are. The articles are about immigration critics, but they are hardly ever written to an audience where anti-immigration opinions are assumed to exist. In this sense, immigration critics are constituted as outsiders to a sphere of political normalcy.

Our findings do not support anti-immigrationists' own narrative of being victims of exclusion from the public debate. They are indeed both present and given a voice in the public debate (cf. Benson, 2013, 87). However, they are consistently represented as *an other*: meaning that they are represented as different from the implied reader constructed in the articles we have examined.

## 2. Representing controversial positions in the press

Communication scholars have argued that there will often be a media bias against challengers of the political status quo (van Spanje & Azrout, 2018). This can happen through the silencing of controversial viewpoints by not giving them attention at all, or by ridiculing or stigmatizing them in the coverage. Ridiculing has been described as a form of *soft oppression* (Ferree, 2005), and some suggest that this prepares the ground for hard repression in the form of state censorship and prohibition of events (Linden & Klandermans, 2006). Scholars have also identified a range of modes through which media can marginalize controversial positions and political groups. "The protest paradigm" is one framework that has been used to depict the range of strategies media can apply to marginalize and weaken the legitimacy of protest groups (Dardis, 2006; Weaver & Scacco, 2013). This includes devices such as obscuring the causes of protest, making the protesters appear deviant, anti-social or simply odd, obtuse or implying that they speak for small and marginal groups only. Such rhetoric of making light of a movement's language, dress, age style, or goals has also been termed *trivialization* (Gitlin, 1980, 27). While much of the protest paradigm research has been on media coverage of social movements and protest groups on the left, it has also been applied on the right (Weaver & Scacco, 2013). In his book *Shaping immigration news* Rodney Benson observes that media attention to immigration restrictionists in the US and France is lower and generally less positive than accorded to immigrant advocates, it is dismissive, sometimes covered with "exoticizing disdain" and "blatant derision, even disgust" (Benson, 2013, 80 ff., 117 ff., 122).

The existing studies of the media coverage of anti-immigration actors tend to focus on anti-immigration political parties. They indicate a common pattern of stigmatization, for example by linking such parties to fascism and neo-Nazism, the "embodiment of pure evil" (van Spanje & Azrout, 2018, p. 2) and demonization (van Heerden & van der Brug, 2017). Some studies have examined quantitatively how the media shape perceptions of right wing populist leaders and anti-immigration parties in relation to effectiveness and legitimacy (Bos & van der Brug, 2010; Bos et al., 2011), stating that media coverage shape the image of candidates by making their attributes more salient. In general, the research suggests that immigrant critics in the media are mostly framed in what Hallin (1986, 114 ff.) has termed the *sphere of deviance*, meaning "the realm of those political actors and views which journalists and the political mainstream of society rejects as unworthy of being heard."

While quantitative research is making progress in examining the effects of media representations on voters, our qualitative close readings provide new insights into *how* the othering is constructed textually and disclose the subtle ways in which distancing is performed without direct demonization or labelling immigration critics as "pure evil". In short, we show *how immigration critics are textually portrayed* in the press.

## 3. The Scandinavian context

Our study examines the discursive representations of anti-immigration positions in the Scandinavian press. Denmark, Norway and Sweden are very similar countries. They are liberal democracies with egalitarian values, and inclusive welfare states. The media systems are also similar, with an emphasis on communication services as public goods underscored by public funding and obligations towards universality (Syvertsen et al., 2014). Yet, when it comes to handling immigration, there are significant divergences between the three countries, which tends to be described in terms of a liberal Sweden, a restrictive Denmark and Norway some place in the middle (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012). Sweden has the longest history of immigration, with large-scale organized labour immigration already in the first post-war decades. Labour immigration from Mediterranean and Asian countries to Denmark and Norway was both more limited and started later. However, all three countries introduced stricter controls on labour immigration in the early 1970s, and until the EU enlargement in 2004, most non-Nordic immigrants were either humanitarian- or family migrants. The early start combined with a more liberal policy towards refugees, means that the immigrant population (including descendants) constitutes a larger part of the population in Sweden than in Norway and Denmark, at present 22 per cent in Sweden, 17 in Norway and 13 in Denmark<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> As reported by *Statistics Denmark*: <https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/Analyser/visanalyse?cid=32554>

Swedish “exceptionalism” consists not only of more liberal policies, but also of its long-time absence of a populist radical right party with a clear anti-immigration agenda (Rydgren & van der Meiden, 2018). While such parties have played significant roles in Norway and Denmark since the 1980s, the Sweden Democrats entered parliament only in 2010 and is (so far) still hedged in by a *cordon sanitaire* where no other parties are willing to collaborate with the party. Furthermore, the Danish and Norwegian populist parties have their origin in liberalist anti-tax movements, in contrast to the Sweden Democrats, which grew out of a right-wing extremist movement. In Norway, the Progress Party was a government coalition partner from 2013-20, while the Danish People’s Party has been a formal support party on the conservative side throughout the 2000s. In recent years, there has been an upheaval of Swedish immigration politics. The, at first, very welcoming approach to Syrian refugees in 2015 led to high arrival numbers which stretched the receiving capacity to the limit. Then followed a sudden turn to policies that are more restrictive and a chaotic political situation. When the Sweden Democrats came third in the 2018 election and the mainstream parties refused to collaborate with it, government negotiations became nearly unsurmountable.

#### 4. Theoretical and analytical approach

We analyse representation of anti-immigration identities through qualitative textual analysis of the representations of immigration critics. We take a historical perspective, starting from the years immediately prior to immigration regulations being introduced in the 1970s. Political parties with a clear anti-immigration position have not been present throughout this period in all of the countries, but the existence of anti-immigration positions has still affected the public discourse on these issues. It is thus crucial to look at the entire span of anti-immigration actors, ranging from organized political parties, via loosely connected protesters to non-organized “ordinary people”. Indeed, as we will see, the textual constitution and othering of immigration critics and the relative visibility of different types of resistance to immigration, may itself be part of the processes of othering, delegitimization, and legitimization.

