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More equal than others: assessing economic and citizen groups' access across policy-making venues.

Abstract: This study assesses whether economic interest groups (business associations and trade unions) enjoy better access to the policy-making process than citizen groups. It compares the interest group population in Switzerland with those sets of groups present in the administrative and legislative venues. The study devises an aggregate measure of access to policy-making as a whole, which weights access according to different venues' importance. It theorizes the granting of access as a sequential process. Policy-makers first decide whether to grant any access at all (selection stage) and then decide on the amount of access (allocation stage). Empirical evidence shows that policy-makers do not discriminate between economic and citizen groups at the selection stage, but that they subsequently grant more access to economic groups. These findings qualify existing research, which interprets economic groups' superior access as the resilience of neo-corporatism, while also questioning the pluralizing effect of multiple policy-making venues.

Keywords: interest groups, neo-corporatism, pluralism, access bias, cumulative measure

Introduction

Over recent decades, many European countries have witnessed a striking increase in citizen groups that defend broadly shared causes, i.e. causes representative of the population in general (such as environmental protection, human rights, health care), instead of the more limited constituencies represented by economic groups. Such pluralization in interest group (IGs) population is also seen in neo-corporatist settings, such as Denmark or Switzerland (Binderkrantz, Fisker, & Pedersen, 2016; Mach, 2015). This might suggest that economic IGs no longer hold a monopoly of interest representation in neo-corporatist countries, where business interest associations and trade unions (i.e. economic IGs) traditional used to be the principal vectors of representation alongside political parties. Thus, the question arises whether this pluralisation of the IG population actually means that economic and citizen IGs enjoy equal access to the policy-making process today. This paper sets out to answering this research puzzle.

Despite the increase in number of citizen groups, some existing research points to the 'resilience' of neo-corporatism: various authors show that economic groups enjoy more access to the administrative venue than citizen groups in traditionally neo-corporatist systems (Fraussen & Beyers, 2016; Binderkrantz & Christiansen, 2015; Fraussen, Beyers, & Donas, 2015). This is not necessarily attributed to economic groups' ability to "constrain and discipline their own members", which, according to Crouch (1983, p. 452), represents the "heart of neo-corporatism". Rather, scholars draw attention to a range of factors: a certain neo-corporatist heritage; the habit of policy-makers to deal primarily with economic IGs; economic groups' ability to affect economic production; or the dominance of inside lobbying. These scholars thus echo the concern that neo-corporatism, initially intended to produce a demanded public good, has become increasingly exclusionary of non-economic (non-producer) interests. Streeck (2006), for

instance, warns of the danger of neo-corporatism evolving into a form of 'insiderism'.

However, scholars who discard the (arguably) parochial focus on the administrative venue show that citizen groups enjoy more access to the legislative venue than business interest associations (Binderkrantz, Christiansen, & Pedersen, 2015; Beyers, 2004). Binderkrantz et al. (2015) therefore speak of 'privileged pluralism' with respect to the Danish system of interest intermediation. 'Privileged' because rich groups enjoy more access than poorer groups. 'Pluralism' because rich economic groups and rich citizen groups both enjoy similar (levels of) access. We thus find ourselves in a curious situation: scholars highlight both the neo-corporatist and pluralist character of European systems of interest intermediation. Moreover, scholars tend to rely on the 'resource-exchange model of interest representation' (Berkhout, 2013) but nevertheless reach different conclusions.

This article seeks to provide some clarification of this apparent paradox, which we argue derives from treating access to different venues as interchangeable. If citizen groups lack access to the administrative venue, they are considered as able to 'make up for it' by gaining access to the legislative venue. In many political systems, however, the different branches of government do not enjoy equal power; we must therefore weight access according to venues' importance in the policy process. We hence propose a *cumulative* measure of access, which also weights access according to venues' relative importance. In order to avoid confusion, we suggest that the granting of access be understood as a sequential decision-making process. When deciding to grant access, policy-makers first decide whether to grant any access at all, and then they decide how much access to grant. Focusing only on the first step means not accounting for different levels of access. Inversely, by only concentrating on the second step we eschew the possibility that policy-makers only grant pro forma access to some groups. We hence

suggest studying access through Hurdle models.

We define interest groups as membership organizations which usually do not seek public office, but which attempt to influence policy-making processes and outputs by engaging in policy advocacy (Beyers, Eising, & Maloney, 2008, p. 1106). In line with the definition proposed by Binderkrantz and Pedersen (2017), we hold that access implies that groups have been able to pass a threshold controlled by institutional gatekeepers. Access implies that the information sent by IGs is actually received by decision-makers. We believe that a focus on IGs' access is warranted for at least three reasons. First, access represents a "facilitating intermediate objective" to exercising influence (Truman, 1968, p. 264). Whereas institutional access is different from policy influence, it seems plausible to assume that most groups cannot be influential without making themselves heard.¹ Secondly, David Lowery argues that the two initial steps of the "influence production process", namely groups' mobilization and their organizational survival, are relatively unbiased in most national interest systems (Lowery et al., 2015, p. 1222). By contrast, resource inequalities among groups might strongly distort the subsequent access and influence stages. Thirdly, whereas we agree that, for most groups, institutional access represents only a necessary but not a sufficient condition for policy influence, the access variable has the main advantage – compared to the influence variable – of being empirically observable (Binderkrantz & Pedersen, 2017). Researchers can find traces of group access and may rely on observational data, such as the number of groups holding mandates in advisory committees or MPs' affiliations to groups. Observational data also has an added value since survey data about self-declared activities, success and influence

¹ Culpepper and Reinke (2014) show that even structural power can require the exercise of agency.

are potentially affected by misreporting.

