

*Fourth Edition*

# REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT IN MODERN EUROPE

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# CONTENTS

*List of Tables and Figures vii*

*About the Authors ix*

*Preface xi*

*Investiture 52*

*Defeat and Resignation 53*

*Putting It All Together 54*

*References 55*

**CHAPTER 1 Introduction 1**

**Our Approach 2**

**Modern Europe 3**

**Plan of Campaign 4**

**A Hundred Years of European History 6**

**The Vital Statistics 13**

**Appendix: Using the Internet and Other**

**Resources to Keep Up with Changes in**

**European Politics 22**

**CHAPTER 3 Parliaments 57**

**Parliaments and Governments 57**

**The Roles of Parliaments 60**

*Appointing and Dismissing Governments 60*

*Parliaments and Lawmaking 61*

*Parliaments and Oversight of Government 66*

**Parliaments and Parties 70**

*Voters Vote for Parties 72*

*Parliamentarians and Party Discipline 73*

**Parliamentarians and Constituency**

**Representation 74**

**European Parliaments: One Chamber or**

**Two? 76**

**The Significance of Parliaments:**

**An Assessment 81**

**References 82**

**CHAPTER 4 Constitutions, Judges, and Politics 86**

**European Constitutions 87**

*The Origins of Constitutions 87*

*Constitutional Traditions 89*

*Amending a Constitution 90*

**CHAPTER 2 The Executive 24**

**Presidential and Parliamentary Government 24**

**The Head of State 25**

*Semi-Presidentialism in France 26*

*Directly Elected Presidents 29*

*Indirectly Elected Presidents 31*

*Monarchs 32*

**The Prime Minister 35**

**The Cabinet 40**

**Junior Ministers 44**

**The Making and Breaking of Governments 44**

*Parliamentary Democracy and Legislative*

*Majorities 44*

*Heads of State and Formateurs 47*

*Choosing Cabinet Ministers 50*

## CHAPTER 14

## POLITICS OUTSIDE PARLIAMENT

In most of this book we focus on what might be thought of as the "official" politics of representation in modern Europe. In the preceding chapters we deal with the national politics of choosing a legislature and an executive, the transnational politics of the European Union, as well as with the public policy outputs that emerge from these political processes. Although these are obviously central to politics in any European country, they are only part of the story. A large part of representative government in modern Europe takes place outside these formal structures, and there are some big differences between European countries in the ways in which this happens.

Political scientists have spent a lot of time thinking about differences between countries in how key social and economic interests play a part in public decision making. This research has led to two very different theoretical descriptions of the impact on the political process of a wide range of formal and informal social groups in what is often now described as "civil society." A model of group politics in which certain key groups are closely integrated into the formal political process is described by theorists as "corporatism" or "neocorporatism." An alternative model of group politics in which groups are seen to compete to put pressure on decision-making elites in a political "marketplace" outside formal political institutions has become known as "pluralism." Having come to regard these distinctions as too stark to capture the complexities of politics in most real countries, many authors also now talk in terms of notions such as "social partnership," "tripartism," and "policy networks," which blend elements of the pluralist and corporatist models.

In this chapter, we explore how well each of these approaches seems to describe some important noneconomic spheres of activity. Although policy making in any modern European state is a complex process that certainly does not conform to any simple model, it is nonetheless useful to describe the essential differences between pluralism and corporatism, and to illustrate the differences with brief discussions of group politics in Austria and in Britain, the former typically seen as the archetypal corporatist system, the latter as essentially pluralist. We then discuss the ways in which the notion of a "policy network" might capture a number of the insights of both the pluralist and the corporatist models of politics outside parliament.

## → CORPORATISM

**The Corporatist Model**

Corporatism as we know it today has diverse sources in the political thought of the past hundred years or so. One important current that fed into modern theories of corporatist

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policy making was the fascism of the 1920s and 1930s. Fascist corporatism was a system of totalitarian state control of society based on an intimate interpretation of interest groups and the state. Domination of the major interest groups by the state was one of the main mechanisms of social control by the fascist one-party government, exemplified by Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy, and Salazar's Portugal. Obviously, any form of thought even vaguely linked with fascism was totally discredited in Europe after World War II. This is the reason why postwar theories of corporatism severed any association with fascism before being relaunched as "neocorporatism" or "liberal corporatism."

A second intellectual source that flowed into modern corporatism was "Catholic Social Thought," especially influential during the early decades of the twentieth century. Catholic Church leaders became concerned that the role of the church was being undermined both by the growth of trade unionism and by what they saw as the relentless encroachment of the state into many aspects of social life. They mourned the passing of the medieval craft guilds and advocated an enhanced role for self-governing interest groups that constituted what they described as the "voluntary" sector. These groups would be intimately involved not only in the *planning* but also in the *provision* of major social services such as health care and education. What lay behind Catholic social thought was the belief that in a predominantly Catholic society these groups would be made up primarily of Catholics so that public policy would be sensitive to the teachings of the church, despite a formal separation of church and state. These ideas were taken up in the early postwar years by Christian democratic parties (see Chapter 8), whose electoral success gave corporatism additional political impetus.

A third factor that contributed to the rise of neocorporatism was the impulse for "national unity" that followed the destruction and trauma caused by World War II in many European countries. As we saw in Chapter 12, a number of states went through the immediate postwar period governed by coalitions of national unity encompassing both right and left. The sense that industry and labor had to work together in order to rebuild war-torn economies fostered tripartite cooperation in places such as Austria and Germany.

A fourth factor was the close relationship between the trade union movement and social democratic parties in several European countries (see Chapter 8). Many of these parties had grown out of the trade union movement and were still intimately connected with it. When social democratic parties were in power over long periods, notably in post-war Sweden and Norway, the relationship between trade unions and political parties became a relationship between trade unions and governments. Even in "pluralist" Britain, economic policy making came closest to being corporatist in style during the "Social Contract" between government and trade unions that was executed during the life of the 1974-79 Labour administration. Conversely, when social democratic parties move out of power, as they did in Sweden in the mid-1990s, the decision-making style can look a lot less corporatist.

One of the problems with the concept of corporatism is that many different people have used it in many different ways. Some authors have used the term to describe what is little more than a system of centralized wage bargaining in which government and the "social partners" of organized labor and business sit around a table and thrash out a national incomes policy. Others see corporatism as being rooted much more deeply in the policy-making system: as a set of institutional arrangements that entrench major social groups in the overall management of the national economy and much more besides.

In a recent and comprehensive review, which also provides an excellent bibliography for interested readers, Siaroff (pp. 180-81) tabulates no less than twenty-four different working definitions related to corporatism used by authors writing between 1981 and 1997. (Wiarda also provides a recent review of this field. See also both Cawson and Lijphart.) On the basis of his review, Siaroff also offers a definition that he feels best captures the key ideas that most of these people are writing about. He feels that corporatism involves, "within an advanced industrial society and democratic polity, the coordinated, co-operative, and systematic management of the national economy by the state, centralized unions, and employers (these latter two co-operating directly in industry), presumably to the relative benefit of all three actors" (Siaroff, p. 177). Working from this general definition, Siaroff (pp. 177-79) breaks down the analysis of corporatist policy making into four general areas: the *structural* preconditions for corporatism; the *roles* within this structure fulfilled by key actors; the patterns of *behavior* that result; and the *contextual factors* that make corporatist policy making more likely to succeed.

