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The Captive, the Entrepreneur, and the Routine-Driven Man

2.1 Introduction

The question of why bureaucrats interact with certain interest groups but not with others, and to what extent their interaction vary, seems straightforward and even elegant, but proves to be misleadingly simple. The examples of the New York administrators and Dutch civil servants attempting to reach out to immigrant organisations reveal a similar – and well-founded – basis for interaction: namely, a need for intermediation. On either side of the Atlantic, the question of why civil servants interacted with these specific organisations seems easy to answer.

The theoretical and conceptual accounts of bureaucracy-interest group relations, however, offer diverse and contrasting explanations. The literature on interest group politics suggests that interest groups may be quite decisive in bureaucracy-interest group interactions. The literature on bureaucratic politics, on the other hand, suggests an image of the entrepreneurial bureaucrat capable of steering his interactions with interest groups. Finally, policy network studies suggest that mutually beneficial relationships between bureaucrats and interest groups are very durable. This chapter discusses each of these strands of literature in detail to show that, despite a considerable body of knowledge on bureaucracy-interest group interactions, the ability to distinguish under which conditions which explanation applies is missing. In short, we cannot properly determine when the bureaucrat will be an entrepreneur, a captive or a routine-driven man.

2.2 The captive bureaucrat

The notion that interest groups exert a significant influence on public decision making stems from the literature on interest group politics. More generally, this literature is concerned with questions of when do interest groups emerge, how do they maintain themselves, and why do they get access to governmental institutions to exert influence? Pluralism and corporatism are two broad research paradigms within which theories have been developed on interest group behaviour. To start with the former, pluralism has often been critiqued for constituting a normative view on interest groups within a democracy. Traditionally (and ideally), it refers to a democratic system characterised by the existence of many, often adversarial, interest groups involved in an equal competition to advance their interests. Every interest in society, or issue salient to it, eventually gets represented via a process of counter-mobilisation. When a particular interest mobilises, it follows naturally that
people who are harmed by this mobilisation process will automatically mobilise to
counterbalance the initial mobilisation of an interest group (Truman 1951). Alternatively, pluralism holds that those in office or with other political power have
such power only as long as they represent the latent political potential of a much
larger group of citizen constituents (Dahl 2005[1961]). Traditional pluralism has
been heavily critiqued for being almost naïve in its assumptions. Some pointed to a
mobilisation bias in the interest population in favour of the upper-class and well-
organised few (Schattschneider 1970[1960]), while others pointed out that such a
bias was a consequence of the inherent nature of public goods, resulting in free-
riding (Olson 1965). Traditional pluralism and its critics focused on the societal
origins of interest groups, and thus adopted a group approach towards politics.

Things diverge when one sets foot on European shores, where corporatism has
been the dominant paradigm for explaining interest group involvement in public
decision making, rather than interest group behaviour as such. However, the
conceptual fuzziness in the literature on corporatism (see Molina and Rhodes
2002) does not seem to help in drawing conclusions about the specific nature of
interest representation in corporatist regimes. An important obstacle in defining
corporatism is that most studies implicitly distinguish between a particular type of
policy making and a particular type of interest representation. Schmitter (1989)
proposed a reconceptualisation that explicitly disentangled both meanings:
corporatism I and corporatism II. Corporatism I, he argued, refers to the
organisation of societal interest representation and should accordingly be termed
corporatism, as opposed to pluralism as another type of interest representation.
Corporatism II entails decision making and implementation as a joint venture
between the state and interest organisations, and should, therefore, be termed
concertation, as opposed to pressure politics. In theory, corporatism and
corporatism do not necessarily co-exist (Schmitter 1989). Yet, in practice, they
largely do, as policy making and implementation by concertation have implications
for the way interest organisations are organised. Policy making and
implementation by concertation necessarily limit the number of organisations to be
invited to the negotiation table. When access is limited, and this is one of the core
characteristics of concertation according to Schmitter (1985), the development and
existence of hierarchically organised umbrella organisations is more likely (Lowery
and Gray 2004; Lowery, Poppelaars, and Berkhout 2008). So, a concerted method
of policy making and implementation (Schmitter’s corporatism II) goes hand-in-
hand with a hierarchically organised field of interest organisations (a pyramid
structure). A simple rule seems to apply: when all interests do not have an equal
chance of access, because access is regulated by the government, the best option is
to organise in a hierarchical fashion.

Without explicit reference to it, studies of concertation have prevailed within the
field of corporatism. They have predominantly focused on the systemic effects of
institutional deliberation on economic and social-economic policies (Molina and
Rhodes 2002). In addition, both concertation and corporatism have been heavily
dominated by studies of business interests (Schmitter 1989), a trend still apparent
in recent attempts to operationalise and measure corporatism (Siaroff 1999), or in
studies examining derivatives of corporatism (Becker 2005). Such a political-
economy perspective has dominated studies of corporatism (Visser 2005; Visser
and Hemerijck 1997; Wilts 2001). And this emphasis has resulted almost in a neglect of the representation of other interests in corporatist regimes (but see Blom-Hansen 2001; Huitema, 2005; Trappenburg 2005).

