

Repertoires of contention and democratization in Sweden

Project design and early challenges

Two projects, funded by Swedish Research Council

The contentious swedes. Repertoires of contention and democratization in Sweden, 1820-1939 (VR 2023-01365)

‘The purpose of the project is to deepen the understanding of Sweden's democratization [...] aims to shed light on the political use of contentious gatherings such as public meetings, election meetings, demonstration marches in public space.’

Magnus Olofsson (PI)

Andrés Brink Pinto, Mathias Johansson

<https://www.contentiousgatherings.se/>

From political apathy to democracy. Investigating the role of popular movements in Sweden's democratization (VR 2023-01352)

‘[T]he democratization and consolidation of democracy in Sweden from 1880s to the 1930s [...] through an examination of pro-democratic protest and the response of political elites’

Magnus Wennerhag (PI)

Erik Bengtsson, Jenny Jansson, Måns Lundstedt, Katrin Uba

Project overview and research questions

Contentious Swedes

“The purpose of the project is to deepen the understanding of Sweden's democratization by examining changes in the political use of public space from 1820 to 1939.”

- How and when did the way people made policy in public change?
- Were there geographical differences and if so, how did they change over time?
- Which actors were making policy in the public sphere, did this change over time, and were one or more actors leading the way?

From political apathy to democracy

The development of pro-democratic protests in Sweden 1880–1939 – and how the state and political elites responded to them. Focusing on how movement networks and frames developed, and how they impacted and adjusted to elite behaviour.

- How did a unified movement for democratic rights emerge?
- How did a specific vision of democracy gain hold within this environment?
- How did elites respond to the protesters' claims and methods?

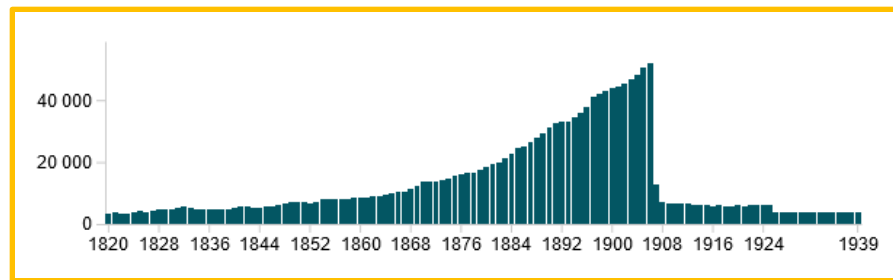
Why Sweden as a historical case?

Analytical strengths of the Swedish case

- relatively fast and late democratization
 - but did become a stable democracy
- relatively peaceful transition
- social movements central pro-democracy force
 - Sweden as periphery, imported ways of doing popular politics
- conservatives (including farmers) central anti-democracy force
- the Swedish Sonderweg-debate, the not-so deep roots of Swedish 20th century democracy and egalitarianism

Methodological strengths of the Swedish case

- The Royal Library database on digitalized Swedish newspapers as a source for historical research
 - Close to 1,6 million pages 1820-01-01 to 1939-12-32
 - Almost complete up til 1906
 - Roughly 1/7 of all papers 1907 to 1924

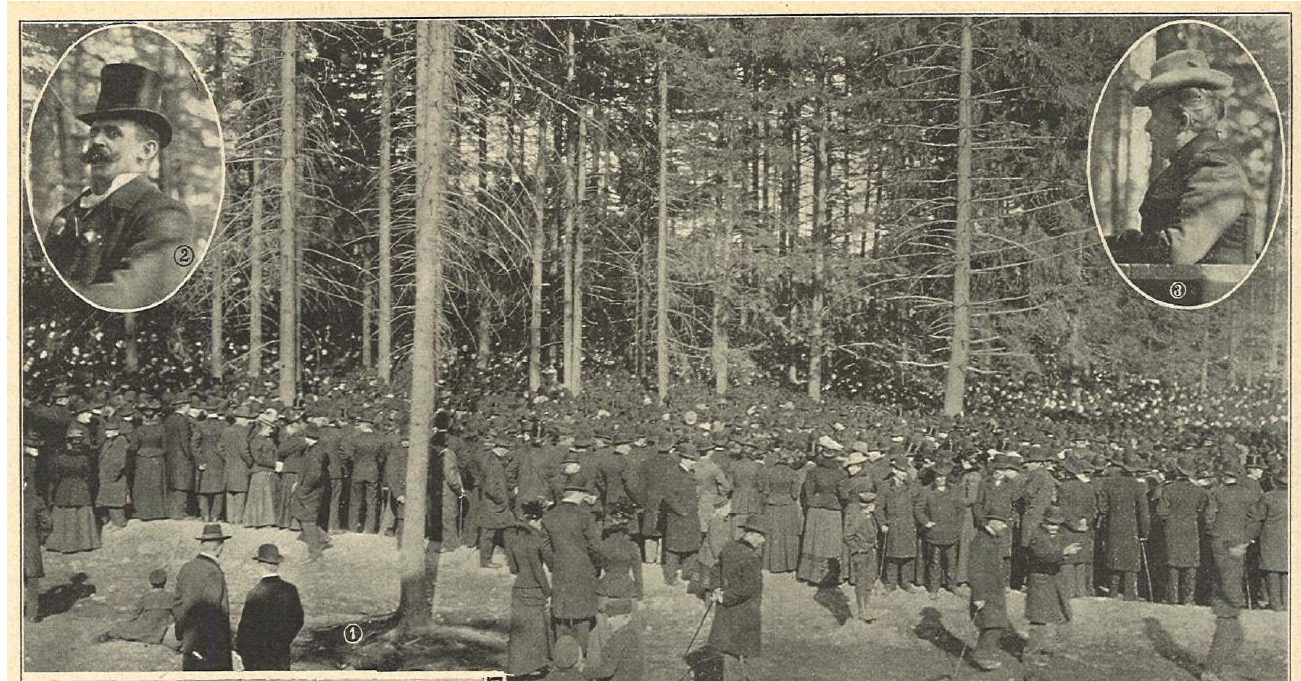


“A PE is an event, occurring outside of established political institutions, during which multiple people gather at a publicly accessible location to express claims that, if realized, would affect the interests of one or more groups”

