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**TITLE:** Interest Groups as Multi-Venue Players

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**ABSTRACT:** Whereas some recent studies underline interest groups' strategy to specialize in certain venues when lobbying, we investigate under which conditions groups develop a multi-venue strategy. This study examines and compares groups' advocacy activities during three issues that were each debated in California and Switzerland. Empirical evidence shows that the policy issue at stake influences the diversity of groups that mobilize to influence an issue, while institutional factors and group types are key to explain the level of multi-venue advocacy. Multi-venue groups are proportionally more numerous in the Swiss neo-corporatist system than in the Californian pluralist system. And citizen groups are more frequently multi-venue players than business groups, regardless of the policy sector or the political system. These findings demonstrate the added value of a research design encompassing advocacy activities in all venues visited during a policy process and, furthermore, comparing these advocacy activities across political systems and policy domains.

**KEYWORDS:** business groups, citizen groups, policy process, institutional venues, California, Switzerland

## INTEREST GROUPS AS MULTI-VENUE PLAYERS

### INTRODUCTION

This study adopts a process approach to capture the advocacy activities of interest groups that seek to influence a policy issue. It traces empirically how groups try to influence the successive policy decisions made in *all* of the institutional venues visited during the entire decision-making process. Interest groups may perform various advocacy activities to influence policy decisions. For instance, they can lobby elected Members of Parliament (Baumgartner et al. 2009), formulate comments on the implementation rules proposed by a regulatory agency (Yackee 2010), write an *amicus curiae* brief to support a party in a court of law (Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2013), or participate in a ballot campaign committee (Boehmke 2005).

Many interest group scholars explore the dynamics leading groups to specialize in one institutional venue (e.g. Buffardi et al. 2014, Vanhala 2009, Hansford 2004). It has been regularly shown that the executive venue is biased in favor of business groups which deliver policy expertise to regulatory agencies (Binderkrantz et al. 2015; Boehmke et al. 2013; Culpepper 2011). By contrast, citizen groups are better endowed with volunteers, and are able to make claims with broad public appeal (Binderkrantz et al. 2015; Dür and Mateo 2013, 664; Kollman 1998, 53 and 91). They can advance an advocacy strategy in more visible arenas, such as the parliamentary, direct-democracy or judicial venues.

This study does not challenge the general idea of venue specialization. Nevertheless, it goes one step further by examining the mobilization of groups across all of the venues visited during a policy process. Such an issue-tracing approach implements the recommendation to incorporate all stages of the policy process into the

advocacy ‘battleground’ (Holyoke 2003), rather than focusing on one specific venue (Baumgartner and Leech 1998, 174; Lowery and Gray 2004, 21; Baumgartner 2007, 487; Beyers 2008, 1206-1207; Halpin and Binderkrantz 2011, 207; Hojnacki et al. 2012; Dür et al. 2015, 25-26). This approach is innovative for three reasons.

First, policy-making power is shared between the executive, legislative and judiciary branches, and democratic checks and balances mechanisms offer different opportunities for policy change. Interest groups strategically shop across venues (Pralle 2006) since they may achieve a policy success in one venue, but experience a setback in another venue. An issue-tracing approach is thus necessary to understand whether multiple venues provide the defeated groups with an opportunity for redress (Jourdain et al. 2017).

Second, surveys on advocacy strategies indicate that most groups declare that they are politically active in many venues (i.e. multi-venue players) and use a broad repertoire of lobbying tactics (Kriesi et al. 2007; Dür and Matteo 2013). Indeed, advocacy in multiple venues seems to be the most common (self-reported) strategy. However, policy-decontextualized surveys do not capture the (real) behavior of groups during concrete policy processes. One of the assets of the present longitudinal study is precisely to gather observational data to assess whether the majority of groups really are multi-venue players.

Third, a few studies have already measured the real advocacy behavior of groups. However, they tend to privilege certain venues (e.g. the administrative and legislative venues) at a single point in time (Boehmke et al. 2013, Grossmann 2012; McKay 2012) or focus on specific venue-transitions, such as the enforcement of accepted popular initiatives by the government (Gerber et al. 2001) or the activation of courts to challenge initiatives’ constitutionality (Miller 2009). These studies

investigate groups' mobilization in one venue and counter mobilization in another venue. However, they do not systematically address the dynamics of all groups involved in all venues of the policy-making processes.

To fill this research gap, our article investigates whether and why some groups go beyond their preferred venue to advocate as multi-venues players. To address this research question, six policy processes are compared. These six policy processes address different policy issues that have been on the political agenda in both California and Switzerland: the regulation of stem cell research, the construction of large railway infrastructure projects, and the promotion of renewable energies.

The group populations concerned by these policy issues are diverse and encompass a large spectrum of groups. In addition, the comparative research design also contrasts two different political systems. California's Constitution sets up a pluralist system of separation of powers, whereas the Swiss consensus democracy is a neo-corporatist system (Christiansen et al. 2018). At the same time, California and Switzerland are both advanced economies where direct democracy is extensively used. While these two political systems represent different levels of government, the comparison is relevant since California and Switzerland have been able to formally and autonomously regulate the three policy issues selected by the present study. Indeed, groups did not advocate at various levels of government in the six policy processes compared here. This article focuses, thus, on horizontal multi-venue players and is complementary to studies investigating vertical venue-shopping in Europe (Beyers and Kerremans 2012) or the USA (Constantelos 2018).

In sum, the research design allows us to assess the potential impact of policy issues and their related constituencies, of formal rules regulating groups' access to institutional venues in California compared to Switzerland, and of groups'

characteristics on advocacy activities. Such a comparative approach to capture multi-venue players is innovative. The few previous studies tracing the involvement of groups during an entire policy process have not compared similar issues across various countries (Holyoke 2003; Pedersen et al. 2014; Jourdain et al. 2017).