The article is structured as follows. First, the theoretical section discusses the contradiction between research pointing to the resilience of neo-corporatism on the one hand, and to the pluralization of (formerly) neo-corporatist systems on the other. It also presents our two main hypotheses: (1) resources increase cumulative access, and (2) economic groups enjoy more cumulative access than citizen groups. Second, the methodological section describes the comparison between the overall IG population in Switzerland in 2010 and those sets of groups present in the administrative and legislative venues in the 2010-2011 period. Third, the results section highlights our major empirical finding: economic groups enjoy more access to political decision-making processes than citizen groups. Finally, the concluding section places our study in a wider perspective to identify the next research steps.

Theoretical framework

This section juxtaposes two competing perspectives on whether group type affects access. The first perspective focuses on the administrative venue and understands neo-corporatism as exclusionary (of citizen groups). The second perspective studies access across venues and considers different group types to enjoy roughly equal access. We propose to account for the importance of different venues and formulate our main research hypotheses.

Neo-corporatist resilience

As seen in the U.S. (Berry, 1999), many European countries have witnessed a significant increase in the number of citizen groups since the beginning of the 1970s (Binderkrantz et al., 2016 on Denmark; Mach, 2015, p. 27 on Switzerland). Citizen groups are considered by researchers to take on what could be termed broadly shared interests,

concerns that speak to large segments of society, and which are fairly distinct from citizens' purely professional concerns. This rise and consolidation of citizen groups coincides with the decline of neo-corporatist structures of interest intermediation, which have been historically strongly present across many European countries. In a certain sense, the rise and consolidation of citizen groups reflects the crumbling neo-corporatist monopolies of representation (Binderkrantz & Christiansen, 2015, p. 1025). Economic IGs (business interest associations and trade unions) find it increasingly difficult to integrate such broad societal concerns largely championed by citizen groups (Häusermann, Mach, & Papadopoulos, 2004). Several scholars point to trade unions' difficulties in maintaining their membership (Öberg et al., 2011). However, the ability to exert control over their members represented the most important bargaining chip of economic groups when negotiating public policies with state authorities (Crouch, 1983; Schmitter, 1974). With economic groups no longer able to engage in such bargaining, scholars note the decline of neo-corporatist structures of intermediation, namely expert or advisory committees (Beetschen & Rebmann, 2016; Christiansen & Rommetvedt, 1999; Rommetvedt, Thesen, Christiansen, & Nørgaard, 2012), while others suggest that economic groups in general have lost power (Sciarini, 2014). As explained by Öberg et al. (2011), neo-corporatist political exchange has been 'disrupted', or at least rendered considerably more complicated.

Nevertheless, several more recent 'revisionist' studies point to the resilience of neo-corporatism. They show that economic IGs enjoy 'privileged' access to the administrative venue. Such studies typically compare (transparency) registers of IGs, as a proxy for the overall population of politically active groups, to the distribution of groups granted seats on advisory committees. For instance, Rasmussen and Gross (2015) examine groups' access to the advisory committees of the European Commission.

Similarly, but for the sub-national case of Flanders, Fraussen and Beyers (2016) identify insiders as those groups invited by the government to become members of the Strategic Advisory Councils (see also Fraussen et al., 2015). In Denmark, Binderkrantz et al. (2015) also compare the overall group population to the set of groups holding seats on public committees (see also Binderkrantz & Christiansen, 2015).

These studies, which focus on different institutional contexts and levels of government, share a common finding. Economic groups are more likely than citizen groups to gain access to the administrative venue.² The privileged access of economic IGs to advisory committees (situated within the administrative venue) is generally interpreted as evidence in favor of the continued existence of neo-corporatist arrangements. Fraussen and Beyers (2016), for instance, highlight that “the community of policy insiders in Flanders strongly reflects Belgium’s neo-corporatist and consociational legacy”. Similarly, Fraussen et al. (2015, p. 584) note that “a limited number of mostly economic interests can be considered rather privileged partners of government”; the authors thus speak about the “resilience of neo-corporatist patterns in the Flemish advisory system”. In a similar vein, Binderkrantz and Christiansen (2015, pp. 1027-1028) conclude that “corporatism has not withered away” in Denmark.³

The aforementioned studies advance different rationales for why economic groups enjoy more access compared to citizen groups. First, Binderkrantz and Christiansen (2015, p. 1027) argue that economic groups enjoy more control over their members than

² Similarly, if the focus is put on levels of access rather than a simple binary measure of access, economic groups are found to enjoy more access than citizen groups (see, in particular, Binderkrantz & Christiansen, 2015; Fraussen, Beyers, & Donas, 2015).

³ It is important to point out, however, that neither early scholars of neo-corporatism nor those pointing to its demise have considered better access for economic groups (as compared to citizen groups) a constitutive feature of neo-corporatism.

citizen groups, despite citizen groups' organizational consolidation. To some extent, this questions the central claim behind the literature that focuses on the decline of neo-corporatism, namely economic groups' inability to engage in political exchange. Secondly, and more in line with the resource-exchange model of interest intermediation, researchers point to economic groups' ability to focus their lobbying activities on inside venues. That is, economic groups that are less constrained by the imperative of demonstrating activity to a diffuse constituency through outside lobbying can focus on the production of expertise (Dür & Mateo, 2013; Gais & Walker, 1991). This provides them with better access compared to citizen groups. However, there is nothing very neo-corporatist about this argument: it applies in both pluralist and neo-corporatist settings. And yet, as traditional economic groups remain in a powerful position, less so regarding state authorities and more so concerning other IG types, scholars continue to assert the resilience of neo-corporatism.

Finally, all studies demonstrate that organizational resources are a strong predictor of groups' access to the administrative venue. The size of the lobbying budget and/or the number of staff explain the number of seats obtained within advisory committees. A strong resource endowment allows groups to provide more technical expertise to policy-makers and thus to be invited as professionalized and credible partners for designing policies and drafting legislation.

