Advocacy in European Civil Societies: Organizational Trade-offs Between Selective and Collective Incentive Provision

Nicole Bolleyer, *Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany*
Patricia Correa, *Aston University, Birmingham, UK*

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are a cornerstone of democracy in Europe. Nonetheless, "civil society" and "political society" should not be equated as membership-based organizations are not necessarily politically engaged. This paper theorizes and empirically examines which membership-based CSOs engage in interest representation through sustained advocacy activity. We propose an incentive-theoretical framework on CSO investments in advocacy activities—a collective, non-exclusive incentive from which also non-members can profit—by organizations fundamentally dependent on member support. Theorizing how CSOs' own structural characteristics, resource dependencies, and government demand for CSO input affect how CSOs reconcile selective and collective incentive provision, we test our hypotheses using new data from four recent surveys conducted in four European democracies. In line with our framework, CSOs organizing individual citizens rather than corporate actors and those pursuing member interests are less likely to engage in advocacy, while CSO professionalization and state funding access enhance CSOs' propensities to do so. Furthermore, the analysis shows that the former structural CSO characteristics are similarly relevant for CSO advocacy across distinct country settings, while the role of resource variables is mediated by institutional context revealing an important source of inequality in democratic interest representation.

Introduction

The representation of societal interests is widely considered a crucial function of membership-based civil society organizations (CSOs) as vehicles through

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which individuals and corporate actors can channel their preferences into the democratic process (e.g., Beyers et al. 2008; Maloney 2009; Olson 1965; Salamon and Lessans-Geller 2008; Saurugger 2008; Schlozman et al. 2015).[1] However, not all CSOs are engaged in the aggregation and articulation of "politically relevant" interests central to interest representation (Salisbury 1984, 64), not even if advocacy activities, the strategies CSOs employ to engage in such processes are defined broadly, covering not only lobbying but also awareness raising activities or citizen education (Beyers et al. 2008; Chaves et al. 2004; Guo and Saxton 2020; Jenkins 2006, 308). Indeed, over a third of the CSOs studied in this paper do not engage in advocacy activities regularly.

This paper addresses the question *which regionally and nationally active CSOs defined as membership-based organizations engage in external activities of interest representation, that is advocacy activities, and why*. This question is theoretically and empirically important whether advocacy is an organization's primary goal or "only" a secondary activity. In many cases—considering organized civil society as a whole—the latter applies, which means focusing on organizations with a dominant advocacy orientation provides only part of the picture. Nevertheless, as interest group populations are commonly defined by politically active organizations (e.g., Baroni et al. 2014), cross-national comparative group research to date has focused on the nature of advocacy strategies employed in different institutional settings (e.g., Berkhout et al. 2017; Beyers 2004; Binderkrantz 2008; Dür 2018; Dür and Mateo 2013; Hanegraaff et al. 2016). Which organizations engage in advocacy and which do not in the first place and why is rarely theorized or examined (Halpin 2014; Schlozman 2010, 5). In contrast, research on non-profits has long recognized that many organizations engage in advocacy "as a secondary activity supporting a mission of direct service" (Berry and Arons 2003; Cairns et al. 2010; Kimberlin 2010, 165). Consequently, this field examines which service-oriented organizations (*despite* their primary mission) engage in advocacy and which do not (e.g., Child and Grønbjerg 2007; LeRoux and Goerdel 2009). However, mirroring interest group research concentrating on "advocacy organizations," non-profit scholars tend to assume the drivers for advocacy to be qualitatively different depending on CSOs' primary mission and, consequently, focus on service providers (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014, 28), making it difficult to generalize findings to CSOs organizing collective interests generally. This is reinforced by a predominant use of legal categories to empirically specify the organizations studied (e.g., organizations with 501(c)(3) status in the US), meaning cross-national studies on non-profit advocacy able to establish which drivers of CSO advocacy are relevant *across* different settings and which are context-dependent are virtually non-existent (see for a recent meta-analysis Lu 2018a).

Consequently, despite the theme's importance for various academic subfields, we find little cross-national research on the organizational trade-offs and dilemmas that CSOs with both social and political missions face when engaging in advocacy (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014, 27; Child and Grønbjerg 2007; Schlozman 2010, 5).[2]

To close this gap, we build on classical incentive-theoretical views on leader-member relations (e.g., Moe 1980; Olson 1965; Wilson 1973) and exchange theoretical views (e.g., Berkhout 2013; Salisbury 1969, 1992) prominent in group research and integrate them with arguments from resource dependency and neo-institutionalist theory prominent in research on non-profit advocacy (e.g., Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014; Mosley 2010, 2011; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Schmid et al. 2008). Building on group research, we argue that membership-based CSOs that organize collective interests—irrespective of their primary mission—need to balance (often conflicting) inwards-oriented and outwards-oriented goals and activities (e.g., Foley and Edwards 2002; Grömping and Halpin 2019; Schmitter and Streeck 1999). This tension is rooted in two major challenges: first, the *on-going need to sustain the support of voluntary members* (Wilson 1973) and second, *the nature of political advocacy as collective, non-exclusive incentives* from which also non-members profit (by definition less effective to sustain member support than selective incentives) (Olson 1965, 51; 132). Linking these two challenges, we formulate hypotheses on organizational characteristics that shape *different balances between collective and selective incentive provision within membership-based CSOs*, which are expected to feed into organizations' advocacy activities as one form of collective incentive provision organizations might decide to invest in. Drawing on non-profit research, we argue that advocacy engagement is not only shaped by CSOs' own structural characteristics but by external resource dependencies as well as voluntary-government relations which can *shift the balance towards collective incentive provision*, thereby making investments in advocacy more likely (e.g., Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014; Mosley 2010, 2011; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Schmid et al. 2008).

We test our framework using new data from four recently completed population surveys conducted in four long-lived European democracies—Germany, Norway, Switzerland, and the UK. These surveys cover currently active regionally and nationally relevant membership-based CSOs that operate in four "most different" long-lived democracies (e.g., covering different voluntary sector regimes) allowing us to assess which factors theorized to affect CSO advocacy apply across different institutional contexts and which effects are mediated by the latter. Applying logistic regression analysis, the findings widely substantiate our hypotheses. For instance, irrespective of whether CSOs are predominantly advocacy- or service-oriented, those mobilizing individual citizens (as compared to corporate actors) are less likely to invest in regular advocacy. While our analysis says nothing about these CSOs' participatory benefits, it still suggests a lower capacity to provide public voice exactly of those organizations commonly considered cornerstones of democracy (e.g., Eliasoph 2013; Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005; Warren 2001). Professionalized CSOs, in terms of staff capacity and specialization, and those that profit from state funding show the opposite pattern, challenging those works that have portrayed those CSOs' political engagement as "ephemeral, thin, sporadic" (Hay and Stoker 2009, 231; Maloney 2012; Skocpol 2003).

