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INTEREST GROUP ACCESS TO KEY POLICYMAKERS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

PhD in Political Science

2015

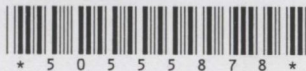
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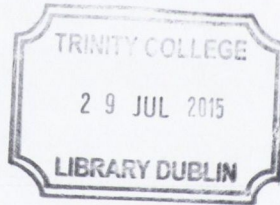
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SUMMARY

This thesis uses both quantitative and qualitative data to offer the most comprehensive and systematic investigation into Irish interest group behaviour heretofore conducted. At the same time it also makes a significant contribution to the more general lobbying literature by offering a comparison of EU and domestic level lobbying. Furthermore, in its examination of interest group access, it uses not only the typical 'frequency of access' dependent variable but also supplements this with a novel 'invited access' variable which, it is argued, is likely to be more closely correlated with interest group power.

The primary goal of this thesis is to examine the access that Irish interest groups receive at two different levels of governance and to four different types of policymakers. At the national level, access to TDs and to civil servants is investigated. At the EU level, access to Irish MEPs and European Commission officials is similarly examined. At each level, the quantitative sections of the thesis focused on identifying variation in access to policymakers, both between different types of interest groups and, perhaps even more importantly, between *differentially resourced* interest groups.

These quantitative sections, which are based on original surveys of interest groups and policymakers, find that, in line with our theoretical predictions, groups who are able to best respond to the incentives and constraints of each type of policymaker typically receive more access to this class of policymaker than other groups. Groups with large numbers of members thus receive more access to TDs, as they represent more voters. Similarly, groups with more public affairs staff, and hence more expertise, receive more access to civil servants.

This domestic level story is partially repeated at the EU level. Groups with more public affairs staff are more likely to gain access to the EU's civil service, the European Commission. Interestingly, however, groups with more members are no more likely to gain access to Irish MEPs. This, it is argued, is due to the diminished electoral pressures felt by MEPs relative to TDs.

Throughout the thesis, these quantitative sections are supplemented by qualitative data based on fifty interviews carried out with interest groups and policymakers. This interview evidence allows the quantitative sections to be supplemented in a number of ways.

Firstly, these qualitative sections allow the question of *why* certain interest group resources were associated with greater access to certain policymakers to be explored. For example, the importance of membership size for TDs is discussed here, and interview evidence reveals the crucial importance for TDs of knowing the preferences of as many of their constituents as possible. Interview evidence is also able to add qualitative depth to the headline quantitative finding and demonstrate that while membership size is important in the aggregate, it is also true that some members are more important than others, due to their greater propensity to vote.

Secondly, these qualitative sections allow questions that cannot easily be analysed using quantitative data to be considered. With regard to MEPs for instance, interview evidence demonstrates how different MEPs have very different goals and hence are in demand of different inputs from interest groups. This is in contrast to TDs who are much more closely monitored by their constituents and hence must seek out information that allows them to be responsive to them, in the first instance.

Finally, this qualitative data allows the public policy implications of some of our findings to be further explored. For instance, the interview evidence confirms the validity of the finding that expertise is particularly important for gaining access to civil servants at both the EU and the domestic level. Furthermore, it also highlights that expertise is particularly important for gaining access to national level civil servants at the present moment, due to the expertise deficit that currently exists in the civil service itself.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Raj Chari, for all of his support over the four years I have spent in the PhD program in Trinity. Raj manages to combine a relaxed demeanour and attitude with an extraordinarily good eye for detail, and his ability to combine those two traits were crucial to this thesis ultimately coming to fruition.

As well as Raj, I would also like to thank both the staff and my fellow PhD candidates in the Department of Political Science for their helpful comments over the last four years, both in Friday Seminars, and in more informal settings. I would like to give particular thanks to Koji Kagotani, Kevin Cunningham and Laura 'Stata Wizard' Schwirz for taking the time to both listen to me, and to provide input, when I was working through the statistical sections of this thesis. Mark Canavan, whom I shared an office with throughout, also provided an invaluable sounding board for ideas as they fermented in my brain over the last four years.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to the various bodies who have seen it fit to fund this project over the last few years. Here I must give initial thanks to both the Department of Political Science and to the Graduate Studies Office in Trinity who funded me throughout my first two years in the program. In the last two years I have been fortunate enough to be fully funded by the Irish Research Council by way of a Government of Ireland Scholarship. Without funding from these bodies it simply would not have been possible for me to undertake this thesis and I offer my sincere thanks to them all.

I would also like to thank all of those interest group representatives and policymakers who gave up their time to complete the two surveys which this thesis is based on. It goes without saying that without them, this thesis would simply not have been possible. I would also like to give particular thanks to the 50 survey respondents who not only completed the survey but also gave up even

more of their time and allowed me to interview them. I would like to hope that the thesis is much the richer for it.

On a personal level, I would like to thank my family for their support and the belief they showed in me throughout the last four years. They never doubted me, even when I myself might have. Special thanks must go both to my Dad, and to my sister Cathy, who arguably know more about my thesis at this stage than I do myself.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank Pia, for putting up with me throughout the highs and the lows of the last four years. From watching me give mock presentations, to reassuring me that the latest 'insurmountable issue' can, in fact, most likely be overcome, her patience and support has known no bounds.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Lobbying has attracted a great deal of public attention in recent years. The fallout from the financial crisis, which exposed the 'cosy' relationships that often existed between policymakers and key figures in, most notably, the banking sector, has led to increased scrutiny of the influence that private actors are able to have on the policy making process both in Ireland, and globally. Irish attention has been particularly piqued by the reports from the Moriarty and Mahon tribunals, which have laid out, in often excruciating detail, how lobbyists, whether acting on behalf of their clients or their own interests, used financial inducements to persuade policymakers to promote their interests at the expense of their competitors (Byrne, 2012). This scrutiny has resulted in a steady flow of newspaper editorials decrying the potentially corrupting influence of 'lobbyists' in Irish society (McGee, 2012; O'Brien, 2012; 2013; McConnell, 2014). Such scrutiny has also prompted a response from the Irish government, which has made the introduction of lobbying regulation part of the current program for government.¹

Of course, lobbying scandals have not been limited to Ireland in recent years. In the US, for instance, the Jack Abramoff scandal received particular attention due not only to Abramoff's misdeeds, but also due to his alleged closeness to numerous Republican politicians (Fowler, 2006). In Brussels, the major scandal has been the 'cash for laws' controversy, whereby four MEPs agreed to accept money from Sunday Times journalists posing as lobbyists in return for a promise to water down banking reform legislation (Rasmussen, 2011).

What is perhaps surprising though, is that despite the level of public interest shown in lobbying in Ireland, there has been very little academic work undertaken that systematically examines the level of access to policymakers that Irish interest groups actually receive. The rather limited literature that does exist meanwhile has a number of shortcomings. Most commonly, academic writing on Irish lobbying has focused on very specific case studies, with little reference made to the broader phenomenon of lobbying more generally or indeed to the

¹ Please see <http://www.per.gov.ie/regulation-of-lobbying/> [last accessed, 31/07/2014].

more general theoretical literature (this approach is best encapsulated by the articles which appear in the 2011 special issue of *The Journal of Public Affairs* on lobbying in Ireland).

More systematic work on Irish lobbying does exist, and most notable in this respect is recent work carried out by Andres Dür and Gemma Mateo. These scholars have used widely distributed surveys to allow them to examine the activities of a broad cross-section of Irish interest groups across a wide range of policy areas (Dür & Mateo, 2010; Dür & Mateo, 2011). They have also made their findings part of a broader comparative project into the lobbying activities of national interest groups across Europe (Dür & Mateo, 2012). While impressive in many respects, one major drawback of these studies is that they focus exclusively on Irish interest group lobbying on EU legislation and do not examine such lobbying on national legislation, on which the vast majority of Irish interest groups focus their attention.

While one may point to a paucity of literature on Irish lobbying, it would not be possible to level the same complaint at scholars of the European Union. Thousands of articles have been written in recent years on the role of interest groups in the EU, with everything from their role in fruit trade regulation to their ability to frame messages in discussions regarding biotech policy being examined (Pedler, 1994; Daviter, 2012). Despite the huge amount of research that has been done, however, important gaps remain.

In the first instance, there are very few studies which compare national level with supranational lobbying within the EU system, despite the importance of such studies being recognised by scholars working in this field (Woll, 2006; Mahoney, 2008; Dür & Matteo, 2011). Indeed, the absence of such studies is particularly surprising given the argument, widely accepted in the literature, that the institutional environment is a crucial determinant of interest group power (Mahoney, 2008; Mahoney & Baumgartner, 2008; Hojnacki *et al*, 2012). The work of Mahoney (2008) for instance, and her finding that a significant explanatory factor in explaining variation in the success of different interests groups in the

EU and the United States is the relative level of democratic accountability in the two systems, is especially noteworthy. It is also worth considering the phenomenon of Europeanization and the gradual expansion of EU level competences that goes with it. In this context, comparing national and EU level systems of governance, and the different interest group biases that are present within each become, from a policy perspective at least, even more important than they otherwise would be.

It is against this backdrop that this project was envisaged. The primary goal is to offer the most comprehensive and systematic investigation into Irish interest group behaviour ever conducted. In doing so it will examine three different types of 'access' that Irish interest groups receive, to four different types of policymakers. Access is chosen as the primary dependent variable, in accordance with recent developments in the wider literature on lobbying (in particular in the EU), and due to the fact that it both lends itself to objective measurement and is also a signal of interest group power.

Furthermore, in this thesis, 'access' is broken down into three separate concepts, all of which are examined empirically. The first of these is 'ability to access'. This variable, which simply looks like at an interest group's ability to gain access to a policymaker at some point during a twelve-month period, is a minimum standard required for an interest group to have even the potential to influence.

The second variable analysed is 'frequency of access'. This is the most common variable used in the existing literature and its importance is obvious. By looking at frequency of access, we can examine if certain groups receive more access than others and, crucially, if there are systematic differences between groups in terms of the frequency of access they enjoy. Groups with more frequent access, it is argued, will be in a better position to influence policy outcomes than groups with less access.

The third variable examined is 'invited access'. This variable examines the access that interest groups receive at the behest of policymakers. It is broken down,

both in terms of whether interest groups receive any such access and also in terms of how frequently groups receive it. While the concept of 'invited access' is not entirely new (there is a comprehensive interest group sub-literature on 'insiders' and 'outsiders' for example), this thesis is one of the first works to empirically examine the level of 'invited access' that different interest groups receive. Up to this point, the vast majority of such empirical studies have focused on the 'frequency of access' variable only.

These concepts are used to allow us to explore variation between different types of interest groups and between *differentially resourced* interest groups in terms of the access they receive to different types of policymakers, at both the domestic and EU levels. This is discussed in more detail in chapters three and four of this thesis, which outline the theoretical framework and the methods of analysis.

Having outlined the dependent variables that will be used in the quantitative analysis, we must now also discuss the policymakers that interest groups seek access to. At the domestic level (where Irish interest groups are most active), this will include both Irish TDs² and civil servants. At the EU level, it will include both EU Commission Officials and Irish MEPs. At both levels the central question will be this: what resources are associated with increased interest group access to each type of policymaker?

This second step will allow an examination of lobbying at two levels of governance not heretofore examined in the existing literature. This examination, which will involve comparing the access that interest groups receive at the national level with the access they receive at the supranational level, will allow us to make a unique contribution to the wider EU lobbying literature. The central question here will be to ask if there are any systematic differences between the access that different types of interest groups receive at the national level with the access they receive at the EU level?

² TDs are members of Dáil Éireann (commonly referred to as 'the Dáil'), the lower house of the Irish Parliament.

This thesis puts forward a relatively simple set of theoretical arguments. These arguments are, in the main, ultimately supported by the empirical evidence presented in this thesis. It is argued, in the first instance, that all policymakers have certain information that they wish to obtain from interest groups. The type of information that is demanded by policymakers depends on the individual incentives and constraints those policymakers face. Furthermore, it is argued that there is variation in the ability of interest groups to provide various types of information to policymakers, dependent upon the resources they have at their disposal.

This argument is in line with a well-developed strand in the lobbying literature, first developed by Pieter Bouwen, which argues that in order to receive access to policymakers, interest groups need to provide what are described as 'access goods' in return (Bouwen, 2002; Bouwen, 2004). These 'access goods' can take a number of forms, but must in some way improve policymakers' ability to carry out their basic functions.

This framework allows us to advance the following arguments. Politicians, who face competitive electoral pressures, are most in demand of information that is electorally relevant (Ainsworth, 1993; Aldrich, 1995). At the national level then, we can expect TDs to privilege interest groups who represent large numbers of voters in terms of the frequency and quality of access they are provided.

Civil servants, on the other hand, are most in demand of information that will help them formulate and implement policy as efficiently as possible. The access good they are most in demand of, therefore, is 'expertise'. The groups that are most likely to be in a position to supply such information are groups with substantial public affairs staffs at their disposal.

At the EU level, the story is somewhat more complicated. EU Commission officials have very similar incentives to national level civil servants and hence can equally be expected to be dependent on expertise. Indeed, such a dependency may be especially pronounced at the EU level due to the small size

of the Commission bureaucracy relative to most national administrations, and the complexity of much of the legislation it deals with (Lehmann & Bosche, 2003; Beyers & Kerremans, 2004; Bouwen, 2004; Coen, 2007; Greenwood, 2007b; Dür, 2008a; Klüver, 2010; Chalmers, 2011).

The similarities between MEPs and TDs are, however, not quite as clear-cut. Due to the competitive nature of national elections in Ireland, levels of democratic responsiveness can be expected to be high amongst TDs, hence the likelihood of groups with large numbers of members being granted frequent access. While the democratic responsiveness of TDs is quite clear, however, such responsiveness cannot be taken for granted in the case of MEPs. For instance, the fact that they are elected in what have been described as 'second order elections' and which are not tied to issues of European policy, may mean they have less of an incentive to be responsive to their electoral constituency (Norris, 1997; Marsh, 1998; Hix, 2005; Follesdal & Hix, 2006). In the absence of clear electoral incentives then, MEPs may not be as responsive to interest groups who represent significant numbers of voters as national politicians. From the perspective of the long-standing debate regarding the alleged 'democratic deficit' in the European Union, a scenario in which groups' representativeness did not grant them any extra access to their elected officials may be cause for concern (Norris, 1997; Beyers, 2004; Hix, 2005; Follesdal & Hix, 2006; Greenwood, 2007b). This issue will be discussed in more depth in chapters three and eight of this thesis.

The rest of this thesis is laid out as follows. Chapter two features an extensive literature review that examines broader developments in the lobbying literature, developments which have, undoubtedly, informed the approach that this particular thesis takes. Having set this context, chapter three outlines in detail the theoretical argument that this thesis puts forward and identifies how it advances the literature in a number of ways. Chapter four looks at the data and methodology used in this thesis and outlines its empirical approach used in this thesis. Chapter five is the first empirical chapter, and discusses the access that interest groups receive to Irish TDs. Chapter six examines the access that these interest groups receive to Irish, national level, civil servants. Moving to the EU

level, chapter seven looks at the access interest groups receive to EU Commission officials. Chapter eight is concerned with interest group access to Irish MEPs. Chapter nine concludes the thesis, and briefly looks at the wider conclusions that can be drawn from this study, particularly in relation to its policy implications and its potential impact on the wider academic literature. It will also look at the limitations of this thesis and offer suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

One of the major contributions of this thesis is that it represents the first large-scale systematic study of Irish interest group access. In order to do this, however, we need to go beyond the relatively limited existing Irish literature and draw extensively on both the US and EU literatures. This thesis therefore, both draws on, and feeds into, a variety of literatures and hence this review is wide-ranging and broad in scope. Across the literatures it examines, it tracks the development of the literature over time, developments which inform the approach that this thesis takes in its own empirical investigation.

Focusing on four main strands in the lobbying literature, this chapter has four main sections. In the first instance, an analysis is made of the development of the 'general' theoretical literature. This 'general' literature is dominated by American political scientists and is undeniably US centric in focus. Notwithstanding this US centricity, however, this literature is crucial, as it is comfortably the most developed body of literature on interest groups, certainly theoretically and in many ways empirically as well.

This influence can be seen quite clearly in the development of the second literature we draw on, that of European Union lobbying. Many scholars working in this field draw on the theoretical tools developed by their US counterparts in their studies. Equally, however, it is important to note that the field of EU lobbying is, at this stage, a highly developed literature in its own right. Of course, in many ways, this is unsurprising. Since the inception of the EU (and its predecessors, the EC and the EEC) interest groups have always been seen as playing a crucial role in EU policy. As a result, the study of interest groups in the EU has been approached from an abundance of different angles in a plethora of different studies.

The 'holy grail' of such research has often been to try and explain interest group influence, 'one of the most fraught, difficult and complex problems in political science research' (Beyers *et al*, 2008). This review will examine these attempts

and, in particular, look at the efforts that have been made to attempt to study interest group 'influence' more systematically. Such attempts have often avoided shying away from trying to measure 'influence' directly and instead focused on concepts such as 'access', that are more easily measurable, and are also, it is argued, ultimately likely to be correlated with influence.

The third, and perhaps least well-developed, literature that this thesis concerns itself with, is the literature on Irish lobbying. It is clear that there has been very little wide ranging, or quantitative academic work undertaken, looking at how Irish interest groups lobby (Dür & Mateo, 2011). This is perhaps particularly surprising when one considers the various scandals and tribunals that have graced Ireland in the last decade, which have involved lobbyists of various stripes and the privileged access they have gained to politicians.³ While such scandals have certainly kept newspapers' editorial pages busy, they have not, generally speaking, prompted a similar level of interest from academics.

Notwithstanding the paucity of such works, however, this review will cast a critical eye over the work that is out there. In doing so, it will cast its net reasonably widely, focusing both on works which examine Irish interest groups in their role as specific 'lobby groups' and, also, on works which consider social partnership and the role that interest groups have arguably played 'within the system' in Ireland.

The fourth, and final, section looks at the literature on multi-level lobbying. This literature looks at the effect that the existence of EU level decision-making has on domestic lobbying groups. The most frequently posed question in this respect is whether the possibility of lobbying at the EU level, as an additional lobbying route, provides an opportunity for certain interest groups to 'venue shop' and find a more receptive audience at the EU level than they have previously found at the national level (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Holyoake, 2003; Yee, 2004; Mazey & Richardson, 2006: 250; Coen, 2007). It also examines the question of how the different needs of policymakers at the national and EU levels may

³ Such scandals have not been restricted to Ireland of course

advantage different types of interest groups, depending on the resources they have at their disposal.

The General Lobbying Literature

Although classic works from scholars such as Arthur Bentley (1908) appeared much earlier, the 'golden era' of interest group scholarship really began in the 1950s and the early 1960s. This particularly vibrant period in interest group scholarship saw a number of very prominent American political scientists address the issue of the power that different types of interest groups were able to wield in society from a variety of different perspectives.

From one end of the spectrum, Robert Dahl painted a pluralist picture of society, in which every possible interest group had access to the political process (Dahl, 1961). At the other, C. Wright Mills spoke of a 'Power Elite' made up of leading figures from business, the military and politics exerting domination over the rest of society (Wright Mills, 1956).

While both works were masterly pieces of scholarship, they were not without their drawbacks. The elite as 'all powerful' approach, as perhaps best encapsulated by Wright Mills' 'Power Elite' polemic was criticised by a number of scholars, starting with Dahl himself. In contrast to Wright Mills, Dahl outlined a clear progression in the organisation of political structures, from a pre-existing historical system of patriarchal rule, with clear elite dominance, to one in which the masses were no longer explicitly excluded from the political process.

Dahl's argument was not that modern society was perfectly just with everyone having equal power, it was simply that modern democratic systems gave all groups within society a voice in the political process and, hence, arguments which contended that the elite echelons of society were still able to exert total domination of the general public failed to recognise the clear gains in representativeness that had been made as a result of the transition to modern representative democracy. Central to Dahl's thesis was the argument, made not just by him but also by other scholars at the time (most notably Truman, 1951),

that the existence of competitive elections- and of legislators who desired to be re-elected- meant that interest groups who desired influence must demonstrate that their policy desires also resonated with the electorate rather than being able to pursue a policy platform that was entirely independent of the public interest.

Of course, Dahl and his pluralist contemporaries ultimately came in for a significant degree of criticism themselves. The central criticism that scholars who were dissatisfied with such an optimistic view drew attention to, was the narrow focus on 'observable' aspects of power. Lukes (2005) for instance, noted that Dahl's analysis failed to take into account the very real possibility that power was being exercised within the system to limit decision making to a constrained set of issues. In focusing exclusively on actual decision-making, Dahl neglected to study failed attempts at penetrating the political system by groups, thereby potentially missing out on much of the bigger picture. This criticism was also taken up by Bachrach and Baratz (1962) who were keen, like Lukes, to stress that power is not solely expressed in overt decision-making, as decision-making itself could be limited to uncontroversial issues and hence more powerful groups could create barriers to the airing of policy conflict. From a different angle, Olson (1965) created further problems for the pluralist argument, by making the persuasive argument that not all groups (particularly large groups) will be able to coordinate themselves effectively.

Ultimately, this 'grand narrative' type literature that was so popular in the 1950s and 60s, fell out favour for two major reasons, both of which have already been alluded to. Firstly, it was difficult to reach a scholarly consensus as to whether it was more appropriate to consider the power of interest groups against some abstract idea of what a perfectly 'just society' should look like, or rather, if scholars were best served considering interest groups' role within the political structure relative to what had existed previously. This question, of 'what we should be comparing interest group power to' is one that will come up again and again in this chapter. Secondly, and even more problematically, once authors such as Bachrach & Baratz and Lukes began to stress the importance of the second and third dimensions of power (focusing on agenda-setting power and

even on the manipulation of consciousness) it became less and less clear how scholars could account for these types of power in the context of a grand narrative.

Bachrach and Baratz, in particular, were hugely influential in exposing the analytical problems in the conclusions reached from the 'grand narrative' type work that scholars such as Dahl and Wright-Mills carried out. As a clear sign of this influence, it may be noted that their 1962 article *Two Faces of Power* is, as of writing, the most cited article in the history of the American Political Science Review. Indeed, it is difficult to read an article that examines influence on public policy that does not cite Bachrach and Baratz's warning that interest group power comes as much (if not more) from their power in setting the agenda, as it does in determining the outcome once the agenda is already set.

Despite the overwhelming attention that Bachrach and Baratz received from scholars working in this field, however, very few authors have followed up directly on their ideas (Crenson 1971; Baumgartner *et al*, 2006). This is due to the fact that while interest groups ability to affect 'non-decisions' through their agenda-setting power is clearly a powerful concept, it is also one that is very difficult to observe empirically (Baumgartner *et al*, 2006). This problem accounts, in no small part, for the recent rise in interest in work that either takes a more comparative approach or, instead, looks at intervening variables, rather than trying to measure 'power' or 'influence' directly.

Despite its drawbacks, the interest group literature of the 1950s and 60s was clearly very influential. In the 1970s and 80s, however, the interest group literature became somewhat marginalised as there was a shift away from the study of groups and towards the study of institutions. This shift was not just down to the problems with ascertaining the importance of groups that have already been documented. It was also due to the literature defining itself into a position of 'elegant irrelevance' (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998: xvii). This 'elegant irrelevance' was a reference to the 'near obsessive' focus on formal models of collective action problems and hence on why people join people groups, and

which lacked real relevance from a policy-making perspective (Olson, 1965; Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Lowery & Gray, 2004; Hojnacki *et al*, 2012).

The only caveat that should be added in reference to Baumgartner and Leech's (1998) arguments is that despite being published in 1998, the shortcomings in the literature that they note are more applicable to the pre 1990 than the post 1990 literature. This is a caveat that is picked up by Lowery and Gray in their 2004 review article. The authors' note that while Baumgartner and Leech's criticisms are valid in its assessment of the literature from the 1970s and 1980s, it paints too negative a view of the direction the literature started to take in the 1990s, especially towards the latter half of that decade. In addition to Lowery and Gray's argument, we can also point to two very important books, *The Hollow Core: Private Interests in National Policymaking* and *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, both of which were published in 1993. While the claim is, of course, not being made that Baumgartner and Leech were unaware of such works (as Baumgartner was one of the co-authors of *Agendas and Instability* such a claim would be particularly foolish), it would appear however, that at their time of writing, they saw such books as an anomaly. In hindsight, it is possible to take a more optimistic view and consider them as the start of a healthy trend towards work which is both wide ranging in scope, while also paying close attention to the importance of context.

Along with this excessive focus on Olsonian problems, the other problem that plagued the interest group literature during this period was an over reliance on narrow, single-issue, case studies. As Baumgartner and Leech have noted from their review of articles that have appeared in the *American Political Science Review* 'the modal type of interest group study in the premier journal of political science over the post-war period is a cross-sectional comparison of a few groups working on a single issue at one point in time' (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998). While understandable in the context of a reaction against and a move away from 'grand theory', this shift toward a case study approach presented problems of its own for the interest group literature. Firstly, narrow case studies make generalisation very difficult (Heinz *et al*, 1993; Baumgartner and Leech, 1998).

Secondly, it is clear that such case studies were often chosen simply because of data availability rather than either their theoretical importance or their 'ability to enable us to say something about politics' (Lowery & Gray, 2004). Thirdly, and perhaps most problematically, the findings of these case studies are inconsistent and it is unclear how many of these studies fit into a 'coherent' interest group literature which looks to build cumulative knowledge (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Hall & Deardorf, 2006). As Baumgartner and Leech noted, with reference to the US literature's frequent use of political action committee spending contributions as a proxy for lobbying, 'the unavoidable conclusion is that PACs and direct lobbying sometimes strongly influence Congressional voting, sometimes have marginal influence, and sometimes fail to exert influence' (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998:134; Lowery, 2007). The clear implication here is that when findings are so inconsistent across studies, no theoretical or general conclusions can be drawn from them.

The good news is that since the 1990s, and especially in more recent years, the interest group literature has not only acknowledged the limitations of its prevailing approaches, but also looked to embark on more fruitful projects, which embrace 'mid-range' theorizing while also demonstrating sensitivity to the importance of context. Two previously mentioned books, both published in 1993, provide two early examples of the very best type of this work. The first is *The Hollow Core: Private Interests in National Policymaking* by John Heinz, Edward Laumann, Robert Nelson and Robert Salisbury. The second breakthrough book, also published in 1993 (and which has since spawned a second edition), is *Agendas and Instability In American Politics* by Frank Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones.

Perhaps the most interesting stress on context that both groups of authors note, concerns the importance of institutions in shaping interest group behaviour. It is noted, for instance, that 'all political institutions channel conflict in a particular way; all are related to the mobilization of bias' (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993:12). All political institutions also have their own set of rules and these rules have their own policy consequences- consequences which may not be immediately

obvious but which may be serious nevertheless. As an example, Baumgartner and Jones note that institutions such as state and city governments, which are intended to foster a more directly accountable link between the electorate and their leaders, often ultimately end up empowering local business elites, as politicians at this level are very dependent on such elites for financial support.

Both institutions' importance and the different distinct characteristics they display, also open up a possibility for interest groups that Baumgartner and Jones explore- that of 'venue shopping'. 'Venue shopping' refers to the phenomenon whereby interest groups, who are aware of the variation between institutions in their rules, procedures and, hence, biases, 'shop around' between venues looking for the institution which is most likely to be favourable to their policy platform. Venue shopping amongst multiple policy venues offers opportunities for policy entrepreneurs to have their proposals heard by a variety of different actors in the hope that a favourable ear can be found. It also offers the possibility for groups that are unsuccessful in influencing policy at one level being able to regroup and search for alternative venues to press their case. From a democratic standpoint this is, of course, potentially problematic, as it offers interest groups with significant resource bases the opportunity to outflank their less well-endowed competitors by seeking alternative influence routes even if they are defeated in the first instance. This option is not likely to be open to more modestly endowed groups.

This focus on the circumstances under which interest groups were likely to be successful was taken on by a number of prominent scholars in the later half of the 1990s. Lowery and Gray (2004) for instance, cite a number of works (Kollman, 1998; Berry, 1999; Gerber, 1999; Goldstein 1999; Hojnacki & Kimball, 1998) as examples of work which both 'shares an appreciation of the contingent nature of interest group influence and a willingness to consider the interactions and feedback' (Hojnacki *et al*, 2012: 381).

As an example of such an approach, we can cite Gerber's acknowledgment that groups need different types of resources to 'get over different types of hurdles'

(Gerber, 1999). For instance, when electoral incentives are front and centre, groups that can clearly demonstrate a broad base of public support, such as citizens' groups, are likely to hold more sway. Should groups wish to influence the policy process by drafting a legislative initiative, however, different types of resources are needed as doing so requires either acquiring or paying for expertise. This is not something that every group, regardless of their membership size, will have at their disposal.

The trends of the 1990s have continued in the 21st century literature. Context is increasingly seen as crucial, while at the same time the singular case study continues to recede in importance. Hojnacki *et al's* (2012) review of works published between January 1996 and July 2011 notes that nearly two thirds of their sample consider the conditions and/or circumstances under which the groups studied operate. These circumstances include, amongst others: the institutional environment (e.g. electoral system), the political environment (e.g. ideological climate), the group environment (e.g. the strength, diversity and size of the interest group community) and the stage of the process/time (e.g. if lobbyists are active at the committee or at the floor stage). In terms of the diminishing importance of the singular case study meanwhile, the authors note only 14 such studies in their sample of 110 books and articles from 1996-2011, and that even amongst these studies, almost all include multiple cases that allow some comparison across 'groups, issues, time periods and governments' (Hojnacki *et al*, 2012).

The EU Lobbying Literature

Despite the deep foundations of the general (albeit US centric) literature on lobbying, the EU lobbying literature developed, initially at least, somewhat in isolation from the more general theoretical literature (Woll, 2006; Coen, 2007; Beyers *et al*, 2008). Much of this work considered the EU as a *sui generis* case and sought to map the role of interest groups in the context of the EU integration project (e.g. Mazey & Richardson, 1993, Greenwood, 2007a). This treatment of the EU and of European integration more generally as a *sui generis* phenomenon

also meant that the singular descriptive case study became the most common method for studying EU lobbying.

In many ways this is unsurprising. As we have already seen in our review of the US centric literature, the case study is often the first starting point for scholars looking to analyse interest groups, as such studies present the fewest data availability problems and allow them to investigate issues of particular interest to themselves. The use of the case-study approach is especially unsurprising amongst EU scholars. Unlike US focused scholars, who are able use political action committee contributions and legislative voting records, they lack an obvious source of quantitative data to aid their analysis. Qualitative case studies therefore provided a method by which scholars could obtain a level of data that allowed them to say something meaningful. The problem with all of these qualitative case studies is however, as we have previously discussed, two-fold. Firstly, they make generalisation very difficult. Secondly, their findings are often inconsistent with findings from previous studies, thereby leaving our search for cumulative knowledge frustrated. The result of all of these types of studies meant that the EU lobbying literature came to be characterised, by the mid 1990s, by its 'empirical richness, [but] theoretical poverty' (Andersen & Eliassen, 1995, cited by Woll, 2006).

In more recent years, there has been some progress, as scholars have moved away from descriptive case studies and sought to examine theoretical and empirical questions in a more systematic manner (Beyers *et al*, 2008). Particularly importantly this literature has, like its US counterpart, also begun to address questions in a comparative fashion. This approach is particularly important for considering what is the most important public policy question in the lobbying literature- that of interest group power.

One major strand of literature which examines this question, typically from a theoretical rather than empirical perspective, is the literature on interest group bias within the European Union. This literature often takes as its starting point the relative power of the various European institutions and, in particular, the

crucial importance of one such institution, the European Commission, to interest groups who wish to influence policy. The Commission is so important to interest groups as it is the Commission who drafts legislation and it is at this initial, pre-draft, 'agenda setting' stage that interest groups have the most opportunity to influence legislation (Cowles, 1995; Cram, 2001; Pollack, 2003; Coen, 2007; Buena, 2012). Once legislation has been drafted by the Commission and starts to work its way through the EU's decision-making process, it becomes progressively more difficult for interest groups to have any influence over it (Lehmann & Bosche, 2003; Bouwen, 2009).

What then is the relative impact of this crucial importance of the Commission on various types of interest groups? Perhaps the first thing to note here is the plethora of authors who have noted that the Commission is an institution which is considerably understaffed (McLaughlin *et al*, 1993; Marks & McAdam, 1996; Lehmann & Bosche, 2003; Beyers & Kerremans, 2004; Bouwen, 2004; Bartolini, 2005; Van Schendelen, 2005; Balme & Chabanet, 2008; Saurugger, 2008; Coen, 2007; Greenwood, 2007b; Dür, 2008a; Klüver, 2010; Chalmers, 2011). Bouwen, for instance, notes that despite the breadth and complexity of the Commission's regulatory mission, its staff size is more akin to a larger city administration than to a large federal state (Bouwen, 2009). Coen, meanwhile, quotes a Commission official whose division is responsible for 44 directives and 89 regulations but which has only nine staff to deal with all. An equivalent division in the US, it is claimed, would have 600 people (Burston-Marsteller, 1991:22, cited by Coen, 1997).

Numerous scholars have noted that the most obvious effect of this disconnect between the Commission's staffing levels and the breadth and complexity of its day to day tasks is the dependence on interest groups it creates (Broscheid & Coen 2007; Bouwen & McCown, 2007; Mahoney, 2007). Without the specialist information that interest groups are able to provide, the Commission would simply be unable to deal with the level of draft legislation it currently does.

Scholars working in this area have drawn on earlier work by resource dependency theorists to model this relationship between interest groups and Commission bureaucrats (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Bouwen, 2002; Lowery, 2007; Berkhout, 2013). Resource dependency theory demonstrates how different institutions are in need of a variety of different inputs, dependent on their own needs and goals and, therefore, establish reciprocal relationships with those interest groups who are best placed to provide these inputs. Under this formulation, there is an exchange relationship between both interest groups and policymaking institutions (in this case the European Commission), whereby each are in need of critical resources from the other party in order to function optimally.

From the Commission perspective, the resource they have the power to grant is access. Interest groups seek such access for two reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, this is because access is the 'first step for policymakers toward making substantive policy concessions favourable to the constituents of the interest organization' (Bouwen and McCown, 2007). In addition to this, interest groups also seek access, as it makes them more attractive to potential members (or donors) due to the increased visibility and credibility such access gives them (Berkhout, 2013).

On the other side of the coin, the resource that the Commission is most in demand of is expertise. Legislation that originates from the European Union is generally regulatory in nature and, hence, the Commission is in need of specialised and technical information to ensure that this regulation is as efficient and effective as possible (Peterson & Bomberg 1999; Bouwen, 2002; Broscheid & Coen, 2007; Lowery, 2007; Eising, 2007a). As has already been discussed, the Commission is particularly understaffed for a bureaucratic institution. This therefore makes the Commission dependent on interest groups who have the expertise necessary to help them bridge this resource gap.

There is a deep pool of literature that considers the importance of such expertise for interest groups who seek access to the Commission. An interest group which

has 'expertise', is one which has both knowledge of specialised and technical information and, crucially, also has the ability to assess it in a manner that makes it possible to communicate it to policymakers (Schmitter, 2000; Beyers & Kerremans, 2004; Michalowitz, 2007; Saurugger, 2007; Saurugger, 2008). Scholars who have examined the importance of expertise have looked at the question from a number of angles.

One such angle is the question of why certain interest groups can be expected to have such expertise available to them. Here, authors have pointed to a number of factors, such as the access these groups have to private information (Eagleton, 1988, Ainsworth, 1993). By providing private information on technical issues, interest groups are able to significantly reduce the cost to policymakers of obtaining such information (Richardson & John, 2012). Interest groups often obtain such information as a costless by-product of their specialised activities (Lohmann, 1998).

Scholars have noted how this dependence on technical expertise has increased over time due to the increased complexity of legislation (Radaelli, 1999; Gornitza & Sverdup, 2011). They have also noted how this complexity leads to particular dependence in specific policy areas. The sophisticated products sold in the pharmaceutical sector for instance are noted as an area where the substantive expertise that companies themselves hold is much in demand (Broscheid & Coen, 2007).

Examples of this phenomenon can also be found in the ICT sector, in which there is a heavy reliance on the expertise of large companies and national and EU associations when it comes to developing policies, due to the often technically complex nature of policy in this area (Cram, 1997; Knill, 2001; Lehmann & Bosche, 2003). Similarly, Bowen (2002) also references the example of Barclay's Bank providing the technical expertise to EU officials so that they could "better understand the particularities of new capital adequacy rules for commercial banks". Of course, this example also highlights one of the dangers of officials relying too much on interest groups for their expertise- namely that interest

groups' preferences are not necessarily in line with society's. While a number of scholars have stressed that this risk is minimized by the fact that interest groups must build long term trust relationships with officials over time and can be sanctioned by officials for faulty and unconstructive inputs, the failure of banking sector regulation across the EU has shown that such a risk has not been eliminated (Coen, 2007; Griffith-Jones & Persaud, 2008; Woll, 2012; Young, 2012).

Of course, this dependence upon interest groups for the provision of such expertise is problematic, and not just in the banking sector. The most obvious issue it creates, from a democratic standpoint at least, is that not all groups are equally well placed to provide such information to the Commission. As Broscheid and Coen (2007) have pointed out, technical information is often costly to obtain. A significant swath of the literature, therefore, stresses the importance of interest group resources that allow these groups to obtain the expertise necessary to have input into the Commission's drafting process (Beyers & Kerremans, 2004; 2007). The question is then; what types of groups are likely to be well resourced? One strand of this literature focuses on the likely power of business groups and, in particular, large firms. Large firms are seen as particularly likely to be able to provide expertise to the Commission due both to their direct participation in the market and the financial resources they have at their disposal (Coen, 1997; Bouwen 2002; 2004). These financial resources allow the hiring of more staff, while financial strength also allows interest groups to devote more funds to research, both in house and, when required, to outside sources (Gerber, 1999; Mahoney, 2004). It is also argued that interest groups with more financial resources will have better trained personnel at their disposal (Klüver, 2010). It should also be noted that large firms may be particularly advantaged due to the fact that such firms often have the resources to both lobby independently and to support national and EU industry associations. This may mean that a firm has two or even three opportunities to seek to influence, and can potentially take a different angle each time. A citizens' group by contrast will generally only have one outlet through which to channel their lobbying efforts.

Similarly, as well as the perceived pro-business bias, a number of authors point to what they see as the relative strength of concentrated interests (such as producer groups) relative to more diffuse interests (such as consumer or cause groups) at the EU level. The logic here is not overly complicated. Groups which focus on a single market (or even a single product) will naturally have superior technical information than those groups who have to deal with a wider range of issues or satisfy a more diverse range of stakeholders (Bouwen, 2002; Beyers, 2002; Dür & De Bièvre, 2007). In addition, they will be able to more clearly identify with the positive or negative consequences of a specific piece of legislation than more diffuse citizens' groups (Dür & Mateo, 2012).

Such business and 'producer' strength is strengthened further, some authors argue, due to the EU's 'neo-liberal ethos', which privileges producers at the expense of other economic actors (Peterson & Bomberg, 1999). This argument is taken up by a number of other scholars, of whom Vivian Schmidt is perhaps the most notable. Schmidt argues that 'global economic imperatives' which are at the heart of European integration mean that 'most business-related societal interests that knock at the door [of the Commission bureaucracy] are allowed in, unlike many non-business-related societal interests' (Schmidt, 1999: 158).

These business groups also have at their disposal a card that other groups simply do not have- the threat of exit (Van Apeldoorn, 2000; Yee, 2004). Large firms may conceivably argue that should the regulation that is eventually be imposed by the EU be too onerous, they may take their business elsewhere. The Commission is also aware that it may prove potentially embarrassing if it proposes such legislation, which is eventually thrown out by the Council of Ministers for precisely this reason. Such a credible exit threat is, of course, not held by either consumers or by more publicly minded interest groups.

A number of scholars have examined how such relative weakness for non-business groups may manifest itself. Klüver, for instance, discusses the problems

that 'cause groups' may have in their attempts to influence the Commission.⁴ The overwhelming majority of these cause groups lack sufficient financial resources to employ a sufficiently large staff to be able to both monitor the fast pace of policy developments at the European level and to provide relevant technical information on initiatives, both current and potential (Klüver, 2012). This relative inability to provide the resource that the Commission most needs (expertise) means that such groups are at an intrinsic disadvantage relative to business groups (Hall & Deardorf, 2006; Klüver, 2012). Such a privileging of expertise at the EU level can, it has been argued, mean that it can become 'an exclusionary device'. An exclusionary device that is particularly effective at the EU level because of the weakness of representative institutions such as parliaments, who would usually be expected to hold such experts to account (Peterson, 2009).

