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## Chapter 6

### **Multiple Arenas, Multiple Populations: Counting Organized Interests in Scottish Public Policy**

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The basic premise of this book is that counting populations of organized interests is a worthwhile activity. The opening chapter – not to mention many of the contributions – provides numerous persuasive reasons. In this chapter, all this is taken for granted, and it pursues some of the challenges inherent in actually counting populations. It starts with what seems at face value to be a single perfectly reasonable and achievable aspiration with data on organised interest populations – namely, to be able to say something authoritative about the basic size and composition of the politically active organized interest system. This is a deceptively difficult task.

As observed in Chapter 1, perhaps the core reason for concerning ourselves with counting organized interest populations is to draw conclusions about the size and diversity of the system. This prompts questions such as: How large is the organized interest ‘system’? Are business interests numerically dominant participants in public policy? How important are citizen groups in the organized interest ‘system’? No doubt, these are just the types of aims or outcomes that scholars frequently place high on their research applications. And, as deliverables, they don’t seem too lofty. In fact, one might expect them to be within the grasp of the average researcher endowed with sufficient time and resources. But, as will become evident, such simple aims are easily thwarted – not so much because the data are harder to collect than in other areas of the social sciences (although this is an issue), but because the underlying phenomenon – an organized interest *population* – itself is slippery.

This chapter recounts efforts to achieve this (apparently) simple research ambition outcome with respect to the level of organized interest activity in consultations about Scottish public policy. It utilizes several related data sets generated on organized interests in Scottish public policy as a context to explore these broader issues. Not only are the actual data presented, but the chapter takes some time to retrace and make explicit the decisions made about what to count and why. The intention is to provoke questions about counting populations and interpreting findings. The purpose of this chapter is neither to offer a straitjacket for future practice nor to dissuade those who might be considering inserting the tools in their own research application. Rather, the intention is to raise important issues concerning the choices to be made about collecting data and the implications these have for how we conceive of organized interest populations.

Addressing this question means in part following the lead of Robert Salisbury, who is perhaps the most important source for those seeking some precision on what sorts of pressure participants are empirically present in different policy arenas. Salisbury (1984) is widely cited on the strength

of one innovative concept: 'institutions'. This chapter argues that equally important, yet mostly neglected, is his stress on the 'diverse array' of pressure participants and his proposition that the proportions of different types of participants will vary across different policy arenas.

### **More than a handful?**

The aspiration to construct an *authoritative* account of systems of organized interests is not new. James Q. Wilson, framed in the US context, provides a good sense of the general problem:

when I was an undergraduate taking my first course in American government, answering an exam question about interest representation was easy: all you had to do was remember seven names – the Chamber of Commerce, The National Association of Manufacturers, the AFK, the CIO, the Farm Bureau Federation, the American Legion, and the American Medical Association. Although none of these has disappeared, today no one would take you seriously if you tried to understand the exercise of influence with reference to seven, or even seventy, groups. (1995, p. xx)

Few if any would quarrel with this sentiment, regardless of national system. It is not hard to list out the 'key players' in any given policy area. And, most of these players – like those on Wilson's list – would likely fit the description of an interest group. But few people would accept such a list as a satisfactory summary population or map of the organized interest system.

It is easy to point out the unsatisfactory nature of any list such as that produced by Wilson in his undergraduate essays. The harder question is: Where do we place the boundary around a more realistic (and expanded) population? At least two obvious issues emerge. Firstly, if listing off a handful of national, large, longstanding, membership-based, and politically dedicated interest group organizations, is insufficient, then what? Do we satisfy ourselves with a longer list of the same *type* of interest-group organisations? Or do we cast a broader net? If we look at broad interest representation, then surely Salisbury (1984) is right to suggest that 'institutions', and not simply interest groups, will be important players. A second, and related, issue is how might we detect the existence of such an *organized interest* population? Where do we look? We might utilize directories and such like to catalog systematically groups that are in existence at any one time? Or we could look at policy engagement by organizations in specific policy arenas? Is the aspiration to list those organizations 'ever ready' to engage in policy issues generally? Or do we accept that the population concept is most useful when pegged to specific policy arenas (or even issues)?

There is no right or wrong answer to such questions; the point is that choices have consequences. As discussed in Chapter 1, two broad approaches are evident. Some studies use directories and the like to identify a population: if an organisation is in the directory, then it is in the population. Perhaps the most commonly used directories of this type is *Washington Representatives* and the *Encyclopaedia of Associations*, both covering the US. The alternative is to track organizations as they actually *engage* in some policy-related activity: if an organization is active (e.g., registered to lobby), then it is part of the population. The most used approach has been to examine lobby-registration records from the US (both Washington and the states). Regardless of approach, for those of us engaged in counting populations, decisions need to be made.

