Speaking for the People? : Analysing the extent to which interest groups represent the opinion of the citizens and under which conditions they are more likely to do so

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Lobbying – for better or for worse?

"Could an advanced democratic country prevent the drift toward government by de facto quasi guardians? To do so it would have to focus attention on the weakest link in the chain of successive approximations. That link is the demos itself."
(Dahl 1989: 338)

Do interest groups help or hinder democratic policymaking? Normatively speaking, democratic governments should be expected to develop policies that are in line with what the public wants, as this assumption lies at the core of representative democracies (Dahl 1971). For example, Dahl argues, that for a government to be responsive, all citizens must have the opportunity to formulate their preferences, indicate their preferences by individual or collective action and have their preferences weighted equally (1971: 2). However, policymakers constantly have to balance competing interests of different actors in society. For example, the interests of the automobile industry may not coincide with what the majority of citizens want. Who wins such a battle is one of the core questions in political science. The risk is, as indicated by the opening quote, that policymaking is taken over by political elites (or quasi guardians) who are influential because of their specialised knowledge (Dahl 1989: 337).

Generally, scholars show that governments succeed in translating public opinion into policies (Rasmussen, Reher, et al. 2018; Soroka and Wlezien 2010; Stimson et al. 1995; Toshkov et al. 2018). At the same time, there is a body of literature that is more critical, arguing that chances of policies being in line with what the public wants are equal to flipping a coin (Lax and Phillips 2012). Moreover, if governments respond to public preferences, they mostly cater to the rich rather than the poor (Gilens and Page 2014; Peters and Ensink 2015). Until recently, surprisingly little research has looked at how interest groups affect the link between public opinion and policy outputs (but see Burstein 2014; Gilens and Page 2014; Gray et al. 2004). The GovLis project[1] in which my PhD project was written, set out to fill this gap and has advanced the field with a number of new findings (Bevan and Rasmussen 2017; Rasmussen et al. 2019; Rasmussen and Reher 2019; Rasmussen, Romeijn, et al. 2018). Filling this gap is important as it enhances our understanding of whether interest groups thwart policies away from what the public wants or if specific interests prevail over the public

[1] www.govlis.eu

interest. While my dissertation does not aim at testing the conditioning link of interest groups on policy responsiveness (see for example Rasmussen et al. 2019), it advances the field by looking at an important precondition, that is, the extent to which interest groups act as transmission belts of public preferences and how they do so. I argue interest groups do so by means of information, which is a mechanism through which they represent citizens.

Existing theories offer two perspectives that help understand how interest groups could affect the opinion-policy link (cf. Bevan and Rasmussen 2017; Rasmussen et al. 2019). The more optimistic perspective sees interest groups as important intermediaries between the public and the policymaking level with the potential for groups to enhance the legitimacy of democratic decision-making. This pluralist perspective understands interest groups as transmission belts (Truman 1951) that organise, aggregate and transmit public preferences to the policymaking level (Bevan and Rasmussen 2017; Dür and De Bièvre 2007b; Kollman 1998). Groups mobilise and emerge as a group if a common interest (shared by the members of that group) is 'disturbed', potentially, but not exclusively, by other groups. Hence, various groups co-exist, which, in the aggregate, reflect the complex needs and preferences within the society (Truman 1951). Different groups, therefore, transmit a diverse, balanced and pluralistic view to the policymaking level. This dynamic could positively influence the opinion-policy link as policymakers have incentives to take into account a diverse set of mobilised interests. Moreover, the mobilisation of interest groups allows policymakers to learn about citizens' preferences and therefore enables them to more accurately respond to what the public wants.

Yet, even though, from a pluralist perspective, the involvement of interest groups is supposed to enhance democratic legitimacy, their involvement is not without risk. Unequal opportunities and undue influence may bias the interest group landscape towards special interests. This line of thinking, which also reflects many of the public concerns, goes back to elitist perspectives on interest representation (cf. Bevan and Rasmussen 2017). Schattschneider (1960) draws an image of the interest group community that sings with an 'upper class accent' as especially diffuse interests or interests of the disadvantaged are systematically excluded and therefore less likely to be represented. This view is also supported by Olson (1965), who argues that economic, or special interests face less collective action problems and have therefore an advantage when it comes to mobilising in the first place. Moreover, such groups may be more advantaged with regard to the resources (monetary, informational, personnel) they possess (Yackee and Yackee 2006). Given these

groups represent sectoral interests from which only a concentrated set of actors can benefit (rather than the general public) (Olson 1965), their involvement may introduce bias. Much of the existing research has indeed found that the interest group landscape is crowded with business interests (Baumgartner and Leech 2001; Berkhout, Hanegraaff, et al. 2017; Rasmussen and Carroll 2014; Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Wonka et al. 2010). From such a perspective, it seems questionable that interest groups can transmit a balanced and diverse set of interests. Regarding the opinion-policy link, it could suggest that interest groups are likely to negatively influence general responsiveness as only certain actors voice their interests (Gilens and Page 2014).

The latter, less optimistic perspective on interest group involvement is one that reflects public concerns. Lobbying has a rather negative reputation amongst the general public. There is no shortage of news articles reporting about the dominance and power of big players in policymaking, criticising that policies tend to favour industry interests rather than ordinary citizens. According to the campaign group Corporate Europe Observatory as many as 30.000 lobbyists are attempting to influence EU politics, a number which roughly equals the staff employed by the European Commission.[2] By some estimates, "these shadowy agitators are estimated to influence 75 per cent of European legislation" (ibid.). This negative view of interest advocacy is not merely an EU phenomenon: More than half of the people in Germany and the UK feel that their national governments are run by business interests.[3] For example, Germany is often accused of developing policies that are more in line with what the automobile industry than with what citizens would prefer[4]. Critics therefore see lobbying as a threat to democracy and ask for more regulation and transparency[5]. The public perception of lobbying is likely to account, at least partly, for an increasing scepticism towards the political elite. In fact, the OECD reports that public trust in governments is waning, which is "partly due to the perception that policy decisions are driven by private interests at the expense of the public good"[6].

It is crucial for political science as well as representative democracy to know to what extent these stances on lobbying are warranted. Do groups actually represent the public and

[2] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/08/lobbyists-european-parliament-brussels-corporate
[3] https://www.transparency.org/gcb2013/report, last accessed 04.03.2019.
[4] see for example: https://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/deutschland-merkel-ist-die-beste-lobbyistin-der -deutschen-autoindustrie-1.3038396, last accessed 17.12.2018.
[5] https://www.sueddeutsche.de/geld/lobbycontrol-gruenderin-heidi-bank-in-der-politik-siegt-geld-zu-oft-ueber-argumente-1.3373534, last accessed 17.12.2018.
[6] https://www.oecd.org/gov/ethics/lobbyists-governments-trust-vol-3-highlights.pdf, last accessed 04.03.2019.

can contribute to democratic legitimacy? More specifically, can groups act as transmission belts of public preferences and how could they do so? Understanding these mechanisms is important for understanding how groups can help strengthening the extent to which governments respond to public demands. It is the dissertation's aim to contribute to these debates. I will show that different interest groups represent public opinion to varying degrees but that the differences in their congruence with public opinion are smaller than conventional wisdom would lead us to expect. Moreover, and this helps answering the question how interest groups can act as transmission belts, I argue that *one mechanism through which interest groups transmit public preferences is the information they provide to policymakers*. So while the field has advanced over the years in scrutinising whether interest groups affect the opinion-policy link, there is still little research that helps understanding how this potential link works. That is, so far, little attention has been paid to explaining how the potential transmission belt mechanism works (but see Albareda 2018; Kohler-Koch 2010) or whether it works at all. While some suggest that interest groups work as transmission belts by informing policymakers about public preferences (Albareda 2018; Bevan and Rasmussen 2017; Eising and Spohr 2017; Klüver and Pickup 2019), existing research has not included information as a variable when assessing whether groups represent citizens.

