

Medialization of political decision making?

A study of Lomborg's "The Skeptical Environmentalist"
prominence in Danish print media and how it correlates to
political decision-making in Denmark

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Abstract

This study's aim has been to investigate how media's reporting may correlate with political decision making based on a theory of medialization of political decision makers. This theory implies a raised level of media consciousness and adjustment to media's news values among political decision makers in a setting where institutionalized advisory arrangements are no longer exclusive.

The study treats the case of Bjørn Lomborg who became a controversial intellectual after his book "The Skeptical Environmentalist" was published in 2001, claiming that the environmental state of the world is actually improving. Despite the substantial criticism Lomborg received among environmentalists and scientific magazines, he was employed by the Danish government in 2002.

By conducting a qualitative content analysis on Denmark's largest newspapers two months before Lomborg's employment, the aim is to investigate whether media's reporting of Lomborg may be plausibly connected to his acquired position as what is prominent in mass media may also influence political decision makers. The results show that firstly, the reporting of him has been rather balanced and secondly, the majority of the negative depictions are provided by the public through debate articles and are therefore not produced by the actual journalists.

Different aspects of a plausible connection to Lomborg's employment are discussed depending on how one sees media's portrayals of him, suggesting further research in the subject.

Key words: Mass media, medialization, science, expert knowledge, decision making

Words: 10 000

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1 Introduction

Various processes that imply a generally higher media-consciousness among those who govern over our lives take place in Western democracies today; we have since several years back in time been speaking about an increasing medialization of politics (Protest et al. 1987; Kepplinger 2002) and several cases where mass media¹ has become closely coupled to political rhetoric and decision-making (Kepplinger 2007; Petersen et al. 2010; Strömbäck 2002). In its purest form the development could be described as one which “[...] assumes an institutionalization of attention to mass media coverage and an internalization of media criteria on all levels of the policy making process” (Petersen et al. 2010:867).

What is exceptionally interesting in the medialization process is how mass media have managed to influence even those fields which have highly acknowledged codes of “truth” and which predominantly have had the status of almost indisputable authority in our societies and among politicians in their decision-making; science and expert knowledge being a good example. The “medialization” of science implies a clash of media’s news-values criteria and the ditto established in science communication; creating a conflict over the adequacy of representation where science’s criterion of truth competes with media’s criterion of public acclaim (Weingart 1998:869f). As the production of science in many aspects adapts to media logic in order to gain legitimization and reach the public (Weingart 1998) – and as mass media’s evaluation of scientists and production of knowledge differs from those conducted among scientists and scientific journals (Weingart & Pansegrau 1999) – it is plausible to believe that politicians also turn their attention to that science and expert knowledge which is prominent and not negatively reported about in mass media when legitimizing and substantiating their decision-making.

A relevant case is the political scientist Bjørn Lomborg who was appointed as the head of the Environmental Assessment Institute in Denmark in 2002, not so long after his world famous book “The Skeptical Environmentalist” (2001) reached the global public. Due to its controversial claims on the global

¹ Mass media are all those distribution channels through which information is processed and disseminated to the public with one aspect in common; the information in these media is mass-communicated which means that it is most often one-way directed, official and impersonal and most often simultaneous, i.e. it reaches the public at approximately the same time. Different media are also profit-driven organizations with organizational and technical attributes. Journalism at the other hand is not the same as media or mass media, but rather a genre among others such as entertainment, advertisement and propaganda, all processed through (mass) media (Nord & Strömbäck 2004:16ff). In this study, the term “mass media” will imply exactly what is described above but may be used intermittently with the term “media” to avoid being too repetitive, however, in a careful sense, especially when emphasis is precisely on those aspects that define “mass media”.

environment issues – denying the risk that the planet is facing because of global warming – it caused an intense debate worldwide. Despite its harsh criticism from the scientific community, Lomborg was quite popular among the American mass media. However, what is more relevant is how the Danish media handled Bjorn Lomborg preceding his later acquired position as the head of the Environmental Assessment Institute in Denmark.

As the main interest in this paper is to investigate how the relation between scientific expert knowledge, mass media and politics correlates when it comes to political decision-making, the Lomborg case provides a great example of a scientist whose publication almost unanimously got criticized by environmentalists, but who still was employed by the Danish government. So if the Danish government at the time ignored Lomborg's poor reputation among environmental scientists, could it be that at least his presence in the Danish mass media was one of less criticism and more positive reporting? As politicians are often driven by media logic and adapt themselves to the media sphere (Petersen et al. 2010; Strömbäck 2002), it would be plausible to assume that media's way of framing an issue might affect the politicians' attitude towards it and its originator. And as mass media are an incredibly powerful, independent actor in today's democracies, driven by a media logic and news values which in many aspects are self-constructed (Brighton & Foy 2007), the direct problem in this development is what consequences mass media's influence on politics might have for the actual decision-making and hence the politicians' legitimacy as democratic leaders. These are, however, not issues that I will analyze in this paper but something that raised my interest in the very beginning – and made me conduct this study.

1.1 Problem statement and research question

In this study, my objective is to investigate how political decision-making legitimized and substantiated by expert knowledge is correlating to mass media's reporting and evaluation of that same knowledge. As mass media have become an incredibly strong and independent actor in Western democracies today, its news-values and agenda setting powers have caused a medialization of politics (Petersen et al. 2010; Strömbäck 2002). The development implies an increased media-consciousness and adaptation to media logic and media's news values in the political sphere (ibid.), in other words, the way media depicts something affects politics' use of it. In this study I am going to look a bit deeper in the case of Bjørn Lomborg and investigate how the main Danish print media reported about him and his book "The Skeptical Environmentalist" before he was appointed as the head of the Environmental Assessment Institute in Denmark in February 2002 (Brier 2006:673). It is for my research question relevant to see whether his reputation in Danish print media differed substantially from the criticism he received in scientific journals and among environmental scientists. Speaking in broader terms, this paper seeks to investigate what role the Danish print media had in the Lomborg case. Not seeking to detect any causal

connections, I rather want to investigate whether a plausible connection between mass media and political decision-making based on Petersen et al's theory of the medialization of politics and political decision-making (2010) does exist in this case. The exact research question is the following:

- How did the Danish print media portray Lomborg preceding his acquired position as head of Environmental Assessment Institute and is there a plausible connection between media's reporting of him and his employment provided by the Danish government?

By looking at Denmark's three biggest national newspapers' (Politiken, Berlingske Tidende and Jyllands-Posten) writing about Lomborg two months preceding his acquired position, I am hoping to cover the main opinion-forming print media in Denmark and hence be sure of their importance for the politicians of whose one of the main communication and reference channels are media (Petersen et al. 2010; Strömbäck 2002) – solidifying the validity in this study. It is not implausible to question my method of drawing any possible connections from media's reporting of Lomborg to the Danish government's handling of him; however, even though I am excluding any causality-seeking aims, by detecting similar attributes in the case of Lomborg and my theoretical framework, arguments for any plausible connection them between may arise and hence be discussed in the end of this paper. If that will not be the case, I will still have investigated Danish print media's role in the process and hence, suggestions for future research in this field will be proposed.

1.2 Disposition and structure

The next section will outline the theoretical framework before my choice of method and its implications will be presented.

