

20.June 2024, 3. Day of Parliamentary Research

Nina Bianca Dohr, BA, MA, LL.M.

PhD Candidate 2023-2027

Political Changes of Position Under Public Pressure - Using The Example of Party Donations in Austria



Problem Definition & Research Questions

- Do political positions change under public pressure?
- (How) does public opinion affect agenda setting?

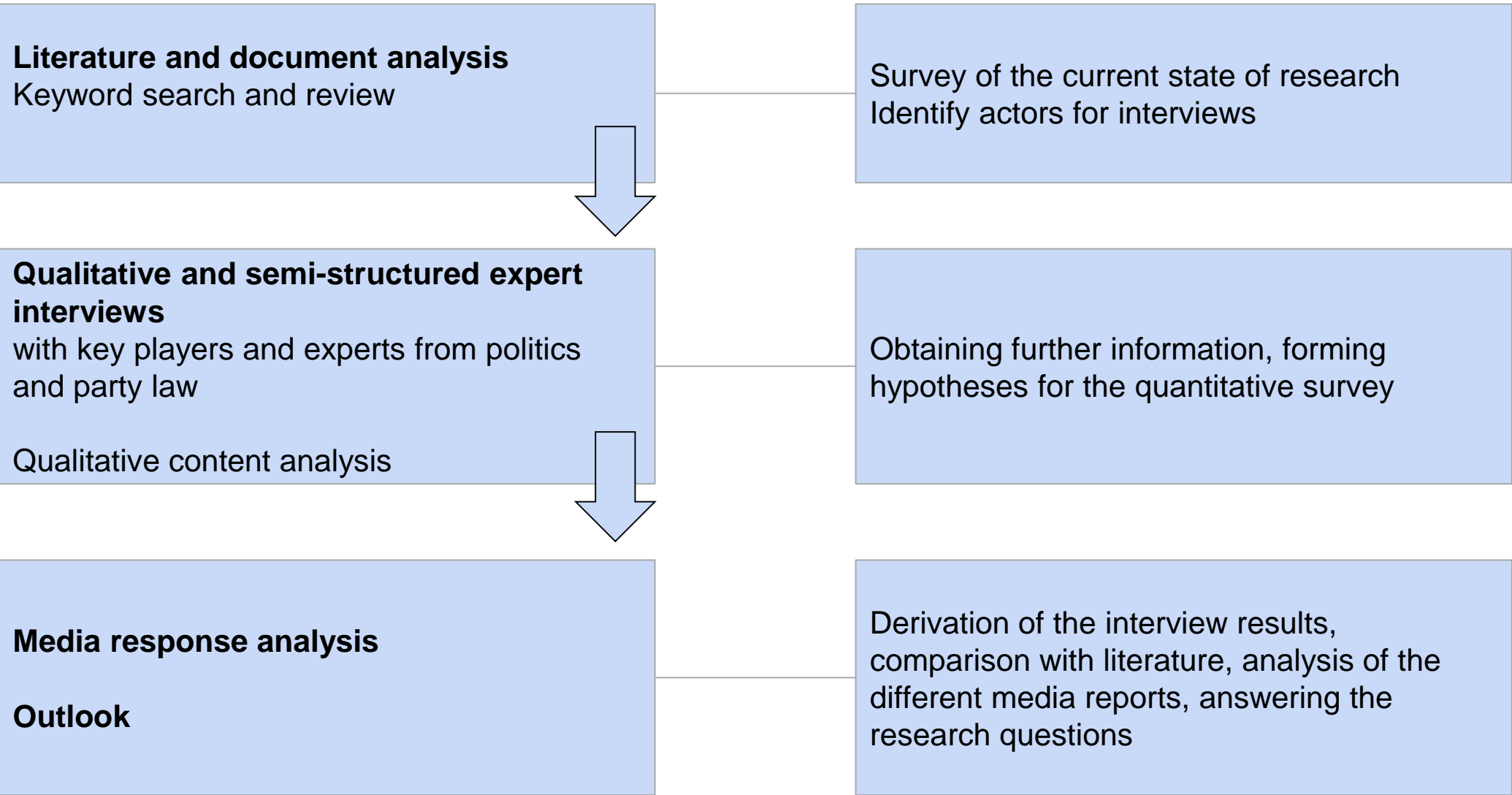
Initial hypotheses suggests resistance from political parties to tighten party laws, but recent instances of regulatory changes in party donations challenge this assumption.



Scientific Methodology

- encompasses interdisciplinary approaches to theoretical grounding and empirical investigation
- communication science & decision-making theory
 - McCombs and Shaw's agenda setting approach: the role of media in shaping public opinion and influencing political agendas
 - Cohen's trash can model: offers insights into decision-making processes within political contexts
- theoretical frameworks for understanding the dynamics of political positions, public pressure and agenda-setting
- document and literature analysis
- qualitative, semi-structured expert interviews





Current Status

How are Austria's parties and politicians financed? Where does the money come from and where does it go? Which areas are particularly susceptible to political corruption? Which role does media play in this context?

