Parliamentarians' Strategies for Policy Evaluations[*]

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Abstract

This article considers the question of which strategies parliamentarians pursue when they use parliamentary requests demanding an evaluation. In order to be re-elected or to achieve desirable policies, parliamentarians can either appeal to their constituency or to their party by adopting legislative roles. The study is based on twelve case studies of parliamentary requests from the Swiss parliament between 2010-2014. The analysis shows that parliamentarians of legislative committees submit parliamentary requests to oppose a policy, while parliamentarians of oversight committees submit parliamentary requests to obtain information on specific policies. On the contrary, the party membership of the responsible Federal Councillor does not influence the strategy. These findings suggest that parliamentarians use evaluations as an instrument rather than using the actual findings. This conclusion might be very relevant to understand how evaluations are used in the political process.

Keywords: Policy Evaluation, Parliament, Parliamentary Request, Case Study

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1 Introduction

Policy evaluations fulfill an important function within contemporary democracies. They assess a public policy in regard to its effectiveness, efficiency or fitness for purpose. This information is not only potentially interesting for the public administration, but also for other institutions. Since members of parliament (MPs) have to make many decisions about unfamiliar issues, evaluation studies may provide them with information on specific policies (Weiss, 1999, 478). Moreover, recent studies show that MPs use evaluations for accountability (Speer et al., 2015; Author 2016) as well as agenda-setting (Zwaan et al., 2016) by demanding evaluations with parliamentary requests.

In general, parliamentary requests allow MPs to initiate new policies or to receive information about them, which is why they belong to the most powerful tools of parliaments (Pelizzo & Stapenhurst, 2012). On the one hand, some studies argue that parliamentary requests allow parliaments to align the government's actions with their own voters' preferences, as they enable MPs to set the agenda (Raunio, 1996; Martin, 2011a; Bailer, 2011). On the other hand, authors state that parliamentary requests are a useful tool to control the government, since they provide information on how the government implements policies (Russo & Wiberg, 2010; Proksch & Slapin, 2011). Policy evaluations meet both needs for MPs, since they provide information for legislation and oversight. However, previous literature fails to explain which purposes MPs have when they submit a parliamentary request to demand an evaluation. Thus, this article aims to look behind the scenes of parliamentary procedures in order to understand the strategies of policy evaluations in parliaments.

This article considers the question of which strategies MPs pursue when they use parliamentary requests to demand an evaluation. The paper argues that MPs are mainly driven by the aspiration of reelection and seeking desirable policies. In order to achieve these goals, they can make use of legislative roles: Either they appeal to their constituency or they promote their party so that the party leadership rewards them. Previous studies suggest that MPs are mainly influenced by two organizational allocations: Committee and party group membership (Bowler & Farrell, 1995; McElroy & Benoit, 2007). Depending on their allocation, MPs pursue different strategies with policy evaluations.

Empirically, the analysis is based on a comparative case study approach (Yin, 2014). In doing so, the study investigates twelve parliamentary requests, which were submitted between

2010 and 2014 at the federal level in Switzerland. Evaluations are particularly well established in the Swiss political system and are highly institutionalized in the parliament compared to other democracies (Jacob et al., 2015). Furthermore, Switzerland is a least likely case for the observation of legislatives roles. On the one hand, the Swiss parliament has weak oversight capacities and only knows a limited opposition system due to the consensual character of the Swiss democracy (Vatter, 2014). On the other hand, parliamentary groups still tend to have a powerless position within the parliament, which can be observed by their low voting unity (Bailer & Bütikofer, 2015; Coman, 2015).

The study shows that MPs indeed pursue different strategies with evaluations. The committee membership has a considerable effect on the strategy of an evaluation. While MPs from oversight committees seek information with evaluations, MPs from legislative committees demand evaluations in order to oppose a policy. On the contrary, the party group membership does not influence the evaluation strategy. These findings provide important implications for research on evaluations. Not only does the study contribute to research on the demand of evaluation, which has rarely been investigated so far, but it also illustrates that MPs pursue different strategies with evaluations. Evaluations might be demanded for social betterment, but they are also requested for the pursuit of personal goals (e.g. reelection, policy outcomes). This conclusion indicates that we have to change our understanding of the role of evaluation in the decision-making process. MPs use evaluations as an instrument rather than the findings of evaluations.

The article is structured as follows: Section 2 introduces the theoretical framework and the hypotheses. Section 3 discusses the research design and case selection. Section 4 presents the findings of the case studies, which are discussed in section 5. Section 6 concludes the results and discusses the implications of the findings for research on evaluation.

2 Theory

Strategic behavior is an important component for MPs, as several studies have illustrated the importance of strategic voting in parliaments (Farquharson, 1969; Clinton & Meirowitz, 2004; Rasch, 2014; Bütikofer & Hug, 2015; Hug et al., 2015). Moreover, MPs also express their strategic nature by the use of parliamentary requests (Bowler, 2010; Martin, 2011b; Kellermann, 2013, 2015; Martin & Rozenberg, 2014). In doing so, MPs mainly have two motives for their activities.

