

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

Master thesis

2023

August Kaae Merved

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

August Kaae Merved

**Anonymous Private Party Funding in
Denmark: How do journalists cover this
issue?**

Master Thesis

Prague 2023

Author: August Kaae Merved, BA

Supervisor: Mgr. Anna Shavit, Ph.D

Academic Year: 2022/2023

Bibliographic note

Merved, A. (2023). *Anonymous Private Party Funding in Denmark: How do journalists cover this issue?* (Master Thesis; pp. 1–50). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism, Supervisor Mgr. Anna Shavit, Ph.D.

Abstract

This thesis intends to examine the amount- and reasons for the news coverage related to the controversial party funding system in Denmark. This is achieved through comparisons of other political cases during the Danish 2022 and 2019 elections in a quantitative media analysis. The results are then analyzed and discussed using the data from eight interviewed Danish journalists working on some of the seven most prominent Danish media outlets. These qualitative interview data provide insights into reasons, motives, and causes for the fluctuation and difference in the coverage between the other observed and analyzed political cases in the past two elections. The findings show that the journalists deem party funding a complex and technical subject, but still, a subject deemed important to cover by journalists. However, in a fast-paced news agenda, the non-transparent party funding is covered less in comparison with news topics or cases during elections that are more emotionally charged and personalized, or topics that can provide a more direct influence on society, according to the qualitative data - as opposed to the more complex cases of political funding.

Keywords

Party funding, Media, Coverage, Denmark, Journalists, Transparency

Abstrakt

Tato práce má za cíl zkoumat množství a důvody zpravodajského pokrytí souvisejícího s kontroverzním systémem financování politických stran v Dánsku. Toho je dosaženo porovnáním s jinými politickými případy během dánských voleb v letech 2022 a 2019 v kvantitativní analýze médií. Výsledky jsou následně analyzovány a diskutovány na základě dat z osmi rozhovorů s dánskými novináři pracujícími pro některé ze sedmi nejvýznamnějších dánských médií. Tato kvalitativní data získaná prostřednictvím rozhovorů

nabízejí hlubší vhled do důvodů, motivací a příčin fluktuace a rozdílů ve zpravodajském zastoupení mezi ostatními sledovanými a analyzovanými politickými případy během posledních dvou voleb. Závěry ukazují, že novináři považují financování stran za složité a technické téma, ale i přesto za důležité jej pokrýt. Nicméně, v rychlém zpravodajském programu je téma netransparentního financování politických stran pokryto méně ve srovnání s novinkami nebo případy během voleb, která mají větší emoční náboj a osobní přesah, nebo záležitostí, které mohou mít přímý dopad na společnost, podle kvalitativních dat - na rozdíl od složitějších případů politického financování.

Klíčová slova

Financování politických stran, Média, Zpravodajské pokrytí, Dánsko, Žurnalisté (Novináři, Reportéři), Transparentnost

Range of thesis: 50 pages and 101802 characters

Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.
4. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

Prague ...

August Kaae Merved

25-07-2023

Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism FSV UK

Research proposal for Erasmus Mundus Journalism Diploma Thesis

THIS PART TO BE FILLED BY STUDENT:

Student's surname and given name:

Merved, August Kaae

Registry stamp: / Razítko podatelny:

Univerzita Karlova Fakulta sociálních věd		
Došlo dne:	29 -11- 2022	-1-
Čj:	426	Příloh:
Přiděleno:		

Start of studies for EMJ (in Aarhus)

September 2021

Your faculty e-mail:

48776060@fsv.cuni.cz

Study program/form of study:

Erasmus Mundus Journalism

Thesis title in English:

Anonymous private party funding in Denmark: Did the journalists fail this issue?

Expected date of submission (semester, academic year – example: *SS 2021/2022*)

(Thesis must be submitted according to the Academic Calendar.)

2nd semester, 2022-2023

Main research question (max. 250 characters):

RQ1: How have journalists covered the non-transparent private party funding in Denmark so far?

RQ2: Does the coverage have an impact on the legislation still being in place?

The current state of research on the topic (max. 1800 characters):

Danish electoral campaigns take place on crooked premises, which is stated by both Transparency International and GRECO. The blue (right-wing) parties receive a way higher amount of financial support from private individuals and businesses than the red parties, and there are several examples of the business community expecting and also getting something in return for this support.

The issue has been covered by journalists, and the private non-transparent party funding has been discussed and published by numerous Danish news outlets over many years. Surprisingly, it has gotten little to no attention from the public compared to other journalistic focus areas, such as the climate crisis, #metoo, and the boycott of the 2022 World Cup.

The lack of interest and action regarding this non-transparent funding could be due to the lack of journalistic coverage, the complexity of the topic, or simply that journalists have underestimated the lack of importance that the Danes have towards the non-transparent funding. This hole in academic research is what I make attempt to close with this thesis.

However, there is a lack of academic research covering the issue. From a journalistic point of view, this is an exciting topic to investigate further because the Danes rely on the media

Expected date of submission (semester, academic year – example: *SS 2021/2022*)

(Thesis must be submitted according to the Academic Calendar.)

2nd semester, 2022-2023

Main research question (max. 250 characters):

RQ1: How have journalists covered the non-transparent private party funding in Denmark so far?

RQ2: Does the coverage have an impact on the legislation still being in place?

The current state of research on the topic (max. 1800 characters):

Danish electoral campaigns take place on crooked premises, which is stated by both Transparency International and GRECO. The blue (right-wing) parties receive a way higher amount of financial support from private individuals and businesses than the red parties, and there are several examples of the business community expecting and also getting something in return for this support.

The issue has been covered by journalists, and the private non-transparent party funding has been discussed and published by numerous Danish news outlets over many years. Surprisingly, it has gotten little to no attention from the public compared to other journalistic focus areas, such as the climate crisis, #metoo, and the boycott of the 2022 World Cup.

The lack of interest and action regarding this non-transparent funding could be due to the lack of journalistic coverage, the complexity of the topic, or simply that journalists have underestimated the lack of importance that the Danes have towards the non-transparent funding. This hole in academic research is what I make attempt to close with this thesis.

However, there is a lack of academic research covering the issue. From a journalistic point of view, this is an exciting topic to investigate further because the Danes rely on the media

for political news. They trust the media when disclosing political information and rely highly on them during electoral campaigns.

Therefore, the journalistic coverage of the issue is an important research topic. It is relevant for both Danish politics as well as Danish media to be transparent. If the political private party funding is not, the media must at least be to ensure the public's opinion of the Danish state as non-corrupt so that both state and media can live up to the trust of the public. Now as well as in the future.

Expected theoretical framework (max. 1800 characters):

For the expected theoretical framework, the aim is to use the scientific theory of phenomenology to understand and describe the phenomenon that is political funding.

Framing theory will also come into use when looking into how private funding towards politicians is framed in Denmark by politicians and the media.

Furthermore, the use of theories on accountability by scholar Tero Erkkilä will help explain some of the differences that are in the Danish notion of accountability which could rely more on deliberation rather than a sense of accountability and thus explain the reason for the lack of problematization of the non-transparency in the party funding. This will also shed light on why the private party funding has not been of much interest to the Danish journalists (since it is simply viewed differently from nation to nation).

In the analysis of qualitative interviews, I will look into why the journalists have not succeeded in creating a "fuss" about the lack of transparency in political funding. With the theories above, the goal is to first gain a greater understanding of non-transparency in private political funding even being an issue. Secondly, the theories will be used to find a cause for the seeming lack of interest and action among journalists to resolve the issue. Thirdly, the chosen theories aim to shed light on what responsibility the media and journalists have in terms of how the non-transparency topic has been covered as well as how they can or should improve the coverage in the future to contribute to private party funding becoming more transparent.

Expected methodology, and methods for data gathering and analysis (max. 1800 characters):

To find the answers to why the journalists are not more engaged in the issue, it is important to understand why the status quo is as it is now. Qualitative interviews with journalists will pinpoint why the current cultural acceptance is shaped the way it is and what the journalists think of coverage. These interviews will also include political experts. It is furthermore interesting to unfold which kind of journalists, which kind of media, and which kind of news outlets cover the topic to investigate whether or not this has an impact on the current non-transparency of private funding. It will also be possible to look into the difference it could have if other journalists or other media outlets covered the issue.

To shed light on how non-transparency has been covered so far, I will use coding on articles that have been published about the topic. The coding method will provide knowledge on which angles and frames have been put to the topic and also in which quantity.

To provide insight into the phenomenon, I will start with a quantitative analysis to find out how much journalists frequent the issue of political parties. Here, especially looking into the differences between parties such as Venstre and Konservative, who receive the most private funding, and those who receive the least funding. This analysis will also provide information about two left-wing parties as the only two political parties that disclose their full funding information, and the parties who disclose little to no information.

Once it is established how the problem is covered, I will move to interviews with journalists from mainstream Danish newspapers. In the following expected research design, I cover which and how many journalists to interview, what I will ask them, and how I will do it.

Expected research design (data to be analyzed, for example, the titles of analyzed newspapers and selected time period):

For the research design, I will make use of qualitative semi-structured interviews. The interviews will be recorded and answers deemed valuable for answering the research

question will be selected. The quotes picked will be transcribed, whereas the rest will be in attached sound files. My thoughts on the analysis are based on the attempt to understand why the non-transparency is accepted and thus a use of the phenomenology science theory.

10 semi-structured interviews with Danish journalists

Since the core of the thesis is the journalists, I will pick selected individuals to provide knowledge on the coverage of the non-transparent party funding. I will carefully select journalists that both have and have not covered the political funding (but overall still pick journalists that work with political news). I will interview journalists from the national mainstream media, such as Politiken, Berlingske, Jyllands-Posten, and TV2, since these are all outlets that have been covering the funding. Questions will circulate around themes of whether the journalists think they have lived up to their hopes in regards to the publicity of the topic if they think it has been covered enough in relation to other topics of interest if they believe they have made a change, whether or not a change is even necessary, and what it would take to make such a change from a journalistic point of view.

3-5 semi-structured interviews with politicians, political researchers, and scientists

To supplement the statements of the above-mentioned journalists, I will also conduct interviews with politicians, political researchers, and scientists. This includes people with great knowledge of the Danish political landscape, such as current parliamentary politicians, lecturers in political sciences at higher educational institutions in Denmark, and/or scientists with a Ph.D. or higher degree in either general politics, political finances, or corruption within the state of Denmark.

Coding and systematization of articles written about the topic

In order to gain an overview of what has been written in the past I will make use of qualitative coding and framing. I am going to set up parameters of how the non-transparent funding has been framed in the past and in which quantity in relation to other topics (such as either aforementioned #metoo, climate change, etc.). There is free access to a comprehensive database of all published articles in Denmark, which I will make use of. I will pick a sample of selected articles and thus put it into a system and research whether it

has been covered as much as the others and if it has been covered the same way. Among other things, I will be looking at the length of the articles, the complexity of each, and from which outlets they have been posted in. I will also make sure to define my search through selected keywords.

Expected thesis structure (chapters and subchapters with a brief description of their content):

ABSTRACT

- Summary of the thesis

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

- A short overview of the topic.

PURPOSE AND LIMITATIONS

- Limited to the perspective of journalists. My research's societal, academic, and cultural relevance

CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

- Short explanation of the Danish political system, party funding rules, donation system, and so on.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Review of primary sources and statistics. How my research will contribute to the existing academia.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Explanation of concepts and theories used. Phenomenology, framing theory

METHODOLOGY

- Interview style, questions, justification of analysis methods.

RESULTS

- Presentation of the outcome of the research.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

- What can be concluded and what cannot be concluded from the results. How the results can be used in practice.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

- Discussion in relation to the answering of the research question. Especially in regards to whether the journalists “failed this issue” of the coverage.

Basic literature list (at least 5 most important works related to the topic and the method(s) of analysis; all works should be briefly characterized on 2-5 lines):

Power, S. (2020). Party Funding and Corruption in Denmark. In: Party Funding and Corruption. Political Corruption and Governance. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-37580-5_9

This paper examines the relationship between finance, party funding, and thus corruption in Denmark. To analyze this the case of the UK party financing system has been used.

Pop, Ioana. (2012). Acceptance of Corrupt Acts: a Comparative Study of Values Regarding Corruption in Europe. Journal of Social Research & Policy. 3. 27-42.

A comparative study based on the European nations and their acceptance of corruption, based on values, demographics, trust in the government, religion, and other factors. The conclusion of the study is that these variables have a high impact on the level of acceptance.

May, D. (2018). "Chapter 7: Political party funding and the enigma of trust". In Handbook of Political Party Funding. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing. Retrieved Nov 9, 2022, *from*

<https://www.elgaronline.com/view/edcoll/9781785367960/9781785367960.00013.xml>

This paper examines the ways that different ways of party funding increases or decrease trust in the political mandates. The study shows that private contributions to political parties decrease trust.

Kukutschka, R.M.B. (2021) Global Corruption Barometer: Every fourth Dane believes that corruption is increasing, Global Corruption Barometer: Hver fjerde dansker mener, at

korruption er stigende. Transparency International. Available at: <https://transparency.dk/global-corruption-barometer-hver-fjerde-dansker-mener-at-korruption-er-stigende/> (Accessed: November 9, 2022).

Statistics on the level of corruption and attitude towards corruption in Denmark. The statistics state that the level of corruption in Denmark is increasing, according to the respondents.

Erkkilä, T. (2007). Governance and Accountability: A Shift in Conceptualisation. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 31(1), 481-518.

- A paper that discusses the “shifting conceptualisation of accountability.” Different methods of accountability can create vastly different outcomes on how legitimacy is viewed in societies.

Related theses and dissertations (list of B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. theses defended at Charles University or other academic institutions in the last five years):

As of now I could only find one paper that was even closely related to my topic, which is the diploma thesis referenced beneath this paragraph. The relation to my topic is in the part of the diploma thesis where Styrkul discusses the party funding’s importance to anti corruption and how to live up to the guidelines of GRECO.

