Why Groups Are Politically Active: An Incentive-Theoretical Approach

Forthcoming: Comparative Political Studies

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Abstract: Political activity is conventionally considered a constitutive feature of interest groups, underpinning an impressive literature on the strategies groups employ to exercise political influence. Whether and how intensely voluntary membership groups engage in political activities to start with, however, is rarely examined. We present a new incentive-theoretical perspective on group political activity, considering both member demands and leadership constraints. We argue that investments in political activities (one way of generating collective incentives) as a means to prevent member exit are more or less important depending on a group's composition. Simultaneously, the extent to which leaders are incentivized to cater to members' demands when trying to balance these against conflicting demands, depends on communication channels between leaders and members and the importance of membership fees. Applying Bayesian ordered logit models to data from two group surveys supports our perspective and stresses the importance of considering how intra-organizational dynamics steer groups' external activities.

Keywords: Groups, political activity, incentive theory, intra-organizational characteristics, leader-member relations

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Acknowledgments: We are grateful for the helpful comments and suggestions we received from the anonymous reviewers. We further thank Jan Beyers, Nils-Christian Bormann, Joost Berkhout und Heike Klüwer as well as the participants of the ERC Workshop on 'Regulating Civil Society', held in June 2016 at the University of Exeter, who commented on an early version of this paper.

Introduction

Political activity is conventionally considered as a constitutive or defining feature of interest groups (Truman, 1951; Berry, 1977). It is the criterion which sets them apart from inwards-oriented civil society groups that focus on their membership without becoming politically active, as well as from service-providing groups that engage with the policy process in the output (implementation) rather than the input (agenda-setting or decision-making) stage. Whether firms – whose primary function is the making of economic profit – become lobbyists or not constitutes a puzzle and has been actively discussed (e.g. Bouwen, 2002; De Figueiredo & Kim, 2004; Drutman 2015). What motivates voluntary membership organizations[1] to become interest groups[2] in a political sense, in contrast, has rarely been examined. Interest group populations are commonly defined by their political activity, with supposedly 'non-political' groups excluded from the outset. This is because interest groups' engagement in political activity is considered closely tied to their *raison d'être* (Lowery, 2007), putting an emphasis on the strategies through which groups try to exercise political influence (e.g. Beyers, 2004; Binderkrantz, 2008; Dür & Mateo, 2013), moving attention away from *whether and how intensely voluntary membership groups engage in political activities* (hence transition from 'group' to 'interest group' status) in the first place. This paper addresses this caveat.

To do so, we define political activity broadly as 'any attempt to influence the decisions of any institutional elite on behalf of a collective interest' (Jenkins, 1987: 29), which not only includes lobbying of government officials or bureaucrats in the narrow sense, but also covers public education and protest activities. This is important as groups can consider themselves as politically active (e.g. engaged in awareness raising or education) without perceiving this as lobbying (Bloodgood & Tremblay-Boire, 2016: 2). Empirically, the boundaries between politically active and inactive groups are fluid, as highlighted by the literature on hybrid organizations, which stresses how organizations try to reconcile often conflicting political and non-political goals (e.g. Minkoff, 2002; Hasenfeld & Gidron, 2005).

[1] We define voluntary organizations as organizations with a formalized infrastructure, that are private (separate from government), non-profit-distributing, self-governing and membership-based (Salamon & Anheier, 1998: 216), with members being either individuals or corporate actors such as firms, institutions or associations (Jordan, Halpin & Maloney, 2004).

[2] While in the context of this paper we use 'group' and 'organization' interchangeably, 'group' stresses more the composite nature of the actors we theorize and 'organization' their structural underpinning.

Indeed, groups might be only temporarily politically active – best characterized as latent interest groups (Berkhout, 2016: 10) – and still survive due to 'non-political' activities generating support, as demonstrated by predominantly service-oriented charities that only periodically engage in political activity (be this due to the nature of their mission, due to legal constraints or a mixture thereof). As Almong-Bar and Schmid (2014: 15) point out: "Participation in advocacy is not limited to organizations that define themselves as "advocacy organizations" and thus should be studied as an activity, and not as an organizational classification". Meanwhile, Halpin urges scholars to go beyond a functional specification of interest groups, and to avoid the downplaying of other dimensions of group life as a consequence of defining groups as actors formed for the purpose of influencing public policy (2014: 7; 28; see also Moe, 1988: 1-2; Witko, 2015: 122). Which factors affect *how intensely voluntary membership organizations engage in political activity* is a theoretically and empirically important question for research on interest groups, third sector and civil society organizations alike, as they study supposedly distinct groups of organizations which, however, considerably overlap in practice (Hasenfeld & Gidreon, 2005: 99-102).

We address this question from an *intra-organizational perspective* which has been fruitfully applied to understand group governance (e.g. Halpin, 2006; Barakso & Schaffner, 2007; Binderkrantz, 2009), but is less commonly used to theorize or examine groups' political orientations or activities (but see Berkhout, 2013: 229; Lowery, 2007; Halpin, 2014; Witko, 2015). Unlike firms or formal institutions such as government units that lobby individually, voluntary membership organizations face the constant threat of member exit (whether members are individuals or organizations themselves). Thus, they need to make on-going efforts to sustain member support and loyalty (Olson, 1976; Wilson, 1973; Hirschman, 1970; Gray & Lowery, 1995). Lowery (2007) has stressed that before they can pursue any goals, all organizations need to ensure their survival. For organizations reliant on a voluntary membership, survival might depend more on factors such as resources for organizational maintenance (e.g. members, finances) than on the successful exercise of policy influence, suggesting a direct link between intra-organizational dynamics and a group's external activities (Halpin, 2014: 24, 62-3). Berkhout (2010: 3, 12-3; 2013), in turn, has convincingly argued that organized activities should be understood as exchange relationships with

distinct audiences that organizations engage with simultaneously. While we consider political activity as a *possible instead of a constitutive feature of voluntary membership organizations* that have formed to jointly pursue a shared interest, we consider organizational members as a central 'audience' (Salisbury, 1992: 43) or 'primary environment' (Schmitter & Streeck 1999: 50) for this class of organization.[3]

Starting out from here, we build on classical works on the maintenance and survival of voluntary groups that can be politically active or not (e.g. Clark & Wilson, 1961; Wilson, 1973; Moe, 1988) and present an *incentive-theoretical perspective on group political activity* from which we derive several hypotheses. Essentially, our hypotheses theorize, on the one hand, how leaders[4] sustain (rather than form) their organizations through *different strategies of incentive provision to group members* able to exit the organization at any point (Hirschman, 1970; Barakso & Schaffner, 2007). Investments in political activities play a more or less important part in such incentive provision, depending on the nature and composition of an organization's membership (Wilson, 1973: 33-5). On the other hand, we hypothesize that leaders themselves *are subject to intra-organizational incentive structures as generated by members' particular role or position in the respective organization* when they try to balance internal demands with conflicting external pressures (e.g. by government) (Schmitter & Streeck, 1999: 19, 21; Berkhout, 2013: 232). While leaders cannot ignore members altogether, the balance struck by leaders can take different shapes, which, in turn, feeds into whether investments in political activities are prioritized or not (Witko, 2015: 122-5). This, in turn, is decisive for whether a membership group becomes an interest group in 'functional terms' (Lowery 2007; Halpin 2014).

After developing our theoretical framework, we examine our hypotheses using data from two group surveys in Switzerland and Germany (Jentges et al., 2013), data that is particularly suitable to test our framework as the surveys used a bottom-up strategy to map group populations (Berkhout et al. forthcoming) leading to the inclusion a wide variety of

[3] Our approach is applicable to collective voluntary groups, not to individual actors or institutions (e.g. firms or government agencies) (Salisbury 1992) which might lobby as well but need not deal with trade-offs between external pressures and member demands (Gray and Lowery 1996; Drutman 2015; Halpin et al forthcoming).

[4] We define leaders as those intra-organizational actors in charge of the day-to-day running of an organization, as well as the managing of its outside relations (e.g. Cigler & Loomis, 2012).

organizations ranging from classical interest groups (e.g. business associations) over service-oriented professional associations to inwards-oriented hobby groups. Our findings substantiate our incentive-theoretical perspective. For instance, we expected organizations composed of individual members (compared to corporate members) to be less politically active. We further expected this only to hold as long as an organization's individual membership size remains below a critical threshold. Above this threshold, a growing number of individual members strengthens an organization's propensity towards political activity (as differences in size alters the type of incentive provision that is effective to prevent members from leaving). Our findings confirm this idea. Importantly, our findings hold even though we control for a range of 'external' factors (e.g. issue area, competition) that the literature highlights as important influences on organizations' strategic choices (see e.g. Baumgartner & Leech, 2001) as well as country context. These findings provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors that motivate voluntary membership organizations to act like interest groups in a 'functional sense' by taking more serious the possibility that for many groups political activity might be one of many things they do, without necessarily being constitutive for their identity. We conclude with the broader repercussions of our findings and avenues for future research.

An Incentive-Theoretical Perspective on Group Political Activity

When theorizing the behavior of voluntary membership organization, it seems intuitive to theorize the nature of the leader-member relationship as being at the core of maintaining such organizations as collective actors. Indeed, case study research has stressed the importance of members and the resources they hold within the organization for the extent to which leaders can, or want, to prioritize political over other activities (Witko, 2015: 123-5; Halpin, 2014). Quantitative research, in contrast, often bypasses membership-related factors and more generally intra-organizational drivers of groups' political activities (but see Binderkrantz 2009; Berkhout 2010; Halpin and Herschel III 2012a; 2012b). This is the case although Maloney (2015: 99; see also Jordan & Maloney, 1997) has prominently argued that leaders tailor organizational activities to their members' preferences to provide an incentive mix that assures their organization's maintenance. If this is the case, whether investments in political activities are worthwhile to organizations should be assessed accordingly.

Starting out from classical works (e.g. Clark & Wilson, 1961; Wilson, 1973), we thus propose an incentive-theoretical perspective on group political activity focusing on how organizations as collective actors sustain themselves (rather than dealing with questions around group formation and interest aggregation). We then develop hypotheses on the intra-organizational factors central to whether political activities are likely to be a priority for an organization or not. In the following, we theorize first which types of incentives leaders provide to their membership depending on the latter's nature and composition (Wilson, 1973: 26-7) and second under which intra-organizational conditions leaders are incentivized to prioritize member demands over the demands of external audiences, a fundamental tension leaders have to manage on an continuous basis (Schmitter & Streeck 1999: 15; 20; 23-4; Berkhout, 2013: 233-4). Both aspects are expected to feed into the extent to which group leaders make investments in political activities.

