

ACADEMIC PAPER

Interest groups on social media: Four forms of networked advocacy

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The affordances of social media both constrain and enable new forms of political advocacy. The present study identifies four forms of networked advocacy and analyses these with emphasis on constituencies, platforms, activities, and aims. Based on over 40 semistructured elite interviews with interest group leaders and heads of communication, it first finds that interviewees distinguish between social media platforms, tailoring content and genre, to target intended audiences. Second, it finds that social media affordances make awareness-raising and community-building more efficient and purposeful for all groups. At the same time, only large organizations with bigger budgets, credibility, technical knowhow, and political relations, systematically engage in networked mobilization and lobbying. Third, interviewees representing these resourceful organizations underline that Twitter represents a new efficient form of middle-stage lobbying. The study contributes empirical insights into the aims and strategies behind networked advocacy among different groups within one policy field in a local, non-American context. Theoretically, it combines insights from networked media logics, social affordances, and interest group advocacy to conceptualize how networked media can afford a new form of lobbying conducted as real-time, semi-private direct communication with decision makers.

1 | INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the digital mobilization of new forms of advocacy networks, and how these can redefine interest group operations and power, has caught both popular and scholarly attention (e.g., Bennet & Segerberg, 2013; Heimanns & Timms, 2018, Vromen, 2016). Such nonhierarchical, cause-specific, digital native movements both inspire and challenge centralized, established interest groups.

For all interest groups, being noticed by those in power is imperative; hence, interest groups employ a number of strategies to promote their interests vis-à-vis government agencies, parliaments, and the public. Social media strategies are often highlighted as an open, low-cost opportunity to provide information, mobilize supporters, raise funds, interact with multiple constituencies and attract attention to issues otherwise ignored within the public debate (Lovejoy, Waters, &

Saxton, 2012). The potential of new technology for pursuing organizational goals has been widely recognized (see Hackler & Saxton, 2007, for an overview). New digital technologies potentially enable interest groups to bypass the legacy media organizations and communicate directly with the public and political authorities. The networked media platforms, thus, represent an important channel for organized interests aiming to influence policy-making processes and political priorities, and what the present paper thus asks: What motivates established interest groups to employ social media as part of their lobbying and advocacy campaigns?

The rapidly changing media landscape has transformed from a media system controlled by professional media organizations (Waisbord, 2013) into a hybrid system where networked media and established news media interact and compete (Chadwick, 2013). These developments have opened up new opportunities and

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challenges for interest groups' advocacy strategies. Today, all organizations can become "media organizations" producing their own content, as the media environment has become more fluid (Lloyd & Toogood, 2015). In a situation where content production has increased enormously, yet attention remains scarce (Webster, 2014), interest groups must compete with each other and an increasing number of other political actors for attention.

The present study analyses how established health interest groups are motivated to use social media for political purposes. By interviewing health interest group leaders and heads of communication, it identifies four forms of networked advocacy and analyses the constituencies, platforms, and aims behind the groups' multifaceted campaigning—insights that are largely missing in previous quantitative mappings of social media's use in advocacy (i.e., Chalmers & Shotton, 2016; Thrall, Stecula, & Sweet, 2014; van der Graaf, Otjes, & Rasmussen, 2016). Because social media is often presented as a platform for the "weak," whereas lobbying is seen as a strategy for the most powerful interests, the paper also discusses networked advocacy from a resource perspective. The health sector was selected because health and medicine involve large capital assets and comprise a policy sector in which a conglomerate of different interests compete to influence the policies and priorities of massive health care budgets (Nettleton, 2013). Based on over 40 in-depth interviews with executives and heads of communication, the study contributes empirical clarity into the motivations and conditions behind networked advocacy, among different groups within one policy field in a local, non-American context (van der Graaf et al., 2016). Theoretically, this research also contributes insight into how networked media potentially affords a new form of lobbying conducted in visible, direct communication networks.

2 | NETWORKED MEDIA LOGICS

Reflecting the realities of the current hybrid media landscape, scholars theorize how political organizations aim to adopt and use *networked media logics* for organizational and political purposes along technological, normative, and commercial dimensions (see Klinger and Svensson (2016) for elaboration). First, technology has often served as the main prism for understanding social media and for analysing how the dynamics and conditions enabled by devices, platforms, and media influence actors (i.e., high-level affordances) or how particular features and platforms encourage or constrain particular actions (i.e., low-level affordances; Bucher & Helmond, 2018).