Information is a key aspect in the literature on interest representation and lobbying is often understood as the 'strategic transmission of information' (cf. Wright 1996). Truman already argued that policymakers and interest groups exchange different types of information (Truman 1951). This results from an interplay between demand and supply side in which information is the currency (Austen-Smith 1993; Austen-Smith and Wright 1992; Bouwen 2002, 2004; Chalmers 2011, 2013; De Bruycker 2016; Hall and Deardorff 2006; Nownes 2006; Nownes and Newmark 2016; Wonka 2017; Wright 1996). Policymakers need information about different aspects when drafting new policies. For example, the government wants to implement new measures that help protect biodiversity. Even if the government has policy experts for different areas, it is quite unlikely that they have experts for every topic they have to deal with, nor that policymakers have knowledge about every detail and its consequences of a new legislation. They have to know whether decreasing biodiversity is actually a problem and if so how this problem can be solved. They probably would want to know whether there is any scientific evidence for whether proposed measures that help protecting biodiversity are successful, but also what new measures would mean for certain sectors. Eventually they also would want to know what the public thinks about the issue and

whether they would be willing to support new measures. As one interviewed civil servant summarised the dilemma: *"We do not know everything. We need interest groups to tell us what to do."* [7] Interest groups indeed have such knowledge and therefore constitute a source of different types of information, which they can use to access and influence policymakers. Importantly, however, providing information also constitutes a channel for interest groups to inform policymakers about what the public or segments of the public want(s). Eventually this may allow policymakers to actually respond to public demands in which case interest groups have helped strengthening the opinion-policy link.

This raises a couple of questions. First, and this can be seen as a precondition, to what extent do interest groups actually promote the same view as the public? Second, to what extent do interest groups provide information about public preferences? Do groups differ in the extent to which they provide information about public preferences? Furthermore, are there situations in which groups are more likely to inform policy makers about public preferences? How do groups acquire such information in the first place? Is information transmission actually effective, so do policymakers consider information? Eventually, these sub questions will help answering the dissertation's overall question, that is, *to what extent do interest groups act as transmission belts of public preferences and how do they do so?* Ultimately, answering such questions contributes to answering the bigger question of the GovLis project, that is, to what extent do interest groups represent the citizens and do we find empirical patterns that confirm the negative and somewhat worrying accounts of lobbying?

While a vast literature has examined the extent to which the interest group system follows a more pluralist or elitist account of interest representation, scholars have predominantly used business groups as a proxy for assessing how biased a group system is (Gray and Lowery 2000; Rasmussen and Carroll 2014; Schlozman and Tierney 1986). However, scholars tend to be less interested in 'the people' when assessing whether the system sings with an upper class accent. Including citizens in the equation may therefore help us evaluate the perhaps most widespread criticism of lobbying, namely that it does not articulate a voice representative of the population (Gastil 2000; McFarland 1991). Arguably, this requires not only data on interest group activity but also data on public opinion that is linked to interest group data. This could explain why scholars have rarely taken on the

[7] This quote comes from an interview, which I conducted in May 2016 with a German civil servant who has worked on one of our policy issues.

endeavour of linking public opinion, interest groups and policymakers when addressing questions of bias and unequal representation.

My participation in the GovLis project allowed me to answer the questions raised above. As already indicated, its purpose was to link data on public opinion, interest groups and public policy to study whether groups affect the link between public opinion and policy on specific policy issues. I contribute to this important research by looking at a precondition, that is, *how* and *to what extent* do interest groups act as transmission belts and inform policymakers about what the public wants. Answering questions about the information transmission between groups and decision-makers is important; not only for interest group scholars but also for scholars of political responsiveness given the question of how groups can help to enhance responsiveness may shed new light on the relationship between citizens and political representatives. Moreover, such research is also important for society as it provides empirical evidence on how warranted fears of lobbying are and under which conditions lobbying may be helpful for democracy.

1.2 Existing Research

Recent research has pointed out that scholars have rarely included interest groups when examining the opinion-policy link (Bevan and Rasmussen 2017; Klüver and Pickup 2019; Rasmussen 2018; Rasmussen et al. 2019; Rasmussen and Reher 2019; Rasmussen, Romeijn, et al. 2018). This research has also pointed out those that have tackled the question often provide mixed results (Bevan and Rasmussen 2017; Rasmussen et al. 2019). For example, Gray and her colleagues (Gray et al. 2004) look at whether interest group density and diversity affect the extent to which liberal states in the US get more liberal policies as an indication for whether the government responds to public preferences. If groups act as transmission belts, a higher number of mobilised groups (so higher density) may ensure that policymakers get more accurate representation of public preferences (ibid.: 413). Moreover, if business interests dominate the interest group landscape (so less diversity), the representation of public preferences may be skewed. The authors find marginal effects that a higher interest group density leads to more policy liberalism, while a dominance of economic interests weakens this link. The strongest predictor for policy liberalism is after all opinion liberalism, that is, policymakers predominantly develop liberal policies in liberal states. However, responsiveness was measured at the level of ideology, giving less precise estimates about

actual opinions on concrete policy issues. Moreover, interest groups usually do not mobilise to push a policy in a more liberal or conservative direction but act on concrete and specific policy issues.

A study by Bevan and Rasmussen (2017) examines how the population size of voluntary associations affects whether policy priorities reflect public priorities. Relying on measures of political attention of agendas at the US federal level over time, they find that if more voluntary associations are mobilising, the government is more likely to devote attention to the same types of issues as the public (Bevan and Rasmussen 2017). This suggests that groups positively affect the extent to which governments respond to public issue priorities. At the same time, their study shows that group numbers only affect agenda responsiveness at the early stage of the policy process, when institutional friction is low.

Similarly, Rasmussen and Reher (2019) study whether engagement in associations enhances the correspondence between public opinion and policy, using data of 20 specific policy issues in 30 European countries. The findings confirm their expectation, that is, the relationship between public opinion and policy is stronger on issues with higher engagement in associations relevant for the jurisdiction of the policy issue. Again, this study suggests that groups can positively affect the extent to which governments respond to what the public wants, which also finds support by another recent study. Based on a media content analysis of 160 specific policy issues in Germany and Denmark between 1998 and 2010, Rasmussen, Binderkrantz and Klüver (2019) show that policies are more likely to be congruent with the opinion of the majority of the public if the public's view is supported by interest groups that have mobilised on these issues.

