Who's in and who's out? Explaining access to policy-makers in Belgium

Fraussen, B.; Beyers, J.; Fraussen B., Beyers J.

Original Article

Who's in and who's out?: Explaining access to policymakers in Belgium

Bert Fraussen[a,*] and Jan Beyers[b]
[a]Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra ACT 0200, Australia.
[b]Department of Political Science, University of Antwerp, Antwerp 2000, Belgium.

*Corresponding author.

Abstract In most political systems, the community of policy insiders represents a small subset of the total interest group population. Therefore, one key question is which factors explain why some mobilized interests become insiders and others remain outsiders. By contrasting a bottom-up registration of interest groups with a top-down census of all groups that enjoy access to policymakers, we present a unique approach to distinguish insiders from outsiders. This approach allows us to systematically analyze which factors – such as resources, constituency, scale of organization and policy portfolio – predict who becomes a policy insider. Our analysis focuses on interest group politics in Belgium, and shows that next to resources, the size of the membership, the scale of organization and a group's policy portfolio are strong predictors of the likelihood to gain access.
Acta Politica advance online publication, 24 April 2015; doi:10.1057/ap.2015.9

Keywords: interest groups; access; mobilization; corporatism; federalism; Belgium

Introduction

The interaction between organized interests and policymakers represents a key component of contemporary democracies, which often have established extensive participatory systems, such as consultation arrangements or advisory bodies. Such venues play a crucial role in transmitting societal concerns, political knowledge and policy expertise from organized interests to government officials. Although ideally these systems of interest intermediation should ensure that no societal segment is systematically over- or underrepresented, it is well established that considerable inequalities exist in the extent to which different sections of society get organized and gain access to policymakers. A repeatedly heard conclusion is that interest representation tends to be biased towards a few selective interests, and that most interest group communities are skewed towards well-endowed constituencies, in particular economic interests (Schattschneider, 1960; Baumgartner and Leech, 1998; Lowery and Gray, 2004; Schlozman *et al*, 2012). Therefore, a fundamental political science question concerns in what way organized interests that gain access, the so-called policy insiders, are different from policy outsiders, those that do not enjoy such privileges.

Interest group scholars have spent much effort characterizing systems of interest intermediation, distinguishing groups who enjoy access from those who are bound to stand on the sideline. Yet, most studies examining national patterns of interest representation have focused on systems that are pluralist in nature, in particular the United States or the United Kingdom. We have relatively less knowledge on how these processes unfold in neo-corporatist continental European systems (but see Binderkrantz, 2008; Christiansen *et al*, 2010; Christiansen, 2012). Moreover, not much research has been conducted on how institutional multilayeredness shapes interest representation; most work on this topic has focused on the activities of EU-level interest groups or examined the Europeanization of national groups (Constantelos, 2004; Eising, 2006; Poloni-Staudinger, 2008). The existing research on the Europeanization of interest groups is primarily interested in how the transfer of policy competencies to the supranational level has affected organizational strategies, promoted ‘extensions and modifications of established practices’ and affected access opportunities (Eising, 2006, p. 180). The implications of the downward transfer of policy competences to sub-state or regional jurisdictions have generated much less attention, despite the fact that these institutional changes may also have fundamental implications for domestic systems of interest representation (Keating, 2008, p. 74; but see Celis *et al*, 2013; Keating and Wilson, 2014). Therefore, we know little about how multilayeredness shapes the composition of interest group communities or affects who gains access and becomes an insider.

A special focus on a devolved country may shed more light on these issues. This article therefore looks at Belgium, and more in particular one of its regions, Flanders. Analyzing one region within a federal country enables us assess the extent to which a subnational community of policy insiders reflects the overall population of mobilized interests, taking into account important contextual aspects such as the multilayered nature of the country’s political institutions, as well as the corporatist and consociational legacies that characterize its system of interest representation. The next section elaborates the conceptual implications of this research problem and demonstrates its broader relevance. Next, we present a set of hypotheses on the relation between interest group features and government access, focusing on an organization’s perceived legitimacy and its capacity to provide policy advice, yet also the scale of representation and a group’s policy portfolio. After having clarified our research design that combines a bottom-up registration of interest groups with a top-down census of all groups that are represented in the government’s advisory system, we present our descriptive and multivariate data-analyses and discuss how mobilization patterns of societal interests translate in access to policymaking processes. Our results suggest that although organizational resources clearly matter, the size of a group’s membership, its scale of organization and the policy domains it focuses on are strong predictors of the likelihood to gain access. In the concluding section, the broader implications of these findings are discussed.

Interest Group Mobilization and Access

Although many organized interests may mobilize, only a minority enjoys government access. Although transaction costs will play their part, as policymakers due to limited resources cannot interact with all relevant interest groups, we expect that the interactions between policymakers and societal interests will also be substantially shaped by the institutional nature of an interest group system. In this regard, one traditionally distinguishes corporatist and pluralist polities (Schmitter and Lehmbruch, 1979; Lehmbruch and Schmitter, 1982; Almond, 1983). This distinction refers to variation involving 'the extent of state autonomy, the degree of societal organization, the variety, legitimacy and degree of interest group participation' (Eising, 2008, p. 1169; see also Dür and Mateo, 2012). A pluralist system is generally characterized by a fragmented and diverse organizational landscape, where the community of policy participants is largely shaped by competition among a diverse array of organized interests. In contrast, a corporatist system traditionally has an extensive institutionalization of state–society interactions resulting in a more top-down and hierarchical structure of interest representation. In such systems, umbrella associations enjoy privileged relations with public authorities, which take 'a leading role in orchestrating interest group participation in the policy process' (Granados and Knoke, 2005, p. 293). Here, public authorities often grant privileged access to a limited number of mostly socio-economic interests, and may also develop 'restrictive NGO regulations as a means to preserve consensus and well-developed formal procedures for collaboration' (Bloodgood *et al*, 2014, p. 720). For these reasons, one can expect that newcomers generally face greater difficulties to mobilize and gain access in neo-corporatist systems.

The country we focus on, Belgium, is usually conceived 'moderately neo-corporatist', as it is quite similar to Germany and Denmark, but less neo-corporatist than Austria and Norway (Lijphart and Crepaz, 1991; Siaroff, 1999; Bloodgood *et al*, 2014). The neo-corporatist mode of policymaking is not limited to economic affairs and also characterizes policymaking in other sectors such as education and health care. However, besides its neo-corporatist feature, interest group mobilization in Belgium is also strongly affected by its consociational legacy and federal nature. Consociationalism here implies pillarization, referring to strong and dense networks among organizations from the same subcultures, the latter build on religious, ideological and economic cleavages (Deschouwer, 2009; Beyers *et al,* 2014). Next, several of the so-called new social movements and NGOs that emerged in the 1960s, focusing on issues ranging from environmental protection to development cooperation and consumer rights, have over time developed into well-established organizations. In sum, as in many other neo-corporatist countries, interest representation in Belgium cannot be limited to traditional labor and business organizations. This observation provides us with an interesting paradox. Whereas neo-corporatism generally constrains the number of mobilized organized interests and tends to centralize access, other characteristics of Belgium (such as its multilayeredness and consociational legacy) may result in rather crowded, diverse and fragmented interest group system.

