

You can't have one without the other

Cross-cutting dependencies and the intensity of interest organisations' advocacy behaviour in Belgium

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Abstract

How does multilevel governance impact the intensity of interest organisations' advocacy activities? In this paper, we argue that advocacy behaviour is part of a (long term) relationship between policymakers and interest organisations. In an institutionally fragmented environment, these relations -and the (resource) dependencies they entail- may empower but might possibly also constrain certain interest organisations in developing advocacy activities. For the purpose of this paper we analyse data collected through a survey among 693 Belgian interest organisations. Our main finding is that resource dependencies towards one level of government are related to the intensity of advocacy behaviour directed towards other levels of government. For example, government patronage from the Flemish government has a negative effect on the intensity of advocacy behaviour towards the federal level of government, and vice-versa. This we call the cross-cutting effect of resource dependencies. We argue that these cross-cutting dependencies may be an important source of representational bias in de-centralized federal systems.

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Introduction

The policymaking process in European countries is increasingly characterized by multilevel governance (MLG) in which national governments delegate considerable policy competences to the European Union and their subnational entities (Marks & Hooghe 2004, Bartolini 2005). Although this MLG-environment might imply a multiplication of access-points (or opportunities) for domestic interest organisations, it also poses considerable challenges for them. Yet, the means to overcome these challenges are likely to be unequally distributed. In that, some organisations may lack the capacities needed to attain their political and organisational goals at the various levels of government.

In this paper, we focus on the intensity of advocacy patterns. Although it might be relatively easy for an organisation to contact, one European official once a year, not all domestic interest organisations have the capacity to contact multiple European institutions on a more regular basis. The intensity of contacts (i.e. number of policymakers contacted and the frequency with which) is directly related to the total amount of (potential) influence an organisation can exert over the policy process. Organisations that are only capable of sustaining advocacy behaviour at low rates of intensity, we argue, are less likely to develop stable political relations and thus may fail to gain effective political representation. The intensity of advocacy behaviour is in this regard connected to the total amount of input legitimacy present in a political system. If only a very select set of homogenous interests (e.g. only business associations) are able to sustain intense contacts with policymakers, this may bias policy outcomes.

Previous authors that looked at multilevel advocacy behaviour often characterizes these interactions as non-recurring or one-off in nature (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Pralle, 2003). In this paper, we underline that advocacy behaviour is usually part of a (long term) relationship between policymakers and interest organisations. On the one hand, interest organisations need stable relations with governments to attain their political goals and to maintain their organisation. On the other hand, policymakers need regular input from a stable and diversified set of organized interests in order to make legitimate public policies. From this follows that these relations entail certain (resource) dependencies. Yet, at this moment, it is unclear how such dependencies play out in a MLG-environment.

One possibility is that close relations to, for instance, one particular governmental level, might empower organisations to reach their (policy) goals. Another, equally likely, possibility is that steady relationships could become a straightjacket which constrains interest organisations in their advocacy behaviour towards other levels of government. This could become problematic when action towards other levels of government are required for interest organisations to attain their policy-oriented goals. Or when because of this, the other levels of government structurally lack the input of certain interests. We call this the cross-cutting effect of resource dependency.

In this paper we use recently collected survey evidence of 693 Belgian interest organisations. Belgium is characterized by a high degree of institutional fragmentation, making it an ideal case to study advocacy behaviour in a MLG-environment. Our main finding is that the resource dependencies towards one level of government are indeed systematically impacting the intensity of advocacy behaviour towards other levels of government. For instance, government subsidies from the Flemish government, all else equal, constrains interest organisations to frequent the federal level of government (and vice-versa).

Theoretical framework.

The propensity with which interest organisations seek access to policymakers is a widely debated topic. In the context of MLG, recent scholarship addressed the extent to which domestic interest organisations develop cumulative multilevel strategies (Beyers, 2002; Beyers & Kerremans, 2007, 2012; Dür & Mateo, 2012), to what extent policy issues impact the choice to approach one venue and not the other (Constantelos, 2010; Poloni-Staudinger, 2008), the conditions under which organised interests move issues towards other venues (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Baumgartner & Jones, 2010; Holyoke, 2003) and to what extent organisations take the institutional environment into account in terms of regionalization (Bouteca & Devos, 2014; Constantelos, 2007; Keating & Wilson, 2014) and Europeanization (Beyers, 2002, 2004; Constantelos, 2007; Klüver, 2010). These latter authors have labelled the implications of institutional constraints on civil society mobilization 'regions without regionalism', 'Europe's democratic deficit' and 'the erosion/hollowing out of the nation-state' (e.g. Keating & Wilson 2014; Follesdal & Hix 2006; Grande 1996).

These authors generally regard advocacy behaviour as a function of/reaction to the political issues with which interest organisations are confronted. Thus depending on the policy issue at hand, interest organisations devise a strategic response to approach the government(s) competent over the matter. In more fragmented policy domains we may therefore expect a general increase in the

intensity of advocacy behaviour towards multiple levels of government. However, it needs to be emphasized that not all advocacy behaviour is strictly rational, or indeed always a strategic response (Pralle, 2003). According to neo-institutional theory (NIT), the extent to which organisations can manoeuvre strategically, is conditioned by the institutional environment in which they are embedded. Given their drive to survive and to reach their (policy-oriented) goals, interest organisations have to adhere to the norms and procedures prevalent in this environment. This so-called 'iron cage' constrains the extent to which organisations can contact multiple levels of government more intensively (Powell & DiMaggio, 2012). However, it is less clear how this mechanism plays out in a polity which is characterized by high degrees of institutional fragmentation. For in a MLG environment, the possibility arises that organisations are confronted with overlapping or even competing rules and procedures.