On the one hand, they may submit parliamentary requests to attract attention from the public, since they are influenced by their electoral vulnerability. This argumentation is based on the assumption that MPs have incentives to maximize their votes in order to succeed in elections (Norris, 2004, 98-101). On the other hand, they might propose parliamentary requests in order to influence the political agenda. As a consequence, they do not primarily aim to get reelected, but rather focus on their desirable policy outcomes (Müller & Strøm, 1999).

Both interpretations of the motives are based on a rational choice perspective. However, rational choice institutionalism differs across the context. Shepsle (2006, 28-30) highlights the importance of rational choice for structured institutions. A parliament is usually a structured institution, in which MPs are elected by their voters and thus are an agent of their constituency. By rule, MPs are authorized to act on behalf of their voters during their election. Since the voters delegate their policy preferences to the MPs, the latter are also accountable towards them (Müller et al., 2006).[1] Therefore, MPs spend a considerable amount of time and effort to appeal to their voters, by responding to their mail or attending public events (Kellermann, 2015; Giger & Lanz, 2016). Also, they focus on the topics in the parliamentary arena from which they believe that voters will reward them in the next election. In doing so, MPs can use parliamentary requests in order to propose a political project, which is favorable to their voters (André et al., 2014). Moreover, it can lead to additional publicity for the author, since media frequently reports about parliamentary requests (Van Santen et al., 2015).

Although electoral vulnerability is doubtless an important trigger, MPs might also be motivated by policy outcomes. This idea is based on the idea that MPs are not only accountable to their constituency, but also to their own party. Katz (2014) recently showed that a MP has multiple principals. In order to get reelected, MPs do not only have to care about their voters, but also about their party, since the party leadership is often responsible for nominating the candidates. They also have the power to obstruct a MP from the election, if the MP does not seem favorable for them. Albeit parties do also care about electoral success, they care a little less about individual MP success, but more about policy and political competition (Benoit & Laver, 2006). In order to enforce their policies' preferences, parties depend on their internal cohesion. According to Kam (2014, 399), party cohesion is the degree to which members of the same party work together in order to pursue the party's goal. Most prominently, MPs from the same party

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[1]However, André et al. (2014, 234) argues that voters need to have the possibility to monitor the MPs' actions, and also to sanction or reward them for their performance.

should coordinate their votes to pass the policy (Krehbiel, 2000; Kam, 2009). As a consequence, parliamentary questions should not request an issue, which contradicts the party's opinion or is detrimental to it. More important, parliamentary questions could lead government members of the same party to inconveniences, if the request reveals a governmental failure (Jensen et al., 2013).

Subsequently, MPs do not only have to consider their constituency, but also their party. Since the voters and the party are the collective principal that chooses an MP to act as its agent, they are vulnerable to the usual kinds of agency problems: Adverse selection and moral hazard (Strøm, 2000, 270). In doing so, voters, and partly also the party both face problems of hidden information and action, since they cannot be fully informed about the politicians who plan to run for office. Hence, both relationships entail a form of delegation, thus make the MPs accountable towards their voters. Since both have a strong influence on how MPs behave in the parliament, MPs sometimes face a dilemma between what is in the interest of their own party and what is important for their voters (Carey & Shugart, 1995). The crucial point for MPs is to satisfy both interests at the same time.

Legislative roles[2] help MPs to satisfy both voters and party leaders. Various studies emphasize the different roles amongst MPs (Wahlke, 1962; Andeweg, 1997, 2014; Scully & Farrell, 2003). Strøm (2012) argues that MPs pursue different goals depending on their situation in the parliament. In doing so, their situation is often influenced by their organizational allocation. In most parliaments, MPs are divided into legislative and oversight committees in addition to their membership in their party groups. According to Saalfeld (2000), these memberships have a high influence on how MPs interpret their role in the parliament. While members of oversight committees tend to focus on the control of the administration, members of the legislative committees seek to promote themselves by policy advocacy. Moreover, parties delegate their members into committees urging them to represent their party's preference in the legislative committees.

In Switzerland, MPs might use parliamentary requests in order to assume such legislative roles. Parliamentary requests are generally considered as the instruments, with which the Federal Assembly[3] can influence the political agenda directly, since the agenda of committees is mainly

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[2]In literature, the term *legislative roles* is often used to describe the behavioral patterns or routines that MPs adopt. However, apart from legislative aspects, these patterns can also include oversight goals (Strøm, 1997).

[3]The Swiss Federal Assembly is a bicameral parliament. In contrast to other countries, the lower (National Council) and upper house (Council of States) are perfectly symmetric, since they have exactly the same prerogatives (Bütikofer & Hug, 2010, 178)

determined by the Federal Council and its departments (Vatter, 2014, 285). They enable MPs to propose a new policy or to obtain information on specific matters. In general, one can distinguish between four different requests: Motion, postulate, interpellation, and question.[4] The requests vary in their procedure and goal. A motion instructs the Federal Council to initiate a new policy proposal or to undertake a certain action. A postulate requests the Federal Council to examine and report on whether to submit a new policy proposal or to undertake a certain action. In addition, MPs can also request a report on a different matter with a postulate. Finally, an interpellation or a question requests the Federal Council to provide information on matters that are related to the Swiss Confederation.[5] A parliamentary request can be submitted by individual MPs, a parliamentary group or a committee. Although they are often signed by several MPs, usually only one MP is the author of the parliamentary request.