Pluralization

We now argue that the 'neo-corporatist resilience' hypothesis derives from a somewhat parochial focus on the administrative venue alone. In fact, even though research on IGs' access to the legislative venue is less developed than research on the administrative venue, some recent findings suggest that economic groups do not enjoy more access than citizen groups.

Indeed, several studies explore the lobbying contacts between party groups and IGs (De Bruycker, 2016; Marshall, 2015). Even though lobbying refers to group *presence* rather than access, IGs' activities can reveal the access enjoyed in a particular venue. Binderkrantz and Krøyer (2012, pp. 132-133), for instance, show that citizen groups engage more in legislative lobbying than economic groups. Binderkrantz et al. (2015, p. 102) actually measure access to the legislative venue in Denmark. In particular, the authors measure whether letters sent by groups to parliamentary standing committees lead to a concrete follow-up action, namely a question asked by MPs to the minister or government, or whether IGs participate in meetings with standing committees. In contrast to the administrative venue, they show that both identity and public IGs enjoy more access to legislative committees than business interest associations (Binderkrantz et al., 2015, p. 107) when controlling for financial resources, of course. With respect to EU institutions, Beyers (2004, pp. 230-231) shows that both economic and citizen groups (which he terms specific and diffuse interests respectively) enjoy roughly equal access.

In order to explain diverging access patterns across venues and arenas, these scholars mostly explore how the value of different resources (expertise, legitimacy) varies across venues. Already some decades ago, Salisbury (1984, p. 65) claimed that in publicly visible venues, external actors are drawn in for their "legitimizing capacity". Economic groups enjoy more access to the administrative venue because they can provide non-elected policy-makers with policy expertise. On the other hand, MPs are more sensitive to public opinion, and groups' legitimacy is thus the key to gaining access. Citizen groups are considered to represent more legitimate interlocutors than sectional groups. Others refer to citizen groups' capacity to make "claims of broad public appeal" (Binderkrantz et al., 2015).

In brief, researchers point to the *pluralist* character of the institutional systems under scrutiny. Beyers (2004, p. 218) argues that “the EU’s mixed institutional setting, with its multiple access points, contributes to a diversified supply of access”. Similarly, Binderkrantz et al. (2015, p. 109) conclude that the “provision of access to different group types on different political arenas can be seen as a pluralist trait”. Others discuss the ‘pluralization’ of different (formerly) neo-corporatist systems of interest intermediation when focusing on the citizen groups’ access to parliament in a diachronic perspective (Christiansen, Mach, & Varone, 2017; Gava et al., 2017; Rommetvedt et al., 2012).

Hypotheses

The move towards studying access across the most important policy venues and arenas is crucial when we want to scrutinize the conclusions drawn about the extent to which a given system of interest intermediation is seen as either pluralist or neo-corporatist (as in exclusionary of citizen groups). However, the conclusions drawn are likely to depend on two further, hitherto unexplored, issues: (1) whether access to different venues is considered as being *interchangeable*, and (2) whether the granting of access represents a sequential decision-making process.

First, scholars have largely neglected discussion about the various venues’ importance during the policy process. In comparison to economic groups, citizen groups might enjoy less access to the administrative venue, and more access to the legislative venue. But does this indeed translate into pluralism, where different groups enjoy largely equal chances of making themselves heard? Of course, the answer depends on the respective effect sizes of group type in the administrative and legislative venues. It also rests on the relative importance of the different venues in the policy-making process. We also find a certain blind spot in the literature on venue-shopping, which has made a rather positive assessment of the existence of multiple venues, which allow groups

disadvantaged in one venue to seek redress in another (Beyers & Kerremans, 2011; Holyoke, 2003). This positive assessment is based on the assumption that decisions taken in one venue can indeed be reversed in another. This assumption is likely to hold in a multi-level context, since rules established at a higher level most often take precedence over those at a lower level. When focusing on different branches (rather than levels) of government, however, it crucially depends on whether powers are strictly separated. In pluralist systems of checks and balances this is likely to be the case. However, many parliaments are constrained to amending legislation developed in the administrative venue, rather than developing it from scratch.⁴ Approaches concentrating on IGs' venue-shopping activities cannot control for different venues' importance. We intend to do so by weighting groups' access according to the importance of the venue.

Secondly, scholars have thus far theorized the granting of access as the consequence of a single decision: policy-makers either decide to include or exclude groups or they decide to listen to them more or less. We believe, in contrast, that the granting of access resembles a sequential decision-making process: policy-makers first decide whether to listen at all, and then how much to listen. Hence, the decision whether to listen at all is distinct and it takes place prior to the decision to grant more or less access. Acting on a maxim of unbiased representation, policy-makers might first cast a wide net and grant some (pro forma) access which does not depend on group type or resources. In a second step, however, group type and resources might actually separate the core insiders from those on the periphery.

⁴ Varone et al. (2018) have shown that Swiss IGs are far more likely than their Californian counterparts to lobby in multiple venues because decisions taken in one venue cannot simply be reversed in a another.

Both the supporters of the neo-corporatist resilience hypothesis as well as those pointing to the pluralization of neo-corporatist systems of interest intermediation share a similar, if not identical, theoretical reasoning: IGs' access to the political system largely depends upon so-called access goods: policy expertise, political information, legitimacy. This is commonly termed the 'resource exchange model of access' (Berkhout, 2013; Bouwen, 2002).⁵ Researchers reach different conclusions, however, because they focus on different venues. In the following, we develop our two main (sets of) hypotheses, derived from this basic resource-exchange model.

First, the classical 'resources count' hypothesis postulates that groups with more staff are in a better position to deliver the necessary 'access goods' to policy-makers (Bouwen, 2002). Financial resources allow the hiring of policy experts, who can transform technical expertise into concise, digestible information. In the legislative venue, groups better endowed with advocacy resources can produce additional information for likeminded MPs: these 'legislative subsidies' comprise political intelligence about the law-making process, such as for instance procedural advice to monitor the strategic move of other MPs or groups, and signals about citizens' positions on the policy issue at stake (Hall and Deardorff 2006: 75). Therefore, we expect that *groups hiring more employees enjoy more access to both the administrative and legislative venues* (H1).