This chapter starts by saying that in Scottish public policy, there are more than a handful of active interest groups. Students of Scottish politics have tended to adopt the tradition noted by Wilson: they list a few large interest groups, often including the Scottish Law Society, the Scottish British Medical Association (BMA), the Scottish Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the National Farmers Union of Scotland, the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, and the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations. But, as Wilson suggests, this shorthand seems now too simplistic. The challenge is to do better. Of course, the population of organized interests or pressure participants is large. With some confidence it can be said that it is larger than it used to be – and surely bigger than the lists in undergraduate texts. But how large? A directory of groups or associations for Scotland might have been helpful, but none exists (although it does for the UK; see Chapter 4). So, the only means of constructing a map of the organized interest population in Scotland is to utilize public policy sources and capture groups engaged in a form of political action. In this case, the decision was made to count *policy-active* organisations. Since the cast of the policy-active is far broader than strictly defined interest groups, the population that emerged can be more accurately labeled ‘pressure participants’. Of course, this approach also necessitates a decision concerning the arena(s) where policy participation is to be observed and registered.

### **In search of an authoritative system account**

If nothing else, counting populations of organized interests or pressure participants in a national or subnational setting ought to be able to produce an authoritative map of that system. Studies utilizing directories can also claim to provide just that, but the directories are usually decoupled from any specific policy arena: editors make a list of whom they deem to be in existence and (in addition, in some cases) policy-relevant. They are deemed ‘policy-relevant’ in a general sense, which makes any discussion of which policy arena they are active in redundant. But when one moves to *directly* counting policy engagement, the question arises of which arena to count.

As a scholarly enterprise, counting populations of organized interests is a resource-intensive activity. Moreover, the publication payoffs flow slowly, and the upfront investment is high. Thus, decisions about what to count and which sources to utilize are not insignificant concerns. It is understandably rare for the organized interest scholar to compare multiple arenas in the same polity. One obvious consequence is that results for a single arena are used to generalize to the broader polity. For instance, the Washington lobbying population can easily become the ‘US group population’. But what if the shape of the population differs across arenas? What are we to make of this, and how do we choose which arena to map?

In his influential article, Salisbury (1984) argued that group scholars had tended to implicitly assume that interest representation would occur *mostly* through the activities of membership-based organisations, through interest groups. He was concerned that this emphasis had led scholars to ignore the diversity of the system of organized interests. Much as Wilson explained, the ‘old-school’ view was that populations of organized interests were populations of interest groups. Salisbury argued, ‘The American political universe, in fact, contains a considerably more diverse array of actors than these conventional headings suggest’. The omissions he had in mind were ‘individual corporations, state and local governments, universities, think tanks, and most other *institutions* of the private sector’ (1984, p. 64). He also mentioned elected officials, such as

members of Congress. In making this argument, he was not claiming that interest groups were not numerically dominant in *all* arenas, just that they were not dominant in populations of organized interests engaging in public policy work (Salisbury himself eschews the term ‘lobbying’).

While Salisbury’s 1984 article may be widely quoted for its memorable finding that institutions dominate Washington lobbying circles (and interest representation), his broader argument was that the mix of institutions and interest groups – the *complexion* of the population – varied across policy arenas within the US. He found that while interest groups constituted a fraction of the population as measured by *Washington Representatives*, they were a more dominant presence in congressional hearings and in media coverage. Put another way, institutions dominated the broad population of organized interests engaged ‘somewhere’ in policy work (as captured by *Washington Representatives*), but they became less prominent in *specific* arenas. His analysis of data from the *Washington Representatives* directory suggests that ‘individual membership groups [interest groups] constitute only one-sixth of the community of agriculture interests...in Washington’ (Salisbury 1984, p. 74): institutions dominate, in particular individual businesses. Yet his analysis of congressional hearings and then of national media coverage revealed a different pattern: groups became more numerically dominant in these arenas.

How can this be interpreted? Salisbury suggests, from a demand-side view, that congressional hearings and the media are ‘more public and visible arenas’ which require the prominent role of interest groups given their *legitimizing* capacity. He also suggests that, from the supply-side, institutions are more likely to be interested in ‘quite small items of no interest to most groups...or the general public’ and ‘few of them [these issues] may have attracted the attention of the *New York Times* or congressional committee hearings’ (1984, p. 75)<sup>1</sup>. Whatever the rationale, the finding has implications for the selection of populations to count and the interpretation of the data that are produced. Indirectly, Salisbury highlights the vexing issue of which arena within a single given polity one ought to count?

This research takes up Salisbury’s often overlooked observation that counting populations in different arenas of US political activity (in his case congressional and media arenas) nurture *different* populations of active organizations. It asks how we might utilize this in planning and executing population studies, and it explores implications in considering how to construct an account for Scotland.

### **Choosing a (Scottish) policy arena**

The decision in respect of Scotland started with a basic choice about data source. As described above, with no authoritative directory to utilize, there was no convenient alternative to counting the policy activity of organizations. The question then arose of which public policy activity to count.