STYRKUL, Alexej. The Ukraine’s efforts toward Europeanization: Anti-Corruption and Justice reforms. Prague, 2021. 82 p. Diploma Thesis (Mgr.). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institut Politologie. Katedra Politologie. Academic advisor doc. PhDr. Jan Karlas, M.A., Ph.D.

I did not find any research related to my specific approach.

Date / Signature of the student:

THIS PART TO BE FILLED BY THE ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR:

I confirm that I have consulted this research proposal with the author and that the proposal is related to my field of expertise at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

I agree to be the Thesis supervisor.

Anna Shavit

.....
Surname and name of the supervisor

Date / Signature of the

Further recommendations related to the topic, structure and methods for analysis:

Further recommendations of literature related to the topic:

The research proposal has to be printed, signed and submitted to the FSV UK registry office (podatelna) in two copies, **by November 15, 2021**, addressed to the Program Coordinator.

Accepted research proposals have to be picked up at the Program Coordinator's Office, Mgr. Sandra Štefaniková. The accepted research proposal needs to be included in the hard copy version of the submitted thesis.

RESEARCH PROPOSALS NEED TO BE APPROVED BY THE HEAD OF ERASMUS MUNDUS JOURNALISM PROGRAM.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
1.0 INTRODUCTION	2
2.0 PURPOSE AND LIMITATIONS	3
2.1 Main research questions	4
2.2 Deviation from the proposal to the presented thesis	5
3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	6
3.1 The controversy surrounding the party funding system	6
3.1.1 The Revelations of Frihedsbrevet in the 2022 Election	8
3.2 Definition of a political scandal/case	9
3.3 Supplementary interviews with scholars, researchers, and professors.	9
3.3.1 Handling of Respondents' Data	10
3.3.2 Lack of transparency is a problem	11
3.3.3 Theories on the amount of coverage of non-transparent funding	12
3.4 The media does influence transparency in the government	13
3.5 How journalists pick stories	14
4.0 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS	14
4.1 The Danish party funding and donation system	14
4.1.1 The Danish media structure	15
5.0 METHODOLOGY	16
5.0.1 Motivation to study	16
5.1 Analysis of the amount of coverage of private party donations during elections	17
5.1.1 Criteria for selection and sampling	18
5.1.2 The comparison search	20
5.1.3 Expected results	22
5.2 Research of the causes for the journalists' coverage of anonymous funding	23
5.2.1 Interview respondent criteria	23
5.2.2 Questions to journalist respondents	24
5.3 Method of analyzing the qualitative data	25
6.0 RESULTS	25
6.1 Coverage during the election periods	25
6.1.1 The 2022 election	26
6.1.2 The 2019 election	27
6.1.3 The past three elections' coverage of the non-transparent party funding	28
6.2 Qualitative interview results	28
6.2.1 An "important" topic to cover	29
6.2.2 A subject hard to cover	31
6.2.3 Other political scandals/cases are more approachable and interesting	33
7.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS	37

7.1 What can be interpreted from the results	37
7.2 What cannot be concluded from the results	41
8.0 CONCLUSION	43
9.0 LITERATURE	45
9.1 Appendices	45
9.2 Journals	45
9.3 News articles	46
9.4 Other	49

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Ever since the Danish party funding laws were implemented in 1995 there has been raised concerns about the lack of transparency between the funding from private donors towards political parties. The absence of public knowledge on who the political parties get their money from, how much they get, and who they meet with has led to speculations of conflict of interests. The financial premises on which Danish electoral campaigns run have been criticized multiple times by scholars and anti-corruption entities such as Transparency International (Astrup, 2019) and GRECO (2018).

These donations through so-called “pengeklubber” or “erhvervsklubber” (directly translated to “money clubs” in English) can then lead to opportunities for the donors to discuss various aspects with the Danish politicians - again without public knowledge of whom they meet with and what is discussed (Jørgensen, 2017). Simply put, one could theorize that the public has no way of knowing whether policies and political statements are influenced by corporate money.

Journalists have covered the political cases on how politicians try to surpass the funding laws, the problematic incidents of the system as of now, and the secretive nature of the relationship between politicians and private donors. However, the coverage of the non-transparent party funding is significantly lower compared to other subjects covered during the last two national Danish elections in 2019 and 2022, such as personal political misconduct or the political scandals surrounding the Qatari World Cup - even though they have certain parallels topic-wise. So with this thesis, I aim to shed light on why there is a difference in a descriptive-analytical manner by letting the journalists' explanations provide answers to why the coverage fluctuates among the topics and why some topics during the elections get either

more or less coverage than one another. In this thesis this has been done by comparing the media coverage of the non-transparent party funding with the cases of political misconduct of former prime minister candidate Søren Pape Poulsen and the coverage of the Qatari world cup - both were political cases during the last Danish election in 2022. Furthermore, the case of Rasmus Paludan, a right-wing politician, that caused a media storm during the election of 2019, has also been analyzed and included in the data of this thesis to make a comparison concerning the coverage of non-transparent party funding.

With this thesis, I have researched the amount of coverage of non-transparent funding in a quantitative media coverage analysis compared to other political cases to get an overview of the status and quantity of media exposure the aforementioned political cases have gotten in comparison with party funding stories.

To provide perspective and outside knowledge towards getting a better understanding of the subject I have gathered information from three Danish media scholars to provide a more fitting theoretical overview of the current media coverage. This has been done before I got in touch with the eight journalist respondents working on some of the seven most prominent Danish media institutions and interviewed for this thesis. Their answers are the basis for explaining the amount of coverage during the past two Danish elections and I have aimed to answer some of the reasons why the topic has been covered less than the other political cases, through qualitative methodology in terms of semi-structured interviews with the beforementioned journalists.

The results show that the coverage fluctuates much and the explanation as to why this is the case varies with different editorial, societal, and personal choices, according to the journalist respondents interviewed for this thesis.

2.0 PURPOSE AND LIMITATIONS

This thesis is limited to the perspective of journalists. My research's societal, academic, and cultural relevance is based on observations from the data acquired for this thesis.

I aim to contribute to the existing literature by shedding light on what makes one political scandal/controversy get more media coverage than others during election periods in Denmark. First by conducting a quantitative overview of the former election period coverage on the subject and latter by semi-instructed interviews with selected journalists working in some of

the most prominent Danish media institutions. With the use of the journalists' knowledge, I hoped to get clarity on whether the lesser coverage is due to the complexity of the topic, a lack of interest from the public towards stories on non-transparent party funding, or a lack of access to information kept by the politicians towards the journalists, or even further reasons.

The lack of academic research covering the Danish subject on coverage of non-transparent party donations and the reasons behind the coverage is a hole I aim to close with this thesis.

In the field of media studies, it is an exciting topic to investigate further because the Danes rely on the media for political news (Kulturministeriet, 2020, p. 10). They trust the media when disclosing political information (Schröder, Blach-Ørsten, & Eberholst, 2022, p. 13) thus making the media's role in the case of covering political scandals/cases and their reasons for coverage important in a society highly reliant on their media. For instance, almost 50 percent of the Danes are reading about either the "Danish Economy" or finances at least once a week, according to Danish statistics (Mindshare, 2016, p. 22).

It is important to emphasize that this study is limited to the perspective of the journalists alone - that means this thesis is not a study of what the Danish population thinks about political scandals or how it is covered - it is rather an aim to understand journalistic reasons for why the topic is handled and prioritized the way it is during elections.

Furthermore, this thesis is not a study of laws or reasons behind the party funding system's existence - but rather how the system is covered from the journalistic perspective.

My purpose with this thesis is to make an analytical description of how much party funding is covered during elections and why the coverage is as it is.

2.1 Main research questions

Based on the aforementioned introduction and aim, this thesis will aim to answer the following two research questions:

RQ1: How much have journalists covered the non-transparent private party funding in Denmark in the past two elections?

RQ2: What causes are there for the amount of news coverage of the non-transparent party funding in Denmark in the past two elections?

With RQ1, I aim to quantify the coverage to provide an overview of the coverage in the election and by that, see the amount of exposure the Danish media provides the non-transparent party funding concerning other subjects.

With RQ2, I aim to find data on what reasons and incidents affect the eight journalists' choices when they choose stories during elections about political scandals and non-transparent party funding. This is done by looking at and investigating why the found number of articles has been written and prioritized space in the media sphere during the last two elections. In other words, this thesis aims to determine *why* the coverage is the way it is and what potential reasons lie behind the prioritization and amount of media attention it has.

2.2 Deviation from the proposal to the presented thesis

As I have delved deeper into my research, gotten a better understanding of the subject, and obtained insights into the process of my academic writing, I have found it necessary to make some refinements and changes that deviate from the original thesis proposal in this finished thesis, so I could achieve a more comprehensive work.

The first research question has been changed regarding a bit of wording to make it more precise and in line with what I aim to research.

The second research question in the proposal was “Does the coverage have an impact on the legislation still being in place?” which has been overhauled by the question “What causes are there for the amount of news coverage of the non-transparent party funding in Denmark?” which is a significant change - however justifiable regarding the first question being highly difficult to provide an academic answer to. To provide causality between the relationship of journalistic changes to political legislation has been deemed an unfeasible task since there could be a great number of factors determining why the party funding legislation is in place - an overall impossible task to undergo with the resources allocated for this thesis to fulfill.

Therefore, I have instead chosen to focus on how the second research question could contribute to the first one (the one that researches the amount of coverage) and vice versa. Meaning that with this constellation they contribute more to one another and in the end can be able to provide a greater supplement to existing literature. Furthermore, the newly made second research question is answerable within the allocated resources and time frame of this thesis format, which is deemed important.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section will review primary sources, theories, and statistics. This will also explain why journalists look into non-transparent party funding, why it is covered in the first place, and why three scholars deem the current system a democratic problem.

3.1 The controversy surrounding the party funding system

In 2023 Denmark was declared the least corrupt country in the world by Transparency International, (Transparency International, 2023, p. 2) but according to the CEO of the Danish Transparency International section, Jesper Olsen, the index only “tells us something about how the level of corruption in Denmark is perceived and what kind of experience you have abroad of cooperating with Danish authorities and civil servants,” (Ritzau, 2023) - and therefore not the actual level of corruption, only the perception. As stated earlier, one of the factors that cause corruption, according to both GRECO (2018) and Transparency International Denmark (Astrup, 2019) is this lack of transparency in the party funding system. Jesper Olsen claims that “Denmark is one of the countries where it is easiest, for example, to conceal financial transactions from the politicians.” (Ritzau, 2023)

On Eurobarometer polls, on how the Danes perceive the level of corruption within the government, Danes score higher than Britain in regards to trust (European Commission, 2017, p. 9). However, 30 percent of the Danes surveyed “considered political parties to be corrupt/extremely corrupt, with 18% saying the same of the parliament/the legislature.”(Power, 2020, p. 181) - and according to Power, this could be due to the lack of transparency in the political funding system (Power, 2020, p. 171).

One of the reasons is that the definition of the donation/party funding law is that the money has to be used towards “any activity aimed at promoting the election in this country of one or more candidates or promoting a particular result of a referendum. Including disseminating political views, establishing and running an organization and cooperating with other organizations, etc.”[quote translated from Danish to English by the thesis author] which is a wide definition according to skeptics (Jørgensen, 2017, ¶ Generelle bestemmelser).

Furthermore, the law has been criticized for simply being too easy to surpass (Jensen, 2016). For example, if a donor just provides 19.999 DKK/2.683 EUR (which is fairly close to the limit that can be donated anonymously) to each political party member, instead of just a single person, it does not have to be displayed anywhere. In that sense, the donor can provide multiple donations to the party itself by just providing each member/politician of the party an amount under the value of 22.800 DKK [around 3000 EURO].

Moreover, several parties have advised that potential donors could use a method where they simply split up the number of donations in smaller portions and then send it from different VAT numbers (Ritzau, 2022).

Lastly, donors use the so-called “business clubs” (or “pengeklubber” (“money clubs” translated into English)), to further anonymize themselves. By simply using the party-founded business clubs, the money is canalized from donors, via the middleman of the club, and then ends in the hands of the party (Ritzau, 2016). The business clubs have similarities to the American PACs (Political Action Committees), and larger donations to certain Danish political parties “does not provide exclusive access, but it provides a seat at the dinner table—or at least an invite to certain receptions,” as scholar Sam Power states (Power, 2020, p. 170). For an annual fee, it is possible in many of the larger parties to become a member of the business club, and thus get access to meetings with politicians - a difference from the basic principle of democracy, which could state that *one person = one vote*, but in this case, money can give access in another way. There is very limited knowledge of whom the politicians meet with, how much money they receive from the donors, and what is discussed at the meetings (Power, 2020, p. 171). It is simply hard to document who the politicians meet up with, and even more difficult to prove, if the people that the politicians meet up with have an influence on the legislation or rather that it is the politicians' motives and actions that lays the base for legislation (Krause-Kjær, 2016).

Such an example became knowledge to the public in a recent memoir book written in 2023 by a former political member of the right-wing Liberal Alliance party. The revelation of information in the book raised questions regarding how a wealthy banker and businessman, Lars Seier, had influenced the party's politics as far back as 2017 (Christensen and Holm, 2023). Among others, the party's taxation policies and whether the party should become a leading role in the government or remain a supporting party. In the memoir, the businessman is quoted saying, “I didn't put 10-15 million into the project to get easing at the

bottom,”(Christensen and Holm, 2023) referencing that he did not provide heaps of money to the party to support taxation policies that spared the “bottom” [people with the lowest income] from taxation and hence criticizing the party for not following his desired policy even though he provided funding support. The author of the book cannot state whether or not Lars Seier has had a direct influence on the policy but simply provide examples of what has been talked about within meetings between party donors and party members (Christensen and Holm, 2023). Interestingly it has been researched that larger private contributions to political parties do not correlate with a decrease in trust from the public - as described by scholar Danielle May (2018, p. 136). However, one of the reasons explaining this lack by the author is that the scope of studies is simply too narrow, and there has not been looked enough into it. secondly, those reports on the lack of correlation could have been from the politicians themselves - thus might be lacking statements since they “may be misleading,” (May, 2018, p. 136).

