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In search of political influence: Outside lobbying behaviour and media coverage of social movements, interest groups and political parties in six Western European countries

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Abstract

Outside lobbying is a key strategy for social movements, interest groups and political parties for mobilising public opinion through the media in order to pressure policymakers and influence the policymaking process. Relying on semi-structured interviews and newspaper content analysis in six Western European countries, this article examines the use of four outside lobbying strategies – media-related activities, informing (about) the public, mobilisation and protest – and the amount of media coverage they attract. While some strategies are systematically less pursued than others, we find variation in their relative share across institutional contexts and actor types. Given that most of these differences are not accurately mirrored in the media, we conclude that media coverage is only loosely connected to outside lobbying behaviour, and that the media respond differently to a given strategy when used by different actors. Thus, the ability of different outside lobbying strategies to generate media coverage critically depends on who makes use of them.

Keywords

Interest groups, media coverage, outside lobbying, political parties, social movements, Western Europe

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Introduction

The literature on interest groups and social movement organisations (SMOs) has long pointed to the importance of so-called 'outside lobbying' strategies of political influence: protesting, holding press conferences, making public speeches and organising petitions are only a few tactics designed to generate public support and media attention in order to exert pressure on policymakers (e.g. Gais and Walker, 1991; Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993; Kollman, 1998; Koopmans, 2004). Yet, previous work suffers from two shortcomings. First, one strand of the literature focuses on the determinants of outside lobbying by a particular actor type – usually interest groups or SMOs – and in single countries (for the United States, see, e.g., Gais and Walker, 1991; Kollman, 1998; for Denmark, see, e.g., Binderkrantz, 2005, 2008; for the United Kingdom, see, e.g., Grant, 2001). However, this focus on organised interests not only neglects the fact that outside lobbying is also important for political parties (not least of which for electoral reasons), but also makes it difficult to evaluate the relative importance of outside lobbying for different actors and to validate and generalise the findings to other national contexts. Second, another strand of the literature concentrates on media coverage and argues that the most important evidence for the effectiveness of outside lobbying is 'how well the typical interest group actually does in gaining media coverage of its actions and cause' (Thrall, 2006: 408; see also Danielian and Page, 1994). However, these studies usually focus on actor appearances in the media, but do not examine which outside lobbying strategies are associated with these media appearances. Against this background, this article offers a comparative perspective across actor types and institutional contexts, and combines two data sets to address two key questions. First, how does the use of outside lobbying vary across contexts and actors? Second, how much media attention do different outside lobbying strategies generate?

To study these questions, we introduce a fine conceptual distinction between four outside lobbying strategies: media-related activities, informing (about) the public, mobilisation and protest. Methodologically, we combine two data sets to allow us to study the use of outside lobbying and its determinants across actors and institutional contexts, and to examine the amount of media attention that different outside lobbying strategies attract. The first data set consists of semi-structured interviews with the most important SMOs, interest groups and political parties in four countries with rather open institutional structures (Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) and two countries with rather closed structures (Italy and Spain). The second data set is based on the content analysis of newspaper coverage in the same six countries from the years 2000–2002. Admittedly, we cannot directly link the two data sets as not all the actors covered by the media could be interviewed. However, our comparison of both data sets is a first step towards a better understanding of the ability of various outside lobbying strategies to attract media coverage.

This article is structured as follows: we first conceptualise outside lobbying behaviour, discuss the determinants of actors' strategic choices and consider the media's selection logic. We then present our comparative research design and data before we turn to our empirical results. Finally, we conclude with a critical discussion.

Outside lobbying strategies

Outside lobbying is generally contrasted with 'inside lobbying' (e.g. Gais and Walker, 1991; Kollman, 1998; Kriesi et al., 2007). While *inside lobbying* is a means to influence policymakers through direct interaction (e.g. by means of advisory boards, consultation or personal contacts) (Beyers, 2004: 213), *outside lobbying* seeks to influence them indirectly through the mobilisation of public opinion (Kollman, 1998: 3).

Within the broad category of outside lobbying, we distinguish four strategies according to their *target* and *degree of involvement of the public*. Whereas the *media strategy* explicitly targets journalists and aims at making policy positions publicly available through news coverage – by giving interviews, distributing press releases or holding press conferences – the other three strategies are directed towards the public, but differ with respect to the degree of citizen involvement. The *information strategy* includes activities involving information about the public and of the public (such as polling the public or presenting oneself on the Internet), but hardly ever involves any direct citizen contact. The *mobilisation and protest strategies*, in contrast, both aim for citizen participation, but demand varying degrees of citizen time and effort. While the former consists of conventional activities that do not need much commitment from the individual citizen (e.g. signing petitions), the latter is composed of more costly radical activities (such as demonstrating, striking or boycotting). Although the public is the direct target of the information, mobilisation and protest strategies, their ultimate goal is to win media attention because policymakers will only know about and respond to them if the media reports on them (Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993; Koopmans, 2004). Thus, their rationale is different from that of the media strategy. With the media strategy, actors try to get media attention in order to create public awareness and support for their claims. With the three other strategies, actors inform and mobilise citizens in order to generate media coverage. In all cases, however, the common goal is to influence public opinion to one's advantage and, in this way, to exert pressure on policymakers. Although the general mechanism is simple – media coverage shapes public opinion (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987) and changes in public opinion can affect policymakers (Page and Shapiro, 1983; Stimson et al., 1995) – media coverage is no guarantee of policy adjustments. Winning media attention and public support with outside lobbying strategies is, however, a necessary condition for pressuring policymakers and having a potential effect on policies. In this article, we focus on the first part of the causal chain – the use of outside lobbying strategies and their ability to generate media coverage – but leave the analysis of the effects on policymakers and public policy for future research.