How to Prevent Member Exit: The Nature and Composition of Membership Groups and their Investments in Political Activity

Which incentives (or mix thereof) are most effective in achieving organizational stability is bound to depend on the nature of members as well as their number. The distinction between groups composed of individual members and those composed of corporate actors (e.g. institutions, firms or other associations), two types of members whose motivation for organizational membership will at least partially differ (Jordan et al., 2004: 203-4), can be expected to be central for which incentive mix can effectively induce these members to stay loyal and continue their support. This pushes leaders of differently constituted groups to provide distinct combinations of incentives to their members (Wilson, 1973: 26-7), which, in turn, either supports or weakens the prioritization of political activity as one mode of incentive provision. [5]

[5] The terminology used for various incentive or benefit types vary to some extent across central works such as by Wilson and Clark (1961), Wilson (1973) and Olson (1965). As for our purposes the specific distinctions between *selective* and *collective* incentives (whether material or not) and, more specifically, between *solidary incentives* (as one type of a non-material selective incentive) and *selective material incentives* are the most crucial, we stick to these as the main terms for the sake of clarity and do not discuss any other incentive types presented in the literature. Furthermore, central to our argument is our treatment of political activities as a (non-exclusive) collective incentive, as not only members benefit from them.

How do organizations composed of individuals differ from those composed of corporate members considering the role that political activity might play in sustaining organizational support? We can expect selective *material* incentives exclusively available to members (e.g. access to specific resources or services) to be equally relevant to sustain membership *irrespective of the type of member*. This is because both types of membership group suffer – *ceteris paribus* - from the same free-rider problem regarding political activity generating 'policy change' as one possible *collective* incentive. For instance, if a favorable policy change can be achieved and the organization can effectively claim credit for it, membership of the organization is no prerequisite for benefitting from this change, i.e. non-members with similar interests can equally enjoy its advantages.[6] This problem of non-exclusivity makes selective material incentives (that are exclusively accessible to members) crucial for the maintenance of voluntary organizations generally (Olson, 1965).

In contrast, we expect a form of selective *non-material* incentives, *solidary incentives,* to be important to *individual* membership organizations but of little relevance to those composed of corporate members*. Solidary incentives* are generated by the personal satisfaction of members derived from associating with others (e.g. through joint activities strengthening members' belonging to the group) (Clark & Wilson, 1961: 134-5; see also Salisbury, 1969). These incentives can be assumed to be an important driver of at least some individuals' membership in groups who predominantly enjoy group life, rather than being interested in selective material incentives (e.g. access to member services) or collective incentives (e.g. the implementation of the organization's political agenda). Members that are organizations or institutions themselves are unlikely to care much for activities strengthening feelings of group solidarity between each other. Thus, as far as internally provided incentives go, different from individual membership groups, selective *solidary incentives are unlikely to be useful investments for leaders to prevent corporate members from free-riding*.[7] But why and how does the varying relevance of (selective) solidary incentives within individual and corporate membership groups matter for leaders' investments in political activities

[6] As specified later, political activity can also strengthen group attachments, i.e. it can generate different types of collective incentives. The main 'difficulty' in terms of incentive provision is that (whether ascribing it an instrumental or emotional underpinning) its benefits cannot be restricted to members.

[7] These do not have to be material in the narrow sense but could consist of status or special recognition derived from exclusive group membership.

(generating collective incentives)? Importantly, the engagement in activities able to generate distinct incentive types (e.g. political activities generating (non-exclusive) collective incentives through influencing government policy; joint social activities for members to strengthen group solidarity; service provision to members to generate selective material incentives) creates costs for an organization. As membership organizations with individual members (unlike corporate membership organizations) face pressure to sustain member support, not only through the provision of selective material, but also through (selective) solidary incentives, they face a trade-off between a more diverse (and more costly) demand for intra-organizational selective incentives from members and investments in externally oriented political activities (generating their own costs) (Witko, 2015: 125; Halpin et al. forthcoming). Put differently, organizations with individual members will – ceteris paribus - have fewer resources left to invest in political activity than those without individual members (as the latter are not expected to provide solidary incentives to members as well), which allows us to formulate an initial working hypothesis:

If an organization has individual members, it is less politically active than an organization composed of corporate members.

The nature of members, however, is only one central aspect defining a group's basic composition. Another is membership size, which our working hypothesis assumes to be constant. Differences in size, however, fundamentally affect the balance of incentives that is most cost-effective not only to form an organization (Olson 1965: 48-50; 61), but also to sustain internal support post-formation. So what happens when membership organizations composed of individual members grow?

Again returning to Wilson (1973: 13) and theorizing group political activity in relation to leaders' efforts towards organizational maintenance, we can refine our initial hypothesis that rests on two arguments: all voluntary membership organizations will use to some extent selective material incentives to stabilize member support; and individual members are less instrumentally driven than corporate members and therefore receptive to solidary activities (Schmitter & Streeck, 1999: 14-15). If the second argument holds, individual members should also be receptive to political activities that strengthen the attachment to the organization's cause, tapping into individuals' emotional attachments (e.g. public protests), activities that target not only members but also sympathizers more broadly and

thus generate collective incentives. That said, as long as the organization is relatively small, solidary incentives should be more effective in stabilizing member support than collective political activities, as non-members can be more effectively excluded from the former (which, in turn, should make them more valuable to members).

This, however, changes when an organization's individual membership grows. Then the following three shifts take place, which can be expected to change the incentive mix most effective in sustaining organizational support, thereby making investments in political activities more worthwhile from the viewpoint of leaders: First, solidary incentives are more difficult to provide effectively in big organizations that, by their very nature, are more anonymous. As far as investments in solidarity incentives are less effective in mass organizations, resources are better invested in other incentives. Second, political activities can serve as 'substitute' for solidary incentives as a mechanism to strengthen a group's identity. Particularly the pursuit of political goals through outsider or public political strategies (e.g. media campaigns) which are highly visible to members, media and sympathizers alike (Beyers, 2004: 213-14) can stress the importance of the organizations' cause and thereby strengthen group attachments (compensating for intra-organizational solidary incentives becoming less effective). Again, individual members can be expected to be more receptive to such activities than more instrumentally driven corporate members. Third, the provision of selective material incentives, which need to be made available to each individual member, is bound to become increasingly costly the more members there are. This, in turn, makes alternative strategies for generating incentives to maintain member support more (cost)effective and thus more attractive; investments in political activities to generate collective incentives is one of these strategies. In conjunction, these three shifts suggest a 'threshold effect' when theorizing the relationship between individual membership and political activity.[8] We can refine our initial working hypothesis in the following manner:

[8] It is important to note that the implications of *differences in membership size for political activity are theorized in the context of consolidated organizations* that have already built up a core support base (assumed to be interested in a mix of incentives, rather than just one) and whose leaders are expected to choose (depending on membership size) different strategies to sustain this support accordingly. Our arguments do not apply to situations in which a new organization is created for the purpose of being politically active and based on this functional orientation builds up its membership.

H1A (*Individual Membership Hypothesis)*: If a group has individual members, it is less likely to be politically active than one without, as long as the group is sufficiently small.

H1B (*Individual Membership Size Hypothesis):* Once an individual membership group has reached a critical size, the further it grows, the more politically active it is likely to be.

These hypotheses contrast with arguments made in the interest group literature stressing that individual membership groups tend to be bigger and more complex than membership groups composed of corporate actors (e.g. firms, associations, government units), and on this basis associating distinct processes of interest aggregation with each group type. Due to their higher complexity, individual membership groups are assumed to represent more diffuse interests as compared to the more specific interests represented by those groups composed of a smaller number of organizations (Berkhout, 2010: 46). Consequently, it has been argued that individual membership organizations (as they are usually bigger) are less politically active than corporate ones, as the higher number of members in organizations is associated with lower political activity. This argument hypothesizes a *combined* effect linking membership type to group size. Once disentangling the two, approaching the ability of an organization to engage in political activities as an *aggregation problem* allows us to formulate a third hypothesis specifically on the implications of having an increasing number of corporate members.

Building on Olson (1965), we consider interest aggregation (and with it the engagement in joint political activity) as instrumentally driven, with each group member wanting to see his or her own interests considered in whatever political position the organization fights for. This makes the actual engagement in political activity the more difficult and demanding the more numerous, heterogeneous and complex member preferences become, whose management is a central problem of organizational design. This is because political activity not only requires the formation of a common line reconciling member preferences as such, but a common line with which most or the most important members are happy, which organizational leaders try to achieve by selecting, excluding, emphasizing and combining interests to transform them into a more or less coherent set of objectives (Schmitter & Streeck 1999: 14-15; 46). The nature of this process suggests that political activity (if evaluated in terms of whether it helps to pursue individual member goals rather than functioning as identify-strengthening activity) might be controversial as members disagree over what line to take, making an organization vulnerable (Halpin, 2014:

23). Such vulnerability grows the bigger and more complex an organization becomes, making alternative, less contested modes of incentive provision (e.g. provision of services) more attractive to organizational leaders that are concerned about the organization's maintenance than investments in political activities.

We expect this negative relationship between bigger size and political activity to particularly affect groups composed of corporate members. This is because the argument made presupposes that members are instrumentally driven and consider political activity as a way to pursue their own, particular interests, an assumption – as argued earlier – that is more convincing with regard to corporate members than individuals who might care more about the provision of solidary incentives or be driven by their value orientations instead (Clark & Wilson, 1961: 134-5; LaPalombara, 1964: 18; Schmitter & Streeck, 1999: 14-15). This leads us to third hypothesis theorizing the link between an organization's basic composition in terms of corporate members and political activity:

H2 (*Corporate Membership Hypothesis*): The more corporate membership organizations grow, the less they are politically active.

When Leaders Prioritize Member Demands: Members' Voice and Member Finances

While voluntary organizations generally depend on membership support (Wilson, 1973), Jordan et al. have stressed that only a minority of groups are interested in or able to enhance member involvement (2004: 209). The extent to which members are involved in decision-making varies widely (Barakso & Schaffner, 2007: 16; Halpin, 2006). Group members, mindful of the costs of a more active involvement, might be perfectly happy to remain passive and not be interested in actively shaping their organization's priorities as long as the latter do not directly clash with their preferences (Maloney, 2015: 102). The extent to which members play a role for what types of activities a group engages in, and which activities are prioritized by leaders, is likely to depend on the mechanisms within the organization that allow members to communicate their preferences to leaders and which members are likely to use such channels. These, in turn, generate different levels of intra-organizational pressure on leaders to consider members in their on-going attempts to reconcile internal and external demands (Berkhout, 2013).

Members (individual or corporate) who hold strong political views and desire specific policy changes can be expected to care most about having communication channels to receive information from leaders; they are also more likely to actively use these channels to communicate their demands back to them (as compared to members that predominantly enjoy participation in group life, joined to gain access to the services offered by the organization and predominantly operate as 'passive consumers' or 'check book supporters'). If so, the pressure on the organization to actively pursue members' political interests should be higher the more numerous the available communication channels are, and the more frequently they are used. To consider this dimension is particularly important in light of new technologies that significantly reduced the costs especially for large and complex organizations to communicate with their membership (Karpf 2012: 162; Halpin et al 2017: 4).

