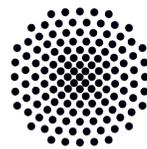


Agendas and Interest Groups



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM



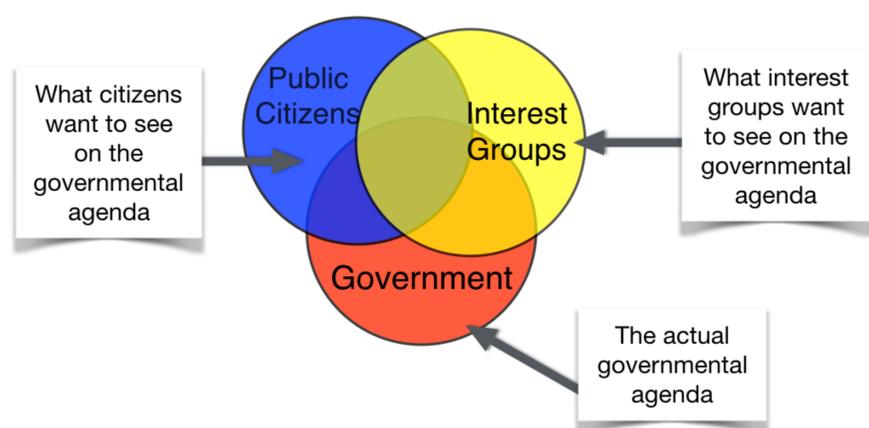
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The project in brief

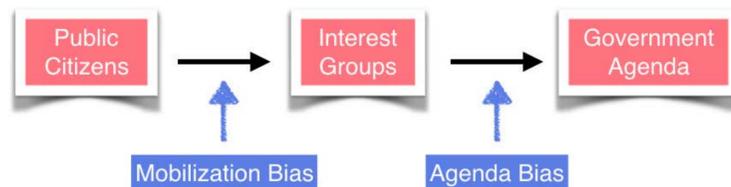
The influence of interest groups in politics poses **potential threats to democracy**. The challenges of collective action predict that the groups most likely to be represented will have concentrated economic interests or intensely held beliefs, resulting in policies at odds with general public opinion. While such biases in representation are **clear in theory**, there is **scant systematic evidence** of disproportionate influence over government by a subset of interest groups. Further, social scientists know little about the **degree of correspondence between the political preferences of interest groups and those of the public**. Agendas and Interest Groups is a comparative project that for the first time will address concerns about the role of **interest group influence by focusing attention on policy agendas and analyzing the circumstances under which specific types of groups and citizens find their issues represented before government**. In mapping public, group, and government agendas in **Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, and the US**, we aim to address normatively important questions about the extent and causes of inequalities in representation.

Aims and objectives of the project

- ❖ Evaluate the degree of congruence between the concerns of citizens, the policy agendas of interest groups, and the policy priorities of national governments.
- ❖ Assess the efforts and ability of interest groups to represent societal interests in their interactions with government.
- ❖ Understand why some issues of concern to interest groups find their way onto the governmental agenda while others are excluded, and why this differs across countries.
- ❖ make novel inferences about which groups are more likely to successfully (a) shape the national political agenda, (b) attain their preferred policy outcomes, and (c) connect public citizens and government elites
- ❖ separate characteristics of institutions and issues from characteristics of groups in predicting groups' relative success at the agenda-setting stage and in representative communication
- ❖ Draw normatively important inferences about the extent of inequalities in the representation of citizens and develop recommendations about how to reduce them



Public, Interest Group, and Government Agendas:
Where are they congruent, why do they differ, and what does that mean for the quality of representation?



Interest Groups as Transmission Belt:
Is the upper-class accent met by attentive government ears?

Mapping agendas, explaining (in-)congruence

- ❖ **Survey the public** in each of the countries to map the public agenda
- ❖ **Interview interest group representatives** to map the interest group agenda
- ❖ Corroborate the interview findings with a large-scale **content analysis**
- ❖ **Analyse legislation and regulation** to map the government agenda
- ❖ Use **qualitative and quantitative methods** in **single country and cross-sectional designs** to provide explanations of agenda (in-)congruence

The research teams

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