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Selling Far-Right Extremism
New forms of far-right merchandise and online consumer subcultures in Sweden

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Introduction

For a number of years, liberal democracies have faced growing far-right activity and a rise in terrorist attacks committed by sympathizers recruited from the outskirts of or outside extremist environments (e.g., Koehler 2016: Fieltz 2020). In 2020, the Global Terrorism Index reported a 250% increase in right-wing terrorist attacks since 2014 (GTI 2020). Over a relatively short period of time, terrorist attacks by lone actors motivated by white nationalist ideas have been carried out in Christchurch, Poway, El Paso, Baerum, Halle and elsewhere. In Sweden too, researchers, monitoring groups and the security services have documented rising activities among actors in the far-right movement and identified far-right extremism as a deepening threat against Swedish democracy (e.g., Ranstorp & Ahlin, 2020; Säpo 2020; Expo 2020). At the same time, identifying and isolating which actors pose a threat is becoming an increasingly hard task. Swedish Security Service have warned against a blurring of boundaries and a development in which violent right-wing ideology is normalizing and increasingly propagated outside of the constellations traditionally understood to constitute violent extremism (Säpo 2020). Consequently, there is a need for research which looks at the synergies between ideas entertained by violent extremist actors linked to these terrorist attacks and the ways in which the same ideas, conspiracy theories and violent threats (e.g., 'the Great Replacement', the 'Plandemic' or Day of the Rope, in Sweden often articulated with reference to the so called Finspång tribunals), are iterated in more moderate, non-violent forms across the broader ideological landscape of far-right actors only some of whom are classified as violent extremist per se. Sweden is a particularly interesting case for exploring these issues for several reasons. For one, in international comparisons of right-wing violence and militancy, Sweden represents an outlier position with a markedly stronger and more resilient extreme-right movement, not least compared to its Nordic neighbors (Ravndahl 2018). Sweden has in recent years become both an inspiration to and an organizational hub in the Nordic countries with an organization such as *The Nordic Resistance Movement* operating several chapters in Denmark, Finland and Norway out of Sweden. The case of Sweden therefore provides a window onto considering some of the broader developments in violent extremism and anti-democratic movements emerging in the Nordic countries more generally.

A veritable explosion of research has emerged in recent years seeking to understand, explain, predict and prevent the far-right movement, which is best described as a network of parties, groups, online communities and individual actors, who represent more or less radical versions of anti-democratic and exclusionary practices and belief systems, that run counter to the norms and values underpinning liberal democracy. Scholarship has however primarily focused on formal political participation of actors organized in social movements and parties and paid scarce attention to the 'softer' dimensions of the aesthetic, material, and (sub)cultural underpinnings of extremist engagement, identity and sense of belonging. This chapter explores *how actors across the spectrum of the extra-parliamentarian far-right in Sweden, from cultural nationalists to national socialists, mobilize through market mechanisms by using cultural artifacts and consumer goods to promote far-right narratives and radicalize into extremist beliefs*. Drawing on the broader 'cultural turn' in radicalization and extremism research (see e.g. Miller-Idriss, 2018; Teitelbaum, 2018) and consumer culture theory (CCT) (Arnould and Thompson 2005), we argue that, in order to understand radicalization into extreme-right beliefs, we need to understand the extreme-right as a site of cultural and subcultural engagement and as a producer of not only ideological and explicitly political, but also cultural, symbolic, and aesthetic 'texts' and material artefacts (Miller Idriss 2018). This involves looking into new, unconventional spaces and places to understand where people come into contact with extremist narratives including anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, homophobic and misogynist messages today (Miller-Idriss 2020) as these increasingly penetrate into the digital mainstream in Sweden (Åkerlund, 2022).