For the US, Lax and Philips (2012) provide similar evidence, showing that if the public and interest groups agree on an issue the likelihood of congruence between policy outputs and opinion of the majority of the public is enhanced. Klüver and Pickup's recent study (2019) also emphasises that groups can exert a positive impact on policy responsiveness, but point out that there may be variation in the transmission potential of different group types: while cause groups enhance government responsiveness, sectorial groups decrease government responsiveness.

Although valuable, this research only partly allows us to understand the links between public opinion, interest groups and policy outputs. Scholars have acknowledged that research on responsiveness lacks an explanation of *how* organised interests affect the opinion-policy

link (Bevan and Rasmussen 2017; Burstein and Linton 2002; Gray et al. 2004; Rasmussen et al. 2019; Rasmussen et al. 2014; Rasmussen and Reher 2019). Some assume that groups can affect the link by acting as a transmission belt between policymakers and the public and by informing the latter about preferences of the former (Bevan and Rasmussen 2017; Eising and Spohr 2017; Klüver and Pickup 2019; Rasmussen et al. 2014; Rasmussen and Reher 2019). This would suggest that *information* is a mechanism through which representation may occur.

1.2.1 The Role of Information in Policymaking

Information is indeed a key aspect in the literature on interest representation, as, from an exchange perspective, interest groups are able to provide information that policymakers need. Policymakers need information to draft good policies but also, and this is important in the context of this dissertation, to respond to public demands. In '*The Politics of Information'* Baumgartner and Jones (2015) argue that a government's performance is often assessed with regard to its problem solving capacity *and* its responsiveness (ibid.). The ability to develop efficient policies and to respond to what the public wants requires information about public preferences and information about how to (effectively) design a policy so that policymakers can fully understand the issue (Baumgartner and Jones 2015; Wright 1996). Hence, groups may contribute to a government's problem solving capacity by providing expert information. However, they may also enhance the ability of governments to respond to public preferences if they inform policymakers about such preferences.

Arguably, policymakers can acquire some of such different types of information themselves. Yet information acquisition is time and resource intensive. So even if a policymaker had the cognitive capacities to find and interpret scientific studies and learn about the consequences of decreasing biodiversity, it would simply cost too much time. Moreover, this would only be one type of information and only one question would be answered. It may be even more difficult to access information that helps predicting whether the proposed measures will eventually be effective. Moreover, even if general public opinion may be available on such a specific issue, policymakers may want to have some more constituency-specific information. For example, what do farmers want? What do people who live next to fields on which pesticides were sprayed want? What do consumers who may have to pay higher costs for agricultural products think about this? Such information is not easily accessible for policymakers as it is privately held information.

Interest groups, on the other hand, are a good source for the type of information policymakers need. They have access to the information as they are specialised in the field, acquire knowledge as part of their daily work routine or can obtain information from their members (Dür and Mateo 2013: 94; Michalowitz 2004: 86; Wright 1996). For example, a farmers' association may have a good idea about the farmers' opinion. Moreover, the association may also have information on whether the new measures will actually solve the problem and be effective. A consumer protection organisation, on the other hand, has more accurate estimates about what a new policy could mean for consumers. In addition, interest groups also have information as to whether citizens actually care about an issue and think such an issue is a problem the government should address. Finally, interest groups have some estimates about direct consequences, that is, whether a new policy will positively (or negatively) affect certain parts of the public.

Hence, relying on different interest groups allows policymakers to acquire the relevant information at much lower costs (compared to if they had to collect the information themselves). Even more so, drawing on interest groups for information also allows policymakers to credibly justify and legitimise policy decisions. If groups fulfil the role of a link between policymakers and citizens, involving those means that policies are made with the input from society and less behind closed doors. Involving interest groups in the decision-making process, hence, can (ideally) contribute to input-legitimacy (Kohler-Koch 2010). Either purpose makes information a powerful resource and a source of influence as interest groups can use information in exchange for access and influence (Bouwen 2002, 2004; Chalmers 2013). Hence, interest groups achieve influence through the acquisition and strategic transmission of information that legislators need in order to draft good policies and get reelected (Wright 1996: 2). Since information is a source of influence it is important to know when and how interest groups transmit it.

Early accounts of informational lobbying were formal and theoretical but illustrated how information can influence decision-making (Austen-Smith 1993; Austen-Smith and Wright 1992; Hall and Deardorff 2006; Lohmann 1998). Only recently has research approached informational lobbying empirically. This stream focused predominantly on explaining the different types of information that interest groups provide. Such research has shown, for example, that interest groups predominantly use technical information and less political information (Baumgartner et al. 2009; De Bruycker 2017; Mahoney 2008; Nownes and Newmark 2016) and that groups with higher financial resources hold higher levels of

information and therefore influence (Klüver 2012). Yet, even though there is a growing body of literature on informational lobbying "we still know relatively little about it" (Nownes and Newmark 2016: 58). Moreover, even though "numerous studies rest upon the premise (or show) that lobbying is about providing information, few delve into precisely what types of information lobbyists provide" (ibid.: 61).

Linking this back to the question of whether groups act as transmission belts, scholars often assume that groups work as transmission belts by informing policymakers about what the public wants without considering empirically to what extent interest group actually provide information (cf. Bevan and Rasmussen 2017; Eising and Spohr 2017; Klüver and Pickup 2019; Rasmussen and Reher 2019). Also Burstein argues that "general ideas about information have not been used as the basis for practical research designs, data on the information provided has not been systematically gathered or analyzed, and hypotheses about such information have not been tested" (Burstein 2014: 131). Especially we know very little about information on public preferences and how interest groups use such information to represent their constituents' interests. This is an important gap, which this dissertation addresses theoretically and empirically.

1.2.2 Research Question

The overall aim of the dissertation, therefore, is to look at the extent to which interest groups act as transmission belts of public preferences and understand how they do so. I argue that we have to go to the core of interest representation and bring the people back in. The focus is hence on the constituents of an interest group. I furthermore argue that interest groups represent their constituents by informing policymakers about their interests. Interest groups interact with their constituents (to varying degrees), which allows them to acquire different types of information such as how a new policy proposal will affect them and whether they support such a proposal. When approaching policymakers, interest groups use such information to get access and to influence a policy proposal by lobbying in the interest of their constituents. Policymakers need this information as they have to anticipate electoral consequences and may be quite receptive to such information. This allows groups to influence the opinion-policy link, simply by informing policymakers about what the people want.

The dissertation therefore applies an informational perspective to interest representation aiming at answering the question to what extent interest groups represent citizens. Moreover, the dissertation aims to shed light on how they do so, when they do so and whether they are successful in doing so. More specifically, and as indicated in the introduction, the dissertation seeks to answer the following questions:

To what extent do interest groups represent the opinion of the citizens?