Recent works suggest that this may draw interest organisations towards the level of government which represents the centre of gravity in this institutional environment (Keating and Wilson 2014). For instance, Constantelos (2007), observes that while regional French business associations focus their advocacy activities at the central level of government, regional Italian associations prefer the subnational level of government. In addition, (Beyers & Bursens, 2006, 2013) argue that -in heavily EU regulated policy domains- Belgian domestic interest organisations are drawn towards the national level of government. Both studies explain the focus of advocacy by the competences particular governmental levels hold. Constantelos (2007) argues that the difference between France and Italy lies in the fact that Italian regions have considerable autonomy with regard to European structural funds, whereas this is not the case for the French regions. Beyers and Bursens (2006, 2013) explain their findings by pointing at the strong institutional mechanisms for intra-Belgian cooperation between the Flemish, Walloon, and federal government with regard to EU matters.

H1: The higher the degree of institutional fragmentation, the higher the intensity of advocacy behaviour will be towards the level of government that is the centre of gravity in the MLG-environment.

Nevertheless, it is not only the institutional environment *as such* that determines the advocacy behaviour of interest organisations. Indeed, the rules and procedures are created and upheld by the institutional actors governing the polity. In other words; governments control the rules and procedures for gaining crucial resources, making organisations dependent upon them

(Verbruggen; Verschuere & De Corte, 2014). Therefore, NIT is often combined with Resource Dependency Theory (RDT) (see for example, Schmid, Bar, and Nirel 2008 or Verbruggen et al. 2011). Shortly stated, RDT posits that organisations cannot autonomously achieve their organisational goals, but have to rely on resources external to their organisation to ensure their survival and attain their policy goals (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978; Neumayr et al. 2013; Chaves, 2004; Bloodgood & Tremblay-Boire, 2016; Mosley, 2012; Davis & Cob 2009; Rehli & Jäger 2011). These resources (financial, but also professional staff and expertise), are attained by establishing relations with other actors (the government, members, or other interest organisations). Yet, these relations entail certain dependencies which can shape the behaviour of interest organisations (Schmid et al., 2008). However, an MLG environment makes that interest organisations are confronted with institutional actors at various levels of government that all have their own rules and procedures for gaining crucial resources. This entails that resource dependencies may be cross-cutting.

Governments can actively shape interest mobilization by adopting a framework of state-society relations that is more/less permissible for certain organised interests. Two important tools to do so are (1) providing subsidies and (2) granting institutionalized access. First of all, the reliance on government patronage can both lead to an increase in the intensity of advocacy as well as a decrease in the advocacy efforts targeted at a particular level of government (Leech, 2006; Neumayr, Schneider, & Meyer, 2015; Schmid et al., 2008). On the hand, interest organisations that are highly dependent upon government patronage may advocate less intensively at that level of government, fearing the alienation of policymakers and losing their subsidies and grants (i.e. not wanting to bite the hand that feeds them). In some cases, regulations may even explicitly limit the amount of advocacy activities an organisation can deploy (Buffardi, Pekkanen, & Smith, 2015; Leech, 2006). On the other hand, research by Buffardi, Pekkanen, and Smith (2015) and to a lesser extent by Leech (2006) provides evidence that, at least in the US context, non-profits receiving federal funds are more inclined to advocate at the federal level.

Adding to this is that in a MLG environment, organisations can/have to develop relations with multiple governments. And so funding of government A may also impact the patterns of advocacy towards government B. The effect of subsidies does not stop at the border, but can spill-over (cross-cutting effect). For one, it might be possible that as interest organisations receive subsidies, their capacity (to advocate) increases. However, it is also possible that subsidies from government A decreases the possibilities of organisations to bypass this government and go directly to government B. For instance, in the Belgian context, Celis et al. (2012) found that as the Flemish

government became the most important source of funding, this reduces incentives for interest organisations to mobilize at the federal level. On top of that, Celis et al. (2012) found evidence that subnational governments may even demand ‘*exclusivity of project funding or territorial focus*’ and are controlling the work of interest organisations – as a major funds provider – to ensure a ‘*return on investment*’ which entails to not spend too much time on federal policy issues (even when these are part of their representative focus).

H2: Interest organisations that receive government patronage of a particular government, develop more intensive advocacy activities towards that government.

H3: Interest organisations that receive government patronage of the (sub) national/EU level, will develop less intensive advocacy activities towards other levels of government.

We now consider the second tool governments have to shape interest organisations advocacy behaviour. In many democracies the state-society relations are formalised in, a more or less, permanent consultation settings. Several European democracies have established a wide array of advisory councils in various policy domains. By regulating the state-society relations through the granting of regular and institutionalised access, policymakers introduce a mutual resource dependency in terms of information and political support. In a multilevel setting, as with government subsidies, these dependencies can empower but also hamper an organisation in its activities towards multiple levels of government.

On the one hand, Beyers and Kerremans (2012, 2007) argue that repeated interactions with domestic policymakers allow interest organisations not only to acquire specific -domestic level- skills and assets (i.e. resources), but that these skills and assets also help them at the European level. On the other hand, the (neo-) corporatist structure of state-society relations at the national level can cause certain inertia. More specifically, privileged access in key advisory councils may keep organisations from fleeing the national level of government (Celis et al. 2012). This could counter the centrifugal forces at the central level of government. In that, interest organisations remain at the central level of government because they enjoy privileged access to the decision-making process. Thus, again, the differing rules and procedures at each level of government in terms of gaining privileged and regular access may cause cross-cutting dependencies for interest organisations.

H4: Interest organisations which are member of an advisory council at a certain governmental level are constrained to display more intensive advocacy activities towards the other governmental levels.

Beside governments, another important patron for interest organisations are the members/supportive constituency. Although, it has recently been argued that as organisations have diversified their sources of income, membership fees are becoming less important (Maloney 2015; Jordan & Maloney, 1997; Walker et al, 2014; Skocpol, 2004), we expect that (dependency to) a particular membership is still an important predictor for the intensity of advocacy behaviour. This is because targeting particular levels of government conveys a signal to the members, the public and potential allies (Pralle, 2003). Which is especially the case in polities where the membership to certain interest organisations is strongly determined by a sense of sub-national identity. In a federal system, the regional-national divides may cross-cut the traditional political cleavages. This may constrain interest organisations to advocate certain levels of government based on the origins of their members. For example, the members of Catalan/Scottish/Flemish business associations might not allow their association to by-pass the sub-national government by going directly to the central level of government. In contrast, in a federal polity, having a nation-wide membership may constrain organisation to by-pass the federal level of government, by directly going to the sub-national government. In conclusion, in an MLG environment, cross-cutting dependencies can arise based on the origin of their members.