Second, user-generated content produced through interactivity, reflexivity and personalization, distributed through networks of like-minded others and peers is a key component in the idealist, normative dimension. Early studies on social media use among interest groups (mapping and measuring interest groups' degree of digital interactivity) have often departed from such normative expectations of the inherent benefits of interaction and dialogue. This strand of mainly quantitative studies finds that

despite new affordances, interest groups primarily use social media for public information purposes (e.g., Curtis et al., 2010; Lovejoy et al., 2012).

Third, the commercial imperatives of networked media logics indicate that social media platforms grant privilege—measured in quantifiable terms—to popular items and influential people. Affective, emotional, and positive evaluations and personalization are often promoted, and shareability has become crucial (Klinger & Svensson, 2016; van Dijck & Poell, 2013). As social media use can be quantified and measured in real time, user-data is increasingly utilized for both commercial and political purposes.

The networked media logics fundamentally impact *production, distribution, and usage* of content (Klinger & Svensson, 2018). First, on social media platforms, all users and stakeholders can produce content; production costs are low as lay producers only need ordinary consumer equipment; and immediate, horizontal, interactive, and individualized communication is privileged (Klinger & Svensson, 2018, p. 6). Previous studies find that advocacy groups primarily use social media for providing information and creating awareness among current and potential supporters (i.e., Kingston & Stam, 2013), while using it less for dialogue, community building, and mobilizing supporters (e.g., donating, gathering, protesting; Guo & Saxton, 2014). Second, social media has further altered the way information is distributed: Users share information in their own networks and can choose closed and open communication; verbal and image-based communication; to a number of different constituencies—ranging from open posts, communication in group or person to person (Kalsnes, 2016). Studies of interest groups find that they use different platforms for different advocacy purposes (Auger, 2013; Briones, Kuch, & Jin, 2011; Kanol & Nat, 2017). Third, media usage is significantly altered as social media platforms enable selective use; users can tailor their personalized menus, and audiences are increasingly fragmented (Klinger & Svensson, 2018, p. 8).

3 | INSIDE, OUTSIDE, AND MIDDLE-STAGE LOBBYING

Interest groups seek political influence but differ in their ability and efforts to achieve it (Dür & Mateo, 2013; Scott, 2018). As the corporatist structures for formal participation have declined in Europe in recent decades, lobbying, or the "effort to influence the policy process" (Baumgartner, Berry, Hojnacki, Kimball, & Leech, 2009) has become more important for interest group advocacy (Rommetvedt, 2017). Lobbying has traditionally been divided into *insider* and *outsider* strategies, the former involving direct, discrete, backstage contact with policymakers to influence policy decisions, typically by resourceful "insider" groups, whereas the latter involves more indirect frontstage communication, typically by less resourceful, outsider groups, such as activists protesting through the media (e.g., Baumgartner et al., 2009; Scott, 2018). According to Kollman (1998), outside lobbying can have three key purposes: (a) signalling (i.e., communicating public support to decision makers), (b) conflict

expansion (i.e., mobilizing among constituents to increase that public support), and (c) organizational maintenance (i.e., forming coalitions or raising funds). The logics of membership (i.e., resource competition and organizational maintenance objectives) explain why insider organizations also lobby to raise funds and interact with members, donors, and patrons rather than to influence policymakers (i.e., Hanegraaf, Beyers & de Bruycker, 2016; Schmitter & Streeck, 1999).

An interest group's presence in different political arenas often corresponds to group type, resources, and issue characteristics (Binderkrantz, Christiansen, & Pedersen, 2015), although groups have significant leeway in their choice of strategy (Dür & Mateo, 2013). Resources are not necessarily confined to economic assets but can be conceptualized as different forms of capital: symbolic (e.g., reputation and legitimacy), cultural (e.g., competence and knowledge), and social (e.g., network and relations; Ihlen, 2007). Although financial resources do not necessarily secure influence, they can increase issue salience and attract relevant human resources and competence (Baumgartner et al., 2009).