- To what extent do interest groups and the public want the same things?
- To what extent do interest groups inform policymakers about what the public wants?
- Under which conditions are interest groups more likely to provide such information?
- What resources are necessary for groups to acquire information?
- Do interest groups increase their chance of lobbying influence when providing information?

1.3 Theoretical Approach

The following part will introduce the theoretical framework that is used throughout the dissertation. The question the dissertation seeks to answer is about the extent to which interest groups *represent* citizens. Naturally, then, we have to look at concepts of representation, which will be discussed in the following. Concepts of representation will allow me to pay particular attention to the represented ones, thus the citizen. After discussing concepts of representation, I will link them to theories of informational lobbying to develop a theoretical framework that will help understand how interest groups represent citizens and work as transmission belts.

1.3.1 Classic Representation

The most prominent concepts of representation to date are probably rooted in Pitkin's work in '*The Concept of Representation'* (Pitkin 1967). For example, when we talk about the representation of women in parliament we often get the impression that women are underrepresented as the amount of women in parliament does not reflect the amount of

women in a country. Pitkin refers to this as descriptive representation. If we think of representation as descriptive representation we could therefore conclude that women are not adequately represented. Descriptive representation in Pitkin's sense refers to a 'standing for'. Essentially it means that a representative government mirrors the people and that the composition of a legislature should accurately corresponds to that of a nation (Pitkin 1967: 60 ff.). Descriptive representation is less about what the representative does but rather what a representative stands for, i.e., for women, for ethnic minorities, for old people. However, arguably a woman may actually not agree with another woman on a policy issue. Hence she may ensure descriptive representation of other women but not necessarily *acting* in the interest of the majority of women. Similarly, a man can share the same interest as a woman; a rich person can act in the interest of a poor person. So even though they may not be representative in the sense of descriptive representation, they may still act in the interest of someone. This is what Pitkin calls substantive representation.

Substantive representation is less about a 'standing for' but rather an 'acting for'. Substantive representation is seen as an activity of making something present, a "substantive acting for" others (ibid.: 115). The represented "person is present in the action rather than in the characteristics of the actor" (ibid.: 144). Ultimately, Pitkin defines representation as "acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them" (ibid.: 209). We shall come back to this term at a later stage to also illustrate what this could look like empirically. Importantly, however, representation in this dissertation is based on Pitkin's concept of a substantive 'acting for'.

1.3.2 Classic Representation and Interest Groups

As the discussion of these two concepts has shown, representation can be defined in different ways, which arguably has implications for whether we consider something to be representative. For decades, scholars have discussed and disagreed about concepts of representation and it is for that reason that some scholars suggest that instead of arguing about *the* concept of representation, we should "develop *concepts* of representation to study the broad array of phenomena that we often imprecisely classify as 'representation'" (Rehfeld 2011: 631). This approach is especially convenient when we want to study representation through interest groups; the reason being that classic concepts of representation usually refer to electoral forms of representation. Electoral forms of representation imply that the

representative is given a mandate to act in someone's interest and is held accountable by the represented one. Arguably, such a conceptualisation is hard to apply for interest groups. Interest groups do not necessarily have the formal authorisation to act in someone's interest. Instead, they claim to represent someone or something (Urbinati and Warren 2008: 403). Hence, they act as self-authorised representatives (ibid.). While recognising that self-authorised representation is not necessarily new, their increasing emergence, diversity and importance has forced democratic theorists to understand nonelectoral democratic representation to "assess which of them count as contributions to democracy and in what ways" (ibid.: 404).

For example, one question is how the representatives who claim to represent someone or something are authorised to act in their interest and how they are held accountable. Some groups can be held accountable by their members or supporters who could withdraw support or who can even have an impact through internal voting mechanisms. However, there are also agents that act on behalf of involuntary constituencies such as ethnic groups, children, animals (ibid.). In such cases, the representatives have not been given a clear mandate to represent someone or something. In either case, "it is up to those who are claimed as 'represented' to say yes or no or to offer alternative accounts" (ibid.). In the case of interest groups, this could mean that those who feel not accurately represented will organise themselves and mobilise to counterbalance some of the other interests. In that sense, these newly organised groups can hold other groups accountable, especially if they feel they do not accurately represent the ones they claim to represent (ibid.). The problem with nonelectoral representation is that there is no guarantee that representation ensures equality as "advantages of education, income, and other unequally distributed resources are more likely to translate into patterns of over- and underrepresentation" (ibid.: 405). This is exactly Schattschneider's and Olson's point: the interest group landscape will be dominated by those that actually have the means to mobilise in the first place which may introduce bias and foster unequal representation.

So what does this mean for interest groups? Can they not act as representatives? Surely not. It means, however, that it is important to understand the extent to which interest groups represent citizens. Moreover, it means that we should focus on the represented ones and use citizens' preferences as a benchmark for assessing whether interest groups introduce bias (Flöthe and Rasmussen 2019). It also means that we should stretch some of the classic

concepts of representation (cf. Rehfeld 2011) to be able to study representation through interest groups.

1.3.3 Nonelectoral Representation through claims-making

Representation through interest groups is a nonelectoral form of representation and understanding representation in the sense of 'claims-making' allows taking such representation 'seriously' (Saward 2006). For example, studying nonelectoral forms of representation often includes the process of 'claims-making' (Rehfeld 2018), that is, self-authorised representatives claim to act in the interest of someone (Urbinati and Warren 2008). Saward provides a valuable contribution to the debate by defining representation as claims-making (Saward 2006). Instead of focusing on different forms of representation and, most importantly, seeing representation as a state achieved after elections, he sees representation as a dynamic process. In such a process, multiple actors articulate claims to an audience to "represent something or somebody, or to know what is in the interest of the represented" (Saward 2006).

Saward starts with a critique of Pitkin's concept of substantive representation, which, in his mind, focuses too much on the representative and not the one to be represented (Saward 2006: 300). While Pitkin acknowledges that representative institutions provide information about the people, she takes such information as given. She, so Saward argues, does not pay enough attention to the transfer of information and by doing so she neglects what Saward considers most important, namely the active making of what is to be presented as well as the actor of 'making present' (Saward 2006: 301). Following him, the process of representation is crucial for a 'substantive acting for' in the sense of Pitkin.

Moreover, while Pitkin predominantly looked at representatives who received a mandate to act on someone's behalf (by that someone), Saward suggests that representation is a two-way street (ibid.). At the core of representation, so he argues, is "the depicting of a constituency *as* this or that, as requiring this or that, as having this or that set of interest" (ibid.). Hence, an interest group decides to act on behalf of constituency for some reason. For example, an organisation wants to represent the interests of pensioners. They depict all pensioners as their constituents as they share the key characteristic of being retired. That

organisation presents itself to its constituency who has to accept the claims the organisation makes on their behalf.