Secondly, and concerning to group type, we develop three separate hypotheses. For the *administrative* venue, we expect *economic groups to enjoy more access than citizen groups* (2a). Economic groups do not need to capture the attention of a diffuse

⁵ This must not, however, be confused with neo-corporatist "political exchange", which refers to favorable public policies granted to IGs in return for their members' consent.

constituency (Dür & Mateo, 2013, p. 664; Gais & Walker, 1991, p. 105) and can, therefore, invest more resources than citizen groups into inside lobbying and the production of the policy expertise required by civil servants. Furthermore, business interest associations, which represent the vast majority of the economic groups, largely prefer the low-salience surrounding of the administrative venue and are thus likely to make a particularly heavy push for access to this venue (Culpepper, 2011). Since neo-corporatist compromises used to be primarily negotiated within the administrative venue, bureaucrats might exclude citizen groups simply because they are not accustomed to taking into account a broader set of groups.

For the *legislative* venue, we expect citizen groups to enjoy more access than economic groups (2b). Citizen groups can easily make credible “claims of broad public appeal” (Binderkrantz et al., 2015, p. 99). The inclusion of groups which, by definition, represent the opinion of large segments of society, helps to increase the legitimacy of public policies. De Bruycker (2016) has shown that group type does *not* determine whether groups present expertise rather political information (notably, such claims of broad public appeal). This leads us to add nuance to the original argument of Binderkrantz et al. (2015). Alongside Schattschneider (1960, p. 27), we concur that “public discussion must be carried on in public terms”. Both economic and citizen groups must make representative claims, but we hypothesize that citizen groups make more *credible* representative claims. It must be borne in mind, however, that economic groups’ ability to focus on the production of insider resources (expertise) is likely to provide them with substantial access to the legislative venue as well, particularly if the focus is placed on legislative committees. Inversely, citizen groups’ legitimating capacity represents a less attractive asset to bureaucrats who do not stand to be re-elected. Put differently, whereas economic groups are likely to face a disadvantage within the legislative venue, this is less

pronounced than that faced by citizen groups within the administrative venue. Therefore, *we expect economic groups to enjoy more cumulative access than citizen groups (2c)*. In addition, it must be emphasized that the administrative venue enjoys more importance in many parliamentary systems. Even though the Swiss Parliament has been revitalized through the introduction of standing committees, Sciarini (2014) shows it is still considered less important.

Methods and Data

Case selection

The present study focuses on the Swiss case; decision-making processes in Switzerland are characterized by strong integration of the administrative and legislative venues. Decisions taken within the administrative venue, notably within so-called 'extra-parliamentary committees' (i.e. preparatory experts' committees), are not easily overturned within Parliament, although the latter has become increasingly critical towards dispatches submitted by the Government. IGs cannot refrain from mobilizing early on during the process, since the governmental dispatch strongly frames the subsequent parliamentary debate. At the same time, IGs cannot remain absent from parliamentary debates, in particular those taking place within legislative committees, since governmental dispatches can be strongly amended within Parliament. Groups cannot specialize within one particular venue, but must follow the issue as different venues are activated (Varone, Gava, Jourdain, Eichenberger, & Mach, 2018).

This has been evidenced most clearly by Sciarini (2014), who evaluates the relative importance of the administrative and legislative venues on the basis of the 11 most important policy processes that took place in Switzerland between 2001 and 2006. In general, 61 percent of all collective actors engaged in these processes consider the

administrative venue to represent the most important venue, while 39 percent consider the legislative venue to be one of the most important venues. The crucial point is that both venues are important, albeit not to the same extent. This remains the case even though Switzerland is a consensual democracy where all major parliamentary factions are included within Government.

Furthermore, Switzerland is well known for its neo-corporatist heritage. Business interest associations and trade unions used to represent the principal vectors of representation alongside political parties. In comparison to other neo-corporatist systems, Switzerland has, however, witnessed a stronger integration of citizen groups over the past few decades (Christiansen et al., 2017). This is due to Switzerland's direct democratic institutions, which open up the policy process (Weiler & Brändli, 2015). IGs can rely on referenda in order to force a popular vote on any parliamentary decision, or on popular initiatives in order to propose constitutional amendments.⁶ Citizen groups make extensive use of these instruments, therefore bureaucrats and MPs must grant them access or risk defeat at the ballot box.

Finally, focusing on the Swiss case carries the advantage that we can rely on Sciarini's findings to develop a general measure of access to the major venues (Sciarini, 2014).

Dependent variables

In order to measure overall access to the political system, we rely on access indicators for both the administrative and legislative venues. First, access to the administrative venue is

⁶ The referendum and the popular initiative respectively require 50'000 and 100'000 valid signatures of Swiss adult citizens. For comparison, the Swiss section of the WWF has roughly 220'000 members.

measured by relying on the number of IG seats within extra-parliamentary committees.⁷ To be clear, we use this indicator as a measure of access to the administrative venue in general, and not just to the extra-parliamentary committees in particular. In fact, IGs included in extra-parliamentary committees are selected by civil servants within the different administrative departments and approved by the Federal Council (i.e. Swiss Government). There are more than 200 different committees affiliated to different governmental departments and they often draft entire pieces of legislation.