3.1.1 The Revelations of Frihedsbrevet in the 2022 Election

During the 2022 election in Denmark, one of the larger news stories was about non-transparent party funding - a story that many of the scholars and journalists interviewed for this thesis mentioned in their responses.

A small media by the name of Frihedsbrevet used a decoy and hidden recordings with politicians, local chairmen, and campaign staff, to reveal how they tried to surpass the law of party funding anonymity (Findalen et al., 2022). Frihedsbrevet used Mads Dinesen, a former nightclub owner, and convicted businessman, as a decoy. He called the politicians and their staff and said he would provide a large donation to the selected politician/party on the condition that he could remain anonymous - a donation of 50.000 DKK (around 6.700 EUR), which would exceed the amount which is allowed to be donated without the public’s knowledge. A large amount of the politicians and their staff, which were called, were willing to find ways to guide the surpassing of the law, the recordings showed. One of the most preferred methods was to split up the donations into amounts not overreaching the roughly 3059 EUR (that is the amount allowed to donate anonymously) and donate it to different party accounts with various CVR numbers, but still channeling it towards the selected politician in the end. Such a way of surpassing the law is not necessarily illegal but is against the initial intention of the law in the first place (Findalen et al., 2022).

So at its core, the story showed that the politicians were open to circumventing the rules to

obtain anonymous donations larger than the limit during the last election in 2022, which caused some media coverage, as can be seen in the Excel appendix (see Appendix 1).

3.2 Definition of a political scandal/case

In this thesis, I would categorize non-transparent funding, the surpassing of the laws, and the hidden nature of the transactions as a categorization of a *political scandal* rather than “political corruption” or “law-breaking” - or at least with a more neutral term as a “political case”. This is because politicians cannot get prosecuted or condemned in court based on the current funding law system, and thus do not act illegally. The definition of a political scandal in this thesis (and by my definition) is that a scandal does not necessarily have to be illegal. Just as with the Monica Lewinsky/Bill Clinton affair in 1998 - an incident that caused significant controversy due to accusations of abuse of power, but by the legal system were not per se illegal (History.com, 2017).

I have chosen to support the definition of a political scandal as described by Dziuda and Howell from the University of Chicago, in which they state: “At its heart, scandal is the public revelation of previously concealed misconduct,” (Dziuda and Howell, 2020, p. 197). The criteria used for the political scandal and/or “political case” in this thesis is that the politicians have committed moral or ethical misconduct. This could include a racist statement, a revelation of greediness, poor judgment, or not living up to the ideals of credibility Danish voters deem important for politicians, as said by Danish communication professor, Christian Kock (Kock, 2022).

A “political scandal” or “case” is a wide term, but the important notion, in this thesis, is that it is distinguishable from political illegal activity and is more a way of committing misconduct in one’s position as a politician.

3.3 Supplementary interviews with scholars, researchers, and professors.

To supplement the eight journalist interviews later presented in this thesis, I have gained information about what influences the coverage of the non-transparent party funding, from three semi-structured interviews with political researchers and scientists as background research tailored for this thesis. I have conducted the interviews to provide additional insights into the field of journalistic coverage of non-transparent party funding as a supplement to

already existing literature on the topic. The researchers have different backgrounds and approaches to the media than the working journalists, thus making their answers a valuable asset to the thesis literature. It was expected that the data gathered from the supplement respondents might provide clarity and aid in the framing of the questions in terms of which information is needed to be gained from the journalist respondents.

The supplement respondents/scholars were selected based on their knowledge of the Danish political media landscape and/or with expertise in party funding research. The respondents aimed for are lecturers in political sciences at higher educational institutions in Denmark and/or scientists with a Ph.D. or higher degree in politics, media studies, political finances, or corruption within the state of Denmark. The respondents selected were:

Mads Hove, political science Ph.D. student at the University of Amsterdam, and a researcher at the Southern University of Denmark who researches Danish politicians' use of money on social media, among other things.

Roger Buch, head of research at the Danish School of Media and Journalism.

Jørgen Albæk Jensen, professor emeritus with a special focus on political party funding at Aarhus University.

The three above scholar respondents, giving supplementary interviews, were asked questions that were tailored to this thesis' research, thus making their qualitative answers/data supporting the theoretical background knowledge of this paper. The supplement interview questions were on the themes of journalistic coverage of non-transparent funding during election periods, if non-transparency funding is a democratic problem in Denmark, why the party funding rules are different in Denmark than the neighboring countries, and why some political scandals were covered more than the non-transparent funding, etc.

3.3.1 Handling of Respondents' Data

Both the supplement interviews and the interviews with the eight journalists were conducted over Skype, Zoom, Google Meet, FaceTime, and Facebook Messenger. The choice of media was based on the respondents' preferred media and replaced the traditional phone interview (due to phone costs calling abroad or physical interviews traveling), due to the premise of the author's location in the Czech Republic and the respondents' location in Denmark. Since this thesis has no monetary allocated resources, the most cost-efficient option (which in this case was online/internet calls) were put to use for the interviews. The answers were then

recorded, transcribed, and then translated from Danish into English with DeepL Translation, and then put into appendixes which can be found in Appendix 2 and 3.

Regarding the processing of data, all respondents have signed a data consent form - a form previously used by the thesis author at Aarhus University. The purpose of the data consent form is to ensure that the thesis author will treat the data in accordance with the levels of confidentiality expected at a university master's level. The written forms can be seen upon request.

The journalists interviewed for this thesis have been provided with an alias to, first of all, secure the journalist's job security since this thesis is public online, and secondly, to ensure that the respondents could be as free as possible to speak about their job, opinion, and reasons of action.

3.3.2 Lack of transparency is a problem

All three scholars interviewed for this section agreed that the lack of openness surrounding the party system was a problem.

Scholar Jørgen Jensen states that it could be difficult to refuse a meeting with a private donor that just donated five million DKK (671.265 Euro) (anonymously canalized through different VAT numbers e.g.), out of fear of not receiving that kind of money in the following year, and in that way you as a private donor "...at least you buy access to the decision-makers,"(Appendix 2, Jørgen Jensen, p. 11).

Media researcher Roger Buch expresses concern over the current rules because it makes it unclear if politicians can be bought by stakeholders since we in the worst-case scenario do not know "whether the politicians are in the pockets of people or companies or something else,"(Appendix 2, Roger Buch, p. 41) when asked if the current party funding rules were a democratic problem in Denmark. He also states that there has been proof from whistleblowers and spokespeople that money can provide access to stakeholders to non-public meetings with politicians - and that in itself is not corruption, since it is difficult to prove that stakeholders influence the policy "But it's just a really good example of the fact that people who give a lot of money to the parties probably get a responsiveness, which we would normally consider to be contrary to democracy - that it's money that gives responsiveness," (Appendix 2, Roger Buch, p. 42).

Media researcher Mads Hove raises the question: "...is there a risk that there is someone who is in someone's pocket or owes someone...?", (Appendix 2, Mads Hove, p. 26) and argues that if there is no control with who is financing who it can lead to these suspicions and unfair competition between the parties since some might have better chances of drawing donations than others. He states, that the way of influencing politics might be done indirectly by hiding their tracks through private donations (Appendix 2, Mads Hove, p. 26-27).

3.3.3 Theories on the amount of coverage of non-transparent funding

Regarding the fact that the coverage is significantly less in comparison to other political scandals and subjects, Roger Buch states that " We have very, very little openness, and that's what makes it really, really difficult to work with journalistically," (Appendix 2, Roger Buch, p. 46) and adds that only with the aid of whistleblowers or a source within the party the story might be able to produce: "It's a difficult area to penetrate journalistically," he adds (Appendix 2, Roger Buch, p. 46).

However, he also adds that it is possible to hold politicians accountable for this, without having to do time-consuming investigative journalism during an election. This could be done by asking unexpectedly at the end of an interview. Buch's point is that politicians are more willing than normal to be interviewed during an election. After the end session about "what the politician wanted to talk about" one could ask "So, why do you not publish your private donors?". This approach would not require any investigative journalistic and could then raise public awareness of the issue (Appendix 2, Roger Buch, p. 47). This point of view is also presented as a question to some of the journalistic respondents.

Jørgen Jensen theorizes that the reason for the low coverage is due to the low news- and sales value in the coverage of non-transparent funding and adds that "I think it's the ordinary Dane who doesn't care very much about this because they always have that in the back of their minds that 'We are corruption-free, and therefore it doesn't matter so much.'"(Appendix 2, Jørgen Jensen, p. 14). He references that the low significant value of the topic is due to the Danish mentality of the Danes collectively stating that "... We have no corruption, so, therefore, we don't need to have any particularly strict rules in this area"(Appendix 2, Jørgen Jensen, p. 12).

Mads Hove explains that the complexity of the subject, and the fact that it is harder to relate to the funding rules being non-transparent and technically easy to surpass, compared to a

story about the political scandals of the Qatari World Cup in 2022 and the violation of human rights (Appendix 2, Mads Hove, p. 30). Furthermore, he theorizes that “It's also difficult to necessarily find the right conflict in it,” and adds that it can therefore be hard to relate to such a story (Appendix 2, Mads Hove, p. 30).

3.4 The media *does* influence transparency in the government

One could ask why it would be important to look at how journalists cover any political topic in the first place, and one out of many reasons is that journalists can affect legislation and the government according to some studies.

Previous literature shows that media pressure and influence do have an impact on both legislation in place (Yanovitzky, 2002) and the transparency of public officials (Cuadrado-Ballesteros, Martínez-Ferrero, Frías-Aceituno, & García-Sánchez, 2017, p 32). For instance, a study conducted in Spain showed that if media pressure were present then public officials in local Spanish governments were more reluctant to disclose more transparency thus “suggesting that media could be seen as a powerful tool to push governments to act responsibly.”(Cuadrado-Ballesteros, Martínez-Ferrero, Frías-Aceituno, & García-Sánchez, 2017, p 32). However, the pressure effect is less apparent a year before an upcoming election the researchers found out - this was due to that they would “entrench themselves” so critical stories would not emerge before the voting (Cuadrado-Ballesteros, Martínez-Ferrero, Frías-Aceituno, & García-Sánchez, 2017, p 25). Furthermore, research shows that the amount of transparency is higher if a municipality is governed by a left-wing party, and if the area governed is more densely populated (Cuadrado-Ballesteros, Martínez-Ferrero, Frías-Aceituno, & García-Sánchez, 2017, p 22). In Denmark the right-wing parties are the ones that get the most money donated from anonymous funds, (Jørgensen, 2017).

There have been multiple studies on how media coverage affects policies, (Yanovitzky, 2002) which are relevant when looking into whether the Danish journalists could/could not affect the level of transparency in the anonymous donations to politicians, and the lack of preventive legislation. A study by scholar Itzhak Yanovitzky overall states that periods of intense media coverage of a subject increase its chances of affecting the policy in place (Yanovitzky, 2002) -

it is however worth noting that the study is from 2002, so the effect might have decreased or increased since.

3.5 How journalists pick stories

There have been numerous studies on how and why journalists pick and choose certain subjects. Ever since scholars Galtung and Ruge put forward their 12 journalistic criteria, only more scholars have tried to follow up on which selection criteria the journalists work from (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001). These criteria change and with the digital age and faster 24-hour news flow, what does (and does not) become news is an ever-evolving study (O'Neill & Harcup, 2019). However, recent scholarly papers agree that it is crucial to look at the “political, economic, social, global and other contexts,”(O'Neill & Harcup, 2019, p. 225) when looking at what makes the news. It is further argued that “it is probably not possible to examine news values in a meaningful way without also paying attention to occupational routines, budgets, the market, and ideology as well as wider societal, cultural, economic, and political considerations,”(O'Neill & Harcup, 2019, p. 225). This is why this thesis will look into if/how these beforementioned factors (and which of them) come to play when the news stories of the non-transparent donation system are covered in the Danish news media and why the journalists have covered it the way they have.

4.0 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

To understand why the lack of transparency of political funding is considered problematic, one must know the basics of the political- and media-related systems in Denmark. This section will provide an explanation of the beforementioned subjects and additionally explain the current (and former) party funding laws in-depth.

4.1 The Danish party funding and donation system

Denmark is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary representative democracy of 179 elected politicians in the parliament “Folketinget/Christiansborg.” There must be elections at least every four years (The Danish Parliament, n.d).

Intending to fund the basis of democracy and political development, there are numerous ways that both politicians and political parties can get financed in Denmark. There are two main ways to get political funding in Denmark. Firstly, every political party that participated in the

last election is eligible for state funding. Secondly, all Danish parties and politicians, in general, are allowed to receive funding from private- and non-state donors. The Danish law states that the state-given money is to be used in compliance with political work domestically (Stenfalk, 2017, ¶ Generelle bestemmelser). The Danish parties are not as dependent on private donations as - for example- the British parties are, according to scholars (Power, 2020, p. 169). However, political parties and politicians are prohibited from receiving anonymous donations exceeding 22.200 Danish kroner (almost 3000 Euros). If the amount exceeds this, it has to be disclaimed publicly - but only the name of the donor, not how much the amount of donations is above the 22.800 DKK (Krause-Kjær, 2016). Neither if the amount is one million Euro or 10 cents above the 22.800 DKK.

The laws have not changed substantially since their implementation in 1995 regarding the amount that can be donated without being disclaimed publicly (Weiss, 1995), besides the fact that the amount of money has increased from 20.000 DKK/ 2683 EUR to 22.800 DKK/3059 EUR that can be donated anonymously (Indenrigs- og Sundhedsministeriet, 2023).

Breaking the laws of political donations can result in fines or up to a four months prison sentence (Stenfalk, 2017, ¶ Straffebestemmelser).

In recent times, the right-wing Danish parties have traditionally received more money than their counterparts on the left wing (Power, 2020, p. 174).