Determinants of strategic choices

We draw on three dominant approaches to study our first research question – how different outside lobbying strategies are used across institutional contexts and actor types. The four strategies are not mutually exclusive, but complementary; actors combine them to maximise their influence in the policymaking process (e.g. Beyers, 2004; Binderkrantz, 2005; Kriesi et al., 2007). However, we argue that their relative use and specific combination varies depending on three factors: their costs and benefits, institutional contexts, and actor types.

First, from a *cost–benefit perspective*, scholars have stressed the risks of outside lobbying as compared with inside lobbying (e.g. Beyers, 2004; Kollman, 1998). Similarly, we hold that protest and, to a lesser extent, mobilisation most clearly violate political bargaining rules. They involve contestation, polemic and even confrontation, whereas institutional politics 'prizes predictability, moderation, and compromise' (Gamson and Meyer, 1996: 288). Also, the media often focus on forms of protest activities, the number of injured people or material costs rather than substantive claims (e.g. Gitlin, 1980). The media and information strategies, in contrast, are of a more 'responsible character' (Grant, 2000, quoted in Binderkrantz, 2005: 703) and are thus more compatible with the logic of political bargaining. Whereas the media strategy might be more efficient because it directly targets the media, the information strategy tries to reach the media by first raising citizen awareness. Therefore, the media strategy should be most frequently used, followed by the strategies of information, mobilisation and, finally, protest. Regardless of other factors, we expect the

same ordering of strategies in all institutional contexts and for all actor types, but with different *relative shares*.

Second, drawing on *institutional approaches*, we assume that the degree of institutional accessibility to the political and media systems influences the choice of outside lobbying strategies (see the literature on 'political opportunity structures', e.g., Kriesi et al., 1995; Meyer, 2004). In open institutional settings with multiple points of intervention in the policymaking arenas, political actors are expected to make use of them to voice their claims, and to refrain from unpopular confrontational protest activities (Kriesi and Wisler, 1996). Therefore, we assume that the protest strategy is more frequently employed in closed political systems, whereas the other strategies are more widespread in open political systems.[1]

The degree of institutional accessibility of the political system is closely related to the degree of openness of national media systems. National media systems can be understood as 'media opportunity structures' (Adam et al., 2004), which presumably affect the choice of particular outside lobbying strategies. The information capacity and the degree of politicisation of a media system determine how accessible it is for organised interests. A media system with low information capacity – that is, a strongly commercialised media system with few media outlets – offers less space for political news and is less inclusive in terms of representing varying opinions. In such an environment, political actors would be more likely to 'make news by making noise' (Thrall, 2006: 417). Similarly, a strongly politicised media system, where the media are more dependent on politics and have a strong elite orientation, is less accessible for organised interests, and pushes them towards the protest strategy. Summarising our arguments with respect to institutional accessibility, we expect that the relative share of the protest strategy is higher in more 'closed' systems, whereas the other outside lobbying strategies have higher shares in more 'open' systems.

Third, borrowing from *resource-related approaches*, we argue that the relative share of the four outside lobbying strategies varies between and within actor types. Actors' structural position in the policymaking process, as well as their organisational structure and culture, influence their choice between inside and outside lobbying strategies (Beyers, 2004; Gais and Walker, 1991). Because SMOs lack systematic access to the policymaking arenas, they are almost forced into outside lobbying strategies (Danielian and Page, 1994; Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Wolfsfeld, 1997). Additionally, SMOs face the problem of 'diffuse interests', wherein they defend interests linked to broad and fragmented segments of society such as consumers or migrants. Their members are united only by their dedication to a common cause and their loyalties must be continually reinforced. Hence, to capture public attention and demonstrate that they are a worthwhile group defending a valuable public benefit, SMOs are drawn towards controversial issues and tactics (Beyers, 2004: 216–217; Gais and Walker, 1991: 105–106). Yet, we expect differences within the group of SMOs. Resource-rich SMOs tend to express themselves through non-protest activities (Oliver and Maney, 2000: 467–468). We therefore expect established, international SMOs (such as Greenpeace or the Red Cross) to pursue more moderate outside lobbying strategies than national or local SMOs.

Interest groups – especially business associations – participate in corporatist structures in many European countries and benefit from privileged access to policymakers. They enjoy the advantages of 'specific interests': they have a clear-cut stake in the production process and defend the professional interests of their members, hence their general preference for inside lobbying (Beyers, 2004; Binderkrantz, 2008; Gais and Walker, 1991; Kollman, 1998; Kriesi et al., 2007). If they turn to outside lobbying, their probable preference would be for the media strategy, which is most compatible with their participation in corporatist structures. Yet, within-group differences are likely: expertise and finances are the typical resources of employers' associations, whereas labour unions and farmers can rely on their individual members to exert social pressure through strikes and

blockades. Therefore, we expect the latter to use mobilisation and protest strategies more often than the former.

