

Information Resources in Political Advocacy

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INFORMATION RESOURCES IN POLITICAL
ADVOCACY

PHD DISSERTATION

INFORMATION RESOURCES IN POLITICAL ADVOCACY

PhD dissertation

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Jonas A. H. Whittlestone

Odense, January 2024

English Summary

It has long been acknowledged in the interest group literature and beyond that a group's resources are important antecedents of their influence over public policy. Yet, much of the empirical literature to date has focused on tangible resources such as money and staff, while intangible resources such as information remain understudied. This is surprising in a neo-corporatist context where groups are professionalizing and organizations such as think tanks are proliferating. Coupled with the decreasing importance of membership resources, these factors have likely made information an increasingly important currency for influence-seeking groups.

To advance the study of information resources in political advocacy, this dissertation takes the resource exchange model as its point of departure. It is argued that policy makers' demand for organized groups' information is not uniform and politicization and executive control are theorized as two constraints on this demand. Against this backdrop, it is further argued that coalitions between groups are likely to emerge when some groups face an attenuated demand for their information while others do not.

The empirical results show that politicization and executive control do affect policy makers' demand for groups' information. However, no evidence of coalitional behavior between excluded and included groups is found. These findings underline the importance of information as a resource in organized groups' political advocacy efforts, and they stress the pertinence of theorizing about non-uniformity in the demand for information. The dissertation also demonstrates several innovative ways to study the impact of information advocacy empirically using text-as-data.

Dansk Resumé

Det er bredt anerkendt både i og udenfor interessegruppe-litteraturen at en gruppes ressourcer er vigtige forudsætninger for deres indflydelse på offentlig politik. Dog har meget af den hidtidige empiriske litteratur fokuseret på håndgribelige ressourcer såsom penge og ansatte, mens uhåndgribelige ressourcer såsom information kun er blevet belyst i mindre udstrækning. Dette er overraskende i en neo-korporatistisk kontekst, hvor grupper i stigende grad professionaliserer sig, og hvor organisationstyper såsom tænketanke stiger i antal. Kombineret med at medlemskabs-ressourcer er blevet mindre vigtige, så har disse faktorer sandsynligvis gjort netop information stadig vigtigere for indflydelsessøgende grupper.

For at videreudvikle studiet af informations-ressourcer i politisk indflydelsesarbejde tager denne afhandling afsæt i ressource-udvekslingsmodellen. Der argumenteres for, at politiske beslutningstageres efterspørgsel efter information ikke er uniform, og politisering samt regeringsmagt teoretiseres som to faktorer, der begrænser denne efterspørgsel. Der argumenteres videre for, at koalitioner mellem grupper er et sandsynligt resultat når visse grupper møder en begrænset efterspørgsel efter deres information mens andre grupper ikke gør det.

De empiriske resultater viser, at politisering og regeringsmagt påvirker politiske beslutningstageres efterspørgsel efter grupperes information. Dog findes der ingen empirisk evidens for koalitionsadfærd mellem inkluderede og ekskluderede grupper. Disse fund understreger vigtigheden af information som en ressource i grupperes politiske indflydelsesarbejde, og samtidig viser de vigtigheden af at teoretisere om ikke-uniformitet i efterspørgslen efter information. Afhandlingen demonstrerer også flere innovative måder, hvorpå betydningen af information i politisk indflydelsesarbejde kan studeres empirisk ved hjælp af tekstdata.

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Research Papers*

- A. Whittlestone & Klitgaard (nd): *Interest Group Resources, Access, and Influence: An Empirical Review.*
- B. Whittlestone (nd): *Lobbying the Bureaucracy at Different Proximities to the Minister.*
- C. Whittlestone & Florczak (nd): *A Shotgun Approach? Assessing Politicians' Selection of Information from Interest Groups and Think Tanks.*
- D. Whittlestone et al. (nd): *Interest Groups and Think Tanks in a Coordinated Market Economy: Towards Advocacy Coalitions or Protection of the Turfs?*

*The research papers are not included in the reduced version of the dissertation.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Motivation, gap, and research question

It has long been acknowledged in the interest group literature and beyond that different types of resources are important antecedents of influence over public policy. Resources are here understood as ‘... anything that can be used to sway the specific choices or the strategies of another individual’ (Dahl 1961, 226). Resources, however, encompass many different things ranging from external factors such as institutional positions in the policymaking process to internal factors such as staffing and money.

The resource type which has arguably received the most attention in the literature is money. Indeed, there is a large literature on the role of interest group money in politics (see e.g., Ansolabehere et al. 2003, Baumgartner et al. 2009, Roscoe & Jenkins 2005). Results from this literature remain mixed, however, which has led some scholars to assert that ‘... the direct correlation between money and outcomes that so many political scientists have sought simply is not there.’ (Baumgartner et al. 2009, 214).

But money is not the only resource which is potentially relevant in political advocacy.¹ *Information* is broadly acknowledged as another key political resource. Here, it is usually assumed that interest groups are better informed in their issue niches than policymakers, and that the former can directly convey their knowledge to the latter (Awad 2023). The resulting learning on the part of policymakers can affect political debates and public policy outputs which implies that interest group information can be a tool for political and policy influence. Thus, it is broadly acknowledged that information is an important currency in politics and political advocacy alike.

Existing literature on information as a resource in political advocacy can be divided into different strands. First, there exists a reasonably large literature which uses game theoretical models, and other forms of formalization, to explore the usefulness of information for influence-seeking groups (see e.g., Awad 2023, Bernhagen 2007, Hall & Deardorff 2006). While this literature is theoretically rich and has yielded important insights, it often makes strongly simplifying assumptions about the structure of the political system, the structure of the competition for influence over public policy, the different actors' utility functions etc. This, in turn, can make the models' results difficult to operationalize and test empirically.

Second, there exists another strand of literature which has a stronger empirical foundation.² Yet, these studies remain scarce compared to studies that examine the role more tangible resources such as money, staffing etc. (notable exceptions include Binderkrantz et al. 2014, Flöthe 2019, Klüver 2013*a,b*). I believe that there are at least two reasons for this.

¹Political advocacy is here broadly understood as any advocating in relation to a political issue. Hence, lobbying is a form of advocacy and is therefore subsumed under the concept.

²Paper A in this dissertation contains a thorough review of the empirical literature pertaining to the usefulness of information resources for access- and influence-seeking groups. Therefore, this literature is only reviewed in brief here.

First, the inherent intangibility of information makes it more difficult to observe and hence work with empirically. Second, establishing a strong empirical link between information conveyed from interest groups to, say, public policy outputs is a methodological challenge since it may require tools that are not usually found within the social science standard methodological toolbox. In this dissertation I will address both of these challenges.

Furthermore, the relative scarcity of these empirically grounded studies entail that we have scant knowledge about under what conditions information is a useful resource for organized groups in their advocacy efforts. Therefore, the main purpose of this dissertation is two-fold. First, it is to theorize about, and empirically examine, *when* information is a useful resources in advocacy. Second, it is to showcase empirical methods and strategies that are useful when examining the role of information resources in advocacy. I ask:

Research question. When are information resources useful for organized groups in their advocacy efforts, and how can we study this empirically?

The first part of the research question can be interpreted in two distinct ways, both of which will be addressed in this dissertation. The first interpretation is the extent to which information resources are valuable at all either in absolute terms or relative to other types of resources. The second interpretation assumes some level of usefulness of information resources and instead pertains to factors constraining their usefulness (i.e., ‘information resources are [not] useful when ...’). The second part of the research question cuts across the empirical contributions to the dissertation. In other words, there are three subquestions to the research question:

Subquestion 1. To what extent are information resources useful in political advocacy in absolute or relative terms?

Subquestion 2. What can constrain the usefulness of information resources in political advocacy?

Subquestion 3. How can we study the usefulness of information resources in political advocacy empirically?

Aside from the broadly acknowledged importance of information in political advocacy, I will now briefly argue that there are gaps in the literature specifically regarding all three subquestions. Regarding the first subquestion, I just argued that while it is often assumed that information is an important resource when groups advocate, not much empirical evidence exists on this account. In particular, we lack knowledge on how information resources measure up against other, more tangible resources such as financial resources.

For the second subquestion, among the relatively few studies that exist, not much attention has been paid to factors constraining the usefulness of information resources. Some studies do take into account the extent to which there is a match in information supply and demand (e.g., Bouwen 2004, Chalmers 2013, De Bruycker 2016, Flöthe 2019). However, when theorizing about e.g., policy makers' demand for information, the focus tends to be the specific institution (or venue) in which the policy maker is embedded (e.g., the European Commission needs expert information etc.). While it may certainly be the case that

policy makers' resource demands depend on their institutional embedding, the theoretical mechanisms nonetheless remain underdeveloped. Furthermore, these venue-specific information demands are usually not incorporated explicitly into the (often) underlying resource exchange model³ as what they are, namely constraints on policy makers' resource demands. When answering subquestion 2, I address these gaps.

Finally, for the third subquestion, there is not a gap *per se* but rather room for adaptation to the increasing availability of data sources such as political text (see Carpenter et al. 2020). Specifically, many of the standard tools in political science methodology (e.g., surveys, elite interviews, archival research) can be (and are) used to study the usefulness of information resources in political advocacy. However, many of these methods are costly, time-intensive, and require access to elite actors, archives etc. Furthermore, text data is becoming increasingly available online—from social media, transparency registers, online archives etc.—and scholars have already begun to take advantage of this. However, automated analyses of text data has only very recently begun to gain traction in the interest group literature. Therefore, in this dissertation I offer some methodological innovations and suggestions regarding how we can use text-as-data to save both time and money while still measuring the concepts and phenomena of interest in an as reliable and valid fashion as possible.

1.2 Relevance

The research question has broad relevance for political science scholarship. First, a central and enduring theme in political science is power relations, i.e., the link between an actor's

³The resource exchange model is introduced below and presented at length in chapter 2.

preferences with regard to an outcome and the outcome itself (see Pettigrew 1972, 188). Power resources within such relations can be e.g., labour's structural positions in the economy, institutional power positions etc. (Schmalz et al. 2018). Furthermore, the importance of information and knowledge exchanges in policymaking are also broadly recognized (see Contandriopoulos et al. 2010). Thus, this dissertation's endeavour to further our understanding of the role of information resources in political advocacy is relevant to debates about power relations in political systems more broadly.

Second, interest groups have been considered central to the study of politics for decades (Baumgartner & Leech 1998). That is, it has been broadly acknowledged that if we are to understand politics and political systems, we must take the advocacy efforts of mobilized interests into account. As such, interest groups have a central position in common theories of the policy process such as the multiple streams-, advocacy coalition-, and punctuated equilibrium frameworks. However, the study of interest groups arguably remains relatively neglected in political science more broadly compared to topics such as political parties, public opinion etc. Thus, there is a discrepancy between the theoretical importance of interest groups in policy processes and the attention which they receive in political science more broadly.