We approach this topic from two traditionally separate fields and largely disconnected academic discussions on the rise of far-right extremism, media and communication studies and critical marketing studies. In doing so, we bring together critical perspectives on the role of online media in the production and circulation of far-right ideas and material artifacts with insights from consumer culture theory on how the far-right subject is invoked and imagined as a citizen-consumers (Cambefort and Pecot 2020; Ulver and Laurell 2020). In line with leading theories on consumer culture (e.g., Slater 1998; Sassatelli 2007), we suggest that treating the political subject as a citizen-consumer subject sensitizes us to modes of cultural reproduction where daily needs and desires are satisfied through capitalist consumer culture and where the subjects constantly must re-evaluate market-mediated symbols, services and objects around them in order to stabilize political meanings and social relations. Importantly, we suggest that the current revival of far-right extremism across liberal democracies extends beyond the realm of politics; 'it is anchored in the logic of global capitalism and has become 'inextricably intertwined with the practices of promotion and consumption' (Castelló and Mihelji 2017). Bringing market perspectives and theories into the field of violent extremism is essential for several reasons. In consumer culture research, researchers have for decades explored the cultural mechanisms and linking value of consumption in the social, and conceptualized marketplace cultures in different ways; subcultures (e.g., Schouten and McAlexander 1995), consumption communities and tribes (e.g., Cova 1997), brand communities (e.g., Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001), fan cultures (e.g., Kozinets 2001), and countercultures (e.g., Holt 2002). Although consumers' social identity-work has always been

emphasized in this work, albeit increasingly criticized as consumers' free labor (Cova, Dalli and Zwick 2011), lately, old conceptions of the role of possessions for identity-making (e.g., Belk 1988) have been largely replaced by theory on transposed, multiple and digital selves (e.g., Belk 2013) and processes of "dividualization" (Hietanen, Ahlberg and Botez 2022). Here, consumers own identity-work is outsourced to algorithmic technology which converts consumers into "samples," "data," "banks," and "material to be controlled" (ibid. 166). The new formations appear as new consumption communities polarized and positioned in conflict with each other, as this is the fodder for the market in the social media age; the *conflict market* (Ulver 2021). All in all, the technologies increase desire for consumption (Kozinets, Patterson and Ashman 2017), create networked publics around brands (Arvidsson and Calliandro 2016) where the consumers have little in common except for counter-ideological sentiments undergirding the brand.

In terms of conceptualizing far-right extremism in relation to the online sphere, we subscribe to an understanding of the far right as comprised of not just formal and informal groups and organizations with an online presence but also of the more loosely connected network of individual 'alternative influencers' that operate more or less exclusively online (Lewis 2018; 2020; Maly 2020). These actors are all in turn part of an expanding and multi-dimensional online ecosystem that is, "an entity made of an ever-changing number of different components whose natures and interconnections are in constant evolution (as opposed to a static landscape made of a fixed number of well-defined objects)" (Baele, Brace and Coan 2021 p.2).

We bring these perspectives to bear on an empirical case study of the growing body of commercial consumer products laced with far-right ideology and coded symbols which form part of the broader far-right 'scene' in Sweden today; their marketing and sale online as this is enabled by a complex web of digital platforms, services and media practices. In an effort to build a case study design which take the complexity of the ecosystem into consideration the following analysis explores the *actors, platforms, practices and products* involved in these developments.

Previous research

In her extensive work on the commercialization and mainstreaming of far-right extremism, Miller-Idriss (2017: 2019; 2020) explores how clothing brands like Thor Steinar, Erik and Sons, Lonsdale, Ansgar Aryan and other consumer products have, with a considerable degree of commercial success, adopted the styles and branding techniques of mainstream brands to sell far-right merchandise through mail order catalogues, online web shops and physical stores around larger European cities. Encoding historical and contemporary nationalist and white supremacist references into iconography, slogans/jargon, acronyms, color combinations, script, motives, coded symbols etc., these clothing lines have managed to appeal to a segment of younger consumers looking to embrace mainstream fashion and subcultural styles while still being able to convey ideological affinity to the far-right in subtle or hidden ways. Not only do these brands mark affinity and a measure of credibility to insiders, but they also normalize extreme right ideologies and attract young people by way of consumer culture (Miller-Idriss 2018). These trends in political behavior, cultural codes and consumer patterns internationally have not gone unnoticed by the various actors

across the far right in Sweden who today engage in a wide variety of commercial activities and increasingly operate from a communication platform combining ideology, consumer culture and lifestyle products which in turn is enabled by mainstream social media and social commerce platforms.