H5: Interest organisations dependent on members concentrated at the sub-national level of government will develop less intensive advocacy activities with the central level of government (and vice-versa).

Although NIT and RDT generally regard the determinants for behaviour as exogenously given, this does not mean that the directors and managers of interest organisations themselves, cannot actively arm their organisations to cope with this MLG environment. The extent to which organisations are dictated by the institutional environment as such and the relationships with their patrons, might be mitigated by their organisational capacities. In this regard, interest organisations may hire judicial experts, appoint a managing director or full-time secretary general or install task- or policy-oriented working groups. So organisations with higher degrees of professionalization are better able to contact multiple levels of government and overcome the institutional constraints and dependencies restricting them in their advocacy behaviour.

H6: The more professionalized an interest organisation is, the more intense advocacy activities it will have developed towards all levels of government.

Research design: data, methods and measures

In this paper we opt for a broad conceptualization of interest organizations to encompass the variety of actors that make up the organisational fabric between citizens and the government (e.g. public interest groups, social movement organisations, non-profits/third sector, labour unions, leisure associations and business associations). Interest organisations are entities which are (to a certain extent) organized, stand between citizens and the government and have a (potential) political interest. Furthermore, interest organisations can become politically active, but this does not need to be their primary goal. We restricted our sample¹ to those organisations that aim to represent (sub)national constituencies and excluded associations that are primarily focused on representation at the local level (such as provinces and cities). Our sampling procedure yielded a list of 1691 subnational and nation-wide (or federal) organisations: 35 percent Flemish, 23 percent Francophone, and 42 percent national interest organisations.

Our data collection is part of a larger research project in which the aim is to conduct comparative surveys in various European countries (Beyers et al. 2016).² Our survey focuses on topics such as political strategies, organisational development and management. This web-survey was conducted over a time-span of 117 days (January till May 2016). To fill out the survey we contacted at least one high level official per organisation and in most cases two. In the end we achieved a response rate of 41% (n= 693), which is high compared to previous interest organization surveys.

The dependent variable in this paper concerns intensity of advocacy behaviour. To assess this, we asked our respondents how frequently they contacted specific governmental actors in the last 12 months. In separate batteries, we gauged their contacts to several actors at (1) the European, (2) the federal, (3) the Flemish, (4) the French-speaking community, and (5) the Walloon regional government. The items in each battery contained the most important governmental actors at this level, ranging from the legislative branch, the executive, to the administrative branch³. The answer options were: *“(0) we did not seek access, (1) at least once, (2) at least once every three months, (3) at least once a month, (4) and at least once a week”*. We created an index by summing the answer options of each governmental level (i.e. each battery of actors). So for example, an organisation that

1 Our mapping of organised interests in Belgium is drawn from the Crossroads Bank for Enterprises which is maintained by the FPS Economy, SMEs, Self-Employed and Energy. This database registers all legal entities that engage in some economic activity, but also includes all established non-profits and foundations. For our sampling purpose we singled out category S94 (NACE), which refers to organisations that represent the interests and views of specific constituencies. The sampling from this database was also triangulated with additional sources Sectorlink, data collected by Fraussen (2014) and via web search.

2 For more information see www.cigsurvey.eu (Beyers et al. 2016).

3 The list of federal and European actors both include 8 types of governmental actors. For the Flemish and the French-speaking community each battery contained 6 actors.

contacted all eight actors at the federal level of government, at least once a week, gets a score of 32 (8X4). To make sure these measures can be compared across the levels of government, the variables are normalized (range 0-1)⁴. The scores of the French-speaking community and the Walloon regional government were taken together. This means that a single organisation can get up to four advocacy intensity measures (one for each level of government). Aggregated, this leads to 1495 organisation-governmental level dyads (see box-whiskers plots and histogram in the appendix).

From looking at the number of organisations that get multiple intensity scores, we can already say something about the prevalence of multilevel strategies among Belgian interest organisations. We find that about 71.3% of all domestic interest organisations in Belgium target two or more levels of government. Of these organisations, 32.4% target two levels of government, 29.6% three levels of government and 9.3% target all four levels of government.

In figure 1 we present the mean plot with 95% confidence interval of the four measures of intensity separately (left) and the (aggregated) organisation-government dyads (right). There is no difference in mean advocacy intensity when contacting the Flemish and Walloon level, whilst the federal and European level are, on average, significantly less intensively contacted. Although the Walloon level is contacted by less organisations (only 30.1% of all interest organisations in Belgium), they are contacted, on average, at higher levels of intensity. In contrast to this, we find that although the federal level of government is contacted by the highest number of interest organisations, this behaviour is conducted at lower levels of intensity. In sum, this plot provides evidence to suggest that we should take the differences between levels of government into account when analysing the intensity of advocacy behaviour.

Figure 1 HERE

As the multiple measures of intensity are nested within the individual organisation, we have to deal with the non-independence of observations. Moreover, each organisation has a unique base-line capacity to deploy its advocacy activities⁵. Therefore, we opt for a linear mixed effects model to explain the intensity of advocacy behaviour. The model is mixed because we add both fixed effects (our predictors) and a random by-organisation intercept or baseline. By adding varying intercepts for each organisation, we tell our model to expect multiple measures for advocacy intensity per

⁴ A correction was made for the Walloon level of government. Technically, it is for organizations unnecessarily difficult to reach high values (resulting in biased results) as some organizations only intend to target either the French-speaking community or the Walloon region. So when they contact, for example, only the Walloon region, but do so very intensively, these organizations can only get a maximum score of 0.5. In these cases, we multiplied the scores by two.

⁵ The different measures are strongly correlated with each other (.35 to .75). Which also points to a base-line capacity.

organisation. We therefore have a repeated measures design. Please note that we do not model random effects for country or polity⁶ (Winter 2013). We control for differences between governmental levels by adding a categorical variable indicating the level of government as a fixed effect. All else equal, this will indicate the increase in intensity when contacting a certain level of government compared to the reference category. To test hypotheses 1 through 5 we interact the independent variable in question with the level of government variable.