Theorizing and examining organization-level drivers of CSOs' varying propensities to engage in regular advocacy are not only empirically relevant in light of the increasingly blurred boundaries between service- and advocacy-oriented CSOs (e.g., Minkoff 2002). Highlighting the centrality of resource variables as "facilitators" for CSO advocacy reveals fundamental inequalities in democratic representation, thereby substantiating elitist theories of interest representation (Gilens and Page 2014). These inequalities are not only related to the fact that regular advocacy is more likely to generate actual influence than occasional engagement (Halpin and Fraussen 2017, 724). Providing public voice (alongside support) to less advantaged groups is a central yardstick applied to membership organizations in civil society, non-profit research, and interest group research alike (e.g., LeRoux and Goerdel 2009; Schlozman 1984). Hence, focusing on CSOs' varying propensities to enter the "interest group system" (Schlozman 1984) *and* the propensities of predominantly social or service-oriented organizations to regularly engage in advocacy (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014) reveal a less visible but equally important "representation bias." This bias is normatively particularly problematic as social and service-oriented CSOs often serve the needs of marginalized groups that lack the human or financial resources essential for regular advocacy (e.g., Berry and Arons 2003; Billis 2010; Kimberlin 2010; LeRoux and Goerdel 2009; Minkoff 2002). This gains particular relevance when inequalities are reinforced by government (expected to counteract the latter in liberal democracies, e.g., Kohn 2011), which becomes manifest in a stronger advocacy engagement of economic CSOs, whose disproportionate influence is a longstanding concern in group research (e.g., Offe and Wiesenthal 1980).

The next section specifies our theoretical framework and hypotheses. This is followed by a description of our data collection, methodology, and a discussion of our findings. We conclude with a summary of our findings and avenues for future research.

CSO Investments in Advocacy: A Theoretical Framework

Definitions

CSOs are defined as membership-based organizations characterized by a formalized infrastructure, private (separate from government), non-profit-distributing, and self-governing with individual or corporate members (such as associations, institutions, or firms) (Baroni et al. 2014; Salamon and Anheier 1998; Wilson 1973).

Following Salisbury, interest representation as organization-level activity involves the aggregation and articulation of "politically relevant" interests, that is, interests created in response to perceived or anticipated effects of government action or inaction that express policy-related purposes, whether broadly defined or highly specific (Salisbury 1984, 64–5). Advocacy activities (the variety of strategies CSOs use to engage in interest representation) are wide-ranging and cut across central dichotomies such as programmatic and legislative advocacy, unconventional and conventional participation, or the

distinction between self-interested and public-spirited activities (Guo and Saxton 2020; Jenkins 2006, 308). Concretely, they cover (legal and illegal) protest, attending press conferences, publishing reports educating the public as well as classical lobbying activities targeting public officials (e.g., Beyers et al. 2008; Chaves et al. 2004; Schmid et al. 2008). Such an inclusive definition covering "insider strategies" (e.g., lobbying decision-makers) and "outsider strategies" (e.g., influencing public opinion) (Beyers 2004; Guo and Saxton 2020) is essential: It avoids qualifying organizations as "politically inactive" due to investments in the "wrong" type of political activity and reflects the aim of theorizing why CSO leaders generally invest in regular advocacy (irrespective of their organizations' primary mission and the nature of the political activities they might, consequently, prefer or avoid).

Basic Assumptions—The Prioritization of Selective over Collective Incentive Provision in Membership-Based CSOs

To theorize which CSOs invest in sustained interest representation—that is, regularly engage in advocacy activities (rather than just occasionally or temporarily)—the *defining characteristics of CSOs as membership-based organizations* and the *nature of advocacy activities as one form of collective incentive* provide the two building blocks for our framework.

First, unlike firms or institutions such as government units that lobby individually, CSOs face the constant threat of member exit (whether members are individuals or organizations themselves) and need to make on-going efforts to sustain their support base (Gray and Lowery 1995; Hirschman 1970; Olson 1965; Wilson 1973). For such organizations, survival can depend more on resources for organizational maintenance than on political influence success, suggesting a direct link between intra-organizational dynamics and group's external activities (Halpin 2014, 24, 62–3; Lowery 2007; Moe 1980: 6). While *advocacy activity is an optional, not a constitutive feature of CSOs* (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014), *organizational members constitute a central* "*audience*," which this class of organization depends on (Berkhout 2013; Salisbury 1992, 43; Schmitter and Streeck 1999, 50). The nature of this dependency and its intensity are one main foundation for formulating hypotheses on groups' advocacy activity.[3]

Second, *advocacy activities constitute a collective, non-exclusive incentive* (Moe 1980, 6; Olson 1965, 51, 132), affecting how organizational leaders[4] *maintain their organizations* through *different strategies of incentive provision to group members* (e.g., Barakso and Schaffner 2007; Hirschman 1970; Wilson 1973). Advocacy activities generate a free-rider problem: Even if "policy change" can be achieved and an organization can claim credit, non-members with similar interests can still enjoy its advantages. This problem of non-exclusivity makes selective incentives that can be restricted to members, ceteris paribus, more effective to assure organizational maintenance (Olson 1965, 51, 132). If a CSO—due to limited resources—is unable to provide selective *alongside* collective incentives (such as advocacy activities), Olson's "by product theory" suggests

that the more dependent leaders are on members, the more pressed organizations are to prioritize selective over collective incentives.

Building on this, we derive hypotheses from two rationales: First, following seminal work on groups, we theorize which *intra-organizational* features shaping leader-member relations motivate CSO leaders to *deprioritize* political advocacy in favor of selective incentives. Second, integrating this incentive-theoretical rationale with resource dependency and neo-institutionalist arguments, we theorize how different resource availabilities *mediate* the tension between collective and selective incentive provision, thereby *facilitating* investments in advocacy.