Paying detailed attention to these developments at the intersection of market and political culture is important for several reasons. We know from previous research that lifestyle elements such as clothes, accessories and other consumer goods marking social identity and political affinity have significant potential to shape recruitment and socialization into far-right communities, especially among youths (Miller-Idriss 201[illegible] These products play a key role in processes of desensitization to violence, the valorization of violence, a dehumanization of victims and a normalization of belief systems and conspiracy theories underpinning violent extremism (Ibid). There is however a dearth of research on the growth of the commercial market around extremism and how this relates to developments in the digital infrastructures and tech-actors that support and facilitate far-right movements across the world. While the phenomenon of marrying right wing ideology and symbols with popular culture and style in for example clothing and other consumer products, has been given some journalistic attention, often framed as "Nipster culture" and often focusing on the US and Germany (see e.g., Colborne 2019; Foresta 2020; Thomas 2017; Rogers 2014), we know relatively little of what this looks like in the Nordic context and which commercial (f)actors act as driving forces in introducing people to extremist beliefs and symbolism through consumer culture and our everyday interactions online.

This chapter is an attempt to address this gap by looking at the Swedish market context specifically, which has so far mainly been explored in relation to far-right consumer discourse related to brands (Ulver and Laurell 2020), and not the market actors *per se*. We seek to provide a rudimentary mapping of the actors and driving forces behind the proliferation of far-right merchandise and consumer products (t-shirts, hoodies, mugs, stickers, posters, candles, tote bags etc.) currently being advertised and sold across the intricate network of individual 'influencers', websites, blogs, podcasts and web shops that make up the far-right online eco-system. Taking a case study approach (Bryman 2016) we explore the product lines and business models of key actors in this landscape. The case provides a window onto exploring the different ways in which far right ideas are being commodified and monetized in contemporary digital environments in Sweden today.

The Commodification of Far-Right Ideas: Actors, Platforms, Practices & Products

a) Actors

In the years following the 2015 European border crisis, we have seen the far-right in Sweden—much like elsewhere in Europe—evolve from a fragmented and loosely connected formation of groups and organizations, often in open conflict with one another, to an increasingly tight-knit network of formal and informal groups and individual actors who increasingly collaborate and form alliances across group affiliations and ideological differences. This solidification of a networked social movement has been undergirded and facilitated in part by both mainstream and

fringe social media platforms and in part by the extensive web of alternative far-right news media, which in Sweden have managed to create a considerable counter public of hyper-partisan alternative news sphere around issues related to immigration, Islam and anti-feminism in recent years (Ihlebæk & Nygaard, 2021). These developments dovetail with international tendencies and patterns identified in studies from a wide range of national contexts testifying to the rise of an increasingly networked (domestically and transnationally) far-right movement across Europe and the United States (Heft et al., 2021; Kaiser et al., 2020; Lewis, 2018; Rauchfleisch & Kaiser, 2020; von Nordheim et al., 2021).

Understood in terms of a networked social movement we may think of the Swedish far-right as made up of formal organizations (including parties), informal groups, and individual 'alternative influencers' operating mainly on social media but some of whom are tied loosely to formal groups or the alterative media companies catering to these groups. Some of the formal groups and organizations aspire to gain power through national and local elections. This includes organizations such as *Alternative for Sweden* (AfS) and the neo-Nazi *Nordic Resistance Movement* (NMR) both of which—unsuccessfully—pursued election campaigns in 2018 and 2022. Established in 2017, *Det Fria Sverige* (DFS) is less interested in parliamentarian politics and maintains a focus on local activities, online activism, not least through an extensive repertoire of podcasts, and community building centered around their community house in Älgarås, Västergötland. All these actors run web shops and engage in the various forms of commercial activities explored below.