We now turn to the measurement of the independent variables. To gauge fragmentation of competences we construct⁷ a measure indicating to what extent individual organisations are confronted with institutional fragmentation in the policy domain(s) they are active in. In that, some policy domains are under the competence of one, two or even three levels of government (sub-national, national and European). Our measure consists of three categories indicating whether organisations are confronted with low, moderate or a high level of institutional fragmentation. We find that 31.1% of all organisations are confronted with low, 50% with moderate and 18.9% with high institutional fragmentation.

To gauge the amount of government patronage we used the following question: *“Please indicate the percentage of your organisation’s 2015 budget that came from the various sources listed below”*. Among other sources of income, the list included subsidies coming from the subnational governments, the national government and the European Union. Due to the limited number of observations at the high end of the distributions, we recoded the percentages for the federal and EU level patronage as dichotomies. Subnational patronage was re-coded as a categorical with three categories, 0 indicating none, 1 indicating from 1:50 and 2 indicating from 51 to 100. We find that 47.2% of all organisations receive subsidies from the subnational level of government. Whilst, 24% receive subsidies from the federal level and 11.4% receive subsidies from the EU.

⁶ To introduce such random effects, we would need to have at least, 10 and preferably 30 countries at the second level.

⁷ Respondents were given a list of 23 policy domains and were able to tick multiple boxes. These 23 policy domains are: migration; economic, budgetary and monetary; crime; energy; education; gender; social; environmental; consumer; agricultural; civil rights; development aid; foreign affairs; defence; European integration; scientific research; regional EU; human rights; transport and mobility; cultural; employment; other. In the category ‘other’, we were able to distinguish three additional policy domains, namely manufacturing and services, sports, and youth. Each policy domain was given a value between one and three; either the policy domain is under the competence of one, two, or three governments (see Table 1 in appendix). Most respondents indicate that their organisation is active in multiple policy domains. To account for this we summed the scores of the individual policy domains and divided this score with the total number of policy domains in which the organisation is active. For instance, an organisation active in five domains with an exclusive subnational competence ended up with a value of 1, while an organisation active in two areas, one in which one government is competent and another in which two governments are competent, got a fragmentation score 1.5 $((1+2)/2)$. To increase interpretability, we recode this variable into a factor with three categories.

To measure membership to a federal, Flemish or Walloon advisory body, we relied on a coding of all councils in Belgium dealing with general policy formulation. For each organisation we coded the number of advisory bodies in which they are active. We find that 16.9% are member of at least one federal council, 7.3% are member of at least one Walloon council and 12, 9% are member of at least one Flemish council⁸.

To assess whether organisations have members across the nation or not, we asked: *“From which region or community do your members or constituency come from?”* We recoded this as dichotomy indicating whether or not they have a nation-wide membership. Of all organisations, 58.9% have nation-wide members (thus members in Flanders as well as in Wallonia).

To measure the degree of professionalization, we constructed a scale based on the following question: *“Does your organisation have any of the following, (1) a president (2) secretary general/managing director (3) executive committee (4) written rules/constitution (5) committees competent for specific tasks (6) general assembly (7) judicial experts”*. The different items are dichotomous. The Cronbach’s Alpha of this scale is an acceptable 0.66. Yet, the polychloric ordinal alpha indicates a very high reliability score of 0.85, making the scale suitable for use in our analysis.

One important control we introduce is the type of organisation. Some organisations are created with the sole purpose of being politically active, so it is only logical that such organisations will develop more intense advocacy activities with policymakers compared to organisations that are in the first place created to provide services to their members. For this we used data from our website coding of each organisation (n=1691). Coders were asked to classify organisations based on which type of members they have. We created a variable which distinguishes between business organisation, NGO (and trade unions), professionals, leisure organisations, association of institutions and public authorities. We further refined this variable by distinguishing between NGOs which are primarily occupied with advocacy work (i.e. public interest groups) and NGOs for which the provision of services is their primary activity (i.e. 6= non-profits or third sector organisations).

⁸ For more information on the sampling and coding of the Belgian advisory councils and their members, please contact Evelien Willems.

Linear mixed effects analysis

Table 2 shows the linear mixed effects model based on the aggregated intensity measure (n=1495 organisation-government dyads). The coefficients of the full model can be interpreted as a regular (mixed effects) model without interaction terms. One unit of increase in X leads to N-units of change in intensity.

TABLE 1 HERE.

We see that, all else equal, non-profits and leisure associations are less likely to develop intense patterns of advocacy. Higher levels of fragmentation positively affect intensity, so does being a member of any advisory council, having nation-wide members and professionalization. No effect is found for subsidies from any government. Although these are already interesting results, they have little relevance to test our hypotheses. What is more important is whether and how the relationship between intensity and our independents varies across the different levels of government.

To test whether the effect of a certain predictor on advocacy intensity has a cross-cutting effect at the various levels of government, we add the interaction term between the level of government-variable and the various independent variables. This is done in the third column, where we present the results of the Likelihood ratio tests (LRT, Chi square values) which compares the full model with a model in which the interaction term between the independent on that row and the level of government-variable is added. This is represented in a somewhat unconventional way, as we do not display all 10 models separately. A significant LRT indicates that the interaction model has a better fit compared to the model without interaction terms.

In this regard, we find that only the effect of EU patronage has a uniform effect across all levels of government. All other independents tested positive to not having a uniform effects across all levels of government⁹. Which leads to the suggestion that the effect of these independent variables is different, depending on the level of government. Warranting further posthoc analysis for these independents and their interaction coefficients (Gellman & Hill 2007)¹⁰.

9 Further post-hoc testing was done on the basis of least-square means and testing linear pairwise contrasts of the interaction predictions.

