

INTEREST GROUPS' RECRUITMENT OF INCUMBENT PARLIAMENTARIANS TO THEIR BOARDS

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Interest groups recruit incumbent parliamentarians to their boards to influence policy, improve their resources, and signal political connectedness. To detect parliamentarians' characteristics that drive recruitment, this study analyses three decades of annual data (1985-2016) of 903 Swiss parliamentarians and their board seats. It compares 5,249 cases of parliamentarians' successful recruitment by 3,291 different organisations to counterfactual cases where no recruitment took place. The results show that interest groups recruit parliamentarians for both knowledge and networks (professions, other board seats) and influence (committee seats) in interest groups' policy areas. Moreover, recruited parliamentarians are more likely newcomers, ideologically proximate to interest groups, moderate, and from the same district as them.

Keywords: access, board seats, interest groups, parliamentarians, political capital, recruitment

In 2016, the Swiss government submitted a tobacco bill with extensive advertising bans to parliament. In the health committee, the bill was met with fierce resistance by a group of parliamentarians under the leadership of Member of Parliament (MP) Josef Dittli. By emphasising the importance of commercial freedom, he managed to rally cross-partisan support to have the bill referred back to the government with instructions to remove almost all references to advertising bans. Two years later, MP Dittli became president of Curafutura, an association representing some of the country's largest health insurance companies. When the revised version of the tobacco bill was again deliberated in early 2019, Dittli's position had radically shifted. In a health committee hearing, he started proposing amendments with stringent advertising bans; the very same provisions for whose removal he had been instrumental (Honegger 2019).

The story of how MP Dittli served as a built-in lobbyist for a health insurance association received broad media attention. For interest groups¹ (IGs), it epitomised the importance of recruiting incumbents to their boards to gain privileged and institutionalised access to parliament. For critics of this system, Dittli's support of business restrictions – he belongs to an economically liberal party – exemplified how board seats can impair parliamentarians' responsiveness to their partisan constituents. Dittli's example also suggests that IGs' recruitment of particular incumbents is far from random. The goal of this article is therefore to gain a first systematic understanding of the qualities that drive interest groups' recruitment of incumbent MPs.

Paid side jobs for parliamentarians – not to mention unpaid ones – are legal in 72 democracies globally (Weschle forthcoming). Nonetheless, IGs' recruitment strategies to obtain long-term allies in parliament are largely unknown. Recent research suggests that incumbent parliamentarians themselves consider electoral consequences when determining which board

¹ Here, the term interest group refers to trade unions, business / trade associations, firms, public interest groups, institutional organisations, occupational organisations, identity-based organisations, and hobby / leisure groups.

seats to accept (Huwyler and Turner-Zwinkels 2020). But there is a lack of extant studies on whom interest groups consider suitable candidates in the first place. Scenarios of long-term cooperation where incumbent parliamentarians and interest groups enter into principal-agent-like relationships have seldom been the centre of studies (see Eichenberger and Mach 2017 for an exception). Studies on parliamentarians' recruitment have remained largely limited to the post-parliamentary phase, and without a particular interest group focus (e.g. González-Bailon, Jennings, and Lodge 2013, Würfel 2018).

To address that gap, this study develops an interest group-centred theoretical model of incumbent MPs' recruitment. It posits that MPs are invited to serve on IGs' boards for political capital and access they can provide. Political capital encompasses knowledge, experience, networks, and political skills that make parliamentarians effective in pursuing their own and interest groups' goals inside and outside parliament. In contrast, access refers to current offices that allow MPs to provide IGs with the possibility to influence policy-making processes at key stages.

The results reveal that political capital and access both matter when they are relevant to IGs' area of operation. Interest groups recruit parliamentarians for expertise and networks (professions, other board seats), and influence (committee seats) in interest groups' policy areas. Beyond the hypothesised effects, the results reveal additional tendencies. In addition to primarily working with moderate and ideological proximate MPs, IGs are more likely to recruit newcomers and those originating from their own district.

1. Interest groups' recruitment of parliamentarians

Board seats constitute long-term, formalised ties between parliamentarians and interest groups. They help IGs achieve what Snyder (1992, 19) describes as a 'relationship of mutual trust and respect with officeholders in order to receive tangible rewards.' MPs consult their IGs to learn

about implications of political decisions for IGs and keep them informed about relevant developments. Parliamentarians' board seats have been shown to affect their voting behaviour (Giger and Klüver 2016), co-sponsorship patterns (Fischer et al. 2019), and demand for policy evaluations (Varone, Bundi, and Gava 2020). More generally, MPs as board members serve as powerful signals to the public, group members, donors, and in the case of firms, to investors and trade partners.

In return, parliamentarians receive logistical support for their work in the legislature and sometimes, additional personal income.² IGs supply parliamentarians with arguments, facts, and supporting research for legislation, provide them with background material to effectively use legislative instruments, in particular preparing bills, and inform them of potential electoral consequences (Hojnacki and Kimball 1998). Outside of parliament, interest groups offer MPs a platform to raise their profile, particularly in the media, and support them in their endeavour to secure re-election (Wilcox and Rentaro 2010). For post-parliamentary careers, side jobs can provide fallback options (Lazarus, McKay, and Herbel 2016, Würfel 2018).