Adjacent to these formal organizations and groups, we find a wide range of individual, mostly unaffiliated actors with considerable followings online that are less easily pigeonholed but ever more significant if looking to understand the broader political landscape around the contemporary far right. These individuals form part of what Lewis (2018) dubs the so-called 'alternative influencer network' (AIN) who repurpose engagement techniques of brand influencers to spread ideological content on social media. While these actors and their connective practices are most noticeable on YouTube, they tend to work across an intricate web of websites, mainstream social media and fringe—or 'Alt-Tech platforms' (Donovan, Lewis and Friedberg 2018) that make up the online ecosystem of the extreme right today (Davey & Ebner, 2017). Actors in the AINs align micro-celebrity practices[1] with reactionary, anti-progressive, and frequently conspiratorial politics anchored in far-right belief systems. Together, these individual political commentators and activists comprise a loose and overlapping assemblage of subcultural influencers who appear on each other's YouTube channels and podcasts, forming a network of online connections and collaborations (Lewis 2018). In the Swedish context, the AIN consist of a motley array of independent, yet related actors that are tied together by an interlocking series of connective practices including guest appearances on each other's YouTube channels as well as a variety of referencing- and hyperlinking practices and joint live streaming events (Askanius, Modani and Stoencheva, forthcoming 2023). Some of these operate under pseudonyms such as *The Angry Foreigner* or *The Golden One,* while most just use their own names in their YouTube channels in which they intersperse business strategies with political propagation techniques. They address their

audiences as unaffiliated private individuals and present themselves as concerned citizens and ordinary people who have "woken up" to the grim political realities in Sweden (of a societal collapse/a society in decay) which for long has been kept hidden by government and mainstream media and engage on YouTube to mobilise fellow "ordinary citizens". Others navigate dual identities as both individual political influencers and members of groups as in the case of the channels '*Sund fornuft med Gustav'* [Common sense with Gustav] or *Lennart Matikainen* both of which are affiliated with AfS and the latter a frequent guest on *SwebbTV's* YouTube channel.[2] While a few run their channels in English aiming for an international audience, these actors primarily form a Swedish-speaking alternative public sphere around issues related to immigration, climate change, gender, anti-feminism, the pandemic etc. Most importantly for the purpose of this chapter, they provide a window onto considering the ongoing commercialization of far-right ideas in how they exhibit various forms of marketing techniques, sale of merchandise and other consumers products, product placement, sponsorship, and fundraising schemes, some of which are explored in more detail below.

b) Platforms

Beyond mainstream social media platforms such as YouTube - which is the most important hub for the Alternative Influence Network described above—podcasts, fringe Alt-Tech platforms such as Gab and Minds and a number of additional lesser-known online platforms and services are involved in the promotion and sale of far-right merch. These include online payment processors, and donations and subscription services such as Swish, Paypal, Stripe, Patreon, Subscribestar, Ethereum, Litecoin, Monero, Payops, Nets Easy, MolliePayments, Bungeecolud and Paysera. Such platforms make it possible for alternative influencers to translate the user's digital doings into cash earnings through, for example subscription, crowdfunding, and sponsorship services. YouTube's Partner Program and outside actors like Patreon are some of the platforms that in recent years have helped individuals turn content creation on YouTube into lucrative full-time careers (Lewis 2018). Influencers in the Swedish network often relay their popularity on YouTube into monetary gains using the fundraising platform Patreon that allows viewers to make monthly donations for the content and influencers they support. This is the case for example, with The Golden One (TGO) —one of the most popular Swedish influencers who combines fitness coaching, Norse mythology and ethnopluralist politics in a multi-platform online performance of his 'ideological alter ego' (Poletti 2022, p. 33). TGO relied on Patreon for income until he was deplatformed in March 2022 after which he instead turned to SubscribeStar. On SubscribeStar users can unlock access to his podcasts for 2 dollars per month or subscribe to more exclusive, and hence more expensive, package deals combining access to the Podcast and "exclusive training and health content" along with an additional feature allowing users to personally ask questions for the Q&A videos. This subscription income is combined with pledges for direct contributions by way of PayPal, Bitcoin, Ethereum, Litecoin, and Monero on his website and his YouTube channel. Together, all of these different platforms enable an alternative trading which enhance economic self-reliance for individual and small-scale actors within this online ecosystem.

