Making it to the News.
Interest Groups in the Media

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Paper prepared for:

The Eighteenth International Conference of Europeanists
June 20-22, 2011 - Barcelona, Spain

Very first draft. Do not quote

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Abstract

Interest groups place considerable emphasis on affecting the news media. However, not all groups are equally successful in their media-directed efforts, perhaps because they do not have sufficient resources to engage in sophisticated media strategies. Further, news values theory argues that the media are more likely to report on actors with status and power and bring stories that are seen as newsworthy. The paper analyzes the diversity in group appearances in the news media and the effect of group resources and strategies on their media presences. It builds on an innovative data set linking data from a survey among Danish interest groups with data on press statements and group appearances in two daily newspapers. Media attention is found to be heavily skewed with extensive reporting on a handful of groups in possession of financial resources and insider positions in the political system. However, front page news also devotes considerable attention to groups representing broader causes.

1. Introduction

Each day a number of interest groups find their way to news stories in printed media, online news sites or on television and radio. In fact, many groups continuously appear in the news media and some even make it to the front page on a regular basis. The increasing political importance of the news media has affected interest groups alongside other political actors and today having a prominent media presence is seen as a crucial indication of organizational success. In political processes the news media are important and, accordingly, for groups interested in shaping political outcomes a central arena.

Patterns of media appearance have wider implications than those relating to individual interest groups. Analyzing and understanding the patterns of group appearances in the news media is important because it tells us something about political power. A prominent media presence does not equal political power, but it is an indicator of an important position in the media arena. A prominent media presence provides an opportunity to affect or even shape the political agenda and to affect decision makers. In a mediatized political world it is crucial to investigate whether media appearance is a privilege of a few large interest groups or whether a broad array of groups attract media attention.

Understanding group appearances in the news media requires a step-wise approach to theory building. Lowery and Gray have launched the idea of an influence production process as a general approach to the study of group influence (2004). This calls attention to the role of factors related to groups and to the different arenas where groups seek influence. In respect to the media, groups are not alone in determining their share of media attention. Groups may direct attention and resources towards the media arena, but if reporters and news editors do not find their stories worth reporting on, their efforts will be in vain.

The present paper investigates the media appearance of Danish interest groups. It takes the idea of the influence production process as point of departure and asks: Which groups aim to affect the media? To what extent do groups invest in media-directed activities? And: Which groups are successful in getting media attention? The empirical strategy is logical and rather simple, yet innovative. While previous research has either studied the strategies of interest groups for example by conducting surveys (Beyers 2004; Binderkrantz 2005; Eising 2007) or investigated group presence in the media (Binderkrantz 2011), this paper combines different data sources. We look at (1) groups' self-reported intention to affect the media and (2) compare this with unique data on press statements issued by groups and (3) compare this group input with output as it appears in national newspapers. Survey data are used to test the effect of group resources and institutional privileges.

2. Media attention: From group strategy to media appearance

Media attention has become a precious resource for political actors. In present-day mediatized political systems much interaction between political actors takes place in the media (Koopmans 2004; Mazzoleni & Schulz 1999). Parties and political candidates are keen to have their stories and viewpoints propagated by reporters because the media are the primary channel of communication with voters; ministers employ spin-doctors and other special advisors to pursue effective media strategies and government organizations have public relations offices occupied with presenting a favorable view of their organization to the media. Likewise, interest groups' leaders view a prominent presence in the media as a central organizational goal. For groups interested in political influence it is central to make it to the news in order to shape the political agenda and have political parties react to – and ultimately adopt – the view points of groups. Members of interest groups also expect their organization to be politically active and media attention is well suited to demonstrate to members that the organization is actively pursuing their viewpoints and interests.

It is well documented that media-directed activities are prominent in the political tool box of interest groups. Most groups use tactics such as issuing press releases and talking to journalists and evaluate these activities as important (Baumgartner & Leech 1998; Beyers 2004; Binderkrantz 2008; Kriesi et al. 2007). It has also been shown that different types of influence tactics and strategies are complementary. The more active groups are towards decision makers, the more active they are in approaching the media (Binderkrantz 2005; Kriesi et al. 2007: 62). This lends support to Beyers' persistence hypothesis (2004) according to which media strategies are not a 'weapon of the weak' primarily used by groups excluded from circles of decision making (Wolfsfeld 1984). It may be so in some cases, but the overall picture is that an intensive media strategy is one among many instruments that resourceful groups utilize in their attempts to attain political influence (Kriesi et al 2007: 55).

