

Flying Green?

Representing ‘Sustainable Aviation Fuel’s in the Danish Media

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The climate crisis poses a challenge for existing mobility practices, lifestyles, and transportation infrastructures based on fossil fuels. While new technologies and alternative fuels are being developed to replace fossil fuels for mobility, flying constitutes a particular challenge as electrification is not expected to be technically feasible within a foreseeable future. Meanwhile, flying has been associated with guilt or shame due to relatively high carbon emissions, observable in the notion of ‘flygskam’, which took off in Sweden a few years ago and has rapidly travelled to many other countries (Wormbs & Söderberg, 2021; Ullström et al., 2023).

The aviation industry has articulated high hopes to so-called ‘Sustainable Aviation Fuels’ (SAF), especially fuels based on carbon capture utilization, and hydrogen produced by electrolysis (power-to-X). In Denmark, as in other European countries, these hopes resonate with mainstream political ambitions on green energy transition. This includes specific targets for sustainable domestic flight as well as energy strategies for power-to-X and carbon capture and utilization (Regeringen, 2023). Recently, the issue of SAF has also entered public discussions in Danish media.

This paper examines the representation of SAF in Danish media from 2018-2023, covering different public arenas such as national mainstream media, regional/local media, and trade journals devoted to energy and mobility. Drawing on a systematic sample (n=302) from the database Infomedia, the study identifies and characterizes the dominant frames in the media representation (Entman, 1993; Nisbet, 2010) as well as their distribution in different media publics. Particularly attention is paid to how notions of ‘green’ and ‘sustainable’ are employed in the coverage, i.e. what is assumed, stated, or contested when ‘green’ or ‘sustainable’ is presented as a quality of aviation fuels. Furthermore, the study maps the main sources in the debate, their positions within the identified frames, and the central lines of conflict.

Preliminary findings show a sharp increase in media attention to SAF from almost nothing (n=32) to nearly a thousand news items (n=955) within the sampling period. News reporting is dominated by technical and economic story lines. Further findings will be discussed in relation to scholarly literature on media, politics, and sustainable aviation (Budd et al., 2013; Anderson et al., 2022) and situated within the broader landscape of mediated discourses on climate change (Hajer & Versteeg, 2005; Dryzek, 2021, Schäfer & Painter, 2021).

Selected references:

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Regeringen (2023). *Vejen til grøn luftfart*. <https://skm.dk/media/0xefayun/vejen-til-groen-luftfart-udspil-om-groen-luftfart.pdf>

Wormbs, N. & Söderberg, M.W. (2021). Knowledge, Fear, and Conscience: Reasons to Stop Flying Because of Climate Change, *Urban Planning* 6 (2).