Arguably, the claims an actor makes are contested and not everyone within the alleged constituency may agree with the claim, but, as Saward suggests, "[to] argue in this way is to stress the performative side of political presentation" (ibid.: 302). Representative claims, so he continues, can only work if an audience can accept or reject the claims in one way or another. While in practice this may be difficult, theoretically, the audience is "always free to reinterpret" and reject a claim (ibid.: 304). It is not entirely clear in Saward's understanding how the audience can reject or accept such claims, nor who this audience actually is. I follow De Wilde in that case who defines the audience as anyone who witnesses the claim (cf. De Wilde 2013). More specifically, in my case, audience is defined as the policymakers who witness the claims and have to decide whether to accept or reject them (why I refer to policymakers will become clear in the next section). This also means, however, that we cannot know whether the represented ones actually accept the claim by the interest group, and results should be interpreted accordingly. In essence, however, a representative claim can be expressed in a number of ways but may refer, for example, to the needs/desires/preferences of a person or a group of people (ibid.: 305). So what does this mean for interest groups and how does this help to understand the extent to which interest groups represent citizens?

1.3.4 Interest Groups as Transmission Belts

As discussed, the application of classic concepts of representation to interest groups is not without problems. This may be the reason why these two literatures have hardly spoken to each other. Yet, if we want to understand *representation through interest groups*, I think we should also look at how interest groups refer to citizens as well as how they represent citizens and whether they succeed in 'making present'. The concepts of representation help to understand how interest groups act as transmission belts and are therefore the base for the theoretical framework in this dissertation.

One of the exceptions bridging representation literature and interest groups is Kohler-Koch (2010). Concerned about the democratic deficit in the European Union, she assesses the contribution (and limitations) of civil society organisations to democratic representation. While generally quite pessimistic about their contribution at the EU level, her work is

important for understanding how interest groups can (ideally) act as representatives of the public. Moreover, while some may argue that linking interest groups and representation makes no sense as interest groups are a matter of participation and not representation, which ultimately is about delegation, Kohler-Koch argues that this may depend on the types of questions one asks (Kohler-Koch 2010: 105). Clearly, the question addressed in this dissertation is a question of representation and not participation.

Kohler-Koch (see also Furlong and Kerwin 2004; Rasmussen et al. 2014) refers to the pluralist understanding of interest representation, according to which interest groups (or in her case civil society organisations) act as intermediaries, "feeding citizens' preferences into the policy process" (Kohler-Koch 2010: 107). Following this approach, so she argues, representation through interest groups is "a case of representation built on the expression of preferences" (ibid.). She refers to Pitkin's concept of substantive representation, hence, a substantive acting for others in the interest of others. So, democratic representation is achieved when policy outputs are congruent to the interests of the represented (ibid.: 108).

Applied to interest groups, it means that we have a relation between citizens and interest groups on the one hand, and a relation between interest groups and policymakers on the other hand. While she uses this conceptualisation for civil society organisations involved in EU policymaking, I argue this can be applied to interest groups (and interest advocates) more generally. So interest groups 'give expression to citizens' preferences', which they channel to the policymaking level by interacting with the relevant policymakers. Policymakers take these views into account and either respond or ignore the demands. Representation can be considered successful when interest groups and citizens agree on an issue and when the positions of policymakers and interest groups on an issue are congruent (ibid.: 109). Eventually, governments can respond to the interests of citizens. This idea of interest groups as transmission belts is the backdrop for the whole dissertation. Each empirical chapter will look at a different step of the transmission belt chain.

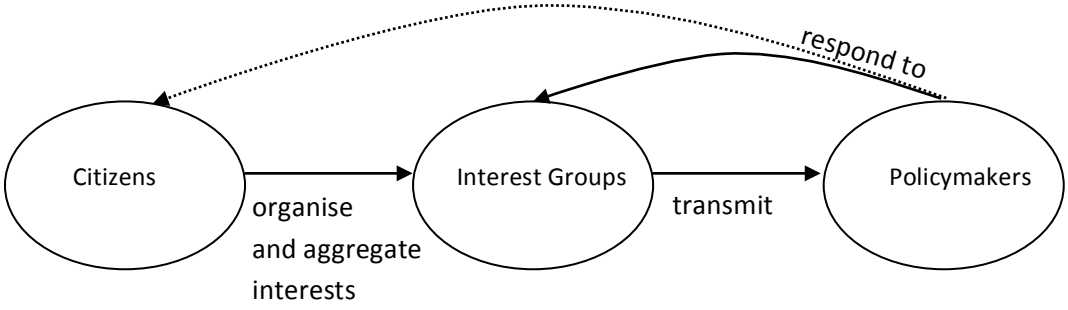

Figure 1.1: Conceptualisation of interest groups as transmission belts

The figure visualises interest groups as transmission belts. First, interest groups organise and aggregate public preferences, which are then transmitted to the policymaking level. Policymakers, finally, may or may not respond to pressures by the groups and/or citizens.[8]

A word of caution is in order. I conceptualise interest groups as transmission belts who organise, aggregate and transmit public preferences to the policymaking level. This means I treat public opinion as exogenous. Yet, arguably, interest groups can and do shape public opinion as well. Moreover, they also transmit information they have received from policymakers to their constituents which can influence their opinion on an issue. Hence, the relationship is reciprocal and the transmission belt can work in both directions. It is beyond the scope of this study, though, to examine *both directions* which is why I focus solely on the extent to which interest groups transmit public preferences to the policymaking level, irrespective of how such preferences were formed in the first place.

While Kohler-Koch's conceptualisation of interest representation nicely illustrates interest groups as transmission belts, it is largely based on Pitkin's concept of substantive representation. Hence, representation is understood as acting for someone in a manner responsive to them. While obviously valuable, it does not allow understanding *how* interest groups represent citizens. Moreover, this conceptualisation still comes with the problem of accountability and authorisation that are at the core of Pitkin's definition of representation.

[8] Note that this is only one route of how public preferences get transmitted to policymakers. An obvious alternative way are political parties which are however not the focus of this dissertation.

1.3.5 Representation through Information

"Representing means giving information about the represented, being a good representative means giving accurate information; where there is no information to give, no representation can take place." (Pitkin 1967: 83)

After discussing different concepts of representation and conceptualising interest groups as transmission belts, we now turn to the question of *how* they do so, that is, how they can represent citizens. Answering that question will help answering the question about the extent to which interest groups represent citizens as it will allow gauging some of the underlying mechanisms of interest representation. As mentioned, representation in this dissertation is seen as an 'acting for' someone to be represented. Following Saward, I am, however, also interested in the process of 'making present' as I think this is crucial for understanding the 'acting for'.

Moreover, I argue that information is a crucial part of representation. Interestingly, already Pitkin hints at the importance of information in representation as shown in the quote above. Saward criticises, however, that Pitkin takes such information as given and ignores the process of providing such information (Pitkin 1967; Saward 2006: 301). Moreover, Pitkin's concept is difficult to apply empirically to interest groups as they are nonelectoral actors. Yet, I focus on her idea of a 'substantive acting for' which will be part of the theoretical framework of the dissertation. So what can the act of 'making present' through information look like? Here the concept of representative claims will be helpful.