Notwithstanding the extensive biases that have been highlighted in the previous paragraphs, a number of scholars have noted that, in recent years at least, the European Commission has taken a more pro-active approach in order to seek to mitigate the biases that are inherent in the system. This more 'pro-active' approach has taken several forms. The most obvious way in which the Commission has sought to engage with public interest groups has been through direct subsidy of their EU level operations (Kohler-Koch & Finke, 2007; Greenwood, 2007b; Mahoney; 2008). Estimates have suggested that as many as 60% of groups who could be considered as representing 'broader societal interests', receive EU funding (Lehmann & Bosche, 2003). The Commission has also made some structural innovations in an attempt to give public interest groups more of a voice in the integration process. A relatively early example of this would have been the decision, taken in the Maastricht Treaty, to establish a 'social partnership' framework which mandated that the 'social partners' (including) the trade unions would be consulted on relevant issues (Storey,

⁴ Klüver most succinctly lays out the theoretical case for why cause related groups can be expected to be less powerful than business groups in their relationship with the Commission. In doing so, she also faithfully represents the consensus view in the literature. It is worth noting, however, that her own empirical results do not find evidence of any such bias- an issue that will be dealt with later on in this review.

2008). This social partnership initiative also saw such groups achieve a number of successes, most notably over regulations concerning parental leave and part time employment (Storey, 2008). The legislation on parental leave was considered a particularly big achievement as such measures were unavailable in national legislation (Balme & Chabanet, 2008).

In addition to drawing on the so-called 'social partners', the Commission has also looked to increase the involvement of individual citizens. One way in which they have done this, is by using 'online consultations' to solicit feedback from all affected parties, without requiring such parties to have the resources necessary to make their case in person in Brussels. Such online consultations were introduced in DG Environment in 2000 and are now used on a regular basis by all Directorates-General (Kohler-Koch & Finke, 2007). More recently, the EU has also introduced an 'EU citizens' initiative' which is 'an invitation to the European Commission to propose legislation on matters where the EU has competence to legislate' (European Commission Secretariat, 2011). Such initiatives must be backed by at least one million EU citizens, coming from at least 7 out of the 27 member states. A minimum number of signatories are required in each of those 7 member states. The rules and procedures that govern this citizens' initiative were formalised in 2011 (European Commission Secretariat, 2011).

These measures have been part of the Commissions efforts to improve what a number of scholars have referred to as its 'input legitimacy'. Traditionally, the Commission has been seen as focusing on its 'output legitimacy' which is concerned with the effectiveness and efficiency of the legislation it proposes (Scharpf, 1999; Bouwen, 2002; Broscheid & Coen, 2007; Dür & Mateo, 2012). In this formulation, the Commission justifies its role by pointing to the efficacy of its output. It is for this reason that it is so in demand of expertise from interest groups, as it is only with this information that the Commission is able to draft high quality legislation, as it seeks to legitimise itself, in part, through the quality of its outputs. As these measures show however, the Commission is aware that it cannot properly legitimise itself through output legitimacy alone.

Input legitimacy refers to the legitimacy that a policymaking body derives from involving citizens and diverse interest groups in the policymaking process (Bouwen, 2002). To achieve input legitimacy this process should be structured in such a way as to achieve 'truth-oriented deliberations and discourses' (Scharpf, 1999). At the same time, it must also involve a large number and variety of different interest groups (Dür & Mateo, 2012). As Broschied & Coen (2007) note however, there can often be a tension between these two competing forces (and indeed more broadly between input and output legitimacy). This is due to the fact that due to the highly technical nature of much of the legislation that the EU deals with, orientating the debate in a focused, 'truth-orientated' manner can mean restricting it to a small number of privileged interest groups.

This perhaps explains why, notwithstanding the aforementioned initiatives aimed at being more inclusive, it remains the case that even those scholars who have highlighted such measures, nevertheless emphasize the asymmetry that would still appear to exist amongst groups of different stripes at the EU level. Kohler-Koch and Finke for instance, who lay out in some detail the different ways in which the Commission has sought to be more inclusive in its approach, nevertheless conclude that 'both the Commission's changing conception of good governance and its practice of involving societal actors have been fraught with ambiguities' and, furthermore, that it could be questioned 'whether they are in fact consistent with even a rather modest conception of democratic legitimacy' (Kohler-Koch & Finke, 2007).

It should also be noted that there is a clear variation across policy fields and Directorate Generals in terms of how sympathetic Commission policy makers are to public interest groups (Kohler-Koch & Finke, 2007). Hyman notes, for instance, how the Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs (DG EMPL) 'may be sympathetic to many trade union aspirations for social regulation' (Hyman, 2005). As Daly (2006) has noted, however, there is a perception that there is a clear hierarchy in the EU, both between the various DGs and between the various committees. Within this hierarchy, finance and economics rank highest while employment and social protection are considered

to have considerably less clout. Further evidence for this is provided by a historical take on Commissioner assignments. DG EMPL, perhaps the most 'labour-friendly' of the DG's has consistently been served by a Commissioner hailing from a 'peripheral' country, after, it is argued, 'the more influential briefs have been carved up among the heavyweights' (Hyman, 2005).

From a less normative position, the variation between policy areas in terms of the use that Directorate Generals make of different types of interest groups is also highlighted in a recent article by Coen & Katsaitas (2013). Coen & Katsaitas show how in areas where there is a greater demand for output legitimacy, technical expertise is particularly in demand, and in such cases business associations, who are expected to be most likely to have such information available to them, are prone to dominate. In areas where input legitimacy is stressed however, a more varied pool of interest groups can be observed with citizens and civil society groups especially likely to feature prominently.

Many authors have highlighted the structural biases that would appear to be inherent in the EU lobbying environment. They have also outlined a (often very strong) theoretical case regarding how these biases demonstrably strengthen (or weaken) certain types of interest groups. What is perhaps surprising, however, is that far fewer have presented empirical evidence, clearly showing how these biases lead to variation in the level of influence by interest groups in their interactions with the European Commission or at the European level more generally. This lack of empirical attention to the determinants of interest group influence has been noted by a significant number of scholars (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007; Lowery, 2007; Michalowitz, 2007; Beyers *et al*, 2008; Dür, 2008a; 2008b; Buena, 2012; Klüver, 2012). At the same time as noting this seeming oversight in the literature, however, a number of scholars also highlighted the main reason for it- measuring interest group influence is extremely difficult. As one group of scholars have put it, the measurement of interest groups' influence is, simply put, 'one of the most fraught, difficult and complex problems in political science research' (Beyers *et al*, 2008). Such measurement is particularly difficult in the EU as, unlike in the US, where scholars can often use both political action

committee contributions and roll call voting records, no such 'ready made' empirical evidence exists for EU scholars (Potters & Sloof, 1996). Without such ready made evidence then, scholars who do wish to examine interest group power need to be more creative in their approach.

One such approach (and the approach that is used in this thesis) is to look at interest group access as an alternative to trying to directly observe interest group influence. Unlike the rather nebulous concept of 'influence', access lends itself to systematic measurement. Access is generally measured by asking interest group respondents how frequently they are in contact with various classes of policymakers (Beyers, 2002; Bouwen, 2004; Eising, 2007a; 2008; Chalmers, 2011). While it is an oft-repeated refrain in this literature that 'access does not necessarily equate to influence', the underlying argument is that access to policymakers is a necessary prerequisite for influence and hence is likely to be correlated with it (Bouwen 2002; Beyers *et al*; Chalmers, 2011). While a group with access to key policymakers will not necessarily be influential in every case, groups without such access do not even have the opportunity to exert influence.

This literature has used the advantage of the availability of a quantifiable dependent variable to explore further the potential biases in the EU interest group system. Although this literature is somewhat limited, and still developing, for the most part, it has returned findings that are consistent with the expectations from the theoretical literature. That financial resources are of significant importance to gaining access to EU policymakers is most starkly demonstrated by Eising (2007a), which shows that the probability of EU associations with significant financial resources (i.e. a budget of €7.5 million+), having weekly contacts with the Commission is 46 percentage points higher than groups without such financial resources. Indeed, in a study that looks at an entire range of factors, Eising finds that lobbying budget is the single best predictor of access to Commission officials.

This finding is backed up further by Andreas Dür and Gemma Mateo's study of EU lobbying by Irish, Spanish and German national interest groups. Using a

measure of the number of staff devoted to lobbying as a proxy for lobbying budget, Dür and Mateo find that resource rich organisations have six times as many contacts with desk officers in the Commission as resource-poor ones (Dür & Mateo, 2012). Dür and Mateo's findings are also in line with the general expectation of a general 'business bias', as they find that national business associations have better access to the European Commission than other national associations (Dür & Mateo, 2012).

Similarly the expectation, often repeated in the literature, that those who have the expertise to provide 'technical information' will receive more frequent access to the Commission is also borne out by recent work by Chalmers (2013). This is in line with the expectation that it is this type of information that the Commission is most in demand of, and hence it is groups who can provide such information who will receive the most access (Bouwen, 2002; 2009; Michalowitz, 2004).

It should be remembered of course that, while the idea of using 'access' as a quantifiable dependent variable is a relatively new one, the idea that access is valuable in of itself is not. Grant (1978) for instance, first developed the distinction between so-called 'insider' and 'outsider' groups. Insider groups enjoyed recognition by government and are legitimised by such. Such recognition allows them to enter into formal and informal consultations with government. Linking into the previously discussed importance of expertise, it is worth noting that, in order to protect this insider status, interest groups have to ensure they provide policymakers with high quality information (Grant, 2004).

Outsider groups by contrast, are groups who operate 'outside the system', either by choice or due to resource deficiencies. Such groups rely more on the tactics of protest than insider groups do. While it is true that in certain instances groups may reject insider status in order to remain outside the system, the general consensus in the literature is that insider groups are more favourably placed to influence government (Cram, 2001; Grant, 2004; Broscheid & Coen, 2007; Coen, 2007).

Furthermore, a number of scholars have pointed to the fact that business groups are more likely to enjoy insider status as a sign that the EU is an 'elite pluralist' system (Coen 1997, 1998, 2007; Bouwen 2002; Woll 2006; Mazey and Richardson 2006). While recent developments have shown that there may not be as dichotomous a relationship between insider/outsider status as was once assumed (with insiders using traditional 'outside' tactics, and traditional outsiders often gaining some 'inside' access), it is nonetheless still the case that those interest groups with the 'inside track' are at an advantage when it comes to influencing policymakers (Binderkrantz, 2005; Binderkrantz & Kroyer, 2012). The importance of such 'inside access' is something we will return to in the next chapter of this thesis.

The Irish Lobbying Literature

As has already been mentioned in the first chapter, there is a disconnect between the public attention that lobbying in Ireland has attracted in recent years and the extent to which an academic literature has emerged to study the phenomenon. Up until very recently, most examinations of Irish interest group behaviour were carried out in the context of attempting to understand 'social partnership', the system by which tripartite pay agreements were negotiated between the government, employer groups and trade unions between 1987 and 2009, when the financial crisis effectively brought such agreements to an end.

Despite this focus, however, and despite social partnership being the dominant framework of economic organisation for over twenty years, no consensus has ever been reached about how social partnership should be best explained, or even described (Murphy, 2010a). The major issue that scholars failed to overcome was in determining the relative level of power that the various 'partners' had in the process. For some scholars, partnership, and the power it gave to unions and other 'citizen orientated' groups, allowed Ireland to have a more 'humane welfare trajectory' when compared to other 'Anglo-Saxon' states such as the US or the UK (Kennelly & O'Shea, 1997; McCashin et al, 2002; McCashin, 2004; Murphy, 2009).

Not all scholars favoured this positive view of partnership, however. Others worried about the way in which it allowed policies to bypass rigorous parliamentary scrutiny (Collins, Cradden & Butler, 2007). From a similar standpoint, others worried about the challenge presented to representative democracy by a system which gave power to unelected interest groups, allowed Parliament to be bypassed and, arguably, stifled debate while also tying the hands of elected governments (O'Donnell & Thomas, 2002: 181). Scholars feared that such a scenario could lead to a number of problems. Most notable in this respect was that it might lead to a situation whereby social partners were 'insiders', whose pay and conditions were protected at the expense of those outside the partnership process (O'Donnell & Thomas, 2002: 181). Indeed, some would argue that rather recent developments in Ireland provide an example of this, with unions agreeing to accept a blanket 10% reduction in starting pay for new hires into the public service, in order to protect the pay, conditions and job security of current members, as part of the Croke Park Agreements (Wall, 2011).

Social Partnership was also criticised from other angles. A number of scholars on the left of the political spectrum, for instance, criticised social partnership for being 'elitist', 'undemocratic' and 'exclusionary' (Roche & McCradden, 2003). This critique of social partnership argued that it co-opted many groups in, but ultimately only paid lip service to them, while groups who argued against the prevailing neo-liberal ethos of the day were effectively ignored (Allen, 2000; O'Broin & Kirby, 2009; Murphy, 2009). For these scholars, social partnership was a means by which the state legitimated its pursuit of neo-liberal economic goals rather than one which actively sought out a diversity of views. The government was able to do this, it was argued, as the unprecedented economic growth that Ireland enjoyed during this time made it difficult for groups to argue against the status quo.

That scholars of social partnership failed to reach a consensus on any of its major issues is disappointing if, perhaps, unsurprising. For our purposes, there are two issues of note. Firstly, it is clear that the literature on social partnership failed to come to any consensus as to the relative power of the groups who were party to

the process. Secondly, it has also meant that the literature on 'private' lobbying by individual interest groups is in very short supply.

The work that does exist on Irish lobbying, outside of the general social partnership literature, has generally focused on case studies of specific policy areas. The most common policy area studied in this respect is agriculture. This is unsurprising. The Irish Farmers Association (IFA), the preeminent agricultural lobbying organisation (and arguably, simply *the* preeminent Irish lobbying organisation) is, in its own eyes, a 'highly professional, well-resourced, lobby organisation whose record of delivery is the envy of many other representative bodies at home and in Europe' (Greer, 2005: 66). It is also an organisation which has traditionally managed to enjoy extremely high levels of access to policymakers, while also retaining a level of independence which allows it to make trenchant criticisms of government policies it disagrees with (Greer, 2005; O'Mahony, 2007).

Agricultural policy is also particularly noteworthy in Ireland due to the extent to which the IFA have been successful in shutting out alternative lobbying voices. In this respect, agricultural policy has been seen as a 'closed policy community' in Ireland (Adshead, 1996). Environmental groups, for instance, are notoriously weak in Ireland, and are usually considered as having substantially fewer resources than the IFA enjoys (O'Mahony, 2007). They are also generally considered to enjoy far less access to policymakers (Greer; 2005; O'Mahony, 2007). This disparity of access is considered to be so extreme that scholars have remarked that the Irish agricultural policy community is characterised by 'the effective exclusion of alternative farming interests' (Greer, 2005:59).

Work on lobbying by Irish interest groups on policy areas other than agriculture is particularly underdeveloped. What we do have in this respect are, in the first instance, a small number of descriptive case studies (often written by practitioners) which treat Ireland as very much a *sui generis* case, and which make little reference to either comparative cases or, indeed, to the more general theoretical literature (an approach best encapsulated by the articles which

appear in a special issue of the Journal of Public Affairs from 2011, which focused on lobbying in Ireland).

There is some interesting work, again often carried out by practitioners, regarding effective lobbying strategies in Ireland. Here we may note the value that many such authors put on face-to-face contacts with TDs. By making sure their members attend TDs clinics to verbally express their views, they are able to both make politicians aware of the concerns of their constituents and potentially establish relationships with them (Watson *et al*, 1997: 151). Developing such a relationship, and stressing the gravity of the situation will hopefully (from the group's perspective) lead to a letter being written by the TD to the Minister responsible. Of course, the easiest way of 'stressing the gravity of the situation' is by demonstrating that your concerns are shared by large numbers, something that can be achieved through the form of a petition or similar. The value of securing this letter or other such representations on your group's behalf are clear. As Watson and her co-authors have noted, 'while a letter written by you might not make it to the Ministers desk, every letter written by a TD will be read and responded to by the Minister' (Watson *et al*, 1997: 147).

This is particularly interesting in the context of Irish politics. There is a large strand of literature which discusses the weakness of the Irish legislature and the dominance of the executive (see Hardiman, 2012 & Martin, 2012 for two recent examples). In such a context, one may question why interest groups bother contacting their local TDs at all. As Watson and her co-authors makes clear, however, TDs play a crucial- if often intermediate- role in the policy process and hence are vitally important targets for concerned interest groups.

There is also the related question of course, of why a local TD would take up the interest group's cause in the first instance. This ties into the more general literature on political motivation. The first point that is often raised here is that like all politicians who face competitive elections, the primary goal of Irish TDs is re-election (Ainsworth, 1993; Aldrich, 1995). Regardless of how many, or how

few policy goals, politicians may hold, politicians must first ensure re-election if they are to see any to fruition.

This theoretical framework will be drawn out in more depth in the next chapter. It is worth noting at this stage however, how scholars have pointed to some of the effects that these incentives have, particularly in comparison to what is typically seen in the EU lobbying context. The most important effect, perhaps, is in terms of the increased importance of political mobilisation for access. Groups who can mobilise large numbers of members and hence demonstrate the extent to which an issue resonates with a voter are likely to be very well placed to receive access in an Irish context (Héritier & Knill, 2011). By contrast, EU policy debates are often noted for their lack of grass-roots mobilisation (Beyers, 2004; Lowery *et al*, 2008). Instead, such debates are, as previously discussed, dominated by technical expertise and the groups who have such expertise at their disposal.

Observers of Irish lobbying also point to another option open to groups who wish to get their message across to policymakers and it is one that a number of scholars have picked up on. This is the practice of interest groups hiring people with direct experience in Irish politics. This is particularly the case with respect to lobbying consultancies, which are frequently staffed by individuals who have close personal contacts in the political system (McGrath, 2010). The logic behind such appointments is generally obvious. Indeed, when Pat Farrell, the former Fianna Fáil general secretary was hired by a leading financial institution, the business papers had no qualms about explaining his appointment in terms of what he could offer by means of political connections (O'Halpin & Connolly, 1999:132).

Other scholars have noted further advantages that former politicians may have as lobbyists in Ireland. As well as being able to contact current Ministers, Collins and O'Shea (2003), for instance, note how former ministers often write *personally* to the Secretary General of the department where they previously held office, on behalf of their clients, once they have gone through the revolving

door into the world of lobbying. Former backbenchers, while they may not have quite the same level of contacts, will nevertheless have established contacts within government departments which they will still be able to call on after leaving office. All former TDs and Senators, by grace of their former positions, enjoy effectively unlimited access to both chambers (Fallon, 2011). Such access can be much more difficult to establish for those interest groups who do not employ anyone who has previously held such a position (Cronin, 2010).

This work ties into the more general literature on the effect of the 'revolving door' when analysing lobbying. The phenomenon by which policymakers exit public office and go through the 'revolving door' into the world of private lobbying has been studied not just in an Irish context but also, at depth, in the US and EU contexts as well (Bernauer & Meins, 2003; Chari & Hillebrand O'Donovan, 2011; Choi, 2012). The existence of such 'revolving doors' may prove problematic for a number of reasons. Choi (2012), for instance, demonstrates that legislators who plan to continue their career after leaving the legislature are more likely to vote for industry friendly policies than legislators who plan to retire. Indeed, as McGrath (2009) points out, there is a danger that officials will simply use the contacts and knowledge they have built up at the taxpayer's expense and, upon retirement, immediately put them to work for the narrow self-interest of a particular private sector employer. In order to mitigate against this danger, scholars have advised the lobbying regulation should include 'cooling off period' provisions, to prevent officials jumping straight from the role of gamekeeper to that of poacher (Chari & Hillebrand O'Donovan, 2011; Murphy *et al*, 2011).

The research on Irish lobbying is certainly interesting in its own right. Somewhat disappointingly, however, it does not really directly grapple with perhaps the most important question in the lobbying literature- what systematic biases are there in the Irish interest group system? Such a question is particularly pertinent with the demise of social partnership. However, only very tentative progress has been made in this area. The work that has been done has mainly come from Andreas Dür and Gemma Mateo. This work, which has spawned a number of

papers, is based on a survey of 401 Irish interest associations, carried out in 2008 (Dür & Mateo, 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012). The papers that derive from this survey are some of the first to look at lobbying by Irish interest groups in a systematic fashion. Interestingly, they also represent some of the first works to look at national interest group lobbying on EU legislation in any country. These papers have significant merit. The detailed questionnaire the authors use gathers information on interest groups' characteristics, their lobbying strategies, their targets, the number of contacts they have had with various levels of government and their basic resources. It also asks them to rate how important various policies are to them. These questions throw up a great deal of useful information. Perhaps most interesting in this respect is their finding that well endowed groups find it easier than other groups to articulate their interests on EU legislation (Dür & Mateo, 2011).

While offering significant insights into Irish lobbying, Dür and Mateo's work nevertheless suffers from a number of shortcomings, acknowledged by the authors' themselves. Firstly, the survey does not capture sufficient systematic data on the type and level of interest group resources to really assess the nature and extent of bias within the Irish interest group system (Dür & Mateo, 2009:27; 2010:121). Secondly, the survey omits some key actors in the interest group landscapes, most notably large firms, but also lobbying consultancies (Dür & Mateo, 2009; 2010). Thirdly, no complementary survey of policymakers is carried out as a crosscheck on the findings from the interest group survey, nor is the survey supplemented with any qualitative data to allow its findings to be examined more fully (Dür & Mateo, 2009; 2010). These are all shortcomings that this project addresses and which are discussed in more detail in the chapter four.

Multilevel Lobbying

The final strand of the lobbying literature that this thesis draws from, and builds on, is that on multilevel lobbying. One of the first authors to highlight the potential for multilevel lobbying in the EU was Sandholtz (1996), who noted that European integration helped 'create new options for domestic actors in their choice of allies and arenas'. It is important to note here that this expectation, that

national interests groups would make use not just of national but also of EU channels, was not always accepted in the literature. Indeed, there was often an assumption in earlier work on EU lobbying that there was a clear division of labour between national level groups focusing on national level lobbying and EU-level groups focusing on European level lobbying (Greenwood, 2007b; Dür & Mateo, 2010). While this division of labour certainly still exists to an extent, recent empirical work has shown that national associations and other nationally based interest groups can pursue their own lobbying strategies at the EU level, rather than exclusively working through EU level groups.

Eising (2004), for instance, finds in his study of French, British and German associations, that 21.8% of national associations from these states are active at both the national and the EU level. A study by Beyers and Kerremans (2012) which looks again at French and German associations, but also at Belgian and Dutch associations, finds that Belgian and Dutch associations are also active at the EU level albeit at a lower rate than French and German groups. Dür & Mateo meanwhile also find in their study of Irish, German and Spanish associations that groups from all three countries are active as multilevel players. Interestingly, they also note that Irish groups have significantly more contacts with decision makers on EU legislation than Spanish associations (Dür & Mateo, 2012). This suggests that smaller member states are not necessarily less inclined to develop multilevel political strategies- in contrast to Beyers and Kerremans suggestions.

One interesting question with regard to the multilevel lobbying is what types of groups are advantaged or disadvantaged by the opportunities it potentially affords interest groups. The classic debate in this respect is between those who propose that those who are already strong at the domestic level will be further strengthened by the possibility of lobbying at the EU level (the so called 'positive persistence' hypothesis) and those who argue that the EU level is likely to benefit those who are marginalised at the national level (often referred to as the 'compensation' hypothesis).

In recent years the scholarly consensus has been that, generally speaking, the

opportunity to be active at the EU level as well as the national level has further strengthened those who are already strong at the national level. Indeed, a number of scholars have put forward an argument that stresses that, in the main, interest groups first pursue a national level strategy and it is generally only groups who have already been able to secure access at this level that have both the desire and the ability to secure access to EU policymakers. This was the overwhelming finding of Beyers' (2002) study of Belgian interest groups. Beyers demonstrated that the network strategies of national interest groups generally followed a cumulative pattern. Groups first sought to secure solid access channels to national policymakers. It was only once these channels were well established that interest groups, in the main, sought to extend their lobbying efforts to EU level policymakers. This finding is particularly interesting, as it would appear that Belgian interest groups, due to their location, would face fewer obstacles than most in expanding their lobbying efforts to the EU institutions.

We may pause here to consider Beyers & Kerremans' findings that Belgian (and Dutch) interest groups are less active, in general, at the EU level than groups from Germany and France. Eising (2004), in his study of German, French and British groups similarly finds that in these countries, it is those groups who are already strong at the national level who are most likely to take advantage of opportunities to lobby at the EU level. These findings are further backed up by Beyers & Kerremans themselves, who find that across Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Germany, that interest groups, in the first instance, look for 'proximate venues' to direct their lobbying efforts towards. They also find, in line with other scholars, that multilevel lobbying tends to have a 'cumulative character' whereby groups who have already successfully gained access at the national level are more likely to gain access at the EU level. This finding is further supported by Adshead (1996), in her study of the Irish agricultural lobby, in which she finds that the Ireland's entry into the European Union further strengthened Irish farming groups which had already held a position of strength within the Irish political system. Such advantages are particularly noteworthy due to the fact that the national and EU levels can often be mutually reinforcing.

Groups who only lobby at one level run the risk of being outflanked by groups who have the capacity to lobby at both.

Furthermore, it is argued that the 'cumulative character' of access opportunities is especially pronounced for certain types of interest groups. Eising notes, for instance, that business associations that are financially well equipped are more likely to evolve into multilevel players. Similarly, large firms that are both financially well resourced and generally highly mobile are likely to be able to be active at both national and EU levels of governance. Dür & Mateo report similar findings, noting that resource-rich organisations have significantly more contacts with the various policymakers interest groups seek out when they wish to lobby on EU legislation. When it comes to desk officers in the European Commission, for instance (arguably the single most important contact point for interest groups engaging in EU lobbying), resource rich organisations have six times as many contacts as resource poor ones (Dür & Mateo, 2012).

These findings are consistent with the argument that different types of resources are important at different levels. As financial resources are the most fungible of resources, groups who possess them are likely to be in the best position to scale up their activity in order to meet the demands of EU policymakers (Schlozman *et al*, 2012: 396). As has been previously noted, many scholars have argued that expertise is the key resource required for gaining access to policymakers at the EU level. Financial resources can be converted into hiring and training expert staff and purchasing outside consultancy services (Schlozman *et al*, 2012: 589).

Generally speaking, interest groups who are already well established at the national level will find it easier to extend their lobbying reach to the EU level, although there is variation between types of groups in terms of how easy this is for them. As Eising notes, however, while multilevel governance has a tendency to disadvantage groups who are weaker at the national level, this is not true in the case of each and every policy decision (Eising, 2004).

Indeed one type of interest group that has managed to take advantage of the

multilevel character of EU decision making, despite often having limited success in their dealings with national policymakers, have been environmental groups. Fairbrass and Jordan (2004:148), for instance, have noted how the EU has created 'some of the strongest and most progressive environmental policies in the world'. These policies also often have 'teeth', as can be observed by the EU's legal action taken against the UK for failing to properly follow EU directives relating to protected sites for wildlife (Bache & Flinders, 2004).

The EU, therefore, offers an opportunity for environmental interest groups to find a more receptive ear for their arguments than they often find in a domestic setting. It is not difficult to imagine why this might be the case. EU policymakers are clearly more insulated from immediate electoral pressures than domestic policymakers. On one level this arguably allows them to take a more long-term view of policy. It also allows them to make different cost benefit calculations as they are not hamstrung by the fact that neither endangered species, nor future generations, vote in popular elections and hence electoral concerns are less of a restraining force on their policy proposals.

One other type of group that scholars argue have been able to take advantage of the political opportunities afforded by multilevel governance, despite being marginalised in certain member states, have been women's groups. In the case of women, it has perhaps more difficult to make the case that diminished electoral concerns were the reason behind campaigns for an upgrading in the status of women as independent workers having more success at the EU level (although nor should some countries' traditional social conservatism be completely discounted).

What did seem to count against women in the national arena were long-standing national institutional arrangements, which, in a number of European countries, clearly worked against the interests of female workers. This was particularly the case in so called 'male breadwinner states' (Ireland, the UK and Germany), whose institutions were traditionally structured around the assumption that men would work in the marketplace while women would focus on homemaking

(Mazey, 1998). Indeed, Ireland represented the most extreme example of this phenomenon with a marriage bar, which forced women to leave public service employment upon marriage, in place until 1977 and a tax system which, up until the introduction of tax equalisation in 2002, imposed high marginal rates on working women (Mazey, 1998). Similarly, Ireland's policies regarding parental leave lagged behind the European norm by some measure, and were indeed successfully challenged with a 1996 directive adopted which mandated that parents were entitled to a minimum of three months parental leave without prejudice to their employment rights (Falkner, 1999:93). While more 'advanced' member states already had policies in place which went significantly beyond this, this directive represented significant progress for Ireland and, indeed, the same is true for most EU directives adopted by the Social Affairs Council (Falkner, 1999).

The EU institutions, therefore, offered a potential venue which was effectively a 'blank slate' for feminist groups in certain EU member states, without the traditional institutional biases that had existed in these states. Furthermore, not only was the EU receptive to arguments in favour of equal pay and equal treatment of all workers, regardless of gender, it was also prepared to provide financial assistance to feminist groups, particularly those of a transnational nature to aid them make their case in Brussels (Mazey, 1998). This financial assistance aided feminist groups in the same way it helped environmental groups- by allowing them to purchase expertise- the resource that numerous scholars have noted is the key requirement for access at the EU level.

These examples also highlight one other point that is important for the EU vs national level comparisons that this thesis attempts to make. Namely, that the EU is a distinct lobbying environment. While the thesis is set up to look at access to the European Parliament and the European Commission separately, while also looking at access to TDs and national level civil servants individually, it is also worth noting differences that exist at the system level between the EU and national levels. Here, the argument that has most often been made by scholars is that, while a European Parliament does exist, it lacks the strong democratic

linkage to the electorate that characterises national parliaments. This will be discussed in more depth in chapters three, eight and nine of this thesis (Christiansen 1997; Horeth 1999; Bouwen, 2002).

There is one further issue that is worth considering in relation to multi-level lobbying. The first is the extent to which interest groups make use of the venue shopping opportunities that multi-level governance presents, in a systematic fashion. This is currently an open question in the literature. As Maurer *et al* (2003:66) have noted, 'the logic of multi level governance means that actors need to allocate personal and financial resources to different levels and various loci of interaction'. In order to fully take advantage of venue shopping opportunities therefore, actors must learn to manage their policy environment and respond dynamically to change. Some studies argue that interest groups are acutely aware of this and hence they shift their resources between venues in response to such systematic factors (Baumgartner, 2007; Bouwen & McCown, 2007). Such systematic behaviour, however, has been questioned by Pralle (2003), who argues that the received wisdom that venue shopping is generally carried out in a systematic and calculated fashion is wide of the mark. Her study of forestry advocacy groups shows that interest groups are generally constrained by the limits of bounded rationality and, instead of continually shopping around for the most advantageous venue, settle instead for the most proximate one. The extent to which interest groups are truly able to take advantage of venue shopping opportunities in an efficient way is still an open question therefore.

One other significant gap that remains in the multi-level lobbying literature is a comparison of the access opportunities opened up by both levels. Specifically, here we refer to how the differing incentives and constraints faced by policymakers at the national and EU levels may lead to different resources being particularly important for gaining access to policymakers at each level. This is a gap this thesis seeks to go somewhat towards addressing, as will be outlined in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This review considered a number of the important and relevant questions that have been examined in four main strands of the lobbying literature in recent years. These questions have undoubtedly shaped my own thinking, both in terms of what questions need to be asked, and, in terms of what theory suggests the answers are most likely to be. It is important to also note at this stage how this thesis builds on the literature that has been reviewed in this chapter.

The first way in which this thesis builds on the existing literature is through its focus on Ireland, a country which has not previously received significant attention from interest group scholars. Existing work on lobbying in Ireland has tended to be of a descriptive nature. It has also tended to consider Ireland as a 'sui generis' and has generally not drawn on the wider international literature on lobbying. This thesis, therefore, seeks to go some way towards filling this gap and offers a comprehensive examination of Irish lobbying that both draws on the wider literature and, uses both quantitative and qualitative data to examine important questions in a systematic fashion.

The second contribution to the literature this thesis makes is in its comparison of national level and supranational level lobbying within the EU system. As discussed at length in this chapter, there has been a clear shift in the literature towards a more comparative approach when analysing lobbying. This is the case both for US and for EU focused scholars. Despite their potential value being recognised by scholars working in this area, however, studies which compare both national and supranational level lobbying within the EU system are very rare (Beyers, 2002; Woll, 2006; Mahoney, 2008; Dür & Mateo, 2011). This thesis, therefore, represents one of the first attempts to compare national level lobbying with EU level lobbying in a systematic fashion.

The final contribution this thesis makes is in its introduction of the new concept of 'invited access'. As discussed in detail in this review, one of the questions that interest group scholars have continually wrestled with is how to truly get at the question of interest group 'power' or 'influence'. One approach that has been

used quite frequently recently, particularly by EU focused scholars, is to abandon attempts to study 'influence' directly and instead to examine 'access'. The logic behind this is that access lends itself to systematic measurement in a way that influence does not. As well as being of interest in its own right, studying access is also of value as it is a necessary pre-requisite for influence and, hence, is likely to be correlated with it. This thesis also uses this approach and uses 'access' as its main dependent variable. While existing studies have focused exclusively on 'frequency of access', however, this thesis goes further and introduces the concepts of 'invited access' and 'frequency of invited access' as complementary dependent variables. The argument that is put forward is that both 'invited access' and 'frequency of invited access' are likely to be even more closely correlated with interest group power than 'frequency of access'.

This argument will be outlined further in the next two chapters. Chapter three lays out the theoretical framework of the thesis in some depth. Chapter four outlines the data and methodology used to test the hypotheses at the centre of this framework. The subsequent chapters empirically examine these hypotheses.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This thesis concerns itself with variation between interest groups in terms of the access they receive to four different types of policymakers. These are TDs, Irish national level civil servants, Irish MEPs and European Commission officials. Throughout the thesis, two types of variation are salient. First, is the variation between *different types* of interest groups. Do different types of groups systematically differ in the access they receive to different types of policymakers? Is there, for instance, a 'pro-business' bias in terms of access to some policymakers?

The second type of variation is that between *differentially resourced* interest groups. Is there a relationship between the amount and type of resources that interest groups have at their disposal, and the amount and type of access they are granted? While considering both these questions, it will also be important to consider whether there are systematic differences between different types of interest groups in terms of their level of resources and the effect this may have on the access that groups receive to the various types of policymakers they target.

Examining these types of variation allows us to gain insights into the determinants of interest group access to different types of policymakers. While these are worthy of note in their own right, they are particularly interesting in comparative perspective. This project allows two such comparisons to be made. Firstly, we can compare the relative importance of different resources for access to elected officials and to civil servants. How do the different incentives and constraints these actors face shape the access they grant to different interest groups? Secondly, comparisons can be made between the national and EU levels of governance. How, for instance, do the differing levels of democratic accountability, and of power held by technocratic officials, at each level of governance, influence access pattern?

As mentioned in the introduction, the dependent variable of this analysis is 'access'. In recent years, a number of interest group scholars have turned away from attempting to measure interest groups' *influence* directly, cognizant of the fact that influence is 'one of the most fraught, difficult and complex problems in political science research' (Beyers *et al*, 2008) and that it is 'incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to categorically attribute a policy outcome to a specific interest group activity' (Chalmers, 2011). Instead they have increasingly turned to examining access, as access can be studied more systematically (Bouwen, 2002; Bouwen; 2004; Broscheid & Coen, 2007; Eising, 2007a; 2007b; Woll; 2007; Dür & Mateo, 2011; Chalmers, 2013). Such authors have been motivated by Baumgartner & Leech's famous pronouncement that 'there is little reason to organize a project on the chimerical promise of measuring the unmeasurable' (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998:37). Access is thus used, as it is a quantifiable dependent variable which is also a necessary pre-condition for influence and, hence, is likely to be correlated with it. Should there be systematic biases in terms of the level of access different interest groups are able to achieve, biased policy outcomes may be the result.

Furthermore, to try and further derive value from 'access', as a dependent variable, we split it into three separate concepts all of which, it is argued, tell us something about the political system we are studying. First, in this respect, is the simple 'ability to access' variable. This variable is a dichotomous measure of interest groups' access over a 12-month period. In a reasonably open political system, it is argued that all interest groups should be able to gain some access to policymakers during the year. The second variable, and the one that is by the far the most commonly used in studies examining access to policymakers, is 'frequency of access'. This variable measures how often an interest group has had access to policymakers over a 12-month period. On this measure, we would expect our hypothesis with regard to variation in the level of access afforded to differentially resourced groups (outlined below) to hold.

The final variable that we introduce is one that has not previously been widely used in the literature. This variable, which we term 'invited access', refers to

interest groups being contacted directly by policymakers to seek their advice. It is argued that interest groups, who have the resources necessary to provide policymakers with the information they are most in need of, are most likely to be granted such access. Of course, the idea that 'invited access' would be of particular benefit to interest groups is not a totally novel one. In the previous chapter, for instance, we discussed how various authors wrote about the dynamic of 'insiders and outsiders' and how interest groups who were 'inside the system' may enjoy preferential treatment. What is new however, in this thesis, is the use of 'invited access' as an empirically examined dependent variable. While previous theoretical and case study work has discussed the benefit of being an insider, large-scale survey work has traditionally examined 'frequency of access' only.

In looking at invited access in a systematic way, we examine both the occurrence, and frequency, of this direct contact over a 12-month period. This particular type of access can be seen to be particularly useful for interest groups (and particularly correlated with influence), as it increases the likelihood that interest groups will be involved at the earliest possible stage in the policy process. The earlier in the policy process that interest groups are involved, the more likely they are to be effective in realising their goals (Cowles, 1995; Cram, 2001; Pollack, 2003, Coen, 2007; Princen, 2009; Buena, 2012). On top of this, it would seem sensible to assume that policymakers are more likely to take on board the views of groups that they themselves have sought out. Contacting an interest group directly, to seek their view on a point of policy, would suggest that the policymaker acknowledges that the group in question has an opinion on the matter that is worth listening to.

We thus make two claims in relation to both 'invited access' and 'frequency of invited access'. First, it is argued that there are strong theoretical reasons for believing that there is likely to be a relationship between the type and amount of resources at an interest group's disposal, and the level of such access received. Second, it is felt that of all possible types of access, 'invited access' is likely to correlate most closely with interest group power.

Finally, and with relation to what resources are likely to be important to different types of policymakers, we follow Bowen's (2002; 2004) 'access good' approach. The logic behind this argument is that in order to be granted access to policymakers, be they politicians or civil servants, interest groups need to provide 'access goods' in return. These 'access goods' can take a number of forms, but must in some way improve policymakers' ability to carry out their basic functions. Of course, as different types of policymakers have different incentives and constraints, we can expect that the 'access goods' that are important in securing access will differ between policymakers (Michalowitz, 2004).

Access to TDs

Looking first at Irish TDs, like all politicians who face competitive elections, their primary goal is quite simple: to be re-elected (Ainsworth, 1993; Aldrich, 1995). This means that as TDs are ultimately accountable to the electorate, they should also be responsive to them. The 'access good' that interest groups need to provide to secure access to Irish policymakers then, is information that is electorally relevant. This is especially important for Irish politicians, as a combination of the unique character of the electoral system, coupled with the weakness of Irish local government, leads to a need for all politicians, even government Ministers, to take care of their electoral constituency in order to secure re-election (Adshead, 1996; Callanan, 2007; O'Malley & MacCarthaigh, 2012). The extent of the importance of this responsiveness is highlighted by the examples of Patrick Cooney and Conor Cruise O'Brien, both of whom fostered a reputation as 'competent' policy makers but who subsequently lost their seats in parliament, seemingly as a result of their neglect of their electoral constituency (Connaughton, 2012).

It is a feature of the Irish electoral system that TDs must be particularly careful to be individually responsive to constituents. While in other countries, members of parliament may be able to rely on their party affiliation to secure them votes, in Ireland prospective TDs actually compete with members of their own party in

multimember constituencies. This further increases the need for politicians to be personally responsive to the interests of their electorate.