Although the two paradigms differ markedly, they nowadays seem closer to each other than they have ever been. Most importantly, the emphasis on context has become apparent on both sides of the Atlantic, and, in addition, scholars in Europe now seem to pay more attention to interest population studies than previously. Dependencies on their immediate environment have been used to explain, for instance, whether or not interest groups are able to get access in Brussels (Beyers and Kerremans 2007). More generally, context seems to have become an important explanatory variable in explaining interest groups' behaviour (Lowery and Gray 2004). Baumgartner (1996), for instance, has shown that different conceptions of government and constitutional structures in France versus the US result in different resources, maintenance strategies, and relations between government agencies and interest groups. State structures and constitutional design are additional variables to consider along with historical tradition, social cleavages and other mass-based factors to explain interest groups' access.

Variables such as formal political institutions, informal arrangements between elites, social cleavages and more informal institutional characteristics determine how and why social movements come to life and maintain themselves (Koopmans and Statham 2000; McAdam 1996). Originally designed to explain social movement behaviour, these political opportunity structure arguments have more recently been applied to explain the origins and maintenance of immigrant organisations in Western Europe as well (Koopmans and Statham 2000; Soysal 1994). Another approach that heavily emphasises context is Gray and Lowery's population ecology approach explaining the density of interest group communities at the US state level. They applied a population ecology model used by island biogeographers hypothesising that the size of the island (area), the energy available for species (energy) and the stability of the system (stability) are crucial in explaining how certain species of interest groups thrive (Gray and Lowery 1996a). They found that the size of potential constituents (area) and the likelihood of government actions (energy) of concern to interest groups have a profound influence on a state's interest community density.

An important question for this study is thus whether and how government action, and context in general, affects interest group behaviour. As Lowery and Gray (2004, 170) note: “Neo-pluralist research is strongly grounded in the notion that policy outcomes influence mobilisation rates, the structure of interest populations, and levels and types of influence activities employed.” Illustrative is a study on the relationships between the US Presidency and federal membership organisations, which shows that the US presidency deliberately tried and succeeded to influence interest group behaviour. More generally, Leech et al. (2005) identify a recurrent pattern of interaction between government actions and interest group activity. US interest groups become active when there is a certain level of government activity in the issue areas of concern to interest groups. A similar process takes place in Brussels concerning EU interest groups (Mahoney 2004). And Dutch interest groups also seem to benefit from the distinct opportunities the Dutch political system offered: the maintenance of Dutch interest groups is often
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ascribed to the willingness of the government to provide subsidies, even to perceived adversaries (Duyvendak et al. 1992; Koopmans 2002). And as a respondent in the current study observes: “Now that the government emphasises the importance of exercising for personal health, the fitness and sports industry has become really active in this field.” In other words, government activity is like the legendary flute of the Pied Piper of Hamelin \( (De\ rattenvanger\ van\ Hamelen)\). Just like the tune of the Pied Piper’s flute, governments’ activities seem to cast a spell on interest groups’ behaviour, drawing them to their realm. Whenever a government proposes solutions to societal problems or initiates projects, interest groups become active, almost in a mechanical fashion. Vice versa, when government withdraws from initiating policy actions, interest groups lose interest.

Some question, however, whether the Pied Piper’s flute is really in the government’s hand. Those who have studied the behaviour of interest groups with respect to regulatory agencies are likely to argue that it is interest groups that play the flute. The following example illustrates this point:

**Interest groups playing high**

We [one of the regulatory agencies in the NLD, CP] formulate every year a formal list of priorities we will address in the year to come. It includes, for instance, which industries we are going to monitor closely, or what kind of sector-specific research we are planning to conduct. We consult the major stakeholders to approve this list. One of the priorities included in this year’s list was to establish a research project in a particular sector where we knew that individual corporations were violating the law. Their representative organisation was one of the stakeholders invited to discuss our priorities for this year. They obviously did not agree with this particular priority and threatened not to endorse the list. They even threatened to no longer cooperate, and they refused to attend the stakeholders meeting. A few days later they invited themselves to our office and, tried to ‘convince’ us to refrain from investigating their sector. ... This was indeed difficult, but we need to find a way to deal with this situation. Obviously, we caught a big fish...³

Interest group influence on agency behaviour is often referred as ‘capture,’ and this concept most commonly features in studies about economic regulation. In short, capture means that regulatory agencies become largely dependent on the industries they were designed to regulate. Regulations such agencies produce often favour certain industries (Chubb 1983; Posner 1974). More generally, authors have studied interactions between bureaucracies and interest groups in terms of bureaucratic responsiveness, or how external actors determine a bureaucracy’s or agency’s behaviour (Moe 1985; Scholz and Wei 1986). Recent studies indeed show that business interests have a significantly larger influence on government rulemaking than other interest groups (Yackee and Yackee 2006), and that, in general, interest groups have significant influence on the content of government regulation (Yackee

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1 Interview by author.