Furthermore, the responsiveness of leaders to members' demands can be expected to vary depending on whether members are important contributors to an organization's budget (Schmitter & Streeck, 1999: 50; Witko, 2015: 123). While not all members are interested in their organization's political activities, if (as argued earlier) members with strong beliefs are more vocal, as well as being more likely to leave when dissatisfied with the organization, financial dependency on member fees should reinforce the incentives for the organization to stress its ability to visibly push for members' political interests. This is why growing dependency on membership fees should increase the likelihood of organizations to be politically active.

This leads to our final two hypotheses each referring to a factor that enhances the intra-organizational influence that active members can exercise within an organization, which creates incentives for leaders to engage in political activities facing countervailing external pressures (e.g. dependency on government funds incentivizing the downplaying of political activism instead, see on this Bloodgood & Tremblay-Boire, 2016).

H3 (*Member Communication Hypothesis)*: The more numerous and the more actively used communication channels between leaders and members, the more politically active a group is likely to be.

H4 (*Membership Fees Hypothesis)*: The more dependent a group is on membership fees, the more politically active it is likely to be.

Country Selection, Data and Measurements

We test our framework across two different country settings, Switzerland and Germany, which differ in a variety of systemic characteristics relevant to group maintenance and the costliness of political activity. These are: the degree of societal heterogeneity (multilingual vs. monolingual), population size, regime type (parliamentary vs. separation of powers), presence/absence of referenda and welfare state type (conservative vs. liberal[9]). Furthermore, while both systems are constitutionally federal, German federalism – due to its different party system – is considerably more centralized than Swiss federalism (Thorlakson, 2009). Consequently, if our hypotheses find support across these two settings, this is unlikely to be the result of country specificities.

To test our hypotheses we use two new group datasets, that are particularly suitable to test our framework as group populations were mapped through a 'bottom-up strategy' (Berkhout et al. forthcoming) leading to the inclusion a wide variety of organizations ranging from classical interest groups (e.g. business associations) over service-oriented professional associations to inwards-oriented hobby groups (thus covering the full spectrum of political activity levels). Consequently, a list of groups for Germany and Switzerland was compiled using the most comprehensive and – where possible – official sources (Wonka et al 2010). For Germany, the main source was the 'Taschenbuch des öffentlichen Lebens – Deutschland 2010' (Oeckl, 2010), a directory of currently active national and regional organizations, complemented by the list of officially registered lobby organizations with the German Bundestag (the so-called 'Lobbyliste'). In Switzerland, the main source was the ‚Publicus: Schweizer Jahrbuch des öffentlichen Lebens' (Schwabe, 2009), whose coverage is similarly inclusive to the 'Taschenbuch des öffentlichen Lebens'.[10] This was complemented by the parliament's 'Gästeregister' (guest registry) and information from the website www.verbaende.ch for potentially relevant organizations not yet included in the list. The different lists were merged, and duplicate entries deleted. During this coding process the postal, Internet, and email addresses of each group's central office, and (where possible)

[9] The classification of Switzerland is much debated. However, Ebbinghaus (2012: 15-16, Table 2) shows that most studies classify it as liberal welfare state.

[10] Both directories cover economic and political but also social and cultural associations and clubs.

the Internet and email addresses of the organization's communication departments were recorded. These email addresses were used as the email-database to distribute the online questionnaire. Data collection was completed in 2011 in Switzerland, and in Germany 2012. The response rate was 40% for Switzerland and 23% for Germany. While these response rates are similar to comparable studies (see e.g. Dür and Mateo, 2013; Eising, 2009), the difference between the two countries is potentially problematic.[11] However, several checks on a range of variables such as membership, group type, age, and political activity show that the two country samples are comparable to each other, and to samples reported in other studies (see Appendix A for details). Hence, sampling bias due to unit nonresponse is unlikely to be problematic. When considering item nonresponse, we are left with 1034 organizations that completed all questions relevant for our analysis.[12] Because our framework theorizes the internal dynamics of membership groups, we excluded all groups with neither individual nor corporate members, which left us with 939 observations.[13] All variables used in this paper but one are derived from this dataset (see details below).

Operationalization of Dependent Variable

To capture *political activity* respondents were asked how often they are politically active: 'Never', 'Rarely', 'Sometimes', 'Often', 'Very often'. This variable encapsulates both the likelihood of organizations to be politically active and the intensity of political activity. We find that 76 groups in our dataset (8.1%) are never politically active, while 174 groups (18.5%) are rarely, 288 (30.7%) sometimes, 251 (26.8%) often, and 149 (15.9%) very often politically active. Respondents did not only vary in the intensity of political activity, but also whether they reported that they are political active at all, reflecting the wide range of organizations included. Positive coefficients in the statistical models indicate higher activity levels.[14]

[11] The difference in the response rate is potentially explained by the survey request coming from a reputable Swiss institution, which might have prompted a higher number of Swiss than German groups to respond.

[12] For more information on missing data and item nonresponse checks, see Appendix D.

[13] The 95 removed organisations are mostly single businesses. After removing them, we are left with 484 observations from Switzerland, and 455 from Germany.

[14] Survey questions can be problematic, because respondents might understand the questions in various ways, or interpret the categories differently. As a check whether our political activity variable captures what we intend to measure, we construct a second variable making use of a range of other survey items regarding political activity. We also asked survey participants how often they engage in political activities targeted at specific audiences: the government, political parties, the media, and the general public. These four questions are also on a five-point scale from rarely (1) to very often (5), and we sum these four variables up as a second

Operationalization of Explanatory Variables

To test H1A (*Individual Membership Hypothesis) and* H1B (*Individual Membership Size Hypothesis)*, we include a membership dummy which captures whether a group has individual members (1) or not (0). Of the 939 interest organizations in the dataset 647 have individuals as members (approximately 69%). We further include how many individual members organizations had, a highly skewed variable, which we include as logged into our models. To test our *Corporate Membership Hypothesis* (H2), we measure the number of corporate members in an organization.[15] Again, this variable is highly skewed, which is why we use the logarithm. To operationalize H3 (*Member Communication Hypothesis*) we developed a measure that captures the communication channels in an organization and the intensity of communication between leaders and their members, capturing both traditional channels of communication (e.g. direct contract with members, events for members, etc.) and those exploiting increasingly important new technologies (e.g. e-mailing lists, Twitter, etc.) (Karpf 2012). To obtain such a measure we rely on nine variables that record how often organizations communicate with their own members (see Appendix B), and asks respondents how often they use these communication channels on a five-point scale ranging from 'almost never' (0) to 'daily' (4). To generate the index, the numeric values of these nine variables were summed up (hence higher values represent a higher intensity of communication).[16] Finally, we measure an organization's reliance on membership fees to test our *Membership Fee Hypothesis* (H4) based on a survey item asking organization about

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measure of group activity. Using both these activity variables as numerical variables, they exhibit a highly significant correlation coefficient of 0.602. This indicates that the political activity variable used as the dependent variable in this study does indeed capture what we intended.

[15] Corporate membership organizations encompass organizations composed of associations, businesses or institutional actors.

[16] This index combines traditional communication tools with electronic forms of communication such as email, but also relatively new communication channels such as social media. It thus captures the entire array of communication techniques available to groups, and is therefore better able to capture communication with members than any of the individual communication variables alone. However, factor analysis of the nine communication variables shows that they basically fall into two groups (i.e. factors), where traditional forms of communication (direct contact, organisation of events) load on the same factor as mailing lists and newsletters, while the second factor is mostly composed of the newest communication techniques via social media, Twitter, and blogs. This shows the reliability of the data and the data structure. However, as the two factors are not of equal importance and are composed of different numbers of highly loading variables, we do not obtain the factor loadings and use them in the analysis, but construct the index as described. For more information see Appendix B.

this income source. As this variable is highly skewed, the variable is logged (see for details Appendix C).

Control Variables

To ensure that the estimates of our main explanatory variables are unbiased, we include the *level of competition* that groups face. As the general level of competition links to the competition for members, this is an important control (e.g. Gray & Lowery 1996: 96; Baumgartner and Leech 2001), and we expect the level of activity to increase with competition (Weiler, 2016). To capture competition between groups we rely on a survey question on the visibility of other groups in the field of activity of an organization, which could be answered on a five-point scale from not at all visible (1) to highly visible (5). G*roup type* is also an important indicator for how groups behave (e.g. Binderkrantz, 2008, Klüver, 2012, Weiler & Brändli, 2015). As cause groups face a stronger collective-action problem than sectional groups who cater to a more clearly defined constituency (Klüver 2012: 1116-7; Dür & De Bièvre, 2007: 972), we expect the former to be more politically active to incentivize members to stay (or new members to join). To measure this variable, all organizations in the dataset were hand-coded, with 282 cases (about 30%) being cause groups. *State subsidies* are an important form of income for interest organizations, which may have a negative impact on the political activity of groups as the receipt of state funding can be linked to restrictions regarding organizations' political activities (Becker, 1983; Bloodgood & Tremblay-Boire, 2016).We include the amount of state subsidies received by organizations, provided by survey respondents, to the models. Due to the skewedness of this variable the logged form is included in the models. The *issue area* is also an important determinant for the political activity of interest organizations (Baumgartner & Leech, 2001, Klüver, 2011). Therefore, we also include the main issue area of groups' political activity into the models, as identified by the groups in the surveys. Specifically, we identify the following six issues areas in our dataset: economics, education, social issues, environment, religion, and others. To capture potential differences in political activity stemming from the length of time an interest organization has already been part of the political system we include an *organization's age* expecting a negative relationship with political activity due to the higher institutional knowledge, which allows groups to better recognize when to become active and whom to target. Finally, we control for potential systematic differences between group

behavior in our two countries and include a *country dummy* (with Switzerland as base category).

Further details (including descriptive statistics and a correlation table) on all variables as well as the survey items based on which our measures were constructed are provided in Appendix C.

Empirical Analysis

Model Choice – Bayesian Ordered Logit Models

In this section we present the empirical findings. Given that the dependent variable (political activity) is categorical in nature and on a five-point scale with a clear ordering, we opt for ordered logit models. We estimate the model using a Bayesian approach and Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) simulations. This approach is well suited for our dataset, since we have a) survey data, and b) many missing values due to item nonresponse (see Appendix D for a description of the problem and robustness checks). Both these elements introduce uncertainty into the estimation of our model parameters. Sampling from the posterior distribution for specified quantities of interest to obtain predictions for posterior means and highest posterior density (HPD) intervals allows accounting for these uncertainties (Gelman et al. 2013). The MCMC algorithm we use is called via the Stan Modeling Language and implemented in C++. We utilize the user interface rstan available in the R computing environment, which automatically translates the model into the Stan Modeling Language, runs the model, and returns the result. Stan uses Hamiltonian Monte Carlo (HMC) sampling – a form of MCMC sampling – which is highly efficient and converges to stationarity much faster than more traditional Gibbs samplers (Stan Development Team, 2016).[17] We run the models using four parallel chains with 10,000 iterations, of which the first 3,000 are used as burn-in. Autocorrelation between consecutive iterations of our chains is unproblematic. Therefore, no thinning is required and we have an effective chain length of 28,000. Various diagnostics indicate that only a short chain length of about 4,000 is required for stationarity (Raftery and Lewis's diagnostic), and that the sampled chains passed the stationarity test for

[17] A comparison between the Gibbs sampler and Stan's HMC sampler shows that our main model requires about one million iterations to achieve convergence for the former, while the later only needs a few thousand iterations for convergence.

all parameters (Heidelberger and Welch's convergence diagnostic). Finally, the scale reduction statistics (Gelman & Rubin, 1992) for all parameters are very close to 1, which shows that the four chains drawn for the same coefficient are almost identical. This is another indication for the convergence of the chains after the burn-in period. Overall, we conclude that the chains are sufficient in length and have converged to the target posterior distribution. Because we do not possess prior knowledge about the main effects in our model (apart from the theoretically derived hypotheses), we set uninformative priors and let the likelihood determine the posterior distribution.

