

# Capturing the recent history of public affairs occupational culture: A comparative case study on the image of lobbying in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century

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## Abstract

This article analyzes the narrative structures of two audiovisual products from the point of view of public relations cinematic discourse: the documentary *State Legislature*, directed by Frederick Wiseman, and the TV series *K Street*, created and directed by Steven Soderbergh. Both productions capture the activity of lobbyists in the state and federal governmental arenas, are remarkable ethnographic exercises in analyzing the practice of lobbying in the United States and major examples of the media representation of corporate public affairs. Accordingly, *State Legislature* and *K Street* are key sources of the recent history of public relations occupational culture.

**Keywords:** Frederick Wiseman; Lobbying; Media representations; Public affairs; Steven Soderbergh.

## 1. Introduction

In one of the most celebrated historiography books of recent years, *The Mirror of Herodotus* (2009), a current member of *Annales* French historiographical movement, François Hartog, asks whether Herodotus is to be regarded as an ethnographer or a historian. In fact, to Herodotus —a

Greek historian from the 5th century BC, and considered the first historian ever— a historian is not a compiler of old documents, but a researcher who travels to form an opinion and collect testimonies regarding the recent past (Hartog, 2009). As other scholars have argued, "the Father of History is also the father of comparative anthropology" (Pipes, 1990), "the father of ethnography" (Jones, 1996, p. 315).

This stance on history was adopted by other historians from classical antiquity, such as Thucydides, who used oral surveys to collect data for his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, and by historians from the Middle Ages (Guenée, 1980) or the Enlightenment, like Voltaire (Soulet, 2012). Although it was Voltaire who said: "Over time, stories grow and the truth is lost" (quoted in Soulet, 2012, p. 14), from the nineteenth century onwards historiographical trends dealt more with the earliest times than the present.

However, it was the great psychological impact of the Second World War that triggered the boom in research into Recent History (also known as History of the Present or Contemporary History; in French: *Histoire immédiate*), a term coined by the French historian Jean-François Soulet (1994) to refer to the historiography of the present world.

Recent history arises through the dividing of contemporary history, inevitably expanded by the passage of time (Soulet, 1994). Through the use of words explicitly linked to the present and the immediate, historians insist on making the most recent events their object of study, meaning it is an object under permanent construction (Hobsbawm, 1996). Unlike journalism, which is also concerned with narrating current events, recent history applies the methodology of historical science (Soulet, 2012). The problem that can most easily affect the historian of recent history is a lack of objectivity; although objectivity is not fully achieved in the history of bygone eras, either.

The other crucial factor in the development of recent history, however, was the mass media revolution, which affected sources of information, both through their sudden multiplication and the different media and channels via which information might appear. Compared with the shortage of sources suffered by the classical historian, the recent historian has them in abundance. And this thanks to audiovisual documents that involved similar innovations in using the sources themselves. Although fictional cinema is also considered a source of recent history (Soulet, 2012), documentary film is the most accurate, since “the present and the will to make it history place the protagonists’ own testimony at the service of the historian” (Capellán, 2001, p. 296). The result is therefore recent history, a historiographical project that seeks to provide a response to the technological revolution, the emergence of the mass media, and the new historical consciousness that arose in twentieth century societies.

Although the history of public relations and its various professional fields, such as corporate public affairs and lobbying, is a recent one, the profession has not received intense coverage in film (Miller, 1999; Ames, 2010; Kinsky, 2011), and when this has happened, it has not always been positive (Lee, 2001, 2009, Ames, 2010). Furthermore, in the field of television, perhaps only Aaron Sorkin’s *The West Wing* (1999-2006) and *The Newsroom* (2013) tackle professional aspects of political public relations and media relations (Smudde & Luecke, 2005). However, in the first decade of this century, lobbying —“an area of public relations that is challenging, rewarding and intrinsically worthwhile” (Gregory, 2007, p. XIV)— has had more luck in arousing the interest of American producers and filmmakers. In fact, some notable classic Hollywood movies addressed the theme of political influence, such as Frank Capra’s *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939).

Lobbyists have also been the central characters in recent fictions such as Jason Reitman’s *Thank You for Smoking* (2005), **George Hickenlooper’s *Casino Jack* (2010)** —a comical portrayal of **lobbyist Jack Abramoff**—, and even *The West Wing* shows lobbyist strategies towards the White House. Nevertheless, it is two big-name directors, documentary maker Frederick Wiseman and

Oscar-winning director Steven Soderbergh, who have been responsible for the two most important testimonies of the current practice of lobbying, one through a documentary and the other a TV series.