Hypotheses

Leader-Member Relations and Internal Pressures towards Selective Incentive Provision

Considering organizations' *representative orientation* as defined by *whose interests they predominantly pursue*, we can distinguish membership-based organizations pursuing the interests of their members—"member-serving organizations"—from those pursuing the interests of wider societal constituencies transcending their membership—"public-serving organizations with members" (Halpin 2006; Steinberg 2007, 121). We expect investments in political advocacy to be less likely in more inwards-oriented, member-serving organizations. As members cannot be assumed to be interested in political advocacy (Jordan and Maloney 2007, 25, 33), leaders are more strongly incentivized to invest resources in activities generating, for instance, solidary incentives that exclusively benefit members. This suggests such organizations to remain dominated by the "logic of membership" at the detriment of the "logic of influence" (Schmitter and Streeck 1999).[5] This contrasts with public-serving organizations, an orientation which makes investments in collective incentives from which also outside actors can profit more worthwhile.

If member support can be more effectively maintained through selective incentives rather than (non-exclusive) advocacy activities (Jordan and Maloney 2007; Olson 1965), this further suggests that the more influence members have over organizational priorities, hence, *the more dependent leaders are on members*, the stronger the pressures to prioritize selective incentives. This has two implications: First, intra-organizational structures granting members control over decision-making (making leaders structurally accountable to members) should lead to a de-prioritization of collective incentive provision, thereby making investments in advocacy less likely. Second, members' financial contributions to an organization should increase leaders' need to consider member preferences (Halpin 2014; Jordan and Maloney 2007, 179), and if members are—ceteris paribus—more interested in selective than collective incentives, such dependency should decrease investments in advocacy too (Schmitter and Streeck 1999, 50). This leads to our first three hypotheses:

H1.1 (*Member Focus Hypothesis*): Member-serving organizations are less likely to invest in sustained advocacy than public-serving organizations.

H1.2 (*Member Control Hypothesis*): Organizations giving members control over core decisions are less likely to invest in sustained advocacy than those that do not.

H1.3 (*Membership Fees Hypothesis*): Organizations strongly reliant on membership fees are less likely to invest in sustained advocacy than those that do not.

Finally, organizations composed of individuals are likely to generate different demands towards leaders from those composed of corporate members such as institutions, firms, or other associations (Andrews and Edwards 2004, 488; Berkhout 2010). We can expect selective material incentives exclusively available to members (that do not generate a free-rider problem, Olson 1965, 16), to be equally relevant to sustain a CSO's membership irrespective of the dominant type of member. However, this does not apply to solidary incentives (a specific form of selective incentives) as, unlike individual members, members that are organizations or institutions themselves are unlikely to care much for activities strengthening feelings of group solidarity (Clark and Wilson 1961, 134–35; Salisbury 1969). Thus, as far as incentives provided to corporate members go, selective solidary incentives are unlikely to be useful investments for leaders to prevent corporate members from free-riding (Schmitter and Streeck 1999, 14–15).[6] Consequently, CSOs with individual members (unlike corporate membership organizations) face pressure to sustain member support *not only* through the provision of material incentives *but also* through solidary incentives. Meanwhile, a range of demands is already dealt with *within* the corporate members as units, hence, beneath the level of the CSO, limiting the diversity of demands towards the latter (Offe and Wiesenthal 1980, 81–85). Facing a more diverse (and thus more costly) demand for intra-organizational selective incentives, investments in externally oriented advocacy activities (generating their own costs) become more difficult (Bolleyer and Weiler 2018). If so, CSOs with individual members will have fewer resources left to invest in advocacy than CSO with corporate members:

H1.4 (*Individual Members Hypothesis*): Organizations composed of individual members are less likely to invest in sustained advocacy than organizations composed of corporate members.

Resources Mediating Tensions between Collective and Selective Incentive Provision

The trade-off between selective and collective incentive provision is rooted in the scarcity of resources most organizations struggle with (e.g., Gray and Lowery 1996; Guo and Saxton 2020; Nownes 2004; Salamon and Lessans-Geller 2008), forcing leaders to make choices rather than being able to simultaneously maximize the provision of different incentive types. Such scarcity is fundamentally shaped by CSOs' environment. External resource dependencies and CSOs' propensity to adapt to them are thus central to how organizations balance selective and collective incentive provision (e.g., Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014; Mosley 2010, 2011; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Schmid et al. 2008).

Drawing on resource dependency theory (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978), various subfields have stressed the growing importance of state funding for CSO functioning and survival (e.g., Weisbrod 1997). While the implications of state funding for CSO advocacy are controversially discussed (Bloodgood and Tremblay-Boire 2017; Lu 2018b), it is widely accepted that access to state funding as a more stable source of income than private donations creates incentives for those running an organization to reorient themselves towards the state (Crepaz et al. 2021; Fraussen 2014, 406; Lu 2018b, 205–6). Being interested in whether CSOs engage in any regular advocacy at all (rather than in the choice of advocacy tactics), state funding—including both grants and contracts—creates incentives to lobby for the maintenance of central funding streams, while existing CSO-state contacts enhance the likelihood of advocacy success (Mosley 2011, 442–43; Salamon and Lessans-Geller 2008, 13–14). State financial support generally enhances CSOs' autonomy from members, enabling them to focus on influence seeking rather than membership demands (Schmitter and Streeck 1999, 53–55).
H2.1 (*State Funding Hypothesis*): The more an organization can rely on state funding, the more likely are investments in sustained advocacy.

According to neo-institutionalist theory, policy fields produce distinctive policy environments exercising field-specific impacts on organizations operating in them (Child and Grønbjerg 2007, 261; Nicholson-Crotty 2007). Specifically, areas differ in policymakers' demand for CSO input and in the extent to which the former incentivize regular exchanges with CSOs, which reduces "the efforts of 'knocking on the doors'" (Leech et al. 2005, 21; Offe and Wiesenthal 1980, 86), while granting legitimacy to those CSOs accepted by policymakers as relevant players (Mosley 2011, 440–1). Traditionally, government demand for CSO input on legislation or budgets is particularly intense in the economic field (Baumgartner and Leech 2001, 1207; Dür and Mateo 2016, 153; Offe and Wiesenthal 1980, 85–7), thereby reducing the costs of collective incentive provision through advocacy.