Another category of tech platforms involved in the commercialization of the far right is the so-called *social commerce platforms.* Allowing users to design and sell customized products, these platforms have in recent years become significant retailers of far-right merchandise. For example, in 2018 around the national elections in Sweden, 'Skurt store' was launched along with a variety of different accounts on social media (Instagram, Facebook etc.) to direct traffic to the store that sell t-shirts, hoodies and other attires in which Skurt[3] poses as a 'Viking', 'high commander', SS soldier, 'or 'crusader' declaring 'white sharia', protecting Sweden or 'going into battle in the suburbs.' *Skurt Store* is operated by undisclosed actors through the California-based social commerce platform *Spring.Inc.* Spring (formerly Teespring) has previously been involved in several controversies in the US around their sale of merchandise promoting racist violence and extremist messages and have previously reported to have changed their policies and safety routines to better monitor design for offensive content (see e.g., Chua 2021; Weise 2017; Yadav and Holt 2021). *Spring* is however but one of several international companies which undergirds the sale of merchandise in Sweden and provides part of the movement's financial infrastructure and an important node in its monetization model. An additional example of a so-called social commerce company includes the Australian print-on-demand retailer *Redbubble,* which sells a wide variety of items targeting a Swedish far-right consumer base. Most of the products currently on sale here riff off MAGA relics and slogans selling stickers, clothes and other products with statements such as 'Make Sweden Sweden again' or 'Make Sweden lagom again.' A third and final example of a social commerce platform offering print-on-demand designs for a Swedish far-right consumer base includes *Spreadshop* which sell bibs and baby clothes, aprons and t-shirts laced with far-right slogans and references including implicit and explicit references to 'Finspång'—a long standing campaign propelled by NMR among others which playfully engage with a fantasy of executing politicians, journalists and researchers and other members of the perceived elite in Sweden (for further discussions of the Finspång campaign, the coded language it draws on and the implicit death threats it carries, see Askanius and Keller; Idriss-Miller 2019).

Companies like Teespring, Spreadshop and Redbubble help amplify and monetize far-right ideas and enable groups to grow at a continuous rate just like crowdsourcing sites like Patreon and Subcribestar are facilitating far-right micro-celebrities in their quest for visibility and global audiences. These platforms are all important drivers in the commodification and renewal of longstanding far-right ideas and their rebranding toward a more fresh-faced fascism—which is accelerating an ongoing process of normalization around far-right beliefs and conspiracy theories in Sweden today.

c) Practices & products

Web shop merchandise: selling far-right fashion items

Contrary to the network of individual alternative influencers, the more formal groups and organizations of the far-right such as the NMR, DFS, and AfS tend to primarily engage in direct

sales of branded clothes and other attires with logos, official slogans, and emblems through online web shops embedded into their official websites. NMR showcases a relatively modest selection of products on their web shop, Greenpilled, including literature, pins and stickers, (previously also candles, mugs, hoodies and t shirts) most of which are decorated with the Tyr rune, the organization's official logo. AfS who opened their web shop in May 2020 similarly sell a range of traditional merch such as caps and t-shirts. These are decorated with slogans such as "Don't touch my country" or "Swedish Lives Matter." Whereas the first slogan is a reference to the French anti-racism campaign Touche pas à mon pote, later adapted by the Swedish Daily Aftonbladet for their campaign against hate speech and racism 'Vi gillar olika' (We love difference), the second is a nod to the BLM protests, which were unfolding at the time the t-shirt was first put on sale. The intertextual layers, the riffing off, remixing and nods to topical issues and events as they unfold is a testimony to the opportunism and the flexibility of how an actor such as AfS operates - constantly looking for new ways to tap into more mainstream and widespread populist anti-immigration sentiments and topical events in their framing of the movement and its key messages. Sales texts on the web shop itself provide potential customers with the overall framing of how to understand the key messages of the t-shirts being sold:

> 'Are you tired of people talking shit about Sweden? Or of tradition after tradition being eliminated because it doesn't fit into the new and "exciting" Sweden? Show your resistance against our country's destruction in the hands of liberals and socialists by buying this t-shirt'.

