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Policy Evaluation in Parliament: Interest Groups as Catalysts

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Abstract: Members of Parliament (MPs) request policy evaluations and use the resultant findings to inform law-making and hold the government to account. Since most elected representatives have developed strong ties to interest groups, one might wonder whether these privileged relationships influence MPs' parliamentary behavior. This study investigates how MPs' affiliations to groups affects their demand for policy evaluations. Empirical evidence shows that, regardless of respective party or individual characteristics, MPs are more likely to request evaluations in those policy domains where they have a group affiliation. This effect holds even when controlling for a classical measure of MP policy specialization, such as legislative committee membership. These findings suggest that ties between MPs and specific types of interest group should be considered when explaining parliamentary behavior across different policy domains.

Point for practitioners: To influence the policymaking process, interest groups participate in consultation procedures and parliamentary hearings, they lobby elected officials and deliver policy expertise to decision-makers. These advocacy strategies are well studied. This article innovates by showing that, in addition, interest groups foster

the development of policy evaluations. MPs affiliated to an interest group active on a specific issue are likely to request policy evaluations in that policy domain. Interest groups strengthen the parliamentary demand for evaluation studies and, thus, may potentially contribute to the accountability of government and public administration.

Keywords: evaluation, citizen groups, economic groups, policy domains

Introduction

Elected Members of Parliament (MPs) are both legislators and controllers of the government. MPs require information to fulfill these law-making and oversight functions. Policy evaluation is one potential source of such information, since a policy evaluation aims to deliver new insights about the quality of a policy design, the progress of its implementation and its final impacts on economy and society. MPs are the stakeholders *par excellence* of policy evaluations (Speer et al. 2015), whose results should reduce MPs' uncertainty about policy effects and, furthermore, the information asymmetry between the government and the parliament.

Empirical studies have demonstrated that MPs activate different parliamentary instruments (e.g. questions, interpellations, motions) to initiate an evaluation, to monitor an evaluation process and to ask about concrete evaluation findings. In addition, MPs directly use the knowledge provided to improve their own decision-making and to hold

government to accountable (Jacob et al. 2015; Speer et al. 2015; Bundi 2016; Zwaan et al. 2016). Previous research delivered three findings on the factors explaining why an MP will demand or use a policy evaluation report. First, MPs' attention to evaluation is unequally distributed between policy sectors (e.g. high attention in education or health policy versus low attention in public finance or defense policy). Second, MPs belonging both to the opposition and to the political parties forming the government (coalition) request evaluations: the former need evaluative evidence to scrutinize and challenge the government, and the later instrumentalize evaluation to highlight and publicize the policy activities and performance of their own ministers. Finally, socio-economic as well as partisan characteristics of MPs (e.g. age, education, seniority in parliament, party membership) seem to have little to no influence at all on an MP's evaluation activity. In contrast, membership in an oversight committee as well as a positive attitude towards evaluation in general increases MPs' motivation to request evaluation reports (Bundi 2016).

The role of interest groups as a factor explaining the parliamentary requests of policy evaluations remains unexplored. This is an important research gap since evaluation reports are by no means the only source of policy-relevant information for MPs. Interest groups, which often represent the target groups or beneficiaries of the policies to be evaluated, are a valued source of expertise. For instance, interest groups deliver information through lobbying activities targeting individual MPs, actively

participate in official consultations procedures, and present testimonies during the hearings organized by legislative committees. By means of these advocacy strategies, interest groups provide their expertise as an 'exchange good' to access the parliamentary venue (Bouwen 2002).

At the same time, interest groups also encourage MPs to evaluate specific policies. Evaluation might be highly rewarding for an interest group if the resulting evaluation allows for keeping an issue important to the group constituency on the parliamentary agenda, revising a law in a policy direction that better fits the group preferences, or (re)legitimating the implementation tasks formally delegated to the group. Various motivations lead interest groups to get involved in parliamentary evaluation practice and this study considers the ties between MPs and groups to investigate the following research question: *What is the impact of interest groups on MPs' behavior related to evaluation request?* This question is not only relevant from an empirical and theoretical point of view. It is also highly sensitive from a normative stance. If interest groups do have a significant impact on the parliamentary evaluation practice, then this could also have major implications for the democratic accountability of policy processes and elected officials.

The article is structured as follows. The theoretical section introduces the research hypotheses. The methodological section explains why the Swiss parliament is selected as a most likely case to test these hypotheses and shows that the survey data

collected are representative. It also presents the operationalization of the main variables. The results section focuses on one major empirical finding: MPs are more likely to demand policy evaluations in the policy domains of their interest group affiliations. This effect holds even when controlling for a classical measure of policy specialization such as legislative committee membership. Finally, the concluding section put this study into a broader perspective and identifies the next research steps.

