



Representational bias and changes in the Brussels-based interest group population

Presentation prepared for the INTEREURO outreach workshop in the section on the Brussels interest group community at the CEPS on 2 December 2014

Joost Berkhout, Assistant Professor in Political Science



Outline

- Research question:
 - Position of system- or population studies
 - Importance
- Findings:
 - Explosion of lobbyism?
 - Brussels: A Tale of Two Cities
- ‘Practical’ implications

Research questions by sub-field of study of interest representation

	1. Mobilisation and maintenance	2. Population of interest groups	3. Activities and strategies	4. Political outcomes and success
Typical research question	Why do people or organisations act collectively?	Why does the population of groups vary across states, policy areas and over time?	Why do interest groups do what they do?	Why are certain interests more successful than others?
Explanandum	Collective action	Density and diversity of organisations	(Policy-oriented) Activities	Policies or policy frames

Concern about inefficiency

- Number of groups grows over time
- Groups secure narrow, private gain from existing public policies
- Group pressures' lead to policy deadlock and, eventually, economic decline

Concern about bias

Schattschneider (1960) about lobby in the US:

- The "range of organized, identifiable, known groups is amazingly narrow; there is nothing remotely universal about it" and
- the "business or upper-class bias of the pressure system shows up everywhere."

Questions

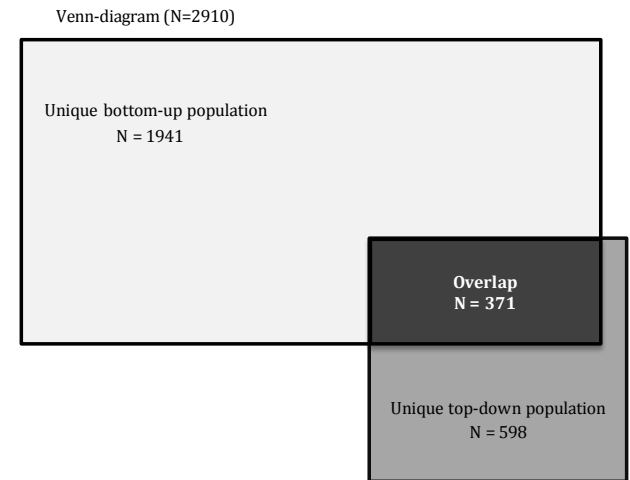
- Has there been an 'explosion' in the number of lobbyists in Brussels?
- What are the main differences between the general population of organized interests and those that are potentially heard by policy makers?

No explosion, but lobby tourism

- Number of registrants in the EP register constant at around **1500** organisations
- 30% 'residents', registering for more than 40 weeks, **70% 'tourists'**
- Longer term population over 4000 organisations
- Differences in lobby experience

A tale of two cities

- scope of political conflict tends to narrow through the policy process
- ‘whole’ population differs from active population in size and constituents,
- composition is similar
 - business interest representation (around 60 per cent),
 - national/European/supra-national (1/3 each)
 - collective, associational (1/3), individual firm or institutional representatives (1/3), citizens’ groups (1/3)



Lobby practice and registration

- Lobby practice:
 - Short-term
 - Narrow institutional focus
- Lobby transparency
 - ‘it takes two to tango’: who participates in meetings in the buildings of the Commission, Council and Parliament?