The purpose of this article is to analyze how Frederick Wiseman's documentary *State Legislature* and Steven Soderbergh's television series *K Street* constitute two important sources of knowledge regarding the practice of public affairs. Both are prime examples of media representations of public relations practice while constituting ethnographic and historiographical models of said professional practice.

## **2. Frederick Wiseman's *State Legislature***

*State Legislature*, a three-hour and 37 minute documentary, is one of the last films created by Frederick Wiseman, a producer/director who has spent most of his long, respected career recording everyday life in a wide variety of American public institutions – including mental hospitals, high schools, welfare institutions, juvenile courts, and, with this documentary, parliamentary branch.

*State Legislature* shows the day-to-day activities of the Idaho Legislature, including committee meetings, debates of the House and Senate, informal discussions, meetings with lobbyists, constituents, the public and the press. As Darmon (2013) suggests, the workings of a democratic government are of interest not only to Americans; because so many countries in the world are currently trying to adopt a democratic form of government, the issues presented have relevance on a global scale.

Frederick Wiseman —“perhaps de most sagacious of American documentarists” (Saunders, 2007, p. 188)—, has made 34 other documentaries, including the controversial *Titicut Follies* in 1967, which examined life in a Massachusetts hospital for the criminally insane. His films have explored

American life and institutions such as high school, horse racing, law and order, and domestic violence. “The film shows how the democratic decision-making process works” (Wiseman, 2007, p. 153). The Idaho Legislature consists of the upper Idaho Senate and the lower Idaho House of Representatives. The Idaho Senate contains 35 Senators, who are elected from 35 districts. The Idaho House of Representatives consists of 70 Representatives, who are elected from the same 35 legislative districts, with 2 being elected from each constituency. There are no term limits for either chamber.

Why Idaho? According to Wiseman (2007), Idaho is a western state with a relatively small population, vast natural resources, great beauty, and a complex and fascinating history. The issues that are of importance to Idaho are similar to those of many western states (i.e. development of natural resources, tourism, increasing the industrial base, preserving the integrity of the environment, and maintaining a rural way of life hospitable to its residents). All of these factors are reflected in the issues that the legislature deals with during a legislative session.

Wiseman presents several issues at various stages in the legislative process. His camera is present at committee meetings, debates on the floor, lunch conversations, and even backroom meetings with lobbyists (the film has major sequences illustrating the role of lobbyists). His camera watches as legislators grapple with issues as diverse as water usage, teachers’ salaries, drivers licenses for immigrants, telephone deregulation, gay marriage, contractor licensing, and the building of an American history monument.

The film was shot during the 2004 session of the Idaho legislature. Wiseman was present, with the exception of a few days, for the entire session, and he had access to all aspects of their work —“The people in the Idaho legislature were extremely cooperative (Wiseman, 2007, p. 154)—, which

included the following kinds of events, most of them part of public relations and corporate public affairs strategies and tactics:

- debates in the House and Senate;
- testimony before legislative committees;
- meetings of legislative committees;
- discussion among staff members of committees;
- party caucuses;
- meeting of the leadership of the House and Senate;
- legislators meeting with constituents;
- legislators meeting with representatives of various interest groups;
- legislators meeting with lobbyists;
- political discussion among legislators;
- informal conversations in the corridors of the State House;
- discussion of legislative strategy;
- conferences and meetings with representatives of other state agencies and regulatory commissions;
- press conferences and interviews with journalists.

All the lobbying process is covered by the film. In addition, the film raises issues of the relationship between church and state, free speech, the separation of powers between the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of government, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, capitalism, crime, education, immigration, health, the environment and the role of lobbyists. Wiseman does not paint Idaho's elected officials as powerful manipulators of the public, but rather depicts a government of the people, by the people, for the people. In consequence, the film legitimates the role of lobbying and corporate public affairs in the exercise of democracy. "*State Legislature* is, in my view, a

reflection of contemporary American life and both an illustration of and metaphor for the democratic process” (Wiseman, 2007, p. 154).

### **3. Steven Soderbergh’s *K Street***

*K Street* is a 2003 ten-episode HBO television series —created by actor George Clooney and director Steven Soderbergh— about lobbyists and politicians in Washington, D.C. According to Baker (2011), the whole idea for the series seemed to grow out of the Georgetown cocktail-party scene in famous Soderbergh’s film *Traffic*, “in which Washington politicians, ...lobbyists, and media figures proclaim their positions on illegal narcotics to the drug czar Bob Wakefield” (p. 82).