2 This is the legendary tale of a man who lured all rats of Hamelen out of the city with the bewitching tunes of his flute in 13th century Germany. When he did not get properly paid for his helpful deed to dispose Hamelen of the rats, he repeated the same trick with the city’s children, and led them out of the city and they never returned.

3 Interview by author.
2005). By studying databases of proposed rules by government agencies, the comments various types of interest groups submitted on the proposals, and, finally, the extent to which the rules were changed according to the interest groups’ comments, the authors assessed the influence of various categories of interest groups. Business interests indeed seemed to have a dominant influence.

Measuring business influence by content analysis certainly points to the direction of influence, but not necessarily to the causal mechanisms underlying these interactions. The advantage accorded to certain businesses may be related to capture, but may also be related to familiarity with a particular firm or early entrant benefits. Some capture-related mechanisms thus may overlap with non-capture-related mechanisms (Carpenter 2004). Indeed, it is a difficult methodological challenge to establish whether behaviour that benefits a certain industry results from capture or is simply a routine (Yackee and Yackee 2006; see also Wilson 2000[1989]). Perhaps civil servants, in coping with their workload, simply adapt the rules accordingly to make life a bit easier, a routine which unintentionally results in benefiting a certain industry. Questions of whether and how bureaucratic agencies respond to their environment, in particular to interest groups - so, who eventually plays the Pied Piper’s flute – brings me to the second strand of literature related to bureaucracy-interest group interactions, namely, bureaucratic politics.

2.3 The entrepreneurial bureaucrat

From the literature on bureaucratic politics we can infer that bureaucrats rather than interest groups dominate these interactions. Bureaucratic politics commonly refers to conflict among several bureaucratic agencies within government, or to the strategic behaviour of civil servants in regard to their political superiors. Engaging in contacts with interest groups could enhance the bargaining power of agencies as opposed to their political superiors or other competing agencies. Those interactions, however, could also serve the execution of policies designed by civil servants. To establish and maintain relations with interest groups could, thus, be administratively instrumental or political in nature. But there is only a fine line between these two incentives, if there is any at all. To address this delicate line, bureaucratic politics is here defined to include several individual yet interrelated components: political-administrative relations, interagency competition, and interactions with interest groups.

2.3.1 Political-administrative relations

Bureaucratic politics raises the idea that government bureaucracies constitute a ‘fourth power’ in addition to Montesquieu’s Trias Politica (Crince le Roy 1979). This in turn invokes a discussion of the grand dichotomy between politics and administration. In its most rigorous, but nowadays unattainable, form it declares administration to be both totally separate from and yet loyal to its political masters. This neutral yet loyal conception of bureaucracy parallels the Weberian ideal type of a rational bureaucracy. Weber acknowledged the potential capacity of a bureaucracy to gain power and engage in policy making based on its specialised knowledge. Weber, however, was very much concerned with restricting such bureaucratic
power because he considered it most undesirable (Albrow 1970; Weber 2006[1922]). What seems common sense today is that bureaucrats enjoy administrative leeway and that their activities are becoming increasingly political in nature (Peters and Pierre 2004; Svara 2001).

Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (1981) were among the first to offer a comprehensive empirical picture of the overlap between bureaucratic and political functions. They distinguished four images of the relation between politicians and bureaucrats. Image 1, ‘Policy-Administration’, refers to a true politics-administration dichotomy. Image II, ‘Facts-Interests’, assumes that both politicians and civil servants engage in policy making. Their functions are intertwined, but they bring distinct contributions to the policy process. Politicians bring interests and values; civil servants bring facts and knowledge. Image III, ‘Energy-Equilibrium’, states that civil servants and politicians engage both in policy making and politics. Yet a distinction remains, with politicians articulating the broad interest of unorganised individuals and civil servants introducing the narrowly focused interests of organised clientele. Their fourth and final image, the ‘Pure Hybrid’, indicates a full blurring of the roles of bureaucrats and politicians. Following a comprehensive empirical analysis, part of their conclusion is as follows (Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman 1981, 239-241):

It could be a committee room in the modernistic Bundestag, or the prime minister’s functional central Stockholm office, or a Renaissance chamber in a Roman ministry. Around the table are gathered a few members of parliament and several senior civil servants, discussing what to do about petroleum supplies, or housing subsidies, or university reform. In the shorthand of political science: they are ‘making policy.’ (...) All these men (and they are almost surely all men) are here as policy makers, and all accept that civil servants are legitimate participants in the policy process.