Explaining Who's In and Who's Out: Hypotheses

In multilayered federal systems, a significant proportion of the interest group population gets mobilized at the regional level. As a result, the increase in the size and scope of mobilized interest groups that has been observed in most political systems during the past decades (Halpin and Jordan, 2012), can be expected to be even more pronounced in federal systems. The growing demand for access entails a challenge for policymakers; as their time and resources are constrained, they cannot grant access to every individual interest group Therefore, the supply of access by policymakers inevitably has some exclusionary effects. While some groups enjoy close ties with policymakers – the insiders – the great majority of organized interests will remain outsiders. Our main goal is to analyze how groups that enjoy access differ from those that have no formal ties to public authorities. Often, the interactions between policymakers and organized interests are conceived as an exchange relation (Bouwen, 2002; Eising, 2007; Braun, 2012; see also Emerson, 1962; Blau, 1964; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). While strategic considerations will play their part in these interactions, various authors have argued that the insider-position of a group will largely be shaped by its status in the eyes of policymakers, which is generally linked to a groups' overall potential to provide valuable resources, in particular policy expertise and societal legitimacy (Maloney *et al*, 1994; see also Grossmann, 2012). As argued by Grossmann, 'policymakers rely on basic signals about organizations that allow them to make comments like "they have credibility" and "they're known players", without fully processing how they arrived at these judgments' (2012, p. 165). Here, various organizational features provide cues on the basis of which policymakers determine who is most valuable in terms of policy know-how or societal support.

Furthermore, in order to understand interactions between organized interest and policymakers in a multilevel system, two more organizational features should be taken into account. First, the scale of organization, the extent to which an interest group represents a regional or a nation-wide constituency, could be an important factor to explain access at different levels. Second, we should also consider the division of policy responsibilities within a multilayered system. That is, the fact that some domains are an exclusive regional competence whereas others are shared with the central government, may greatly affect the mobilization of organized interest and their policy engagement at different levels of government. Below, we develop a more detailed account of these hypotheses linked to three factors: a group's perceived legitimacy, its ability to provide policy expertise, and how a group is tied to a regional constituency or regional policy competencies.

First, we consider organizational features related to a group's legitimacy or the amount and type of political support an organization can mobilize. Generally, one can presume that government officials are primarily interested in organizations that are capable to speak on behalf of a substantial membership, which can be signaled through an umbrella structure, implying that a group's members are associations of organizations (H1) and/or a large amount of members (H2). Furthermore, some types of organized interests might enjoy more credibility with policymakers. Especially in a neo-corporatist system, economic groups, such as labor unions and business interests who as employers and employees often have a specific stake in policymaking, are quite likely to be regarded as legitimate interlocutors (H3). In addition, the age of a group might be an important factor. Hannan and Freeman for instance argue that 'old organizations tend to develop dense webs of exchange, to affiliate with centers of power, and to acquire an aura of inevitability' (1989, p. 81). Similarly, it can be expected that older organizations have a better understanding of policymaking processes (Furlong, 1997, p. 329). Therefore, policymakers might be tempted to ascribe more legitimacy to older organizations, compared with groups that have only been in existence for a few years (H4). One other relevant feature concerns whether an interest group has a centralized or decentralized structure, the latter implying that groups not only have a national office, but also established grass-roots chapters at the provincial or local level. A decentralized organizational form is believed to promote citizenship and the build-up of social capital by linking nation-wide and regional associations to their local roots (Skocpol, 2003). Yet, the effect on access is less obvious. While it could be that decentralized groups are more focused on providing membership services, we expect that a decentralized structure positively affects access, as it signals an organization's local embeddedness and might also provide some informational advantages (H5). Moreover, having local antennas is especially relevant in a proportional electoral system with relatively small electoral districts, which is the case in Belgium (Deschouwer, 2009). As interest groups with local branches have closer connections to voters, they could be particularly relevant to politicians.

Next, we consider organizational features that relate to an interest group's policy capacity, or its ability to provide expertise to policymakers. An evident indicator involves the amount of staff employed by an organization. Human resources are critical to effective advocacy, as they enable organizations to survive, monitor political processes, develop specialized expertise, network and set up campaigns to attract new supporters and members (Klüver, 2012; Klüver and Saurugger, 2013). In this article, we use the amount of full-time equivalent employed as a proxy for an organization's capacity in terms of financial resources, which we consider indicative of a group's potential to provide policy expertise (H6).

Still, to understand Belgium's system of interest representation, one needs to consider the broader consociational context, of which 'the basic practices are power sharing between the elites of the segments and segmental autonomy' (Deschouwer, 2009, p. 4). This consociationalism usually goes hand in hand with a strong associational culture and dense networks of intermediary organizations that belong to the same subculture, also called pillars, who frequently provide state-sponsored services to their members(for example, in the area of health and education). Consequently, there usually is not one single umbrella organization that dominates interest representation in one particular field, but rather multiple peak organizations that compete for attention.[1] In the past, many of these so-called collateral organizations had strong ties with the three traditional political parties (the Christian-democrats, the liberals and the social-democrats) on which they were quite dependent (and vice versa) (Kitschelt, 2004). Although these pillar organizations generally benefited from the development of the welfare state, pillarization (in terms of societal segmentation) is believed to have reached its peak in the 1960s and 1970s (Huyse, 2003; Deschouwer, 2009). Nonetheless, despite the fact that relations between these organizations and the traditional political parties have weakened, their past affiliation may reverberate in contemporary policymaking (for instance through overlapping memberships, see Van Maele, 2009; van Haute *et al*, 2013) and result in higher chances of gaining access. While it might be less prevalent in newer domains, such as environmental affairs where more recently established organized interests often opted to act independently from the pillars, in more traditional fields – such as health, labor market or social security – pillar organizations still play a considerable role in policymaking and implementation (Deschouwer, 2009, p. 193). Their former affiliation with central political parties and current involvement in policy implementation is likely to increase their ability to supply valuable information to policymakers (H7).