- Expert in political financing: Hubert Sickinger, DDr.



Political Financing in Austria

Income of Austrian parties:

- membership fees
- donations
- parliamentary group financing (party taxes from mandataries)
- borrowing and state party financing

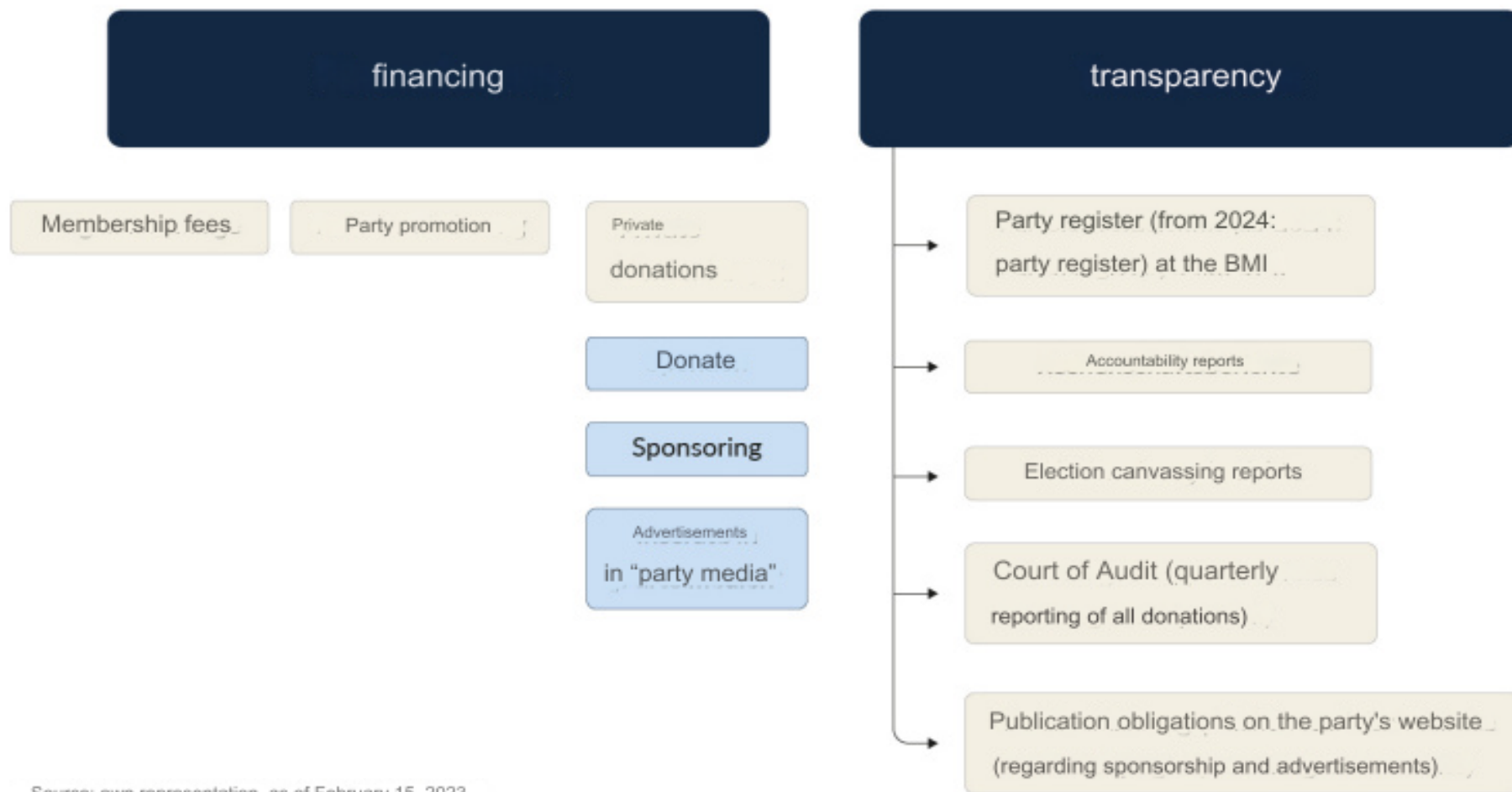
Expenditures:

- costs of election campaigns
- salaries
- financing of Austrian politicians





Key aspects of the financing and transparency of political parties



Source: own representation, as of February 15, 2023.



Legal basis: PartG 2012

The legal basis for the establishment of political parties is the Political Parties Act 2012

- contains fundamental provisions on the amount and distribution of public funding for political parties
- regulates the limitation of election advertising expenditure and the permissibility of donations
- the definition of 'related organisation' was extended to include 'related organisations of related organisations' (Section 2 no. 3 PartG)



Financing and its Importance

- Political parties require resources for their operations (organizing activities, disseminating information, and managing public relations)
- Political parties receive state support to ensure they can serve their role in parliamentary democracy
- Intention to prevent reliance on donors or interest groups
- Safeguarding integrity of the political process



Examples of Changes to PartG 2012

- election advertising expenditure has been limited in Austria
- each party may spend a maximum of around € 7.4 million on election advertising for a national or European election
- limitation of donations
- disclosure of income and expenses
- sanctions
- court of auditors



Public Pressure - Media?