From a supply and demand perspective then, TDs are most in demand of information about the effects of policies on their constituents and hence interest groups who are best placed to supply such information can be expected to receive the most frequent access, and the most frequent invited access, to them. Two similar types of groups are expected to be best placed in this respect. First in this respect are groups who have a large number of members. The logic here is quite simple. Groups who have a large number of members also represent a large number of potential voters. As a result, when they wish to speak to politicians, politicians must listen. The second type of group who are expected to be well placed are groups (usually large firms) which employ a large number of employees. TDs have clear incentives to listen to such groups due to the positive or negative economic effect (along with the positive or negative publicity) that the expansion or contraction of such a group's activity in any area is likely to bring.

Two explicit hypotheses can be derived therefore.

H1: Interest groups with more members will receive more frequent access and more invited access to TDs than interest groups with fewer members.

H2: Interest groups with more employees will receive more frequent access and more invited access to TDs than interest groups with fewer employees.

Access to Civil Servants

Irish civil servants are likely to have a rather different set of incentives. As bureaucrats whose main function revolves around the effective and efficient formulation and implementation of policy, the information they are likely to be in most demand of is information regarding the costs, benefits and logistical challenges of any proposed legislation. Inputs that do not simply identify problems, but also propose potential solutions (especially solutions which do not

impose a financial cost on the government), are likely to be particularly valuable (Walsh *et al*, 2013). In short, the 'access good' that civil servants are most in demand of is expertise; as groups who have such expertise can provide them with information that can make it easier for them to do their job effectively. Irish civil servants could be expected to be particularly in demand of expertise from outside groups due to the deficiency of expertise that exists within its ranks. This expertise deficiency exists in the first instance due to the generalist nature of Irish civil service recruitment and practices. This deficiency has been further exacerbated in recent years, as an incentivised retirement scheme, introduced during the financial crisis, led to many of the most knowledgeable and experienced people in civil service departments taking early retirement.

An interest group with 'expertise' is one which has both knowledge of specialized and technical information, and, crucially, also has the ability to assess it in a manner that makes it possible to communicate it to policymakers (Schmitter, 2000; Beyers & Kerremans, 2004; 2007; Michalowitz, 2007; Saurugger, 2007; Saurugger, 2008). Of course, just as all groups are not created equal in terms of membership or staff size, not are they all equal in terms of the expertise they have at their disposal. As Broscheid and Coen (2007) have pointed out, expertise is often costly to obtain. Groups with significant financial resources at their disposal are likely to be able to acquire more expertise, therefore, through hiring appropriate public affairs staff or spending money on external consultants (Gerber, 1999; Mahoney, 2004).

With this in mind, it is reasonable to hypothesise that the groups that are most likely to be in a position to meet civil servants informational needs, are those with substantial public affairs staffs at their disposal. These groups will be able to devote more resources to monitoring policy developments and calls for consultations (which can be a challenge in itself in Ireland), researching best practice in their area of interest, writing position papers and policy submissions, and providing information to civil servants directly, when requested. It is also likely that the submissions that are made by groups with more public affairs staff at their disposal will be richer in detail and be more likely to not only flag

problems with proposed legislation but also identify alternative solutions. Such 'solution identification' is both considerably more time consuming for an interest group and also considerably more useful for a policymaker.

From the above we derive the following hypothesis:

H3: Interest groups with more public affairs staff will receive more frequent access and more invited access to civil servants than interest groups with fewer public affairs staff.

Potential Importance of Contacts

In addition to the resources already discussed, there is a third resource that may be expected to be important to Irish interest groups in their attempts to seek access to both TDs and civil servants. While it is one that may not initially appear to fall as neatly within the 'access good' framework, it is nevertheless one whose importance is relatively easy to explain using it. The resource in question is that of 'contacts'. 'Contacts' are a resource that interest groups themselves frequently cite as of significant importance for their work.⁵ For policymakers, 'contacts' can be particularly useful when faced with information overload. With a plethora of both local and national interest groups seeking contact with policymakers in Ireland, such policymakers are always on the lookout for a shortcut by which they can identify groups they should pay most attention to. Having a pre-existing relationship with a member of an interest group is likely to make it easier for that group to establish a policymaker's trust and, hence, make it more likely that a policymaker will both listen to and seek out an interest group's views.

The fact that contacts can be expected to be particularly important for lobbying in Ireland can, at the simplest level, be put down to the small size of the policymaking community. There are theoretical reasons for believing that 'who you know' will be especially important in Ireland beyond simple size considerations, however. Firstly, the lack of any registration of lobbyists or

⁵ As is demonstrated by the language used in almost every job posting for Public Affairs Officers in Ireland.

formal rules concerning lobbyists' behaviour at the national level means we can expect significant emphasis on informal contacts (Regan & Wilson, 1986; Chari *et al.*, 2010). Such informal contacts have previously been noted as being particularly important in the Department of Agriculture for instance (Adshead, 1996). Secondly, the lack of a formal registration system also has an impact on what types of people are able to consistently access politicians through the legislative chambers. Former TDs and Senators, by grace of their former positions, enjoy effectively unlimited access to both chambers (Fallon, 2011). Former senior public servants and governmental advisors may not enjoy the same level of access; they do, however, enjoy much better access to both the legislative chambers and to politicians more generally than individuals who lack such experience (Fallon, 2011).

On top of their access to the legislative chambers, former politicians also have considerable access to the civil service. Collins and O'Shea (2003), for instance, note how former ministers often write *personally* to the Secretary General of the Department where they previously held office, on behalf of either their constituents (if they are still TDs) or their clients (if they have gone through the revolving door into the world of lobbying). Former backbenchers, meanwhile, are likely to have established contacts within government departments which they will still be able to call on after leaving office. From a lobbying perspective then, such individuals are able to trade on their unparalleled access to ex-colleagues, regardless of the quality of the information they have at their disposal.

That status as an ex-politician and the advantages that comes with that is a prized asset in Ireland is demonstrated further by the fact that lobbying consultancies in Ireland are almost always staffed by individuals who have close personal contacts in the political system (McGrath, 2010). From a democratic standpoint this is of course problematic, as it can easily lead to a situation whereby former politicians, having acquired a network of contacts at the taxpayers' expense, can then make this network work for them subsequent to their political career, for their own private benefit (McGrath, 2009). It can also, of

course, lead to a potential conflict of interest. Public officials may be conscious during their interaction with certain interest groups that such groups may offer them future employment opportunities. This may affect the decisions that such public officials take on issues of concern to these interest groups.

Operationalizing this 'contacts' variable then, it is reasonably hypothesized that those with prior governmental experience as either a TD or civil servant will receive more access and more invited access to policymakers than lobbyists without such experience.

The following hypothesis can therefore be put forward:

H4: Interest groups with a greater percentage of staff with government experience will receive more frequent access and more invited access to policymakers than interest groups with fewer such individuals on their books.

Anecdotal evidence for this expectation is provided by Joe Costello TD, who noted that 'most of the lobbyists within the confines of the House are former Members...we see such people everywhere in the House as they have privileged access' (McGrath, 2010:222).

Access to European Commission Officials

For Irish interest groups who lobby at the EU level, the European Commission is a crucial lobbying target. It is particularly important to interest groups as it is the Commission which drafts EU legislation and it is at this initial, pre-draft, 'agenda setting' stage that interest groups have the most opportunity to influence such legislation (Cowles, 1995; Cram, 2001; Pollack, 2003; Coen, 2007; Princen, 2009; Buena, 2012). Once legislation has been drafted by the Commission and starts to work its way through the EU's decision-making process, it becomes progressively more difficult for interest groups to have any influence over it (Lehmann & Bosche, 2003; Bouwen, 2009).

In terms of what groups are best placed to lobby the Commission, it must be noted that the incentives for EU Commission officials are broadly in line with those of Irish national level civil servants. It must be remembered that the European Commission is first and foremost a regulatory agency and that it acquires its legitimacy from good policy making. It must therefore be open to input from interest groups with the expertise necessary to inform good policy making. Indeed, even more so than at the national level, the likelihood of their being bias towards groups with substantial expertise has been noted as being especially likely as far as access to the European Commission is concerned (Broscheid & Coen, 2007; Chalmers, 2011; Klüver, 2012).

There are a number of reasons why expertise may be considered to be especially important for gaining access to EU Commission officials. First in this respect, we may mention the Commission's relatively low staffing levels. As was noted in the previous chapter, there is a significant swathe of literature which discusses how the Commission is an institution which is considerably understaffed (McLaughlin *et al*:201; Bouwen, 2004:346; Bartolini, 2005:286; Dür, 2008a:1215; Klüver, 2010:179; Chalmers, 2011:472).

The relatively low staffing level of the Commission is particularly problematic due to the regulatory and often technically complex nature of the legislation that the Commission deals with (Dür, 2008a; Bouwen, 2009; Klüver, 2010; Chalmers, 2011). Such complexity, when combined with understaffing issues, is likely to lead to a dependence on interest groups (Broscheid & Coen, 2007; Bouwen & McCown, 2007; Mahoney, 2007). Of course, this dependence is likely to fall on a particular type of interest group, namely groups who have sufficient technical expertise to provide the inputs that the Commission is in need of to ensure that the legislation they propose is as efficient and as effective as possible (Peterson & Bomberg 1999; Bouwen, 2002; Lowery, 2007; Eising, 2007b).

All of this means therefore, that it is reasonable to hypothesise that expertise is the most important resource for groups seeking access to such officials. Of course, as already mentioned in the discussion of the importance of expertise to

national civil servants, not all interest groups are equally well placed to provide this expertise. The larger the public affairs staff an interest group has, the more likely it is to have significant expertise at its disposal (Gerber, 1999; Mahoney, 2004).

This leads us therefore to the following hypothesis:

H5: Interest groups with more public affairs staff will receive more frequent access and more invited access to European Commission officials than interest groups with fewer public affairs staff.

As in the previous section, it is worth noting, not just our hypothesis, but also the implications of it. First, in this respect, is that fact that a dependence on expertise is likely to work in the favour of financially well endowed interest groups, due to the obvious cost of hiring and retaining a substantial public affairs function.

Of course, for some groups to be advantaged, others must be disadvantaged, and our hypothesis is in line with previous findings from the literature in this respect. We may note here, for instance, the findings of Klüver (2012), who discusses the problems that 'cause groups' may have in their attempts to influence the Commission. The overwhelming majority of these cause groups lack sufficient financial resources to employ a sufficiently large staff (or indeed, in the case of many national interest groups, any Brussels based staff at all) to be able to both monitor the fast pace of policy developments at the European level and to provide relevant technical information on initiatives, both current and potential.

This relative inability to provide the resource that the Commission most needs, means that such groups are at an intrinsic disadvantage relative to groups such as well endowed business groups, who have the financial resources to acquire such expertise (Hall & Deardorf, 2006; Klüver, 2012). While such groups may use protests, grass roots lobbying, or other demonstrations of numerical support, to bring attention to their cause at the national level, the lack of a true

European 'public space' means such tactics are difficult to employ at the EU level (Princen & Kerremans, 2005). Such a privileging of expertise at the EU level can mean, therefore, that groups who are not in possession of significant expertise can find themselves effectively excluded from the policy process.

Finally, in this section, it should be noted that these potential biases in terms of the access to the Commission that different types of groups can achieve are particularly problematic. This is due to the fact that, unlike most national civil services, the Commission has the right to draw up and initiate legislation in its own right, and is hence often referred to as the 'engine' of the EU (Harvey, 2008).

Access to MEPs

The EU does have a democratically elected parliament, in which 12 Irish MEPs sit alongside 754 other MEPs from other EU countries.⁶ From a lobbying perspective, however, the European Parliament has often played 'second fiddle' to the Commission, both in terms of the attention it has received from interest groups and in terms of the attention it has historically received from interest group scholars (Mazey & Richardson, 2006; Eising, 2007). This is due to the fact that the Commission has generally been considered the most important contact point for interest groups due to its monopoly over policy initiation.

This perspective has changed somewhat in recent years, as the relative power of the European Parliament within the European Union has increased, particularly since the introduction and extension of the codecision procedure (Crombez, 2002; Burns, 2004; Rasmussen, 2012).⁷ The introduction of this procedure, which means that the Parliament now shares legislative authority with the Council of the European Union, was first introduced with the Maastricht Treaty, and was later amended and extended by the Treaties of Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon.⁸ These changes are particularly closely felt post-Lisbon, as the European

⁶ The total number of MEPs will be reduced to 751 after the 2014 elections.

⁷ Now known as the ordinary legislative procedure.

⁸ Please see

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/industrialrelations/dictionary/definitions/codecisionprocedure.htm> [last accessed 31/07/2014].

Parliament now also has to act as a regulator and work closely with the European Commission in a close policy community. Under this new regime, it is also the case that chairs of committees and rapporteurs now have significantly more power than previously.

Notwithstanding the European Parliament's increase in power, however, from the perspective of lobbyists, the Commission is still considered the most important EU level venue. The reason for this, as we have already discussed, is because the European Commission retains the sole right to initiate legislation and it is at the initial 'pre-draft' stage that interest groups have the most chance of influencing the direction of legislation. This is in line with Bachrach and Baratz's original theoretical argument, that those who have the power to 'set the agenda', have significant influence within any political system.

Of course, from our perspective, what we are most interested in, is not the relative power of the EU's institutions, but in examining the relationship between the resources interest groups have and the access that interest groups receive, to policymakers from both institutions we examine, the Commission and the Parliament. In considering access to MEPs then, what we are most concerned with, in the first instance, are the incentives that MEPs are likely to have.

Certain authors argue that as MEPs are directly elected by specific constituencies, they can be expected to be responsive to their concerns in the same way that national politicians are (Beyers, 2002; Bouwen, 2002; Beyers & Kerremans, 2007; Marshall, 2010). Other scholars, however, have pointed to a number of reasons why democratic accountability might not be so keenly felt by MEPs. Perhaps most dominant here is the argument that MEPs are elected via 'second order elections' which are not tied to issues of European policy, and hence have less of an incentive to be responsive to their electoral constituency (Norris, 1997; Marsh, 1998; Hix, 2005; Follesdal & Hix, 2006). Furthermore, the European Parliament is often regarded as either a 'retirement home' for politicians at the end of their careers or, alternatively, as a stepping stone to a national political career. It is unsurprising then that scholars have argued the

desire for re-election (and the attention to the electorate that comes with it) is weaker in the EP than in national systems (Jupille, 2007). Finally, but as importantly, is the relative absence of vigorous media coverage of legislative issues in the EU, a key mechanism for ensuring democratic accountability and responsiveness at the national level (Weiler *et al* 1995; Culpepper, 2010). This lack of media coverage also arguably leads to much less public debate about the relative merits of EU legislation. This phenomenon has led authors to criticize the EU as a venue that is about 'policy without politics', where issues that should be subject to vigorous 'left/right' political debate are instead all about technocratic detail (Schmidt, 2010; Hyman, 2011).

In the absence of obvious electoral incentives, MEPs may be interested in a variety of different inputs. On the one hand, it is reasonable to hypothesize that MEPs who wish to establish their reputation as policymakers at the EU level, and contribute to legislative change within the EP, are likely to be most in demand of expertise, and hence grant more access to groups who can provide it. On the other hand, MEPs who wish to further their political career at the domestic level are likely to be most responsive to groups who represent large numbers of voters in their prospective future domestic constituencies. Finally, it may be hypothesized that MEPs who are 'winding down' their political career and do not intend to run for re-election at any level may not grant particularly frequent access to interest groups of any kind. In the absence of an incentive structure that lends itself to any explicit hypotheses then, one question this thesis will examine is whether any of aforementioned possible access patterns are dominant.

Venue Shopping

In looking at interest group access across two levels of governance, our research design also allows us to consider the question of venue shopping. The multilevel governance structure of the EU gives interest groups various options in terms of which policymakers they wish to seek access to. As previously noted, we expect different resources to be particularly important for gaining access to different

types of policymakers. Interest groups are most likely to target the policymakers who are in demand of resources that they possess in significant quantities.

As was noted in the previous chapter, venue shopping is a phenomenon which scholars of a variety of political systems have found particularly interesting. In their work on the US for instance, Baumgartner and Jones (1993) examined the relative ability of interest groups to 'shop around' between suitable policy venues looking for the institution which is most likely to be favourable to them. While such an ability may be very useful for an individual interest group, from a democratic standpoint, of course, it is more problematic. This is because venue-shopping may favour groups who are well resourced with a variety of different 'access goods'. Such groups may be able to overcome their less well endowed competitors by seeking alternative access routes even if they had previously been blocked, an option that is likely to be more difficult for more modestly resourced groups to take advantage of.

Looking specifically at the EU, it is not only groups with significant financial clout who have been able to take advantage of venue shopping opportunities in the past. In the Irish case, for example, two of the most frequently cited types of groups in this regard are women's groups and environmental groups. In the case of women's groups, Ireland has received specific mention, with groups able to use EU legislation to make appeals against policies which harmed Irish women's ability to compete in the work place. Such appeals include the use of a 1996 EU directive to force the Irish government to mandate that parents were henceforth entitled to a minimum of three months parental leave without prejudice to their employment rights (Falkner, 1999). Indeed, some authors have gone as far as to argue that laws which guarantee equality for women both in terms of workplace rights and in terms of rights to social security have come about 'entirely as a consequence of EU membership' (Costello, 2004:26).

With regard to environmental groups, again Ireland can potentially be seen as a typical case whereby domestic groups may find the EU route particularly advantageous. Ireland has been described as a 'laggard' in environmental policy

terms, an industrial latecomer whose regulatory structures are less developed than the European norm and which has a history of voting against changes to the decision making framework that could make passing even more stringent environmental regulations easier (Börzel, 2002).

In contrast, at the EU level, policymakers have traditionally been very receptive to environmental arguments, with some authors arguing that the EU now has 'some of the strongest and most progressive environmental policies in the world' (Fairbrass & Jordan, 2004). From the perspective of the theoretical framework this thesis presents, this is an interesting phenomenon to explore. As we have already hypothesised, at the national level, there are policymakers who are likely to be particularly in demand of electoral relevant information (TDs) and policymakers who are likely to be particularly in demand of expertise (civil servants). At the EU level, there are still policymakers who are likely to be in demand of expertise (EU officials) but it is less clear if the elected officials, the MEPs, are similarly in demand of electoral relevant information, or subject to the same level of electoral pressure, as their national level counterparts. Such a scenario may allow groups who represent causes which may potentially have electoral costs to achieve success at the EU level even if they are unlikely to achieve similar success at the national level.

Indeed, by drawing on work in other EU member states it is possible to point to examples where environmental interests were able to take advantage of the more favourable climate at the EU level to successfully overturn decisions taken at the national level that were unfavourable to their interests. We can point for instance here to *Comunidad Valenciana's* plan for two national bird sanctuaries in Spain (Marks & McAdam, 1999). Initially rejected by the national government, who calculated the costs (to voters) of introducing the sanctuaries outweighed the benefits, *Comunidad Valenciana* was successful in shifting the issue to the European level and was able to secure both support and funding for the sanctuaries from the relevant Directorates General of the Commission.⁹ At the national level environmental groups often claim to be hamstrung by the fact that

⁹ DG-11 (Environment) and DG-16 (Structural Funds).

neither endangered species nor future generations' vote in national elections and hence they struggle to find a sympathetic ear. At the EU level, the scientific expertise that many such groups have, an expertise they are often able to acquire due to EU grants helping them to maintain sizeable staffs, allows them to find such an ear.

We may also make note here of the US, a system in which all policymakers find themselves subject to electoral pressures. Here, industry has been much more successful in making the case that restrictive environmental legislation has the capacity to negatively impact on jobs and economic growth (Burnett & Davis, 2002). In the few cases that environmental groups have been able to garner some success meanwhile, they have been able to achieve this, not by lobbying legislatures, but instead through the federal courts system (Wenner, 1993; Burnett & Davis, 2002). In this venue, environmental groups were able to use expert arguments to convince the courts that the Forest Service had failed to ensure adequate compliance with US environmental law. Even these pro-environmental successes were often short-lived, however, as the legislation that allowed such rulings was often ultimately overturned by congressional action (Burnett & Davis, 2002).

Making use of this thesis' research design, and within this theoretical framework, we look at the question of how Irish interest groups are able to make use of the venue shopping possibilities that multi-level governance opens up. Are there groups who struggle to find an audience at the domestic level and hence may be advantaged by being sufficiently well resourced to take advantage of its possibilities? Or does the existence of an EU lobbying level simply further advantage groups who are sufficiently well resourced to be able to lobby at two levels simultaneously?

It is important to note here that while these questions are very interesting from a theoretical perspective, they are also very difficult to explore empirically. It is also important that, in the context of the research design used in this thesis, that we do not 'over promise' in terms of what can be delivered in our discussion of

venue shopping. Studies that focus in on venue shopping typically use specific qualitative case studies to investigate the phenomenon. The more general focus of this thesis, therefore, means that venue shopping can only be explored as a supplement to our primary empirical investigation into the determinants of access to national and EU level policy makers. Notwithstanding this fact however, where venue shopping can be explored is through the use of the extensive interview evidence that this thesis draws on. Such interview evidence provides particular insights into the use that Irish environmental groups make of venue shopping, for instance. The nature of this interview evidence, along with the other data sources used in this thesis, will be outlined in the next chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4: DATA & METHODOLOGY

One of the main goals of this thesis is to offer a more comprehensive and systematic study of lobbying by Irish interest groups on both national and EU legislation than has previously been found in the literature. As such, a detailed research plan was put in place to gather all the data necessary to achieve this goal.

The first stage of the project involved exploratory interviews with lobbyists and policymakers in Dublin and Brussels. Five interviews were carried out in Dublin, all of which were with lobbyists with experience in both Dublin and Brussels. In addition, I also travelled to Brussels, where I interviewed six interest group representatives/lobbyists, three Irish MEPs (including an MEP who had previously served as a TD) and the Head of Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn's Cabinet. These interviews, in conjunction with my reading of the academic literature, helped me to define the questions that needed to be included in the subsequent survey. They also had value in terms of providing useful qualitative data that will, in conjunction with the rest of our interview evidence, be analysed in its own right.

In the project's second stage, two large databases of relevant actors were put together. The first, featuring 512 Irish interest groups of various types, was put together using the Institute of Public Administration's 2012 yearbook. This is the same source that Dür and Mateo used in their 2008-09 study of Irish interest groups (Dür & Mateo, 2009). While the yearbook does not necessarily include *all* groups who engage in lobbying it is, nevertheless, reasonably comprehensive.¹⁰ Crucially, it also includes all types of interest groups (including large firms) and hence our database is likely to be representative of the interest group population as a whole (Dür & Mateo, 2009). The second database, featuring all 164 TDs¹¹

¹⁰ By way of contrast, we may note that there are 84 Irish registered interest groups on the EU Transparency Register

¹¹ At the time of the survey there was one fewer TD than usual in Meath-East due to the recent passing of Shane McEntee TD.

(excluding the Ceann Comhairle¹²), all 12 Irish MEPs, the Secretary Generals of all 16 Government Departments, and the Assistant to the Director General in the 20 Directorates General of the European Commission that deal with policies was put together using a mixture of publically available web resources. In the case of civil servants, both at the national and EU levels, senior officials were targeted. This was both due to their contact details being much more readily available than more junior officials and due to the fact that they are likely to be lobbied to at least some degree. At more junior levels, this cannot be assumed as easily.

All of the actors in each database were invited to then take either an 'Interest Group' or 'Policy Maker' survey.¹³ These surveys were carried out between October, 2012 and February, 2013. Surveys were used as a means of capturing the level of interest group access, as they offer the best method of capturing the total amount of interest group access, through both formal and informal channels (Pedersen, 2013). It is also unlikely that there will be systematic differences between interest groups in terms of the level to which they self report access levels, especially when the survey itself guarantees anonymity.

Looking first at the interest group survey, all interest groups were first invited to take the anonymous survey via email on a secure website. After the first email was sent out, two further email reminders were sent at two-week intervals. 104 completed responses were ultimately received by this method with a response rate of 20%. While this response rate was reasonable, it was felt to be possibly too low to engage in meaningful statistical analysis. In order to increase this response rate therefore, a hard copy of the survey was sent out to all interest groups who had neither completed the online survey nor chose to opt out from receiving further correspondence when initially emailed. 81 hard copy responses were received from interest groups, with the overall response rate therefore rising to just over 36%. This compares favourably with other similar surveys carried out in this field which have generally recorded a response rate of between 10 and 40% (Chari *et al*, 2010; Dür & Mateo, 2011; Bernhagen 2013).

¹² The Speaker of the House.

¹³ These surveys appear as Appendix A and Appendix B at the end of this thesis.

The breakdown of the survey population, both in terms of those surveyed and in terms of respondents, was as follows:

Table 4.1 Interest Group Survey Population

Business Associations	142 (27.7%)
Citizens' Groups	6 (1.05%)
Farming Organisations	16 (3.1%)
Labour Organisations	17 (3.3%)
Large Firms	55 (10.7%)
NGOs	155 (30.3%)
Others	7 (2.54%)
Professional Associations	84 (1.37%)
Public Affairs Consultancies	30 (5.86%)
Total	512 (100%)

Table 4.2 Interest Group Survey Responses

Business Associations	45 (24.3%)
Citizens' Groups	4 (2.2%)
Farming Organisations	3 (1.6%)
Labour Organisations	11 (5.9%)
Large Firms	7 (3.8%)
NGOs	65 (35.1%)
Others	15 (8.1%)
Professional Associations	25 (13.5%)
Public Affairs Consultancies	10 (5.4%)
Total	185 (100%)

Table 4.3 Interest Group Survey Response Rate

Business Associations	31.6%
Citizens' Groups	66.6%
Farming Organisations	18.8%
Labour Organisations	64.7%
Large Firms	12.7%
NGOs	41.9%
Others	214%
Professional Associations	30.0%
Public Affairs Consultancies	33.3%
Total	36.1%

As can be seen in Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3, survey response rates were reasonably evenly distributed across interest group types suggesting that the responses received are representative of the interest group community at large. The one group that are significantly underrepresented are large firms.¹⁴ While they made up 10.7% of our initial sample, they represent only 3.8% of our completed responses, for a response rate of 12.7%. The main reason for this was due to the difficulty of obtaining contact details for the person within such firms who dealt with 'public affairs' or lobbying. It may of course also be possible that large firms are less willing to answer questions regarding their lobbying behaviour than other groups. One other note to be made is that a small number of the respondents did not agree with the labels given to them and preferred to identify themselves as 'other' when responding to the survey. This explains why more than twice as many respondents identify as 'other' than are listed as such in the initial survey population.

The survey captured the key information required to measure interest group access. The first tranche of questions looked at how many members the interest group had and how many staff they employed, both in general and, specifically, in their public affairs function. The second set focused on the level of government experience that those working in the interest group had. The third group of questions garnered information on both the amount and type of access that interest groups receive to both elected officials and civil servants.

Policymakers were similarly invited to take a separate anonymous survey, via email, on a secure website. An initial email was once again sent out along with two further email reminders. 33 responses were received by this method equating to an overall response rate of 16%. Hard copies were then sent out to all policymakers who had neither completed the survey online nor indicated that they did not wish to take part in such an exercise. 25 further responses were received via this method, taking the overall response rate to 27%.

¹⁴ While farming organisations are also less well represented than may be expected this is perhaps simply due to the fact that a number of the farming organisations in our original population are very small in size.

It is noteworthy that the data obtained from the policymaker surveys do not lend themselves to regression analysis in the same way that the interest group responses do. It would of course be unrealistic, for instance, to expect policymakers to estimate the resources that those lobbying them have at their disposal. This data is still interesting, however, both from a descriptive perspective and also as a check on our findings from the interest group survey.

In the third stage, a series of semi-structured interviews was carried out with those survey respondents who indicated that they would be willing to take part in a follow up interview. 38 such interviews were carried out. These interviews, along with the 12 interviews carried out early on in the data collection process, provide qualitative depth to supplement the quantitative findings that were derived from the survey responses.

These semi-structured interviews were carried out with a broad range of interest group representatives, including business associations, professional associations, trade unions, NGOs and public affairs consultants. As before, the only group that was underrepresented were large firms, and no interviews were secured with this type of group. Notwithstanding this fact, generally speaking, we secured interviews with a wide-ranging universe of interest groups to the point that we can be reasonably confident that we sampled views from across the diverse interest group landscape in Ireland.

In addition to interest groups, interviews were also carried out with civil servants of between Principal Officer and Secretary General level and TDs from the three main political parties.¹⁵ All interviews were carried out under the condition that the interviewees retained anonymity.

These interviews were wide-ranging in scope. In the first instance they focused on assessing the key reasons why interest groups were able to secure access to various types of policymakers. They also focused on identifying the mechanisms by which the resources that interest groups have at their disposal facilitate them

¹⁵ Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour.

in achieving their goals. Within this framework they also looked at differences that existed in terms of gaining access to civil servants and politicians and, similarly, also explored the differences between lobbying in Dublin and Brussels. The questions were framed, wherever possible, in a way that they could best lend themselves to furthering the analytical goals of the thesis. To this end, there was a focus on how variation in interest group type, lobby target and in level of governance, impacted both on how lobbying was carried out, and also on lobbying outcomes.

The interviews also allowed a number of questions that are interesting from a policy perspective, but which do not lend themselves to straightforward quantitative analysis to be asked. From an Irish perspective, these included issues around transparency and lobbying regulation, issues that arise from the lack of coherency that seems to exist between civil service departments and, the impact that the current financial context has had on lobbying in Ireland for the last few years.¹⁶

Overall then, the interview evidence was crucial for both adding depth to our quantitative findings and also allowing us to explore questions that were of clear policy relevance but which did not lend themselves as easily to quantitative analysis. As will be seen, the interviews take on particular relevance at the EU level, as the smaller number of policymaker survey respondents, added to the fact that interest groups receive less access at this level overall, mean that the interview evidence must take on more prominence.

The next four chapters in this thesis are an empirical exploration of the central questions of this thesis. Each chapter looks at Irish interest group lobbying of a particular type of policymaker. Chapter five examines lobbying of TDs, chapter six of national level civil servants, chapter seven of European Commission officials and chapter eight of MEPs.

¹⁶ Examples of the questions asked in both the interest group and policymaker interviews are included as appendices at the end of this thesis

Each chapter follows the same three-part structure. The first section uses data from the interest group survey to empirically examine the amount of access and invited access that interest groups receive to each type of policymaker. In each chapter, both descriptive statistics and regression models are presented. These models use both logistic regression and ordinal logistic regression techniques where appropriate. In every case, three models are used to examine the effect of our independent variables on our dependent variable of interest.

The first model is a complete model, which includes both our resource variables of interest and our categorical interest group variable. This complete model allows us to pick up on the effect of our variables of interest while controlling both for the effect of other resources and on the effect that systematic differences between interest groups in terms of resources may have. The second model is an interest group only model and allows us to pick up on differences between different types of interest group, allowing for the fact that such differences may be due to different types of interest groups having different levels of resources. The third and final model includes the resource variables only. This model is included for two reasons. Firstly, as an alternative, more parsimonious model to the first complete model, as it includes less than half the number of independent variables. And, secondly, as a robustness check on the aforementioned complete model. Including both models, it is argued, should diminish the chance of spurious correlations.

In terms of the robustness of our statistical results more generally, it should be noted that we have considerably more confidence in our national level data than in our EU level data. This is for two reasons. Firstly, because far more of the interest groups in our sample receive access to TDs and national level civil servants than they do to MEPs and European Commission officials. This means that we can be a lot more confident about what our independent variables tell us about the differing levels of access that interest groups receive at the national level than at the EU level. Another contributory factor to this is that, as we have already noted, large firms are significantly underrepresented in our sample. This

is of particular relevance for our EU results as large firms are a traditionally powerful force at this level.

Notwithstanding any of the limitations of our statistical data, it is important to reiterate that this thesis does not rely solely on analysing the data obtained from our interest group survey. As such, the second section of each chapter uses data from the policymaker survey to further explore the level of the access and invited access that different interest groups' receive to policymakers and the resources that are associated with this access.¹⁷ This data analysis also acts as a further robustness check on the inferences we reach when analysing the results of the interest group survey in each chapter.

The third section draws on the interview evidence obtained from both interest group representatives and policymakers. This interview evidence is used in a number of ways. Firstly, and crucially, it allows us to add qualitative depth to our quantitative findings. Secondly, it allows us to examine a number of issues relevant to Irish interest group lobbying that do not lend themselves to systematic or quantitative measurement in the way that 'access' does. Each of these issues were put forward by interviewees as central to understanding lobbying by Irish interest groups. These issues may not always be directly linked to the question of access. However, as this thesis seeks to provide the first large-scale, comprehensive study of Irish interest group lobbying, it would be remiss of us not to include them, as a supplement to our investigation of interest group access. Indeed, when considering the qualitative evidence generally, it must be stressed that it acts not simply to supplement the quantitative data but is also a rich data source in its own right.

¹⁷ Due the very low response rate from this class of policymakers, an analysis of this data for European Commission officials is not included.

CHAPTER 5: UNDERSTANDING ACCESS TO TDS

Building on the theoretical arguments put forward in the previous chapter, this chapter explores the determinants of access to Irish TDs. The chapter will first look quantitatively at three different dimensions of access- 'ability to access', 'frequency of access' and 'invited access'. These will all be explored using data garnered from the original interest group survey which was outlined in chapter four. Quantitative data from the corresponding policymaker survey will also be used to further assess the determinants of interest group access. Subsequent to this quantitative data analysis, data garnered from qualitative interviews carried out with both Irish interest group representatives and Irish TDs will be introduced. This interview data will add value in two different ways. Firstly, such data will allow the findings from the quantitative data analysis to be explored in more depth, with particular focus on more precisely explaining the mechanisms that may be at work. Secondly, interview data will allow a number of questions to be explored that do not lend themselves to quantitative analysis. This is particularly useful in terms of providing insight for policy relevant questions- questions that do not always easily lend themselves to quantitative analysis.

Ability to Access

It is often said of the Irish political system that it is a particularly open one, in which anyone can attain access to elected officials should they wish to so do. Highly competitive elections, intraparty competition, relatively small constituencies and a political culture in which the 'constituency clinic' is central to a TDs role, are all contributory factors to this phenomenon. As a result, we can expect that the vast majority of interest groups have gained access to TDs, at least once over a 12-month period. Similarly, it is also reasonable to expect that there are no systematic differences between interest groups (either in terms of interest group type or resource provision) in their ability to do so.

Table 5.1 Groups with access to TDs during the last 12 months (%)¹⁸

Business Associations	82%
Citizens' Group	75%
Farming Organisations	100%
Labour Organisations	82%
Large Firms	71%
NGOs	83%
Other	67%
Professional Associations	64%
Public Affairs Consultancies	80%
Overall	78%

As expected, the empirical results in Table 5.1 are in line with our hypothesis, that a significant majority of all interest groups gain access to TDs over any 12-month period. To further confirm this result, a logistic regression analysis (not reported here) was run. No systematic differences between differentially resourced interest groups were found in this analysis.

Frequency of Access

If the above shows that the vast majority of interest groups are able to gain at least some access to Irish TDs, a much more interesting question, generally posed in the literature on access, is 'how frequently can interest groups gain access'. It is clear that frequency of access is likely to tell us much more about an interest group's possible 'power'. While the ability to meet a policymaker at some point in a 12-month period means that a group is not completely shut out from the political process, it does not suggest, in and of itself, that that group has any real power. If a group has access to policymakers on a daily, or weekly basis, however, it is likely that they have a reasonable chance of shaping the political agenda. It is also clear that just as frequent access is more valuable, it is also more difficult to obtain, as all policymakers are subjected to time constraints and hence must ration the level of access they give to interest groups who wish to lobby them. The frequency of access variable is likely, therefore, to both offer a solid test of our hypotheses, and a good indication of variation in interest group power.

¹⁸ Survey Question: "In the last 12 months have you met with and made representations directly to TDs?"

As laid out in chapter three, the resources expected to be particularly useful for obtaining access to TDs are membership size and staff size. Put simply, groups with more members and larger staffs are likely, *ceritus paribus*, to receive more frequent access to TDs than other groups. The logic in both cases is that these groups represent larger numbers of voters and hence TDs, who are dependent on receiving more votes than their challengers to secure re-election, have a clear incentive to be responsive to them. In addition to these variables, one further resource that may prove useful for gaining access to TDs is that of pre-existing government contacts. This variable has been included as an independent variable in all of our regression analyses in order to help determine whether it does indeed have an effect on the amount and quality of access interest groups receive to TDs.

The hypotheses above will be tested using ordinal logistic regression analysis. Before this analysis is carried out, however, it is useful to present the relevant descriptive data for the key independent variables. One of the first tasks that had to be carried out, in order to allow meaningful comparisons to be made, was to code all the variables of interest. In this respect, both the membership and the staff variables were coded on a 1-7 ordinal scale with 1 indicating that a group had very few such resources and 7 indicating that they had very significant resources in this area. The membership variable broke down an interest group's membership numbers into following categories: 0-100, 101-200, 201-500, 501-1000, 1001-5000, 5001-10000, and 10000+. The staff variable broke down an interest group's number of staff into the following categories: 0-10, 11-20, 21-50, 51-100, 101-200, 201-500 and 500+.

Having coded the relevant resource variables, it is now possible to present tables of descriptive statistics for each of these variables. The objective of this is to present a picture of how resources are divided between groups.

Table 5.2 Mean Membership Size by Interest Group (1-7 Scale)¹⁹

Business Associations	2.40
Citizens' Group	3.50
Farming Organisations	5.00
Labour Organisations	6.01
Large Firms	2.00
NGOs	2.71
Other	2.47
Professional Associations	3.88
Public Affairs Consultancies	1.00
Overall (Standard Deviation)	2.91 (2.10)

1= Low, 7=High

A number of observations can be drawn from the data above. Firstly, it is clear that while there is variation in this respect, the average Irish interest group does not have a huge number of members. This is perhaps unsurprising considering the relatively small size of the Irish state. In addition, in the context of the underlying argument advanced in this paper, it should be remembered that Irish elections are generally decided by a relatively small number of votes and, hence, even membership sizes in the low hundreds could still be considered as important in securing a TD's attention. In terms of differences between interest groups, it is unsurprising that labour organisations and farming organisations have the highest number of members in the sample. Labour organisations, by their very nature, derive their strength from their membership sizes and hence are always likely to have more members than other types of interest groups. Farming organisations also traditionally have great numerical strength in Ireland, with a small group of powerful organisations, most notably the Irish Farmers Association (IFA), representing the great majority of the country's farming population. On the other side of the equation, it is of course unsurprising that public affairs consultancies and large firms have very few members. Indeed, the only reason large firms have any members at all is because of two such firms which are still formed as co-operatives and hence technically still have members.

¹⁹ Survey question: "How many members does your organisation have?" (0-100, 101-200, 201-500, 501-1000, 1001-5000, 5001-10000, 10000+).

Two final points can be made in relation to this data. Firstly, the standard deviation of greater than two suggests that while the average group is indeed quite small in terms of its membership size, this is not universally the case. There are a sizeable number of groups with significantly larger membership sizes and, therefore, there is reasonable variation in the data. Finally, it can also be noted that the two types of interest group that are most prevalent in our data set, business associations and NGOs, have quite similar average membership sizes.

Table 5.3 Mean Staff Size by Interest Group (1-7 Scale)²⁰

Business Associations	1.27
Citizens' Group	1.00
Farming Organisations	2.33
Labour Organisations	2.45
Large Firms	6.86
NGOs	2.18
Other	2.20
Professional Associations	1.84
Public Affairs Consultancies	1.60
Overall	2.05
(Standard Deviation)	(1.70)

1= Low, 7=High

Considering the staff data, the first thing to note is that, as Table 5.3 shows, most Irish interest groups do not have huge staffs on their books. The obvious exceptions to this rule are large firms. As previously noted, however, we should still be aware that huge numbers of voters are not necessarily needed to influence elections. It is still possible, therefore, that small differences in staff size may have an impact on TDs' willingness to grant access to groups.

Regression Analysis

While the descriptive statistics are interesting, in order to examine the key questions of interest, regression analysis must be used. In looking at frequency of access, ordinal logistic regression analysis is the technique of choice. This is the appropriate method for our analysis due to the ordinal nature of the dependent variable (Dür & Mateo, 2011).

²⁰ Survey question: "How many staff does your organisation/firm employ?" (0-10, 11-20, 21-50, 51-100, 101-200, 201-500, 500+).

The two key independent variables of interest, membership size and general staff size are, as previously discussed, coded on an ordinal scale. In addition to these independent variables, four other control variables are included in the analysis. The first of these is public affairs staff size. This variable, which will receive more attention in the next chapter, is included as a proxy for expertise. While expertise might not be TDs primary concern, it is not unreasonable to suggest that TDs might make time for people with expert policy advice to offer.