*K Street* executive producers conceived a program which fused politics and entertainment in ways not previously tried (McGrath, 2008). Work on each episode began on Monday mornings, with the episode being transmitted that Sunday evening. Issues were taken from current political events, and a rough storyline would be developed. Fragments of dialogue would be written at the Monday meetings, but each episode was largely unscripted and improvised (Frey, 2003; McConnell, 2003; Taubin, 2004; McGrath, 2008).

Indeed, *K Street* was “an experiment in rapid television production” (Gallagher, 2013, p. 197).

Unlike *State Legislature*, the intention was not to produce a documentary showing how laws are made and how congressional committee hearings are organized (essentially, the stuff of C-SPAN), but rather to go behind the formal processes and reveal something about the nature of politics. As James Carville put it: “I envision a show about power: building power, applying power. There will be a lot of conniving going on” (quoted in McGrath, 2008, p.173).

In spite of that, *K Street* offers a good picture of how the lobbying industry works (Taubin, 2004), thanks to a combination of fiction and reality. In addition, as McGrath (2008) clarifies, behind the scenes *K Street* was staffed by people who mixed political and entertainment experience. Co-producer, Stuart Stevens, worked as a Republican media consultant and had been a writer for network TV programs, including *Northern Exposure*. A consulting producer, Jon Macks, worked as a speechwriter for elected officials, before becoming a writer for Jay Leno's *Tonight Show*. Another consulting producer, Michael Deaver, spent over 20 years as one of Ronald Reagan's closest advisers, after which he became one of the most prominent lobbyists in Washington. Mark Sennet, an executive producer, who had worked at Merv Griffin Entertainment and Columbia Pictures Television, previously collaborated with Deaver on *The Reagans: A Love Story*.

The series focuses on a Washington, D.C., public relations and lobbying firm, Bergstrom Lowell, run by two real Beltway insiders: the former Clinton campaign advisor James Carville and his wife, the Republican political consultant Mary Matalin. The other three principal characters are fictional, yet their conflicts and dilemmas seem less artificial because of their constant interaction with actual members of Congress and media personalities. Numerous senators (Barbara Boxer, Charles Grassley, Rick Santorum, Chuck Schumer), House members (David Dreier, Steny Hoyer, Harold Ford Jr.), power brokers (Robert Bennett, Tamara Haddad, Ken Adelman), lobbyists and political consultants (Paul Begala, Joe Lockhart, Jack Quinn), and journalists (Howard Kurtz, Joe Klein, Al Hunt) appear in the series.

As it has been mentioned above, no scripts were used, and all the dialogue was spontaneous.

Another level of realism was added by the show's use of current issues: the California governor's race; the presidential campaign of Howard Dean; accusations that Matalin had been involved in leaking the identity of the covert CIA operative Valerie Plame, whose ambassador husband Joseph



Wilson had written a report critical of the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq; and the music industry lobbying for legislation to limit illegal downloads (Baker, 2011).

*K Street*'s mix of fiction with real people and situations was not new; in fact, it evokes the combination of the two in other HBO programs, such as *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, which uses improvised dialogue and people playing themselves, and the actual politicians and fictional characters in the HBO series *Tanner*, set during the 1988 Democratic Primary. Carville and Matalin also were not newcomers to performing for the camera, as both had appeared in D. A. Pennebaker's 1992 documentary about the Bill Clinton presidential campaign, *The War Room* (Taubin, 2004).

As Wiseman, Soderbergh can be considered the total author of the series: to operating the digital video camera himself, Soderbergh is the director of photography and editor. Each week's shoot moves very quickly and is visually shaped and emotionally distanced by Soderbergh's use of available light photography and improvised dialogue. As in several of Soderbergh's feature films, *K Street* eschews a classical narrative structure of character exposition, dramatic arc, and resolution. *K Street*'s nonlinear form, which includes whole episodes in flashback, a peculiar rhetorical resource of public relations discourse (Xifra & Girona, 2012) is one of several innovations Soderbergh brings to the television political drama. Events are elided because it would be impossible to include them and because doing so is an extension of Soderbergh's style, "where narrative ellipses are used to indicate temporal breaks and jump cuts reinforce his docudrama approach" (Sanders, 2011, p. 200).