When it comes to mapping organized interests as they actually mobilize in Scottish policy contexts, there are several alternative relevant arenas. The most obvious ones, where data are available in one form or another, are outlined in Table 6.1. For our purposes – mapping the incidence of mobilisation by organized interests – it matters only that the broader community of organized interests *does* see these as important arenas and access points to engage in public

policy. The question as to whether their activity in these arenas is actually influential and impacts policy outcomes is not strictly relevant here.

<b>Arena</b>	<b>Policy activity/institution</b>	<b>Details</b>
Administrative	Scottish government stakeholder groups	Government establishes routinized engagement with organized interests
Administrative	Scottish government consultations	Government seeks 'open' input on established policy questions
Legislative	Scottish Parliament committee hearings	Parliament seeks open input on issues of interest and proposed bills
Media	Scottish media	Media outlets provide reportage on policy issues

These alternatives *are* broadly relevant to most Western democracies. Yet, over time, specific national scholarly traditions and conventions emerge and tend to dominate. US practice, which has a comparatively long tradition of counting populations, provides a useful illustration. When policy activity data are utilized, the orthodox US tradition has been to examine the mobilization of groups in the legislative arena: whether through evidence to congressional committees or via congressional lobby registers (see as prominent examples Gray and Lowery 1996/2000; Berry 1999; Baumgartner and Leech 2001). Large mapping studies of the bureaucratic arena are rare even though there is some evidence that US groups may see the bureaucratic arena as just as important as (or more important than) the legislative arena (but see, e.g., Yackee and Yackee 2006). In this regard Salisbury (1990, his table 6.2) lists lobbyists' most frequent tasks as 'maintaining relations with government' (3.8%), 'informal contact with officials' (3.7%), 'monitoring proposed changes in rules and laws' (3.7%), and providing 'information to officials' (3.5%), but has 'testifying' to congress (2.7%) lower. Two decades on there is still a tendency to privilege the legislative arena when compiling population data. Traditions combine with data availability to shape where scholars focus their energy.

Traditions, where possible, ought to be made explicit.<sup>2</sup> That being said, many non-US scholars would relish a situation where they could utilize established sources with the confidence that little opposition over their 'choice' would result. Yet, following Salisbury, the message here is that it may be worth pausing intermittently to ask whether alternatives are worthy of exploration, if only to reaffirm the ongoing value of the tradition.

### **Forging a (Scottish) research tradition?**

The absence of any extensive population-based work on groups or organized interests in Scotland – or British political science generally – means that students of public policy need to make some basic choices<sup>3</sup>. It is, therefore, important to be explicit in offering up rationales for choices.

The *initial* decision in this project was to map *an* administrative/bureaucratic process with external participation. The primary data set here maps the mobilization of organized interests in the consultative process over a 25-year period utilizing government records (including Scottish Office records pre-devolution and Scottish Executive post-devolution). What was the justification? There are good reasons why an *initial* focus on the bureaucratic arena is justified in Scotland. Jordan and Maloney explain that ‘the bureaucratic arena will almost always hold more appeal for groups in a country like Britain, characterized by a highly centralized political system with an executive-dominated Parliament’ (2001, p. 44). Apart from the fact that records of organizations responding to consultations were available to the research team,<sup>4</sup> government-launched consultation exercises were chosen specifically because there is a UK tradition of civil servants consulting with organized interests at all stages of the policy process (from agenda setting to implementation). While data have not previously been collected and analysed systematically, it has been long asserted that the ‘consultative’ system involving organized interests and the bureaucracy (1) is important alongside the parliamentary (McKenzie 1958; Rose 1984), (2) constitutes the British (and Scottish) ‘policy style’ (Richardson and Jordan 1979; Jordan and Richardson 1987; Cairney 2008), and (3) is the ‘orthodox’ UK public policy approach (Grant 2001). Others have highlighted the importance of consultations as core ‘policy work’ among UK civil servants (Page 2003; Page and Jenkins 2005).

Of course, there is a healthy level of scholarly caution at accepting the policy importance of consultation exercises (see, e.g., Cook 2002; Wilkinson 2004). Moreover, the use of lists deriving from these government consultations is not unanimously accepted (see Cavanagh *et al.* 1995; but also Jordan *et al.* 1994; Jordan and Maloney 1995). The core concern is that using invitation lists serves as an indicator of access, which is relatively easy to achieve, but not of influence. The research reported here uses lists of respondents (not simply those groups invited to participate in a consultation) which measure actual group policy mobilization<sup>5</sup>. As such, we count those groups that are *mobilized to act* when offered access. No assertion is made that access equates to influence.

In summary, apart from data availability considerations, the choice to pursue consultations as the initial place to invest resources in mapping the Scottish ‘organized interest system’ was made because (1) the bureaucratic arena is likely to be *a* main focus for public policy activity in Scotland; (2) consultations are launched on most issues of Scottish public policy, which makes them a good basis for generalising about policy life (insofar as this can be achieved at all);<sup>6</sup> and (3) they are very open in terms of access, which means that they catch the broadest population of organisations that are both organizationally alive and in some way engaged in public policy. These are positives from a research-design perspective. Clearly, if the question were about identifying the *most influential* or *key* actors, then a data source that was very open in relation to access would not be as helpful. It is horses for courses. Given the research aims, it matters only that organized interests can and do readily utilize consultations as an avenue through which to engage in Scottish public policy.