The second control variable is government experience. Government experience is used as a proxy variable for the value of 'contacts'. The logic here is that those who have experience working in government are likely to have more contacts in government and, considering the value that contacts are often considered as having in Ireland, groups with greater reserves of such experience may receive more access than groups more populated with 'outsiders' (Collins & O'Shea, 2003; McGrath, 2009; McGrath, 2010; Fallon, 2011).

The third control variable added was a dichotomous variable which picks up whether an interest group has employed a lobbying consultancy firm in the last 12 months. Hiring a lobbying consultancy firm allows interest groups to potentially make up for shortfalls they may have in terms of their own public affairs resources, or in terms of the policymaker contacts they may lack.

Finally, interest group type is also included as a categorical independent variable to pick up on any possible systematic biases between groups. The dependent variable, frequency of access, is coded on an ordinal scale. Respondents to the survey were able to choose between the following options when indicating the frequency with which they received access to TDs in the previous 12 months: 'Never, Once, Twice, Quarterly, Monthly, Weekly, Daily'. This provided a seven point ordinal scale for the analysis.

Table 5.4

Frequency of Access to TDs

	Model (1-Complete)	Model (2-IG Only)	Model (3-Resource Only)
Business Association	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	
Citizens' Group	0.018 (0.997)	0.220 (0.936)	
Farmers' Group	-0.051 (0.978)	1.260 (1.028)	
Labour Organisation	-1.585 (0.697)	-0.457 (0.584)	
Large Firm	-1.553 (1.157)	-0.167 (0.866)	
NGO	0.024 (0.378)	0.343 (0.351)	
Other	-0.390 (0.603)	-0.241 (0.554)	
Professional Association	-1.329 (0.528)	-0.743 (0.473)	
Public Affairs Consultancy	2.228 (0.996)	1.100 (0.623)	
Staff	0.200 (0.129)		0.115 (0.102)
Members	0.176 (0.085)		0.052 (0.073)
Public Affairs Staff	0.095 (0.195)		0.108 (0.180)
Government Experience (%)	0.121 (0.137)		0.135 (0.124)
Consultancy	0.279 (0.427)		-0.032 (0.394)
N	162	174	162

Coefficients in bold are significant at the 95% level. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Three empirical models are run. Model one is the complete model including both the categorical interest group variable and the resource variables. Model two includes the categorical interest group type variable only, thereby allowing direct comparison to be made between interest group types. Model three includes the interest group resource variables only. This three-model format is used in all of the regression analyses carried out in this thesis.

The most notable result from these first set of empirical models is that the complete model, with all independent variables of interest, returns results that are broadly in line with the hypotheses laid out in chapter three, with membership size having a positive and statistically significant effect on frequency of access. It should be noted, however, that this result is somewhat sensitive to model specification. When the model is run without including the categorical interest group variable for instance (Model 3), the coefficient for the membership variable is still positive but is no longer statistically significant.

The results for the staff variable, while they do have the expected sign, do not approach statistical significance in either model. These results would lead us to tentatively conclude that a modest increase in staff size does not have a significant effect in terms of the frequency of access that a group receives. It may well be the case, therefore, that only really large employers derive power from their staff size and, as these employers make up a very small portion of our dataset, our model will struggle to pick this effect up. To assess the power that such groups (generally large firms) may derive from their personnel numbers then, a different analytical approach is needed and, hence, this will be examined further in the qualitative section of this chapter. A qualitative approach will also allow us to explore the importance of staff size in a more nuanced way, allowing an examination of, for example, the importance that large employers have in specific constituencies, and, by contrast, the potential difficulties that other groups may have should their staff be more geographically dispersed.

Similarly, the results for the government experience variable, while they also have the expected sign, do not approach statistical significance. There are two

possible reasons for this. Firstly, as the percentage of public affairs staff with prior government experience is a rather rough proxy for government ‘contacts’, it may be that it is failing to adequately capture the potential effect that pre-existing contacts has on the ability of interest groups to gain frequent access to policymakers. Secondly, it may be the case that TDs, due to the nature of the electoral incentives they face, cannot afford to grant more frequent access to certain groups, simply due to pre-existing contacts that members of that group may have. It may be the case, however, that government experience, and the contacts that come with it, can be used by groups to gain frequent access to civil servants, who are not subject to the same level of political accountability as elected officials. This is a question we will explore in the next chapter.

Of course we are interested not just in statistical significance but in the substantive significance of our key independent variables as well. In order to demonstrate this, the table below presents the predicted probabilities of all possible levels of contact with TDs, varying the membership variable from the minimum (1) to the maximum (7) while keeping all other variables at their means. This presentation most clearly shows the effect that membership size has on frequency of access to TDs and is consistent with previous presentations in this literature (Dür & Mateo, 2011).

Table 5.5 Predicted Probabilities of Frequency of Access to TDs

	None	Once	Twice	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Membership=1	11%	11%	28%	27%	11%	6%	4%
Membership=7 (Complete Model)	4%	5%	20%	32%	18%	12%	9%

1=Minimum, 7=Maximum

Table 5.5 demonstrates the substantive impact that membership has on frequency of access. It can be clearly seen that groups with more members have more regular access to TDs, with more meetings on a quarterly, monthly, weekly and daily basis. A group with the minimum number of members is more than twice as likely to have no access to TDs across a 12-month period than a group

with the maximum number of members. It is also more than twice as likely to have only one contact during this period. On the other side of the coin, a group with the maximum number of members is twice as likely to have weekly contacts and more than twice as likely to have daily contacts than a group with the minimum number of members.

Three other statistically significant results are returned in the complete model. The first of these is a positive one and is the result that public affairs consultancies receive more frequent access than the reference group. The logic that best explains this finding is relatively simple. While other interest groups generally carry out a range of tasks, public affairs consultancies tend to focus more or less exclusively on lobbying and, hence, can potentially be expected to receive more access than equivalently resourced interest groups.

The other two statistically significant results are negative effects, meaning such groups have less frequent access, and are found for labour organisations and professional associations. It is possible to put forward a number of possible theoretical reasons for these results. In the case of professional associations, it is clear, from both an examination of their websites and from interview evidence carried out as part of this thesis, that professional associations devote a smaller share of their resources towards external lobbying than other types of interest groups. This is due to the fact that professional associations generally have obligations to their members which can include, but which are not limited to, organising training programs, investigating complaints, and publishing a trade publication. This means that a professional association is unlikely to have the same resources to devote to seeking access to politicians than other, similarly resourced, interest groups.

In the case of labour organisations, there are a number of reasons why labour organisations may have less frequent access than other similarly resourced interest groups. Firstly, a number of scholars of Irish politics argue that the neo-liberal ethos of the Irish state works to try to shut out alternative, pro-labour voices (Allen; 2000; Murphy, 2009; O'Broin & Kirby, 2009). Alternatively, trade

unions may be expected to have less frequent access to TDs as, unlike most other interest groups, they are highly democratic organisations and as such they generally do not enter into discussions or negotiations with government until they have first balloted their membership, a process which, especially in case of trade unions with large membership bases, can take a significant amount of time and which hence restricts their capacity to lobby politicians on a consistent, ongoing basis.

Finally, two other possible explanations for labour organizations receiving less access than similarly resourced interest groups of other types can be put forward. These explanations are perhaps best supported by the data. The first explanation is related to the finding in this model that membership has a positive and statistically significant effect. While we certainly believe this result is a real one, it is also possible that there are diminishing returns to scale here. For example, while it is possible that an interest group with 1000 members may receive access twice as regularly as a group with 500 members, it is unlikely that a group with 10,000 members receives ten times as much access as a group with 1000 members. As labour organizations have far more members than other types of organizations it is possible that while they receive somewhat more access than other groups, they do not receive as much as a linear model would predict.

The second explanation that can be put forth here is that perhaps labour organizations engage in venue shopping at the domestic level and focus more of their resources on lobbying civil servants rather than politicians as perhaps they feel civil servants are more responsive to their message. This would account for the fact that in this complete model labour organizations are likely to receive less access to TDs than other interest groups while, as we shall see, labour organizations actually receive more access to civil servants than other types of interest groups- in the interest group only model at least.

Invited Access

As discussed earlier, existing work on access has tended to focus on frequency of access only. One of the core arguments of this thesis, however, is that 'invited access' is even more important than frequent access. Interest groups have the best chance of influencing policymakers' decisions if they have access early in the policy making cycle (Cowles, 1995; Pollack, 2003:579, Coen, 2007:335; Bouwen, 2009:20; Princen, 2009:3; Buena, 2012:1). It is at this 'agenda setting' stage that the scope of possible decisions is at its broadest and, therefore, it is when the inputs of interest groups are likely to have most weight.

It stands to reason that the interest groups who are most likely to receive access at this stage are interest groups whom policymakers seek out for advice. Policymakers will generally seek advice from preferred sources early in the policymaking process as these sources have established themselves as key sources of information, thereby guaranteeing them access at the most advantageous point in the policymaking process. In addition, it may also be noted that policymakers are more likely to listen to the views of groups that they themselves have sought out, rather than groups without such invited access who are simply trying to make themselves heard amidst the general interest group chorus. It is for these reasons that it is argued that of all the measures of interest group access, it is invited access that is likely to most clearly correlate with interest group power.

To provide an indication of this phenomenon descriptive statistics are presented which demonstrate the extent to which different types of interest groups receive such access.

Table 5.6 Groups with invited access to TDs during last 12 months (%)²¹

Business Associations	62%
Citizens' Groups	50%
Farming Organisations	100%
Labour Organisations	55%
Large Firms	57%
NGOs	55%
Other	33%
Professional Associations	44%
Public Affairs Consultancies	30%
Overall	53%

As can be seen from Table 4.6, over 50% of interest groups in our sample have received such access in the last twelve months. It is thus common practice for TDs to seek out interest groups for advice on policy. Of course, the question we are most interested in, is how the likelihood of obtaining invited access in a given 12 month period varies between interest groups, considering two types of variation. Firstly, between different interest group *types*. And, secondly, between *differentially resourced* interest groups. In order to answer these questions a series of logistic regression analyses are carried out.

²¹ Survey Question: In the previous year have you been contacted directly by any of the following to seek your advice on a policy issue? (TDs).

Table 5.7 Likelihood of Receiving Invited Access to TDs

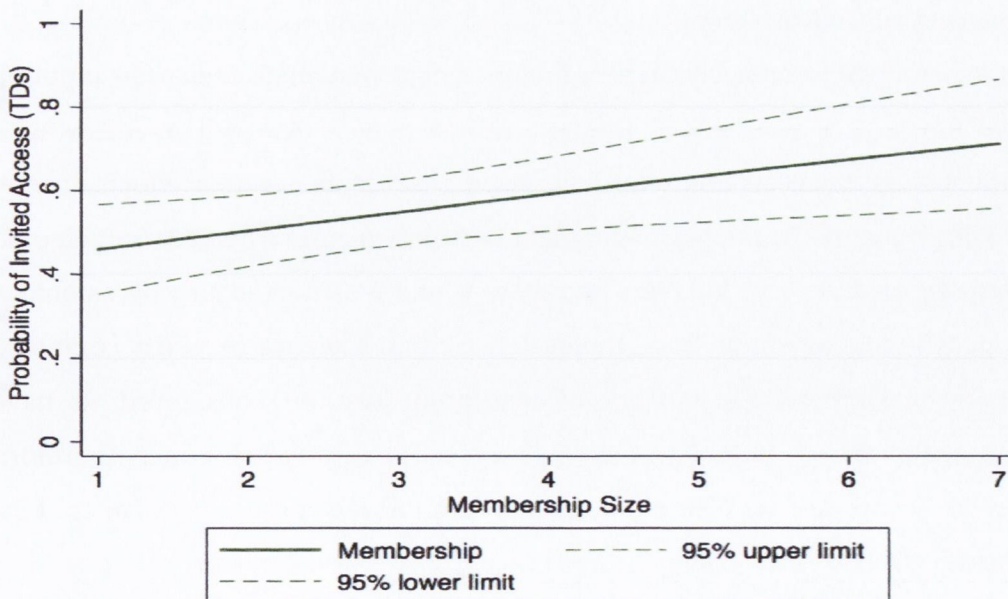
	Model (1-Complete)	Model (2-IG Only)	Model (3-Resource Only)
Business Associations	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	
Citizens' Group	-0.746 (1.095)	-0.499 (1.046)	
Farmers' Group	15.47 (1489.0)	15.07 (840.3)	
Labour Organisation	-1.661 (0.846)	-0.317 (0.692)	
Large Firm	-1.490 (0.846)	-0.211 (0.823)	
NGO	-0.506 (0.435)	-0.283 (0.396)	
Other	-1.236 (0.690)	-1.192 (0.628)	
Professional Association	-1.232 (0.579)	-0.740 (0.507)	
Public Affairs Consultancy	-16.58 (1384)	-1.346 (0.756)	
Staff	0.236 (0.146)		0.161 (0.110)
Members	0.242 (0.098)		0.178 (0.084)
Public Affairs Staff	0.006 (0.221)		0.034 (0.200)
Government Experience (%)	-0.046 (0.150)		-0.161 (0.133)
Consultancy	0.131 (0.489)		-0.023 (0.443)
N	172	185	172

Coefficients in bold are significant at the 95% level. Standard errors are in parentheses.

The results for the 'invited access' models are broadly in line with those which were found in the 'frequency of access' models. Once again, the central finding is that membership size has a positive and statistically significant effect, in this case on the likelihood of an interest group being contacted directly by TDs during a 12 month period. Furthermore, this finding is significant in both the complete model and the resource only model. Just as in the 'frequency of access' models, no other resource variables have statistically significant effects in either model.

Substantively speaking, we can say that in both models of interest, the probability of a group with the minimum number of members receiving invited access to TDs is less than 50% (47% in both models). The probability of a group with the maximum number of members receiving invited access, however, is at least 70% in both models (78% in the complete model and 70% in the resource only model). In order to illustrate this further, the below graph plots, for the resource only model, the predicted probability of an interest group receiving invited access to TDs. This graph is plotted by varying the membership variable from its minimum to its maximum, while keeping all other variables at their mean.

Figure 5.1 Effect of Membership Size on Probability of Invited Access



The other two statistically significant findings in the complete model are negative effects for both professional associations and labour organisations. It is likely that the negative finding for both groups is a result of the same factors that were mentioned in our discussion of these same findings in our 'frequency of access' models. In the case of professional associations, we may give particular mention to the other obligations they have to their members. Obligations that mean they may be less able to direct resources to lobbying politicians than other, similarly resourced, interest groups. It follows that if professional associations are doing less lobbying of politicians than other groups, they are also less likely to be on politicians' radar when it comes to seeking inputs from stakeholders regarding upcoming legislation.

In the case of labour organisations, in addition to the explanations put forward in the previous section, we may also mention the way the labour movement is structured in Ireland, with individual labour organisations often working mainly on behalf of their members with regard to their relationship with their employer and ICTU, the umbrella group representing labour organisations as a whole, responsible for a significant amount of the dialogue between government and the labour movement as a whole.

Frequency of Invited Access

That an interest group is contacted at all by a policymaker to seek their input on legislation is a clear sign of interest group power. As well as drawing a distinction between groups who have such power and groups which do not, however, we can also further distinguish between groups who are contacted on an ongoing basis by policymakers and those who are contacted only occasionally. Groups who manage to position themselves so that they are regularly contacted by policymakers on all matters of legislation can be considered to have significant power in the policymaking process. Our next set of models therefore examine the frequency of invited access that interest groups receive to TDs. These models are all run using ordinal logistic regression analysis.

Table 5.8

Frequency of Invited Access

	Model (1-Complete)	Model (2-IG Only)	Model (3-Resource Only)
Business Association	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 0.000	
Citizens' Group	1.648 (1.232)	-1.368 (1.208)	
Farmers' Group	0.090 (1.129)	1.416 (0.981)	
Labour Organisation	-0.616 (0.715)	0.501 (0.629)	
Large Firm	-0.547 (1.128)	0.486 (0.844)	
NGO	-0.124 (0.379)	0.068 (0.344)	
Other	-0.879 (0.670)	-0.443 (0.584)	
Professional Association	-0.922 (0.509)	-0.453 (0.461)	
Public Affairs Consultancy	-15.929 (0.000)	-1.055 (0.762)	
Staff	0.088 (0.121)		0.106 (0.099)
Members	0.208 (0.086)		0.167 (0.075)
Public Affairs Staff	0.084 (0.194)		0.131 (0.178)
Government Experience (%)	0.310 (0.132)		0.163 (0.131)
Consultancy	0.675 (0.466)		0.478 (0.413)
N	172	174	172

Coefficients in bold are significant at the 95% level. Standard errors are in parentheses.

The results from these models further support the notion that membership size is the key resource in determining interest group access to TDs. In this case we see that increased membership size has a positive and statistically significant effect on the frequency of invited access to TDs. This finding holds both in our complete model and in our resource only model. Groups with large memberships are therefore more likely to have ongoing relationships with TDs whereby TDs frequently seek them out for information regarding upcoming legislation. This is in line with our initial theoretical hypotheses, which were that TDs would be most in demand of information that was electorally relevant and, therefore, the groups who represented the largest numbers of voters were likely to be best placed to provide this information and, hence, be most likely to receive the most frequent, and best quality, access.

Again, we are interested not just in the statistical significance of our key variables, but in their substantive significance as well. In order to demonstrate this, the table below presents the predicted probabilities of all possible levels of invited access to TDs, varying the membership variable from the minimum (1) to the maximum (7) while keeping all other variables at their means. This table includes both the complete model and the resource only model, as membership size is statistically significant in both models.²²

²² This is in contrast to the 'Frequency of Access' models where membership size was statistically significant in the complete model only.

Table 5.9 Predicted Probabilities of Frequency of Invited Access to TDs²³

	None	Once	Twice	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly
Membership=1	38%	16%	19%	16%	7%	5%
Membership=7 (Complete Model)	15%	11%	20%	28%	14%	11%
Membership=1	43%	15%	17%	16%	6%	4%
Membership=7 (Resource Only Model)	22%	12%	20%	26%	12%	8%

1=Minimum, 7=Maximum

Substantively, Table 5.9 clearly demonstrates the value of membership size for obtaining frequent invited access to TDs. A group with the minimum number of members has less than a 1 in 2 chance of receiving invited access to TDs more than once in a year in both models. A group with the maximum number of members on the other hand, has more than a 2 in 3 chance of receiving such access. Groups with the maximum number of members also have double the chance of receiving weekly invited access to TDs as groups with the minimum number of members.

The other statistically significant finding from our frequency of privileged access models is that public affairs consultancies are likely to receive less invited access to TDs than the reference group, business associations. There is certainly a theoretical argument that may explain this. As public affairs consultancies generally represent the interest of their clients rather than their own interests, in cases where TDs are looking to contact stakeholders directly therefore, it is likely that they will bypass consultancies and go straight to the source. At the same time, however, it would appear that the rather 'extreme' result we get in this case is a result of a statistical artefact in the data, as a result of the small number of public affairs consultancies in the dataset rather than as a strong indicator of

²³ The percentage of groups receiving no access in the frequency model differs slightly from the result in the binary model as a small subset of respondents to the binary question did not answer the frequency question in the survey.

anything else. The fact that in the interest group type only model, the statistically significant relationship disappears further suggests that this is the case.

To summarize, the findings from this quantitative examination of the interest group survey are as follows. In the case of access to TDs, it is clear that the most important resource for interest groups is membership size. In five out of the six models that examine the relationship between resources and access to TDs, membership has a positive and statistically significant relationship with access. This includes all four of the models which examine 'invited access', which, it is argued, is the type of access that is expected to be most strongly correlated with interest group power.

These findings strongly support one of this thesis' main theoretical expectations. Namely that TDs, due to the electoral incentives they face, will grant most access to groups who represent significant numbers of voters. Furthermore, from a democratic standpoint, these results are encouraging. They suggest that it is the number of people a group represents that is the best predictor of the level and quality of access that a group receives.

It should also be noted that, contrary to our hypothesis, staff size could not be said to clearly have a positive effect on the level of access than an interest group receives to TDs. While staff size does have the expected positive sign in all six models of interest, it never approaches statistical significance in any of them. This may be because staff size does not in fact matter or because the model that is used in their particular paper does not allow us to pick up on it.

A number of points need to be made here in relation to the staff size finding. Firstly, it should be noted that is unlikely that there is a linear relationship between staff size and likelihood of being granted access. An organisation with 20 employees is unlikely to be twice as likely to be granted access to TDs as an organisation with 10 employees for instance. Where staff size may indeed matter, however, is for organisations, particularly large firms, who employ such a sufficiently large number of employees that their actions may have significant

effects on the employment landscape as a whole. If the CEO of Intel Ireland for instance, which employs over 4,700 people in Ireland, wished to set up a regular meeting with TDs on the Oireachtas Finance Committee it is likely that such a request would be facilitated.²⁴ Of course, deciphering just how many staff a group or firm needs to employ for TDs to pay extra attention to them on account of their size is very difficult. In addition, (as well as the potential importance of absolute staff size) it is quite possible that the concentration of staff size within a specific constituency is also important. As the findings from our examination of the importance of membership suggest, TDs are driven by electoral incentives in their access decisions. As TDs in Ireland are elected by geographically specific constituencies it would seem logical that firms and groups whose employees are concentrated in a specific constituency are more likely to receive access to TDs than employers whose staff are more geographically dispersed.

These questions and issues will be examined in more detail in the qualitative section of this chapter. These interviews will reveal evidence that will help us further understand the relationship between staff size and access. At the same time, however, it is important to be realistic about what this particular project can and cannot do. Staff size is something that is most likely important for firm access. In the database that is used in this project, however, only 7 of the 185 groups are firms. While this study will certainly suggest avenues for further exploration, in order to reach stronger conclusions as to the effect of staff size on access, a study with a much larger sample of firms and which includes significant variation in staff size between these firms is needed.

Policymaker Survey

While the previous section focused on quantitative data obtained from our interest group survey, two further types of evidence need to be presented. First, is the data obtained from our survey of Irish TDs. While this survey does not lend itself to the same type of regression analysis that was employed when examining

²⁴ Please see <http://www.intel.ie/content/www/ie/en/company-overview/about-intel-ireland.html> [last accessed 31/07/2014].

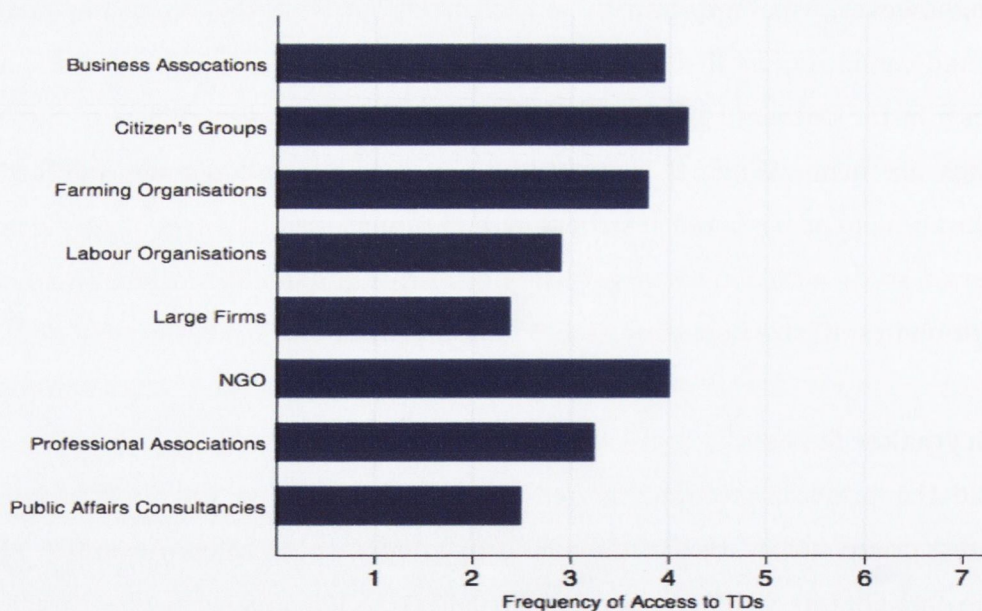
data obtained via the interest group survey, an interesting descriptive picture can still be painted.

The descriptive data that is presented is based on an original survey of Irish TDs. Of the 164 TDs surveyed, 42 replied for a response rate of 26%. TDs were asked about how frequently they grant access and invited access to different types of interest organizations. There were also asked what types of resources they thought were most important for gaining access to them.

Frequency of Access

TDs were first asked how often each type of group received access to lobby them in the previous 12 months. The response options that TDs had were 'Never', 'Once', 'Twice', 'Quarterly', 'Monthly', 'Fortnightly', 'Weekly' and 'Daily', thereby providing a 0-7 scale with 0 indicating no access and 7 indicating daily access.. The bar chart below illustrates the responses received.

Figure 5.2 Frequency of Access Granted By TDs (0= no access, 7=daily access)



The first thing to note from the above chart is that access appears to be reasonably evenly distributed between interest groups. The range on the 0-7 scale, is between 2.40 (large firms) and 4.09 (citizens' groups). Such findings are

in line with the findings from the frequency of access model used in the interest group survey analysis. This model reports no statistically significant differences between interest groups in terms of their frequency of access to TDs.

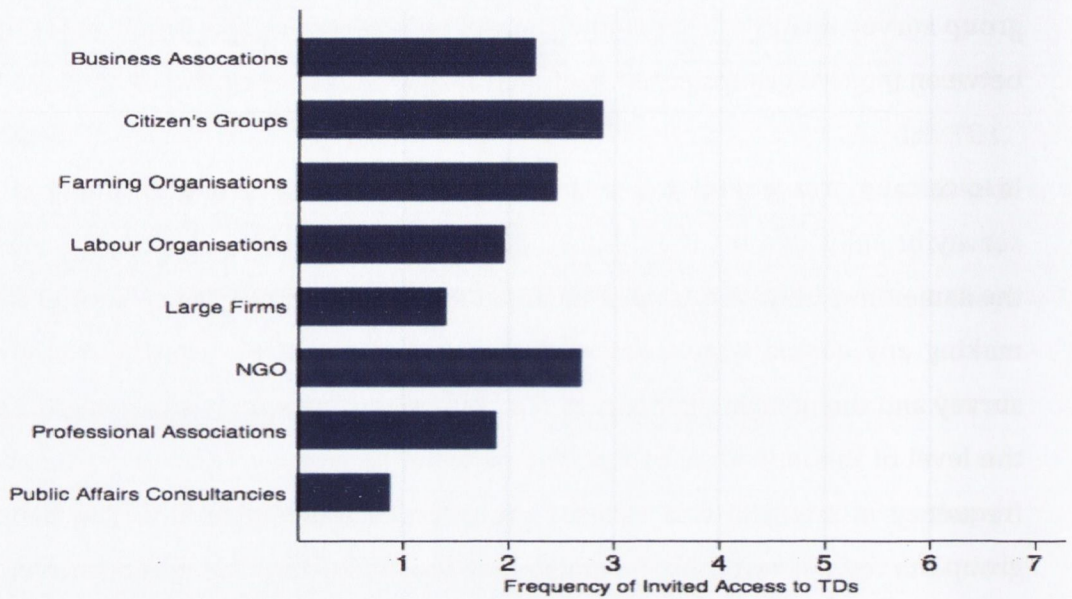
It is certainly reasonable to conclude that these findings from the policymaker survey broadly support the relevant findings from the interest group survey. At the same time, however, it must be noted that there is a need to be careful when making any comparisons between the data obtained from the interest group survey and the policymaker survey. The interest group survey surveys groups at the level of the individual group. The policymaker survey, however, asks about frequency of contact with interest group types more generally. The interest group survey suggests, for instance, that individual farming organisations are more likely to have frequent contact with TDs than business associations (although the difference is not statistically significant). The policymaker survey suggests, however, that business groups *as a whole* have more frequent access than farming organisations. This is of course possible, as there are far more business associations which are active in Ireland than there are farming organisations.

Frequency of Invited Access

As well as being asked about the frequency with which they are lobbied by interest groups, TDs were also asked how frequently they sought the advice of different types of interest groups. This metric can then be compared to our results for the 'frequency of invited access' analysis used in the interest group survey.

Figure 5.3

Frequency of Invited Access Granted By TDs



Once again we can see that the frequency with which TDs will contact interest groups to seek their advice is reasonably evenly distributed between interest groups. Public Affairs Consultancies are, by a reasonably large margin, the least likely to be contacted directly (0.88). This finding would seem to back up the results from the interest group survey data, which suggested that TDs, when seeking advice, would prefer to go 'straight to source' rather than relying on consultancy firms. That TDs seem to have relatively little need for middlemen is perhaps unsurprising considering the small scale of the Irish state and TDs' own accessibility (Watson *et al*, 1997:151; Collins & O'Shea, 2003: 95; Harvey, 2008:9). This will be discussed further when analysing the interview evidence in the next section of this chapter.

Citizens groups' are again the most contacted of interest groups'. This is another positive from a democratic perspective and demonstrates that TDs incentives are aligned with ensuring that policy reflects 'the will of the people'. It is important to reiterate here, however, that when comparing results from the policymaker survey to the interest group survey we must be cognisant of the fact that the interest group survey is carried out at the level of the individual interest group while the policymaker survey asks respondents about their contact with different types of interest groups, thereby making comparison quite difficult. It

also needs to be added here that our interest group survey undoubtedly fails to capture the full spectrum of 'citizens' groups'. Most notably here, the interview evidence, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter, revealed that ad hoc groups who come together to lobby TDs on specific issues in the TD's constituency, take up a significant amount of the time that TDs spent being 'lobbied'. Such groups are, however, very unlikely to be captured in our database.

Importance of Resources

Along with asking about their contacts with different types of groups, TDs were also asked about what resources they thought were most important for an interest group who sought to gain access to them. Unfortunately, membership size was not included as an option in the policymaker survey hence we cannot directly compare its importance. What is included, however, is 'constituency information': a variable that similarly allows us to examine the relative importance of electoral incentives compared to other variables. For each resource, TDs were asked to indicate on a 1-5 scale, with 1 signifying 'Of No Importance' and 5 signifying 'Extremely Important' how important they felt that resource was for gaining access to them as policymakers.

Figure 5.4 Importance of Resources For Gaining Access to TDs

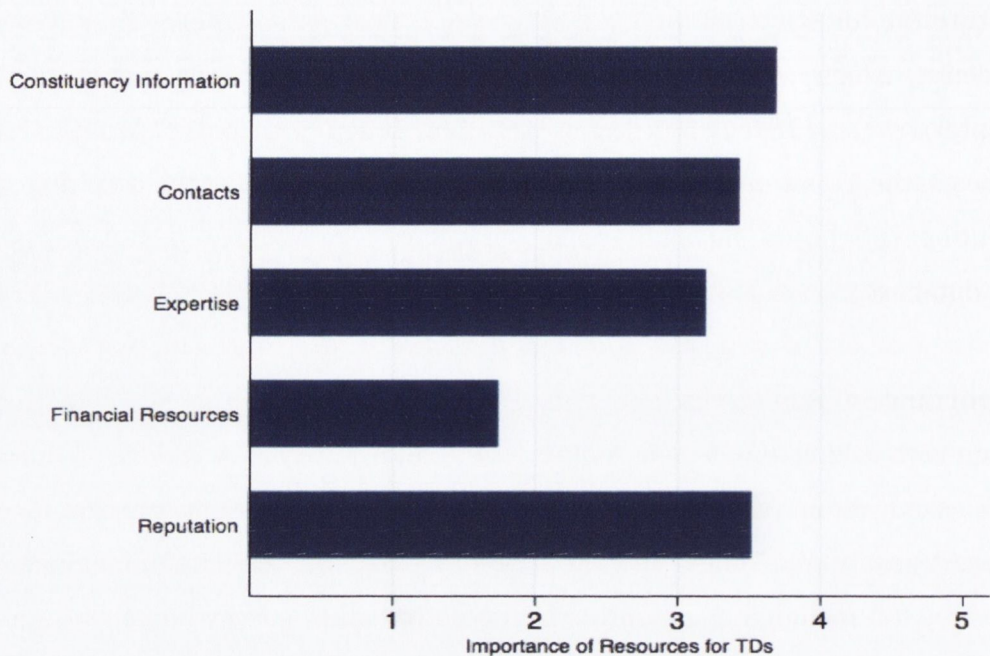


Figure 5.4 suggests that TDs do indeed rate constituency information as the resource they are in most demand of from interest groups. This once again backs up our consistent finding that electoral incentives are keenly felt by TDs and trump other concerns when interacting with interest groups. It is also interesting to note that financial resources are considered the least important resource by some margin. To some extent this may just be a reflection of a reality in which how many people you speak for matters more than how deep your pockets are. At the same time, however, it must be acknowledged that there is almost certainly an element of some TDs associating ‘financial resources’ with ‘direct financial payments’.²⁵ Considering recent political history in Ireland, it is perhaps unsurprising that TDs are keen to downplay the notion that such resources are important for gaining access to them.

The other three resources included in the survey- expertise, contacts and reputation- all appear to be considered to be of very similar importance by TDs. The results of the interest group survey demonstrated that expertise and contacts did not appear to have a statistically significant impact on the amount

²⁵ This most likely accounts for the fact that significant numbers of TDs give financial resources the minimal possible importance rating as they associate the idea of ‘financial resources’ with bribery.

or quality of access that interest groups receive in the aggregate. Reputation meanwhile is not a variable that lends itself to easy quantitative measurement. Accordingly, the next section uses qualitative data to examine how such a resource may be important for interest groups seeking to improve their access opportunities.

To summarise the policymakers' survey, it is important to note all of the caveats that exist with regard to the comparability of the data from this survey to the data from the interest group survey. Notwithstanding these caveats, however, it is still reasonable to conclude that this data from the policymaker survey supports our main finding from the relevant interest group surveys. That is that groups who most clearly represent voters (and ideally as many voters as possible) are likely to receive the most frequent, and the most invited, access to TDs.

Interview Evidence

In this final section of the chapter, the qualitative data that was obtained through interviews with interest group representatives and TDs will be used for two purposes. Firstly, such data will be used to further flesh out some of our findings from the quantitative analysis. And, secondly, some questions that are not as easily explored through quantitative analysis will be considered. As previously mentioned in chapter three, these will include questions that are not central to the question of interest group access. Notwithstanding this fact, however, considering that this thesis represents one of the first large scale studies of Irish interest group lobbying, it was considered worthwhile to use the opportunity that our qualitative interviews provided to explore some questions that are crucial to understanding Irish interest group lobbying. This examination, while it is supplemental to our core study, both furthers the academic literature in this area and is of policy relevance and hence merits inclusion in this section.

Importance of Membership Size

The stand out finding from the quantitative analysis of the interest group survey was that membership size was the best predictor of access to TDs, both in terms

of frequency of access and in terms of invited access. Further strengthening this finding, the importance of membership size was stressed by a number of interviewees. In every case, the groups interviewed explicitly made the link between members and potential votes. For instance, a representative from the credit union movement cited membership size as one of the movement's key selling points when lobbying politicians:

We have 3 million members in the credit unions in the island, probably 2 and a half in the Republic so that was our key argument, we have all of these people and people equal votes.... so we play the member card.²⁶

Similar sentiments were expressed by a representative of a well-established non-governmental organisation, who noted, the 'larger our membership is, the more [access] we have'.²⁷ Where the qualitative data perhaps added the most value was not just in confirming that 'members matter' but also, in outlining how 'some members matter more than others'. Two types of members are considered as especially useful for an interest group. Firstly, members who are 'active' and hence are able to clearly demonstrate their interest in an issue to policymakers and, secondly, members who, demographically speaking, are more likely to vote.

Organisations who represent the elderly often appear to have both these strings to their bow. A representative of one such group for instance noted how, if the government proposed an issue that affected older people, they could respond. 'We could get older people to contact their TDs, we could get older people onto the streets if necessary'.²⁸ Such organisations also understand the power that their membership has as a voting bloc. This representative noted, for instance, that older people 'vote more and they are less likely to be swing voters... and that's why older people have the influence that they do and that's why, if there is a bias, it is towards older people'.²⁹

26 Interview with Credit Union official, carried out in Dublin, on June 6th, 2013.

27 Interview with NGO representative, carried out in Dublin, on July 4th, 2013.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

In order to demonstrate that their membership numbers equate to numbers of votes and in order to use this to their lobbying advantage, interest groups also target key constituencies where their members are particularly concentrated. A representative of an arts group, for instance, described a successful strategy they employed in the face of significant cuts to arts funding that had been threatened in the budget.

We were able to go in the Dublin constituencies, to people in Dublin South East and say there are 400 people whose names and addresses we have, whose jobs depend on the arts, who are registered to vote in this constituency. That turned out to be a game changer for us because whereas a politician will often talk about a factory, we're not very visible because we're all freelancers, but the minute we were able to say 400 voters, 400 jobs, we made them take note.³⁰

Importance of Constituency Information

One aspect that is important to note here is the constituency angle that is presented. While demonstrating membership size is clearly important, an interest group is in an even stronger position if they can demonstrate that a significant number of their members are concentrated in a particular constituency. To a significant extent, this can be explained by reference to Ireland's electoral system.

TDs in Ireland are elected using a system of proportional representation with single transferable vote, in geographic constituencies with a district magnitude of between 3 and 5 (Coakley & Gallagher, 2010). Such a system tends to lead to highly competitive elections, where prospective and incumbent TDs compete even with members of their own political party for relatively small numbers of crucial votes. This electoral system, combined with the weakness of local government means that all politicians must be responsive to groups who represent significant numbers of voters in their own constituency, should they wish to be re-elected (Adshead, 1996; Callanan, 2007; O'Malley & MacCarthaigh, 2012).

³⁰ Interview with Arts Organisation representative, carried out in Dublin, on February 9th, 2012.

The reality of this scenario was confirmed by a number of interviewees. One public affairs professional noted, for instance, that 'a primary part of the function of an Irish politician is keeping their constituents on their agenda... it's very grass roots stuff here'.³¹ Indeed, from a strategic standpoint, a number of interviewees stressed the need of providing such a constituency angle in order to generate interest from TDs. One lobbying consultant noted for instance how she would not 'request a meeting with a TD from Donegal unless I know the activity of the client is or is not in Donegal because if there's no activity in Donegal then we need to find another angle'.³² Similarly, a member of a national professional association commented on how they would adapt their strategy depending on the relative strength of both the relevant policymaker and of their membership base in the area, noting that 'if you have a decision maker within the political system and you have a strong membership base in that area you will use those members in the area to talk to the local representative for him to put your case forward'.³³

Interestingly, even in cases where the interviewees chose not to use a constituency angle in their lobbying arguments, a number noted that TDs struggled to think in any other terms. One representative of a non-governmental organisation for instance noted how, while her organisation does not use a constituency angle when presenting her arguments, TDs nevertheless would think in those terms, noting that 'they have to try and make sense of it in the context of it being a constituency issue'.³⁴ While there is of course some variation here and some TDs are more 'policy focused', a number of interest group representatives noted that for many the first question they ask is 'how will that affect my constituency'. In order to make headway then, interest group arguments have to, in the words of one representative of a professional association, 'be tied to something going on in the constituency.... there has to be a point of reference'.³⁵

³¹ Interview carried out with Public Affairs consultant, in Dublin, on February 3rd, 2011.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Interview carried out with Professional Association representative, in Dublin, on July 5th, 2013.

³⁴ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on June 17th, 2013.

³⁵ Interview carried out with Professional Association representative, in Dublin, on July 9^h, 2013.

What is clear from this data then is that TDs are very responsive to their electorates. As an interest group, having a large number of members is clearly beneficial as representing more members also means representing more voters. If an interest group is able to demonstrate the commitment level of its members to a particular cause, that clearly signals to TDs that policy in such areas may lead to real shifts in terms of numbers of votes. Finally, the nature of how Irish TDs are elected are likely to make them particularly responsive to groups who not only have significant numbers of members, but also have members concentrated in specific constituencies rather than being spread diffusely across the country. This is perhaps best illustrated by the example of the arts organisation which was able to demonstrate that their members represented a significant voting block in certain Dublin city constituencies rather than being spread across the country, as may have been assumed.

Value of Contacts

One potentially surprising finding from our quantitative evidence was that contacts (at least as far as it was measured) did not seem to matter. Conscious that the operationalization of this variable was somewhat crude in the quantitative models, interviews were used as a means of further exploring the value of contacts.

From these interviews, one thing that is clear is that when interest groups have contacts, they do use them to get access to policymakers. One business association for instance noted how their press relations officer had previously been a special advisor to a government minister and hence 'she knows a lot of the characters down the Dáil' and is therefore often charged with making the first point of contact.³⁶ Similarly, a representative from a non-governmental organisation noted how those within the organisation who had previously worked as parliamentary advisors to TDs will often still have contacts in the Dáil and hence will be tasked with using those contacts to figure out who may be the best person to approach over a specific issue.

