

A Strained Relationship: Media Reactions to the Populist Radical Right in Scandinavia

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Abstract

The media constitutes a crucial part of the socio-political environment all new parties are confronted with. Yet very few have analysed systemically how the media has dealt with the emergence of anti-immigrant parties, often referred to as populist radical right (PRR) parties. In this paper I analyze the media's reaction to the emergence and long-lasting persistence of PRR parties in three Scandinavian countries: Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Confronted with such new parties, what kind of strategies have the media adopted? How much publicity has been given to these new parties? Is the coverage negative or positive? How are the attitudes towards these new parties among the journalists in each of the three countries? In order to provide some preliminary answers these questions, I will use different media archives, secondary sources and surveys carried out among journalists.

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Please do not quote without permission.

¹ This "paper" will be a chapter in my PhD-thesis on PRR parties in Scandinavia. Hence, this text does not include much information about the parties in question. Neither do I devote much space to definitional problems. Hopefully, most of the readers will be familiar with the parties that are analysed.

Introduction

The second generation of populist radical right (PRR) parties in Scandinavia are certainly not satisfied with the media coverage of their own parties. The Progress Party (FRP), the Danish People's Party (DF) and the Sweden Democrats (SD) have accused the media for being left wing biased in general and anti-PRR parties in particular.

In April 2010, the party leader for the SD since 2005, Jimmie Åkesson, sent a open letter to a selection of Swedish chief editors strongly encouraging them to treat the SD as a normal party (Brisman et al. 2010). Referring to an ongoing discussion in the Swedish press about how the SD should be monitored, Åkesson called for a media coverage which would allow him to communicate his message to the voters on the same terms as other parties (Åkesson 2010).² According to Åkesson, such a coverage entails, among other things, that the SD should be invited to television programs, analysed in columns, and that its "policy proposals are given equal space as the other parties".

FRP's first party leader, Anders Lange, hated journalists so much that he refused to make an interview with the largest newspaper *Verdens Gang* already before the electoral breakthrough. According to Lange, all journalists were "liars" and "rats" (Askeland 1973). The second party leader, Carl I. Hagen (2007, 139-140), accuses the media for harassment with regard to the so-called Mustafa-letter in the 1987 election campaign in his autobiography. Hagen has regularly criticized the state television, The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK). In fact, he renamed the channel, from NRK to ARK, which was short for The Labour Party Broadcasting Corporation (Hagen 2007, 267-273).. More recently, the current party leader Siv Jensen (2010) argued the FRP is subjected to "differential treatment". According to Jensen, the media is more likely to write about difficult and "piquant" cases when FRP-politicians are involved.³

In Denmark, two prominent politicians from the DF, Mogens Camre and Morten Messerschmidt, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen and three other ministers in 2010, asking them to stop so-called "red journalism" carried out by the state television, Danish Broadcasting Corporation. Messerschmidt (2010) criticized the editorial decisions in particular, and he insinuated that the framing of news and the selection of interviewed experts, supported the world-view of the Socialist People's Party.

These examples should be more than enough to demonstrate the uneasy relationship between the media and the new party family of PRR parties. However, while it should come as no surprise that the media and journalists are sceptical, if not hostile, towards PRR parties, the relationship is more nuanced than that, and there might be important differences between countries. Moreover, we would expect that the relationship probably changes over time as the PRR party become either bigger or more acceptable, or both.

In this paper I analyze the media's reaction to the emergence and long-lasting persistence of PRR parties in three Scandinavian countries: Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Confronted with relatively successful populist parties (particularly in Denmark and Norway), what kind of strategies have the media adopted? How much publicity has been given to these new parties? Is the coverage negative or positive? And how are the attitudes towards these new parties among the journalists in each of these three countries? This paper is organized in three different parts. The first presents three theoretically important indicators, which allows us to analyse different aspects of the media's treatment of PRR parties. The second part elaborates the method and data, and the third part presents the empirical analysis.

² The author does all translations from Swedish, Norwegian and Danish unless specified otherwise.

³ To some extent, the analysis was supported by Harald Stanghelle (2011), the political editor of the largest Norwegian newspaper, who said "The FRP has, probably more often than other parties, experienced that peripheral representatives have been exposed with relation to both sex scandals and other noise in and outside the party".

The Media and Political Opportunity Structures

Why should we care about the media when analysing the rise and fall of new political parties? The answer is simple: In modern democracies, “mass media provide the best—and only—easily available approximation of ever-changing political realities” for most citizens (McCombs and Shaw 1972, 185). Consequently, the way political parties are framed and how their political ideas are presented in the media, affects how parties are publicly perceived. Yet few studies have discussed the media’s reactions to populist and/or radical right parties (but see Mazzoleni et al. 2003). Indeed, different aspects of the media have been mentioned in the literature, such as the opportunity for non-traditional mobilization, how the populists leaders perform better than other politicians in modern media, or how specific media events might have contributed to the rise of new parties. The rapid growth of Pim Fortuyn, for instance, has been linked to “... his popularity as a TV commentator” (Panizza 2005, 13). A similar argument has been put forward explaining New Democracy’s flash success in Sweden (Rydgren 2002). However, these analyses have rarely conducted systematic empirical data.

Theoretically, the mass media, together with the electoral system and behaviour of other parties, can be seen as an important component constituting so-called “political opportunity structures” (POS). These structures can be defined as “consistent—but not necessary formal, permanent, or national resources that are external to the party or movement in question” (Tarrow 1998: 19–20). Recent research has underlined how facilitating or obstructive POS can influence the electoral trajectory of political parties in general and newcomers in particular (Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Ellinas 2010; Mudde 2007; Rydgren 2005). The role of the mass media is therefore crucial if we want to understand and explain the rise, stability and, in some cases, fall of PRR parties.