Social media is an emerging advocacy channel potentially altering, which groups gain impact, what constituencies they target and whether the networked advocacy takes place frontstage, backstage or in-between (i.e., middle stage). One line of studies has analysed whether social media—which alters both production and distribution of information—potentially enables resource-poor outsider groups to increase their voice and impact. Among established interest groups, the main finding is that digital strategies also privilege established, large organizations with larger budgets, credibility, staff, technical knowhow, and political relations (Briones et al., 2011; Thrall et al., 2014, van der Graaf et al., 2016) and have not altered existing inequalities between groups (van der Graaf et al., 2016). At the same time, new nonhierarchical, cause-specific, digital native movements have gained impact (e.g., Vromen, 2016), indicating a potential increased impact for those interest groups that are able to make use of the networked logics and understand social media affordances (i.e., networked competence).

Social media affordances further enable interest groups to strategize which constituencies to target, from broad audiences (aiming for mass mobilization) to distinct segments (i.e., constituents, potential donors, decision makers). Social media use can be quantified and measured in real time, which increase interest groups' control over and measurement of whether they have reached their target audiences, how to tailor content and improve content quality and what campaigns and content are most efficient (Treem &

Leonari, 2013). The affordances of social media also blur the traditional distinction between backstage and frontstage advocacy channels, as network connections (previously hidden or difficult to see) are made visible for others; different social media platforms have different interfaces affording visibility and association (confirming existent networks or enabling new connections (Treem & Leonari, 2013).

4 | METHOD

Aiming to study why and how interest groups use social media in political advocacy, we conducted 43 in-depth interviews with top leaders (28 interviewees) or heads of communication (15 interviewees) representing 40 Norwegian health care interest groups. A team of four researchers conducted three pilot interviews in 2015 and the remaining interviews in 2017–2018. The groups consisted of trade unions (nine groups representing health care professionals), patient organizations (27 groups, both single diseases and umbrella organizations, representing all major patient groups), and medical industry organizations and business (e.g., pharma; four groups). The groups were selected to represent both insider organizations with close ties to the political and medical establishments and outsider groups struggling for recognition (i.e., groups with extensive resources and large media and public affairs divisions, and interest groups with scarce resources primarily run by volunteers). Of the organizations approached for interviews, only three declined the interview request; reasons included hectic schedules and lack of human resources. In most interviews, interest group characteristics were brought up and addressed by interviewees. To systematically map organizational resources, two research assistants mapped revenue and the number and reach of different social media accounts by the various organizations to create a resource index used as background data in those parts of the analysis, which deal with organizational resources (see Table 1 for overview).

The interviews were semistructured and covered a broad range of issues related to organizational communication, reactive and proactive media strategies, lobbying and political campaigns, and social media strategies and use. The interview guides were designed as a combination of open, exploratory questions, and numerous follow-up questions, inviting interviewees to elaborate and reflect on their media and advocacy strategies in a rapidly changing media landscape. The transcribed interviews were coded in HyperResearch, and all statements addressing social media advocacy were analysed for this paper. Interviewees would often discuss social media throughout the open

TABLE 1 Overview group resources and group presence on social media

Interest groups (N = 40)	Social media platforms	Facebook followers	Twitter followers
Very well-resourced groups (9)	FB, Twitter, and Instagram	Most have over 20,000	Most have over 3,000 followers
Well-resourced groups (16)	FB, Twitter (Instagram)	Majority between 5,000 and 10,000 followers	Most have over 1,000 followers
Groups with limited resources (15)	Primarily on FB (Twitter)	Majority between 1,000 and 5,000 followers	(Half without active Twitter account)

questions, after which the interviewers followed up by explicitly asking which platforms the interviewees used and for what purposes. The authors then analysed the data in light of the literature on social media logics and affordances, interest groups, and political advocacy (see Luker, 2009, for elaborations on this approach).

A critical approach to interview statements is particularly pertinent when interviewing political and communication elites (Dexter, 2006). The majority of interviewees in this study are skilled communicators and experienced public speakers. Aiming to reduce formulaic, well-rehearsed statements, the interviewers thus prepared follow-up questions, asked for practical exemplars and asked interviewees to evaluate real-life campaigns, cases, and practices. All direct statements used in the analysis have been approved by the interviewees. To preserve the interviewees' anonymity, only the professional categories to which the interviewees belong are provided, and the interviewees are numbered to increase transparency.