What is the shape of the Scottish map of ‘organized interests’ as captured by engagement in public policy consultations? Table 6.2 reports the types of participants engaged in consultations using pooled data for 1982-2007. It reports both overall activity (allowing multiple counts of

each organization) and the number of discrete participants (single counts, the usual metric deployed in mapping studies). The data are coded in a variety of (more or less detailed) ways, but here the broad coding scheme adopted by Baumgartner and Leech (2001) is utilized. The table shows that ‘Government’ and ‘Public institutions’ constitute the majority of overall activity. When combined with ‘Businesses’, these three categories map (broadly) onto Salisbury’s usage of the term ‘institution’. In the Scottish consultations data, institutions so defined account for almost 70 percent of all actors active at least once in this 25-year period. This suggests that Salisbury’s finding of institutional dominance in the US holds for Scotland, or at least for the administrative arena (more on this below).

Type of actor	Actors		Activity		Activity ratio (activity/actors)
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	
Public institutions <sup>b</sup>	5,367	29.1	19,575	21.1	3.6
Nonprofits and citizen groups	3,850	20.9	14,904	16.0	3.9
Businesses	3,748	20.3	7,032	7.6	1.9
Government <sup>c</sup>	2,590	14.0	32,016	34.5	12.4
Trade associations <sup>d</sup>	1,116	6.0	5,819	6.3	5.2
Professional associations	1,026	5.6	7,721	8.3	7.5
Unions	73	0.4	845	0.9	11.6
Other	686	3.7	4,974 <sup>e</sup>	5.4	7.3
Total	18,456	100.0	92,886	100.0	5.0

<sup>a</sup> Excluding individual citizens, who were all coded as a single actor.

<sup>b</sup> This category includes the operational elements of government, such as schools and hospitals.

<sup>c</sup> This category includes central government departments, local authorities, Parliament, and nondepartmental public bodies.

<sup>d</sup> This category includes all business associations.

<sup>e</sup> This figure includes anonymous responses (which could be organisations or individuals) and politicians.

The ‘Government’ activity mapped was overwhelmingly dominated by local authorities. In fact, a list of the most frequent actors reveals local authorities as constituting the entire top 20.<sup>7</sup> In relation to ‘Public institutions’ the dominant actors are schools, hospital boards, and the like. This map may come as something of a surprise to political scientists, but civil servants with whom it was discussed seemed to anticipate it. This underlines the value of confronting our scholarly assumptions with empirical maps. The common currency of the profession might just be wrong.



### Comparing arenas

As discussed above, the primary data set counted the mobilization of organized interests in governmental consultation processes. But, following Salisbury, there was the nagging question as to whether this picture might look different in other arenas. To this end, other data sets were developed to cover the legislative and media arenas (summarized in Table 6.3). This helped establish the consequences of adopting any particular measure in the future.

<b>Arena</b>	<b>Policy activity/institution</b>	<b>Data set</b>
<i>Primary data set</i> Administrative	Scottish government consultations	Collected for all issues (1982-2007)
<i>Additional data sets</i> Administrative	Scottish government stakeholder groups	Collected for agriculture, environment and rural affairs, and transport (as at 2009)
Legislative	Scottish Parliament committee hearings	Scottish Parliament committee data (1999-2007)
Media	Scottish media	Collected for agriculture, transport, education, and health policy (January to April 2006)

An obvious alternative for a primary data set is the population of organized interests /pressure participants engaged in the legislative arena. In the US, there is a long tradition of examining the population of interests giving evidence to congressional committees. In contrast, in the UK political system, where the executive can use its whipped majority in the House of Commons to ensure safe passage of bills, parliamentary committees are generally viewed as marginal. In fact, we could find almost no empirical work on committees at Westminster (but see Jordan *et al.* 1984; Marsh 1986). The Scottish case, however, provides a rationale for considering that committee evidence giving might be an important arena, and that populations of organized interests in that arena might be worth counting. After devolution in 1999, the new Scottish Parliament was designed in such a way as to – at least on paper – better utilize committees. Scottish committees combine legislative work with inquiries, and they have the power to initiate bills. Thus, in principle they have considerable powers; in fact, they are considered to have ‘high’ strength on existing comparative measures of committee strength (see Cairney 2006, p. 183).

To quantify participation in parliamentary committee work in the legislative process, a data set was created based upon the activities of the committees of the Scottish Parliament in Sessions One (1999-2003) and Two (2003-2007). The data set collated information from the Scottish Parliament’s Web site,<sup>8</sup> including the Official Report, minutes of proceedings, and information on written and oral evidence (including digital copies or transcripts of evidence where possible). The data cover all of the Parliament’s subject committees, although several of the mandatory Committees were excluded from the analysis due to the internal nature of their remit.<sup>9</sup> The data

set includes details of the individual organizations giving evidence and the type of evidence given (oral or written).