The Swedish Lives Matters t-shirt is marketed with the following sales pitch:

> 'Swedish lives matter is a slogan in remembrance of all the victims of imported multicultural violence. Show them that we will not forget those who have paid for the megalomania of the politicians with their life or health—and that we Swedes will no longer tolerate this!'

Among the wide variety of products on offer across the far-right scene in general, the t-shirt is "the primary commercial product through which coded messages are deployed and performed" (Miller-Idriss 2018:41). T-shirts, Miller Idriss argues, should be understood as everyday modes of resistance. They are particularly important tools of communication as they work both to signal membership and as such help to create feelings of togetherness vis-a-vis other insiders and as a means to make statements of resentment toward mainstream society to outsiders and to provoke fear and anxiety in ethnic or religious minorities. One of the most recent additions to the repertoire of T-shirt on sale in Sweden include t-shirts with the slogan 'Hell Seger'—a Swedish variant of the Nazi salute Sieg Heil. While this has long been used by neo-Nazi groups in their propaganda, banners and merchandise, its recent popularity however, on various new products sold by other actors, including DFS, happened when the slogan was exclaimed by a candidate for the Sweden

Democrats in an interview with the far-right news site *Samnytt* on the election night of the 2022 national elections. Her outburst which she later withdrew, corrected, and then claimed had been misinterpreted, was however widely interpreted as a dog whistle and celebrated by actors across the far right. Today variants of 'Hell Seger' garments are for sale in a variety of different places online, including the large and well-established Swedish retailer *Midgaardshop,* which is one of the biggest providers of fascist fashion items and other merchandise that promotes neo-Nazi ideology and white supremacy.

The product line offered in the web shop of DFS provides an example of an actor who coaches the ideological messages of their products in very subtle ways to the extent that it is virtually impossible for outsiders to discern or decode. They have an extensive line of lifestyle products that are displayed in sleek and minimalist settings on the web shop. Most of the merchandise sold by DFS convey simple and subtle slogans on discrete fashion items and accessories. This includes for example a silver bracelet on a female wrist with the engraving 'Swedish' or a simple black t-shirt with the words 're-migration is love'. The products are characterized by an absence of violent or offensive images and language. Instead, they are embroidered with seemingly harmless messages of love and pride for the nation. The banality and unremarkableness of these products is worth noticing. As a distinct style, this toned-down aesthetic offers ways of embedding political affinity and beliefs into the texture of everyday life. By interlacing the mundane with the extraordinary/extreme nature of some of the messages and slogan on these items, they invoke a sense of the ordinary; 'a cult of the light, the trivial and the everyday' (O'Shaughnessey 2009) which in turn conveys a sense of normalcy. The products imbue extremist ideas with a kind of 'banality of ordinariness' (p 55) of consumer culture and make them credible and palatable. In this sense, the mundaneness of these items pave the way for extremism to penetrate the sphere of the digital mainstream and ultimately help these ideas enter the quotidian.

Jargon, in-jokes and innuendo in coded products

An additional example includes the product lines that were sold on the now defunct website altnorden.se run by the group *Nordisk Alternativhöger* (Nordic Alt-Right). While the web shop closed in 2018 and this actor is no longer active, at least in the constellation in which it was first formed, the Nordic Alt-right provides an interesting example of an agile actor responsive to digital subcultural trends with an appeal to younger audiences. They tap into the visual language of mischievous, rebellious and humorous subcultures online. Rather than overtly hateful, racist or violent language the use of language, images and symbols which offer plausible deniability for those acquiring, wearing or using the products as they can always claim it is only a joke (Munn 2019; Tuters, 2019). Further, they represent an actor whose relatively sophisticated online sale strategies involve a third-party commercial actor outside of Sweden. In the immediate aftermath of the refugee crisis of 2015-16, a range of merchandise was on sale in their web shop laced with the slogan NEJ UT [No Out] which was spread widely on stickers, t-shirts and various other commercial products. The retail items of the Nordic Alt-right differ from those on offer in web

shops of DFS, AFS and NRM in that are these are more prominently laced with jargon, in-jokes and irony, tropes and symbols produced and circulated in the international (post)digital subcultures around contemporary far-right movements (Albrecht et al 2019).