- media-centred campaigns
- agenda setting: The weighting and evaluation of issues by the media have an influence on voters, especially among swing voters (Rhomborg, 2009, p. 214)



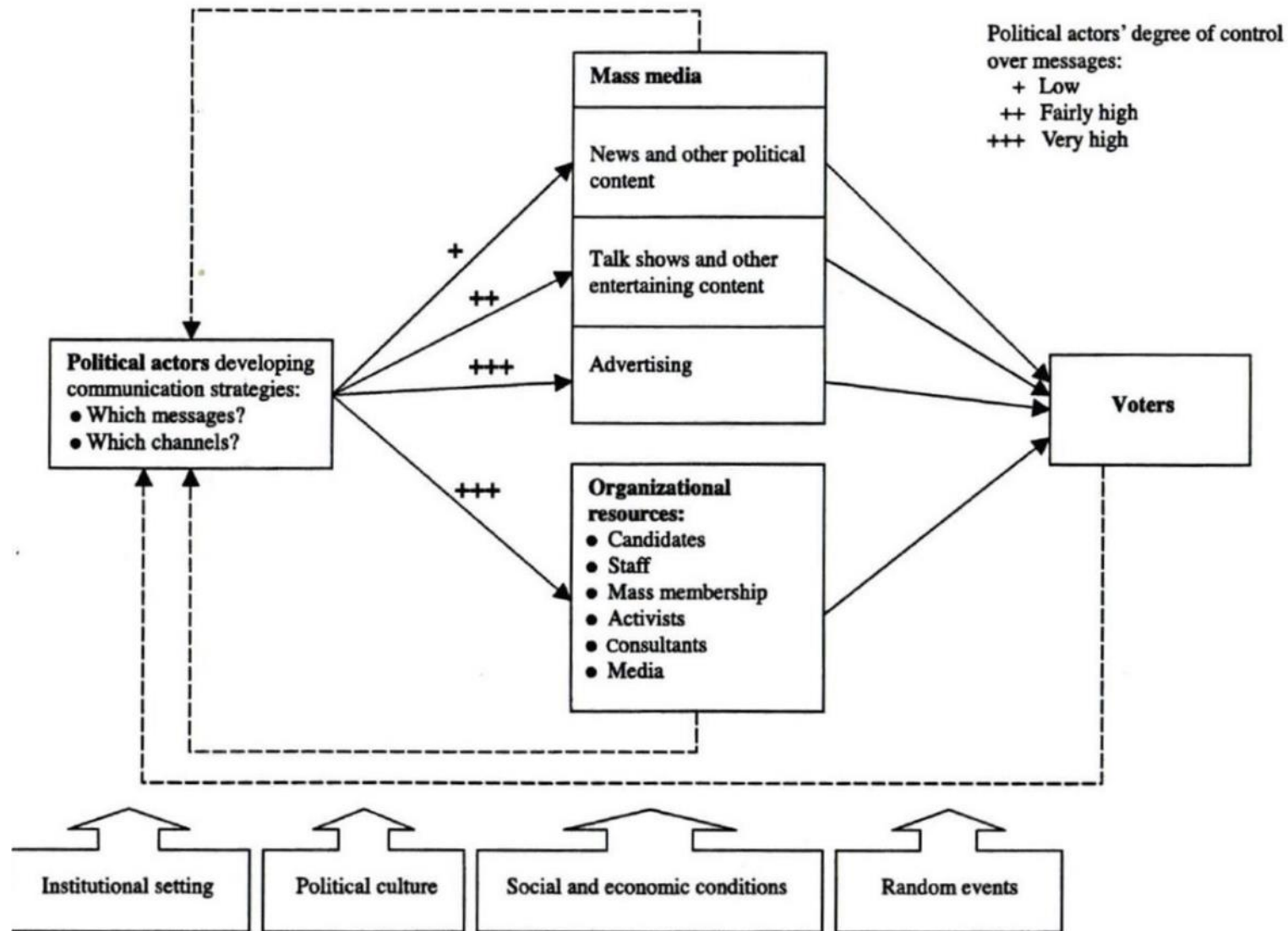


Abbildung 3: Modell Wahlkampfkommunikation

Quelle: (Farrell & Schmitt-Beck, 2006, S. 6)

Next steps

- redrafting of outline
- saving press releases and similar
- writing first chapters
- preparation of interview questions and contacting partners



Sources

- BKA. (2019). Österreichisches Parteiengesetz. Abgerufen 2. Februar 2023, von <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=20007889>
- Parlamentswebsite des österreichischen Parlaments
- Rhomberg, M. (2008). Mediendemokratie: die Agenda-Setting-Funktion der Massenmedien. Paderborn: Fink.
- Sickinger, H. (2009). Politikfinanzierung in Österreich. Czernin Verl.
- Sickinger, H.(2013). Politisches Geld. Parteienfinanzierung und öffentliche Kontrolle in Österreich. Czernin Verl.