In her research of fictional portrayals of public relations from 1930-1995, Miller (1999) found eight archetypical attributes associated with public relations practitioners in entertainment media: practitioners were portrayed as generally ditzy, obsequious, cynical, manipulative, money-minded, isolated, accomplished, or unfulfilled. Furthermore, practitioners were often represented as effective

at their jobs, but their work was fraught with moral questions, and many portrayals also included tensions between practitioners and their clients. One decade later, Ames (2010) has analyzed eleven movies released after 1995 and has concluded that those films include more accurate depictions of public relations and fewer negative stereotypes. Similarly, Kinsky (2011) argues that television series like *The West Wing* have portrayed public relations practitioners as competent and responsible professionals. *K Street*, as (para) fictional audiovisual creation, can be considered a good example of how the portrayals of public relations practitioners have turned into a more accurate depictions. Obviously, the main reason of this accuracy is the fact that the main characters are played by real practitioners. From this point of view, *K Street* confirms Ames' (2010) results.

#### **4. Discussion: Direct cinema, recent history and images of public relations occupational cultures**

If one of the main features of *K Street* is its narrative style, *State Legislature* style includes no narration. The unscripted scenes tell the story. That's typical of the direct cinema, a documentary genre that originated between 1958 and 1962 in North America, principally in the Canadian province of Quebec and the United States (Rosenthal & Carter, 2005). Similar in many respects to the *cinéma vérité* genre, it was characterized initially by filmmakers' desire to directly capture reality and represent it truthfully, and to question the relationship of reality with cinema.

It is sometimes called "observational cinema" (Monaco, 2001, p. 206), if understood as pure direct cinema: mainly without a narrator's voice-over. There are subtle, yet important, differences among terms expressing similar concepts. Direct cinema is largely concerned with the recording of events in which the subject and audience become unaware of the camera presence: operating within what Nichols calls the "observational mode" (Nichols, 2001, p. 109), a fly on the wall.

In *State Legislature*, the approach of Wiseman to the legislature is also symbolic. As Wiseman (2007) pointed out, “a legislature is also a site for political symbolism. It is where elected representatives act out the image they want to project to constituents and opponents, and where groups present collective grievances and goals – seeking press, symbolic legislative declarations, or simply airtime as often as actual laws or appropriations” (p. 153). This statement confirms that public relations is a “meaning-construction process through the use of symbols, interactions and interpretations” (Zhang, 2006, p. 27). From this standpoint, Wiseman has acted as public relations **ethnographer**, and *State Legislature*, in the future, will be one of the most important sources of lobbying (and public relations) historical anthropology.

From this point of view, we can find extraordinary connections between the work of Wiseman and other documentary makers that have made audiovisual public relations work, as pioneering Scottish documentary maker John Grierson. In fact, Wiseman labels his films variously “reality dreams”, or “reality fictions” (Saunders, 2007, p. 145). These terms, nonetheless appropriately update a sentence attributed to John Grierson, “the creative treatment of actuality” (Eitzen, 1995, p. 82). Nevertheless, there is an important difference between Grierson documentaries and Wiseman ones. According to Nichols (1992), the documentaries of Grierson and his colleagues at the Empire Marketing Board (EMB) were expository, and their editing was used to establish and maintain rhetoric continuity rather than space or time continuity. Wiseman's films, however, are part of the observational mode of documentaries (Nichols, 1978), in which the filmmaker remains hidden behind the camera, ignored by the surrounding environment he/she neither changes nor influences the actions/events being captured. Observational (objective) mode is best exemplified by the *cinema vérité* and direct cinema movements that emerged in the late 1950s/early 1960s — it attempted to capture (as accurately as possibly) objective reality with filmmaker as neutral observer, and its editing enhances the impression of authentic temporality (Nichols, 1992). Regardless this debate,

Frederick Wiseman should rightly be awarded a place as one of a group of filmmakers who, like John Grierson, Alberto Cavalcanti, Humphrey Jennings or Paul Rotha, have played an important role in creating a rhetorical and audiovisual dimension to public relations, and particularly he should rightly be awarded a place as the first one in offering an ethnographic approach to the image of the practice of one of the areas of public relations.