Policy evaluations might be a particularly worthwhile request for a MP, as they provide information for legislations (Weiss, 1989; Christie, 2003) and for overseeing the government (Lees, 1977; Author 2016). Therefore, MPs might use evaluations in order to assume specific legislative roles. In doing so, they have different possibilities to demand an evaluation. With interpellations and questions, MPs ask the government whether they would support an evaluation for a certain policy. In contrast, a motion includes an evaluation of a policy within the new bill, which finally results in an evaluation clause if the legislation is passed in the parliament (Bussmann, 2005). The most direct way to demand an evaluation is the postulate. In doing so, the MP requests a report about a policy regarding its effectiveness or efficiency. However, the process of all parliamentary evaluation requests that demand an evaluation can be structured into four different stages: *Background, Trigger, Strategy*, and *Purpose*. The background and trigger have an influence on the MP's evaluation strategy, which determines the purpose of the evaluation. Figure 1 identifies the process and illustrates how the demand for a policy evaluation develops.

Background: MPs react to certain circumstances with parliamentary requests. Either a policy has turned out to be a failure or a policy has changed and it is uncertain whether the change causes new effects. In order to spot such policy failures, a MP may demand an evaluation in order to obtain information about the deficient policy (S. H. Linder & Peters, 1990, 307). In

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[4]In addition, the National Council has a question time every second or third week of session. During the question time, the Federal Council orally answers written questions, which their members have received in the beginning of a session. Furthermore, MPs can submit parliamentary initiatives to propose a new bill. However, these initiatives are directly treated by a legislative committee instead of the Federal Council (Vatter & Wirz, 2015).

[5]Art. 118-125 ParlG, SR 171.10.

Figure 1: Process of Parliamentary Evaluation Requests
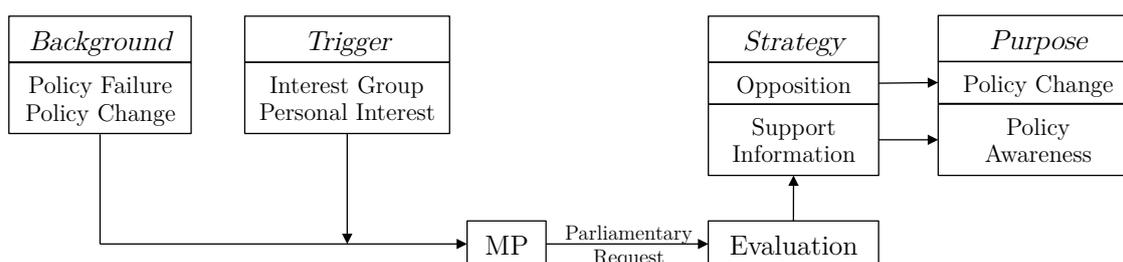
contrast, a policy change harbors perils due to its unknown effects. Hence, policy changes also often increase the need for information in order to calculate the impact of the change.

Trigger: Two factors usually trigger MPs to submit parliamentary requests to a specific issue. On the one hand, MPs have a special interest in a certain policy field due to their personal background or their specialization within parliament (Searing, 1991; Bowler & Farrell, 1995). Since MPs only have limited resources, they often specialize in certain policy areas in which they are members of a committee. On the other hand, several studies have shown that interest groups are often the main driver behind parliamentary questions (Raunio, 1996; Bailer, 2011). According to Richardson (2000, 1009), interest groups provide information, which influences the decision-making process. Therefore, interest groups are keen on evaluations due to their information content.

Strategy: Previous studies show that evaluations can be used instrumentally, conceptually or symbolically (Rich, 1977; Knorr, 1977). While instrumental use refers to situations where MPs make a decision based on evidence, conceptual use indicates that MPs gradually improve their understanding of an object. In addition, symbolic use indicates that an opinion is already made and the MP uses the evaluation to justify a decision. Depending on their openness to evidence, MPs demand evaluations to oppose or support a policy, or to get information to aid a decision process. While opposition is characterized by the MPs' goal to eliminate or replace an existing policy, support aims to protect and keep a policy. In contrast, the strategy information reveals nothing about the MPs' attitude towards the policy, apart from the fact that the MPs are seeking information on the issue.

Purpose: MPs pursue two main purposes when demanding an evaluation. Their goal is either to change an existing policy, or else to maintain the status quo, yet sensitize some actors to it. While policy change is well established in public policy literature (Sabatier, 2006; Sabatier &

Weible, 2014), policy awareness has rarely been discussed. In contrast to policy change, policy awareness emphasizes the importance of a certain policy for a specific group within society. Hence, it is more focused on maintaining the status quo - a task, which is often just as important for MPs as changing a policy (Tsebelis, 1994, 131-135). The purpose of the evaluation has an important effect on the MP's motivation. With both policy change and policy awareness, the MPs can try to satisfy their constituency or their party.