Interest groups dispose of two ways to obtain such built-in lobbyists in parliament. They can either endorse and support their board members in their bid for parliament (Lutz, Mach, and Primavesi 2018), or recruit incumbents. The latter option not only avoids electoral uncertainty, it also provides clarity about MPs' roles in parliament (e.g. committee assignment). In

² In 2004/5, a representative survey conducted by Baeriswyl (2005) showed that the average Swiss MP earned 16,540 Swiss francs (\approx €15,560) annually from IG board seats. Given the lack of income disclosure rules, it is, however, unknown which board seats are remunerated, and with what amount.

consequence, post-election recruitment is by far the more prevalent way of how MPs obtain their board seats.³

However, recruiting incumbents entails an evaluation process. Lobbyists have likened this to a market-like environment where interest groups examine the ‘offers’ before making the purchase (Fahrenkrug 2008). IGs need to carefully select MPs who can provide them the most benefits in the long run. When relying on regular lobbyists, IGs distinguish between those who offer primarily expertise, and those who can open the right doors (LaPira and Thomas 2014, 9). Arguably, the motives for parliamentarians’ recruitment are similar.

The first hypothesised selection criterion for IG board seats is political capital. It can be defined as MPs’ previously acquired politically relevant experiences, skills, knowledge, networks, and reputation (Turner-Zwinkels and Mills 2019, Becker 1964). Past research has related it to the understanding of the political system (Mattozzi and Merlo 2008, 606), and expertise and abilities that increase their political output (Scharfenkamp and Dilger 2014, 24). Parliamentarians gain relevant skills and knowledge from their professions, pre-parliamentary and parliamentary political offices (Allen 2012, Cairney 2007). These experiences provide MPs with policy-specific knowledge, help them become better trained in communicating both within and outside of parliament, and teach them the ropes of legislative procedures.

Similar to the professional job market where employers use candidates’ accumulated human capital as a signal of capability (King, Burke, and Pemberton 2005, 983), IGs use parliamentarians’ political and professional trajectory as a means to assess their expected effectiveness for the organisation. Indeed, previous studies suggest that political capital is also used for benchmarking under similar circumstances. Skill requirements for lobbying practitioners

³ The data analysed in this article reveal that MPs enter parliament with an average of 1.4 board seats. The average parliamentarian, however, sits on 4.6 boards. Hence MPs accumulate most of their IG positions while in office.

include profound expertise on general political proceedings and issue areas, strong communication skills, and high levels of social competence (Mattozzi and Merlo 2008). In a similar fashion, party leadership evaluates political capital with respect to practical skills for office (Keane and Merlo 2010). Voters, in turn, use legislative candidates' previous political mandates as a way to assess their competence for office (Burden 2004).

H₁ Parliamentarians who can provide political capital are more likely to be recruited to interest group boards.

The second driver of IGs' recruitment of parliamentarians is their ability to influence policy-making processes at key stages. Obtaining access to key decision-makers is a proximate goal in this endeavour because it allows them to stimulate parliamentarians' agency when pursuing their political agenda (Hall and Wayman 1990, 803). Specific roles and offices in parliament, in their party, and other elected offices equip politicians with the means to yield influence at crucial junctures of the formulation, decision, and implementation of policy.

Previous research has provided ample evidence for this access-seeking behaviour. In legislatures, IGs have been found to particularly target parliamentarians in leadership roles (Romer and Snyder 1994). Committee chairs, on the one hand, influence both content and fate of legislation (Volden and Wiseman 2014, 40). Leadership in their parliamentary party, on the other hand, renders parliamentarians attractive for their agenda-setting powers, ability to coerce or incentivise certain behaviours from members (Fahrenkrug 2008, Smith 2007), and their procedural powers e.g. in their role for committee assignment (Fournaies and Hall 2018).

In a similar vein, access may also relate to the power concentration associated with multiple-mandate holding (see Van de Voorde 2019). IGs may decide to recruit national parliamentarians for holding additional elected offices (e.g. regional ones) that equip them with influence on other levels of policy-making.

Moreover, interest groups seek out MPs for membership in parliamentary committees in areas pertinent to their policy agenda (Eichenberger and Mach 2017, Fourinaies and Hall 2018, Gava et al. 2016, Romer and Snyder 1994). Committee membership offers MPs a key role in shaping their party's strategy in these areas, negotiating issues pertaining to these areas, acting as spokesperson for their party inside and outside of parliament, and shaping the voting decision of allied MPs (Schendelen 1976).

H2 Parliamentarians who can provide access are more likely to be recruited to interest group boards.

The two concepts of political capital and access encompass a breadth of qualities that provide room for further differentiation. In analogy to the seminal work on human capital by Becker (1964) from labour market economics, they can be distinguished by the labels 'general' and 'specific'. The term 'general' applies to qualities that are relevant to any recruiting IG whereas 'specific' denotes qualities that are only an asset to a subset of IGs and of minor, if any use to the rest. Parliamentarians' likelihood to be recruited by an IG is arguably particularly increased if they can provide specific political capital and access.

Interest groups' demand for MPs with specific political capital and specific access reflects their goal to work with board members who share their policy area focus. When IGs recruit MPs to their board for specific political capital e.g., other boards seats in the same policy area, they make use of MPs' pre-existing relevant knowledge and networks. This reduces both the time and resources needed to acquaint new board members with IGs' area of operations. In a similar vein, specific access e.g., membership in specific parliamentary committees, serves as a strong indicator for the area in which MPs exert their influence. Whereas general access e.g., a party group leadership role does not reveal in what policy area parliamentarian use their influence, specific access is tied to a policy area.