Findings

Table 1 presents the posterior means and Highest Posterior Density intervals (HPD) for all parameters in the three models. Model 1 is the full model including all observations with complete information from both surveys. In Models 2 and 3 we present findings for Germany (Model 2) and Switzerland (Model 3) only. Expecting our hypotheses to apply equally in the two different country settings, we do this to check whether our results hold in both political systems, or whether they are driven by group properties in one country only.[18] As an additional check regarding whether missing values in our data are problematic, we used multiple imputation techniques to run the same models again for all organizations in the survey that indicate that they have either individual or corporate members. We thereby almost doubled the number of observations from 939 to 1780. The results are stable both for the full model as well as the two country models, which indicates that our missing values are indeed missing at random (see Appendix D for the imputed models and more information on missing data), underlining the robustness of our findings.

Table 1 shows the Bayesian point estimate and the 95% HPD for each variable in the model. Other than frequentist approaches, which treat parameters as fixed and constructs confidence interval with a specific probability of containing that 'true value', Bayesian approaches treat the point value as random and calculate posterior distributions providing probability values for that 'random parameter'. The provided point estimate is the value

[18] In the main model, we use a dummy variable approach as random effects and clustered standard errors require a much larger number of countries. In addition to the separate 'country models', we applied interaction effects between our main explanatory variables and the country dummy. While all the main effects in these models remain stable, none of the interaction terms are significant, supporting the robustness of our findings (the respective models are provided in Appendix E).

with the highest probability, given the current knowledge we possess, and the 95% HPD is the probability distribution of the random parameter we are after. The more we learn about the parameter, the narrower the HPD should get (see Samaniego, 2011).

Table 1: Posterior summaries for determinants of political activity of groups in Switzerland and Germany

	Model 1 Full model Ord. logit	**Model 2 Germany Ord. logit**	**Model 3 Switzerland Ord. logit**
Presence of individual members (H1A)	-0.85	-0.79	-1.02
	[-1.34, 0.37]	[-1.49, -0.09]	[-1.74, -0.31]
Individual membership size (H1B)	0.10	0.09	0.13
	[0.04, 0.16]	[0.01, 0.18]	[0.03. 0.23]
Corporate membership size (H2)	-0.03	-0.02	-0.02
	[-0.08, 0.03]	[-0.10, 0.06]	[-0.10, 0.06]
Member communication (H3)	0.06	0.06	0.05
	[0.04, 0.08]	[0.03, 0.09]	[0.02, 0.09]
Membership fees (H4)	0.16	0.10	0.23
	[0.09, 0.22]	[0.01, 0.19]	[0.13, 0.32]
Control Variables			
Competition (base=no competition)			
Low competition	1.32	1.53	1.13
	[0.81, 1.83]	[0.73, 2.35]	[0.45, 1.18]
Medium competition	1.65	1.84	1.57
	[1.16, 2.16]	[1.05, 2.64]	[0.98, 2.24]
High competition	2.06	2.39	1.73
	[1.50, 2.62]	[1.51, 3.28]	[0.97, 2.48]
Very high competition	2.54	2.75	2.50
	[1.75, 3.33]	[1.65, 3.87]	[1.13, 3.72]
Group type (base=sectional group)			
Cause group	0.69	0.71	0.58
	[0.40, 0.98]	[0.29, 1.13]	[0.14, 1.02]
State subsidies	-0.01	0.02	-0.05
	[-0.03, 0.01)	[-0.01, 0.06]	[-0.08, -0.02]
Age of group	-0.14	-0.21	-0.07
	[-0.28, -0.00]	[0.10, 0.41]	[-0.28, 0.14]
Country dummy (base=CH)	0.45		
	[0.20, 0.71]		
Issue area (base=economic groups)			
Education	-0.68	-0.77	-0.65
	[-1.07, -0.29]	[-1.36, -0.20]	[-1.12, -0.12]

Religion	-1.23	-1.26	-1.06
	[-2.14, -0.34]	[-2.43, -0.10]	[-2.60, 0.47]
Social	-0.27	-0.26	-0.41
	[-0.64, 0.10]	[-0.80, 0.28]	[-0.95, 0.12]
Environment	-0.28	-0.44	-0.13
	[-0.84, 0.28]	[-1.25, 0.28]	[-0.93, 0.66]
Other groups	0.11	-0.08	0.24
	[-0.23, 0.44]	[-0.61, 0.45]	[-0.21, 0.70]
Intercepts			
1|2	0.59	-0.20	1.08
	[-0.34, 1.52]	[-1.61, 1.18]	[-0.18, 2.36]
2|3	2.25	1.29	2.90
	[1.32, 3.18]	[-0.11, 2.68]	[1.65, 4.19]
3|4	3.87	2.83	4.65
	[2.92, 4.83]	[1.42, 4.25]	[3.35, 5.98]
4|5	5.50	4.46	6.39
	[4.53, 6.48]	[3.03, 5.91]	[5.04. 7.77]
WAIC	2637.08	1297.48	1357.31
Num.obs.	939	455	484

Note: The table reports point estimates (posterior means) and 95% HPD intervals (in squared brackets) for all parameters in the models

So does the nature and composition of an organization's membership shape the extent to which investments in political activity form an important part of an organization's incentive provision directed towards preventing members from leaving (Hirschman, 1970; Barakso & Schaffner, 2007; Wilson, 1973: 33-5), as theorized in our *Individual Membership Hypothesis* and our *Individual Membership Size Hypothesis* (H1A and H1B)? The presence of individual members should negatively influence organizations' political activity level. Such groups are expected to be less politically active because the provision of solidarity incentives – through social activities for members for instance – generates costs. These costs, both staff time and/or financial resources, reduce the resources individual membership organizations have at their disposal to invest in political activities. Organizations with only corporate members, in contrast, do not have to bear such costs, in turn, freeing resources for political activity. Indeed, the effect of the *individual membership dummy* we use to operationalize H1A is a strong predictor of political activity. For instance, the negative posterior mean of -0.85 in Model 1 for the *individual membership dummy* indicates that groups with (few) individual members are considerably less likely to be in the higher political activity categories than groups without individual members. We further sampled from the posterior distributions to obtain estimates for specified quantities of interest. For instance, fixing all covariates to

meaningful values and then obtaining samples for organizations with and without individual members, the model predicts 41.4% of organizations *without individual membership* to be often or very often politically active (the two highest political activity levels), while only 23.4% of organizations *with individual members* are expected to exhibit such high levels of political activity. This interesting finding begins to address the research gap identified by Jordan et al. (2004: 202), who state that the implication of membership-related characteristics of organizations tend to be under-researched. Related to organizational investments in political activity more particularly, Berkhout (2010: 47) indicates that "scholars have seldom directly compared the activities of organizations with different types of supporters", a problem our study directly addresses. One argument to explain the support for our *Individual Membership Hypothesis* (H1A) is that groups serving (predominantly) individual members have to reinforce the loyalty of these members by offering more (costly) selective solidarity incentives which stress the 'fun factor' of being together and part of the group (Jordan & Maloney, 2007: 46) and the enjoyment of group life (see Clark & Wilson, 1961: 134-5). Such activities cannot be seen as political and are generally less important for corporate membership. But since they are costly, groups using them have fewer funds left than corporate membership groups, and as a consequence their political activity levels are lower.

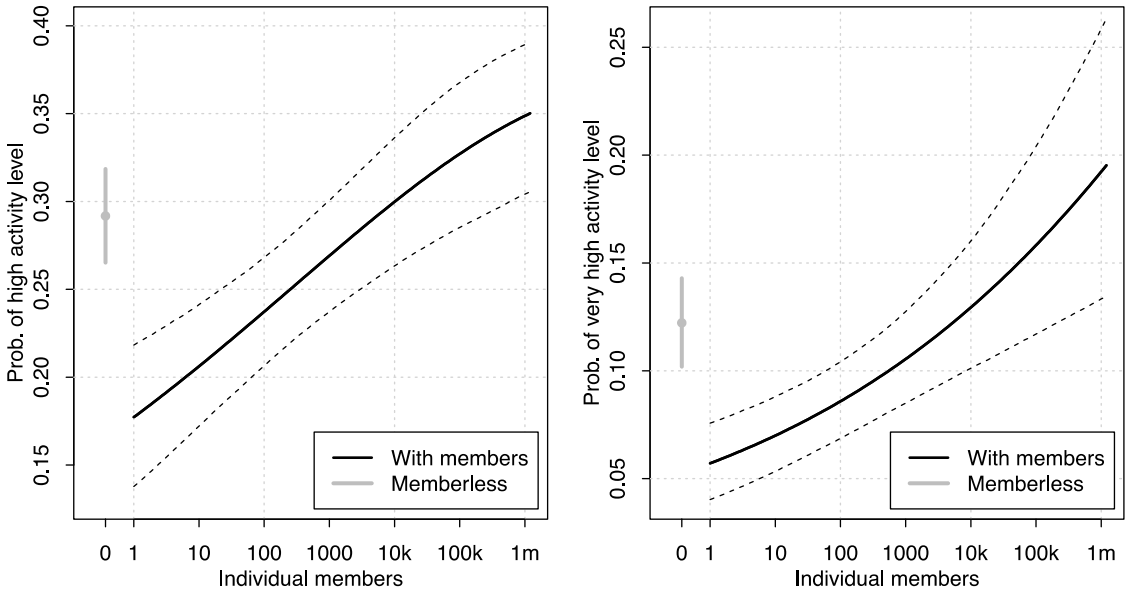
According to our *Individual Membership Size Hypothesis* we, in turn, expected the intensity of groups' political activity levels to increase as the number of individual members increases. Again, our findings support this expectation, as the positive and influential coefficients of the *individual membership size* variable across all models indicate. The predicted effects in the models are influential and fairly strong. Again sampling from the posterior distribution, the coefficient of 0.10 for the *individual membership size* variable in Model 1 translates, all else equal, into a predicted value of only 23.4% of groups with very few individual members that are often or very often politically active (as should be the case as this is in line with the findings presented in the previous paragraph and thus H1A). However, from there the predicted activity levels quickly increase. When organizations grow to 1,000 individual members, 37.4% of organizations are expected to fall into the highest two activity categories. And when they have about 10,000 individual members, more than 45% of the organizations sampled from the posterior distribution are predicted to be often or very often politically active. Thus, organizations of that size overtake the activity levels of

organizations without individual membership. For organizations with the highest number of individual members in our dataset about 55% are predicted to fall into the highest two activity categories. This suggests that political activities can strengthen group attachment and act as incentives for individual members of (particularly large) organizations to stay with the latter. It also echoes Jordan and Maloney's argument (1998: 391) that group size influences political participation positively because broad support increases the attention interest organizations can attract, and thus facilitates both voice and access strategies the organization can employ in the political process. This, in turn, is in line with Thrall's point (2006: 410) that a larger individual membership base can be regarded as another resource which helps groups to increase organizational activity levels, in particularly with regards to voice strategies, i.e. political activities designed to reach the general public, such as media campaigns or protests. Simultaneously, the finding challenges works arguing that individual membership groups represent more diffuse interests as compared to the more specific interests represented by groups composed of a smaller number of organizations, making political activity more difficult and less likely in the former than the latter (Berkhout 2010: 46).

