

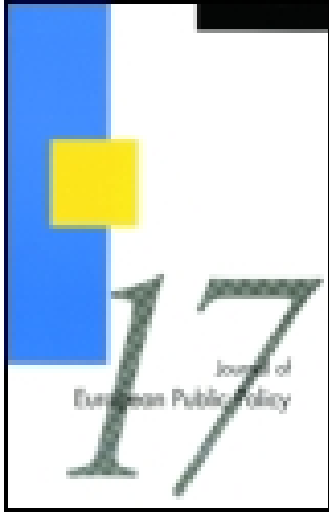
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# The state of the discipline: authorship, research designs, and citation patterns in studies of EU interest groups and lobbying

Adriana Bunea and Frank R. Baumgartner

**ABSTRACT** Which European universities and research centres are most prominent in research on European Union (EU) interest groups? What are the theoretical perspectives employed currently in this scholarship? What research designs do scholars employ to study and investigate EU interest groups? And finally, what are the academic works that constitute the core building blocks on which researchers of EU lobbying build their theoretical arguments and empirical research? We answer these questions by analysing an original, built-for-purpose dataset providing information on the theoretical approaches, research designs and bibliographic references employed in 196 academic articles published on the topic of EU lobbying and interest groups in 22 European and American journals of political science and public policy. The dataset also contains information about authors' academic affiliation and Ph.D.-awarding institutions. We combine two approaches employed in the literature on systematic analyses of a discipline: the *research synthesis and meta-analysis approach*, and the *bibliometric approach*.

**KEY WORDS** Analytical review; European Union lobbying; scholarship

## INTRODUCTION

Interest groups are key actors in the design of politics and policies at European Union (EU) level. They are widely perceived as channels of societal representation of policy demands and as key actors in effective problem-solving and implementation of EU legislation (Coen and Richardson 2009). However, the academic scholarship examining EU lobbying and interest groups' activities is considered to be a 'niche field of research within political science' (Beyers *et al.* 2008a: 1103). In 1998, Baumgartner and Leech identified a similar situation characterizing the research on American interest groups and diagnosed this scholarship as being in an 'elegant irrelevance' (1998: xvii) with respect to both United States (US) politics and the overall discipline of political science. Meanwhile, however, the scholarship on American interest groups benefited from two comprehensive analytical reviews: *Basic Interests. The Importance of Groups in Politics and in Political Science* (Baumgartner and Leech 1998) and

*Studying Organizational Advocacy and Influence: Reexamining Interest Groups Research* (Hojnacki *et al.* 2012). These two landmark studies mapped the field of US interest groups' research by examining its theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches, identified gaps in the accumulation of scientific knowledge and suggested possible ways to ameliorate them. And, indeed, the second review of that literature suggests that the first review had a substantial impact on the research foci of scholars in the field. More recent studies have collectively addressed many of the issues, and in more productive ways, than had been the case of the earlier literature; thus, the stocktaking exercise inherent in such a review was a healthy development for the literature on US interest groups. The scholarship on EU lobbying and interest groups is still waiting for a similar review, being currently marked only by some isolated and limited in scope of analysis studies, providing broad assessments of the scholarship as part of special issues on European/EU lobbying published by the *Journal of European Public Policy* and *West European Politics* (Baumgartner 2007; Beyers *et al.* 2008a, 2008b; Coen 2007; Mahoney and Baumgartner 2008).

Our study addresses this issue and proposes a systematic, empirical analysis of the scholarship published in European and American peer-reviewed journals of political science and public policy on the topic of interest groups and lobbying in the EU system of governance, from the creation of the European Community to the present. We address four key questions in relation to the *state of the art* in this discipline. First, which universities and research centres are most prominent in research on EU interest groups? Second, what are the theoretical perspectives employed in this scholarship? Third, what research designs do scholars employ to study and investigate EU interest groups? And finally, what academic works constitute the core building blocks on which researchers build their arguments and empirical research, as indicated by the most frequently cited bibliographic sources?

We answer these questions by analysing an original dataset providing information on the theoretical approaches, research designs and bibliographic references employed in 196 academic articles published on the topic of EU lobbying in 22 journals. Our dataset also contains information about authors' academic affiliation and Ph.D.-awarding institutions. We combine two main approaches employed in the literature on systematic analyses of an academic discipline: the *research synthesis and meta-analysis approach*, focusing on the substantive content of articles (Cooper *et al.* 2009) and the *bibliometric approach*, focusing on the analysis of bibliographic references and citation networks (Jensen and Kristensen 2013; Leydesdorff 2005). In line with the first approach, we analyse the main research themes, methodological approaches and issues of research design describing the literature on EU interest groups. We identify areas of progress and consolidated knowledge in the scholarship, as well as topics that currently are insufficiently examined. The study differs from a classic meta-analysis in that it does not aim to provide a quantitative nor a qualitative analysis of the findings provided in the literature with respect to different aspects of EU lobbying. This limit in the scope of analysis is justified in two ways: first, our

main analytical focus is on how research on EU interest groups is currently conducted; and second, a review of the main findings already exists (Eising 2008). In line with the second approach, we analyse the bibliographic sources used in the literature with the help of social network analysis. We identify those pieces of academic scholarship that provide the theoretical foundations of current research on EU lobbying, and discuss the overall characteristics of bibliographic references and in relation to country of origin and authors' gender.

Our study contributes to the advancement of academic research on EU interest groups in two ways. First, it provides a systematic, empirical assessment of theoretical approaches and research methods employed in the discipline. This will serve as guidance and a useful analytical tool for the empirical research that will soon stem from the intense and laborious data gathering process initiated as part of the INTEREURO research project by a large team of European scholars researching EU lobbying. To date, this project represents the most ambitious and comprehensive data gathering effort on interest groups, their lobbying activities and participation in the EU policy-making and decision-making processes conducted in Europe.<sup>1</sup> Second, the study facilitates a comparative EU–US perspective regarding the development of scholarship on lobbying and interest groups in these two research communities. The study allows a more in-depth examination of converging and diverging theoretical perspectives characterizing the two research communities (Mahoney and Baumgartner 2008). It allows a better understanding of how the two communities developed in relation to each other over time, and how the more well-established and with a longer history US literature informs and contributes to the more recent, and therefore still maturing, scholarship on EU lobbying.