In this paper media’s resources will further divided into three separate indicators: (1) visibility, (2) coverage and (3) sympathy. While the two first resources are linked to “cognitive media effects”, the latter can partly explain the degree of visibility and the type of coverage, and partly function as an indicator of media’s relationship with PRR parties more broadly.

Visibility and coverage

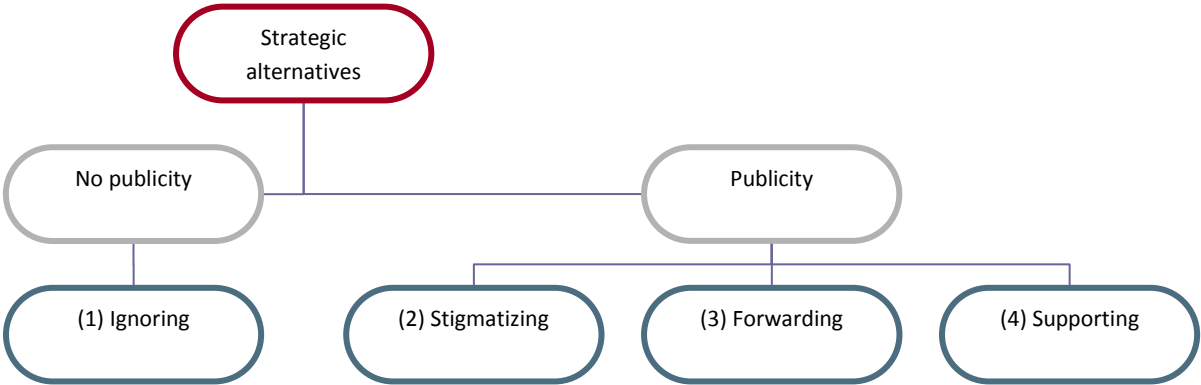
Since quite a few voters get their information about political parties through the media, *visibility* is one of many vital resources the media can provide to political parties. Assuming that the media controls the “gateway the electoral market” (Ellinas 2010, 3), some argue that it is better to be visible in a negative way, than being completely left out in the dark. Such an argument is also based on the well-known insight that the press “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think *about*” (Cohen 1963, 13). This mechanism is usually referred to as the “agenda-setting function of mass media” (McCombs and Shaw 1972). According to this theory, media (partly) decides to what extent a party is seen as relevant option in the eyes of the voters. Hence, in order to mobilize potential voters, parties need to be discussed in the (national) press. In fact, this might be particularly important if the parties have weak ties with civil society or few party members, which usually is the case with parties created by political entrepreneurs such as the new party family of PRR parties in Scandinavia (perhaps with the exception of the SD and the FRP in recent years). While (most) other parties display relatively strong ties with different organizations in civil society and at least used to have many party members, PRR parties are not characterized by those features even though some of them are on the way of becoming institutionalized (Jupskås 2011; Ringsmose and Pedersen 2006).

While some argue that ‘all PR is good PR’, which is the main argument in the ‘agenda-setting theory’, the media might also contribute to shape the attitudes of its readers and viewers. So-called framing and priming effects, referring to *how* a news are presented, demonstrates that media effects consist of more than setting the agenda; they also affect *what* we think about the issues, problems, solutions which are discussed. In short, framing refers to a “process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (Entman 2007, 164). In other words, through the coverage, the media possess the power not only to decide what we should care about, but also how we evaluate and judge (political) issues. But while well-developed frames usually occur in four steps (problem definition, causal analysis, moral judgement and remedy promotion), this analysis will only concentrate on how these parties are defined and to what extent their policy is supported or not.

Combining visibility and coverage: Identifying four media strategies

Based on these two variables – visibility and coverage – a set of different media strategies can be identified. While political parties can choose between ignore, isolate, accommodate or collaborate with a new political actors (Downs 2001), the media has a slightly different set of alternatives. First the media have to decide whether or not they should give publicity to the new party and its political message.⁴ If the media decides not to give the new party publicity, they choose what I call an *ignore strategy* (see figure 1). If they rather choose to give publicity, which is likely to happen after an electoral breakthrough, the media are faced with three distinct approaches, namely a *stigmatizing strategy*, *objective forwarding strategy* and *supporting strategy*, respectively (again, see figure 1).

Figure 1: Different strategies available to the mass media when confronted with new political parties.



Source: modified version of (Downs 2001)

It is still unclear which one of these strategies that lead to decline, rise or stability for new parties. On one hand, some argue that the ignoring or stigmatizing strategy makes it possible for PRR parties to adopt a successful martyr position, which eventually will lead to increased sympathy among the voters. On the other hand, some argue that framing these parties negatively, will prevent them from becoming normalized, and that they therefore will remain “fringe parties” (Demker and Fernros 2011). Not surprisingly, there are contradictory views on the effects of neutral forwarding or supporting strategies as well. On one hand, such coverage could, by treating the party as a “normal party”, have a

⁴ This is certainly not a dichotomy in reality – indeed, there is *degrees of publicity* in the mass media. However, as for now this dichotomy is all we need.

legitimizing effect. On the other, it could narrow the scope for a populist critique of the elite, making it more difficult for the populist party to present itself as something completely different.

Sympathy

The last dimension which will be scrutinized in this paper, is the political preferences of journalists. It is well-known that the media, and the journalists that work there, are negative to new PRR parties in Western Europe, but there are certainly important differences between countries. In Belgium, for instance, only occasionally would a journalist declare that he favoured Vlaams Belang (most well-known is Guido Tastenoey, but he passed away some time ago). In Austria, however, the situation has been quite the opposite. The FPÖ has in fact been supported by the largest newspaper (Kronenzeitung) on its most important issues, the battle against the EU and Islam (Gartner 2002; Plasser and Ulram 2003). Sympathy from newspapers and journalists can be important because journalists are gatekeepers in the information flow which characterizes the public discourse. Even after the introduction of different social media – such as Facebook and Twitter – journalists still occupy a central role in the mediation of political events, happenings, conflicts and discussions in society. Moreover, the political sympathy of journalists in this paper is also an indicator of the ordinary news coverage. After all, there are studies which claim that the political beliefs of individual journalists lead to politically biased news coverage (see e.g. Patterson and Donsbogh 1996). If no journalist vote for the PRR parties, we would expect a more or less negative coverage.