The article is structured into four parts. First, the theoretical framework defines the concept of *multi-venue players* and introduces two research hypotheses that explain why some groups are more likely than others to be multi-venue players. Secondly, the research design and data section presents the logic of comparison, the definition and measurement of the main variables, and the sources exploited for their empirical coding. Thirdly, descriptive statistics and regression models are discussed in order to move onto the comparative test of the hypotheses. The main findings show that, regardless of the policy issue at stake, multi-venue players are more frequent in Switzerland than in California. Furthermore, citizen groups are more likely than business groups to mobilize in multiple venues. Fourthly, the concluding section discusses the implications of the present study for the methodological design of upcoming research on groups' advocacy strategies.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Multi-venue players are defined as those interest groups which advocate in more than one venue. For example, a group may lobby Members of Parliament to support a bill and participate in a rule-making procedure implementing the adopted law. Or, a group may financially support a campaign against a popular initiative and, if voters accepted this initiative, file a subsequent action in court contending that the initiative is unconstitutional. In other words, multi-venue players try to influence various binding

decisions made by very diverse policy-makers (i.e. elected representatives, rulemaking agencies, voters and judges). This definition of the dependent variable does not further distinguish between groups mobilizing in two, three or more venues, since very few groups mobilize in more than two venues (i.e. 1% in California and 7% in Switzerland; 4% of business groups and 5% of citizen groups).

Furthermore, multi-venues players are not similar to ‘repeat players’ (Galanter 1974), who specialize in one venue (e.g. the judicial venue) and try to influence successive decisions in that venue (e.g. by bringing a subsequent suit to court to lock in an earlier favorable court ruling). Of course, some multi-venue players active across many venues may also be repeat players in one of these venues.

We formulate two research hypotheses about the impact of institutions and groups' features on advocacy activities across venues. First, institutional theories suggest that if countries differ because of particular institutional configurations, then policy processes are likely to differ as well. The pluralist environment of the USA is supposed to increase groups' competition for decision-makers' attention and lead to a less biased access to venues. By contrast, neo-corporatist arrangements, which are (still) at work in many European countries (Binderkrantz and Christiansen 2015; Fraussen et al. 2015; Christiansen et al. 2018), guarantee a privileged access to insider groups, namely peak business groups, majors unions and those associations representing public authorities. Within the European context, Lowery et al. (2015, 1221-1224) note that neo-corporatist intermediation systems are, by definition, the “ultimate form of bias” as they clearly provide venue access and policy influence for only a few favored groups. One can thus speculate on how a neo-corporatist heritage (in Switzerland) versus a pluralist system (in California) affects the advocacy activities and multi-venue strategies of groups.

Californian and Swiss institutional access rules differ by policy-making venues and, as a consequence, will offer different opportunities for advocacy as the policy process unfolds. California's pluralist system includes a system of checks and balances between the branches of power. For instance, the Governor may veto a bill that was adopted by the Legislature; the State Supreme Court may overturn a law or popular initiative accepted by voters. Thus, a venue change during the policy process constitutes a window of opportunity for groups aiming to change the status quo. Previous studies show that groups that did not mobilize previously, or which failed to reach their policy goals in the previous venue, are more likely to mobilize later if the policy process changes venue, compared to those which have achieved their policy preference in the previous venue (Jourdain et al. 2017). For example, the losers of a direct democratic ballot (i.e. legislative or constitutional initiative) may seek to 'steal' the initiative through a judicial review process (Miller 2009) or during the rule-making process (Gerber et al. 2001). Empirical evidence shows that opponents challenged about 69% of all California initiatives in the 1970s and 1990s and invalidated, at least partially, 38% of all the initiatives adopted (Miller 2009). In other words, the availability of multiple venues provides a counter-weight to the possible advantages received by certain group types in each venue. Consequently, we expect that most groups specialize in one specific venue, hoping to reverse the policy direction when this venue is visited during the policy process. This advocacy strategy also allows groups to deploy lobbying resources where they can be most effective: business groups provide technical expertise to rule-making agencies, or citizen groups organize grassroots actions during ballot campaigns or try to influence elected representatives.

In sum, we claim that most Californian groups are not multi-venue players, but rather follow a venue-specialization strategy. However, if groups do not realize their



policy preferences in their preferred venue, they can still turn to other venues to seek redress. Such ‘adaptive venue shoppers’ (Ley and Weber 2015) learn that their preferred venue is indeed dominated by their opponents and expect the new venue to be more receptive to their policy preferences (Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Pralle 2006). This compensation hypothesis states that weak groups compensate for a lack of advocacy success in one venue by engaging in another venue (Beyers and Kerremans 2012). Of course, a multi-venue advocacy strategy makes sense only if the political system provides real opportunities for redress, as is obviously the case in California – and if groups have strong incentives to shop for new venues, for instance if they fear the costs of a policy defeat on a salient issue (Baumgartner and Leech 1998, 177-184).

The situation is very different in Switzerland, an emblematic example of a consensus democracy (Lijphart 1999) with neo-corporatist traits such as an ideology of social partnership, the inclusion of encompassing groups in policy-making, and a pervasive relationship between peak associations and political parties (Katzenstein 1985). The system is more integrated, the policy process is more predictable and institutional opportunities for major policy changes are much less developed compared to California. For example, no mechanism of constitutional review is institutionalized: the Federal Supreme Court cannot declare a law or popular initiative unconstitutional. The government has no power to oppose a law accepted by the Parliament. In other words, policy entrepreneurs have little opportunity to strategically shop across venues and discover which venue is potentially the most conducive to promoting their particular interests. Groups cannot specialize in one venue, but must rather follow the issue through the successive venues activated across the entire policy process.

For example, interactions between the legislative and direct democratic venues are important even when groups launch a popular initiative. The Swiss Parliament may

develop a (direct or indirect) counter-proposal to a popular initiative, asking citizens to vote on both the citizen-launched initiative and the legislative counter-proposal. To a large extent, the direct democracy venue is embedded in the overall policy-making process. Even an *ex post* referendum – that can be launched after a law has been accepted by the Parliament – is an instrument that connects different venues. Powerful groups use the threat of launching an *ex post* referendum if their policy position is not fully taken into account during the very first, pre-parliamentary consultation on the bill proposal. These institutional rules of the game induce positive spillovers from one venue to another, and translate into a cumulative access over the entire policy process (Binderkrantz et al. 2015): strong actors in one venue will be present and influential in other venues as well. This persistence hypothesis relies on the institutional integration of various venues and, furthermore, on the political socialization of groups, which develop cooperation norms and habits through frequent interactions with different decision-makers (Beyers and Kerremans 2012).