Theoretical framework

Both MPs and interest groups try to influence policy-making in order to realize the policy preferences of their respective constituencies. However, one major difference between them is that interest groups do not compete for office, they cannot make authoritative decisions and must cooperate with MPs in order to influence legislative outputs. By contrast, MPs hold formal decision-making power, but regularly interact with interest groups to increase their information resources and secure their re-election. The MPs-group linkage is frequently understood as an exchange relationship. Groups provide technical expertise about the policy issue at stake and political information about the policy position of their constituency to elected MPs, or make contributions to their electoral campaign. As a counterpart, MPs grant groups privileged access to an institutional venue (e.g. a hearing at a legislative committee) where policy decisions are

made, or even commit themselves to actively supporting legislative proposals promoted by groups (Berkhout 2013).

Surveys of both interest groups (Rasmussen and Landeboom, 2013) and MPs (Wonka, 2017) indicate that such partnerships are reported as crucial by both sides. Previous scholarship has also demonstrated that the information transmitted by groups to MPs predominantly concern the feasibility and implementation of policies (Baumgartner et al. 2009:132-133). Furthermore, when groups deliver policy-relevant information, they target parties which share their ideological preferences and policy positions. Linkages are established between likeminded groups and MPs (Hall and Deardorff, 2006:75): business groups predominantly support the legislative activities of MPs belonging to right parties, while public interest groups primarily help MPs from left parties to design workable policies (Otjes and Rasmussen, 2015; Gava et al. 2016; Wonka 2017). The present study contributes to this literature by looking more deeply at the impact of MP-grous links on parliamentary evaluation practice. More concretely, we argue that interest groups foster parliamentary evaluation demand.

Interest groups as catalysts: Beyond providing their own policy expertise and political intelligence to like-minded MPs, interest groups also try to convince 'their' MPs to demand evaluations that will deliver additional policy-relevant information. Three main reasons motivate interest groups to advocate for policy evaluation. First, evaluation might be instrumentalized as a strategic tool to monitor all stages of the

policy cycle. Evaluation requests concern the (*ex ante*) regulatory impact assessments of intended policies, the (*in itinere*) monitoring of implementation outputs or the (*ex post*) measurement of policy effects. Consequentely, the political use of evaluation findings support or hinder the agenda-setting of a new policy, and legitimate either the continuation, revision or termination of an existing policy (Eberli 2017: 3). Interest groups encourage MPs to request evaluation with the deliberate aim of preempting a new policy that contradicts the group's preferences or, on the contrary, of supporting policy outcomes that deliver benefits concentrated on their members (Wilson 1980). The following evaluation demand illustrates this strategy: "Before taking any additional measures to regulate the mortgage market and home ownership, the Federal Council (i.e. the government) shall evaluate the effects of the measures taken in the last two years in this field, and consult widely with interested parties." (Motion by MP O. Feller; 06.05.2014). This parliamentary request was introduced by a right-wing Swiss MP, who was affiliated to several business groups active in the real estate market, as a tactical move to delay any policy change towards more state regulation on the mortgage market.

Second, likeminded groups and MPs often try to build 'iron triangles' with public agencies sharing their policy preferences. If the consolidation of such policy monopoly with a trustworthy agency is not feasible, then interest groups and MPs face a classical agency problem. They have to delegate policy implementation to a public administration whose positions may differ from their own preferences. This results in a

series of common agency problems for the interest groups and their MPs. The latter, as principals, cannot be sure whether the government and its agencies implemented the policies in the way they were intended (McCubbins, 2014). Hence, MPs have strong incentives to control the government. In doing so, evaluations seem to be an instrument for MPs to oversee agencies and to provide accountability, since agencies have to report about their activities and provide information to MPs during evaluations (Bundi, 2016). As a consequence, MPs not only gather information about a certain policy, but also about how it has been implemented by the administration. For instance, an MP requested the government evaluate the legal basis of the placement of foster children, as most of the placement companies are said to focus on their own profit rather than on the children's benefit (Interpellation by MP J. Fehr, 15.12.2011). This evaluation request was strongly influenced by a group committed to the interests of foster children. Both the MP and the group feared that the well-being of the children would be in danger without a sound implementation of the policy (Bundi, 2017:5).