10 Our analysis was re-run using several techniques. First of all, separate OLS regressions were conducted for each level of government. However, due to the non-independence of the observations, the risk of biased results is too high. Also, further post-hoc testing is not possible. Lastly, it is not possible to assess the effect of intensity at other levels of government. Second, a multivariate multiple regression was conducted, which can give some indication whether effects are different for the different levels of government. Further posthoc testing is also possible. However, the coefficients and errors are identical to running four separate OLS regressions. Rendering this technique less useful for our intents and purposes. In both cases the missing values are deleted list-wise by default, resulting in a substantial loss of data. The mixed effects

With regard to hypothesis H1, we find that the higher degree of institutional fragmentation, the more the organisations engage in more intense contact with the federal level of government (T-ratio -4.462, p value <0.0001)¹¹. Hereby conforming our first hypothesis, all else equal, interest organisations are drawn towards the centre of gravity (in our case the federal government). This is in line with the work of Beyers and Bursens (2013). In Belgium, the federal government, after decades of strong centrifugal devolution, has re-developed strong institutional mechanisms for intra-Belgian cooperation between the Flemish, Walloon, and federal governments (2006; 2013). The idea that fragmentation could be the very glue that holds the central level of government together is, to say the least, counter-intuitive. However, from the organisation's point of view it makes sense to frequent the central level of government as it may have become a central meeting point for policymakers and stakeholders from all levels.

With regards to hypothesis 2, we find that as organisations receive more subsidies from the subnational and European governments, they will have more intense contacts with the Walloon and European level of government (respectively, T-ratio -4.462, p value <0.0001 and T-ratio -2.83, p value 0.005). No relation can be found for the federal and Flemish levels of government. Furthermore, concerning hypothesis 3, we find that federal subsidies have a negative effect on displaying more intense patterns towards the Flemish level. Whilst the reverse is also true: subnational subsidies have a negative effect on advocacy intensity towards the federal level. This evidence suggest that the effect of subsidies in one level spills over to having contacts at other levels.

Figure 2 and 3 HERE¹²

With regards to hypothesis 4, no constraining effect was found for membership to advisory councils. Membership to certain advisory bodies does not make displaying more intense advocacy behaviour towards other levels of government less likely. Furthermore, we can only partially confirm hypothesis 5: interest organisations with nation-wide members, develop significantly less intense advocacy patterns towards the Flemish or Walloon level of government (respectively, T-ratio -3.68, p

model is an elegant solution which accounts for the dependency of observations, allows for a broad range of hypothesis testing and the way it handles missing data enables us to use the data to its fullest extent. The mixed effect has also proven to be quite robust in handling the skewed data of the European measure of intensity. A negative binominal regression was conducted to account for the relatively high number of zero's. The results were very similar and did not change the final conclusions with regards to our hypotheses.

¹¹ Results from Tukey test for multiple corrections with LSmeans package in R.

¹² Plots made with package SJPlot. Plots show the overall effects (marginal effects) of the interaction, with all remaining covariates set to the mean (for more information see: <http://www.strengjacke.de/sjPlot/sjp.int/>)

value 0.0002 and T-ratio-6.82, p value <.0001). However, the reverse is not true, having members exclusively at the sub-national level, does not lead to less intense advocacy behaviour directed towards the federal level of government (T-ratio -1.63, p value 0.10).

With regards to hypothesis 5, we find that higher degrees of professionalization, generally leads to more intensive advocacy patterns. However, our analysis does not show an effect at the EU level. However, this could be because few organisations that contact the European level have a low level of professionalization (see figure 6). In sum, this indicates that interest organisations are better able to overcome the challenges –coming from cross-cutting resource dependencies and institutional fragmentation– the more professionalized they are.

Figure 4 HERE

Conclusion

In this paper we aimed at explaining the intensity of advocacy patterns in an MLG environment. Intensity, we argue, is directly related to the total amount of (potential) influence an organisation can exert over the policy process. Which is therefore related to the total amount of input legitimacy that circulates in a system of interest representation. One important concern is whether in a MLG environment, a stable and diversified pattern of interaction between the government and civil society is formed and maintained. Thus instead of characterizing the political behaviour of interest organisations as a single, non-recurring interaction, we underline that such behaviour is part of a (long-term) relation.

To explain advocacy intensity, we relied on a theoretical framework based on neo-institutionalist (NIT) and resource dependency theory (RDT). NIT stresses that although organisational behaviour is a function/reaction to the institutional environment, it is not always strictly rational or strategic. RDT, provides some specific and testable hypotheses on exactly how the environment and (institutional) actors are able to shape (constrain or empower) the behaviour of organised interests.

In the descriptive analysis two important observations are made. First of all, it seems that advocacy intensity is different at the various levels of government. For instance, although the federal level of government is contacted most frequently, and the Walloon level the least, we see that the federal level is contacted at significantly lesser degrees of intensity compared to the Walloon level. Secondly, we found that organisations have a certain base-line in the intensity of their advocacy

behaviour.

In our explanatory analysis we employed a mixed effects model, which accounts for the non-independency between levels of intensity of the same organisations. Our most surprising findings are that (1) the federal level of government in Belgium, all else equal, is contacted more intensely for higher degrees of fragmentation. And (2) we find that government subsidies from the Flemish level have a negative effect on the advocacy intensity towards the federal level of government. And vice-versa, federal subsidies have a negative effect on the Flemish level of government. This whilst Flemish and federal subsidies had no effect at contacting these levels more intensely.

Our analysis has shown that advocacy behaviour should be seen as a recurring interaction, or indeed as a relationship. Relationships entail certain dependencies. In a MLG environment such dependencies are more prone to be cross-cut with relations to other levels of government. Our analysis clearly shows that (resource) dependencies towards one level of government, relates to the intensity of advocacy activities at other levels of government. Meaning that future studies on interest mobilization focused on only one or two level(s) of government should be aware of the impact of cross-cutting dependencies and if possible control for them.