Figure 1 summarizes the findings of our *Individual Membership Hypothesis* and our *Individual Membership Size Hypothesis* and brings them together. On the left-hand side of the sub-plots we depict the predicted values for organizations without individual members for the two highest activity levels (in grey). Moving from these organizations to those with only very few individual members, the figures show that the posterior means predict much lower activity levels for such groups, in line with our *Individual Membership Hypothesis* (H1A). In other words, small groups composed of *individual members* are expected to be much less active and tend to be more often in the lower activity categories. However, as *individual membership size* increases, groups become increasingly politically active, substantiating H1B. At around 5,000 individual members, organizations' activity levels are predicted to be on par with organizations without individual members. From then onwards, political activity levels increase and larger groups are expected to be more politically active, than groups without individual members (note that although the HPD intervals overlap somewhat, the Bayesian models still allow us to state with some confidence that very large individual membership groups are more active than those without individual members). These findings are similar irrespective of whether the full sample is used, or whether the

models for the two countries are run separately, underlining the robustness of these findings.

Figure 1: Predicted values (posterior means) for high and very high political activity levels depending on individual membership size (including 95% HPD intervals)

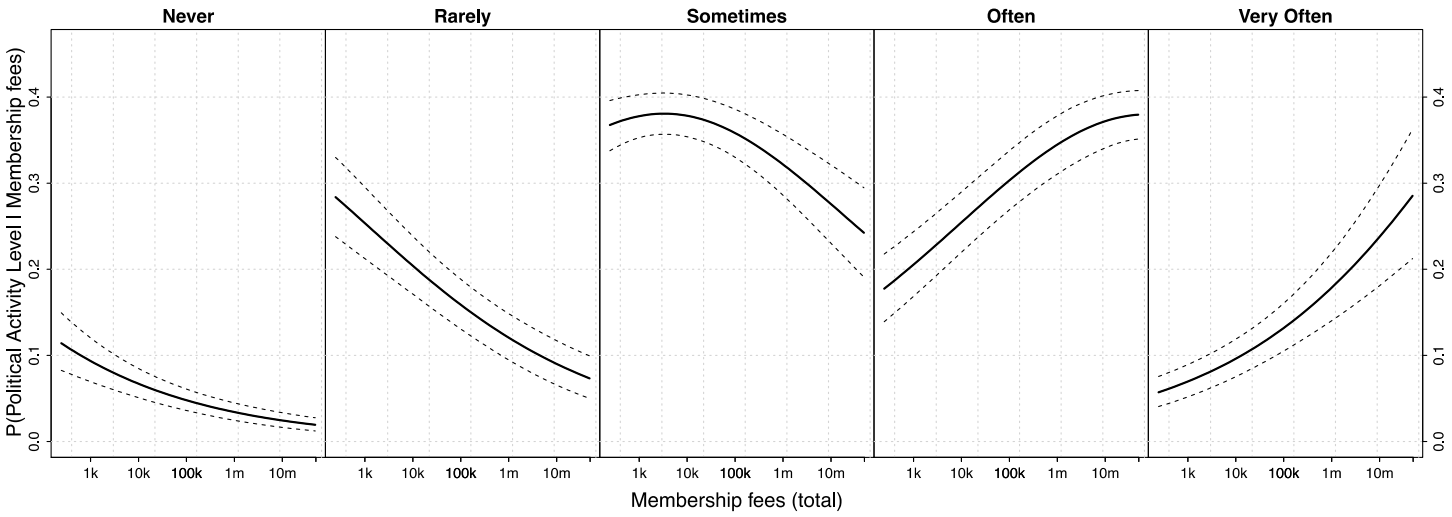


Moving on to the leaders, depending on the presence of communication channels actively used by members and an organization's dependence on membership fees, leaders are indeed incentivized to cater to members' political demands when trying to balance them against conflicting external pressures to different degrees. As theoretically expected, both intra-organizational features feed into investments in political activities. Communication with members, according to the models in Table 1, is a strong predictor for the general level of political activity in line with our *Member Communication Hypothesis* (H3). These findings are very strong, and the magnitude of the effect is substantial. Organizations with the lowest level of membership communication, according to Model 1 of Table 1, only have a likelihood of 19.2% of being often or very often politically active. This value increases to 60.5% for the organizations with the highest level of communication between organizational leaders and group members. At the mean of the *membership communication* variable

(12.97) approximately 33.6% of organizations are predicted to fall into the two highest activity categories. Thus, the presence of communication channels and their active usage incentivizes leaders to pursue members' political interests (as those members with strong political views are more likely to bear the costs of actively voicing demands in the first place, compared to members driven by the desire to gain access and passively consume organizational services). This finding echoes insights from the exchange theory of interest groups proposed by Salisbury (1969). Members expect benefits from their continued participation in the group. When members actively articulate demands (and bear the costs of doing so) yet leaders decide to ignore them, the likelihood of exit is particularly high.

The growing dependency on membership fees has similar implications and increases the likelihood of organizations to be politically active, and more intensely so, substantiating our *Membership Fees Hypothesis* (H4). Such dependency incentivizes group leaders to visibly demonstrate their value to their individual members to provide enough incentives to members with strong political views to prevent them from leaving and possibly switching to a competitor. Consequently, an exchange relationship between leaders and members also shapes political activities and activity levels in a financial sense (Witko, 2015: 123). We can see in Table 1 that higher dependency on membership fees indeed increases the degree of activity of interest organizations. This finding is both valid in the pooled Model 1 including data from both countries, and in the two separate country models. Sampling from the posterior distribution of the full model to obtain predicted values, the organizations with the smallest revenue coming from membership fees are expected to fall into the two highest activity levels 'only' in about 23.5% of the cases, while for the richest organizations this value rises to over 65%. The effect for the full model including all 939 observations is graphically depicted in Figure 2. The plot shows that organizations generating only small amounts of revenue via membership fees are more likely to be never or only rarely politically active, while organizations with higher income from this source of are less likely to fall into these two low activity categories, while their predicted probabilities for the two highest activity categories increase. This suggests that higher dependency on financial contributions coming directly from members increases the responsiveness of group leaders, in turn, substantiating our *Membership Fees Hypothesis*.

Figure 2: Predicted effect (posterior means) of membership fees on the level of political activity of groups (including 95% HPD intervals)



While three hypotheses derived from our incentive-theoretical perspective on group political activity were substantiated by our analysis, we do not find support for our *Corporate Membership Hypothesis* (H2). We theorized that as the number of – instrumentally driven – corporate members increases, groups become more heterogeneous and more difficult to steer by the groups' leaders. As a consequence, we can expect less consensus about the direction the group should take politically, which should disincentivize leaders' investments in political activity. However, our models provide no evidence in support of this hypothesis. The coefficients in all three models of Table 1 are close to zero and have comparatively large HPD intervals. This is in itself an interesting finding. Our *Corporate Membership Hypothesis* theorized incentive provision to sustain a group and its repercussions for political activity – building on Olson (1965) – as a problem of interest aggregation (aggravated by a growing number of corporate members aiming to maximize their separate interests). This rationale contrasts with theorizing investments in political activities as one mode of incentive provision that leaders need *to balance against* the provision of other incentive types, as done in our *Individual Membership Hypothesis* and our *Individual Membership Size Hypothesis* that were both substantiated.

Concluding with control variables, several variables derived from central earlier works show significant effects in the theoretically expected direction. The positive (and growing)

coefficients of the competition variable show that with each step of increased competition the level of political activity increases. In other words, when groups are faced with tougher competition in their field of activity, they react by increasing their activity levels. These findings corroborate theoretical expectations of Gray und Lowery (1995, 1996), and more recent empirical findings by Mahoney (2008). Group type as a predictor variable also influences the political activity of groups as theoretically expected (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007: 972). Cause groups, according to our models, tend to exhibit higher activity levels than sectional groups. The former, according to Olson (1965: 126), are less able to supply selective incentives to their members, compared to other types of groups. As a consequence, in order to prevent members from switching to a competitor interest organization, cause groups only are pressed to increase their political activity levels to signal their utility to their members (also see Binderkrantz, 2009; Jordan & Maloney, 1998). Finally, we also find that the issue area in which organizations operate matters for political activity, with economic groups being particularly active compared to groups in (most) other issue areas. That our main findings hold despite these important variables shaping political activity underlines the importance of considering intra-organizational aspects as theorized by our incentive-theoretical perspective.

Conclusion

The question under which conditions voluntary membership organizations become 'interest groups' by engaging in political activity is rarely addressed in the interest group literature predominantly focused on strategies through which political influence is exercised rather than *how intensely groups engage in political activity in the first place* (e.g. Beyers, 2004; Binderkrantz, 2008; Dür & Mateo, 2013). This is problematic as groups might be politically active only periodically (Schlozman 2010) and ensure their survival by generating support through a variety of 'non-political' activities (Almong-Bar and Schmid 2014). This paper has addressed this caveat, which is important – theoretically and empirically - not only to interest group research but also to research on civil society and third sector organizations, literatures that have widely remained separate.

Building on classical works on group maintenance and survival (e.g. Clark & Wilson, 1961; Wilson, 1973; Moe, 1988) we presented an *incentive-theoretical perspective on group political activity*, focusing on the demands of organizational members (Wilson, 1973: 33-5) and intra-organizational constraints imposed on leaders (Schmitter & Streeck, 1999: 19, 21; Berkhout, 2013: 232). Factors linked to each dimension were theorized regarding whether *investments in political activities as one strategy to generate collective incentives are prioritized in different types of groups or not* (Witko, 2015: 122-5). In line with our theoretical expectations, our analysis found that organizations composed of individual members (compared to corporate members) are less politically active, as long as membership size remains below a critical threshold. Above this threshold, individual members strengthen an organization's propensity towards political activity, as differences in size alter the type of incentive provision that is effective to prevent members from leaving. Regarding how intra-organizational incentives shape the priorities of leaders, we found – again in line with our hypotheses – that organizations with stronger communication channels and higher dependency on membership fees to be more politically active.