Overall, Swiss institutions feed into one another in a smooth manner, whereas California's institutions are set up more independently. In turn, this feature informs groups' mobilization throughout the policy process: we expect cooperation and negotiation of compromises during the entire policy process in the Swiss consensus democracy, versus competition and legal adversarialism in the Californian "hyper-pluralistic interest politics" (Lowery et al. 2008, 1232). Therefore, the first hypothesis states that *groups are more likely to mobilize in many institutional venues (i.e. multi-venue players) in a neo-corporatist system (i.e. Switzerland) than in a pluralist system (i.e. California), regardless of the issue at stake and the group type.*

The second theoretical approach focuses on the organizational characteristics of groups as a major factor explaining policy capacity (Halpin 2014, 176-195) and

advocacy activities. Group types differ with respect to their organizational form, size and resource endowment; the nature of their members (e.g. individuals, firms or associations); the interests they defend (e.g. material versus ideal, short versus long term); their organizational age and advocacy experiences and so on. Various group typologies try to summarize these differences (Halpin 2014). We rely here on the subcategories developed by a European consortium of researchers to capture the diversity of the interest group population (Binderkrantz et al. 2015). For the purpose of this study, we aggregate the subcategories into two main types of group. First, *business* groups comprise all sector-specific and peak-level organizations representing corporations, alongside occupational groups whose individual members share the same profession. These business groups clearly promote private and sectional interests. Secondly, *citizen* groups encompass the major unions, identity groups seeking benefits for their restrained constituencies, public interest groups focusing on the attainment and protection of common goods, and religious groups including churches or religious communities. Table A in the online Appendix presents a few concrete examples of groups belonging to these categories, and which have effectively mobilized during the six policy processes scrutinized here.

After this categorization exercise, the next question is whether business groups are more or less likely than citizen groups to be multi-venue players. Studies addressing this question – and which simultaneously use behavioral data and an issue-tracing approach – are rare. What scholars agree upon is that very few groups adopt a multi-venue strategy (Pedersen et al. 2014, 212; Varone et al. 2017, 17; Jourdain et al. 2017, 13). By contrast, there is no strong evidence about (the factors explaining) differences in the multi-advocacy strategies of business versus citizen groups.

In their descriptive analysis of 225 law-making processes in Denmark, Pedersen et al. (2014, 213) show that business groups make up 43% of all groups active in both the administrative and legislative venues, whereas they account for only 27% of the overall population of groups that mobilized during the whole policy process. Citizen groups, on the other hand, make up 15% of all mobilized groups, but only 9% of groups active in both venues.

Furthermore, this study tests whether groups' resources are a strong predictor of multi-venue advocacy. According to the conventional wisdom, one would expect that proceeding to parliamentary committees after responding to administrative consultations requires substantial resources, and that money and political staff are more prevalent among business groups than citizen groups. This better resource endowment should eventually explain why business groups are more frequently multi-venue players. However, multivariate models indicate that groups' resources do not explain the engagement of business versus citizen groups in a dual-venue strategy (Pedersen et al. 2014, 220). This empirical finding probably reflects the strong variation in resource endowment within each group category (Baroni et al. 2014). Additional studies explaining the extent to which groups seek access to multiple venues across levels of government also come to the conclusion that groups' resources generate no or very little explanatory power for vertical venue-shopping (Beyers and Kerremans 2012).

The membership strategy of groups might be another factor influencing advocacy in multiple venues. As an organization, each interest group faces the threat of members' exit. It must secure its survival or reinforce its members' loyalty and willingness to pay membership fees. Since a group wants to prevent its members from leaving and joining another group, it has a strong incentive to mobilize in all venues

where opposing or competing groups are also mobilized (Holyoke 2003). As suggested by Lowery and Gray (2004, 170), there are strong interdependencies between the choice of venues and advocacy tactics by a particular group, on the one hand, and its chance of organizational survival within the overall group population on the other.

This argument, based on the intra-organizational incentives to become a multi-venue policy advocate, is probably more valid for citizen groups than for business groups. Indeed, cause groups are less able than sectional groups to offer selective benefits to their members (Olson 1965, 126; Halpin and Binderkrantz 2011, 206). Consequently, citizens groups need to increase the visibility and level of their political activities (Bolleyer and Weiler 2018) and demonstrate that they are resilient warriors during the whole policy process (Solberg and Waltenburg 2006). By contrast, business groups may temporarily ‘hibernate’ politically (Gray and Lowery 1996, 96 and 108; Schlozman 2010, 450), since they deliver individual and material benefits to their corporate members.

Applying such an incentive-based approach to the overall group population in Germany and Switzerland, Bolleyer and Weiler (2018, 23) demonstrate that cause groups with individual members exhibit higher levels of political activity than sectional groups. This higher level of political mobilization eventually translates into more frequent multi-venue advocacy strategy in the Swiss interest representation system (Weiler et al. 2018). Accordingly, our second hypothesis states that *citizen groups are more likely to be multi-venue players than business groups, regardless of the issue at stake and the political system.*

## **RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA AND SOURCES**

The research design compares different categories of groups in three policy domains across two institutional systems. The six cases were selected according to Seawright and Gerring's (2008, 300) 'diverse cases' selection strategy. The cases will represent the full range of values characterizing the dependent variable (i.e. single versus multi-venue players) and the independent variables (e.g. policy sector characteristics, institutional rules and group features). The diverse nature of the policy issues at stake, the differences between a pluralist and a neo-corporatist system and the large set of groups belonging to various categories have been discussed above. It could be added that, after re-tracing the decisions' chronology in the six cases, it also became clear that the path of each policy debate through the different venues varies from case to case (see summary of the six case studies in the online Appendix). We are thus able to assess very diverse combinations and changes of venues. Whereas we did not proceed to a random sampling, the 'diverse cases' selection implemented here should nevertheless guarantee a useful variation on all dimensions of theoretical interest, and thus contribute to the external validity of the empirical findings.

Each case study starts with a chronological reconstruction of the policy process. The binding policy decisions made in the various venues are identified. Policy-making is not a linear and sequential process, since groups may activate different venues at the same time in both California and Switzerland. For example, a group may simultaneously lobby the Legislature, launch a popular initiative and/or support a party in a court of law. Once the binding policy decisions are registered, a documentary analysis identifies the unique groups that mobilize to influence these decisions. Finally, the data collected on groups' mobilization are aggregated at various

levels (venue, entire policy process, group types) and analyzed by means of descriptive statistics, pairwise comparisons and logistic regression models.