The concepts I will treat in the Terminology-chapter are political use of expert/scientific knowledge, mass media's news values and the medialization of science. My hope is to through these concept-discussions provide a theoretical basis that complements and clarifies different aspects of my theoretical framework in order to achieve a thorough explanation of how the relation between media and politics may look like. Thereafter I will describe the case of Lomborg, conduct my analysis of the articles, summarize the analysis and lastly, discuss the results in comparison to the theoretical framework and the circumstances surrounding Lomborg's employment in 2002.

1.3 Theoretical framework

It is not a new discovery that media is the most important source of political issues for the public, and hence the political sphere has long been “mediated”; in other words it is taking place in and through the media (Nord & Strömbäck 2004:15; Strömbäck 2002). However, it transforms into a *medialization* of politics when by acknowledging the media as the main communication channel to the public, the politicians adapt themselves to media logic in order to reach the public (Nord & Strömbäck 2004:15f; Strömbäck 2002). The politicians conform themselves to a certain rhythm, form and possibly content in their work, as by Meyer termed media’s “colonization” of politics (Nord & Strömbäck 2004:16; Boswell 2009:99). To explain this more clearly, firstly a theory of mass media’s agenda-setting function is to be presented briefly.

Similar to the case in this paper, the following framework concerns science in media and its influence on politics and can also be termed as a process of “medialization” of politics and political decision-making.

1.3.1 Mass media and political decision-making

Petersen et al. argue about mass media's reporting of science as directly affecting politicians' rhetoric, argumentation and hence indirectly their decision-making in different issues. The authors call this kind of media-prominent science “mass-mediated² expertise” (2010). Having a pre-established view of mass-mediated science’s impact on political decision-making as largely underestimated, the authors outline three main trends in the domains of scientific knowledge and policy making; the decreasing ability of institutionalized scientific policy advice to provide a comprehensive knowledge base for political decision making, its inability to resolve conflicts in science-related policy issues and the medialization of politics. The last of these trends is according to Petersen et al. at its extreme institutionalizing attention to mass-media coverage as well as internalizing media criteria in the policy making process (2010:866f).

Petersen et al. substantiate their study by mentioning five important functions that media coverage received by policy makers is acknowledged to have; (1) the media help politicians to keep track of their competitors as well as provide space for interparty and intraparty argumentation; (2) the media are a vital information channel for political parties to reach their members; (3) politicians can observe the public response to their proposals and achievements; (4) media are an indicator for potential conflicts, public views and specific demands of civil society and finally, (5) due to media’s time-efficiency, political decision makers depend on the media in order to be updated of current issues (ibid.:869). Five similar functions could be derived from the interviewees of the study, and the authors conclude that:

² Although Petersen et al. use the term “mediated”, many of the criteria and description in their study point towards a high level of media-consciousness among politicians and hence, highly resemble what I have chosen to describe as a “medialization” process – which is defined though other contributors in this study.

(1) Scientific events, findings, and arguments communicated by the media can trigger political activities. (2) Scientific expertise contributes to an image of society including the general public mood, societal problems, and conflicts. (3) References to science organizations, scientific experts, or scientific fields in the media are perceived by the political establishment as an indicator of social relevance. (4) Scientific experts and arguments that are presented in the media are sometimes taken up for use in political rhetoric because of the anticipated credibility and attention in public. (5) Finally, scientific knowledge enters the political process via opinion formation among individual policy makers (Petersen et al. 2010:881).

The main conclusion of the study is that mass-mediated expertise functions as a complementary informal policy-advice without excluding the institutionalized advisory arrangements that already exist (*ibid.*).

The authors acknowledge the positive aspects of mass-mediated scientific expertise on politics when it supports policy initiatives already taken but also emphasize how it can result in a strong pressure for action for ditto. However, the impact of mass-mediated scientific knowledge on political decision making is rarely simply instrumental but can differ between symbolic or substantiating ways of politicians' use of such knowledge. Politicians due to their already established compliance to mass-media criteria are inevitably taking mass-mediated expertise into consideration in their decision-making; however, its function is merely one which rationalizes political discourse to legitimize certain political statements and decisions in a process where institutionalized advisory arrangements still prevail and are merely complemented by the informal, mass-mediated ones (*ibid.*:881f). Still, the actual role of mass media is highly acknowledged and has considerable influence on politicians' decision-making according to this study's results. Going back to the third function among those mentioned above that describes how media refers to science and scientists as indicating of what is of social relevance for political decision-makers; it proves that what gains positive or at least not negative response in media is also considered successful among politicians and hence has an influence on them (*ibid.*:875f). In other words, "[...] media are therefore able to serve as a basis on which to appropriately assess the public response to political work" (Petersen et al. 2010:876).

Mass-mediated expertise does have a substantial influence on politics and policy processes, however, any causal link may not exist; still, policy makers are enforced to react to mediated policy advice although in a different way in each case due to the complexity of the relationship between science in media and politics. They can either react symbolically or substantially depending on stakeholders' pressure, compatibility with political programs and the level of persuasion of the science portrayed in mass media (*ibid.*:882).

1.4 Research method

In order to answer my research question and conduct this study, a qualitative content analysis will be applied on the texts that I will analyze. A content analysis

method is used when one must measure or count the occurrence of something in a specific material (Bergström & Boréus 2005:43). As the number of items is rather small (43) and I inevitably must include interpreting practices³ in my analysis, a quantitative content analysis is not a relevant tool to use as it is mainly used when the frequency or occupied space of specific categories in a certain material is measured (Esaiasson et al. 2009:223). The less “mechanical” qualitative content analysis rests upon several other evaluation criteria which as Esaiasson et al. claim become a strength when the resulting meaning of a text becomes more factual after performed analysis, but can also be a weakness if the same criteria are ambiguously formulated and hence limit the required explanation and transparency of the performed analysis which is a scientific criteria (ibid.:224). Nevertheless, a qualitative approach is necessary in this case as I will be analyzing newspaper articles which I only can interpret correctly by not only taking into consideration the different parts of the text but also through looking at the specific context and the text in its entirety – this is of great importance in order to not only detect the manifested information but also the latent one so that a valid interpretation is possible (ibid.:237). As Østbye et al. highlight, the hermeneutical approach in qualitative content analysis implies every item as an entire work which is unique and must be interpreted as an entire piece rather than quantified by its different parts (2004:64f). Same characteristics define a newspaper article as it is the way something is said rather how many times it is said that often tells us what meaning it has (Bergström & Boréus 2005:77) and all newspaper material consists of unique narratives written by journalists.

I am not constraining myself to any specific journalistic genres in my analysis but include all texts that treat Lomborg in any way – this is because I want to investigate how he was written about in the newspapers totally. This will be made sure of as I will include the name “Lomborg” when searching for articles, excluding those that do not treat him in connection to either environmental politics nor his profession or book.⁴ The types of texts in my study are conventional news-articles, professional debate articles, commentaries sent in by the public and individual reviews by journalists. I started by reading through the articles in order to get an overview and see the texts from different perspectives while acknowledging the inescapability of the influence of my personal interpretation when interpreting the articles and the generalizing difficulties this implies (Bergström & Boréus 2005:82).