The study proceeds as follows. The following section details the research methodology and the data collection. We then describe the community of scholars conducting research on EU interest groups. The next section examines the theoretical and methodological perspectives. Next we present the bibliographic analysis. Finally we conclude and discuss the findings in light of some of the key points raised by previous discussions on the development of scholarship on EU lobbying.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

### Selecting journals and articles

Conceptually we draw inspiration from the two analytical reviews of the scholarship on US interest groups: Baumgartner and Leech (1998) and Hojnacki *et al.* (2012). Methodologically, however, we depart from this line of research in that we focus on journal articles only. We analyse all articles published (in print or 'online first') in 22 authoritative academic journals of political science and public policy from the beginning of the European Community until December 2013. The unit of analysis is a journal article. Thus, the analysis excludes some relevant contributions to the research on EU interest groups published as books

or book chapters. The most prominent contributions in this respect are Coen and Richardson (2009), Mazey and Richardson (1993), Greenwood and Aspinwall (1998), Greenwood (2007), Mahoney (2008) and Klüver (2013), but for the most part these authors are also represented in the articles reviewed. And, by limiting ourselves to journals, we can be comprehensive, with our limitations made clear. The study also excludes conference papers, working papers and Ph.D. dissertations. Our focus on articles only is justified by three reasons. First, this approach allowed keeping the data collection feasible. The content analysis of articles was done by hand coding and was therefore highly labour intensive. The coding of the bibliographic sources required for mapping and analysing the citation networks was also particularly laborious, as each analysed journal article had on average 45 bibliographic entries. The task of assigning each bibliographic entry a unique code and then of harmonizing these codes across all articles is detailed below and illustrates the solid effort behind the data collection. Second, focusing on articles only assures a certain level of consistency in terms of content analysis. Third, this approach allows us to analyse the scholarship that is generally recognized to have the highest impact on knowledge accumulation and advancement in a field of research (Bastow *et al.* 2014: 38). Research published in journals is easier to access, has a broader outreach and higher citation rates. This in turn makes journal articles potentially more consequential over the development and accumulation of knowledge in any given area of research in social sciences. Further, as noted above, most of the especially prominent books in the field also have journal articles drawn from the same research project, which are also highly cited.

To identify the sample of analysed journals the following strategy was pursued: first, the sample of top international peer-reviewed journals publishing research in the field of European politics and public policy was identified based on Hix's ranking (Hix 2004). To this list, the *Journal of Civil Society* and *Interest Groups and Advocacy* were added, as these are also well-established journals in the field of European and EU interest group research. We also added the *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. The study thus includes only articles published in English.

To identify the relevant articles, for each journal in the sample we systematically analysed each issue and we thoroughly examined all titles and abstracts in search for one of (or a combination of) the following key words: 'EU lobbying'; 'EU interest groups'; 'European Commission'; 'European Parliament'; 'Council of the EU'; 'European Union'; 'EU policy-making'. To be included in the sample, the article needed to satisfy the following criterion: it had to study interest groups' organizational or lobbying activities in the context of or in relation to the EU supranational politics or policy-making. The list of articles analysed is available in the supplementary data available on the T&F website.

Table 1 lists the journals and the number of articles examined per journal. The three journals with the strongest publication record of scholarship on EU lobbying are the *Journal of European Public Policy* (24 per cent of analysed

Table 1 Journals publishing articles on EU lobbying and interest groups

Journal name	Five-year impact factor	Articles	Percentage
1. <i>Journal of European Public Policy</i> (JEPP)	1.667	47	24.0
2. <i>Journal of Common Market Studies</i> (JCMS)	1.624	25	12.8
3. <i>West European Politics</i> (WEP)	1.713	21	10.7
4. <i>Journal of European Integration</i> (JEI)	na	19	9.7
5. <i>European Union Politics</i> (EUP)	2.358	18	9.2
6. <i>Journal of Civil Society</i> (JCS)	na	12	6.1
7. <i>Interest Groups and Advocacy</i> (IGA)	na	10	5.1
8. <i>Journal of Public Policy</i> (JPP)	1.033	9	4.6
9. <i>British Journal of Politics and IR</i> (BJPIR)	na	7	3.6
10. <i>European Journal of Political Research</i> (EJPR)	1.757	6	3.1
11. <i>Government and Opposition</i> (GOVOPP)	0.778	3	1.5
12. <i>British Journal of Political Science</i> (BJPS)	2.284	3	1.5
13. <i>Political Studies</i> (PS)	1.558	3	1.5
14. <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> (CPS)	2.460	2	1.0
15. <i>Comparative European Politics</i> (CEP)	0.547	2	1.0
16. <i>Comparative Politics</i> (CP)	1.167	2	1.0
17. <i>Governance</i> (GOV)	2.129	2	1.0
18. <i>Acta Politica</i> (AP)	1.088	1	0.5
19. <i>Politics and Society</i> (POLSOC)	2.301	1	0.5
20. <i>Journal of Theoretical Politics</i> (JOTP)	0.792	1	0.5
21. <i>Political Science Quarterly</i> (PSQ)	0.664	1	0.5
22. <i>Political Quarterly</i> (PQ)	0.556	1	0.5
Total		196	100.0

articles), the *Journal of Common Market Studies* (12.9 per cent) and *West European Politics* (10.7 per cent).

### Data collection

We coded information on the following three dimensions describing the articles: (1) authors' university affiliation, Ph.D.-awarding institution and gender; (2) information about theoretical and methodological aspects characterizing the article; (3) bibliographic references. This resulted in two original

datasets. The first contains systematic data on authors and the substantive content of articles. The second is a citation matrix: rows correspond to the analysed articles, while columns indicate their bibliographic references.

Authors' institutional affiliations were indicated in the articles and straightforward to code. Their Ph.D.-awarding institution was documented online by consulting their personal websites or those of their universities.

Information about the substantive content of articles and their methodological approach was gathered following an attentive content analysis. A codebook was developed stating the information to be coded for each article. Data were gathered on the following dimensions: lobbying stage analysed (building on Lowery and Brasher [2004] typology); policy stage analysed; overall goal; dependent variable; research design; level of analysis; data sources; number of policy events; number and type of policy areas analysed; number of and which EU institutions were considered; political systems analysed.