Table 6.4 compares the population of organizations giving evidence (orally and written) with those engaging in Government consultations over the same time period (1999-2007).<sup>10</sup> Results for oral and written evidence are presented separately because limited time is provided for oral evidence, which is allowed only upon invitation of the committee (written evidence may be provided unsolicited). Thus, oral evidence might be seen to serve as somewhat of a proxy for those organized interests that are deemed most crucial to the issue at hand (see the similar discussion for the US congressional case in Berry 1999). Further, in Salisbury's terms, oral evidence giving could be considered a more 'public arena' than written evidence giving and engagement in government consultations. By this logic, public attention is more likely to be attracted to oral evidence, as compared to written submissions.

	Consultations		Parliamentary committee evidence			
			Written		Oral	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Public institutions <sup>a</sup>	3,176	27.3	344	13.1	229	14.2
Nonprofits and citizen groups	2,755	23.7	824	31.3	451	28.0
Businesses	2,201	18.9	423	16.1	177	11.0
Government <sup>b</sup>	1,741	15.0	494	18.8	402	25.0
Trade associations <sup>c</sup>	767	6.6	196	7.4	118	7.3
Professional associations	607	5.2	206	7.8	119	7.4
Unions	44	0.4	27	1.0	26	1.6
Other <sup>d</sup>	353	3.0	117	4.4	89	5.5
Total	11,644	100.0	2,631	100.0	1,611	100.0

<sup>a</sup> This category includes the operational elements of government, such as schools and hospitals.

<sup>b</sup> This category includes central government departments, local authorities, Parliament, and nondepartmental public bodies.

<sup>c</sup> This category includes all business associations.

<sup>d</sup> This category includes anonymous responses (which could be organisations or individuals) and politicians.

Reading Table 6.4 from left to right, the most notable change in composition is an increase of government itself (broadly conceived) as a contributor of oral evidence to committees. This is perhaps best explained by the fact that it is standard practice for committees to call the minister and civil servants in the team responsible for bill preparation to give oral evidence at the opening and closing of evidence taking in bill-related hearings.<sup>11</sup> It is also usual for these actors to

provide written evidence to such hearings. Business and public institutions are less active in both written and oral evidence giving. Salisbury (1984) expected institutions to be less prominent in policy arenas where the focus was on legitimating (publicly) a policy. Notwithstanding the point about the custom of government evidence giving to parliamentary committees, we found that the proportion of the population accounted for by interest groups was larger in the legislative arena. And, as Berry (1999) found for the US congress, among groups the largest rise was in citizen groups. It is not as overwhelming an upswing in group activity as Salisbury noted for the US, but (with the exception of government) it does broadly track his finding of a drop in the dominance of institutions as arenas become more public.

To the above, data from two additional arenas have been added. First, a different (less accessible) bureaucratic/administrative arena was covered, namely the population of organized interests participating in government-established stakeholder groups or forums. The limits on what information could be extracted from government by a Freedom of Information request mean that these data are available only for a narrow sliver of activity: the rural affairs and environment (incorporating agriculture) and the transport policy areas.<sup>12</sup> The raw data consisted of a list of participants in 15 stakeholder or advisory groups in the transport policy area and 19 in the rural affairs and environment area. The choice of policy area might be expected to influence the populations mapped; for instance, it is not unreasonable to anticipate that citizen or professional groups might be more dominant in a nonindustry sector (say health or education). But that research has yet to be done.

Finally, we also generated population data based on the profile of policy actors in the Scottish media. The media data were based on a search of the *Scotsman* and *Scotland on Sunday* newspapers and covered the period from January 2006 to April 2006.<sup>13</sup> The decision to concentrate on this narrow window was purely pragmatic: it was simply too time-consuming to search more broadly.

As far as possible, we followed the approach used by Salisbury (1984), but it has to be said that Salisbury is not entirely clear in outlining his counting method. An organized interest was recorded as ‘appearing’ in the media arena when it was attributed a set of interests or views, either directly (by way of quotation) or indirectly (by way of attribution). Thus organizations were not counted if they were simply mentioned by way of incidental background in reportage. After the search was conducted as described and duplicates and articles unrelated to the search had been removed, 177 articles were identified. In all, 448 individual organizations/participants were mentioned in the relevant articles sampled. Of these, 237 are unique. It is worth noting that 69 of these actors did not appear in either the parliamentary or the consultation data – mostly because they were individuals contacted by the media for expert comment. Table 6.5 puts these two additional data sets alongside the data sets described above. To focus more closely on Salisbury’s point about the balance of institutions to groups, rows are ordered so that ‘institutions’ are at the top and interest groups at the bottom.<sup>14</sup> So what does the comparison reveal?