Our last three hypotheses relate to how a multilayered setting shapes the organization and representation of organized interest. In various European countries, including Belgium, devolutionary processes have resulted in a decentralization of competencies away from the central state to subnational jurisdictions (Hooghe *et al*, 2010). As a result, these jurisdictions now have substantial powers in many domains, such as agriculture, education, research and environmental affairs. This institutional setting presents a challenge to organized interests, as some adjustments might be needed in order to cope with a changed division of policy responsibilities. National groups might dissolve into distinct regional organizations or establish regional branches, while also new organizations could mobilize at the subnational level. Consequently, multilayeredness might lead to a multiplication of interest groups and a fragmentation of policy communities, since each government level (with its distinct competences) functions as a potential niche within which specialized groups can survive. Furthermore, policymakers in a multilevel setting could also have particular demands and preferences regarding the organizational features of interest groups. As sub-state governments first and foremost need political intelligence and policy expertise on matters that have a subnational character (such as the preferences of its constituency, or the implications of a particular initiative on regional employment), these will prefer to interact with interests that primarily represent a regional constituency (H8).

Similarly, we should consider the policy portfolio of an interest organization, that is, the domain on which the group focuses its attention and resources. We hypothesize that the type of policies an interest group seeks to monitor and influence also shapes the likelihood of gaining access. Taking into account the division of policy responsibilities between the central and the regional level, we expect that organized interests which focus on domains that relate to (quasi)-exclusive regional competencies more easily gain attention from policymakers and therefore enjoy more access (H9). Still, this does not imply that the subnational level is the exclusive playground of groups with a regional constituency, as organizations with a nation-wide membership might also have a stake in regional policies. One of the complications here is that, even in a dual federation such as Belgium, policy domains cannot easily be separated as watertight compartments belonging to the regional or the federal level (Swenden, 2004). While some areas, such as agriculture and education, are fully delegated to the subnational level, in other domains, such as health and economic affairs, competencies are shared between the federal and the regional level. In such areas, we expect to observe both regional and nation-wide groups gaining access, although the latter might be less prominent.

To summarize, an overview of our nine hypotheses is presented:

Hypothesis 1: *Umbrella organizations are more likely to enjoy access.*

Hypothesis 2: *Groups with a high amount of members are more likely to enjoy access.*

Hypothesis 3: *Economic interests (business groups and labor unions) are more likely to enjoy access.*

Hypothesis 4: *Older organized interests are more likely to enjoy access.*

Hypothesis 5: *Organized interests with a decentralized structure are more likely to enjoy access.*

Hypothesis 6: *Organized interests with a high amount of staff are more likely to enjoy access*

Hypothesis 7: *Components of the pillars are more likely to enjoy access*

Hypothesis 8: *Organized interests mobilizing a regional constituency are more likely to enjoy access at that level.*

Hypothesis 9: *Organized interests specializing in policies that are exclusive regional responsibility are more likely to enjoy access at that level.*

Research Design: Data and Measures

The label organized interests is frequently used to refer to a broad array of organizations, such as labor unions, professional interests, public interest groups and social movement organizations (Andrews and Edwards, 2004; for a discussion see Halpin, 2010, pp. 30–56). In addition, different types of institutions are often included, such as corporations, universities, hospitals and local governments (Salisbury, 1983). In this article, a more narrow approach will be applied, defining interest organizations as 'policy-dedicated membership organizations' (Halpin and Jordan, 2012, p. 12). Consequently, these organizations are collective in nature, relying either on a formal membership structure or representing a more informal constituency consisting of (a mixture of) supporters, activists or donors. Furthermore, seeking political influence represents one of their main objectives. They are not part of the state, nor do they compete in elections (distinguishing them from political parties). This definition excludes public and private institutions, such as local governments and firms. Our analyses will be restricted to these constituency based organizations, as this enables us to assess the impact of central organizational features (such as the amount of resources, the amount of members or the type of members) within a set of organizations that have more or less equivalent structures and representational objectives.

We focus on the population of organized interests in one of Belgium's regions, Flanders, which as a devolved region enjoys considerable autonomy in various domains. It is important to clarify that we conceive the Flemish interest group population as consisting of both nation-wide (read *Belgian*) and regional (read *Flemish*) groups. The Belgian federation can be characterized as a dual system, which implies the absence of a hierarchy of legal norms. As a result, the regional parliaments and governments stand on equal footing with the federal political institutions. The high degree of self-rule in a wide range of domains implies that the Flemish government also intervenes in areas that are possibly of interest to nation-wide interest groups. Moreover, many nation-wide interest groups were established before the Belgian regions started to gain self-rule and have maintained their national structure. Although nation-wide groups often established regional branches, many of these are still organized at the Belgian scale.

When analyzing the differences between interests that enjoy access and those that are bound to stand on the sideline, many scholars have relied on top-down analyses of groups that take part in ongoing policymaking processes, and consequently predominantly covered organized interests that demonstrate a rather high level of political activity (Binderkrantz, 2005; Eising, 2007). Such research designs tend to ignore organized interests that are less well integrated in political circles. As a result, the literature offers few systematic accounts of what it takes for a mobilized group to gain access and become an insider. In order to draw conclusions regarding the representation of various interests, we need evidence on how mobilization patterns of societal interests translate in actual access. In other words, if we seek to examine why some organized interests are more successful in gaining access, the full set of organized interests needs to be considered, including organizations characterized by a high level of political activity, as well as those that possibly demonstrate lower levels of political activity. For this purpose, our design combines a bottom-up registration of interest groups (which includes groups that are possibly less well integrated in political circles) with a top-down census of all interests that gain access to the Flemish advisory system. This approach allows us to analyze the extent to which the distribution of mobilized interests in the population is reproduced by policymakers when they select groups for policy advice and to identify factors that explain the distinction between insiders and outsiders.

Our bottom-up census of the interest population in Flanders relies on the Crossroads Bank for Enterprises *(CBE, Kruispuntbank van Ondernemingen)* that is maintained by the Federal Public Service Economy, SMEs, Self-Employed and Energy (*FPS Economy, Federale Overheidsdienst Economie, K.M.O., Middenstand en Energie*). The CBE includes all entities that engage in economic activities in Belgium, and is connected to different other databanks, such as National Bank of Belgium. From this register, we selected all non-profits that had been assigned the NACE code S94, which refers to organizations that represent the interests and views of specific constituencies.[2] Category S94 includes business, employers and professional membership organizations, yet also other membership organizations, such as environmental and development NGOs. We also include mutuals, or health insurance associations, that are organized on a nation-wide basis. While these organizations have been assigned a different code in the NACE system, they fit our definition, as they have individual members whose interests they claim to represent. Similar to other organizations such as labor unions, they are subsidized by the state in return for executing specific tasks, in their case the reimbursement of medical expenses.[3] After excluding political parties and religious orders (such as abbeys, dioceses and other mostly local religious institutions), as well as associations that focus predominantly on the international (for instance European or international umbrella organizations), local level or the Francophone community of Belgium, our population encompasses 1013 nation-wide and Flemish interest organizations. As we mentioned above, we focus exclusively on constituency-based groups (with and without a formal membership structure), which represent 729 of the 1013 identified organizations (72 per cent) of the interest organizations in the population.