One thing is that a wide array of interest groups view media coverage as an important means of influence; another is the actual media attention groups get. Media attention is a scarce resource and the number of newspaper pages and television spots severely limits the chances that interest group leaders and other political actors will get their stories in the media. While some studies have concentrated on group strategies, others have analyzed the actual patterns of media appearance by groups and other actors (Binderkrantz 2011; Danielian & Page 1994; Thrall 2006). These studies are not abundant, but a relevant finding is that a few groups are able to attract a very high share of attention and that groups dominating the insider game of politics are also predominant in the outsider arena of the media (Binderkrantz & Christiansen 2010; Thrall 2006: 408). Even so, increased diversity over time – at least in the Danish political system – in the types of interest groups appearing in the news media has also been demonstrated (Binderkrantz 2011).

This study differs from the previous literature by linking group strategies to actual media coverage. Any understanding of group media appearances needs to take into account both the incentives for groups to seek media attention and the selection processes in the media. Making it to the news can be seen as a step-wise process and different factors are likely to be important in different stages. Here, Lowery and Gray's (2004) idea of an influence production process is useful. It calls attention to the different stages from group mobilization, over how populations of interest groups make strategic choices and finally towards political influence. In the present context this involves focusing both on (1) the factors involved in mobilizing groups to seek media attention and (2) the factors related to the media and their news selection.

2.1 Diversity in group appearances

In most cases media attention is a valued asset for interest group leaders and in most cases more attention is better than less. Group appearances in the media are an indicator of an influential position in the media arena and it is therefore not trivial who does and who does not make it to the news. Dahl sees 'effective participation' as an important indicator of democracy and argues that: 'Before a policy is adopted by an association, all the members must have equal and effective opportunities for making their views known to the other members as to what the policy should be' (1998: 37). In democratic practices, this places interest groups at center stage since they constitute a main channel for the expression of diverse viewpoints in public debates. In light of this paper's research question Dahl's criteria of equal and effective opportunities can be transformed into an interest in different groups' opportunities for making their voices heard in the media arena.

Starting with the first step in the influence production process, a particularly dominant theme in the interest group literature has been the obstacles involved in group formation. Mancur Olson (1965) inspired a generation of group scholars to investigate the severity of the collective action problems involved in mobilizing interest groups. As noted by several scholars these problems may have attracted more attention than warranted since groups in fact do mobilize despite collective action problems. Existing group populations include not only narrow and intense interests but also more groups working for broader causes than the collective action theory would prophesy (Baumgartner & Leech 1998: 75; Lowery & Gray 2004: 166). In Western democracies, the more pressing issue is therefore the extent to which these different groups are effectively represented in the media. This may depend on the resources available to the groups and on the accessibility of the media.

One criterion for evaluating group media appearances is the diversity of appearance. Diversity in group representation – or its flipside concept, bias – has continually been a major theme in the group literature (Baumgartner & Leech 1998: 100-119; Schattschneider 1960; Schlozman 1984: 1008). Representation bias is a difficult concept to get at because there is no clear way to assess what an unbiased pressure group system would look like and how unbiased access to the media would look. We approach this problem by following groups through the influence production process. The question is whether there is more or less diversity in the groups mobilized for action towards the media arena than in the groups actually appearing in the news – and if so what factors can account for the divergence.

A crucial issue here is comparing the chances different types of groups have for making themselves heard. We define interest groups in a rather standard way as membership organizations working to obtain political influence. Group members can be individuals, firms, governmental institutions or other interest groups (cf. Jordan et al. 2004). In contrast to Schattschneider, who reserved the term 'pressure system' for special interest groups

(Schattschneider, 1960: 29), groups representing specific interest organizations as well as public interest groups are included in this definition.

Interest groups have been categorized in numerous ways depending on the purpose of the categorization. The distinction between special interest groups or sectional groups on the one hand and public interest groups on the other is a classic distinction (Berry 1999; Schlozman 1984). Public interest groups are distinguished from the other groups because they seek collective goods, the achievement of which will not materially benefit the members of the group (Berry, 1977: 7). This fundamental difference may be phrased in different ways, but the division of groups into a public interest group vs. a sectional group category is rather consistent in the literature (Dunleavy, 1988; Halpin, 2006).