Structural preconditions for corporatism are typically seen as the following:

- Most workers are organized into a small number of powerful unions.
- The business community is dominated by a small number of powerful firms organized into a powerful employers' federation.
- Wage bargaining between unions and employers is centralized.
- A powerful state is actively involved in the economy.

In a successful corporatist system, both employers and unions should have a formal institutional role not only in *making* policy but also in *implementing* it. The types of behavior by these "social partners" that are likely to make corporatism work include

- A consensus on broad social values shared by state, unions, and employers
- A preference for bargained solutions to problems, rather than solutions that either are imposed from above or are the outcomes of industrial conflict

The contextual factors argued to make corporatism work more smoothly include

- A long tradition of social democratic rule
- A small, open economy
- High expenditures on social programs and low expenditures on defense

The stress on policy *implementation* in this elaboration of the corporatist model is what sets corporatism fundamentally apart from other forms of political decision making that involve different socioeconomic groups. The implications of this are far-reaching. For any particular decision-making regime to be seen as "corporatist," interest groups must be comprehensive in their representation of particular sectors of society and must be able to *police* their members as well as *represent* their interests. This point is strongly emphasized by both Philippe Schmitter and Gerhard Lehmbruch, two of the most influential political scientists associated with discussions of corporatism: "Corporatism is more than a particular pattern of articulation of interests. Rather, it is an institutionalized pattern of policy-formation in which large interest organizations co-operate with each other and with public authorities not only in the articulation of interests, but ... in the 'authoritative allocation of values' and in the implementation of such policies" (Lehmbruch, p. 150).

Many of the authors who have written about corporatism have gone on to produce rankings of countries in terms of how close they are to the idealized model of corporatist state. Siaroff (p. 198) combined all of these into a single additive index of corporatism, the results of which are given in Table 14.1, with figures for the United States and Canada provided as a basis for comparison.

Table 14.1 groups countries crisply into three clusters. There are the "big three" corporatist countries (Austria, Norway, and Sweden), which are rated as being clearly more corporatist than all of the others. After these comes a group of countries that rank as moderately corporatist. The Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, and Switzerland are at the more corporatist end of this group; Luxembourg, Iceland, and Belgium are at the corporatist end. Finally, there are countries that are hardly corporatist at all. In this group, Britain and Ireland (as well as the United States and Canada) are joined by the "Mediterranean" democracies: Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, and France. The parts of Europe that are neither English-speaking nor from the Catholic south are likely to be at least somewhat corporatist in their policy-making style.

TABLE 14.1

## Corporatism Scores for European Democracies

Country	Corporatism Score	Social Democratic and Left Share of Cabinet Seats
Austria	5.00	60.7
Norway	4.86	73.1
Sweden	4.67	76.3
Netherlands	4.00	18.6
Denmark	3.55	50.7
Germany	3.54	24.8
Switzerland	3.38	23.8
Finland	3.30	33.6
Luxembourg	3.00	28.4
Iceland	3.00	31.7
Belgium	2.84	27.6
Ireland	2.00	9.7
France	1.67	24.5
United Kingdom	1.65	28.1
Portugal	1.50	5.7
Italy	1.48	12.4
Spain	1.25	26.0
Greece	1.00	19.7
United States	1.15	
Canada	1.15	

Sources: See sources for Table 13.1; Siaroff, p. 198.

Table 14.1 also repeats information from Table 13.1 on the extent of left or social democratic control of government over the postwar years, and it confirms the view that this is indeed conducive to the development of a more corporatist policy-making regime. Four of the five most corporatist countries—Austria, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark—were also the countries with the most extensive social democratic control of their postwar cabinets. The striking exception is the Netherlands. Christian democratic parties were dominant in the Dutch cabinet over much of the postwar era, yet the country exhibits strongly corporatist tendencies. In this sense, the Netherlands is more like some members of the group of more moderately corporatist countries, notably including Germany, Switzerland, and Belgium. In these, a tradition of "northern European" Christian democracy, combined with a need to reconcile fundamental religious or linguistic cleavages, has created an impetus to entrench extra-parliamentary groups in the policy-making system. (On corporatism in the Netherlands, see Woldendorp.)

As Table 14.1 indicates, most authors agree that of all western European countries, Austria exhibits the strongest form of corporatism. By looking in greater detail at the situation in Austria, therefore, we can gain some additional insight into what is involved in corporatist policy making.

## "Corporatism" in Austria

Austria is usually taken as the classic case of a political system that is characterized by a very high level of corporatist policy making. Indeed, Marin has even argued that Austria is a "model-generator," one of a very few countries that theorists have in mind when they develop accounts of corporatism. This was possibly true of the period up until the late 1980s than it is today, for the recent development of more confrontational party politics, combined with Austrian membership in the European Union, may have moved Austria somewhat closer to the European mainstream (Luther and Müller). Nonetheless, there can be little doubt that Austrian politics for most of the postwar period provided one of the main sources of ideas for those who have written at length about corporatism.

Perhaps the most striking and distinctive feature of Austrian politics in this regard has been the important role of the "chambers." These institutions were designed to provide formal representation for the interests, respectively, of labor, commerce, and agriculture. Although chambers (especially chambers of commerce) can be found elsewhere, the Austrian chambers traditionally have been much more important, given their statutory position and the vital role that they play in decision making. All working citizens in Austria are obliged by law to belong to the appropriate chamber. This rule requires the chambers to run their affairs in a manner that would withstand legal scrutiny—to make internal decisions and hold internal elections in a representative manner, for example. The chambers have the formal right to be consulted on and represented in a wide range of matters, as well as to nominate members to many other public bodies.

In addition to the statutory chambers, Austria has an extensive system of "voluntary" interest groups. These include a trade union movement organized under the auspices of the "peak" trade union organization, the ÖGB, and the League of Austrian Industrialists, the VÖI. The ÖGB, in particular, is a powerful independent actor in Austria, for a number of reasons. First, it is the main agency engaged in collective bargaining on behalf of its own members. The Chamber of Labor, by virtue of its statutory status, must

also consider the "public interest" in its dealings. Second, the ÖGB is highly centralized. The member unions, legally speaking, are subdivisions of the ÖGB, rather than the ÖGB being a federation of autonomous unions. In addition, the level of trade union affiliation in Austria is relatively high, and unions tend to be organized on an industry-by-industry (rather than a craft-by-craft) basis.

Almost all observers agree that the three main chambers—the Chamber of Labor, of Commerce, and of Agriculture—and the ÖGB interact with one another as the four key players in the making and implementing of economic policy in Austria, in a system known as *Sozialpartnerschaft*, or "social partnership." This system operates in parallel with, rather than in opposition to, the formal parliamentary system. Although the key interest associations are quite distinct from the political parties, the obvious political affiliations of their respective memberships mean that each association tends to be dominated by supporters of one or another of the main parties. This gives interest group leaders a very strong position. As might be expected, the Chamber of Labor and the ÖGB are dominated by the Socialists (SPÖ), and the Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Agriculture are dominated by the conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP). It is important, however, not to present relations between parties and interest groups in Austria as if they were in some sense exclusive entities. On the contrary, there has been an intimate interpenetration of interest groups and parliament, and this symbiosis has been identified by many as one of the strengths of Austrian corporatism. A steadily growing proportion of parliamentarians are also interest group representatives, and interest groups have played an important role in the selection of parliamentary candidates for the major Austrian parties.