Third, performing a policy evaluation is costly. On the one hand, individual MPs suffer from resource scarcity (i.e. time, money) when attempting to monitor all developments in a policy field. On the other hand, groups do not always have the resources or necessary access to public records (e.g. on policy outputs) to produce their own expertise. Evaluation knowledge produced by the state has thus one clear appealing characteristic for interest groups: by piggybacking on the public sector, groups can

outsource the cost of producing policy expertise. Furthermore, if the evaluation results are eventually in line with the group's position, the policy expertise produced by the state can be presented as relatively authoritative and objective during policy struggles. Even if the evalution results does not correspond with the interest group's position, MPs still have the possibility of misusing the evaluation findings, either by manipulating or intentionally misinterpreting them (Weiss 1979). In sum, interest groups encourage MPs to demand policy evaluation to assist 'their' MPs, as policy allies, in achieving their shared policy preferences. The first hypothesis reads as follows: *The more MPs have affiliations to interest groups, the more they demand evaluation requests (H1).*

Economic versus citizen groups: We have to note, however, that interest groups are likely to differ in their incentives for relying on policy evaluations performed by the state. First, economic groups (e.g. peak-level business associations) are probably better endowed with financial resources and political staff than citizen groups (e.g. environmental or humanitarian groups). They are more likely to provide MPs with private expertise, whose content can be controlled by the group itself, privileging it over policy evaluations produced by the state. To counterbalance this comparative disadvantage, citizen groups may resort more often to the evaluation knowledge produced by the state. The incentives for piggybacking on state resources is higher for citizen groups than for economic groups.

Second, evaluation reports are often discussed in the parliamentary arena and covered by the media as well. Evaluation reports thus contribute to raising public attention about policy effects, supporting the outsider lobbying tactics privileged by cause groups rather than by sectional groups (Binderkrantz 2005:706; Kriesi et al. 2007:66). Indeed, the value of private expertise provided by business groups declines as MPs, media and citizens care about the policy under evaluation (Culpepper 2011:178). In short, the second hypothesis postulates that *MPs with affiliations to economic groups demand less evaluation requests than MPs with affiliations to citizen groups (H2).*

Policy specialization of groups and MPs: The two previous hypotheses may be further specified, since most MPs specialize in one or a few policy domains. Indeed, MPs are members of legislative committees focusing on specific policy issues and negotiate legislative proposals that are eventually adopted by the plenary assembly. Membership in a permanent legislative committee fosters the specialization of MPs (Gillian and Krehbiel 1987; Searing 1987; Strom 1998), who acquire a policy expertise that also grants them power and prestige among party peers and the media. Accordingly, policy specialists are more likely to request policy evaluation on their domain of competence than MPs who are not members of the relevant legislative committee.

Furthermore, interest groups prefer to lobby MPs sitting on the legislative committees that address the policy issues which directly concern the stakes of their group's members (Marshall 2015: 323; Bowler and Farrell 1995; Yordanova 2009). One

might thus expect a topical congruence between the competence area of a committee and the domain of activity of the groups with which MPs are affiliated. Indeed, Eichenberger and Mach (2017) showed that, within the Swiss Parliament, MPs' formal ties to groups strongly reflect the policy responsibilities of the respective committee. This substantive match is partially due to the strategic recruitment of legislative committee members by interest groups, since many ties between groups and MPs develop after MPs are assigned to specific committees.

These privileged relationships between committee members and groups are consequential. An MP who has accepted a seat in the board of a specific group arguably has a strong incentive to be proactive, within the relevant legislative committee, on the policy issues that are of interest for the constituency of 'their' group. In other words, we argue that MP-group ties have an additional impact on parliamentary evaluation requests, beyond the MP's policy specialization through committee membership, which will be introduced as a control variable in the statistical models. Within a given legislative committee, MPs with ties to groups will probably demand more policy evaluations than MPs not affiliated to groups. The third research hypothesis stipulates that *within a policy domain, MPs with more affiliations to interest groups are more likely to demand policy evaluations than MPs with lesser or no affiliations to interest groups (H3).*

In a nutshell, the theoretical framework claims that interest groups do matter for MPs' evaluation requests. However, citizen groups are more willing than economic groups to encourage MPs to demand evaluation evidence and, furthermore, each group concentrates on the policy issues that are of interest for their own members.

Research design

The present empirical study is based on a survey of all federal MPs of Switzerland, who were asked to report on the importance of evaluation activities for their parliamentary work. This section discusses three issues raised by this research design: the selection of the Swiss case, the representativeness of the MPs survey, and the empirical measurement of the key variables.

Case selection: The Swiss Parliament is a most likely case to test the research hypotheses. First, and in comparative perspective, the Swiss parliament enjoys a strong institutional position *vis-à-vis* the government in terms of agenda-setting power, competences of parliamentary committees, decision rights and instruments to control the executive (Döring 1995; Lüthi 2014; Siaroff 2003). Switzerland is, together with the Scandinavian countries, a political system where parliament's co-decision rights are strong and the government's control of the legislative agenda is weak (Vatter 2014: 298-

299). Therefore, the demands of policy evaluation are highly relevant for Swiss MPs and, more generally, for the balance of power between executive and legislative venues.