There is less agreement on how to categorize groups that organize specific constituencies but are not related to the economic sector. Authors interested in broad social movements would treat for instance women's groups or ethnic minority groups alongside environmental groups or human rights groups (Tarrow 1998). Others would emphasize the difference between public interest groups on the one hand and groups drawing their members from a specific constituency and working to achieve goods benefiting this constituency on the other hand (Dunleavy 1991). Berry provides a Solomonic solution in using the term 'citizen groups' to refer to a broader category containing both public interest groups and sectional groups not related to vocations or professions (Berry, 1999: 2; 190).

This distinction draws attention to the fact that sectional groups are indeed a very heterogeneous group. Some represent the business community or unions, others broader and less well organized groups such as women or the elderly and yet others organize public institutions such as schools, universities, or local authorities. Capturing this diversity is not easy and any empirically useful categorization would embrace a rather varied set of groups. Nonetheless, we divide sectional interest groups into four groups that enable a discussion with at least some main themes in the literature. The two first groups are almost indispensable: A classic discussion concerns the balance between business and labor. These two groups are of special interest in a European context because of the tradition for strong labor movements and for involving labor market groups in corporatist arrangements (Christiansen et al. 2010; Molina & Rhodes 2002; Schmitter 1974).

A third group type is producers and providers of public service. Local authorities in most countries have established interest groups, and schools, universities, museums and other institutions are organized in regional and/or national associations. A fourth type represents sectional groups that are not vocational, but are mobilized on the basis of a different logic, for instance groups for women or for the elderly. The net result of these grouping speculations is five categories: 1) labor groups, 2) business groups, 3) groups of institutions and authorities, 4) other sectional groups, and 5) public interest groups.

2.2 Explaining media appearance: Group incentives and news values

A crucial step in the influence production process relates to the strategic choices made by groups. Different types of groups do not have equal incentives to prioritize the media arena in their political work. Notably, public interest groups have a special interest in this channel of communication since they draw their membership from the population at large and therefore have no direct way of communicating with members (Dunleavy 1988). Further, such groups often work for causes that appeal to broad segments of the population and therefore see the media as a particularly attractive arena (Binderkrantz & Krøyer 2011). Previous research has demonstrated that public interest groups do in fact use the media strategy more intensively than other types of groups (Binderkrantz 2008).

One thing is incentives; another is the resources to pursue effective influence strategies. There are huge differences in the resources possessed by interest groups and resources matter both for the capacity to monitor the political system and to engage in media-directed activities. Resources may also matter for reporters and editors deciding which stories to report and which groups to include in such stories. Here, resources may be conceived broader than just financial resources. According to news values theory media selection is based on factors – e.g. status, power and relevance – that make some events and actors newsworthy and therefore increase their chances of making it to the news (Galtung & Holmboe Ruge 1965).

Here, we move on to the last stage in the influence production process: the media selection of groups to report on. The central premise in news values theory is that routine decisions about media coverage shape the patterns of actor presence in the media. Bennett (1990) argues that reporters 'index' the range of voices and viewpoints in the news according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate. Timothy E. Cook (1998) discusses how officials are generally seen as more reliable sources than other actors. The effect is a systematic bias in the pattern of actor appearance favoring public officials (Bennett 1990: 106; Cook 1998; Thrall 2006: 408). For interest groups, a decisive factor is whether groups enjoy privileged access to decision making. Such access can provide groups with inherent news value similar to that of public officials. According to Thrall, the same groups that dominate the inside game of politics can thus be expected to be predominant in the media arena (Thrall 2006: 408).

News value theory also emphasizes aspects related to specific issues and stories. Interest groups work with different kinds of causes some of which may be more consistent with news values than others. For example, a 'personal interest' angle may make reporters more interested. Groups representing the sick or the elderly will often find it easier to live up to this criterion than business groups. Further, some groups work with rather technical issues mainly of interest to authorities and specific business sectors, whereas other groups work with broader issues appealing to the population at large (Binderkrantz & Krøyer 2011). The latter are likely to find it easier to attract media attention. Overall, these elements of news value theory can be expected to benefit public interest groups on the one hand and groups representing specific constituencies such as patients or the elderly on the other.