Data

The different questions addressed in this paper obviously need different types of data.

In order to answer the question to what extent the media has given publicity or not to the PRR parties, this paper will use secondary sources (most notably election reports), as well as data from the national media archives. In Norway and Sweden this archive is called *Retriever*, and it covers all articles in a substantial numbers of newspapers in both countries. While at least one newspaper in Norway – *Verdens Gang* – is available all the way back to birth of the FRP, the Swedish archives does not reach further back than 1995.⁵ In Denmark, an archive named *Infomedia* can be used to find out how much DF and Danish Progress Party (FRPd) have been mentioned in the newspapers (*the Danish data is, however, unfortunately still missing in this paper*). In all three countries the two largest newspapers in the period, which means *Verdens Gang* and *Aftenposten* in Norway, *Aftenbladet* og *Dagens Nyheter* in Sweden and *Politiken* og *Jyllands-Posten* in Denmark, are analyzed (their distribution compared to the third largest newspaper is shown in appendix 1).⁶ All of these newspapers have a distribution of at least 100 000 copies, and to some extent they are the main newspapers of mainstream left and mainstream right (for Denmark see Albæk et al. 2010).⁷ In Sweden, the analysis also show that the range of the biggest newspapers in 2010 is about three times the circulation, which means that these newspapers are widely read (Tidningsstatistik 2010).

The second question, which sets out to analyze *how* the different PRR parties are presented in the biggest newspapers, will be addressed through an analysis of editorials in the two largest newspapers in the three Scandinavian countries. All editorials from the

⁵ Indeed, some newspapers do reach further back. However, these are not the mainstream newspapers (e.g. Dagens Industri) and they are therefore not suitable for this type of analysis.

⁶ In recent years Berlingske Tidende has become larger than Politiken. However, in period we analyse in this paper, Politiken is still a more influential and bigger newspaper.

⁷ However, in Norway *Verdens Gang* can hardly be seen as a newspaper of the mainstream left.

election years are analyzed and categorized according to whether they are negative, neutral or positive to the PRR parties. Reading all the editorials also revealed interesting information on how these parties are defined and described by the biggest newspapers, and some of this information is presented in the analysis.

The third part, included to analyze the changing attitudes among journalists, is based on different surveys among journalists in the Scandinavian countries. In Norway, the Norwegian Journalist Association has collected surveys from 1999 to 2010. In Denmark, a survey was collected by Nørgaard Kristensen (2003) in 2001 and another was conducted by Albæk, Van Dalen and De Vreese (2008) in 2007. In Sweden, Kent Asp have carried out several surveys between 1994 and 2005 and Jesper Strömbäck (2010) did another one in 2009. Unfortunately, the SD are not included in any survey prior its electoral breakthrough in 2010. However, other materials and secondary sources point in the direction of no support whatsoever.

Oxygen of Publicity: The Visibility of Populist Radical Right Parties In the Media

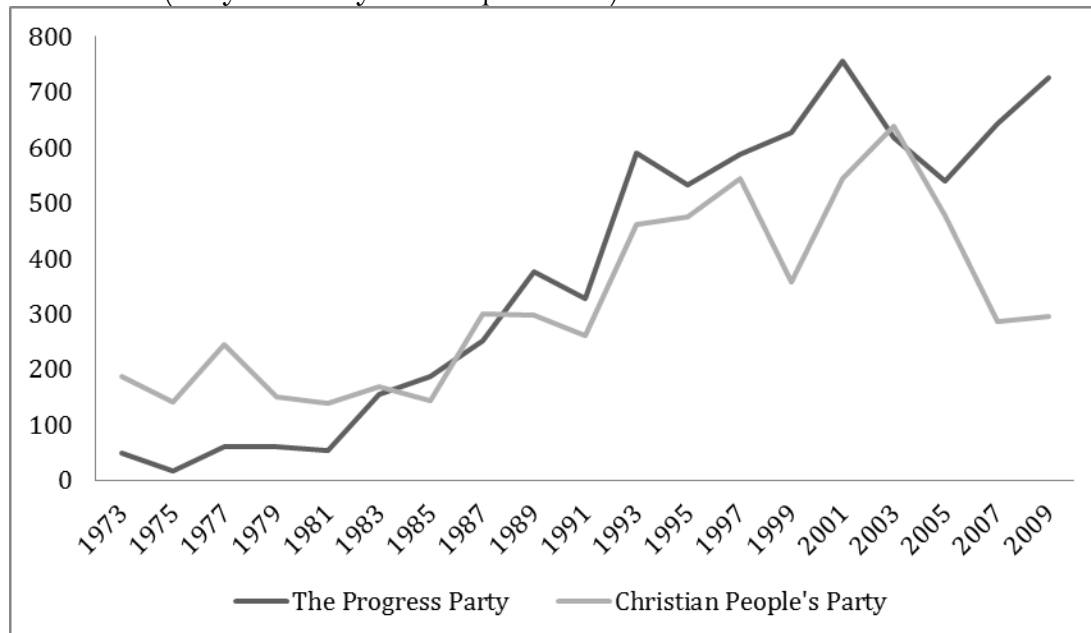
In Norway, the FRP has from the very beginning enjoyed much publicity in the media, particularly television publicity.⁸ Bjørklund (2000) even argues that television's new position in the 1973 election – the FRP's breakthrough election – was a necessary condition for its rapid parliamentary success. While the newspapers were still highly party controlled, or at least party loyal, the television could provide Lange with the scene he needed. Probably due to controversial behaviour, the questioning of Anders Lange was in fact the most watched of all televised questionings before the 1973 general election (Bjørklund 2000, 452). Lange's party is thus the first political party in Norway which deserves the label a "media phenomenon" (Svåsand and Wörlund 2005, 255). The FRP fell out of the parliament in 1977, but the party continued to be exposed in the media. Before the election in 1981, the party leader Carl I. Hagen was invited to both radio and television programs on NRK even though the party was not represented at *Stortinget*. The party re-entered the parliament in 1981 with four representatives, only to be halved again four years later, in 1985. However, the reduced size of the parliamentary group did not result in less publicity. On the contrary, after this election, which resulted in a hung parliament (neither the Government nor the opposition parties had a majority of the seats), the policy of the FRP was suddenly more interesting than ever before. As noted in the annual report from 1986, "the parliamentary work has, despite halving the number of representatives, attracted considerable attention in [...] the press and TV" (Fremskrittspartiet 1986, 8). The same conclusion is repeated internally by the party a few years later (Fremskrittspartiet 1989, 41).