Orientations towards maintaining resources critical for CSO survival and the readiness to strategically adapt to field-specific practices are particularly likely when those in charge of CSOs care more about self-maintenance than social change, a tendency associated with paid professionals, keen to enhance their organization's legitimacy (Mosley 2011, 441; Schmid et al. 2008, 585; Staggenborg 1988). CSO professionalization is reflected by an increasing dominance of paid staff with broader competences and skills than volunteer staff and, more specifically, the enhanced reliance on staff with relevant specialist knowledge (e.g., Hwang and Powell 2009; Maloney 2012). Professionals (rather than volunteers) running a CSO enhance an organization's overall capacity to deal with conflicting internal and external demands (Kreutzer and Jäger 2011; Maloney 2012; Maloney and Rossteutscher 2005, 97–98) and to provide a wider range of incentives including collective ones. Meanwhile, policy specialists can be expected to be particularly relevant for sustained advocacy as paid staff generally might focus on service provision (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014: 17; Mosley 2010, 62; Mosley 2011, 443).

H2.2 (*Government Demand Hypothesis*): CSOs active in the economic field are more likely to invest in sustained advocacy than organizations in other fields.
H2.3 (*Professionalization Hypothesis*): The more professionalized a CSO is, the more likely are investments in sustained advocacy.

Case Selection and Data

Country Selection

To test our framework, we conducted four surveys of membership-based CSOs in Norway, UK, Germany, and Switzerland. These four democracies are most different regarding four important macro characteristics considered relevant for the structure and resources of CSOs and, with this, their activities. First, we cover central types of third sector regimes relevant in long-lived Western democracies (Salamon and Anheier 1998) with the UK being a liberal regime, Germany a corporatist one, Norway a social democratic, and Switzerland a mix between the liberal and the social democratic regime (Butschi and Cattacin 1993, 367; Einolf 2015, 514). Public resources made available to voluntary sector organizations are particularly extensive in corporatist regimes, while competition for policy access is particularly intense in pluralist systems. Second, the countries selected cover a wide spectrum of legal constraints that apply to CSOs, respectively, with Switzerland among the most permissive and the UK among the most constraining within long-lived democracies, and Norway and Germany being located in between (Bolleyer 2018, 170)[7]. Third, we varied country size, the type of multilevel structure, and the level of societal heterogeneity as factors relevant for patterns of group formation and behavior (e.g., Coates et al. 2007; Dür and Mateo 2016). If findings on the organization-level drivers of political advocacy hold across these systems, we can reasonably consider them as robust and generalizable to long-lived democracies more broadly (see for more details Appendix A).

Data Collection

To specify the population of currently active, nationally and regionally, CSOs, we followed a bottom-up strategy based on the most inclusive sources documenting active membership-based organizations available for each democracy (Berkhout et al. 2018). This assured the inclusion of a wide variety of organizations ranging from classical interest groups (e.g., business associations) to ("non-political") service-oriented organizations operating nationally and regionally. To compile the list of relevant organizations, we have used the most recent "Directory of British Associations" (DBA) in the UK, the "Enhetsregisteret" (The Central Co-ordinating Register of Legal Entities) in Norway, the German directory "Taschenbuch des öffentlichen Lebens" (Oeckl), and the Swiss "Publicus" (Schweizer Jahrbuch des öffentlichen Lebens) as main sources. We have checked for potential duplicates in the lists and included organizations active when the

surveys were launched. We then collected (where available several) up-to-date email contacts of those in charge of the day-to-day running of the organization (e.g., chief executives, chairmen, leaders, organizational secretaries) to be used in our surveys.

The four surveys were launched between April and October 2016. The questionnaire consisted of 36 questions that covered aspects about the organizations, their resources, their core activities, and challenges.[8] The response rates were the following: in the UK 21%, in Norway 28%, in Germany 30%, and in Switzerland 41%.[9] The resulting dataset covers 803 organizations in the UK, 335 in Norway, 1400 in Germany, and 637 in Switzerland. This gives us a dataset of 3175 organizations, which is widely representative regarding the distribution of organizations.[10]

Measurements

Dependent Variable

The variable *Political Advocacy* capturing an organization's engagement in interest representation is based on the following survey item: "The table below lists a range of activities organizations can engage in to exercise political influence. Please indicate which activities your organization engages in nowadays." For each option, organizations were asked to indicate the relative frequency with which they engage in the respective activity (i.e., never, rarely, sometimes, often or very often).[11] The activities listed were the following:

- Contact reporters, write letters to the editor, issue press releases
- Paid advertisements in media outlets
- Arrange debates/hold press conferences
- Encourage members and others to contact decision-makers
- Participate in public consultations
- Contact government officials (e.g., ministers, members of parliament, civil servants)
- Publish analyses and research reports
- Legal direct action (e.g., authorized strikes) and public demonstrations
- Civil disobedience and illegal direct action
- Electoral and/or referenda campaigns
- Donations to political parties
- Cooperation with specific interest or advocacy group(s)
- Cooperation with a political party/parties

Importantly, in line with our conceptualization of interest representation and our focus on the full spectrum of membership-based CSOs, the 13 activities deliberately cover a wide range including conventional and unconventional forms of political participation, educational activities, activities directed towards government institutions as well as those targeting the public. To avoid a bias in favor or against organizations focused on specific activities (e.g., classical lobbying), we follow Chaves et al. (2004, 312) and deliberately do not discriminate between distinct types of political advocacy (Guo and Saxton 2020). To capture sustained advocacy activity, we consider an organization as engaged in advocacy if it engages in one or more of these 13 activities either often or very often. In contrast to occasional engagement, this indicates the prioritization of advocacy, with organizational resources being regularly invested in it, usually (as most organizations have limited resources) at the cost of other activities.