1.4.1 Analysis instrument

³ The articles in the analysis are written in Danish, however, as Danish is quite similar to Sweden I consider myself competent enough to understand the language. In those cases where something becomes unclear, a dictionary will of course be used as aid.

⁴ In a few articles, Lomborg’s name was mentioned only once in connection to his popularity in the media sphere without any judgmental claims or any connection to his field of work or environmental politics.

In order to construct a valid analytical instrument in this study I had to bear in mind and apply three different aspects which are important when undertaking an interpretation of a text; to decide the genre and its characteristics, to understand the entire item as something constructed by the pieces and the different pieces as part of the complete item and lastly, the hypothetic-deductive method. The last of these three simply means that when uncertainty of how to interpret something arises, the researcher should test hypothetically possible alternatives on the material and see how the results may differ depending on the chosen alternatives and other relevant considerations of the content due to its genre and the current knowledge available (Esaiasson et al. 2009:251f).

In order to answer my research question I have chosen to classify the analyzed material into three categories; *positive*, *neutral* and *negative*. In other words, my aim is to measure whether Lomborg was mostly criticized or reported positively or neutrally about in Danish print media. As stated in my theoretical framework the way something is reported about influences politicians' argumentation, rhetoric and indirectly decision-making. The difficulties that arise when deciding such categories are evident; hence, I have posed five questions in connection to the analyzed texts which make it easier to divide the texts among the categories and also help to explain how the analysis is conducted. These can be seen as variables as they not necessarily imply yes/no answers and hence they will be critically discussed about in connection to my analysis of the items.

- What kind of genre does the text conform to?
 - Argumentation type and layout differs from a news-article compared to a debate article written by an intellectual.
- What is the theme of the article?
 - The subject matter treated in the article affects the way argumentation and fact presentation are conducted.
- Does it treat Lomborg directly or indirectly?
 - The way Lomborg gets portrayed differs from a direct to an indirect reference to him.
- What kind of adjectives and expressions are included about Lomborg?
 - The kind of adjectives that describe Lomborg affect the way he is presented in the article.
- How balanced is the amount of arguments compared to counterarguments about Lomborg?
 - Lomborg is portrayed differently depending on how equally the argumentation *pro et contra* is presented in the article.

I will of course also be looking at other aspects of the articles such as titles and introductions. Unfortunately, I will not be able to look at the eventual photographs that may be present alongside the articles because of practical constraints.

I have outlined the above questions after thoroughly reading and interpreting the material and hence as Esaiasson et al. describe, the analysis instrument is not predetermined but has been constructed from an open view of understanding, partly based on the content in my material (2009:244f). By using this strategy my

analysis instrument becomes more adjustable according to the material (ibid.:245) and hence I will be able to grasp the specific aspects that every unique item consists of rather than having predetermined assumptions on what answers I am expecting to get. This is highly relevant as I am analyzing *how* something is portrayed due to every item's entirety, however, some disadvantages follow with this approach such as an unnecessary interest for exciting but irrelevant information in the material and that the conclusions may become highly dependent on the material's content. It is important to once again test differing conclusions and hypothetically try to discern a most correct interpretation in order to manage these difficulties (ibid.:245f). In addition I must emphasize that even though the analysis instrument was constructed with the specific content in mind, the analysis will be conducted systematically on every item, having both the validity and reliability criteria of this paper in mind. As mentioned before, part of the analysis is dependent upon my individual interpretation characteristics but that is an issue that most social science research has to deal with (ibid.:251). To ensure a satisfying level of validity in this study, the analysis instrument has been tested on a few samples and after a necessary revision it has become applicable for all material, diminishing methodological and practical problems as much as it is possible. Finally, in order to provide a legitimate analysis that does not considerably depend on my individual interpretation, a solid connection between this study's aim and research question and the interpreting analysis is ensured (Bergström & Boréus 2005:82; Esaiasson et al. 2009:244).

1.5 Choice of material and delimitations

In this study, I am only going to analyze two months of Danish newspapers' reporting before Lomborg got employed by the Danish government; December of 2001 and January of 2002. I hope I have made my limitations adequately as my analysis of the articles starts almost immediately after the newly formed Danish government got into office – it is plausible that its media-consciousness increased due to its acquired position as Denmark's governor.

I am only looking at the newspapers Berlingske Tidende, Jyllands-Posten and Poilitiken because I expect that they represent the main opinion-forming media in Denmark and Internet-newspaper reading was still a rather small phenomenon at the time compared to today. I could have looked at how Lomborg was portrayed in TV, however, due to time limits and practical constraints I have chosen to focus on print media only. Also, the study that my theoretical framework is largely based on claims that politicians in Germany mainly use print media and not TV or radio as their main reference point (Petersen et al. 2010:869); it might be plausible that similar conditions prevail in the Danish context since both countries are politically and culturally close to each other. By analyzing articles from Denmark's three largest newspapers of which one is according to its website

social-liberal (Politiken) (<http://politiken.dk/>) and the other two are more conservative-liberal oriented (Berlingske Tidende (<http://www.bt.dk/>) and Jyllands-Posten (<http://jp.dk/>)) according to their websites, I am also ensuring that some kind of diversity among their ideological orientations prevails, which increases the chance of differing views of Lomborg. I have chosen to analyze basically all material written about Lomborg during the two months to get as complete picture as possible of how he was portrayed in the media. By having that set, I am hoping to have a good level of validity in my paper.

As for other material, I am mainly using scientific articles, and other scientific publications in order to conduct my analysis and provide the reader with vital concept definitions. A lot of my material consists of works from the field of media studies and media and communication studies but a lot of it also comes from the fields of political science, expertise and political decision-making as well as sociology. Several works on media and politics are more or less produced in a largely Swedish context; however, as my aim is to analyze Lomborg's case in Denmark, I acknowledge the cultural and societal similarities in these two neighboring Nordic countries as allowing for those kinds of references. I have been very careful in my choice of sources when it comes to Internet websites and those of them that treat the case of Lomborg are complemented by similar accounts from scientific articles. This is because the case is rather controversial and in many aspects includes differing opinions on the course of events.

2 Terminology

2.1 Political use of expert knowledge

Politics' use of expert knowledge⁵ has certainly been a widely discussed subject in academia, however, Christina Boswell's seminal account in which she questions the instrumentalist approach of how expert knowledge relates to politics, goes a step further and unveils the complexity of the relation between politics and expert knowledge from another perspective; the neo-institutionalism theory (2009). In order to understand mass media's role in the relation between expertise and politics, a deeper understanding of how expert knowledge may be used by politics is required.

An initial distinction between expertise or science and politics can be defined as one in which science equals "truth" and politics is adhering to "power". In other words: science must produce truth meanwhile political decisions should preserve power. These essentially different codes of operation have implications for the constant interactions between expertise and politics and have the character of "coupling"; whereas political decisions seek legitimization through "true" knowledge, the truth of it is not a goal in itself for political decision-makers, but ultimately a means to lasting decisions that keep them in power (Maasen & Weingart 2009:4).