	Toward operationalization	Exceptions/comments
“Event”	The occurrence can be delineated in time and space. One day+One location	Events that move between locations/go on for multiple days without significant discontinuities can count as unitary.
“Outside of established political institutions”	Event should not be part of routine procedures (e.g. elections, parliamentary meetings, court proceedings, etc.)	Events that <i>disrupt</i> activities in established political institutions
“Collective”	≥2 participants	A collective actor does not need to be a formal organization
“Publicly accessible location”	Most outdoors activities, but also some indoors events. There should be no membership/ticket/other requirements for participation	Events that move into otherwise inaccessible locations (e.g. meeting disruptions)
“Expresses a claim that...”	Claims that are addressed <i>collectively</i> against/toward some counterpart that, if they were to be realized, would affect the interests of at least one party	Claims can be expressed retroactively, and they can be implied (understood from the context).

Four primary “types”

- Marches
- Meetings
- Collective violence
- Petitions (why?)
- (Why no strikes?)

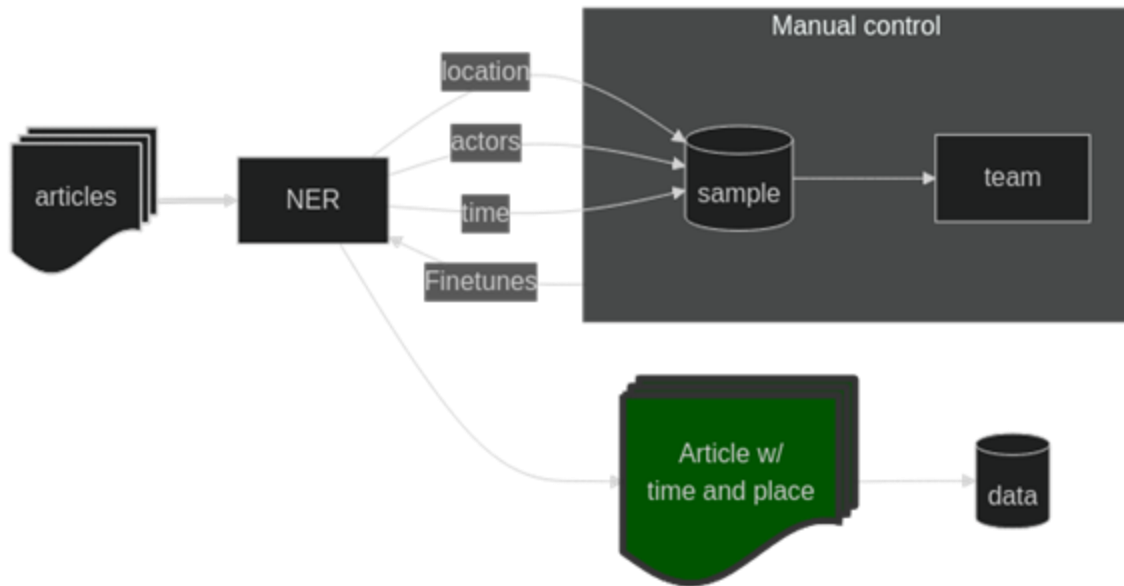


What is to be coded, and why?

	To code	Main analytical contribution
Where/When	Date, time, town, location within town	General occurrence; diffusion
Who	Organizations, part. individuals, numbers	Networks
How	How do they protest?	Repertoires
What	Claims (general/specific categories), slogans	Frames
To whom	Recipient and target of claims (incl. "public opinion")	Frames; networks
Repression	Interventions, violence, arrests, etc.	Repertoires; protest dynamics

Distance reading and the (ideal) digital pipeline

Named Entity Recognition (NER) Annotation and Filtering



Computer-assisted PEA: general challenges

- Identify duplicates
- Disaggregate simultaneous events
- Integrate contextual information
- Going beyond contemporary sources

Project-specific challenges

A repertoire in the making

- Capturing an unsettled repertoire
 - Atypical *combinations* of actions
 - Grey area between public and non-public actions
- Capturing an unsettled *language* about the repertoire
 - “Unnamed” actions
 - Many names for the same thing, several things with the same name.
 - Initial variation in spelling of imported words for protests

A massively changing media landscape

- The project covers the emergence of the 20th century news market
- An unsettled genre, an unsettled market

Technical/data-specific challenges

- Compound words (e.g. “workers’ demonstration”=arbetardemonstration)
- Poor/uneven OCR quality
- Sharp decrease in digitization after 1906

Solutions

Automated methods occur through several steps, incl. several steps of manual annotation

Combine automated and manual reading/coding

Structure database according to time/place-combinations

Use a living lexicon for event-types with established names (e.g. “förstamajtåg”, “folkmöte”)