Tapping explicitly into the rich pool of coded langue and symbolism of the global far right, stickers and other merch draw on well-known analogy to 'being pilled' (white pilled, redpilled, blackpilled etc) Pepe the Frog, the free helicopter ride meme* and various other symbols, styles and aesthetics which has come to be associated with the Alt-Right internationally. These products are explicitly marketed to those in the know; those in on the joke and thus part of the community. The merchandise of Nordic Alt-right has no official logo or name on it as is the case with both NMR and a lot of the items sold by AfS. As such the products dovetail with contemporary forms of visual culture and extremist discourse online which tend to disguise intent and 'authorship,' to avoid overtly violent discourse or hate speech and instead draw on popular culture, irony and innuendo to cloak extremism and carry harmful ideas and images into the digital mainstream (Askanius 2021; Bogerts and Fielitz; Greene 2019: Tuters & Hagen, 2020).

Product placement and influencers tactics

A variety of different marketing and promotion techniques are at work just as the network of channels provide a window onto the broader commercial market of far-right merchandise in Sweden today. Although mostly unaffiliated with formal groups, actors in the so called "Swedish YouTube family"[4] often appear on their channels wearing different forms of merchandise such as caps with AfS' logo, t-shirts from Medborgerlig Samling or DFS and other attires produced and sold by actors on the extra parliamentarian far-right. Some channel hosts offer others in the network the opportunity to promote their products, events or news (e.g., on upcoming protests) in return for a fee. Others again use their channels as a platform for advertising specific products—anything from self-defense courses and pepper spray to protein powder and fruit juice—and promote brands or companies that either sponsor the channel or that the actors themselves are directly involved in. Videos containing sponsored content are often (but not always) marked as "sponsored posts" or contain in-video "paid marketing" labels.

Lewis (2020) uses this term micro-celebrity or influencer practices synonymously to refer to a set of styles and techniques which resemble those of brand influencers and other commercial actors online. In some cases, actors adapt certain presentational techniques, and a certain style and tone associated with social media influencers while others use influencer marketing practices more front and centre with actors being sponsored by and promoting commercial products. A particularly good example of an actor in the Swedish AIN who excels in seamlessly interlacing branding techniques and political propaganda is provided by *The Golden One* who has a reached a considerable international audience. On the website of *TGO* visitors are introduced to an online marketplace and directed to a number of subpages displaying his repertoire of consumer products. These include his book "Collected teachings of the Golden One," the coffee brand *Det Gyllene Kaffekompaniet, Jotunheim Nuitrition* and not least the web shop of clothing brand *Legio Gloria*

in which TGO himself poses as model in for example 'Norse-Gallic woollen garments', polo shirts and gym stringers with Pagan imagery and iconography from Norse mythology. The lifestyle self-brand is conspicuous in its imperative that this is a brand exclusively for the well-trained body and mind, for the self-determined and disciplined: "There are plenty of faceless and rootless brands looking to gain traction in the globalist monoculture. Since those brands are for everyone, it also means that they are for no one. Legio Gloria is not for everyone." Although the claim of exclusivity may sound like a non-mainstreaming tactic, in the paradoxical system of fashion discourses the opposite has long been household knowledge (Thompson and Hayko 1997), because in the age of individualism, framing of "exclusivity" is by and large a prerequisite for the mainstreaming of style. TGO uses his multiple platforms to self-brand as political micro celebrity by adapting to the language and market logics of branding, building online following and repurposing conventional influencer marketing techniques to impart ideological ideas to his audiences.

