

Section 7 – Amministrazione e politiche pubbliche

Panel 3. Lobbying and Policy Change: How Italian interest groups try to influence policymaking. Chairs: Renata Lizzi, Andrea Pritoni

The main objective of this panel is to take a step further on the study of interest groups in Italy, with a particular emphasis on interest groups' policy influence and following a policy analysis perspective. With respect to the most recent literature on interest groups' policy influence, "studies of the policy process indicate that interest groups often play a central role in setting the government agenda, defining options, influencing decisions and directing implementation (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Berry, 1999; Patashnik, 2003)" (cited in Grossman 2012, 172). Yet most part of these studies are venue/issue area/interest organization specific, and they don't propose generalizations beyond case studies.

We therefore believe that time has come to develop systematic knowledge on the actual role of interest groups in Italian policymaking, and more precisely to analyze the influence that interest groups have in policy reform processes and with regard to policy change more broadly.

With respect to this, a few crucial policy processes with the aim of modifying the public policy status quo in some particular policy fields – i.e. in labour market policy, education policy, administrative policy, etc. – are privileged empirical cases to be studied in order to ascertain whether or not interest groups have been able to counterbalance governments' proposals and to limit or favor policy change, over the course of the whole policy cycle (agenda, formulation, implementation).

More precisely, with this panel we want to focus on different policy processes in different policy fields, with the aim of reconstructing carefully the whole policy process: from the agenda-setting to the first implementation of policy measures, passing through the formulation stage of the policy cycle. In so doing, we will be able to take into account various stages and institutional arenas, channels of institutional access and lobbying strategies, trade unions and entrepreneurial associations, public interest groups and institutional groups, etc.

In other words, with this panel we thus aim at ascertaining whether:

- i) the level of interest group activity in one venue for a given policy area is strongly related to its level in other venues;
- ii) the mobilization of interest groups is homogeneously distributed throughout the policy cycle, with different lobbying strategies employed in different moments and on the basis of the political actor with which they have to interact. Moreover, and most importantly,
- iii) we will also be able to differentiate between groups that are able to be influential in the policymaking, and groups that do not. Those findings will be of crucial importance in order to give a preliminary, but rather systematic, impression of the level of bias in representation that characterizes Italian political system in recent years and its potential causes.