Second, policy evaluation is strongly institutionalized in Switzerland (Varone et al. 2005). A general evaluation clause was introduced in the constitution fifteen years ago: "The Federal Assembly shall ensure that federal measures are evaluated with regard to their effectiveness." (Article 170 of the Federal Constitution of April 1999). Sector-specific evaluation clauses can be found in primary or secondary legislations and urge MPs to request evaluations in various policy domains. Furthermore, parliamentary Control Committees commission the Parliamentary Control of the Administration to evaluate the legality, expediency and effectiveness of selected public policies. The Federal Audit Court is also habilitated to compare the costs and benefits of policy measures. The Swiss parliamentary evaluation culture is among the most advanced in all OECD countries (Jacob et al. 2015).

Third, the Swiss parliament is an interesting case due to its 'militia character'. For decades, the Federal Assembly was basically "composed of amateurs who combine their professional activities with their parliamentary duties" (Kriesi 2001: 60). The lack of MP resources resulting from this militia system increases MPs' dependence on interest groups (Bailer 2011; Bütikofer 2013). In fact, the information resources that Swiss MPs have at their disposal are limited from a comparative perspective (Schnapp & Harfst 2005; Vatter 2014). However, permanent legislative committees have been

institutionalized since 1992 and MPs have become increasingly competent in those policy fields covered by the specialized committees to which they belong (Pilotti 2012). If MPs are more professional nowadays, then interest groups could be expected to invest more intensively in the parliamentary venue to influence them (Eichenberger & Mach 2017; Christiansen et al. 2016).

Finally, Swiss MPs are requested to declare their formal ties (i.e. seating in a group's board) with interest groups. The register of interests is a rich source of observational data showing that the average number of interest ties per MP has more than doubled over the last decade, from 3.5 in 2000 to 7.6 in 2011 (Gava et al. 2016). In sum, the Swiss parliament offers an ideal setting for investigating the influence of interest group advocacy on MPs' evaluations requests.

Survey: The second methodological issue concerns the representativeness of the survey that we conducted in 2014 amongst the 245 federal MPs (Eberli et al. 2014). With 112 MPs answering the survey, the response rate (45.7%) is relatively high for legislative surveys in Switzerland and abroad (Bütikofer, 2013; Deschouwer and Depauw, 2014; Strebel, 2014). Table 2 (in the Appendix) compares the participants of the survey with all invited MPs regarding different characteristics. The four major parties (Swiss People's Party, Social Democrats, Liberals, and Christian Democrats) are reasonably represented in the survey (i.e. 80.4% in the survey to 80.8% in the parliament). Concerning MP's gender, language and age, the sample is relatively

balanced as well. MPs with parliamentary seniority between eight and 11 years are underrepresented in the survey sample (13.4% to 18.0%). In contrast, almost no differences can be observed regarding the committee memberships and the number of parliamentary interventions, which were submitted by the MPs. Hence, no self-selection bias invalidates the empirical analysis (Bundi et al. 2016).

Measurement of variables: The survey data measure MPs' activities related to policy evaluation. As MPs may have a broad understanding of what policy evaluation is, the survey introduced an explicit definition: "In this survey, evaluations are interpreted as studies, reports or other documents, which assess a state's measure in a systematic and transparent way with respect to their effectiveness, efficiency or fitness for purpose." The dependent variable investigated is *the demand for policy evaluations*. MPs were asked to report whether they have requested policy evaluations in different policy domains by means of parliamentary interventions during the last four years (i.e. 1 March 2010 – 20 June 2014).

To capture relationships between MPs and interest groups, we exploit the official register of MPs' interests: Swiss MPs have been required since 1985 to declare all their mandates (e.g. executive boards seats) with companies and interest groups. For the period 2012-2014, the year-based 'raw' inventory of the register allows us to identify 602 dyads between the 112 MPs who participated to the survey, and 544 interest groups. We capture two distinct but complementary dimensions of interest

groups. First, we assess the diversity of interest groups by means of two main types (Binderkrantz et al. 2015): (1) Economic groups encompass private firms, business associations (e.g. Industry and Trade Association), occupational groups (e.g. Swiss Medical Association) and unions at the sector and peak level (e.g. Federation of Trade Union). (2) Citizen groups correspond to public interest groups, whose members focus on the attainment and protection of common goods (e.g. environmental groups or humanitarian organizations) and identity groups (e.g. representing women, tenants, drivers, etc.), leisure groups (e.g. Scout groups, orchestras' support associations, Swiss Olympics, etc.), religious groups (e.g. Swiss Evangelical Alliance or abbeys' support associations) and associations representing institutional actors, such as Swiss cities.