In principle, media coverage ought to be the most public of arenas. Journalists seeking to cover a policy story will seek out authoritative actors and try to balance coverage by using input from two contending sides (see Woolley 2000 for a discussion of using media data in politics). The

data in table 6.5 shows the ‘Other’ category is almost one third of the media-based population. This category includes elected politicians, mostly Scottish ministers and members of the Scottish Parliament. Government agencies – typically ‘departmental spokespersons’ – are also part of the population and serve the same narrative function as politicians in media coverage. Apart from this set of actors, citizen groups and business associations dominate: in fact, with elected politicians removed, interest groups make up more than 50 percent of the population. To give an idea of the dominance by individual groups; in the 80 media articles on agriculture the National Farmers Union of Scotland – appeared 36 times (even more often than the Minister for Agriculture). To summarize, analysis of media data generates a population of interest groups and politicians. It is perhaps closest to the ‘group’ population imagined in Wilson’s undergraduate essays and reproduced as lists of ‘usual suspects’ in textbooks on Scottish politics: for example, National Farmers Union of Scotland, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (Scotland), the Tenant Farmers Association of Scotland, the Scottish Rural Property Business Association, and the Scottish Crofting Foundation.

At the other end of the spectrum, stakeholder groups are dominated by the same interest groups, but with politicians replaced by actors within government. The ‘government’ in stakeholder groups comprises almost exclusively nondepartmental public bodies, such as Historic Scotland, the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, and Scottish Enterprise, and local authorities. Given that the emphasis of stakeholder groups is usually on legitimating policy among key players at the policy-formulation stage, while also solving implementation problems, the focus is understandably on membership groups and those institutions (mostly governmental) with a statutory interest in the policy area. Just as the media is keen to capture the views of groups claiming to represent sets of interests, government is interested in having such groups sitting on stakeholder forums. Thus, individual companies and public institutions (like school boards, individual universities, or hospitals) are largely unsuitable parties to such forums.

A direct comparison with Salisbury’s work is not easy because his data sources did not include politicians or government departments: as is clear, in the Scottish case – almost regardless of arena – the population is heavily influenced by such actors. Thus, it is hard to critically appraise his specific argument that the more public and visible arenas will foster populations with relatively low numbers of institutions.<sup>15</sup> But if we were to remove government and public institutions from the data set, in which case it would better resemble Salisbury’s populations, we would find that institutions (now simply businesses) would be most heavily represented in the organized interest populations in consultations and written evidence to Parliament and almost absent from populations in the media and stakeholder arenas. For the present purpose, however, we simply focus on his broader point that populations vary across arenas.

Following Salisbury’s lead, this rough-and-ready comparison of arenas demonstrates that the choice of lens through which to view organized interest populations is crucial to what one finds. If one accepts the general proposition that there is value in looking at *actual* policy mobilisation when mapping organized pressure participant (or even interest group) populations, this finding is no doubt interesting, but at the same time a little worrying. A viable mapping literature needs to discuss the relative value of mapping these arenas, and become confident in both the choices and their implications.

	Media ( <i>The Scotsman</i> and <i>Scotland on Sunday</i> , 2006)		Parliamentary committee evidence (1999-2007)				Consultations (1999-2007)		Stakeholder groups (agriculture & transport)	
			Oral		Written					
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Public institutions <sup>a</sup>	22	9.3	229	14.2	344	13.1	3,176	27.3	1	0.9
Government <sup>b</sup>	32	13.5	402	25.0	494	18.8	1,741	15.0	56	49.6
Businesses	20	8.4	177	11.0	423	16.1	2,201	18.9	9	8.0
Nonprofits and citizen groups	37	15.6	451	28.0	824	31.3	2,755	23.7	18	15.9
Trade associations <sup>c</sup>	26	11.0	118	7.3	196	7.4	767	6.6	23	20.4
Professional associations	11	4.6	119	7.4	206	7.8	607	5.2	5	4.4
Unions	6	2.5	26	1.6	27	1.0	44	0.4	1	0.9
Other <sup>d</sup>	83	35.0	89	5.5	117	4.4	353	3.0	-	-
Total	237	100.0	1,611	100.0	2,631	100.0	11,644	100.0	113	100.0

<sup>a</sup> This category includes the operational elements of government, such as schools and hospitals.

<sup>b</sup> This category includes central government departments, local authorities, Parliament, and nondepartmental public bodies.

<sup>c</sup> This category includes all business associations.

<sup>d</sup> This category includes anonymous responses (which could be organisations or individuals) and politicians.

### Overlapping populations

An obvious question is to what extent these arena-specific populations overlap. This matters because it goes to whether it is in fact sensible, empirically, to talk of a given political system having an organized interest system or population. Put another way, if one wants to talk in terms of a general population separate from a specific arena, it helps to qualify what type of population is actually engaged in a 'general' manner across arenas. We found no work comparing actual mobilization data across arenas. But previous work comparing database sources has consistently found low levels of overlap. Work on US nonprofit data comparing IRS, state incorporation, and telephone listings found that almost three quarters of all entries were found in only one database (Grønbjerg 2002). Work on the sources used to map the Brussels lobbying community found similarly low levels of overlap (Berkhout and Lowery 2008). On this basis, this research did not expect 100 percent overlap; nonetheless 'commonsense' expectations anticipated a significant core of organized interests active across these arenas.