Political parties are in constant need of media attention to make their policy positions publicly visible and to shape public opinion for electoral reasons. Therefore, informing (about) the public should be more central for parties than for other actor types. Yet, we expect intra-group differences since, as compared with other political parties, the Left is prone to emphasising the strategies of mobilisation and protest more often, given its roots in the labour movement and its proximity to SMOs (Kriesi et al., 1995).

Summarising our resource-related arguments, we first expect the relative share of the four outside lobbying strategies to vary *between* actor types. Whereas SMOs make comparatively more use of protest and mobilisation strategies, political parties emphasise the strategy of information and interest groups prefer the media strategy. Second, the relative share of the four strategies should vary *within* actor types. Left-wing parties, labour unions and farmers, as well as national and local SMOs, will make more use of protest and mobilisation than other parties, interest groups and SMOs.

Media selection and resonance of outside lobbying strategies

The literature on source selection emphasises that the media rely strongly on 'authoritative' and 'credible' sources from within the policymaking process (Bennett, 1990; Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1973). Empirical evidence is mainly based on accounts from sources in the news, but it almost never accounts for actors' strategies to win media attention (for an exception, see Andrews and Caren, 2010). Similarly, the most prominent theories of source selection only implicitly deal with the impact of different strategies on media coverage. In this study, we try to be more explicit and derive some theoretical expectations from the two dominant approaches – news routines and news values – to address our second research question: how much media coverage each of the four outside lobbying strategies attracts.

According to *news routines* research, news-gathering is affected by the constraints of journalists' professional environment, especially in terms of time and space (Tuchman, 1980). Due to a lack of time in the production of news, journalists focus on scheduled and continuing events provided by the daily routine of the policymaking process (parliamentary debates, state-political meetings, etc.). Moreover, the problem of writing to deadlines pushes them to rely on convenient and reliable sources, notably, from the elites of the political and economic systems (Gans, 1979). With regard to space, journalists are assigned to specific locations (e.g. the capital city), and events occurring in these places are easier to cover (Oliver and Myers, 1999: 47). These news routines work to the advantage of high-ranking state actors from SMOs, interest groups and political parties, and may increase their chances of getting covered by adapting to them, for instance, by writing good press releases with catchy quotes, inviting journalists to press conferences or timing their activities appropriately for news media deadlines (e.g. Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993; Kollman, 1998). If the news routines argument holds, we should see that *compared to its use* in a given institutional context, or by a particular actor, the media strategy receives a disproportionately high share of media coverage, whereas mobilisation and protest strategies get disproportionately low coverage.

Alternatively, in *news values theory*, media selection is based on specific properties of events and actors, or so-called news factors, which increase their chances of making news (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). As their actions directly affect many citizens, state actors benefit from an 'inherent' news value and generally dominate the news (e.g. Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Gans, 1979; Wolfsfeld, 1997). Non-institutional political actors can, however, compensate for their lack of status and

power by stressing other news factors (Galtung and Ruge, 1965: 72). The mobilisation and protest strategies seem well-suited to serving the media's interest in drama and confrontation. Empirically, SMOs do indeed make news 'by making a fuss' (Danielian and Page, 1994: 1072), especially if their protests attract many participants or involve some violence (Oliver and Maney, 2000; Oliver and Myers, 1999). If the news values arguments hold, we should see that *as compared to* their use in a given institutional context, or by a particular actor, the mobilisation and protest strategies get a disproportionately high share of media coverage.

Although both theories lead to opposite expectations, both may apply, but only to certain actors; previous studies suggest that the media react differently to a given strategy when used by different actors. For instance, business groups mostly make news with press releases or statements (Danielian and Page, 1994: 1072; Thrall, 2006: 416), whereas media-friendly SMOs appear less appealing to the press (Sobieraj, 2010) and fare better with radical protest activities and demonstrations (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 180).

Comparative design

We rely on two data sets from the Europub.com project, covering three actor types (SMOs, interest groups and political parties) and six Western European countries (Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom).[2] Given the constraints imposed by the international project, our *comparative design* might not be optimal, but we argue that it is adequate for testing our theoretical expectations. Regarding actor types, previous scholarship has mainly focused on either SMOs or interest groups, but rarely on both. Including both actor types allows us to test the expected differences between the two. Work on outside lobbying has so far barely accounted for political parties, presumably because they directly participate in the policymaking process inside or outside of government. However, given parties' incentives to rely on outside lobbying for electoral reasons, we include them. Whereas parties can be easily identified, interest groups and SMOs are harder to define. In contrast to several interest-group studies that count organisations as being different from labour unions, citizen groups or think tanks as interest groups (e.g. Binderkrantz, 2008; Danielian and Page, 1994: 1061–1062; Thrall, 2006: 411), we strictly define interest groups as business organisations (employers' organisations, labour unions, farmers, professional organisations), and consider all other membership organisations working for political influence as SMOs (Churches, migrant organisations, extreme Right organisations, etc.). This categorisation is admittedly crude, but a more detailed classification would be problematic given our limited number of interviews.