H₃ Parliamentarians who can provide specific political capital and/or specific access are particularly more likely to be recruited to interest group boards.

Notwithstanding the importance of interest groups' motives, recruitment also requires parliamentarians' willingness to work for these organisations. Recruitment constitutes a two-step process where suitable MPs are first invited to join boards and subsequently need to accept or decline the respective offers. Accepted offers therefore constitute a subset of all board seat invitations, meaning that IGs' recruitment preferences are arguably only manifest in the intersection of cases in which both MPs and IGs consider forming such a tie mutually beneficial. When working with observational board seat data, the research design needs to take this limitation into account.

2. Research design

Predicting which parliamentarian is successfully recruited by which IG is fraught with challenges. The sources only provide information on who eventually obtained the board seat, but the preceding recruitment process remains a black box. It is unknown whom the recruiting IG considered suitable candidates and contacted for the seat, how many MPs rejected the position before someone accepted the offer, or how long the recruitment process took.

The recruitment model therefore hinges on three assumptions. First, interest groups seek access to the national legislature. Therefore, all MPs are considered to be equally 'at risk' of being recruited.⁴ Second, the state of being at risk is dependent on incumbency. Only parliamentarians present in the year of recruitment feature as possible candidates for a specific board seat. Third, offers for board seats are patterned. Only MPs who fulfil certain selection criteria

⁴ All recruitment possibilities, including unlikely ones, are tested for instead of being excluded a priori.

are invited to serve on the respective IGs' boards. The eventually recruited MPs might not always be IGs' first choice because MPs may turn them down. However, the eventually recruited MPs will display certain characteristics (e.g., particular experience) that separate them from the majority of the non-selected ones, and reflect IGs' preferences.

The unit of analysis are annually observed dyads of MPs and IGs. This includes not only all dyads where MPs were successfully recruited to the boards of IGs in a given year but also all the counterfactual MP-IG pairings that in reality never materialised. For every MP-IG dyad that formed successfully in a given year, all possible combinations of this IG with the remaining incumbent MPs in the same year are added as counterfactual cases. This provides a data frame where the number of materialised MP-IG dyads is extremely small (5,249 observations) compared to that of counterfactual dyads (1,142,144 observations).

To avoid estimation biases associated with such rare events data, logistic regression with bootstrap model averaging is used.⁵ Building on the sampling strategy described by King and Zeng (2001), 1,000 data frames each containing all of the 5,249 true MP-IG dyads and a random sample of 5,249 counterfactuals are compiled. They are fitted logistic regression models with non-nested (crossed) random effects that account for year-specific, IG-specific, and MP-specific effects. Finally, unweighted model averaged parameter estimates are obtained.

The underlying data derive from the Swiss parliament between 1985 and 2016. Compared to other cases where paid and unpaid board seats are legal, Switzerland offers two key

⁵ Alternative estimation techniques such as rare events logistic regression and Firth logistic regression also allow researchers to deal with highly unequally distributed binary dependent variables (see the Online Appendix). However, to the knowledge of the author, there is no software implementation available for estimating non-nested models in such a context.

advantages. First, the Swiss case is particularly well-suited for generating counterfactual recruitment observations. Not only have Swiss elite networks been traditionally very tight-knit (see Mach 2017), the country's small size and the short travelling distances also set low physical barriers to successful recruitment and subsequent work in the organisations.

Second, the observed board recruitment patterns are particularly likely to reflect IGs' true preferences. The country's semi-professionalised parliament arguably offers a comparatively larger pool of recruitable MPs than more professionalised legislatures: The Swiss parliament exhibits a stark disparity between MPs' workload and the resources provided to them (Z'Graggen and Linder 2004). In contrast to more professionalised parliaments, there is hence a greater demand among MPs for IGs' support for their work in the legislature. Geys and Mause (2013, 78) report paid and unpaid IG board seats for 95% of Swiss Lower House and 100% of Upper House MPs respectively, while showing lower percentages for more professionalised legislatures with similar disclosure rules (German parliament: 88%, Finnish parliament: 84%, Dutch Lower House: 69%). The larger supply of recruitable MPs implies that the observed board recruitment patterns are more likely to reflect IGs' true preferences.

3. Data and operationalisation

Interest groups' selection criteria are studied with data on parliamentary recruitment in Switzerland between 1985 and 2016. The country's 246-member national parliament is divided into two equally powerful chambers, the 200-member Lower House (National Council) and the 46-member Upper House (Council of States). During the observation period, 903 MPs from one of two chambers were recruited for one or more board seats by at least one of 3,291 distinct IGs.

Data on three decades of MPs and IGs are provided by the Parliamentary Careers in Comparison (PCC) project.⁶ The biographical data collected by the PCC project serve to detect recruitment events, generate variables on political capital and access, and construct relevant control variables. For coded interest group information, data provided by Mach et al. (2017) were also used. Measures relying on party-specific information build on information from ParlGov (Döring and Manow 2019).