4.1.1 The Danish media structure

Since the media is the area researched in this thesis, this short section will explain the Danish media structure (including the media analyzed in this paper), which is grouped into two financial categories. The largest Danish media, the public service media DR (Danish Broadcasting Corporation), is owned and financed by the state and formerly by license fees paid by the Danish public (Willig and Blach-Ørsten, 2016, ¶, 2. introduction). TV2 is state-owned but also financed by commercial- and consumer fees (Kulturministeriet, 2022), while the majority of the Danish media is privately owned - but still supported with funds from the state (Willig and Blach-Ørsten, 2016). There is a consensus and research that states that the Danish media landscape is relatively free from political interference due to the *arms lengths principle* and operates under a fair amount of editorial freedom (Willig and Blach-Ørsten, 2016).

5.0 METHODOLOGY

With the theories and literature stating that non-transparent private party funding can be considered political misconduct and a problem for a democratic and fair election, the next step is to shed light on how, and why the topic is covered the way it is - especially regarding other political cases during elections

In this section, I will explain and justify the methods and tools used to get the data that can answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How much have journalists covered the non-transparent private party funding in Denmark in the past two elections?

RQ2: What causes are there for the amount of news coverage of the non-transparent party funding in Denmark in the past two elections?

Each research question is aimed to be answered by a separate method and in conclusion a mixed-methodology approach. For the first question, I want to descriptively show how salient the issue and coverage are by using a quantitative media coverage analysis, plotting the results into a dataset to get an overview of how much the non-transparent party funding is covered compared to the cases of “typical” election subjects such as immigration- and health policies, but also especially other political cases/scandals in the media (such as the Qatar World Cup e.g.). The second research question will be attempted answered with a qualitative analysis by analyzing the semi-structured interviews of eight journalist respondents. The criteria for their selection as respondents, tone of questions, and other factors will be presented in this section as well.

5.0.1 Motivation to study

In previous section 3.4, it has been described how journalistic coverage can influence transparency in politics and among elected public officials toward more openness. This could lead to the theory that the amount of coverage of the non-transparent funding is important if one wants to change the current funding system to be more transparent to the public. However, the amount of coverage does not explain a lot alone which is why one of the aims of this thesis is to analyze and understand the journalists' choices, reasons, and causes for why and how much they have covered the non-transparent funding, and why it is covered

more/less than other political cases. In the following, I aim to uncover this, with the use of the qualitative journalist interviews after using the quantitative methodology to shed light on how much the chosen political topics have been covered during the last two elections.

5.1 Analysis of the amount of coverage of private party donations during elections

Before one can ask the journalists about what lies behind the current coverage during elections it is crucial to research how much the non-transparent party funding has been covered in the first place.

To analyze the current coverage of non-transparent party funding, this thesis will use a selection of articles, to provide an overview. This is done by the method of a quantitative content analysis of the media coverage, by monitoring the frequency and quantity of the articles containing stories about the non-transparent party funding in the past two elections. In the following, I will provide information on the selected sample, criteria, observation period, and a justification of the chosen parameters. I believe this is a great tool to understand how the status quo is in terms of the current coverage and the patterns of the coverage during election periods, to be able to observe patterns and trends.

The website used for gathering articles for the quantitative analysis: Infomedia. A company, archive, and database that collects and monitors news from Danish media. This includes both print and online web-based news. The archive spans from today till roughly the last thirty years (InfoMedia (n.d.)). I have chosen Infomedia since they provide extensive access to a wide range of articles in Denmark.

Selection criteria for the media chosen for the coverage: Within the search engine Infomedia I have selected Politiken, Ekstra Bladet, BT, Berlingske, Jyllands-Posten, DR, and TV2. The media are chosen since these entities are the most read by Danish consumers, (Bruun-Hansen, 2021) and thus one could argue that they have the most substantial impact on political discourse and public opinion in Denmark. The media Ekstra Bladet and BT are considered tabloid newspapers, whereas DR and TV2 are public service channels, and Jyllands-Posten, Berlingske, and Politiken are considered daily press (BBC News, 2019). By including different genres of newspapers the dataset is diversified in terms of results and can thus achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the coverage.

I have chosen to focus on nationally reaching news only - that means no regional or local publications are a part of this study. This is due to the time and resources available by only focusing on the most influential media in Denmark, which makes the analysis more manageable - both for the author of the thesis and the reader.

Observation period: The last two Danish elections.

This overview will only focus on the election periods. In this research, the “election period” is stated as ‘from the day it is publicly known when the election day is, to the actual election day’. The choice of election periods is due to the fact that it is a crucial time economic-wise for politicians since elections are expensive. A large part of the money used for political campaigning originates from an unknown source due to the business clubs' presence. It is furthermore interesting that the four parties spending the most (for example on commercials or social media campaigns) during the last Danish election in 2022 (Osted, 2022) are the ones who also receive the most money from private business clubs (Jørgensen, 2017). One could argue, that those parties get an advantage in budget with money from anonymous sources, and thus make it relevant to investigate these parties/politicians and the journalistic coverage in relation to the elections. The focus on the last two elections is due to the timing of when GRECO (the anti-corruption entity), among others, started to criticize private funding in their report from 2018 (GRECO, 2018).

Keywords used for the search on Infomedia: “Pengeklub”(party-support/donation), “erhvervsklub” (money club), “partistøtte”(business club).

The articles in the researched dataset would have to have at least one of the three words above within the article.

5.1.1 Criteria for selection and sampling

Included elements: Only articles containing information about one- or more of the politicians in parliament and/or their respective parties have been included in the dataset as well as one of the words “partistøtte”/“pengeklub”/“erhvervsklub”. Only web-based articles are included in the search. That means, no printed media or video/radio pieces are included. The articles are included with no regard to the length or quality of the news piece.

Excluded elements:

For the sake of transparency of the research and the credibility of the results, I will in the following section, make clear which elements I have not included in the dataset.

Articles about party donations from the public domain/state have not been counted in this research since this thesis is solely focusing on private donorship to the parliamentary parties and politicians. For example, articles about the misuse of public funds by Danish taxpayers will not be included, since the focus is solely on private donations to the politicians/parties.

The term “business club” (erhvervsklub/pengeklub) is widely used in Danish for other elements not related to politics or the parliament - e.g. a football club “business club” or a local business that forms a “club”. The non-parliament/party/politician-related articles with the use of the word “business club” have therefore been excluded from the research and data in this thesis. This also includes parties on a municipal level - only the nationwide parties and politicians are focused on and included in the dataset. This exclusion has been done by going through the articles one by one.

Only articles written by journalists working for the respective chosen media are included. That means opinion pieces, viewer-based articles, debate pieces, and other sources brought in the news are excluded from the dataset.

Furthermore, some articles have the word “partistøtte” written in the body text of the article like this one (Geil, 2022) but the article is not counted in the dataset, since it is not about the party donations. The beforementioned article is about a former politician accused of a sexist comment towards a female journalist in a debate *about* partistøtte, but the article itself has nothing to do with anonymous party donations. Such articles, mentioning the word only but not about the party donations are not included. This selection is based on the thesis author's interpretation and selection.

Limitations: Since this dataset is only searching for articles containing the keywords “partistøtte” (Party support/donation), “pengeklub” (money club), and “erhvervsklub” (business club), there might have been some articles in the search that were overlooked. This is due to the fact, that I have excluded using words in the search such as “donor” or “donation” since it would clutter the search and provide articles related to other areas - for example regarding “donors of kidneys” or a “donation of blood”. By using fewer keywords

the search and dataset presumably end up more precise, but a limitation is that there might be a slight chance of overlooking some articles.

Dataset

To provide a transparent overview of the counting, I have included all the articles in an Excel file containing a link to the article, which election it was taken from, and which media published the article.

5.1.2 The comparison search

To provide perspective on the frequency of the coverage of non-transparent funding I have compared it with other subjects in the Danish election. I have done this to contextualize the data and to research how the coverage of other political cases/scandals are covered. I will do this search via Infomedia. The reason to use comparison in this thesis is to have a control method to provide insights and perspective to the non-transparent funding coverage and to have something substantial to hold it up against.

The typical Danish subjects during elections are described by Nesheim (2022) in a survey made for the media Politiken and TV2. I have made use of the coverage of “healthcare” and “immigration”, which according to Nesheim are subjects typically getting much attention during election periods.

In order to compare the number of articles, that contains news about non-transparent party funding during an election period, this thesis will make use of similar subjects typically covered in elections (like aforementioned healthcare and immigration), but also other political scandals/cases.

The reason to include other political scandals (and not just the “general subjects of immigration and healthcare) is due to the fact that non-transparency funding is often associated with surpassing the law or hiding information from the public and thus could be somehow similar.

In terms of the “typical” subjects covered during elections, I will make use of the following keywords and topics:

Healthcare keywords: “Hospital”, “sundhed” (healthcare), “sundhedsvæsen” (healthcare system)

Refugee/immigration keywords: “Immigration” (same as in English), “integration” (same as in English), “indvandrere” (immigrants)

Since elections are the time when the Danes put their vote on their candidate, one could argue that the matters they see important, are also the ones that the news media would cover the most. Thus make the aforementioned typical hot election subjects an unfair comparison to the non-transparent funding.

There are thousands of results when searching for health and immigration on Infomedia. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to insert all of these into Excel. Mapping and systematizing the healthcare/immigration articles in the same manner as the political scandals/cases and the non-transparent funding have not been prioritized. In contrast, the latter-mentioned articles on non-transparent party funding and political/cases only provide search results in the hundreds regarding quantity.

Counted articles to compare to non-transparent funding

The scandals/political cases I have chosen to compare to non-transparent funding, are:

Søren Pape Poulsen, Conservative party leader, and prime minister candidate in the 2022 election. During the election campaign, several stories about Pape emerged and these were heavily covered by the media. He had among other things called Greenland (which is part of the Danish kingdom) “Africa on Ice”, (Mouritzen, 2022) and there were stories about him traveling during the Corona travel ban (Jeppesen, Ehrenskjöld, & Mathiessen, 2022). All stories and articles made him a prime target for the media, and thus declared a “scandal” or “political case”.

Search words in Infomedia: “Søren Pape”

Rasmus Paludan and his party “Stram Kurs” (Tough Course) in the election of 2019. Rasmus Paludan is a far right-wing politician candidate. One of his trademark policies is to decrease the influence of Islam in Denmark significantly (Vilstrup, 2019). During the 2019 election, just as with Søren Pape Poulsen, many articles were written about things other than his policies, such as his often violent rallies, (Jeppesen, 2019) his stalker cases, (Andersen,

2019) his conviction of racist statements (Thomas, 2019), and more. Rasmus Paludan never made it into the parliament.

Search words on Infomedia: “Rasmus Paludan”

Qatari World Cup 2022 Was deemed with controversy in the election period. Even though the World Cup had no direct link to the Danish election, the political aspects of the tournament were surrounded by scandals in the Danish media sphere (Kamil & Ladefoged, 2022). Articles solely focusing on sports, like how the 2022 WC is Lionel Messi’s last or that he might miss it due to injury, (Claes, 2022) have not been counted in the dataset since they have no political association.

Search words on Infomedia: “Qatar” and “VM” (WC or “World Cup” in Danish)

These subjects are subdued to the same parameters as the non-transparent party funding quantitative research (only web-based articles, same period, etc.) - but with the differences in the keywords search in the Infomedia database.

With these comparisons, I do not wish to provide a substantive comparison but rather a way to signal the need for a zoom into the non-transparent party funding compared with the coverage of the aforementioned topics covered during the elections.

5.1.3 Expected results

I supposed that the coverage of this non-transparency issue during elections was very subtle compared to not only the “typical election subjects,” often valued most by the readers (such as healthcare and immigration), but also subtle coverage compared to other political scandals and cases, such as Qatar, Pape cases, and the controversy surrounding Paludan.

This assumption was due to the fact that the healthcare/immigration topics could be absolute in terms of where the voters put their mark in an election, (Appendix 2, Mads Hove, p. 27) whereas the non-transparent party funding is not a game changer in terms of how people vote, (Appendix 2, Mads Hove, p. 27) and thus getting less attention in the election period.

My hypothesis is, that the complexity of the non-transparent funding is what will make the coverage less in comparison with the other political scandal stories with a more “clear” angle with good/evil or personification of the story. The news story of the funding is complex with numbers, finance, and many layers, not very audiovisual, whereas a story about Søren Pape

making a somewhat unfortunate comment about Greenland, which is within the Danish Kingdom, is easier to comprehend and write.

I expected that the coverage of the non-transparent party funding is biggest in the current 2022 election due to a revelation by the small media Frihedsbrevet; a revelation of how the Politicians tried to surpass the legislation on party funding (Fogt, Tekeli, & Findalen, 2022). There was no such story in the 2019 election, thus it is to be expected that the result of the analysis will show less news coverage in the 2019 election. The same counts for the 2015 election, which have been included in the dataset but not analyzed to the same extent as the 2019 and 2022 elections.

5.2 Research of the causes for the journalists' coverage of anonymous funding

To provide an analysis of the causes of why the coverage of non-transparent party funding is the way it is, (and to answer RQ2) this thesis is supplemented by qualitative, individual, semi-structured interviews since I would argue they provide more nuances to the causes, than what could be achieved through a questionnaire. For this thesis, I have conducted 8 semi-structured interviews with Danish journalists via online calls (like Zoom or Microsoft Teams).

The core of the thesis is to understand the journalists' reasoning, motives, routines, and organizational position, that among other things could influence their choice of picking subjects for news stories.

5.2.1 Interview respondent criteria

Journalists working in the seven most viewed/read national media have been chosen such as Politiken, Berlingske, Jyllands-Posten, DR, Ekstra Bladet, B.T, and TV2, to provide knowledge on the coverage of the non-transparent party funding. I reached out to journalists that, at least, have covered politics during either the 2019 or 2022 election. Only journalists that work with print/web-based articles were selected since there is a tendency for TV- and radio news to often source the printed/web-based media in the first place (Leask, Hooker, & King, 2010, p. 2). The reason for the mention of print-based media is that there is a tradition in Danish media to post printed articles online as well.

Furthermore, journalists that have covered the non-transparent party funding a lot have been selected together with journalists that have covered it less, in order to diversify the results. Only journalists that have previously written news pieces related to one of the elections have been contacted for interviews.

This study will aim to ensure that there is a wide selection of respondents - that means ensuring that there is a mix of gender, age, and media as well in the choice of respondents.