Boswell goes further by describing politics' use of knowledge as symbolic and aiming to either increase the department's legitimacy or to substantiate its policy preferences. By that Boswell means that the knowledge is not used because of its substance but rather as a means to express the authority or validity of political decisions and practices. The legitimacy of political organizations is obtained from the adaptation of their norms and structures to the expectations of their environment and hence they seek to display expert knowledge if operating in an unstable organizational field, alternatively in those fields where expert knowledge is valued in policy making (2009:61f). The substantiating use of knowledge is applied in contested areas where scientific substance is required for policy proposals and most often where the debate treats technocratic issues rather than values or interests (ibid.:62). For party politicians, public debates on policy issues most often require their ability to prove their claims and proposed policies valid;

⁵ The terms "knowledge", "expertise", "expert knowledge" and "science" will from here on and throughout this paper be used intermittently when referring to expert knowledge produced by scientists and experts alike.

in areas of complex technocratic questions a substantiating use of expert knowledge is commonly applied by them (ibid.:89f). Party politicians use expertise merely in those occasions where the debate revolves around technical instead of ideological questions. Boswell emphasizes that party politicians mainly legitimize themselves through claims that concern conflicting values and beliefs and through rhetoric that captures public attention; however, they also use expert knowledge in policy debates concerning areas characterized by risk, involving problems of social and economic steering and where new findings strengthen or undermine the record of incumbents (ibid.:91f).

2.2 Mass media, journalism and “news values”

Mass media are often termed as “the fourth estate” in a society (the other three are universally considered the state, the church and the judiciary). In a Western democratic context the press freedom which allows the media to function absent from state-censorship is the guarantee for journalism’s vital mission to inform the public through a wide spectrum of facts and ideas disseminated to the people. By ensuring that, a facilitated public opinion capable of requiring responsiveness and consideration to its interests from the governing ones is possible (Allan 2004:47f). Hence, media’s potential power and importance in a modern mass-communication society cannot be overstated. The question arises how news media and journalism really carries out its duty?

2.2.1 News Values

In a journalist’s daily work decisions on what to report about and what to leave out must be made. I am going to look a little deeper on why some events become “news” and some not.

These criteria for what may constitute “news” are called “news values”. Steering what characteristics a certain event must entail to make it to the news media, news values have become an acknowledged paradigm of journalistic work in order for them to make the world “reportable” (Allan 2004:56f). Many studies have been conducted in the field of news values and the established criteria in the current context are the following:

- Conflict – dramatized dispute between two sides
- Relevance – Proximity to audience’s lives and experiences.
- Timeliness – Recent events are favored
- Simplification – Event should be unambiguously interpreted to avoid additional views.
- Personalization – Connection to the “ordinary person” rather than abstract forces and institutions.

- Unexpectedness – Preferably unique or out of the ordinary.
- Continuity – Allowing to be seen as “fitting in” according to a specific news plot or news category.
- Composition – News are chosen out with consideration to the rest of the news repertoire of that specific day.
- Reference to elite nations – An established hierarchy in which some countries are more prioritized than other as they are seen as having greater influence on the public.
- Reference to elite persons – Activities performed by politicians, celebrities and other prominent people are prioritized.
- Cultural specificity – Conforming to “maps of meaning” established by journalist and allegedly appealing to the audience; a form of ethnocentrism.
- Negativity – Bad news are more attractive than good news because they most often fulfill most of above described criteria.

Although the news values may differ to some extent according to different news organizations and also change over time, a general consistency in their substance and function has been discerned (Allan 2004:57f). While excluding those kinds of events and topics that are not considered newsworthy, specific frames are distinguished that help the journalist to effectively process and produce the newsworthy events into *news* according to certain discursive conventions. The actual framing is often following traditional criteria in news management: news concerns the event rather than the underlying condition; the person instead of the group; a discernible conflict instead of consensus; facts that advance the story instead of those that explain it. Through daily repetition the frames acquire a natural status (ibid.:57ff).

But how does scientific and expert knowledge function in relation to above discussed news values and mass media’s criteria in its strive to enter the public sphere? The discussion now turns to the medialization of science.

2.3 Medialization of science

The simplification of knowledge through popularization has until the 1970’s been conveyed to a generally unspecified and passive public which had the role of receiving the popularized knowledge rather than participating in its production and seen as incompetent to evaluate it. Also, the popularizers (media) did not function as independent selectors when processing knowledge but merely as translators of it (Weingart 1998:869f). Over the years journalists have gained more influence on how science is portrayed in media compared to the world of science as they have gone from purely “translating” science for the public to include a sense of public responsibility in their reporting which is expressed through conveying relevant risks and consequences for the society of the issue at hand (Allan 2002:75f). Hence, media’s role in the representation of science has

grown and inevitably been coloured by media's own "rules". According to today's closer science-media-coupling, the clash of media's news values-criteria and the ditto established in science communication create a conflict over the adequacy of representation where science's criterion of truth competes with media's criterion of public acclaim (Weingart 1998:870).

Mass-media's news value criteria exert substantial influence on publication and dissemination strategies of science to the public (Petersen et al. 2010; Weingart 1998) which in several cases has affected the core production of (scientific) knowledge as the influence is present even *within* science (Weingart 1998:872). The criteria by which media decide the news value of a certain event differ substantially from communication in science and as media produce their own construction of reality – in which science's description of reality is included – the latter is often not enough to guarantee prominence and therefore media's criteria remain an integral part in the dissemination process (ibid.:870f). As Weingart puts it forward: "With the growing importance of the media in shaping public opinion, conscience and perception on the one hand and a growing dependence of science on scarce resources and thus on public acceptance on the other, science will become increasingly media oriented" (Weingart 1998:872).

Medialization of science may be exemplified as the pre-publication of scientific results in the media, the role of media prominence in contrast to scientific reputation of scientists themselves and scientists' initiation of catastrophe discourses in order to catch public attention, also termed "Cassandra Syndrome" (ibid.:873). The first of these has become quite common and mainly concerns issues of high social relevance which take a short-cut to public recognition (ibid.:871f). The second is exemplified through a scientist who is prominent in media no matter what his/her reputation is in science and the third one directly affects the production of science to fit media's criteria – often by presenting "[...] simplified, dramatized pronouncements and prognoses calling for immediate action which are taken up and amplified by the media" (Weingart 1998:876). In all three examples media's criteria not only competes with scientific evaluation criteria but also affects the production of science. However, the medialization of science can also indirectly influence the orientation of science to the media as new themes on the political agenda get established due to media's processing of scientific knowledge (ibid.:872f) and trigger scientists to initiate projects on same themes.

2.3.1 Medialization of science and political decision-making

In several studies about the relationship between media and science it is acknowledged that politicians' decision-making in science-related issues gets influenced by media's reporting of science (Weingart 1998; Petersen et al. 2010; Weingart & Pansegrau 1999).

For instance, the "Cassandra Syndrome" implies scientists' adaptation to media's news values through drawing on highly dramatized and exaggerated scientific results which often push politicians to respond. Indeed, politicians

become forced to act through for instance allocating resources to more research, or perhaps establish a new political arena for a specific issue. Only after a while do other scientists discover the exaggeration of such reports but the decision-making process has often already taken place by then (1998:876f). The politicians put themselves in a legitimacy-dilemma; they are entitled to act in order to keep their legitimacy but they also lose legitimacy if the repetition of such discourses reduces the public's trust in science and hence the politicians' future use of ditto will not be acknowledged by the public (ibid.:876ff). As Petersen et al. derive from their study; mass media's intrusion in the science discourse may substantiate policy initiatives already taken but also put a pressure on politics to act in order to keep their legitimacy (2010:881).