Explanatory Variables

Member Focus (H1.1) is measured through a dichotomous variable that takes the value 1 if the organization indicates "it pursues goals that primarily benefit the members" and 0 if not. For *Member Control* (H1.2), we use an index based on three indicators from a question on how organizations primarily make decisions in different areas. The index adds up (with equal weight) the following dimensions, aligning closely with notions of intra-organizational democracy, representing core areas of decision-making: "Appointing board members or the executive," "Appointing the chairperson or the leader," and "Changing the statutory rules or the constitution." Each component has been coded as 1 when decisions in an organization were taken by consensus or by voting among members (indicating members' direct control on decisions). The index ranges from 0 to 3 indicating growing degrees of member control. We operationalize dependence on *Membership Fees* (H1.3) based on a survey question about this income source's relevance for the organization's budget coded 1 if membership fees are important or very important and 0 if not. *Individual Membership* (H1.4) takes the value 1 if an organization's membership is "predominantly composed of individual citizens" and 0 if not.[12] Moving to the resource measures, we measure an organization's dependence on state funding (H2.1) through two measures, based on two questions about the relevance of different types of financial support for the organization's budget. We measure *State Grant Dependency* through an index ranging from 0 to 2 adding two items about the relevance of public funding from national government and other levels of government, indicating respectively whether these income sources are important or very important or not. We also capture *Service Contract Dependency* and coded CSOs as 1 when this income source is important or very important and 0 if not.[13] To test the government demand hypothesis (H2.2), we measure whether a CSO is active in the *Economic Field* as compared to other policy fields. In line with earlier studies, organizations' main area of activity has been hand-coded, categorizing organizations into eight categories (economic, social policy, health, recreation, education and culture, political, environmental, and religion)

(Bolleyer and Weiler 2018). Our survey asked about different types of staff working for the organization, capturing the number of paid employees as well as volunteer staff working for a CSO. To test H2.3, we include the ratio between paid and volunteer staff measuring *Paid Staff Dominance*, as this variable is right-skewed we use the log. We further include *Staff Specialization* captured by a 5-point Likert scale from a survey question about the changes in the proportion of policy or political specialists in the organization over the last five years.

Controls

We have added various controls. Most importantly, organizations for whom advocacy is the central mission are more likely to be politically active than organizations with a primary mission of service provision. To avoid mischaracterization, advocacy mission is based on a question in which organizations classified themselves as either an interest group (coded as 1) or a service-oriented organization (coded as 0) (Binderkrantz 2009). We further add size (based on the number of members), age since foundation and number of volunteers, all important factors shaping organizational strength and capacity (e.g., Halpin and Thomas 2012; Jordan and Maloney 2007). As they have right-skewed distributions, we use the log. We added a measure for involvement asking participants how involved members are in their organization, 1 being not at all involved and 5 extremely involved. Finally, we control for resource competition, a dichotomous variable capturing whether organizations perceive competition for new members, funds, government contracts, or other key resources or not (e.g., Baumgartner and Leech 2001; Halpin and Thomas 2012).

Details on all variables in the analysis and the survey items based on which our measures were constructed are provided in Appendix B.

Empirical Analysis

Model Choice

To assess the impact of our explanatory variables on CSO investment in political advocacy, we use logistic regression, the most suitable method when the dependent variable is dichotomous (Fox 2008). As we work with survey data typically characterized by a high number of missing values, we run our models applying multiple imputation techniques (King et al. 2001)[14]. Table 1 shows the results of a general model including all variables in our framework (M3) and two partial models reflecting each theoretical pillar, one with structural factors expected to incentivize selective incentive provision (M1) and one with resource variables expected to facilitate collective incentive provision (M2).[15]

Findings

Our findings widely substantiate our framework that theorizes CSO advocacy as a fundamental "balancing act" that leaders of membership-based CSOs need

Table 1. Logistic Regression Models for the Drivers of CSO Advocacy

	M1: Selective incentive provision model		M2: Resource model		M3: General model	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Factors prioritizing selective incentives						
Member focus	−0.519***	0.113			−0.491***	0.117
Member control	−0.087†	0.044			−0.034	0.046
Membership fees	−0.093	0.137			0.046	0.144
Individual membership	−0.682***	0.088			−0.595***	0.095
Resources mediating tensions between selective and collective incentive provision						
State grant dependency			0.288**	0.093	0.272**	0.087
Service contract dependency			0.067	0.178	0.031	0.175
Policy field (*Economic field* as reference)						
Social policy			−0.356*	0.154	−0.445**	0.165
Health			−0.254	0.190	−0.224	0.193
Recreation			−1.176***	0.156	−1.211***	0.160
Education and culture			−0.650***	0.117	−0.644***	0.123
Political			0.622*	0.274	0.472†	0.281
Environmental			−0.375	0.259	−0.500†	0.260
Religion			−0.675*	0.269	−0.745**	0.280
Paid staff dominance (log)			0.613***	0.114	0.533***	0.120

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued

	M1: Selective incentive provision model		M2: Resource model		M3: General model	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Staff specialization			0.321***	0.069	0.309***	0.069
Controls						
Advocacy mission	0.344***	0.103	0.380***	0.099	0.425***	0.104
Size (log)	0.108***	0.025	0.061*	0.025	0.106***	0.026
Age (log)	−0.102*	0.052	−0.087	0.053	−0.092†	0.054
Volunteers (log)	0.007	0.030	0.110**	0.035	0.093**	0.035
Involvement	0.363***	0.050	0.333***	0.053	0.313***	0.053
Resource competition	0.381***	0.082	0.333***	0.088	0.322***	0.088
Country (*Norway as reference*)						
UK	−0.150	0.161	0.114	0.168	0.035	0.172
Germany	0.307*	0.149	0.465**	0.159	0.357*	0.160
Switzerland	−0.122	0.161	−0.036	0.175	−0.172	0.178
Constant	−0.356	0.331	−2.562***	0.407	−1.810***	0.435
N	3,175		3,173		3,173	

