ABSTRACT

Can Danish experience explain why Sverigedemokraterna had a higher support among voters in Skåne, than among other Swedish voters?

Essay in Political Science, C-level
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The key question of this essay concerns the outcome of Sweden’s latest election. When all the votes where counted, the county of Skåne showed an exceptionally high support for the right wing nationalist party Sverigedemokraterna. Why then, did Sverigedemokraterna have a higher support among voters in Skåne (as part of the larger and transnational Öresund region), than among other Swedish voters? My hypothesis is the following: the regional interaction within Öresund has not only had positive effects concerning the values that the people of Skåne hold. In other words, Danish experience has changed the way in which the people of Skåne view immigrants and radical right wing parties.

Before I go on any further I will explain what is meant by the Öresund region. This region encompasses both parts of Sweden and Denmark (most notably Skåne and Själland), and the interaction between the two countries have increased considerably since a physical bridge between the two border regions was opened in July 2000.

Now, let us go on to the purpose of this essay, which is to answer the key question, and also to determine if the regional cooperation in the Öresund region has led to changes in the way the people of Skåne view right wing nationalist parties. Therefore, I explored the effects of the interaction between the Swedish region Skåne and the Danish region Själland, in order to discern if the Danes negative views towards immigrants and their strong feelings of nationalism, have effected Swedes and their values. In other words, was it possible that the Danish hostility towards immigrants and their unproblematic view of right wing nationalist parties, had been transmitted to the people of Skåne? Last but not least, it has also been the purpose of this essay to prove that traditional variables, concerning the question of why
people vote for right wing nationalist parties, do no longer explain this phenomenon. By traditional variables I mean unemployment and a high density of immigrants of the population in a specific area.

In order to research the above mentioned issues, I have gone through letters to the editor, sent to the newspaper Sydsvenskan, and analysed the material using qualitative text analysis. I have also studied literature within the field of cross-border studies.

After ten weeks of research, I came to the conclusion that the traditional variables do not explain why Sverigedemokraterna received such a high proportion of the votes in Skåne. However, this essay also sheds light on the possibility of Danish experience as a plausible variable when it comes to explaining the outcome of the last election, but based on my limited study I can neither confirm nor dismiss the hypothesis. However, my study does provide some evidence that supports the hypothesis. In order to draw any conclusions however, it would have to be broadened in itself and replicated in other sections of Sweden or nationally.

The results of my study might leave the key question unanswered, but in itself can be viewed as an important step towards obtaining a clearer overview of what has driven the increased vote share for Sverigedemokraterna.