In order to identify the Flemish policy insiders, we consider membership of the Strategic Advisory Councils (SACs) as a proxy for access.[4] These advisory bodies represent the main consultative arrangements in Flanders and play an important role in several phases of the policy cycle (Popelier *et al*, 2012). They are considered a central component of the Flemish administration and a crucial instrument to 'keep a finger on the pulse of civil society' (Bourgeois, 2009). Representation in the SACs can thus be conceived as an important institutionalized form of access. While these venues enable public authorities to structure their relations with organized interests, they also offer the latter an opportunity to gain political attention, exercise influence and build networks with different policymakers and other organized interests. This set, which includes 352 organizations, comprises a number of cultural and educational institutions ($n = 19$; for instance universities), firms ($n = 65$, frequently appointed by business associations) and governmental actors ($n = 74$, mostly cities and provinces, but also operational elements of government, such as harbors, airports and public agencies); these organizations do not claim to represent a particular constituency. Still, most consulted organizations ($n = 194$ or 55 per cent) represent a (formal or informal) membership or constituency and encompass both national ($n = 51$) and subnational ($n = 143$) groups.

Subsequently, all data were coded using an adjusted version of the codebook developed by Hanegraaff *et al* (2011), consulting information available on organizational websites, annual accounts or publicly available reports. For each identified actor, we coded variables related to the organization type (such as whether it involves an economic group, encompassing labor unions and business associations), a (formerly) pillarized association (which implies that their (former) name or mission refers to one of the main political ideologies), its structure (umbrella organization, membership type, amount of members, scale of organization), issue focus, as well as age and resources (in terms of staff size). Regarding the 'scale of organization', we coded *1* if the organization focuses on a constituency exclusively located in Flanders and *0* if the organization represents a constituency encompassing the Belgian territory (including both the Francophone community and the Flemish region). Concerning issue focus, our coding is based on a website coding of the domains in which an organization is active and consists of three categories: (i) domains in which the Flemish region has exclusive competence (for example education, transport, culture and environmental affairs); (ii) shared competences, implying that policy responsibilities are shared with the federal government; and (iii) domains where the federal government has full authority. As indicative of the organizational resources, we use the number of full-time equivalents employed by an interest organization, distinguishing between organizations with a low (1–4), medium (5–19) and high ($\geqslant$20) amount of staff.

Finally, our measurement of the membership variables needs some clarification. There are two problems with raw membership counts, which justify a transformation of this variable (see Table 1). First, such membership counts are incomparable across different organization types; a business or institutional organization with 500 members (firms or institutions) could be large and pretty encompassing, while 500 individuals is a rather small membership for a group with individual members. Second, the distribution of membership densities is severely non-linear, with a number of organizations that have huge membership numbers (for groups with individuals this distribution ranges from 29 individuals to 4.5 million; the range is 3 to 25 000 for groups with an institutional membership). This makes that, although

Table 1: Distribution of membership numbers for different membership types

	n	*mean*	*std.*	*skewness*	*min*	*max*
Individual membership	132 (93 missing)	123 602	507 387	6.75	29	4 500 000
Institutional membership	213 (69 missing)	1012	3116	4.87	3	25 000
Association of organizations	95 (19 missing)	89	243	4.96	2	1 800

Index: 108 organizations are not included in this table as they represent a more informal constituency consisting of (a mixture of) supporters, activists or donors.

we have one count, this count represents different metrics for different organization types and, therefore, it does not reflect what a 'low' membership density means within the context of a specific organization type. Clearly, one cannot simply compare the counts of institutional memberships with counts of individual memberships, or with the number of associations that are member of a particular interest organization (see Table 1).

We addressed this problem by testing multiple models for which we developed distinct explanatory factors. To begin with, we model the impact of membership type by distinguishing whether groups (i) have no formal members, (ii) have formal members that are individuals, (iii) have formal members that are corporate entities or institutions, and (iv) have other organizations as member. Next, we log-transformed the membership counts (in order to cope with its non-linear nature) and then established standardized *z*-scores separately for each distinct membership type (to get a comparable metric which discounts for the role membership types plays in generating incomparable counts). Finally, we created a categorical variable that compares groups without an informal constituency with three sets of equal sized categories distinguishing groups with a *low, medium* and *high* amount of members taking account of the distributions within membership type.

Data Analyses

Before carrying out a multivariate test, we provide a descriptive account of the different organization types within the Flemish interest group population and compare this with organizations that enjoy access to advisory bodies. Here, we pay particular attention to the territorial scale of organization (nation-wide or regional; see Table 2). Among these interest groups, we have a highly diverse set of actors including institutional groups such as associations of hospitals and schools ($n = 49$, 6 per cent), citizen groups including for instance patient groups, environmental and development organizations ($n = 301$, 41 per cent), labor unions ($n = 27$, 4 per cent), and business associations ($n = 351$, 49 per cent), the latter two including sector-specific and multi-industry associations. More than half of the mobilized population (53 per cent) thus consists of economic interests, namely business associations and

Table 2: Organization type and scale of organization in the population and advisory bodies (frequencies and percentages)

	Population			*Advisory bodies*		
	($n = 729$; $Chi^2 = 72.25$, $P < 0.0001$, $DF = 3$, Cramèr's $V = 0.31$)			*($n = 118$; $Chi^2 = 22.16$, $P < 0.0001$, $DF = 3$, Cramèr's $V = 0.43$)*		
Organization type	*Nation-wide*	*Regional*	*Total (%)*	*Nation-wide*	*Regional*	*Total (%)*
Institutional group	18 (3%)	31 (4%)	49 (7%)	0 (0%)	13 (11%)	13 (11%)
Citizen group	133 (18%)	169 (23%)	302 (41%)	12 (10%)	35 (30%)	47 (40%)
Business group	259 (35%)	92 (13%)	351 (48%)	20 (17%)	22 (19%)	42 (36%)
Labour group	20 (3%)	7 (1%)	27 (4%)	12 (10%)	4 (3%)	16 (13%)
Total	430 (59%)	299 (41%)	729 (100%)	44 (37%)	74 (63%)	118 (100%)

labor groups. If we focus on the scale of organization, that is, do these organizations mobilize or represent a nation-wide (Belgian) or a regional (Flemish) constituency, we notice that a majority of the organizations in the population are nation-wide groups ($n=430$ or 59 per cent), meaning that they represent a constituency situated in the different Belgian regions. However, the picture changes when we consider organization types. Whereas three out of four business and labor groups operate at a Belgium scale, institutional and especially citizen groups mostly mobilize Flemish constituencies (respectively 37 and 44 per cent of these groups operates at a Belgian scale).