†$p < .1$
*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$
***$p < .001$

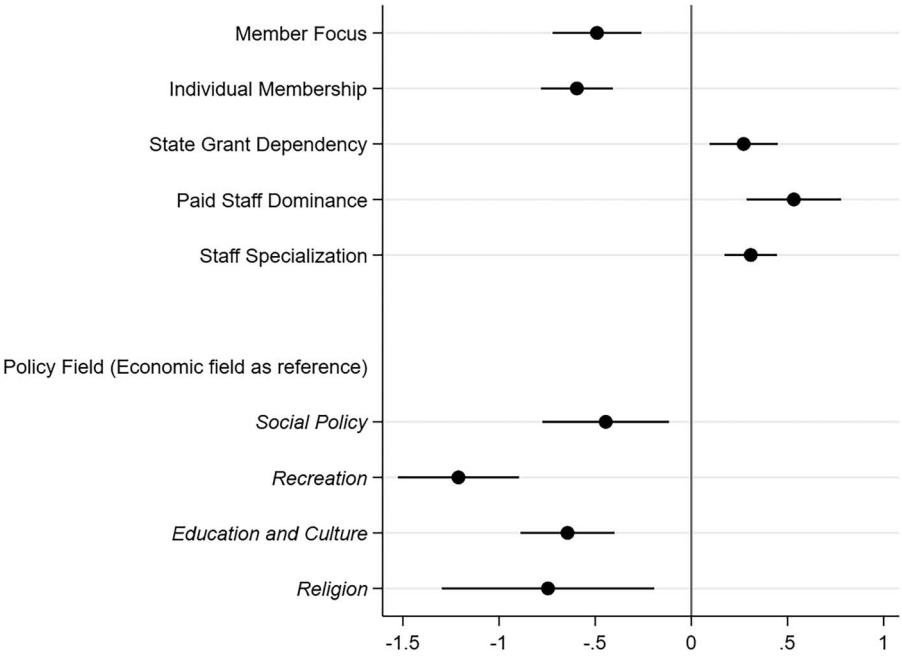
to manage when trying to maintain their organization by providing selective incentives, while engaging in advocacy which, even if successful, tends to generate collective, non-exclusive benefits. We discuss first the results of our general model (table 1, M3) and then look at whether our framework holds when being applied to each country separately to distinguish those relationships that "travel" country contexts from those affected by them (table D4, Appendix D).

As visualized in figure 1, our general model (table 1, M3) supports two of four hypotheses capturing *member-related pressures towards selective incentive provision*. Organizations' orientation towards member interests (H1.1) as well as being composed of individual members (H1.4) negatively affect the likelihood of organizations to regularly invest in advocacy, revealing a direct link between intra-organizational dynamics and external CSO activities (Berkhout 2010, 3, 12–13; Berkhout 2013; Halpin 2014, 24, 62–63). More specifically, stressing the relevance of distinguishing member-serving from public-serving organizations (Steinberg 2007, 121), a narrow orientation towards members (instead of broader societal constituencies) reduces the odds of investing in advocacy by 38.8%, holding other variables constant. While leaders' responsiveness to member interests might be beneficial to those within the organization and internal processes might, under certain circumstances, foster political awareness (e.g., Eliasoph 2013), by directing leader priorities towards providing benefits exclusive to members, it constitutes a barrier against CSOs generating a public voice, essential for CSOs meeting democratic expectations attributed to them (e.g., Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005; Warren 2001). Furthermore, while organizations increasingly having *no* members is for many a major concern (reducing their internal participatory benefits) (e.g., Schlozman et al. 2015), for *external* advocacy the decline of citizen-based CSOs might be less problematic than the decline of organizations encompassing associational or institutional actors.

Moving to the *resources expected to mediate tensions between selective and collective incentive provision*, our results show a positive relationship between state grant dependency and sustained advocacy, in line with H2.1. Since state funding encompasses an important resource at organizations' disposal (Weisbrod 1997), organizations have strong "business" reasons to invest in political advocacy in favor of maintaining such resource (Salamon and Lessans-Geller 2008, 13–14), substantiating a positive link between state funding and political advocacy (see also Chaves et al. 2004; Crepaz et al. 2021; LeRoux and Goerdel 2009).

Furthermore, not all types of organizations benefit from the same state access (e.g., Dür and Mateo 2016). Indeed, the expertise and knowledge of organizations in the economic field often ensures them a privileged position in government consultations (Baumgartner and Leech 2001, 1207), decreasing the costs of advocacy. This, in turn, increases the incentives of CSOs in this field to regularly engage in interest representation (H2.2), which is substantiated by our findings. Running our model for economic and other groups separately (see tables D2 and D3, Appendix D), the results remain the same, with one exception: State grant dependency is only positively significant among non-economic CSOs. This suggest that state funding, as an enabling factor for CSO advocacy, is less

Figure 1. Drivers of Political Advocacy in Four European Civil Society.



Note: figure 1 displays the point estimates and confidence intervals of the significant explanatory variables based on M3. Circles represent point estimates and horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

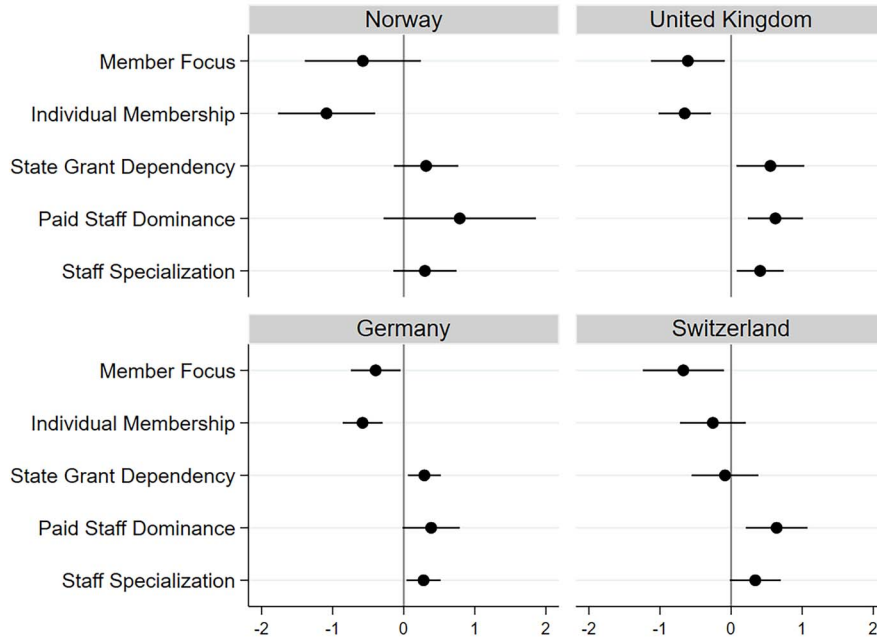
relevant for those groups enjoying both superior private funds and privileged government access (e.g., Beyers et al. 2008; Offe and Wiesenthal 1980).