*New York Times* television critic Virginia Heffernan notes of *K Street*: “As much as people claim to want Wiseman... versions of reality, it’s pretty unwatchable” (Stanley & Heffernan, 2003). Indeed, the aims of both filmmakers are diverse, as well as the results. Remarkably for prestige television, episodes of the part-reality, part-fiction *K Street* were, as mentioned before this, aired the same week they were filmed, and they incorporated within their plotlines breaking national news and the ongoing primary campaigns for the 2004 U.S. presidency. *K Street* embodies what Gallagher (2013) denominates “the parafictional form” (p. 197) — relying on television’s more intimate address and serial-narrative possibilities, *K Street* generates a semi-fictional commentary on Washington, D.C., political culture while participating in curious ways with that culture (Gallagher, 2013).

We can find one example of this approach in the series’ third episode, when political consultant Mary Matalin and journalist and bestselling novelist Joe Klein (identified in dialogue only in passing as “Joe”) have an impromptu discussion on a busy Capitol Hill street as a single, handheld digital-video camera films them from a distance in surveillance-video style. The meeting is staged for filming, and while Matalin and Klein improvise their dialogue, it relates loosely to a fictional plotline constructed by screenwriter Henry Bean and director Soderbergh as well as to real events in the U.S. political world in the week prior to the scene’s filming and telecast (Sanders, 2011).

Gallagher (2013) argues that series as *K Street* belong to the category of paradocumentary, gaining power from their relationship to documentary modes and their attendant truth claims.

“Paradocumentary extends documentary address, making truth claims (or deliberately advancing false ones) and marshaling supporting evidence through interviews and fabrication of the world of lived experience, often using the *vérité* staple of footage of informal or dead time” (Gallagher, 2013, p. 202). For these reasons, unlike *State Legislature*, Soderbergh’s series does not pretend to be a documentary; its aim is not the illusion of authenticity or truth but rather the proximity to truth. It does not tell us: “this is really happening”, but instead: “things like this are really happening” (Gallagher, 2013, p. 202). This filmmaking approach is similar to the one adopted by the authors of early twentieth century urban documentaries: Walter Ruttmann, Dziga Vertov or Alberto Cavalcanti, in which, thanks to the editing, the audience feels that the events it is seeing “are really happening” (Vitella, 2009, p. 79).

Indeed, in Soderbergh’s staging there are parts of *cinéma vérité* procedures. His *mise en scène* is able to eavesdrop on conversations as if the director (and audience) were a privileged member of the cast. Furthermore, the cinema of Steven Soderbergh —and *K Street* is a classic example of this— is deeply indebted to the urban immediacy of the Italian neorealist movement (Ciment & Niogret, 2002) —in turn influenced by urban documentaries— and therefore can be approached as a new neorealism, in which the immediacy is based on links with current events. As Sanders (2011) points out, Soderbergh “foregrounds the fortunes of Bergstrom Lowell’s employees against actual events occurring in all their immediacy. Given the tendency in Washington for “breaking events” to be reported in the media at a moment’s notice, Soderbergh’s creativity is on full display in his ability to exploit the fortuitous” (p. 207). Related with staging, the neorealist background is also present. Sanders (2011) argues that the program portrays a neorealist Washington, D.C., “as a place of betrayals, embattled wills, unconfirmed suspicions, broken relationships, and indeterminate meanings through Soderbergh’s use of skittish camera work, off-kilter framing, and unbalanced lighting” (p. 199).

In sum, while *K Street* is parafictional, mixing fiction with ethnographic ingredients (characters are played by real lobbyists), *State Legislature* is an excellent example of ethnographic film, as it reflects a certain culture of political decision-making and the lobbyist's *modus operandi*. In *K Street*, lobbying is the activity that serves as a framework for the TV fiction, while *State Legislature* is more concerned with the decision-making process. In addition, *K Street* takes sides and values the role of lobbying, while *State Legislature* does not. *K Street* is consistent with some films produced and directed by Steven Soderbergh and George Clooney, that is, films of political denunciation, and *State Legislature* does not evaluate, but captures reality through the traditional style of direct cinema. In consequence, the image of lobbyists is more stereotyped in *K Street* than in *State Legislature*. Despite such divergences, the two productions are the best examples —along with Matthew Quirk's **novel** *The 500*— of the image represented of lobbying in popular culture.

*State Legislature* is the only **documentary** approach to corporate public affairs, a specialized function of public relations (Lerbinger, 2006). An approach made from ethnography, where we observe how dialogue, conversation and advocacy are not incompatible and can be combined within the professional practice of lobbying. For its part, *K Street*'s connection with reality and its scenes depicting the everyday work of the lobbyist —even doing research work (the second episode shows a focus group being conducted)— make it also a good example of the representation of corporate public affairs practice. From this point of view, both *State Legislature* and *K Street* capture public affairs occupational culture.

