

>> **The geopolitics of lobbying. New stages of strategy and action**

Madrid >> 07 >> 2013

“Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World Island; who rules the World Island commands the World.” (Mackinder).

This phrase sums up the essence of geopolitics and the responsibility of individual nations. Efforts to control Eastern Europe, the so-called heartland, have led to world wars and all kinds of movements that have forever changed our history and values. Today, the *heartland* moves to Asia.

If we were to shift this idea to the realm of policy and lobbying in Spain, we could say that in recent years, the *heartland* has been the executive branch. Companies that played as an ambitious and definitive lobby predominantly directed their efforts towards the executive branch of the government of the Nation (actual or potential). But like Eastern Europe, the executive branch will witness a change in its *status quo*.

The centres of political decision-making are shifting; strategies and lobbying actions are changing. Why? ... Towards what? This article is an approximation to what we might call the geopolitics of lobbying or, as it were, the analysis of the dominant centre of political decision-making and the variables involved in these shifts - why many are already working on the new management of influence which will arrive on the scene after what we are calling a crisis, when this new reality has completely melted away and we have become accustomed

to living in this uncertainty ..., liquid, gaseous almost. Gramsci said that “The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born”; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear”. This interregnum, long, hard and heavy, brings with it a shift towards a new way to manage influence.

Members —what about Senators— complain that companies, especially the large ones, dedicate huge efforts to lobbying the government and almost none, shall we say only residual, to actual Parliament. The truth is that, especially in a context of absolute majority and clear bipartisanship, it is no surprise that of the entire chain of values of policy decision-making, efforts have been mainly directed to the executive branch and, if anything, the first party of the Opposition. This is despite the assumption that 80 % of the legislation to be implemented in our legal system comes from the European Union, as worn out as it may be.

What will influence management in the coming years? The influence will deal with notability, visibility and representation, as well as relationships, time frames and dialogue, but speed, the “to whom” and the “how” are altered. Without any interest in being thorough, albeit from a professionalized concept of lobbying, these are just some ideas to open debate.

In the coming years it is quite probable that we will see a general increase in the complexity and regulation which tries to sort out the beating which we are being submitted to as institutions and as a society. In terms of strategy and action for responsible lobbying, this will result, among others, in:

1 A shift towards legislature. Moving the lobbying effort from the executive to the legislative. Make a move towards a series of simple majority; it will take some time to recover absolute majority. Moving forwards, but back in time - A move towards democracy, in the best case scenario, negotiated, where variable geometry will be another attribute with increasing weight. This broadens the range of influence companies will have in the parliamentary process, thus returning to them the role that absolute majority has overshadowed, and thereby slowing down the decision-making process.

2 Fluid parliaments, ideological shapeless Loss of bipartisanship in Parliament. Moving towards fluid parliaments, ideological shapeless Moving forwards, but back in time —moving towards minority lobbying, much of



which, we assume, being populist and anti-system. The efforts of companies who want to influence political decision-making will have a dual focus: on the one hand, stability - seeking consensus of major parties in order to promote their interests; on the other hand, the commons approach— giving a nod to the more volatile minority, closer to citizen-lobbying groups.

As Juan Freire and Antonio Gutierrez-Rubi say in *Manifiesto Crowd*, “States and markets are incomplete solutions; the commons is essential in order for the governance of a complex world to be viable “. The key is who will represent the commons and if that representation will be parliamentary or just informal, street so to say.

3 The rise of citizen-lobbying. The average citizen has its Maslow pyramid distractions. The masses are lost, helpless, frightened and tired. The key will be whether, finally, the crowd (and its wisdom) are empowered and able to pull along the masses. Citizens are wary, and, like a whipped dog, will trust only an equal - street leadership.

In recent years we have witnessed the death of the political banner. It no longer matters if you are able to mobilize a large group outside the gates of Congress or collapse a main thoroughfare in the city; it doesn't matter if you are able to collect one million signatures for a common cause. The prevailing deadlock will give way to another million signatures that replace another million signatures, ultimately causing a pileup, and the many demonstrations and protests are no longer seen as newsworthy. I am not talking about political indifference to the banner, but rather citizen indifference to the banner.

The alternative to this will emerge from the review process which the masses are undergoing. This will most likely be directed towards the very heart of the system. They know that noise gets lost in noise, entropy, once controlled by the system is generated and that the masses will not resist in the medium term. The government policy was also aware of this. A new version of *laissez faire, laissez passer*.

If they hit the nail on the head, the crowd will become the reference for the grass-roots 3.0 for companies, because they dare to where others don't. “The crowds are able to innovate and transform society in an effective way,” says *Manifiesto Crowd*. If they succeed, corporate lobbying will have to be very careful, because new techniques and ways are emerging.