While the discussion above refers to general news values, more media outlet-specific patterns may also be at play. Historically, in Denmark as well as in other European countries, there has been widespread parallelism between newspapers and the political system in the sense that individual papers had ties to specific parties. Over time, these ties have loosened and papers have gained increasing independence (Hjarvard 2008). However, newspapers still have different guidelines and traditions for political coverage. Among the major Danish daily newspapers, there is a clear division between left-leaning and right-leaning papers. For example *Politiken* calls itself an independent social-liberal paper and is in general considered to be left leaning, while *Jyllands-Posten* is a self-described independent liberal paper (Hjarvard 2008: 80-81).

Another historical parallelism is the one between parties and groups. In particular, labor market groups have had clear ties to particular parties. Therefore, it may be expected that left-leaning papers are more likely to provide labor unions with a political platform, while right-leaning papers report more on business groups. For other types of groups it is difficult to establish clear expectations.

3. Research design

The research question necessitates indicators at several stages in the influence production process. While previous research typically focuses on either group strategies (Beyers 2004; Binderkrantz 2005) or media appearances (Binderkrantz 2011; Danielian & Page 1994) the present study combines the different types of data. We utilize measures of: 1) group mobilization to affect the media, 2) tactics used to approach the media, and 3) appearances in the news media. Further, to explain the patterns of media strategies and access we use measures of 4) group type and resources. Notably, we link data on the different stages of the influence production process in a database enabling analyses of the correlations between these measures as well as of group level factors affecting the different stages.

An intriguing issue in all studies of interest groups is to identify the relevant population (Berkhout & Lowery 2008). After all, there is no way to know exactly how many groups exist and it may be particularly hard to identify groups that attempt to gain political influence but are unsuccessful (Halpin and Jordan 2011). Researchers have utilized different approaches to identify interest group populations partly reflecting national traditions and the availability of directories or other relevant lists of interest groups (Halpin 2011). In the Danish case, a general directory of groups does not exist and scholars interested in establishing the relevant population of groups have therefore relied on searches in a wide array of sources. The result is a list of groups that has been continuously updated as interest group surveys have been conducted over the years (Christiansen 2011).

The present study uses the existing list of interest groups as point of departure and internet searches were carried out to check if they still exist. Also, searches of subsection-specific registers – for example of business groups – were conducted and new groups added to the list as identified in these registers. Finally, all groups identified in the media-relevant sources discussed below as well as in sources related to the parliamentary arena and the administrative arena were added. The result is a register of the group population that is very likely to include every major nationwide political interest group in the Danish political system as well as a very encompassing range of less significant groups that have been identified for example because they have at some point approached parliament or participated in a hearing or simply because they appear in a register of relevant actors in a subsection.

A first step in the empirical analysis is to establish an overview of the groups that exist and the extent to which these groups aim to affect the media agenda. Here, a group survey is the most relevant instrument since interest groups themselves can be considered the most reliable informants about their intention to influence the media. A survey is also suitable for collecting information about group resources, membership and their integration into public decision making.[1]

The next step involves mapping the activities carried out by groups in order to make it to the news. A wide range of tactics are relevant, and among the more spectacular ones are staging of events or direct action. A recurring point in the literature on social movements is that such activities are necessary for non-privileged groups to attract attention (Koopmans 2004). Other, less confrontational activities include press releases, press briefings or contacting individual reporters. To get an overview of the extent of these activities, the survey asked groups about their use of different activities.

To obtain a measure of media strategies based not on group reporting but on actual behavior we collected press statements issued by interest groups. A challenge here is to establish a complete collection of press statements. One option is to approach groups to obtain their statements, but with a population of several thousand this is close to impossible. Also, a pilot test shows that groups do not systematically make their press statements available online, which further inhibits data collection. We therefore chose to collect press statements at the recipients' end. The data set builds on all press statements received by the national news

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[1]. This version of the paper draws on a survey conducted in 2004. A new survey will be carried out in 2011 enabling the direct linking of information from the survey with other indicators.

agency Ritzau – owned by the Danish newspapers – in February, March, April and May 2011.[2]

Ritzau does not receive all press statements from interest groups as some groups may choose to approach selected news outlets or reporters directly. Nevertheless the news agency has a central position in the Danish media system and it is not reputed to display a political bias which could have led some types of groups to target other news organizations. It is therefore likely that our dataset encompasses most or at least a large representative sample of press statements issued by groups in the period. Press statements may not be as effective as communication targeted at individual reporters or newspapers by the more skilled groups, but it is likely that interest groups involved in more direct interaction with reporters also issue general press statements. This is supported by a high correlation in the survey responses between issuing press releases and holding press briefings on the one hand and contacting journalists on the other (0.683, significant at the 0.001 level).