Finally, also CSO professionalization matters in the theoretically expected way: Both paid staff dominance and staff specialization increase the likelihood of regular CSO advocacy (H2.3). According to Model 3, for each unit increase in paid staff dominance, the odds of sustained advocacy increase by 70.4%. Consequently, staff with broader competences and skills than volunteers increase organizational capacity to deal with conflicting internal and external demands (Maloney and Rossteutscher 2005, 97–98) and thus are in a "better position to support a meaningful advocacy and lobbying role" (Salamon and Lessans-Geller 2008, 13–14). Simultaneously, reliance on policy specialists matters as well, stressing the importance of taking into account different dimensions of CSO professionalization (Dür and Mateo 2013; Hwang and Powell 2009; Mosley 2011, 443).

These findings hold despite controlling for a range of other factors considered important in earlier research such as a CSO's mission, size, age, involvement[16], country, and resource competition (e.g., Baumgartner and Leech 2001; Halpin and Thomas 2012; Jordan and Maloney 2007; Klüver 2011).

To examine which of the significant relationships depicted in table 1 travel across country settings and which might be mediated by institutional context, we

Figure 2. Drivers of CSO Advocacy Country by Country.



Note: figure 2 displays the point estimates and confidence intervals of the significant explanatory variables based on M3. Circles represent point estimates and horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

have run our general model (M3) for each of the four countries separately (see for details table D4, Appendix D). The results especially substantiate the theoretical distinction between an "incentive-theoretical" and a "resource-dependency" rationale to account CSOs' varying propensities towards advocacy, as shown in figure 2: The main variables of the selective incentive rationale capturing CSOs' own structural properties (individual membership and member focus) are significant for CSO advocacy in the majority of country models stressing their broader relevance across voluntary sector types and very different CSO legal frameworks echoing earlier cross-national group research (e.g., Dür and Mateo 2013; De Bruycker et al. 2019). In contrast, the relevance of resource variables CSO professionalization and state grant dependency for advocacy is more context-specific.

In line with prominent arguments in research on non-profit advocacy (e.g., Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014; Mosley 2010, 2011; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Schmid et al. 2008), discrepancies between the country models systematically displayed in figure 2 align with voluntary sector type (shaping the nature of state-voluntary relationships prevalent in a country) and differences in CSO legal frameworks. Norway combines a social democratic voluntary sector regime (in which welfare services are provided by government directly) with a permissive CSO legal framework, two features incentivizing an autonomous voluntary

sector (Bolleyer 2018; Salamon and Anheier 1998). It is the only country in which *none* of the "resource variables" is significant. In contrast, resource variables have significant and differentiated effects in the three countries in which state-voluntary relationships are comparatively closer: the UK (a liberal voluntary sector regime), Germany (a corporatist voluntary sector regime), and Switzerland (a mix between social democratic and liberal system) (Butschi and Cattacin 1993, 367; Einolf 2015, 514). At least one of the two professionalization variables—paid staff dominance and staff specialization (H2.3)—is significant at 5% level in the three settings. More specifically, we find systematic differences in *how* professionalization matters. In liberal UK, where CSOs are expected to contribute to welfare-provision but without benefitting from extensive state financing typical for corporatist systems (Salamon and Anheier 1998), both staff capacity and specialization are relevant for whether CSOs can regularly engage in advocacy. This is reinforced by the high complexity of the CSO regulatory system making it difficult for CSOs without specialist knowledge to circumvent legal constraints and to exploit (relatively scarce) state benefits (Bolleyer 2018, 170). In Germany, where CSOs are better financed and many work in a close partnership with government (Salamon and Anheier 1998, 240), only specialization is significant (though paid staff dominance capturing staff capacity is borderline ($p = .059$)). While—overall—systemically stronger state-voluntary interdependencies suggest resource variables matter more for CSO's ability to engage in advocacy, the specific nature of these interdependencies seems to affect *how* CSO professionalization matters. The Swiss case, which as a mixed system sits in between Norway as social democratic regime and the UK as liberal one (Butschi and Cattacin 1993, 367), underlines this interpretation. While fewer resources are made available to CSOs than in Germany, the legal system is considerably less complex and constraining than in the UK (Bolleyer 2018, 170), making professional capacity more valuable for CSO advocacy than specialist knowledge, a reading aligning with a significant effect of paid staff dominance and the insignificant effect of staff specialization in the Swiss country model. This line of argument is substantiated by the country-specific effects of state grant dependency (H2.1). It is only significant at 5% level in UK and Germany where state-voluntary relations are closer and expectations towards welfare provision by CSOs are more intense than in Norway and Switzerland. Instead of close voluntary-state interdependencies generally decreasing CSOs' propensity to engage in advocacy, in such contexts access to state funding is a, comparatively speaking, more important enabling factor for CSO advocacy. This finds further support in the general model (see table 1, M3) showing a significantly higher propensity of German CSOs to engage in advocacy than in Norway.

Conclusion

This paper has theorized which membership-based CSOs engage in regular advocacy integrating incentive-theoretical arguments prominent in group research with arguments from resource dependency and neo-institutionalist theory

prominent in research on non-profit advocacy. Testing our framework on CSO advocacy based on new survey data covering advocacy- and service-oriented CSOs across four European democracies highlighted the importance of considering the varying *pressures towards selective incentive provision* that different CSOs are exposed to *alongside* the *resources mediating these pressures*, thereby facilitating the provision of collective incentives and, with this, the engagement in political advocacy. This was further substantiated by the comparative assessment of country-specific models (table D4, Appendix D). Structural CSO characteristics theorized based on incentive-theoretical arguments proved relevant across different voluntary sector types and CSO legal frameworks. In contrast, the role of resource variables—especially state funding dependency—was systematically affected by institutional differences. While the latter has been suggested by research on non-profit advocacy (Almog-Bar and Schmid 2014), to our knowledge, this is the first large-scale, cross-national analysis that explicitly assessed which drivers of CSO advocacy "travel" across country contexts and which are mediated by the latter instead. The findings have important normative and societal repercussions regards to the propensity of states to mediate or reinforce inequality within organized civil society in terms of "voice" (Schlozman 1984; Kohn 2011): That resource access has no significant effects on advocacy engagement in Norway, where the state involves CSOs little in service provision and only loosely regulates them, highlights the benefits of weaker interdependencies between state and civil society. In contrast, where monetary flows from state to the civil society sector and the latter's involvement in service-provision are more intense, existing resource inequalities reinforce differentiations within the "group system" between politically active and "only" social or service-oriented CSOs. This points to an important source of inequality in democratic representation, further underlined by the stronger advocacy engagement of economic CSOs.