4 Crowd-lobbying (alliances). Closely linked to citizen-lobbying and the intervention of 95% of the SMEs that make up Spanish businesses. The policy of alliances is gaining ground on the new scene, functioning under the new codes emanating from what, in the corporate world, has been being called “coopetition”. In an increasingly crowd environment, lobbying will not be able to escape the dispersed and viscous form of doing business, relationships, politics and thought.

Crowd-lobbying aims to grow in representation and will do so by means of virtual mechanisms as well as a pragmatic approach to reality and its possibilities. The crowd makes the small bigger. The stakeholder born of the crowd is the place

“Moving forwards, but back in time – moving towards minority lobbying, much of which, we assume, being populist and anti-system”

to go if you want to have real control over the infrastructure of large companies. Therefore, a reference model of learning and a potential ally - strange bedfellows once again.

5 An office in Brussels to get closer to ... Germany. The European Union is also subject to a proofreading process whose results we are unsure of. Either way, of the 27 countries in the current European Union, one or two will emerge to take charge of European policy via *fait accompli*, either by GDP or by ability to sway the international circles of influence.

Lobbying in the European Union by Spanish companies is still rather demure and scarce. Presence in Brussels in the coming years is a necessary point for companies that finally understand that by joining interests, they will achieve a margin of influence in 80% of European politics that years later will be transposed into our system. But it will be a base camp for those companies that want to influence the other magma of decision - the countries that lead the Union. Countries and governments fit in here such as the German or international institutions such as the IMF or various “G”. Understanding the policy elite consensus is key here.

6 A rise in economic lobbying. In keeping with the above, but with a different derivative, is the rise in economic lobbying. In this divorce between power and politics, as announced by authors such as Bauman, it is the economy that has been dealing with power and has given a helping hand - odd, yes, but generally speaking, a hand - to politics. But nothing is free. It has done so from the public-private partnership aspect, which makes it easier for the states to continue providing public services, thus stagnating the political decision-making in government, making it less autonomous and more empty than ever.

In that scenario, corporate ideal will become one of the faithful public-private partners. It is a reinterpretation of the Trojan horse which, as a lobbying technique, has always given fantastic results. It isn't the end of politics; as geoeconomics has taken over geopolitics, politiconomy will take over politics.

“Nation-states suffer the conflict, quarrelsome and aggressive presence of some pugnacious and competitive subjects, entities that circumvent the principle hitherto binding of *cuius regio, eius potestas, lex et religio* (“the ruler has the power, makes laws and chooses religion”), and often silence or undermine and sneakily degrade that principle.” Bauman critiqued this movement. The emptying of the states through subsidiaries and outsourcing is a disaster from the citizen standpoint but an opportunity from the lobbying (corporate and serve the paradox, citizen) standpoint.

7 Focus on the non-issues. A priority effort of public affairs professional and lobbying is anticipation; the sooner you start on the work of influence, the more chance you have of success and being better positioned. On this scene, anticipation earns points. As we have seen, we are moving towards an increasingly competitive environment, from the point of view of key players who will lobby: better advised more professionalized. What is the difference? In part, they will take a break on the creation/anticipation of needs, which could euphemistically be called “solutions” and not be part of the noise.

It's time to make partnerships with *think-tanks* which will really help create (political fiction) and not only respond to policies (what legal and economic arguments made in such extent appropriate, what other show than another is inadequate) it is time for purposeful and creative work instead of the short term and prior to the mobilization of the players affected by this measure. This mobilization will expand in the next five years. We will work before the Parliament dies from success. The real strategy will be in the *non-issue*.



>> **Carmen Muñoz** is Manager of Public Affairs at LLORENTE & CUENCA in Spain. She has been Executive Director of the Consultancy firm Rosa Gómez-Acebo and Communications Director of Unión Profesional. She has a Bachelors Degree in Journalism from the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM), graduated in Business Management and Communications from the Instituto de Empresa (IE) and Management of Electoral Campaigns from the Universidad Pontificia de Comillas (ICADE).

d+i LLORENTE & CUENCA

d+i is the LLORENTE & CUENCA Ideas, Analysis and Trends Centre.

Because we have a new macroeconomic and social script. And communication is not lagging behind. It is progressing.

d+i is a global combination of relations and exchange of knowledge that identifies, focuses and transmits new communication patterns from an independent position.

d+i is a constant flow of ideas moving ahead of new trends in information and business management.

d+i LLORENTE & CUENCA exists because reality is not black or white.

www.dmasillorenteycuenca.com