Our analysis applies rhetorical approaches focusing firstly on the construction of the *implied reader* (Booth, 1983), also known as the *second persona* (Black, 1970). This is the textual construction of the audience as it is designed and imagined in the newspaper stories. Verbal tokens of ideology can be taken as implying an auditor who shares this ideology, Black argues. So, the critic “can see in the auditor implied by a discourse a model of what the rhetor would have his real auditor become” (Black 1979, 113). This approach both informs us who the papers are *talking to*; and who the newspaper discourse *leaves out or negates*. This rejected implied audience is known as *the third persona*: “audiences not present, audiences rejected or negated through the speech and/or the speaking situation” (Wander, 2013, 614). The third persona is the summation of “all that you and I are told to avoid becoming (Wander, 2013, 615). It is such negation and rejection we signify as *othering*, meaning textually establishing – often in subtle ways – certain people or groups as different and *not one of us*.

Secondly, the rhetorical approach focuses on the textual construction of the character of immigration critics. We examine how the newspapers report the positions of immigration critics and especially how they portray and represent these people. We do this through an ethological, or characterological, approach that involves exploration of the character descriptions. In the rhetorical tradition, this is known as *ethopoeia*, which means the construction or simulation of character in discourse (Kjeldsen et al., 2019, chapter 8). In line with the three dimensions of ethos we especially look for descriptions of moral character, competence, and good will (McCroskey, 2016; McCroskey & Young, 1981) in the representations of immigration critics. We also look for coverage that concentrate on accounts of appearance and mental ability of immigration critics (cf. Dardis, 2006; McLeod & Hertog, 1999), which are often used to marginalize groups through trivialization (cf. Gitlin, 1980, 27) that describes them as *marginal oddities* (Hackett & Zhao, 1994, p. 518). Finally, we look for recurrent labelling, such as “racist” and similar naming-strategies. The ethological analysis draws upon theories of epideictic rhetoric, dealing with praising and criticizing people, groups, or phenomena, thereby establishing and sustaining certain values and norms (e.g. Condit, 1985; Sheard, 1996).

On this basis, we establish rhetorical techniques of acceptance and normalization, marginalization and delegitimization, as well as estrangement and othering in relation to the debate on immigration. Here we draw on the literary theory of *defamiliarization* as described by Victor Shklovsky (1988). He argues that humans may only appreciate the novelty of art when seeing the new against the habitual and ordinary. Poetic language removes the automatization of perception by making objects unfamiliar and forms difficult. This creates the estrangement that characterizes aesthetic perception. We suggest that a similar estrangement is at play in the representation of immigration critics. Our study shows *how* such estrangement may be performed either *conspicuously* or *inconspicuously*. The techniques of estrangement, which we described in the part on “Representing Controversial Positions in the Press” are all towards the conspicuous side. All these vilification-strategies – ridiculing and making light of, stigmatizing and presenting actors as deviant, exoticizing and expressing disgust and disdain – are explicitly estranging the represented actors and placing them in the sphere of deviance. Because these strategies obviously take a stance, we refer to them as *conspicuous estrangement*. However, newspapers are supposed to write in an objective manner, thus representations in the press also use techniques of “artful defamiliarization” that creates estrangement in subtle and inconspicuous ways. We call this rhetorical and ideological representational work for *inconspicuous estrangement*, precisely because it establishes estrangement without attracting attention to the rhetorical work. The inconspicuous estrangement of the immigration-critics in the Scandinavian press is constructed through a presupposed and non-explicit assumption of the habitual and ordinary view on the immigration issue. We demonstrate this through our characterological analysis and our analysis of the relation between second and third persona.

##### 4.1. Empirical material

The empirical material analysed in this paper is a subsample of a much larger representative sample of articles from Scandinavian

newspaper media in the period 1970–2016, constructed through the research project SCANPUB. The SCANPUB team used constructed week sampling, starting with the first Monday of the year and selecting every subsequent 15<sup>th</sup> day, excluding Sundays. In total, this constituted four constructed weeks or 24 days per year. This method was applied on the largest broadsheet/quality newspaper and largest tabloid/popular newspaper in each country (Denmark: *Ekstra Bladet* and *Jyllands-Posten*. Sweden: *Aftonbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter*. Norway: *Verdens Gang* (VG) and *Aftenposten*). Starting in 1970, our material was necessarily gathered through the print versions of the newspapers. However, it bears mentioning that many of the articles from the last decades have also been published in the online versions of the newspapers.

The Nordic media system has been dubbed “the media welfare state” (Syvertsen et al., 2014). It has high circulation figures for newspapers, egalitarian user patterns and a high degree of commonality across newspapers and other media outlets. Small populations mean that national papers need to address the entire population and cannot afford to exclude particular classes of potential readers. The subsidy system means that they need to have a serious news profile, thus excluding purely sensationalist papers (ibid., chapter 3). Following this, analysing only one or two newspapers from one country can make sense, as there exists a common national debate ground (Hovden & Mjelde, 2019).

The papers chosen in the three countries vary somewhat with respect to political leanings. Although they view themselves as politically independent, they are regarded as having political leanings. *Jyllandsposten* (DK) and *Aftenposten* (NO) leans towards the conservative side; *Aftonbladet* (SE) towards the left; VG (NO), *Dagens Nyheter* (SE) and *Ekstra Bladet* (DK) are independent liberal, with the former leaning more to the right and the latter to the left. The Swedish papers’ more liberal-left sympathies may partly explain the more critical approach to immigration opponents found in the Swedish material, but not entirely as this pattern of rejection is also consistent with general analyses of Swedish politics where anti-immigration actors have been isolated from political collaboration also on the right (e.g. Rydgren & van der Meiden, 2018).

The selection of articles was done by national teams of assistants who read whole newspaper issues and selected immigration-related articles from these. In the first round, they were given broad criteria for sampling. Immigration and immigrants simply had to be represented in the article, without immigration as such being an issue. This resulted in a corpus of 30.000 texts. In the second round, stricter sampling criteria were used to construct a smaller sample of about 8000 articles. In this round, very short articles were excluded and immigration discourse had to be tangibly present in the article. (E.g. articles about soccer players who happened to be immigrants and so forth were excluded). Due to resource constraints, only every second article was coded, in total 4329 articles. This coded sample has been constructed in order to be representative and provide the basis for quantitative content analysis.

However, the resulting SCANPUB database is also suitable as a starting point to create a more strategically constructed sample for qualitative textual analysis. Given our research question, we were interested in articles that portrayed resistance to immigration in national news media. We thus needed a sample that could both give an impression of the variety of ways in which anti-immigration positions have been represented *and* from which we could select articles that manifested these types of representations in particularly intense or information-rich ways (Patton, 1990, p. 171).