Secondly, in order to measure access to the legislative venue, we rely on legislative committee members' ties to IGs working within the committee's area of responsibility. Swiss MPs must indicate all leading positions held within IGs at the beginning of every year. For each IG comprised within our sample, we have checked whether it holds a tie to an MP sitting in a relevant committee. The relevance of ties is established on the basis of a match between the policy domain in which IGs are predominantly active, and the area of responsibility of a given legislative committee. Recent research shows that such relevant ties are developed in function of MPs' committee membership and are thus tightly related to MPs' daily work with committees (Eichenberger & Mach, 2017)

Finally, a general measure of access to the political system requires these two separate indicators to be aggregated. However, a seat within a legislative committee does not count as much as one within an extra-parliamentary committee. As pointed out above, 61 percent of all collective actors engaged in the 11 most important policy processes

⁷ Data concerning IGs' seats within extra-parliamentary committees was drawn from the Swiss Elites in the 20th Century Database: <https://www2.unil.ch/elitessuisses/>. This database investigates Swiss elites on the basis of various positional criteria, most notably their membership within extra-parliamentary committees in 2010.

taking place in Switzerland during the 2000-10 decade consider the administrative venue the most important. For the legislative venue, this figure lies at only 39 percent (Sciarini, 2014, p. 122). By dividing these two figures, it can be said that a seat within the administrative venue equals 1.56 (i.e., 61/39) seats within the legislative venue. We use this number to give extra weight to the administrative venue in our aggregate measure. However, as a robustness check, we test our hypotheses on a second aggregate measure giving equal weight to the two venues.⁸

Independent and control variables

Data concerning IGs' characteristics have been drawn from a survey administered to the entire Swiss IG population in 2011 (Jentges, Brändli, Donges, & Jarren, 2013). Most of the independent variables (bar one) used in this study stem from the online survey (see appendix for the survey design). The final dataset contains 964 organizations. We now present our independent variables and the control variables.⁹

Staff size: To measure IGs' resources (H1), we rely on their staff size. One question in the survey asked participants to provide information on the number of employees in their organization. Sixty groups reported having no professional staff members, while the maximum number of employees in the dataset is 310. This variable is heavily skewed; we therefore apply the natural logarithm in the analysis.

Group type: The next independent variable – group type (H2) – is not derived from the online survey, but was instead hand-coded. Each group that responded to the

⁸ As an additional robustness check, we construct another dependent variable by first calculating the proportion of access to each venue for each group, and then summing up the two values. For more information, refer to the appendix.

⁹ For descriptive statistics, a summary of how the IG types were coded, and a short bivariate analysis please refer to the appendix.

survey was coded according to the INTERARENA coding scheme (Binderkrantz et al., 2015).¹⁰ For the purpose of our analysis, we have aggregated trade unions and business interest associations into an economic groups category (303 organizations). It also comprises a residual group of institutional groups mainly representing the economic interests of public entities (e.g. Swiss Group for Mountain Regions – SAB). Identity and public IGs have been aggregated into a citizen group category (256 organizations). Occupational associations and leisure groups were aggregated into a third “other” category (369 organizations).¹¹

All control variables were retrieved through the survey.

IG Age: As more experience might lead to easier (and more) access, and as economic IGs are generally older than citizen groups, we include group age as a control variable. However, we expect this gain in experience to become less important the older IGs get and thus apply the natural logarithm to this variable.

Importance of national level and political activity: Citizen groups often develop local chapters, which are less concerned about gaining access to the federal government. Therefore, we control for the importance of the national level in IGs’ political activities. We rely on a survey question asking respondents how important the national level is for their political work. Answers could be given on a five-point scale from ‘very important’ to ‘not important’. Similarly, we also control for the extent to which IGs are politically active, measured on a five-point scale from ‘very rarely active’ to ‘very often active’.

¹⁰ See <http://interarena.dk> [accessed on 31.07.2018]

¹¹ In our sample, occupational groups mainly comprise organizations concerned about quality standards, deontological questions and continued education within a certain profession. They only comprise individuals and are less concerned about market regulation. Thus, we did not code them as economic groups.

Level of competition: This control variable again relies on a survey question about the (perceived) level of competition. Again, answers could be provided on a five-point scale from ‘very low competition’ to ‘very strong competition’, with 107 groups choosing the former, and only 30 the latter category.

In addition to these described variables, we also include two variables capturing membership in the organizations (both corporate and individual membership).

Empirical Analysis and Discussion

Explanatory models for the overall access variable

To test the relationship between our independent and dependent variables statistically, we rely on Hurdle models. The basic idea is that a Bernoulli probability governs the binary outcome of whether a count variable has a zero or positive realization. If the realization is positive, the hurdle is crossed, and the conditional distribution of the positives is governed by a truncated-at-zero model (see Cragg, 1971). Applied to our access data, we believe there are two stages that contribute to how much access IGs are able to gain. First, a selection stage, which decides whether interest organizations are granted access at all, and second an allocation stage, in which it is determined how much access the chosen groups get. The two stages are estimated separately, but the second stage can only be meaningfully interpreted conditional on the first stage (Clist, 2011). Such Hurdle models are appropriate in the case of sequential decision-making processes. As pointed out above, this might apply to the granting of access as policy-makers might be inclined to first cast a wide net and grant some access to many groups, and then discriminate between different groups with regards to the amount of access granted. Thus, the first stage is modeled using binary (logit) models and dependent variables capturing whether access exists (1) or not (0). The second stage models the actual number of ties only for those organizations that

have been selected in the first stage. The models for the separate administrative and legislative venue as well as the non-weighted aggregate measure thus have count data (integers) as dependent variables, and Poisson models (i.e. Poisson models but excluding the outcome value zero) are used in the allocation stage. For the (non-integer) weighted measure, Gamma regression with a log-link is used. The models are presented in Table 1 (selection stage) and Table 2 (allocation stage).

Test of the research hypotheses

In this section we describe the findings of the statistical models. We do so for the resource hypothesis (H1) and the three group type hypotheses (H2a to H2c) separately.