Third, this dissertation's empirical subquestion (i.e., subquestion 3) is relevant more broadly for the study of power and influence—two closely related concepts that are ubiquitous in political science (see Bachrach & Baratz 1962, Dahl 1957, Lowery 2013). Measuring political influence is a significant empirical challenge (Dür 2008) even to the extent that it has been labeled as one of the holy grails of the social sciences (see Ward et al. 2011, 245). While this dissertation does not find this holy grail, it does offer suggestions regarding

how we can advance the study of influence using increasingly available data sources such as political text. These suggestions are of course situated within the context of the study of interest groups, but their potential applications go beyond this.

For the interest group literature more narrowly, the research question is also relevant in different ways. Consider first of all the changing composition and structure of interest intermediation systems across Western democracies. A prominent dynamic here is the rise and proliferation of think tanks (Rich 2004, Kelstrup 2016, Kelstrup & Blach-Ørsten 2020, Sherrington 2000). This is an organization type characterized by its capacity to create and transmit policy information to policymakers, the public etc. (see Bertelli & Wenger 2009). Indeed, a defining characteristic of think tanks is their ability to mobilize research (Kelstrup 2016, 1). This could conceivably result in a form of arms race dynamic (cf., Svallfors 2020) where other groups attempt to adjust their informational capabilities to compete with think tanks. Thus, in this view information resources become a competition parameter in the interest intermediation system.

In more general terms, interest groups have increasingly professionalized (Ihlen et al. 2021) and rely less on membership resources now compared to earlier. This is the case in the United States (Minkoff et al. 2008) but also in neo-corporatist countries such as Denmark which is the main focus of this dissertation (more details on the case selection later). In the heyday of neo-corporatism, membership was the main resource that interest groups could utilize in an exchange relationship with legislators (Öberg et al. 2011). However, with declining levels of neo-corporatism (cf., Rommetvedt et al. 2012), disrupted exchange dynamics (cf., Öberg et al. 2011), and a gradual shift towards pluralism, other resources such as information have become increasingly relevant (Arnesen 2023).

Furthermore, it is well known that not all interests are equally well mobilized (Schattschneider 1960). And among those mobilized, there are still variation with respect to their resource endowments and capabilities (Dür & De Bièvre 2007). Some groups have access to in-demand private information while other do not. Some groups have the capabilities to condense public information to make it easily digestible and hence attractive for policy makers while other do not. And in some political systems, some groups have privileged access to policy makers while others do not. All these factors are likely to affect a group's prospect of attaining influence. Hence, by examining whether and how information resources shape interest group influence, we can learn important lessons about the workings of political systems and, ultimately, how resources are distributed in society via public policy outputs.

Finally, the research question and its subquestions also have a more normative relevance. Specifically, it is arguably not problematic *per se* that policy makers may demand different information under different circumstances. However, there is a possibility that policy makers' information demands are partly endogenous to organized interests' advocacy efforts. In other words, it is possible that organized groups can help create a demand for their own information. Such a process is democratically more thorny which is why I return to it in chapter 6.

1.3 The Danish case

The empirical contributions to this dissertation are all situated in the empirical context of Denmark which is therefore the overall case setting. As I will elaborate below, the Danish case represents a hard test of the theoretical arguments. This is mainly because of Danish

policy makers' demand for outside information being relatively low due to a neo-corporatist mode of interest intermediation coupled with a well-functioning state bureaucracy.

The Danish interest intermediation system used to be characterized by a strong neo-corporatist mode of policymaking where certain organized interests enjoyed routinized institutional integration into policy making (Binderkrantz & Christiansen 2015). While the degree of neo-corporatism has declined, it still exists in somewhat adapted forms (Christiansen 2017). What this means in terms of the structure of the Danish interest group system is that some groups enjoy a privileged position across political arenas relative to other groups (Binderkrantz et al. 2014).

In this dissertation, I do not examine the entire Danish interest group population nor the entire policy making process. Rather, the focus is on three broad categories of groups. In Paper B the focus is (mainly) on business groups. In Papers C and D the focus is on peak interest groups defined as large groups (employer organization and unions) that are negotiation partners in collective policy making institutions, and on think tanks. Regarding the policy making process, Paper B focuses on the implementation phase and Paper C focuses on the decision making phase.⁴

What type of case, then, is Denmark in relation to the extent to which groups' information resources are useful in policy making in light of this delimitation? Here, we must consider both the supply side and the demand side of an information exchange relationship. From the supply side, the types of groups that are mainly studied in the empirical contributions to this dissertation (i.e., business groups, peak interest groups, and think tanks) will tend to have professionalized secretariats making them able to monitor politics and craft high-

⁴Papers A and D do not pertain directly to specific phases of the policy making process.

quality information. Thus, the information resources exist and can be useful to the extent that there is a transmission channel to responsive policy makers on the demand side.

From the demand side there are at least two reasons why policy makers' demand for information may well be relatively low—at least in the stages of the policy making process studied in this dissertation. First, Denmark has a well-functioning state bureaucracy with both ministerial departments and agencies to support the minister (Christensen & Opstrup 2018). This likely attenuates the demand for outside information because politicians can rely on their bureaucrats to a large extent. Second, some interest groups are legitimate parts of policy making and implementation (cf., neo-corporatist heritage). What this means, however, is that in the parts of the policy making process considered in this dissertation (i.e., the decision-making- and the implementation phases), the information exchanges in neo-corporatist institutions such as public committees (see Binderkrantz & Christiansen 2015) will likely already have occurred. This may again reduce policy makers' demand for external information.

Taken together, this implies that the Danish case can be seen as a least likely case of information-based influence mechanisms when considering specifically the types of groups and stages of the policy making process that are studied in this dissertation. This means that the Danish case is a hard test of the theoretical arguments, and, by extension, that confirmatory evidence weights more than disconfirmatory evidence (Gerring 2008).

How then does the Danish case compare to other case settings that feature prominently in the interest group literature? If we look at the Danish case as a static snapshot, then it is in many ways the polar opposite of, say, the American case. To mention just a few differences, the Danish interest intermediation system is relatively highly structured whereas

the American pressure system is much more pluralistic and unstructured, and in Denmark money in politics plays a comparatively small role compared to in America (see Elkjær 2020, 2224-2225).

However, to really appreciate the relevance of the Danish case we must take a dynamic perspective which stresses how the Danish interest intermediation system is changing. If we consider neo-corporatism and pluralism as opposite ends of a continuum (cf., Rommetvedt et al. 2012; but see Schmitter 1974) then the decline of Danish corporatism entails a more pluralistic interest intermediation system—i.e., a move in an American direction. Furthermore, political parties in Denmark have increased their fundraising activities significantly in recent years (Buch 2022, Lønstrup & Lund-Hansen 2021) which is, arguably, a sign of an increasing importance of money in politics. While there is still a long way to go, the Danish case is—at least by some accounts—transitioning slowly but steadily to become more like pluralist systems such as the American. As such, the Danish case can be relevant to both neo-corporatist systems like the Scandinavian ones and to systems that are moving in the direction of a more pluralist mode of interest intermediation.

1.4 Theoretical arguments in brief

In this dissertation I theorize—based on resource exchange models— *politicization* and *executive control* as two demand-side constraints on resource exchanges. Furthermore, I theorize that active participation and coordination in *advocacy coalitions* are options for groups that face a diminished demand for their information resources.⁵ These theoretical arguments are

⁵The individual papers also test some other hypotheses that are relevant in the contexts of each paper but are less relevant for the overall theoretical arguments of this dissertation.

elaborated in the next chapter.

Thus, this dissertation's theoretical contributions are some additions to the standard resource exchange model. First, the focus from the supply side is exclusively on information resources which is in line with the topic and research question of the dissertation. Second, the additions pertain to factors that *constrain* the feasibility of the resource exchange and hence also constrain the usefulness of information resources in advocacy. Two types of exchanges are considered—exchanges between groups and policy makers, as well as exchanges between different groups.

In a nutshell, the resource exchange model assumes is that all actors in a potential exchange relationship (e.g., interest groups and policy makers) control, and can exchange, resources that are desired by other participants. Information is one resource controlled by groups which may be exchanged for e.g., policy influence etc. Thus, the basic building blocks of a resource exchange are supply and demand. Groups have a supply of information resources which they can potentially convey to, e.g., policy makers. Policy makers, however, have specific demands, and will only engage in the exchange to the extent that they can have their information demands met.

This implies that a resource exchange is not a mechanical process. Building on the arguments from the case selection section above, we can consider the present case as an instance where the groups' stocks of information are close to unlimited due to their professional secretariats etc. This suggests that the main constraining factors of resource exchange should be sought on the demand side in the exchange relationships. As such, the general notion that resource exchanges can be constrained from the demand side is not new. Indeed, a key argument in a seminal contribution by Bouwen (2004) is that the most critical information

resource demand differs between the different European Union institutions. Similar arguments can be found in other contributions (e.g., Chalmers 2013, Klüver 2013*b*). Thus, I add to this line of work by examining other constraints on resource exchanges.

1.5 Methodological contributions in brief

Turning now to the methodological contributions, their common denominator is that they rely on text-as-data (press releases, consultation data, and parliamentary speeches) that are analyzed using combinations of different natural language processing tools and statistical methods. As such, they follow in the slipstream of a recent trend in political science methodology towards a larger emphasis on exactly text-as-data (Grimmer & Stewart 2013, Wilkerson & Casas 2017). The methods used in this dissertation include text reuse (see e.g., Linder et al. 2020, Røed 2023, Wilkerson et al. 2015) and sentence-level bidirectional encoder representation from transformers (BERT) model (see Devlin et al. 2018, Reimers & Gurevych 2019). As will be elaborated from chapter 3 onward, such methods are useful for measuring e.g., influence and can be particularly useful when they are combined with suitable empirical modeling strategies.

1.6 Overview of papers

This dissertation consists of four papers. Table 1.1 contains the status of each paper and Table 1.2 shows how the different papers relate to the different dimensions of the research question.

Table 1.1: Status of Papers A-D as per the date of submission.

Paper	Reference	Status
A	Whittlestone & Klitgaard (nd)	Revise and resubmit at <i>Scandinavian Political Studies</i>
B	Whittlestone (nd)	Revise and resubmit at <i>Public Administration Review</i>
C	Whittlestone & Florczak (nd)	Submitted to <i>West European Politics</i>
D	Whittlestone et al. (nd)	Submitted to <i>Political Studies</i>

Table 1.2: How Papers A-D relate to the research question.