In particular the so-called Mustafa-letter in the 1987-campaign brought the party to the forefront of the public discourse (Bjørklund 1988, 216). Also in the 1997 campaign, the FRP was visible in the campaign partly because of the immigration issue (Bjugan 1998). In election year of 2001, the party attracted much media attention due to a party split about six months before the election, and "as usual the party fought a lively election campaign" (Madeley 2002, 215). However, immigration was almost a non-issue in the media this year, and although taxes, a classic FRP issue, was the paramount issue, it was rather the Conservatives which took advantage of this (Valen 2003, 181). In 2005, the party leader of FRP dominated the campaign due to his rejection of Bondevik as a Prime Minister (Sitter 2006, 578), and in 2009 the FRP profited publicity-wise from being the main challenger of the incumbent government (Allern 2010).

⁸ Until 1992 on the state television NRK, and after this year, also at the commercial channel TV2.

The publicity for the FRP in Norway's largest newspaper, *Verdens Gang*, has increased more or less continuously since its breakthrough in 1973, but before the party re-entered the parliament in 1981, the degree of publicity was rather low (see figure 2). However, in order to decide what is high or low publicity, we should make comparisons with other parties.

Figure 2: Number of articles referring to the FRP or Christian People's Party in *Verdens Gang* 1973-2009. (Only election years are presented).

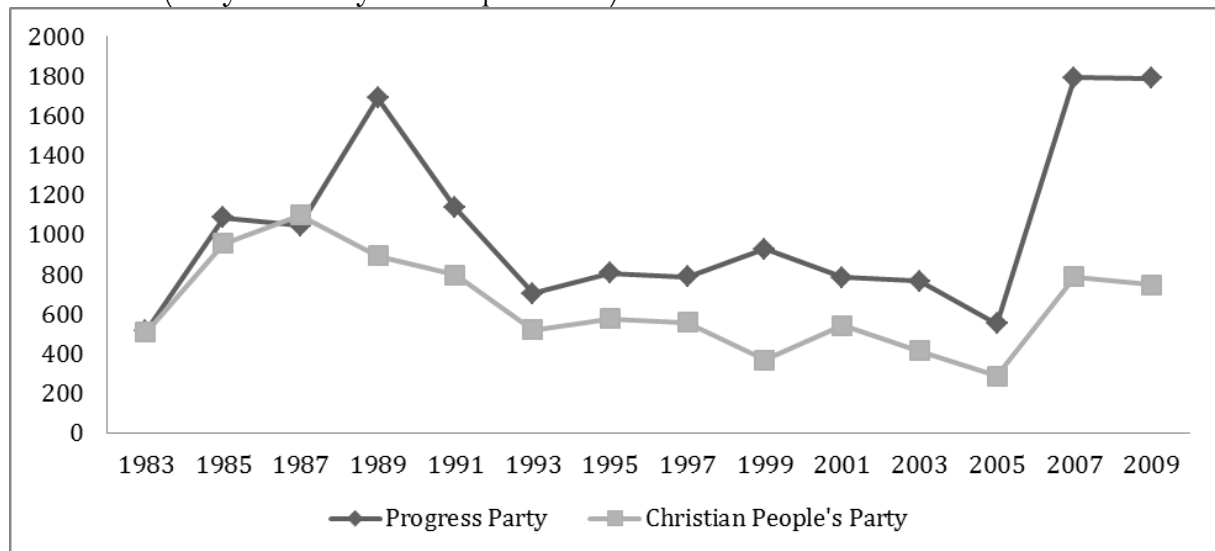


Source: Retriever Media Archive. URL: <https://web.retriever-info.com/services/archive.html>. Notes: Only Christian People's Party and The FRP are included because the abbreviations of these parties cannot stand for anything else. The search string is 'Fremskrittspartiet' OR 'FRP' ANDNOT 'Glistrup' for the FRP (before 1977 only 'Anders Langes Parti') and 'Kristelig Folkeparti' OR 'KRF' for the Christian People's Party. Note: Between 1973-1977, the FRP was called 'Anders Langes Party'.

In figure 2, Christian People's Party is included⁹, and in 1985, the media exposure of the FRP had already passed the Christian People's Party, which is small, but significant party in the Norwegian party system, due to coalition potential and governmental experience. In recent years, the difference between the parties seems to have increased, making the FRP far more visible than Christian People's Party in this particular newspaper. However, the same pattern is shown in a similar analysis of the second largest newspaper, *Aftenposten*, from 1995 to 2009 (see figure 3). Consequently, based on election reports and content analysis of the largest newspapers, it seems fair to argue that the FRP has enjoyed much media attention from the very beginning, particularly since the late 80's.