The next three columns compare the population distribution with the distribution among the policy insiders. Of the 729 organizations in the population, 118 (or 16 per cent) are policy insiders, meaning that they enjoy access to at least one of the Flemish SACs (or one of the various sub-councils). Regarding different organization types, we notice that about half of the organized interests in the advisory bodies are labor unions and business associations. However, while the proportion of business interests in the advisory bodies is 13 per cent lower than their share in the population, the representation of labor unions in the community of insiders is 9 per cent higher than their share in the population. Hence, although we expected that all economic interests would be privileged in a neo-corporatist policy, it appears that the advisory system is particularly beneficial to labor unions, as they are pretty successful in becoming policy insiders. Yet, this could also refer to the more heterogeneous nature of the category business associations, which encompasses a great variety of groups, ranging from generalist associations with mostly regional companies to very specialized industry associations or professional groups. This heterogeneity might follow from a larger capacity to establish more specialized associations compared with labor unions, whose resources are more limited and therefore are more likely to organize through more generalist organizational forms (Traxler, 1993, p. 687). If we consider the level of mobilization, our observations appear to corroborate the hypothesis that organizations representing a regional constituency have a considerable higher chance to gain access to advisory bodies (compared with nation-wide organizations). With the notable exception of labor unions, a majority of citizen and institutional interests in the community of policy insiders consists of Flemish organizations. With respect to business groups, both national and regional groups are more or less evenly represented.

Given the fact that we have a dichotomous dependent variable, we run a logistic regression analyses for the multivariate analysis, making a distinction between insiders (1) and outsiders (0). Our parameter estimates express the likelihood of an organization to gain access, given a particular organizational feature, and keeping other variables constant. One of the challenges we faced in coding the organizations in our population is that some basic information, in particular membership data, was sometimes difficult to come across. While we have data for most variables, we were only able to retrieve membership data for 75 per cent of the organizations. Therefore, we test different models with distinct membership-related variables. The results are presented in Table 3; the discussion below relies on expected probabilities as generated by Model IV.[5]

Based on these analyses, three of our hypotheses need to be rejected. An organization's degree of decentralization does not have any effect, nor does its age. Although a decentralized organization has an average probability of 0.37 of gaining a seat, while centralized organizations have a likelihood of 0.15, this difference cannot be considered as statistically significant (partially because of considerable variation among the decentralized groups, $\sigma = 0.44$). Interestingly, we did not observe a significant difference for different age cohorts. While it is often assumed that it takes time to build a reputation and establish ties with policymakers, the Flemish advisory system does not privilege older groups. Furthermore, being an umbrella organization (or having an organizational membership) has a small, but not highly significant ($P = < 0.1$) impact on the chance of becoming an insider and the effect of this variable evaporates in Models III and IV.

Furthermore, in terms of representativeness, the size of the membership generates a stronger explanatory impact than organizational structure. Model II tests whether membership type matters and shows that associations of organizations, and to a lesser extent groups with institutional members, have a higher chance of gaining access compared with groups with individual members or an informal constituency (which is in line with Model I, which suggests that umbrella associations have slightly more access). Yet, the impact of membership size appears to be much more significant and robust, as shown by both Models III and IV. Groups with a high and medium amount of members (average expected probability of respectively 0.38 and 0.21) are much more likely to gain access compared with those with a lower membership density (average expected probability 0.13). Moreover, the same models demonstrate that a formal membership structure which involves many members is more helpful than

Table 3: Predicting the probability of gaining access, logistic regression analysis

Independent variables	*Model I: Ignoring membership data*	*Model II: Membership type*	*Model III: Transformed membership variable (omitted groups with an informal constituency)*	*Model IV: Categorizing membership variable*
Intercept	–4.32 (0.63)***	–4.70 (0.69)***	–3.40 (0.72)***	–4.71 (0.74)***
Umbrella organization	0.57 (0.29) †	—	0.32 (0.32)	0.33 (0.32)
Membership type (H1)				
4 = associations of organizations	—	1.01 (0.48)*	—	—
3 = institutional members	—	0.96 (0.50) †	—	—
2 = individual members	—	0.21 (0.48)	—	—
1 = informal constituency (ref category)	—	—	—	—
Membership transformed (H2)	—	—	0.48 (0.15)**	—
Membership categorized (H2)				
4 = high membership	—	—	—	1.28 (0.50)*
3 = medium membership	—	—	—	1.09 (0.51)*
2 = low	—	—	—	0.56 (0.52)
1 = informal constituency (ref category)	—	—	—	—
Organization type (H3)				
1 = economic group (business-labor)	0.77 (0.26)**	0.44 (0.30)	0.46 (0.31)	0.42 (0.31)
0 = otherwise	—	—	—	—
Age (H4)				
Organizational age in years (logged)	0.02 (0.15)	0.01 (0.15)	–0.03 (0.17)	0.08 (0.16)
Decentralized (H5)				
1 = decentralized	0.20 (0.27)	0.31 (0.28)	–0.14 (0.32)	0.02 (0.30)
0 = centralized	—	—	—	—

Staff resources (H6)				
3 = high (⩾ 20)	2.35 (0.36)***	2.40 (0.36)***	1.91 (0.42)***	2.10 (0.39)***
2 = medium (5–19)	1.56 (0.29)***	1.57 (0.29)***	1.34 (0.32)***	1.39 (0.31)***
1 = low (ref category) (⩽ 4)	—	—	—	—
Pillarized (H7)				
1 = pillarized	1.19 (0.36)**	1.30 (0.38)**	0.95 (0.45)*	1.16 (0.43)**
0 = not pillarized	—	—	—	—
Organization scale (H8)				
1 = regional constituency	1.12 (0.26)***	1.08 (0.28)***	1.34 (0.31)***	1.18 (0.29)***
0 = ration-wide constituency	—	—	—	—
Policy portfolio (H9)				
1 = exclusive regional competence	1.10 (0.28)***	1.09 (0.28)***	1.18 (0.34)***	1.13 (0.31)***
0 = shared or exclusively federal	—	—	—	—
−2LogL (Null Model = 637.630)	480.740	474.135	358.518	409.826
DF	9	11	10	12
Nagelkerke R^2	0.25	0.26	0.26	0.26
N	707	707	433	540

Index: parameter estimates (standard errors between brackets); *** = < 0.001; ** = < 0.01; * = < 0.05; † = < 0.1

representing a more informal constituency (see Model IV); the average expected probability of gaining access for the latter category is only 0.07. Importantly, while peak and especially economic groups have a higher chance of gaining access (Model I), the effect of peak associations and being an economic groups disappears entirely and when controlling for membership variables (Models II, III and IV). Hence, for gaining access, membership variables – in particular the size of the formal membership – are more important than whether an organization is a peak association or represents economic interests.