We analyse six countries that vary with respect to the degree of openness of their political and media systems. In line with previous research on political opportunity structures, we consider both formal institutional structures and prevailing informal strategies to classify countries as either 'rather open' or 'rather closed' (Kriesi et al., 1995). Regarding formal political institutions, the six countries can be roughly divided into two groups based on the extent to which they concentrate power (see Lijphart, 1999): the group of the more consensual (Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Italy) and the group of the more majoritarian democracies (Spain, the United Kingdom). We assume that the more power is concentrated, the less the political system is open and accessible to non-state actors. Regarding prevailing informal strategies, we account for the extent to which political actors cooperate informally. Although consensus democracies provide stronger incentives for cooperation than majoritarian democracies, there is not necessarily a one-to-one relationship. In the United Kingdom, policymaking is known to 'emphasize consensus and a desire to avoid the imposition of solutions on sections of society' (Jordan and Richardson, 1982: 81). In Italy, by contrast, policymaking is more unilateral despite more power-sharing institutions.

Combining both dimensions, Spain and Italy belong to the category of rather closed countries, whereas the other four countries have rather open political systems. Given the close relationship between the characteristics of the media system and the political system in Western European countries (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), we arrive at the same categorisation when considering media opportunity structures. Spain and Italy have a rather closed media system characterised by low information capacity (low diversity of media outlets and high commercialisation) and a high degree of politicisation, whereas the remaining countries have a rather open (i.e. a more pluralistic and/or autonomous) media system (Adam et al., 2004). Thus, the selected countries allow for a test of institutional approaches and, at the same time, include the oldest and/or largest Western country members of the European Union plus Switzerland, which is the 'best example' of a consensual democracy (Lijphart, 1999: 33).[3] Admittedly, our binary operationalisation of opportunity structures as either more or less open may be simplistic, as opportunity structures may not consist of one variable, but a cluster of variables (Tarrow, 1988). Additionally, recent developments suggest that opportunity structures are multifaceted and also contain more volatile and dynamic aspects (Giugni, 2011). In this article, we focus solely on the more stable aspects (i.e. institutional accessibility), because the extant literature on outside lobbying has barely discussed the impact of other aspects and variables. Yet, given the possibility of within-group heterogeneity, we present evidence not only for 'rather open' and 'rather closed' systems, but also for each country separately. This allows us to better judge the pertinence of our classification and to explain potential national differences.

Data

The first data set was gathered from *semi-structured interviews* conducted in spring/summer 2003 by members of the six country teams. Following a reputational approach (Knoke, 1993), the four most important political parties, interest groups and SMOs active in the fields of agriculture, immigration and European integration were identified in each country based on the judgement of academic experts.[4] From 216 political actors (six countries × three policy domains × three actor types × four interviews per actor type), 199 of them finally answered our questionnaire.[5] Scientific professionals and research institutions are neither interest groups nor SMOs, and were therefore removed from our data set. We ended up with 191 completed interviews, ranging from 28 in the United Kingdom to 34 in Italy.

Outside lobbying strategies can be observed empirically as combinations of specific activities (Kollman, 1998). From a list of 29 political activities, interviewees indicated whether they never, occasionally or regularly made use of them to influence policymaking in their country (for the exact wording, see Kriesi, 2003). Seventeen of these 29 activities pertained to outside lobbying and were assigned to one of the four strategies as shown in Table 1.[6]

For each outside lobbying strategy, we counted the number of activities used by an actor, weighted regular activities twice as much as occasional ones and standardised the resulting score by the theoretical maximum value for each strategy. By adding up the four standardised scores, we got a summary score of each actor's total outside lobbying behaviour. On this basis, we calculated the proportion of each of the four outside lobbying strategies. Given that this measure is based on interviews, it can only capture the actors' *self-reported* (or perceived) use of outside lobbying strategies. However, although perceptions can be biased, we have no reason to believe that our interviewees did not answer the questions as objectively as possible.

The second data set is based on a *content analysis of media coverage*. In each country, trained coders coded a sample taken from two quality papers (a left-liberal and a conservative paper[7]) by means of political claims analysis (Koopmans and Statham, 1999). A claim consists of the expression of a political opinion by some form of verbal or physical action in the media, and can be

Table 1. Classification of political activities into four outside lobbying strategies.

Media-related activities
– Giving interviews to the media
– Writing newspaper articles
– Distributing press releases
– Holding press conferences to announce policy positions
– *Running advertisements in the media about your positions on policy issues*
– (Publicity campaign, including advertising)
– (Public letter)
Informing (about) the public
– *Presenting yourself on the Web*
– Making public speeches
– *Hiring a public relations firm to assist in your political activities*
– Polling the general public on policy issues of concern to you
– (Publication of book/research report/leaflet)
– (Presentation of survey/poll result)
Mobilising
– Engaging in direct mail fund-raising for your organisation
– Organising letter campaigns in newspapers
– Organising petitions/signature collections
– Launching/supporting referendum campaigns (Switzerland: and popular initiatives)
– Holding public assemblies and meetings
Protesting
– Protesting or demonstrating
– Organising boycotts
– Striking
– (Vigil/picket)
– (Blockade/occupation)
– (Disturbance of meetings)
– (Symbolic violence)
– (Destruction of property)
– (Self-mutilation and physical violence against people)

Note: Activities in normal font appear in both data sets, activities in italic only in interview data and activities in parentheses are only present in media data.

broken down into several elements, among others, the author and the action form of the claim (Koopmans, 2002: 2). From the original data set, we extracted all claims made by indigenous SMOs, interest associations and political parties for each country from the years 2000–2002.[8] This includes claims by the organisations as such and claims by any of their individual representatives. The list of action forms were more detailed than the list of activities presented to the interviewees, and also contained so-called genuine events (Kepplinger, 1998: 170), that is, activities with a proper functionality in the policymaking process (parliamentary votes, state-political meetings, etc.). These activities are often routinely covered by the media, but as they are not the result of strategic outside lobbying behaviour, we removed them from our data set (for a complete list of action forms, see Koopmans, 2002: 37–39). The classification of remaining action forms into the four strategies of outside lobbying was straightforward and is documented in Table 1.[9] One problematic case concerned 'unspecified verbal statements' (in newspaper articles, they usually appear in the form of 'actor X said/stated/commented …'). They are frequent in our data, but given that

Table 2. Average use of different outside lobbying strategies by context (in %).