Parliamentarians' recruitment to IG boards serves as the dependent variable. The measure captures on an annual basis whether an MP obtained a new board seat at a specific IG in a given year (1) or not (0). Non-recruitment observations (0s) correspond to the artificially created counterfactuals i.e., dyads of the recruiting IG with all other MPs in office in that year. Board seats that parliamentarians already held prior to entering parliament, accepted earlier in their tenure, and promotions within the same organisation are therefore neither used as counterfactual nor as true recruitment cases.

To operationalise political capital and access, 14 indicators are used. Political capital – skills, experiences, and networks – is measured with eight different variables that capture experience in years at the time of recruitment e.g., the number of years as a member of a regional parliament. The only exception are relevant professions and pre-existing IG board seats where dichotomous measures are used due to a lack of complete information on durations. Access, in contrast, is always measured dichotomously. Six different measures are used to operationalise access. They indicate whether an MP holds a certain position at the time of recruitment (1) or not (0) e.g., party group leadership.

Political capital and access can be further characterised based on a division into general and specific forms. The general form refers to qualities that are useful to any recruiting IG, the

⁶ The codebook is available at <http://parliamentarycareersincomparison.org> (last accessed 25 June 2020)

specific form matters only to a subset. In total, six of the 14 indicators measure either general access or capital; the remaining eight operationalise the specific forms. To establish the specificity of either political capital or access, they need to match the policy area in which the recruiting IG operates. For example, an MP who has been sitting on the parliament’s health committee for three years brings specific access and three years of specific political capital to the table for a health lobby group. To IGs operating in other policy areas, these qualities are of little use and do not constitute any type of access or political capital. Table 1 provides an overview of how the operationalisation of key independent variables is conceived.

Table 1 Operationalisation approach for drivers of recruitment

		Logic of recruitment	
		Skills and networks Measure: years	Access Measure: 0/1
Policy Area	Unspecific	General political capital <i>(e.g. experience as a regional MP)</i>	General access <i>(e.g. party group leader)</i>
	Specific	Specific political capital <i>(e.g. experience as a regional minister in IGs’ policy area)</i>	Specific access <i>(e.g. committee member in IGs’ policy area)</i>

Beyond these career-related variables of key interest, a series of controls are used. They encompass primarily ideological and power-related variables, including IGs’ preference to collaborate with MPs who are ideologically proximate to them (Wonka and Haunss 2019), moderate, and members of large party groups (see Lazarus, McKay, and Herbel 2016, 87). Moreover, geographic circumstances are accounted for. When IGs and MPs originate from the same district, IGs are more familiar with MPs and their work, and the two actors are more likely to share geographically defined policy goals. The analysis also includes the parliamentary chamber, as well as election years as further controls. Lastly, MPs’ time availability – their total

number of pre-existing board seats, and basic demographics are used. An overview of all variables employed in the analysis is provided in Table 2. More detailed information on the control variables is provided in the Online Appendix.

Table 2 Variable overview

	Variables	Description	Mean	SD	Min	Max
<i>Dependent</i>						
	Recruitment	An IG recruits an MP to its board.	0.005	0.071	0	1
<i>Independent</i>						
General political capital	National MP tenure	Years of experience as a national MP	6.550	5.251	0	32
	Regional MP tenure	Years of experience as a regional MP	0.386	2.333	0	31
	Party group president tenure	Years of experience as a party group leader	0.076	0.613	0	11
Specific political capital	Committee tenure in IG's policy area	Years of experience as a member of committee that deals with policy issues relevant to the recruiting IG	0.986	2.618	0	23
	Committee president tenure in IG's policy area	Years of experience as a president of committee that deals with policy issues relevant to the recruiting IG	0.017	0.221	0	11
	Profession in IG's policy area (0/1)	Professional background with relevance for the recruiting IG's policy issues	0.164	0.370	0	1
	Regional government tenure in IG's policy area	Years of experience as a regional minister dealing with policy issues relevant to the recruiting IG	0.037	0.659	0	26
	Existing IG ties in IG's policy area (0/1)	Currently on the board of another IG active in the same policy area as the recruiting IG	0.350	0.477	0	1

General access	Regional MP (0/1)	Currently a regional MP	0.038	0.192	0	1
	Regional government member (0/1)	Currently a regional government member	0.021	0.144	0	1
	Party group president (0/1)	Currently a party group president	0.031	0.173	0	1
Specific access	Committee in IG's policy area (0/1)	Currently a member of a committee that deals with policy issues relevant to the recruiting IG	0.237	0.425	0	1
	Committee president in IG's policy area (0/1)	Currently a president of a committee that deals with policy issues relevant to the recruiting IG	0.019	0.135	0	1
	Regional government member in IG's policy area (0/1)	Currently a regional government member dealing with policy issues relevant to the recruiting IG	0.005	0.067	0	1
Controls	Ideological proximity (0/1)	Proxy-measure: Pairing of an MP from a business-friendly party with a firm or business association or a left-wing MP with a trade union.	0.356	0.479	0	1
	Ideological extremeness	Absolute deviation from a party-level left-right score of 5 (left-right scale: 0-10).	1.919	1.114	0.075	4.474
	Seat number of party group	Total number of seats of MP's party group in both chambers	49.178	16.405	1	73
	Upper House (0/1)	The MP holds a seat in the Upper House	0.195	0.396	0	1
	Election year (0/1)	Current year is an election year	0.200	0.400	0	1
	Total number of ties	Total number of MP's board seats	3.599	2.095	1	13
	Same district (0/1)	The MP represents the canton where the IG is headquartered	0.081	0.273	0	1
	Age	The MP's age in years	52.838	8.219	24	83
Female (0/1)	The MP's gender	0.223	0.416	0	1	