As an illustration, Table B in the online Appendix gives an overview over the policy process related to the California Renewables Portfolio Standards (RPS) program, which aims to increase the state's reliance on renewable energies following the 1999-2000 energy crisis. In 2002, the California Legislature adopted Senate Bill (SB) 1078, which introduced the RPS program, requiring investor-owned utilities (IOUs) and private energy service providers (ESPs) to increase their annual purchase of electricity from renewable resources by at least 1% per year, so that 20% of their sales would come from renewables by 2017. In 2004, SB 1478 accelerated the 20% requirement to 2010, however Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed the bill. The same language was reintroduced in 2006 with the passage of SB 107, and the 20% requirement by the end of 2010 made the books. In 2007 the Legislature passed SB 1036, which 'recasts' the RPS by implementing organizational changes. In 2008, the voters defeated Proposition 7, which would have increased the target of renewables to 40% in 2020 and 50% in 2025. Shortly following the vote, Governor Schwarzenegger issued an Executive Order expanding the RPS to 33% by 2020. In 2009, Assembly Bill (AB) 64 and SB 14 were adopted by the Legislature. Together, these bills required that 33% of the IOUs and ESPs retail sales come from renewable sources by 2020. However, Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed them both, arguing that they imposed too strict limits on in-California renewable energy production versus out-of-California imports. Instead, the Governor issued another Executive Order directing the California Air Resources Board to adopt regulations increasing RPS to 33% by 2020. Finally, in 2011, the Legislature passed SBX1-2 which maintained the 33% by 2020 requirement, but no longer required that renewable energy come from generation in California. On

the other hand, it mandated RPS compliance on publically owned utilities (POUs) for the first time. This latest legislation (SBX 1-2) mandated the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to oversee IOUs and the California Energy Commission (CEC) oversight over POUs. The CEC posted proposed RPS regulations in the Notice Register in March 2013, in accordance with the California Administrative Procedures Act. The CPUC, which conducts unique, semi-judicial, semi-legislative rule-making proceedings, conducted five rule-making proceedings to implement and administer the RPS, in which dozens of groups participated.

Groups implemented different advocacy strategies to influence these thirty binding decisions. For example, the Pacific Gas and Electric Company lobbied on all four legislative decisions that shape the RPS program, contributed \$13,895,250 to a direct democracy campaign to defeat Prop 7, and lobbied on the vast majority of administrative decisions issued by the CPUC. On the opposite policy side, The Utilities Reform Network (TURN), a public interest organization, also mobilized repeatedly in the legislative venue in favor of the RPS, and fiercely lobbied the Governor's Office and the CPUC, providing in-depth analysis and data to counter the utilities' arguments.

In contrast to these multi-venue players, many groups are present in only one venue. For example, most unions including the Utility Workers Union of America (Local 246) mobilized in the legislative venue only to influence the development of the RPS program. Several other groups – including business and citizen groups – advocated in the administrative venue only.

Table 1 presents how the advocacy activities have been assessed in California and Switzerland. Multiple sources were triangulated to empirically trace groups' mobilization. In California, to assess which groups mobilized in the executive venue, we examined the files of regulatory agencies that were subject to Office of



Administrative Law approval or the letters requesting or opposing the Governor's veto. For the legislative venue, we extracted data about groups' activities from legislative history ([www.leginfo.ca.gov](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov)) and the California Secretary of State's records of lobbying reports. In the judicial venue, we identified groups that participated in a suit through the California courts' websites, which provide access to dockets and documents and, as needed, through Westlaw Next and LexisNexis. For the direct democracy venue, the National Institute on Money in Politics ([www.followthemoney.org](http://www.followthemoney.org)) provides an interface with the Secretary of State's records on financial contributions.

In Switzerland, to assess which groups mobilized in the executive venue, we relied on the answers given during the consultation procedure regarding governmental ordinances ([www.admin.ch/ch/f/gg/pc](http://www.admin.ch/ch/f/gg/pc)). For every consultation, the responsible governmental office provides an in-depth report synthesizing the answers given by groups. Concerning the legislative venue, we rely on three measures: first, groups' participation in consultation procedures leading to the adoption of a bill; second, formal ties between a group and a member of the relevant legislative committees ([www.parlament.ch/d/organe-mitglieder/nationalrat](http://www.parlament.ch/d/organe-mitglieder/nationalrat)); and third, groups' participation in legislative committee hearings ([www.parlament.ch/d/organe-mitglieder/kommissionen](http://www.parlament.ch/d/organe-mitglieder/kommissionen)). For the direct democratic venue, a group is considered to have mobilized if it is a member of a ballot campaign committee.

***Table 1 around here***

These data capture groups' observed behavior and not the (self-) reported activities as normally measured through surveys or interviews. The related data collection procedure is demanding and time-consuming, but it allows us to accurately measure formal advocacy activity. However, we do not pretend to also capture the

informal lobbying efforts of groups such as personal contacts between a group and a policy-maker, for which no legal reporting duty usually exists.

Furthermore, we acknowledge that while the data collected in the executive venue (i.e. comments sent by groups) are the same in California and Switzerland, we had to find functional equivalents in the other venues. Relying on our in-depth knowledge of the two political systems and the six case studies compared here, we claim that these data are capturing the same kind of advocacy behavior. We may potentially overestimate the advocacy activities in the Swiss legislative venue, since sending a written comment on a bill proposal is probably less demanding than hiring a professional lobbyist in California. But, vice versa, in the direct democracy venue, giving money to a campaign in California corresponds to lower engagement than being an active member of a ballot campaign committee in Switzerland. All in all, the different thresholds applied in California and Switzerland to capture advocacy activities in one specific venue are counter-balanced as soon as we consider multiple venues. In other words, it should not be systematically easier for a group to be counted as multi-venue player in Switzerland than in California, or vice versa. If descriptive statistics show differences between the relative levels of multi-venue players in the two political systems, this is not a pure artifact of partially different data sources and coding schemes.