In the following, I argue that the evaluation strategy is shaped by the MPs' expected benefit for a re-election from the perspective of their voters, and by the MPs' perceived party pressure in order to pursue the party's preferred policy position. Depending on their organizational allocation in the parliament, they will assume different legislative roles and thus pursue certain strategies with evaluations. First, the MP's memberships in *parliamentary committees* provide legislative roles. On the one hand, MPs from legislative committees want to influence the legislation process by policy advocacy either based on their voters' or their parties' preferences. They can achieve this by demanding an evaluation, which provides evidence against an existing policy and serves as a basis for a policy change, which is favored by their voters and their party. Moreover, they might also demand an evaluation, which supports a MP's preposition for a new policy by raising awareness of this very policy. In doing so, they either make their constituency aware of their personal work or of the work of their party. On the other hand, MPs of an oversight committee want to appeal to their voters by displaying themselves as controllers of the public administration to their constituency (Strøm, 2000; Bovens, 2005). Hence, they submit parliamentary requests in order to obtain information on a certain policy as well as to fulfill their oversight function. Since they obtain information on a certain policy, they can raise awareness of the effective, respectively ineffective policy without demanding a direct policy change. This legislative role rather addresses the constituency than the party, since the latter's preference depends on whether the party is part of the government or the opposition. Therefore, I will test following hypothesis:

> **Hypothesis 1:** MPs from legislative committees will more likely demand an evaluation to oppose or support a policy than MPs from oversight committees; MPs from oversight committees will more likely demand an evaluation to obtain information on a policy.

Second, the MPs' choices of legislative roles also depend on their membership in a *parliamentary group*. In order to foster their parties' policy, MPs might point out how effectively the policy

works, as effectiveness is often regarded as a high legitimacy aspect (Scharpf, 1999; Widmer, 2009). In doing so, MPs seek evidence against or for a policy depending on the party group membership. MPs from the same party group as the responsible Federal Councillor will demand an evaluation to support a certain policy, while MPs from different party groups will pursue the same strategy to oppose a policy in order to blame the political opponent (Thesen, 2013). While the former want to maintain an existing policy and raise awareness of the good work of their political group, the latter seek to make a policy change. As a consequence, the MPs motivation lies in the realization of a certain policy outcome or in the expectation of being rewarded by their party during the next election - either by the re-nomination or else by a good position of the party list. Therefore, the following hypothesis is tested:

> **Hypothesis 2:** MPs from the same party group as the responsible Federal Councillor will more likely demand an evaluation to support a policy; MPs from a different party group as the responsible Federal Councillor will more likely demand an evaluation to oppose a policy.

The following section discusses the research design that this article uses to examine the hypotheses. Since the analysis is based on a comparative case study, the section introduces the case selection and gives an overview of the used data and methods.

3   Research Design

The bases of the empirical analysis consist of twelve comparative case studies (Yin, 2014). A case is defined as a parliamentary request, which has been submitted by a MP and which demands an evaluation. The cases were selected by keeping as many independent variables as possible constant, while the parliamentary requests differ in the MP's organizational allocation. First, the parliamentary requests vary in the MP's committee membership: legislative or oversight committee.[6] Second, I distinguish between the parliamentary requests and the MP's ideological affiliation. In doing so, I have compared the party membership of the parliamentary request's author (MP) and it's recipient (Federal Councillor). According to recent studies (Kriesi et al., 2006; Bornschier, 2015), the main cleavage of the Swiss party system proceeds along the left (Social Democratic Party, Green Party) and liberal-conservative parties (Christian Democratic People's Party, FDP.The Liberals, Swiss People's Party). Although these MPs are not in the

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[6]MPs of oversight committees are often also members in a legislative committee, since the latter is more frequent. I have allocated the MPs according to their statements within the interviews.

Table 1: Selected Cases of Parliamentary Requests

	Legislative Committee	Oversight Committee
Different Party Group	(1) Stalking (Mot. 13.3742)	(2) Supplementary Benefits (Post. 12.3673)
	(5) Axpo (Inter. 14.3163)	(11) Prevention Programs (Inter. 12.3498)
	(7) New Buildings (Post. 13.3903)	(10) Professional Integration (Quest. 10.1124)
Same Party Group	(8) Gender Equality (Inter. 13.3270)	(6) Poster Children (Inter. 11.4077)
	(3) Lötschberg-Tunnel (Post. 11.3626)	(12) Federal ICT-Projects (Post. 13.4062)
	(9) Doctor Admission (Post. 12.3218)	(4) Regional Policy (Post. 11.3697)

Note: Mot. = Motion; Inter. = Interpellation; Post. = Postulate; Quest. = Question; Number of Case in parentheses.

same party, they are also worried about embarrassing their allied parties, since the federal election allows list combination (Bochsler, 2010). The twelve cases were selected on the basis of the study of Author et al. (2016)[7] following the variation of committee and party group membership. Moreover, I selected eight matching cases. The cases have the same author, but differ in their context, since some MPs have changed their committee or have submitted the parliamentary requests to different departments. According to King et al. (1994, 199-206), matching is one of the most valuable strategies to estimate the causal effect of a variable, since most other control variables are held constant. The case selection included parliamentary requests from both parliamentary chambers. Finally, the selected cases differ in several other factors (e.g. political party, type of parliamentary request, federal department). Table 1 shows an overview of the selected cases. Although MPs from legislative committees submitted more parliamentary requests, MPs from oversight committees have more submissions in relation to their size, since the number of oversight committees is smaller than that of legislative committees. In addition, MPs tend to submit more requests to Federal Councillors, which are from a different party group. The parliamentary requests are distributed as follows: 79 (36.2%) legislative committee and different party group, 73 (33.5%) legislative committee and same party group, 38 (17.4%) oversight committee and different party group, and 28 (12.8%) oversight committee and same party group.[8]

In order to investigate the cases, I gathered data from a document analysis as well as from

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[7]Author et al. (2016) have identified all parliamentary requests, which demanded an evaluation in the National Council and the Council of States between 2010 and 2014. Since 2010, between 33 and 45 parliamentary requests were submitted by MPs in order to demand an evaluation. However, only a small number of motions are accepted within the chambers, while almost fifty percent of the postulates are finally submitted to the Federal Council. Table 3 in the Appendix provides an overview of the demanded evaluations.