Occupational culture is a useful conceptual tool for analyzing the values and beliefs held by workers and how this binds them together. According to Johnson *et al.* (2009), occupational culture is believed to be the result of similar occupational backgrounds and experiences of different groups of organizational members. Crawley and Crawley (2004) describe occupational culture as “the commonly shared beliefs, values and characteristic patterns of behavior that exist within an

organization” (p. 8). In particular, occupational culture (or subculture) develops through social interaction, shared experience, common training and affiliation, mutual support, associated values and norms, and similar personal characteristics of members of a particular occupational group. Like organizational culture, occupational culture develops distinct jargon and shapes perceptions of reality by developing classification systems to describe experiences and concepts (Hansen, 1995).

According to L’Etang (2011), research into public relations occupational cultures would fall under the ethnography of work. “Such research has analyzed how people do their jobs, how and why they take decisions, stresses and tensions experienced in a great variety of workplaces and in relation to the gamut of jobs” (p. 25). From this perspective, the role of Wiseman in *State Legislature* is like a researcher. Furthermore, the staging of direct cinema is a useful discourse for ethnographic purposes. Indeed, the direct cinema *mise en scène* stresses the ethnographic dimension of Wiseman’s film and brings us, as never been done before, to the practice of lobbying as one of the public relations occupational culture.

Not so with *K Street*. As McGrath (2008) states, “while the show was originally promoted by HBO as being about lobbying, in fact relatively little lobbying is evident in the series” (p. 173).

Nevertheless, the realism of *K Street* is not “spurious”, as Sanders (2011, p. 197) suggests. Indeed, as Baker (2011) argues, using a combination of realism and expressive stylization of character subjectivity, *K Street* (and all Soderbergh’s films) differs from the contemporary Hollywood mainstream through the statements they offer on issues including political repression, illegal drugs, violence, environmental degradation, the empowering and controlling potential of digital technology, economic inequality, and the role of lobbying in political system. From this perspective, Soderbergh and Wiseman can be considered, at different levels, two audiovisual analysts of 1) lobbying and its political context, in particular, and 2) American social and political reality (Darmon, 2013). From their filmmaking, the most interesting and accurate representations of

part of public relations practices have been delivered. Through their cameras, both have written a recent history of American lobbying. And both film makers have shown the critical role of public relations in shaping social and political relationships.

As Lerbinger (2006) pointed out, most listings of public affairs activities include more public relations activities than activities of any other type, but the main contribution of public relations to public affairs “is its emphasis on establishing and maintaining long-term relationships between an organization and its publics” (p. 3). Both *State Legislature* and *K Street* show how this function works — they are also two important sources of the recent history of public relations. According to Soulet (2012), historians of the present find the main sources for their research in audiovisual productions (documentaries and fictional films), especially those in which the “director captures the reality instead of filming it” (p. 197). Both Wiseman and Soderbergh have accurately captured the practice of professional lobbying in the United States.

If Frederick Wiseman documentary is (and will be) a main source of historiographical analysis of lobbying practices as public relations occupational culture, the elements of reality of *K Street* and Soderbergh’s parafictional narrative investments, turn the series in a secondary historiographical source for the public relations historians. Both films are a good example that lobbyists, as public affairs consultants, “can be regarded as members of a particular speech community” (L’Etang, 2011, p. 26), which possesses its own “communicative repertoire, speech event, speech act, shared language, attitudes, etc.” (Keating, 2001, p. 288).

Frederick Wiseman and Steven Soderbergh, using the approach initiated by Herodotus, have proceeded as ethnographic researchers, and like them, they have produced “empathetic insights and understanding of public relations occupational cultures” (L’Etang, 2011, p. 26). Subsequently, both



film makers, from a Herodotusian perspective, form part —indirectly— of the small group of public relations historians.

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## **Credits**

***State Legislature***

Country: USA, 2007. Production: Idaho Film Inc. Director and editor: Frederick Wiseman. Director of photography: John Davey.

***K Street***

Country: USA, 2003. Production: HBO. Created by Steven Soderbergh. Director, editor and director of photography: Steven Soderbergh. Screenplay: Henry Bean. Starring: James Carville, Mary Matalin, John Slattery, Mary McCormack, Roger Guenveur Smith.