We already find excellent works that theorize the impact of intra-organizational characteristics on group governance (e.g. Schmitter & Streeck, 1999; Halpin, 2006; Barakso & Schaffner, 2007; Binderkrantz, 2009), and the connection between such characteristics and organizations' external activities such as political activity has been highlighted (Berkhout, 2010; Halpin, 2014; Witko, 2015). Yet to our knowledge, the latter neither has been explicitly theorized nor tested based on large-N data. Our findings accounting for how actively organizations engage in political activities have important normative repercussions, as recent studies point to the falling number of organizations composed of individual members (e.g. Schlozman et al., 2015), and the increasing number of 'members' who are content not to be actively involved in their organization's internal life (e.g. Skocpol, 2003; Maloney, 2009). Our findings suggest that having few individual members affects negatively, while having many individual members affects positively how politically active an organization is, which, in turn, has important repercussions for how willing and able organizations are to channel their members' interest into the political process and engage in effective citizen representation. This puts a different light on mass organizations that are often portrayed as unresponsive 'oligarchic' structures. That political activities are more pronounced in organizations that strongly rely on membership fees underlines further that

the decline of mass membership organizations is likely to have pronounced implications for the health of democratic civil societies.

We tested our hypotheses based on two inclusive, national population surveys of groups in Germany and Switzerland. As pointed out earlier, our two countries are distinct in a variety of systemic characteristics relevant to group maintenance and the costliness of political activity. Our findings held despite various robustness checks considering the role of country contexts. Nevertheless, the question remains whether there are reasons to expect that the hypotheses derived from our incentive-theoretical perspective on group political activity – which is focused on intra-organizational properties, not systemic ones – are likely to play out differently in, for instance, a social-democratic welfare state with a constitutionally unitary structure, a configuration that our empirical analysis did not cover. The third sector literature suggests that – unlike in conservative and liberal welfare states included in our analysis – in social-democratic welfare states direct government provision of welfare services 'frees' third sector organizations from service provision and allows them to focus on political activity and advocacy (Salamon & Anheier, 1998). As far as there is a trade-off between political activities and government-funded service-provision, the conditions for political activity for organizations operating in the systems covered in this paper might have been comparatively *less* favorable. This difference, however, should not alter the nature of the relationships between membership size, composition and members' structural position within an organization on the one hand, and political activity on the other (especially as we control for organizations' dependency on state funding).

Concluding with future research, our incentive-theoretical perspective would doubtlessly profit from being put on a broader empirical footing, not only in terms of wider cross-national applications. Its application to longitudinal data tracing organizational change could contribute to the important debate whether and, if so, how voluntary organizations move in and out of politics. While some consider the "decisions of previously apolitical organizations to enter the political fray and of politically active organizations to exit politics and revert to apolitical status" as an important (though neglected) aspect affecting the composition of interest group communities (Schlozman 2010: 5; Anderson et al 2004), recent work on company lobbying stresses the 'stickiness' of lobbying (an activity that - once engaged in -

will be continued) (Drutman 2015). Our framework suggests that political activities are prioritized over other ways of incentive-provision only as long as certain intra-organizational conditions are met. For instance, a decline in individual members (reducing organizational complexity and the relevance of membership fees) should lead an organization to deprioritize political activities, suggesting policy engagement to be 'volatile' rather than 'sticky'. This, in turn, might well be a specific feature of *composite* organizations that - unlike individual companies - need to listen to their members: indeed, recent research on the breadth of policy engagement indicates that institutions and membership-based organizations show distinct patterns of activity (Halpin & Herschel III, 2012b: 592-3). While assessing organizational dynamics over time as well as studying the differences between groups and institutional actors, two important areas for future research, lie outside the scope of this paper, the framework presented provides a sound foundation to approach them.

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Appendix A: Sampling checks

As stated in the main text, the two country samples are very similar to each other and also comparable to samples described elsewhere, which increases our confidence that no systematic bias is introduced into the analysis due to unit nonresponse. First, the fraction of groups without *individual members* in Switzerland and Germany are 32% and 30% respectively. For organizations without *corporate membership* the numbers are 27% in Germany, and 30% in Switzerland. The remarkable similarity in the membership structure of groups in the two countries can also be seen in the overlapping density plots of Figure A1. The overlapping density plots in the left-hand panel (individual members) and the right-hand panel (corporate members) exhibit that about the same fraction of groups in both countries do not have one of the two forms of membership, while the rest of the two figures show that those groups that do have the respective form of membership have a remarkably similar size distribution for both types of membership in the two countries. This also shows that the size difference between the two countries does not – for the average (relatively small) organization – matter much for how many members they can attract (the slightly higher weight in the upper tail of both distributions of Germany indicates that the larger country has a slightly larger share of big organizations). In addition, we also checked the *type of groups* and find that in Switzerland we have 74% sectional groups (mostly professional groups and business associations) and 26% cause groups, while in Germany these numbers are 66% and 34% respectively (these numbers are similar to those reported by Dür and Mateo, 2013). Next, the average *age of groups* (in years) in the two countries is comparable, with 50.6 in Germany and 55.6 in Switzerland, and the age distributions in the two countries are similar as well, as Figure A2 shows. Finally, on the dependent variable – *political activity* – we also find that the distributions in the two country samples are fairly similar, with 8% of groups never being politically active in Germany compared to 7% in Switzerland, while 20% are active very often in the Germany and 12% in Switzerland. This comparability between the samples of our two countries, but also with samples reported elsewhere, increases our confidence that unit nonresponse is not problematic and does not systematically bias our results.

Figure A1: Overlapping density plots for individual membership (A) and corporate membership (B) in Switzerland and Germany

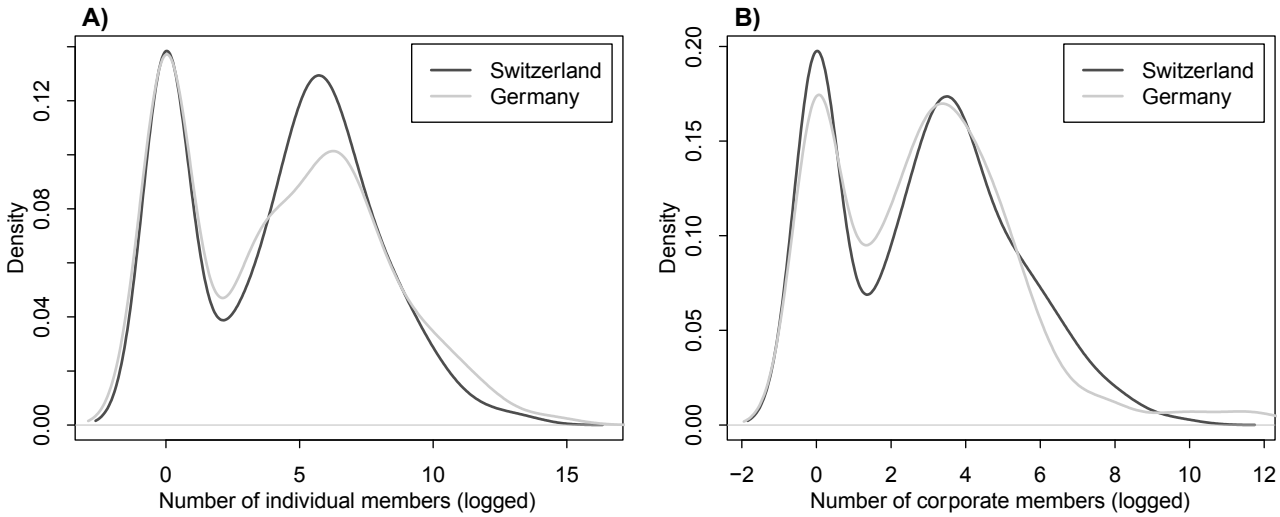
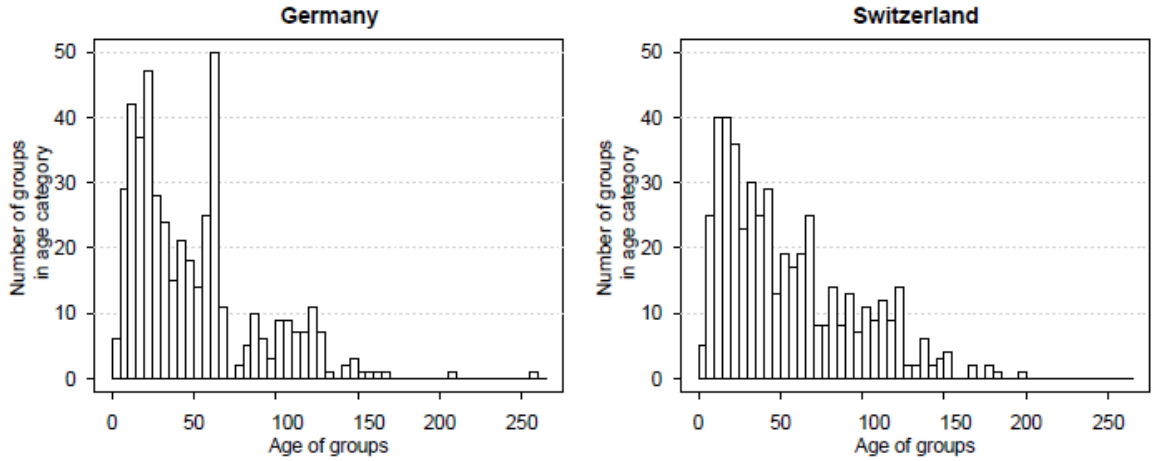


Figure A2: Comparison of age distribution of groups in Germany and Switzerland



Appendix B: Factor analysis and communication index

To check whether the nine variables we used to construct the communication index are useful tools to capture the communication behavior of groups with their members, we first run a factor analysis on these variables (see Table B1). As can be seen in the table, variables 2 to 7 load highly (>0.4) on the first factor, while the last two variables (social media and Twitter) make up the bulk of the second factor. Only the variable *sending out printed materials* does not load highly on any of the two issues. The Kaiser criterion and the factor loadings both indicate that two factors are adequate. This shows that while email and communication via the webpage have already found their way into the more traditional forms of membership communication, social media, Twitter and Blogs are still treated differently in their usage.

Overall, this analysis shows that it is better to rely on a range of communication variables to capture the communication behavior of groups than on single items. However, the two factors are not equally important (see proportional variance) and have quite different numbers of variables with higher factor loadings. Thus, retrieving the factor scores for each observation and adding them would give disproportional weight to the variables of the second factor. Instead, as the factor loadings of the different variables on their main factor are relatively balance (possible with the exception of *social media usage*), meaning they contribute relatively equally to the factors in question, we construct the index in the way described in the main text by adding them up. In other words, the factor analysis confirms the about equal importance of the various *individual* communication variables, as they have similar factor loadings on their main factor. This indicates that combining these variables and giving them equal weight – as we have done – is appropriate for the construction of our communication index. Although the variable *sending out printed materials* does not load highly on any of the factors, we nevertheless keep this variable in the index, as producing informational journals for the members is an important tool particularly of larger organizations, and should therefore not be disregarded.