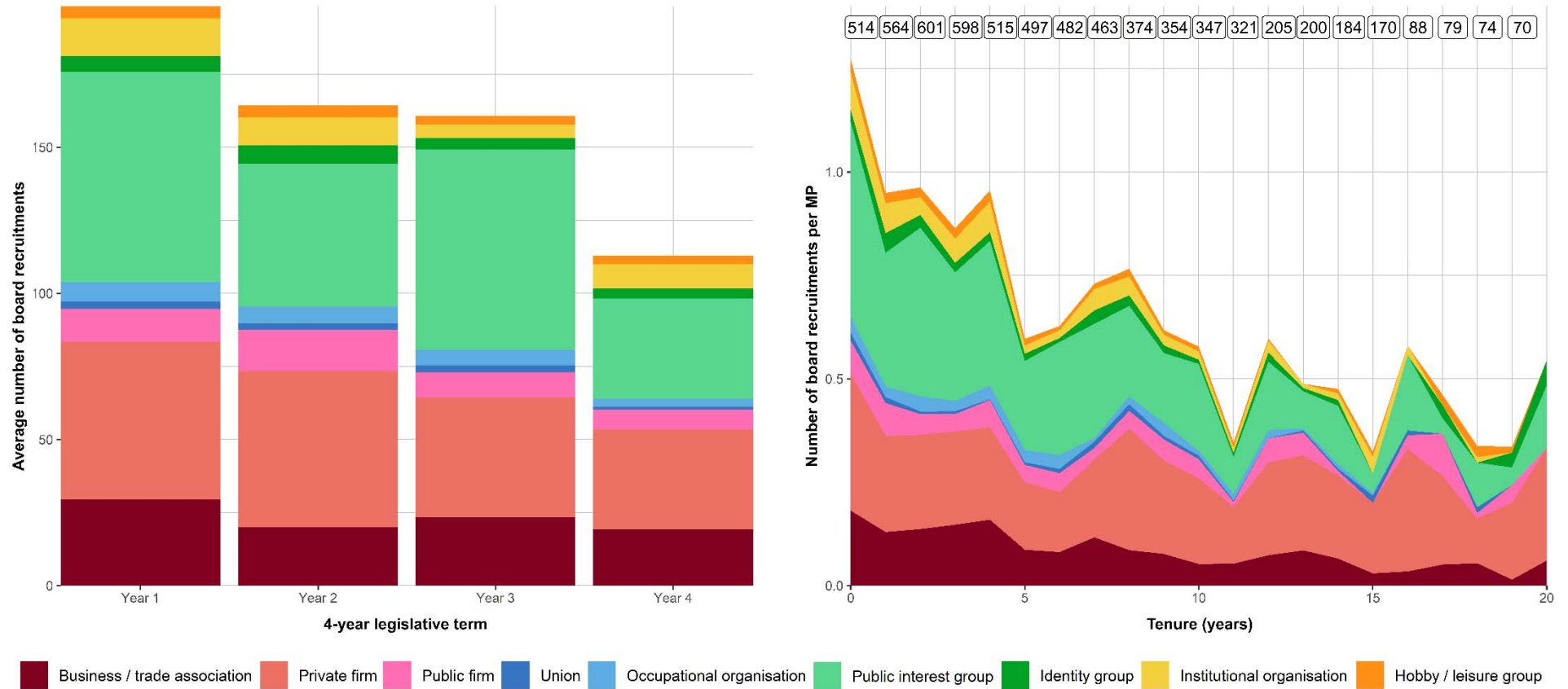
Note: N = 1,142,144

4. Descriptive patterns of recruitment

A broad variety of interest group types recruit incumbent MPs, most actively among them are various business interest groups. They collectively account for almost half of all recruitment cases. Private firms account for 28.4%, public or partly publicly owned companies for 6.2%, and business and trade associations for 13.6% of all recruitments. The single largest type of recruiting IGs, however, represents public interests (34.0%).

These organisations actively recruit parliamentarians over the entire course of the four-year legislative term. Independent of IGs' type, these patterns are strongly cyclical though. As Figure 1, left panel shows, the peak in the number of MPs appointed to IG boards occurs in the beginning of the four-year legislative term with an average of 203.6 recruitments. In the fourth year when elections take place, the number of newly recruited board members is almost halved (116.3) compared to the first year.