³⁶ Interview carried out with Business Association representative, in Dublin, on June 6th, 2013.

Where contacts seem to clearly be useful for interest groups then, is in helping them to establish initial contacts with TDs as quickly and efficiently as possible. What is less clear, however, is how efficiency of establishing initial contact and gaining initial access, will necessarily translate into frequency of access or invited access in the long run. While having a contact may indeed help you to get an initial meeting, it is perhaps not enough to guarantee you consistent access, considering the electoral pressures that TDs are under.

Indeed, even those groups who stress the importance of contacts are often quick to point out that a contact (however initially established) is only useful if you can turn it into an established relationship. The importance of building up such relationships with TDs was noted by a number of interest groups. One non-governmental organisation for instance noted, in reference to their relationships with TDs, that 'we have always taken the view that it's important to nurture those relationships and you build them up over time'.³⁷

Established relationships are useful, interest groups note, as they create a situation where both sides trust each other and hence the lines of communication are more open. Becoming a 'trusted source of information', for a TD or government minister is crucial, as it leads to a situation where, in the words of one professional association '[TDs] will come to you...and come back to you' as policy is developed in their area of interest.³⁸

What is interesting to note here, of course, is that such established relationships are not built up solely by becoming personally friendly with a TD, but also involve establishing oneself as a source of trusted information. In this respect, the 'trusted information' that is most important is information that is useful to the TD in question. This may be information regarding a policy that a TD is interested in because it aligns with their own policy interests, such as, for example, information regarding adult literacy policy. What it often is, however, is

³⁷ Interview with NGO representative, carried out in Dublin, on June 27th, 2013.

³⁸ Interview carried out with Professional Association representative, in Dublin, on July 5th, 2013.

information regarding the positive and/or negative effects such policy may have on their constituents.

Issues with Irish Lobbying Environment

Throughout this chapter, it has been repeatedly stressed that the potential voters they represent are interest groups' most important assets. From a democratic standpoint this is an undeniably positive finding. It is also an interesting contrast to findings that have come out of the US literature on democratic responsiveness, where it is the wealth of constituents rather than their number which appears to most important (Bartels, 2008; Gilens, 2012). In Ireland, small constituencies and the relative inexpensiveness of contesting elections seem to have assured that TDs grant most access, and pay most attention, to groups who represent significant numbers of voters rather than groups who can cut them sizeable cheques.

While all of this is undoubtedly positive, it would be remiss not to mention the ways in which the lobbying environment in Ireland is less than perfect, particularly from the perspective of improving the quality of policymaking. It must be mentioned, in this respect, that the ways in which politicians' overwhelming focus on being responsive to voters can also have downsides. Firstly here we may mention that a number of interest group respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their attempts at getting TDs to really engage with the policy debate. As one non-governmental organisation noted for instance, while each TD is entitled to appoint a parliamentary assistant, this assistant 'tends to be used to run the constituency, not to research policy...there's a choice not to invest in policy because it doesn't get you elected'.³⁹ Such lack of interest in public policy questions also appears to extend beyond individual TDs and to political parties. One respondent noted, for instance, that

There is very little systematic policy analysis. Parties in my experience don't systematically work out what existing policy is in order to critique and say what they like and what they want to change.⁴⁰

³⁹ Interview with NGO representative, carried out in Dublin, on June 19th, 2013.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

The electoral system arguably plays a role in this relative lack of interest in policy in two ways. Firstly, a system in which candidates compete against other individual candidates (and even members of their own party) for votes, incentivises TDs to focus on activities they can conceivably claim credit for in their constituency. In this respect, securing spending (or preventing cuts) for public projects is likely to be a much more achievable aim than having a significant role in the shaping of public policy. This is especially the case considering the weakness of the legislature in Ireland and the difficulty this causes any TD who wishes to establish a reputation for themselves as a skilled legislator (Hardiman, 2012; O'Malley & MacCarthaigh, 2012). Secondly, and similarly, it is likely that the nature of the Irish electoral system is likely to create a system where the skill set required to be a viable candidate for election (and hence likely to be selected by a political party) is not necessarily the same skill set that is likely to make that candidate a skilled legislator or policymaker.

Such a lack of public policy focus by TDs can have a real detrimental effect on the quality of the public policy debate in Ireland, and, by natural extension, on the quality of public policy produced. Interest groups noted, for instance, how the lack of policy debate creates a situation whereby, for example, TDs simply use the tax industry as their experts on tax policy, as they do not have the necessary expertise to assess the merits of potential counter arguments that may be made by other concerned parties. Indeed, it is perhaps even the case that TDs are unaware of the implications of being overly reliant on information supplied to them from groups who may have a vested interest in the matter. One TD noted, for instance, in response to a query regarding their interactions with interest groups that:

[interest groups] have access to all of the facts at their fingertips where as for me to go and start researching or get someone to do that, why do that when you have people who have published all of this information?⁴¹

⁴¹ Interview with TD, carried out in Dublin, on August 6th, 2013.

Such an uncritical eye can have implications for the extent to which interest groups are able to move policy. It also highlights the potential importance of access for interest groups. Such lack of policy based critical thinking on behalf of legislators has also been noted by interest groups. As one NGO representative ruefully noted in the context of expressing frustration at an inability to make much headway in moving the policy debate in their area of interest in their favour, and contrasting this to the success they had had in the UK

I don't think there is the same level of policy debate. You go in and present to [TDs] and you get some questions back but they aren't very taxing. You get the sense the politicians in the UK are better informed or read their briefings possibly more than the Irish politicians'⁴²

Indeed, the nature of the electoral system can sometimes combine with the lack of public policy focus of politicians to lead to outcomes that are sub-optimal for the country as a whole. As one representative of a professional association noted with regards to healthcare:

If you look at it rationally you would say there should be far more money spent on primary care than on acute hospitals but because people have a fixation on acute hospitals there is proportionally unfortunately far more spent on acute hospitals.⁴³

While this particular interest group respondent stressed 'people's fixation', it also important to note here TDs' incentives with regard to health policy. It is clear that no TD wants to be seen as allowing a hospital to close in 'their constituency' due to the electoral damage it is likely to cause them. Indeed, TDs have gone as far as to resign from their political party over such decisions (Brennan, 2012). It is perhaps no surprise then that there are far more hospitals in Ireland per capita than are found in most other European countries and that these hospitals are spread throughout the country (Wren, 2003; Wren, 2004) While a more nationally focused health strategy might make more sense from a policy perspective, the electoral incentives of TDs are clearly aligned with the preservation of the status quo (Barrington, 2000; Canavan, 2010).

⁴² Interview with NGO representative, carried out in Dublin, on June 10th, 2013.

⁴³ Interview with Professional Association representative, carried out in Dublin, on July 25th, 2013.

Lack of Transparency

The other criticism of the lobbying environment that is frequently made by both interest groups and interested observers in Ireland is that there is lack of transparency in how government engages with interest groups. Staying with the theme of health policy, a representative of a non-governmental organization perhaps best summed up the frustration that many interest groups have with the lack of transparency that currently exists and the negative effect it arguably has on the policy process:

It's the closed-door element of policy making that is so frustrating. If you go on say the Australian department for health website you can look at consultations, see minutes of meetings, hearings at parliament and they're all collected there and it gives you a sense that there was a plan in the first place so it's like having that commitment at a really high political level to what it is we want to actually achieve and showing how it is you follow that through.⁴⁴

Some interest group respondents felt the process was so lacking in transparency that they were not even always aware of ongoing public consultations in policy areas that were relevant to their own activities. Even in cases where they were aware of such consultations, some remarked that they only became aware of the consultation at a very late stage and hence did not have time to submit a considered position paper on the issue. The lack of consistency in terms of how consultation processes were carried out was cited as a particular issue here. This issue will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

A further point that interview respondents stressed when discussing the issues with the lack of transparency with regard to policy making in Ireland is the perception it creates that 'who you know' is a crucial determinant of interest group access and influence. While the data we have presented in this chapter suggests that such a perception may be wide of the mark, it is not difficult to see how weak transparency can lead to a situation where it is widely held. As one lobbyist noted

⁴⁴ Interview with NGO representative, carried out in Dublin, on June 21st, 2013.

Nobody really knows the contact that's going on. Just take any of the well-known companies, we don't really know what they are saying on behalf of Google or Coca Cola or whoever. There's no transparency about the actual contacts being made or the content of the contact so I think that leads to a perception that if you have heavy hitters- for example previous advisors to the government- particularly in a recent government- they will be perceived to have an unfair level of access to the government compared say to a small lobbying firm or a small group who have a particular issue. It's really hard at times to distinguish between perception and reality and it's that lack of transparency and accountability which I think feeds the perception that lobbyists like me have unfair access.⁴⁵

Transparency is so important as without it, neither concerned interest groups nor citizens are able to keep track of who is providing inputs into the policy process or how such inputs translate into ultimate policy outcomes. Such a situation creates a scenario whereby interested actors with the potential to add to the political discourse are discouraged from engaging and ordinary citizens lose trust in government. It is worthy of note here that the most recent Eurobarometer poll, taken in September 2009, revealed that Ireland had virtually the lowest level of public trust in government across the twenty-seven European countries surveyed, with only Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Greece returning lower degrees of trust (Hardiman, 2009).

What is required then, from a policy perspective, is a much greater degree of transparency surrounding lobbying in Ireland. In the words of one trade union representative:

If you had very clear transparency about the access people get and the outputs people get people can see who has the resources, who spends the money and what they get for that. Anything that makes the process more transparent at any level is a good thing.⁴⁶

In this regard, the introduction of a statutory register of lobbyists in Ireland is a welcome development.⁴⁷ As one TD put it, such a register should hopefully lead to a situation whereby 'we [will] all know who is lobbying and for what'.⁴⁸ Once

⁴⁵ Interview with Public Affairs professional, carried out via Skype, on June 17th, 2013.

⁴⁶ Interview with Trade Union representative, carried out in Dublin, on June 26th, 2013.

⁴⁷ Please see <http://www.per.gov.ie/regulation-of-lobbying/> [last accessed, 31/07/2014].

⁴⁸ Interview with TD, carried out in Dublin, on August 6th, 2013.

the Regulation of Lobbying Bill comes into effect we will have a better idea of the extent to which this is the case.

Conclusion

Chapter five has presented data that is interesting in a number of different ways. In the first instance, detailed empirical evidence, based on our interest group survey, was presented. This empirical evidence clearly demonstrated the importance of membership size for both frequency of access and for invited access to TDs. No other variable in our models had such a consistent effect. These findings were in line with our theoretical hypotheses, which stressed the importance of membership size for access, due to the competitive electoral pressures that TDs face, and the need to be responsive to their electorate that comes with that. The importance of these electoral incentives was also demonstrated by the results of the policymaker survey, which highlighted constituency information as the resource TDs considered most important for granting access to interest groups.

These findings were further supported by evidence from interviews carried out with interest groups and TDs. Again, the importance of electorally relevant information was stressed, with membership size highlighted as being of particular importance. The nature of interview evidence also allowed us to add some qualitative depth to our main quantitative findings. Interview evidence revealed, for instance, that while membership size is indeed important in its own right, not all members are considered equal. For example, members who are either disproportionately likely to vote (such as older people) or who are particularly concentrated in a single constituency (and hence are of particular relevance to a particular politician) are likely to be especially valuable to an interest group seeking access to TDs.

It is also possible to make a number of normative comments based on this chapter's data. Firstly we may note that, from a democratic responsiveness perspective, the fact that membership size is clearly the best predictor of access to TDs is a positive finding. Notwithstanding this positive finding, however, our

interview evidence also demonstrates that that there are some issues with the Irish lobbying environment, issues that may lead to sub-optimal policy outcomes. These include a lack of transparency in the system, and a lack of public policy focus on behalf of TDs.

The next three chapters of this thesis will be structured in a very similar way to this one. In each, the interest group survey will first be analysed, with attention paid to ability to access, frequency of access and invited access. Subsequent to this, data from the policymaker survey, which looks at both the types of interest groups which different types of policymakers grant most access to, and the resources such policymakers consider to be most important for gaining access, will be introduced.⁴⁹ Finally, interview evidence, based on interviews with both interest group representatives and with policymakers will be introduced. The focus of these interviews will be on adding qualitative depth to our quantitative findings. They may also, where appropriate, provide some insights into issues with the overall lobbying environment, within which interest groups are seeking access opportunities.

⁴⁹ Such data will not be discussed in chapter seven due to lack of data.

CHAPTER 6: UNDERSTANDING ACCESS TO NATIONAL LEVEL CIVIL SERVANTS

Introduction

Following the same outline as chapter five, this chapter's focus is on empirically exploring the determinants of access for Irish interest groups. In this case, however, we are interested in national level civil servants rather than TDs. As already outlined in the theoretical framework that was introduced in chapter three, it is reasonable to expect that, as civil servants have different incentives and constraints than TDs, the types of access goods they are in demand of also differs. This also means that the types of resources that interest groups are most in need of to secure regular access are unlikely to be the same.

In this regard, the number of members an interest group represents is not expected to be important for securing access to civil servants in the same way as it is for TDs. This is because, unlike TDs, civil servants do not depend on a public vote in order to retain their job. By contrast, what is expected to be important for securing access to civil servants is expertise, because an interest group with expertise is likely to be able to help civil servants carry out their jobs in a more efficient and effective manner. Groups with substantial public affairs staffs, by virtue of the man-hours they are able to devote to research, are expected to be best placed in this respect.

This chapter will once again look quantitatively at the three different dimensions of access- 'ability to access', 'frequency of access' and 'invited access' using data obtained from our original interest group survey. Quantitative data from the corresponding policymaker survey will also be used as a further test of the determinants of interest group access to civil servants. Following on from this quantitative analysis, data garnered from qualitative interviews carried out with both Irish interest group representatives and Irish national level civil servants will be introduced.

Ability to Access

The previous chapter demonstrated that in as far as simply being able to get some sort of access to TDs, a significant majority of groups were able to gain such access. In terms of access to civil servants, it is first worth noting that unlike TDs, they do not have an automatic incentive to try and grant access to, more or less, every interest group who seeks it. This is because civil servants are not dependent on securing re-election. Looking at the survey data, however, we can say that while this automatic incentive may be absent, nevertheless, the vast majority of interest groups do still receive some access to civil servants across a 12-month period. These results reinforce the idea that the small scale of the Irish state leads to a situation that it is almost always possible to get 'a meeting' in Ireland, should you seek one with a policymaker.

Table 6.1 Groups with access to Civil Servants during last 12 months (%)⁵⁰

Business Associations	69%
Citizens' Groups	75%
Farming Organisations	100%
Labour Organisations	73%
Large Firms	71%
NGOs	86%
Other	73%
Professional Associations	76%
Public Affairs Consultancies	90%
Overall	78%

Frequency of Access

While the results for the 'ability to access' variable are worth noting, we are much more interested in the extent to which groups are able to secure frequent access to civil servants. As was outlined in chapter four, it is frequency of access that is generally used as the test of access in the literature, as it is much more likely to tell us something about interest group 'power' than ability to access is.

⁵⁰ Survey Question: "In the last 12 months have you met with and made representations directly to national level civil servants?"

Groups who are able to secure access to civil servants on a regular basis are much more likely to be able to shape government policy than groups who only have access to civil servants on a very occasional basis. It is also the case that in the same way that frequent access is of particular value, it is also more difficult to obtain, as civil servants are limited by time constraints with regard to the level of access they can afford to grant to interest groups who seek to lobby them. It is also worth noting here that civil servants play an integral role in both drafting and implementing policy and, hence, an ability to have frequent access to them during these stages of the policy process is a clear indication of interest group strength.

As has already been outlined in some detail in chapter three, the groups who are expected to be best placed to receive access to civil servants are those who have two types of resources. Firstly, and most importantly, expertise and, secondly, contacts. Expertise is operationalised by looking at the number of public affairs staff an interest group has at their disposal. The more public affairs staff an interest group has, the more time they are able to devote to establishing expertise in policy research; research that can both identify problems with legislation (either proposed or current) and also potentially identify solutions to these problems. Such time consuming tasks are of particular benefit to civil servants as they make their job of ensuring legislation is efficient, equitable and effective much easier. Civil servants, therefore, have a clear incentive to grant more access to groups who are more able in this arena.

A further point to note here is that in the context of an interest group climate where most groups have only a very small number of public affairs staff on their books, any increase in the number of public affairs staff an interest group is able to employ is likely to make a significant difference to the amount of expertise that group is able to provide. This is due to each additional member amounting to a significant increase, in percentage terms, in the public affairs capacity of the group in question.

The second variable of interest, contacts, is operationalised by looking at the percentage of public affairs staff that have prior governmental experience. The logic here is that such experience is likely to also equate to governmental contacts. Interestingly, while we hypothesised in chapter three that such contacts may be prove useful for access to both Irish TDs and civil servants, no such relationship was found in chapter five with regard to Irish TDs. It is possibly the case that the electoral incentives that TDs face are too strong to allow them to grant more frequent access to certain interest groups simply on account of the level of contacts they may have built up. As such constraints are unlikely to be as keenly felt by civil servants, it will be interesting to examine if such contacts do have an effect on civil service access.

Descriptive Data

The hypotheses above will be tested using a combination of logistic regression and ordinal logistic regression analysis. Before these analyses are carried out, it should prove useful to present the relevant descriptive data for the independent variables of interest. As was outlined in chapter four, in order to do this all variables of interest had to be coded. In this respect, the public affairs staff variable was initially coded on a 1-7 scale to reflect the options of the survey respondents. Survey respondents were asked how many public affairs staff their interest group employed and, in answering the question, to choose one of the following categories: 0-1, 2-3, 4-6, 7-10, 10-15, and 15+. Following the receipt of the survey responses, this variable was recoded on the following four-point scale 0-1, 2-3, 4-6, 7+. This decision was taken due to the small number of Irish interest groups with substantial public affairs staffs on their books.

A 'government experience' variable was used as a proxy for contacts. This variable measured the percentage of staff with prior government experience. Five such options were available: 0-10%, 11-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, and 75%+. After coding the relevant resource variables, it is possible to present tables of descriptive statistics for each variable. The objective of these statistics is to demonstrate how resources are divided between groups.

Table 6.2 Mean Public Affairs Staff Size by Interest Group (1-4 Scale)⁵¹

Business Associations	1.47
Citizens' Groups	2.25
Farming Organisations	2.67
Labour Organisations	2.27
Large Firms	2.14
NGOs	2.03
Other	1.53
Professional Associations	2.12
Public Affairs Consultancies	2.00
Overall (Standard Deviation)	1.90 (0.93)

1= Low, 4=High

There are two striking features of the data in table 6.2. Firstly, interest groups in Ireland are not inundated with resources in terms of public affairs staff. Secondly, public affairs staff size (and presumably the expertise that these staff bring) is reasonably evenly distributed amongst different types of interest groups. In addition we may also note that, of all the different types of interest groups surveyed, business associations have the smallest number of public affairs staff on their books, on average. Such findings are at odds with findings from other jurisdictions, such as the US and the EU where large firms and/or business groups are often found to dominate in terms of their resources in this area (Coen, 1998; Gerber, 1999; Bouwen, 2002; 2004; Mahoney, 2004). It is possible that the legacy of social partnership in Ireland, and the continued government funding of NGOs have contributed to a more level playing field in this respect in Ireland.

⁵¹ Survey Question: "How many of your organisation's staff work on advocacy/public affairs"?

Table 6.3 Mean Government Experience Percentage by Interest Group (1-5 Scale)⁵²

Business Associations	1.31
Citizens' Groups	1.00
Farming Organisations	2.00
Labour Organisations	2.64
Large Firms	2.29
NGOs	1.40
Other	2.27
Professional Associations	1.36
Public Affairs Consultancies	2.60
Overall	1.62 (1.27)

1= Low, 5=High

The government experience data in table 6.3 allows one very simple conclusion to be drawn. The idea, sometimes expressed in the media, that all lobbying in Ireland is carried out by former TDs and civil servants, is clearly inaccurate. At the same time, however, it is also clear that a reasonable number of people with prior government experience are active lobbyists. Perhaps unsurprisingly, an above average percentage of these are found in public affairs consultancies and in large firms.

The finding that the public affairs staffs of farming organisations have relatively more government experience than other interest groups is in line with the argument, frequently put forward in both the academic literature and the news media, that the Department of Agriculture and farming groups (most notably the IFA) have a particularly close relationship (Adshead, 1996; Greer, 2005; O'Mahony, 2007). This relationship may lead to staff from the former migrating over to the latter at some point in their career.

The finding that labour organizations have the highest percentage of their staff with government experience is perhaps more difficult to explain. Potentially, it is a further sign of the close relationship that the government and the trade unions built up during the social partnership period. Such a relationship may have

⁵² Survey Question: "What percentage of your public affairs staff have experience of working for government at some level (as either a politician or civil servant)?" (0-10%, 11-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, and 75%+).

extended to personnel moving from the government side of the table to the social partners' side. This is an interesting finding as it stands in contrast to the more general literature on the 'revolving door' between government and lobbying, particularly the US centric literature, which focuses more or less exclusively on how this dynamic operates between government and industry groups (Choi, 2012; Parker *et al*, 2013).

Regression Analysis

As in the previous chapter, in order to examine the impact of our independent variables on frequency of access, ordinal logistic regression analysis must be used. The two key independent variables of interest, public affairs staff size and government experience were, as laid out above, coded on an ordinal scale.

In addition, four other control variables are included in the analysis. The first of these is membership size. While membership size is not expected to have the same hold over civil servants as it has over TDs, a large membership base may still be valuable for interest groups due to the credibility it may give them in their interactions with civil servants. Demonstrating that the policy proposal they are working on is likely to impact large numbers of people may lead to civil servants granting more access to such groups. The second such control variable is staff size. The logic here is the same as with membership size. Interest groups with large staffs may have more credibility with civil servants on account of their size and hence receive more access.

The third control variable added was a dichotomous variable which picks up whether an interest group has employed a lobbying consultancy firm in the last 12 months. Hiring a lobbying consultancy firm allows interest groups to potentially make up for shortfalls they may have in terms of their own public affairs resources, or in terms of the policymaker contacts they may lack.

Interest group type is also included as a categorical independent variable to pick up on any possible systematic biases between groups. The dependent variable, frequency of access, is coded on an ordinal scale. Respondents to the survey

were able to choose between the following options when indicating the frequency with which they received access to civil servants in the previous 12 months: 'Never, Once, Twice, Quarterly, Monthly, Weekly, Daily'. This provided a seven point ordinal scale for the analysis. As per the format used throughout this thesis, three regression models are run: a complete model, an interest group only model and a resource only model.

Table 6.4 **Frequency of Access to Civil Servants**

	Model (1-Complete)	Model (2-IG Only)	Model (3-Resource Only)
Business Association	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	
Citizens' Group	1.415 (0.974)	1.666 (0.928)	
Farmers' Group	0.643 (1.192)	1.700 (1.023)	
Labour Organisation	-0.496 (0.731)	1.546 (0.692)	
Large Firm	-1.557 (1.133)	0.135 (0.831)	
NGO	0.650 (0.383)	1.065 (0.364)	
Other	-0.514 (0.598)	-0.143 (0.364)	
Professional Association	-0.629 (0.488)	0.001 (0.453)	
Public Affairs Consultancy	0.754 (1.001)	0.868 (0.592)	
Staff	0.202 (0.127)		0.107 (0.101)
Members	0.140 (0.084)		0.099 (0.074)
Public Affairs Staff	0.522 (0.194)		0.626 (0.187)
Government Experience (%)	0.258 (0.133)		0.163 (0.115)
Consultancy	0.329 (0.437)		-0.073 (0.391)
N	163	175	163

Coefficients in bold are significant at the 95% level. Standard errors are in parentheses.

The standout result from these empirical models is the positive and statistically significant effect of public affairs staff on frequency of access to national level civil servants. In line with our hypotheses, interest groups with more public affairs staff on their books receive more frequent access to civil servants. This is a result, it is argued, of the fact that they have additional expertise and hence are more able to provide relevant information to civil servants than less well resourced groups. This finding holds in both the model which includes the interest group categorical variable and the model which includes solely the resource variables. It is also robust to various other possible model specifications.

In contrast to the public affairs staff variable, government experience, while it has the expected positive sign, is not statistically significant in either model. It may be that, contrary to our hypothesis, contacts are not in fact important in gaining frequent access to civil servants. Alternatively, it may be the case that contacts are important for gaining frequent access to civil servants but that our model does not do a good job at picking this up due to the fact that 'government experience' may be too rough a proxy for contacts. Again, this is something our qualitative interview evidence will tell us more about.

Interestingly, we may also note that model two, our interest group only model, suggests that labour organizations and NGOs are more likely to get more frequent access to civil servants than business associations. Of course, it is important to bear in mind that these differences disappear once the resource differentials between different groups are also controlled for in the model. Nonetheless, these results do suggest that in terms of frequency of access to civil servants, that there is no prevalent 'business bias', as has been observed in a number of other jurisdictions, including the US and the EU (Bernhagen & Bräuninger 2005; Webb Yackee & Webb Yackee, 2006; Eising, 2007b).

While these findings with regard to statistical significance are, of course, interesting, we are also concerned with the substantive effect the key independent variables have as well. In this case, the variable that merits closest

attention is the public affairs staff variable, as it has already been seen to be statistically significant. In order to demonstrate this, table 6.5 presents the predicted probabilities of all possible levels of contact with civil servants, varying the public affairs staff variable from the minimum (1) to the maximum (4) while keeping all other variables at their means.

Table 6.5 Predicted Probabilities of Frequency of Access to Civil Servants

	None	Once	Twice	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Public Affairs Staff=1	12%	5%	12%	32%	21%	10%	8%
Public Affairs Staff=4 (Complete Model)	3%	2%	4%	22%	31%	20%	18%
Public Affairs Staff=1	21%	6%	14%	29%	18%	7%	4%
Public Affairs Staff=4 (Resource Only Model)	4%	2%	4%	23%	32%	20%	15%

1=Minimum, 4=Maximum

The predicted probabilities table clearly shows the substantive significance of the public affairs staff variable. In both models, groups with the minimum number of public affairs staff have between a 59% and a 71% chance of more than two contacts with civil servants in a 12-month period. Groups with the maximum number of public affairs staff, however, have between a 90% and 91% chance. Similarly, depending on model specification, those with the minimum number of public affairs staff have between an 11% and an 18% chance of having either weekly or daily contacts with civil servants. By contrast, those with the maximum number of public affairs staff have between a 35% and a 38% chance of having such regular contacts. It is clear then that, the more public affairs staff an interest group has, the more frequent access they are likely to have to civil servants.

Invited Access

As outlined in chapters three and four, one of the main theoretical contributions of this thesis is the introduction of a new concept of 'invited access'. The concept of 'invited access' captures the access that interest groups receive at the behest of policymakers. Such access is considered to be especially valuable both because it is likely to come early on in the policymaking cycle and, because it is likely to ensure that policymakers pay attention to what interest groups who receive such access have to say. Invited access to civil servants may be particularly useful as it allows interest groups to have input into the very early stages of the drafting of legislation- the point at which such input is most likely to be taken on board. Similar to the previous chapter, we first present descriptive statistics which demonstrate that civil servants also directly seek out interest groups in reasonably large numbers.

Table 6.6 Groups with invited access to Civil Servants during last 12 months (%)⁵³

Business Associations	42%
Citizens' Groups	75%
Farming Organisations	100%
Labour Organisations	45%
Large Firms	43%
NGOs	57%
Other	47%
Professional Associations	56%
Public Affairs Consultancies	10%
Overall	50%

Table 6.6 shows that 50% of groups received such invited access to civil servants across a given 12-month period. It is also worthy to note that with the exception of public affairs consultancies, over 40% all types of interest groups surveyed received such access. These results are in line with the findings for invited access to TDs. The overall percentage of groups receiving invited access is very similar (50% vs 53%), with public affairs consultancies again receiving less invited access than other types of interest groups.

⁵³ Survey Question: "In the previous year have you been contacted directly by any of the following to seek your advice on a policy issue?" (Civil Servants).

Of course, once again, what we are most interested in is the relationship between interest group resources and invited access. In order to further investigate this question therefore, a logistic regression analysis, which measures the impact of resources on the likelihood of receiving such access, is carried out.

Table 6.7

Invited Access to Civil Servants

	Model (1-Complete)	Model (2-IG Only)	Model (3-Resource Only)
Business Associations	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	
Citizens' Group	1.137 (1.226)	1.412 (1.193)	
Farmers' Group	1.572 (168.7)	15.88 (840.3)	
Labour Organisation	-9.832 (0.853)	0.131 (0.677)	
Large Firm	-0.986 (1.172)	0.026 (0.821)	
NGO	0.334 (0.429)	0.592 (0.392)	
Other	0.158 (0.661)	0.180 (0.599)	
Professional Association	0.007 (0.561)	0.554 (0.503)	
Public Affairs Consultancy	-16.00 (1380)	-1.884 (1.096)	
Staff	-0.001 (0.139)		-0.077 (0.108)
Members	0.007 (0.009)		0.041 (0.083)
Public Affairs Staff	0.459 (0.224)		0.587 (0.209)
Government Experience (%)	0.007 (0.146)		-0.031 (0.132)
Consultancy	0.985 (0.510)		0.757 (0.458)
N	172	185	172

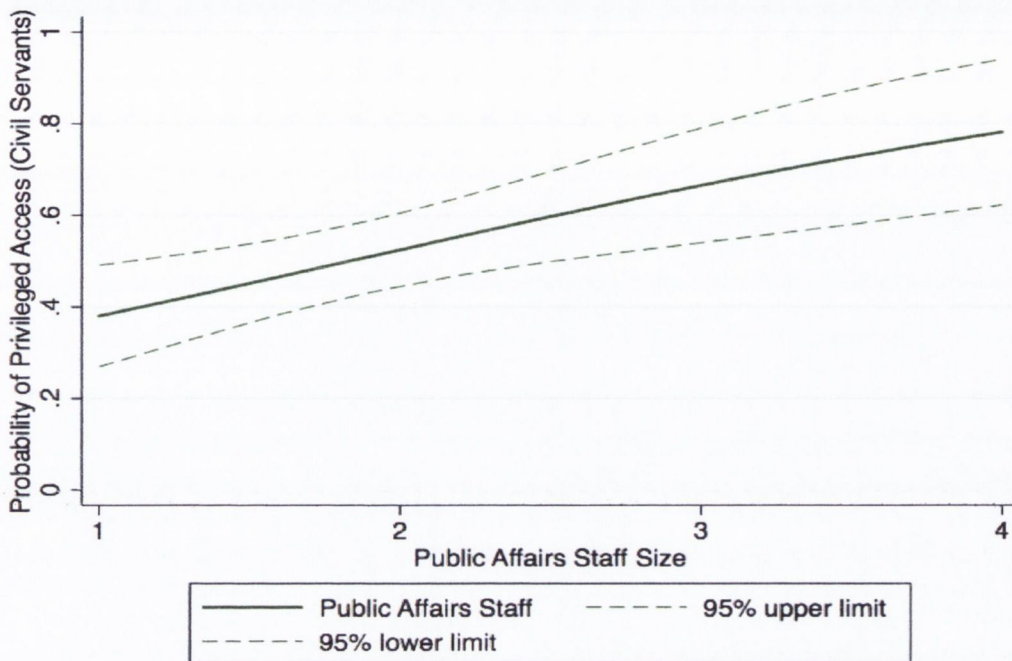
Coefficients in bold are significant at the 95% level. Standard errors are in parentheses.

The 'invited access' models further confirm the hypothesis that the most important resource for interest groups in their relationship with civil servants is expertise. There is a statistically significant, positive relationship between the number of public affairs staff on an interest groups' payroll and the likelihood of them being granted invited access over a 12-month period. This is in contrast to the findings in chapter five, where no relationship between public affairs staff and access to TDs was found (but were there was a relationship between membership size and access). As in the frequency of access models, this finding is robust in both the complete model and the resource only model. No other variable is statistically significant in any of the three models.

Substantively speaking, after varying the public affairs staff from the minimum to the maximum, the likelihood of an interest group receiving invited access to civil servants increases from 43% to 73% in the complete model and from 36% to 76% in the resource only model. To further illustrate this substantive effect, the below graph plots, for the resource only model, the predicted probability of an interest group receiving invited access to civil servants. In this case, it is the public affairs staff variable which is varied from its minimum to its maximum, while all other variables are kept at their mean.

Figure 6.1

Effect of Public Affairs Staff Size on Probability of Invited Access



Frequency of Invited Access

The ability to achieve some level of invited access to civil servants is likely to be a sign of interest group power. An even stronger sign, however, is the frequency with which such access is obtained. An interest group which is continually informed by civil servants about upcoming legislation, or regularly consulted with at an early stage in the legislative proposal process, is one which is most likely to have a significant degree of power within the political process.

In order to examine what types of interest groups are likely to have such power, an ordinal logistic regression analysis is carried out.

Table 6.8 Frequency of Invited Access to Civil Servants

	Model (1-Complete)	Model (2-IG Only)	Model (3-Resource Only)
Business Association	0.000 0.000	0.000 0.000	
Citizens' Group	1.119 (1.110)	1.442 (1.116)	
Farmers' Group	1.170 (1.158)	2.033 (0.954)	
Labour Organisation	-0.321 (0.768)	0.847 (0.728)	
Large Firm	-0.064 (1.098)	0.322 (0.876)	
NGO	0.613 (0.396)	0.789 (0.366)	
Other	-0.446 (0.634)	-0.016 (0.559)	
Professional Association	-0.069 (0.489)	0.294 (0.453)	
Public Affairs Consultancy	-1.097 (1.306)	-1.245 (0.850)	
Staff	-0.060 (0.113)		-0.044 (0.094)
Members	0.051 (0.083)		0.033 (0.075)
Public Affairs Staff	0.424 (0.188)		0.554 (0.180)
Government Experience (%)	0.300 (0.140)		0.167 (0.123)
Consultancy	0.479 (0.410)		0.326 (0.377)
N	173	175	173

Coefficients in bold are significant at the 95% level. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Consistent with the findings from our previous models in this chapter, we can see that the type of group which receives invited access most frequently are those with significant numbers of public affairs staff. This is once again in line with our main hypothesis, that groups that are best placed to provide expertise will be granted such access due to their ability to help civil servants carry out their work efficiently and effectively.

To look at this relationship substantively, the public affairs staff variable is once again varied from its minimum (1) to its maximum (4) with all other variables kept at their mean.

Table 6.9 Predicted Probabilities of Frequency of Invited Access to Civil Servants

	None	Once	Twice	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Public Affairs Staff=1	38%	9%	17%	14%	15%	6%	3%
Public Affairs Staff=4 (Complete Model)	15%	5%	14%	19%	28%	12%	7%
Public Affairs Staff=1	51%	9%	14%	11%	10%	4%	2%
Public Affairs Staff=4 (Resource Only Model)	17%	6%	14%	19%	28%	11%	6%

1=Minimum, 4=Maximum

These substantive findings further show the value of expertise for interest groups seeking to develop relationships with civil servants. Groups with the maximum number of public affairs staff are more than twice as likely to receive invited access to civil servants on two or more occasions during a 12-month period. Similarly, groups with the maximum number of public affairs staff are at least twice as likely to receive invited access on a weekly or daily basis to civil servants as groups with the minimum number of public affairs staff.

Another significant finding in the complete model is that government experience has a statistically significant positive impact on frequency of invited access. This is in line with our initial hypothesis, that groups with a greater percentage of ex-government employees would have better contacts with policymakers and hence would receive more access, both in terms of quantity and quality.

Notwithstanding this fact, this finding is not particularly robust. Firstly, the relationship between frequency of invited access and level of government experience is not statistically significant in the resource only model. Secondly, the fact that government experience does not show up as statistically significant in any of the other models we use to investigate the relationship between interest group resources and interest group access suggests that we cannot reliably conclude that such a relationship exists. In the context of our overall theoretical model, this would suggest two possible conclusions. Either 'contacts' are less important for access than we had initially postulated, or 'percentage of staff with government experience' is not a reliable proxy for 'contacts'. This is something that our interview evidence will allow us to explore in more detail.

Finally, in the interest type only model (Model 2), farming organisations and NGOs both receive invited access more frequently than business associations. This finding for NGOs is especially interesting as it is the third of our models which finds such a relationship. NGOs are more likely to have access, more likely to have frequent access and more likely to have frequent invited access to civil servants. These findings would suggest that from an access to civil servants perspective, there is certainly no business bias in Ireland. On the contrary, the results suggest that the NGO community in Ireland is, generally speaking, well endowed with resources useful for gaining access to civil servants, and is able to use these resources to obtain preferential access to them. While this does not necessarily mean that civil servants are particularly sympathetic to NGOs interests, it at least means that NGOs are consistently getting the opportunity to put their arguments across.

Summary of Interest Group Survey

This chapter has presented a detailed empirical examination of the relationship between interest group resources and interest group access to civil servants in Ireland. It has also, as in the last chapter, taken the concept of 'access' further than in previous studies, looking not just at the quantity of access that interest groups receive from different types of policymakers, but also at the quality of access- as represented by access that results from requests from policymakers.

The main finding is that interest groups with more public affairs staff receive significantly more access, and more timely access, than groups with fewer such staff. This finding holds in all six of the models used to investigate the relationship between interest group resources and interest group access, including all four models which examine 'invited access'. These results are in line with the hypothesis that groups which had more expertise and hence which were better placed to provide timely, useful information to civil servants would be likely to be provided with more access, and better quality access to civil servants. Size of public affairs staff is used as a proxy for such expertise, because it is reasonable to assume that organisations with more staff resources devoted to policy matters have more expertise in the policy arena. From an interest group perspective, the findings suggest that the best course of action that such a group can take, should they wish to receive more access to civil servants, is to employ more public affairs focused staff. This is, of course, in contrast to the previous chapter, which showed no relationship between public affairs staff size and access to TDs.

The second finding is the lack of a robust relationship between percentage of ex government employees within an interest group and access to civil servants (or, as seen in the previous chapter, TDs for that matter). This independent variable was added to our empirical model in an attempt to examine the hypothesised relationship between the pre-existing contacts that interest group staff may have with policymakers and the access they may receive. While one of our models does report a statistically significant positive relationship between this variable and our dependent variable of interest, this finding is not backed up from results

from any of our other models. It would not be reasonable to conclude, therefore, that there is a clear observable relationship between the percentage of employees with prior government experience an interest group employs and the level of access they receive to policymakers of any type.

Two conclusions are of course possible here. On one hand, it may be the case that the hypothesised relationship between contacts and access simply does not exist in Ireland. Alternatively, it may be that while contacts do matter, the proxy variable we use to capture them is not fit for purpose and a different approach is necessary. These are questions that the qualitative component of this study are best placed to answer.

While the overwhelming focus has been on examining the effect of resources on interest group access, the findings also showed differences between interest group *types*. Firstly, the results from our models do not suggest there is a systematic bias towards business groups, as is suggested by the literature from other jurisdictions (Bernhagen & Bräuninger 2005; Webb Yackee & Webb Yackee, 2006; Eising, 2007b). Indeed, on the contrary, three of the four interest group only models find that NGOs are *more* likely to receive access to civil servants than business associations. We may also note that, in the resource only model, labour organizations get more frequent access than business associations

Finally, it is also interesting to note at this stage the contrast between TDs and national level civil servants in terms of the resources that are important for determining access. Using both the same dataset and the same regression models we can clearly observe the differences between these two different types of policymakers in this regard. While membership size was overwhelmingly the best predictor of access to TDs, public affairs staff size had a similar status with regard to access to civil servants. Such a contrast quite clearly demonstrates how the incentives and constraints of policymakers effects the resources that interest groups need to secure access to them.

Policymaker Survey

Moving from analyzing the quantitative data from our interest group survey, the next tranche of data is that obtained from the policymaker survey. While regression analysis is not possible in this respect, as we have only nine survey responses to analyse, some interesting descriptive statistics can still be presented. The descriptive data presented is based on an original survey of Irish civil servants at the Secretary General level. The survey was sent to Secretaries General in the sixteen government departments. From these sixteen departments, responses were received from nine, with either the Secretary General or a nominated Assistant Secretary or Principal Officer completing the survey.⁵⁴ The response rate for this class of policymaker was therefore 56%. Civil servants were asked the same questions asked of TDs. This included questions regarding how often they grant access and invited access to different types of interest groups and, also, what types of resources they felt were most important for gaining access to them.