[8]More details to the cases can be found in Table 4 in the Appendix.

guideline-based interviews (Bailer, 2014).[9] In doing so, I analyzed the text of each parliamentary request, which is available in the database of the parliament (Curia Vista, 2016). The database reveals the full text of the parliamentary request, its author, the date of submission, the responsible government department, and a short justification. The guideline-based interviews with the MPs were conducted during March 2016. The study uses a causal-process observation so as to test the influence of the parliamentary allocation on the strategy of policy evaluations. According to Brady & Collier (2010, 318), causal-process observation is "an insight or piece of data that provides information about context, process, or mechanism, and that contributes distinctive leverage in causal inference". I focus on mechanism causal-process observation, which provides information about whether an intervening event posited by the theory can be observed (Mahoney, 2010, 128-129). The study reconstructs the process of parliamentary requests demanding an evaluation with the help of the interviews and analyses of what factors lead to the specific strategy of the evaluation.

4 Findings

Table 2 presents an overview of the findings of the case studies. The case studies show that the evaluations were mainly used in order to oppose (7) or to obtain information on a policy (4). Only one MP demanded an evaluation in order to support a policy. In order to illustrate the mechanisms of causality behind these variables, the next sections provide detailed information from the case studies.

In total, seven parliamentary requests were submitted by a MP of a legislative committee, which aimed to oppose a policy (Cases 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9). In the parliamentary request "Stalking" (Case 1), a prosecutor called the MP's attention to unavailable possibilities of punishment against stalking. In addition, the MP was dismayed by the stalking accusation against the former Chief of Army. Although he admitted some of the stalking accusation, the charge was dismissed. As a consequence, the MP deeply believed that the existing policy was useless to persecute stalking. "This situation could have been solved with a particular article on stalking, as other countries would know already, e.g. Germany (Case 1 - oral interview).[10] According to her, the legal basis failed to protect victims of stalking. The evaluation should have confirmed

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[9]One interview was conducted per email, since the MP only had limited time resources (Case 3).

[10]Original in German or French, author's own translation (applies for all following quotations).

her information and should have exerted pressure on the Federal Council to take action. The other cases are similar, since the MPs aimed to demonstrate that an existing policy has failed and that one should consider a policy change. The parliamentary request "Lötschberg-Tunnel" demanded an evaluation in order to assess the safety of the tunnel and to oppose the current stage of the tunnel. However, in the MP's opinion it was clear that the report would show that an extension of the tunnel was also necessary due to capacity reasons. In her argumentation of the parliamentary request, she makes clear that the evaluation of the current situation of the Lötschberg Tunnel can only lead to the conclusion that an extension is inevitable. Hence, the MP was not really interested in obtaining information on the tunnel, but rather in seeking ammunition for her policy change, since she opposed the current state of the tunnel. In addition, a parliamentary request can also oppose a policy by trying to make the government aware of a problem. The parliamentary request "Foster Children" demanded the Federal Council to assess the placement of foster children to foster families. Since private companies participate in this market, the MP feared that the well being of the children would be in danger. "My main focus was to persuade the Federal Council to change the regulation on foster children" (Case 6 - oral interview). The administration would have needed to deal with the topic, since they are obliged to answer the questions in the interpellations. In order to write a reply, the public servants would need to read up on the subject of foster children, and recognize that there would be a problem.

While most parliamentary requests aimed to oppose an existing policy by illustrating its failure in the evaluation reports, only one parliamentary request aimed to support a policy (Case 11). The parliamentary request "Prevention Programs" aimed to highlight the relevance of the Federal Prevention Programs Tobacco, Alcohol, and Diet & Exercise, which had been extended by the Federal Council in the current year. In doing so, the request asked about the most positive points of an evaluation that had been conducted on the prevention programs the year before (Balthasar et al., 2011; Von Stokar et al., 2011). The MP aimed to link the positive results to the prevention bill, which was connected to the prevention programs. "I expected some support from the evaluation results with regard to the vote on the prevention bill. Hence, I wanted the Swiss upper chamber to be aware of the good work by the policy" (Case 11 - oral interview). Thus, the MP did not directly demand an evaluation, but wanted to discuss an already existing evaluation report in order to gain support for a similar bill.