Such an overlap between roles and tasks, or put differently, the politicisation of the bureaucracy (Peters and Pierre 2004; Page and Wright 2001), triggers intense debate about the perceived power of the bureaucracy. Such debates involve concerns about the primacy of politics, the span of control of the political executives, and the perceived power of senior civil servants. The case below, ‘Stuck in a revolving door’ (Klem in de draaideur), illustrates this nicely. It is the case of a notorious clash of influential top civil servants and the Dutch minister of Justice, which harmed her reputation and finally resulted in the dismissal of the chair of the Board of Procurators General (Van Thijn 1998):

**Stuck in a revolving door**

‘Stuck in a revolving door’ is situated in the late 1990s and tells the story of Arthur Docters van Leeuwen, the then chair of the Board of Procurators General, in defending a colleague who eventually got fired by the then Ministry of Justice, Mrs. Sorgdrager. His colleague, Procurator General Steenhuisen, had been accused of favouring a particular consultancy bureau, which employed him, to conduct the investigation of a judicial case. The case was formally investigated. Just before the findings of the investigation were to be sent to the parliament,

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4 The title ‘Stuck in a revolving door’ refers to the story that Docters van Leeuwen had once been literally stuck in the main entrance of the Ministry of Justice, which is a revolving door.
Docters van Leeuwen, during a short conversation with Mrs. Sorgdrager on that day, defended the position of his colleague. The fact that Steenhuisen wanted to go to court to contest the evaluation even before it had been sent to the parliament, was leaked to the media. The eight o’clock news announced that the entire Board of Procurators General was about to go court. Soon, the political establishment of The Hague portrayed the entire Board of Procurators General as senior civil servants in rebellion against Mrs. Sorgdrager. ‘Mutiny’ among Sorgdrager’s senior civil servants, whether a true reflection of reality or not, was undoubtedly severely harmful for her authority and her political position. The image of an entire a Board of Procurators General on a collision course with the Minister could not be remedied, and Docters van Leeuwen lost his job. Such a display of power was unacceptable. As chair of the Board of Procurators General, he was held responsible for allowing the senior civil servants to adopt too powerful a position and for being too supportive of his colleague.

### 2.3.2 Agency strife

Not only do such power relations between top civil servants and political executives add to the idea of bureaucratic politics, but inter-agency competition does so as well. Inter-agency competition stems from the underlying idea that civil servants pursue their agency’s interests rather than the public interest in general. Early public choice scholars developed a rather bleak picture of civil servants submerged in their own or their agency’s interests. Whereas Tullock (1965), for instance, argued that bureaucrats seek to maximise their agency’s size, Niskanen (1971) argued that, as there is no profit to maximise, bureaucrats will try to maximise the budgets they receive to do their work. Their individual interests, such as salary, public reputation, power, or output of the bureau are all positively related to the bureau’s overall budget. Maximising budgets are in two ways important for an agency’s survival. First, agencies receive their budget from ‘sponsors’, i.e. political superiors who expect to receive requests for an increase in the agency’s budget. It is their natural tendency to expect demands for higher budgets from civil servants (see Dunleavy 1991; Wildavsky 1964). If there is no demand for an increase, political superiors will get confused and stop their cooperative behaviour. Secondly, senior civil servants seek to maximise budgets, because a larger budget makes it easier to manage the bureau. Removing people to other positions, for instance, becomes easier with a larger budget. These accounts of bureaucratic behaviour portray civil servants’ motives as purely based upon maximising their own interests, either by maximising the budget or maximising agency size.

The public choice literature developed a picture of what bureaucracies do and why they do it based on the idea of ‘economic man’, projecting ‘market failure’ in terms of the inefficient monopolies granted to government agencies. Downs’ (1967) account of bureaucratic behaviour is bit more nuanced. Instead of the existence of the bureaucracy’s interest, Downs argues that bureaucrats’ preferences depend on the role and function they have. He developed two laws of bureaucratic behaviour, namely the ‘law of conservatism’ and the ‘law of increasing

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5 He distinguishes several bureaucratic personalities, of which two act upon pure self-interests, the ‘climbers’ and ‘conservers’. The other personalities, ‘zealots’, ‘advocates’ and ‘statesmen’, mix self-interest with broader altruistic motivations (Downs 1967, 88).
conserverism.' The first law points to a life cycle of bureaucracies, arguing that every agency ends up becoming dominated by conservers who are resistant to change. Second, the ‘law of increasing conserverism’ indicates that every individual bureaucrat will become a conserver who wants to retain the status quo. Upward-moving bureaucrats quickly exhaust the promotion options available to themselves and lower-ranking officials and become conservers of their function. Lower-ranking officials, in turn, also become conservers as they realise that their behaviour has no significant influence on the agency’s policy. Another account, also inspired by public choice principles, is that the bureaucrat, rather than maximising agency size and budgets per se, engages in bureau-shaping behaviour (Dunleavy 1991). Public employment systems make it likely that the welfare of higher-ranking bureaucrats will be closely linked to intrinsic characteristics of their work. This means that rational officials want to work in small, elite, collegial bureaus close to the centre of political power. Bureaucrats will maximise their bureaus’ conformity to these goals.