Boswell argues that the second main factor that affects the role of expert knowledge in political debate are media (2009:89f). How media portrays expert knowledge in their news coverage influences political use of knowledge (ibid.:90). Especially when it comes to politicians in public debates, they want to substantiate their opinions through showing that they generate public support. And as their main target is the public via mass media, their rhetoric provides more simple and stylized accounts (ibid.:91) – according to media criteria.

Even though Boswell highlights that politicians may be cautious about relying on scientific knowledge as main basis for decision-making (ibid.:102), in those cases where they base their decision-making on science, they inevitably take media's representation into consideration – as discussed above.

3 The Lomborg Story

Bjørn Lomborg became very quickly prominent around the world due to his controversial book on the environment “The Skeptical Environmentalist” (2001). The following is a description of the book and the response it received globally.

3.1 The Skeptical Environmentalist

After the release of Lomborg’s Danish book on environment “Verdens Sande Tilstand” (The Real State of the World) in 1998, the English version of the book was released in 2001 under the label “Cambridge University Press” and instantly became a hit across the globe (Brier 2006:672f).

Containing 1700 references and 3000 notes, this scientific publication is more than 500 pages long and translated into more than ten different languages. It mainly challenges widely held beliefs that the environmental situation is getting worse and its argumentation is mainly based on statistics (Lomborg 2001). Lomborg refers to the “Litany” which can be described as an established view of our world as suffering substantial stagnation caused by humans, which he criticizes and instead contends that the information of our state of the world “[...] should be assessed not on myths but on the best available facts” (Lomborg 2001:3). The book is divided into six parts which all treat different subjects such as forests, energy, non-energy resources, water, pollution, biodiversity, global warming, food and hunger, and prosperity to mention a few. Summarizing Lomborg’s results a quote from the first page of the book is perhaps the most telling: “*The Skeptical Environmentalist* offers readers a non-partisan stocktaking exercise that serves as a useful corrective to the more alarmist accounts favored by campaign groups and the media” (2001).

3.1.1 Reception of “The Skeptical Environmentalist”

As TSE became popular across the world, it also caused a great deal of controversy and heated debate.

It was severely criticized among environmentalists at the same time as it was hailed by most economists (Brier 2006:672). Several established scientists attacked Lomborg and the editor of the book in 2002, questioning its scientific qualities. However, the English and American newspapers *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Economist*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post* and *New York Times* gave Lomborg’s book a very positive review. Science magazines such as *Science*

and *Nature* gave it a very negative review and *Scientific American* gathered a group of reviewers who together gave TSE a quite harsh response. Science journalists' view differed radically from the portrayals of the conventional news media and as Lomborg got appointed as the head of EAI the critique against him and his book continued by international specialists in environmental and ecological sciences (ibid.:673f). In 2002, The Danish Ecological Council published a book in response to Lomborg's TSE through a group of experts. On the basis of this book's criticism of Lomborg, TSE was accused of scientific dishonesty by American and Danish scientists and the case was then brought before the Danish Committees on Scientific Dishonesty. The verdict said that Lomborg could not be convicted as he knew too little about the subject and hence may not have acted dishonestly by purpose, however, the book remained a scientific publication (ibid.:674f).

Consequently, several professors left the board of Lomborg's institute although Lomborg himself was supported by the Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen. Among other instances of support for Lomborg at the time TSE was published was his acquired title "Global Leader for Tomorrow" which he received by The World Economic Forum in 2011. *Business Week* nominated him as being 1 of the 50 stars of Europe and one of the nine agenda-setters in Europe in 2002. A couple of years after the book's release Lomborg's popularity perhaps increased even more; *Time* magazine named him as one of the 100 most influential people in the world in 2004 and *Foreign Policy and Prospect Magazine* had him listed as the world's 14th most influential intellectual in 2005 (Brier 2006:675ff).

4 Analysis

In this study, a total amount of 43 articles⁶ have been analyzed through a qualitative content analysis. The texts come from Denmark's three biggest newspapers⁷: Politiken, Jyllands-Posten and Berlingske Tidende and are published during December 2001 and January 2002. By including the name "Lomborg"⁸ when searching for articles I have made sure that they all involve him in some way.

Politiken is clearly dominating when counting the number of articles (24) while Jyllands-Posten contained 12 and Berlingske Tidende 7 articles. This is perhaps because much of the debate surrounding TSE:s predecessor "Verdens Sande Tilstand" (1998) took place on the pages of Politiken. Also, Lomborg was an active columnist in Politiken during the time his book was published and therefore a lot of the debate surrounding his ideas took place on that newspaper's pages (Fog 2010). As my aim with this thesis is to investigate how Danish print media reported about Lomborg before his acquired position at the Environmental Assessment Institute (EAI), in order to find out whether he was mostly criticized or reported neutrally or positively about, I have classified the analyzed articles into three categories: *positive*, *neutral* and *negative*. I will motivate my results at the same time as I will exemplify them by reciting material from the articles. The citations will be translated into English but also presented in Danish when necessary. The analysis will not be conducted in a chronological order or take chronological aspects into consideration as no dramatic changes in reporting throughout the period have been detected, as well as because of the fact that the attitude among the newspapers does not vary correlating to any specific time periods. The analysis is rather aiming to see the overall differences among the newspapers in their reporting of Lomborg.

⁶ By "article" I refer to all kinds of texts about Lomborg such as feature-articles, editorials and debate-articles. However, when needed, reference to respective genre will be given throughout the analysis.

⁷ The articles were derived from Internet through the "Infomedia" newspaper database, www.infomedia.dk but are initially published in the physical newspapers from December 2001 and January 2002.

⁸ Almost all articles containing the name "Lomborg" treated the actual Björn Lomborg during the period I have chosen to analyze. One of the articles referred to another Lomborg and four articles from Politiken mentioned him without any connection to either his book, nor his profession. Hence, they were excluded.

4.1 Categories and analysis instrument

To decide whether Lomborg is portrayed positively, neutrally or negatively is a task that has its difficulties. When it comes to hermeneutics a certain part of individual interpretation skills are impossible to escape. To still be able to conduct a systematic analysis with generalizing ambitions that rests upon a well structured analysis instrument and transparent argumentation is something that I strive to do in this study.

Also, my five variables will serve as help when deciding which tag to put on an article:

- Type of genre
- Theme of the article
- Argumentation balance
- Use of adjectives/expressions
- Indirect/direct reference to Lomborg

While acknowledging their crucial guidance one must not forget that the interpretation process is complex and requires a scrutinized analysis of every item in its entirety, assisted by the variables and guidelines outlined above and in the Methodology-chapter.

