

En kompis pappa och en ytlig djuping

Partieliters ambivalenta partiledarideal

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Abstract

A friendly father figure and a superficial intellectual. Party elites' ambivalent party leadership ideal

This thesis studies political elites' beliefs about the ideal party leader. This ideal, like other human ideals, is characterized by ambivalence. The thesis explores the ambivalence expressed in party elites' leadership ideal and how it can be understood.

The study draws primarily on qualitative interviews with members of the party elites in the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Party in Sweden. Specifically, it analyzes the "life world" of the party leaders, party secretaries, group leaders in the Swedish Parliament, and election committee chairmen. Building on classical and modern research on leadership and political parties, the thesis derives an analytical tool to guide the interviews which covers six aspects of party leadership: Characteristics, Leadership style, Tasks, Freedom of action, Representation, and Status.

The empirical analysis shows that the elites' party leadership ideal is ambivalent and different across the two parties. The ambiguities can be summarized as dichotomies, where the ideal leader should encompass both sides of the dichotomy. The Social Democratic Party elites' ideal is represented by two dichotomies: the leader versus the team and the party versus the government. To bridge the ambiguities, the elite resort to the idea of "anchoring". This notion resolves conflicts between the leader and the surrounding team and the party and the government.

The ideal of the Liberal Party's elites includes four dichotomies: dogmatism versus pragmatism; idea versus person; appearance (outward-looking) versus action (inward-looking); and free versus constrained. Unlike the case of the Social Democratic Party, it is less evident how the Liberal Party's elites accommodate the ambiguities. However, an emphasis on accountability and maintaining a balance between existing conflicts, partially remedies the dilemma. Also, the idea of leadership within the Liberal Party is less problematic compared to the Social Democratic Party.

In sum, while the Social Democrats' ideal resembles the "friendly father figure", the Liberals' ideal is portrayed by the "superficial intellectual". The findings also indicate that the way in which the parties were established, their experience of being in government, size, ideology, and position within the party system affect their beliefs about leadership ideals.

Keywords: *Political elites, political leadership, party leadership, party leader ideal, life world, ambivalent leadership ideal, dichotomous leadership ideal.*

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