Clearly the data to hand are not similarly comprehensive across all arenas. The comprehensive nature of the parliamentary and consultations data means a direct comparison is possible and reasonable. Both arenas engage in a similarly full cross-section of public policy issues and they are equally open in relation to access. Simply aggregating data on both arenas generates a population of 14,745 organisations. The combined population for parliament and consultations together, after removing duplicates, totals 12,844 organisations. Comparing the two figures gives a ratio of 'total' to 'cleaned' data of 0.87; this hints that the overlap between data sets is low.

Table 6.6 sets out the relationship between the populations of organized interests across the two arenas (legislative and administrative) for the same time period (1999-2007). Of the combined population of organized interests, 76 percent were active only in the administrative arena and 9 percent in the legislative arena only. Given the larger overall population engaged in consultations, this difference in magnitude is to be expected. What is perhaps most interesting is that only 14.7 per cent of organized interests were engaged in both arenas at least once during the same time window.

Arena (data source)	<i>N</i>	%
Administrative (consultation data)	9,770	76.1
Legislative (committee hearings)	1,181	9.2
Overlap (appear in both arenas)	1,893	14.7
Total	12,844	100.0

The limited nature of the media and stakeholder data means a detailed comparison is not useful. But a brief comparison yields an indicative picture of what might be revealed with better data. For instance, of the 237 unique actors mentioned in newspaper coverage almost one third had not appeared in either the parliament or the consultation data. As discussed above, this is mostly because they are individual members of Parliament or experts contacted by the media but not likely to make individual submissions to inquiries. In contrast, only 16 of the 113 actors engaged in the stakeholder groups mapped were *not* also participants in the parliamentary or administrative arenas. These were by and large community councils that were invited to participate in transport-related working groups. Compared to the figures in Table 6.6, this suggests that most actors participating in stakeholder groups are also engaged in consultations and parliamentary hearings. By contrast, the media tap into politicians and individual experts who might comment on issues but not engage separately in the public policy process.

The point this drives home is that, at least empirically, there is not much sense in talking of a general organized interest population. The specific political arena seems to be crucial in shaping the population. Not only is the overall complexion – the mix of organized interest types – different, but the *specific* organized interests themselves are often different.

### **Conclusions**

Where does this leave us? The initial implication is the rather trite-sounding observation that the arena chosen has implications for what is counted. In this light, it would be expedient to opt for directory or aggregate (e.g., lobby registers) data sources that are *not* explicitly arena-specific. While this choice by the student of organized interest populations comes at the cost of specificity, it obviates the need to erect too robust a case with respect to defending what to count and where to look. But, as in the Scottish case, there may be no such source of data.

Above, the absence of British (and Scottish) mapping studies was noted, and it was argued that this most likely reflects both the absence of ‘off-the-shelf’ directories and the lack of a clear tradition with respect to which arena one ought to count organisational mobilization in. Against this benchmark, the intention was to make a modest contribution to (or to institute) a Scottish population-mapping tradition. As discussed, the need to collect data based on policy mobilization then raises the subsequent question of which window on policy engagement to utilize. The initial choice to map policy consultation processes was based on three principles: pragmatism (the data were available and accessible), relevance (the consultation process is very open and would likely capture most politically active groups), and scholarly salience (at least some researchers suggest that the bureaucratic arena is a likely focal point for the engagement of organized interests in British politics). Similar justifications of approach are welcome, indeed necessary – to justify both stepping away from established orthodoxies and (especially) taking a first tentative step when no orthodoxies exist to follow.

As Salisbury noted some time ago, populations will likely differ across arenas. We found support for Salisbury’s often overlooked observation that policy arenas nurture different populations of active organisations; specifically, institutions dominate some arenas and interest groups others. And, with several arena-based data sets to hand, this chapter has established that this is indeed the case (at least for Scotland). Not only is the general complexion of each arena-based

population different, but the mix of individual organizations is different. There is a core of interest organizations that engage across arenas, but this core is swamped by the sheer volume of actors that do not. Thus, caution needs to be exercised in letting data from one arena *stand for* (probably differing) populations in other arenas. Moreover, this finding underscores the need for scholars – at least those who do not utilize directories – to be clear on their choice of arenas to map. Of course, there are traditions and orthodoxies that emerge with respect to what arena to collect data in. Where counting multiple arenas is not feasible, a case ought to be made for why one arena is more (or less) suitable as a window onto the composition of an underlying national (or subnational) population.

The broader question is whether it makes any empirical sense to talk as if a given polity had an underlying or standing population of organized interests. While it is not made explicit, the study of organized interest populations sometimes proceeds with an image of an ever-present universe of organizations ready to engage in policy. This may constitute a convenient picture in our heads, but this chapter suggests it might lack a strong empirical foundation. The analysis of the Scottish data above suggests many organisations are engaged in just one arena. The same data analysed elsewhere shows that most organizations are engaged very intermittently over time (see Halpin 2011). Together, these results imply a core of well-engaged organizations – policy professionals – engaged across all arenas, accompanied by a very fluid, rarely engaged set of policy amateurs. When we talk about organized interest populations, it might also be useful to distinguish between an ever-presently engaged policy-dedicated core and an ephemerally engaged amateur periphery. The question is then to what extent we are concerned with simply mapping only the former or both.