We started by manually shifting through all the articles in the broad sample from the 1970s and 1980s. As the number of articles for each year increased over time, this became too work consuming when we started to work on the samples from the 1990s and onwards. Here we relied on the coded material, which we could narrow down further by focusing on the most relevant codes. The articles had been coded according to the subjects that were present in the text. There were 26 such subject codes (several codes possible for each item), and we selected articles that contained one or more of the following: majority population’s attitudes towards immigrants/immigration; racism; immigration debate. The search resulted in 897 articles, which we looked through manually, again selecting the articles that involved portrayals of anti-immigration positions. We had expected to find more articles in the 2000s. To check that our choice of thematic codes had not systematically caused us to exclude relevant articles, we also looked through non-coded material for 3-4 years in each country (including election years where we expected particularly much coverage). This resulted in a small number of articles added but did not indicate that we had overlooked much relevant material.

Two thirds of the selected articles are from tabloid papers, indicating that immigration critics got more attention in this part of the press. The tabloid/broadsheet distinction, however, is generally regarded as less significant in the Nordic countries, as tabloid papers also publish serious news content similar to the so-called quality press (Herkman, 2017, 436). A quantitative analysis of the SCANPUB material shows that engagement with populism does not differ between tabloids’ and broadsheets’ journalistic content (Mjelde & Hovden, 2019, 5496), and this is also our assessment of the material – the same type of rhetorical strategies are being applied by both types of outlets.

In our manual identification of relevant articles from the bigger sample, we operated with the following rough criteria: The texts should have been produced in-house by the newspapers’ own staff. Very short articles were excluded. The articles should cover resistance to immigration in some way. Of particular interest were articles that portrayed and gave voice to people who were critical to immigration. Finally, the articles should be about resistance to immigration in Scandinavia, so we excluded articles about the growth of right-wing populism in Europe for example.

Thus, starting from the vast randomly selected SCANPUB-corpus we have constructed a smaller purposefully selected corpus for textual analysis. This corpus provides us with dominant and typical ways of representing anti-immigration positions in the Scandinavian countries over time. (See Table 1 for overview).

## 5. Representing anti-immigration positions: Three main categories

We study newspaper articles about anti-immigration actors and positions, where such voices are quoted, paraphrased or described, and where this constitutes the main part of the article. However, the existence of anti-immigration positions can also be acknowledged

and represented in other ways, without directly providing them with a voice. We did, for example, find articles from the 1970s about the growth of racism and xenophobia, where the *victims* of racism were made visible, for example in moving accounts about children who are bullied or immigrant families whose homes are vandalized. There may be attempts at explaining the incidents, for example by referring to sentiments of “not wanting to accept people who are different” (Aftonbladet/SE 2.2.1972). However, the perpetrators of racism are not named, pictured, given voice or quoted. We have not included such articles in our actual analysis, but they do constitute an important backdrop which indicates that racism and negative attitudes to immigration have been presented as significant *problems* in all the three countries. In the table below, they are counted as “outside category”.

We have concentrated on articles where holders of anti-immigration opinions are the main issue. Our initial analysis of these newspaper-items revealed three main categories of anti-immigration positions. We will expand more on these below, and illuminate the rhetorical techniques applied within each of them. They are:

- 1 *Extremists*: Portrayals of extreme positions, such as neo-Nazism, right-wing extremism and violent racism. These can be organized groups, loose collections of like-minded persons or singular individuals. Two representational techniques stand out: 1) radicalized individuals and marginal oddities, 2) antidemocratic networks. Extremists are all conspicuously estranged and clearly represented as an other.
- 2 *Populist politicians*: Portrayals of right-wing populist parties such as the Norwegian and Danish Progress Parties, The Danish People’s Party, New Democracy and the Sweden Democrats, which all operate within established parliamentary institutions. In our material we find four representations of populist politicians: 1) the clown, 2) the disguised racist, 3) the unorthodox charismatic, 4) the ordinary politician. While the two first categories are generally conspicuously estranged, the two latter are more often estranged inconspicuously.
- 3 *Critical citizen*: Portrayals of ordinary people that are critical of immigration. These may be voters who support anti-immigration parties, or local people who are sceptical of new asylum-seekers in their area or concerned about the numbers of immigrants in their neighbourhood. We find three such representations: 1) The irrational xenophobe, 2) The sensible critic, 3) The well-grounded local. These actors are portrayed in their capacity of representing ordinary citizens. While the irrational xenophobe are represented as an other through conspicuous estrangement, the sensible critic and well-grounded local are seemingly represented as ordinary, however both are inconspicuously estranged through subtle textual suggestions that the portrayed are different from the intended audience, the second persona, in the text.

Table 1 gives an overview of how the sampled articles are distributed across the categories. As we sampled articles from «article populations» that were not constructed in the same way over time, the table below may generate an exaggerated impression of the total number of articles in the earlier decades. Representative analyses show a growing trend with respect to the presence of anti-immigration radical right parties in the press coverage (Hovden & Mjelde, 2019, p. 150). Since our study is qualitative and text-analytical, the purpose of the table is to give an overview of the articles that we selected for scrutiny, and it does not measure the exact distribution of different types of articles across time and space. Yet, given the large total number of articles we have looked at during our research, it is possible to make some rough observations of trends in our material (although not with the security of statistical significance tests).

In the reporting of all three categories the implied audience, or the second persona, is different from the people reported on. The newspaper talks *about* extremists, populist politicians and ordinary people with sceptical attitudes towards immigration, hardly ever to *them* or to their followers and sympathizers. Generally, as we will show, the reader is constituted as a liberal person looking into the foreign world of the three categories, invoking either alarm or astonishment due to the strange behaviour and attitudes of immigration critics, who as readers are constituted as a *third persona* (Wander, 2013).

## 6. Extremists: Representing evil – or just Weirdos?

Articles about extreme, often openly racist, groups who oppose immigration and immigrants start appearing in significant numbers in the 1980s, particularly in the tabloids. They make up more than half of the corpus in the 1980s and 1990s. This is particularly the case in Sweden, where right-wing extremist groups were strong (Ravndal, 2018), and coverage within the category “racism” is more abundant than in Norway and Denmark (Hovden & Mjelde, 2019, p. 148).