Second, we rely on the twenty policy domains of the *Comparative Agendas Project* (http://www.comparativeagendas.net) to code the main sector of activity for each interest group. We then aggregate these data in ten broader categories of policy domains in order to match those areas with the policy domains of the parliamentary interventions: Foreign Affairs and Security, Public Finance, Welfare, Economy, Education, Energy, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, Health, Justice and Migration, and State Affairs. For example, the first evaluation request presented above showed that an MP affiliated to interest groups active in the real estate market demanded an evaluation of the regulation of the mortgage market. In this case, both the policy content of the evaluation request and the main area of activity of the interest groups affiliated to

the MP concern the same policy domain, namely 'economy'. It is worth noting that the policy domains do not overlap with the two groups types. For example, within the health policy domain, economic groups such as business associations representing private health insurances, or occupational groups representing medical professions, cohabitate with citizen groups such as public interest groups representing all patients, or identity groups representing people with specific disabilities. Table 3 in the appendix provides an overview of the policy domains.

Finally, information about the control variables stems from the MPs survey and include gender, age, education, language region, occupational background[i], party affiliation, Lower and Upper House, professionalization, membership in oversight and legislative committee, and parliament experience. Table 4 in the Appendix presents the operationalization of all variables.

In order to assess the impact of group affiliations in specific policy domains as formulated in H3, the survey data set has been stacked in a matrix that derives from a normal one, as the units of analysis do not represent a single MP, but an MP x Policy domain combinations (Van der Eijk et al. 2006). Hence, each MP is represented by as many cases as there are policy domains (i.e. ten domains in this case). An entry was generated for every policy domain that indicated whether a MP has submitted a parliamentary request in a certain policy domain. By using this approach, we can estimate the influence of groups in different policy domains. Since the data is nested in

two different levels (MP, policy domain), the study uses a multi-level analysis in order to estimate the models. Moreover, we assume that the variance of the second level is varying, which is why we use random intercept model to test variables on the two levels. As the outcome of the endogenous variable is binary, we use a logistic regression model. The following model is used to estimate the MP's likelihood to submit a parliamentary request:

$$Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0ij} + e_{ij} \quad (1)$$

Where *Y* is likelihood of an MP (*i*) to demand an evaluation in a policy domain (*j*), while γ_{00} stands for the random intercept and u_{0ij} for the overall regression slopes. e_{ij} refers to the random residual error term at two levels.

Results

More than 50% of the 112 MPs participating in the survey demanded an evaluation in the four years prior to the survey (i.e., between 2010 and 2014). About 20% of the MPs submitted one parliamentary request to demand an evaluation. One third of MPs even submitted several requests. However, the evaluation demand is unequally distributed amongst the policy domains. While the MPs frequently demanded an evaluation in the

policy domains Welfare and Economy, the areas Education, Energy, and Public Finances were less often targeted by parliamentary requests.

Table 1 about here

Model 1 tests the whether the number of interest groups linked to a MP has an influence on the general evaluation demand. Results indicate that the amount of ties to distinct interest groups does not influence an MP's likelihood to request an evaluation. The first research hypothesis is thus not supported by empirical evidence. In contrast, some socio-economic characteristics influence MPs' likelihood to submit parliamentary requests in order to evaluate a policy measure. Women are more likely to demand evaluations than men, so are MPs from the minoriarian French and Italian speaking regions. Moreover, MPs with an independent work logic (e.g. farmers, company owners) are less likely to demand evaluations than MPs with dependent work logic professions. By contrast, parliamentary characteristics (i.e. professionalization, experience, oversight committee, party affiliation) do not affect evaluation demand.

Model 2 investigates the impact of MP ties to economic groups versus citizen groups. The estimates of model 2 show that ties to economic or citizen groups do not influence whether an MP demands an evaluation. This result does not provide evidence for the second hypothesis.

Finally, model 3 presents the results of impact of interest affiliations in specific policy domains. In comparison to policy domains in which MPs do not have any ties to interest groups, MPs with the maximum ties of interest groups (n=15) have almost a 53.8% higher probability to demand an evalution in this very policy field. Figure 1 illustrates this empirical finding. The horizontal axis refers to the number of ties in a policy domain, while the y-axis shows the predicted probability to demand an evaluation regarding different policy fields. In order to control for the legislative committee effect, a traditional measure of MP policy specialization, we distinguish between MPs who are member in legislative committee of a policy domain (dashed line) and those who are not (full line). Within policy domains, MPs with affiliations to interest groups have a 30%, respectively 50% higher probability to demand evaluations than MPs with no affiliations. Although legislative committee members have a higher probability to demand an evaluation, the effect also increases with the number of ties to groups in a specific policy domain. Ties to interest groups in a certain policy field thus have a positive effect on evaluation requests in this specific policy domain, even though the effect of committee membership is more substantial. The committee effect confirms previous studies showing that MPs want to build a reputation in their area of legislative specialization (Proksch and Slapin 2011). However, the interest group effect provides new evidence about the motives and incentives driving legislators' demand for policy evaluations. Bundi (2017) shows that MPs' motives to demand policy evaluations is

strongly linked to committee membership. While oversight committee members more often demand evaluations in order to obtain information on a policy, legislative committee members seek to change policy outcomes. Our findings suggest that, through their ties with MPs, interest groups may influence the policy agenda by means of policy evaluations. The evidence indicates that the parliamentary behavior of MPs is shaped by their links with interest groups. To sum up, the analysis provides strong support for the third hypothesis.