As hypothesized, an organization's degree of professionalization (measured as full-time equivalents employed) has a strong positive effect on the likelihood of becoming an insider. While the average expected probability to gain access is 0.21, this probability is on average 0.08 of organizations with 4 or less than 4 staff members. In contrast, organizations that have between 5 and 19 staff members have an average likelihood of gaining access of 0.28, whereas those organizations that employ more than 20 people have an average likelihood of 0.51. Furthermore, organized interests that represent a Flemish constituency have a much better chance of gaining representation (0.33 compared with 0.13 for those representing a nation-wide constituency). Similarly, organizations that focus on a domain which is an exclusive regional competence, such as education, agriculture or environment, have a much higher chance to gain access (average expected probability of 0.34) compared with those who focus on shared or federal competencies (average expected probability of 0.18).

Another way to illustrate the importance of how policy competencies are divided or shared is by comparing various policy fields in more detail. Figure 1 plots the share of organizations in the population which focus on a particular domain, with the observed proportion of organizations within a field that gain access, and the expected probability within these domains to gain access. It is also relevant to look at the extent to which a field is an exclusively regional competence, or rather a shared or federal policy responsibility. For instance, agriculture and fisheries, education, cultural policy, environment and transport are exclusive or largely regional competencies. In contrast, development cooperation and most rights-based policies (such as anti-discrimination policies, human rights, justice and criminal policies) are largely central government competencies. Other fields are more difficult to classify. For instance, while social security and health insurance are federal competencies, the organization of residential health care is a regional competence. Therefore, these fields can be seen as shared competences, implying that policy responsibilities are shared between the central and the subnational governments.

Figure 1 shows that the likelihood of access is rather high for associations representing interests related to education (55 per cent) and transport (35 per cent)). For other domains, the observed proportion is lower than 25 per cent. Consequently, it appears that organized interests that are active in fields that are an exclusive Flemish competence (such as culture, education, transport, environment and agriculture) have a high chance of gaining access (compared with their prevalence

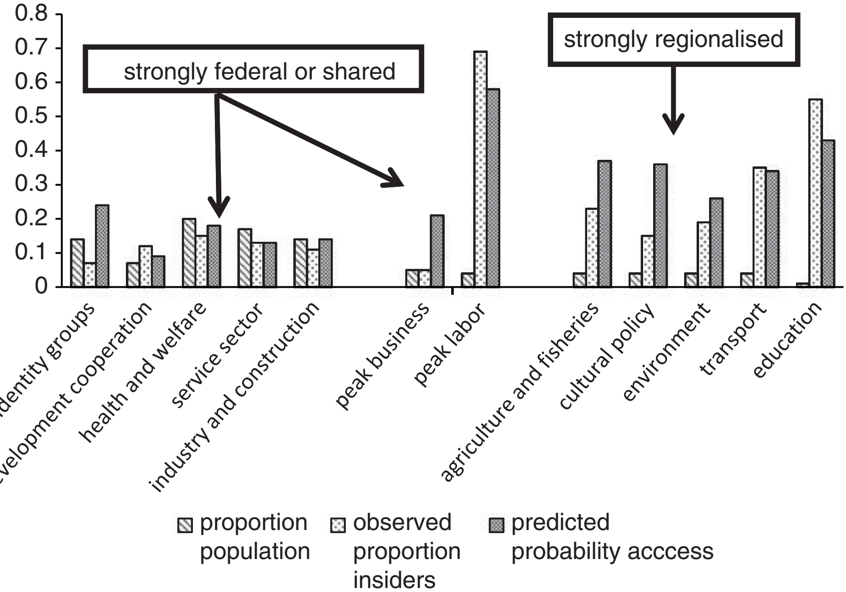

Figure 1: Comparing the observed share in the population with observed insiderness (proportion of access) and the predicted probability to become an insider (Model IV).

in the population). Apparently, there appears to be a mismatch between the share of a field in the population and the chance that groups within that field gain access to a Flemish advisory body. For instance, transport and education have a relative low share in the population, while the probability that these groups gain access is pretty high. In contrast, some fields represent a considerable share in the interest group population (for example, health and welfare and the service sector), while organizations representing these fields enjoy rather low levels of access (observed and expected) to the advisory system. Next to the organizations that focus on a particular field, we observe that peak business and especially labor associations – whose interests encompass both regional and central state competencies – enjoy a high level of access, despite the fact that these organizations exist in low numbers.

Taking this into account, devolution in Belgium has resulted in the emergence of a subnational interest group community. While this logically follows from the division of competencies in a federation, it remains a significant finding, as in many domains competencies are still shared between the regional and federal government level. Yet, even in these domains, a regional interest community is emerging, providing support for the expectation that devolution may have contributed to a fragmentation of policy communities. At the same time and somewhat in contrast, our regression results (see Table 3) also confirm that while Belgium can no longer be characterized as entirely pillarized, pillarized organizations have managed to maintain themselves quite well and still play a considerable role in supplying policy advice. The difference is enormous, namely an average expected probability of 0.64 for pillarized groups compared with 0.17 for the non-pillar organizations. Apparently, the legacy of a long-standing integration in one of the pillars and the close relationship with the traditional political parties still translates into a better integration in policy circles.

Conclusion

With this article we aimed to contribute to the broader literature on the interaction between organized interests and policymakers by combining a bottom-up registration of all mobilized groups with a mapping of all organizations that enjoy access to advisory bodies. In this way, we did not only analyze who enjoys access to policymakers, but also examined in what way these insiders differ from the full population of organized interests. In addition, by focusing on interest intermediation in Flanders, we were able to assess the impact of multilayeredness on patterns of interest representation. The results demonstrate that organized interests that represent a regional constituency, and that focus on fields that are the exclusive policy responsibility of the Flemish government, are much more likely to gain access. While we should be cautious due to a lack of robust longitudinal data, it appears that the successive state reforms had a significant impact on interest representation in Belgium as a considerable number of interest groups are organized at a subnational basis. While speculative, in the long run, this development may result in the further fragmentation of interest group communities in Belgium, and eventually lead to a shortage of organized interests that are able to bridge sectoral and territorial interests (see also Celis *et al*, 2013, p. 58).

At the same time, however, our analyses show that the community of policy insiders in Flanders strongly reflects Belgium's neo-corporatist and consociational legacy, as labor unions and other formerly pillarized associations still gain substantial access. This is somewhat remarkable, considering that neo-corporatist patterns are in decline in several countries (Traxler, 2010; Oberg *et al*, 2011), and taking into account the relatively young nature of the system of SACs at the Flemish level, which was established in 2003 (Fobé *et al*, 2013). Yet, it cannot be concluded that policymakers are insensitive to the representative features of organized interests, as groups with stronger societal roots (especially in terms of membership) stand a better chance of becoming insiders. Although professionalization and staff resources play an important part, the size of an organization's constituency also is a critical factor.