### **Building a citation matrix**

To explore the citation network in the scholarship, we constructed a matrix indicating the relationship between analysed articles and their bibliographic references. This entailed several stages. First, each article received a code indicating the author's name, year of publication and journal abbreviation (e.g., Coen2007JEPP). Second, for each article the bibliographic sources were coded in an Excel file and attributed similar unique codes allowing their identification. These codes were then cross-checked across the entire matrix and harmonized to make sure that one bibliographic reference received the same unique code across the entire dataset. Third, to keep the matrix management feasible and focus on academic references only, newspaper articles, policy reports, official documents and websites indicated as references were removed. The fourth step was to prepare the data for the network analysis. The file was converted into a binary, asymmetric, incidence matrix indicating which article cited which reference from the total of identified references. This resulted in a binary matrix of 196 rows (articles) by approximately 4,000 columns (references). Each row is an article in our sample, while each column corresponds to a unique reference. Each cell indicated whether the article cited the reference (1) or not (0). Next, in line with previous research (Jensen and Kristensen 2013; Kristensen 2012), this matrix was reviewed and, to keep the visualization of the network simple, the size of the matrix was reduced so as to include only those references cited three or more times. This resulted in a final matrix containing 196 rows and 392 columns. This matrix was analysed as an incidence, directed, two-mode network based on the assumption that the dataset contains two categories (levels) of academic scholarship: analysed articles; and articles and books used as bibliographies. This structuring of the data illustrates well the universe of citation networks in which articles play simultaneously the role of citation sources and bibliographic references. This is also the case for some of the 196 articles in our dataset. Data were analysed with the help of Netdraw



in UCINET. This instrument of analysis is appropriate for the purpose of this study, as it facilitates a concise and precise identification of the most commonly cited studies by referring to the full name of the author(s), year of publication and the journal/publishing house.

### AUTHORING SCHOLARSHIP ON EU INTEREST GROUPS

The analysis of authorship characteristics reveals five features of the scholarship on EU lobbying. *First*, this scholarship has been until now mainly an individual enterprise, being predominantly characterized by single-authored articles. In our dataset, 62.8 per cent of the articles are single-authored, 30.1 per cent have two authors, while 6.1 per cent have three. Only two articles have four authors. We identified a total number of 174 scholars who have been listed as authors across the 196 articles. This indicates a rather large but not particularly collaborative community of scholars, with co-authorship emerging as a more common practice only recently: 74 per cent of co-authored articles were published after 2005. Most often, co-authorships emerged between scholars based in the same universities. [Figure 1](#) indicates the names of most prolific scholars. This includes both well-established scholars such as Justin Greenwood, Jan Beyers, David Coen and Rainer Eising, and the names of younger scholars such as Christine Mahoney and Heike Klüver. Authorship is predominately European, with only three American academics publishing more than three articles in this field (Christine Mahoney, Frank R. Baumgartner and David Lowery).

Second, this scholarship is marked by an obvious gender gap in terms of authorship and citation patterns. Only 37 per cent of articles in our dataset are authored by women, and only four women have authored more than three articles, as indicated in [Figure 1](#). Further, our analysis of bibliographic references reveals that only 25 per cent of them have at least one female

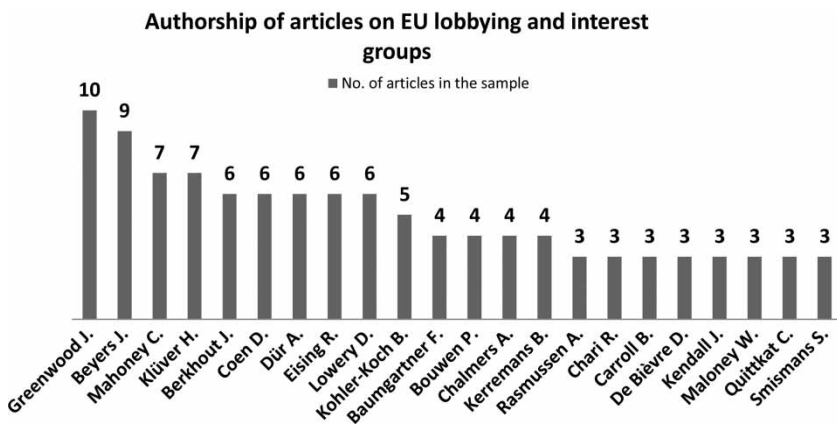


Figure 1 Scholars of EU interest groups and number of articles authored/co-authored

author, with the rest being authored by male academics only. This is consistent with the overall gender gap characterizing in more general terms political science as an academic discipline.<sup>2</sup> Both publication patterns and citation levels reveal a significant gender gap, and provide relevant information for the broader academic debate currently marking political science with respect to a reported gender bias in citation patterns favouring male academics (Maliniak *et Al.* 2013).

Third, the majority of articles are authored by scholars conducting research in universities located in the United Kingdom (UK) (32.1 per cent) and Germany (almost 18 per cent). Almost a quarter of articles are authored by scholars working in universities in the US (11.2 per cent), Netherlands (8.7 per cent) and Belgium (7.1 per cent). For simplicity's sake, we report only the first author's institutional affiliation when the article was published and his/her Ph.D.-awarding institution (Table 2). This allows a more disaggregated identification of the universities and research centres that have a strong research output in the scholarship and a strong tradition of training Ph.D. students in this field.