4.2 “The Rebel-Environmentalist” – Positive portrayals of Lomborg

Of the newspapers that reported most positively about Lomborg Jyllands-Posten (JP) dominated clearly. Out of 12 articles, 7 are depicting Lomborg in a positive way. Among the clearly positive there is one example in the Århus-local section of JP which is titled “A shoulder pat for Lomborg”⁹ (JP 08122001) and which discusses Lomborg’s international prominence and the fame his book has received without mentioning any criticism of it. The direct reference to Lomborg, the article’s theme which can be set “the famous Lomborg” and the one-sided argumentation proves this; the article starts triumphantly:

⁹ Translation: ”Skulderklap til Bjørn Lomborg” (JP 08122001)

“He is a man who makes people’s tempers boil. Nevertheless, the international organization World Economic Forum has picked him out as one of the 100 most prominent young leaders which the organization announces every year.” (JP 08122001)¹⁰

A less obvious example which however also presents Lomborg in a positive way is also published in Jyllands-Posten and promotes the new Environmental Assessment Institute which is about to be established. The title speaks for itself: “Environment: New Institute will improve environmental politics”¹¹ (JP 04012002). Compared to many of the articles in for instance Politiken that describe Lomborg as controversial the introduction here says “[...] and rebel-environmentalist Bjørn Lomborg [...]”¹² which is very uplifting for him and also, the introduction ends by highlighting that the Government’s EAI initiative will make sure that the investment in environmental politics will repay themselves. This implies that the former investments in environmental politics have not been efficient and whilst the whole article mainly discusses how the new EAI will improve environmental politics in Denmark excluding any explicit counter-arguments, Lomborg himself receives a very warm presentation before he is cited:

“Lomborg is however still not doubting that investments in environmental politics both here at home and abroad can be used more efficiently.” (JP 04012002)¹³

Although the article includes a sentence about Lomborg’s anticipated role as the director of the institute and the controversy this and the government’s hasty funds approval has caused, the following two paragraphs of the article give him exclusive space for expression with the titles “More sensible”¹⁴ and the last one “The right proportions”¹⁵ (JP 04012002) before the article ends.

Interestingly, all news articles in JP except two portray Lomborg in a positive way which means that the journalists depict him in this way. This is the genre which one may expect has the most objective reporting (compared to debate articles and individual reviews), but still is the one that favors Lomborg most in Jyllands-Posten. While Berlingske Tidende (BT) is dominated by neutral portrayals of Lomborg and only has one positive article about him, of Politiken’s 24, only 4 are more or less positive. Not to forget is that Politiken (P) is social-liberal in contrast to JP and BT which both are conservative-liberal, however, Lomborg had been a columnist in Politiken for a while and may hence be most resembled to that newspaper. Among the few positive depictions of him is this

¹⁰ Translation: ”Han er en herre, der bringer sindene i kog. Ikke desto mindre kunne den international organization World Economic Forum enes om, at den danske miljømand hører til blandt de 100 unge ledere, som organisationen hvert år peger på som fremtidens folk” (JP 08122001)

¹¹ Translation: ”Miljø: Nyt institut skal forbedre miljøpolitik” (JP 04012002)

¹² Translation: ”[...] og miljørebellen Bjørn Lomborg [...]” (JP 04012002)

¹³ Translation: ”Lomborg er dog fortsat ikke i tvivl om, at miljøkronerne både herhjemme og i udlandet kunne anvendes mere fornuftigt” (JP 04012002)

¹⁴ Translation: ”Mere fornuftigt” (JP 04012002)

¹⁵ Translation: ”De rette proportioner” (JP 04012002)

news article that presents Lomborg as the architect behind the EAI and speaks in favor of him as it cites him saying that this institute must be more independent than the present one is (P 01122001). After discussing the government's EAI initiative in the first paragraph, the second paragraph starts by saying:

“Bjørn Lomborg's thoughts behind an institution for environmental assessment concern a raise of the environmental policy's efficiency. Economical calculations about advantages and disadvantages of different initiatives will secure that the money will be well used.” (P 01122001)¹⁶

Thereafter, questions are posed to Lomborg about his thoughts concerning environmental politics prioritization and only in one sentence in the very end of the article – where another scientist claims the opposite to Lomborg in one question – are any counter-argumentations present. This is clearly not enough as Lomborg receives substantially more space and is also mentioned as the architect behind the EAI – at the same time as the government is neutrally depicted as establishing it. While the border here seems fluid between a neutral and positive portrayal, I argue for the latter as Lomborg answers two uncritical questions in the article and any counter-argument from the current environmental institute's side about the efficiency of Danish environmental policy is absent.

Of the total amount of articles on Lomborg in Jyllands-Posten (12) he was depicted positively in 7 of them. As for BT, a positive depiction was only present in one of the 7 articles. In Politiken, only four out of 24 articles portrayed Lomborg in a neither neutral nor negative way which also presents the lowest rate among the newspapers. In JP three of the seven articles that presented him positively were conventional news articles. In BT, no one of the news articles presented Lomborg positively and in Politiken only one of the positive articles was a news article. The positive depictions mainly discussed Lomborg's contribution to the new EAI, which will make the environmental policy more efficient and also often presented him as an environmental “rebel” that goes against the established paradigm of green politics in Denmark.

4.3 Balanced journalism – Neutral reporting of Lomborg

The newspaper that has the highest amount of neutral accounts of Lomborg is Berlingske Tidende. Surprisingly, this category is in clear minority when it comes to the other newspapers – did Lomborg really create that much controversy that

¹⁶ Translation: ”Bjørn Lomborgs tanke bag et institute for Miljøvurdering er at gøre miljøpolitikken mere effektiv. Økonomiske beregninger om fordele og ulemper ved forskellige initiativer skal sikre at vi får mest muligt miljø for pengene” (P 01122001)

neutral depictions of him became a rarity? Whilst it is not always entirely clear in what ways a neutral depiction differs from a positive or negative one, one first example as a quite short news notice discusses the upcoming EAI and refers to Lomborg as the initiator of the idea to establish the institute (BT 17122001):

”It is the statistician Bjørn Lomborg from Århus that has proposed to the Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen (V) to establish an institute that will conduct research in how to make efficient investments in environmental policy.” (BT 17122001)¹⁷

The text merely describes Lomborg’s role in the process without including any “strong” adjectives or references to Lomborg’s book or the controversy he has caused. Preceding Lomborg’s introduction the article presents the government’s idea behind the institute and also mentions the criticism the opposition has expressed towards it; however, as both sides are equally present the text is a classic journalistic product with objectivity characteristics.

Several other articles in BT portray the Danish government and its ambitions and initiatives, indirectly referring to Lomborg in connection to the EAI and also mentioning him without any evaluating expressions. The other type of neutral portrayals of Lomborg are the ones where the argumentation *pro et contra* is more or less equally distributed and title and introduction are objectively and formally expressed. For instance in BT, an article named “Ecologists fear the government’s environmental institution”¹⁸ (BT 01122001) already in the introduction weighs up the relatively contentious title by citing a governmental politician saying that assessments of environmental policy will be conducted by the institute. The first section of the article furthers same politician’s promotion of the institute and ends with the Danish Ecological Council’s questioning the necessity of such an institute. In the second and last section of the article the opposing sides receive equal space of argumentation and Lomborg enters the picture as a possible architect for the institute. The description of him is quite formal and neither draws any criticism nor tribute upon him:

“Bjørn Lomborg is known for his optimistic view of the environmental state as actually improving during the long period that the leaving SR-government has been ruling.” (BT 01122001)¹⁹

Most of the articles in the newspapers that portray Lomborg neutrally do not treat him directly but refer him to the government and the environmental politics in Denmark. Hence, if the article does not treat the main subject in any dramatic way

¹⁷ Translation: ”Det er statistikeren Bjørn Lomborg fra Århus, som har opfordret statsminister Anders Fogh Rasmussen (V) til at oprette instituttet for at styrke forskningen i, hvordan man får mest miljø for pengene” (BT 17122001)

¹⁸ Translation: ”Økologer frygter regeringens miljøinstitut” (BT 01122001)

¹⁹ Translation: ”Bjørn Lomborg er kendt for sine optimistiske synspunkter om, at miljøet har fået det bedre og bedre, bl.a. i den lange periode den afgående SR regering har haft ansvaret” (BT 01122001)

but has balanced *pro et contra* argumentation, one can conclude that neither is Lomborg presented in any dramatic way.