Although the latter is somewhat more nuanced, what these accounts of bureaucratic behaviour have in common is that they only pay attention to one particular set of incentives bearing upon a bureaucrat’s behaviour, namely self-interest. As Wilson (2000[1989], 88) argues: “When bureaucrats are free to choose a course of action, their choices will reflect the full array of incentives operating on them: some will reflect the need to manage workload; others will reflect the expectations of workplace peers and professional colleagues elsewhere; still others may reflect their own convictions.” Not all of these early public choice scholars are entirely oblivious to the public interests civil servants might want to serve. Yet, they argue that civil servants will be unable to do so, because they lack full information to properly attend to that interest (Niskanen 1971). Critics of these approaches have shown that economic models of bureaucratic behaviour do not always effectively explain bureaucratic behaviour (Frederickson and Smith 2003, 190-193), or that public-choice-inspired solutions for inefficiency should not be taken as axiomatic in designing reforms, despite their attractive analytical rigour (cf. Lowery 1998).

Interagency competition between the armed services that together make up a country’s Ministry of Defence is a well-known phenomenon (Huntington 1961). Equally notorious in the Netherlands was competition over het banenplan van den Uyl, an attempt of the 1981 Minister of Employment and Social Affairs (Joop den Uyl) to design a comprehensive approach to unemployment. The Ministry of Social Affairs brought its political reasoning to the negotiation table, while the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Treasury brought a divergent view, which resulted in serious antagonism during the bargaining process (Hupe 2000). More recently, the competitive or, rather, non-cooperative behaviour between the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Economics to address what is commonly called the ‘knowledge economy’ may be also termed a case of bureaucratic politics. Bureaucratic politics, some argue, may result in neutralising the power of the entire bureaucracy because of the competition that results from individual agencies pursuing their own interests (Rosenthal 1988), a possibility that the early public choice scholars ignored (but see Niskanen’s (1971) last chapter). Or, it might result in a virtual bureaucratic gridlock (in Dutch: bureaucoplitisme). Such a gridlock, or bureaucoplitisme occurs when competition and rivalry among bureaucratic agencies ends up in a strong defence of self-interests, resulting in non-decisions,
inefficiency, and avoidance (Rosenthal 1988; Rosenthal, Geveke, and ‘t Hart 1994). More generally, bureaucratic politics seems to be characterised by the interplay of many actors with divergent interests, where no single actor has dominant influence, and by compromises and a gap between decision making and implementation (Rosenthal 1988). The divergent interests that characterise interagency competition not only seem to result from civil servants pursuing their own interests, as public choice scholars have argued. They may also stem from divergent societal interests that civil servants want to represent or defend.

2.3.3 A search for interest groups

The politicisation of the bureaucracy and interagency competition all contribute to inherently political behaviour by and within the bureaucracy. An important aspect of this political behaviour concerns the external relations of civil servants. As Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (1981, 241) observed:

> The civil servants, it is true, are especially concerned with technical matters (...). But they are also concerned about mediating among those organised interests that have expressed concern about the problem at hand. The politicians, by contrast, emphasise their own roles as partisans and advocates for broader causes and for less organised or more individual interests. (...) brokerage among interests is less central to the role conception of politicians than of bureaucrats.

Thus, the tasks of politicians and bureaucrats seem intertwined, and advocating interests has become a significant task of civil servants nowadays. ‘Brokerage among interests’ is exactly what bureaucratic politics often seems to be all about. Civil servants may use such external relations to enhance their agency’s position or their own position in relation to the political executive. As a respondent notes:

> Within the ministry, we have divergent opinions on how to properly design a public health care system. We have recently written a letter for the minister to send to parliament discussing our idea for such a design. Well, they [civil servants from another division, CP] made sure that this letter did not reach the minister. So, we tried another way, by involving certain interest groups, in order to convince him of the advantages of our approach.6

Although the external component of bureaucratic politics is not demarcated as a theoretical topic as such in the literature, several authors have discussed such dynamics. A very early example of bureaucracy-interest group interactions is provided by the Ottoman bureaucracy. As early as the seventeenth century, such interactions between the state administration and interest groups are reported to have existed within the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman state officials engaged in purposive bargaining with organised groups of bandits roaming the empire to incorporate them into the state bureaucracy. The Ottoman state absorbed these bandits temporarily into the state organisation either by hiring their services or attracting their leaders to powerful positions within the state bureaucracy. The main goal was to keep them under control and establish state rule in the remote regions of the vast Ottoman Empire (Barkey 1994). In fact, the Ottoman bureaucracy shows a very early attempt of what Selznick (1953) termed cooptation.

6 Interview by author.
More recent, but still early, accounts of bureaucrats interacting with interest groups can be found in the works of La Palombara (1964) and Suleiman (1974). Suleiman, for instance, shows that French bureaucrats in the 1970s interacted with a few selected interest groups, despite the general belief that intermediary organisations would threaten the general public interest. Although the ministries were open to virtually any organised interest, in practice, the Directors of the ministries made a careful distinction between what they perceived as legitimate and illegitimate groups. For those civil servants, the term *groupe d’intérêt* or *groupe de pression* entailed a negative connotation. Interest groups were thought to only represent private interests and not to represent a larger part of the population. They rather favoured working with *professional* organisations that represented an ‘entire profession’ (Suleiman 1974). Perhaps more important than this perceived representation was the fact that these professional organisations were well-equipped, well-organised, and had information to offer that was useful and often indispensable to the *Directions* or agencies of a ministry. Moreover, close relations between such professional organisations and the *corps des mines* of respective industries meant that agencies could mobilise an industry’s power to exert pressure on their own minister (Suleiman 1974, 343–344).