The social partners in Austria traditionally have been concerned first and foremost with economic policy making, in particular with prices and incomes. The social partnership underpinning Austrian corporatism has thus involved both the negotiation and the implementation of policies on prices and incomes. This cooperation has been formalized in a powerful institution, the Joint Commission on Prices and Wages, representation on which has been governed by the principle of parity. Thus the representation of the Chamber of Labor and the ÖGB has equaled that of the Chamber of Commerce and Chamber of Agriculture, and the commission has often been referred to as the "Parity Commission." The concept of parity has been vital to the operation of Austrian corporatism, implying strictly equal membership for representatives of business and labor in all important economic policy-making bodies. The effect has been to compel groups that might otherwise be antagonistic to cooperate with one another, for no effective decisions can be made unless they do. Thus, many important decisions have been "bargained out" by the interest groups before the government becomes involved.

As a system of economic planning, Austrian corporatism has been judged, especially during the relatively affluent 1960s and 1970s, to have been an outstanding success. The Austrian economy enjoyed steady growth and a record on inflation and unemployment that was much better than the European norm. More remarkable, however, was Austria's record in preserving many aspects of corporatism during the recessionary 1980s and early 1990s, with an important social partnership agreement implemented in 1995. While other countries came to exhibit some of the more visible institutional features of corporatist decision making during the 1960s and 1970s, an effective corporatist system involves far more than mere institutions. It rests on a history and culture of collective accommodation that cannot simply be invented as the need arises. Thus, "Austrians have internalized

attitudes and values of social partnership and apply them even when they appear to or do actually contradict their individual and immediate interests. Austrians even consider that, in the long term and overall, social partnership optimally realizes their individual preferences by collective regulation" (Gerlich et al., p. 218). Full-fledged corporatism, therefore, is a comprehensive and deep-rooted decision-making culture rather than just a transient collection of superficial institutions.

### Tripartism and Social Partners

The theoretical notion of corporatism describes an ideal type of decision-making regime unlikely to be found in its pure form in any European country. The Austrian corporatist system that we just described is probably the fullest practical implementation in modern Europe, to the extent that, as we said, some authors have described it as a "model-generator." At the same time, as we indicate in Table 14.1, if we concentrate on the key area of economic policy, it is possible to classify European countries as being more, or less, corporatist in their decision-making ethos. To a large extent this classification depends on the "tripartite" integration of the two key social partners—trade unions and employers' associations—with government in the management of the economy. This in turn depends on the extent to which the social partners can speak and act authoritatively on behalf of those they represent.

Two of the key variables that affect the system of economic policy making are the level of trade union membership within the working population and the centralization of wage bargaining, or the extent to which the national peak organizations for labor and employers are involved in negotiations over wage levels. In general terms, European trade union membership is "densest" in Scandinavia, with membership rates of around 90 percent in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. It is much lower than this in France, the Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland. The centralization of wage bargaining is highest in Austria and Scandinavia and much lower in France, Switzerland, Britain, and Italy.

A highly unionized workforce combined with a centralized trade union movement, however, does not guarantee an effective system of corporatist decision making. Thus, although it is true that the Austrian trade union movement is highly centralized (nearly all trade unionists are members of the main trade union federation, the ÖGB), the level of trade union membership in the workforce is high but not especially high. Belgium, for example, has a much higher level of trade union membership and a moderately centralized trade union movement, but most people agree that it has a much lower level of corporatist decision making than Austria. The Netherlands, in contrast, which is generally held to be significantly more corporatist than Britain, has a much lower level of trade union membership.

Perhaps the most important condition for effective tripartite wage bargaining is that the social partners are able to rely on strong and effective peak organizations. In Germany, for example, the peak organization for the trade union movement is the German Federation of Trade Unions (DGB), which represents over 80 percent of all unionized workers. On the side of business and industry, there are three different peak organizations, but they do not compete with one another. The Federation of German Industries (BDI) concentrates on the political representation of business. The Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA) deals with social policy and the labor markets, including collective bargaining. The Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHT),

representing nearly 3 million companies, all of which are obliged by law to affiliate, deals with trade and commerce. Thus, the three peak organizations representing the interests of capital coordinate their activities and often function as one. This division of the employers' peak organizations, however, as well as the fact that the DGB can negotiate on general prices and income strategy but cannot bind individual member unions in its negotiations, means that Germany is probably better thought of as an example of tripartism rather than full corporatism.

It is also the case that the institutions of tripartism can rise and fall in significance over a period of time, even in the absence of a more fundamental corporatist culture. In Ireland, for example, economic policy during the 1990s and early 2000s was based on a series of tripartite deals between government, employers, and unions—including the "Programme for Competitiveness and Work" and "Partnership 2000," the "Programme for Prosperity and Fairness" and "Sustaining Progress." These involved agreements on wage levels, productivity arrangements, aspects of employment conditions, and government policy in areas such as taxation, investment incentives, and the provision of certain social welfare benefits. Such deals were first negotiated at a time of economic crisis—the original deal in 1988 was called the "Programme for National Recovery." Public finances were then in disarray, inflation and unemployment were very high, and large numbers of young people were leaving Ireland to seek jobs elsewhere. The resulting national agreements between what are explicitly referred to in Ireland as the "social partners" contributed to a far more stable economic environment. There are doubtless many reasons to explain the remarkable growth of the Irish economy in the latter part of the 1990s and the early years of the new century. But the stable industrial relations environment produced by these partnership deals is certainly one factor that was used to explain the large inflows of foreign investment that fueled this growth. It has led successive Irish governments to go to great lengths to renegotiate partnership agreements between trade unions, business organizations, and the voluntary sector, creating a situation in which one of the central processes of economic policy making in Ireland takes place quite outside the formal political process. (For a comprehensive overview of the social partnership process in Ireland, see Murphy.)

Successful tripartite negotiations between the social partners can therefore generate a number of the effects attributed to a more comprehensive corporatist policy-making regime. Nonetheless, as we can see from the collapse of the 1970s "Social Contracts" in Britain, there is a real sense in which tripartism is only as good as its last deal. It is far less deeply rooted than the type of corporatist institutions that are grounded in more fundamental social attitudes about the institutional roles of the key social partners.

### Tripartism in Eastern Europe

Creating a new system of relationships between government, business, and trade unions was not the very first thing on the agenda for the transition states of eastern Europe, but it nonetheless was a crucial matter on which important decisions had to be taken quickly. All postcommunist countries formed their first tripartite commissions and committees by the early 1990s. At that time, tripartism and neocorporatism seemed to be necessary and stabilizing features of the social and economic landscape. The perceived achievements of western European neocorporatism in moderating class antagonisms and coordinating

the conflicting interests of labor and capital were often used as examples to justify new policies. Eastern European policy makers, by including representatives of labor in negotiations and decision making, hoped to ease the pains of economic transformation and generate mass support for liberal democracy.

Hungary formed its first National Interest Reconciliation Council in 1988–89, and Poland started its Round Table discussions in 1989. Soon, because of dramatic declines in earnings and living standards, these tripartite commissions started focusing on the economic concerns and demands of the general population. The Interest Reconciliation Council (IRC) was formed in Hungary in 1990 and included representatives of several national trade unions and employers' organizations. Critics suggest, however, that this body was largely a remnant of the communist past and failed to mobilize the working class to fight actively for its interests. They see the origins of tripartism in eastern Europe not in governments trying to mediate the conflicting interests of labor and capital but as a way to provide social support for government reform policies (Ost, p. 509). Even after the 1994 electoral campaign in Hungary, during which the concept of a "social pact" dominated almost all parties' electoral platforms, the situation did not radically change. Negotiations on a Social Economic Agreement (SEA) were long and highly contentious. By 1998, the IRC had been transformed into an informal "consultative" body, in a context where the government of Hungary was setting economic policy without much formal input from organized labor.