Finally, we should acknowledge some limitations of our research design. First, while we have population data for the Belgian case, as our insider data apply to one region, we could offer only a partial picture of interest representation in Belgium. While analyses of access of organized interests in other regions (such as Wallonia) might yield different results, we expect that in these cases, yet also in various other countries with an extensive 'meso' level of governance (such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Spain and Germany), the organization and representation of societal interests is substantially affected by multilayeredness (for instance Baumgartner *et al*, 2009; Constantelos, 2010; Keating and Wilson, 2014). Second, as we lack longitudinal data on interest group access, nor detailed and reliable evidence on the development of organizational features over time, the precise causal relationship between some factors – such as membership and staff resources – and government access remains unclear. One can imagine that policymakers prefer to interact with professionalized groups that credibly represent a sizable societal segment and are able to supply valuable expertise. Yet, being an insider might also benefit the overall organizational development of an interest group (Fisker, 2015; Fraussen, 2014). Future research that maps the organizational development of organized interests in conjunction with their degree of government access might deliver more clarity on this thought provoking matter.

Acknowledgements

The research presented in this article has been supported by the Odysseus program of the Research Foundation-Flanders (Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek-Vlaanderen). The authors would like to thank the journal editors and the two anonymous reviewers for their careful reading of the manuscript and their constructive criticism.

About the Authors

Bert Fraussen is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Australian National University (ANU), Research School of the Social Sciences. In addition to this, he is Honorary Research Fellow at the Antwerp Centre for Institutions and Multilevel Politics (ACIM). His research focuses on interest groups and lobbying, in particular the organizational development of interest groups as well as the interaction between organized interests and policymakers.

Jan Beyers is Professor of Political Science at the University of Antwerp and Director of the Antwerp Centre for Institutions and Multilevel Politics (ACIM). In addition to this, he is Visiting Research Professor at Agder University (Norway). His current research and teaching covers institutional theories, comparative politics, European Union politics, interest groups and research methods.

Notes

1 For instance, Belgium has three peak labor unions, each tied to specific political-ideological segments (in casu Catholics, socialists and liberals). In addition, also some prominent socio-cultural organizations (representing youth, women, elderly or disabled people) and NGOs can be linked to one of these pillars.

2 NACE is the abbreviation of the French *Nomenclature statistique des activités économiques dans la Communauté européenne*. This European industry classification system consists of a six digit code and is systematically used in most national statistical data systems (see http://goo.gl/8NLquM). Full definition of S94: 'This *division includes activities of organizations representing interests of special groups or promoting ideas to the general public. These organizations usually have a constituency of members, but their activities may involve and benefit non-members as well. The primary breakdown of this division is determined by the purpose that these organizations serve, namely interests of employers, self-employed individuals and the scientific community (group 94.1), interests of employees (group 94.2) or promotion of religious, political, cultural, educational or recreational ideas and activities (group 94.9)*'.

3 They are assigned code 84.302, which specifically refers to mutuals or '*ziekenfondsen en zorgkassen*'.

4 True, whether or not an organized interest has gained access to consultation arrangements is one way to assess access. Yet, there are still significant and substantial differences in the 'insiderness' among those who gained this form of access. For a more detailed account of this matter we refer to Maloney *et al* (1994), and, for the Belgian case a recent publication by Fraussen *et al* (2014).

5 In addition we also tested models with an interaction term for membership density (the number of members) and membership types (individual members, institutional members, and associations). This allows us to check whether the impact of membership densities (*vis-à-vis* access) is conditional on the type of members. In the Supplementary online appendix (Table 2A; Models V and VI) we report evidence with the raw and transformed membership variables. These results demonstrate that there is no significant conditional effect. This implies furthermore that, although organizations with individual members have less chance to gain access (Model II), on average organizations with more members enjoy more access (Models III and IV). Or, having more members can be considered as advantageous to all organizations (regardless of the particular membership type, that is, also organizations with individual members benefit from it).

References

Almond, G.A. (1983) Corporatism, pluralism, and professional memory. *World Politics* 35(2): 245–260.

Andrews, K.T. and Edwards, B. (2004) Advocacy organizations in the U.S. political process. *Annual Review of Sociology* 30: 479–506.

Baumgartner, F.R. and Leech, B.L. (1998) *Basic Interests: the Importance of Groups in Politics and Political Science*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Baumgartner, F.R., Gray, V. and Lowery, D. (2009) Federal policy activity and the mobilization of state lobbying organizations. *Political Research Quarterly* 62(3): 552–567.

Beyers, J., Braun, C. and Haverland, M. (2014) Plus ça change, plus c'est pareil. Europen integration and interest group politics in the Low Countries. In: H. Vollaard, J. Beyers and P. Dumont (eds.) *European Integration and Consensus Politics in the Low Countries*. London: Routledge.

Binderkrantz, A. (2005) Interest group strategies: Navigating between privileged access and strategies of pressure. *Political Studies* 53(4): 694–715.

Binderkrantz, A. (2008) Different groups, different strategies: How interest groups pursue their political ambitions. *Scandinavian Political Studies* 31(2): 173–200.

Blau, P.M. (1964) *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. New York: Wiley.

Bloodgood, E.A., Tremblay-Boire, J. and Prakash, A. (2014) National styles of NGO regulation. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 43(4): 716–736.

Bourgeois, G. (2009) *Beleidsnota Bestuurszaken 2009–2014*. Brussel, Belgium: Vlaamse Regering.

Bouwen, P. (2002) Corporate lobbying in the European Union: The logic of access. *Journal of European Public Policy* 9(3): 365–390.

Braun, C. (2012) The captive or the broker? Explaining public agency-interest group interactions. *Governance* 25(2): 291–314.

Celis, K., Mackay, F. and Meier, P. (2013) Social movement organizations and changing state architectures: Comparing women's movement organizing in flanders and scotland. *Publius* 43(1): 44–67.

Christiansen, P.M., Norgaard, A.S., Rommetvedt, H., Svensson, T., Thesen, G. and Öberg, P. (2010) Varieties of democracy: Interest groups and corporatist committees in scandinavian policymaking. *Voluntas* 21(1): 22–40.

Christiansen, P.M. (2012) The usual suspects: Interest group dynamics and representation in Denmark. In D. Halpin and A.G. Jordan (eds.) *The Scale of Interest Organization in Democratic Politics: Data and Research Methods*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 161–179.

Constantelos, J. (2004) The Europeanization of interest group politics in Italy: Business associations in Rome and the regions. *Journal of European Public Policy* 11(6): 1020–1040.

Constantelos, J. (2010) Playing the field: Federalism and the politics of venue shopping in the United States and Canada. *Publius* 40(3): 460–483.