Press statements are divided into: 1) general newsletters, 2) political press statements, and 3) non-political press statements. The last category is not included in the analysis. The unit of analysis is a press statement issued by an interest group. Press statements from more than one group have thus been registered under all relevant groups.

The ultimate indicator of media access is presence in the news media. Previous research has demonstrated differing patterns of group appearance in different newspapers (Binderkrantz & Christiansen 2010) and our coding therefore encompasses two national newspapers with different political leanings – *Politiken* and *Jyllands-Posten*. The coding period ranges from July 1 2009 to June 30 2010;[3] all articles in the first section and the business section of the two papers were read and articles mentioning interest groups were registered. The unit of analysis is an interest group appearance in an article. Articles that were clearly non-political were left out of the analysis.

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[2]. This version of the paper only encompasses a three week period in February/March 2011. Ideally, press statements should have been collected for the same period as appearances in newspapers but the options for data collection were limited because the news agency did not keep an archive of press statements received.

[3]. This version of the paper includes about one third of the period.

A limitation of data on media appearances is that a high number of appearances does not necessarily equal a politically influential media position. Some stories may even constitute negative publicity for groups and even though it may be argued that 'any publicity is good publicity' it is hardly valid to include such stories in a measure of groups' media position. Therefore, the coding registered whether the interest group's appearance could be seen as positive, negative or neutral and appearances coded as negative were left out of the analysis.[4] Further, some articles may mention groups only in passing while others allow groups to express their viewpoints. Therefore, we have coded the nature of group appearances and can compare all group appearances with appearances with direct quotations.

4. Empirical analysis: From group input to media output

A first step in the empirical analysis is to look at the group population and the extent to which these groups are active towards the media. Table 1 compares the composition of: 1) survey respondents, 2) groups reporting intention to influence the media, 3) groups reporting intensive use of two media tactics, and 4) groups issuing press statements and general newsletters. The table displays the representation of different group types in regard to these measures.

Table 1 shows that 722 out of 1229 groups – or 59 percent – to 'some' or to a 'large' degree work to affect the media agenda. Groups may use different methods to get media attention. One is direct action, e.g. demonstrations or Greenpeace chaining activists to a ship. This is a media strategy preferred by relatively few Danish groups and mostly by public interest groups when the strategy is relevant. The vast majority prefers to contact the media, e.g. reporters, directly.

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4. There are surprisingly few articles in Danish newspapers with a negative framing of interest groups. Binderkrantz and Christiansen (2010) find 4.3 percent of all articles mentioning interest groups to be negatively framed. In the present study there are only very few negatively framed groups, namely 1.3 percent.

Table 1: Diversity in media input. Column percentages

	Group mobilization		*Media tactics*			
	Group population[1]	Aim to influence media[2]	Direct action[3]	Contacting reporters[3]	Press statements[4]	News-letters[4]
Labor union	18.6	19.4	10.5	18.6	17.8	20.0
Business groups	22.0	20.1	2.6	22.2	32.4	38.3
Institutional groups	5.5	6.5	0	5.7	8.9	16.7
Public interest groups	14.8	19.5	58	18.0	21.5	10.8
Other groups	39.1	34.5	28.9	35.5	19.4	14.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	1,229	722	38	829	191	120

1. Survey data. All groups responding to survey
2. Survey data. Question: 'Does the group work to affect the following? The media agenda'. Groups answering 'to a large degree' and 'to some degree'.
3. Survey data. Question: 'How important are the following when the group seeks political influence?'. Groups answering 'to a large degree' and 'to some degree'.
4. Data on press statements.

The economic interest groups – unions and business groups – produce most of the media input. They comprise 40 percent of the groups, but produce 50 percent of the press statements and almost 60 percent of the newsletters. In relative terms the institutional groups produce the same oversupply of media input. The category 'other' groups is underrepresented in the use of media tactics. It is actually a very heterogeneous group and it is difficult to assess whether the underrepresentation is a problem or not: A quite large proportion of these groups probably only has occasional intentions to take part in the political process.

The pattern of using press statements and newsletters varies among groups: Unions, business groups and particularly institutional groups produce a large share of the newsletters, presumably because most of them have the professional – and costly – apparatus to do so. We assume that these newsletters serve as newsletters for the members as well. If this assumption is correct, part of the media tactics is to get some cheap publicity from material that is produced in any case: The letters are just a byproduct of what has to be produced anyway. Public interest groups publish relatively few newsletters but relatively many press statements, perhaps because they have fewer resources to produce regular newsletters or because they prefer to feed the media more targeted messages.