Dimension of RQ	Paper(s)
Absolute/relative usefulness of information resources	A
When information resources are useful	B, C, D
How to empirically study the usefulness of information resources	B, C

In Paper A⁶ Whittlestone & Klitgaard (nd) review the empirical literature about the absolute and relative usefulness of interest group information- and financial resources. Using both a narrative synthesis of the literature and a series of meta-regressions, the main conclusion is that information appears to be even more important for access- and influence-seeking groups than financial resources.

In Paper B⁷ Whittlestone (nd) theorizes and tests politicization as a constrain on the usefulness of interest group information. Focusing specifically on the case of taxation in Denmark, the agency level (low politicization) is compared to the ministry level (higher politicization). By comparing interest group consultation letters with bureaucratic regulatory outputs using text reuse methods, support is found for the theorized relationship.

In Paper C⁸ Whittlestone & Florczak (nd) theorize and test executive control as an-

⁶Paper A title: *Interest Group Resources, Access, and Influence: An Empirical Review.*

⁷Paper B title: *Lobbying the Bureaucracy at Different Proximities to the Minister.*

⁸Paper C title: *A Shotgun Approach? Assessing Politicians' Selection of Information from Interest*

other constraint on the usefulness of groups' information. Unlike in Paper B, the focus is not on policy outputs but rather on politicians' information selection during parliamentary floor debates. Furthermore, the focus is on both interest group and think tanks. By using a sentence-level bidirectional encoder representation from transformers (SBERT) model, interest group and think tanks' press releases are compared to temporally proximate parliamentary speeches. The theoretical arguments finds partial support.

In Paper D⁹ Whittlestone et al. (nd) move beyond what can constrain policy makers' information demands and instead ask what organized groups can do when they are subjected to a limited demand for their information. Think tanks as outsiders to the policy making process are theorized to engage in advocacy coalitions with prominent interest groups. In this way they can have their information flow to policy makers indirectly via their coalition partners. Press releases are argued to be a tool with which coalition members can signal coherent messaging. However, the paper finds little consistence in this written messaging which leads to the conclusion that temporally stable advocacy coalitions that encompass think tanks and prominent interest groups probably do not exist in the Danish setting.

In sum, Paper A thoroughly reviews the relevant literature and, by doing to, motivates that information resources are substantially important and relevant to study, but also relatively understudied. Paper B and C build on this argument specifically by theorizing about when information is or is not a valuable asset in an exchange relationship between groups and policy makers. Paper D goes one step further and examines what groups with a large supply of information (specifically, think tanks) can do to attain influence when there is not

Groups and Think Tanks.

⁹Paper D title: *Interest Groups and Think Tanks in a Coordinated Market Economy: Towards Advocacy Coalitions or Protection of the Turfs?*

a strong demand for their information.

1.7 The structure of the dissertation

The rest of the dissertation is structured as follows. In chapter 2 I define the dissertation's key concepts and present the theoretical arguments and their underpinnings. Chapter 3 summarizes the data and methods used in Papers A-D to test the theoretical arguments. This includes details on data sources and -collections, research designs, and important choices made in relation to measurement etc. In chapter 4, I present the dissertation's key empirical results. These are subsequently discussed in chapter 5, as are the theoretical arguments and empirical strategies. I conclude the dissertation with chapter 6 which lays out what I consider to be its main conclusions, contributions, broader implications, and questions that remain open for future research.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Arguments

This chapter presents the theoretical arguments of the dissertation. First, I present the different types of groups that are of interest in the dissertation. Next, the resource exchange model is presented with an emphasis on information as a resource. This is followed by the dissertation's more specific arguments about the demand-side constraints of information resources, and what groups can do when faced with such constraints.

2.1 Definitions of key concepts

Before diving into the theoretical arguments of this dissertation some key concepts need to be defined. The focus of this dissertation is, broadly speaking, on interest groups and think tanks, albeit not all papers deal with all types of groups. Specifically, Paper B is about interest groups with an emphasis on business interest groups. Papers C and D are about both interest groups and think tanks.

Interest groups, I define using a behavioral definition where groups are defined by their

observable policy-related activities. As such, an interest groups is defined as any group that attempts to influence public policy at any stage of the policy making process from outside the formal electoral process (see Baroni et al. 2014). Note that organizational characteristics such as having a membership base are not parts of this definition.

Within this definition, I make one sub-definition, namely of *peak* interest groups. A peak interest group is understood as a group which stands at the apex of the interest group system by virtue of being a negotiation partner in coordinated policy making institutions. In a Danish context this includes e.g., large umbrella organizations for business and labor and thus excludes large parts of the interest group population.

The second organization type of interest in this dissertation is think tanks. These are defined in line with Kelstrup (2016, 1) as permanent organizations that claim to be autonomous from e.g., political parties and interest groups. Further, they are defined by their mode of trying to influence public policy which they do specifically by mobilizing research (Kelstrup 2016, 1).¹

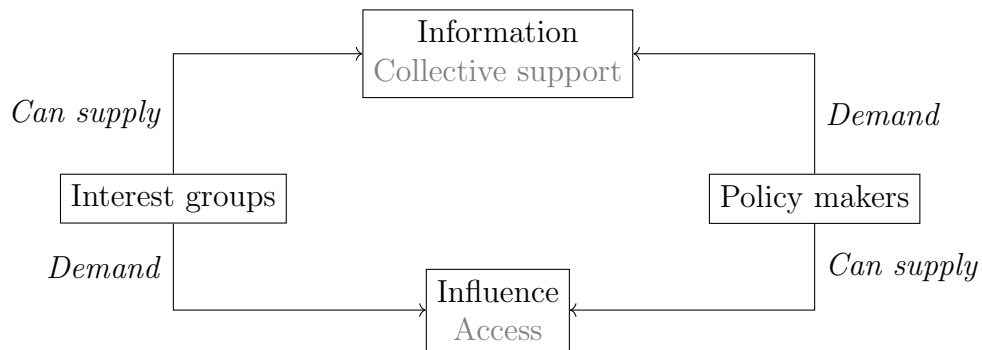
Turning to the definition of information resources, the point of departure is that resources are ‘... anything that can be used to sway the specific choices or strategies of another individual’ (Dahl 1961, 226). Thus, information resources can be understood as groups’ passive possession or active use of information towards achieving some organizational goal, notably to exert influence on policy by swaying policy makers.

¹There is a debate in the literature about whether think tanks are just interest groups or if they represent a distinct type of organization (see e.g., Bertelli & Wenger 2009). Indeed, scholars have observed a convergence of the interest groups and think tanks in terms of their informational capabilities (Stone 2007; see also Campbell & Pedersen 2014, 185-186). In this dissertation think tanks and peak interest groups are considered as two distinct types of organizations, but it is also acknowledged that this demarcation may not be completely crisp. Furthermore, it is noted that what sets a think tank apart from, say, a university (which could in principle also fall under the definition) is that policy influence is one of the primary goals of a think tank whereas for a university the primary goal is knowledge production and education.

2.2 Information resource exchange

The theoretical arguments in this dissertation rely on the resource exchange model which originates in sociology (Berkhout 2013, Bouwen 2004, Pfeffer & Salancik 1978) and has gained wide usage in the interest groups literature (Christiansen et al. 2014). In essence, the basic assumptions across varieties of the resource exchange model are that interest groups and policy makers control resources that the other part in the exchange relationship needs. Groups on their part control e.g., specialized information whereas policy makers are gatekeepers of access to policy making arenas (Binderkrantz & Pedersen 2017) and control influence on policy making. Thus, in a rational exchange of resources both groups and policy makers can have their resource demands met. Figure 2.1 shows a stylized representation of the model.

Figure 2.1: A stylized resource exchange model. This figure is an adaption of Figure 1 in Öberg et al. (2011, 368). Greyed text indicates resources that are less relevant in the context of the present dissertation. The lists of resources in the figure’s text boxes are not exhaustive.



The resource exchange model has been used explicitly in the neo-corporatist literature (Berkhout 2013), even to the extent that neo-corporatism has sometimes been defined as a political exchange between groups and the state (see e.g., Öberg et al. 2011). The underlying assumptions is that in neo-corporatist systems, groups function as intermediaries between

its own constituents and the government (Berkhout 2013),² and that groups can deliver collective support by virtue of internal membership control (Öberg et al. 2011). Indeed, in a seminal essay by Schmitter (1974) written before the formalization of the resource exchange theory as we know it today by e.g., Pfeffer & Salancik (1978), the idea of an *exchange* is still visible in the definition of corporatism:

Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories *in exchange for* observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of support.³ (Schmitter 1974, 93-94; emphasis added).

However, with the decline of neo-corporatism over the last half-century⁴ (cf., Rommetvedt et al. 2012), the ability to deliver collective membership support has declined which has led to a disruption in the exchange relationship between interest groups and policy makers (Öberg et al. 2011). This trend has coincided with, and plausibly been amplified by, patterns of decreasing voting across economic class cleavages as well as an increasing detachment of interest groups from political parties (see Christiansen 2012). These factors have changed the dynamics of the resource exchange relationships between interest groups and policy makers. Specifically, it has shifted the emphasis away from collective membership support as a resource and towards other resources such as information (see Arnesen 2023, Christiansen

²A somewhat softer formulation of this intermediary function can also be found in pluralist theory where groups are seen as *transmission belts* between citizens and public institutions (Junk 2019a, Rasmussen et al. 2014).

³This definition should be seen as an early definition and it is by no means the only definition of corporatism in the literature. A part of the purpose of this particular definition was to free the concept of corporatism from its formerly strong ideological connotations. (Schmitter 1974).

⁴The exact extent to which neo-corporatism has declined in countries like Denmark is debated in the literature. There is a consensus that it has indeed declined overall, but as Christiansen (2017, 44), for example, writes: ‘While Scandinavian corporatism might not be what it used to be, the rumours of its death are grossly exaggerated.’

2017).

It should be noted here that the value of information is acknowledged across many strands of literature and not just within exchange theories. Specifically, there exists a large literature on the topic which uses different formal methods such as game theory (e.g., Austen-Smith 1993, Bernhagen 2007, Hall & Deardorff 2006, Lohmann 1995; see also Awad 2023 for a review). Examples include the *legislative subsidy* framework where interest groups can subsidize allied policy makers with information and other resources (Hall & Deardorff 2006). Furthermore, interest groups can function as *service bureaus* for policy makers and provide them with information about the potential electoral consequences of policies (Hansen 1991).