Our first hypothesis on the effect of resources states that financial resources positively affect access to both the administrative and the legislative venues. The positive effects of the coefficients in question in all models of the selection stage (Table 1) and the allocation stage (Table 2) indicate that this hypothesis is substantiated. In the selection stage, we find that better staffed organizations are more likely to establish ties with policy-makers in both the administrative and the legislative venue, while the significant effect of the allocation stage indicates that they are also more likely, once they gained access, to obtain a higher number of seats in both venues. This finding is also consistent using the two aggregate access measures for both stages.

[Tables 1 and 2 about here]

Figure 1 depicts the employee effects for both stages and the (weighted) aggregate access measure. As can be seen in panel A of the figure, the likelihood of obtaining access at all, i.e. being selected in the first stage, is only around 5% for very small organizations.

This probability then increases steadily, and for larger organizations with 50 or more employees, the likelihood of obtaining access is predicted at over 20%. Similarly, once organizations have been selected, the smallest groups obtain fewer seats than their larger peers. Of those groups with at least one seat, the smallest organizations in the dataset are predicted to have on average less than two seats, while organizations with 50 or more employees have four or more direct connections to influence policy, as panel B of Figure 1 shows. These effects are similar when modeling the administrative and the legislative venues alone, which is evidence in favor of the idea that IGs indeed possess the necessary information valued by policy makers, and which helps them gain access (Bouwen, 2002). Therefore, H1 is substantiated.

[Figure 1 about here]

The findings on IG type highlight the different patterns of access of citizen and economic groups. In the administrative venue (testing H2a), economic groups are both more likely to be selected for access, and also more likely to obtain a larger number of seats, as the positive coefficients of both the selection and the allocation stage indicate. In the legislative venue, however, this is reversed: citizen groups are more likely to gain access to seats and a higher number of seats within this venue. In the administrative venue, gaining access is generally more difficult than in the legislative venue. The selection stage predicts that 9.8% of economic IGs do have access to policy-makers in the administrative venue, but only 3.0% of citizen groups (and 2.0% of groups in the others category). For the legislative venue, these numbers are much higher. Here, citizen groups have the highest rate of being selected at 36.2%, while economic groups have a likelihood of 23.2% of gaining access (9.7% for others). So we see that economic groups

are more likely to gain access in the crucial (for policy-making in Switzerland) administrative venue. In contrast, citizen groups are more able to access policy-makers in the legislative venue. Both these findings are statistically significant.

In the allocation stage, we again see a similar pattern. Once access was achieved, economic groups achieve more access than citizen groups in the administrative venue, whereas the reverse holds for the legislative venue, as Figure 2 depicts. The panels show the probability of obtaining a given number of seats for the three types of groups in the two venues. First to note is that the probabilities for the administrative venue (panel A) are much lower than for the legislative venue, as should be expected given that fewer groups gain access during the selection stage. It can be seen, however, that economic groups indeed have a higher likelihood of achieving a higher number of seats in the administrative venue, while the same is true for citizen groups in the legislative venue. In other words, economic groups form a larger number of ties outside of parliament, while citizen groups do so within the parliament. Again, both findings in the allocation stage are highly significant, and in combination with the findings of the selection stage are indicative of the validity of H2a and H2b.

[Figure 2 about here]

Focusing on our aggregate measure of access, it can be seen in Model 3 of Table 1 that economic groups are *not* more likely than citizen groups to gain access to decision-

making processes.¹² The model using our aggregate measure predicts the likelihood of gaining access for citizen groups to be approximately 33%, and for economic groups to be around 27%, yet this difference is not statistically significant. However, if we focus only on those groups who have gained access in the selection stage, then it clearly appears that economic groups achieve a higher number of seats than citizen groups in the allocation stage (see Models 3 and 4 of Table 2). The finding for the weighted measure of access (Model 3) translates to a predicted number of 3.4 seats for economic groups with access, while citizen groups are only predicted to obtain 2.2 seats, all else equal. When using the aggregate measure without giving extra weight to the administrative venue (Model 4 in both tables), these findings are corroborated. In sum then, this corroborates H2c, according to which economic group enjoy more overall access than citizen groups.

Now we have discussed the main findings of the paper, we briefly turn to the results of the control variables. Age does not seem to increase access consistently, according to our findings. The results therefore do not support the idea that advocacy experience increases access to various venues (Apollonio & Raja, 2004, p. 1145). Swiss groups with a stronger focus on the national level of policy-making (as opposed to the regional and local level), do enjoy significantly more access, as do politically more active groups. Both findings are not too surprising, but allow us to ascertain that the effect captured by group type is not simply due to citizen groups being generally less politically active or less focused on national politics than economic groups. More unexpected is the finding that the level of competition faced by groups does not influence their level of

¹² Models 3 and 4, i.e. for weighted and unweighted access, are the same. The reason is simple, no matter whether we use weights or not, access means values larger than zero, which translates to values of one in the selection stage.

access. According to Holyoke (2003), when competition is high, individual groups' chances to gain access should diminish. Yet we do not find evidence in favor of this argument, possibly because in fields with higher competition, more seats are available. Finally, membership (both individual and corporate) is also insignificant across both stages of the models (with a single exception), and hence do not influence access. We believe this is because membership is another measure of resources, which is already captured by the employees-variable.

Conclusion

Taking as our starting point the rise and consolidation of citizen groups and the concomitant decline of economic groups' monopolies of representation, we asked whether citizen and economic IGs enjoy equal access to the policy-making process. Rather than considering access to the administrative and legislative venue as interchangeable, we have weighted access according to both venues' importance in the Swiss political system and created an aggregate measure of access. Furthermore, we theorize the access granting process as two sequential choices. Policy-makers first decide whether to grant any access at all, and then they decide how much access to granted to the selected groups. This allows us to test whether policy-makers first cast a wide net and grant (pro forma) access to a wide set of groups, and possibly only discriminate between different groups in a second step when deciding about how much access should be granted. We tested for the effect of groups' resources and group type.