Table 2: Overview of Case Studies

Case No.	Parliamentary Request	Title	Back-ground	Trigger	Strategy	Committee Hypothesis 1	Party Group Hypothesis 2
1	Motion (13.3742)	Stalking	Failure	Personal Interest	Opposition	Legislative (Y)	Different (Y)
2	Postulate (12.3673)	Supplementary Benefits	Change	Personal Interest	Information	Oversight (Y)	Different (N)
3	Postulate (11.3626)	Lötschberg-Tunnel	Failure	Interest Group	Opposition	Legislative (Y)	Same (N)
4	Postulate (11.3697)	Regional Policy	Change	Interest Group	Information	Oversight (Y)	Same (N)
5	Interpellation (14.3163)	Axpo	Failure	Personal Interest	Opposition	Legislative (Y)	Different (Y)
6	Interpellation (11.4077)	Foster Children	Failure	Interest Group	Opposition	Legislative (Y)	Same (N)
7	Postulate (13.3903)	New Buildings	Failure	Interest Group	Opposition	Legislative (Y)	Different (Y)
8	Interpellation (13.3270)	Gender Equality	Failure	Interest Group	Opposition	Legislative (Y)	Same (N)
9	Postulate (12.3218)	Doctor Admission	Change	Personal Interest	Opposition	Legislative (Y)	Same (N)
10	Question (10.1124)	Professional Integration	Change	Interest Group	Information	Oversight (Y)	Different (N)
11	Interpellation (12.3498)	Prevention Programmes	Change	Interest Group	Support	Oversight (N)	Different (N)
12	Postulate (13.4062)	Federal ICT-Projects	Failure	Personal Interest	Information	Oversight (Y)	Same (N)

Note: Support for the hypotheses in parentheses in row committee and party group (yes/no)

In addition, four parliamentary requests aimed to collect information about a policy (Cases 2, 4, 10 and 12). In the parliamentary request "supplementary benefits", the MP made it clear that he was not against the supplementary benefits with the social insurances IV and AHV. However, he observed that the costs highly increased after the rearrangement of the fiscal equalization scheme between the Swiss cantons. He assumed that the reason behind this increase could be found in the long-term care insurance. Since he was not entirely sure, he demanded an evaluation in order to obtain information on the reason behind the supplementary benefits. "I hoped that the report would give me and my colleagues an idea about what type of action we should take regarding the supplementary benefits" (Case 2 - oral interview). The parliamentary request "Federal ICT-Projects" aimed to illustrate similar behavior patterns, as the MP knew that the ICT projects were poorly managed, but he was missing the information to demand a policy change, so he wanted to give the Federal Council the possibility to adjust the management of the ICT projects. "I did not want to question the process. My goal was to make the Federal

Council document and monitor the ICT process, so that one can avoid a mismanagement" (Case 12 - oral interview). The parliamentary request "Regional Policy" demanded an evaluation on the effectiveness and implementation of the new regional policy. The evaluation should include non-governmental experts as well as representatives of the mountain regions and should explicitly be addressed to the Federal Assembly. "The introduction of the new regional policy (...) has extensive consequences for the mountain regions, which are difficult to foresee for the relevant authorities and the population " (Case 4 - written request). The MP would aim to find out whether the mountain regions were negatively affected by the new policy and whether one needed to change anything. Since he was a representative of the mountain regions, he wanted to know whether he would need to attempt any new policy, if the policy failed to serve the mountain regions.

The analysis suggests that the committee membership plays a crucial role for the choice of strategy. While MPs of oversight committees tend to ask for evaluations in order to obtain information (Cases 2, 4, 10, 12), legislative committee members demand evaluations in order to oppose an existing policy (Cases 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9). However, the case studies do not provide evidence for the influence of legislative committee members on the strategy to support a policy. In contrast, the case studies show no party group effect. In only three cases (Cases 1, 5, 7), did a MP from another party group than the responsible Federal Councillor aim to oppose a policy, while four parliamentary requests (Cases 3, 6, 8, 9) pursued an opposition of the policy, although the MP and Federal Council were from the same party group. Moreover, the only supportive evaluations were submitted by a MP from another party group. The double cases 5 and 6 display the missing effect of the party group. Although the parliamentary requests were submitted to two different Federal Councillors by the same MP (one from the same party, the other from another party group), they both pursued the same goal to oppose a policy.

5   Discussion

The case studies suggest that the membership in a legislative or oversight committee shapes the MPs evaluation strategy significantly, while the party group of a Federal Councillor does not seem to have an effect. In doing so, the difference between legislative and oversight committee members lies in their use of evaluations. According to the case studies, the MPs from legislative committees mainly interpret an evaluation as means to an end, since their main objective is to

influence the policy agenda in order to appear as a policy advocate. This becomes apparent in the statement of one MP: "The evaluation should have come out so that it confirms the information that I already had" (Case 1 - oral interview). In contrast, all MPs from oversight committees emphasize that they are more aware of evaluations and parliamentary oversight in general due to their membership in an oversight committee. Previous studies have shown that MPs from oversight committees demand evaluations more often (Speer et al., 2015; Author, 2016). Evaluations were important instruments for parliamentary oversight and they would be necessary to fulfill their oversight function. One MP highlighted that evaluations are elementary to understand the processes of a policy, since the administration has to provide information on the implementation of it. As a consequence, they position themselves in a different way. One MP explained that he cannot distinguish himself with issues from parliamentary oversight, but he can do so more generally as a MP who controls the government. On the contrary, MPs from legislative committees tend to have a stronger focus on the policy agenda. Although those MPs argued that parliamentary oversight is important, they admitted to not being very aware of the function and relinquish these tasks to the specific committees. If they demand evaluations, they want to influence the political agenda. This finding partly confirms the study of Zwaan et al. (2016, 15), who argues that MPs of the European Parliament demand evaluations for an ex ante agenda-setting outlook by asking about information on actions that must be taken.