In general, I assume that information as a resource is not different from other types of resources (say, money or political support) within the context of resource exchanges *per se*, since it can be exchanged for access, influence etc. However, information exchange do have some specific characteristics of which I now address some of the most important ones. First, not all information is of equal value to policy makers (Reenock & Gerber 2008). For example, it has been shown that technical information may be more valuable to policy makers than information on public preferences (Flöthe 2019). It follows that there is not a uniform demand for information across information types, information providers etc. Second, information provided by groups may be biased towards the preferences of the group (Bertelli & Wenger 2009; but see Esterling 2004). Assuming that policy makers are aware of this, it entails that they need to process and filter the information which groups provide and choose which information to use. Third, there is an over-supply of information in the political system. This means that e.g., politicians need to be highly selective in their information selection (Walgrave & Dejaeghere 2016). Finally, and related, information

processing is costly in terms of both time and cognitive energy. Policy makers for instance need to allocate time in their calendars to read or listen to information, and they need to engage with the information to know if it is useful.⁵

Thus, in short, information resource exchanges are characterized by a large supply and a non-uniform demand. This is likely quite different from other types of resources that groups can possess since we can generally assume that policy makers will have an interest in larger amounts over smaller amounts—more money (within the limits of the law), more political support etc. In particular, the non-uniform demand makes it pertinent to examine factors that could constrain policy makers demand for interest group information and—by extension—what groups can do when they are subjected to such constraints on their information supply.

2.3 Two demand-side constraints in information resource exchanges

In this section, I turn to theorizing about two specific factors that can affect policy makers demand for information resources from interest groups and think tanks. The first constraint pertains to one specific type of policy maker, namely bureaucrats. Here, I argue that higher levels of politicization are associated with lower information demands. The second constraint pertains instead to politicians and I argue that control of the executive leads to a demand for information balance which is not the case for opposition politicians.

⁵This, however, assumes some level of policy making capacity and at least somewhat clear policy preferences since low levels of these may incentivize policy makers to accept inputs from groups more uncritically (see Hertel-Fernandez 2019).

2.3.1 Constraint one: Politicization

The first factor which is theorized to affect policy makers' demand for information from groups is politicization. The focus is specifically on bureaucrats which are characterized as having some amount of policy authority delegated to them from the political level (Bennedsen & Feldman 2006). Bureaucrats are therefore commonly studied lobbying targets both in Europe (e.g., Binderkrantz & Krøyer 2012, Binderkrantz & Christiansen 2015, Binderkrantz et al. 2014, Braun 2012) and in America (e.g., Dwidar 2022, Furlong & Kerwin 2005, Yackee 2006, 2020, Yackee & Yackee 2006).

Politicization of the bureaucracy has been studied extensively within public administration (e.g., Bach et al. 2020, Cooper 2021, Christiansen et al. 2016, Hustedt & Salomonsen 2014, Peters 2013) but has rarely been linked to the interest group and lobbying literatures (but see Dür & Mateo 2023). Politicization can be broadly understood as any intrusion of politics into the administration (Cooper 2021, 565) and many different sub-types of politicization exist (see Peters 2013 for an overview).

Bureaucrats, like any other type of policy maker, need information and expertise in order to make policy which is likely to achieve its intended goals. This means that bureaucrats have a demand for information at the baseline. However, bureaucrats do not operate in a political vacuum and the political viability of bureaucratic outputs is an important success criterion—depending on the degree of politicization.

When politicization is high, politics is a salient factor impacting bureaucratic policy making. Indeed, when working under high levels of intrusion of politics into administrative decision making, the political logic of the bureaucrats' principals (i.e., ministers) will tend to

permeate into the administrative layer. This will generally attenuate the demand for outside information from e.g., interest groups because the political bargains and considerations take precedence over the preferences of outside groups. Of course, high levels of politicization will not remove the information demand entirely since bureaucrats may still benefit from information exchanges as long as they buttress the political logic and -goals of their political principals.

When politicization is lower, on the other hand, the political considerations will recede into the background and a more technocratic logic will take the forefront. This leaves bureaucrats with a larger flexibility and leeway to incorporate information from e.g., interest groups—and doing so is a way to help ensure the legitimacy of policy outputs among the regulated entities (firms, citizens etc.). This leads to the dissertation’s first proposition:⁶

Proposition 1. Politicization reduces policy makers’ information demands which reduces the effectiveness of information lobbying.

2.3.2 Constraint two: Executive control

The second constraining factor on policy makers’ information resource demands pertains to politicians. It is a basic democratic ideal that governments should be responsive to public opinion when making public policy⁷ (Burstein 2010). This implies at the most fundamental level that politicians need to be informed about what the public wants. Interest groups, and to a lesser extent think tanks,⁸ can provide this information.

⁶I use the term *proposition* to denote a general theoretical expectation. More specific hypotheses are derived and tested in the individual papers.

⁷The extent to which governments are equally responsive to citizens across, say, economic echelons is, however, a subject of ongoing debate in the literature (APSA 2004, Elkjær & Klitgaard 2021, Schakel 2021).

⁸Think tanks often do not have members as such (Stone 2007) and can therefore typically not credibly claim to represent a constituency.

However, I argue that it matters for their information demand whether a politician is in the government or in the opposition. Two factors characterize government politicians which do not characterize opposition politicians. First, government politicians have a state bureaucracy at their service which is staffed by experts in various policy fields. This means that government politicians—and in particular ministers—have policy expertise readily available which, in turn, reduces their need for policy expertise from outside groups.

Second, governments are responsible for passing and implementing legislation and can be assumed to want to do so to achieve socially efficient outcomes (cf., Esterling 2004). Both the passing and the implementation of legislation will run more smoothly if public opposition to a policy is not too strong. Thus, government politicians need to be in tune with the national encompassing interests, i.e., the aggregated needs and interests of a sector (see Bouwen 2004, 340). Interest groups—and in particular peak interest groups—can provide this information by virtue of the knowledge they can obtain from their members, be they individuals, firms etc. Furthermore, government politicians need to send a signal that they are willing to compromise and be broadly responsive since they are governing everyone and not just their allies. Taken together, this entails that politicians from the government will have a demand for balanced information when learning about the national encompassing interests and hence have an incentive to be inclusive in terms of which peak interest groups they listen to. This leads to the dissertation's second proposition:

Proposition 2. Government control makes politicians demand information from a more ideologically diverse set of groups.

Opposition politicians, on the other hand, do not have a bureaucracy at their disposal,

and they are not responsible for passing and implementing legislation. The fact that they do not need to craft bills means that they do not need a bureaucracy *per se*, which implies that their low demand for expert information is not different from that of government politicians. Furthermore, the fact that opposition politicians do not govern makes them more flexible in terms of which interest groups they can choose to listen to (Røed 2023).

In general, the main purpose of the opposition is to build a policy program which appeals enough to voters to challenge the incumbent government in the next election. One way to do this is to stick with your allies. Indeed, politicians from certain political parties have ideological and historical proclivities towards interacting with some interest groups rather than others (see Allern et al. 2023, Otjes & Rasmussen 2017). This suggests that opposition politicians will have a higher demand for information on the national encompassing interests from their allied groups rather than their opposing groups. In other words, opposition politicians, like politicians from the government, also demand information about the national encompassing interest but without the same need for inclusiveness. This leads to the dissertation's third proposition:

Proposition 3. Politicians from the opposition demand information the most from their ideologically allied groups.

2.4 Groups' options under attenuated information resource demands

I have just argued that policy makers have a non-uniform demand for external information and theorized two factors that can constrain this demand. Since the information supply is also non-uniform across groups (depending on their issue niche(s), membership base etc.), it follows that some groups will face obstacles when trying to supply information to politicians due to a low—or absent—demand for the types of information that they can supply. Therefore, in this section I theorize one way in which excluded groups can circumvent a low demand for their information, namely by coalescing with groups that do not face such a diminished demand for their information.

Scholars have long paid attention to interest group sides and coalitions in lobbying (see e.g., Baumgartner et al. 2009, Dwidar 2022, Hojnacki 1997, Junk 2019*b*, 2020*a*, Klüver 2013*a,b*, Nelson & Yackee 2012). Indeed, lobbying in coalitions is a common interest group strategy and a promising way to achieve access and influence (Junk 2020*b*). One of the more elaborate ways to think about long-term coalitions in policy advocacy is the advocacy coalition framework (Jenkins-Smith et al. 2018, Sabatier 1988, 1998). Here, different actors that have an interest in changing policy within a specific policy subsystem seek out allies with similar worldviews and policy core beliefs and coordinate their advocacy efforts with them (Weible & Sabatier 2007). Thus, shared beliefs about policy and a non-trivial degree of coordination between actors are necessary and sufficient conditions for them to be part of the same advocacy coalition (Sabatier 1998).

When a group faces a diminished demand for its information, it can be attractive to try

and enter into an advocacy coalition with groups that are not subjected to this diminished demand. Specifically, if groups in the former category manage to successfully coalesce with group in the latter category, this can provide an indirect entrance into the policy making process for the former.⁹ It should be noted, however, that the emergence of advocacy coalitions is not a mechanical process since coordination is costly and there is a perpetual risk that some coalition members free ride on the efforts of others. This means that in order for excluded groups to be attractive coalition partners for the included groups, they must bring something of value to the table. This could for example be other types of resources such as staff time devoted to working for the benefit of the coalition etc. Thus, the dissertation's fourth and final proposition:

Proposition 4. Groups that face a diminished demand for their information will enter advocacy coalitions with groups that do not face such a diminished demand for their information.

I will argue later that think tanks are one specific type of group which are likely to face a relatively small demand for the information they have to offer. On the other hand, the demand for information from peak interest groups is likely to be bigger. Therefore, the test of this proposition will be whether think tanks and peak interest groups coalesce in advocacy coalitions.

⁹There is an entire strand of literature which examines interest groups' insider and outsider resources and strategies (see e.g., Binderkrantz 2005, 2008, Dür & Mateo 2013). This literature shows that it can be a deliberate strategic choice to use an outsider strategy, i.e., to go public rather than to seek insider access. However, insider lobbying is often considered to be a more effective way to achieve influence over policy than outsider lobbying (Mahoney 2007; but see De Bruycker & Beyers 2019) and can therefore be assumed to be more attractive for influence-seeking groups (to the extent that they have this option).

Chapter 3

Data and Methods

Having outlined the dissertation's theoretical arguments in the previous chapter, I now proceed to the empirical part. This chapter contains an overview of how the papers that test the theoretical arguments have been designed. This primarily revolves around the choices me and my co-authors have made regarding data sources, as well as empirical measurement-, modeling-, and estimation strategies. It should be noted that not all papers in the dissertation directly test the theoretical arguments presented in the previous chapter. Specifically, Paper A mainly provides context and motivation. I will also present the data and methodology of this paper, but the bulk of this chapter will revolve around the papers that directly test the theoretical arguments which are Papers B–D.