The Hungarian experience of tripartism was by no means unique across the region. The tripartite commissions in the Czech Republic and Poland were also quite weak in negotiating and implementing agreements, in defending workers' interests, and in negotiating with the employers' associations. This weak, or rather "symbolic" role of tripartism has even led to union boycotts in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. In eastern Europe, the best that can be said is that tripartism means formal negotiations over very broad issues, with no guarantee that the agreements will become law or be respected by employers (Ost, p. 515). (See also Iankova; Stark and Bruzst.)

### The Decline of Corporatism?

Views about the likely spread of corporatism were modified by the 1990s. The apparent decline of the institutions of corporatism in a number of countries during the preceding years of recession led to an increasing tendency to categorize corporatism as a "fair-weather" phenomenon: a form of concerted action that tends to fall apart when resources become scarcer and interest groups must bargain more competitively to divide up a pie that is fixed rather than one that is continually expanding (Keman and Whiteley).

Two other trends may be leading to a decline in the importance of "purer" forms of corporatism in modern Europe. The first has to do with the ever-expanding role of the European Union in major economic policy making, particularly after the Maastricht Treaty cemented an agreement to develop a common European monetary system. The need for a "convergence" of European economies to underpin a common European currency, the euro, implied the need for participating European governments to surrender some of the autonomy they had at least in theory traditionally employed to manipulate key instruments of macroeconomic policy, such as interest rates, exchange rates, and budget deficits. In addition, many other formerly national levers of economic policy have

increasingly come under the auspices of the EU, including state supports to industry, competition policy, and regional policy.

As we saw when discussing EU decision making in Chapter 5, national governments remain very important in this process, through their role in the European Council. Thus, traditional economic groups still set out to influence economic policy making at the EU level, one stage removed, by influencing national governments. But the traditional institutionalized channels of influence used by such groups have been undermined to the extent that decision making is moved to EU institutions in Brussels. Interest groups, however, have not sat around twiddling their thumbs while this has happened, and many have set up very effective Brussels-based organizations designed to work directly on EU decision-making elites. Key groups may or may not have become more influential as a result of all this, but the traditional corporatist model—entrenched as it is in what is essentially a national decision-making system—has undoubtedly been undermined (Adams).

A second important trend that may have weakened traditional corporatist arrangements has to do with the very steady shift in the sources of wealth generation in European economies toward the service sector, in line with trends in all affluent countries. This shift has been accompanied by a weakening of the power of the traditional trade union movement. Modern high-tech and service industries have created an increasingly white-collar workforce, a much more rapid turnover in employment histories, and new patterns of work, which have combined to undermine the industrial power of trade unions. (For an extended and very useful discussion of changing European labor markets, see Kitschelt et al.)

Notwithstanding these important trends, Staroff's survey shows that even in the 1990s there were still big differences between European countries in the extent of institutionalized involvement by the main social partners—especially employers and trade unions—in the process of managing national economies. This is especially true in relation to the involvement of the social partners in policy implementation, as well as policy making, which is one of the key defining characteristics of corporatist systems.

## → PLURALISM

Like corporatism, pluralism has tended to occupy an uneasy no-man's land between being a "normative" theory of how politics *ought* to be conducted and a "positive" theory of how groups *actually do* operate. As a normative theory, pluralism is one of the underpinnings of traditional liberal democracy, perhaps best summarized by Dahl (pp. 4–33). But this is not our main concern here. As a descriptive scheme, pluralism typically has been used to characterize interest group activity in systems such as Britain (and, for that matter, Canada and the United States), where groups put pressure on political elites in an uncoordinated and competitive manner. This is in contrast to the well-ordered and cooperative interaction between groups and elites that is implied under pure forms of corporatism.

Even though pluralism has been criticized for being a vague and incomplete theory of politics (Jordan, "Pluralism"), it does nonetheless have a set of striking features that allow us to regard it as a distinctive description of political decision making. Pluralism can be distinguished from corporatism in a number of respects. The most important is that pluralist interest groups have no formal institutional role in the allocation of resources and the implementation of policy. A second fundamental difference is

that interest groups in a pluralist system are assumed to be self-generating and voluntary. This assumption implies the existence of a range of different groups, typically competing with one another to represent the interests of the same classes of people in a given sphere of economic or social activity. Another assumption in much of pluralist theory is that although not all groups have equal levels of power or resources, it is nonetheless relatively easy for people to form an interest group and thereby gain at least some access to the levers of political power (Smith, p. 309). This assumption suggests that many of the salient social interests in a pluralist system will be represented by the set of competing interest groups. New interests that might emerge, for one reason or another, can be represented in the political system as a result of the capacity of existing groups to adapt, or as a result of the relatively unhindered formation of new groups. (Good introductions to pluralist theory can be found in Jordan, "Sub-Governments"; Jordan, "Pluralism"; and Smith.)

The basic process by which pluralist theorists assume popular interests to be represented in decision making involves groups influencing the output of the executive branch of government by applying "pressure" on political elites. Different groups compete with one another for the ear of decision makers, who are pressed in many different directions at the same time. The groups that apply pressure most effectively (possibly because they have the most public support, but quite possibly also because they have the most resources or the most privileged access to elites) have the greatest success in bringing public policy closer to their own preferred positions.

Despite allegations made by some naive critics, few pluralists assume that the resources available to different groups are in any sense equal or that different groups have equivalent access to key political decision makers. Most pluralists accept that the market in political influence is far from perfect, containing actors with very different capacities to affect important political decisions. In particular, many pluralists accept that business interests are often in a highly privileged position and that the state is far from neutral, favoring business interests or, indeed, favoring the particular interests of the bureaucracy. A clear statement of this "neopluralist" position can be found in Charles Lindblom's influential book *Politics and Markets*. According to Lindblom, there are some "grand" issues that are effectively removed from public debate by the combined power of business interests and the state, and as a result, conventional pluralist politics operates most effectively in relation to what can be seen as "secondary" issues (Lindblom, p. 142). Even reconstructed pluralists are thus distinguished by their assumption that there is at least something important left to be contested in the accessible political arena and that such contests take the form of applying political pressure to decision-making elites.

Political pressure can be applied in a number of ways, although these ways are not always very clearly specified by those who write about pluralism. In the sphere of prices and income policy, however, the process is relatively clear-cut. Policy is set on the basis of bargaining between groups, backed up by the threat of the economic sanctions that each group has at its disposal. In the last analysis, trade unions get their way in a pluralistic system not because they are in some sense integrated into the political process but because they can go on strike and thereby inflict damage on the employers or the government with which they are dealing. Similarly, employers have power because they control the means of production and can inflict pain by engaging in fringes, lockouts, and plant closures if they choose to do so.