At a more general level, Peters (2001) describes several types of relations between bureaucrats and interest groups: ‘legitimate’, ‘clientele’, ‘parentela’ and ‘illegitimate’ interactions. These relations differ in the scope of the interests that are included and how close the relationships are between bureaucrats and interest groups. Such classifications or general theoretical statements about bureaucracy-interest group interactions can be summarised by the fact that interactions often involve a resource exchange: support and information for access to and influence over the political process (Peters 2001, 186; Van Schendelen 1992). Carpenter (2001, 94–144) provides a detailed account of how political support is exchanged when it is beneficial to, what he terms, the ‘forging of bureaucratic autonomy’:

**Forging bureaucratic autonomy with the help of various interests**

In the late 19th and early 20th century, the establishment of a Rural Free Delivery system (RFD) in the US became feasible due to the American Post Office’s sound reputation together with its multiple ties to a diverse network of political actors, including many interest groups. The then postmaster-general, Wanamaker, turned out to be a skilful entrepreneur in establishing a diverse network of support and a sound reputation for his agency. RFD would entail a revision of the national delivery system and included delivering mail at the doorstep of each rural citizen instead of delivering mail for a small town to a small post office located in a general or common store. Whereas Wanamaker thought his proposal for RFD would strengthen support from rural constituencies, it divided farm communities. The fourth-class postmasters, the ones who ran the small post offices in common stores, were heavily opposed to RFD and lobbied extensively against it. As they were central figures in the Republican Party, many representatives were left between choosing between the new system or sticking to the old one. Wanamaker knew he had to establish sound support from the farmers. To get support for his agency and RFD, he not only communicated with agrarian leaders, he also tightened relations with business and civic associations, which were supportive of free rural delivery. In sum, coalition building in the case of the post office included assembling diverse organised interests in a broad network, including
moralist progressives, media organisations, agrarians and corporate business, all with a stake in mail delivery reforms. Without securing vast support from such a diverse coalition, the development of a strong autonomous bureaucratic agency would not have been possible, or would at least have been more difficult.

According to Carpenter (2001), bureaucratic agencies tend to rely on a network of diverse organised interests for support to prevent capture and enhance their position toward their political executives. In the RFD case mentioned above, Wanamaker proved to be a skilful bureaucratic entrepreneur capable of arranging such a network. When policy innovations are supported by a wide variety of organised interests, it becomes more difficult for politicians to resist or stall proposals for reform. In Carpenter’s words (2001, 363): “Multiple networks did not refract power. They rather reduced the dependence of agencies on any one group, putting the agency in the role of broker among numerous interests seeking access to the state.” Late 19th and early 20th century civil servants thus proactively reached out to interest groups in society and diversified the portfolio of interest groups they interacted with to build agency autonomy.

Scattered throughout the literature, one can find other studies of bureaucrats deliberately choosing to interact with particular interest groups. A well-known example of a government agency deliberately working together with interest groups is what Selznick (1953) called ‘the cooptative mechanism’. Cooptation refers to the “the process of absorbing new elements into the leadership or policy-determining structure of an organisation as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence” (Selznick 1953, 262-263). The strong constituent relationship that evolved between the agricultural relations department of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the land-grant college system in the valley can be said to particularly reflect such a cooptation mechanism. Strong influence centres in the valley were covertly absorbed into the policy-determining structure of the TVA. More generally concerning bureaucracy-interest group interactions, Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993,77), for instance, state that: “Interest group interactions with the bureaucracy make an important contribution to social problem solving by helping to cope with the great complexity of the governmental agenda.”

Ripley and Franklin (1986, 28) offer an even more intriguing argument on interactions between bureaucracies and organised interests: “What is less-evident [in the study of interest groups’ role in policy, CP] is that bureaucracies charged with implementing programs will, in fact, sometimes take the initiative in creating and funding the existence and activities of interest groups that will then subsequently lobby for decisions favourable to their interests.” This is basically what the EU is aiming at by encouraging a flourishing civil society to address the democratic gap in European decision-making. A respondent observes: “National implementation of policy programs as part of the European Social Funds, requires us to involve interest groups. Interest groups and an active civil society are really important in Brussels. Actually, Brussels is organising its own system of interest representation, just as we in the Netherlands have done before, to proactively arrange organisational structures with which to deliberate and which could serve as intermediates.”

7 Interview by author.
local level implementation is the practice of community policing in which police officers choose community groups to interact with to enhance public safety.