The subjects of the articles in this category make up a mixed bunch ranging from unorganized racist thugs to neo-Nazi organizations with a clear leadership profile. Two representational techniques stand out: 1) radicalized individuals and marginal oddities, 2)

**Table 1**  
Sampled articles by type of anti-immigration actor, country and decade.

	Extremists			Populist politicians			Critical citizens			Outside category			Tot
	SE	NO	DK	SE	NO	DK	SE	NO	DK	SE	NO	DK	
1970s	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	7	9	3	25
1980s	10	2	8	5	4	2	0	0	1	2	2	2	38
1990s	11	2	3	8	2	1	2	0	1	1	3	2	36
2000s	4	4	1	5	1	3	0	1	0	0	2	1	22
2010s	1	0	2	17	2	3	0	0	2	1	1	0	29
Tot	26	10	14	35	9	9	5	2	4	11	17	8	150

antidemocratic networks. What is common across the material is that the illegitimate status of the portrayed actors appears as unproblematic. There is nothing controversial about defining them as extreme, racist or unacceptable. Rather, they are portrayed as bizarre, unfathomable, and strange subjects who need to be analysed and dissected in order to comprehend (and fight) extremism. In general, as we show, *extremists* are conspicuously estranged. The reporting leaves no doubt that these individuals are different from “ordinary citizens”. Readers are invited to view them from the outside.

Especially in Sweden, skinheads and their violent attacks at immigrants and others made the headlines from the 1980s and onwards. Much coverage takes the shape of reporting from investigations and court trials, but there are also articles where the skinheads themselves are being interviewed and portrayed in more depth. One example is *Aftonbladet*'s interview with “Kenta, 24, skinhead – charged with abuse” (*Aftonbladet*/SE 3.2.88). The article starts by presenting – in writing and photographs – a booted skinhead sitting in front of a Swedish flag on his wall. Skinheads, the text states, is a notion used to scare little children. Then the tone changes, as we move closer to Kenta in his own home. There is a Swedish flag on Kenta's wall. “But no swastikas and Hitler images if anyone thought that”. Kenta himself insists: “I am a Swedish patriot. But I distance myself from neo-Nazis and do not like the Sweden Democrats”. The reader is told that there is more than one way of being a skinhead, not all of them unambiguously evil. Indeed, Kenta is far from evil. “It is hard not to like Kenta when one has talked with him for some hours. An intelligent, well read and thoughtful young boy, who even reads English history”. That he has a history of violence is also a part of the portrayal. The journalist touches his steel-toed boots and reflects about how easily Kenta could become a killer when using them in a fight. Kenta is not presented as a normal young man, but there are strong humanizing dimensions in this portrayal. His traits of ordinariness are presented alongside the effects that make him extreme. The reader is invited to empathize with Kenta, although his actions are clearly despicable.

With skinheads and unorganized youth, their acts of violence tend to take the forefront, while their politics are placed in the background. In articles about more organized resistance to immigration, the protagonists' detestable attitudes are at the forefront. “Race hater and top-nazi” is the headline of a portrayal of Jørgen Nielsen in Danish *Ekstrabladet* 31.7.85. The article describes him in terms of fanaticism and madness: “Once he had time to sail and go fishing. Today party work in the Nazi movement takes all his time. Fanaticism has conquered sense”. The portrayal of the Holocaust denier Nielsen also has elements of normalcy – he likes fishing, he was raised in a secure middle-class home. The ordinariness of his background serves to accentuate the irrationality of his current state of mind.

Neither Kenta nor Nielsen are constituted as part of the articles' imagined audience – the second persona. But by highlighting elements of ordinariness alongside their violence, deviant symbolic markers and irrationality, they are constituted as persons who *could* have been part of the audience if things had turned out differently in their lives. In other articles, anti-immigrationists appear even more ridiculous, in the sense of being (comically) distinct from the normal and acceptable. *Ekstra Bladet* portrays “Nazi-Esben” as “a temperamental Jutlander” who was late in court and “went amok” in a “chaotic” court case (1.6.01). In a reporting on a meeting by The Danish Association, the participants are described as “a racist organisation”, but also as “A little and frail flock, ancient both in body and mind” (*Ekstra Bladet*/DK 2.9.88). They looked more, the newspaper reports, “like a 70s discussion club than a procession”. The attention to the visual appearance and the contrast between the “racism” and the description of behaviour and looks, clearly marks the immigration critics as marginal oddities. The conspicuous estrangement in this category of “extremists” is constructed as a *we* (second persona) looking at *them* (third persona). As we will demonstrate, the estrangement of the individual extremist is unabashed and evident compared to the representations of the categories of “populist politicians” and especially of “critical citizens”.

In another set of articles, we see a different pattern, which textually increases the mental and moral distance and estrangement between the reader (second persona) and the extremists (third persona), making the estrangement even more conspicuous. These articles establish relations between deviant individuals, small groups and local events in Scandinavia, and broader ideological movements and lengthy histories of oppression and extermination. One way of doing this is by demonstrating the existence of *networks*. The documentation of networks, for example to Nazi actors, turns deviant individuals and events into nodes in larger patterns and sinister strategies. A major article series from Swedish *Aftonbladet* (7.10.91) exemplifies this well. The series is opened by a full-page editorial with the headline “The Europe of hate” flanked by an image of a young man with a shaved head doing the Nazi salute. The editorial describes a “plague” that has hit all of Europe. There is a “wave of racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia sweeping across Europe”. In a multi-page continuation of the series two weeks later, several pieces are tied together under the headline “The hatred in Europe”. One article is about an attack on a Kurdish refugee family's home in Germany; one is about a bomb attack on a refugee camp in Gothenburg; a third is about a secret international network of Nazis and holocaust deniers. The latter is illustrated by a map covered by a spider web pattern, into which pictures of Nazi leaders are inserted with swastikas placed in the middle of the web – where Germany is located. The headline is: “Nazi spider web covers all of Europe” (*Aftonbladet* 22.10.91). There is nothing in the actual reporting from Gothenburg and Immenstadt that indicates who the perpetrators of the attacks are, or what their connections are to Holocaust denier David Irving or German Nazi leaders, but by connecting distinct events under headlines such as “The hatred in Europe” (*Aftonbladet* 22.10.91) or “The threat to democracy” (*Dagens Nyheter*/SE 30.11.2001) the gravity of the situation is made clear.