	Media	Informing	Mobilising	Protest	Total (N)
Rather open systems	39*	33*	21	7***	100 (127)
Switzerland	38	27	28	7	100 (36)
The Netherlands	41	36	17	6	100 (29)
Germany	40	32	19	9	100 (35)
United Kingdom	37	37	19	7	100 (27)
Rather closed systems	36*	28*	21	15***	100 (64)
Italy	36	28	23	14	100 (34)
Spain	37	29	19	16	100 (30)
Total	38	31	21	10	100 (191)

Note: Levels of significance based on one-way ANOVA tests: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

they are not explicitly linked to a particular political activity (statement in the context of a rally organised by the actor, a press conference, etc.), it is impossible to determine for sure whether they arise from the strategic behaviour of a political actor or from something else (e.g. a journalist inviting an actor to comment on an event). It would therefore be problematic to code them as being part of actors' conscious outside lobbying strategies, and we therefore excluded them. Finally, we ended up with 364 cases, which were weighted to account for the different number of cases per country.

Independent variables include categorical variables for actor types (SMOs, business interest groups, political parties) and institutional contexts (rather open/rather closed systems) in both data sets. To test for differences *within* actor types, we distinguished international SMOs from national or local SMOs, trade unions and farmers from employers' organisations, and leftist parties (green, social-democratic and communist parties) from other parties.

We ran one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) to assess the differences in the use of outside lobbying strategies and their coverage in the media across institutional contexts and actor types. In the presence of variables with more than two categories, we relied on a Scheffe test to examine the differences between categories.

The use of outside lobbying strategies

We first analysed how the use of outside lobbying strategies varied across institutional contexts and actor types. Based on a cost–benefit perspective, we argued that for all institutional contexts and all types of actors, the media strategy will be most widespread, followed by the strategies of information, mobilisation and, last, protest.

The 'total' columns in Tables 2 and 3 offer strong support for this assumption. Overall, media-related activities are the most widely used outside lobbying strategy. In contrast, protest corresponds to only 10% of the total self-reported use of outside lobbying activities. Given the risks and costs associated with protests, this indeed seems to be a 'strategy of last resort'. In between these two extremes are the information and mobilisation strategies.

Second, we expected actors' strategies to vary *across institutional contexts*. Table 2 confirms that in rather open institutional contexts (characterised by multiple points of intervention in the policymaking arenas and a pluralist and autonomous media structure), actors tend to refrain from protest: the strategy of protest has a significantly higher share in rather closed systems than in rather open ones ($F(1,190) = 29.82$, $p = .000$). In contrast, the media ($F(1,190) = 5.18$, $p = .024$) and information ($F(1,190) = 6.47$, $p = .012$) strategies have a slightly higher share in rather open

Table 3. Average use of different outside lobbying strategies by actor type (in %).

	Media	Informing	Mobilising	Protest	Total (N)
Party	37	32	24	7	100 (60)
Left	34*	32	22	12***	100 (27)
Other	39*	32	25	4***	100 (33)
Interest groups	40	32	16***	12	100 (60)
Unions/farmers	37***	29*	18	16***	100 (42)
Other	48***	37*	13	2***	100 (18)
SMOs	37	30	23	10	100 (71)
International	35	29	28**	8	100 (19)
Other	37	31	21**	11	100 (52)
Total	38	31	21	10	100 (191)

Notes: Levels of significance based on one-way ANOVA tests for within-actor differences and on a Scheffe test for between-actor type differences: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Asterisks indicate that the mean is significantly different from that of all other groups.

systems, but differences are small and become insignificant if we remove Germany (for the media strategy) or the Netherlands (for the information strategy) from the sample.

Third, based on resource-related approaches, we expected the relative share of the four outside lobbying strategies to vary both between and within actor types. Looking at *between-actor differences* first, Table 3 invalidates our expectations. Interest groups do not resort to the media strategy more often than other actors, and political parties have no special preference for the information strategy. The most important difference in actors' self-reported outside lobbying behaviour relates to the mobilisation strategy ($F(2,190) = 13.09$, $p = .000$). As anticipated, SMOs rely significantly more often on the mobilisation strategy than interest groups, but so do political parties. While SMOs' reliance on mobilisation was to be expected, the high level of mobilisation reported by parties is rather surprising given the alleged crisis of the 'party on the ground' (for a discussion, see Mair, 1994). However, their mobilisation efforts are probably driven by different motivations: whereas parties are dependent on constant publicity for electoral reasons, SMOs need to mobilise the public in order to compensate for their lack of access to the policymaking arenas. For this reason, we also expected SMOs to rely comparatively more on the strategy of protest. However, this is not the case: just like interest groups and parties, SMOs make only limited use of protest. This finding is noteworthy, as it contrasts with the usual assumption in the literature that protest is one of the few available weapons of SMOs. However, our selection of the 'most important' organisations for each actor type may be partly responsible for this result. According to resource mobilisation theory, the most resource-rich SMOs combine different political strategies (McCarthy et al., 1996: 306) and favour moderate strategies (Oliver and Maney, 2000: 467–468).