Questions will circulate themes of motives, causes, and reasons for the coverage publicity of the topic.

5.2.2 Questions to journalist respondents

Each interview started with a brief explanation of the subject, the background of the research, the motivation to study it, and the representation of the results of the coverage during the election presented in this thesis. I was mentioning my findings and results from Infomedia to the journalist respondents before the beginning of the interview. I mentioned my own starting point, in which non-transparent party funding was covered less than the other mentioned political cases. Furthermore, I mentioned to the journalists that the literature states that journalistic coverage can influence transparency in governments, which is why I focused on them as subjects in this thesis. This also means that the information provided by the thesis author may have influenced the answers from the respondents to some degree, but is still justified by setting the interview in the right direction.

Furthermore, the journalists were informed about data consent and the confidentiality of the interview. Due to the sensitivity of the journalists commenting on their workplace, job position, and more, the journalists were anonymized with an alias not to reveal their identity, e.g. as “journalist A”.

Due to the nature of semi-structured interview data gathering, the questions can be subdued to change, depending on the answers from the respondent. However, the questions was revolving around topics and phrases such as: “How would you describe the current coverage of non-transparent party funding?”, “What reasons, do you think, are behind the amount of coverage of the subject?”, “Why do you think certain topics like Qatar and Pape get covered more or differently?” etc. The expected shape of the interview, in order to gain knowledge on the journalistic reasons, causes, motives, organizational boundaries, and time constraints in

relation to the coverage of the non-transparent funding, can be found in the appendices with each interview referenced in this thesis.

5.3 Method of analyzing the qualitative data

To analyze the respondents' data this thesis has made use of an inductive approach with its roots in grounded theory (Aarhus University, n.d.) - by making the observations guiding towards a theory that can explain the coverage during the elections. However, for the sake of providing a sufficient overview I have categorized the findings into three categories of patterns that are fitting to answers and shed light on information towards the research question.

The reason why this method has been picked is to let the data and answers from the respondents stand on their own and to provide the best possible overview for the data results since it would otherwise be too much text and answers for the allocated resources of this thesis.

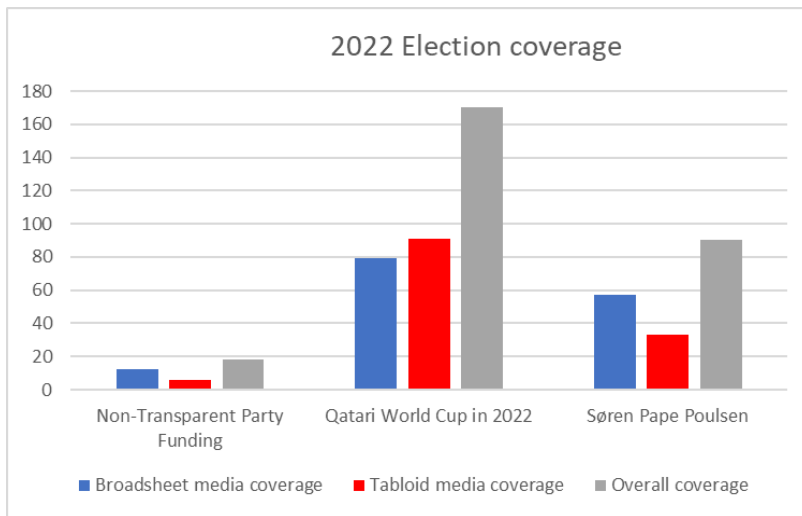
6.0 RESULTS

The following chapter will present the data from the quantitative media coverage analysis of the election periods. Furthermore, the results of the qualitative interviews with the journalist respondents are presented in this chapter as well.

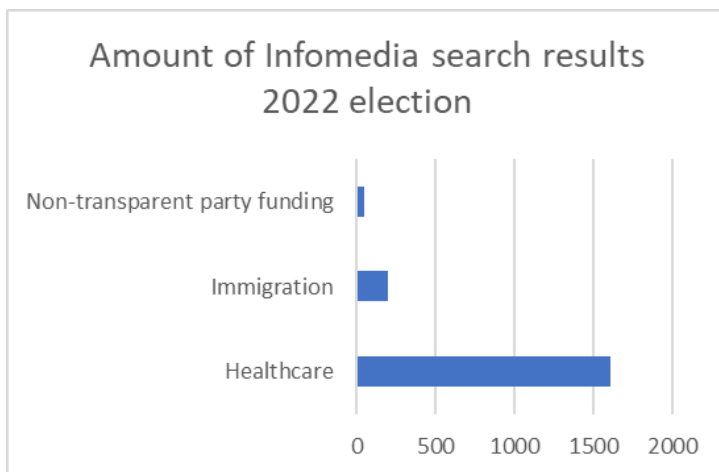
6.1 Coverage during the election periods

The quantitative data that represents the coverage of different topics covered during the election compared to the non-transparent party funding coverage is presented in the figures below. The media coverage has been divided into three categories "Broadsheet media coverage," "tabloid media coverage" (Ekstra Bladet and B.T. are the only analyzed tabloid media in this thesis), and "Overall coverage" for each of the topics analyzed. The source of the data can be found in the Excel file Appendix 1, with the list of sources as well.

6.1.1 The 2022 election



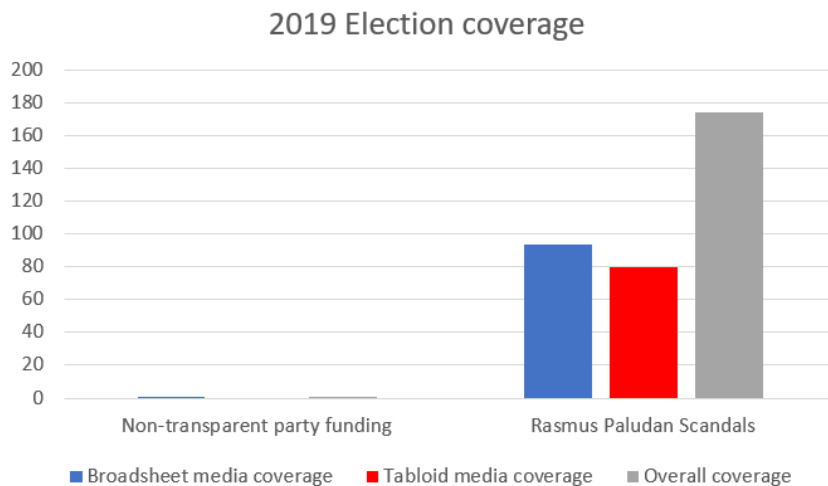
Of the three topics, the political turmoil of the Qatar World Cup was covered the most with an overall 170 articles. The runner-up was the political surrounding scandals of Søren Pape Poulsen with 90 articles in total. As hypothesized the non-transparent party funding got the least coverage with 18 articles in total.



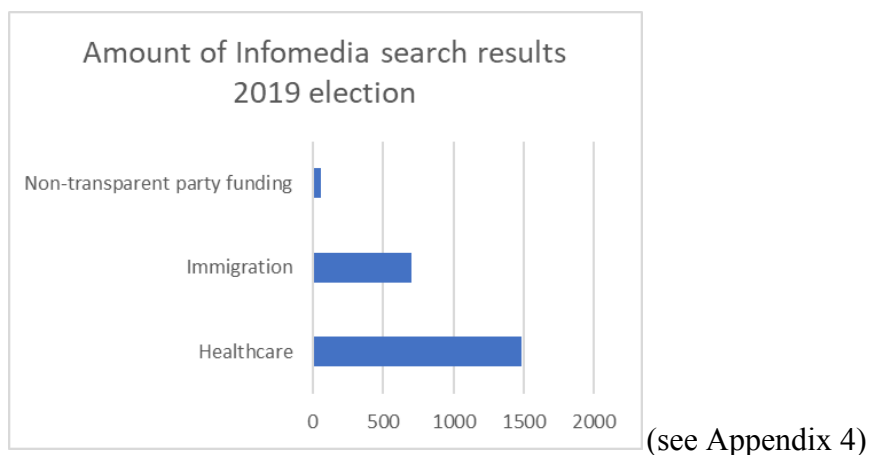
In terms of the non-indexed results from healthcare and immigration, the search on Infomedia provided 1611 results for the healthcare comparison and immigration had 202 results, compared to only 48 results on the non-transparent party funding. It is important to emphasize that even though if the results were put into a dataset, like the political scandals such as the Qatar World Cup, the number would be lower, due to duplicated articles, opinion pieces, and

so on, which is not included in the dataset (see section 5.1.2 for further elaboration). However, it does emphasize the vast difference in coverage between the topics.

6.1.2 The 2019 election



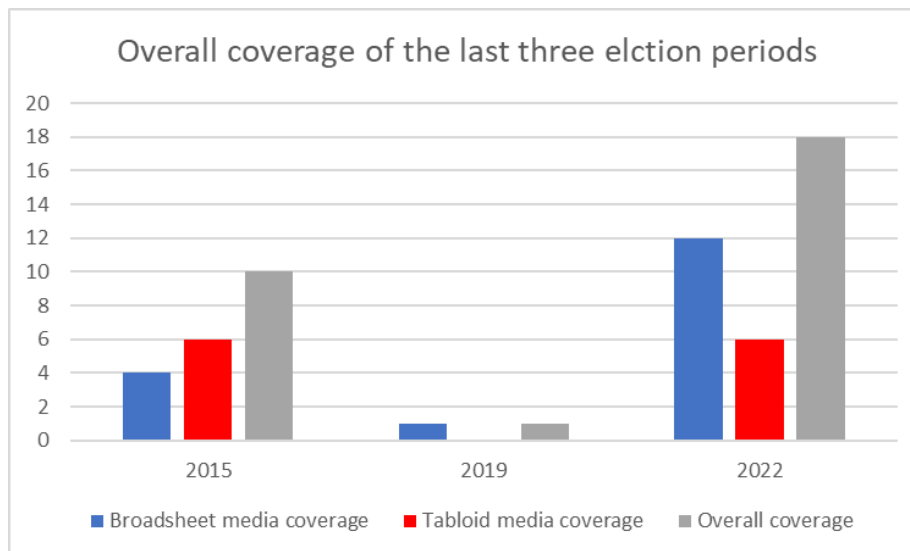
The political turmoil and scandals of Rasmus Paludan in the 2019 election period had a large frequency of articles in the media sphere with a total of 174 articles. Even though it was expected that the coverage of the non-transparent funding would be less, it was still surprising to solely find one article covering the non-transparent party funding.



As with the 2022 election non-excel indexed search, healthcare and immigration provided vastly more search results on Infomedia in comparison to the non-transparent party funding. The immigration topic provided 698 results and the healthcare topic gave 1488 results. In comparison, the non-transparent party funding topic had 60 results, which would seem like a

lot, but in fact, the articles in the 60 results were mainly about a scandal regarding the Austrian chancellor - and thus not have any relation to the Danish election.

6.1.3 The past three elections' coverage of the non-transparent party funding



The statistical illustration above represents the media frequency coverage of non-transparent party funding in the past three elections.

This illustration and data are added to identify patterns from a broader perspective than just by looking at two elections. It is not in this thesis aim to go in-depth with all three, due to the limitations of this thesis length and allocated time resources, but adding the 2015 election period to the research can provide a more comprehensive and elaborate overview of the coverage. As far as this research shows, the coverage is not stable and fluctuates much.

6.2 Qualitative interview results

This section will explain which patterns the journalistic interviews reveal after the eight interviews, using an inductive approach determined by the thesis author to localize patterns, themes, and overall style of answers. This approach aims to provide a summary of the data relevant for a more concluding presentation of the qualitative interviews. The concluding remarks are supported by quotes from each respondent - the whole length of the interviews can be found in Appendix 3.

The three overall topics circulated the themes of:

1. Non-transparent party funding is important to cover (to a certain degree)
2. It is a difficult topic to cover due to the different factors
3. The other political scandals researched in this thesis were either more approachable or interesting to cover

The respondents for the thesis came to be:

- Journalist A, a journalist at DR (Public service media)
- Journalist B, a journalist at B.T (Tabloid media)
- Journalist C, a journalist at Politiken (Broadsheet media)
- Journalist D, a journalist at TV2 (both public service and commercial-based media)
- Journalist E, a journalist at DR (Public service media)
- Journalist F, a journalist at Ekstra Bladet (Tabloid media)
- Journalist G, a journalist working at Berlingske (Broadsheet media)
- Journalist H, a journalist at Berlingske (Broadsheet media)

6.2.1 An “important” topic to cover

A large part of the respondents stated that the non-transparent party funding was an important topic to cover - also during an election. However, to which degree and in which time span the importance differed a lot in regard to the respondents’ opinions and answers.

Politiken journalist C expresses that “I think it's a really, really important topic, and that's because in my view it's such a cornerstone of our democracy that voters can gain insight into the relationships our politicians have with potential donors,” (Appendix 3, Journalist C, p. 33).

Journalist B at the tabloid media B.T states that he thinks it could even be covered more than now already “No, I would like to see more of it,” (Appendix 3, Journalist B, p. 23) while TV2 Journalist D is uncertain whether he thinks the non-transparent party funding is covered enough at all by stating “Well, a...both yes and no...” (Appendix 3, Journalist D, p. 44). According to Berlingske journalist G, who calls the fact that there was only one article in 2019 about party funding “a disgrace,” (Appendix 3, Journalist G, p. 64).

On the other hand, another Berlingske Journalist H, supplements that: “I would say that it's not something that gets a lot of coverage compared to what it perhaps should,” but adds that

he believes that his media have covered the subject sufficiently (Appendix 3, Journalist H, p. 70).

Berlingske journalist G, agrees with that statement “Is it something we can look at more? Maybe, but the question is also whether we have the strength to do so because when it's as obscured as it is, it requires a lot of work,” (Appendix 3, Journalist G, p. 62).

However, B.T Journalist B also explains that even though investigative journalism is important at B.T it; “...is also a business, and you're probably never going to make money on an investigative journalist editorial board,” (Appendix 3, Journalist B, p. 23). He adds further that journalistic resources are limited especially during an election and if it takes investigative journalism to launch a story on party funding then the resources will be prioritized in a different area (Appendix 3, Journalist B, p. 21).