The articles about networks invite the audience into a wider narrative of threats to fundamental values in society. The perpetrators of the crimes remain anonymous and faceless in this kind of journalism, compared to the portrayals of Kenta and Nielsen. It is the identity of the network that is represented; the nodes' shared ideological origins tie them together and explain the monstrosity of each violent episode. The audience is not invited to empathize or understand, but to acknowledge the gravity of the threat.

Thus, two representational techniques characterize the portrayal of *extremists*. One technique portrays *individuals* more as fatuous, strange or silly than threatening. Another represents *antidemocratic networks*, of a more sinister and threatening kind. Both represent phenomena at the fringes of society. Whether they appear threatening or just ridiculous, they are clearly on the outside of what is ordinary or acceptable in the newspapers' representations of them as *radical others*, very different from the second persona in the

articles. In short: all the examined representations of extremists are instances of conspicuous estrangement. Extremists are not “us”, they are an “other”.

## 7. Populist politicians: Not just ordinary politicians

Immigration was not top of the agenda for the Scandinavian populist parties established in the 1970s. Both the Norwegian and Danish Progress Parties benefited primarily from right-wing voters' discontent with conservative governments in charge of massive welfare state expansion and rising levels of taxation. In Sweden, the social democrats were still in charge, and similar attempts at party establishment on the right were not successful.

Following a steep increase in asylum migration from the mid-1980s, both the Danish and Norwegian Progress Party successfully started campaigning against immigration (Andersen & Bjørklund, 1990). In Norway, the party was part of a coalition government 2013–2020. The Danish Progress Party eventually disintegrated, being replaced by the Danish People's Party, which combines a critical position to immigration with a strong nationalist rhetoric. In 1991 New Democracy was the first anti-immigration party in Sweden that was elected to parliament, but it fell out again in 1994 and dissolved in the early 2000s. The Sweden Democrats has its roots in the extreme right landscape of the late 1980s, but over time moved in a more moderate direction. It entered parliament in 2010 and has since 2014 been the third largest party in parliament.

### 7.1. Charismatics and clowns, racists and ordinary politicians

Many populist parties have been chaired by charismatic leaders claiming to speak for the people in a language untainted by the conventions and contradictions of ordinary politicians' talk (Eatwell, 2017). It is thus particularly interesting to look at how the media has portrayed the populist leaders in Scandinavia. Our material exhibited four categories, although the distinctions can sometimes be blurry: 1) the unorthodox charismatic, 2) the clown, 3) the disguised racist, 4) the ordinary politician. In recent articles, we find examples where the mode of representation has moved from a position of estranged third persona – as unorthodox, clown or racist – to the position of an ordinary politician, closer to second persona in the reporting. This is most pronounced in the Danish articles, but examples of a similar change are apparent also in Norway and Sweden. This is consistent with what Cas Mudde (2019) terms the fourth wave of the far right, a mainstreaming of the far right where these parties become legitimate coalition partners and their ideas adopted more widely.

The Norwegian Progress Party had its electoral breakthrough in 1987, fronted by the chairman Carl I. Hagen, who is an example of the *unorthodox charismatic*. In a portrait interview (Aftenposten/NO 19.09.87) he is portrayed as a media savvy politician, the strong man of a party which is in most other ways less impressive. The interviewer reflects on his experiences from the party's congress earlier in the year: “With all due respect, there was a long way between each thoughtful contribution, to put it mildly”. There are no hints at Hagen himself being racist. Instead, he is asked: “Do you feel uncomfortable about having kindled sentiments of xenophobia during the last stage of the election campaign?” This is a general tendency in how the Progress Party was treated in the Norwegian mainstream public in this period: The party was rarely accused of itself being racist; the claim was that it fed on racism and in effect increased racism and xenophobia among its voters (Hagelund, 2003). In another article, Hagen is accused of appealing to “brown mud” in the population (VG 2.11.88). Again, he is not brown (alluding to the colour of Nazism) himself; he appeals to it, benefits from it.

While Hagen has always been controversial, he also appears in a professional, politician-like manner. In Denmark articles from the same period construes a much less professional, rather carnivalesque version representing the populist politicians as *clowns*. The Danish tabloid *Ekstra Bladet* does this when it describes the scenes when the party leader of the Progress Party, Mogens Glistrup, is released from prison after serving a sentence for tax evasion. The title (03.12.85) announces: “The Z-wolf is loose and thunders out: Now we shall hate the others” (In Denmark all parties are signified by a letter. Z was the letter signifying the Progress party). The party and its leader are described as religious believers fishing for votes in xenophobia and hatred. A picture of the smiling party leader is followed by a caption saying:

- It is nice to be back, says the Z-guru Mogens Glistrup. However, the joy is Danish. Behind the thin cover of nationalism race hatred lurks.

However, despite the use of words like “race hatred”, “nationalism”, and “xenophobia”, neither Glistrup nor the Progress Party comes across as truly frightening or alarmingly racist. The graveness is mollified by presenting the meeting as a mixture of a circus, madhouse, revival and a local celebration. The reader is placed as the observer to a strange sight that does not invite fear and uproar, as much as it invites astonishment and ridicule.

Similar representations can be found both elsewhere and later. An article in the Swedish broadsheet *Dagens Nyheter* (16.5.91) follows one of the leaders of New Democracy, Ian Wachtmeister, on the campaign trail. He is not portrayed as a politician, but first as an entertainer and then as a preacher. “So far, it is as an entertainer Ian Wachtmeister has had his greatest progress in politics”, the reporter claims. The crowd is laughing, the reporter compares him (in a favorable way) to Hasse Alfredsson, a popular Swedish comedian and filmmaker. In another set of metaphors, parallels are drawn to charismatic Christianity. The headline speaks of his followers being “newly saved”, and his talk is termed “preaching”.