Table B1: Factor analysis of the variables making up the communication index

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2
Send out printed materials (e.g. monthly journal)	0.21	0.07
Send out newsletters	**0.45**	0.14
Send out emails (general mailing list)	**0.49**	0.10
Direct contact with members	**0.61**	0.08
Organize membership events (social purpose)	**0.51**	0.12
Organize membership events (informational purpose)	**0.46**	0.03
Communication via membership area on webpage	**0.51**	0.05
Use of social media to communicate with members	0.17	**0.98**
Use of Twitter or a Blog to communicate with members	0.16	**0.54**
SoS Loadings	1.64	1.32
Proportional Variance	0.28	0.15

Appendix C: Variable description, summary statistics, and correlation table

In this Appendix A we present detailed information about the variables used in the statistical models. Table C1 presents the items from the surveys in Germany and Switzerland used to construct the variables, and provides a general description of the variables (including how the variable in question was coded, and whether a transformation, such as the natural logarithm, has been applied). Table C2 then shows the most important summary statistics for the numerical variables used in the study, and provides an overview how often the different categories occur for the categorical variables. Finally, Figure C1 shows how strongly the various variables correlate with each other. The figure shows that correlation between the covariates is generally not problematic. Only the variables *individual membership dummy* and *individual membership size* correlate highly, yet this should be expected given how these two variables are constructed. The results indicate that this correlation is not problematic.

Table C1: Description of all variables used in the study, including the survey items[19]

Variable	Survey item	Variable description
Dependent variable:		
Political activity	One defining feature of interest organization is their level of political activity. How often is your organization politically active?	Survey respondents were asked to answer the question on a five-point scale from never to very often. We assigned numerical values to these five categories as follows: never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), and very often (5). Coding the dependent variable in this way for the ordered logit models ensures that positive coefficients indicate higher political activity levels.
Independent variables:		
Individual membership dummy	Which forms of membership does your organization allow: membership of individuals?	We asked survey respondents three questions about membership type (individual membership, corporate

[19] This questionnaire was in German for Germany. Swiss participants could choose between a German and a French version – covering the two predominant languages in the country – to do justice to the countries' multilingualism. All questions in both countries and languages were the same.

		membership, and other forms of membership). The question about individual membership, used to operationalize the individual membership dummy, was a binary *yes/no* question (with *no* serving as the baseline category in the models).
Individual membership size	How many individual members are currently registered with your organization?	If survey respondent answered *yes* to the question about the presence of individual members, we next asked how many such individual members the organization had at the time of the survey. This variable is highly skewed, as many organizations have no or only very few individual members, while there are also a few very large organizations (the maximum is 2.7 million members for a large union). This skew also explains the large difference between the mean and the median, the former being 13350, while the latter is 101 individual members. For this reason, the natural logarithm is applied when this variable is used in the statistical models.
Corporate membership size	How many corporate members are currently registered with your organization?	If survey respondent answered *yes* to the question about the presence of corporate members, we next asked how many such corporate members the organization had at the time of the survey. Again, this variable is highly skewed, with many groups not allowing corporate membership, while one group in the dataset has 293,000 such members. The mean is 1210, and the median 20, which is another indication for the strong skew of this variable, and we again apply the natural logarithm.
Membership fees	How is your organization financed? Amount of membership fees (in thousands)	In this block of questions survey respondents were asked to provide the amount of money they received through various streams of income (membership fees, selling of products and services, donations, and state subsidies). For the

		membership fees variable, the mean value earned by the interest organizations in our dataset is €620,300, with many groups earning very little (or nothing) through this source of income, while the maximum is €56 million. The median for this variable is €71,000. Again we see a strong skew of this variable, with many relatively small organizations earning only limited amounts of funds from membership fees, while few large organizations receive large amounts of money. Consequently, the membership fees variable is logarithmized.
Membership communication	How often do you use the following instruments to communicate with your members? - Send out printed materials - Send out newsletters - Send out emails via a general mailing list of members - Direct contact with members - Organize events for members (general and social purpose) - Organize events for members (informational purpose) - Communication via (password protected) membership area on webpage - Use of social media to communicate with members - Use of Twitter or a Blog to communicate with members	To capture organizations' communication with their members, survey respondents were asked how regularly they send out newsletters or have direct meetings with members. In total, there are nine such questions on member communication in the surveys, all of which could be answered on a five-point scale indicating that the specific form of communication happens *almost never* (0), *a few times a year* (1), *a few times a month* (2), *a few times a week* (3), or *daily* (4). The numeric values (as shown in the brackets) of these nine variables were summed up. Thus, the higher the value of the resulting variable is, the more intensive the communication between groups and their members. The maximum observed value in the dataset is 33 (out of a possible maximum of 36), while four organizations reported that they almost never used any of the nine ways of communicating with their members. The mean is 12.97, and the median is 12.
<u>*Control variables:*</u>		
Competition	If you think of the issue area	To capture competition between groups we

	in which your organization is active: how visible are other groups active in the same issue area?	rely on a survey question on the visibility of other groups in the field of activity of an organization. Again, survey respondents had to indicate on a five-point scale how visible other groups are: *no visibility* (1), *low visibility* (2), *medium visibility* (3), *high visibility* (4) and *very highly visible* (5). The mean value in the dataset is 2.82, with 70 organization selecting the lowest possible competition value, and 39 the highest. This variable is included in the models as a categorical variable, with the lowest level of competition acting as the baseline category.
Group type	N/A	In this paper we distinguish between cause groups and sectional groups. No question in the survey allowed the identification of groups as being cause groups or sectional groups. For this reason, all organizations which answered all relevant questions, and which could be identified through the information they provided (some organizations chose not to provide either Internet or email address) were hand-coded. 282 of the groups (about 30%) were found to be cause groups, while 656 are sectional groups, with the latter serving as the baseline category in the statistical models.
State subsidies	How is your organization financed? Amount of state subsidies (in thousands)	In this block of questions survey respondents were asked to provide the amount of money they received through various streams of income (membership fees, selling of products and services, donations, and state subsidies). For the state subsidies variable, 604 of the groups in our final dataset (about 64%) did not report the receipt of any state subsidies, while some organization receive large contributions from public funds. The biggest state subsidy reported was €112 million by an

		international aid organization, yet is should be noted that money allocated to aid project does not (or only indirectly) contribute to the advocacy budget of organizations. Due to the skewedness of this variable the logged form is included in the models.
Issue area	Please indicate the main issue area of activity of your organization.	We also include the main issue area of activity into the models, as identified by the groups in the surveys. Specifically, respondents could choose from the following six options to identify their main area of political activity: economics, education, social issues, environment, religion, and others.
Age of group	What is the founding year of your organization?	This variable records the age of an organization in years, as provided by the survey respondents, and is logarithmized.
Country dummy	N/A	This variable records whether an organization responded to the German or the Swiss survey.

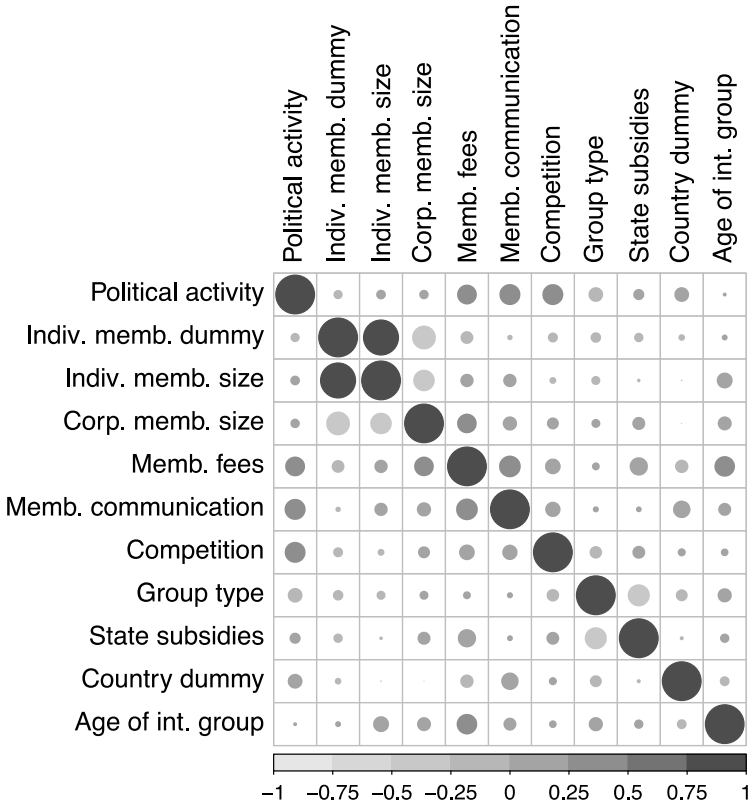
Table C2: Summary statistics for all numerical (panel A) and categorical (panel B) variables used in the models of the main text (n=939)

A. Numeric Variables	**Mean**	**Median**	**SD**	**Min**	**Max**
Individual memb. size (logged)	4.25	4.62	3.51	0	14.81
Corporate memb. size (logged)	2.86	3.04	2.4	0	12.59
Membership fees (logged)	11.11	11.17	2.34	2.40	17.84
Membership communication	12.97	12	5.90	0	33
State subsidies (logged)	4.14	0	5.73	0	18.53
Age of group (logged)	3.60	3.74	0.90	0	5.55

B. Categorical Variables	**# occurrences of categories**
Political activity	Never: 76; Rarely: 174; Sometimes: 289; Often: 251; Very often: 149
Ind. memb. dummy	No individual members: 292; Individual members present: 647

Group type	Sectional groups: 656; Cause groups: 283
Country dummy	Switzerland: 484; Germany: 455
Competition	None: 70; Low: 268; Medium: 405; High: 157, Very high: 39
Issue area	Economics: 280; Education: 141; Religion: 15; Social issues: 207; Environment: 54; Others: 242

Figure C1: Correlation plot for all variables used in the statistical models



Note: Both the size and the color of the circles indicate the strength of the relationship, the larger the circle, the stronger the relationship. Light gray shades indicate negative and darker shades positive relationships.

Appendix D: Multiple imputations

In this Appendix B we lay out the problem of missing data in our dataset in more detail, and then explain how we use data imputation techniques as a way to test the robustness of the results presented in the main text. We also briefly discuss the models presented in Tables D1, D2, and D3.