**Community policing and the search for intermediates**

In trying to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Houston Police Department, its then new leader Lee P. Brown chose to bring the police closer to the community. In this way, the police would respond more to problems of citizens’ concerns rather than to those the police department considered important. To bring the police closer to the people, Brown set up the Directed Area Response Teams (DART). Each team was assigned a specific district in Houston and was responsible for public order and safety in that area. The police officers had to establish contacts in the community and had to consult with local citizen groups representing the citizens living in that area. Subsequently, they had to solve the problems the citizens brought up (Moore 1990). This idea of ‘community policing’ and proactively reaching out to citizen groups has also been applied in the Netherlands. In Rotterdam, for instance, police officers responsible for particular neighbourhoods (wijkagenten) try to build and maintain relationships with various organisations, such as community organisations, governmental agencies, and mosques, so that they can be informed by and provide information to those organisations. According to a police officer in Rotterdam: “The police are by now utterly convinced of the necessity and usefulness of cooperating and communicating with other actors. When the relationships are good, you can get a lot of information, even from mosques, which naturally have a rather suspicious attitude towards us.”

Both cases show that including interest groups during implementation is often an important step in successfully completing the policy process, or generally in administering society, and thus serves the civil servants’ interests. So, the external component of bureaucratic politics entails consciously chosen interactions with interest groups by civil servants, as illustrated by these diverse case studies. For instance, those interactions serve to generate support, as was the case for the American Post Office. For the Houston police and the Rotterdam police, deliberately establishing and maintaining relations contributed to more successful policy implementation and administration of the society. These interactions somehow served the interests of civil servants, in functional or in strategic terms.

The literature on bureaucratic politics does not systematically study how bureaucracy-interest group interactions may contribute to an agency’s or civil servants’ interests. Instead, it offers anecdotal evidence of such interactions. The literature contains either typologies of such interactions, or case studies that show more descriptively how such interactions take place. What we can distill from these insights is that bureaucratic politics assumes that civil servants may benefit from interactions with interest groups both strategically and instrumentally. They thus deliberately engage in interactions, carefully picking and choosing those that serve their interests. In other words, bureaucratic politics assumes that bureaucrats are in control of their interactions with interest groups in order to serve their own or their agency’s interests.

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8 The case description is partly based on interviews by author; see also Poppelaars (2007).
2.4 The routine-driven bureaucrat

A final, often implicit, explanation in the policy network literature of bureaucracy-interest group interactions is that they are mutually beneficial and are therefore stable over time. The core idea of this network-based perspective is that policy making and policy implementation are inevitably based on interactions between many actors, who all have different interests yet need each other to achieve their goals. (Provan et al. 2005; Provan and Milward 2001; Toke and Marsh 2003; van Bueren, Klijn and Koppenjan 2003).

The basic idea behind these policy networks, namely interactions between government and other actors, is certainly not new. Policy community or policy subsystem studies were already concerned with relations between government and society. Initially, terms like ‘iron triangle’ and ‘sub government’ referred to rather closed systems of relationships between elected politicians, government officials, and interest groups. These systems were characterised by consensus among participants and were effectively closed to new interests (Salisbury et al. 1992). Gradually these terms were replaced by concepts such as ‘advocacy coalitions’ and ‘issue networks,’ referring to systems of relationships that were more open and flexible and often characterised by conflict (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Baumgartner and Leech 1998). Although over time closed networks seemed to open up, given the growth of interest communities, subsystems often appeared to be remarkably stable. This was the case, for instance, in US energy policy even after the 1970s oil crisis (Chubb 1983). Dutch policy making was also shown to take place in rather closed policy communities, in which policy advisors form ‘an iron ring’ around policy makers (Oldersma, Portegijs, and Janzen-Marquard 1999).

Pressman and Wildavsky (1984[1973]) coined the idea of ‘complexity of joint action’ to indicate the involvement of third actors and its consequences in policy implementation. Simply put, complexity of joint action means that the more actors are included during policy implementation, the more decision junctures along the process will occur. This growing number of decision junctures will increase the likelihood of conflicts and therefore delay or, even worse, distort output. Over the years, this complexity of joint action has become recognised as an important feature of policy implementation (Börzel 1998; Goggin et al. 1990; O’Toole Jr., Hanf and Hupe 1997). Interestingly, scholars examining policy implementation in developing countries had earlier indicated that implementation was exactly the stage of the policy process when interest groups were most influential. According to this literature, it becomes increasingly apparent during implementation how the groups’ interests would be harmed and/or could be enhanced. Some of these scholars point to the difference between a weak and a strong state as a reason for such severe interest group involvement in policy implementation in developing countries (Grindle 1980; Migdal 1988; Smith 1973). Yet, in democratic states, the involvement of interest groups during implementation has been occasionally shown to alter or slow down implementation processes. The example of US residential home programs for the mentally ill in the late 1980s is such a case. Local decision makers had to take into account the conflicting interests of constituents’ groups, which were split between pro-community and pro-institution groups, in establishing proper housing for the mentally ill. These two groups were
divided on whether to provide the mentally ill with a normal life in the community, or to put them away in concealed homes outside society (Miller and Iscoe 1990, 115-118). Obtaining legitimacy for the community option required taking the concerns of the pro-institution group seriously, which slowed down the establishment of proper housing. In the Dutch immigrant integration case, an instrumental approach toward immigrant organisations in order to accomplish swift and proper implementation, rather than high politics on normative immigrant issues, revealed a fundamental difference between policy making and policy implementation (Poppelaars and Scholten 2008). Getting the job done requires a different approach towards societal actors than articulating political ideas and designing policy advice.