First, as previously indicated, it allows studying nonelectoral forms of interest representation (De Wilde 2013; Saward 2006). However, it also considers more discursive elements of representation (De Wilde 2013). Given that my argument is about information transmission, we should see information transmission as a communicative act in which a sender (interest groups) sends a message (information about public preferences) to a receiver or an audience (policymakers). However, an empirical application of Saward's concept is also difficult as some of his concepts remain unclear (see for a discussion De Wilde 2013). Yet, we focus on his idea of representative claims by focusing on the activity of making present as well as the actor of making representative claims. So can we have the best of both worlds?

Severs (2012) links the idea of the representative claim back to the concept of substantive representation by introducing the term 'substantive claims'. The substantive claim refers to "a particular dimension of representation, implying some sort of activity on behalf of others rather than the mere claiming to do so" (ibid.: 170). That activity, in my case, refers to an interest group who has mobilised and informs a policymaker about the preferences of the represented ones. While Severs uses an example with electoral representatives, her example can also be applied to interest groups. So she argues that while an actor who claims to stand for the interests of families qualifies as a representative claim, the claim misses a reference to an activity (ibid.: 173). However, an actor who claims to stand for the interest of families by "denouncing revenue cuts for family allowances" (ibid.) adds a substantive element in Pitkin's sense of 'acting for'. Linking this to interest advocates and the question of how they act as transmission belts, representation through interest advocates can be thought of an act where interest advocates mobilise on a specific issue (reforming children support) to actively promote a position (no cuts) in the interest of the represented (families with children) by informing policymakers about what the people in general or the affected ones will think about this proposal, or also by informing policymakers how it will affect the respective people (in this case families with children). Interest advocates, therefore, can be conceptualised as transmission belts that transmit public preferences to the policymaking level by informing them about what the public wants.

Going back to the literature on informational lobbying, scholars have referred to such information as political information, which includes information regarding support or opposition of a specific constituency or the public at large (see for example De Bruycker 2016; Nownes and Newmark 2016). Importantly, however, Nownes finds that advocates do not necessarily make arguments about the public as whole, but rather about certain parts of society (2006: 66). To allow a systematic analysis of how interest groups can act as transmission belts and to link it more to the concept of representation, I define such information in the dissertation as information on public preferences, which refers both to information on preferences of the public at large but also preferences of specific constituencies and certain segments of society (cf. Burstein 2014). This definition allows including claims that interest groups make about the interests/needs/desires/wants/preferences of a person or group of people (Saward 2006).

Information on public preferences therefore includes both information on general public opinion on an issue, as well as information on preferences of a specific constituency.

Importantly, this is not restricted to interest group member preferences but refers to a somewhat broader constituency that would allegedly benefit from the lobbying efforts of a group. Hence, interest groups can act as a transmission belt by providing information about more general public opinion, but also in a more narrow sense by providing constituency-specific information. Moreover, information on public preferences does not only entail information about support (opposition) of certain parts of the public, but also whether people consider an issue as relevant to address as well as information about how new policies will affect certain people (both positively and negatively). Such an understanding helps to unpack the transmission belt mechanism, that is, tapping into the question of how interest groups act as a transmission belt and to what extent they represent the people.

As discussed, policymakers need information about how people will react to a policy decision to anticipate electoral consequences (Baumgartner and Jones 2015; Wright 1996). Interest groups have such information because of their interactions with their members and constituents (Wright 1996). Relying on interest groups for such information does therefore constitute not only a valuable source for information but may also increase the legitimacy of a policy decision. Yet, groups vary in their ability and also in their motivation to acquire and provide such information which is why the information groups are able to provide may be a potential source of bias and unequal representation. Linking this to representation, I argue that this also helps to understand when and to what extent interest group represent their constituents and the public. Bridging these two literatures, the argument of the thesis will be outlined in the following.

1.3.6 Theoretical Argument

The first argument is that groups should have a higher potential to act as transmission belts when they share the same view as the public. This logic is derived from the first step in the transmission belt chain, that is, as a first step of successful representation the public and interest groups have to agree on an issue (Kohler-Koch 2010). As mentioned, this idea is based on Pitkin's concept of substantive representation. Hence representation is understood as an 'acting for' the interest of someone. This does not necessarily imply that interest groups follow public opinion but can also mean that interest groups have shaped public opinion so that their positions align. Hence, causality can go in both directions. **The first empirical chapter of the dissertation (Bias Article with Anne Rasmussen)** delves into this and looks

at the extent to which the general public shares the same view on an issue as individual advocates but also as all mobilised actors aggregated on an issue. Moreover, bringing the people back into interest group literature, it suggests to use public preferences as a benchmark to assess the extent to which groups act as representatives of the public which ultimately allows commenting on whether there is bias in the interest groups system or not. While this is a valuable first step for exploring the extent to which interest groups represent citizens, it does not allow understanding *how* they do so. As criticised earlier, the concept of substantive representation does ignore the process of 'making present' and solely looks at whether a representative (the interest group) acts in the interest of the represented (the public).

To understand how interest groups represent the public, **the second empirical chapter (Transmission Belt Article)** conceptualises interest groups as transmission belts. It introduces the argument more elaborately that groups act as transmission belts by informing policymakers about public preferences. This means, representation is still understood as an 'acting for', yet the focus in this chapter now lies on the process of 'making present'. Hence, representation is rather understood in the sense of (substantive) claims-making (Saward 2006; Severs 2012) to gauge how representation may occur. The second argument, therefore is, *that for representation to occur and as a necessary (but insufficient) condition for interest groups to act as transmission belts, we should observe that groups provide information about what their constituents want when lobbying policymakers*. Moreover, this chapter argues that interest groups provide both general public opinion information and also information about specific segments of society that will allegedly benefit from the lobbying efforts of a group. While such disaggregated, constituency-specific opinion is difficult to measure or get data on, the concept of representative claims allows getting closer at who exactly interest groups (claim) to represent.

So after looking at how interest groups represent citizens' preferences and arguing that they do so by means of information, it is relevant to assess how interest groups get such information. While existing research has usually treated information as a resource, I argue that information acquisition and provision requires resource itself. This is important for two reasons. Following Kohler-Koch, representation is successful when interest groups and the public agree *and* when interest groups manage to agree with policymakers (Kohler-Koch 2010). However, only information that is costly and privately held by the interest group can be used as a source of influence (Austen-Smith and Wright 1992; Wright 1996); and it has to be used to influence policymakers if a group also wants to fulfil the second criteria of

successful representation. Policymakers do not need interest groups for information that they can easily access themselves. Hence, they do not have to rely on interest groups for information that they can access at much lower cost. This also means that for interest groups it only makes sense to provide information that is costly.