Figure 1. Temporal Recruitment Patterns



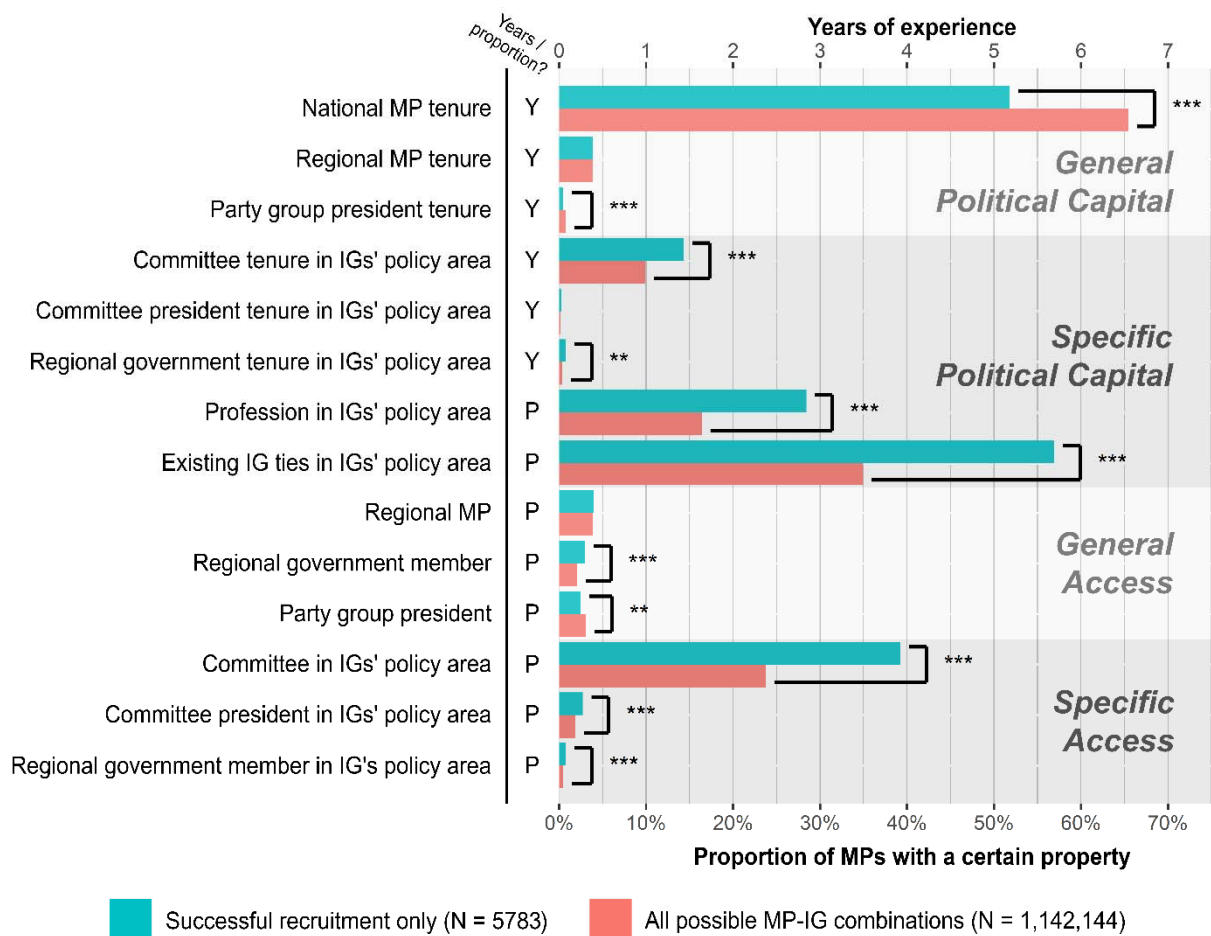
Note: N = 5245. Numbers above the right panel indicate the number of observations per tenure-year.

This trend over the parliamentary term suggests that IGs preferably recruit their board members when newcomers enter parliament and parliamentary roles such as committee assignments are reshuffled. It also highlights IGs' need to re-establish access to parliament after elections. By the start of the new term, some politician board members will have – voluntarily or involuntarily – relinquished their seat in the legislature. Interest groups need to recruit new incumbents to re-establish their access to parliament. The low number of board appointments towards the end of the term echoes this dynamic. Recruitment shortly before elections is unattractive from a cost-benefit perspective. While IGs will only have benefitted from their new board members for a short while, MPs might expect them to contribute to their re-election campaigns.

Figure 1, right panel, reveals a second important time trend in IGs' board recruitments. It displays that recruitment becomes less frequent with increasing tenure. Interest groups attempt to have MPs join their boards early in their parliamentary career. MPs are most frequently recruited to IG boards until the fourth year into their tenure, with the average number of board recruitments per MP being the highest right after entering parliament (1.3). This strategy comes with the advantage of securing IGs a longer period during which they benefit from their MP board members. Early in their tenure, it is less likely for parliamentarians to depart voluntarily from the legislature. However, early recruitment also means working with less experienced parliamentarians. In this trade-off, interest groups predominantly appear to give more weight to the outlook of longer collaboration than to parliamentarians' political capital.

Nonetheless, there is quite strong bivariate evidence that interest groups take MPs' political capital and access positively into account. Figure 2 juxtaposes political capital and access of recruited MPs with that of all possible MP-IG dyads.

Figure 2. Bivariate Comparison of Recruited to All Parliamentarians



Note: Significance codes refer to the results of two-proportions z-tests (variables measuring years), and to two-sample tests for equality of proportions with continuity correction (variables measuring proportions). * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. For exact p-values, see the Online Appendix.

The figure shows that recruited MPs set themselves primarily apart from their colleagues with specific political capital and specific access. Two of the most distinguishing characteristics of recruited MPs concern committees. 39.2% of all recruited MPs serve on a committee that deals with the recruiting IGs' policy area (e.g. a health IG recruits a member of the health committee), and have 1.4 years of experience on that committee at the time of recruitment. These two traits are significantly more widespread among recruited MPs compared to all possible MP-IG dyads. This suggests that interest groups seek both politicians who are influential and knowledgeable in their organisations' policy area.