The same kind of ridiculing takes place in the coverage of the 1997 party conference for the Danish People's Party in the tabloid *Ekstra Bladet* in 1997 (06.10.97). Under the heading “The lower classes march”, the article uses an ironic distance to describe how the participants look and act, the food they eat and the music they play. They are mockingly described as the party of the “Danish Top of

the Pops”, referring to traditional, lowbrow Danish pop music. Even the few final lines of the article mentioning the politics of the party is formed as a character description:

They love each other. They applaud each other back and forth. They cannot stand the EU. They despise the immigration policy. They worship the flag and the armed forces. They want to build new prisons. The retirement pension must go up. The waiting lists must go away. They have everything. Everything that the upper classes do not want to discuss on the terms of the “stupid”. The underclasses march.

Throughout the article, the members of the Danish People’s Party are constituted as a “they”. “They” are a strange mixture of youth members marching with flags, “nifty bimbos, and heavy proprietor ladies in polka-dotted dresses. Men with port wine cheeks. Double airbag bellies filled with potatoes”. It is a picture of a different Denmark, seen from the outside by the reader as the second persona looking in. In such portrayals of charismatics and clowns, populist politicians appear as something else than ordinary politicians. In a sense, these articles are replicating populist politicians’ own self-representation: That they represent the people against the establishment of mainstream politicians. However, in the coverage they are conspicuously estranged and framed as a third persona.

In recent years, we also find more normalizing portrayals of populist politicians, which exemplifies inconspicuous estrangement. In an article from 2016, the Norwegian Progress Party’s then minister of immigration, Sylvi Listhaug, is portrayed as she is visiting refugee camps in Turkey following the 2015 refugee crisis (VG 19.01.16). Listhaug has positioned herself as particularly critical to immigration and multicultural society, and is correspondingly unpopular among liberals. In the article, she is portrayed as a confident and engaged minister, bubbling with energy from everything she has learnt. In this sense, it is a positive portrayal. However, at the same time the text establishes an ironic distance to its subject. “In Turkey she has learnt to feel sorry for Syrian refugees”. “The Progress Party’s rising star has received an intensive course in tragic destinies, devastated people, poor families and children who are not allowed to go to school”. Is this a positive portrayal of a learning politician or sarcastic remarks about her heartlessness? Did she really have to go all the way to a refugee camp to understand the misery of people in flight? The latter interpretation is supported when the text later says that it was a “happy day” when she learnt that Turkish authorities only spend 2-3 Euros a day on each refugee, as this supports her key point about assisting refugees in “nearby areas”. Then in the final part of the article, she is again normalized and legitimized through references to her admiration for Norway’s first female prime minister (from the Labour Party) and the love and concern she holds for her own children.

The Danish material contains examples of more unequivocal normalizing representations. *Ekstra Bladet* (3.11.10) reports from a visit by party leader, Pia Kjaersgaard, to an immigrant dominated area of Copenhagen. She is described as “famous – and infamous” for her views on immigration, but the reporting is formed as an objective account, not a judgmental characterization by the reporter. She is portrayed as an *ordinary politician*, without any techniques of othering or marginalization. The transformation appears complete when *Ekstra Bladet* in 2015 (05.08.15) presents a large interview with Kristian Thulesen Dahl, who became party leader in 2012. The leader and the party are now covered like any other party. The political viewpoints are reported without any negative characterization. Both pages of the report are dominated by a large photograph of Mr. Dahl sitting relaxed outside in front of lush greenery looking directly in the camera putting him at eye level with the reader. Inserted on the right-side page is a picture of Mr. Dahl at an internal football match in the party. Both the party and the leader are presented as legitimate and ordinary, enjoying a leisurely game. In our material, then, the representations of immigration critical parties have moved from conspicuous estrangement in the early days of reporting parties, then towards inconspicuous estrangement, before finally reaching the stage of legitimation. This is especially the case for Denmark and Norway, but the same tendencies can be seen in the Swedish material.

## 8. Balancing the tightrope

The Swedish political scientist Anders Hellström (2016) writes about *balancing* the tightrope between radicalism and extremism. The political message of anti-immigration parties has to be radical enough to satisfy voters who are discontented with mainstream policies, but without entering into the illegitimate zone of extremism. Coverage of anti-immigration parties often problematize this balancing act through questioning the true nature of these parties. Are they to be taken seriously, or are they not really proper politicians but fools or charlatans? Are they just critical of immigration, or something more sinister? Racist? Or even Nazi?

Such portrayals vary between identifying parties that somewhat succeed in balancing and confirmations of them being on the wrong side. We saw that the Progress Party in Norway tended to be accused of fishing in muddy waters, rather than having plunged into the mud. A Swedish cartoon (Aftonbladet 19.08.93) depicts New Democracy’s leadership as a jester (Wachtmeister) and a crying boy (Karlsson), led by the hand by two sinister-looking skinheads waving clubs. Themselves they are seemingly harmless (a clown and a minor), but they are captives of larger and more sinister forces.

A spectacular event of failing the balancing act was the so-called “iron pipe scandal” in 2012 tainting the Sweden Democrats’ attempt at cleaning up its reputation. A film was revealed showing the party’s economic policy spokesperson racially and sexually harassing people in the street and picking up iron pipes in a threatening move. In the days that followed, not only him but also his companion and yet another member of parliament had to withdraw for participation in the episode as well as for falsely accusing immigrants of robbery. In this reporting, we find a representation of the immigration critic as a *disguised racist*.

The headline “The face of racism” fills the front page of *Dagens Nyheter* when the scandal breaks, and the editorial follows up on the theme with the headline “When the mask is torn off” (15.11.12). “Racism cannot be cleaned out of the Sweden Democrats, it is the air they breathe, from top to bottom”, is the introductory line. The metaphor of cleansing is central. Party leader Jimmie Åkesson had some time earlier introduced a zero-tolerance policy for racism and inappropriate behaviour in the party. This is described as a cleansing process, but one that can never succeed. The dirt is not only on the surface, but too ingrained with the party’s true nature to

ever be cleaned off. Accordingly, at the times when the SD may appear to have cleaned up itself expressing a “cleansed rhetoric”, it is in fact only a mask we see. The scandal – the film exposing the authentic behaviour of SD politicians – had exposed the true (and filthy) face behind the mask.

