

# Symposium: Lobbying for better or for worse?

Organized by the GovLis project  
Professor Anne Rasmussen and her team  
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## Date

25 April – 26 April 2019

## Location

Campus the Hague, Leiden University

## Keynote speakers

Raj Chari & Michele Crepaz  
*Trinity College Dublin*

## Description

The responsiveness of policy-making to demands in society is a central tenet of representative democracies (Dahl, 1971). Politicians and policy-makers alike have to take into account the preferences and interests of the general public. There are reasons to believe that traditional mechanisms for securing policy responsiveness have become less effective in recent decades. For example, political party membership has declined strongly and there is a growing skepticism towards governments. Moreover, there is an increased tendency to locate policy-making authority in regulatory agencies that enjoy greater independence of the political arena. In response to these developments, there has been an increase in the extent to which policy-makers involve interest groups in policy-making in the EU and at the national level. Yet, their involvement is not without risk as unequal opportunities and undue influence may bias political outcomes towards special interests. Such unbalanced policy input may lead to a mismatch between public preferences and policy. Recent research projects have therefore started to assess the extent to which such group involvement actually helps or harms the responsiveness of policy-making to public preferences and interests.

A number of these projects both in the United States and in Europe take up a classic concern in the interest group literature. They focus on the extent to which interest groups are able to represent public opinion. Such studies have considered the extent to which mobilized interest groups are on the same side as the public opinion majority on specific policy issues (Flöthe and Rasmussen 2018; Gilens and Page 2014).

Similarly, this strand of literature investigates whether group involvement actually enhances or hampers agenda and policy responsiveness to public opinion (e.g. Bevan and Rasmussen 2017; Klüver and Pickup 2018; Rasmussen, Romeijn and Toshkov 2018; Rasmussen and Reher 2019). Another central concern that is attracting increasing academic attention is regulatory capture. Especially in depoliticized settings that focus on rulemaking, policy-makers and regulatory agencies may become too dependent on the expertise and knowledge of a specific set of interest groups or industries to develop policies and consequently become less attentive to the broader public interests that are at play (Arras & Braun, 2018). Other scholars studying the representation of societal interests have and continue to focus on the types of interests that are represented by mobilized interest groups, and how such groups are involved in policymaking and transfer both their constituent's interest and policy-relevant expert information to policy-makers. Finally, scholars also take into account some of the political reactions to these developments, and study the emergence and efficacy of lobby regulations (Chari, Murphy and Hogan 2007, 2010, Crepaz 2017).

The purpose of this workshop is to bring together scholars who take different approaches to study these fundamental questions about the role of interest groups in contemporary governance and the extent to which they can contribute to the legitimacy of public policy. The participants will discuss current and future research projects and papers, as well as conceptual and methodological approaches to studying these phenomena. The goal is to stimulate dialogue between scholars and research projects who take different approaches to this central question.

We therefore invite abstracts that address these questions at both the national and EU level. The symposium will also include an afternoon session with practitioners who will share their perspectives and experiences on the role of interest groups in policy processes.

### **Deadline and submissions**

Abstracts can be submitted to Jeroen Romeijn ([j.romeijn@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:j.romeijn@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)) or Linda Flöthe ([l.floethe@fgga.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:l.floethe@fgga.leidenuniv.nl)) by **March 1st 2019**.



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