In terms of research output, the most prominent universities in the dataset are Leiden and Mannheim universities, followed closely by the London School of Economics (LSE), Robert Gordon and Antwerp universities. For some of these universities, the solid research output is attributable to only one (usually

Table 2 First author's academic affiliation and Ph.D.-awarding institution

Country	Universities with highest research output	Articles	Percentage
Part A: Authors' institutional affiliation			
UK	LSE, Robert Gordon Univ., Oxford, UCL	63	32.1
Germany	Mannheim Univ., Max Planck Institute, Bremen Univ., Konstantz Univ.	35	17.9
USA	Penn State University, Syracuse University	22	11.2
Netherlands	Leiden Univ.	17	8.7
Belgium	Antwerp Univ., Leuven Univ.	14	7.1
Ireland	University College Dublin, Trinity College Dublin	10	5.1
	Various other institutions	35	17.9
	Total	196	100.0
Part B: Authors' Ph.D.-awarding institution			
UK	Nottingham Univ., LSE, Exeter Univ.	47	24.0
Germany	Mannheim Univ., Cologne Univ.	32	16.3
USA	Harvard Univ., Penn State Univ.	36	18.4
Italy	European University Institute	24	12.2
Belgium	Leuven Univ.	12	6.1
	Various other institutions	36	17.9
	Information not available	9	4.6
	Total	196	100.0

a well-established) scholar, such as, for example, Justin Greenwood in Robert Gordon University. Other universities owe their high profile in the scholarship to a group of researchers, such as Mannheim University (hosting established scholars of interest groups research such as Beate Kohler-Koch, Christine Quittkat and Heike Klüver) or Leiden University (hosting, in different time periods, leading scholars such as Jan Beyers, David Lowery or Anne Rasmussen). Mannheim University was also the centre from which Beate Kohler Koch coordinated the EU-funded Network of Excellence (CONNEX), one of the very first notable initiatives to co-ordinate and promote collaborative research on EU governance and lobbying.

Fourth, [Table 2](#) indicates there are two main training centres of scholars specializing in research on EU lobbying: the European University Institute (EUI) and Mannheim University. In our dataset, 29 articles were authored as first, second or third author by EUI graduates (a total of 14 authors). Twenty-one articles were authored (alone or in collaboration with others) by Ph.D. graduates of Mannheim University (nine authors).

[Figure 2](#) illustrates the frequency with which articles were published across years. We notice two trends. First, a significant gap in the number of articles published before and after 1994 (just 12 articles from the Treaty of Rome in 1958 to 1993, or 0.3 per year, versus 184 articles from 1994 through 2013, or approximately 10 per year). This matches a broader pattern characterizing the publishing of academic articles in the EU studies literature in general: this scholarship boomed right after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 (Keeler 2005). Second, after 1994, there was a steep growth in the literature, with peaks in 2007 (24 articles) and 2013 (25 articles). The 2007 momentum continued throughout the coming years, so that by 2013 the number of published articles doubled compared to the 1994–2006 period (127 articles versus 57). In total, 70 per cent of articles were published in the last 10 years (2003–2013), a fact indicating a new, yet fast growing, field of research.

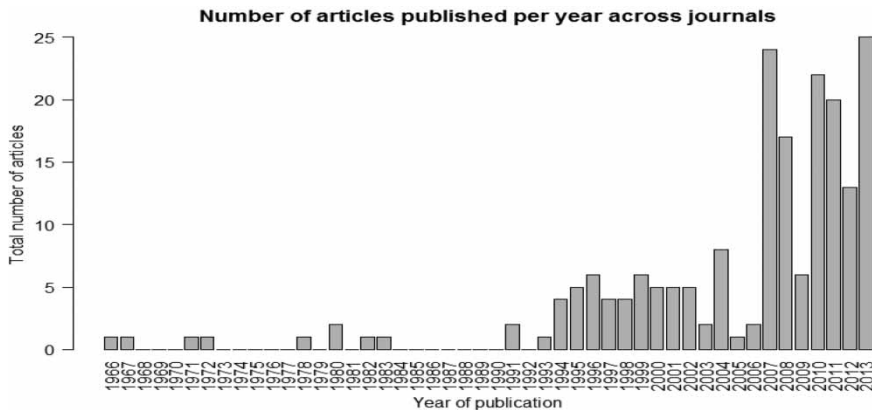


Figure 2 Scholarship on EU interest groups published per year across journals

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOLARSHIP

### Analytical focus: interest groups in the EU policy-making

In their 1998 review, Baumgartner and Leech emphasized the importance of studying US interest groups as part of the policy context in which they lobby, and pointed out that this aspect was for a long time neglected by American scholars (Baumgartner and Leech 1998: 39–40). By contrast, Baumgartner evaluated the scholarship on EU lobbying as being ‘firmly rooted in the study of policy processes’ (Baumgartner 2007: 486). Our study documents this evaluation and finds evidence supporting it.

Following Lowery and Brasher (2004) we distinguished between different *lobbying stages* the articles analysed. Table 3A indicates that the scholarship has been primarily interested in the mobilization for influence stage: articles examined mainly groups’ access to lobbying venues and decision-makers and their lobbying strategies (41.3 per cent). The exercise of policy influence stage raised lower levels of academic interest (11.7 per cent), while the question of how interest groups mobilize at EU level and maintain their organizations and constituency support was tackled by very few articles (4.1 per cent). The interest community stage, referring mainly to descriptions of the population of EU interest groups and the inter-organizational dynamics, received a relatively modest attention (only 9.7 per cent). Overall, then, almost 90 per cent of the articles are about lobbying, not mobilization and collective action issues; this is in stark contrast with Baumgartner and Leech’s (1998) critique of the older US-based literature, consistent with recent trends in Europe, and a healthy sign for a strong and relevant literature.

Regarding the main *research foci*, most articles describe/explain determinants of *lobbying strategies*, *access to* and *forms of participation* in different lobbying and decision-making venues. Most commonly lobbying activities are described and discussed in relation to their impact on lobbying success/influence and the issue of ‘Europeanization’ of lobbying activities of national organizations. The exchange of resources theory (Bouwen 2002) represents the dominant theoretical framework when examining the interactions between EU policy-makers/institutions and interest groups. Information, legitimacy and access to multi-level decision-making venues are most commonly the key lobbying resources investigated as part of this exchange. Interestingly, we note the absence of studies taking the analysis of this exchange relationship one step further to examine systematically and empirically if and how exactly policy-makers benefit from this exchange. Most studies assume that EU decision-makers benefit from this exchange, although none has actually provided systematic empirical evidence attesting this. A case in point is, for example, the analysis of whether or not, and how exactly, open consultations have an effect on the bargaining success of the Commission during decision-making in the Council.