Perhaps the single most distinctive feature of the pluralist account of decision making, therefore, is that it is characterized by conflict rather than consensus. Of course, conflict will not always manifest itself in the shape of strikes, lockouts, and so on. Rather, it is the *threat* of such sanctions, whether explicit or implicit, that underpins pluralist bargaining. Indeed, if the various actors are rational and equipped with perfect information, they will anticipate the outcome of any potential conflict and settle their differences before overt hostilities can begin. Actual observed conflicts—real-world strikes and lockouts—are, according to this view, the product of imperfect information. They are what happens when competing groups test each other's strengths and weaknesses. For all this, however, the outcome of political activity in a pluralist system is assumed to be the product of the balance of forces between the various groups involved. And this balance of forces is determined by the anticipated outcome of head-to-head confrontations over essential conflicts of interest.

Most people see pluralism and corporatism as being at opposite ends of a spectrum describing different types of group politics. For this reason, studies that describe different countries as being more, or less, corporatist are also making judgments about the extent of pluralist decision making. Thus Table 14.1 is also, in the minds of most authors, a ranking of European countries in terms of the extent to which they have a type of group politics that can be thought of as pluralist. As we already seen, a striking regularity in Table 14.1 is the tight cluster of the Mediterranean and English-speaking European democracies at the "pluralist" end of this spectrum. This group accounts for the seven countries reckoned by a large variety of authors to be the most pluralist. None of these countries has a long tradition of social democratic government in the postwar era, and all seem to be characterized by a more market-oriented style of interaction between the main social partners.

### "Pluralism" in Britain

Table 14.1 shows us that Britain is a key member of the "pluralist" cluster of modern European countries. During the 1970s, when the interest of political scientists in corporatism was at its zenith, even Britain was diagnosed as moving toward the corporatist model. This prediction had much to do with the emergence of the "Social Contract" between the Labour government of the day; the main British trade union federation, the Trades Union Congress; and the main employers' federation, the Confederation of British Industry. This era was, however, short-lived. For most of the postwar era in Britain, "cooperative" rather than "cooperative" has been the best way of describing interactions between the main social partners in Britain. Trade unions themselves have set great store by their right to "free collective bargaining," backed up by a right to strike that is regularly exercised. Even more than the unions, British employers have also been willing for the most part to take their chances in the rough-and-tumble of the labor market rather than getting involved in institutionalized collaboration with the unions.

This mode of economic policy making conforms closely to the model of a pluralist system based on a political market in which self-generating interest groups compete freely with one another to influence the flow of public policy. The argument that Britain is decidedly not a corporatist system thus rests on two important phenomena. The first is the general lack of integration of both unions and management into the policy-making process. The second is the apparent preference of both sides for confrontational methods of settling their differences.

The fragility of what appeared to be moves toward tripartite decision making in Britain, with the "Social Contract" of the mid-1970s, can be seen clearly from the speed with which confrontational bargaining was restored after the introduction of government-imposed wage ceilings in 1977. Equally striking is the success of the Conservative attack on trade union rights and privileges after Margaret Thatcher's election victory in May 1979. As early as July 1979, the Conservatives proposed a series of restrictions on trade union power. These included the banning of "secondary" picketing (that is, picketing away from the main scene of an industrial dispute); the restriction of closed shops (which oblige all who work in a particular employment to join a particular union); and the requirement that unions hold secret ballots of those involved before calling strikes. A series of laws restricting trade union power was passed shortly afterward. Confrontation between government and unions came to a head in a long and very bruising miners' strike that began in March 1984 and soured industrial relations in Britain for some time afterward. The Thatcherite approach to economic policy making in Britain was thus to use legislation to weaken the power of trade unions and then relegate them to the position of "mere" economic actors with no formal political role. These attacks on the trade unions were defended on the grounds that trade union power hinders the free play of market forces. A strong belief in the effectiveness of the market left no room for tripartite economic planning, involving agreements between government, employers, and unions.

In this regard, not a lot changed after the landslide election victories for Labour in 1997 and 2001. During the 1997 election campaign the Conservatives complained that Tony Blair's "New" Labour Party had "stolen" many aspects of Conservative economic policy, and research into the British party manifestos of 1997 confirms for the first time that Labour was no longer the most left-wing of the mainstream British parties and had moved sharply toward the Conservatives on economic policy (Laver and Garry). Over two full terms in office, from 1997 to 2005, Labour did not seek a dramatic rolling back of Thatcherite trade union legislation, made no conscious attempt to forge a new social contract between the social partners, and gave no real indication that Britain was likely to move away from an essentially pluralist form of interest group representation.

### Pluralism in Action: The Women's Movement

The corporatist model of interest group politics explicitly refers to the management of the economy and to the role of unions and employers in the economy. The pluralist model, in contrast, is entirely open as to which particular interests might put pressure on the decision-making system. Indeed, one of the virtues claimed for pluralism by its champions is that a "free market" in influence can adapt to changes in society and allow new groups into the decision-making loop. Whether or not this claim is justified, changes both in the structure of society and in social attitudes do have the potential to change the focus of interest-group politics. This effect can be seen quite clearly in the rise to prominence toward the end of the twentieth century, of both the women's movement and the environmental movement.

As we saw in Chapter 11, women are systematically underrepresented at nearly every level of politics in nearly every European country. This underrepresentation arises not only within political parties and bureaucracies but also in the peak organizations of the social partners (there are relatively few women among senior trade unionists or

business leaders) and in entrenched economic and professional interest groups such as churches, farmers, and doctors. The political underrepresentation of women arises even in Scandinavia, where the women's movement has made more progress than anywhere else. (For a comprehensive overview of the evolution of women's representation in the formal political system, see Leyenaar.)

It is not surprising, therefore, that groups promoting women's interests have often been forced to operate outside the traditional institutional structure. Of course, women's issues have also been pursued within existing organizations, be they trade unions or political parties (Leyenaar). Those promoting women's issues inside such organizations have often met with limited success, however. Women's activists have often found themselves in the role of activist groups within organizations, from which positions they have applied internal pressure for change with varying degrees of success. One of the best examples is the way in which many European trade unions have now been convinced—often not without a struggle—to campaign for equal pay and conditions for women who do the same jobs as men. Such intra-institutional campaigns for women's rights have had most success inside established public organizations in Scandinavia and the Netherlands.

However, campaigners for women's rights are also prominently involved outside traditional organizations, in single-issue pressure group politics of particular relevance to women. Obvious examples include abortion (Lovenduski and Outshoorn), divorce, domestic violence, and a range of equal rights causes (Dahlerup). A striking example was the important role played by the Women's Coalition as a mediating group during the early stages of the Northern Ireland peace process—although the same group was quickly sidelined by the traditional male-dominated political "players" once this process gained momentum. In almost all cases, however, women's groups have found themselves outside traditional institutional patterns of influence, and their "outsider" status has meant that they have had to fight very hard for every inch of ground won since the 1960s.

At the same time, however, activism by women's groups has probably forced at least the public face of many mainstream decision-making organizations to take women's issues more seriously than they did before. Indeed, the concept of "mainstreaming" gender issues in modern Europe—of building gender into the heart of public decision making, no matter who makes such decisions—has become central to the debate on the role of gender in the decision-making process (Beveridge, Nott and Stephen; Mazey, "Integrating"; Mazey, *Gender*; Rees). This approach rejects the notion of women as an "interest group" trying to influence public decisions-making from a position that is essentially outside the loop. Rather, women are seen as an integral part of the process. But the very existence and success of mainstreaming policies in a number of countries provides a good example of the way in which issues can be forced up the political agenda by interest group politics, to the extent that the entire decision-making system may come to take on some of the values that are being promoted.