First, regarding groups' resources, the results of the selection stage, i.e. the decision whether to grant any access at all, show that resource-poor groups enjoy less access. This indicates that a lack of resources effectively hinders IGs from achieving any access at all, and this is difficult to reconcile with the pluralist idea that any group should

be able to make itself heard at some point during the policy-making process. Furthermore, resources also make a difference during the allocation stage since resource-rich groups are being granted more access than the resource-poor.

Secondly, on the basis of the selection stage alone, we are led to believe that group type actually does not affect overall access. Indeed, it appears that policy-makers first cast a wide net and grant some access to a rather diverse set of interest groups. However, amongst those groups having gained some access, economic groups enjoy considerably more overall access than citizen groups. Thus, depending on whether we focus on the selection or allocation stage of the process of granting access, we reach very different conclusions as to whether group type has an effect on access. According to the selection stage, the opposite effects of group type within the administrative and legislative venues cancel each other out. This corresponds to the idea of 'privileged pluralism': group resources increase the probability of being selected, but not group type. However, if we also take into account the allocation stage, it can be seen that the representation of purely economic interests increases access, even when controlling for group resources. At first sight it appears as if economic and citizen groups are equals in terms of access. At second sight we come to see that economic groups are 'more equal' than citizen groups.

Taken together, these results suggest that that the Swiss system of interest representation is exclusionary of resource-poor and citizen groups. According to the pluralist ideal, groups should enjoy roughly equal access to decision-making processes and they should certainly not be excluded from the policy process. Our results hence point to a bias against the resource-poor and citizen groups in the Swiss system. To be clear, we did not measure access bias in itself. We did not establish for each group whether it enjoys the 'right' amount of access. Nevertheless, we think that the superior access enjoyed by economic groups can be considered as introducing bias into the Swiss system

of interest representation. Economic groups cannot be considered to be generally more representative than citizen groups. On the contrary, economic groups explicitly defend sectional interests, whereas citizen groups, by definition, represent interests which are shared by large segments of the population.

Switzerland of course represents a country with a neo-corporatist heritage. However, we do not interpret our results as the unique consequence of policy-makers having developed a 'neo-corporatist habit' of consulting only with economic groups. If this were the case, then different venues would be biased in a similar manner. Rather, we think that the pluralizing effect ascribed to the existence of multiple venues must be nuanced. Economic groups can focus on the production of policy expertise, which grants them better access to the most important (administrative) venue. Therefore, we believe that our results have meaning beyond a neo-corporatist context and can possibly also be applied to more pluralist systems.

Finally, further research should address at least two issues. First, it could be the case that economic IGs do not enjoy more access than citizen groups in all policy areas. In some policy areas, we might find a set of citizen groups with considerable technical expertise. For instance, environmental groups have strongly professionalized and dispose of considerable expertise. Further research must hence disaggregate our analysis according to the different policy areas in which IGs are active. The second caveat relates to the comparability of access measures across venues. Our measures suggest that access to the administrative venue is generally more difficult as there are fewer extra-parliamentary than legislative committee seats available to IGs. In other words, seats in the administrative venue are rarer and might therefore be more valuable in terms of influence. We attempted to address this issue by developing a measure of relative access, dividing the number of seats by the total number of seats occupied by IGs in a venue (see

Appendix). More fundamentally, however, comparing access across venues depends on the accuracy of our measures. Further research must establish whether access to the administrative venue indeed represents a rarer good than access to the legislative venue. This necessarily depends on the development of a common empirical measure, such as, for instance, the time spent by key decision-makers listening to IGs.

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Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Effect of staff resources on overall access to the political system.

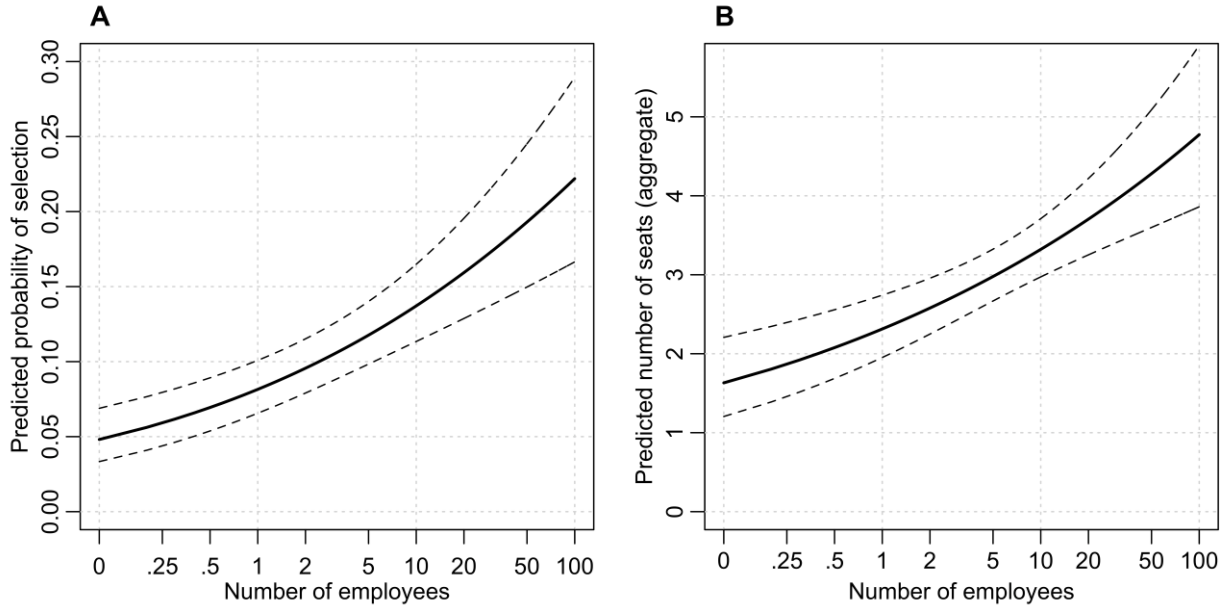


Figure 2: Predicted number of seats in administrative (Panel A) and legislative (Panel B) venues, according to group type.