In Table 2 we turn to the media output as it appears in two major Danish newspapers. If we start with the total number of articles it is clear that unions and business groups get by far the most attention by journalists. Almost two out of three times a group is mentioned in these two newspapers it is a union or business group – and they do appear roughly six times a day in the two papers combined. These groups are directly quoted with the same frequency. Compared to the production of media inputs unions are relatively more successful than business groups when we look at media outputs. Unions produce 18 percent of all press statements and one out of five newsletters, but they appear more often in the articles, actually a little more than one out of four times a group appears. Public interest groups are less successful. They comprise 15 percent of all groups and they produce more than 20 percent of all press statements and more than 10 percent of newsletters. However they appear only one out of ten times a group is mentioned in the media. If we look at all appearances, outsider coverage appears to mirrors insider access where labor unions, business groups and institutional groups are most integrated into public decision making structures.

Table 2: Diversity in media output. Column percentages

	All articles	*Direct quotations*	*Front page*
Labor unions	26.1	25.8	19.7
Business groups	37.8	37.7	16.4
Institutional groups	11.7	12.7	22.1
Public interest groups	9.5	8.9	17.2
Other groups	14.9	14.9	24.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
All groups	1,507	1,096	122

Note: *Politiken's* business section is incorporated in the first section whereas *Jyllands-Posten's* is a separate section, which is included in the figures for 'all articles'.

Front page coverage differs somewhat. Public interest groups appear as often as business groups on the front pages, and unions appear more often than business groups. Actually the most frequent group type to appear on the front page of the two papers is a representative from the heterogeneous group of 'other groups'. The pro economic sectional group bias is significantly reduced on the front pages compared to all articles. An explanation may be that a lot of business and union media appearance is 'routine' appearance that more seldom makes it to the front pages, whereas the more sparsely communicating institutional groups, public interest groups and 'other' groups communicate more news that is in line with dominant news criteria.

Groups may engage in political media activity for a number of reasons. On some occasions they approach the media because they find the time ripe for trying to improve the conditions for their members or promote their causes. On other occasions they haven't chosen the time and issue, but are forced to go to the media to safeguard their members or their causes because they have come under attack. A third reason for approaching the media might not be related to one or more specific issues, but instead an attempt to maintain the public's awareness of the group or its cause. Finally, groups may be approached by the media and choose to take part in a dialogue or discussion over some issue that the group is involved in.

According to Table 3, Danish interest groups are more on the offensive than on the defensive when they appear in daily newspapers. Contrary to what one would hypothesize based pm the literature (e.g. Baumgartner et al. 2009) groups are pursuing change – even if it is only to their own benefit. Only in one out of seven appearances are they fighting deteriorations, i.e. pursuing the status quo. In one out of ten appearances groups are simultaneously on the offensive and on the defensive and one out of three times it is not clear whether groups are fighting deteriorations, working for improvements or neither. Labor differs from the other groups because they are on the defensive significantly more often than the other groups. One reason might be that the period of measurement is characterized by a center-right government that at the time of observation had launched a number of proposals and decisions that were perceived as particularly hostile to labor, for instance on eligibility of the unemployment scheme and on the administrative structure of the labor market administration.

Table 3: Character of media appearances. Row percentages

	Working for improvements	Fighting deteriorations	Elements of both	Not clear or other	Total	N
Labor union	35.8	21.4	11.2	31.6	100	392
Business groups	36.0	10.6	9.7	43.7	100	566
Institutional	47.5	13.0	12.4	27.1	100	177
Public interest	54.2	12.7	5.6	27.5	100	142
Other	49.3	12.1	9.9	28.7	100	223
All groups	41.0	14.1	10.1	34.8	100	1,500

The groups not related to the labor market or business sectors score particularly high on working for improvements. Especially public interest groups are on the offensive most of the times they appear in the media.

In Table 4 we test the idea of political parallelism and we may get a hint of the importance of media selection criteria vs. group resources and strategy. The two papers differ in various ways as far as the total number of groups appearing in all articles. First, more than twice as many groups are mentioned in *Jyllands-Posten* than in *Politiken*. A large part of the explanation is the very large business section in *Jyllands-Posten*. Since unions and business organizations are important political actors it is straightforward that a highly developed business section reports widely on interest group news and especially on business groups.