### Pluralism in Action: The Environmental Movement

The environmental movement in Europe has adopted a very different strategy in its attempt to have an impact on public policy. The effects of this strategy can be seen in

the rise of Green parties in many European countries, a phenomenon discussed in Chapter 8. Green parties have tended to look quite unlike traditional political parties. Rather, they have shared many of the features of new social movements (described in the following section), having views that cut across traditional ideological lines, and members have had very ambivalent attitudes toward the need for strong party leadership. This tendency is reinforced by the fact that only one Green party has been in a position of sustained power at national level: German Greens took cabinet seats in a coalition with the Social Democrats following the 1998 election, a coalition that was sustained in office after it won a majority by the narrowest of margins in the 2002 election. With a few rare exceptions, Greens have had little real bargaining power in the formation of national governments, and the movement typically remains divided over even the merits of seeking power. The main impact of the Greens on environmental policy, therefore, has been indirect—in the "greening" of their main opponents, many of which have adopted more environmentalist policies once it became clear that Green politics could attract votes. Many European party programs have become "greener" in response to this potential challenge.

Notwithstanding the electoral role of the Green parties, there are many other active environmental groups in Europe, most of which use more direct political strategies. The Greenpeace organization, to take just one example, was formed in 1971 to oppose underground nuclear testing by (unsuccessfully in this case) attempting to sail a small ship into the nuclear test zone. Now based in Amsterdam, Greenpeace claims 2.8 million supporters worldwide in its 2004 annual report, with offices in over forty countries employing a substantial number of people (Greenpeace). Annual income net of fund-raising costs is listed in the audited accounts published in 2004 as being in excess of 120 million euros, while the organization's financial reserves amounted to 100 million euros. Since its formation, Greenpeace has engaged in a series of effective and headline-grabbing campaigns, blocking an outfall from the British nuclear reprocessing plant at Sellafield and placing Greenpeace members in rubber dinghies between whaling ships and whales in the Antarctic or in the way of ships dumping toxic wastes in the North Sea. One of its most famous campaigns, against French nuclear testing, culminated in 1985 with the sinking in New Zealand of its boat, *The Rainbow Warrior*, allegedly by the French Secret Service. Greenpeace now runs a fleet of four boats, spearheading its campaigns to put pressure on national governments, at a cost listed in its 2004 accounts as over 19 million euros a year. The most recent of these boats, the *Esperanza* relaunched in 2002, is a former Russian firefighting boat capable of withstanding heavy ice. Greenpeace is thus a very large and successful example of a classic "outsider" pressure group with a policy of "mass networking: enabling the people to act" and a view that "we cannot rely on governments, alone, to act and make change." Its philosophy is that "public opinion needs to be focused effectively if Greenpeace can direct public opinion to make a real difference" (Greenpeace).

Like Greenpeace, most other environmental groups have almost no institutionalized access to power and are forced to rely on more direct forms of pressure. When state environmental protection agencies are established, for example, prominent individuals associated with environmental causes may be selected for some role or other, but there are very few examples in Europe of environmentalist groups being given formal policymaking and implementation status, along neocorporatist lines. One reason may be that

the most successful groups, such as Greenpeace, have deliberately distanced themselves from the political establishment. Another may be that established parties and other organizations have identified the politics of the environment as something that they can profitably annex for themselves, and they are therefore unwilling to allow environmental groups to use green politics to gain any sort of foothold within established political systems. (See both Carter and Rootes for comprehensive reviews of environmental politics.)

### New Social Movements

The examples typically used to distinguish corporatist from pluralist decision-making systems tend to deal with the relations between the social partners representing organized labor and management. Major entrenched interest groups such as these are but a tiny fraction of the vast range of groups—women's and environmental groups provide only a few examples—that can be found in every European country. In particular, there is a cluster of groups and organizations, together with more loosely defined structures that we might think of as "movements," that appear to have a fair amount in common with one another. In addition to women's and environmental movements, almost all European countries now have active antiracist, antiwar, antiglobalization, anticolonialist, or pro-human rights groups, gay rights groups, animal rights and antinuclear groups, and groups promoting a range of more or less radical single-issue causes. Many of the groups share a number of features that, taken together, characterize them as what have been called "new social movements" by political scientists (Jahn; Kriesi et al.; Rucht; Schmitt-Beck). They are seen by some as "postmaterialist" or "postmodern" alternatives to traditional political parties and entrenched interest organizations.

The "membership" of a typical new social movement—though it may not be formally defined—tends to be rather fluid; people drift in and out of affiliation with a movement or cause on a rather casual basis. The "leadership"—though some of these groups are actively opposed to any notion of formal leadership—often has an intellectual lineage that can be traced to the period of student radicalism of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The views these movements represent tend to cut across traditional ideological lines. It is fair to say, however, that most of these groups can be seen as being aligned much more with the left than with the right of the traditional ideological spectrum, and that many such movements emerged as informal activist alternatives to more traditional and formal party political or trade union organizations representing the left.

Supporters of new social movements tend to strongly favor active participation and group democracy, rather than the more passive membership and hierarchical decision-making structures of a traditional political party, trade union, or interest group. Some new social movements, as we said, may even refuse to acknowledge that they have any "leadership" at all. When it comes to intervening in the political process, they tend to work outside traditional institutional channels. Demonstrations, boycotts, and other forms of direct action are preferred to lobbying, letter writing, petitions, and more conventional pressure tactics (Dalton). Direct action such as this serves a number of purposes for new social movements. It mobilizes and engages members who otherwise would be alienated from the political process; it forces new issues onto at least the media's political agenda; and it maintains the group's status as a radical outsider rather than as a co-opted part of

the traditional establishment. Indeed, while mainstream politicians fret over the decline of popular participation in politics—measuring this decline as they do by looking at steadily falling levels of turnout at local, national, and European Parliament elections—others would say that the success of antiglobalization or antiwar groups at mobilizing people for large popular demonstrations shows that political participation is as vibrant as it ever was. It is just that people, especially younger people, are finding direct participation in the activities of various new social movements to be more fulfilling personally, and see it as potentially a more effective way to make a difference politically.

One very significant technological change underpinning a growing popular participation in various types of less conventional social movements has been the explosive growth and penetration of the Internet and World Wide Web. Certainly in modern Europe it is very easy for new movements and organizations to establish a significant presence on the Web, which is growing rapidly in importance as a source of information with the advent of powerful Internet search engines. Information on almost any issue is no more than a few mouse clicks away for large numbers of Europe's citizens, especially its younger citizens, and "informator" can be found that is tailored to almost every social and political view. Email has made international person-to-person interaction cheap and effectively instantaneous. As a consequence, governments and other "official" organizations have seen their previously powerful roles as gatekeepers of information and communication greatly undermined. At the same time, forms of political organization that cut radically across traditional social and economic linkages have been greatly facilitated. All of this has had the effect of forcing people to reevaluate what they have in mind when they think of political participation, political communication, and group politics, recent changes in which have the potential to have far-reaching long-term effects. (For a widely cited, balanced, and ultimately somewhat skeptical review of this argument, see Bimber, "Internet." Bimber, *Information*, provides a book-length evaluation, though in an explicitly American context.)