Social media lobbying in the Norwegian health care sector was chosen for four reasons. First, Norway is a digitally advanced society, with 99% Internet penetration. Of all members of Norwegian society, 86% use online news weekly (primarily on the smartphone), 78% are on Facebook, 42% are on Instagram, and 18% use Twitter (Newman, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2018). Second, the organizational landscape is changing, and the proliferation of new organizations has increased the groups' competition for the attention of decision makers (Sivesind, Arnesen, Gulbrandsen, Nordø, & Enjolras, 2018). Third, Norway has an extensive national health service and is among the top spenders on health care per capita among OECD countries (Morgan, Gmeinder, & Wilkens, 2017). Fourth, the distance between societal and political elites and the general public is narrower, and Norwegian politicians are more easily approachable by the media and organized interests.

Taken together, this study of social media lobbying in the Norwegian health care sector thus represents a most likely case (Yin, 1994). This research is well-suited to illuminate established interest groups' adoption of a networked media logic in a rapidly changing media context.

5 | ANALYSIS

5.1 | Four forms of networked advocacy

On the basis of in-depth interviews with a broad range of health interest groups, we identify four forms of networked advocacy. For each form, we discuss which interest groups take part in the practices and their motivations, the target audience(s), and choice of social media platform (see Figure 1 for systematization).

5.1.1 | Networked information and awareness

All the interviewed organizations use social media platforms to provide information and raise awareness of their key causes, and they are conscious about which audiences they seek to reach. The intentions behind the informational content are manifold; the organizations first

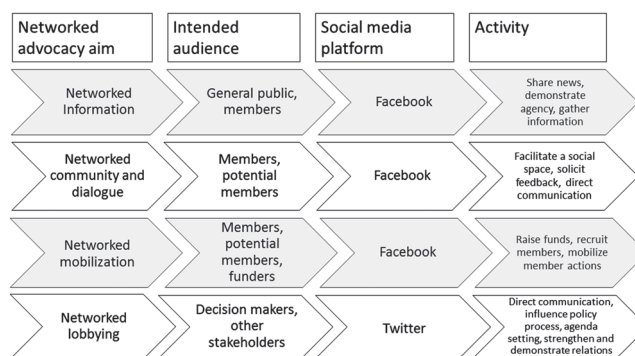


FIGURE 1 Four forms of networked advocacy

and foremost seek to share new and relevant information about their field that is deemed interesting for their followers, constituents, and others potentially interested in the topic. For almost all the interviewees, this is primarily a strategy afforded on Facebook as this platform reaches broader audiences than other platforms. Interviewees explain that they republish externally produced research reports and news articles, often adding comments to the posts, thus reframing the content to highlight the organization's views and interpretations of the events. Similarly, the interest groups use Facebook to (re)publish content such as newsletters or media appearances to magnify the messages. This quote by one of the larger patient organizations is illustrative of this practice: "We use the website and social media when we have made a (media) statement or a press release and want extra distribution—so we primarily use it as a distribution channel" (PatientOrganization9, 2015). Many interviewees also use Facebook as an activity log to demonstrate advocacy efforts and successes to their member bases. When interest group representatives participate in political arenas and meet with central decision makers, those encounters are documented and shared on Facebook. A leader of a professional group says the following: "Last week, the health minister visited one of our stands, and talked to our representatives. Such things are important, so then we post it on social media to show it to our members and others, that the health minister was with us" (ProfessionalOrganization9, 2018).

Explaining how they use Facebook to distribute information, some organizations tend to describe the social media platform like a *second website* as they have "outsourced" much of the direct member communication to Facebook platforms in an effort to efficiently inform about upcoming events, courses, and talks. As explained by the head of communication in a professional group: "So many of our members are on social media that it's easier to reach them there than by text messages and e-mail or sending letters [...] we don't do that anymore" (ProfessionalOrganization5, 2018). Additionally, several groups also use social media as an information-gathering channel, either to track the activities of other organizations and actors or to discover trending topics, discussions, or media articles shared within their network.