A number of original data collections have been conducted in relation to this dissertation and an overview of these can be found in Table 3.1. Much of the data used are text data generated in political processes and, as such, are similar to e.g., rulemaking text data which American scholars have worked with for decades (see e.g., Yackee & Yackee 2006, Yackee 2006, 2020; see also Carpenter et al. 2020, Yackee 2019).

Table 3.1: Overview of data collections conducted in relation to the dissertation.

Data source	Used in paper(s)	Collected by	Described in section(s)
Existing literature	A	Me	3.1.1
Consultation material	B	Me	3.2.1
Background interview	B	Me	3.2.1
Interviews	D	Me	3.4.1
Press releases	C, D	Co-author	3.3.1, 3.4.1

3.1 Paper A

In Paper A Whittlestone & Klitgaard (nd) review the empirical literature about the absolute and relative usefulness of interest group information- and financial resources.

3.1.1 Data

The data in the paper is the relevant existing literature which first had to be identified and, next, study-level data had to be extracted from these. The literature searches were done in the databases *Scopus* and *Web of Science* using search queries. This resulted in a large set of potentially relevant studies. A series of inclusion criteria guided the decisions about inclusion/exclusion of the studies in the review. In total, 60 studies ended up being included in the review.

Once the 60 relevant studies had been identified, multiple data points were extracted from each study. This was done in two rounds. In the first round, data pertaining to the studies' hypotheses, results, empirical settings etc., were systematically extracted. This was the data which formed the basis of the narrative part of the review.

The second round of data extraction focused explicitly on extracting effect estimates and relevant covariates at the effect estimate-level from the studies. This was done in accordance

with the recommendations by Ringquist (2013). The resulting data (418 effects from 39 studies) were then used to conduct a series of meta-regressions that test the relative usefulness of information and financial resources for access- and influence-seeking groups.

3.1.2 Empirical strategy

The paper contains two empirical parts. First, it contains a narrative synthesis of the identified literature. This entailed reading all the included studies coupled with a manual identification of cross-cutting themes, results, areas of agreement/disagreement etc.

Second, the paper contains a meta-analysis of a subset of the literature examining the usefulness of information- and/or financial resources for access- and influence-seeking groups. To this end a series of meta-regressions are run. In the present case the dependent variable in the meta-regressions is the standardized effect of a resource variable on an access or influence variable. The independent variables (or *covariates*) are measured at the level of the standardized effect size and are factors that may moderate the conditional expectation of the standardized effect sizes (see Ringquist 2013, 144-145).

In meta-regressions it is typically assumed that the standardized effect sizes are independent of each other (Hedges et al. 2010). This is an unrealistic assumption in the present case, however, because many of the included studies yielded more than one standardized effect size. Thus, there is likely to be intra-study correlation of the standardized effect sizes due to e.g., the use of the same data. Therefore, we use a specific estimator which is robust to such correlations (Fisher & Tipton 2015).

3.2 Paper B

In Paper B Whittlestone (nd) examines politicization as a constraint on policy makers information resource demands (i.e., *Constraint one* theorized above). This is done using the case of tax policy implementation in Denmark. The paper relies on consultation data collected from publicly available archives.

3.2.1 Data

First, consultation data for executive orders (*bekendtgørelser*) issued by the Danish ministry of taxation were collected. The collected document types were draft executive orders, final executive orders, consultation letters, and consultation lists.¹ The data collection was conducted over the summer and fall of 2021, and all data going back to 2014 were collected. Second, consultation data for public rulings (*styresignaler*) issued by the Danish Agency of Taxation were collected. The document types collected, data collection time, and time window of the data are the same as above.² In total, the resulting dataset contains 87 executive orders (draft- and final versions), 192 public rulings (draft- and final versions), and 1,593 consultation letters³ of which 829 had substantive content.⁴

Finally, two interviews were conducted with employees from two interest groups active in relation to the consultation types just described. These were conducted early in the research

¹Consultation lists contain information on which organizations were explicitly invited to participate in a consultation. Consultations, however, are public and anyone can participate.

²Public rulings only started being sent into public consultation in mid-2014 which means that the collected data constituted the full set of available data at the time of the data collection.

³This number contains some double counts due to a deliberate duplication strategy used e.g., when a consultation letter was co-signed, or when multiple draft executive orders were sent into consultation together. See the paper for details.

⁴Paper B's supplemental material (specifically, appendix G) contains examples of what executive orders and public rulings are about, what points the consultation letters raise etc.

process and are primarily used for background information.

3.2.2 Empirical strategy

The paper examines the constraining role of politicization on policy makers demand for information. The case studied is, as mentioned, tax policy implementation in Denmark. Tax policy in general has been a core issue across Western democracies for decades (Steinmo 1993). This case is chosen because it allows for comparable observations of information lobbying⁵ and policy influence at different levels of politicization. Specifically, the agency and ministry levels are compared, and it is argued that politicization is higher at the ministry level than at the agency level. This is because the ministry generally functions as a buffer between the agency level and the political level, i.e., the minister (Christensen et al. 2014).

The focus in the paper is on measuring which groups' information (as provided in consultation letters) change the text of the regulatory documents. Changing the text of a regulatory document can happen in two ways—either by having text deleted from the draft regulation compared to the final regulation, or by having text inserted into the final regulation which is not in the draft regulation.⁶

To obtain this, we need three types of documents per consultation: The draft regulation document which is sent into consultation, the final regulation document which contains the finalized regulation text, and the set of consultation letters which are sent as a response to the draft regulation document before the issuance of the final regulation document. The

⁵Sending a consultation letter can be seen as a form of information lobbying (see Awad 2023) since the letters inform policy makers about e.g., the preferences of the group(s) sending a consultation letter, how groups perceive the impact of the proposed regulation on their members etc.

⁶This conception of influence sets the paper apart from most existing studies that use a similar empirical approach since these usually focus only on overlaps between the consultation letter content and the final regulation document (e.g., Dwidar 2022).

overall empirical approach then proceeds in two steps. The first step is to identify all textual *differences* between the draft and the final regulation document. This results in two *difference texts*—one difference text with the removed text, i.e., the text which is in the draft but not in the final regulation document, and one text with the inserted text, i.e., the text which is in the final but not in the draft regulation document. The second step is then to look for textual overlaps (with some degree of imperfections allowed) between each consultation letter and these two difference texts. The reason for this is that if a group had influence on the contents of the regulation document it should be visible exactly from an overlap between their provided information and the difference texts. The searches for textual overlaps are done using text reuse methods, and more specifically the Smith-Waterman algorithm (see Linder et al. 2020, Wilkerson et al. 2015).

This procedure results in an influence score for each consultation letter. Then, by coding whether a consultation letter was sent in relation to an executive order or a public ruling, as well as a number of covariates, it is possible to estimate if influence is higher at the agency level compared to the ministry level. This is done using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression.

3.3 Paper C

In Paper C Whittlestone & Florczak (nd) study the effects that executive control have on politicians' demand for information from different organizations. Here, the focus is on peak interest groups and prominent think tanks—four of both kinds—in the calendar year 2018. This year is chosen because it is the last non-election year before the onset of the COVID-19

pandemic.

3.3.1 Data

This paper uses data on interest group and think tanks’ press releases (and similar written messaging) as well as transcripts of politicians’ speeches in the Danish parliament. The dataset consists of 1,657 press releases and 20,510 parliamentary speeches. These press releases were collected using a combination of manual and automated scraping of the organizations websites, and all organizations gave us permission to collect their data. The data collection was spread across 2021 and 2022.⁷ To obtain transcripts of parliamentary speeches we use the pre-collected `ParlSpeechV2` dataset (Rauh & Schwalbach 2020).

3.3.2 Empirical strategy

The case studied is politicians and their speeches in parliament during the calendar year of 2018. The parliamentary floor is chosen because this is a venue where politicians can signal responsiveness, seek attention etc. (Fernandes et al. 2021). Two types of organizations are studied as potential information suppliers to politicians, namely peak interest groups and think tanks.

The empirical approach in the paper is essentially to trace whether information from organizations’ press releases gets selected⁸ by politicians and make it into their floor speeches.

⁷The press releases used in Paper C is a subset of the press releases used in Paper D and they were collected in the same round of data collection.

⁸The selection of information can be direct or indirect (see Awad 2023). Direct information selection is when a specific piece of information from a press release makes it into a parliamentary speech. Indirect information selection refers to situations where politicians make inferences from the contents in a press release and draw on these inferences in floor speeches. This could e.g., be that a press release pertains to some topic and the politician then infers that the given topic is important for the organization issuing the press release, and subsequently addresses this topic in a floor speech.

Since the corpora of parliamentary speeches and press releases are large and the number of potential press release-parliamentary speech comparisons huge, we need an automated approach.

The measurement of information selection therefore has two main components—the first pertains to similarity between press releases and floor speeches, and the second pertains to how far back in time politicians can be assumed to seek out information. First, regarding similarity between press releases and floor speeches, we rely on a bidirectional encoder representation from transformers (BERT) model (Devlin et al. 2018) which has been specifically pre-trained to detect *semantic similarity*—i.e., similarity in meaning—between natural sentences across multiple languages, including Danish (Reimers & Gurevych 2019). In brief, the model yields a context-dependent semantic encoding of a natural sentence in a high-dimensional dense vector space. Finding the semantic similarity between a pair of sentences then simply amounts to finding the cosine similarity⁹ and choosing a proper threshold for this cosine similarity.¹⁰ We then aggregate these measures from the natural sentence level to the press release-parliamentary speech level which then becomes the unit of analysis.

Second, regarding how far back in time we assume that politicians seek information from e.g., press releases, it is worth noting that information quickly becomes outdated due to the pace of modern day politics (see Walgrave & Dejaeghere 2016). Thus, in general, the empirical strategy is to compare any given parliamentary speech in the corpus to all press

⁹Cosine similarity is bounded above by 1 and values closer to 1 indicate higher semantic similarity.

¹⁰We choose 0.7 as the threshold. This aligns with threshold values chosen in similar, existing studies (cf., Cann et al. 2023, Kim et al. 2023). Furthermore, a subset of the data was hand coded in earlier versions of the paper to find a suitable threshold which struck the best balance in terms of the entries in a confusion matrix. Here, 0.7 was also found to be the best threshold. This hand coding was removed from the paper, however, since the data went through additional rounds of cleaning after that which meant that the hand coded data was outdated compared to the final data used in the paper. However, the hand coding remains indicative of that 0.7 is indeed a suitable threshold for the present purpose.

releases in the corpus where the press release was published no later than the same day of the speech and no earlier than t days before.¹¹ This is meant to account for the fact that politicians cannot logically choose information from future press releases, and the assumption that they will not seek out information more than, say, $t = 14$ days back in time.