For all these reasons, when all is said and done, new social movements fit more easily with a pluralist than with a corporatist view of the world of political decision making. Indeed, new social movements, particularly when they meet with some success, might even be considered as advertisements for the pluralist model, which holds the notion of an open and accessible market in political influence as one of its central normative justifications.

### → THE NEW PLURALISM? POLICY NETWORKS

Political scientists increasingly have come to see the "pure" corporatist and pluralist models as being too simplistic to handle the complex ways in which the social actors of civil society influence decision making in modern Europe. The concepts that have emerged tend to blend aspects of the entrenched integration in policy making implied by corporatism, with aspects of the informality and practical power politics implied by pluralism.

Two very important and related political developments that are leading to changes in the ways that interest groups do their business derive from the general "globalization" of economic life and the continual accumulation of functions by the European Union. Both

have the effect that key decisions are increasingly made—and thus must be influenced—at the supranational level. The European Union itself is a distinctive decision-making system, quite unlike any single national government and blending elements of pluralism and corporatism in its decision-making style. For many interest groups, it is very important to influence EU decisions, because they may weigh far more heavily on their interests than any decision taken by a national government. EU agricultural policy, for example, has a direct and vital bearing on how easy it is for every European farmer to earn a living.

One response to this development has been the growth in importance of European "peak" organizations, which reflect interests (of farmers, for example, or trade unions) at a supranational level. Because these peak organizations have direct access to EU decision-making elites, it is possible for a national interest group to bypass its national government completely and to attempt to influence EU decision making either directly or through its European peak organization. Alternatively, or indeed at the same time, a national interest group may put pressure on its national government in an attempt to influence EU policy through the government's role in the Council of Ministers. (For an analysis of the various channels open to those trying to influence EU agricultural policy, see Pappi and Henning, "Organization.")

This system of "multilevel" governance has created a complex environment for the exercise of group influence on key decisions. Many actors are trying to influence one another and are exploring different routes through a complicated system of interactions. One way of trying to make sense of such a complex system of links, whether within the EU or elsewhere, is to see them as a network. This approach has led to a distinctive way to study the paths that interest groups use to influence policy, which is to describe and analyze the entire system as a "policy network." David Knoke (p. 508) captures what most writers mean by a policy network as "a heterogeneous set of persons or organizations, linked by one or more relationships into an enduring social structure with the potential to influence public policy decisions of interest to the network's members."

The key relationships behind the idea of a policy network are those of mutual interdependence, and therefore of exchanges, between key actors in the policy-making system. These relationships are important because, as König and Bräuninger (p. 448) put it, "no one actor is capable of deciding public policies in western democracies." Since all policy influence involves interaction with others, when a public or private actor interacts over and over again with the same set of other actors, both sides steadily learn about each other and begin to develop well-defined mutual interactions. Thus, farmers' organizations these days deal repeatedly with their national Department of Agriculture; with farmers' organizations in other countries, with European "peak" organizations for farmers, and with particular offices of the European Commission. Each has information the other values. Each may be helpful to the other in some part of the process of either making or implementing policy. Thus, relationships between the various actors, including both private actors and agencies of national or supranational government, come to be conducted according to clearly understood informal rules of the game that can be as potent as formal institutions. This set of established interactions can be thought of as a policy network. (For thorough introductions to the literature on policy networks, see Thatcher, Pappi and Henning, "Policy." For a skeptical view, see Dowding.)

Policy networks differ from corporatist decision-making structures in the crucial sense that a network of relationships between key actors is not hierarchical (van Waarden). Corporatist decision structures are pyramid-shaped and are organized from the top down. Policy networks, in contrast, look like spiders' webs. The notion of a policy network might in this way seem to bridge the gap between pluralist and corporatist models of policy making. However, we still need to know which actors have the power to influence which decisions in which political arenas if we are to tell an accurate story about how any particular policy dispute is settled.

### Policy Networks in Action: Doctors

Physicians are typically organized as members of a self-governing profession. This arrangement provides an important basis for the exercise of political power on behalf of sectional interests. The key powers associated with the professional status of physicians derive from the fact that health care is an expert service, one that cannot properly be evaluated by its consumers or even by nonspecialist political elites. Thus doctors have the more or less unchallenged ability to define and defend the professional standards of medical practice and to control medical training and licensing—and hence access to the profession. This control is typically exercised by a powerful guild-like medical association to which all licensed physicians must belong. The medical association typically also plays a vital policy implementation role, besides controlling professional ethics and standards (and thus practice), through a system of peer review. Politicians can make all the policies they want on health and medicine, but they cannot implement such policies effectively without the cooperation of the medical profession, organized by the medical association. This constraint gives the medical lobby a very powerful position in the policy process.

The control of highly specialized information by the profession, and the need for the cooperation of physicians in the effective implementation of policy, form the basis of an exchange relationship between physicians and decision-making elites that can very usefully be thought of as a policy network. In practice, European medical associations are incorporated into political decision making in ways that vary somewhat from country to country. In Germany, for example, the process of making health policy has taken on a decidedly corporatist flavor since the establishment of a Concerted Action organization in 1977. This has a sixty-member council, with representatives of medical associations, hospitals, insurers, and government, that makes annual recommendations on health care spending and doctors' pay (Altenstetter; Dohler). Thus the situation was that:

Despite some attempts by governments to clip doctors' wings, the autonomy of German physicians remains unchallenged. ... On the macroeconomic level, their participation in a corporatist negotiating institution serves as a buffer against possible threats to professional autonomy, ... [facilitating] package deals between government and physicians, such as moderate fee increases in return for restricted access to medical schools. On the regional and local level the extensive self-governing authority, which is legally as well as structurally established, ... makes changes in the power structure extremely difficult to implement. (Dohler, pp. 186-88)

The situation in Sweden is rather different, despite the existence of the centralized Swedish Medical Association (SLF), which represents about 90 percent of all Swedish

physicians (Dohler, p. 193). The SLF has monopoly bargaining rights in negotiations over pay and conditions, but the effectiveness of such an apparently powerful position was undermined by the decentralization of the responsibility for health care provision to Swedish local councils (Lane and Arvidson). What the Swedish example teaches us is that a powerful and hierarchical medical association can have a major impact on national policy making at an elite level, but its ability to influence a much larger set of local policy makers may be much weaker. At the local level of politics, the electoral concerns of politicians are more likely to prevail over sectional interests, and policy makers seem less likely to be co-opted into the received wisdom of what is good and bad about medical policy.

Overall, however, the Swedish case seems to be the exception to the European norm. When health policy is made at the national level, medical associations in Europe appear to be able to exploit with potent effect their ability to monopolize the market in expertise—a situation also found in the United States, given the political role of the American Medical Association. And the exercise of this monopoly inevitably gives medical associations both control over vital information and a key role in the implementation, as well as the making, of health care policy. This creates the type of mutual interdependency between decision makers and interest organizations that can fruitfully be seen as a policy network. (For an overview of the politics of health in Europe, see Freeman.)

### Policy Networks in Action: Farmers

There is a strong tradition in Europe for farmers' groups to be very well integrated into the political system, wielding disproportionately more influence over policy makers than many other types of economic actor—such as the consumers of farm products, for example, or the unemployed. A succession of wars in Europe has led governments to cultivate indigenous food producers very carefully and set up a policy-making regime based on assumptions of mutual interdependence between decision makers and interest groups—in other words, to set up a policy network. As a result, there has been a long tradition of farm support programs, typically involving government intervention in agricultural markets at guaranteed prices, to protect the interests of farmers. For those countries in what has become the European Union (EU), this tradition was enshrined in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), with its system of intervention prices and consequent "mountains" of stored butter or grain and "lakes" of surplus wine or milk. Subsequent payoffs for farmers have been immense (see Chapter 5).