Consequently, especially the "resource dimension" is in need of further cross-national research, including analyses using financial measures capturing the actual weight of different funding sources in different CSO types' budgets, their evolution, and their impact over time. Furthermore, future research needs to go beyond *whether or not* CSOs regularly engage in interest representation towards considering *whose interests* they represent (Saurugger 2012, 69) and *how* they end up adopting particular forms of action in the first place (Bosi and Zamponi 2020, 849). As stressed by Beyers et al. (2008, 1117), we cannot assume that groups that engage in advocacy necessarily function as "intermediaries" between the state and society. While advocacy is a necessary precondition for public voice, future cross-national research needs to explore more closely how the factors identified here as conducive to activities directed towards interest representation affect the "substantial" side of representation and how they are shaped by the way organizations originated (Bosi and Zamponi 2020, 850–851). Showing a stronger propensity for advocacy, professionalized CSOs might be more strategic in who they direct these activities towards, focusing on popular, sympathetic causes facilitating fundraising and the interests of resource-rich citizens who are easier to mobilize, thereby reinforcing biases in an already "dysfunctional

democratic market" (Maloney 2012, 108–112). Revealing a trade-off between enhanced capacity for representation and the societal responsiveness of its content would reinforce those voices sceptical of a growing professionalization of civil society (e.g., Hay and Stoker 2009; Skocpol 2003).

Finally, our findings need to be put on a broader empirical foundation transcending long-lived Western democracies, especially as recent cross-national research has shown group systems operate differently in mature as compared to young democracies (Hanegraaff et al. 2020). New democracies tend to suffer from a "civil society deficit," displaying lower organizational membership and lower participation rates than long-lived democracies (Lane 2010, 304–6). These differences might reduce the relevance of "incentive-theoretical" factors focusing on CSOs' own infrastructure. And while there are no strong theoretical reasons why professionalization should not play a capacity-enhancing role in new democracies, stricter regulations of state funding access in these countries might impose constraints on state-dependent organizations' political advocacy rather than supporting the latter.

Notes

1. Next to functioning as vehicles for representation through their external behavior, CSOs can make less direct but equally important contributions to democracy as venues for participation and the cultivation of voluntarism (e.g., Eliasoph 2013; Jordan and Maloney 2007). Our paper focuses on the former.
2. See for US-focused studies, for instance, Chaves et al. 2004; Salamon and Lessans-Geller 2008; LeRoux and Goerdel 2009; Mosley 2010; see for a Swiss-German comparison Bolleyer and Weiler 2018.
3. Our approach does not apply to individual actors (e.g., firms) which might lobby but whose leaders do not face comparable trade-offs between external pressures and member demands.
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., Bolleyer and Correa 2020).
5. This analytical distinction has been fruitfully employed to explain interest group strategies (e.g., Berkhout et al. 2017; Hanegraaff et al. 2016).
6. This argument resembles Olson justifying a relative disregard for solidary and expressive incentives when focusing on "organizations with a significant economic aspect" that are "rationally motivated" (1965: 6).
7. In established democracies, tax law usually does not prohibit political activity of charities or public benefit organizations per se but only particular kinds of activities (Bolleyer 2018). Still, to test the potential relationship between CSO dependency on tax benefits, country settings, and political advocacy, we have performed an additional robustness check, which does not find support for such relationship (see table D5, Appendix D).
8. The survey is composed of questions based on earlier group surveys such as by the "Comparative Interest Group (CIG) Survey Project"

(www.cigsurvey.eu), INTERARENA (http://interarena.dk/), and The "Organising Interests in Australia" Project (http://interestgroupsaustralia.com/).

9. Differences in response rates are in line with earlier group surveys reporting rates from 25% to 40% (Beyers et al. 2020; Marchetti 2015).
10. We have examined if our survey data are representative in terms of policy field in each country sample using the R-indicator (Schouten et al. 2009). The respective R-indicators are as follows: 0.94 for UK, 0.87 for Norway, 0.92 for Germany, and 0.92 for Switzerland (the closer to 1, the more representative the sample).
11. This question is based on the CIG Survey by Beyers et al. (2016).
12. Member Focus and Individual Membership are based on questions from the Scottish and Australian Interest Groups surveys (Halpin and Fraussen 2015). Member Control and Paid Staff Dominance are based on questions from the CIG Survey.
13. All measures referring to CSO finances have been adapted from the CIG Survey to ask about the relevance of different income sources for the organization's budget instead of the percentage or actual figure. We deliberately distinguish CSOs for whom an income source is important or very important from those for whom it is not to capture, in line with resource dependency theory, whether this resource is "critical" to an organization's survival or not (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Schmid et al. 2008, 545–6).
14. We have also run our models with list-wise deletion, and the main findings remain the same indicating missing values are missing at random (see table D1, Appendix D).
15. Diagnostic tests indicate that collinearity is not a problem (see tables B17 and B18, Appendix B). Since we have a very small number of clusters (4), we controlled for country differences through country dummies instead of performing multilevel analysis (Hox et al. 2018).
16. The positive effect of involvement suggests that CSO's ability to involve members in organizational work is qualitatively different from members' ability to hold leaders to account (member control) and other member-related factors constraining advocacy, echoing recent work conceptualizing involvement as "organizational resource" at the disposal of CSO leaders (Bolleyer and Correa 2020).

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material is available at *Social Forces* online, http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/.

About the Authors

Nicole Bolleyer is Chair of Comparative Political Science at the Geschwister Scholl Institute of Political Science, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (Germany). She is the author of *The State and Civil Society: Regulating Interest Groups, Parties and Public Benefit Organizations in Contemporary Democracies* (Oxford University Press 2018). Her research has appeared in a range of leading

journals such as *Comparative Political Studies*, *Journal of Politics*, and the *European Journal of Political Research*.

Patricia Correa is a lecturer in Politics and International Relations at Aston University, Birmingham (UK). Her main research interests are intra-party dynamics, party membership, digitalization, and territorial politics. Her research has appeared in journals such as *Comparative Political Studies*, *European Political Science Review*, and *Comparative Politics*.

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