Interest groups' preference for MPs with relevant expertise is also reflected in their strategy to recruit them for their policy area-relevant professional background. In 28.4% of all

recruitment cases, MPs' professional background matched interest groups' policy area (e.g. an educational lobby group recruits a teacher-MP). Among recruited MPs, professional experience related to the recruiting IG's policy area is 73.4% more common in comparison to all possible MP-IG dyads.

Moreover, pre-existing IG ties matter. Other board seats equip parliamentarians both with knowledge and relevant networks in specific policy areas. Recruited parliamentarians bring in 57.0% of all cases pre-existing policy area-relevant ties to the table. This percentage is 62.8% higher compared to all MP-IG combinations.

At the same time, Figure 2 does not provide any strong evidence that general political capital and general access play a defining role in IGs' recruitment decisions. In the case of party group leadership, there is even the suggestion that it renders recruitment less likely. In sum, these bivariate results imply that interest groups' recruitment of parliamentarians is primarily linked to MPs' political capital and access in IGs' policy areas.

5. Multivariate analysis

The role of MPs' political capital and access on IGs' recruitment is further inspected with model averaged non-nested logistic regression models in Table 3. Five separate models are estimated. Model 1 and 2 show the coefficients of the variables for general political capital and general access. In Model 3 and 4, the regression results for specific political capital and specific access are presented. Model 5 includes all independent variables from the four previous models and controls.

Table 3 Model averaged non-nested logistic regression models explaining MPs' recruitment by interest groups

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
National MP tenure	-0.067 (0.006) ***				-0.059 (0.009) ***
Regional MP tenure	-0.016 (0.016)				0.028 (0.031)
Party group president tenure	-0.036 (0.057)				-0.040 (0.082)
Regional MP (0/1)		-0.021 (0.174)			-0.478 (0.338)
Regional government member (0/1)		0.340 (0.209)			0.277 (0.26)
Party group president (0/1)		-0.221 (0.187)			-0.009 (0.271)
Committee tenure in IG's policy area			0.027 (0.011) *		0.018 (0.016)
Committee president tenure in IG's policy area			-0.095 (0.137)		-0.083 (0.177)
Profession in IG's policy area (0/1)			0.505 (0.075) ***		0.412 (0.087) ***
Regional government tenure in IG's policy area			0.043 (0.035)		0.068 (0.074)
Existing IG ties in IG's policy area (0/1)			0.616 (0.060) ***		0.644 (0.07) ***
Committee in IG's policy area (0/1)				0.698 (0.063) ***	0.520 (0.094) ***
Committee president in IG's policy area (0/1)				-0.114 (0.190)	0.108 (0.263)
Regional government member in IG's policy area (0/1)				0.380 (0.371)	-0.815 (0.799)
Ideological proximity (0/1)					0.160 (0.077) *
Ideological extremeness					-0.171 (0.044) ***

Same district (0/1)					2.634 (0.09) ***
Total number of ties					-0.013 (0.020)
Seat number of party group					-0.001 (0.003)
Election year (0/1)					0.052 (0.079)
Upper House (0/1)					0.295 (0.110) **
Age					-0.027 (0.006) ***
Female (0/1)					0.176 (0.111)
Intercept	0.144 (0.055) **	-0.24 (0.045) ***	-0.633 (0.050) ***	-0.432 (0.046) ***	0.531 (0.350)

Note: Table reports log odds. Significance codes: * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001.

The multivariate results corroborate the earlier bivariate ones. They show that both political capital and access increase the odds of recruitment if they are specific. The strongest effect for H₁ on political capital is found for pre-existing interest group ties. Sitting on the board of another interest group that is active in the same policy area increases MPs' odds of recruitment by a factor 1.90 (Model 5). A professional background relating to IGs' policy area also raises MPs' odds of being recruited by a factor 1.51. This suggests that interest groups care about both MPs' expertise and networks when scouting for new board members. Support for the H₂ on access is found in the form of committee membership. Current parliamentary committee memberships in an IG's policy area increases the odds of MPs being recruited by a factor 1.68. This highlights interest groups' goal to have their in-built lobbyists present when relevant legislation is being prepared.

However, there is again no suggestion that general political capital and general access lead to a higher chance of being appointed to an IG board (H₃). In fact, higher tenure in the national legislature decreases the odds of obtaining a board seat. This supports the claim made earlier that IGs attribute more weight to the potential of longer collaboration than to general expertise on parliamentary processes. In this light, it is also an unlikely coincidence that parliamentarians' age also significantly reduces their chance of obtaining a board seat. Recruitment at a younger age also offers a longer horizon for collaboration, in some cases beyond membership in the legislature.

Apart from testing the effects of political capital and access, the analysis also revealed the impact of additional drivers of board recruitment. Model 5 establishes that the strongest overall predictor of board recruitment is geographic proximity. The odds of IGs recruiting an MP is higher by a factor 13.93 if the IG is headquartered in the MP's electoral district. This suggests that IGs prefer to work with parliamentarians who share geographically defined policy goals with them (e.g. a regional environmental organisation advocating for nature conservation

in the MP's district). At the same time, both actors are likely to move in the same circles, meaning that IGs will be more knowledgeable about MPs and their work.