The second most researched topic is that of conditions under which organizations are able to exert *influence* and achieve *lobbying success/preference attainment*. Studies focusing on *macro-level characteristics* and *dynamics* of the EU

Table 3 Research on EU interest groups: lobbying and policy context

	<i>Articles</i>		<i>Percentage</i>	
<b>A. Lobbying stage (Lowery and Brasher 2004)</b>				
Mobilization of interests and maintenance	8		4.1	
Interest community	19		9.7	
Mobilization for influence	81		41.3	
Exercising influence	23		11.7	
Several stages	20		10.2	
Other lobbying aspect	37		18.9	
Not applicable	8		4.1	
Total	196		100.0	
<b>B. Policy-making stage</b>				
Agenda-setting and policy formulation	28		14.3	
Policy-shaping	5		2.5	
Decision-making	2		1.0	
Policy implementation	1		0.5	
Policy evaluation	0		0.0	
Several stages	26		13.3	
No specific stage	103		52.5	
Not applicable/not related to EU policy-making processes	31		15.8	
Total	196		100.0	
	<i>Exclusive focus<sup>a</sup></i>		<i>In combination with other institutions<sup>b</sup></i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>C. EU institutions studied</b>				
European Commission	50	25.5	75	38.3
European Parliament	6	3.1	68	34.7
Council of the EU	0	0.0	52	26.5
European Court of Justice	0	0.0	8	4.1
Other (e.g., Committee of Regions, etc.)	1	0.5	16	8.2
Council of Europe	1	0.5	0	0.0
<b>D. Political systems studied</b>				
EU	145		74	
EU and other EU national systems	33		16.8	
EU and non-EU systems (mainly USA)	8		4.2	
Only EU national systems	9		4.6	
Not applicable	1		0.5	
Total	196		100.0	

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Numbers do not sum to 100% because only 51 articles have an exclusive focus on one institution.

<sup>b</sup> Numbers do not sum to 100% because each article may be counted more than once.

*interest group system* are less frequent, and they revolve mainly around topics such as *population dynamics and density* (e.g., Berkhout and Lowery 2008). Only few analyses address explicitly the question of finding *the most appropriate label for describing* the EU system along the classic lines of pluralism versus corporatism, within and across policy areas (see, however, Coen and Katsaitis [2013]). We also observe that only few studies focus on key dimensions of EU lobbying such as *lobbying coalitions* (three articles), *lobbying regulation* (four articles), interest groups' *preference formation* (six articles) and *EU funding* for interest organizations (two articles).

Regarding the *stage of the EU policy-making process* in relation to which lobbying was examined, Table 3B indicates that the majority of studies (52.5 per cent) do not explicitly circumscribe their analysis to a specific policy-making stage and study lobbying in the EU policy-making system broadly defined. When scholars did circumscribe their research to a specific stage, they were most likely to study lobbying during the agenda-setting and policy formulation (14.3 per cent) or to study lobbying during several policy stages (13.3 per cent). Approximately 15.8 per cent of articles do not analyse lobbying in relation to the dynamics of the EU policy-making and discuss the EU interest groups somehow independently of it.

When examining what *EU institutions* were included in the analyses, Table 3C shows a very frequent focus on the EC: 25.5 per cent of articles discuss EU lobbying in relation to the Commission only, while in 38.3 per cent this is one of the institutions referred to along with other institutional actors. In sharp contrast, studies focusing exclusively on lobbying in the context of the European Parliament (EP) were far less frequent (only 3.1 per cent). The more common approach was to study the EP together with other institutions (34.7 per cent). The Council and the European Court of Justice (ECJ) were examined only together with other institutions, and there are more studies analysing lobbying in the context of the former (26.5 per cent) than the latter (4.1 per cent). Lobbying in the context of other EU institutions (e.g., Committee of Regions) was also less researched (8.2 per cent of articles).

Finally, Table 3D shows the literature typically involves lobbying in one *political system* only (i.e., the EU). However, some studies did employ a broader comparative perspective and referred to other systems: 16.8 per cent mentioned other EU national systems, while 4.6 per cent referred to non-EU systems (mainly the US). The most commonly referred to were UK, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark and France.

Regarding the *number and diversity of EU policy areas* examined, Table 4 shows a strong tradition of studies focusing on one policy area only. The study of more than two areas is limited to only a few studies (16), most of which were published during/after 2007 (12 articles). Not only are the studies highly focused on just one or two issue domains, the particular choice of domains is highly skewed. There is no surprise that agriculture policy might garner much attention, considering the size of the Common Agricultural Policy in the EU budget, both over time and today. However, it is striking to see the policy domains such as internal market, fisheries and foreign policy which

Table 4 Policy focus

<i>A. Number of policy domains studied</i>	<i>Number of Articles</i>
One	68
Two	11
More than two	16
No particular policy domain is the focus	101
Total	196
<b>B. Policy domains analysed</b>	
Environment	25
Consumers' and public health	16
Agriculture	14
Regional policy	11
Trade	10
Banking and financial services	9
Energy	8
Employment	8
Competition, Fisheries, Social Policy, Information and Communication, Internal Market, Pharmaceuticals, Foreign Policy, Asylum, Economic Affairs, Monetary Union, etc.	Fewer than 8 studies each

were the object of much fewer studies. Clearly, the literature has little to do with a simple reflection of where the lobbyists are. Rather, a small number of policy domains garner most of the attention, and certain domains that are fundamental to the functioning of the EU, and home to much of its lobbying activity, are impressive by their absence in Table 4.

### Methodological approaches

Table 5 summarizes the theoretical and methodological approaches employed in the scholarship. It reveals a clear predominance of studies pursuing empirical research (69.9 per cent). Only a handful of studies discuss issues of research methodology (2 per cent), or aim for theory-building based on empirics (3.1 per cent). Theoretical discussions of different aspects of EU lobbying account for a quarter of the studies (25 per cent).