As outlined in the theoretical framework (see the compensation hypothesis), multi-venues advocacy might be due to the fact that a group which mobilizes in a venue but fails to realize its policy preference in this venue is likely to mobilize later if the policy process continues in another venue. Applying Markov transition models to explain why interest groups become active in a particular venue based on past preference attainment and venue-change, Jourdain et al. (2017) demonstrate that the

compensation hypothesis is valid, at least in the Californian context. Groups which lose in one venue are more likely to lobby in another venue. Our analysis capitalizes on this previous finding and takes into consideration whether a group is able to realize its policy preferences before re-mobilizing in a different venue.

In order to take the *previous failure* of groups into consideration, we consider the preference attainment (McKay 2012) of groups during their first mobilization in the policy process. In the legislative venue, we conceive of this as a dichotomous measure of whether a bill actively supported by a group succeeded in becoming a law. Conversely, if a group opposes a bill that is enrolled, that group failed to realize its preference. In the direct democracy venue, we record whether the group supports a ballot measure that is accepted by the voters, or opposes a ballot proposal that is rejected by the voters. Likewise, if a court's ruling on the substantive causes of action coincides with the group's preferred outcome, that group has reached its preference, and vice-versa. Or in the administrative venue, the question might be whether the Governor vetoes a bill a group opposes. Finally, during a rule-making process, a group realizes its preferences if the modification requested by the group is implemented by the regulatory agency. Such a measurement of preference attainment partially relates to seminal studies focusing on lobbyists' policy preferences and success (Bernhagen et al. 2014). For instance, Baumgartner et al. (2009) measure whether a (pro-change versus pro-status quo) side got its preferred outcome or did not succeed at all in realizing its policy preferences.

## EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Which groups have tried to influence the six policy processes? Overall, 1088 unique groups are politically active in California (593) and Switzerland (495). The absolute number of groups per policy process and the distribution among group types differ notably across issues and political systems (see Figure 1).

### *Figure 1 around here*

Figure 1 suggests that the different substantive issues addressed in the three policy processes have an impact on the overall level of groups' mobilization (Rasmussen and Carroll 2014, 447). Many more groups advocate in the electricity sector (619) than in the two other domains (241 in railway and 228 in stem cells). This first finding illustrates the power law distribution of groups' lobbying attention to various issues (Baumgartner and Leech 2001; Halpin and Binderkrantz 2011). Turning back to the seminal typology of Lowi (1972), we argue that this important variation across policy domains might be related to the type of issues at stake. The policy related to stem cell research is primarily a regulatory issue, since the primary question is whether the state should authorize the use of embryonic stem cells for research and therapeutic purposes. By contrast, the construction of railway infrastructure is a typically distributive policy, as the state budget could be allocated to alternative needs. Finally, the promotion of renewable energies requires that utilities increase their annual purchases and sales of electricity from renewable resources. This is a regulatory and redistributive issue since the related policy grants benefit the producers of green electricity and, at the same time, imposes a burden and costs on utilities without a strong renewable energies portfolio. The policy impacts of this redistributive issue are direct, visible and close in the time horizon of advocacy groups. Consequently, the potential policy winners versus losers are clear. To maintain their membership or even

to secure their organizational survival, groups must be politically active during the policy-making process. It is thus not surprising that, overall, more groups mobilize on redistributive (i.e. electricity) rather than on distributive (i.e. rail) or regulatory (i.e. stem cells) policies.

When it comes to the proportion of business versus citizen groups, variation across policy issues is also noticeable. For example, in the electricity case, business groups are clearly dominant both in California (76%) and Switzerland (87%). In contrast, there is a better balance of business and citizen groups' mobilization in the other domains. Pairwise statistical tests indicate that variation across political systems is less important than variation across issues.<sup>1</sup> For a given issue, similar proportions of business and citizen groups mobilize in the pluralist California and the neo-corporatist Switzerland. This second finding is in line with the idea that different actor networks are constituted in different policy sectors, depending upon the configuration of key policy stakeholders whose interests are directly affected by the issue at stake (Coen and Katsaitis 2013). Overall, when policy sectors are held constant, the issue constituency is similar even across very different political systems. This interpretation is based on the assumption that the technological and economic context is structured rather similarly in California and Switzerland, even though differences in terms of size do exist.

The empirical evidence suggests that the policy issue at stake is a key factor explaining the overall level and diversity of groups' mobilization, independently from the institutional context of California and Switzerland. However, the political system,

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<sup>1</sup> Pearson's chi-square tests were performed to explore the association between the number of business and citizen groups with political systems (three tests) and issues (four tests). Only one of the three pairwise tests performed to investigate the association between the number of business and citizen groups and the political system suggest a significant association ( $p < .05$ ). In contrast, the four pairwise tests for issues indicate a significant association ( $p < .05$ ).

and thus access to decision-makers institutionalized by formal rules, are relevant for group mobilization in another way. The institutional rules embedded in each political system do not explain which groups mobilize. Yet the data shows that institutions do matter as well, since they contribute to determining how frequently groups mobilize during the policy process.

The dashed lines in Figure 1 indicate the number of multi-venue players by group type, policy issue and political system. For example, in the railway case, 39% of the business groups and 59% of the citizen groups are multi-venue players in Switzerland, whereas 6% of the business groups and 12% of the citizen groups mobilize in more than one venue for this issue in California. The proportion of multi-venue players is much higher in Switzerland (42%) than in California (20%) if we consider all three policy issues together. Furthermore, the variation of single versus multi-venue players between Switzerland and California appears larger than variation across policy domains within Switzerland<sup>2</sup>. In sum, this finding gives credit to the first research hypothesis.

The data also suggests that business and citizen groups privilege different types of venue. When taking into consideration the six cases, business groups mobilize relatively more (61%) than citizen groups (29%) in the executive venue. In contrast, citizen groups privilege the parliamentary venue. While 69% of citizen groups mobilize in the parliamentary venue, the figure decreases to 58% for business groups. These observations are consistent with previous studies indicating that business groups privilege the ‘quiet’ atmosphere of executive venues where they have a comparative

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<sup>2</sup> Pearson’s chi-square tests were performed to explore the association between the number of multi-venue players with political systems (three tests) and issues (four tests). The three pairwise tests for political systems suggest a significant association with the number of multi-venue groups ( $p < .05$ ). In contrast, the association between issues and multi-venue players is significant ( $p < .05$ ) only in California (i.e., two of the four pairwise tests).

advantage over citizen groups (Culpepper 2011; Boehmke et al. 2013; Binderkrantz et al. 2015).