Figure 1 about here

To sum up, the empirical analysis shows that MP-group ties influence parliamentary behavior. However, it is the specialization of groups in specific policy domains that is crucial for the relationship between MPs' affiliations to groups and evaluation demand. As expected by the third hypothesis, MPs demand more evaluations in those policy domains which are most relevant for their groups. Contrary to the first theoretical expectation, the number of ties to different groups does not determine whether a MP will demand an evaluation. Moreover, the type of group (economic vs. citizen groups) to which MPs are affiliated does not seem affect the demand of policy evaluations by MPs.

Conclusion

Previous scholarship on the parliamentary evaluation practice showed party politics does not explain why some MPs are more likely than others to ask for policy evaluations (Speer et al. 2015, Bundi 2016). The present study corroborates this finding. Furthermore, it has the added value of proposing an innovative explanation of MPs' motivation to submit an evaluation request, namely the linkages between interest groups and MPs. It is argued that MPs interact with groups sharing their political priorities and policy preferences. Both partners focus on the same policy domain and, accordingly, monitor the legislative developments that affect their respective constituencies. Groups assist MPs to request policy evaluation in specific policy domains and, thus, to perform their oversight function. They provide policy expertise and political intelligence as well as financial resources to MPs who, as their counterpart, introduce evaluation requests about policy issues that are important for the groups' constituencies. This claim is supported by empirical evidence from the Swiss Parliament. The positive effect of linkages between MPs and interest groups on evaluation demand in specific policy fields remains present even when controlling for committee membership.

Some policy domains are characterized by the strong presence of economic groups, while citizen groups populate others (Coen and Katsaitis 2013). The very nature of policy domains affects the density and diversity of MP-groups ties and, eventually, that parliamentary behavior related to policy evaluation. The importance of

systematically comparing policy domains has been acknowledged by scholars working on the 'ecology of groups population' (Gray and Lowery 1996) or on "Chameleon pluralism" (Richardson and Coen; 2009: 338); it should also be put on the research agenda of parliamentary evaluation studies. This research avenue is also relevant for normative debates on the quality of democratic representation, policy responsiveness and accountability. Indeed, the electoral delegation chain might be broken if, for instance, MPs are closer to the policy preferences of 'their' interest groups than those of their electoral constituency (Giger and Klüver 2016).

This exploratory article has three limitations that could be overcome by upcoming studies. First, it was argued that Switzerland is a most likely case to test the three research hypotheses since the parliament is institutionally strong *vis-à-vis* the government, non-professional MPs interact intensively with interest groups, and the policy evaluation culture is well developed. Swiss institutions are an enabling context for the impact of MP-group ties on parliamentary interventions asking for policy evaluations. To assess the external validity of the empirical results presented here, this study should be replicated in Westminster systems, highly professionalized parliaments and countries with a less developed policy evaluation practice.

Second, interest groups are one information source among many for MPs. The policy expertise provided by parliamentary committees, MPs' party staff and civil servants is also relevant for the law-making and oversight functions that MPs fulfill.

The influence of interest groups on the parliamentary evaluation practice should thus not be overestimated before these additional information sources are also taken into consideration.

Finally, this study has investigated under which conditions MPs rely on parliamentary instruments to initiate a policy evaluation process. The next logical step would be to scrutinize if these parliamentary requests translate into concrete evaluation mandates and, eventually, if MPs use the findings of the produced evaluation reports to improve legislation and/or to increase the government's accountability. MP-group ties could also play an important role to foster – or, on the contrary – hinder such policy feedback loops. If the policy recommendations from an evaluation report run against the preferences of an interest group, then one can reasonably expect this group to develop an advocacy strategy with counter-arguments to pre-empt the use of evaluation results. So, it would make sense to compare the relative strength of interest groups as evaluation entrepreneurs versus veto players trying to block policy-making based on empirical evaluation evidence.