Journalist B (B.T) states the non-transparent funding topic is “probably the most important story you can do before an election,” (Appendix 3, Journalist B, p. 21) whereas tabloid media, Ekstra Bladet Journalist F, adds that the scope of reference in the election is simply not enough when talking about the coverage of non-transparent party funding “Party funding is a more universal topic that can be relevant to cover - not necessarily in an election campaign - but also one year before an election and two years before an election,” (Appendix 3, Journalist F, p. 55).

However, in general, for a tabloid media worker, Journalist F thinks that non-transparent funding is an interesting topic to cover “Yes, well, I think that matters relating to economics and politics are interesting to us at Ekstra Bladet,” (Appendix 3, Journalist F, p. 56). The reason why is that money stories are interesting since they can be used “to change power structures” Journalist F explains (Appendix 3, Journalist F, p. 56).

DR Journalist A sees it as an important story to cover during an election period or just before it, just like with Frihedsbrevet’s story since it is where the politicians need money (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 14).

On the contrary, another journalist at DR, Journalist E disagrees with that statement, by saying that there are “... many other issues that are more important in terms of how Danes should mark their crosses in addition to party support,” (Appendix 3, Journalist E, p. 48) during an election campaign, by adding that party funding rules is not what makes the Danes change their votes. However, he does add that the significance of the non-transparent party

funding as a news area is just as important outside an election period as during one (Appendix 3, Journalist E, p. 48-49).

6.2.2 A subject hard to cover

Multiple journalists interviewed for this thesis stated that the complexity and the lack of transparency in the subject made it hard to cover, if not by solely relying on investigative journalism (Appendix 3, Journalist C, p. 35) - a type of journalism that is both time-consuming and expensive, thus making it less available in comparison with the Søren Pape Poulsen story. Many respondents, among other journalists B, stated that politicians are very secretive in terms of where they get their money from (Appendix 3, Journalist B, p. 21). “It is very, very difficult to demonstrate that and the reality of making up stories about party funding during an election campaign,” Journalist C adds (Appendix 3, Journalist C, p. 34).

Berlinske Journalist H agrees and states that “It's not always such a straightforward story to make, where you just think "here's the hook," and explaining that the secret from the majority of the parties is a major factor in regard to not covering the subject more (Appendix 3, Journalist H, p. 73).

Journalist G explains that as the subject matter is relatively complex, there may be a risk of losing the reader along the way (Appendix 3, Journalist G, p. 63). There can be a communication challenge in balancing, first and foremost, the need for a tabloid appeal to capture the reader, but at the same time making a grounding story to avoid misunderstandings in the relatively complex topic. Journalist G also mentions that Berlinske's publication policy, which involves a paywall after the first three paragraphs, may inadvertently lead to unbalanced perceptions based on limited exposure to the article by some readers (Appendix 3, Journalist G, p. 63).

Furthermore, according to B.T Journalist B “the people who make party support are often quite resourceful people,” while referencing the largest Danish company, the shipping enterprise Maersk (Appendix 3, Journalist B, p. 24) which also provides party funding to politicians. He is thus referencing that the journalists are simply not dealing with unknown or nonsignificant entities but rather powerful instances in relation to covering the party funding, which in turn makes it harder to go after and cover.

As previously described in this thesis, Journalist C also states, that the problem of covering the party funding during an election is that the information of the donators and the sums are not publicly shown until one and a half years later (Appendix 3, Journalist C, p. 34) - thereby, the delay in making the insights less newsworthy and irrelevant in regard to party funding stories during an election.

Another challenging aspect about publishing stories of non-transparent party funding during an election can, according to Politiken Journalist C, be that it could look like the media is targeting a politician for the sake of bringing them down - thus making it an editorial journalistic consideration of whether to publish it in the short span of the election period.

“...there may also be some who believe that, like in an election campaign, you should refrain from launching big investigative stories about individual politicians, because it may look as if they are just timed, even though they may not necessarily be,” (Appendix 3, Journalist C, p. 38).

This exact point is something that DR Journalist A shares by saying “You put a politician in a slightly bad light or a completely bad light, but without them having done anything like that,” (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 11) while the term “that” refers to that circumventing the rules is not necessarily the same as breaking them. They explain it would simply seem like the journalists are trying to bring a chosen politician's election campaign down, which could provide a bad reputation to the media covering it.

Furthermore, to launch a story about politicians and the economy or funding requires a lot of solid proof according to source B.T Journalist B, since very few politicians are interested in “coming forth” and presenting the information about their funding (Appendix 3, Journalist B, p. 22) and even doing a story with anonymous sources is difficult since. “...if you want to do an anonymous article, then I would say most such respected media would say that there should be 3, 4 very credible anonymous sources before you write something about it,” (Appendix 3, Journalist B, p. 22).

According to Politiken Journalist C, there is in general a taboo about money in politics thus making them stall once asked about the topic of party funding - and if brought up and discussed by the journalists to the politicians it could even be seen as incriminating (Appendix 3, Journalist C, p. 37). According to Journalist C, when asked about why they do not publicly show their donors, they simply refer to evasive terms such as “Well, I follow all

the rules,"(Appendix 3, Journalist C, p. 37) - and if the politician has no wrongdoing then one could argue that it is not as interesting to write a sensational news story about the topic, Journalist C explains.

DR journalist A explains that the non-transparent legislation and the fact that the news stories on party funding often rely on personal cases make it hard to cover and thus need investigative journalism to make such a story: "...it's a kind of investigative journalism or at least more advanced than news journalism, which is what it takes to cover it..." (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 9). He further adds that the non-transparent funding is hard to communicate in an engaging way to the readers, (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 9) which could further add to the low amount of coverage in comparison to the other topics such as Qatar or Søren Pape.

DR Journalist A adds that "I'm actually not quite sure I can figure out how to do it either. Or have the patience to do it necessarily," (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 9) and the hard work it takes to make the story does not "...necessarily justifies the story you end up with. So you have to take a lot of chances..." when asked about covering party funding in Danish politics (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 11).

6.2.3 Other political scandals/cases are more approachable and interesting

In answering why the journalists believe the Qatari world cup, the Rasmus Paludan cases, and the Søren Pape stories got such a high share of articles in the election periods, multiple explanations were given.

In terms of the Qatari World Cup, it was explained that the people who normally read sports news are now suddenly interested in reading the more "political" aspect, because of the sub-category of "sport," Journalist B explains (Appendix 3, Journalist B, p. 22-23).

Furthermore, he explains that the Pape case got a lot of attention because he was a candidate for the position of prime minister - thus naturally giving him more attention in the election period (Appendix 3, Journalist B, p. 22).

DR Journalist E says that the reason why Pape was exposed a lot in the media was due to his position during the election: "And Søren Pape was the man he stood for, perhaps to be prime minister and have an enormous influence on what would happen in this country in the next four years," (Appendix 3, Journalist E, p. 49).

A statement that is backed up by Berlingske Journalist H: "...he [Søren Pape] was sort of pressure tested to a much greater extent. And he was also an interesting name for the readers," and further adds that his story was unique since there were both an ascent and a downfall in a short time span during the election (Appendix 3, Journalist H, p. 71).

Journalist E states that " I think both Qatar and Søren Pape are basically much bigger stories.", but he also believes that Frihedsbrevet's revelations about the party funding deserved more attention than they initially got (Appendix 3, Journalist E, p. 49). He further elaborates that the Pape story has "...some clear protagonists, some villains, something like that(...)And Pape also works really well, because there's a clear protagonist," (Appendix 3, Journalist E, p. 50).

Even though the interest is there, Berlingske Journalist H is, after getting the results from this thesis present, surprised that "...the World Cup in Qatar from a political point of view has gotten so much coverage, because it's well-- I didn't really have the impression that it had," (Appendix 3, Journalist H, p. 71).

TV2 Journalist D explained the difference in the coverage of the other subjects with the non-transparent party funding simply not being a topic with as much of a broad appeal as the other ones: "Party support rules are not as sexy a topic as a personal case like Pape and are also not as well known. With Qatar as the World Cup, where the national football team will also be part of it. Party support rules are more of a dry and somewhat unsexy topic," (Appendix 3, Journalist D, p. 43).

Berlingske's Journalist H agrees with this statement and says that even though his media, in his opinion has covered the party funding sufficiently, it is simply not something that the readers find that interesting, (Appendix 3, Journalist H, p. 70) but that they do not want to ignore them. "I think, write about them when it's worth doing something about," (Appendix 3, Journalist H, p. 70).

Journalist H explains that the Pape story has somewhat of a personal story that is linked to something, whereas "...party support rules are often something that is a little more systemic and a little nerdier (...)I don't think many Danes have ever woken up and thought "I wonder what's going to happen to the party support rules?"" (Appendix 3, Journalist H, p. 72).

The fact that the topic needs more investigative journalism in comparison with the other political scandals such as Søren Pape and Qatar according to TV2 Journalist D is also a

significant factor in the lower amount of articles in comparison to non-transparent party funding: “It's not as obvious as the other more readily available topics,” (Appendix 3, Journalist D, p. 44).

However, B.T Journalist B adds that in a journalistic prestige-wise aspect the party funding story is more interesting than for example the personal cases of Pape: “In the political editorial offices, the interest will be almost higher to do that kind of stories than to do the Søren Pape stories.” and “So, these are some really cool stories to do as a journalist, also for your own career,” (Appendix 3, Journalist B, p. 22).

Elections are according to Ekstra Bladet's Journalist F very largely influenced by the news agenda, which is why we have seen such a large difference in the coverage between the political cases and during the elections: “...election campaigns are extremely agenda-based topical agendas that media jump on and go after,” (Appendix 3, Journalist F, p. 55).

Journalist F further explains that there needs to be a hook to write about the topic, which in the 2022 election came with the revelations of Frihedsbrevet “We don't just write about party funding for the sake of writing about party funding. So, for it to be newsworthy, there has to be a specific hook,” (Appendix 3, Journalist F, p. 56). Which could explain the low amount of coverage in the 2019 election.

According to DR Journalist A, the non-transparent funding stories lack a bit of depth since very few politicians see the point in changing the rules for more transparency, and the minimal enthusiasm for the topic is also a factor that plays into getting less coverage from his perspective (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 14). He says “I would definitely rather read about the World Cup in Qatar and Søren Pape than I would read about party funding, almost no matter what,” and adds that the conflict (as one of the journalistic criteria) is much more apparent in the aforementioned stories than in the party funding topic (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 12).

And even if the story about funding is covered “There's a feeling that nothing will happen because the parties in power have no interest in it,” Berlingske Journalist H explains (Appendix 3, Journalist H, p. 72), and adds that the lack of enthusiasm is a factor that makes it less appealing to write about.

However, DR Journalist A states that “It is less interesting for Danmarks Radio than it is for Frihedsbrevet or Ekstrabladet or BT,” (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 10) when talking about

the non-transparent party funding story. His perspective is that the stories often revolve around single candidates and thus not a “broad” enough story for a public service media like DR. This is backed up by the fact that DR has not made a single story about party funding during any of the elections researched, according to this thesis data. He adds that the use of a decoy, like Frihedsbrevet, would not be something that would be within DR’s jurisdiction or ethics of journalism (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 10). For a story about party funding to be broad enough for a media like DR, it would need a lot of “examples,” and a general tendency which would simply take a lot of investigative journalism and time which the parliament journalism DR group does not prioritize in this regard, Journalist A explains (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 10).

He further adds that with a story like the Søren Pape ones it is easy to find historical records in DR’s archive and point out the inaccuracies of his statements - and not something that takes a lot of investigative journalistic digging to brush up on (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 11). In relation to the number of articles about Paludan back in the 2019 election, was due to the polarizing statements, and his divisive way of being, which in turn had a large effect on the political landscape (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 12-13). “Paludan divided people like crazy,” he explains (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 12-13).

“But I would rather read about him than I would read about party support,” he says (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 12-13).

Even with Frihedsbrevet’s revelations, Berlinske Journalist H states that it was kind of a niche story, and not something the other media could as easily “jump into” as with the Pape or Qatar stories; “...it was in some way a common agenda for all the media that were there,” (Appendix 3, Journalist H, p. 71). As other journalists have mentioned, there needs to be some sort of news hook in order for other media to join in on a story, and Journalist H explains that the party funding “... was not tied to anything, there was no need to make a um-Some new rules for party support,” (Appendix 3, Journalist H, p. 71) and by that meaning that the story was very much on the own since it was not on the general agenda to change the rules - so it could be interpreted more as a stand-alone-incident.

Journalist H however says that party support could get on the agenda if “...a majority outside the government were to suddenly emerge to change the party support rules, it could be interesting,”(Appendix 3, Journalist H, p. 72) and thus indicating that if a such news hook appeared (like what the other respondents have mentioned), then the coverage could become

more prevalent. He compares the party funding stories with Berlingske stories about agricultural policies about pollution - which is also an “unsexy” topic but still can generate interest once the agenda and news hook is in place (Appendix 3, Journalist H, p. 72-72).

Lastly, Journalist G explains that “Qatar is not just one story. It's a story about workers' rights. It's a story about sport as a political tool. It is a story about many things. Paludan is also a story about many things. It is a question of a new party, it is a question of security policy. It's a question of what police resources, and in addition to that, threats to journalists and all sorts of other things,” (Appendix 3, Journalist G, p. 64) - saying that in such a scope, party funding is only one topic, thus making the other subjects more interesting to cover.

7.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In this section, I will aim to explain what can and cannot be concluded from the results. Furthermore adding how the results can be used in practice. The purpose is to analyze the results as a whole - that means both the quantitative results and the respondents' interviews.

7.1 What can be interpreted from the results

This section will explain what it tells us that the other political cases are covered more than non-transparent party funding and which reasons could be for this.

