Lobbying in the public domain: Lessons from research and practice

Dr Katharina Kieslich, King's College London
Overview

1. Media, frames and public opinion

2. Effective lobbying and advocacy

3. Anecdotal reflections

4. Conclusion
Media, frames and public opinion

How Big Tobacco's lobbyists get what they want from the media

George Monbiot

With cigarette packs on the agenda, the BBC must be asked why it lets thinktanks argue the tobacco companies’ case without revealing who their paymasters are.

The truth about lobbying: 10 ways big business controls government

From trying to stop plain packaging on cigarettes to pushing through HS2 and opening the countryside to fracking, big business employs lobbying companies to persuade government to meet their interests. But what are the tricks of their trade?

NHS managers investigated over drug company lobbying claims

24 July 2015

An NHS boss has been suspended and another has resigned over claims senior staff were being paid by drug companies to help promote their products.
Media, frames and public opinion (continued)

‘Little Lobbyists’ Help Save the Health Care Law, for Now

By ROBERT PEAR  SEP 30, 2007

Senator Chuck Schumer, the Democratic leader, shook hands with Melanie Carrioe, a 2-year-old Medicaid recipient from Arizona, before a news conference on health care this month. (Jabin Botsford/ The Washington Post)

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Health

Charities lobby Nice over cancer drug

Revlimid has been found to lengthen the lives of patients with multiple myeloma, a deadly bone cancer, by up to three years.

Mary Babalola and agencies

Wednesday 29 October 2008 12:51 GMT
Media, frames and public opinion

• ‘Good’ or ‘bad’ lobbying?

• Connotations associated with lobbying more positive in political science literature than how it is portrayed in media and public discourse

• Lobbying as a part of the public policy process in democratic systems that opens policymaking up to citizens, grassroots movements, interest groups

• Lobbying is about using resources (e.g. knowledge and expertise) to advocate your goal and influence policy
Effective lobbying and advocacy: The puzzle…

How is the public health care agenda set?

Who sets it and why?

How are priorities set?

What are the interests of actors?

What institutions hinder or facilitate the (your) agenda?

How a (public health) issue is framed matters in the policy process where multiple ideas and values compete for salience.

Frames:
“[…] linguistic, cognitive and symbolic devices used to identify, label, describe and interpret problems and to suggest particular ways of responding to them” (Rushton and Williams, 2012)

Refer to:
…what language/words are used.
…how is the need for action explained.
…in the case of national governments: How do policymakers ‘sell’ to their constituents the need for public health action?
“although often characterized as an humanitarian activity, modern public health as practiced in the United States and other Western industrialized nations has long been associated with the needs of national security and international commerce” (King, p.173)

Chain of reasoning (According to the UN Security Council):
Epidemic destabilises societies, e.g. workforces depleted, family life disrupted → reduction in income levels → weakened economies and strain on institutions and resources such as health care → increased social and political instability → increased risk for conflicts and terrorist activity
### Example: How do global health initiatives gain support?

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Factors shaping political priority</th>
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<td>1. <em>Policy community cohesion</em></td>
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<td><strong>Ideas</strong></td>
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<td>11. Effective interventions</td>
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Source: Shiffman & Smith, 2007
Effective lobbying and advocacy

• Frames are important, also to public affairs management
• Issue characteristics matter
• Context matters: Institutional structures, political opportunity structures (access and veto points)
• Access points are system-specific: Who or what is worth lobbying (e.g. members of parliament, ministries, political parties, EU institutions)
• Veto points are also system-specific: When and where (e.g. state or federal level) can policies be blocked, changed, or promoted? Speaks to the targets of lobbying…
Anecdotal reflections

• Lobbying is not a one-way street;
• Reputation and credibility matters;
• Policymakers do their homework;
• The clearer the message, the more likely it is that it will be heard → Don’t be afraid of reducing your message to manageable sound bites
• Connect your agenda/issue to current affairs
• Power in numbers: The bigger your advocacy coalition, the more likely it is it will be heard
Conclusions

• Political science research has shown that context and political structures matter as they offer different access points for lobbyists;

• Public policymaking is messy and complex; success depends on many variables

• Requires time and patience
Thank you for your attention!

Contact: katharina.kieslich@kcl.ac.uk