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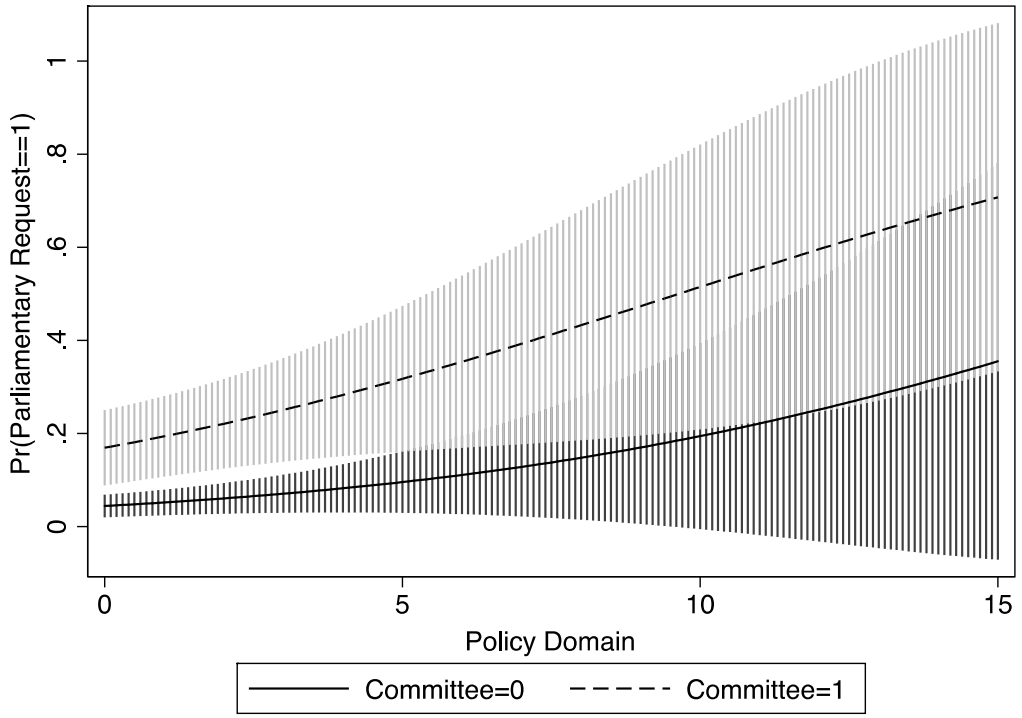
Figures and tables

Table 1: Individual and Policy Domain Random Effects Models

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Women	1.280**	1.257**	0.619**
	(0.532)	(0.538)	(0.251)
Age	0.006	0.002	0.004
	(0.024)	(0.026)	(0.012)
Education	-0.028	-0.029	-0.001
	(0.111)	(0.111)	(0.055)
Latin	1.030*	1.014*	0.529**
	(0.533)	(0.537)	(0.248)
Independent Work Logic	-0.920**	-0.924**	-0.303
	(0.461)	(0.463)	(0.228)
Center-Right Party	0.445	0.466	0.256
	(0.488)	(0.502)	(0.243)
Upper House	-0.492	-0.474	-0.708*
	(0.739)	(0.750)	(0.400)
Professionalization	-0.367	-0.433	-0.565
	(1.536)	(1.535)	(0.770)
Parliament Experience	-0.026	-0.029	0.001
	(0.052)	(0.053)	(0.026)
Oversight Committee	0.034	0.093	0.382
	(0.495)	(0.507)	(0.249)
Committee			1.480***
			(0.230)
Total Interest Group	0.069	0.089	-0.016
	(0.055)	(0.068)	(0.030)
Economic Group		-0.332	0.067
		(0.661)	(0.321)
Citizen Group		-0.164	0.388
		(0.745)	(0.425)
Policy Domain			0.165***
			(0.064)
Constant	-0.692***	-0.198	-3.370***

	(1.717)	(1.954)	(0.988)
Residual Variance			
Between φ (Policy Fields)			0.237
Observations	95	95	950
Log Likelihood	-57.532	-57.360	-298.741
LR χ^2	16.54	16.82	
Pseudo R^2		0.128	
Wald χ^2			65.12***

Figure 1: Predicted Probabilities to Demand an Evaluation for the Policy Domain



Note: Predicted probabilities to demand an evaluation with a parliamentary request, as a function of the policy domain and members of a legislative committee (dashed line) and non-member of a legislative committee (full line). The values are calculated for MPs with the following attributes: men, Center-right party, German-speaking, independent work logic, non-oversight committee, and Lower House. All other variables are at the median.

Appendices

Table 2: Representativeness of the MPs survey

	MPs invited to the survey (N=245)	MPs participated to the survey (N=112)
Party		
Swiss People's Party	58 (23.7%)	21 (18.8%)
Social Democrats	57 (23.3%)	32 (28.6%)
Liberals	41 (16.7%)	18 (16.1%)
Christian Democrats	42 (17.1%)	19 (17.0%)
Other	47 (19.2%)	22 (19.6%)
Gender		
Male	174 (71.0%)	74 (66.1%)
Female	71 (29.0%)	38 (33.9%)
Language		
German	177 (72.2%)	77 (68.8%)
French	57 (23.3%)	28 (25.0%)
Italian	11 (4.5%)	7 (6.3%)
Age (in years)		
< 35	15 (6.1%)	8 (7.1%)
35-49	62 (25.3%)	29 (25.9%)
50-64	141 (57.6%)	60 (53.6%)
> 64	27 (11.0%)	15 (13.4%)
Parliament Seniority (in years)		
< 4	91 (37.1%)	45 (40.2%)
4-7	61 (24.9%)	29 (25.9%)
8-11	44 (18.0%)	15 (13.4%)
> 11	49 (20.0%)	23 (20.5%)
Committee		