Interacting with interest groups is an important part of policy network studies. What remains often implicit, however, is the assumption of stability most policy networks share (but see Baumgartner and Jones 1993). As Fritz Scharpf (1999, 19) argued: “The ‘network’ metaphor is justified by the fact that the set of participants specialising in certain policy domains is likely to remain relatively stable, and that semi-permanent patterns of mutual support or opposition are likely to emerge over time.” This underlying assumption of stability depends on the existence of mutual benefits exchanged by the actors within a given network, but this is often not made explicit by the proponents of network theories.

So, when governance and policy network approaches are employed to examine bureaucracy-interest group interactions, these studies are usually aimed at explaining how many and which actors are involved in policy making and how long-term interaction patterns, resulting from a perceived mutual benefit, influence eventual policy outcomes. Another consequence of such stable relationships, namely routine behaviour, is often not explicitly mentioned in policy network studies. What we can infer from this literature is that bureaucracy-interest group interactions serve a mutual benefit, tend to be durable, and could turn into routine behaviour over time.

### 2.5 The missing link

As diverse as the scholarly contributions on bureaucracy-interest group interactions are, they have one commonality. They all seek to explain particular, not fully responsive, patterns of bureaucracy-interest group interactions. A true null hypothesis underlying this common objective would account for interactions between bureaucracies and interest groups that include all relevant interests and do not discriminate among interest groups representing these interests. Such a null-hypothesis reflects the more normative statements and theories about the role of a bureaucracy and interests groups in a democracy. A central concern about the role of the bureaucracy in a democracy is how to reconcile the efficiency, stability, and order a bureaucratic organisation seeks to achieve with the need to be accountable and politically responsive in a democratic society (Burke 1986; Gormley and Balla 2004; Meier 1997). With regard to the role of interest groups in a democracy, this normative aspect is reflected in the concern that bias in the interest population may
afford the well-organised and powerful members too much influence in the policy process (Schattschneider 1970[1960]; Olson 1965).

From a democratic point of view, interactions between bureaucracies and interest groups should then indeed be more evenly distributed among interest groups representing each group of citizens or organisations targeted by a particular policy issue. In other words, bureaucratic agencies should be fully responsive to the entire general public (or at least those with salient interests in a policy area) and not only to a few carefully selected organisations. Full responsiveness, however, is often like a *fata morgana*; it simply does not exist in reality. Many authors thus turn to questions of who is more influential or powerful, the bureaucracy or interest groups (Hill 1991). The theoretical challenge then is to provide a systematic explanation of why bureaucrats reach out to a particular subset of existing interest groups, for what reasons, and how their reasons may vary under different circumstances. The bottom line is that we need to fully understand the circumstances which enable either bureaucracies or interest groups to dominate the start and maintenance of their interactions.

As has been discussed in the previous sections, three broad perspectives on bureaucracy-interest group interactions feature in the literature: bureaucratic politics, interest group studies and policy network studies. Each suggests that interaction patterns are not evenly distributed among various interests, albeit for different reasons. The bureaucratic politics perspective suggests that bureaucrats behave opportunistically to improve career options, to ensure their agency’s survival, or to improve policy implementation. The interest group literature addresses the strategies of interest groups in approaching bureaucratic agencies, trying to explain interest groups’ influence and success. Policy network perspectives suggest that there will be close ties between bureaucratic agencies, interest groups and elected politicians, influencing eventual policy outcomes. These ties not only appear to be close, but they also turn out to be rather stable over time, as they serve a mutual benefit.

So, the question of why bureaucrats cooperate with some interest groups rather than others can be answered by three general sets of propositions that follow from these three perspectives (see figure 2.1). First, interaction between bureaucracies and interest groups occurs because bureaucrats consciously and strategically pick and choose who to talk to serve their own interests. Or, secondly, interest groups can choose to interact with certain bureaucrats because they are influential enough to do so. Finally, other mechanisms, such as mutual benefit, allow such interactions to thrive.
Figure 2.1 Three sets of explanations for bureaucracy-interest group interactions.

Each of these strands of literature illuminates a certain aspect of bureaucracy-interest group interactions, and each is rich with theories and illustrations. Thus, the basic problem is not that there is not enough information about bureaucracy-interest group interactions, but that we simply do not know under which circumstances which of these explanations will hold. Each of these strands of literature explains bureaucracy-interest group interactions from a different perspective or as part of a broader framework. We thus need a model that is able to differentiate between situations when either bureaucrats or interest groups are decisive in establishing and maintaining relationships and that can simultaneously distinguish between short-term and long-term interactions. Chapter 3 will discuss such a model.