So, populist politicians are presented in discrepant ways: On the one hand, as charismatic, unorthodox leaders and opportunists fishing in “muddy waters”. On the other, as racists and extremists in politicians’ disguise. The textually constructed audience of these articles – the second persona – belongs to a ‘we’ that comprises both writers and readers. It is assumed that readers will tune in to the irony and join in mockery and condemnation. Populist party voters, at times comprising nearly 20 percent of the electorate, are not presumed, it seems, to be reading these analyses. The recent interview with Thulesen Dahl constitutes an interesting exception, pointing at a profound political change in Denmark, where most mainstream parties have now included strict anti-immigration policies in their programs. In the article, sympathizers of the Danish People’s Party are textually included as ordinary readers: the previous third persona have now become part of the second persona. This is, judging by our material, a recent phenomenon.

## 9. Critical citizens: Sensible, irrational, or peculiar locals

Compared to other European countries, attitudes to immigration are quite positive in Sweden, Denmark and Norway, with Sweden demonstrating the most positive attitudes (Heath & Richards, 2016). Yet, for the past decades somewhere between 10 and 20 percent of the Scandinavian electorates have voted for anti-immigration parties on the right, thus making up a substantial minority. Reports on ordinary people represented as immigration-critics make up the smallest of the three categories in our material. This is a point of interest in itself, because it suggests that the interests and concerns of ordinary people are meagerly represented in the newspapers, thus also underscoring a tendency of othering immigration critics.

Our material exhibited three modes of representation: 1) The sensible critic, 2) The irrational xenophobe, 3) The well-grounded local.

Some Swedish articles from the early 1970s tried to analyse the emerging “foreigner hatred” (Aftonbladet 04.12.70) and interviewed ordinary workers as a part of this endeavour. At this time, Swedish companies were actively recruiting foreign workers and the numbers were rising. The articles present a structural analysis of the emerging problems. The housing policies of the companies, the division of responsibility between companies and municipalities, the language barriers – these are factors that work to produce “ghettos”, isolation, misunderstandings, and conflicts. In one article “A Swede and an immigrant speak out” about the bad feelings (Aftonbladet 05.05.71). The interview reveals that they do not think badly about each other. They both think immigration is too large, but they blame housing policies and the concomitant lack of interaction between the groups, not migrants themselves. In this sense, critical attitudes are explained structurally. It is not a moral failure, but a result of poor policies. Thus, the interviewed Swede is represented as a *sensible critic*.

Other (and later) articles portray ordinary people’s hostility to immigration in a less sympathetic way, as *irrational xenophobes*. In the 1980s, we found articles that report on local people who are sceptical to immigrants coming to their neighbourhood. In these reports, the locals appear hostile, almost extremist. One article from Denmark in the mid-1980s is titled: “This is the disgusting way Danish people welcome refugees. The citizen-clan ready to attack”. (*Ekstra Bladet* 31.05.85). The report is from a small village about to receive 50 Iranian refugees. The body text begins like this.

500 citizens in the little South Danish village of Østre Højst at Løgumkloster are now so fired up by race hatred, that they will close all the roads into the city to prevent that 50 Iranian refugees will be installed in the pub for half a year, until they can be let out into society

A citizen is quoted saying: “I do not dare send my three little girls to the grocery store when the refugees have arrived in the city”. The locals are portrayed as consumed with irrational fear and hatred. “Many parents”, a pensioner comments, “are afraid that their girls will sleep with the Iranians”. The villagers’ reactions appear out of proportion, and in the final lines they are judged through a “bystander portrayal” (cf. McLeod & Hertog 1992, p. 267) by two young females from the community, who express dismay about the situation and appeal to charity and humanity.

While the immigration-sceptics among ordinary people in the 1980s thus are estranged, marginalized and represented as extremists, by the 2010s we again find articles that work to normalize negative reactions to immigration. Particularly in Denmark, we found articles that described attitudes to immigration as a significant dividing line between different areas and groups in Denmark. During the election campaign in Denmark in 2015 *Ekstra Bladet* ran a full two-page article with the title: “The divided Denmark” (20.06.15). The paper interviews people from central Copenhagen, where Danish People’s Party (DPP) gets only 3,6 percent of the votes and people from the south of Jylland, where the party gets 39,5 percent. The people from Copenhagen describe their fellow citizens as “not open minded”, “not able to see longer than their own nose”, and “narrow minded” because they “have not been out in the world and experienced what the world looks like. It is very small minded. They live in their own, safe little duck pond”. While parts of the text come across as harsh, antagonistic, even hostile, the photographs of the interviewees give a much more friendly and amiable impression. Everybody is smiling and visually it is not obvious who belongs to each side of the allegedly “divided Denmark”.

In this kind of reporting, the immigration critics are given a voice of coherent argumentation and an opportunity to not only be characterized, but also to characterize their critics. This illustrates that the portrayal of the rhetorical agency of the ordinary people has changed from generally being limited to unfounded, often racist, hostility towards immigrants, to become an acknowledged voice representing a geographical and demographical part of the nation. Still, however, they are subtly and inconspicuously estranged, by being represented as different from the second persona: They are traditional, from the outskirts, and different from “us”, i.e., the reader. The depiction of DPP-voter Bruno Vozny is an example of this. His picture dominates the article. He is standing outside his

house in southern Jutland, casually resting his elbow on the mailbox, while leaning forward and looking with smiling eyes into the camera. On his left side we can see his well-kept driveway, with a wheelbarrow and a small excavator. Vozny is wearing gardening gloves, and it is clear that he is doing manual labour in the garden and driveway. His sub-story has the title: “They have never had a shovel in their hands”. He cannot understand, he says, why “creative Copenhageners” would be ashamed of DPP. Instead, he believes that “the well-bred people from the big cities and Christiansborg [the parliament] should put an ear to the ground and sense the sentiment of ordinary people”.

Despite the negative characterizations of DPP-voters by the Copenhageners, Vozny is constituted as a citizen who is close to real life and with a sense of the true public opinion. As an immigration critic, he is a *well-grounded local*, but the portrayal of him as different from the second persona and the Copenhageners also makes him inconspicuously estranged. The article illustrates a contrast to the depiction of immigration critics as local extremists; here they are constituted as ordinary critical Danes.