⁹ Christian People's party is included only for pragmatic reasons. It is the only party in Norway with a name, which allows us to distinguish it from other words in the Norwegian language.

Figure 3: Number of articles referring to the FRP or Christian People's Party in *Aftenposten*, 1983-2009. (Only election years are presented).



Source: see the figure above

Just as in Norway, both the Danish Progress Party (FRPd) and, later, the DF have attracted a great deal of media attention. According to Rydgren (2004, 493), the DF in particular have been given “a great deal of media coverage on immigration issues”. In fact, the party leader Pia Kjærsgaards was the second most quoted on immigration issues before the earthquake election in 2001 (Karpantschof 2002, 43 in Rydgren 2004). Also with regard to visibility on television, the DF comes out well. An analysis of 4604 randomly selected news reports in the two main TV-channels, TV2 and DR, from five different parliamentary elections (1994, 1998, 2001, 2005 and 2007), finds that the governing parties (including support parties such as the DF) are more visible than the opposition (Albæk et al. 2010). Furthermore, another study of the media and the DF’s communication strategies, argues that the DF has great penetration in the Danish media, because the party communicates professionally and effectively using the language of the journalists (Visby et al. 2007, 71).

Analysing the different elections in which the DF contested, it is clear that the party quickly obtained a central position in the public debate. In 1998, much of the media coverage focused on government formation (Bjugan 1999). However, a DF politician also gained some visibility in the media since he “suggested repatriating Somali refugees by dropping them in parachutes over the Horn of Africa” (Bjugan 1999, 174). In the next election, the DF and its important issues were more visible in the media. If the EU was important in 1998, immigration dominated the agenda in 2001. Contrary to other Scandinavian countries, “immigration has never been a taboo in the Danish media” (Goul Andersen 2003), making it easier for an anti-immigrant party to gain publicity. Moreover, during the election campaigning in 2001, Islamic fundamentalism and integration problems occupied a large part of the public discourse. While other minor parties found it difficult to get access to the media in the 2001 election campaign, this was not the case for the DF (Qvortrup 2002, 208). In 2005, however, the party leaders of the two dominant parties received “the lion’s share of media attention during the campaigning” (Goul Andersen 2006, 396; see also Pedersen 2005), and the DF was only the fifth most covered party (Bro et al. 2005, 18). And while Pia Kjærsgaard was the fourth most cited politician, the next DF-politician was far down on the list (Bro et al. 2005, 16)

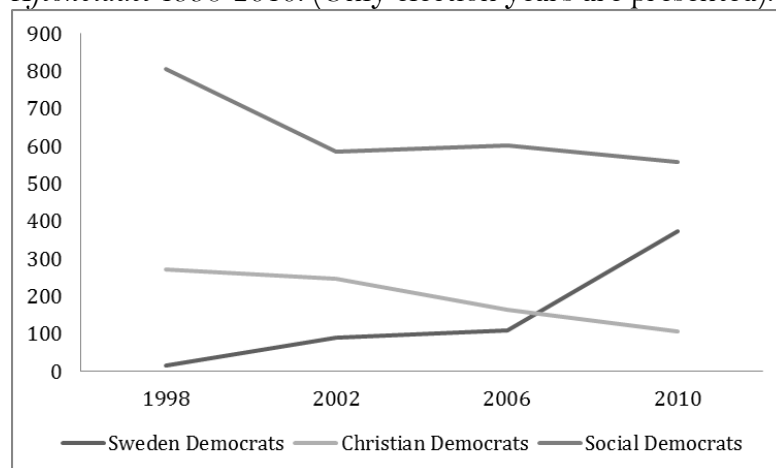
In 2007, Pedersen (2008) argues that the media coverage of Danish politics has become increasingly dominated by “politics, not policies”. Nevertheless, three themes still received more attention than others: Welfare, Taxes and Asylum Children, and at least two

of these issues (the first and the last) are associated with the DF. Indirectly, however, the media coverage was to some extent negative towards the DF in 2007. A new right-wing party – New Alliance – had been formed in order to eliminate the influence of the DF, and for some reason “the press coverage of this party formation was favourable towards the party” (Kosiara-Pedersen 2008). The question of visibility is more mixed than in Norway. While it would be unthinkable for a large newspaper in Norway to refuse to print commercial for the FRP, such a strategy has been discussed in *Politiken* (Espersen 2010).

Looking at the periode as a whole, the party has still been highly attractive for journalists because of its position as a governmental support position. But now this might change: An analysis of the eight largest newspapers presented in *Politiken* (21.10.11), clearly shows that the party is much less visible in the media after Denmark changed government (Christensen 2011).

In Sweden, just as in Norway and Denmark, the first PRR party – New Democracy – gained much media attention due to unorthodox campaigning in the 1991 election. According to Rydgren (2002, 34), the election campaign in 1991 was more “like stand-up comedy than the traditional type of political campaign meetings” , and another analysis concludes by the following: “To describe [New Democracy’s] campaign as colourful is an understatement” (Widfeldt 2000, 8). There was never a question of denying this party publicity. In fact, the party was launched through a debate article in the second largest newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*. However, while New Democracy gained much media attention, it has been extremely difficult for the SD even to be mentioned in the mass media, at least prior to the 2006 election (Bevelander and Hellström 2011, 11). *Dagens Nyheter* even refused to publish a commercial for the SD (Nielsen 2004, 183), and when *Aftonbladet* decided to publish an article written by Åkesson in 2009 it generated much public discussion. Not only about the content, but also to what extent is what a right decision to publish the article in the first place. Even though Åkesson met the leader of the largest party, Mona Sahlin from the Social Democrats, for the first time in a TV debate on TV4, a general increase in the media coverage did not start until a few months before the election (Bevelander and Hellström 2011, 34).