Frequency of Access

Civil Servants were first asked how regularly each type of group received access to lobby them in the last 12 months. The response options were 'Never', 'Once', 'Twice', 'Quarterly', 'Monthly', 'Fortnightly', 'Weekly' and 'Daily', thereby providing a 0-7 scale with 0 indicating no access and 7 indicating daily access. The bar chart below illustrates the responses received.

⁵⁴ Representatives of the following government departments completed the survey: Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht; Children & Youth Affairs; Health; Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation; Social & Family Affairs; Transport, Tourism & Sport.

Figure 6.2 Frequency of Access Granted by Civil Servants
(0=No Access, 7=Daily Access)

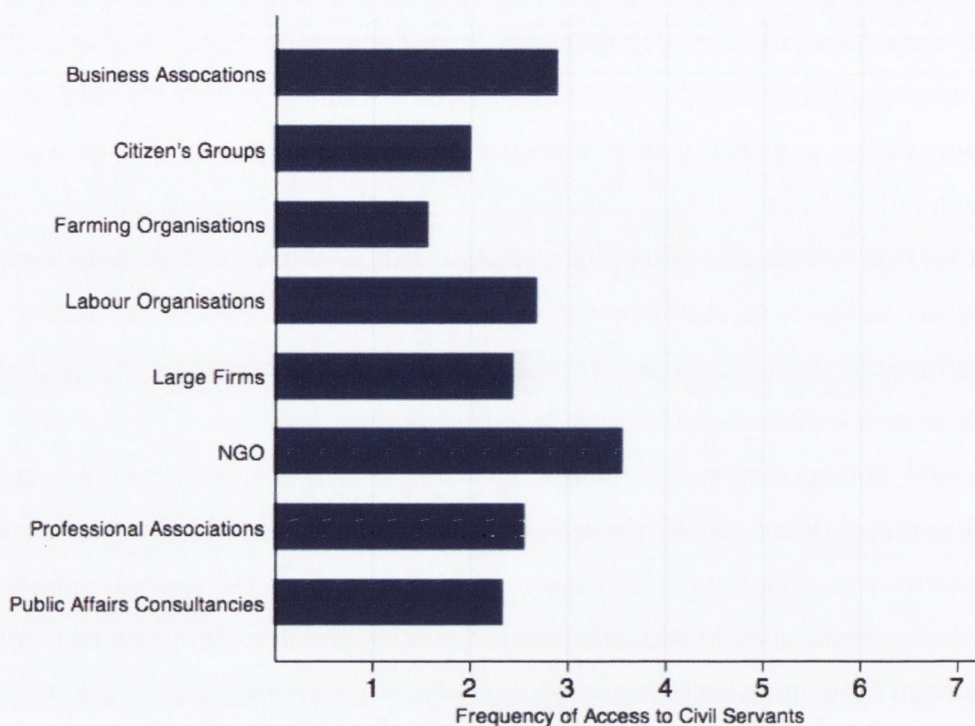


Figure 6.2 shows that access to civil servants is reasonably evenly distributed amongst interest groups with a range of 1.38 (farming organisations) to 3.50 (NGOs), and with all other groups averaging between 2 and 3 on the 0-7 scale. The particular low figure for farming organisations can be explained quite simply. The vast majority of their interactions are with the Department of Agriculture and hence they are unlikely to even seek access to other government departments on any kind of regular basis. NGOs by contrast, as we have already seen from the results of the interest group survey, appear to enjoy quite frequent access across civil service departments.

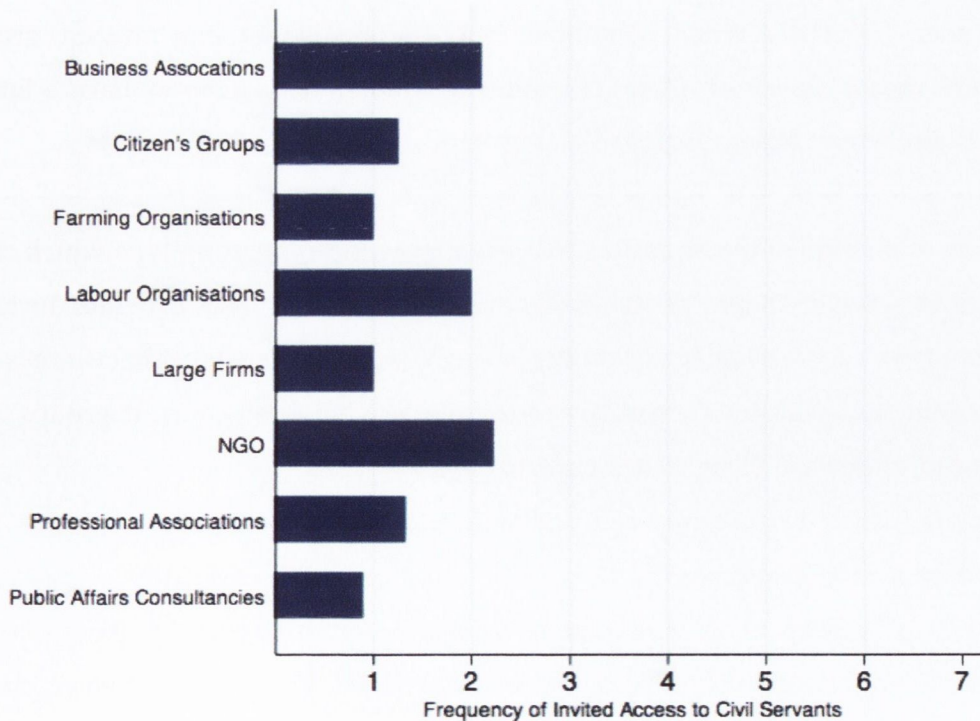
Two findings from the interest group survey are supported by this data. Firstly, the lack of 'business bias' in terms of access is once again observed, with NGOs in fact receiving the most access to civil servants. Secondly, the finding that there are clear differences between civil servants and TDs, in terms of the types of groups which are likely to receive access to them, is also borne out. Most notable here is the case of citizens' groups who, we saw in the last chapter, were the type of group which received the most access to TDs. By contrast, after farming

organisations, citizens' groups receive the *least* amount of access to civil servants. This is likely a function of two forces. One is that the resource profile of the typical citizen group (plenty of members but perhaps limited numbers of public affairs staff) means that they are much more successful in gaining frequent access to TDs than they are to civil servants. Second, citizens' groups, which may be aware that their comparative advantage lies in the numbers of the voters they represent, are likely to allocate the majority of their limited resources to targeting TDs in their lobbying efforts.

Frequency of Invited Access

Just as interest groups were asked both about access and invited access, so too were civil servants surveyed in the same way. Again, the data obtained from this policymaker survey of invited access provides a check on the results obtained from the interest group survey. The same seven-point scale as before was used once again.

Figure 6.3 Frequency of Invited Access Granted by Civil Servants (0=No Access, 7=Daily Access)



A few observations can be made from the data in Figure 6.3. Perhaps the first and most obvious point is that while all types of groups are receiving some sort of invited access, there is no category of interest group that is, comparatively speaking, receiving it on a particularly frequent basis. Of course one caveat must be added here. This survey was directed at Secretaries-General of government departments. This means that the total amount of invited access that is reported (and indeed this applies to the amount of access more generally) may be somewhat deflated as it may be the case that it is more junior civil servants who are responsible for reaching out to interest groups for assistance in drafting policy. As pointed out in chapter four, however, including such junior civil servants in the survey population would be much more difficult, for logistical reasons.

Notwithstanding this caveat, this data still allows us to make comparisons between groups. Interestingly, the type of interest group which is least likely to receive invited access to civil servants is the public affairs consultancy (0.89). This finding, which mirrors the results from the same survey of TDs, further demonstrates that Irish policymakers often see little need for 'middlemen' and are happy to go straight to the source for their policy information. It furthermore suggests, especially when combined with the results of our interest group survey, that Irish public affairs consultancies may not, in general, have a lot of policy expertise at their disposal.

On the other side of the equation, NGOs were the interest group type which civil servants actively sought advice from most often (2.22). This provides further evidence for our finding, based on the interest group survey data, that there is no prevalent 'business bias' in terms of the access that Irish interest groups are afforded, either to TDs or, in this case, to civil servants.

Importance of Resources

As well as asking about their contacts with different types of groups, civil servants were also asked about what resources they thought were most important for an interest group who wished to gain access to them. The bar chart

below shows civil servants responses when asked to rate the importance of various resources for gaining access to them on a 1-5 scale (1= Of No Importance, 5= Extremely Important).

Figure 6.4 Importance of Resources For Gaining Access to Civil Servants

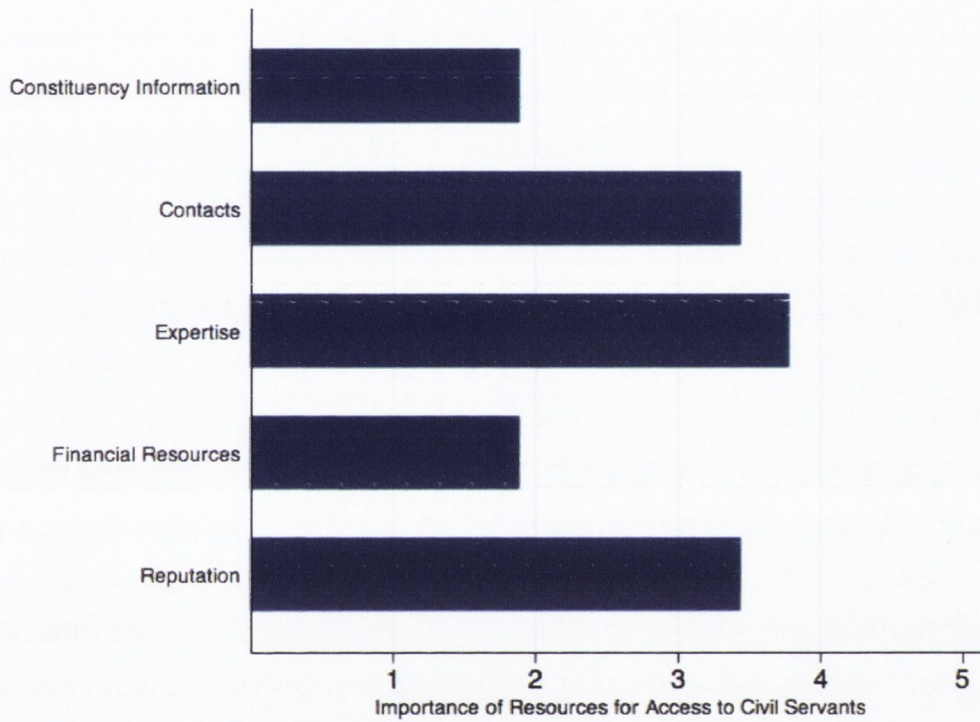


Figure 6.4 highlights that expertise is considered the most important resource by civil servants (3.78). This backs up both our hypotheses and the results from our interest group survey. Interestingly, contacts are also rated as rather important by policymakers for gaining access to them. This contrasts somewhat with our findings from the interest group survey, which failed to demonstrate a clear relationship between contacts and access to civil servants. There are perhaps two possible reasons for this discrepancy. Firstly, it is possible that while contacts are not of significant importance for gaining access to civil servants generally, at the senior level the policymaker survey was pitched, pre-existing contacts may be an important factor in such a civil servant choosing to meet you, rather than suggesting a more junior colleague may carry out this task. Secondly, it may be the case that 'government experience', the metric that was used for picking up on the value of contacts was not a close enough proxy for contacts to

be able to pick up on it. Fortunately, we will be able to explore this question further in the next section, using the qualitative data obtained from our interviews with both interest groups and senior civil servants.

Finally, we may also make two further observations from the data. Firstly, constituency information is considered much less important. This reinforces the point that TDs and civil servants face different incentives. Secondly, financial resources are considered the least important of resources by civil servants. While there is no reason to doubt civil servants honesty in their answer to this question, it would appear that they were perhaps interpreting the question in a quite direct sense. It is unlikely that interest groups can simply gain more access to civil servants by simply demonstrating how much money they have at their disposal. In this context the low rating given to financial resources would appear sensible. However, it is important to note that the 'expertise' which civil servants openly claim is important for gaining access to them, cannot be acquired for free. Acquiring expertise involves hiring staff and allowing them time to focus on carrying out the research required to provide such expertise to policymakers in need of it. It would not be sensible to conclude, therefore, that the financial resources an interest group has at its disposal are irrelevant in determining the level of access such a group is likely to receive to civil servants. This is especially the case when we combine the results of our policymaker survey with the findings from the interest group survey (with its stress on the importance of public affairs staff) we outlined earlier in this chapter.

Summary

Our analysis of the policymaker data further supports our findings from the interest group survey. Expertise is confirmed as being of particular importance to civil servants. This finding further verifies the validity of one of our conclusions from the interest group survey, namely that the resources that are important to gaining access to civil servants differ from the resources that matter for gaining access to TDs.

The policymaker data also highlights the lack of business bias in terms of access to civil servants. This finding, which was already flagged during an analysis of the interest group survey data, was reinforced by our examination of the policymaker data which demonstrated that it is in fact NGOs who appear to receive the most frequent access, and the most invited access, to civil servants.

The final point that needs to be made is that the implications of the importance of expertise for access to civil servants should be recognised. Expertise, the key resource necessary for securing such access, cannot be obtained for free. In order to acquire it, public affairs staff must be employed and given the necessary resources to carry out research. This means that groups who are in a position to spend money on acquiring such expertise are more likely to receive access, and more likely to receive invited access, than groups who are not as well endowed.

Interview Evidence

The final section of this chapter will focus on analysing the qualitative data obtained from our interviews with both interest groups and civil servants. In the first instance, this will allow some of the questions already explored in the quantitative analysis to be examined in more depth. Why exactly is expertise important to civil servants? And how are interest groups able to use it to their advantage in establishing a more favourable access relationship with civil servants? As well as exploring some questions in more depth, the qualitative data will also allow some questions that do not easily lend themselves to quantitative analysis to be explored. Finally, we will also revisit the question of the importance of contacts- a resource that both our theory and the evidence from the policymaker survey suggest may be important, but which data from the interest group survey failed to provide much support for.

Value of Civil Service Access

Before discussing just how certain resources were important for gaining access to civil servants we should first focus on why access to civil servants is valuable at all. In this regard, interest groups were quick to point out that while politicians may come and go civil servants often spend entire careers in specific

government departments. Interest groups', who have long term, as well as short-term goals, must therefore work hard to secure access to them. As one NGO representative explained:

The reality in Ireland is governments might change and ministers might change, [but] the structures of governance don't actually change, so the civil servants are going to remain the same, so we have always worked hard at having good relationships with those civil servants.⁵⁵

Civil servants were also cited as crucial targets for lobbying because of the role they have in the implementation of legislation. Ultimately it is civil servants who write the legislation that becomes law and hence an ability to persuade such civil servants to frame the legislation in a certain way can be crucial for an interest group which is worried about the implications that new legislation may have on them. Interest groups were also very straightforward in describing the latitude that TDs often afford civil servants in this respect. As one representative of a public affairs consultancy described it: 'the reality is, if you manage to persuade the Principal Officer...who's writing the piece of legislation the merit of your case, they will change it'.⁵⁶ Such legislation must of course receive approval from the Dáil before being passed. As was observed in the last chapter, however, TDs are often lacking in terms of their public policy focus. This means that such legislation might not receive significant scrutiny from Dáil deputies.

As well as being of crucial importance from a legislative drafting perspective, civil servants also have an important role to play in terms of controlling their departmental budgets. A number of interest groups stressed that, while lobbying politicians in order to get them 'on side' with regard to proposed policies is imperative, if such policies are likely to have budgetary implications, it is essential that civil servants are lobbied as well. In this respect, one NGO representative described a situation in which you may "[talk] to a Minister and they will say yes I agree with you but they [then] go back and talk to the civil servants, and they say 'we can't do that, we don't have the money'".⁵⁷ The

⁵⁵ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on July 10th 2013.

⁵⁶ Interview carried out with Public Affairs consultant, in Dublin, on January 17th 2012.

⁵⁷ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on July 4th 2013.

interest groups who are most likely to be successful then, are those who are able to achieve sufficient access to both TDs *and* civil servants so that they can both be convinced of the importance of your issue.

Civil Service Expertise Deficit

The quantitative section of this chapter repeatedly stressed the importance of expertise for gaining access to civil servants. The qualitative section teases out why this may be the case. To set the context, it is important to mention that a deficiency of expertise appears to exist in the Irish civil service. While the last chapter discussed the deficiency in legislative expertise amongst TDs, interest groups also frequently stressed during interviews that this deficit of expertise was also found in the civil service. A number of explanations were cited by interest groups to account for this deficit. One rather simple argument put forward was that the civil service faced 'massive resource restraints' and hence were simply unable to invest the necessary time themselves to acquire expertise in the subject areas they were tasked to cover. Other interest groups felt that while there was not a deficiency in terms of civil service *numbers*, civil servants as a group were often 'generalists' rather than subject matter experts with expertise in a specific area.

Interestingly, a number of interest groups, particularly in the NGO sector, stressed that this deficiency of expertise in the civil service has been a particular problem in recent years. The incentivised retirement scheme for civil servants has led to a significant number of the most knowledgeable and experienced people in civil service departments taking early retirement. As one interest group representative, working in the homeless sector, noted:

I have been [lobbying] for four years and I have been here longer than anyone in the department...the Principal Officer she is very good but she is only in that job less than a year and everyone on that team is coming up to her and there is a lack of institutional memory and knowledge of the issue.⁵⁸

As a number of interest groups noted, the most problematic effect such a scenario can lead to is one in which powerful interest groups in certain sectors

⁵⁸ Interview with NGO representative, carried out in Dublin, on June 21st 2013.

are able to use it to their advantage to shape policy in their interests. In the environmental sector, for instance, one NGO representative was keen to stress that the Department of Environment 'is deficient in technical expertise' and hence is 'over reliant on data supply from [outside interests]'.⁵⁹ Such a dependency creates a situation whereby, in the eyes of this representative, the Department is 'not independently acting'. This can mean that, in the farming sector for instance, the Department does not have the confidence to take action against farmers who may be in breach of national or European policies or directives.

A similar set of arguments was put forward from the representative of a business association with regard to the transport sector. This representative noted how, due to the lack of expertise in the Department of Transport, decision-making was often 'outsourced' to Dublin Bus or Bus Éireann as they were assumed to be 'the experts in the area'. The problem with this, however, was that their neutrality was questionable. As this representative put it

They are trying to preserve their own part of the economy, they're public owned entities but they're competing with the private sector and the private sector often doesn't get to influence bus policy in any rational way. It is just dominated by the state owned bus companies.⁶⁰

While interest groups certainly have a valuable role to play in the policy making process, the above examples demonstrate potential problems that can arise when there is an excessive dependence on them. Firstly, as is demonstrated by the example regarding the Department of the Environment, clearly issues can arise when civil servants may struggle to carry out one of their core roles—ensuring that the 'rules of the game' are adhered to. The most obvious recent example of this is the inability of the Department of Finance to regulate the banking sector sufficiently during the period leading up to the financial crisis and the bank 'bail outs' that accompanied it (Chari & Bernhagen, 2012). The second problem that can arise out of excessive dependence on lobbyists, as illustrated by the Department of Transport example, is that there can be distributional

⁵⁹ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on June 26th 2013.

⁶⁰ Interview carried out with Business Association representation, in Dublin, on June 11th, 2013.

consequences. If civil servants are not only dependent on lobbyists but allow themselves to become dependent on a *certain subset* of lobbyists who represent a particular point of view, policy will inevitably favour certain interests in society at the expense of others.

Current Financial Context in Ireland

As eluded to in the previous section, the current financial context in Ireland has had an effect on the Irish lobbying climate. We may note here, for instance, how the incentivised retirement scheme has exacerbated a pre-existing expertise deficit within the civil service. The financial environment in which they were operating in was commented on by almost every interest group interviewed. As one NGO representative from the housing sector put it 'what we never do is ask for more money because that is pointless, it's a waste of time because there isn't any'.⁶¹ It would appear to be a similar story in other areas as well, with a representative from an NGO focusing on older people remarking of civil service departments that 'getting them to spend money at the moment is impossible, it's cut backs all the way'.⁶² As a result of this financial climate then, interest groups have had to adapt their behaviour. As an NGO from the health sector remarked:

We have all had our expectations successfully limited by government departments...we don't ask for money anymore, so [the financial climate] has changed the way we interact and what we advocate for and has lowered our expectations- no one's asking for increases in the health budget so its changed the way we interact.⁶³

This financial environment has, understandably, frustrated many interest groups' lobbying efforts in recent years. What it has not done, however, has diminished the importance of expertise for interest groups seeking access in any way. Indeed, on the contrary, it has likely further increased the premium that groups with expertise enjoy in such regard. In the first instance, the explanation for this is rather simple. Civil service departments have suffered a drop in staffing numbers, and, in particular, have often lost their most knowledgeable individuals to incentivised early retirement. As one NGO put it, quite simply,

⁶¹ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on June 27th, 2013.

⁶² Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on July 4th, 2013.

⁶³ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on July 21st 2013.

there has been 'a sense where they have less staff then they have had before so they need to engage with us a little bit more'.⁶⁴ Well-resourced interest groups were happy to point out how such openness has benefitted them, with one such group noting how in the present environment '[civil servants] are genuinely open to new ideas and we are able to provide them'.⁶⁵

Importance of Providing Solutions

To further understand why groups with expertise are likely to be advantaged in their interactions with civil servants, particularly in the present financial environment, we must look at what it is that such interest groups provide to civil servants. From our interviews with both interest groups and civil servants, one word best encapsulates what this is: 'solutions'. The importance of providing solutions to civil servants, should you wish to be listened to by them, was repeatedly stressed by interviewees. As an NGO in the education sector put it, when asked why civil servants grant them access, 'we would have a contribution to make that includes not only identification of the problem but also identification of a possible solution'.⁶⁶ Similar sentiments were expressed by an NGO from the youth sector, who noted they had become more successful recently in their attempts to establish themselves as key contacts for the Department of Children due to 'being more savvy in presenting to them situations, getting them to see we are the solution to their problems... so [now] we are always going to them with different ideas and offering different options'.⁶⁷ Similar to this again, was the argument put forward by an NGO with a broad social focus that:

Where a social justice group can be influential is if they come up with something clever, a win-win situation. Save a bit of money for the state and sort a problem out.⁶⁸

To provide solutions to civil servants naturally requires more expertise than simply identifying problems. In general then, groups with more expert staff at

⁶⁴ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on June 21st 2013.

⁶⁵ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on June 27th 2013.

⁶⁶ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on June 17th 2013.

⁶⁷ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on July 9th 2013.

⁶⁸ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on June 18th 2013.

their disposal are much more likely to be able to provide solutions to civil servants. At the same time, however, it should be noted that one type of interest group is particularly well positioned to provide such solutions, even if they are not overrun with public affairs staff. We are referring here to service providers. Indeed, service providers' privileged position in this regard was commented on, on a number of occasions, by both interest group and civil servant interviewees. As one NGO working in the homeless sector put it

[our strength] is that we are one of the largest service providers so they know that they need us to do what we are doing and there is an assumption that we know what we are talking about. We can tell them things they have no other ways of knowing...so expertise coming from service delivery is crucial to the type of work we do.⁶⁹

Similar sentiments were expressed by a senior civil servant in a government department who, when asked about the type of organisations who can be particularly effective when lobbying on legislation, cited the Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed, noting how their work is 'based on real experience of working with the long term unemployed who have very poor skills and they are able to make perfect examples of what's not working in respect of certain market activation issues'.⁷⁰

The dynamic by which interest groups ability to provide solutions is crucial to their chances of becoming privileged interlocutors for civil servants was perhaps best explained by a business association representative. Echoing other interviewees, this representative was quick to point out that looking for money from the government was a dead end. In terms of shifting policy, interest groups must put forward solutions and, crucially, provide evidence that such solutions will both have a positive effect and not result in a cost to the exchequer. As this representative put it, 'you must do the work for the government basically'.⁷¹ Interestingly, this representative also highlighted not just the financial context in Ireland at the moment, but also the *interest group climate* as a reason why expertise is so important for interest groups in their dealings with civil servants.

⁶⁹ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on June 21st 2013.

⁷⁰ Interview carried out with Senior Civil Servant, in Dublin, on August 30th 2013.

⁷¹ Interview carried out with Business Association representative, via Skype, on July 3rd 2013.

There is also much more competition in the market now. Not only because there is less money to go around but also because groups have become much more professional.⁷²

Costliness of Expertise

At the same time that groups recognised the importance of expertise, they also realised that such expertise comes at a cost. This is particularly the case for groups who do not acquire expertise as a result of a service provision role.⁷³ That expertise is an expensive resource to acquire for most interest groups is hardly surprising. Groups are unable to become 'more professional' without spending money on professional staff. Of course, not all groups are equally able to spend such money. For those who are less well resourced, lobbying civil servants can be a challenge. Indeed, one NGO representative in the cultural sector noted how this problem can manifest itself at a very early stage in the process, before deficits in expertise even come into play. Describing the consultation process that several government departments use, this representative noted, with frustration, how:

What is not so good is when they put out their calls because if you miss them you miss them. They are on the website but they don't actually email around, so you find out about it afterwards and it's very frustrating and you might find out about it by chance and there could be three days to the deadline so you have to be on their website all the time.⁷⁴

Of course for many groups, they simply do not have the resources to monitor government websites so fastidiously. Nor may they have the resources to provide useful inputs into the consultation process should they only have three days to work on it. Even if interest groups do manage to clear this first hurdle, without money to invest in expertise they are facing an uphill battle in their attempts to establish a privileged relationship with civil servants. As one Secretary-General of a government department noted, when asked what type of interest groups are most effective, it is those with 'very good technical expertise

⁷² Interview carried out with Business Association representative, via Skype, on July 3rd 2013.

⁷³ Service providers may be an exception to the norm as they may be able to 'naturally' acquire expertise as a direct result of their work, without having to necessarily invest extra resources into acquiring expertise for the purposes of lobbying.

⁷⁴ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on July 9th 2013.

and [who] have done some heavy lifting in producing reports with specific representations that are well thought out and well structured'.⁷⁵ It perhaps goes without saying that not all groups are equally able to engage in such 'heavy lifting'.

Both the quantitative and the qualitative evidence presented in this chapter has demonstrated two clear points. Firstly, that expertise is crucial for gaining access to civil servants and, secondly that such expertise is, generally speaking, costly to obtain. One further point that needs to be emphasised, however, is that both the quantitative and qualitative evidence has demonstrated that this 'expertise' is reasonably well distributed amongst interest group types. It is not a case, for instance, that is only big business groups who have significant expertise and, hence, superior access. Across all interest group types there are groups who are well resourced in terms of expertise and groups who are less well resourced. This also holds when comparing groups in terms of the access they receive.

Lack of Coherence between Civil Service Departments

Something else that came up consistently in our interviews with interest groups with regard to their lobbying of civil servants was their frustration with the lack of coherence between departments. While such discussion clearly takes us beyond the question of interest group 'access', as previously argued, it is felt that in the greater context of this study, such a discussion is justified. Considering the nascent state of the literature on Irish interest group lobbying and, indeed, of Irish policymaking more generally, findings that arose from our interviews and which are of significant interest to scholars of these topics, are worthy of discussion.

The impact of the lack of coherence between government departments on interest groups is quite significant. Such incoherence means that even groups with significant expertise, while they are clearly at an advantage relative to groups with less expertise, may still be frustrated in their interactions with civil

⁷⁵ Interview carried out with Secretary General of Government Department, in Dublin, on August 30th, 2013.

servants. Examples of this phenomenon were cited across the spectrum of government departments. An NGO representative from the housing sector for instance noted how

The big problem is the inability of the decision making process to operate outside silos. So you can say if you did this we could get these people out of homelessness and you would save a fortune and they would have a better life but they say yes [another government department] will save a fortune but we will have to spend the money.⁷⁶

This 'siloed thinking' with regard to civil service departmental budgeting was brought up again and again by interest groups. A representative from a NGO concerned with the interests of those with intellectual disability, for instance, described their difficulty in convincing civil servants that the varied nature of their work was worthy of funding from a number of different government departments:

A Minister of Health once told me- the problem with you is you tick a lot of boxes and you do a lot of good for people with intellectual disability but our system of government and line budgets mean we can only support you through one department...so our funding would come from there, there is very little interaction with the department themselves...we are a government who don't do joined up government, we do line budgets, you would never get four or five departments being voted on together.⁷⁷

Similar problems were identified by an NGO working in the youth sector. While the previous section of this chapter talked about the advantage that groups who have sufficient expertise to put forward proposals which are cost neutral (or even cost saving) enjoy, the caveat may need to be added that it is applicable only when the cost savings realised accrue to the department in question. Describing the biggest frustration their group has faced in the last few years this representative remarked that:

There has been a huge amount of emphasis in the last few years about proven programs, we have put a lot of investment into getting organisations into proving...that an investment of X will provide Y. But the cost savings might not

⁷⁶ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on June 21st 2013.

⁷⁷ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on June 19th 2013.

go to their department so DCYA⁷⁸ might have to fund a program where the cost savings will actually in ten years go to the Department of Justice and the Department of Education...and that's a real challenge, its awkward, they aren't linked up.⁷⁹

Indeed, the lack of 'joined up thinking' between government departments may even extend beyond the budgetary process. An environmental NGO, for instance, noted how despite a successful campaign to convince the Department of Environment of the need to encourage people to reduce driving speed in order to reduce emissions, 'at the same time that [this Department] ran a TV campaign telling people to reduce driving speed to reduce emissions...the Department of Transport increased motor way speeds to 120 [k/ph] - so they don't talk to each other'.⁸⁰

Possible Value of Contacts

The overwhelming focus of this chapter has been on the importance of expertise for gaining access to civil servants. This is not unreasonable, as both the quantitative and qualitative evidence have suggested that expertise is clearly the single most important resource in this respect. At the same time, however, the qualitative data does allow us to consider how important other resources may be, resources whose importance may be difficult to measure using quantitative metrics. In this regard, we must consider the potential importance of contacts for gaining access to civil servants. While the quantitative data was very much inconclusive in this regard, the difficulty of identifying a metric that clearly and conclusively measures the importance of 'contacts' as a variable means that this is a question worth re-exploring in our discussion of the qualitative data.

The interview evidence that we have assembled suggests that contacts may indeed be of some value. One public affairs professional, for instance, described how clients of his 'use people who can get you into the system...former political

⁷⁸ Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

⁷⁹ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on July 9th 2013.

⁸⁰ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on June 26th 2013.

advisors or [ex] TDs will get you in'.⁸¹ Similar sentiments were expressed by a business association representative. This representative, while still privileging expertise, also mentioned how contacts can be valuable, noting how 'the thing will stand or fall on the weight of the argument but sometimes you do need someone to open the door for you'.⁸² While contacts may get you quicker initial access, however, (and it should be remembered that in certain cases 'quick access' may be crucial), it is usually very difficult to create sustained access based on contacts alone. As even the aforementioned public affairs professional who spoke about the value of contacts admitted: 'the real skill is not [getting the first meeting] it's being able to draft and to make your arguments, so even if you get the meeting you blow your calling card by not doing the business'.⁸³

Indeed, where 'contacts' seem to matter more is not so much in terms of having a contact that they can use to get them access, but rather, it is in terms of establishing a reputation for credibility with a key contact within a government department. As one NGO stated when asked why they enjoyed such a good relationship with a particular government department- 'we had a good relationship with them so they were very open to meeting us'.⁸⁴ Similar refrains were oft repeated by other interest groups. Of course, in terms of establishing such relationships and reputations, it is again expertise that is important. By providing quality inputs to civil servants over a sustained period of time, you build up a positive reputation. Groups with such reputations have, as one NGO in the housing sector put it 'more chances of getting in'.⁸⁵ While the importance of expertise once again shines through in this story it also adds a caveat to it that can be applicable in some cases- namely that an interest group's level of expertise may interact with their level of contacts to get them the best possible access. This means, that if an interest group loses its contacts (through retirement or movement between government departments) it may suffer a loss in access- even if its level of expertise remains the same. As one representative

⁸¹ Interview carried out with Public Affairs consultant, in Dublin, on January 17th 2012.

⁸² Interview carried out with Business Association Representative, in Dublin, on July 5th 2013.

⁸³ Interview carried out with Public Affairs consultant, in Dublin, on January 17th 2012.

⁸⁴ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on July 16th 2013.

⁸⁵ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on June 21st 2013.

from a professional association in the construction sector put it, 'what [most concerns] us is the official we are dealing with. If that person retires that's the relationship that changes'.

Conclusions: Contrast between Civil Servants & TDs

The main focus of this chapter has been on examining how certain resources are important for securing access to civil servants. One interesting finding that has come out of this is the contrast between the resources that are important for securing access to civil servants and TDs. This was perhaps best encapsulated by the quantitative analysis of the interest group survey, which, using the same dataset and same set of regression models, demonstrated that membership size was overwhelmingly the most important resource for gaining access to TDs while expertise (represented by public affairs staff size) had a similar status for access to civil servants. Such findings were, of course, in line with the hypotheses we outlined in chapter three. The qualitative data from both this chapter and the previous one have demonstrated how and why such differences manifest themselves.

Elite interviews supported these contrasting findings between civil servants and TDs. One representative of a professional association active in the media industry spoke about how 'when you are going to [a civil servant] you are having more of a technical meeting... and I might bring a lawyer or a legal expert or an academic'.⁸⁶ Such a contrast was perhaps put forward even more starkly by an NGO representative from the building sector who, when comparing their approach to civil servants and TDs, noted that 'there would be different messages, you frame it differently, with civil servants you assume that they have time to read what you are going to write'.⁸⁷

In the last two chapters we have examined the determinants of access to both TDs and civil servants. The research design we have used has allowed us to examine these individually while also being able to make some interesting

⁸⁶ Interview carried out with professional association, in Dublin, on July 5th 2013.

⁸⁷ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on June 27th 2013.

comparisons between the two. Focusing on the second level of governance, the next two chapters will continue by looking at Irish interest group access to both European Commission Officials and Irish MEPs. These chapters will in the first instance look at access to the policymakers of interest. They will also allow two types of comparisons to be made. Firstly, between Commission Officials and MEPs and, secondly, between the national level and the EU level more generally.

CHAPTER 7: UNDERSTANDING ACCESS TO EU COMMISSION OFFICIALS

This chapter examines the ability of Irish interest groups to access EU Commission officials. Looking at national interest group lobbying of EU officials is significant in its own right as, traditionally, the literature has focused on lobbying by EU level associations. This is despite the fact that recent work has demonstrated that national associations are also active in lobbying on EU legislation, and in reasonably large numbers (Dür & Mateo, 2010; 2012).

Perhaps even more interestingly, our examination of access by national interest groups to EU officials (combined with the next chapter's focus on access to MEPs) will allow us to offer a direct comparison of the determinants of interest group access at the national and EU levels. The existing literature's overwhelming focus is on access at the EU level, with comparative work often limited to comparisons between different EU institutions (Bouwen, 2004; Eising 2007a; 2007b). While some work does take into account member state level lobbying, it tends to do so within the framework of 'multi-level governance', and hence examines national level lobbying, not in its own right, but instead only as part of an overall EU lobbying strategy (Beyers, 2002; Eising, 2004; Constantelos, 2007; Dür & Mateo, 2010; 2012).

In order to examine the determinants of interest group access, once again the concept of access will be split into three dimensions- 'ability to access', 'frequency of access' and 'invited access' and, in the first instance, analysed using data obtained from the same original interest group survey used in the previous two chapters. From a theoretical perspective, and as was outlined in detail in chapter three, 'expertise' is expected to be the most important determinant of access, due the combination of the Commission's complex regulatory remit and its relatively low staffing levels (Coen, 2007; Greenwood, 2007b; Dür, 2008a; Bouwen, 2009; Klüver, 2010; Chalmers, 2011).

Subsequent to the quantitative analysis of the survey's dataset, qualitative evidence, obtained via interviews with interest groups who lobby in Brussels

(often in conjunction with their work in Ireland) will also be introduced to provide greater clarity and depth to our findings. Finally, it should be noted that no policymaker survey data will be introduced in this chapter, as the response rate from Commission officials was too low to allow any kind of cogent analysis of this data.⁸⁸

Ability to Access

The previous two chapters have demonstrated that the vast majority of Irish interest groups are able to achieve at least some access to Irish TDs and civil servants across a 12-month period. When it comes to achieving access to EU Commission Officials, however, such a basic ability to achieve access is not apparent, as is seen in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Groups who had access to EU Commission Officials during the last 12 months (%)⁸⁹

Business Associations	22%
Citizens' Groups	0%
Farming Organisations	100%
Labour Organisations	27%
Large Firms	71%
NGOs	32%
Other	27%
Professional Associations	12%
Public Affairs Consultancies	50%
Overall	29%

Straight away, we can see that the number of Irish interest groups who have access to EU Commission officials is far lower than the corresponding figures for national civil servants and TDs. A certain proportion of this difference can be explained by interest groups simply not seeking access to the EU officials with the same frequency that they approach national level policymakers. In many cases, however, national interest groups would benefit from lobbying the EU Commission (due to the important role the EU has across numerous policy

⁸⁸ Out of the 20 EU Commission officials surveyed, all of whom were Assistants to the Director General in their respective Directorates-General, only two replied despite numerous reminders.

⁸⁹ Survey Question: "In the last 12 months have you met with and made representations directly to" (European Commission Officials).

areas), but simply do not have the resources to do so. Examples of this will be provided in the qualitative portion of this chapter.

Going beyond the aggregate data and making comparisons across groups, Table 7.1 shows that well resourced groups are better able to gain access to EU officials than other groups. 71% of large firms for instance have such access as compared to only 29% of groups generally. We may also note that 100% of farming organisations have access to Commission officials. This is unsurprising considering the importance of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to Irish farming interests. Of course, to properly investigate this question we will need to go beyond the descriptive statistics and carry out a logistic regression analysis of the determinants of access to Commission officials. This logistic regression analysis will use the same dataset as used in the previous chapters, with a dichotomous dependent variable measuring whether or not an interest group had access to an EU Commission official in the last 12 months being used as the dependent variable.

In terms of the independent variables of interest, as outlined above, our hypotheses lead us to believe that expertise, once again represented by public affairs staff size, will be the key variable of interest. The same control variables as used in the models in the previous chapters are once again introduced. These are membership size, general staff size, government experience percentage and a dichotomous variable which picks up whether or not an interest group has employed a consultancy group in the last 12 months. Interest group type is also included again as a categorical independent variable to pick up on any possible systematic biases between groups. In addition to these variables, a further control variable which picks up on whether or not an interest group has a Brussels office is also included. Groups with offices in Brussels can be expected to have more access to EU Commission officials independent of all other resources they may have at their disposal.

Table 7.2

Access to EU Commission Officials

	Model (1-Complete)	Model (2-IG Only)	Model (3-Resource Only)
Business Association	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	
Citizens' Group	-15.56 (1134)	15.31 (1200)	
Farmers' Group	17.24 (1400)	17.82 (1385)	
Labour Organisation	0.621 (0.962)	0.272 (0.766)	
Large Firm	2.400 (1.347)	2.169 (0.910)	
NGO	0.315 (0.539)	0.513 (0.446)	
Other	0.562 (0.778)	0.241 (0.685)	
Professional Association	-0.976 (0.823)	-0.740 (0.712)	
Public Affairs Consultancy	1.273 (1.369)	1.252 (0.727)	
Staff	0.013 (0.153)		0.182 (0.117)
Members	-0.131 (0.118)		-0.172 (0.102)
Public Affairs Staff	0.745 (0.264)		0.567 (0.230)
Government Experience (%)	-0.089 (0.170)		0.019 (0.149)
Brussels Office	1.479 (0.601)		1.405 (0.544)
Consultancy	-0.709 (0.605)		-0.231 (0.515)
N	172	185	172

Coefficients in bold are significant at the 95% level. Standard errors are in parentheses.

The standout result from these empirical models is the positive and statistically significant effect of public affairs staff on access to EU Commission officials. This is in line with our hypotheses. As expected, those with more public affairs staff are better able to meet the informational needs of Commission officials and, hence, are more likely to receive access to them. This finding holds up in both the complete model and in the resource only model.