In line with previous studies, we observe a preponderance of 'exploratory and descriptive studies' and of case study research (Coen 2007: 333–4). Sixty-three per cent of studies adopted a descriptive approach, while only 35 per cent conducted inferential, theory-testing analyses. Similarly, the table shows a clear preponderance of qualitative over quantitative analysis: 65.8 per cent versus 24 per cent. Qualitative case studies account for over 60 per cent of the studies, while descriptive or inferential statistical analysis is used in only 31 per cent. Applying formal models to study EU interest groups is rare and significantly employed in

Table 5 Theoretical and methodological approaches in the study of EU interest groups

	<i>Number of articles</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A. Overall goal of the study		
Empirical analysis	137	69.9
Theoretical study	49	25
Theory-building based on empirics	6	3.1
Methodological analysis	4	2.0
Total	196	100.0
B. Main research approach		
Qualitative analysis	129	65.8
Quantitative analysis	47	24.0
Mix of quantitative and qualitative analysis	20	10.2
Total	196	100.0
C. Type of analysis		
Descriptive	124	63.3
Inferential	70	35.7
Both descriptive and inferential	2	1.0
Total	196	100.0
D. Research design		
Qualitative case study	122	62.2
Descriptive or inferential statistical analysis	61	31.1
Formal model without empirics	5	2.55
Qualitative case study with statistical analysis	3	1.5
Counterfactual analysis	0	0.0
Experimental analysis	0	0.0
Policy analysis	1	0.5
Other/uncoded	4	2.05
Total	196	100.0
E. Level of analysis		
Individual interest groups	132	67.3
Population of interest groups	53	27.0
Lobbying coalitions	8	4.1
Not applicable	3	1.5
Total	196	100.0
F. Data source		
Interviews	33	16.8
Document and secondary data analysis	37	18.9
Surveys	17	8.7
Mix of sources	55	28.1
No data	32	16.3
Information not available	22	11.2
Total	196	100.0



only five articles. To examine whether any substantial changes in methodological approaches and research designs occurred in the scholarship in the last years, we divided our sample into articles published before and after 2007, and compared the two sub-samples. We note a substantial increase in the percentage of inferential analyses relative to exploratory and descriptive studies in the post-2007 period: almost 43 per cent (54 inferential v. 73 descriptive) as compared to 24 per cent (16 inferential v. 51 descriptive) for the pre-2007 period. Similarly, we note a relative increase in the number of studies employing statistical analyses as compared to case studies post-2007: 35 per cent (47 v. 72) as compared to 22 per cent (14 v. 50) before 2007.

The majority of studies have individual organizations as the unit of analysis (67.3 per cent). Almost 30 per cent of the articles document aspects related to the population level of the EU interest-group system, while only 4 per cent analyse lobbying coalitions. Regarding *data sources*, the current practice is to mix different sources: most commonly document analysis, interviews and surveys (28 per cent). When using one data source only, scholars frequently employ document and secondary data analysis (18.9 per cent), interviews (16.8 per cent), and to a lesser extent surveys (8.7 per cent).

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

We analysed bibliographic references based on four dimensions: number of citations in our sample; authors' gender; the origin of references (American or European journal/ publishing house);<sup>3</sup> and how articles relate to each other based on their common bibliographic references (Newman 2010: 116–17).

To identify the most frequently cited references, we computed in Netdraw a simple measure of *indegree centrality* which indicates how many times a source has been cited across all 196 articles. This continuous measure ranges from 3 to 57. To avoid the information overload associated with the overall large size of the citation matrix, Figure 3 presents only those bibliographic references that were cited more than 20 times (a total of 20 references).

Owing to space constraints, in Table 6 we mention in full only the 10 most frequently cited academic works.

We also observe a strong preference among scholars to employ European references over American ones (70 per cent versus 30 per cent of the sources in the citation matrix). This rather modest presence of American scholarship in the European context might be explained by what Mahoney and Baumgartner's identified as a salient feature of the two academic communities researching interest groups on the two sides of the Atlantic: for a long time they developed their scholarship in 'parallel but separately', and only more recently they 'have begun to converge' (Mahoney and Baumgartner 2008: 1269). Clearly, this merger has yet to reach fruition. On the other hand, there are few Americans working in the area, so the citation pattern does not appear to be based on two communities operating in parallel any more.

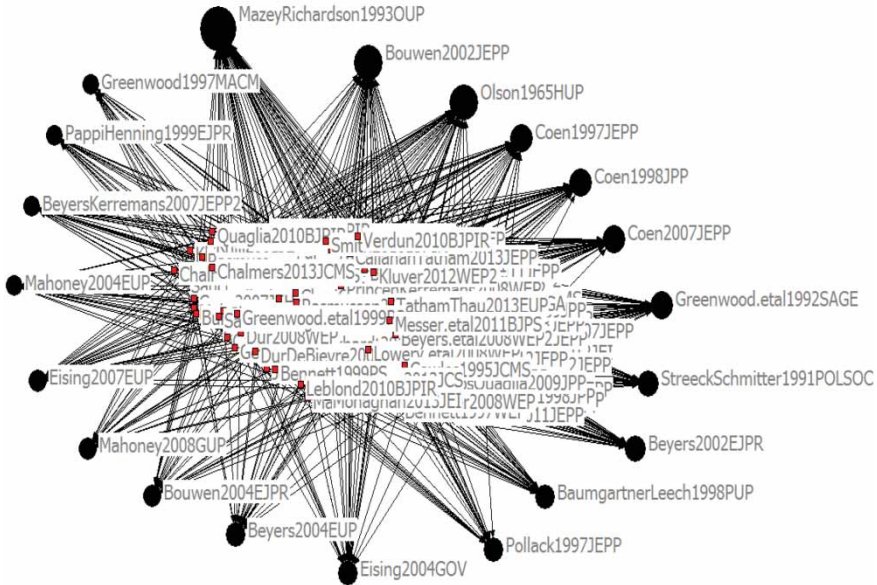


Figure 3 Most cited bibliographic references (in-citations > 20). Node size equals the number of in-citations, clock-wise, from largest to smallest values

To explore the bibliographic coupling of articles, we used multidimensional scaling analysis (MDS) to map how similar/different the articles are in terms of common references, and principle component analysis (PCA) to identify whether there is an underlying pattern (main dimension) of referencing across articles. To conduct the two analyses in Netdraw, we first transposed the two-mode network into a one-mode, undirected, symmetric network providing information only about the 196 articles and the number of references each article shares with each of the others in the dataset. Cell values in the adjacency matrix are continuous and range from 0 to 27. The matrix is symmetric and therefore its diagonal indicates the total number of references each article shares from the total number of 392 common references. These values range from 0 to 55. For our MDS and PCA analyses we recode diagonal values to 0 (in line with Scott [2000: 151]). To keep the network visualization clear, for both analyses we introduced a ‘threshold of relevance’ relative to the analysed articles: we focus only on those articles that cite 10 or more references from the total pool of 392. In Figures 4 and 5 we therefore analyse only 116 articles (representing almost 60 per cent of our initial sample).