Interviewees highlight a number of reasons why Facebook is seen as an efficient platform: First, the production and distribution costs are very low, and the platform is easy to use—it requires no training. Second, Facebook affordances enable the organizations to produce

and format content to reach their intended audiences without having to compromise with established news media formats or genres. Third, the organizations can target the information to specific population segments, and they can measure to what extent they reach and engage those target audiences (i.e., audience metrics). Some groups pay for Facebook posts to increase the precision of their information efforts. This statement from a small patient organization illustrates the perception of Facebook as an efficient information-sharing tool: “We target people directly. That’s the main reason. We have 6000 followers, whereas a newspaper op-ed might reach 300 readers [...]. On Facebook, before we know it, 2000 people might have seen our post” (PatientOrganization13, 2017). Although the level of activity and sophistication differs among the interest groups studied, all the interviewees engage in this basic form of networked advocacy.

5.1.2 | Networked community-building and dialogue

The second frequently highlighted purpose of social media advocacy among our interviewees is community-building and dialogue with members and followers; again, Facebook is the preferred platform. Elaborating on community-building, almost all interviewees explain how Facebook’s affordances facilitate community-building in both open networks and closed groups by targeting current and potential constituencies. In line with the normative dimension of networked media logics, interviewees underline the necessity of keeping a continuous dialogue with their followers by offering them an engaging, informal and pleasant platform where they “hang out.” Interviewees stress the “social” in social media, wanting to create a “warming room for members, followers, and everyone interested in health-related issues,” according to a head of communications of a professional organization (ProfessionalOrganization8, 2018). To do this, organizations seek to supplement the factual communication of key causes discussed in the previous section, with “little everyday stories” and “soft news,” in addition to inspirational posts, humour posts, competitions, or giveaways (e.g., Christmas calendars). Others stress how identification and a personal narrative is crucial for engaging the community to care enough to share (PatientOrganization17, 2017). The organizations seek to adapt to and use networked media logics to boost interaction and community through an informal campfire genre where members and followers can gather in their free time.

To build an active community, several organizations actively encourage participation from followers and other audiences. Followers are asked to contribute and give their opinions on issues raised by the organizations on interactive forums, thus actively contributing, whether to initiate political debates or decide on the organization’s stance on particular issues. As explained by a head of an umbrella organization:

We have this community of experts and affected families, which enables a very dynamic dialogue. If we are to make a public statement or comment on a hearing, then we call for input on Facebook first. It is not a one-way

communication process – social media are important because they are social. (PatientOrganization4, 2017)

For some organizations, Facebook has further become the main platform through which members and other interested individuals contact the organizations’ experts and staff. Interviewees say that they invite the followers to chat with the organizations’ medical, dietary, or legal experts. Even more so, Facebook has become the entry point for all those who have questions, and several organizations report that both wall posts and direct messages have become “new help lines.” As explained by the head of a patient organization: “What we have realized is that people do not call us any longer, they send us a message on Facebook, which has become the new arena that we need to pay attention to” (Patient Organization20, 2017).

The opportunity to establish both open groups and closed groups on Facebook is key for communities. Closed groups allow community members to discuss among each other privately, shielded from the wider public. Such closed discussion fora are particularly important for groups that represent conditions associated with stigma, contested diagnosis, or trauma shared by children, parents, or partners of those affected. As explained by the leaders of an organization representing stigmatized conditions:

Many of those affected do not even dare to be members of our organization [due to stigma]. For them social media become important and we have prioritized closed groups organized by our members to network with others in the same situation [...] Many have never had anyone to talk to except their doctor—and for them it is a relief to connect with peers that they can talk openly with. (PatientOrganization2, 2017)

Some of these groups are organized by peers, whereas others are initiated by the organizations. Most organizations offer both closed and open groups with varying degrees of moderation by the administrators.

5.1.3 | Networked mobilization

For the interviewed groups, a third function of social media advocacy involves mobilization of the member base or the general public for a cause by campaigning on social media. When discussing networked mobilization, there is more variation between the groups, although Facebook remain the platform of choice. Interviewees representing larger organizations explain how mobilization campaigns to either raise funds (for research or other parts of the organization), recruit new members, and keep existing members and supporters are part of their regular routines. Most often, these campaigns and events are organized annually (e.g., International AIDS Day, held every December 1; Pink Ribbon campaigns, held every October). These events are multifaceted, but Facebook has become a crucial platform. For the larger umbrella organizations, these events can be massive fundraisers that are organized centrally, but they are also

carried out by individual users in the users' personal networks to raise funds for causes of personal importance. Such "eventization" of the organizations' awareness-raising, community-building, and fundraising is evident from our interviewees, as explained by a head of communication:

What do we get in return? [...] If you are active on our social media platforms, perhaps you fill out some questions and one of them gives us the permission to contact you again. Then you're in our fundraising loop—you get our Christmas letter, one of our people might call you. . . . It is a mix of trying to reach out and talk to people and getting something back. (PatientOrganization5, 2017)

The organizations also mobilize to increase political pressure. To mobilize constituencies, their networks and the broader public to connective action (e.g., Facebook petitions; Bennet & Segerberg, 2013), interviewees stress the need for compelling, engaging content, often provided through personal stories. Because content is shared in user networks due to the popularity principle in Facebook's algorithms (i.e., popularity increases visibility), interviewees continuously underline the importance of shareworthiness to mobilize public opinion. It may be a patient who raises awareness by overcoming a challenge or the story of a medical expert who is there to help. One patient organization, mobilized sick children and their siblings to illuminate the patient group's vulnerability, needs, and political appeals. As explained by the head of the organization: "We asked them to make a drawing to politicians describing their hopes for the future [...] Some made these clips that we posted on Facebook, which received incredibly many shares and likes [...] Some of them were really strong!" (PatientOrganization11, 2018).

To mobilize people to share, donate, become members, or sign petitions, there is a broad agreement among the interviewees that they should aim for personal, engaging campaigns, which make the symbolic capital (legitimacy, vulnerability) of a cause imperative. Although the most resourceful organizations can organize professional fundraisers and mobilize members, interviewees explain how interest groups representing compelling personal exemplars and victims have a symbolic capital that is imperative in networked distribution and engagement

5.1.4 | Networked, middle-stage lobbying

Numerous interviewees further emphasize how Twitter has come to represent a new networked advocacy platform which enables them to target individual decision makers directly. For interviewees, this is a form of networked lobbying where interest groups use Twitter with a strategic, dual aim: To address an issue with decision makers who are directly accessible and often active on Twitter and to make visible that the organizations communicate directly with and solidify their network connection to those in power (what Treem & Leonari, 2013 label the *affordances of association*). In contrast to the three other types of networked advocacy, Twitter lobbying is primarily targeting decision

makers, although the fact that the interaction is visible to other Twitter users (primarily stakeholders such as journalists, politicians, donors, and other interest groups and members) is seen by interviewees as magnifying the communicative action. This form of networked lobbying takes place on a *middle-stage platform*—direct, "personal" communication between Twitter users, visible for other users and, thus, transcending the traditional divide in the literature between backstage (direct lobbying) and frontstage (indirect outside lobbying) strategies.

Interviewees explain that Twitter lobbying takes many forms, both as an independent networked channel and in combination with other advocacy channels. First, because Twitter has become a platform primarily for political, organizational, and media elites, it represents a unique channel to raise issues with influential decision makers directly and in real time and to monitor if and how politicians respond. Interviewees stress how "all politicians and influential people are on Twitter," and consequently, it is not unusual that they "introduce political issues with the minister directly, which the minister often retweets, or responds to there and then, or the tweet initiates a meeting" (PatientOrganization1, 2017). In particular, the leaders of the largest, most resourceful interest groups are in frequent, direct contact with decision makers on Twitter.

Second, Twitter is used to build an agenda for discussions with decision makers and responsible authorities. Here, the organizations attract the politicians' attention and provoke them to respond on Twitter by challenging them on issues deemed important by the organization, rating politicians regarding how they perform on a particular issue or tagging individual politicians to debate on important issues. According to the head of a major interest group representing health professionals, these kinds of direct challenges in social media can often spur swift, concrete reactions from political decision makers, particularly if the interest group has a substantial network of followers. Furthermore, due to technological affordances, both the challenge and response are visible to others, and such written statements by politicians are perceived to be lasting, searchable and, thus, more difficult for politicians to run away from (ProfessionalOrganization2, 2017). Also, those organizations that have prioritized Facebook over other social media platforms employ such tagging practices, where the responsible politicians are "tied to the mast."