In contrast to the committee membership, the membership in a specific party group does not influence the evaluation strategy. During the interviews, almost all MPs emphasized that the party membership of the responsible government member would not play a role for the submission of the request. One MP stated that the own Federal Councillors were not under preservation order. This would especially be the case for the Council of the States where the party orientation would be less important than in the National Council. Though, some MPs argued that the communication between the MP and the Federal Councillor would be easier. A MP stated that if the Federal Councillor had been from her party, the person might have informed her about the limited acceptance chances within the Federal Council. From time to time, Federal Councillors call the MP's attention to specific issues, so that they have the possibility to become active. However, these MPs must not necessarily belong to the same party, as one MP explained. In addition, several MPs emphasized that the Federal Council is a collective board in which the decisions are taken together with the other members. Another

very important point is the Federal Councillor's agenda. Even if the Federal Councillor is from the same party, a parliamentary request could potentially interfere with the coherent strategy of the Federal Councillor.

The missing influence of the party group membership might be explained by several factors. On the one hand, an evaluation is often perceived by MPs as something very technical, which makes it less attractive for party ideological strategy. One MP argued that from time to time there are parliamentary requests, which aim to oppose a policy in order to harm the political opponent. However, the process of an evaluation would be too complicated to realize that. Evaluations should be neutral, as they are independently conducted and provide information for specific questions. As a consequence, one MP argued that if he had to harm the other parties, he would have done it more straightforwardly. On the other hand, the Swiss political system is characterized by a strong consensual democracy, which integrates all major parties in the government and makes oppositional behavior in the parliament unusual (Lijphart, 2012). Moreover, the national parties are almost absent during the national election campaigns. Since parties in Switzerland are mainly a loose confederation of cantonal parties, the federal party is less important for the reelection of an individual MP (W. Linder, 2012, 83-85).[11] Hence, MPs have fewer incentives to please the own national party.

Although the case studies do not provide evidence for an influence of a party group, they still illustrate how MPs react to electoral vulnerability with parliamentary requests. First and most important, the committee membership provides an opportunity for MPs to present themselves in a specific role to their constituency. Second, in seven of twelve presented cases, an interest group was the trigger behind the parliamentary request, which demanded an evaluation. Switzerland has a strong reputation for the importance of interest groups, since the central state is underdeveloped and the national parties are weak due to limited resources. In contrast, interest groups are well equipped and also institutionally recognized by public authorities (Gava et al., 2015, 2). According to Giger & Klüver (2016), some types of interest groups even influence the link between MPs and their voters. Since interest groups are so powerful, they are also important for MPs in order to get re-elected. Therefore, MPs seek their support when they submit parliamentary requests. In case 4 "Regional Policy" and case 10 "Professional Integration", interest groups played an important role. Both MPs had been approached by interest groups, which reported

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[11]However, Bochsler et al. (2016) argues that Switzerland shows a trend towards a stronger nationalization of the party system.

that a policy had been changed and that some part of society might be disadvantaged. Since the effects of the policy were uncertain, the MPs demanded an evaluation in order to obtain more precise information.

However, this study has some limitations. First and most important, since the analysis is based on a comparative case study with small n, the external validity has to be discussed (Yin, 2014, 48-49). Still, the case selection provided a solid basis in order to assume that the findings are generalizable beyond this study. Second, one has to consider that the least likely case strategy finds its empirical constraints regarding the influence of the party group. While the case studies suggest that the membership in a party group does not determine the strategy of a policy evaluation, there is also the possibility that the characteristics of the Swiss political system are simply too weak to show an effect. On the one hand, Bailer & Bütikofer (2015) show that the power of parliamentary groups is still rather limited. On the other hand, most Swiss MPs are still characterized as semi-professional and pursue an occupation or activity outside of their parliamentary mandate (Bütikofer 2014; Author et al. 2016). This means that MPs are relatively independent, which might lead to individual decisions regarding the evaluation demand. Last, the study did not take timing into account, which might have a strong influence on the MPs motivation for reelection (Fujimura, 2016). Parliamentary requests at the end of the legislative term might be more strongly affected by electoral campaigning compared to those in the beginning. Still, the case studies do not provide any evidence that time was an issue, which attenuates the argument that MPs seek reelection with parliamentary requests. However, several interviewed MPs stated that it is almost impossible to predict when the request is discussed with the parliamentary arena.

6 Conclusion

Policy evaluations are an important tool for the legislative and oversight function of MPs (Lees, 1977; Weiss, 1989). This article has investigated which strategies MPs pursue with evaluations by looking at twelve parliamentary requests at the Swiss Federal Assembly between 2010 and 2014. The analysis found that MPs from legislative committees demand evaluations in order to oppose a policy, while MPs from oversight committees request evaluations to obtain information on policies. In contrast, the evaluation strategy is not dependent on the party membership of the MP, which submits the parliamentary request, and the Federal Councillor, who is responsible

for responding to it. The findings suggest that parliamentary requests are elementary for MPs in order to appeal to their constituency and to some extent to their party by adopting legislative roles. Depending on the focus within parliament, the MPs choose different strategies to promote themselves in the public. According to the cases, the appeal to the voters is more important for MPs than for their own party. These findings provide new insights in how electoral vulnerability shapes legislative behavior.