Legislative	152 (62.0%)	68 (60.7%)
Oversight	93 (38.0%)	44 (39.3%)
Parliamentary Interventions		
< 10	47 (19.2%)	23 (20.5%)
10-19	65 (26.5%)	31 (27.7%)
20-29	45 (18.4%)	20 (17.9%)
> 30	88 (35.9%)	38 (33.9%)

Reading example: 71 female MPs were invited to the survey, which refers to 29.0% of all contacted MPs. 38 female MPs have participated in the survey, which refers to 33.9% of all contacted MPs. Hence, female MPs are slightly overrepresented in the survey sample (29.0% < 33.9%)

Table 3: Policy Domains

Policy Domains	**CAP Domains**
Economy (Labor, Services, I ndustry, Trade, Craft, Agriculture, Forestry)	Domestic Commerce, Foreign Trade, Agriculture
Security/Foreign Affairs (Military, Civil Defense, Police, International Relations)	Defense, Foreign Affairs
Public Finances (Taxes, Subsidies, Cuts)	Macroeconomy
Welfare (Familiy, Social Insurance, Social Assistance)	Social Welfare
Education (School System, Sciences, Research, Culture)	Education, Technology, Culture
Energy (Electricity, Water Power, Nuclear Energy, Renewable Energy**)**	Energy
Infrastructure (Building, Housing, Environment, Telecommunication Private and Public Transport, Spacial Planning)	Environment, Transportation, Housing, Public Lands
Health (Healthcare Provision, Food, Veterinary, Health Promotion and Prevention)	Health
State (People, Political Institutions, Cantons, Municipalities, Church)	Government operations
Justice/Migration (Civil and Criminal Law, Immigration, Asylum, Integration, Naturalization)	Civil Rights, Law and Crime, Immigration

Table 4: Operationalization of the Variables

Variable	Operationalization
Dependent Variable	
Evaluation Demand	"How frequently did you propose a parliamentary request in order to examine a state measure with regard to implementation and impact?" Dummy: 0 (never) - 1 (at least once)
Independent Variable	
Ties to interest groups	Self-reported affiliation to interest groups Dummy for group type: Economic (Trade, Unions, and Professional associations) and Citizen (Public interest and others) Categorial scales for policy domain: Economic (Foreign Affairs and Security, Public Finance, Welfare, Economy) and Social Issues (Education, Energy, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, Health).
Economic Group	Tie to an ecomic interest group Dummy : 0 for no, 1 for yes
Citizen Group	Tie to a citzen interest group Dummy : 0 for no, 1 for yes
Gender	Gender of the MP Dummy: 0 for male, 1 for female
Age	Age of the MP Continous Scale
Education	MP's highest degree of education Ordinal scale (1-8): Compulsory school, vocational school, vocational baccalaureat, higher vocational education, professional education and training college, pedagogoical university, university of applied sciences, university
Language	Spoken Language of the MP Dummy: 0 for German, 1 for Latin (French and Italian)
Occupational Background (Oesch-Index)	Occupational Background of MP Categorial scale: Self-Employed, Technical work logic, organizational work logic, and interpersonal work logic. Classification based on employment situation, number of employees and occupational position.
Parliamentary Group	Parliamentary Group of the MP

	Dummy: 0 left parties (Social Democrats, Green Party) 1 for center-right parties (Liberals, Christian Democrats, Green Liberal Party, Conservative Democratic Party, Evangelical People's Party, Christian Social Party, Swiss People's Party, Ticino League, Geneva Citizens' Movement, Independent)
Upper House	Membership in the Swiss' Upper House
	Dummy: 0 for yes, 1 for no
Professionalization	Over the last year, what is the amount of time spent for your parliament mandate, in
	percentage of a full-time job?
	Continuous scale
Parliament Experience	Years of a MP in a federal parliament
	Continuous scale
Oversight Committee	Membership in an oversight committee (control committee, finance committee)
	Dummy: 0 for no, 1 for yes
Commitee	Membership in a legislative committee of the policy domain Dummy : 0 for no, 1 for yes

[i] Oesch (2006) distinguishes four different types of work logics: Independent (self-employed), technical work logic (work process determined by technical production), organizational work logic (bureaucratic division of labour), and interpersonal work logic (service-based on face-to-face exchange).