Deschouwer, K. (2009) *The Politics of Belgium. Governing a Divided Society*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dür, A. and Mateo, G. (2012) Gaining access or going public? Interest group strategies in five European countries. *European Journal of Political Research* 52(5): 660–686.

Eising, R. (2006) Interest groups and social movements. In: M. Vink and P. Graziano (eds.) *Europeanization: New Research Agendas*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 167–181.

Eising, R. (2007) The access of business interests to EU political institutions: Towards elite pluralism? *Journal of European Public Policy* 14(2): 384–403.

Eising, R. (2008) Clientelism, committees, pluralism and protests in the European union: Matching patterns? *West European Politics* 31(6): 1166–1187.

Emerson, R.M. (1962) Power-dependence relations. *American Sociological Review* 27(1): 31–41.

Fisker, H.M. (2015) Dead or alive? Explaining the long-term survival chances of interest groups. *West European Politics* 38(3): 709–729.

Fobé, E., Brans, M., Vancoppenolle, D. and Van Damme, J. (2013) Institutionalized advisory systems: An analysis of member satisfaction of advice production and use across 9 strategic advisory councils in Flanders (Belgium). *Policy and Society* 32(3): 225–240.

Fraussen, B. (2014) The visible hand of the state: On the organizational development of interest groups. *Public Administration* 92(2): 406–421.

Fraussen, B., Beyers, J. and Donas, T. (2014) The expanding core and varying degrees of insiderness: Institutionalized interest group involvement through advisory councils. *Political Studies*, advance online publication 27 January, doi:10.1111/1467-9248.12112.

Furlong, S.R. (1997) Interest group influence on rule making. *Administration and Society* 29(3): 325–347.

Granados, F.J. and Knoke, D. (2005) Organized interest groups and policy networks. In T. Janoski, R. Alford, A.M. Hicks and M.A. Schwartz (eds.) *The Handbook of Political Sociology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 287–309.

Grossmann, M. (2012) *The Not-So-Special Interests. Interest Groups, Public Representation, and American Governance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Halpin, D. (2010) *Groups, Democracy and Representation: Between Promise and Practice*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

Halpin, D. and Jordan, G. (2012) Estimating groups and associational populations: Endemic problems but encouraging progress. In: D. Halpin and G. Jordan (eds.) *The Scale of Interest Organization in Democratic Politics: Data and Research Methods*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1–22.

Hannan, M.T. and Freeman, J. (1989) *Organizational Ecology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hanegraaff, M., Beyers, J. and Braun, C. (2011) Open the door to more of the same? The development of interest group representation at the WTO. *World Trade Review* 10(4): 447–472.

Hooghe, L., Marks, G. and Schakel, A.H. (2010) *The Rise of Regional Authority: A Comparitive Study of 42 Democracies*. London/New York: Routledge.
Huyse, L. (2003) *Over Politiek*. Leuven, Belgium: Uitgeverij Van Halewyck.
Keating, M. (2008) Thirty years of territorial politics. *West European Politics* 31(1): 60–81.
Keating, M. and Wilson, A. (2014) Regions with regionalism? The rescaling of interest groups in six European states. *European Journal of Political Research* 53(4): 840–857.
Kitschelt, H. (2004) *Diversification and Reconfiguration of Party Systems in Postindustrial Democracies*. Bonn, Germany: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
Klüver, H. (2012) Informational lobbying in the European Union: The effect of organisational characteristics. *West European Politics* 35(3): 491–510.
Klüver, H. and Saurugger, S. (2013) Opening the black box: The professionalization of interest groups in the European Union. *Interest Groups and Advocacy* 2(2): 185–205.
Lehmbruch, G. and Schmitter, P.C. (1982) *Patterns of Corporatist Policy-Making*. London: Sage Publications.
Lijphart, A. and Crepaz, M. (1991) Corporatism and consensus democracy in eighteen countries: Conceptual and empirical linkages. *British Journal of Political Science* 21(2): 235–246.
Lowery, D. and Gray, V. (2004) Bias in the heavenly chorus. Interests in society and before government. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 16(1): 5–30.
Maloney, W.A., Jordan, G. and McLaughlin, A.M. (1994) Interest groups and public policy: The insider/outsider model revisited. *Journal of Public Policy* 14(1): 17–38.
Oberg, P., Svensson, T., Christiansen, P.M., Norgaard, A.S., Rommetvedt, H. and Thesen, G. (2011) Disrupted exchange and declining corporatism: Government authority and interest group capability in Scandinavia. *Government and Opposition* 46(3): 365–391.
Pfeffer, J. and Salancik, G. (1978) *The External Control of Organizations*. New York: Harper and Row.
Poloni-Staudinger, L.M. (2008) The domestic opportunity structure and supranational activity an explanation of environmental group activity at the European Union level. *European Union Politics* 9(4): 531–558.
Popelier, P., Van Humbeeck, P., Meuwese, A. and Van Aeken, K. (2012) Transparant consulteren in Vlaanderen: De spanning tussen rationeel wetgevingsmodel en besluitvormingspraktijk. *Tijdschrift voor Wetgeving* 1(2): 2–13.
Salisbury, R.H. (1983) Interest representation: The dominance of institutions. *American Political Science Review* 78(1): 64–76.
Schattschneider, E.E. (1960) *The Semisovereign People. A Realist's View of Democracy in America*. Hinsdale, IL: The Dryden Press.
Schlozman, K.L., Verba, S. and Brady, H.E. (2012) *The Unheavenly Chorus. Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Schmitter, P.C. and Lehmbruch, G. (1979) *Trends Toward Corporatist Intermediation*. London: Sage Publications.
Siaroff, A. (1999) Corporatism in 24 industrial democracies: Meaning and measurement. *European Journal of Political Research* 36(2): 175–205.
Skocpol, T. (2003) *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
Swenden, W. (2004) What – If anything – Can the European union learn us from Belgian federalism and vice versa? *Regional and Federal Studies* 15(2): 187–204.
Traxler, F. (1993) Business associations and labor unions in comparison: Theoretical perspectives and empirical findings on social class, collective action and associational organizability. *The British Journal of Sociology* 44(4): 673–691.
Traxler, F. (2010) The long-term development of organised business and its implications for corporatism: A cross-national comparison of membership, activities and governing capacities of business interest associations, 1980–2003. *European Journal of Political Research* 49(2): 151–173.

van Haute, E., Amjahad, A., Borriello, A., Close, C. and Sandri, G. (2013) Party members in a pillarised democracy. An empirical overview of party membership figures and profiles in Belgium. *Acta Politica* 48(1): 68–91.

Van Maele, D. (2009) De politiek-organisatorische machtsconfiguratie in België: Relaties tussen maatschappelijke organisaties en de staatselite. *Tijdschrift voor Sociologie* 30(2): 117–142.