The result of this measurement approach is a dataset where each row is essentially a (directed) dyad consisting of a press release and and parliamentary speech where the contents of the press release can potentially have informed the contents of the speech. Then by coding whether the politician in each dyad is from the government or opposition as well as a number of other dyad-level covariates, the theoretical arguments are tested using a series of OLS regression models.

3.4 Paper D

In Paper D Whittlestone et al. (nd) study the same eight think tanks and peak interest groups as in Paper C (albeit with data covering a longer time period; see below) and theorize that the two types of organizations are likely to be members of the same advocacy coalitions.

3.4.1 Data

This paper uses both quantitative and qualitative data to test the hypotheses. The qualitative data consist of seven elite interviews (Harvey 2011).¹² These were semi-structured and

¹¹More formally then we can consider the set of all parliamentary speeches in the corpus $S = \{s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n\}$ and the set of all press releases in the corpus $P = \{p_1, p_2, \dots, p_m\}$. For any given parliamentary speech $s_i \in S$, we compares this to all press releases $p_j \in P' \subseteq P$ where p_j is published no more than t days before s_i was uttered in parliament and no later than the same day as s_i was uttered in parliament.

¹²One organization never replied to our invitations to participate in an interview.

followed a prepared interview guide but also left room for follow-up questions, reflections etc. The interviewees were all high-level employees from the different organizations in the sample. They were recruited via e-mail and promised anonymity for themselves and their employer in all reporting of results etc. The interviews had a duration of 1/2-1 hour.

The quantitative part of the paper relies on 9,023 press releases (and similar written messaging) from the eight think tanks and peak interest groups in the sample for the years 2018–2022. These press releases were collected using a combination of manual and automated scraping of the organizations websites, and all organizations gave us permission in advance to collect their data. The data collection was spread across 2021 and 2022.¹³

3.4.2 Empirical strategy

The empirical approach taken in this paper is simpler than those of Papers B and C. Specifically, we use press releases to make probably whether or not pairs of press releases are indications of a coordinated effort on the part of the sending organizations. As such, what we are looking for empirically is similar to what Junk (2020*b*) refers to as *signalling coalitions*, albeit with a focus on identifying latent coalition structures rather than visible structures such as the joint issuance of a press release etc.

We measure potential coordination at the level of press releases pairs. The approach is to compare each press release in the corpus to all other press releases in the corpus that are published no earlier than the same day as the former and no later than t days after the former. This is meant to account for the fact that manifestations of coordination can only

¹³The set of press releases used in Paper D is a superset of the set of press releases used in Paper C and they were collected in the same round of data collection.

happen forward in time and is likely to manifest itself quickly, say, within $t = 7$ days.¹⁴

The comparison function used to compare press release pairs is a simple cosine similarity which captures the similarity of the document feature matrix representation of the two press releases.

A key assumption in the advocacy coalition framework is that coalitions are temporally stable. In the context of Paper D this means that it makes sense to aggregate to the organization-pairs level. This aggregation yields an average *coordination value* for each of the pairs of organizations. Then, by using a series of one-sample statistics we test whether or not temporally stable patterns of coordination can be identified.

Measuring coordination is a difficult endeavour and we grant that our approach has some limitations. I return to these in chapter 5 and also discuss them at length in the paper itself. Therefore, to nuance and qualify the quantitative results, insights from the interviews are used. Here, quotes etc., are used to exemplify, back-up, and challenge the results from the quantitative part of the analysis. To make the interviews fit for this purpose they were first transcribed and then manually coded according to relevant themes etc.

¹⁴More formally, then given the set of press releases in the corpus $P = \{p_1, p_2, \dots, p_n\}$ we compare all press releases $p_i, p_j \in P' \subseteq P$ where p_j is published no earlier than the same day as p_i and no later than the t days after the publication date of p_i .

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter contains an overview of the results of the papers in this dissertation.¹ The presentation of the results are structured around the first two dimensions of the research question as presented in Table 1.2. The results pertaining to the third dimension—i.e., how to empirically study the usefulness of information resources—are left for chapter 5 since the empirical strategies have already been presented in chapter 3.

4.1 Are information resources useful in absolute and relative terms?

Based on the results from Paper A, information resources are useful for access- and influence-seeking groups both in absolute terms and relative to financial resources. First, in the narrative synthesis of the relevant literature it is found that information resources tend to be

¹It should be noted again that the papers in the dissertation contains more individual results than are presented here, although the bulk of the results is indeed presented here. In this chapter, I focus on the results that pertain directly to the dissertation's research question and propositions.

positively associated with access and influence. This part also synthesizes results pertaining to the absolute usefulness of financial resources. For this type of resource, the results in the existing literature are more mixed.

Second, in a series of meta-regressions the usefulness of information resources is examined relative to financial resources. The results from this part show that information resources tend to be more strongly associated with particularly influence compared to financial resources. These meta-regression results are reasonably robust to a number of alternative specifications, including the exclusion of potential outliers, a jack-knife test etc.

4.2 Does politicization constrain the demand for information resources?

Turning to the first of the two factors which was theorized to constrain policy makers' information demands, Paper B finds that politicization is indeed such a constraint. Specifically, the paper compared influence for actors that lobby at the ministry level and the agency level in relation to taxation. In the paper, I find that influence is on average higher at the agency level—the less politicized venue—compared to at the ministry level—the more politicized venue. This result is also relatively robust to a number of different specifications. The empirical evidence is thus in line with Proposition 1 from chapter 2.

4.3 Does executive control constrain the demand for information resources?

For the second factor which was theorized to attenuate policy makers' information demands—namely executive control—the results are more mixed as can be seen from Paper C. The first result from this paper is that politicians from government parties are *not* more prone to listen to interest groups than think tanks. This runs counter to the theoretical argument since it was argued that what government politicians need the most is information about the national encompassing interest (see Bouwen 2004) which is exactly what interest groups can provide and think tanks generally cannot.

The second result shows that politicians from government parties are balanced in their information selection from right- and left-leaning interest groups. I interpret this as evidence of an information demand which is balanced across the ideological spectrum of interest groups. Thus, this result aligns better with the theoretical argument which stipulated that governments need broad support to e.g., smoothen the passing and implementation of legislation. This result is in line with Proposition 2 from chapter 2.

It was furthermore theorized that opposition politicians will tend to stick to their allies. The third result in Paper C supports this argument. Specifically, it shows that politicians from the main opposition party are more likely to use information from their historically allied interest groups in parliamentary floor debates than from opposing groups. I interpret this as an indication that politicians from opposition parties have a higher demand for information from their allied interest groups compared to their opponents. This result is in line with Proposition 3 from chapter 2.

These three results are also generally robust to a number of different specifications. For example, they are robust to using different time windows, and to variations in the measurement of the dependent variable.

4.4 Do excluded groups form advocacy coalitions with included groups?

The empirical results for the final theoretical argument should first be seen in light of the findings from Paper C. In Paper C, it was shown as a stylized fact that think tanks are much less successful in having their information selected by politicians compared to interest groups. This supports the assumption that think tanks are an example of a group type which faces a smaller demand for their information than interest groups.

It was theorized earlier that when a group (in this case think tanks more generally) are faced with an attenuated demand for their information they can enter into advocacy coalitions with included groups. We test this dynamic both qualitatively and quantitatively and find virtually no support of such coalition dynamics. In short, think tanks and interest groups are generally not members of the same advocacy coalitions. This is not to say that occasional (or even routinized) coordination never takes place—it does. But rather, these patterns of coordination are not sufficiently evident nor temporally stable for us to conclude that distinct advocacy coalitions exist. This result thus runs counter to Proposition 4 in chapter 2.

Chapter 5

Discussion

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings presented in the previous chapter. First, there will be a theoretical discussion of the theoretical arguments presented in chapter 2. Here, I will discuss how the findings align with existing literature and offer some alternative explanations for the empirical findings. Next follows a methodological discussion. Here, I will focus on the empirical strategies' strengths and limitations and how they measure up against common research criteria such as validity, reliability etc.

5.1 Theoretical discussion

In this section the arguments presented in chapter 2 will be compared to other, similar theoretical arguments. Furthermore, alternative explanations and potential explanations of some of the null-findings will be discussed.

5.1.1 Politicization as a constrain on information demands

The notion that low levels of politicization should broaden the scope for lobbying influence aligns to some extent with other, closely related strands of theory such as the *quiet politics* framework (Culpepper 2011). Politicization is not a key concept in this framework where it is instead the salience of an issue to voters which is the driver of influence.¹ In a nutshell, this framework stipulates that the more the public cares about an issue, the less able business is to exercise disproportionate influence on public policy (Culpepper 2011, 177).

The politicization argument presented in chapter 2 and elaborated in Paper B is however not a quiet politics argument *per se*. The reason for this is that the main focus of the paper is on the implementation phase. It is fair to assume that the implementation phase is, on average, less salient than, say, the decision making phase of policy making. Thus, it is quite likely that voters are neither paying much attention to policy implementation at the ministry level nor the at the agency level which are the two institutions that are compared in Paper B. In other words, politics may well be quiet at both the ministry and the agency levels in the implementation phase which means that salience cannot explain the differences in the observed influence across the two institutions due to lack of variation.

A second strand of literature which is relevant for the theoretical arguments is that pertaining to bureaucrats' motivations and values in their work. The theoretical arguments assume that there is some degree of variation in bureaucrats' motivations and values depending on their institutional employment affiliation. This aligns to some extent with e.g.,

¹Politicization and salience are not the same thing, but the concepts are sometimes conceptualized as being closely related. Indeed, some definitions of politicization even have salience as a constitutive part (e.g., Dür et al. 2023, 2-5). It should be noted, however, that I choose in Paper B to follow a definition of politicization which is more closely related to the public administration definition of the concept (see also the definition in chapter 2).

Vrangbæk (2009) who finds that while there are some core values that span the entire public sector, there is also some variation between e.g., the ministry level and the agency level. To mention two notable differences, ministerial departments value political governability higher than agencies whereas agencies value user needs more than do ministerial departments (Vrangbæk 2009, 517; see also Christensen & Opstrup 2018).

5.1.2 Executive control as a constraint on information demands

The second theoretical argument in this dissertation was that government and opposition politicians do not have the same information demands. Specifically, governments seek information from an encompassing set of interest groups while oppositions tend to stick to their historical allies. The underlying assumption here is that the sender of information is a cue for politicians when they choose their information, but also that this cue works differently for government and opposition politicians. Specifically, for opposition politicians the cue is straight-forward in that the the opposition politician will tend to choose information from ideologically aligned interest groups. For the government politicians the cue instead helps them select information from both sides of the ideological spectrum.