This study has made important contributions to research on evaluation. In general, literature on research on evaluation has mainly dealt with the use of evaluations and has neglected the origins of evaluation up to now (Weiss, 1998; Kirkhart, 2000; Patton, 2008; Johnson et al., 2009). Moreover, scholars have completely left the parliament as a demander of evaluations out of the discussion, although parliamentarians are important stakeholders of evaluations. This article builds on the findings of previous research showing that parliaments frequently demand evaluation reports (Speer et al., 2015; Author, 2016; Zwaan et al. 2016). In addition, it shows that MPs pursue different strategies with evaluation. Mark & Henry (2004) discuss the outcomes of evaluation influences. In doing so, they present a schematic theory of evaluation influence building on the traditional understanding of the evaluation's role in the service of social betterment. This study is able to confirm that evaluations are used for cognitive (e.g. agenda setting), and behavioral outcomes (e.g. policy adoption) that might lead to social betterment, as well as showing that MPs also use evaluations in order to achieve personal goals, for instance being reelected. Hence, this study shows that evaluation use must not be restricted to the use of findings (Alkin & King, 2016).

This finding results in a different understanding of evaluation use. Weiss (1999, 477) has argued that evaluators often find it hard to understand why policy makers - including MPs - do not transfer evaluation results directly to the legislation. This study provides an answer to this question regarding the parliamentary arena. Evaluation is not only a tool to learn about a policy, but also to control how a policy becomes implemented. Since evaluations help MPs to oversee the government, they contribute to democracy by strengthening the parliament in their oversight function. In order to make evaluations more relevant for parliaments, evaluators should emphasize the aspect of accountability of an evaluation. Even if parliaments rarely use evaluations for evidence-based policy making, they still rely on them. MPs demand evaluations in order to confirm their opinion or in order to obtain information for the assessment of a policy.

Hence, MPs use the evaluation as an instrument for their purposes rather than making use of the actual findings from the evaluation report. I hope that this understanding of how MPs use evaluations will take roots amongst scholars of research on evaluation.

Appendix

Table 3: Submitted Parliamentary Requests for Evaluations, 2010-2014 (Author et al. 2016)

Parliamentary Request	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014*
Motion	6(1)	7(1)	0(0)	2(0)	3(0)
Postulate	6(3)	8(4)	12(6)	7(3)	4(1)
Interpellation	27	15	27	24	19
Question	3	4	6	3	2
Total	42	33	45	36	28

Note: 2014 covers the submitted parliamentary requests until June 20, 2014. Number of accepted motions and postulates in parentheses. Information provided for the National Council and the Council of States.

Table 4: Detailed Information about the Selected Cases

Case No.	MP	Request	Title	Responsible Department	Committee	Accepted
1	Doris Fiala, FDP	Motion (13.3742)	Stalking-Thema nicht auf die lange Bank schieben	EJPD (Sommaruga, SP)	Legislative	No
2	Alex Kuprecht, SVP	Postulate (12.3673)	Ergänzungsleistungen zu AHV und IV. Perspektiven 2020	EDI (Berset, SP)	Oversight	Yes
3	Viola Amherd, CVP	Postulate (11.3626)	Folgerungen aus dem Brand im Simplontunnel für den Lötschberg-Basistunnel	UVEK (Leuthard, CVP)	Legislative	No
4	Erich von Siebenthal, SVP	Postulate (11.3697)	Evaluation der neuen Regionalpolitik	EVD (Leuthard, CVP)	Oversight	Yes
5	Jacqueline Fehr, SP	Interpellation (14.3163)	Wird die Axpo zum nächsten Fall Swissair oder UBS?	UVEK (Leuthard, CVP)	Legislative	-
6	Jacqueline Fehr, SP	Interpellation (11.4077)	Stopp der Geschäftemacherei mit Pflegekindern	EJPD (Sommaruga, SP)	Legislative	-
7	Alec von Graffenried, GPS	Postulat (13.3903)	Sind Ersatzneubauten energetisch besser als Gebäudesanierungen?	UVEK (Leuthard, CVP)	Legislative	No
8	Alec von Graffenried, GPS	Interpellation (13.3270)	Zeitgemässer Geist für das Gleichstellungsgesetz?	EJPD (Sommaruga, SP)	Legislative	-
9	Stéphane Rossini, SP	Postulat (12.3218)	Auslaufen des Zulassungsstopps für Ärztinnen und Ärzte. Evaluation der Folgen	EDI (Berset, SP)	Legislative	Yes
10	Stéphane Rossini, SP	Question (10.1124)	Kredit für die berufliche Integration in der Bundesverwaltung	EFD (Widmer-Schlumpf, BDP)	Oversight	-
11	Joachim Eder, FDP	Interpellation (12.3498)	Nationale Präventionsprogramme Tabak, Alkohol & Ernährung und Bewegung	EDI (Berset, SP)	Oversight	-
12	Joachim Eder, FDP	Postulat (13.4062)	IT-Projekte des Bundes. Wie weiter?	EFD (Widmer-Schlumpf, BDP)	Oversight	Yes

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