

HISTORICAL EXAMPLES OF LOBBYING: THE CASE OF STRASBOURG ASTRONOMICAL OBSERVATORIES

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Abstract. Several astronomical observatories have been established in Strasbourg in very differing contexts. In the late 17th century, an observing post (scientifically sterile) was put on top of a tower, the Hospital Gate, essentially for the prestige of the city and the notoriety of the university. In the 19th century, the observatory built on the *Académie* hosting the French university was the first attempt to set up in the city a real observatory equipped with genuine instrumentation with the purpose of carrying out serious research, but the succession of political regimes in France and the continual bidding for moving the university to other locations, together with the faltering of later scholars, torpedoed any significant scientific usage of the place. After the 1870-1871 Franco-Prussian war, the German authorities set up a prestigious university campus with a whole range of institutes together with a modern observatory consisting of several buildings and hosting a flotilla of excellent instruments, including the then largest refractor of the country. This paper illustrates various types of lobbying used in the steps above while detailing, from archive documents largely unexploited so far, original research on the two first observatories.

1. Introduction

Lobbying can be defined in various ways. My acception here will be a simple, general one: influencing people (including public officials) for or against a specific cause. We all “lobby” in a way or another in our life and especially in the context of our career: for securing a position for ourselves or others, for ensuring the success of an application for funding or observing time, for supporting the progress of ideas, projects, policies, etc.