Third, interviewees see Twitter as an efficient networking tool. Interviewees who represent some of the most resourceful patient organizations, professional associations, and business sides of the health care sector stress that they strategically use Twitter as a means to network with politicians. They do this by communicating support for new policies and acknowledging decision makers' efforts in social media (e.g., liking and retweeting the politicians they aim to strengthen ties with—a sort of *Twitter boosting*; see Trapp & Laursen's, 2017, study of boosting as part of lobbying campaigns). Interviewees see their frequent and continuous positive responses, by which they boost decision makers—in both the politicians' Twitter feeds and their own—as imperative to increase the organization's impact. As a head of a patient organization states: "We keep in continuous contact: 'Go, [Politician X] on Twitter!' To make our support visible for her network, not primarily for her to like us better, but to show that she's

competent and brave" (Patient Organization10, 2017). Twitter facilitates an "ongoing conversation" that further enables personal meetings and direct political discussions. This strategy is elaborated by the head of an umbrella organization worth quoting at some length:

Social media is about networking. We, for instance, work with positive reinforcement. ... Politicians want their work to be noticed, and we want to contribute to that when they do good things. So we write things like, 'Great you brought up that issue!' 'This is important!' So we network also by pointing out who deserves praise and who works with issues we think are important [...] Politicians rarely receive public compliments, and thus we demonstrate that we also appreciate their hard work. (UmbrellaOrganization1, 2017)

The networked lobbying has to our knowledge been largely ignored in previous studies, at least as seen from the interviewees' insider perspective. It is an advocacy strategy systematically employed only by the largest, most established interest groups in the study—those groups that can be characterized as insider groups with extensive resources. The emphasis on organizational resources was also reflected in the data as several interviewees stressed how the resource situation largely decided their advocacy and impact; they could not engage in Twitter networking and lobbying (even though it was seen as an important intralite platform) because they had to prioritize the lower forms of advocacy due to limited resources. It is the combination of advocacy forms that substantiates networked lobbying, though, as an organization's impact is closely connected to the size, profile, and activity of its networks. Only by providing interesting information, vibrant communities and engaging campaigns can interest groups build the networked capital necessary to matter to political decision makers in the hybrid media landscape.

6 | CONCLUSIONS

The affordances of social media both constrain and enable new forms of political advocacy. The present study has analysed four forms of interest groups' networked advocacy as explained by interest group insiders with an emphasis on the groups' motivation and strategies. Three main findings with implications for how we understand interest groups' advocacy today are highlighted herein.

First, by combining the literatures of networked media logics, social media affordances, and interest group advocacy, the interviews give new insights into how interest groups seek to adapt to and make use of social media affordances, by selecting the specific platform that is most suitable, tailoring content and genre, and distinguishing between a number of target audiences. Such insights into how executives and heads of communication reflect on networked advocacy strategies have been largely missing in previous—largely quantitative—mappings of social media advocacy (Chalmers & Shotton, 2016). It demonstrates shared insights into how networked media logics work,

whereas the groups' abilities to employ these for their political purposes varies.

Second, analysing if and how group resources condition interest groups' networked advocacy and lobbying, some interesting patterns emerge. For the most basic advocacy purposes (i.e., networked information and community-building), Facebook was crucial for all groups in this study, independent of group type and resources. How group characteristics influence networked advocacy varies, particularly regarding networked lobbying, where group resources make a difference; this is a strategy systematically employed by interviewees representing some of the most resourceful groups, whereas interviewees representing smaller groups with limited resources say they cannot prioritize networked lobbying on Twitter. The study, thus, nuances extant mappings of interest groups on social media (i.e., van der Graaf et al., 2016); it finds that social media affordances facilitate and make awareness-raising and community-building more efficient and purposeful for all groups. At the same time, the study largely confirms previous findings, which privilege established, large organizations with larger budgets, credibility, staff, technical knowhow, and political relations, in cases of mobilization and lobbying.

Third, interviewees representing these resourceful organizations underline that Twitter represents a new efficient form of middle-stage lobbying. The Twitter platform affords the combination of being able to communicate directly to decision makers (via Twitter) while making this association visible to other Twitter elites, thereby providing interest groups with new momentum in their direct strategies towards decision makers. This form of lobbying shares some features with outsider lobbying (Kollman, 1998) and boosting strategies (Trapp & Laursen, 2017). At the same time, the semipersonal, direct, real-times communication on Twitter represents a new form of advocacy.

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