The latter conception of an ideology cue aligns to some extent with the ideology heuristic suggested by Walgrave & Dejaeghere (2016, 237-239) who study information selection by ministers and party leaders. In short, they argue that ideology serves as a guide when these high-ranking politicians select information. Importantly, ideology is a stronger heuristic for party leaders in general than for ministers who tend to be less ideologically driven (Walgrave & Dejaeghere 2016, 241). To the extent that this patterns generalizes from the top-level

of government and party leadership to the backbenchers, then it is closely in line with the findings in Paper C.

It is possible that there are other drivers of the empirical patterns observed in Paper C in addition to the ideology heuristic. Specifically, it may be that it is the information *type* and/or *content* which matter more than which group has provided the information. In this regard there exists a relatively small strand of literature which explicitly examines how the provision of different types of information is associated with influence for lobbying interest groups (see e.g., Flöthe 2019, Rasch 2018).

This variable only figures indirectly and rudimentarily in this dissertation's theoretical arguments. Specifically, it was argued that different types of actors are in a position to provide different types of information by virtue of whether they represent members or not. But to truly test this argument a much more granular conception and theorization about information types and contents would be necessary.² I return to this point in chapter 6.

While it is unlikely that the ideology heuristic is the only factor at work it should not be readily disregarded for more granular and specific theoretical arguments centering on for example information types and/or content. Indeed, politicians are highly time constrained and they need to navigate an abundant information supply as effectively as possible to avoid information overload (see Walgrave & Dejaeghere 2016). This entails that heuristics such as the ideology heuristic—even if it is rather crude—may actually be important because it is a way to quickly sort through the incoming information. Sorting on information types and/or contents, on the other hand, logically requires the politician (or her staff) to process more information since these two factors will generally only be apparent after the fact.

²Rasch (2018) for example operates with 20 different types of information (referred to as *frames*).

5.1.3 Advocacy coalitions as an option for groups facing an attenuated demand for their information

The last theoretical argument pertained to what groups can do when they are faced a limited demand for their information. It was argued that such groups (i.e., think tanks in the present case) could coalesce in advocacy coalitions with groups that do not face such attenuated demands for their information. The empirical results did however not support this argument.

There are a number of different potential reasons why the empirics did not support the theoretical argument. The first pertains to what the excluded groups can (or rather, cannot) bring to the table in potential advocacy coalitions. Indeed, the theoretical argument that advocacy coalitions are attractive for excluded groups makes the most sense from these groups' point of view. But there is another side of the coin which is that the non-excluded groups need to actively coalesce with the excluded groups. And if the former do not need the latter to be successful they have little incentive to enter into such coalitions.

The second reason is related but more specific to the case considered in the paper—think tanks and peak interest groups in Denmark. It has been argued that declining levels of neo-corporatism in e.g., Denmark have created a niche in which think tanks can emerge and gain prominence (see Åberg et al. 2020). In that sense, think tanks can be seen as challengers to the usual, highly structured mode of interest intermediation characteristic of neo-corporatist systems. Hence, it is quite likely that established interest groups are sceptical of new actors such as think tanks³ (see Campbell & Pedersen 2014). They may even perceive think tanks as a threat since think tanks are generally less constrained in their advocacy efforts than peak

³At least one interview used in Paper D echoed this sentiment. See the paper for details.

interest groups (Åberg et al. 2020) who must constantly maintain good working relationships with other peak interest groups since these are their negotiation partners in collective policy making institutions (see Busemeyer 2020). Thus, for these reasons peak interest groups may choose to not include think tanks into advocacy coalitions since this would be too welcoming towards groups that are representative of a more pluralistic and conflictual mode of interest intermediation.⁴ This is hence another disincentive for peak interest groups to coalesce with think tanks in the first place.

5.2 Methodological discussion

I now turn to a discussion of the empirical strategies used in the different papers and presented in chapter 3. The discussion will be centered around the different empirical strategies' strengths and limitations with an emphasis on the standard research criteria. To ease the reading, I use the same structure as in chapter 3 and divide parts of the discussion by paper. But before doing so, and to avoid redundancy, I offer some remarks on strengths and limitations that cut across the text-as-data methods used in Papers B–D.

5.2.1 General strengths

A main strength of the methods used in Papers B–D is that they have principally perfect reliability. The methods used are deterministic which means that they will produce the same result given the same input over and over again. This is different from methods such

⁴This view is supported in a Swedish context by Nohrstedt & Olofsson (2016) who review 25 applications of the advocacy coalition framework in Swedish policy processes. They find no empirical evidence of think tanks in any of the 25 cases.

as hand coding where the measurement will depend to some extent on the interpretations on the part of the coder. While reliability is indeed perfect, it is also model dependent, at least in Paper C. Specifically, if we used a different SBERT model the results would likely also be somewhat different.

The second main strength of the methods is that they are highly scalable in terms of input data volume. Once the methods have been set up and the data have been cleaned and prepared, there is only little overhead associated with adding more data.⁵ The fact that automated text-as-data methods are used to measure influence means that we can analyze much larger volumes of data in a much more granular way than would be feasible if we were to do it manually.

The third main strength of the empirical approaches is that they are relatively low-cost in terms of time and data collection. First, all data (except the interviews) used in this dissertation are publicly available in online archives etc., and can thus be collected by anyone. Second, the methods used to analyze the data (i.e., the Smith-Waterman algorithm, SBERT etc.) are all available in packages or modules for standard statistical programming languages such as R or Python. The main bottleneck in terms of time is the structuring and cleaning of the data which are unstructured upon collection. This can take a significant amount of time but can be automatized to some extent.

⁵Some of the methods are, however, computationally intensive. In Paper C for example it was necessary to use high-performance computing capabilities for the SBERT model to run within a reasonable time frame.

5.2.2 General limitations

There is one main cross-cutting limitation of all the empirical strategies used in Papers B–D which is related to the research design. Specifically, due to the observational nature of the data we are not able to make causal conclusions. This means that all the results should be seen as correlational rather than causal.

Another cross-cutting limitation (or even weakness) is the researcher degrees of freedom. This is particularly relevant in relation to the Smith-Waterman algorithm and the SBERT model in Papers B and C, respectively. The researcher degrees of freedom pertain to parameterization and threshold selection. There is little guidance in the literature regarding these two things so we mainly relied on default parameter values and what little guidance we could find (e.g., Cann et al. 2023, Kim et al. 2023) combined with a series of sensitivity checks.

5.2.3 Paper A

Paper A is quite different from the other papers in terms of its empirical strategy since it is the only paper which uses meta-analytic techniques. The main strength of the paper’s empirical approach is that of a reasonably high reliability. Indeed, one of the advantages of meta-analyses is that they generally have higher reliability than the individual studies embedded in the meta-analysis (Flather et al. 1997). Granted, the meta-regressions in the paper rely on a relatively small and heterogeneous pool of studies which reduces the reliability. But still, the fact that meta-analytic approaches are used means that we can draw more reliable conclusions than we would be able to do from any individual study.

The main limitation of the meta-analytic approach used in the paper pertains to the heterogeneity of the underlying studies. Indeed, the studies differ considerably, for example in how they measure the independent (financial- and information resources) and dependent (access and influence) variables. While such heterogeneity may not be a problem in general, it becomes problematic when performing meta-regressions since these estimators principally assume that the underlying measures are the same (or very similar) across studies. So while the heterogeneity we observe in Paper A is common in the social sciences (cf., Ringquist 2013; see also Baumgartner & Leech 1998), it does increase the risk of comparing apples to oranges. In the paper, we do a split-sample specification where we run separate models on effects where the dependent variable is access and effects where the dependent variable is influence. This reduces the heterogeneity to some extent but does not solve the problem completely. The consequence of the heterogeneity is that there is likely to be some noise in the regression models.

5.2.4 Paper B

Paper B uses a text-as-data approach to measure interest group influence at the implementation phase using consultation data. As such, it is methodologically situated in the slipstream of recent contributions which use similar approaches on similar data (e.g., Dwidar 2022, Rashin nd). Also, the paper departs methodologically from older studies that predominantly use hand coding when working with similar data (e.g., Binderkrantz et al. 2014, Yackee & Yackee 2006, Yackee 2006).

The main strength of the text reuse method is that the phenomenon of interest—how the

provision information leads to influence—is observed and measured very proximately to the hypothesized driving process. Specifically, with the method we are in fact able to observe if a given text segment from a consultation letter overlaps with a text segment which has changed between the draft and the final rule. This is arguably as close as we can come to observing how information provided in consultation letters makes it (or does not make it) into rule text from real-world text data.

This very proximate observation of influence resulting from information provision is however also a limitation of the method. Specifically, the method entails a narrow conception and measurement of influence—i.e., an identifiable textual overlap. This misses several types of influence. First, like many other studies of interest group influence it misses influence resulting from more covert lobbying efforts that take place behind closed doors. Second, it also misses influence resulting from the efforts of e.g., lobbying sides and coalitions since these are not taken into account⁶ (see Baumgartner et al. 2009, Klüver 2013*a,b*, Nelson & Yackee 2012). Finally, it misses influence resulting from consultation letter content which does not specifically suggest e.g., a paraphrasing of a specific passage in the draft rule.⁷

This also taps into discussions about the validity of the measure. On the one hand some validation of the measure was conducted (see the supplemental material to Paper B) which shows that the method captures what it is supposed to capture. But on the other hand, it is likely that there is also some noise in the measure resulting from textual overlaps by chance, or textual overlaps which are not indicative of influence. Regarding the former, this

⁶It should be noted that it possible to take coalitions structures into account with text reuse methods (see Dwidar 2022).

⁷For example, if a consultation letter hypothetically suggests that ‘We think that you should elaborate § 10 b by providing some concrete examples.’ and the ministry/agency actually incorporates such examples in the final rule, then we would usually consider this as an instance of influence. However, the text reuse method would not be able to capture this since there is no concrete textual overlap to identify.

concern is to a large extent alleviated by the approach used with the *difference texts* where consultation letters are only compared to textual changes.

5.2.5 Paper C

In Paper C, we continue with the text-as-data approach to measuring the phenomenon of interest, which in this paper is which information politicians select in their floor speeches. The method used—namely an SBERT model—is one way of studying exactly this phenomenon. Like with the text reuse method from Paper B, this empirical strategy has a number of strengths but also some limitations.

The main strength of this measurement approach is, again, that we are able to capture the phenomenon of interest very proximately to the actual driving process. Specifically, by measuring semantic similarity between parliamentary speeches and press releases we observe directly resemblances in meaning which are then taken as indication of information selection. An alternative approach would have been to e.g., ask politicians in surveys or interviews how they choose information from organizations (see e.g., Walgrave & Dejaeghere 2016). While this approach would certainly have its own set of benefits, it would also be a much more distant way of observing the phenomenon of interest.