Our MDS analysis (Figure 4) indicates a relatively cohesive body of literature in terms of shared references. We observe, however, three main clusters of similar articles, as well as the presence of several articles that adopt a different bibliographic approach and have a lower level of referencing similarity (e.g., Klüber’s [2009] article proposing a methodological discussion on the

Table 6 Ten most cited academic works in the scholarship on EU lobbying and interest groups

	Citations
Sonia Mazey and Jeremy Richardson (eds), <i>Lobbying the European Community</i> (Oxford University Press, 1993)	57
Pieter Bouwen, 'Corporate lobbying in the European Union: the logic of access' ( <i>Journal of European Public Policy</i> , 2002)	43
Mancur Olson, <i>The Logic of Collective Action</i> (Harvard University Press, 1965)	42
David Coen, 'The European business interest and the nation state: large-firm lobbying in the European Union and member states' ( <i>Journal of Public Policy</i> , 1998)	32
David Coen, 'The evolution of the large firm as a political actor in the European Union' ( <i>Journal of European Public Policy</i> , 1997)	32
David Coen, 'Empirical and theoretical studies in EU lobbying' ( <i>Journal of European Public Policy</i> , 2007)	32
Justin Greenwood, Jürgen Grote and Karsten Ronit (eds), <i>Organized Interests and the European Community</i> (Sage, 1992)	30
Wolfgang Streeck and Phillip Schmitter, 'From national corporatism to transnational pluralism: organized interests in the single European market' ( <i>Politics and Society</i> , 1991)	28
Jan Beyers, 'Gaining and seeking access: the European adaptation of domestic interest associations' ( <i>European Journal of Political Research</i> , 2002)	28
Frank Baumgartner and Beth Leech, <i>Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and Political Science</i> (Princeton University Press, 1998)	27

measurement of interest groups' influence with the help of *Wordfish* analysis, which draws extensively on the literature on quantitative content analysis, and less on that on EU lobbying). The PCA attests further that the current scholarship on EU interest groups is built on a cohesive body of knowledge. Figure 5 illustrates that articles share a common underlying dimension in terms of citation patterns. This uniformity in the use of bibliographic sources contributes to the coherence of the communication among scholars, and indicates an academic community that works within a unified theoretical framework despite observed low levels of collaborative work and publications. This cohesiveness in citation patterns also explains to a certain degree the predominance of some theoretical perspectives, such as the resource exchange theory (Bouwen 2002), applied to explain both lobbying strategies and lobbying success, as well as the overall consensus that information provision is the hard currency in the EU lobbying context. In some respects citation patterns set the frame within which an academic discipline develops and matures its theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. The cohesive body of references and the high number of

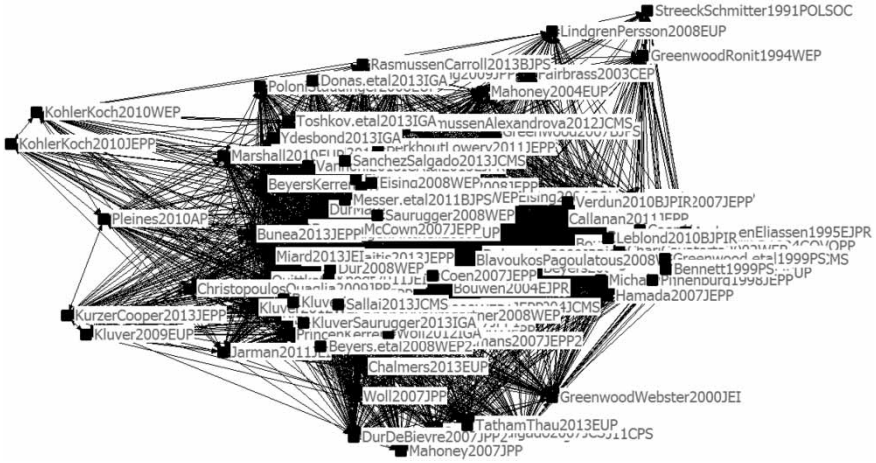


Figure 4 Multidimensional scaling analysis: bibliographic coupling of analysed articles

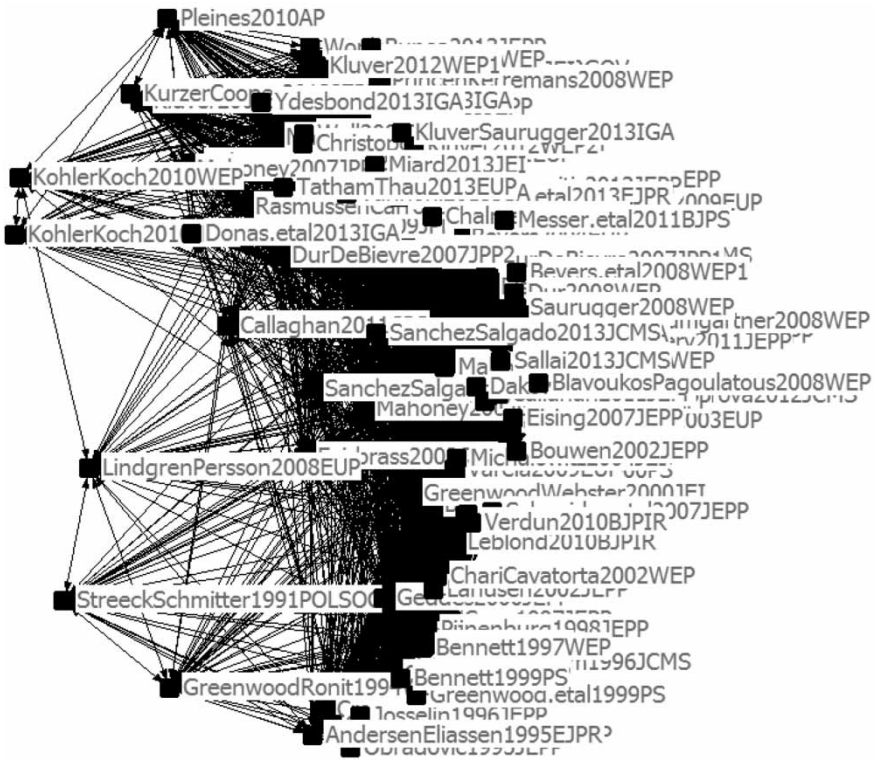


Figure 5 Principle component analysis of bibliographic coupling of analysed articles