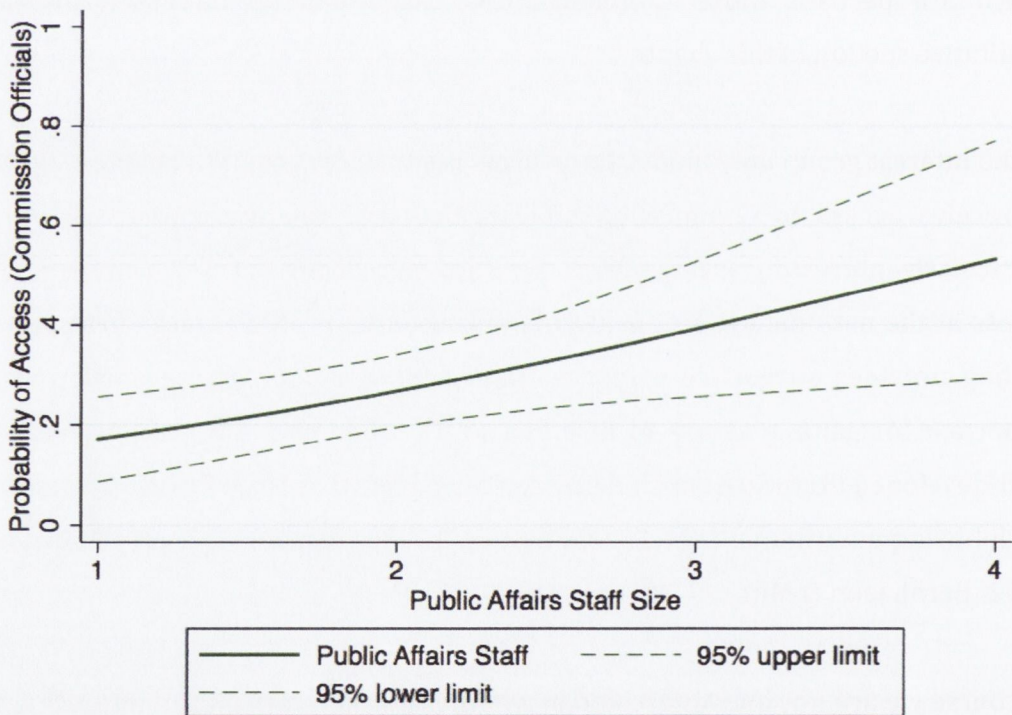
In terms of the control variables, only the presence of a Brussels office for the interest group increases the chance of that group having access to Commission officials in the complete model. There is a clear logic to this result, as groups with a Brussels office are, logistically speaking, likely to find it easier to gain access to Commission officials than groups without such an office. As interesting as this finding is in itself, however, it is the implications of it, particularly in terms of which groups are in a position to have such an office and which groups are not, which are perhaps most interesting. This issue will be discussed in the qualitative section of this chapter.

In the interest group only model, large firms are the only group to be more likely to receive access to Commission officials than the reference group. This is particularly interesting as large firms were not more likely to receive any type of access at the national level. Considering the resource profile of large firms, this finding provides suggestive evidence that financial resources are particularly important for gaining access to EU officials. This finding is also in line with a well-developed literature which discusses the power that large firms have in the EU lobbying environment (McLaughlin *et al*, 1993; Coen, 1997; 1998; Bouwen, 2002; Bernhagen & Mitchell, 2009; Vannoni, 2013).

Of course we are not only interested in whether our key variables of interest are statistically significant, but also in their substantive significance. We are, as always, particularly interested in the effect that public affairs staff size has on likelihood of accessing Commission officials. In order to investigate this, public affairs staff is varied from its minimum to its maximum while all other variables are kept at their mean.

Substantively speaking, we can say that an interest group with the minimum number of public affairs staff has only a 16% chance of receiving access to Commission officials in a 12 month period in our complete model and a 17% chance in our resource only model. By contrast, an interest group with the maximum number of public affairs staff has a 69% chance of receiving access to Commission officials during the same period in the complete model and a 58% chance in the resource only model. To further demonstrate this, Figure 7.1 plots, for the resource only model, the predicted probability of an interest group receiving access to Commission officials.

Figure 7.1 Effect of Public Affairs Staff Size on Likelihood of Access to EU Commission Officials



Frequency of Access

At the EU level interest groups are able to distinguish themselves simply by an ability to get access to Commission officials. This does not mean, however, we

are no longer interested in the frequency with which different groups are able to achieve access. The more frequently a group is able to achieve access the more power that are likely to have. In order to investigate this an ordinal logistic regression analysis was carried out. This analysis is presented in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3 Frequency of Access to EU Commission Officials

	Model (1-Complete)	Model (2-IG Only)	Model (3-Resource Only)
Business Association	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	
Citizens' Group	-16.31 (9.828)	-15.98 (0.000)	
Farmers' Group	3.683 (1.468)	4.059 (1.234)	
Labour Organisation	0.111 (0.809)	0.422 (0.639)	
Large Firm	2.102 (1.265)	1.423 (0.775)	
NGO	0.424 (4.814)	0.505 (0.413)	
Other	0.052 (0.768)	-0.135 (0.659)	
Professional Association	-0.539 (0.673)	-0.372 (0.598)	
Public Affairs Consultancy	1.262 (1.356)	1.448 (0.663)	
Staff	-0.112 (0.135)		0.018 (0.108)
Members	0.045 (0.099)		-0.018 (0.087)
Public Affairs Staff	0.807 (0.237)		0.727 (0.215)
Government Experience (%)	-0.002 (0.150)		0.007 (0.134)
Brussels Office	1.309 (0.529)		1.239 (0.491)
Consultancy	-0.670 (0.583)		-0.180 (0.470)
N	163	175	163

Coefficients in bold are significant at the 95% level. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Table 7.3 shows that the results from the ability to access models are backed up by this regression analysis. Firstly, we can note that interest groups with a Brussels office are likely to receive more frequent access to Commission officials than other groups in both the complete and resource only models. Perhaps more interestingly, however, we can note, in line with our hypothesis, that public affairs staff size has a positive and statistically significant effect on frequency of access to Commission officials. This relationship holds in both the complete and in the interest only model.

For other statistically significant relationships we need to turn to the interest group only model. This model suggests that farmers' groups are likely to receive more frequent access to Commission officials than the reference group. This finding is in line with a well-established literature which discusses the strength of the Irish farming lobby at the EU level; a strength which has much to do with the historical importance of the CAP to Irish farming interests (Adshead, 1996; Greer, 2005; O'Mahony, 2007).

In contrast, citizens' groups are likely to receive less frequent access to Commission officials. This is unsurprising for two reasons. Firstly, a national level citizens' group is unlikely to have the resources required to lobby Commission officials. And, secondly, citizens' groups are likely to find a more receptive audience to their arguments at the national level and hence are less likely to seek access to the EU Commission.

As per the previous empirical chapters, to demonstrate the effect of our key variables of interest, we need to consider not only their statistical significance, but also their substantive significance. In this regard, the substantive effect of public affairs staff size on frequency of access to Commission officials must be analyzed. Table 7.4 shows the predicated probabilities for frequency of access to Commission Officials when the public affairs staff variable is varied from its minimum to its maximum and all other variables are kept at their mean.

Table 7.4 Predicted Probabilities of Frequency of Access to EU Commission Officials

	None	Once	Twice	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Public Affairs Staff=1	79%	10%	5%	4%	1%	1%	1%
Public Affairs Staff=4 (Complete Model)	20%	16%	17%	23%	8%	9%	7%
Public Affairs Staff=1	79%	9%	4%	3%	1%	1%	1%
Public Affairs Staff=4 (Resource Only Model)	26%	17%	16%	20%	7%	7%	6%

1=Minimum, 4=Maximum

As we can see, the effect of additional public affairs staff on frequency of access to Commission officials is very large. For groups with a minimum number of public affairs staff, there is only a 21% chance that they will have *any contact* with Commission officials. Groups with the maximum number of public affairs staff, on the other hand, have between a 74% and an 80% chance of having some contact.

Groups with low numbers of public affairs staff, even if they do manage to have some contact with Commission officials, find it almost impossible to have regular contacts with only 6-7% of such groups likely to have contacts on at least a quarterly basis and 3% expected to have contacts on at least a monthly basis. By contrast, interest groups who are well resourced with public affairs staff have between a 40% chance in the resource only model and a 47% chance in the complete model of having at least quarterly contacts and a 24% chance of having at least monthly contacts. The disparity in terms of frequency of access to Commission officials between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', in terms of public affairs staffing levels, is thus very clear.

Invited Access

One of the innovations that we introduced in the previous chapters was the concept of 'invited access'. Invited access measures both whether an interest group was contacted directly by policymakers and the frequency with which they receive such contact. Such access, it was argued, was an even better measure of interest group power than 'regular' access. As such, invited access was more likely to result both in interest groups being listened to and, also, in being listened to early on in the policymaking process when interest group inputs are likely to have more of an effect on the direction of policy. In this section we will explore whether certain groups are more likely to receive invited access to EU Commission officials.

From a theoretical perspective, we would expect the same types of groups who had frequent access to Commission officials to also receive invited access. This proved to be the case when analyzing access to both TDs and civil servants. Perhaps a few words of warning are relevant here, however. While it was shown that it was relatively common practice for Irish based policymakers to contact Irish interest groups we cannot make the same assumptions about EU Commission officials. In the first instance, such officials deal with a far greater number of interest groups from all the EU member states, not to mention specific EU level associations. In addition to this, it is likely that in only a small number of cases will officials feel that it is necessary to specifically contact Irish interest groups when drafting legislation which will be applicable throughout the EU. While in Ireland national interest groups are effectively 'the only game in town', they are, at the EU level, often 'small fish in a big pond'. By way of illustration of this, we may note that less than 1% of the EU's population currently resides in Ireland.⁹⁰

Of course we do not simply need to make assumptions. We can also look at this question empirically. In this respect we can first present descriptive statistics

⁹⁰<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tps00001> [last accessed 31/07/2014].

which look at the percentage of Irish interest groups who receive invited access to EU Commission officials.

Table 7.5 Groups who were contacted directly by EU Commission Officials during last 12 months (%)⁹¹

Business Associations	13%
Citizens' Groups	25%
Farming Organisations	100%
Labour Organisations	9%
Large Firms	29%
NGOs	15%
Other	13%
Professional Associations	4%
Public Affairs Consultancies	10%
Overall	15%

The above table confirms the suspicions we outlined regarding the likelihood of Irish interest groups receiving invited access to EU Commission officials. In a 12-month period only 15% of groups receive such access. This is in contrast to the 53% of groups who receive such access to TDs and the 50% who receive such access to national level civil servants. Across a sample size of 185 this means that less than 30 groups who replied to our survey receive such access.

Despite the issues highlighted above it is still worth running a logistic regression analysis to see if our findings from the frequency of access models are confirmed. This regression analysis is displayed in Table 7.6.

⁹¹ Survey Question: "In the previous year have you been contacted directly by any of the following to seek your advice on a policy issue?" (European Commission Officials).

Table 7.6 **Invited Access to EU Commission Officials**

	Model (1-Complete)	Model (2-IG Only)	Model (3-Resource Only)
Business Associations	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	
Citizens' Group	0.708 (1.313)	0.773 (1.235)	
Farmers' Groups	1.804 (154.9)	18.44 (1.385)	
Labour Organisation	0.362 (1.043)	-0.431 (1.137)	
Large Firm	0.591 (1.442)	0.956 (0.945)	
NGO	0.033 (0.637)	0.167 (0.557)	
Other	-0.005 (0.967)	-0.000 (0.871)	
Professional Association	-1.539 (1.183)	-1.306 (1.111)	
Public Affairs Consultancy	-1.450 (1380)	-0.325 (1.142)	
Staff	0.026 (0.176)		0.063 (0.136)
Members	-0.017 (0.137)		-0.060 (0.119)
Public Affairs Staff	0.466 (0.310)		0.440 (0.271)
Government Experience (%)	0.113 (0.198)		0.042 (0.177)
Brussels Office	0.955 (0.641)		1.048 (0.576)
Consultancy	-0.319 (0.757)		-0.103 (0.617)
N	172	185	172

Coefficients in bold are significant at the 95% level. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Table 7.6 shows that while our main variable of interest, public affairs staff, has the expected positive sign in both relevant models, neither it, nor any other variables, are statistically significant. Considering both the evidence and the discussion above it would seem reasonable to conclude, not that expertise (as represented by public affairs staff size) is irrelevant for achieving invited access to EU Commission officials but, instead, that we simply do not have enough observations to be able to demonstrate that it does.

For scholars interested in exploring the determinants of invited access to EU Commission officials then, a different approach may need to be taken, particularly if they wish to explore the issue from a quantitative angle. Here we may mention examining the level of the invited access that EU level associations, (who are expected to receive much more such access than national interest groups) receive. Alternatively, interest groups from multiple countries could be looked at, so as to increase the number of observations.

For our purposes within this thesis, meanwhile, we are best off both focusing on the results obtained from the frequency of access models and supplementing these results with the qualitative data that was obtained via interviews with interest groups who are active at the EU level. It is to this qualitative data that we now turn.

Interview Evidence

The final section of this chapter will focus on analyzing the qualitative data we obtained through interviews with Irish interest groups. Such data is particularly important in this chapter as we are working with somewhat less quantitative data than we were in previous chapters. This qualitative data will allow us to examine a number of issues. Firstly, it will allow us to further explore our main finding from the quantitative section of the chapter, namely that expertise is the most important resource for gaining access to EU Commission officials. In addition to exploring this finding in more depth, we will also be able to explore other questions that are not quite as easy to explore quantitatively. Of most interest here will be an exploration of lobbying the EU Commission as a form of

'venue-shopping' and how some groups, in particular in the environmental sector, engage in such behaviour. Venue shopping, as outlined in chapter three, refers to the phenomenon whereby groups who may struggle to gain access to policymakers at one level, take their arguments to a different set of policymakers in the hope of finding a more receptive audience.

Value of Access to EU Commission Officials

Before we discuss how and why certain resources are important for gaining access to Commission officials, it is first worth pointing out why such access is important in the first instance. The European Commission is, admittedly, a somewhat weaker institution than it once was, as the introduction of the codecision procedure under the Maastricht Treaty and the subsequent amendments of this procedure in subsequent treaties, particularly the Lisbon Treaty, have given the European Parliament more power, at the expense of the Commission (Crombez, 2002; Jupille, 2007; Rasmussen, 2012).

Notwithstanding this fact, however, across our interviews, it was still the EU institution that interest groups argued was the most important to target. This argument was based on the fact that it is the EU Commission which has the sole right to propose legislation in the EU. This gives it significantly more power relative to the European Parliament than civil servants in the EU's member states have, relative to their national parliaments. Even after the various changes in EU legislative procedures that have been made, this right to initiate legislation has been retained. As a number of the interest groups interviewed pointed out, the best time to lobby on any issue is either when it is at its earliest point on the legislative cycle or, indeed, even before it has entered the legislative cycle at all. As one public affairs professional argued 'the really smart people lobby before the legislation is published'.⁹² Another lobbyist meanwhile, similarly described their own approach as focusing on lobbying at the earliest possible stage, stating that their overriding goal when lobbying was to 'try and shape, early on, the thinking for the drafting [by the Commission]'.⁹³

⁹² Interview carried out with Public Affairs consultant, in Dublin, on January 17th 2012.

⁹³ Interview carried out with Public Affairs consultant, in Dublin, on June 22nd 2013.

Such lobbyists know that if they are successful at influencing the Commission at such an early stage they can potentially set the legislative agenda rather than trying to react to (and change) an agenda that is already in place- at which point change becomes much more difficult. As legislation originates in the Commission, it is clearly the most important target for such pro-active lobbying.

Value of Expertise

Having established that access to Commission officials is valuable, we must now look at how, and why, groups are able to get such access. The quantitative evidence outlined how, in line with our hypothesis, groups with expertise receive more frequent access to Commission officials. The qualitative evidence both confirms this finding and, perhaps even more interestingly, also offers explanations for why it is the case. Perhaps the first aspect that needs to be mentioned here is the technical nature of legislation at the EU level. This was a point referred to by a number of interest groups, who noted that while dealing with issues in a technical way would happen when interacting with national level civil servants, conversations are even more technical with EU Commission officials.

Consistent with this idea, a number of interest groups pointed out that not only was policy at the EU level more technical, it was also more evidence based. As one NGO representative put it 'I think the evidence base in policy making is much more an expected term at the European level than in Ireland.'⁹⁴ A number of interest groups expressed the view that, while in Ireland certain interests may be able to 'get away with it' even if their arguments had little evidentiary support, at the EU level the Commission is unlikely to entertain any such arguments.

To lobby the EU Commission successfully then, interest groups need to ensure that they are able to use evidence effectively to make their case. In short, they need expertise. Indeed, expertise is even more important for interest groups than it otherwise would be, because the technical nature of legislation is compounded by the fact that the Commission is considerably understaffed. Of

⁹⁴ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on June 20th 2013.

course, for groups who do have such expertise this can present an opportunity for them, and allow them to achieve more access to Commission officials than they otherwise would. As one representative of a lobbying consultancy put it, the Commission is 'massively understaffed, which sometimes works to your advantage because they then require all these people to come in to meet them which makes them more accessible because they need people to come in and tell them what to do and to take their expertise'.⁹⁵

Another representative of a different lobbying consultancy expressed similar sentiments when he opined that 'if you really want to succeed [with the Commission] you draft alternative texts'.⁹⁶ Such a view was not confined to lobbying consultancies either. An environmental NGO, for instance, noted how they had become much more successful in gaining access to Commission officials since they had hired somebody who was working on a PhD in the specific area they were lobbying on. This staff member had the expertise, not only to 'know where the Commission stood on the issue' but also to be able to sit down with them and propose possible amendments to the legislation.⁹⁷

Expense of Expertise

At the same time as the value of expertise is recognised for gaining access to European Commission officials, so too must we recognise the cost of obtaining this expertise. On one level, this cost is very obvious. Public affairs staff represent a business expense for interest groups. We might also note that such staff are especially costly at the EU level. As one public affairs representative put it, when compared to Ireland 'employing people in Belgium is outrageously expensive'.⁹⁸ On top of the expensiveness of staff meanwhile, there are also all of the related costs that are involved when an interest group seeks to establish a permanent presence in Brussels. As we have seen from the quantitative data, groups who are able to do so are likely to receive much more frequent access to Commission officials, hence groups who have the resources to establish such a presence are at

⁹⁵ Interview carried out with Public Affairs consultant, in Dublin, on June 22nd 2013.

⁹⁶ Interview carried out with Public Affairs consultant, in Dublin, on January 17th 2012.

⁹⁷ Interview carried out with NGO representative, via Skype, on July 2nd 2013.

⁹⁸ Interview carried out with Public Affairs consultant, in Dublin, on February 3rd 2011.

a clear advantage. For groups who lack significant expertise and/or a presence in Brussels, gaining access to Commission officials can be very difficult, a situation they themselves are not slow to recognise. As one public affairs professional put it, rather simply, 'I don't do lobbying in Brussels. It is massively manpower intensive.'⁹⁹

Other interest group representatives, meanwhile, contrasted the relative effort required to lobby the Commission with lobbying at the domestic level. A representative of a professional association in the education sector, for instance, spoke about how he could 'make a few phone calls and get access- that's the case in Dublin-but it's very very difficult to get through the bureaucracy in the Commission- I have been effective in an Irish context but I am completely ineffective in the European context'.¹⁰⁰

Without the resources to either establish a base in Brussels or to consistently demonstrate relevant expertise, an interest group such as this will struggle to gain much access to the Commission. Indeed, a number of interest groups remarked that they themselves were aware of this, and hence adapted their behaviour accordingly. As one NGO put it, referring to lobbying the Commission, 'we would, I think, if we had more resources, do it a bit more'.¹⁰¹

The expense of expertise may also mean that certain types of interest groups may be advantaged in their ability to pursue access opportunities at the Commission level. In this respect, we may note that the quantitative evidence found that large firms were more likely to be able to gain access to Commission officials than other types of interest groups. Data obtained from our qualitative interviews further supports such a finding. An NGO representative, for instance, contrasted the 'very weak' community and voluntary sector at the EU level which has 'never had a way through [to the Commission]', to 'corporate bodies', a great

⁹⁹ Interview carried out with Public Affairs consultant, in Dublin, on January 17th 2012.

¹⁰⁰ Interview carried out with Professional Association representative, in Dublin, on June 25th 2013.

¹⁰¹ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin, on July 10th 2013.

many which appear to have European headquarters and which are 'very well resourced around how you lobby [the Commission]'.¹⁰²

Venue Shopping

The final point that needs to be made with regards to lobbying the European Commission is the venue shopping potential it provides. 'Venue shopping', as has already been outlined, refers to the phenomenon by which interest groups who may struggle to find a sympathetic ear in certain political institutions, seek to take their case to other institutions where they may get more of a hearing.

Interestingly, of all the different types of interest groups interviewed, the only type of group which consistently engaged in venue shopping were environmental groups. A number of Irish environmental groups both documented the difficulties they face in lobbying at the national level, and the success they had had in lobbying the Commission. As one environmental group quite stridently put it, 'the Irish government is a prisoner of vested interests, of landowners and of farmers lobbying organisations'.¹⁰³ Such anti-environmental sentiment has led, environmental groups argue, to Ireland failing to properly implement EU legislation such as the birds and habitats directive or regulations regarding the extraction of turf. Indeed, in some cases, implementation has been so poor that Ireland has been successfully prosecuted at the European Court of Justice for failing to comply with EU environmental law.¹⁰⁴

In contrast to the difficulties they report facing in Ireland, environmental groups were quick to point out that the European Commission is very receptive to their input. With regards to turf extraction, for instance, one environmental group described how they were encouraged by the Commission to carry out a satellite survey of the areas in which the turf extraction was allegedly taking place and the effect that it was having on the environment. This survey ultimately resulted in EU legislation outlawing turf extraction in certain bogs.

¹⁰² Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin on June 17th 2013.

¹⁰³ Interview carried out with NGO representative, in Dublin on June 26th 2013.

¹⁰⁴ Please see <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/liste.jsf?language=en&num=C-418/04> [last accessed 31/07/2014].

More generally speaking, Irish environmental interest groups continually stressed that if they wished to lobby on legislation, they would, as much as possible, go straight to Europe with their concerns, as they felt they were effectively wasting their time lobbying at the national level. As one interest group representative remarked 'most environmentalists working in Ireland today would say that there has been [sic] no advancements in environmental protection in the past 15 years that haven't flooded directly from Europe'.¹⁰⁵

The final point we may make with relation to venue shopping, and its use by Irish interest groups, is what it tells us about the relative power of politicians and bureaucrats at the domestic and European levels. At the national level, while civil servants have a role in policy formulation, their main purpose is to implement policy, while TDs set and drive the agenda. In such a policy making climate it is perhaps unsurprising that environmental groups struggle to make headway. The primary beneficiaries of strong environmental legislation are endangered species and future generations. Neither vote in national elections. The costs of imposing such legislation often fall on those who do vote in such elections, however.

By contrast, at the EU level, the European Commission has the sole right to initiate legislation. Commission officials have no such incentives to pay attention to an electorate. Their incentives are generally aligned with expanding the scope of regulations under their oversight (Pollack, 1994; 2000). In addition to this, while democratically elected MEPs do have the ability to amend legislation put forward by the Commission, there are reasons to believe they do not face the same level of electoral pressure as domestic politicians. This will be considered in depth in the next chapter.

Conclusion

There are two standout quantitative findings from this chapter. The first is that groups with a Brussels office are more likely to have access and likely to have

¹⁰⁵ Interview carried out with NGO representative, via Skype on July 2nd 2013.

more frequent access to European Commission officials. This is a finding which makes sense from a logistical perspective. The second is that groups with more expertise, as represented by having more public affairs staff, are more likely to have access and likely to have more frequent access than groups with fewer such resources. This finding is in accordance with our theoretical hypotheses. While no resources were associated with groups likelihood of receiving invited access, this result can perhaps most simply be explained by noting that a very small number of Irish interest groups receive such access.

The qualitative sections of this chapter allowed us, in the first instance, to add some depth to these findings. We were able to note, for instance, how an ability to get more access to European Commission officials is of particular value to interest groups, due to the Commission's key role in EU level policymaking. The interview evidence also allowed us to corroborate our finding that expertise is of particular importance to gaining access to Commission officials, with a number of our interviews highlighting how and why expertise is crucial in this respect. Furthermore, the interview evidence also allowed us to highlight something that was argued earlier on in this thesis, namely that not only is expertise important, it is also costly to obtain. Groups who are more well endowed with financial resources are, thus, more likely to be able obtain valuable expertise than groups who are not so well endowed.

The qualitative section of this chapter also allowed us to explore one other interesting phenomenon, that of venue shopping. This analysis allowed us to examine how Irish environmental groups who, in their own words, have often struggled to gain access to national policymakers, have been able to advance their agenda by gaining access to Commission officials. Such officials have traditionally been more willing to grant access to such interest groups than policymakers at the national level. Such a finding, it is argued, illustrates how the incentive structure of policymakers at the EU level is somewhat different to the incentive structure of policymakers at the national level. This is a topic which will be considered in more detail in the next chapter, which focuses on MEP lobbying.

CHAPTER 8: UNDERSTANDING ACCESS TO IRISH MEPs

As was outlined in some detail in chapter three, of all policymakers examined in this study, the ones whose incentives are least clear are MEPs. On the one hand they do contest democratic elections and, hence, could be expected to be responsive to interest groups who were able to provide them electorally relevant information. This includes the preferences of significant numbers of voters. On the other hand, however, as a number of scholars have pointed out, these are generally considered 'second order elections' and are not tied to issues of European policy (Norris, 1997; Marsh, 1998; Hix, 2005; Follesdal & Hix, 2006). When we add the fact that the European policy is rarely put under the same type of scrutiny as national legislation, we can see why the same type of democratic responsiveness that we found when examining access to TDs might not necessarily be found when examining access to MEPs.

In the absence of clear and universal incentives then, we expect MEPs may fall into a number of different categories depending on what their own aspirations and goals are. Depending on what category they fall into, we can expect MEPs to be in demand of different types of inputs from interest groups. For example, MEPs who wish to build a legislative reputation for themselves within the European Parliament will need expertise. On the other hand, MEPs who see the European Parliament as a possible stepping stone to the Dáil will want to know the preferences of future voters- and hence can be expected to pay attention to interest groups with large memberships. A third possible scenario may be the MEP for whom the European Parliament is the last port of call before retirement. Such MEPs might not be expected to grant much in the way of access to interest groups of any kind, regardless of the inputs they are able to offer.

While acknowledging that the varied incentives that MEPs face make analysis of determinants of access particularly difficult in this case, this chapter will nevertheless seek to broach this subject in a number of ways. Firstly, the chapter will look quantitatively at whether any interest group resources are systematically associated with ability to access, frequency of access, or invited

access to MEPs. This analysis will allow us to see if any resources are systematically associated with access across *all* MEPs. It will of course not allow us to make distinctions between different possible categories of MEPs such as those outlined above.

The second section of the chapter will look at data obtained from a survey of MEPs. This survey will allow us to look both at what level of access MEPs grant different types of interest groups and, also, what type of resources MEPs think are particularly important for gaining access to them.

The third and final section of this chapter looks at our qualitative interview data. This includes both data obtained from interest group interviews and, perhaps even more interestingly, from interviews carried out with three of the twelve Irish MEPs who were in office between 2009 and May 2014.¹⁰⁶ These MEPs were from three different political parties and at three different stages in their political careers. These interviews will help us explore further the question of how different MEPs may be in demand of different inputs.

Ability to Access

The previous chapters have demonstrated that Irish interest groups are generally able to get access to domestic level policymakers, should they wish to do so, but have more difficulty when it comes to gaining access to Commission officials. As MEPs split their time between Brussels and their national constituencies, we can expect that they lie somewhere in between the two in this regard. The below table displays the percentage of interest groups who gained access to MEPs over a 12-month period.

¹⁰⁶ All interviews were carried out prior to the latest European Elections on May 22nd 2014.

Table 8.1 Groups who had access to MEPs during the last 12 months (%)¹⁰⁷

Business Associations	29%
Citizens' Groups	25%
Farming Organisations	100%
Labour Organisations	45%
Large Firms	43%
NGOs	45%
Other	33%
Professional Associations	20%
Public Affairs Consultancies	50%
Overall	38%

The above table confirms our hypothesis that interest groups are more likely to receive access to MEPs than to Commission officials, but substantially less likely to receive access to such actors than to domestic level policymakers. We can see that all of the farming organisations in our sample receive some level of access to MEPs across a 12-month period. This finding, especially when combined with data from the previous chapter, which demonstrated that all farming organisations also receive some access to Commission officials, further demonstrates that the Irish farming lobby is an active force at the EU level. As was already highlighted in chapter seven, this finding is consistent with the well-developed literature on the strength of Irish farmers' organisations in Brussels (Adshead, 1996; Greer, 2005; O'Mahony, 2007).

Looking at other types of interest groups, we can see that in every case, no more than 50% of such groups have any access to MEPs in a 12-month period. A number of factors are most likely to be at work here. On one level, for a reasonable number of interest groups, national policy is likely to be their only focus and as such they do not even seek out access opportunities to MEPs. For others, with only 12 Irish MEPs and with these MEPs spending most of their time in Brussels, they may simply not have the resources to get access to them. The most interesting question to ask then is, building on the discussion at the outset of this chapter, whether any resources are associated with the ability to access

¹⁰⁷ Survey Question: In the last 12 months have you met with and made representations directly to MEPs?

Irish MEPs. To this end, we ran a logistic regression analysis, using the same models as used in the previous chapters.

Table 8.2**Ability to Access MEPs**

	Model (1-Complete)	Model (2-IG Only)	Model (3-Resource Only)
Business Associations	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	
Citizens' Group	-0.136 (1.230)	-0.198 (1.201)	
Farmers' Groups	17.01 (1630)	16.47 (840.3)	
Labour Organisation	0.543 (0.814)	0.719 (0.689)	
Large Firm	0.032 (1.146)	0.613 (0.832)	
NGO	0.641 (0.452)	0.685 (0.413)	
Other	0.525 (0.667)	0.495 (0.621)	
Professional Association	-0.600 (0.642)	-0.486 (0.599)	
Public Affairs Consultancy	17.59 (1380)	0.901 (0.713)	
Staff	0.047 (0.135)		0.050 (0.106)
Members	0.076 (0.096)		0.030 (0.083)
Public Affairs Staff	0.052 (0.227)		0.066 (0.203)
Government Experience (%)	0.073 (0.146)		0.152 (0.128)
Brussels Office	0.587 (0.544)		0.445 (0.505)
Consultancy	0.262 (0.544)		0.187 (0.436)
N	172	185	172

Coefficients in bold are significant at the 95% level. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Table 8.2 shows that, while all of the resources in these models have the expected positive sign, not one is statistically significant in either the complete model or the resource only model. Indeed, across all three models, not one variable, be it an interest group type variable or a resource variable, is statistically significant. These findings would suggest that no one resource is particularly crucial for gaining access to MEPs.

Frequency of Access

Of course it is possible that while no one variable is systematically associated with an ability to access MEPs, certain variables may be associated with the frequency with which groups are able to access MEPs. We saw in earlier chapters, for instance, that while TDs were quite open to meeting all types of interest groups and hence there were no systematic biases in terms of *ability to access*, once *frequency of access* was examined it was clear that groups with larger memberships received more access. An ordinal logistic regression analysis was therefore carried out which looked at whether any of the independent variables of interest were associated with more frequent access to MEPs. Again, the same models were used in this analysis as were used when examining frequency of access to other policymakers in previous chapters.

Table 8.3**Frequency of Access to MEPs**

	Model (1-Complete)	Model (2-IG Only)	Model (3-Resource Only)
Business Associations	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	
Citizens' Group	-0.318 (1.280)	-0.264 (1.229)	
Farmers' Groups	2.359 (1.537)	3.735 (1.363)	
Labour Organisation	-0.072 (0.728)	0.309 (0.609)	
Large Firm	-0.057 (1.116)	0.772 (0.772)	
NGO	0.608 (0.427)	0.674 (0.380)	
Other	0.466 (0.622)	0.337 (0.574)	
Professional Association	-1.089 (0.621)	-0.732 (0.554)	
Public Affairs Consultancy	2.216 (1.014)	1.027 (0.666)	
Staff	0.045 (0.122)		0.053 (0.099)
Members	0.145 (0.083)		0.057 (0.077)
Public Affairs Staff	0.192 (0.209)		0.190 (0.191)
Government Experience (%)	0.017 (0.137)		0.074 (0.121)
Brussels Office	1.028 (0.489)		0.831 (0.476)
Consultancy	0.493 (0.449)		0.370 (0.403)
N	161	173	161

Coefficients in bold are significant at the 95% level. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Looking first at the comparisons between interest groups, we can first note that, in the complete model, public affairs consultancies are likely to receive more frequent access to MEPs than the reference group. It would appear sensible to suggest that this is for the same reason that they receive more access to TDs in the corresponding model, namely that while other interest groups have a variety of purposes, consultancies tend to focus on lobbying. Such consultancies are, therefore, likely to receive more access to MEPs than other types of equivalently resourced interest groups. The interest group only model also reports that farmers groups are likely to have more frequent access. Again, this supports the argument that Irish farming organizations are a force to be reckoned with at the EU level.

Without wishing to downplay these findings, perhaps even more interestingly, are the results that examine the impact of the resource variables of interest. While all resource variables in the model have the expected positive sign, only the Brussels office variable is statistically significant. As already mentioned, running a Brussels office is a substantial cost, thus representing a significant hurdle to overcome for any group who wishes to use this strategy to gain more frequent access to their MEPs.

The fact that no other resource variable is statistically significant in the complete model is perhaps even more noteworthy. Considering the differing motivations and incentives of MEPs that we outlined earlier in this chapter, this lack of statistically significant findings is perhaps unsurprising. From a democratic perspective, however, it is also somewhat worrying. At the national level, both groups who are well resourced in terms of either the members they represent or the expertise they are able to provide, have policymaking outlets which privilege them in terms of the frequency of access they provide. At the EU level, however, as we saw in the previous chapter, groups with significant expertise at their disposal still have an outlet, and receive considerably more frequent access to EU Commission officials. However, for groups whose comparative advantage lies in their number of members (and hence voters), no such outlet seems to exist. MEPs, who would be most likely to be expected to be responsive to the

representativeness, do not appear to privilege such a resource, at least in the aggregate.

Invited Access

This thesis has argued, throughout, that invited access is perhaps an even better indicator of interest group power than simple frequency of access, and hence is a very useful metric to use. As we saw in the last chapter, however, invited access is only a really useful metric to compare groups if a reasonable number of groups receive such access.

It is useful then to first present descriptive statistics which outline the extent to which interest groups receive such invited access to Irish MEPs.

Table 8.4 Groups who were contacted directly by Irish MEPs during last 12 months (%)¹⁰⁸

Business Associations	13%
Citizens' Groups	25%
Farming Organisations	67%
Labour Organisations	18%
Large Firms	14%
NGOs	23%
Other	13%
Professional Associations	12%
Public Affairs Consultancies	10%
Overall	18%

Table 8.4 shows that, while a marginally higher percentage of groups receive invited access to MEPs relative to Commission officials (18% vs 15%), the figure is still far lower than what was reported for domestic level policymakers. Notwithstanding this, it is still worth carrying out a logistic regression analysis to investigate if, on this metric, there are any systematic differences between interest groups.

¹⁰⁸ In the previous year have you been contacted directly by any of the following to seek your advice on a policy issue? (MEPs).

Table 8.5**Invited Access to MEPs**

	Model (1-Complete)	Model (2-IG Only)	Model (3-Resource Only)
Business Associations	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	
Citizens' Group	1.030 (1.276)	0.773 (1.235)	
Farmers' Groups	1.710 (1.580)	2.565 (1.301)	
Labour Organisation	0.362 (1.043)	0.368 (0.896)	
Large Firm	-1.277 (1.479)	0.080 (1.166)	
NGO	0.532 (0.578)	0.668 (0.528)	
Other	-0.133 (0.922)	-0.000 (0.871)	
Professional Association	-0.095 (0.803)	-0.121 (0.756)	
Public Affairs Consultancy	-14.75 (1384)	-0.325 (1.142)	
Staff	0.257 (0.153)		0.183 (0.124)
Members	-0.026 (0.117)		-0.016 (0.105)
Public Affairs Staff	-0.095 (0.283)		0.094 (0.253)
Government Experience (%)	0.048 (0.182)		-0.038 (0.165)
Brussels Office	0.380 (0.656)		0.269 (0.609)
Consultancy	-0.670 (0.583)		-0.442 (0.591)
N	172	185	172

Coefficients in bold are significant at the 95% level. Standard errors are in parentheses.

In line with the findings from our earlier models, none of the resources examined are associated with a greater likelihood of receiving invited access to MEPs. Indeed, the only significant finding from these set of findings is that farmers groups are more likely to receive invited access than the reference group in the interest group model. This further supports the previously discussed argument that farmers groups are particularly strong at the European level.

The regression models that have been run thus far in this chapter have demonstrated that none of the resources of interest are systematically associated with greater access (of any kind) to Irish MEPs. In order to further examine what *is* important for gaining access to MEPs then, we will have to look at different kinds of evidence. In this respect, both data from a survey of MEPs and qualitative interview evidence, drawn from interviews with both interest groups and MEPs, will be used. It is to this policymaker survey data that we now turn.

Policymaker Data

This section will present descriptive data based on an original survey of Irish MEPs. This survey asked the same questions of MEPs that it did of TDs and national level civil servants. Respondents were thus asked about the frequency with which they grant access to different types of groups and the resources they felt were most important for gaining access to them. Surveys were sent to all twelve Irish MEPs and responses were received from five, for a response rate of 42%. While, of course, we must be wary of over concluding from five responses, some interesting insights can nevertheless be gleaned from this data.

Frequency of Access

MEPs were first asked how often each type of group received access to lobby them in the previous 12 months. The response options that they had were 'Never', 'Once', 'Twice', 'Quarterly', 'Monthly', 'Fortnightly', 'Weekly' and 'Daily', thereby providing a 0-7 scale. The bar chart below illustrates the responses received.