Second, the idea of information requiring resources is relevant when we want to think more about the democratic element of representation. The discussed concepts of representation are not necessarily democratic, especially if applied to nonelectoral actors who are not formally authorised nor can be held accountable. Representation qualifies as democratic when it "conforms to the principle of equality" (Kohler-Koch 2010: 109-10) and we simply cannot know if all people had the same chances in being represented. Arguing that interest groups act as transmission belts by providing information, we should therefore look at what it requires to acquire such information; the reason being that *resources* have often been seen as a source of bias in the interest group literature. Hence: *A condition for successful representation is that interest groups get policymakers to agree with them. One source for that influence is the information they transmit. Yet, for that information to be a source of influence, the information has to be costly. Moreover, and this is more from a normative standpoint, for information to be a mechanism of (fair) representation, the cost aspect should not introduce bias.* **The third empirical chapter (Resource Article),** therefore, looks at the costs of information and applies a resource perceptive to informational lobbying.

Lastly, as indicated, representation is only successful when groups and the public agree (argument 1) and if groups and policymakers agree on an issue. Hence, *the fourth argument is that a necessary (but insufficient) condition of interest groups to act effectively as a transmission belt is, that the information they provide on public preferences has to help them acquire a certain degree of influence.* The dissertation's **fourth empirical chapter (Success Article),** therefore, assesses the extent to which interest groups are able to influence policymaking by means of information.

In sum, interest groups are more likely to work as transmission belts when they fulfil all conditions, that is, when they 1) agree with their constituents on an issue, 2) transmit these preferences by informing policymakers about them and 3) be successful in getting the policymaker to listen and respond to that information. Ideally, and 4), the access to such information should not introduce bias and lead to unequal representation. The figure below

again shows how interest groups act as transmission belts, but adds how each empirical chapter contributes to understanding how they do so.

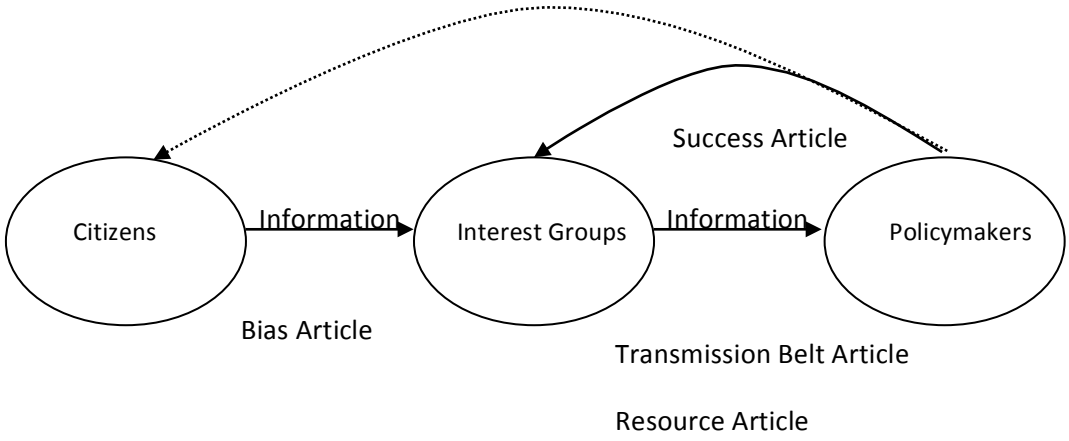

Figure 1.2: Interest Groups as Transmission Belts and dissertation's contribution

1.4 Empirical Approach

The empirical chapters rely on data collected within the GovLis project pooling information on interest group activity, public opinion and policy outputs. Specifically, the dissertation relies on two main datasets. The first dataset integrates information about public opinion and interest group activity on 50 specific policy issues in 5 West European countries (Denmark, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and the UK). This dataset is used for the articles in chapter 2, 4 and 5. Another dataset includes information about public opinion and interest groups on 102 specific policy issues in Germany. This dataset is the base for chapter 3.

1.4.1 Country Selection

While the dissertation does not aim to theorise about how different institutional characteristics affect the extent to which interest groups represent the citizens, it controls for potential country differences in most of the chapters. The data for the main dataset has therefore been collected in five countries. Information provision can determine access to policymakers (Bouwen 2004; Tallberg et al. 2018), which is why the inclusion of different countries considers variation in the degree to which interest groups are involved in policymaking; the

UK being a country in which the interest group system is characterised as pluralist while the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and Denmark experience moderate or strong degrees of corporatism (Jahn 2016; Siaroff 1999). This selection of countries should enhance the generalisability of the findings.

1.4.2 Issue Selection

While much of the research on informational lobbying has surveyed interest groups about general information provision in their lobbying activities (cf. Chalmers 2011; Klüver 2012; Nownes and Newmark 2016), the dissertation applies a design which takes into account that information by advocates is typically provided *on specific aspects of a proposal* and not policymaking in general. Even if some interest organisations may mobilise to push general policy in a more right or left wing direction, most lobbying activities are targeted at specific policy proposals (Berkhout, Beyers, et al. 2017; Beyers et al. 2014).

One of the challenges in interest group research is how to draw a representative sample of interest group activity, as it is hard to define a clear population. This study follows an issue-centred approach (Beyers et al. 2014), rather than an actor-centred sampling strategy to also account for varying context factors that may affect lobbying behaviour. There are different starting points from where to sample policy issues. While some rely on a legislative database (Beyers et al. 2014; Burstein 2014), or the media (Bernhagen 2012), or the actors themselves (Baumgartner et al. 2009), the starting point for the project's dataset were nationally existing public opinion polls conducted in the timeframe between 2005-2010 (for further description of the issue selection, see Rasmussen et al. 2019; Rasmussen, Mäder, et al. 2018).

Each survey item had to be about a specific policy issue rather than an overall policy area, present a suggestion for policy change, be measured on an agreement scale and had to fall under national competences (as opposed to EU or sub-national level). While the 102 issues for the one dataset constitute the population of issues that met the criteria, the specific policy issues for the 50 issue dataset were selected as a stratified random sample from the issues that met the criteria mentioned above to ensure variation with regard to issue type, media salience and public support for the issue. Ensuring such variation should increase the ability to draw more generalisable conclusions. Issues in the sample concern, for example, the

question of whether to ban smoking in restaurants or to cut social benefits (each empirical chapter is followed by an appendix which lists the issues that have been part of study).

The advantage of sampling from public opinion polls over sampling issues from the legislative agenda is that the sample also captures interest group activity before an issue was introduced in parliament, which increases the likelihood of policy change compared to all issues in the universe of issues on the public agenda in a country (Rasmussen, Mäder, et al. 2018; Toshkov et al. 2018). Sampling from existing opinion polls, however, means that the sample only includes issues that were somewhat salient so that they were worth polling on (Burstein 2014). In that sense, this sample is also not a completely random sample of the universe of all potential issues, but is suitable to sample issues that have made it on to the public (polling) agenda. It is also important to consider that citizens should have at least somewhat informed opinions if interest groups are expected to transmit their preferences meaningfully (Gilens 2012). This concern speaks in favour of sampling issues with at least some minimal public salience. Still, the stratified sample ensures variation with regard to media saliency, which is always added as a control variable.