Lastly, ideological factors play a defining role. Ideologically aligned MP-IG pairings have their odds of resulting in successful recruitment increased by a factor 1.17. This demonstrates that IGs take policy preferences into account when selecting suitable MPs, thus corroborating previous findings that have related collaboration between MPs and IGs to ideological proximity (Wonka and Haunss 2019). Ideological extremeness, in contrast, deters IGs from recruitment. A one-unit increase on the five-point extremeness score decreases the odds of recruitment by a factor 0.84. This highlights the importance of IG board members that can act as bridge builders to both sides of the political spectrum.

6. Discussion and conclusion

The goal of this article was to identify the qualities that interest groups seek in incumbent parliamentarians when filling their board seats. It showed that for long-term institutionalised collaboration, IGs recruit MPs for both specific political capital and specific access i.e., for elements in MPs' biography that relate to IGs' area of operation.

Nothing arguably epitomised IGs' access-seeking behaviour better than their systematic recruitment of MPs sitting on relevant parliamentary committees. The finding suggests that IGs particularly value said MPs for committee-specific competences, and for MPs' influence on their party's positions in the policy areas of those committees. This corroborates earlier descriptive patterns (Gava et al. 2016) and indicates that, just as with looser forms of collaboration such as campaign contributions (Romer and Snyder 1994), influence on policy by proxy is as decisive for long-term ties as it is for more short-term issue-based collaboration. Access-seeking board recruitment also mirrors the behaviour of companies that have been found to hire former public officials on the basis of previous departmental affiliations (González-Bailon, Jennings, and Lodge 2013).

At the same time, the study revealed IGs' preference for parliamentarians who are competent and well-connected in their organisation's policy area. MPs whose professional background and other IG board seats relate to IGs' policy area are particularly coveted as board members. This interestingly also suggests the MPs' specific political capital is particularly relevant to interest groups when acquired outside the parliamentary setting.

For the quality of representative democracy, these findings constitute a double-edged sword. On the positive side, they can be construed as enhancing the efficacy of societal involvement in parliamentary dealings. The recruitment of MPs with relevant access and experiences to board seats provides organisations representing different segments of society with a highly effective way to deliver information to relevant policy-makers. They obtain institutionalised channels of influence to those members of the legislature who are among the most interested in their information and best equipped to act on it. From a more critical perspective though, the same findings raise concerns about the input legitimacy of parliamentary decision-making. Institutionalised relationships between MPs and IGs arguably are, already in themselves, conducive to the overrepresentation of said interests vis-à-vis organisations without board seats. Patterned recruitment based on access and political capital further aggravates this discrepancy because it further increases the effectiveness of institutionalised relationships at the expense of unorganised or underprivileged interests.

The study also produced an important counterintuitive finding. It established that IGs primarily recruit novice MPs. This does not only contrast with the assumption that IGs prefer to work with more experienced MPs, it is also at odds with dynamics found in post-parliamentary contexts. Extant research has shown that longer tenure relates to increased post-parliamentary earnings (Diermeier, Keane, and Merlo 2005) and higher chances to work in lobbying after their mandate (Lazarus, McKay, and Herbel 2016), thus emphasising a positive impact of tenure on career prospects. For incumbents' board recruitment, this is not the case. IGs arguably prefer

MPs with lower tenure because early recruitment reduces the risk of imminently losing access to parliament.

Moreover, in contrast to previous research (Romer and Snyder 1994, Volden and Wiseman 2014), it was not possible to detect a leadership effect, or more broadly speaking, a positive effect of additional powers. Interest groups are not more likely to recruit party group presidents, committee presidents, or MPs who also hold other elected offices. The additional powers of these offices are likely offset by substantial limitations on prospective board members' time availability. In the case of party leadership roles, MPs' leeway to represent special interests is further limited by their stronger obligation to partisan constituents. As shown by previous research, it is only after leaving parliament that MPs benefit from their previous leadership position (Lazarus, McKay, and Herbel 2016).

The interpretation of the results involves an important caveat. Given the usage of an interest group-centred approach, parliamentarians are not attributed agency in the recruitment model despite arguably having the last say when being offered a board seat. It would hence be remiss to consider recruitment patterns solely reflective of IGs' preferences. Aspects such as time availability for board seats, shared positions and issue focus matter for both IGs and MPs. This introduces a potential limitation to the observability of IG recruitment preferences in board seat patterns. IGs' preferences can only be observed if they do not conflict with those of MPs. The study's findings therefore only hold if IGs' board seat offers are patterned, but MPs' rejections of offers are not. For example, it is improbable that IGs systematically attempt to recruit more tenured MPs, but mostly have to 'settle' for newcomers. There is no reason to assume that interest groups extend offers to specific types of MPs that are systematically rejected. More detailed recruitment data will, however, be necessary to further test the tenability of this assumption.

It should prove a fruitful avenue to shed more light on the black box of board recruitment. The mechanism – not the question of who but how – requires further attention. It will be necessary to address in more detail the process that leads to institutionalised access for a select subset of interest groups. Pursuing this research will be needed to obtain a clearer picture of the conditions and implications of parliamentarians as interest groups' long-term advocates and allies.

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