As expected in the hypothesis, Frihedsbrevet's revelation in 2022 created a significant increase in the frequency of coverage in the 2022 election compared to the 2019 election, and that lives up to the theory on why the coverage was larger in year 2022, as seen within the graphs made for this thesis (see section 6). From only a single article from the 2019 elections to the number of 18 in 2022 is a significant increase in coverage, and both scholars and respondents, interviewed for this thesis, mentioned the 2022 Frihedsbrevet revelation story as a factor for the coverage increase. Another point that the quantitative data in this thesis shows is that the coverage of non-transparent party funding differs a lot from election to election. This could be explained by the fact that elections are often very agenda based, as stated by Journalist F (Appendix 3, Journalist F, p. 55-56) - meaning that the time of a Danish election is typically only some weeks, and since the media are in overdrive due to the nature of the fast-paced election news, other stories (such as Paludan, Pape, Frihedsbrevet's revelation or

even Qatar) can quickly hijack the news landscape, which could explain the fluctuation of the non-transparent party funding coverage.

According to the respondents, there were various factors that made Pape, Paludan, and Qatar more published stories during the election periods than the non-transparent party funding.

The non-transparent funding corruption scandal presented by Frihedsbrevet was a big revelation, according to both scholars and journalists interviewed for this thesis, but it did not make major waves in the media as compared to Søren Pape's cases for instance, which had a span of 90 articles. The reason for the major waves in this case with Pape, B.T's Journalist B argues, that the Søren Pape stories attract readers since they basically are about his trust and reliability which are important characteristics for a prime minister candidate (Appendix 3, Journalist B, p. 22). DR's Journalist E states in his interview that "Well, you could say that if we take Søren Pape, then it was pretty crucial for how the election would turn out, so therefore it has of course had an insanely great importance," (Appendix 3, Journalist E, p. 49). As to the Søren Pape coverage; he had such a strong position before the election to become prime minister, and that made the media "pressure" test him during the election. When the media found out that there were problems in one area of his backstory it was easy for other media to bandwagon on it - not as easy as it would be to bandwagon on the non-transparent party funding stories for example - even with the revelations of Frihedsbrevet. At the same time, there was a personal story to tell about Pape, where it was possible to attach a role of a protagonist/villain, which makes greater storytelling and coverage, according to the respondents.

Apropos villain, the polarizing figure of the far right-wing politician, Rasmus Paludan, created a big fuss in the 2019 election due to the divisive nature of his statements, which to some extent touched upon something in the Danish mentality that a lot of the media wanted to pick up on, which according to the respondents, could explain why he was covered to such a large extent in the media in 2019. From the results, it could also be interpreted that the reason the Paludan cases were covered to such an extent, could be due to the high focus on immigration in Danish politics in general according to statistics, (Andersen & Reiermann, 2019) - this is something DR's Journalist A also states "Because he [Paludan] was such a crazy phenomenon. And what both Qatar and Paludan had in common was that he's enormous... These have been two stories that have generated a lot of debate," (Appendix 3, Journalist A, p. 13).

In accordance to the amount of Qatar coverage, it was intersected with sports news, meaning that the people who were normally sports interested now read political articles as well. Qatar stories attract readers who are not typically interested in political news, but since it interconnects with sports news, thus those readers are more inclined to read the political Qatar news as well (Appendix 3, Journalist B, p. 22-23).

Furthermore, Journalist G adds that the Qatar stories provide readers due to the emotional connection there is to human rights abuse for an event like the FIFA WC (Appendix 3, Journalist G, p. 64). DR Journalist E says that in terms of Qatar “Well, because Qatar it... It's a country we trade with for about 1 billion kroner a year” (Appendix 3, Journalist E, p. 49) - thus having yet another angle to why the World Cup received much media coverage since it intermingled with the credibility of one of Denmark's global trade partners.

Mads Hove's theory is that the Qatar World Cup got more coverage because it is a more relatable story about human rights violations and deaths by building stadiums (Appendix 2, Mads Hove, p. 30).

In addition, it can be argued that a story like the Qatari world cup or Rasmus Paludan has more layers/journalistic angles to it than the non-transparent party funding stories during elections - for instance, a story about Qatar could be about the Danish national team's stance against human right's abuse, it could be about corruption in FIFA, or even about the lack of rights for journalists in the country during the event. According to Berlingske Journalist G, the requirement for story layers is also present in Paludan's case - for instance his rallies, how the other parties at Christiansborg (the Danish parliament) might/might not work with him, about his new party, a question of security policy, and so on. (Appendix 3, Journalist G, p. 64).

Through the interviews with both the scholars and some of the journalists, it has also become apparent that party funding rules are not something that changes where people put their “cross” on the voter's pamphlet during an election, as exemplified by the quotes that it: “...does not mean that a voter chooses party x over party y, they do so because of health policy, immigration policy, climate policy,” (Appendix 2, Mads Hove, p. 27) and that there are “...many other issues that are more important in terms of how Danes should mark their crosses in addition to party support,” (Appendix 3, Journalist E, p. 48). Since an election campaign's purpose is, among others, to find out who to vote for (USAID, n.d.) then one could assume that is also what journalists are aiming to cover. Thus makes the party funding

rules coverage less wanted in the prioritization process, which is in contrast shown by the immense amount of articles about healthcare and immigration, as presented in this thesis (Appendix 4).

Another point is that the subjects compared to the non-transparent party funding subject in the elections are simply not on the same level in terms of the scale of political scandals/cases as TV2 Journalist D states; “Now you're saying - Are you also calling the party support rules a scandal because some media have covered it, and that's not necessarily how everyone sees it,” (Appendix 3, Journalist D, p. 43). One could simply interpret that the seriousness of Qatar/Paludan/Pape is just not aligned with non-transparent party funding in terms of the mean of scandals.

The respondents' opinions varied regarding how much importance should be given to the party funding coverage. The journalists were especially divided in the matter of the importance of coverage during, before, after, or, between election periods. But nobody discarded the importance of covering it in general. However, many respondents stated that the secrecy, and the need for time-consuming investigative journalism, plus the need for very strong proof to publish stories make it a difficult subject to cover in the media. The fact that investigative journalism is needed to cover the subject makes it less accessible than other topics. Without the usage of unconventional methods, such as the use of a decoy or information from a whistleblower, the subject is difficult to get entry into. However, not all media (such as DR) wants to utilize the means of a decoy in order to bring forth such a story since it might go against the media journalistic code of ethics. Another point is that the public service media needs a “broader” story in order to cover it (meaning that a story about a single politician surpassing the law is not going to cut it). One of the respondents stated that party funding stories often rely on personal cases - an area which is not typically covered by for example DR.

Furthermore, money is often taboo in Danish politics, which makes it something that journalists carefully contemplate before undergoing their research. Another taboo among journalists, in terms of covering the funding, is that it can easily be seen as a means of singling a politician out in an election period and as a personal attack. This means that some editorial boards refrain from publishing big investigative stories (such as a party funding story) during an election period.

The limited enthusiasm from the politicians (and the public in general) to make the change of the party funding rules is also something that decreases the news value of the non-transparent party funding stories.

Lastly, a scope could be to look at the fact that 18 articles on the subject in 2022 could actually be seen as heaps in terms of the complexity, technicality, and in regard to the amount of required journalistic work covering this subject - especially in regard to a subject competing in a quickly changing news election agenda. According to Berlingske's Journalist G, 2019 was a "dirty election" with many topics, which made it hard for the funding topic to compete with that. But even if the 2022 election was different and less cluttered, 18 articles could be considered a lot in her eyes for example, due to the fact that the elections are so fast-paced (Appendix 3, Journalist G, p. 64).

7.2 What cannot be concluded from the results

Even though this thesis has respondents from journalists working at almost all of the media analyzed in this thesis (no one from Jyllands-Posten was willing/had time to be interviewed), it is still only eight respondents, meaning that it can of course not be definitely concluded that these data give all the answers to why the coverage of the non-transparent party funding during the elections is sparse in comparison with the other analyzed election subjects. There could be other factors influencing the reasons why the coverage is the way it is, which has nothing to do with the media alone. Demographic reasons, societal, or behaviouristic factors could play a part in why a certain topic gets more interest in society than others. Some nations also view accountability differently and accountability can also evolve, according to the works of scholar Tero Erkkilä (2007) - and one could thus theorize that the answer to how much attention a topic like non-transparent party funding gets is also determined by how much of an issue it is seen as in accordance to, for example, accountability.

Another point that cannot be concluded from the results is whether or not the coverage is "sufficient", "adequate" or "too little" in comparison with the other subjects. There is, to the knowledge of this author, not a journalistic parameter to determine when "enough is enough" since this differs from country to country and from media to media. This thesis provides a descriptive and analytical academic piece of work that shows the coverage of non-transparent party funding and let the observations from the respondents elaborate on the reasons why the coverage is the way it is.

Furthermore, the topics chosen to analyze in this thesis are distinct from one another. The topics all revolve around political cases and have a certain connection to the election, but still cannot be compared one to one. In other words, the topics could link to the figurative similarities of apples and pears, rather than the incomparability of apples and bananas. So, even though there are similarities it is hard to make a strongly based conclusion since it is not possible to compare non-transparent party funding with non-transparent party funding.

It should be noted that the journalist respondents were informed about this thesis results (that non-transparent party funding is covered less than other subjects during the elections) before the interview and this factor might also have been a factor of influence in their answers (as described in section 5.2.2).

In addition, the political specter/affiliation to each media might also influence the choice of standpoint in regard to how much coverage each election topic gets.

It is also important to emphasize that these results of coverage have mainly been focused on the election periods, which means that there is a large gap of data in between the elections, where the coverage of non-transparent party funding might be much different; either decreased or increased. This argument could be backed up by some of the respondents' statements explaining that coverage inside versus outside an election is vastly different and that the journalist thus has vastly different priorities.

Finally, it is worth noting that this thesis has solely focused on non-transparent party funding as an area of Danish politics where there is a lack of transparency.

Another issue to be discussed could be The "Freedom of Information Act" ("Offentlighedsloven" in Danish) which has also been heavily criticized for making the right to access public documents and records in the Danish Parliament very limited and difficult, which in turn makes it easier for the politicians to withhold and conceal public information (Rosenkilde, 2022).

According to respondent Journalist G, the Freedom of Information Act is also rarely covered by the media, and in her opinion, the non-transparent party funding receives even more coverage than the Freedom of Information Act (Appendix 3, Journalist G, p. 64) - even though the respondent stated it is as much of a problem as the non-transparent party funding. So for further research, and to make a more conclusive study on how much Danish journalists

cover transparency in Danish politics, one could include other areas of “secrecy” in their research.

8.0 CONCLUSION

Non-transparency in Danish politics is regarded as a problem by both the journalists and researchers interviewed for this thesis. The lack of transparency makes it harder for the public and voters to know who the politicians and lawmakers might be influenced by since the current system does allow for either surpassing the law or simply not engaging with it - thus not having to declare anything publicly. Journalists do cover the subject and have done it routinely throughout multiple elections - however less than other political cases. This thesis set out to answer why this was the case.

Regarding “*RQ1: How much have journalists covered the non-transparent private party funding in Denmark in the past two elections?*” which set to investigate how much the journalists have covered the non-transparent party funding during the past two Danish elections, it can be concluded that the subject of party funding was covered significantly less than other political cases/hot topics during the election. This included the cases of right-wing politician Rasmus Paludan, the prime minister candidate Søren Pape’s bad cases of misconduct, and the political turmoil of the Qatari World Cup 2022. With the latter mentioned it was revealed that there was an almost 90 percent difference between the coverage of Qatar and an 80 percent difference in the coverage of Pape versus the non-transparent party funding, despite the fact that the 2022 election had a big revelation (Frihedsbrevet) of politicians surpassing the law of public party funding. For the 2019 election, only one article was written about funding, but that election did not have a media revelation like the past election.

The coverage of political party funding was covered less than other topics and fluctuated a lot, which could be due to the fast-paced news agenda, that can quickly hijack the elections - and thus the results might have been vastly different if the same methods and research were applied outside the election time span.

In regard to *RQ2: “What causes are there for the amount of news coverage of the non-transparent party funding in Denmark in the past two elections?”* Multiple reasons were given as to what caused and did not cause the amount of coverage of non-transparent party funding during the elections. Eight journalists who came from a broad range of both broadsheet, public, and tabloid media, among the largest Danish media, were interviewed and

asked to provide their knowledge and experience as to why the coverage fluctuated so much. They were to put reason behind the amount of coverage and provide causes and insights into how it is to cover the funding, and how the subject is regarded.

The interviews revealed that the majority of respondents deemed non-transparent party funding an important topic to cover, which could explain why there has been coverage of it in both elections - some even said it could be interesting for one's journalist career, but overall it was deemed difficult to cover. The difficulty (and thus the lesser coverage) was, according to the respondents, due to the secrecy, complexity, and non-approachable nature of the topic - especially in comparison with more easily accessible topics such as Qatar, Pape, or Paludan - or even healthcare and immigration. The journalist respondents explained the difference in coverage between the political cases/scandals for many editorial reasons. One of many factors was that the funding stories would require investigative journalism, which takes resources not necessarily available in a fast-paced election news agenda. Another widely mentioned reason was that the techniques to reveal stories about private funding would require unusual methods, such as the use of a decoy, to provide clear evidence to launch a story. Furthermore, the reasons why one case was covered more than the other also differed based on media type - for example, where Danmarks Radio was one of the media that covered the funding the least. The explanation is due to the fact that they did not deem the story "wide" enough and would very much be in the category of a "personal story" rather than a wide societal problem/case. In total each journalist had a different approach and explanation for why the coverage fluctuates the way it does and the reasons for the amount of coverage, but the overall themes and summary of the data provide an explanation of the funding topic being difficult and less interesting in an election in comparison with the other political cases analyzed in this thesis, which can explain the causes behind the amount of coverage.

This thesis is to be understood solely as a descriptive-analytical work and let the observations from- and about the coverage of the non-transparent funding speak for themselves, to provide an overview of the status quo. That means it is not set to try to be agenda-setting or change anything.