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citations received by few prominent scholars (e.g., David Coen, Pieter Bouwen, Jan Beyers or Justin Greenwood) provide an indication of existing dominant theoretical frames in the literature, of their dimensions and of their creators. However, it might also explain (at least partially) why this scholarship is still a niche field in the European political science, in the absence of more diverse and innovative theoretical and methodological perspectives that follow from a more diversified theoretical background. In this respect, the scholarship on EU interest groups would perhaps benefit from drawing theoretical and research design insights from the more theoretically complex and strongly empirically grounded in large n analyses, scholarship on EU formal decision-making: see, for example, Thomson *et al.* [2006], an edited volume that is quite often cited in the more recent publications on EU lobbying but has not yet become one of the main cited works, despite offering an interesting and complex model of how to systematically and empirically study EU policy-making processes, actors, policy inputs and outputs.

## CONCLUSIONS

We reviewed the scholarship on EU interest groups published in the last 60 years as articles in peer-reviewed journals of political science and public policy. We drew inspiration from the research tradition of analytical reviews of the scholarship on US interest groups. We took this approach one step further, and introduced elements of bibliometric analysis. Our analysis reveals several salient characteristics of the scholarship on EU interest groups. First, this scholarship is mainly published in three specialized journals of EU studies, and it is most frequently present in the *Journal of European Public Policy*. This supports the observation that research on EU interest groups is a niche field in the European political science (Beyers *et al.* 2008a: 1103).

Second, the authorship characteristics indicate a rather large community of scholars, preferring single authorship over collaborative work, a majority of whom conduct their research in British and German universities. Two European universities stand out as long-established centres for training researchers of EU lobbying: the EUI and Mannheim University. Research is predominantly conducted by European scholars, with few (yet well-established) American scholars interested in this field. This Eurocentric approach is reflected in the system of referencing bibliographic sources: American scholarship represents a relatively modest proportion of the references used when researching EU interest groups. The patterns in the bibliographic coupling analysis show that articles do have in common a significant proportion of their references; it is a coherent, cohesive literature. This might indicate a healthy level of awareness among EU scholars concerning the dangers of theoretical and conceptual over-stretching and of indiscriminate borrowing of theories and concepts from different literatures and of applying them to new (and in some respects less-suitable) contexts, that Mahoney and Baumgartner (2008) underlined as a potential danger in the current development of the EU lobbying research. This also confirms that the

two communities of scholars of lobbying studies have developed for most of the time in parallel without engaging in any consistent and constructive, transatlantic dialogue. We note, however, a consistent interest for and contribution to the discipline on behalf of some American scholars such as David Lowery, Christine Mahoney and Frank Baumgartner, who have developed an extensive interest and expertise in researching EU lobbying. This aspect indicates, however, that the development of the EU scholarship could still greatly benefit and gain insights from future comparative EU–US studies and from seeking inspiration from the more theoretically complex and methodologically sophisticated American scholarship on lobbying. Current research trends seem to point in that direction, in particular with the development of the large INTEREURO research project, with its complex and multi-faceted research approach.

The analysis of theoretical and methodological approaches employed to study EU interest groups confirmed some of the previous broad assessments of the literature, while also revealing some new features. It showed that the research is strongly embedded in the EU policy-making context (Baumgartner 2007). It showed that the scholarship is predominantly characterized by descriptive analyses and qualitative case studies (Coen 2007), although we note a relevant change in this respect since 2007, marked by a substantial relative increase of studies employing quantitative analysis and conducting inferential, theory-testing research. There is a solid tradition of research on lobbying strategies (as indicated by Coen [2007]). Policy influence and lobbying success (despite some notable contributions [Mahoney 2008; Klüver 2009; Bunea 2013]), remain relatively under-researched (see Dür 2008). We note several other distinctive features, less mentioned in the literature:

- (1) a lack of systematic studies of EU lobbying in relation to the last stages of the EU policy-making (i.e., policy implementation and evaluation);
- (2) a lack of scholarship investigating the methodological issues and challenges specific to research on EU interest groups, as well as of studies interested in theory-building based on empirics;
- (3) a very modest interest in systematic analyses of EU lobbying coalitions, despite a wide agreement that this is a key factor in explaining lobbying success and a very frequent form of collective action at EU level (Greenwood and Aspinwall 1998);
- (4) a rather modest interest in macro-level empirical analyses and characterizations of the EU system of interest-group activity across policy areas;
- (5) a lack of comparative analyses of lobbying across multiple policy areas in one study; and
- (6) a lack of comprehensive analyses examining lobbying across all policy-making stages in one study.

Further, our research revealed that formal and experimental works are almost absent from the literature. The most remarkable characteristics about the literature, however, are probably what Coen (2007: 334) called the ‘exploratory and descriptive’ nature of so much of the work. The typical article in the area focuses

on a single policy domain, features an intensive study of lobbying in the Commission (usually therefore in just a single Directorate-General), and involves a qualitative case study rather than a larger empirical base. Particularly relevant is that the policy domains most often focused on in the literature (environment, consumers' rights and health, and agriculture) virtually exclude such prominent areas of lobbying activity as the single market. The very recent scholarship suggests that there is an increased and serious interest and commitment on behalf of scholars to engage significantly much more into systematic, theory testing, large-n research projects of EU lobbying. So, as the literature continues to develop, we can hope that future studies will take the significant knowledge that has been developed and further push the literature towards larger and more generalizable studies cutting across multiple policy domains and multiple institutions of the EU.

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## SUPPLEMENTAL DATA AND RESEARCH MATERIALS

Supplemental data for this article can be accessed on the Taylor & Francis website.

## NOTES

1 For a detailed description of the project see <http://www.intereuro.eu/> (accessed 4 December 2013).

- 2 For a summary of the latest debates on the role of women in academia and political science, see the Monkey Cage gender gap symposium available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2013/09/30/introducing-the-monkey-cage-gender-gap-symposium/> (accessed 4 December 2013).
- 3 Information on the Web of Knowledge is available at <http://adminapps.webofknowledge.com.ezproxy.eui.eu/JCR/JCR> (accessed 12 December 2013).

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