In all three newspapers, neutral depictions of Lomborg were exclusively provided by news articles which is not surprising as debate articles and individual reviews do not have to live up to the same journalistic criteria of objectivity. However, meanwhile BT had 5 neutral depictions out of 7 articles; Jyllands-Posten only had one out of 12 and Politiken 4 out of 24. This may precisely be an indicator of the controversy Lomborg has caused after the release of TSE.

4.4 “The criticized statistician” – Negative reporting of Lomborg

Politiken was one of Lomborg’s initial gateways to the fame he later acquired. After having written several feature articles in Politiken in which he promoted his ideas about the environmental state of the world, his controversial book got published first in Swedish and then in English. Ironically, Politiken is also the newspaper in which Lomborg received most of his criticism during the two months that are analyzed in this paper. The high amount of articles about him (24) indicate a great interest of discussing him on the pages of Politiken, however, 17 of the texts are portraying Lomborg negatively – of which the majority are debate articles and commentaries sent in by the public. However some of them are also news articles such as the one titled “Committee hinders plans for environmental institute”²⁰ (P 13122001). The article tells us that funds have been thwarted for the establishment of the institute and describes the institute as controversial because of Lomborg’s involvement. The government denies any exclusivity for Lomborg in the article; however, the last part of the second section of the article presents the critique that has been expressed towards Lomborg without including any response by him or the government. One opponent is cited in the article:

“People think that Bjørn Lomborg is an expert but he has never written a scientific article about environmental economy in the climate field which he speaks so much about.” (P 13122001)²¹

By not presenting any opposing opinion in this issue Lomborg inevitably receives a quite negative account.

Much of the criticizing of Lomborg in Politiken is taking place in the Debate-section where both intellectuals and the general public present their opinion about

²⁰ Translation: ” Udvalg bremser plan om miljøinstitut” (P 13122001)

²¹ Translation: ”Folk tror, at Bjørn Lomborg er ekspert, men han har aldrig skrevet en videnskabelig artikel om miljøøkonomi inden for klimaområdet, som han udtaler sig så meget om” (P 13122001)

him. One archetypal example is this article provided by the Danish Ecological Council which has the title “Environment: New institute on an unscientific basis”²² (P 18122001). It criticizes one of Politiken’s editorials which state that the EAI-initiative is a good idea. Throughout the whole article, Lomborg’s view of a desired environmental policy is criticized and the ending sentence speaks for itself:

“But to believe that one can solve the actual problems by giving ten million kr. per year to a statistician who does not know what the concepts uncertainty and reservation are and does not want to conform to scientific evaluation will not generate any success.” (P 18122001)²³

Less obvious examples where the line between neutral and negative is rather difficult to draw do also occur. For instance one news article titled “Majority assured for controversial environmental institute”²⁴ (P 23012002). As the genre is a conventional news article, the argumentation is somewhat balanced in this article that discusses the EAI-initiative. In the first section it is stated that the government’s reduction of funds for the current environmental institute will affect three other environmental organs in Denmark negatively. The second section of the article has the title “No hearing”²⁵ and hence implies that no democratic debate has been allowed to take place concerning the EAI-initiative. References to the government’s ambitions to make the environmental politics more efficient are present, however, substantial criticism against the initiative from an environment-politician in the opposition is illustrated and Lomborg himself is written about as:

“Much concern is raised due to the fact that the assistant professor Bjørn Lomborg from the Aarhus University – the man behind the controversial book “The True State of the World” – is hiding backstage as a hot candidate for the director’s post.” (P 23012002)²⁶

Although the government denies that Lomborg is an exclusive candidate in the end of the article, the fact that no democratic hearing has been conducted about the EAI, the space the opposition received in the article and lastly as it is stated that several environmental organs are negatively affected by the government’s reduction of funds for the current institute – due to Lomborg’s connection to the government, I conclude that he is reported negatively about in this article.

The positive depictions of Lomborg (1) were not as many as the neutral ones (5) in Berlingske Tidende. In Jyllands-Posten, things are the opposite as Lomborg receives positive attention in 7 articles compared to one neutral depiction. Both

²² Translation: ” Miljø: Nyt institut på uvidenskabeligt grundlag” (P 18122001)

²³ Translation: ”Men at tro, at man kan løse de faglige problemer ved at give 10 millioner kr. pr. år till en statistiker, der ikke kender til begreberne tvivl og forbehold og ikke vil underkaste sig videnskabelig bedømmelse, vil ikke fremme sagen” (P 18122001)

²⁴ Translation: ” Klart flertal for kontroversielt miljøinstitut” (P 23012002)

²⁵ Translation: ” Ingen Høring” (P 23012002)

²⁶ Translation: ”Det vækker speciel uro, at lektor Bjørn Lomborg fra Aarhus Universitet – manden bag den kontroversielle debatbog ”Verdens sande tilstand” – spøger i kulissen som et varmt emne som direktør” (P 23012002)

newspapers' reporting of Lomborg is however mostly positive or neutral in contrast to Politiken in which the positive and neutral illustrations of Lomborg together are 8 in number against the 16 negative ones. But is it as simple as the fact that Politiken is social-liberal and Lomborg is more attractive for the conservative government's agenda? The next section will summarize the analysis.

4.5 Analysis Summary

Not quite as I had expected, the total amount of positive and neutral accounts of Lomborg is almost the same as the amount of the negative ones: 22 against 21.

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
BT (total: 7)	1	5	1
JP (total: 12)	7	1	4
Politiken (total: 24)	4	4	16

As one can see, Politiken contributed most to the above figure while BT and JP both had a high amount of positive and neutral depictions of Lomborg. However, it is a matter of fact that most of the negative accounts of Lomborg are actually written in the Debate section or are sent in commentaries by the public. The only negative portrayal in BT is a debate article written by two researchers²⁷; in JP two of four critical articles are debate articles written by same ecologist²⁸ and in Politiken 14 of the 16 articles are debate articles, sent in commentaries and one individual review neither of which is written by the editorial staff of Politiken²⁹.