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Tables and figures

Figure 1. Mean intensity plot and 95% confidence intervals of the four measures of intensity and the aggregated measure. Sample sizes in figure

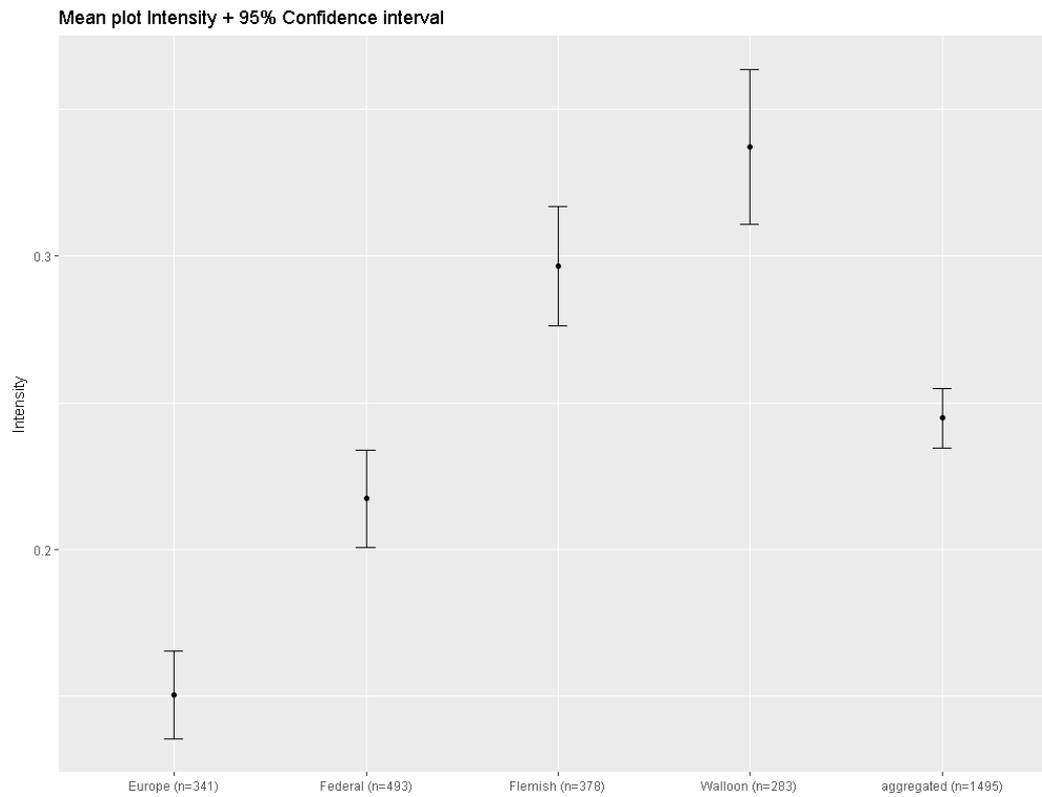


Table 1. Linear Mixed effects analysis

	Full Model	LRT interaction
Intercept	-0.11 (0.03)***	-
Level: European (ref)	-	-
Level: Subnational Flemish level	0.2 (0.01)***	-
Level: Subnational Walloon level	0.24 (0.01)***	-
Level: Federal level	0.11 (0.01)***	-
Type: Business (ref)	-	
Type: NGO advocacy	-0.02 (0.02)	
Type: Professional	<0.01 (0.02)	52 (15)***
Type: Non-profit	-0.07 (0.02)***	
Type: Leisure	-0.07 (0.02)**	
Type: institutions & public	0.01 (0.03)	
Fragmentation (low= ref)	-	
Fragmentation II (mid)	0.05 (0.01)***	13.74(6)*
Fragmentation III (high)	0.05 (0.02)**	
Subnational Funding (0=ref)	-	
Subnational Funding II	0.01 (0.02)	65.19(6)***
Subnational Funding III	0.01 (0.02)	
Federal Funding (0=no)	-	-
Federal Funding (1=yes)	<0.01 (0.01)	12.6(3)**
European Funding (0=no)	-	-
European Funding (1=yes)	0.03 (0.02)	6.17(3)
Federal Advisory council (amount)	0.01 (<0.01) †	25.1(3)***
Walloon Advisory council (amount)	0.01 (<0.01)*	20.9(3)***
Flemish Advisory council (amount)	0.02 (<0.01)***	25.5(3)***
Membership: subnational (ref)	-	-
Membership: Federal	0.03 (0.01)*	78.34(3)***
Professionalization (index)	0.03 (0.01)***	16.7(3)***
Random intercept (by-organization)	0.01 (0.10)	-
Residual	0.02 (0.13)	-
N	1309	-
AIC	-1132.1	-

†= p < 0.1, *= p < 0.05, **=p < 0.01, ***=p < 0.001

Figure 2 and 3: Plot of differential effect of patronage on the intensity at the different levels of government. Regional funding on the left and federal funding on the right.