Second, there are clear traits of political parallelism: *Jyllands-Posten* reports almost twice as often on activities by business groups than by unions, and *Politiken* more often on unions than on business groups. In fact, *Jyllands-Posten's* articles have 450 business group appearances; *Politiken* less than 100. Considering the balance between unions and business groups this is exactly what we would expect from the two papers' editorial and political profiles. It is less expected that we do not find this pattern when we look at front pages only for *Jyllands-Posten*. Actually *Jyllands-Posten's* front pages cover unions more often than business groups. An explanation may be that controversial government-initiated labor market reforms were heavily discussed in this period.

A third difference – in compliance with political parallelism theory – is the differences in the coverage of public interest groups. *Politiken* is much more inclined to cover public interest groups than *Jyllands-Posten.* This holds for all articles as well as for front pages.

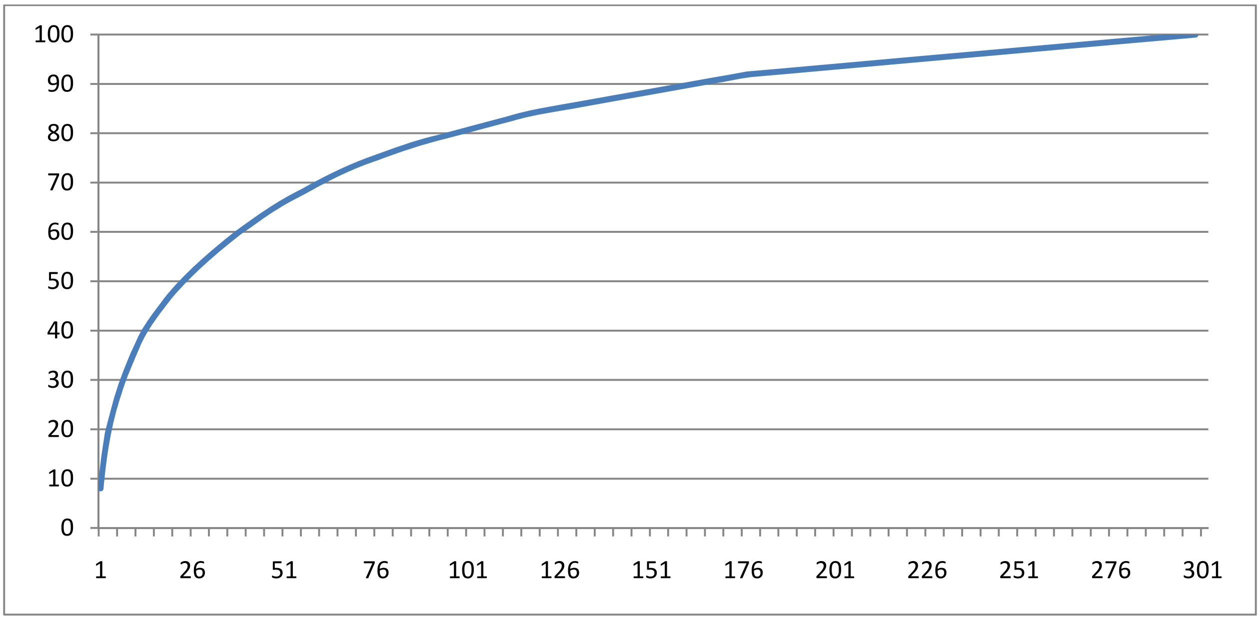
Table 4: Media outlet and group appearances. Column percentages

	JP		***Politiken***	
	All articles	***Front page***	***All articles***	***Front page***
Labor union	23.6	21.4	32.8	17.3
Business groups	44.4	20.0	20.7	11.5
Institutional	10.6	22.9	14.7	21.2
Public interest	6.8	12.9	16.4	23.1
Other	14.6	22.8	15.4	26.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
All groups	1,086	70	421	52

Note: *Jyllands-Posten's* first section and the business section included in 'all articles'.