The main limitations of the SBERT method of measuring information selection are twofold. The first pertains to the validity of the measure. Specifically, since we are only measuring semantic similarity at the sentence-level we capture potentially several different things. A high semantic similarity may result from the same piece of discrete information being present in both sentences. But it can also result from the sentences addressing the same

topics etc. While these two things can both be argued to be information selection,⁸ it is not always clear what drives the model results.

This leads to the second limitation which has to do with the model's accuracy. Specifically, while the SBERT model that we use is indeed multilingual and works on Danish text, most of the data it was trained on is likely in English. Furthermore, in the paper the model is applied to political text which is a specific type of text with its own specialized vocabulary. It is unlikely that the model is trained specifically on such political text which will inevitably introduce measurement error.

A caveat regarding the empirical strategy in Paper C is that we are comparing written and (transcripts of) spoken text which tends to differ in several respects such as their vocabulary etc. (Chafe & Tannen 1987). This concern is alleviated to some extent by the fact that parliamentary speeches are often more formalized compared to everyday spoken language.

5.2.6 Paper D

Paper D uses a text-as-data approach to examine the coalition patterns between a set of think tanks and peak interest groups. Compared to the other papers in the dissertation, this paper is the methodologically most simple one. Specifically, the measurement approach is straight-forward (i.e., cosine similarity between pairs of press releases) and likewise for the estimation strategies.

The simplicity of the measure is also, arguably, its main strength. It is quite apparent what we are measuring, namely the textual correlation between pairs of press releases. While

⁸In the paper we distinguish between these two as being instances of strong and weak information selection, respectively (see Awad 2023).

I am not aware of other studies that use a similar approach to measure coalition patterns, it has an intuitive appeal. Specifically, one observable implication of the existence of coalitions would be consistent written messaging which is exactly what we measure.

There is one main limitation of the empirical approach in the paper which has to do with the measurement approach. Because unlike the methods in Papers B and C, we are measuring the phenomenon of interest—the existence of advocacy coalitions between different think tanks and peak interest groups—relatively distantly from the actual coordination process. Specifically, consistent written messaging can be considered a late-stage outcome in a coordination process.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

In this final chapter, I begin by presenting the more general conclusions which arise from the papers in this dissertation together with the main contributions. Next, I broaden the focus and argue how the dissertation's conclusions may be relevant for other debates and strands of literature within political science. I end the chapter by pointing to questions that remain open and suggest avenues of future research.

6.1 Main conclusions and contributions

The research question of this dissertation read: When are information resources useful for organized groups in their advocacy efforts, and how can we study this empirically? I argued in chapter 1 that this entailed three subquestions with the first being whether information resources are useful at all in political advocacy; the second being which factors constrain their usefulness; and the third being how the usefulness can be studied empirically. I will structure the conclusion around these points.

First, with this dissertation it has been demonstrated that information is an important resource for groups in their advocacy efforts. This is an important conclusion especially in light of the case selection. Specifically, it was argued in chapter 1 that Denmark is a least likely case in the specific contexts studied in this dissertation. Thus, this confirmatory evidence weights more than would disconfirming evidence.

Of course, the insight that information matters is not new, but still to this day not many studies exist that study the usefulness of information resources in advocacy empirically and head on. Therefore, the first main contribution of this dissertation is to show that information resources are important for access- and influence-seeking groups—both in absolute terms and relatively to the most oft-studied resource type, namely financial resources.

The second main conclusion is that policy makers' demand for outside information is not uniform. I have theorized and tested two such constraints—politicization and executive control—and found that politicization diminished the demand for outside information whereas executive control affects which groups' information politicians demand. Thus, the dissertation contributes by showing that if we want to understand when organized groups' information advocacy efforts are most likely to succeed, we must pay close attention to the demand-side. Furthermore, the dissertation offers elaborate theoretical argumentation about the mechanisms underlying these demand-side constraints.

6.1.1 Methodological contributions

Aside from these theoretical contributions, the dissertations also offers some methodological contributions. In general, it has been demonstrated that text-as-data combined with tools

from natural language processing are useful when studying information advocacy and how this translates into e.g., influence. Thus, the methodological contributions mainly pertain to measurement and, as such, serve as suggestions for ways of in which scholars can measure broadly interesting concepts such as influence using tools that are alternatives to e.g., surveys or interviews.

6.2 Broader implications

In this section I briefly link the conclusions just outlined to broader debates within political science and societal trends. First, the finding that information is an important advocacy resource is relevant for the debate about policy responsiveness (APSA 2004, Elkjær & Klitgaard 2021, Gilens & Page 2014). In this literature, the focus is commonly on the responsiveness of policymakers to different societal groups such as economic classes. In general, this literature does not systematically incorporate interest groups despite their transmission belt function between the electorate and the political process. And when they are included, interest groups financial resources tend to take the fore (see e.g., Gilens & Page 2014).

With this dissertation I do not question the importance of financial resources for interest groups. Rather, I point out that other resources—specifically, information resources—are also important and a significant competition parameter between groups that are attempting to influence policy. Thus, scholars of policy responsiveness could potentially benefit from including interest groups more systematically in their analyses, and from broadening their focus to include resources such as information and not just financial resources.

Second, a underlying assumption in the theorizations of chapter 2 was that informa-

tion abounds in politics—in part due to an abundant information supply from interest groups—and that this has implications for e.g., politicians’ information selection. With the recent quantum leaps in the development of generative artificial intelligence this information supply—and hence potential for information overload on the part of policy makers—is likely to increase even further. Specifically, tools are starting to emerge which automatize much of the work of professional lobbyists such as stakeholder analyses etc. (Wheaton 2023). This will likely mean that lobbying in general will become easier, faster, and less costly (see Wheaton 2023) which, in turn, may result in more lobbying overall. And since lobbying is essentially an exchange on information (cf., Dür et al. 2019) this will entail intensified information flows within political systems.

The important questions then relate to how this plausible increase in lobbying volume, and hence information supply overall, will influence policy makers’ information demands and information processing capabilities. If automatized lobbying becomes normal will this then lower policy makers demand for outside information because they will know that the information is not the result of real humans’ cognitive processes? Or, will the automatization rather increase policy makers’ demand for information because a well-trained lobbying-bot will be able to tailor information to the specific situation better than humans? And, will policy makers also start to use higher degrees of automatization to digest, compile, and accumulate the incoming information? These questions have interesting, important, and non-trivial positive as well as normative implications for modern democracies and interest groups’ roles and functions within them. But for now we can only speculate about what will happen since generative artificial intelligence in the context of lobbying is still a nascent phenomenon.

6.2.1 Normative implications

The results presented in this dissertation also have normative implications of which I will elaborate on one. Specifically, one of the main results from this dissertation is that policy makers' demand for outside information is not uniform since it is constrained by e.g., politicization and executive control. In a representative democracy this is not problematic since legislators are elected to make policy decision on behalf of the population.¹ Thus, it is democratically acceptable that policy makers demand different types of information under different circumstances.

However, there are also some potential normative problems. Specifically, it is conceivable that some of the factors that constrain policy makers' information demands are partly endogenous to organized groups' own advocacy efforts. To stylize such a process, it is first of all well known that groups sometimes try to affect issue-level factors (such as politicization) by e.g., raising awareness of the issue in the broader public using media-oriented strategies. Such dynamics arising from interest group advocacy could feed back into policy makers' demand for outside information which, in turn, could benefit exactly those interest groups that helped politicize the issue. If this is done strategically by interest groups, it can be problematic since the interest groups in question would help create a demand for their own information, thus effectively sidelining policy makers.

It is worth noting here that this stylized process only works for constraints on policy makers' information demands that are actually malleable. This is not really the case for executive control (at least not in the short run), nor for the way I conceive of politicization in

¹An underlying assumption here is that lobbying as such is a legitimate expression of preferences in modern democracies. Whether this is the case, however, remains a subject of ongoing debate (see Bitonti 2017).

this dissertation. However, other types of politicization that are more closely tied to specific political issues may, arguably, be more malleable, as may other potentially constraining factors such as public salience etc.

6.3 Open questions and suggestions for future research

While this dissertation answers some questions, it raises others. The first question pertains to other factors that could conceivably constrain policy makers' demand for organized groups' information. I have suggested only two such factors so there is ample room to examine other factors as well. These other factors could of course be meso-level, but they could also be theorized at the level of the individual. Here, a point of departure could be the behavioral economics literature on human biases and heuristics. Or it could be a network perspective where e.g., homophily on some relevant dimension is theorized as the driving mechanism. Furthermore, it could also be at the polity-level which would then require comparative research designs.

The second question pertains to the supply side. Specifically, I have assumed that some groups possess some types of information more than other types. I grant that this assumption is somewhat simplistic and future research should explore its validity. This could be done in at least two ways. The first way would be to observe and/or interview relevant organizations with a focus on how they operate internally. A second—and probably more easily accessible—way would be to examine more closely the types of information that groups then actually supply to policy makers in, say, consultations, deputations etc.

Building on this, there is room for methodological innovation in relation to distinguishing

between information *types*. Specifically, it would be beneficial if we were better able to move beyond the group type as a proxy for the type of information that a group can supply. This task is not easy (see De Bruycker 2016) but some early work has been done in this regard (e.g., Flöthe 2019, Rasch 2018). It is quite possible that the most promising way to do this in a text-as-data context would be to rely on supervised techniques from machine learning.

The third question is how information resources interact with, and depend on, other interest group resources. Clearly, a group's information stock depends to some extent on other resources such as staffing which, in turn, depends on budget sizes which, in turn, depends on factors such as the number of members and so on. In addition to these, other intangible resources such as reputation, legitimacy etc., are also likely to be relevant. Thus, it would be beneficial to disentangle the many dependencies that exist between resources—both within an organization and between different organizations.

The final question is methodological. Specifically, I have suggested a number of ways to go about the empirical study of information resources in political advocacy. While some validation of these suggested empirical strategies has been done already, a lot remains to be done. Specifically, much more validation is needed before these methods should be used off-the-shelf.²

In sum, the study information as a resource in political advocacy is a worthwhile scholarly undertaking. With this dissertation I have made some contributions to the field, but much remains to be done in the future. Our theoretical understanding need continual development and extension. And when the theories meet the empirical reality there remains an ample

²A concern in this regard is that the current pace with which new tools for measurement (such as generative artificial intelligence) become available makes careful validation of new methods recede into the background.

room for methodological innovation and refinement to make this meeting as valid and reliable as possible.

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