9.0 LITERATURE

9.1 Appendices

- Appendix 1: Merved, A. (2023) Dataset of media coverage analysis, Excel File.
- Appendix 2: Merved, A. (2023) Research interviews with Danish Scholars, pp 1-50
- Appendix 3: Merved, A. (2023) Semi-structured interviews with Danish journalists, pp 1-75
- Appendix 4: Merved, A. (2023) Visual representation of media coverage data, Excel File.

9.2 Journals

- Cuadrado-Ballesteros, B., Martínez-Ferrero, J., Frías-Aceituno, J.-V., & García-Sánchez, I.-M. (2017). The Role of Media Pressure in Promoting Transparency of Local Governments. *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, 2017(51E), 20–37.
<https://doi.org/10.24193/tras.51e.2>
- Dziuda, W., & Howell, W. G. (2020). Political Scandal: A Theory. *American Journal of Political Science*, 65(1). <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12568>
- Erkkilä, T. (2007). Governance And Accountability - A Shift In Conceptualisation. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 31(1/2), 1–38. Retrieved from
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41288281>
- Harcup, T., & O’Neill, D. (2001). What Is News? Galtung and Ruge revisited. *Journalism Studies*, 2(2), 261–280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700118449>
- Leask, J., Hooker, C., & King, C. (2010). Media coverage of health issues and how to work more effectively with journalists: a qualitative study. *BMC Public Health*, 10(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-10-535>
- May, D. (2018). Political party funding and the enigma of trust. *Handbook of Political Party Funding*, 125–140. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781785367977>
- O’Neill, D., & Harcup, T. (2019). *The Handbook of Journalism Studies* (pp. 213–228; K. Wahl-Jorgensen & T. Hanitzsch, Eds.). 2nd edition. | New York, NY : Routledge, 2019. | Series: International Communication Association (ICA) handbook series: Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315167497>
- Reese, S.D. and Shoemaker, P.J. (2016) “A media sociology for the Networked Public Sphere: The hierarchy of influences model,” *Mass Communication and Society*, 19(4), pp. 389–410. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2016.1174268> .
- Vos, T.P. (2019) “The Handbook of Journalism Studies,” *Journalists as Gatekeepers*. Edited by K. Wahl-Jorgensen and T. Hanitzsch, pp. 90–104. Available at:
<https://doi.org/https://doi-org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk/10.4324/9781315167497>

- Power, S. (2020). Party Funding and Corruption in Denmark. *Party Funding and Corruption*, (1), 169–187. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-37580-5_9
- Yanovitzky, I. (2002). Effects of News Coverage on Policy Attention and Actions. *Communication Research*, 29(4), 422–451. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650202029004003>

9.3 News articles

- Andersen, K. J. (2019, May 21). Kvinde får afslag på tilhold mod Rasmus Paludan. Retrieved February 27, 2023, from www.Berlingske.dk website: <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/kvinde-faar-afslag-paa-tilhold-mod-rasmus-paludan>
- Andersen, T. K., & Reiermann, J. (2019, October 21). Danskernes bekymring for indvandring er historisk stor – men færre efterlyser stramninger. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.mm.dk website: <https://www.mm.dk/artikel/danskernes-bekymring-for-indvandring-er-historisk-stor-men-faerre-efterlyser-stramninger>
- Astrup, E. (2019, March 11). Transparency International: Der mangler kontrol med pengestrømme til partier og politikere. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.Politiken.dk website: <https://politiken.dk/indland/art7079022/Der-mangler-kontrol-med-pengestr%C3%B8mme-til-partier-og-politikere>
- BBC News. (2019, March 29). Denmark media guide. Retrieved June 15, 2023, from www.bbc.com website: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17930162>
- Bruun-Hansen, K. (2021, June 2). Trafikmålingen lever igen: Her er de 10 største online-medier. Retrieved February 10, 2023, from www.Journalisten.dk website: <https://journalisten.dk/trafikmaalingen-lever-igen-her-er-de-10-stoerste-online-medier/>
- Christensen, M. F., & Holm, T. A. (2023, February 21). Lars Seiers rolle i Liberal Alliance i nyt fokus:»Jeg har sgu ikke postet 10-15 millioner i projektet for at få lettelser i bunden«. Retrieved April 10, 2023, from www.Berlingske.dk website: <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/lars-seiers-rolle-i-liberal-alliance-i-nyt-fokus-jeg-har-sgu-ikke-postet>
- Claes, L. (2022, October 15). Argentina holder vejret: Messi frygter for sit VM. Retrieved February 27, 2023, from www.ekstrabladet.dk website: <https://ekstrabladet.dk/sport/fodbold/landsholdsfodbold/argentina-holder-vejret-messi-frygter-for-sit-vm/9471099>
- Findalen, J., Jensen, H., Frøkjær, S., Sandborg, L., Stemann, C., Jensen, M., ... Fogt, L. (2022, October 21). Skjulte optagelser afslører: Politikere og partifolk vejleder på stribe i at omgå loven for at få hemmelige donationer. Retrieved May 22, 2023, from www.Frihedsbrevet.dk website:

<https://frihedsbrevet.dk/skjulte-optagelser-afsloerer-politikere-og-partifolk-vejleder-paa-stribe-i-at-omgaa-loven-for-at-faa-hemmelige-donationer/>

- Fogt, L., Tekeli, M., & Findalen, J. (2022, October 23). Hos fire partier takkede man nej til hemmelig donation: Reglerne skal skærpes, alle donationer skal frem. Retrieved February 27, 2023, from www.Frihedsbrevet.dk website:
<https://frihedsbrevet.dk/hos-fire-partier-takkede-man-nej-til-hemmelig-donation-reglerne-skal-skaerpes-alle-donationer-skal-frem/>
- Geil, A. (2022, October 27). Søren Pind forsvarer henvisning af kvindelig journalist til »stripperstangen“: ”Jeg vidste ikke engang, at hun var kvinde«. Retrieved February 28, 2023, from www.Berlingske.dk website:
<https://www.berlingske.dk/oestergaards-salon/soeren-pind-forsvarer-henvisning-af-kvindelig-journalist-til>
- History.com. (2017, December 20). Monica Lewinsky Scandal. Retrieved March 31, 2023, from www.history.com website: <https://www.history.com/topics/1990s/monica-lewinsky>
- Jensen, C. N. (2016, May 29). Forfatter til ”Skjulte Penge”: Lukkede pengeklubber er win-win for politikere og erhvervsfolk. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.DR.dk website:
<https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/forfatter-til-skjulte- penge-lukkede-pengeklubber-er-win-win-politikere-og>
- Jeppesen, P. (2019, May 22). Politiet indskærper: Aflever ikke tændvæske til Paludan. Retrieved February 27, 2023, from www.ekstrabladet.dk website:
<https://ekstrabladet.dk/nyheder/politik/valg19/politiet-indskaerper-aflever-ikke-taendvaeske-til-paludan/7644014>
- Jeppesen, P., Ehrenskjöld, C., & Mathiessen, P. (2022, October 24). Ny ferieafsløring: Pape i coronabrøler. Retrieved February 27, 2023, from www.ekstrabladet.dk website:
<https://ekstrabladet.dk/nyheder/politik/valg22/ny-ferieafsloring-pape-i-coronabroeler/9481966>
- Jørgensen, S. A. (2017, March 9). Overblik: Fire partier har hemmelighedsfulde pengeklubber. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.Jyllands-Posten.dk website:
<https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE9418938/overblik-her-er-partiernes-hemmelighedsfulde-pengeklubber/>
- Kamil, C., & Ladefoged, A. (2022, October 30). Er Qatar klar til fodboldfest? Vi så et forvarsel på, hvad der venter i historiens mest udskaeldte VM. Retrieved February 27, 2023, from www.Berlingske.dk website:
<https://www.berlingske.dk/internationalt/er-qatar-klar-til-fodboldfest-vi-saa-et-forvarsel-paa-hvad-der>
- Kock, C. (2022, October 6). Folketingsvalg: Karisma og troværdighed er på kollisionskurs. Retrieved March 8, 2023, from www.videnskab.dk website:

<https://videnskab.dk/forskerzonen/kultur-samfund/folketingsvalg-karisma-og-trovaerdighed-e-r-paa-kollisionskurs>

- Krause-Kjær, N. (2016, June 13). Politikernes skjulte penge. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.Altinet.dk website: <https://www.alinget.dk/artikel/politikernes-skjulte- penge>
- Mouritzen, K. (2022, October 7). Søren Pape Poulsen om Grønland som et »Afrika på is«: ”Jeg er en politiker, der siger tingene direkte«. Retrieved February 27, 2023, from www.Berlingske.dk website: <https://www.berlingske.dk/globalt/soeren-pape-poulsen-om-groenland-som-et-afrika-paa-is-je-g-er-en-politiker>
- Nesheim, S. (2022, July 30). Sundhed er vigtigst for danskerne til det kommende valg, viser ny måling - TV 2. Retrieved February 10, 2023, from nyheder.tv2.dk website: <https://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2022-07-30-sundhed-er-vigtigst-for-danskerne-til-det-kommend-e-valg-viser-ny-maaling>
- Ritzau. (2016, May 29). Overblik: Partistøtte over 20.000 kroner må ikke være anonym. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.Jyllands-Posten.dk website: <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE8709866/overblik-partistoette-over-20000-kroner-maa-i-kke-vaere-anonym/>
- Ritzau. (2022, October 21). Politikere og partifolk vejleder i at omgå lov for donationer. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.Berlingske.dk website: <https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/politikere-og-partifolk-vejleder-i-at-omgaa-lov-for-donation-er>
- Ritzau. (2023, January 31). Danmark topper listen som verdens mindst korrupte land. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.Politiken.dk website: <https://politiken.dk/indland/art9192080/Danmark-topper-listen-som-verdens-mindst-korrupte-land>
- Rosenkilde, K. (2022, August 10). Regeringen ville lempe offentlighedsloven: Men nyt lovforslag gør det ”betydeligt” nemmere at afvise aktindsigter. Retrieved May 23, 2023, from www.Altinet.dk website: <https://www.alinget.dk/artikel/regeringen-ville-lempe-offentlighedsloven-men-nyt-lovforslag-goer-det-betydeligt-nemmere-at-afvise-aktindsigter>
- Thomas, P. (2019, May 8). Paludan efter tv-angreb: - ”Nazi-svin” var mildt. Retrieved February 27, 2023, from www.ekstrabladet.dk website: <https://ekstrabladet.dk/nyheder/politik/valg19/paludan-efter-tv-angreb-nazi-svin-var-mildt/7626854>
- Vilstrup, S. F. (2019, April 27). Hvad står Stram Kurs for? Her er partiets politik. Retrieved February 27, 2023, from www.Altinet.dk website: <https://www.alinget.dk/artikel/hvad-staar-stram-kurs-for-her-er-partiets-politik>

9.4 Other

- Aarhus University. (n.d.). Grounded theory. Retrieved April 28, 2023, from www.metodeguiden.au.dk website: <https://metodeguiden.au.dk/grounded-theory>
- European Commission. (2017, December). Eurobarometer. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.europa.eu website: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2176>
- GRECO. (2018, June 6). GRECO report on Denmark: more transparency in party financing needed. Retrieved February 28, 2023, from www.coe.int website: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/greco-report-on-denmark-more-transparency-in-party-financing-needed>
- Indenrigs- og Sundhedsministeriet. (2023). Åbenhed om privat økonomisk støtte til politiske partier. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.valg.im.dk website: <https://valg.im.dk/valg/partistoette/aabenhed-om-privat-oekonomisk-stoette-til-politiske-partier>
- InfoMedia. (n.d.). Om Infomedia, vores historie og ledelse. Retrieved February 10, 2023, from www.infomedia.dk website: <https://infomedia.dk/om-os/>
- Kulturministeriet. (2020). NYHEDER, BAGGRUND OG BREAKING NEWS Hvilken rolle spiller de sociale medier i danskernes nyhedsforbrug. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.kum.dk website: <https://kum.dk/kulturomraader/medier/mediernes-udvikling/publikationer/nyheder-baggrund-og-breaking-news>
- Kulturministeriet. (2022, November 11). TV. Retrieved April 19, 2023, from www.kum.dk website: <https://kum.dk/kulturomraader/medier/tv>
- Mindshare. (2016, October 31). Kulturstyrelsens frivillige udbud om mediernes udvikling i Danmark. Retrieved February 7, 2023, from www.mediernesudvikling.kum.dk website: https://slks.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/dokumenter/medier/Mediernes_udvikling/2016/Specialrapporter/Mindshare/Borgernes_kilder_til_viden_og_nyheder.pdf
- Osted, V. (2022). FTV22 -. Retrieved February 10, 2023, from www.politiskannoncering.dk website: <https://politiskannoncering.dk/ftv22/>
- Schröder, K. C., Blach-Ørsten, M., & Eberholst, M. K. (2022, September 20). Danskernes brug af nyhedsmedier 2022. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.forskning.ruc.dk website: <https://forskning.ruc.dk/da/publications/danskernes-brug-af-nyhedsmedier-2022>
- Stenfalk, N. (2017, August 11). Bekendtgørelse af lov om økonomisk støtte til politiske partier m.v. (partistøtteloven). Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.Retsinformation.dk website: <https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lt/2017/973>
- The Danish Parliament. (n.d.). The Parliament. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.thedanishparliament.dk website: <https://www.thedanishparliament.dk/en/democracy/the-parliament>

- Transparency International. (2023). CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2022. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.transparency.dk website:
https://transparency.dk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/CPI2022_Report_EN-web.pdf
- USAID. (n.d.). Election Campaigns - Section 3: Key Election Process Categories - Unleashing the Potential of Election Data - Open Election Data Initiative. Retrieved May 18, 2023, from www.Openelectiondata.net website:
<https://openelectiondata.net/en/guide/key-categories/election-campaigns/>
- Weiss, B. (1995, August 21). Bekendtgørelse af lov om økonomisk støtte til politiske partier m.v. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from www.Retsinformation.dk website:
<https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/1995/704>
- Willig, I., & Blach-Ørsten, M. (2016, December). Denmark. Retrieved April 19, 2023, from www.cmpf.eu website:
<https://cmpf.eu/media-pluralism-monitor/mpm-2016-results/denmark/>