To summarize, portrayals of ordinary people as critical citizens in our material vary from irrational xenophobes to sensible critics and well-grounded locals, who respond to societal changes they are uncomfortable with. The most poignant examples of the latter we find in recent articles from Denmark. However, this last quote is from an editorial commentary article in the Swedish *Dagens Nyheter*, following the refugee crisis of 2015: “Nobody should be ashamed about experiencing that society does not work as it did until recently. It is about basic issues: Will I receive good health care? How will my kids have a good life? What does it mean in practice if the country gets a surplus of young men? ... They still react in a fairly rational way” (*Dagens Nyheter* 18.2.16). Scepticism and anxiety is becoming understandable, a rational way of responding to social change that policy actors must take into consideration.

## 10. Conclusion

Our study of the media coverage of anti-immigration positions in Scandinavia from 1970 – 2016 supports the existence of soft oppression, trivialization and stigmatization suggested by other studies (see the part on “Representing controversial positions”). We have added to the theoretical understanding of this phenomenon by identifying important rhetorical variations in how anti-immigration actors are portrayed within the three dominant categories.

Our empirical results demonstrate a variety of representational strategies. There are examples of anti-immigration positions being subject to demonizing strategies through references to racism, fascism, Nazism or violent networks. This applies to extremists, but also to contemporary populist parties, as with the “iron pipe scandal” in Sweden. Not all coverage, however, is of this kind – even in the case of extremists. There are also examples of articles that seek to paint a more many-faceted picture of anti-immigration actors, combining estrangement, exoticizing and normalizing strategies. Interestingly, some of the most poignant examples of this can be found in (pre-2000) portrayals of individual extremists, as when individuals’ personal trajectories towards extreme outcomes are being analysed and made (more) comprehensible to the reader. Another set of rhetorical devices consists of ridicule and sarcasm, which can serve to make subjects appear strange and out of the ordinary but not necessarily threatening or sinister. Also, in non-sensationalist portrayals of ordinary people, elements of legitimation and distancing can be found simultaneously. As people’s groundedness and ordinariness are stressed, by letting them speak positioned in homely surroundings with garden chairs and coffee tables, they are also represented in locations different to where the newspapers’ writers and imagined readers are positioned.

Thus, the press in Scandinavia portray anti-immigration positions through the application of a mixed set of strategies. Not all are of a demonizing kind, but generally, they have a distancing effect. Anti-immigration positions are constituted as an *other* and a *third persona*. At the same time, differences appear between the countries, with the Swedish articles exhibiting particular traits. A large proportion portray extreme, often violent, versions of anti-immigration positions. There is a gravity to much of the Swedish material: Sinister networks are exposed, and threats to democracy uncovered. In comparison, many of the Danish and Norwegian articles expose idiocy, eccentric characters, and simple-mindedness. However, this material does not substantiate an image of Sweden where everyone and everything is labelled as racism. Instead, we see a media coverage of anti-immigration positions where mainly extreme positions are visible. In this way, critical views on immigration appear as being more extreme than in the neighbouring countries. This makes the *cordon sanitaire* that is still surrounding the Sweden Democrats more understandable.

As indicated, there is a general theoretical lesson to this. Studies have suggested that soft oppression may prepare the ground for forms of hard oppression and increased marginalizing (e.g. Linden & Klandermans, 2006). Our study does not support this. On the contrary, as we have shown, in our material the representations move toward legitimation and normalizing – especially in Denmark and Norway, and recently also in Sweden. This is in line with the mainstreaming of the radical right, which Mudde suggests is taking place (2019). While the representations of all three categories in the first decades, may be said to belong to the *sphere of deviance* (Hallin, 1986, 117), the representations in the later periods – especially in Denmark and Norway after 2010 – moves toward the sphere of *legitimate controversy* and the sphere of *consensus*. The first is the “province of objectivity”, where “balance reign” as a journalistic virtue. The second “encompasses those social objects not regarded by the journalists and most of society as controversial” (ibid.). In our material, this move towards the sphere of legitimate controversy was evident in the fact that representations of populist politicians historically moved from the position of an estranged third persona – as unorthodox, clown or racist – to the position of an ordinary politician, closer to second persona in the reporting.

Thus, it is important both scientifically and politically to distinguish clearly between soft and hard oppression, and to challenge the theoretical assumption that marginalizing strategies of *trivialization* (Gitlin, 1980, 27) and the protest paradigm (Dardis, 2006; Weaver & Scacco, 2013) lead to hard oppression. There is a rhetorical difference between such strategies of *inconspicuous estrangement* and the *conspicuous estrangement* of explicit vilification and demonization (van der Heerden & van der Brug, 2017) in the direct linking of immigration critical attitudes to fascism and neo-Nazism, as the “embodiment of pure evil” (van Spanje & Azrou, 2018, p. 2). Even though *inconspicuous estrangement* marginalizes, it also allows for a certain acceptance and interaction between parties, which opens up

for legitimation. Undisguised and conspicuous vilification and demonization, on the other hand, closes down interaction and prevent a move from the sphere of deviance to the sphere of legitimate controversy (cf. Hallin, 1986, 117).

Our study based on 46 years of representations in Scandinavian newspapers allowed us to suggest a move towards normalization of immigrant critical attitudes, despite rhetorical marginalization in the press. More studies are needed to explore the connection between such changes and the nature and use of rhetorical use of conspicuous and inconspicuous estrangement.

While our study points to the important rhetorical differences between othering through the conspicuous estrangement of vilification and the inconspicuous estrangement through subtle rhetorical devices, we still need research that examines the nature and consequences of these strategies. Special attention should be given to the use of such rhetoric over time. Rhetoric is situational, and some effects are immediate. Consequences for identity and group belonging, however, develop over time: A group is not marginalized by one instance of estrangement or vilification, but through a sustained use of such rhetoric over time.

So, even though our study deals with the othering of immigration critics in Scandinavia, the techniques of estrangement we describe, can be applied to other groups and other societies. For instance: The difference between conspicuous and inconspicuous estrangement, and a move in the dominance of representation from the first to the second, could illustrate a different public view of the groups in question, and may suggest a move towards legitimation. On the other hand, the presence of inconspicuous estrangement may also function as an ideological tool of domination, when outright condemnation and other forms of explicit othering would be inappropriate or go against the doxa of a society. The rhetorical power of the inconspicuous estrangement in precisely that it goes unnoticed. In many instances, this kind of representation cannot be located manifestly in a text, but only through the analysis of speaker and audience position, as we have demonstrated through the use of second and third persona, and through our development of the rhetorical strategies of conspicuous and inconspicuous estrangement.

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### Supplementary materials

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