Figure 4: Number of articles referring to the SD, Christian Democrats or Social Democrats in *Aftonbladet* 1998-2010. (Only election years are presented).



Source: Retriever Media Archive. URL: <https://web.retriever-info.com/services/archive.html>. Note: Christian Democrats and Social Democrats are included for comparisons. The search string here is only the full party name: ‘Sverigedemokraterna’, ‘Kristdemokraterna’ and ‘Sociademokraterna’.

As shown in figure 4, the 2010 is certainly the year of publicity breakthrough for the SD. From being mentioned about 100 times in *Aftonbladet* in 2002 and 2006, the party receives

almost 400 hits in 2010. The media coverage clearly exceeds the Christian Democrats, which is one of the governing parties. However, the SD is expectedly less mentioned than the Social Democrats.

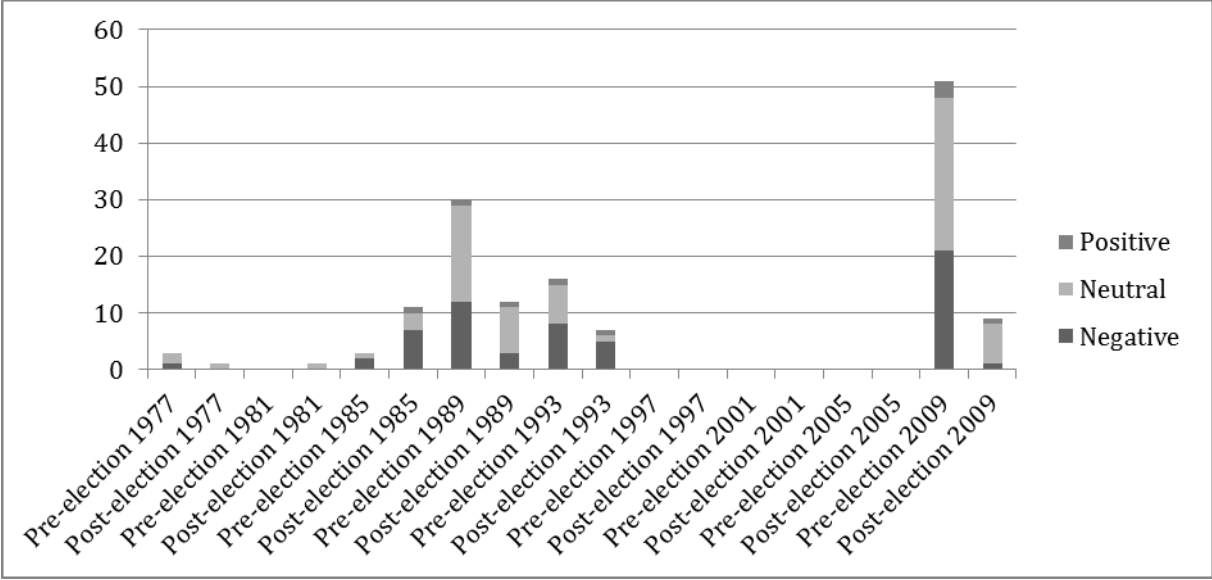
Coverage: Negative, Neutral or Positive?

In this section, we will move beyond the question of publicity and look more closely at the content of the coverage. How are the PRR portrayed, evaluated and defined in the main press?

In Norway, almost all newspapers quickly criticized Anders Lange. Only a few days after the formation meeting in Saga Kino, several of the influential newspapers attacked both the personality of Lange and his political views (Iversen 1998, 39). *Verdens Gang* wrote sarcastically that those who believed in Lange’s societal analysis, had to be “egocentric” or “political illiterates”. The other tabloid, *Dagbladet*, called Lange “a threatening symptom”, and they warned against the consequences if Lange and his followers would gain power and influence in the Norwegian society. The critique of the FRP continued throughout the 70’s. Even though it was never a question of excluding the FRP from the debate, some of the interviews were far from sympathetic. For instance, at the radio in the early 80’s, a leading journalist accused the party of being a “brown party”.

However, analysing all editorials in *Verdens Gang* gives us a more nuanced picture of the how the FRP has been covered (see figure5). In the early years of existence, the few editorials of the party were in fact neutral, but in the 80’s, the VG criticized the FRP more and more often. Yet over 50 per cent of the editorials were in fact neutral, both before and after the Election Day. Perhaps a bit more surprising is the fact that even after 40 years of the existence, the editorials are either neutral or negative. Almost none are positive, and if they are, it is usually the case that VG is supporting traditional conservative policy (i.e. policy in which the FRP and *Høyre*, the Conservative party, agree).

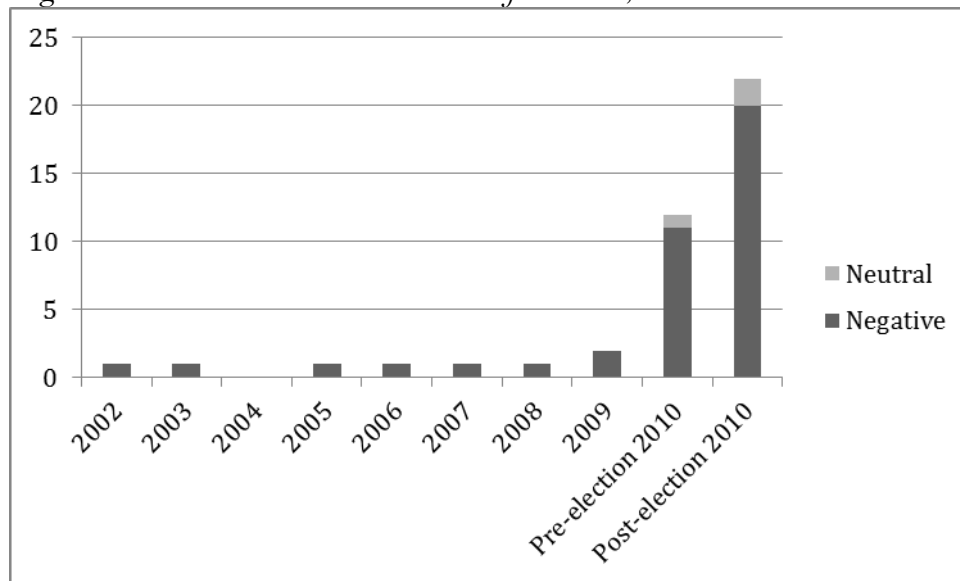
Figure 5: Editorials about the FRP in *Verdens Gang*, 1993-2009 (1997, 2001 and 2005 are missing from the figure).