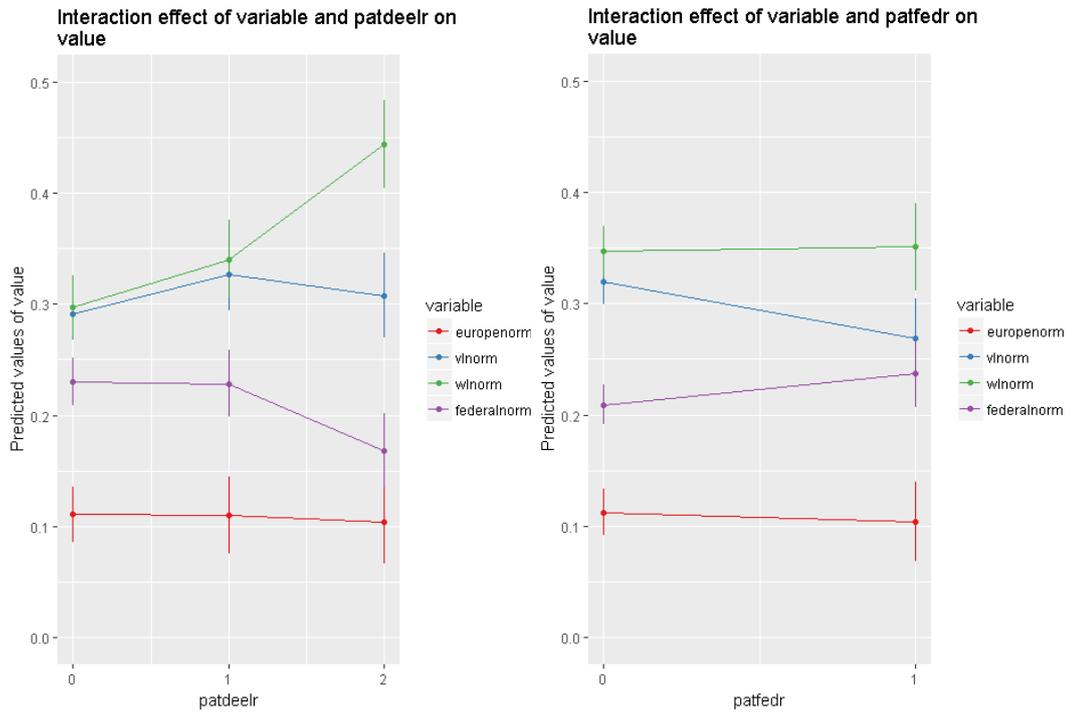
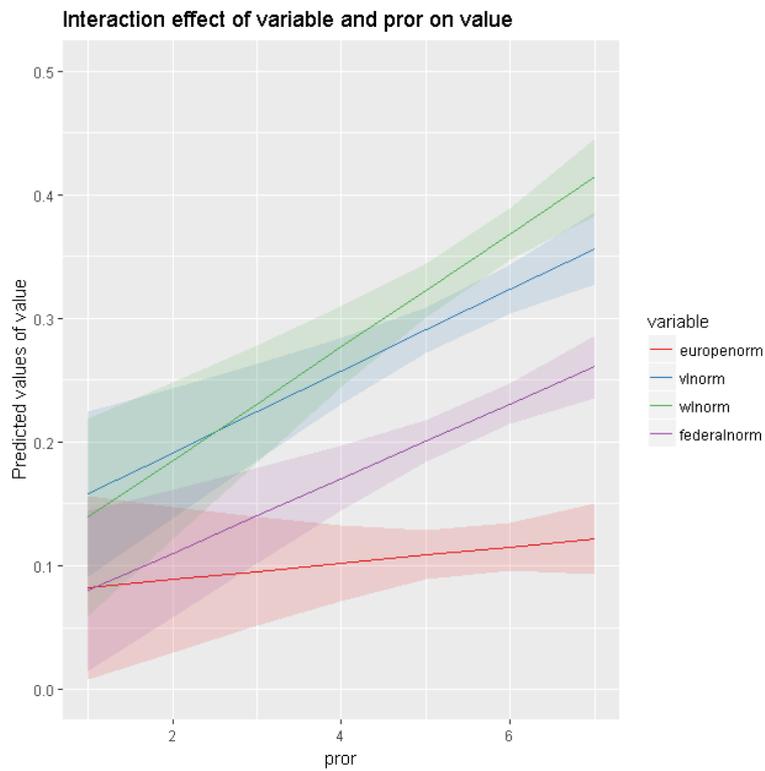
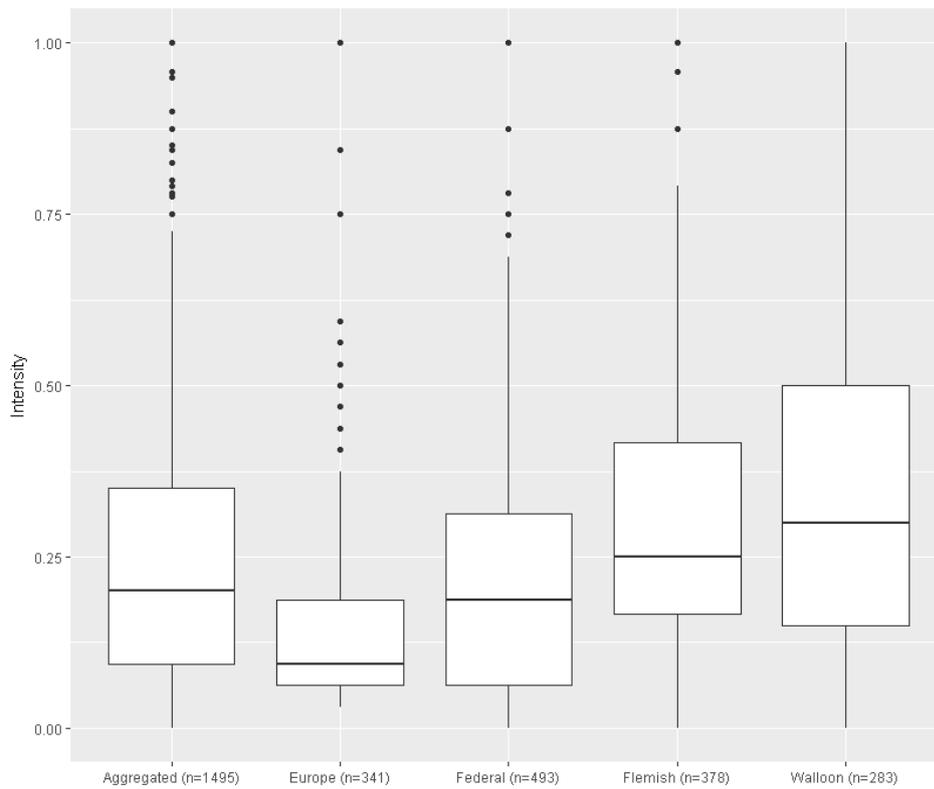


Figure 4: interaction effect of professionalization and level of government on intensity