Turning to *within-actor variation*, we see that, as expected, labour unions and farmers report resorting less often to the media strategy ($F(1,59) = 14.61$, $p = .000$) but more often to strategies of protest than other interest groups ($F(1,59) = 33.48$, $p = .000$). Similarly, and as anticipated, left-wing parties indicate to use the protest strategy significantly more often than other parties ($F(1,59) = 19.27$, $p = .000$).[10] Although we have no direct measure of actors' organisational resources, these findings seem to give credit to resource-based theories according to which the type of organisational resource (expertise and finances versus individual members) accounts for variations in political actors' outside lobbying behaviour. However, with regard to SMOs, expectations are invalidated. The only significant difference between established, international SMOs and national or local SMOs runs counter to our expectations and suggests that the former rely more on

Table 4. Media coverage of different outside strategies by context (in %).

	Media	Informing	Mobilising	Protest	Total (N)
Rather open systems	54	25	14***	8***	100 (243)†
Switzerland	40	11	47***	2	100 (110)
The Netherlands	65	14	0	21	100 (34)
Germany	63	34	1	2	100 (102)
United Kingdom	50	38	6	6	100 (34)
Rather closed systems	54	22	1***	23***	100 (121)†
Italy	59	25	2	14	100 (49)
Spain	49	20	0	31	100 (35)
Total	54	24	9	13	100 (364)

Notes: Levels of significance based on one-way ANOVA tests: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Asterisks indicate that the mean is significantly different from that of all other groups. †Because of weighting, the number of cases does not add up to the number of cases of all countries in the group.

mobilisation than the latter ($F(1,70) = 7.91$, $p = .006$). This finding might indicate that for SMOs, organisational and financial resources matter most when it comes to organising letter campaigns or public meetings, and matter less for directly targeting the media.

In summary, only a few differences exist between the broad categories of actor types: political parties, interest groups and SMOs. The important differences are located *within* these categories and can be explained in light of resource-based approaches.

Media coverage of outside lobbying strategies

Second, we compared the amount of media coverage of the four outside lobbying strategies with the distribution of outside lobbying behaviour across contexts and actors, as analysed earlier. In other words, we are not primarily interested in the absolute level of media coverage of each strategy, but rather in their relative shares in the media as compared to their relative use in different institutional contexts and by different actors.

Table 4 shows the distribution of media coverage of the four outside lobbying strategies by *institutional context*. The total at the bottom of the table shows that while mobilisation is more frequently used than protest overall, it gets less media attention. Mobilisation receives virtually no media coverage in closed systems. In open systems, media attention for mobilisation is higher, but this result is entirely due to the Swiss case, for which the mobilisation strategy accounts for almost half of the total media coverage. Although it does not fit our general theoretical argument of rather open versus rather closed systems, this finding can be explained by the importance of direct democratic instruments in the Swiss political system, and their high news value for Swiss media (see, e.g., Marcinkowski, 2006: 413).

Media coverage of protest is proportional to its reported use in more open systems, but disproportionately high in more closed systems (24% coverage versus 15% use). In closed systems, actors presumably rely more on protest strategies because they have no direct institutional access to policymaking, and because the media system is generally less inclusive. The high proportion of media coverage of protest activities is in line with news value research and suggests that making noise is a good strategy for making the news in more closed systems. Interestingly, this also seems to be the case in the Netherlands, which is the only country that does not confirm our expectations.

Next, the media strategy gets a disproportionately high share of media coverage as compared to its reported use. Although the media strategy is covered to different degrees across countries, its

Table 5. Media coverage of different outside strategies by actor type (in %).

	Media	Informing	Mobilising	Protest	Total
Party	59	30	10	2***	100 (153)
Left	82***	10**	7	1	100 (42)
Other	50***	37**	11	2	100 (111)
Interest groups	56	20	5	20	100 (139)
Unions/farmers	24***	18	8	50***	100 (55)
Other	77***	21	2	0***	100 (84)
SMO	41	19	18	22	100 (72)
International	48	52*	0	0	100 (6)
Other	40	16*	20	24	100 (66)
Total	54	24	9	13	100 (364)

Notes: Levels of significance based on one-way ANOVA tests for within-actor differences and on a Scheffe test for between-actor type differences: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Asterisks indicate that the mean is significantly different from that of all other groups.

over-representation in news coverage is general and unrelated to the degree of institutional openness. This over-representation can be explained by the news routines approach: activities such as giving press conferences or distributing press releases are directly targeting the media and are a relatively easy source of information for journalists.

Table 5 shows how media coverage of outside lobbying strategies is related to *actor types*. Political parties and interest groups get a disproportionately high share of media coverage thanks to the media strategy. Close to 60% of their media appearances involve interviews, press conferences and the like, although these activities represent only about 40% of their total outside lobbying behaviour. Conversely, their media appearances are clearly less related to mobilisation than their reported use of this strategy suggests. In the case of SMOs, media coverage closely reflects the share of the media and mobilisation strategies in their outside lobbying behaviour. In contrast, a disproportionately high share of their media coverage is related to protest. While protest represents only 10% of SMOs' outside lobbying behaviour, it accounts for 26% of their media appearances. Similarly, interest groups get a substantial (and disproportionately high) share of media coverage from protest strategies.