Finally, when considering the six cases together, 32% of the citizen groups are multi-venue players, whereas 29% of the business groups mobilize in multiple venues. While going in the direction of the second research hypothesis, this difference between business and citizen groups is small and needs to be analyzed in a multivariate setting.

To further investigate the differences identified through descriptive statistics and pairwise comparisons, we conduct a series of regression analyses which confirm that the likelihood for a group to be a multi-venue player is systematically higher in Switzerland than in California, and is higher for citizen than for business groups. Table 2 reports the results of a series of logistic regressions, where the dependent variable indicates whether a group is a multi-venue player or not. Models 1 and 2 focus respectively on political systems and group type, while controlling for issue type. Model 3 takes into consideration simultaneously the two variables that are at the core of our analysis: political systems and group type. Finally, Model 4 includes *previous failure* as an additional control variable. As discussed in the preceding section, the non-realization of policy preferences (i.e. *previous failure*) may motivate a group to mobilize once again in a different venue. By taking into consideration if a group was able to realize its policy preferences before it re-mobilized in a different venue, we are able to better assess the impact of political systems and group types. The drawback is that 25% of the observations are dropped from Model 4 due to missing data.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Note that due to data collection constraints we are not able to measure advocacy success or failure for all groups in all venues. This variable is thus available for 821 of 1088 groups (75%). After dichotomizing preference attainment with 0.5 as a threshold, 84% of the groups emerge as ‘winners’ and 16% as ‘losers’ in their first mobilization.

Models 1-4 provide support for both of our research hypotheses. The political system and the group type are systematically pertinent to explain whether a group is a multi-venue player or not. These results hold even when considering alternative explanations based on differences across issues and previous failure. When it comes to the control variables, groups are more likely to be multi-venue players for electricity issues than for the railways and stem cases. The impact of a previous failure is also confirmed: groups that suffered a defeat are more likely to become multi-venue players.

The results suggest that the institutional setting is an important determinant to understand whether groups choose to mobilize in one or multiple venues. According to the predicted probabilities shown in Figure 2,<sup>4</sup> groups are considerably more likely to be a multi-venue in player in Switzerland compared to California. So, a group is more likely to be a multi-venue player in neo-corporatist Switzerland than in pluralist California, even when controlling for factors such as the type of group, the issue at stake and the advocacy failure during a previous mobilization. These empirical findings support the first hypothesis.

***Table 2 and Figure 2 around here***

The second research hypothesis focuses on how group type affects advocacy activities across venues. It postulates that citizen groups are more likely to be multi-venue players than business groups. In order to test whether group type affects the likelihood of groups being active in more than one venue, we rely on the same models presented in Table 2. Figure 3 shows the predicted probabilities of multi-venue mobilization for business and citizen groups, while controlling for the political system,

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<sup>4</sup> Predicted probabilities with 95% confidence intervals calculated on the basis of Model 4 (Table 2) for 'Business' (Group type), 'Electricity' (Issue) and absence of previous failure.



the issue at stake and previous advocacy failure.<sup>5</sup> They suggest that, as expected, citizen groups are more likely than business groups to be multi-venue players. This result holds both in California and Switzerland.

*Figure 3 around here*

The kind of behavioral data on which this study relies offers some advantages over survey data, but tells us little about groups' motivations. A group may mobilize on a particular policy issue and venue for many reasons, and while policy influence is one, visibility, fundraising and member-raising activities also come to mind, as postulated by the second hypothesis. To accurately test this hypothesis, additional data about the size and membership of groups, the benefits delivered to members and the perceived level of groups' competition on this policy issues would be necessary (Bolleyer and Weiler 2018).

Furthermore, citizen groups might also attempt to counter business groups' dominance within the executive venue through repeated engagement in the more visible legislative, judicial and direct democratic venues. Either in reaction to or in anticipation of business groups' dominance of the executive venue during both the drafting of a legislative proposal and the rulemaking procedure. This could also explain why we find the representation of broadly shared interests to exert a positive effect on groups' propensity to engage in multi-venue advocacy.

Anecdotal evidence gathered through interviews with a limited number of groups mobilized during the three policy processes further suggests that citizen groups cannot eschew from engaging in the more public venues, since they must demonstrate

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<sup>5</sup> Predicted probabilities with 95% confidence intervals calculated on the basis of Model 4 (Table 4) for 'Electricity' (Issue) and absence of previous failure.

activity to their membership. For instance, the Basler Appeal<sup>6</sup> launched a referendum against the law allowing stem cell research in Switzerland even though its leaders were sure that success was an ‘illusion’. The deliberate aim of increasing membership and raising new resources, and not the influencing of the policy life-course, motivated the use of the referendum. Furthermore, the leaders of the ATE<sup>7</sup> launched a popular initiative in order to increase the funds reserved for the maintenance and development of the railway infrastructure in anticipation of business groups (road construction, road transportation and concrete industries) strongly lobbying within the administrative venue. They were also hoping to maintain if not even increase their membership numbers, which had been on the decrease for a decade.

A particularly important limitation of this study is the lack of data capturing groups’ resources and coalitions. Previous studies have shown that the ‘resources count’ argument does not (strongly) explain the intensity and success of policy advocacy due to the competition between groups or policy sides with roughly similar resources (Baumgartner et al. 2009, 203, 212-213 and 225-236; McKay 2012, 913). The dynamics of coalitions could contribute to clarify why certain groups mobilize where they do. Coalitions contribute to resource pooling and may explain a higher advocacy intensity across multiple venues (Holyoke 2003).

## CONCLUSIONS

Using several dimensions of comparison in an innovative research design, three main conclusions can be derived from this empirical study. First, it is the nature of the policy

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<sup>6</sup> German: Basler Appell gegen Gentechnologie. A citizen group focusing on the potentially negative effects of genetic engineering for human beings.

<sup>7</sup> French: Association transports et environnement (ATE). A citizen group focusing on the transportation-environment nexus.

issue and not the institutional system that informs the relative shares of the groups mobilized in each policy sector (i.e. which type of group mobilize?). The percentages of business and citizen groups politically active in Switzerland and California are strikingly similar for each of the three policy debates examined here. This finding supports a call for more policy-centered research designs and opens the door for cross-national comparisons within specific policy debates. It also confirms the importance of supply-side factors about an issue constituency, as emphasized by the Population Ecology models of interest intermediation (Lowery and Gray 1995; Halpin et al. 2015). Upcoming studies should thus combine different types of policy issues, and also control for additional policy-related variables, such as the media saliency or partisan ownership of the policy issues.