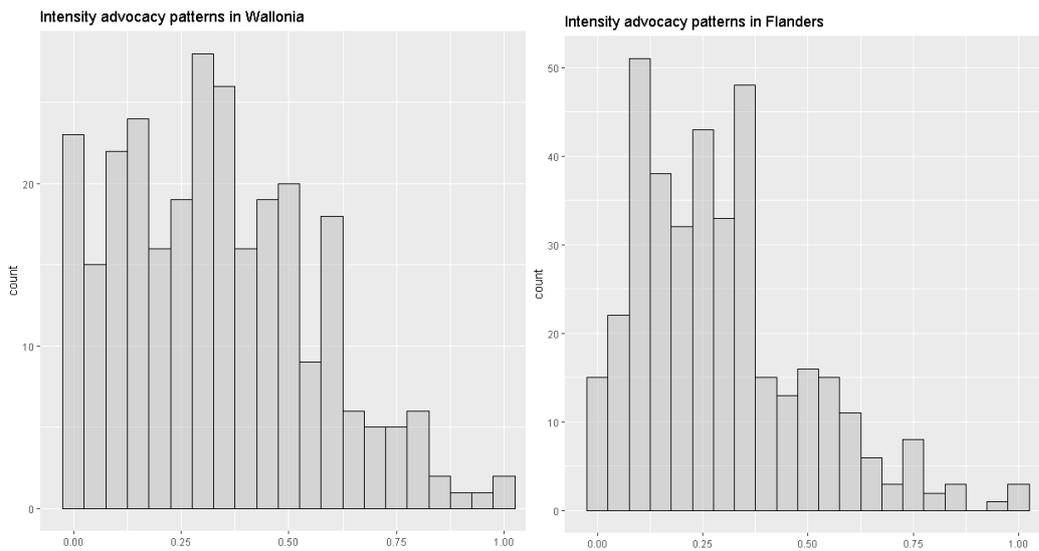


Appendix

Figure: Box-whiskers plots of the four measures of intensity (right) and the aggregated measure (left)



Figures. Distribution of the dependent; intensity of advocacy behaviour. Four histograms of intensity measures towards levels (n=283, 378, 493, 341) of government and the aggregated measure (n=1495)



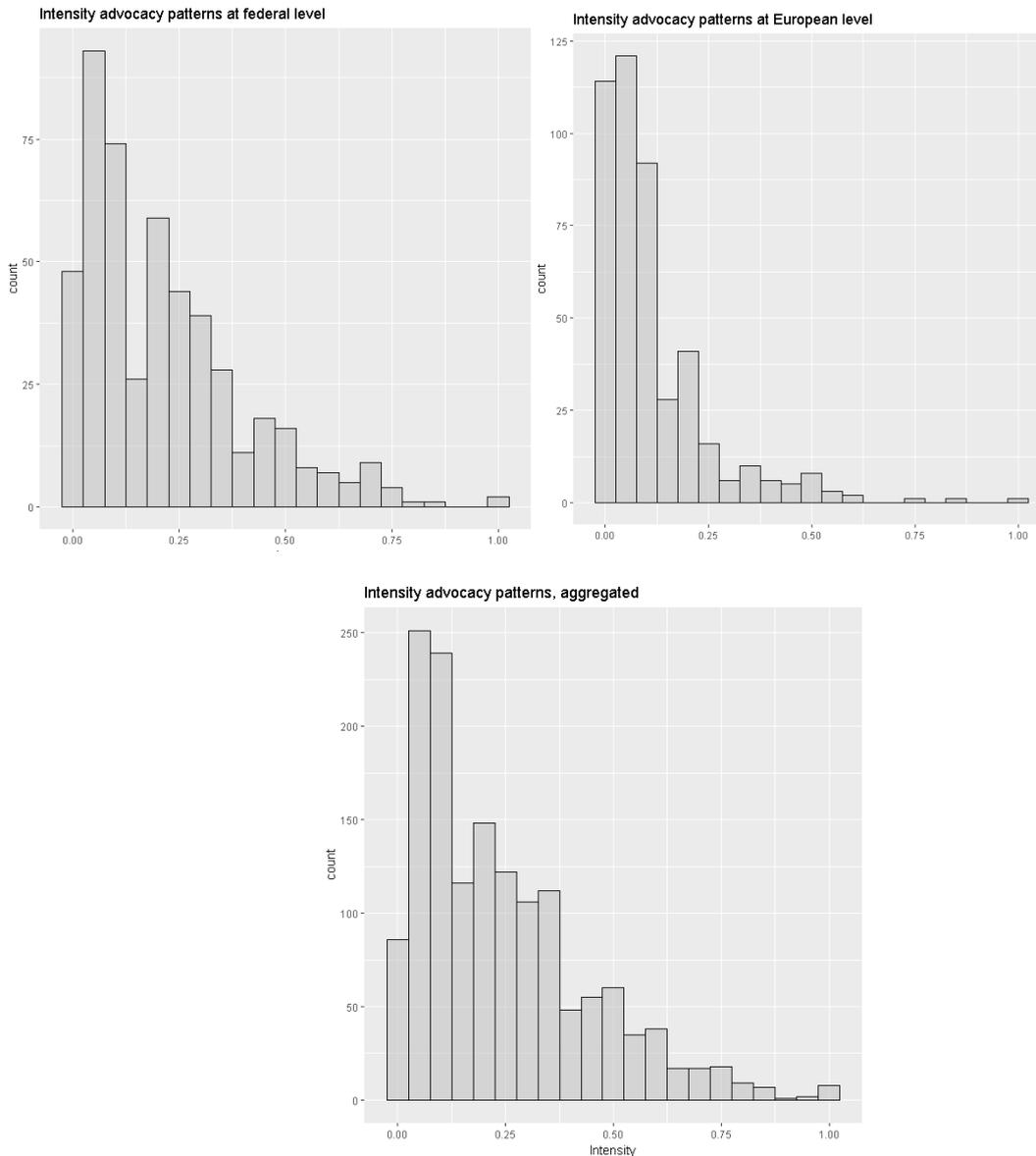


Table. Policy domains by degree of fragmentation

Policy domains	
Not/Weakly fragmented: 1 governmental level is almost exclusively competent	Crime, education, defence, European integration, scientific research, transport and mobility, culture, sport, youth
Moderately fragmented: 2 governmental levels are competent	Migration and asylum, health, energy, social affairs, environment, agriculture, civil rights, development aid, foreign affairs, regional EU policy, human rights
Highly fragmented: 3 governmental levels are competent	Economic, monetary and budgetary; gender, consumer protection, employment, manufacturing and services