While utilizing directory sources – where available – may obviate the type of discussion above by simply providing a list of organizations considered generally ‘active’ in public policy, there are advantages in choosing to collect data directly from observations of policy activity. For one, it is possible then to utilize your data to generate *direct* measures of the frequency and breadth of activity by specific actors (Baumgartner and Leech 2001; Halpin and Binderkrantz 2011). This style of data is able to open up longstanding questions about the pattern of organized interest mobilization that have hitherto been largely explored through sample surveys. Moreover, if mobilization data can be linked to specific issue contexts – rather than just a particular arena – this adds an extra dimension to scholarship. Thus, we suggest that moving beyond directories is worthwhile, but without diminishing the value of such study: multiple lenses seem a sensible strategy.

Inevitably in a chapter of this length many important questions are pushed to one side. For instance, left entirely untouched is the whole question of how one might account for the size and diversity of the organized interest population levels mapped (and changes over time). This question has occupied the minds of many, not least because it goes to the heart of discussions of bias or business dominance of organized interest systems (Lowery and Gray 2004; Schlozman 2010). A few points are worth noting. First, public policy data – such as used here – are by definition about mapping the net effect of choices to engage in policy, and not about organizational disbandment. These populations arise because specific organizations overcome a ‘secondary’ collective action problem (Baumgartner *et al.* 2011). Second, if, as Schattschneider (1960) suggests, conflict expansion is a key factor in stimulating the engagement of the



otherwise disinterested, then we might look to processes of governmental agenda setting as crucial in shaping the contours of populations of the mobilized. While environmental factors such as constituency size and population density might be crucial in explaining birth and/or disbandment, one could imagine that agenda diversity or similar policy system variables might be more valuable in explaining the mobilization of the *already formed*. This might especially apply where populations include policy amateurs who are not heavily engaged in expert monitoring of policy and thus operate by secondary cues (Haplin 2011).

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> This logic has been subject to some criticism (see Lowery *et al.* 2004).

<sup>2</sup> It is well established that any deviation from ‘established’ methods of measuring a given concept will mean that any novel findings are easily dismissed (see the discussion in Schmitter 2008). There are costs associated with stepping outside conventions, and thus they foster inertial forces.

<sup>3</sup> Of course, there have been some attempts to count groups in specific fields. See for instance the work of May *et al.* (1998, fn. 9) on UK trade associations.

<sup>4</sup> Although we had to collect most from archival records from document storage facilities – a very laborious process indeed.

<sup>5</sup> Analysis has been conducted comparing invitation lists to responses in order to determine the relationship. From a representative sample of 173 consultations conducted during the 25-year period, it was discovered that, on average, just 32 percent of those invited to engage in a given consultation do in fact participate. In terms of the number of consultation responses, 77 percent came from invited organisations, which means that 23 percent of responses came from organisations who were not invited directly.

<sup>6</sup> Consultations are launched at all stages of the policy process and seemingly on all relevant topics. In Scotland, of course, this is principally only on devolved matters.

<sup>7</sup> For more details see Halpin and Thomas (forthcoming)

<sup>8</sup> [www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk).

<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of clarity, the committees excluded were: Audit; Finance; Public Petitions; Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments; and Subordinate Legislation. Two mandatory committees (European and External Relations, and Equal Opportunities) were included as their respective remits are more public in scope.

<sup>10</sup> The Scottish Parliament was established in 1999, so there are no data before this date.

<sup>11</sup> Author interview with Committee Clerks, Edinburgh, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> This is based on the direct experience of having lodged numerous Freedom of Information requests during late 2009 and early 2010.

<sup>13</sup> The search was conducted using LexisNexis. The terms were ‘agriculture’ or ‘farm’, ‘education’, ‘health’, and ‘transport’, all in combination with ‘policy’ and ‘legislation’. The time period was chosen as it overlapped with the original data collection period, and it was not in an election period (which tends to dominate policy reportage).

<sup>14</sup> We admittedly apply a rather crude measure. Some of the nonprofits in the ‘Nonprofits and citizen groups’ category could arguably be considered institutions: they could go into Salisbury’s category ‘Nonprofit private institutions’. But it is hard to detect this difference from

organizational names and Web sites. And we did not have many obvious cases, and certainly not enough to justify a bespoke category that would not fit with dominant orthodoxies in the contemporary US mapping literature. In any event, such recoding would simply add to the finding of the dominance of institutions.

<sup>15</sup> Although, the fact that 'open' media and 'closed' stakeholder groups seem to have broadly similar populations suggests a modification to Salisbury's explanation for the prevailing population mix.