The very generous terms of the CAP were a testimony to the key role of the farmers' lobby in each of the member states over much of the postwar era. For a long time the CAP was perhaps the most important and expensive feature of EU economic policy, but its importance began to decline during the 1990s, a process that culminated in radical reforms of the CAP in 2003 and 2004. The reforms replaced the long-standing policy of price supports for agricultural produce with what was intended to be more transparent direct payments to farmers on specified public policy grounds. The reforms arose as a combined result of the enlargement of the EU to the east and ongoing north-south negotiations on world trade under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (WTO). In particular the enlargement of the EU brought in a number of eastern European countries

with very substantial farming sectors. In almost all eastern European EU members, the proportion of the workforce engaged in agriculture far exceeded that of the western European member states. A total of 4 million additional farmers joined the 7 million already in the EU, and 38 million hectares (94 million acres) were added to the existing 130 million hectares (321 million acres) of land under agricultural production (europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/publi/enlarge/text\_en.pdf). Funding to the states under the CAP began to flow in October 2004, and it was widely perceived that the CAP in particular and EU finances more generally would simply have collapsed under the weight of its previous generous terms. The combined effect of the WTO negotiations and the economic and political realities of enlargement, therefore, meant that western European farmers' groups found their traditional ability to dictate the terms of agricultural policy significantly undermined.

Although the situation may thus change in the future, it is probably fair to say, looking back, that the prominence of the CAP from the early days of European integration has meant that agricultural policy making was one of the first policy arenas to involve a very explicit and effective policy network that operated at a supranational level. Farmers' organizations quickly learned that they needed to pile on the pressure in Brussels as well as in their national capitals, and they quickly adapted to do so. This tactic was made easier because the power of the farmers' lobby is usually exercised, even in pluralist systems such as Britain's, in a very institutionalized way. Farmers' organizations, such as the British National Farmers' Union, have traditionally had consultative status with the Ministries of Agriculture on many matters. Farmers and civil servants have tended to settle matters themselves and to exclude other interest groups if at all possible (Smith, p. 313). It has been quite common, furthermore, for farmers' groups to be involved in policy implementation, especially in relation to the distribution among individual farmers of the official national and regional production quotas for particular agricultural commodities. Above-market intervention prices typically lead to such quotas being introduced to avoid massive overproduction.

The political clout of farmers is not confined to the corridors of power, however, and farmers' groups have a long tradition of direct action, including large-scale demonstrations and blockades. An example can be found in skirmishes on the fringes of the 1999 "beef war" between Britain and France, provoked by France's continued refusal to import British beef after an international team of vets had decided that Britain's epidemic of "mad cow" disease was largely under control. Threats of reciprocal measures against French beef in Britain provoked a brief blockade of English Channel ports by tractor-driving French farmers. This was the latest in a series of disputes between Britain and France in which policy disagreements between politicians had quickly filtered down to local farmers' organizations and French farmers had taken direct action on the streets in support of policy objectives shared with the French decision-making elite.

France and Britain are by no means unique. The access of farmers' groups to policy-making elites is very good indeed in many European countries. This close cooperation between the farmers and the civil service might on the face of it look almost corporatist. However, the lack of any formal role in the political equation for any other "social partner" identifies this type of decision-making arrangement as being more like a closed policy network than an example of full-fledged corporatism.

## → CONCLUSION

Most recent developments in both the theory and the empirical analysis of interest representation imply that we are asking the wrong question if we ask whether a particular political system as a whole is characterized by corporatist or pluralist policy making. Political scientists these days concentrate much more on policy making within particular sectors. Corporatists see this as "sectoral" or "ineso" corporatism. Pluralists make a distinction between sectors characterized by particular "policy networks," which include some groups and exclude others, and sectors in which there is a more traditionally free-for-all pluralist competition between groups.

Even in a country such as Austria, the "model-generator" that all commentators agree has provided the clearest example of corporatist decision making in modern Europe, corporatism is concerned mainly with economic policy, especially with prices and income policy. A great many groups that represent important political interests have nothing to do with corporatist decision making. At the other end of the scale—even in Britain, cited by most as having a very clear-cut pluralist decision-making regime—there is an officially established state church, there are self-governing professions in the key areas of law and medicine, there is very close interaction between farmers' groups and the relevant government department, and there has been a major experiment with "contracts" between the social partners over prices and incomes.

The parallel development of the pluralist notion of a policy network and the notion of sectoral corporatism highlights the fact that as each approach has come to terms with the other's arguments, the two approaches have grown together. Nonetheless, given the vital importance of economic policy making and the role of employers and trade unions in this, it does still make some sense to classify countries by the extent to which the economic policy arena, at least, is characterized by corporatist or pluralist institutions. In some countries, the ones that we might think of as being more corporatist, a small number of powerful, authoritative, and centralized "peak" organizations monopolize the legitimate right to participate in the making and implementing of economic policy. In other countries, which we might think of as being more pluralist, trade union and employers' federations may well get their voices heard, but only if they make an explicit and often divisive political effort to do so. And these groups rarely participate in policy implementation.

In all countries, however, the only recourse for groups outside the political establishment—inevitably, the vast majority of groups anywhere—is the traditional portfolio of techniques that characterize pressure politics. In most European countries, we can find a range of groups sharing features of organization, membership, and strategy that identify them as new social movements. These groups provide a medium of interest representation quite distinct from traditional parties, unions, and interest organizations, and they do so in a way that has been significantly enhanced by the development of the Internet and the World Wide Web. In representing interests and opinions in this way, such groups are providing an alternative medium for political participation by citizens and in a sense are counterbalancing the long-term trend for declining citizen participation in more traditional forms of public decision making.

As the discussions in this chapter reveal, there have probably been more "mainstream" intellectual fashions and trends involved in the analysis of politics outside parliament than in any of the other subjects covered in this book. Perhaps this is because it is in

this particular aspect of politics that we can see most clearly the impact of some of the major long-term trends that either have affected, or surely will affect in the future, the more general processes of representative government in modern Europe. We see a process of European integration that is transferring to the supranational level powers that used to be the cherished prerogatives of national governments. We see the rapid collapse of the former Soviet bloc and the radical political transformation of many eastern European countries. Almost inconceivably when viewed from the perspective of 1985 (and it must be said humbling for political scientists who are honest with themselves), a significant number of these countries are now members of the European Union—so that these supranational policy-making powers are now exercised in a large and complex environment. We see a process of globalization, associated with technological developments in information and communications technology, that is also likely to have a fundamental impact on the ways in which people try to influence political outcomes. In one sense governments have never before had so much technology at their disposal to gather, to process, and to act on information about their citizens, realizing the fears expressed in George Orwell's classic *1984*. In another sense, those same citizens have never before had so much technology at their disposal to gather their own information and to communicate and make common cause with like-minded others whom they have never met, others who might live in many different parts of the world. It is a plain fact that political campaigning and pressure group activity in most modern state these days make immense use of the Internet and the World Wide Web. We do not yet know how much and what kind of difference all of this will really make. But we should not be surprised to find that these differences are likely to be felt, in the first instance, in how people conduct politics outside parliament.

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