Up until now, the results for political parties fit nicely into the news routines approach, which predicted that journalists readily respond to actors' media strategies in order to reduce the costs associated with seeking and obtaining information on their own. Conversely, the findings for SMOs suggest that the media are guided by news values, as they pay proportionately more attention to SMOs' protest strategies. SMOs seem to be authentic to the media when they resort to protest strategies (Sobieraj, 2010), whereas their information and mobilisation strategies are deemed less newsworthy (see also Della Porta and Diani, 2006).

Concerning *variation within actor types*, all types of parties, but especially left-wing parties, get a disproportionately high share of media attention from media-related strategies, whereas protest activities are almost never involved when political parties appear in the media.[11] This finding is noteworthy for several reasons. First, whereas left-wing and other parties make significantly different use of the protest strategy, the media do not reflect these differences. Second, although left-wing parties indicate using protest only slightly less than labour unions and farmers, the media do not pay much attention to their protest activities. Protest by labour unions and farmers, in contrast, gets a very large (and, compared to their use, disproportionate) share of media coverage (50%). On the one hand, these findings suggest that the media follow a news routine logic when covering

parties; on the other, they yield evidence supporting our expectation that the media respond differently to the same outside lobbying strategy when it is used by different actors.

Next, there are strong differences within the category of interest groups, corresponding to the differences we observed in their reported outside lobbying behaviour. Again, however, it seems that different logics of news selection apply to the two categories of interest groups. On the one hand, the media seem to follow a news routines logic for employers' organisations: almost three-quarters of their media mentions are related to the media strategy, which is much more than their self-reported outside lobbying behaviour suggests. On the other hand, the media seem to be guided by news values when covering labour unions and farmers: 50% of their media appearances are related to protest, which is three times as much as the share of protest in their reported outside lobbying behaviour. Conversely, the share of their media mentions based on the media strategy is the lowest of all actor types (24%) and lower than their reported use (37%).

Finally, the findings for SMOs point in a similar direction: media coverage of national or local SMOs tends towards an over-representation of protest and an under-representation of the information strategy. Media coverage of international SMOs, in contrast, is strongly focused on media and information strategies. However, due to their low number in our data set, we cannot make valid statements about international SMOs.

To summarise, our results suggest that the media respond differently to the same outside lobbying strategy when it is applied by different actors. The implication is that media coverage is not directly related to outside lobbying strategies. Depending on the actor, exactly the same outside lobbying strategy resonates more or less in the media.

Conclusions

This article analysed how widespread various outside lobbying strategies are among different actor types and institutional contexts, and how much media coverage they attract. We make at least three important contributions to the existing literature. First, in contrast to most previous studies that have analysed outside lobbying as compared to inside lobbying, we distinguished between four outside lobbying strategies: the media, information, mobilisation and protest strategies. This conceptual refinement was useful in our analyses: on the one hand, the use of the four outside lobbying strategies was shown to vary across institutional contexts and actor types while, on the other hand, the four strategies are not equally likely to spark media attention. This finer conceptualisation contributes to a more nuanced understanding of actors' strategies, and we encourage other researchers to rely on more specific categories, too. Second, we examined not only the reported use of outside lobbying strategies, but also their resonance in the media. Given that outside lobbying as an indirect means to influence policymaking depends on media coverage, this combined analysis is an improvement over earlier studies that focused on only one or the other aspect. The combined analysis allowed us to get a better sense of the varying resonance of different outside lobbying strategies in the media. Third, we took a comparative perspective, comparing three types of actors in six Western European countries. From a theoretical perspective, this comparison was important given that institutional and resource-based approaches suggested variation in the use of outside lobbying behaviour across actors and institutional contexts. Although our measures are only indirect and can by no means prove causality, we found evidence for some of the expected differences: whereas the protest strategy accounts for a higher share in rather closed countries, the media and information strategies are more often used in more open systems. With regard to actors, SMOs, labour unions and left-wing parties indicated the strongest use of the protest strategy, whereas employers' and professional organisations have a marked preference for the media strategy. Interestingly, most of these between- and within-actor differences were not accurately mirrored by the media. Most

strikingly, the mobilisation and protest strategies received only minimal media coverage when used by political parties. Although parties in general indicated that they relied on mobilisation as often as SMOs, and left-wing parties reported using protest as much as labour unions and farmers' organisations, they received significantly less media coverage with these strategies.

Of course, there are some limitations to our study, and we would like to briefly mention two of them. First, the use of outside lobbying strategies was studied based on a small sample of the most important organisations in three policy fields, which may not be representative of all organisations in each country. Therefore, we should be careful when generalising our results beyond the organisations included in our sample. Also, the time period under study is rather short. We cannot say anything about changes of actors' strategies over time, for example, whether the strategies of parties, interest groups and SMOs have become similar over time or have always been quite close. Additionally, we only measured self-reported outside lobbying behaviour, which may or may not correspond to actors' actual behaviour. Second, our two data sets (on actors' strategies and on their coverage in the media) cannot be linked directly. Hence, we cannot tell with any degree of certainty which outside lobbying strategy works best for which actor. Not all actors in the media database could be interviewed, we lack information about all the unsuccessful attempts at making news and we have no direct indicators for the media's selection logic either.