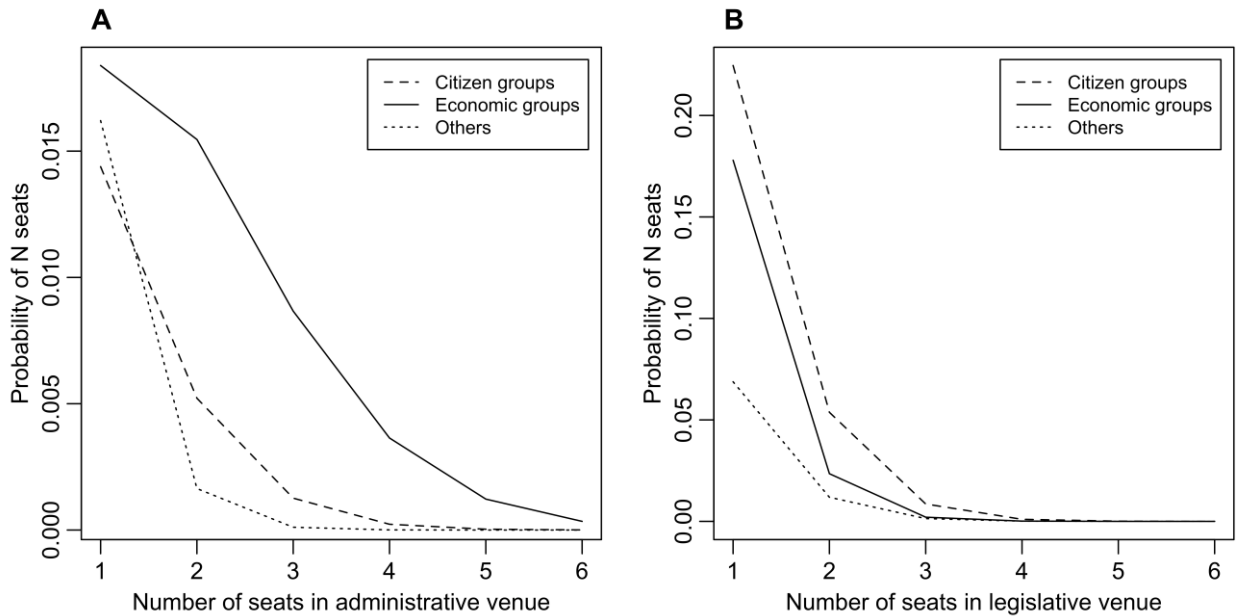


Table 1: Selection stage models

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>			
	Seats administrative venue (1)	Seats legislative venue (2)	Cumulative access (weighted) (3)	Cumulative access (not weighted) (4)
Employees (log)	0.331*** (0.098)	0.196*** (0.059)	0.210*** (0.057)	0.210*** (0.057)
Group type (base = citizen groups)				
Economic	0.845** (0.401)	-0.459* (0.248)	-0.303 (0.242)	-0.303 (0.242)
Others	-0.165 (0.483)	-1.508*** (0.287)	-1.351*** (0.268)	-1.351*** (0.268)
Age (log)	0.638*** (0.202)	-0.290*** (0.108)	-0.097 (0.105)	-0.097 (0.105)
Importance nat. level	0.969*** (0.257)	0.023 (0.112)	0.148 (0.108)	0.148 (0.108)
Political competition	0.015 (0.173)	0.113 (0.116)	0.107 (0.111)	0.107 (0.111)
Political activity	0.636*** (0.188)	0.562*** (0.114)	0.635*** (0.110)	0.635*** (0.110)
Corporate members	0.079 (0.058)	0.036 (0.043)	0.064 (0.040)	0.064 (0.040)
Individual members	-0.01 (0.041)	0.023 (0.030)	0.01 (0.028)	0.01 (0.028)
Constant	-13.949*** (1.684)	-3.174*** (0.649)	-4.491*** (0.656)	-4.491*** (0.656)
Observations	681	681	681	681
Log-Likelihood	-280.113	-448.163	-636.091	-636.091

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

Table 2: Allocation stage models

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>			
	Seats administrative venue (1)	Seats legislative venue (2)	Cumulative access (weighted) (3)	Cumulative access (not weighted) (4)
Employees (log)	0.236*** (0.064)	0.354*** (0.075)	0.167*** (0.041)	0.378*** (0.046)
Group type (base = citizen groups)				
Economic	0.841** (0.360)	-0.594** (0.263)	0.420** (0.177)	0.400** (0.166)
Others	-1.275* (0.659)	-0.325 (0.321)	-0.140 (0.222)	-0.570** (0.265)
Age (log)	-0.212** (0.099)	-0.157 (0.098)	-0.045 (0.075)	-0.087 (0.061)
Importance nat. level	-0.502* (0.257)	0.521*** (0.178)	0.215** (0.085)	0.521*** (0.120)
Political competition	0.405*** (0.117)	-0.138 (0.109)	0.099 (0.080)	0.063 (0.070)
Political activity	0.497*** (0.142)	0.306** (0.130)	0.211*** (0.079)	0.288*** (0.084)
Corporate members	-0.096** (0.037)	0.066 (0.041)	-0.011 (0.030)	-0.005 (0.023)
Individual members	0.006 (0.024)	-0.036 (0.027)	0.012 (0.020)	0.013 (0.016)
Constant	-1.256 (1.312)	-4.651*** (0.923)	-2.112*** (0.469)	-5.542*** (0.650)
Observations	66	150	192	192
Log-Likelihood	-280.113	-448.163	-370.353	-636.091

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