Source: *Verdens Gang* 1977-2009. Retriever media archive. Note: Data from 1997, 2001 and 2005 are still missing.

In Sweden, the most of the coverage of SD has been negative. Before 2006, most commentators viewed the SD as “devils in disguise”, to paraphrase Hellström and Nilsson (2010). In fact, according to an analysis of the six largest newspapers in Sweden, “all the dominant newspapers share a negative view towards the party, [and] after the national elections 2010 the tabloids *Expressen* (Exp) and *Aftonbladet* (AB) launched campaigns against the party, and the xenophobic sentiments they, supposedly, capitalize on” (Bevelander and Hellström 2011, 13). Looking more systematically at *Aftonbladet*, we reach the same conclusion: Almost all editorials have been negative towards the party (see figure 6), and the SD is more or less consistently defined as a “racist” party. All the coverage have been negative, except a few editorials which should be classified as neutral.

Figure 6: Editorials about the SD in *Aftonbladet*, 2002-2010.



Source: *Aftonbladet* 2002-2010. Retriever media archive.

Denmark

To be continued. Data missing so far.

Changing Sympathies? The Journalists’ Attitudes Toward PRR Parties

Let us finally turn to the question of whether journalists in the different countries vote radical right, and whether it has changed over time.

In Norway, very few journalists vote for the FRP. Indeed, in a news article in 2008, the journalist Ulf Andenæs in *Aftenposten* admitted that as far as he knew there were no FrP-voters among his colleagues, and he added sarcastically: “A specimen of the species is said to exist in the *Se og Hør*, but they are not completely on board”. We lack systematic data from before 1999 when the Norwegian Journalist Association started to poll political preferences among their own members, but there is no reason to believe that the support was higher before this year.

As shown in table 1, the support for the FRP has never reached more than 5 per cent, which happened in 2007. In fact, in 2001 no respondents said they would vote the FrP if Election Day were tomorrow. Moreover, it is difficult to see any clear trend towards increased sympathy. Admittedly, the support seems to increase somewhat throughout the 2000’s, but in 2010 the support is back to level where it started in 1999 (see table 1). If we compare the support among journalists with the electoral support in general elections, it is also clear that the FRP is the most underrepresented party in the Norwegian party system.

Since growth in electoral support from 2001 to 2009 is without a corresponding increase in support from journalists, the party gets even more underrepresented (see table 2).

Table 1: Support for the FRP among Norwegian journalists 1999-2010

Years	1999	2001	2003	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Support for the FRP	2 %	0 %	3 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	3 %	3 %	2 %
(N)	(321)	(348)	(296)	(410)	(400)	(460)	(376)	(348)	(406)

Source: (Gaard Olaussen 2010, 20) Note: The sample is a representative selection of members in the Norwegian Journalists Association. The sample is drawn randomly from the membership lists of the Norwegian Union of Journalists. Notes: The questions was “If it was elections to the *Storting* tomorrow, which party would you vote for?”

Table 2: Party sympathies among Norwegian journalists 1999-2009

	2001			2005			2009		
	JP	ER	Diff.	JP	ER	Diff.	JP	ER	Diff.
The Red Party	6	1,2	+4,8	2	1,2	+0,8	5	1,4	+3,6
Socialist Left Party	25	12,5	+12,5	32	8,8	+23,2	18	6,2	+11,8
The Labour Party	30	24,3	+5,7	33	32,7	+0,3	43	35,4	+7,6
The Centre Party	3	5,6	-2,6	1	6,5	-5,5	2	6,2	-4,2
Christian People's Party	6	12,4	-6,4	5	6,8	-1,8	1	5,5	-4,5
The Liberal Party	6	3,9	+2,1	6	5,9	+0,1	14	3,9	+10,1
The Conservative Party	21	21,2	-0,2	16	14,1	+1,9	13	17,2	-4,2
The Progress Party	0	14,6	-14,6	3	22,1	-19,1	3	22,9	-19,9
Others	2	4,3	-2,3	1	1,9	-0,9	2	1,3	+0,7

Abbreviations: ER: Election result, JP: Journalists preferences, Diff: difference between ER and JP.

Source: (Gaard Olaussen 2010). Note: see table above

In Denmark, we do not have the same number of surveys as in Norway. Yet a few have been carried out, and they seem to point in the same directions as those in Norway: Very few journalists sympathize with populist radical right parties. In 2001, no journalists say they would vote for the DF or the FRPd (see table 3). Since the DF at that point in time received 12 per cent in the general elections, the party is among the most underrepresented among journalists. However, the liberal-conservative party, Venstre, is even more underrepresented, and the Social Democrats are just as underrepresented as the DF. Just as in Norway, journalists seem to prefer the liberal party in the center and the new left parties. In 2007, a new survey was carried out among journalists (Albæk et al. 2008), and the DF was supported by 3 per cent. However, there are several methodological problems with this survey. Firstly, the survey is restricted to political journalists working at the parliament, which is a different group of journalists compared to the other surveys discussed here. Secondly, the numbers of respondents are very low, particularly looking at the question of party sympathy. Even though the authors argue that the sample is representative, as few as 39 journalists answered this question, which means the 3 per cent support for the DF represents in fact only one single person. A more recent study asking all journalists in the Danish Journalist Association about their political orientation confirms that very few see themselves as “far right” (Skovsgaard 2010). In fact, while ten per cent placed themselves on “far left” side, only one per cent did the same on the “far right” side. Admittedly, in a dubious way, this was interpreted as being the support the DF (Albrecht 2010).