The above analyses operate with categories of groups, but it is also interesting to look at media attention to individual groups. This can tell us whether attention is distributed across a large number of different groups or whether a few groups receive the lion's share of attention. Figure 1 displays the percentage of media appearances accounted for by number of groups. The frequency with which groups appear in the media is extremely uneven: The vast majority of groups appear only once during the period of observation; a few groups appear frequently. The Confederation of Danish Industries (DI) – the most influential industrial group – appears 117 times in the two papers and outmatches all competitors. Local Government Denmark (LGD) comes in second with 95 hits. The most frequently appearing union representative is the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) with 39 appearances. As Figure 1 shows, five groups have a common share of 25 percent of appearances and 25 groups receive more than half of all attention. The top positions are almost exclusively held by large groups related to the public or private labor market (including associations of local governments) and only The Danish Consumer Council – which is heavily subsidized by the government (Forbrugerrådet 2010) – makes the top ten as a representative of another type of group. The top ten groups are extremely resourceful compared to most other groups. They have large budgets, large public affairs departments, and they hold privileged positions in the decision making process. Media attention is by no means equally distributed. It is, in fact heavily skewed.

Figure 1: Distribution of group appearances



While Figure 1 gives some indication that resources matter for media appearance, a more general test can be done via a multivariate analysis linking data on group resources from the survey with data on media appearances. This will be added when a group survey has been conducted.

Table 5: Explaining group media appearance

This table is not yet ready. It will test the effect of: 1) group resources, 2) privileged position, 3) group type and 4) media strategy on group media appearances in a multivariate analysis. The different data sources will be linked as each group is assigned a unique ID. The relevant survey has not yet been conducted and results are therefore not ready.

5. Conclusion

The Danish interest group landscape is formed by strong civil society organizations, a comparatively strong corporatist legacy, a large public service sector and generous welfare programs (Christiansen, Nørgaard & Sidenius 2011). Interest groups are important societal and political actors and consequently play an important role in the media. In two of the largest Danish daily newspapers interest groups of some kind appear on average six times a day in politically relevant matters. The picture of interest group appearances in newspapers can best be described as one of *biased diversity*.

Group appearances are *diverse*; more than 300 groups appeared in the two papers during the approximately 120 days analyzed here. They include major economic groups, groups representing more diffuse constituencies and causes and very small groups with very scarce resources. In terms of Dahl's criteria of democratic participation it is good news that it is possible for a wide array of groups to access the media arena.

At the same time media appearance is also *biased*. A basic bias is that rather few, large and professional groups dominate newspaper coverage, and that they primarily include economic interest groups, including institutional groups, while most groups appear rather infrequently. Overall, there is a rather strong business accent in the media chorus with business groups accounting for almost 40 percent of all appearances. Public interest groups and groups representing non-economic constituencies do not account for a share of news stories corresponding to their share of the group population. Another type of bias is political parallelism. Even if the two papers under scrutiny are both omnibus papers, they report on different types of groups.

The bias in media appearance derives from two components. The first component is a bias related to group production of inputs as measured by their input to the national news agency. For example business groups produce a disproportionate amount of press statements. Public interest groups are also very active in approaching the media, whereas 'other groups' do not seem equally interested in making a presence in the media. The rather weak media position of the latter groups can thus be seen as partly caused by their lack of priority of media strategies, while the position of public interest groups may be more a result of media priorities – the other component in explaining patterns of group appearance. Some groups – especially unions, business groups and institutional groups – thus have a higher success rate in transforming inputs to media outputs than others.

If we depart from the assumption that front page news is more important than other news in the paper, a different picture emerges as much of the bias in regard to group types is leveled out. Notably, the business group choir fades out leaving the stage to representatives of institutional groups, public interest groups and 'other groups'. Although the share of the latter group type is still below its share in the group population, it is the group type that appears most often on the front page.

The differing patterns on the front page and in the remainder of the papers may indicate the importance of different aspects of news value theory. One aspect is routine reporting on developments in the political and economic system. The major participants are the large economic groups, but these stories typically do not appeal to readers and help sell newspapers. Rather, stories emphasizing human interest angles or conflicting views and interests may make it to the front page. As hypothesized above, public interest groups and 'other groups' are likely to be well placed in regard to these news criteria and their frequent appearance on the front page supports this interpretation.

This distinction raises the question of what the pattern of group media positions may look like in other news media. Notably, the electronic news media may prioritize differently than newspapers, for example because of the emphasis on strong visuals in television news. Likewise, online newspapers are very dependent on readers finding headlines sufficiently interesting to click on the story. While this paper has gone some way in uncovering the pattern of media appearance arising from the combination of group input and media selection an obvious next step would be the inclusion of a wider array of news sources.

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