Out of the total of 2,231 organizations that participated in our survey, we identified 1,780 for which our definition of groups as organizations with members applied (for this identification purpose we made use of survey items specifically asking whether groups have members, see Appendix A). However, many of these 1,780 organizations left information needed for inclusion in the analysis of this paper blank. For instance, 624 groups did not reply to the set of questions about the sources of their budget such as *membership fees* and *state subsidies* – a much higher nonresponse rate than for any other question (only 87 organizations did not reply to the question about *competition*, the second highest nonresponse rate in the survey). The 841 organizations with missing information were excluded from the analysis described in the main text.

As a robustness check we use multiple imputation techniques to complete missing values for the variables used in this study, and then test whether the results change when running the same models as in the main text on five imputed datasets. We use the `mice` package available in the R computing environment to implement the multiple imputations (Buuren & Groothuis-Oudshoorn, 2011), and apply predictive mean matching to impute missing values of our quantitative variables (Morris et al., 2014). For the categorical variables we apply logistic regression to impute the variable *group type* (as this is the only variable with missing data and only two levels), and ordered logistic regression models for variables with more than two levels (Allison, 2005). For most variables no missing data (*political activity, individual membership dummy, issue area, country dummy*) or less than 100 missing values (*size individual membership, size corporate membership, membership communication, competition, age of group*) had to be imputed. Only the two variables capturing sources of income and the hand-coded *group type* variable had higher numbers of missing values, the latter because only those organizations were hand-coded for which enough information existed to be included in the models of the main text.

As already mentioned, five sets of values to fill in missing values in the original dataset were generated using the specified procedures, which leaves us with five completed datasets after the imputation procedure. This allows us to run each of the three models presented in the main text for five times on the different imputations. Thus, we are able to get a sense of the stability of the estimators across the five imputed datasets. Again, we run the same Bayesian ordered logit models described in the main text with 10,000 iterations overall (3,000 for burn-

in), but this time with the higher number of observations of 1,780 for the full model, 798 for the Swiss, and 982 for the German model. As for the models reported in the main text, all the diagnostics for chain length, stationarity, and convergence pass the test for all models reported in the tables below.

Table D1 reports the results for the five imputations of the overall model, in Table D2 the results for Switzerland are shown, and in Table B3 for Germany. The results are remarkably similar to those reported in Table 2 of the main text, and also the models across the various iterations show highly comparable results. This is also true for the two budgetary variables *membership fees* and *state subsidies*, despite the many missing values we had to impute for these two variables. Overall, the very similar outcomes when almost doubling the number of cases are a strong indication for the robustness of the findings reported in the main text of this study.

The only (small) exception to the general rule of comparable and stable results is the *group type* variable, for which we had to impute the data for all 841 observations not included in the models reported in the main text. The results for this variable show the expected direction in all models, but the effects tend to be somewhat smaller than in the main models (particularly for the imputations 1 and 3). This shows that imputation techniques for variables with many missing values can be problematic, and that imputing binary variables is more problematic than using such techniques for quantitative data, albeit the used logistic regression method is one of the more reliable methods (Allison, 2005). Overall, however, the model results using the imputed dataset are stable and increase our confidence in the robustness of the findings reported in the main text.

Table D1: Posterior summaries for determinants of political activity using five imputed datasets (for Switzerland and Germany combined)

	Imput. 1	**Imput. 2**	**Imput. 3**	**Imput. 4**	**Imput. 5**
Individ. membership dummy	-0.96	-1.03	-0.97	-1.03	-1.02
	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.18)
Size individual membership	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.11	0.11
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Size corporate membership	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.03
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Membership fees	0.12	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.09
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)

Member communication	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Competition (base = no competition)					
Low competition	1.31	1.33	1.27	1.29	1.26
	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)
Medium competition	1.69	1.74	1.68	1.75	1.63
	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)
High competition	2.04	2.09	2.06	2.11	1.98
	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.21)
Very high competition	2.45	2.51	2.52	2.46	2.32
	(0.27)	(0.27)	(0.28)	(0.27)	(0.27)
Group type (base = sectional groups)					
Cause groups	0.21	0.58	0.16	0.55	0.67
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)
State subsidies	0.004	-0.01	0.001	-0.004	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age of group	-0.15	-0.11	-0.14	-0.15	-0.09
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Country dummy (base=CH)	0.32	0.33	0.34	0.32	0.27
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Issue area (base = economic groups)					
Education	0.20	0.18	0.22	0.17	0.26
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Religion	-0.48	-0.59	-0.47	-0.54	-0.48
	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.14)
Social	-0.63	-0.80	-0.65	-0.75	-0.70
	(0.30)	(0.30)	(0.30)	(0.30)	(0.29)
Environment	-0.01	-0.17	0.03	-0.16	-0.04
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Other	-0.05	-0.24	0.001	-0.18	-0.16
	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.21)
Intercepts omitted					
Num. obs.	1780	1780	1780	1780	1780

Note: The table reports point estimates (posterior means) and estimation errors (in brackets) needed to construct HPD intervals

Table D2: Posterior summaries for determinants of political activity using five imputed datasets (for Switzerland only)

	Imput.1	**Imput.2**	**Imput.3**	**Imput.4**	**Imput.5**
Individ. membership dummy	-1.25	-1.38	-1.32	-1.38	-1.38
	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.28)	(0.29)	(0.29)
Size individual membership	0.15	0.16	0.15	0.17	0.16
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)

Size corporate membership	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02	-0.003	0.01
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Membership fees	0.19	0.16	0.18	0.14	0.12
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Member communication	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Competition (base = no competition)					
Low competition	1.37	1.37	1.30	1.30	1.20
	(0.26)	(0.25)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)
Medium competition	1.70	1.74	1.65	1.67	1.56
	(0.26)	(0.25)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)
High competition	1.85	1.86	1.77	1.94	1.77
	(0.29)	(0.28)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.29)
Very high competition	2.86	3.05	2.96	2.97	2.67
	(0.42)	(0.44)	(0.44)	(0.43)	(0.41)
Group type (base = sectional groups)					
Cause groups	0.20	0.62	0.23	0.33	0.76
	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.15)	(0.15)
State subsidies	-0.03	-0.04	-0.02	-0.02	-0.03
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age of group	-0.14	-0.13	-0.16	-0.14	-0.06
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Issue area (base = economic groups)					
Education	0.26	0.24	0.20	0.18	0.25
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)
Religion	-0.51	-0.61	-0.49	-0.56	-0.52
	(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.21)
Social	-0.60	-0.92	-0.58	-0.80	-0.90
	(0.54)	(0.54)	(0.54)	(0.54)	(0.54)
Environment	0.02	-0.16	0.03	-0.05	-0.10
	(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.20)
Other	0.17	-0.04	0.21	0.08	-0-002
	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.33)
Intercepts omitted					
Num. obs.	798	798	798	798	798

Note: The table reports point estimates (posterior means) and estimation errors (in brackets) needed to construct HPD intervals

Table D3: Posterior summaries for determinants of political activity using five imputed datasets (for Germany only)

	Imput.1	**Imput.2**	**Imput.3**	**Imput.4**	**Imput.5**

Individ. membership dummy	-0.80	-0.85	-0.83	-0.88	-0.85
	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.25)
Size individual membership	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.08
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Size corporate membership	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.05
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Membership fees	0.06	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.07
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Member communication	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Competition (base = no competition)					
Low competition	1.24	1.30	1.26	1.33	1.32
	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.28)
Medium competition	1.71	1.77	1.75	1.85	1.70
	(0.27)	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.27)	(0.27)
High competition	2.13	2.27	2.28	2.27	2.16
	(0.30)	(0.30)	(0.30)	(0.29)	(0.30)
Very high competition	2.20	2.28	2.28	2.25	2.13
	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.36)
Group type (base = sectional groups)					
Cause groups	0.26	0.53	0.09	0.71	0.60
	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)
State subsidies	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age of group	-0.19	-0.11	-0.15	-0.17	-0.12
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Issue area (base = economic groups)					
Education	0.13	0.12	0.22	0.14	0.24
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)
Religion	-0.50	-0.61	-0.47	-0.54	-0.46
	(0.19)	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)
Social	-0.59	-0.69	-0.58	-0.67	-0.58
	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.36)
Environment	-0.10	-0.21	-0.01	-0.27	-0.07
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)
Other	-0.21	-0.39	-0.13	-0.34	-0.26
	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.27)	(0.28)	(0.27)
Intercepts omitted					
Num. obs.	982	982	982	982	982

Note: The table reports point estimates (posterior means) and estimation errors (in brackets) needed to construct HPD intervals

Appendix E: Interaction Models

The models presented in Table E1 of this Appendix E demonstrate that the interaction terms between the *country dummy* and the variables capturing the four hypotheses are all very small in size (and insignificant in frequentist terms) and do not change the results reported in the main models of the paper. This demonstrates that the country context does not systematically influence the results of our key variables, and therefore that our theory does not lack such context specific elements, at least in our country selection. The results thus corroborate the robustness of the country dummy variable approach used in the model reported in the main text.

Table E1: Posterior summaries for determinants of political activity, including interaction terms for the country dummy with the variables capturing our hypotheses

	Baseline Model	**H1 Interactions**	**H2 Interaction**	**H3 Interaction**	**H4 Interaction**
Individ. membership dummy (H1a)	-0.84	-1.09	-0.85	-0.85	-0.87
	(0.25)	(0.34)	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.25)
Size individual membership (H1b)	0.1	0.14	0.1	0.1	0.1
	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Size corporate membership (H2)	-0.03	-0.03	-0.02	-0.03	-0.03
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Membership fees (H3)	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.19
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Member communication (H4)	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Competition (base = no competition)					
Low competition	1.3	1.29	1.3	1.3	1.29
	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)
Medium competition	1.63	1.63	1.63	1.63	1.62
	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)
High competition	2.03	2.02	2.03	2.03	2.03
	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.28)
Very high competition	2.5	2.48	2.5	2.5	2.49
	(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.40)
Group type (base = sectional groups)					
Cause groups	0.69	0.68	0.69	0.69	0.69
	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)

State subsidies	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age of group	-0.14	-0.14	-0.14	-0.14	-0.14
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Country dummy (base=CH)	0.45	0.45	0.49	0.5	1.28
	(0.13)	(0.22)	(0.19)	(0.30)	(0.60)
Issue area (base = economic group)					
Education	-0.67	-0.69	-0.67	-0.67	-0.68
	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.20)
Religion	-1.21	-1.22	-1.22	-1.21	-1.17
	(0.45)	(0.46)	(0.45)	(0.45)	(0.46)
Social	-0.27	-0.27	-0.27	-0.27	-0.27
	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)
Environment	-0.28	-0.3	-0.28	-0.28	-0.28
	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.28)
Other	0.11	0.09	0.11	0.1	0.11
	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.17)
Interaction terms					
H1a * country		0.44			
		(0.46)			
H1b * country		-0.07			
		(0.06)			
H2 * country			-0.02		
			(0.05)		
H3 * country					-0.07
					(0.05)
H4 * country				0.01	
				(0.02)	
Num. obs.	939	939	939	939	939

Note: The table reports point estimates (posterior means) and estimation errors (in brackets) needed to construct HPD intervals

Appendix References

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