Concluding discussions

With this chapter, we wanted to provide a detailed account the *actors, platforms, practices and products* involved in the ongoing commodification and monetization of far-right ideas in contemporary digital environments in the Nordic context. To begin to grasp this phenomenon a dual analytical focus is required paying attention to the merchandise itself (and the actors behind it) and the social tec platforms and retailers that facilitate their sale and ensure their value in the marketplace. Taken together these different actors operating across the far-right landscape and the product line they offer provide a window onto understanding different ways of monetizing and marketing far-right beliefs in contemporary digital environments. They represent the various ways in which far-right extremist ideas are embodied and find material form in anything from t shirt, hoodies, toad bags, fanny packs and caps to mugs, face masks, computer accessories jewellery, coffee and protein powder. Commercial products are advertised on websites and social media and sold via web shops powered by social commerce and print-on-demand platforms. To be sure, political attires and merchandise are no longer only purchasable through web shops of specific groups in relatively sealed off corners of the web but openly on sale on some of the biggest retail sites on the internet such as *Amazon* but also lesser know platforms such as *Redbubble*, *Spring* and *Spreadshop*. While not directly affiliated with the far right or part of the Alt-Tech alliance which undergirds the movement, these commercial actors form an essential part of the financial infrastructure that enables these actors to continue to operate.

Although this study is situated in the context of Sweden specifically, and the range of products and actors we have identified as part of this online ecosystem represent a relatively narrow market primarily catering to a national consumer group, it clearly demonstrates how dependent this localized/national circuit of products and producers is on international tech platforms and retailers. Further, the case of Sweden as explored here mirrors international tendencies and a broader shift in how far-right extremism elsewhere has successively gravitated away from skinhead life-style markers such as shaved heads, bomber jackets and military boots in favor of new, more ambiguous

and subtle markers of belonging and affinity laced onto consumer and lifestyle products appealing to younger target groups (Miller-Idriss, 2014; 2018).

The online ecosystem of the far right described in this chapter is rife with various forms of merchandise and consumer products that celebrates historical fascism, peddles conspiracy theories, and calls for violence in both explicit and ambiguous ways. These products are all designed to deliberately carry a certain playful ambiguity around the multiplicity of potential interpretations. In this sense, there is a game playing aspect to how the products skirt the lines between what is socially acceptable and toes the line of legality of hate speech. They play around with designs, expressions and symbols that have newly emerged as terms of hate allowing them to go under the radar. This development goes hand in hand with a larger shift in how extremist messages are increasingly cloaked in entertainment-oriented, humorous and ironic modes of communicating community online (Askanius, 2021; Bogerts & Fielitz, 2019; Greene, 2019).

To be sure, the commercialization of far-right ideology is not novel in and off itself. Far-right extremism has always been imbued in consumer culture and produced numerous physical artifacts and goods to sell the ideology. There are obviously historical continuities between the range of products sold by far-right actors in Sweden today and the cornucopia of consumer products that formed part of the propaganda apparatus of the Nazi regime. O'Shaughnessy (2009) for example, reminds us that the third Reich was always preoccupied with consumer culture and recognized the power of consumerism as a way of making the regime palatable. The tat of the regime (junk and kitsch products) was an important part of its popularity and popular appeal—it was the case then, as it is today.

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[1] Drawing on Marwick (2015) work on social media celebrity, Maly (2020) defines micro-celebrity practices as 'a self-presentation technique in which people view themselves as a public persona to be consumed by others, use strategic intimacy to appeal to followers, and regard their audience as fans.' (p. 113)

[2] SwebbTV's YouTube channel was taken down in 2020 after Community Guideline violations.

[3] The co-opted symbol Skurt—originally a frog-like hand puppet on a longstanding children's TV show in Sweden that has been turned into a far-right mascot. As a Swedish version of Pepe the Frog which turned far-right meme around the time of the 2016 presidential election in the US, Skurt is a recurring figure in numerous far-right memes and merchandise in Sweden (see Askanius and Keller 2021).

[4] The self-described "Swedish YouTube family" is a smaller group of tight knit actors in the AIN network who link extensively to each other's content and often do joint live streaming.