Figure 8.1
MEPs

Frequency of Access Granted by

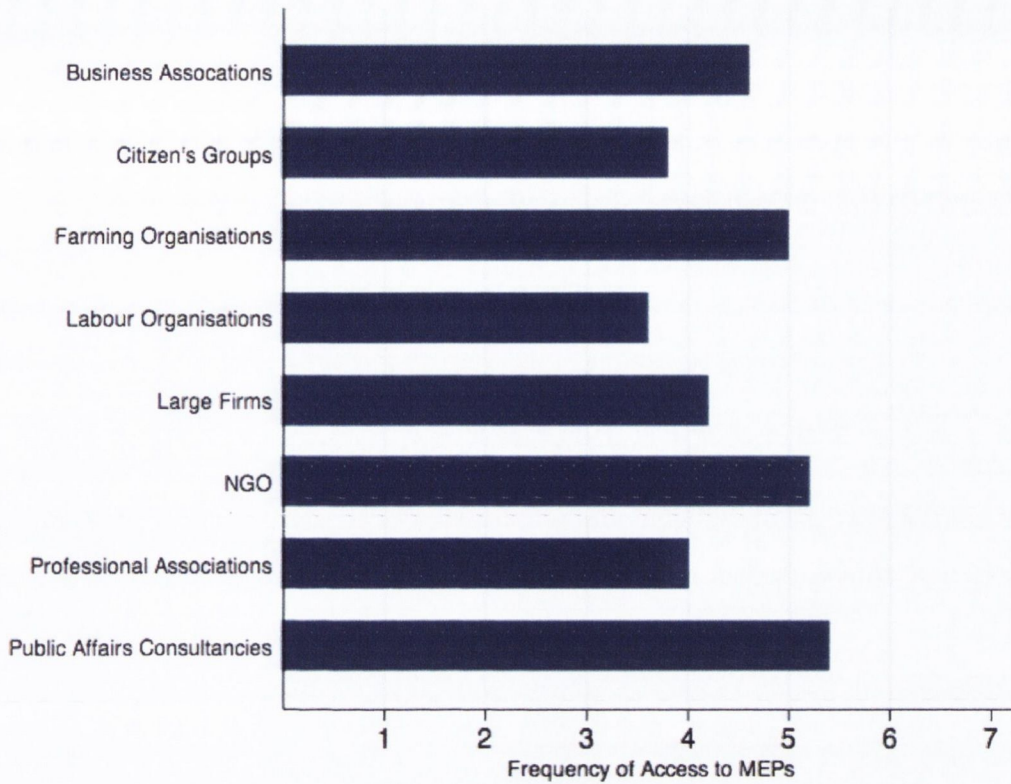


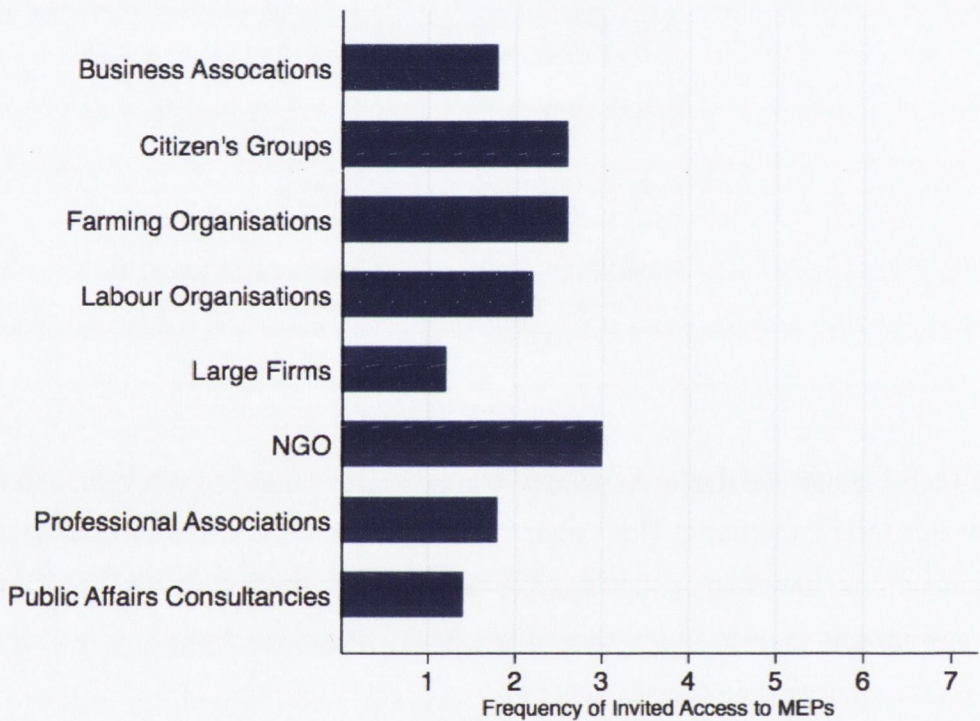
Figure 8.1 suggests that access appears to be reasonably evenly distributed between interest groups. The range on the 0-7 scale, is between 3.6 (labour organisations) and 5.4 (public affairs consultancies). This translates into contact once every few months in the case of labour organizations and every few weeks for public affairs consultancies. That MEPs report labour organizations receiving the least frequent access is perhaps unsurprising, given the historical weakness of labour at the European level (Streeck, 1992; Hansen, 2005; Hyman, 2005; Daly, 2006). That MEPs report that public affairs consultancies receive the most access to them is perhaps more difficult to explain (and of course we need to remember that this finding needs to be placed in the context of it being based on only five survey responses). What it does seem to demonstrate, though, is that MEPs are much more in need of such consultancies than their national level counterparts. This is perhaps unsurprising considering both the scale and complexity of legislation at the EU level, and the limited time MEPs have in their constituencies. Public affairs consultancies may thus be able to act as 'middlemen', bringing particularly important issues to MEPs attention, and using

their knowledge of the EU system to do so at the appropriate time in the legislative cycle.

Frequency of Invited Access

Beyond the frequency with which they are lobbied, MEPs were also asked how frequently they sought the advice of different types of interest groups.

Figure 8.2 Frequency of Invited Access Granted by MEPs



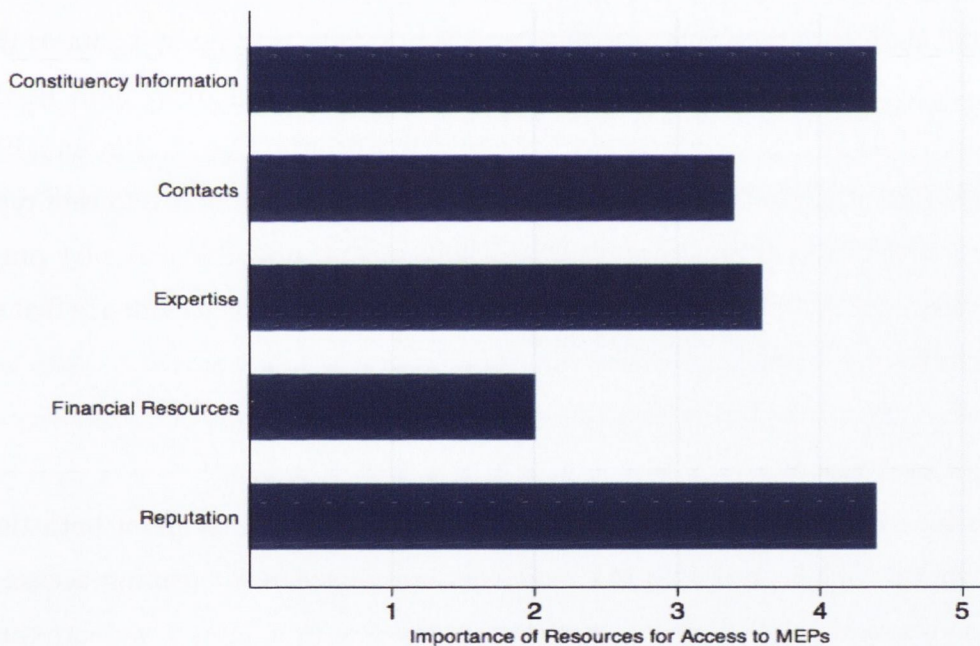
A number of observations can be made from Figure 8.2. The first worth noting is that despite receiving reasonably frequent access, public affairs consultancies receive quite limited invited access. This is in line with our findings from our surveys of national level policymakers and suggests that MEPs are also more likely to go 'straight to source' rather than going through consultancy firms when seeking out information. This could be for two reasons. On one hand MEPs may simply choose to bypass such consultants when seeking information as they view them as unnecessary middlemen. Alternatively, it may be the case that public affairs consultancies are so proactive in their lobbying of MEPs that MEPs know that they do not need to approach them, as these consultancies will be sure to bring any relevant information to their attention.

The other observation is that, as would be expected from our analysis of the interest group survey earlier in the chapter, few groups receive particularly frequent invited access. Only 'NGOs' receive quarterly invited access on average and it should be remembered that this would likely be split between a significant number of interest groups.¹⁰⁹

Importance of Resources

Along with their level of contact with different types of groups, MEPs were also asked about the resources they felt were important for gaining access to them. The bar chart below displays MEPs responses when asked to rate the importance of various resources for gaining access to them on a 1-5 scale (1= Of No Importance, 5= Extremely Important).

Figure 8.3 Importance of Resources for Gaining Access To MEPs



A number of observations can be made based on Figure 8.3. Firstly, in general, MEPs consider both constituency information and reputation as very important for access. This importance of reputation is a further sign that MEPs have limited time within which to meet Irish interest groups and hence are looking for

¹⁰⁹ It is worth remembering, for instance, that there are 65 NGOs in our interest group database, more than any other interest group type.

shortcuts to identify which groups are best to meet. Of course it is worth noting that the importance of 'reputation' does create barriers to entry for groups who may not already have an established reputation. This may also help to explain why MEPs spend a lot of time speaking to public affairs consultancies, as their work on European legislation may have allowed them to build up a reputation over time.

The importance of constituency information, meanwhile, demonstrates that the re-election incentive is not totally absent from MEPs motivations. Of the five MEPs who replied to the survey, four considered constituency information a very important resource for interest groups who sought access to them. Interestingly, however, one of the MEPs considered constituency information of very little importance for gaining access to them. This same MEP considered expertise as being extremely important for gaining access. While we once again need to be careful about reaching overly strong conclusions from such limited data as this, we do find evidence of exactly the phenomenon we described both in this chapter and in the theoretical discussion in chapter three. That is, different MEPs have different goals and motivations, and hence are in demand of different types of resources from interest groups. To explore further how this may play out in practice, qualitative interview evidence is required. It is to such evidence that we now turn.

Interview Evidence

In order to best illustrate the variation between MEPs in terms of both their motivations and in terms of the resources most needed for gaining access to them, this section will focus on considering evidence from interviews with three Irish MEPs, looking at each one in turn. The reason each is examined in turn is that it was clear that the MEPs differed quite significantly in their motivations. This, in turn, meant that they differed quite significantly in terms of the information they were in demand of from interest groups.

The first such interview was with 'MEP A', an MEP who stated that their motivations were to carve out a long-term career as a pro-active legislator at the

EU level. Of course, it needs to be recognised that in order to do this, it will be first necessary to continue to win re-election to the European Parliament. However, as was discussed in chapter three, the European Parliament is rarely subject to substantive media scrutiny in the member states, and Ireland is no exception to this (Weiler *et al*, 1995; Culpepper 2010). As long as an MEP is able to maintain a sufficiently positive personal profile then, and is able to rely on a well-organised campaign team at election time, they have quite significant flexibility to pursue 'their own path' while in the Parliament and still achieve re-election.

For MEPs such as MEP A, who seek to become pro-active legislators, it is clear that the resource they are most in need of is expertise. This is something they themselves recognise, either implicitly or explicitly. This was illustrated, by MEP A, in the basic example they gave of 'good' and 'bad' practice, when it came to attempting to lobby them. In this respect, a contrast was made between a professional association who 'couldn't even say the name of the directive' and a business association who 'know the system, know how amendments are tabled'.¹¹⁰ Of course, to obtain this knowledge, a certain degree of expertise is required.

Furthermore, in order to really be useful to an MEP such as this one (and hence be more likely to be granted both frequent and invited access), it is necessary to go further than simply 'knowing the system'. For example, MEP A stressed the importance of getting in early to make representations. This will allow the MEP themselves to consider the interest groups concerns and, if necessary, help them identify the key players with regard to that piece of legislation and put them in contact with them. Of course, in order to ensure you are doing this, you need sufficient resources to follow closely the legislative agenda of the European Parliament.

To be even more useful, meanwhile, interest groups must go beyond simply engaging in the pro-active monitoring of the European Parliament described

¹¹⁰ Interview carried out with MEP, in Brussels, on February 29th 2012.

above. What they must do in this regard is to also provide solutions. It is not enough for an interest group to simply tell an MEP that they are not happy with a particular piece of legislation. They will also need to have the ability to draft a realistic amendment. Such an amendment, for it to be taken seriously, will need to consider all of the relevant costings, technical issues and political impacts. Of course, to do this effectively clearly requires a certain degree of expertise. Interestingly, groups that do have this expertise stressed that MEPs generally were much more receptive to their input in this regard than domestic level policymakers. As one professional lobbyist put it:

Lobbyists would have more control over the legislative process in Brussels than [in Ireland]. I will sit down and write an amendment to a piece of legislation, give it to an MEP, get them on board, they then either copy paste the amendment or take the spirit of the amendment and use their own wording and then bring it forward.¹¹¹

Furthermore, the interest groups particularly best placed to become privileged interlocutors for such MEPs are groups who have sufficient resources to engage in so called 'soft lobbying'. This involves interest groups providing information to policymakers without seeking to influence any particular piece of legislation at that point of time.

An illustrative example of this was provided by MEP A. They remarked that they had been to lunch that day along with 10 other MEPs and four representatives of the global alcoholic drinks company, Diageo. At this lunch Diageo were not lobbying on a specific issue, but, instead, engaging in 'soft lobbying' and bolstering their reputation for expertise by providing four experts on alcohol policy who were able to answer all of the MEP's questions regarding existing and prospective legislation. MEP A was happy to admit that as a result of this meeting they would be much more likely to grant access to Diageo (or to even contact Diageo directly) should legislation be proposed that would effect the drinks industry. The provision of expertise then, which requires no small outlay on public affairs staff, can be clearly seen as crucial for access to such MEPs.

¹¹¹ Interview carried out with Public Affairs consultant, in Dublin, on February 3rd, 2011.

Turning now to MEP B, it can be noted that this MEP was keen to stress that they did not privilege expertise. In contrast to MEP A, this MEP came from a party on the left of the political spectrum and in their eyes, 'expertise' was something that was tied up with the financial resources that 'corporate' and 'big business' interests had at their disposal. Interestingly, this MEP noted that despite their publicly proclaimed political ideology 'we still get phone calls all the time [from corporate lobbyists] looking to meet up'.¹¹² MEP B noted, however, that he simply would not meet such interests. Such groups would not be this politician's natural constituency regardless of the political environment. It is perhaps difficult to imagine, however, that they would be able to flat out refuse to speak to them in a more competitive electoral environment.

What the European Parliament would appear to allow MEPs to do, therefore, at least when compared to more competitive domestic parliaments, is to give them more freedom to pursue their own agenda. On one level, we might even see this in a positive light as it does mean that MEPs are better able to focus on policy issues than they are at the domestic level. As was discussed in chapter five, the huge pressure TDs feel to look after the interests of their constituents means that they can struggle to develop legislative expertise. With such pressures less keenly felt at the EU level, MEPs have more of a chance to develop such expertise, should they so wish.

This 'freedom' also has a downside to it however. Most obviously in this respect, it clearly demonstrates that there is there is a lower level of democratic responsiveness amongst Irish MEPs when compared to their domestic level counterparts. Indeed, this very issue was brought up by the aforementioned MEP, and spoken about in negative terms. In this MEP's eyes the parliament was merely 'giving the impression that the EU is really democratic'.¹¹³ The MEP further added that MEPs were often 'very removed from peoples' real concerns' and dealt with issues that were 'not very comprehensible to people'.¹¹⁴ This can lead to a situation whereby legislation may go through the Parliament without

¹¹² Interview carried out with MEP, in Brussels, on February 29th 2012.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

there being a real engagement with the public at large over its implications. This MEP cited the liberalisation of postal services as an issue which was pushed through the Parliament by 'business friendly' MEPs without proper consultation. In MEP B's eyes, this legislation would have been opposed by the European electorate had they been more aware of the legislation and more able to channel their concerns through the democratic process.

Both the relative flexibility of MEPs, and their diminished democratic responsiveness when compared to national politicians, are points worth stressing. At the same time though, it is important to note that while voters may be less important to MEPs than they are to TDs, they are not irrelevant.

Indeed, this is perhaps best illustrated by our third MEP interview. MEP C outlined how politicians who are able to develop a reputation for 'looking after people's problems' will always be able to use this to their advantage when seeking election.¹¹⁵ Such a politician, having established that their comparative advantage lies in their ability and willingness to be responsive to constituents concerns, will likely continue to do this at the European level. This obviously is particularly applicable to MEPs who previously held legislative office, at either the local or national level, prior to seeking election to the European Parliament.

At the European level, this can manifest itself in the shape of MEPs spending significant amounts of time ensuring that their constituents are facilitated in terms of being put in front of the right people as much as possible. For example, by introducing them to an MEP on the relevant committee. It may also mean the MEP making representations, on a group of constituents' behalf, to the relevant Commissioner. In order to facilitate this, the MEP can often go to quite significant lengths. MEP C, for instance, noted how they maintained separate offices, in Brussels and in their home constituency and would frequently take in representations from people with concerns of all types, even local ones. Describing how they deal with such representations, the MEP noted, 'I farm it

¹¹⁵ The value of such a reputation obviously fades somewhat as district magnitude increases.

out, I contact the local councillors, say if I wanted a Dáil submission I would go straight to my colleagues at home'.¹¹⁶

While this MEP was keen to point out that they farm such concerns out to the relevant local or national representative, it was interesting to note that they would take responsibility for doing this, rather than simply telling the constituent that they should take their concerns elsewhere. As the MEP noted, those with local concerns can often be 'the strongest part of your base'.¹¹⁷

Conclusions

The quantitative section of this chapter failed to demonstrate a statistically significant relationship between interest group resources (of any kind) and access to MEPs. The sole exception to this was the finding that interest groups with a Brussels office were likely to receive more frequent access to MEPs (a finding that held only in the complete model).

In this particular chapter, however, it is worth noting that the qualitative data is more interesting than its quantitative counterpart. This qualitative data, obtained from interviews with both MEPs and interest group representatives', provided both insights into the relationship that Irish MEPs have with Irish interest groups while also providing a possible explanation for our aforementioned quantitative results.

Focusing on our most interesting data source, our interviews with MEPs, it is important to note that these interviews supported one of our main theoretical hypotheses, namely that MEPs do not face the same level of constraints as domestic level politicians. As they do not face the same level of constraints, there is more variation between them in terms of the objectives they pursue, the inputs they seek, and the relationships they have with different types of interest groups. Such variation likely accounts for our failure to find a statistically significant relationship between any of our resource variables and access to

¹¹⁶ Interview carried out with MEP, in Brussels, on February 29th 2012.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

MEPs *in the aggregate*. What we saw instead was that different MEPs have different incentives and, hence, are in demand of different types of information from interest groups. It stands to reason then that different resources will be associated with access to different MEPs. We will discuss the implications of this finding- along with the implications of the rest of our findings- in the next chapter, which concludes this thesis.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

General Conclusions

This thesis began with a review of the existing literature on interest group lobbying. This review both noted the progress that scholars working in this field have made, while also noting the gaps that remain. One of the primary goals of this thesis then, was to build on this existing literature in a number of ways. Notably here, I sought to offer the most comprehensive examination of Irish interest group lobbying heretofore conducted. I also offered a comparison of lobbying at two different levels of governance in my examination of the lobbying of domestic and EU level policymakers. Furthermore, in my examination of lobbying at two levels of governance, I introduced a new concept of 'invited access' in my analysis. This 'invited access' variable, which looks at the access that interest groups receive at the behest of policymakers, is an advancement over previous studies, which have focused exclusively on the frequency with which interest groups receive access. The argument here is that invited access is likely to be particularly valuable, as policymakers are likely to pay more attention to groups whose views they themselves have sought out.

In order to build on the literature in the manner described above, a research design had to be put into place. This research design used a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques to investigate the access that Irish interest groups receive at two different levels of governance and to four different types of policymakers. At the national level, access to TDs and to civil servants was investigated. At the EU level, access to Irish MEPs and European Commission officials was similarly examined. At each level, the quantitative sections of the thesis focused on identifying variation in access to policymakers, both between *different types* of interest groups and, perhaps even more importantly, between *differentially resourced* interest groups. The qualitative sections of the thesis also had a number of goals. Firstly, they looked to further explore the question of *why* certain interest group resources were associated with greater access to certain policymakers. Secondly, these sections often allowed questions that could not easily be analysed using quantitative data to be considered. Finally, they allowed

us to explore further the implications of some of our findings, particularly from a policy perspective. This concluding chapter summarizes the major findings from this study.

Looking first at the national level, which was examined in chapters five and six, our main findings from the quantitative sections were as follows. Firstly, we can note that there was a clear link between membership size and access to TDs. Membership size has a positive and statistically significant relationship with access in five of the six models that examine the relationship between resources and access to TDs, including all four of the models that looked at invited access. This finding was in line with our theoretical hypotheses in chapter three. The hypothesis here was that, as TDs are subject to competitive electoral pressures, they will be most likely to grant access, both frequent and invited, to interest groups who represent a large number of members and, hence, a large number of voters. From the perspective of democratic responsiveness, the finding that membership size was the biggest, and only statistically significant, predictor of access to TDs was a positive one.

Continuing with the national level, it was also demonstrated that there was a clear link between expertise, for which public affairs staff size was used as a proxy, and access to civil servants. The statistically significant relationship between public affairs staff size and access held in all six of the models used to examine the relationship between resources and access to civil servants, including all four of the models that looked at invited access. Again these results were in line with our hypotheses. The objectives of civil servants are to both advise on and to implement public policies in a way so as to ensure such policies are as efficient and effective as possible. Interest groups with expertise are best placed to help civil servants to do this and, hence, it is unsurprising that such groups receive more access and more invited access.

It is important to also note the contrast between the resources that were important for access to TDs and the resources that secured access to civil servants. Expertise for instance, which was crucial for gaining access to civil

servants did not secure additional access to TDs in any of our models. Similarly, membership size, which was so important for gaining access to TDs, had no impact on the ability of interest groups to gain access to civil servants.

Furthermore, it can also be noted, that in the case of both TDs and civil servants, descriptive statistics taken from surveys of both types of policymakers was consistent with the conclusions reached from the analysis of the interest group surveys.

To flesh these results out further, qualitative evidence was obtained through interviews with both interest groups and policymakers. The data from these interviews strengthened the thesis in a number of ways. Firstly, they both further strengthened the validity of both our theoretical hypotheses and our quantitative results. Both interest groups and TDs stressed the importance of membership size for gaining access to TDs when interviewed. The importance of expertise was similarly cited by civil servants and the interest groups who lobby them.

Secondly, the qualitative data obtained from the interviews allowed us to go beyond the quantitative findings and add some qualitative depth to the analysis. For instance, while membership size is confirmed as being important for gaining access to TDs, in the aggregate, the interview data also revealed that not all members are equal to others. Interest groups who represent members who have a particularly high propensity to vote, for instance, such as groups representing the elderly, are likely to be able to use that to their advantage. Furthermore, as TDs are elected through geographically specific constituencies, groups whose members are concentrated in a specific constituency are likely to receive more access to TDs in that constituency than groups whose members are more diffusely spread across constituencies.

The addition of this qualitative depth allowed us to connect our findings to potentially important public policy questions. For instance, while our interview evidence confirmed the importance of expertise for access to civil servants, in

doing so it highlighted that a leading cause of this is the expertise deficit that currently exists within the civil service itself. Such a deficit is due, at least in part, to the recent targeted early retirement scheme for senior civil servants. In addition to this deficit, the interview evidence also revealed the importance of the financial context in Ireland at the moment. Due to the state of the public finances, interest groups, should they wish to receive the best possible access to civil servants, need to not just flag their problems with legislation, but also propose (ideally cost neutral) alternative solutions. Of course, it is worth noting here, that interest groups with the financial resources necessary to employ a large number of public affairs staff are much better placed to provide such solutions than less well resourced groups.

Our analysis of the lobbying of TDs also allowed us to look at a number of interesting public policy questions. As previously discussed, tackling these questions meant, at times, moving beyond the question of interest group 'access' in and of itself. In the context of our desire to provide insights into the wider Irish interest group environment, however, this was a step worth taking. One issue we might note here are the trade offs that come with the level of democratic responsiveness exhibited by Irish TDs. In this regard we must mention how the qualitative evidence highlighted the limited incentives to develop legislative expertise that exist in the Irish parliament. The electoral system in Ireland incentivises TDs to be extremely responsive to their constituents demands. A natural result of this is that they have less time to develop legislative expertise. Parties also have less of an incentive to nominate candidates whose comparative advantage lies in policy expertise and more of an incentive to nominate candidates whose comparative advantage is in 'getting out the vote'. All of this, combined with the fact that Ireland's parliament is relatively weak, means that parliamentary scrutiny of the executive is particularly weak in Ireland (Hardiman, 2012; O'Malley & MacCarthaigh, 2012).

Turning to the EU level, which was examined in chapters seven and eight, we find that half of the domestic level story repeats itself. In terms of access to the European Commission officials- the European civil service- we find that there

was once again a clear link between expertise and access. Public affairs staff size was again used as a proxy variable for expertise. In all four models which examined access to EU Commission officials there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between public affairs staff size and access. While a statistically significant relationship was not found between public affairs staff size and invited access to Commission officials this was attributed to the rarity with which any Irish interest group received such access to Commission officials.

The second half of the story does not repeat itself, however. None of the models used to assess the access that interest groups receive to Irish MEPs show a statistically significant relationship between membership size and access. This is not hugely surprising, as the theoretical section of this thesis outlined how MEPs do not face the same competitive electoral pressures as national level politicians. A number of reasons have been put forward by scholars as to why MEPs face less competitive electoral pressures and are, hence, less likely to be responsive to groups as a result of their membership size. Firstly, MEPs are elected via what have often been referred to as 'second order elections', which are not tied to issues of European policy, and therefore have less of an incentive to be responsive to their electoral constituency (Norris, 1997; Marsh, 1998; Hix, 2005; Follesdal & Hix, 2006). Additionally, less media attention is paid to the European Parliament than its national counterpart (Meyer, 1999; Peter *et al*, 2003; Proksch & Slapin, 2010). As a result, MEPs are under far less scrutiny from their electorate than national politicians.

Once again, these quantitative findings were further backed up by qualitative data. With regard to lobbying the Commission, those interviewed further stressed the crucial importance of expertise. This importance of expertise was linked to the fact that the EU Commission is considerably understaffed and, consequently, is in need of outside inputs in order to fulfil its mandate. Such a finding is consistent with numerous previous findings from the literature on EU lobbying (McLaughlin *et al*, 1993; Marks & McAdam, 1996; Bouwen, 2004; Coen, 2007; Greenwood, 2007b; Dür, 2008a; Klüver, 2010; Chalmers, 2011).

Of course, as was already discussed, expertise comes at a price. Research needs to be paid for. In addition, as a number of those interviewed pointed out, acquiring expertise at the EU level is particularly expensive. Lobbying is manpower intensive, staff costs are very high and opening up a Brussels office is beyond the reach of most. As a result, a number of interest groups reported that they lobby the Commission less than they otherwise would do so, due to resource constraints.

While a number of interest groups may struggle to gain access to the Commission, for some, however, it provides an important outlet for their lobbying efforts that they struggle to find at the national level. This 'venue shopping' potential offered by the Commission was highlighted by a number of the environmental interest groups interviewed. Such groups noted that while they struggled to get access at the national level they were often much more successful in gaining access to a sympathetic Commission. So much so that one representative went as far as to say that 'there has been [sic] no advancements in environmental protection in the past 15 years that haven't flooded directly from Europe'.¹¹⁸

That the EU Commission has been able to drive such advancements also demonstrates its ability to drive policy, through its right to initiate legislation, in a way that national civil services simply are not empowered to do. At the national level it is politicians who drive policy, politicians who have to closely consider the potential economic costs to their constituents of any environmental regulation. The Commission, as it does not face the electoral constraints than national politicians do, is able to place a higher premium on the rights of both future generations and endangered species and hence support much more stringent environmental regulation.

Qualitative evidence also proved important for analysing interest group access at the EU level. Of particular note here were our interviews with MEPs, which

¹¹⁸ Interview carried out with NGO representative, via Skype on July 2nd 2013.

demonstrated how they have quite diverse goals and objectives and, hence, are in demand of different types of resources from interest groups.

Taking all of this evidence together, this study offers novel evidence that allows us to compare and contrast lobbying at two levels of governance in Europe. Both levels provide an outlet for interest groups whose comparative advantage lies in the expertise they have at their disposal. Only at the national level, however, do groups whose comparative advantage lies in the number of voters they represent have an outlet where they are privileged in terms of the access they receive. TDs provide such an outlet. MEPs, in the aggregate at least, do not. From the perspective of the long-standing debate regarding the 'democratic deficit' that is argued to exist in the EU, this is a somewhat troubling finding (Norris, 1997; Beyers, 2004; Hix, 2005; Follesdal & Hix, 2006; Greenwood, 2007b).

Thesis' Contribution

This thesis has made a number of contributions to various relevant literatures. Firstly, it offers the first large-scale systematic study of Irish interest group access to both national and EU level policymakers. In doing so, it has drawn inspiration from the work of Andreas Dür and Gemma Mateo, while also extending on this work in a number of significant ways (Dür & Mateo, 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012). Most notably, this study captures systematic data on interest group resources. This data allows comparisons between interest group resources and interest group access to be made. In addition, it extends out the study to more interest groups and more types of interest groups, while also including a survey of policymakers as an extra check on the validity of our results from the interest group survey. These new datasets may also potentially be of use to other scholars who wish to carry out research in this area in the future. Finally, fifty interviews with both interest groups and policymakers were also carried out, in order to add qualitative depth to our findings.

The contributions that this thesis makes are not limited to those interested only in Irish interest group lobbying, however. From a theoretical perspective, our introduction of the concept of 'invited access' is novel. Scholars who have

examined interest group access to policymakers have generally focused exclusively on the frequency of such access (Beyers, 2002; Bouwen, 2004; Eising, 2007a; 2008; Chalmers, 2011). In introducing the concept of 'invited access' we are introducing a concept that we argue is even more closely related to interest group 'power' than frequency of access. Groups who receive invited access are more likely, it is argued, to receive access at an earlier stage in the policymaking process. Groups who have access at an earlier stage in the process are more likely to be able to influence the direction of policy (Cowles, 1995; Cram, 2001; Pollack, 2003, Coen, 2007; Princen, 2009; Buena, 2012). In addition it would be sensible to assume that, *ceritus paribus*, policymakers are more likely to listen to interest groups they themselves have invited to make representations than groups who have made unsolicited representations. 'Invited access' is, therefore, a concept that builds on the literature's understanding of access and can be fruitfully used by scholars interested in exploring access to policymakers in any jurisdiction or at any level of governance.

Another novel aspect of this thesis is its comparative framework. Firstly, in this respect, it offers a direct comparison of the determinants of interest group access at both the national and EU levels. The existing literature's overwhelming focus is on access at the EU level, with comparative work often limited to comparisons between different EU institutions (Bouwen; 2004; Eising 2007a; 2007b). While some work does take into account member state level lobbying, it tends to do so within the framework of 'multi-level governance', and hence examines national level lobbying, not in its own right, but instead only as part of an overall EU lobbying strategy (Beyers, 2002; Eising, 2004; Constantelos, 2007; Dür & Mateo, 2010; 2012).

In contrast, this thesis focuses on both levels of governance. First, it compares access to elected officials and bureaucrats at the national level. It then makes the same comparisons (between bureaucrats and elected officials) at the EU level. Such a two level comparison allows us to explore a number of interesting questions- such as the impact that the lower level of democratic accountability at the EU level has on access patterns.

The final contribution this thesis makes is to the literature on the European Union's democratic deficit. One of the standout findings from this thesis is that domestic interest groups who represent significant numbers of members will receive more access and more invited access to TDs than groups with fewer members. Indeed, membership size is the one and only resource that secures interest groups improved access. From a democratic perspective this is an undeniably positive finding, as it means that groups who represent the most voters are most likely to be heard.

At the EU level, however, as we have already discussed, this pattern does not repeat itself. Having more members is not associated with more access to MEPs, despite the fact that such MEPs are democratically elected. This, it is argued, is due to the fact that MEPs do not face the same level of competition at election time, nor do they face the same level of voter scrutiny during their term. For those within the European Union's ecosystem who are keen to further establish the European Parliament's democratic legitimacy, these are issues they must seek to address.

Caveats & Suggestions for Further Research

While this thesis makes a number of important contributions to a variety of literatures we need also be careful to add a number of caveats and suggestions for future research. First, we need to make clear that the focus of this thesis has been on interest group access and, in the quantitative sections, exclusively so. For those who wish to study influence more directly, a different approach may be needed. One recent trend in this area has been to look at interest group policy submissions and use quantitative text analysis to assess what resources are associated with influence over outcomes (Klüver, 2011; 2012; Buena 2012). It is important to note, however, that such analyses do not account for 'face to face lobbying' and hence cannot be accurately used in states, such as Ireland, where the majority of lobbying is carried out through face-to-face meetings rather than written submissions.

A further caveat that needs to be added is regard to the generalisability of our findings. Clearly the generalisability of our study is somewhat limited, based, as it is, on a study of the interest groups of a single member state. What it does offer, however, is a framework for analysis which can serve as a model for examining other member states. For instance, one of the most interesting aspects of this thesis is its comparison of EU level lobbying with member state lobbying. While we feel that comparisons that we make are both interesting, and valid in their own right, we would certainly encourage other scholars to expand on this work by making similar comparisons in other member states. Such work would be particularly interesting if it manages to include more than one member state- and more than one electoral system- in its research design. In this regard it would be worth exploring the extent to which elected officials in other jurisdictions, with different types of electoral systems, are responsive to interest groups based on their membership size. Is the democratic responsiveness of TDs something that is observed due to the fact that the Irish electoral system makes such individuals particularly receptive to their constituents? Or is it a result that holds even when examining national politicians in other states, who are elected via different electoral systems? Such an investigation would both be highly valuable and, also, a natural extension of the thesis that has been presented here.

Finally, and again with relevance to those who are most interested in working on comparing EU level lobbying with member state lobbying, we may mention that the empirical investigation could be potentially extended in a number of ways. Specifically, scholars may also consider the lobbying of an institution which was not examined in this thesis, the European Council of Ministers, within a broader research design. In addition, scholars may also consider how national interest groups utilise EU level umbrella groups as part of their lobbying strategy. One interesting question here would be to examine how interest groups differ in the number of potential options they have in this respect. They might also consider how national level interest groups lobby MEPs from other member states. Again, this is an option that some interest groups are likely to have, but not others.

In summary, it is hoped that this thesis will prompt scholars who are interested in lobbying to build on the work contained within it in a variety of different ways. As lobbying continues to get increased attention from both governments and newspaper editors, the academic community has an obligation to offer insights that are both academically rigorous and politically relevant.

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Appendix A: Interest Group Survey

<http://markpcarpenter.com/limesurvey/index.php/survey/index/sid/988861/token/m6v4svbhb3mi49k/newtest/Y>

1. Please select the heading that best describes your organization:

- Business Association
- NGO
- Farming Organisation
- Public Affairs Consultancy
- Large Firm
- Labour Organisation
- Professional Association
- Citizens' Group/Consumer Association
- Other

2. How many members does your organisation have?

- 0-100
- 101-200
- 201-500
- 501-1,000
- 1,001-5,000
- 5,001-10,000
- 10,000+
- Not Applicable

3. How many staff does your organisation/firm employ?

- 0-10
- 11-20
- 21-50
- 51-100
- 101-200
- 201-500
- 500+

4. How many of your organisation's staff work on advocacy/public affairs?

- 0-1
- 2-3
- 4-6
- 7-10
- 10-15
- 15+

5. What percentage of your public affairs staff have experience of working for government at some level (as either a politician or civil servant)?

- 0-10%
- 11-25%
- 26-50%
- 51-75%
- 75%+

6. Have you hired lobbying consultancy firms to work on your organisation's behalf in the past year?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

7. Does your organisation have an office in Brussels?

- Yes
- No

The following questions relate to your own professional experiences:

8. Do you have prior experience working in governmental institutions in Dublin or Brussels (If yes, please go to Q9, if no, skip directly to Q11).

- Yes
- No

9. Did this governmental experience involve work as a:

Please choose **all** that apply:

- TD
- MEP
- Civil Servant
- EU Commission Official
- Parliamentary Assistant
- N/A

10. How many years of government experience do you have in total?

- <1
- 1-2
- 2-5
- 5-10
- 10-20
- 20+

11. In the last 12 months have you met with and made representations directly to:

***=Irish National Level Civil Servants**

Please choose **all** that apply:

- TDs
- MEPs
- Civil Servants*
- EU Commission Officials

12. For each, please indicate how often you have had such contacts in the last 12 months:

	Never	Once	Twice	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
TDs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MEPs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Civil Servants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EU Commission Officials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. In the previous year have you been contacted directly by any of the following to seek your advice on a policy issue?

Please choose **all** that apply:

- TDs
- MEPs
- Civil Servants
- EU Commission Officials

14. For each, please indicate how often you have been contacted in the last year:

	Never	Once	Twice	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
TDs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MEPs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Civil Servants	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
EU Commission Officials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. How important do you feel the following resources were in gaining access to policymakers at the national level over the last 12 months: (1= Of No Importance, 5=Extremely Important)?

	1	2	3	4	5
Reputation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technical Expertise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pre-Existing Contacts/Established Relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Constituency Level Information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. What other resources do you feel were important for gaining access to policymakers at the national level?

17. How important do you feel the following resources were in gaining access to policymakers at the EU Level over the last 12 months? (1= Of No Importance, 5=Extremely Important)?

	1	2	3	4	5
Reputation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technical Expertise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pre-Existing Contacts/Established Relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Constituency Level Information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. What other resources do you feel were responsible for gaining access to policymakers at the EU level?

19. Would you be prepared to take part in a follow up interview to discuss your responses to this survey in more detail? If so, please provide your e-mail address in the box provided.

Appendix B: Policymaker Survey

1. Please select the heading that best describes your current role:

- TD
- MEP
- National Level Civil Servant
- EU Commission Official
- Other

2. In the last 12 months how often have you been lobbied by the following groups?

	Never	Once	Twice	Quarterly	Monthly	Fortnightly	Weekly	Daily
Business Associations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NGOs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Farming Org's	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public Affairs Consultancies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Large Firms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Labour Org's	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional Associations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Citizens Groups/Consumer Associations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. In the last 12 months how often have you actively sought the advice of the following groups?

	Never	Once	Twice	Quarterly	Monthly	Fortnightly	Weekly	Daily
Business Associations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NGOs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Farming Org's	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public Affairs Consultancies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Large Firms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Labour Org's	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional Associations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Citizens Groups/Consumer Associations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. How important do you feel the following resources are in gaining access to you as a policymaker? (1= Of No Importance, 5=Extremely Important)?

	1	2	3	4	5
Reputation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technical Expertise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pre-Existing Contacts/Established Relationships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Constituency Level Information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. What other resources do you feel were important in gaining access to you as a policymaker?

6. Would you be prepared to take part in a follow up interview to discuss your responses to this survey in more detail? If so, please provide your e-mail address in the box provided.

Appendix C: Interest Group Interview Sample Questions

Ireland:

How would you alternate between contacting TDs and civil servants? How would you adapt your approach for each?

What strategies do you use to seek access/gain influence?

What are the different barriers to entry for lobbyists/interest groups in Dublin?

How important are interpersonal relationships/contacts in your lobbying efforts?

What resource constraints do you face in trying to access policymakers and influence policy?

Where do you think your ability to access TDs and Civil Servants comes from? What can you offer?

Do you need to present a constituency angle?

Do you think some groups get an unfair advantage in Ireland?

How do you use the media in your advocacy efforts?

As a compliment to your contact with policymakers or as an alternative?

What biases do you think exist in the present system- i.e what type of groups find it easier to get access to policymakers than others?

Have you noticed a change in the way the government interacts with representative groups in recent years? Since the decline in social partnership?

You are active in different policy areas? How does your experience vary between areas? Are the same types of things important across the board or is their significant variation?

Do you think there is a clear connection between access and influence?

How could policymaking in Ireland be improved more generally? How could openness be better achieved?

Have made submissions to Oireachtas Committees- how have they found them?

Europe:

When you are lobbying on a European issue how do you mix your approach between lobbying Europe directly and lobbying Irish policymakers on European issues?

Do you ever find yourself in a position where you could choose to approach policymakers in Brussels or Dublin? If so, how do you make your decision?

Do you ever find yourself marginalised at the national level but able to find avenues at the EU level?

What are the biggest differences between advocacy in Brussels & advocacy in Dublin?

What are the differences between access to civil servants and access to DG's in Brussels?

How much flexibility is there when trying to influence policy, between adjusting efforts between Dublin & Brussels.

Is scope of competences (what is an EU issue and what is a national issue) clear or is there contestation here?

How as an organisation do you allocate your resources- is their flexibility between Dublin & Brussels dependent on where you think you will find the most receptive voice?

What do the different institutions demand for access to the lobbying process?

Are the determinants of success different in Dublin different than they are in Brussels?

Is it easier or harder to change the status quo in Ireland than it is in Brussels or vice-versa?

Appendix D: Policymaker Interview Sample Questions

Describe the level of interaction you have with interest groups of various kinds?

Describe the process by which they gain access?

What would you make you more or less likely to meet an interest group which requested access?

What would make you more or less likely to give repeated access to an interest group?

What type of information are you most in need of from interest groups?

What are interest groups most useful function?

Do you think there is too much lobbying in Ireland/too little/about the right amount?

What types of groups would you personally reach out to for information/etc?

What types of interest group approaches do you think are effective? What makes them effective?

What types of interest groups approaches do you think are ineffective? What makes them ineffective?

Do different types of interest groups use different strategies?

What are the most important differences you notice between interest groups?

Last policy issue- why were the groups who were successful, successful? Why were the groups who were unsuccessful, unsuccessful?

You sit on a number of Joint Oireachtas Committees- how effective do you find these committees for getting expertise/information from various stakeholders?

Presumably you frequently receive written submissions from interest groups- what are the hallmarks of good quality submissions?

How effective do you find them for driving policy?

How important do you think interpersonal relationships/contacts are in the lobbying process?

Survey response was that contacts are NOT important- not necessarily the general view- while contacts may not be important for contacting her- do you think they are important for getting access to TDs more generally?

What level of access/influence do TDs have to the Executive? What influence do they have over policy formulation?

What is your relationship with government departments? How do you work with them on policy? Think of the back and forth relationship here.

Do you mainly get requests for access from interests in your constituency or from groups with more national platforms?

Do you think there is a clear connection between access and influence?

Do you have any view on lobbying regulation?

How could policymaking in Ireland be improved more generally? How could openness be better achieved?