1.4.3 Actor Selection

The main unit of analysis in all empirical chapters is an actor on an issue. Actors (or interest groups) are defined based on their observable, policy-related activities which follows a behavioural definition of interest groups (Baroni et al. 2014; Baumgartner et al. 2009). The terms advocates or interest groups are used interchangeably throughout the dissertation. It is important to note that the dissertation uses quite an inclusive definition of interest advocates. Hence, next to traditional membership groups such as non-profit-organisations, labour unions or business associations, also companies, experts and think tanks have been included. While these actors may differ in their internal structure, they have mobilised on the issues in our sample and have therefore had the chance to influence policymaking. Schlozman and Tierney, for example, find that half of the actors in Washington are groups without members such as firms, institutions etc. and conclude that even though they differ in internal dynamics, they are not so distinct in their political comportment (1986: 49).

In the 50 issue data set, several steps were taken to identify the actors that mobilised on an issue (Flöthe and Rasmussen 2019). First, student assistants coded interest group

statements on the specific policy issue in two major newspapers[9] in each country for a period of four years or until the policy changed (cf. for a similar approach Gilens 2012). Second, interviews with civil servants that have worked on the issue during our observation period (82 % response rate) helped to complete the list of advocates that had mobilised on the issues. Lastly, desk research on formal tools and interactions such as public hearings or consultations was conducted in order to identify additional relevant actors. Although this triangulation may still have missed some actors, the interviews with civil servants should help ensure that also actors who exclusively focused on less visible inside-lobbying strategies were captured. Active advocates identified through these steps form the base for the dataset used for the article in chapter 2. From December 2016 until April 2017 I participated in the conduct of an online survey with 1410 advocates identified as active on the specific issues. 478 respondents completed the survey which resulted in a response rate of 34% and is in the range of what is common for interest group surveys (Bernhagen 2013; Dür and Mateo 2010; Eising 2007; Rasmussen and Lindeboom 2013). The survey data has been used for the articles presented in chapter 4 and 5.

The identification of actors for the data used in chapter 3 was slightly different. The dataset covers 102 issues in Germany and pools information about public opinion and issue characteristics on these 102 issues. The study, however, relies on a subsample of issues on which public hearings were held during the observation period. To move the literature forward and in order to establish a new measure of political information, I collected additional data on the different types of information that interest groups raise in submissions to public hearings in parliament. I developed a codebook to be able to scrutinise observed information transmission in public hearings. Analysing written statements by interest groups is a novel way of studying information provision as most studies rely on self-reported information transmission through surveys or interviews (for an exception see Burstein 2014). Table 1 below summarises the data that has been used for each paper.

[9] Denmark: Politiken and Jyllands-Posten; Germany: Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung; Netherlands: De Volkskrant and NRC Handelsblad; Sweden: Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet; United Kingdom: The Guardian and The Telegraph

Table 1: Overview of data for the different research articles

	Article 1	**Article 2**	**Article 3**	**Article 4**
Name	Bias Article with Anne Rasmussen	Transmission Belt Article	Resource Article	Lobbying Success Article
Countries	5 Countries	1 Country	5 Countries	5 Countries
Issues per Country	10 Issues	34 Issues	10 Issues	10 Issues
Actors identified through:	Media Content Analysis, Desk Research, Civil Servants, Other actors in the Survey	Public Hearings	As Article 1	As Article 1
Additional Data		+ Coding of Arguments	+ Survey	+ Survey
Status	Published in the *Journal of European Public Policy*	Published in the *Journal of European Public Policy*	Published in *European Political Science Review*	Published in *Interest Group & Advocacy*

1.5 Outline and Summary of Dissertation

Figure 1.2 has illustrated how each empirical chapter will explore one of the conditions that are necessary for interest groups to act as transmission belts. As such, **chapter 2 (Bias Article co-authored with Anne Rasmussen)** examines the question to what extent and under which conditions interest groups and the public are more likely to hold congruent positions on a policy issue. Moreover, it introduces the discussion on bias in the interest group community and elaborates on its implication for opinion representation. The chapter's analysis shows that the public and interest groups agree roughly half the time, yet some groups seem to do a better job. For example, citizen groups are more likely to align their positions with the public than other actor types. However, the differences between the representativeness of different group types were not as strong as expected. We also saw that a large share of those groups that are feared the most (such as business groups and firms) agree with the majority of the public on an issue. A potential reason for these group differences could be that groups vary in the extent to which they fulfil their function as representatives. Moreover, some may have more information about what their constituents want, which they transmit to policymakers.

Chapter 3 (Transmission Belt Article) builds on these findings and conceptualises interest groups as transmission belts, arguing that information is the

mechanism through which representation occurs. It shows that interest groups inform policymakers about public preferences, but also scrutinises who does so and under which conditions actors are more likely to do so. More specifically, it argues that citizen groups are more likely to share the same opinion as the public as they are better informed about what the public wants. This is why they are also more likely to transmit that information to policymakers. The analysis finds that those actors that are more likely to align their positions with the public are also those that are more likely to inform policymakers about public preferences. Moreover, actors that have a higher share of the public on their side provide more of such information. Hence, the chapter's analysis shows that, by and large, interest groups have the potential to act as transmission belts by informing policymakers about public preferences, yet there is variation in the degree to which they act as one. Additionally, it shows that those advocates that generally provide more information (irrespective of the type) provide more information on public preferences. Linking this to research that argues that more resources lead to more information provision, leads to the question if resourceful groups are better able to provide information.

Chapter 4 (Resource Article) explores this further and argues that it depends on the type of information. While policy expertise may require more economic resources, political information can be acquired and transmitted by other means. The findings show, that economic resources facilitate the provision of expert information transmission. However, interest groups can also rely on other resources (such as political capacities) for providing expert information. Even more so, groups are less dependent on economic resources for providing information about public preferences (which is how the transmission belt mechanism works). In fact, here it are predominantly political capacities that seem to matter. Hence, using information for representation does not necessarily introduce bias in the sense that only the well-off are able to transmit it.

Finally, **chapter 5 (Success Article**) examines the question with what type of information interest groups are more likely to get their way. The empirical chapters so far have shown that interest groups qualify to act as transmission belts (some more than others, sometimes more than other times) by means of information. Yet, the fifth empirical chapter shows that only those actors that provide expert information are able to increase their likelihood of lobbying success. The effect of information about public preferences on lobbying success is, if anything, negative. This is intriguing, given that policymakers are assumed to need both types of information and that interest groups are said to be influential

because they provide both types of information. However, from chapter 4 (Resource Article) we know that groups that rely a lot on their members are able to generate such expert information as well. Moreover, we also know from this chapter that most of the time, groups provide both types of information. Hence, interest groups can only fulfil the last step of the transmission belt chain, if they provide at least a considerable amount of expert information (for which they can rely on their members' expertise). Yet, this also suggests that 'evidence-based lobbying' seems to be more successful and that policymaking is rather made in the light of technical considerations and perhaps revolves less about what the public wants.

Finally, **chapter 6** summarises and discusses the findings as well as their normative implications.