In Sweden, neither the first populist party New Democracy nor the second one, the SD, are included in the longitudinal data collected by Kent Asp (2006). However, a survey carried out by Strömbäck (2010), among others, seems to confirm the patterns revealed in the two other cases: The PRR party is truly disliked by the journalists. Only 0.2 per cent of the journalists in 2009, said they would vote for the SD (see table 4). Moreover, just as in the other countries, left wing and liberal parties are heavily overrepresented among the journalists. This means that not only is the SD underrepresented among journalists – so are

also the Moderate Party, Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats. In fact, both the two largest parties are more underrepresented than the SD – measured as percentage points difference between journalists’ preferences and popular support.

Table 3: Party sympathies among Danish journalists 2001 and 2007

	2001			2007		
	JP (N=527)	ER	Diff.	JP (N=39)	OP	Diff.
Unity list	5,9	2,4	+3,5	3	2	+1
Socialist People's Party	15,7	6,4	+9,3	3	15	-12
Social Democrats	17,1	29,1	-12	31	26	+5
The Social Liberal Party	14,6	5,2	+9,4	31	5	+26
Christian Democrats	0,4	2,3	-1,9	0	1	-1
Centre Democrats	0,2	1,8	-1,6	-	-	-
New Alliance	-	-	-	10	4	+6
The Conservative People's Party	4,4	9,1	-4,7	8	8	0
The Liberal Party (Venstre)	8	31,2	-23,2	13	30	-17
Danish People's Party	0	12	-12	3	9	-6
The Progress Party	0	0,6	-0,6	-	-	-
<i>Do not want to answer</i>	29	0	+29	-	-	-

Source: (Albæk et al. 2008, 112; Nørgaard Kristensen 2003, 148)

Abbreviations: ER: Election result, JP: Journalists preferences, OP: Opinion Polls. Diff: difference between JP and ER, or between JP and OP. Notes: In 2001, the Christian Democrats was called Christian People’s Party. For some reason, Nørgaard Kristensen is referring to a number of respondents also in the distribution of voter preferences in 2001. However, the numbers are the same as the final election result, and that result is not restricted to a representative sample.

Table 4: Party sympathies among Swedish journalists, 1994 and 2009

	1994			2009		
	JP (N=855)	ER	Diff.	JP (N=?)	OP	Diff.
Left Party	20	6,2	+13,8	13,5	4,8	+8,7
Social Democrats	32	45,3	-13,3	22,5	34,6	-12,1
Green Party	14	5	+9	27,3	7,8	+19,5
Centre Party	3	7,7	-4,7	6,4	5	+1,4
Liberal People's Party	19	7,2	+11,8	12	7,8	+4,2
Christian Democrats	2	4,1	-2,1	1,3	4,7	-3,4
Moderate Party	10	22,4	-12,4	9,7	29	-19,3
Sweden Democrats	-	-	-	0,2	3,9	-3,7
New Democracy	?	1,2	?	-	-	-
Others	?	1	?	7,1	2,4	+4,7

Abbreviations: ER: Election result, JP: Journalists preferences, OP: Opinion polls, Diff: difference between ER and JP. Source: (Asp 2006, 5; Strömbäck 2010)

(Very) Preliminary Conclusion

The reaction’s from the media has been quite different in the three Scandinavian countries. Although the media in Scandinavian countries do pursues a *support* strategy of PPR parties, there are clear country specific differences. Contrary to the Swedish press, the Danish and Norwegian media has never adopted the *ignoring* strategy in which the populist radical right party is denied much publicity. Yet, both countries have followed a quite clear *strategy of stigmatizing*. Over time, this strategy seems to have become mixed with an *objective forwarding strategy* (some data for Denmark is still missing, however). In Swedish, we have also seen a process of normalization in which the PRR party is no longer denied the ‘oxygen of publicity’. Hence, the approach towards the SD has changed from *ignoring* strategy to *confrontation* strategy. Given the different origins of the populist radical right parties in the three countries – SD having a neo-Nazi background, whereas the Danish and Norwegian

party emerged as tax-protest parties – the pattern revealed in this paper is perhaps not so surprising. In a true comparison between the Scandinavian countries with regard to the media reactions to different types of far right parties, it would be more appropriate to look at how the Danish and Norwegian media are dealing with “extreme right parties” (i.e. parties with a racist and undemocratic agenda).

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Appendix 1: Distribution of Scandinavian newspapers, 1990-2010

Newspapers	1990	2000	2010
<i>Denmark</i>			
Jyllands-Posten (Morning edition)			109 000
Berlingske Tidende			101 000
Politiken			100 000
<i>Norway</i>			
Verdens Gang	367 000	375 600	233 300
Aftenposten (Morning edition)	265 300	276 400	239 800
Dagbladet	219 800	192 600	98 100
<i>Sweden</i>			
Aftonbladet		401 800	310 900
Dagens Nyheter		360 500	292 300
Expressen (including <i>GT</i> and <i>Kvällsposten</i>)		333 500	270 900

Sources: Denmark: www.do.dk, (Nordicom 2010; Tidningsstatistik 2010). Note: Free newspapers are not included. The 2000-numbers for Sweden is from 2001.