PUBLIC LECTURE

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Deliberation Behind Closed Doors: Transparency and Lobbying in the European Union

Tuesday, 10 June 2008, 16:00
IHS, Stumpergasse 56,
1060 Vienna, Lecture Room II

Does transparency and publicity have the power to civilize politics? In deliberative democratic theory this is a common claim. Publicity, it is argued, forces actors to switch from market-style bargaining to a behaviour more appropriate for the political sphere, where the proper way of reaching agreement is by convincing others using public-spirited arguments. Daniel Naurin has analysed and tested this theory of publicity’s civilizing effect. The test is conducted on business lobbyists—presumably the most market-oriented actors in politics—acting on different arenas characterized by varying degrees of transparency and publicity. Scenario-interviews with lobbying consultants in Brussels and in Stockholm are compared and contrasted with confidential lobbying letters and public position papers. The results are both disappointing and encouraging to deliberative democratic theorists. While the positive force of publicity seems to be overrated, it is found that even behind closed doors business lobbyists must adapt to the norms of the forum. To be successful as lobbyists they must, Naurin argues, get “dressed for politics”.

Daniel Naurin is Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science at Gothenburg University. He has previously been a Marie Curie Fellow at the EUI in Florence. Naurin received his PhD from Gothenburg University in 2004. His dissertation was awarded the 2006 Jean Blondel PhD Thesis Prize, and was subsequently developed into the book Deliberation Behind Closed Doors: Transparency and Lobbying in the European Union (ECPR Press 2007). Other recent and forthcoming publications include “Backstage Behaviour? Lobbyists in Private and Public Settings”, Comparative Politics (2007), “Safe Enough to Argue? Giving Reasons in the EU Council of Ministers”, British Journal of Political Science (forthcoming 2009) and the co-edited volume (together with Helen Wallace) Unveiling the Council of the European Union, Palgrave (forthcoming 2008).