Our second contribution is that the institutional context matters when we examine groups' activities across venues, as they attempt to influence the successive policy decisions (i.e. how do groups mobilize?). In a pluralist system of checks and balances (i.e. California), where each venue transition presents an opportunity for policy reversal, groups specialize in their preferred venue and only a few groups work across political institutions. Groups that have not achieved their preferences in a venue should be more likely than successful groups to proceed in a new venue. This compensatory strategy, which is at work for (horizontal) multi-venue players, confirms previous findings focusing on advocacy across various levels of government, or vertical venue-shopping (Beyers and Kerremans, 2012; Constantelos 2018). In a neo-corporatist system (i.e. Switzerland), interest groups are closely associated to the policy-making process, and are generally more likely to engage in multiple venues. Any kind of political exchange between the state and neo-corporatist groups cannot take place unless the latter are given full access to the policy-making process, that is,

to all venues. An issue-tracing approach is thus crucial to understand advocacy activities across venues, as any policy-contextualized research across venues is likely to be incomplete if using a snapshot in time (Baumgartner 2007, 487).

Furthermore, to advance the field of interest groups research, previous scholarship has made a loud appeal for more comparisons between groups' strategies in the United States, both at the federal and state level, and European countries or at the European Union level (Baumgartner 2007, Mahoney and Baumgartner 2008; Dür and De Bièvre 2007; Fraussen 2012; Woll 2012). Nevertheless, some authors are more critical about the feasibility and added value of such a comparative approach across the Atlantic (Lowery et al. 2008). We strongly believe that the policy-contextualized approach proposed here is a promising way of comparing advocacy activities in very different political systems and, thus, to assess the impact of institutional variables. We agree with Lowery and his colleagues (2008) that the choices of influence strategies may vary significantly between political systems that are characterized by different points of access to decision-makers (Weiler and Brändli 2015). We also agree that we must avoid a specification error by only examining one stage of the influence production process, because the selection of advocacy tactics also depends upon the previous constitution of interest groups and the interactions within the overall groups' population (Lowery and Gray 2010, 495). In fact, this is exactly what the current study has examined. The empirical evidence shows that, regardless of the issue at stake and the diversity of mobilized groups within a policy sector, the number of multi-venue players is lower in Californian "hyper-pluralistic interest politics" (Lowery et al. 2008, 1232) than in Swiss neo-corporatist and consensus-based politics.

Of course, the issue-tracing approach and the related concept of multi-venue players need further empirical applications – for example, also to vertical multi-level policy

processes – to demonstrate their contribution to broad-ranging comparative studies. This multi-level dimension was not relevant in the three case studies compared here, since both California and Switzerland were political entities entitled to regulate the issues at stake and, thus, the target of group's advocacy activities. In addition, the concept of multi-venue players could be operationalized in a more fine-grained way, for instance by measuring the exact number or combination of venues visited as indicator. This should then lead to alternative empirical tests, for instance based on count models.

Furthermore, the scope conditions of our empirical results about the impact of the institutional variable on how interest groups mobilize across multiple venues also need to be considered. The difference observed between pluralist versus neo-corporatist entities should be tested again in other countries without a strong practice of direct democracy, since the opportunity to launch a popular initiative or a referendum shapes the lobbying behavior of interest groups (Weiler and Brändli 2015).

Third, individual group type informs about the nature of venues privileged by business and citizen groups. This study confirms that business groups privilege the executive venues, regardless of the political system or policy sector, whereas citizen groups privilege non-executive venues, such as parliament and the courts. The innovative finding of our study is that citizen groups are more frequently multi-venue-players than business groups. This clearly contradicts the conventional wisdom, according to which business groups are more likely than citizen groups to engage in multi-venue lobbying, mainly due to their better endowment of financial resources and political staff. Intra-organizational incentives and membership strategy might be important drivers for policy advocacy in multiple and visible venues. In addition,

upcoming studies should also include grassroots activities relying on groups' members as advocacy resources beyond money and political staff.

Finally, this study focuses on groups' advocacy, and does not focus on advocacy success or impacts of groups on policy outputs. Whereas this research scope is limited, it is worth noting that mobilization is a precondition for institutional access (Binderkrantz et al. 2017; Halpin 2014) and, eventually, preference attainment (McKay 2012) and policy influence. Forthcoming studies that apply the proposed issue-tracing approach should ideally also include the next stages of the "influence production process" (Lowery et al. 2015, 1222). This research avenue could open up interesting debates about the democratic implications of multi-venue advocacy. Indeed, this study already shows an interesting paradox, namely that a more open system (California) stimulates venue specialization while a more closed system (Switzerland) encourages venue-shopping.

In California, a policy decision taken in one venue can be reversed in another. In Switzerland, decisions taken in one venue can be amended but hardly completely reversed in another. This means that bits and pieces of policies are normally decided across different venues in Switzerland, whereas the entirety of a policy is decided in a single venue in California. Assuming that it is the goal of a group to weigh in on most decisions related to a specific policy problem, Swiss groups must mobilize in multiple venues, whereas Californian groups must merely strike hard in their preferred venue. We have thus shown that the importance of multi-venue advocacy varies across political systems: it is clearly more important in Switzerland than in California. If Swiss groups' increased likelihood to advocate across multiple venues indeed reflects the fact that Swiss venues are more integrated than those in Californian, this means that access bias to the administrative venue, for instance, cannot simply be offset by more

balanced access to another venue. Business groups have better access to the administrative venue in Switzerland, and this arguably leaves an indelible mark on the eventual policy. The decisions taken in the administrative venue are difficult to overturn. In California, however, this can be done. In other words, and from a democratic perspective, in Switzerland it would be important that no venue is biased. In California, however, bias in one venue can be offset by balanced access to another. Of course, the next question is whether multi-venue players really display a higher advocacy success rate than a single-venue player; and, ultimately, if citizen groups may increase their policy influence by being politically active in multiple venues.