²⁷ BT (18122001) "Spar miljøinstitut" Pedersen Helene Sandholm og Brandt Jørgen

²⁸ JP (17122001) "Vindmøller og drivhuseffekt" Ege Christian

JP (24122001) "Debat: Miljø-vurdering og cost-benefit" Ege Christian

²⁹ P (07122001) "Debat: Lomborg vinder – miljøet taber" Olesen Sigurd

P (12122001) "Miljø (1): Nej til amerikanske tilstande" Bergstein Tommy

P (12122001) "Miljø (2): Penge i miljøforringelser" Jacobsen Mogens

P (14122001) "Debat: Lomborg er ikke statistiker" Aage Hans

P (18122001) "Miljø: Nyt institut på uvidenskabeligt grundlag" Ege Christian

P (19122001) "Bjørn Lomborgs sande tilstand" Hansen L. Jørgen

P (20122001) "Debat: Lomborgs lånte fjer" Aage Hans

P (22122001) "Debat: Mest miljø for pengene" Thrane Mikkel

P (30122001) "Om igen, igen, Lomborg" Bergstein Tommy

P (02012002) "Følg forskerfagets spilleregler" Andersen Skou Mikael

P (04012002) "Kulturpolitik: Nyhedsfri zone" Adamsen Billy

P (05012002) "Nedvurdering af vælgerne" Jensen-Baunbak Asger, Jørgensen Per Schultz, Brix Møller Christian, Sloth Kristian, Reich Kløvedal Ebbe og Mikkel Wold

P (05012002) "Replik: De intellektuelles elendighed" Kemp Peter

P (24012002) "Debat: Uafhængigt af viden" Beier Claus

In JP neither of the neutral articles is a debate article, however, 4 of the positive articles are debate articles and commentaries³⁰; in BT the only positive depiction of Lomborg is a debate article/commentary³¹ and among the neutral illustrations, two are debate articles³². In Politiken, one of the neutral depictions is a commentary³³ and two of the positive portrayals are a debate article and a commentary³⁴. Counting them altogether, 17 of totally 21 negative depictions of Lomborg are not written by the editorial staff meanwhile 10 of the 22 neutral and positive illustrations of Lomborg among the newspapers are not either written by the editorial staff. Looking at the results from this perspective, 12 depictions of Lomborg by journalists are neutral or positive while only 4 portrayals by journalists are explicitly criticizing him. What do the above results say in comparison to the theoretical framework of medialization and Lomborg's employment?

³⁰ JP (28122001) "JP-kronik: Miljøoprør fra det midterste sted" Schrøder Hans

JP (28122001) "Vindmøller og indoktrinering" Schumacher Erik

JP (29012002) "Lidt selvmodsigende" Bork-Pedersen Søren

JP (30012002) "For og imod Lomborg" Lauge Madsen Bent

³¹ BT (04012002) "Befri videnskaben" Krogager Ernst

³² BT (05122001) "Regering fra højre" Auken Svend

BT (21012002) "Vi alene vide" Fischer Svinget Charlotte

³³ P (10122001) "Debat: Miljøets fremtid" Juel Grand Kirsten

³⁴ P (17122001) "Stå fast på nyt miljøinstitut" Larsen Ancher Poul

P (18122001) "Debat: Lomborg er også statistiker" Thomsen Risbjerg Søren

5 Concluding Discussion

The results of the content analysis made me aware of something that I had not thought so much about – how portrayals of Lomborg could differ so considerably due to the genre of the text. I initially chose not to make any distinction between the editorial material in the newspapers and debate articles and commentaries provided by the public because it is what is circulating in media rather than what is said by whom that affects the politicians' agenda (Petersen et al. 2010). But now several new questions have come to my mind of how the depiction of something in media can be formed not by the actual journalists' work but by their allowance of circulating material.

When looking at the five main functions of media in their relation to politics and political decision-making derived from the theoretical framework of medialization, it is plausible that³⁵; (1) Lomborg's controversial viewpoints of the environment communicated through media may have suited the conservative government's agenda; (2) the criticism for and against him informed the government about the societal mood concerning the environment issue; (3) both Lomborg's and his critics' references made the politicians aware of what is currently relevant; (4) Lomborg's scientific references may have been adopted by the government as they fit their political ideology and finally; (5) the whole debate about Bjørn Lomborg may have affected and influenced the opinions of the decision-makers in Denmark; ultimately they chose to hire him. By that we can conclude that the government did not merely act symbolically but actually instrumentally applied the knowledge of Lomborg in their decision-making.

However, in order to search for a connection, difficulties arise as media's portrayal might have functioned precisely like Petersen et al. claim; a complementary informal policy-advice without excluding the institutionalized advisory arrangements that already exist (2010:881). Still, 22 of 43 articles present Lomborg in a neutral or positive way and 21 are depicting him negatively. Are we facing a stalemate here?

³⁵ (1)Scientific events, findings, and arguments communicated by the media can trigger political activities. (2) Scientific expertise contributes to an image of society including the general public mood, societal problems, and conflicts. (3) References to science organizations, scientific experts, or scientific fields in the media are perceived by the political establishment as an indicator of social relevance. (4) Scientific experts and arguments that are presented in the media are sometimes taken up for use in political rhetoric because of the anticipated credibility and attention in public. (5) Finally, scientific knowledge enters the political process via opinion formation among individual policy makers (Petersen et al. 2010:881).

To discuss this further, depending on whether the Danish politicians merely looked on the editorial depictions' of Lomborg or also at the material provided by the public, different conclusions can be drawn. As Petersen et al's framework indicates; scientific arguments, events and findings can trigger political activity and scientific experts and arguments are used in politicians' rhetoric because of anticipated credibility among the public (2010:881). One can understand that the government in several articles denied Lomborg's involvement in the establishment of EAI as he received a substantial amount of criticism even in the Danish print media. But any higher level of political activity in reference to the criticism of Lomborg was not the reality – Lomborg became the director of the institute just like expected by his critics.

Returning to the five functions applied on the case of Lomborg, as the amount of articles for/neutral and against him is practically the same, it is hard to pull the argumentation in any direction but to conclude that a fairly balanced depiction of Lomborg is detected among the Danish newspapers.

5.1 Plausible Connection?

Lomborg undoubtedly acquired his global prominence partly because of the controversy "The Skeptical Environmentalist" (2001) caused. As news values circulate around the unexpected, conflicting and personal, his status as the rebellion scientist against the opposing scientific community certainly made him popular in global media. Of course, political ideology also may have played an important role. However, when looking at the Danish media's portrayal of Lomborg preceding his employment, any massive support is missing for him to be embraced by the government. Counting his total prominence, the negative and neutral and positive accounts are almost equal in number. Looking at how the journalists exclusively treated Lomborg, media did give him a good review looking at the circumstances. As any causal connection was not the aim of this paper, I conclude it by saying that a plausible connection between Lomborg's depictions in Danish media and his acquired position *may* have existed depending on how you measure his presence in the media. Looking on the overall depiction of him the rather balanced account does not make him too controversial; if looking on how the media workers exclusively reported about Lomborg, one may claim that the controversy he brought may have give him all the prominence and relatively good accounts (12 against 4), as he fulfilled much of the news values criteria by causing intensive debate in the Danish society and globally.

Nevertheless, this study opens up great possibilities into looking more explicitly in what way media actually influences politics and political decision-making. Are the journalists or perhaps the public itself through its activity in the media sphere influencing political decision-making? Related questions arise such as of who actually decides the agenda; the media or the public outside the companies that makes statements through the media? These questions ought to be addressed; not only in order to better understand how media affects our societies

but how our governors may be medialized and what implications it has for our democratic ideals.

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