These limitations notwithstanding, our innovative combination of two data sets allowed us to draw important conclusions on the relationship between political actors' strategies and the media's selection logic. Most importantly, our findings suggest that there is only a loose relationship between outside lobbying behaviour and media coverage. Depending on the actor and the context, a particular outside lobbying strategy attracts different levels of media coverage. Therefore, existing theories of media selection should be considered as being more conditional: protest and mobilisation do not have a news value per se, but their news value is dependent on who makes use of them. This finding bears important implications for how political actors should design their strategies when attempting to win media attention.

Our study opens up three avenues for future work. First, future studies should include a larger sample of actors and countries to arrive at a more nuanced classification of actors and institutional contexts. A greater number of cases would also make it possible to rely on multivariate analyses and test the theoretical assumptions more systematically. Second, it would be important to establish a more immediate link between actors' strategies and their visibility in the media by interviewing all organisations that receive media attention in a given policy field over a particular period of time. Third, we encourage scholars to investigate the entire causal chain, and to also analyse the impact of outside lobbying strategies (and of their coverage in the media) on policymakers, and on changes in the direction of public policies.

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Notes

1. Institutional accessibility also varies between policy areas within countries (Koopmans et al., 2005). Although our data is related to three different policy areas, we are not aware of any secondary data set or literature that would allow us to derive theoretical expectations at the level of policy areas and to measure their institutional openness in all six countries. Therefore, we do not discuss this aspect, but we did

control for policy areas in our analyses. With regard to outside lobbying behaviour, policy areas have no main effect, and there is no interaction effect with institutional context or actor types either. With respect to media coverage of outside lobbying strategies, the picture is more complex. Policy areas are relevant for media coverage of protest. On the one hand, media coverage of protest is significantly concentrated in the field of agriculture, especially in closed systems. On the other hand, policy areas also matter for protest by interest groups: significant differences between unions and farmers versus other interest groups reported in Table 5 are mainly located in the field of agriculture.

2. France was part of the international project, but was excluded from our study because French political parties refused to answer our questions about the use of political activities.
3. Although previous studies within the 'political opportunity literature' and those dealing with the action repertoires of SMOs rely on a similar set of countries (Giugni 2010; Koopmans et al., 2005), an ideal design would include an equal number of open versus closed institutional systems. We checked the robustness and sensitivity of our findings for particular countries by reanalysing our data after having excluded each of the countries in turn. Our results are robust and not country-sensitive unless otherwise discussed in the text.
4. Relying on experts' judgement is a widespread practice in the literature on collective decision-making and policy networks (e.g. Beyers, 2004; Leifeld and Schneider, 2012) or on party positioning (e.g. Benoit and Laver, 2006; Hooghe et al., 2010). Interview partners were asked to validate experts' selection of the most important organisations during the interviews. The list of interviewed actors is available from the authors upon request.
5. Within each selected organisation, the person in charge of the organisation's mobilisation and communication strategies in the particular policy field in question was interviewed. If this person was unavailable, a person lower in the hierarchy, but capable of answering the questions concerning the organisation's strategic orientation in a given policy field, was selected. Some organisations (especially political parties) were considered as belonging to the four most important organisations in several policy fields and were thus interviewed more than once. However, given our interest in the organisations' outside lobbying behaviour in a *given policy field*, different individuals from within the organisation were interviewed. Tests showed that there was quite some variation in the responses of these individuals, showing that organisations pursue different strategies in different policy fields. Hence, observations are generally independent of each other.
6. Among the other activities included in the questionnaire, seven pertained to inside lobbying, one was court action, another was activity of organisational maintenance and three were related to electoral and other political campaigns (see Kriesi, 2003).
7. Germany: *Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Italy: *La Repubblica, Il Corriere della Sera*. The Netherlands: *De Volkskrant, Het algemeen Dagblad*. Spain: *El País, Abc*. Switzerland: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Le Temps*. The United Kingdom: *The Guardian, The Times*. The papers were coded on a one-issue-per-week sample, with different rotating schemes.
8. The original data set includes additional years and policy fields, as well as claims made by state actors and actors from other countries. For variables and coding rules, see Koopmans (2002). Indicators of inter-coder reliability were very high (91% for the selection of articles, 89% for the identification of claims and 91% for the coding of variables).
9. Although our classification of political activities into outside lobbying strategies may be subject to discussion given that it is sometimes hard to draw a clear line between categories, the coding of political activities was straightforward. The identification of an action form in a media report (i.e. the explicit reference to an ongoing or concluded verbal or physical action) is a necessary element for the coding of a claim; if there are several different actions in a single media article, they are coded as different claims (e.g. if a media report of a peaceful march mentions that a 'black block' broke away and turned violent, then two separate claims are coded: the peaceful march (mobilisation strategy) and the violent protest (protest strategy)). For detailed coding instructions, see Koopmans (2002).
10. We also tested for variation between the strategies of parties in government and in opposition independently from party families. Intuitively, opposition parties seem more likely to resort to mobilisation and protest than parties in government, which are in control of policymaking in any case. In our data, there

is no difference between them, except for Switzerland, where government parties rely more on mobilisation than opposition parties. This result may be counter-intuitive, but it is explained by the collegial executive which includes all major parties and the extensive use of direct democracy, and which is very costly at the signature collection and campaign stages.

11. Media coverage of government and opposition parties is proportional to their use of the different strategies.

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