To conclude, many factors explain why interest groups engage in policy advocacy. The policy issue, institutional context and groups types are all important when understanding these dynamics, but in different ways. While issues seem relevant to explain the overall distribution of groups, the institutional context and group type are relevant for advocacy activities through the different venues of the policy process. Policy-contextualized designs that consider all venues visited during an entire policy process are therefore key to further develop interest group research.

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## Tables and Figures

*Table 1: Data collected to measure groups' activities*

<i>Venue</i>	<i>Binding Decisions</i>	<i>Advocacy in California</i>	<i>Advocacy in Switzerland</i>
Executive	Veto on bill by the governor, rule implemented by the government or a rule-making agency	Written contacts with the Governor's office; comments sent on a rule proposed by an agency.	Comments sent on an ordinance proposed by the government.
Legislative	Bill accepted by the Parliament	Reported lobbying efforts; statements of support or opposition on bill proposal.	Comments sent on a proposed bill; reported contacts with MPs; participations to legislative hearings on bill proposal.
Judiciary	Ruling by a court	Party in a suit or signatory of an amicus curia brief.	Party in a suit.
Direct democracy	Popular vote on an initiative or referendum	Financial contribution to a ballot campaign committee	Membership in a ballot campaign committee.



**Table 2: Logistic regression models**

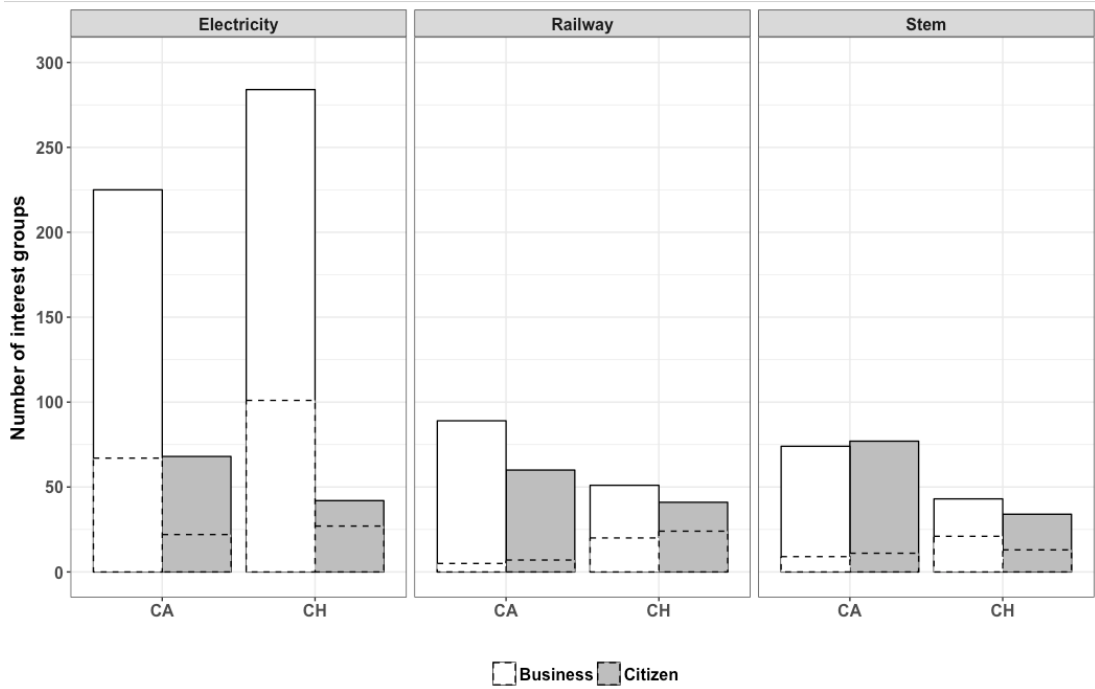
**Group mobilization across venues**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Multi-venue			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Polity: CH	0.964*** (0.138)		1.007*** (0.140)	1.433*** (0.191)
Group type: Citizen		0.373** (0.153)	0.491*** (0.159)	0.786*** (0.193)
Previous failure				0.487** (0.238)
Issue: Railways	-0.461*** (0.179)	-0.675*** (0.180)	-0.591*** (0.185)	-0.494** (0.231)
Issue: Stem	-0.389** (0.182)	-0.675*** (0.185)	-0.544*** (0.191)	-0.390 (0.237)
Constant	-1.160*** (0.120)	-0.686*** (0.089)	-1.274*** (0.127)	-1.265*** (0.245)
Observations	1,088	1,088	1,088	821
Log Likelihood	-631.529	-653.510	-626.779	-462.788
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,271.057	1,315.020	1,263.557	937.577

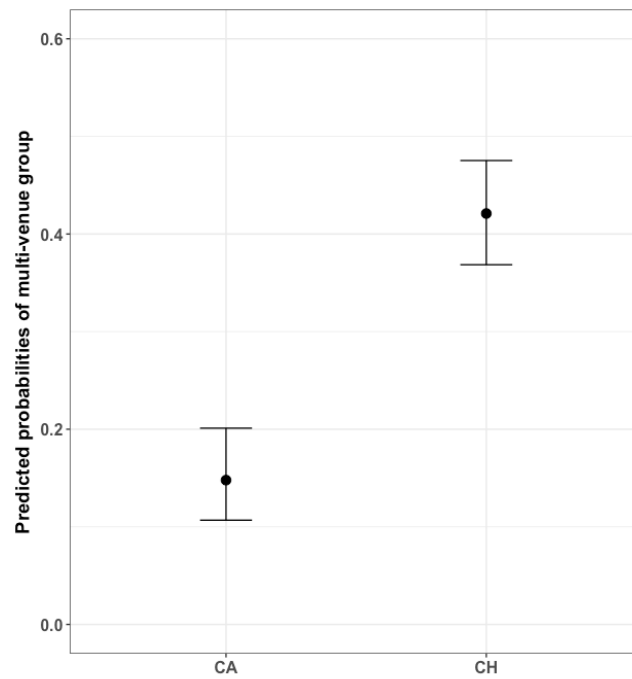
*Reference categories: Polity (California), Group type (Business), Previous failure (absence), Issue (Electricity).*

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Figure 1: Number of groups and proportion of multi-venue players



*Figure 2: Predicted probabilities of multi-venue players across political systems*



*Figure 3: Predicted probabilities of multi-venue players across group types*

