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By invitation only: on why do politicians bring interest groups into committees

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ABSTRACT

In democratic politics, the participation of interest groups in policymaking is commonly understood as a secluded affair. Why would interest groups and policymakers make public an otherwise private affair? I argue that legislators invite interest groups to participate in the legislative process to raise the salience of issues they "own". Legislators with gatekeeping authority, I show, bring interest groups into committees when their party benefits from raising public attention. Interest groups, on their part, are given preferential access to finetune laws that directly affect them. Extensions of the model show that participation increases before an election and declines after, with issue salience providing electoral benefits rather than policy ones. I test my argument using an original dataset of 4902 instances of interest group participation in committee meetings in the Ecuadorian Congress between 1988 and 2018, as well as over 30 interviews to interest group representatives, legislators, and congressional staff.

KEYWORDS Legislature; interest groups; committee; issue salience; gatekeepers

1. Introduction

The standard models of interest politics that developed with private lobbying in mind place policymakers as intermediaries between interest groups and the policy-creation process. In these models, the strategic interaction between interest groups and legislators is one step removed from the intricacies of legislative politics, the preferences of fellow legislators, and perhaps most importantly, the judgment of voters. Be it a quid pro quo exchange (Austen-Smith, 1996), the transmission of information (Grossman & Helpman, 2001), or the support of natural policy allies (Hall & Deardorff, 2006), nothing in the process needs to be made public.¹ In spite of the strong logic in support of private interactions, legislators oftentimes invite interest groups to participate and publicly express their preferences. Companies, unions, and NGOs are regularly called to public forums in committees in the European Union (Bouwen, 2004; Helboe Pedersen et al., 2015); asked

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to participate in public committee hearings in the United States Congress (Hojnacki & Kimball, 1999); and invited by committee chairs in Ecuador to comment on the details of bills under consideration. Making lobbying public changes the motivations and strategic decisions of legislators, and raises a fundamental question: Why would interest groups and policymakers make public an otherwise private affair?

To answer this question, I propose an alternative model of legislative activity and lobbying that departs from models that either emphasise the role of the party (Cox & McCubbins, 2007) or the role of information (Krehbiel, 2010). In this new framework, lawmakers benefit from the strengths of the party and the organisation of the legislature precisely by strategically disseminating information. The main argument is that legislators use the public participation of interest groups in the legislative process to raise the media salience of issues they “own.” At the heart of this strategy is the maximisation of electoral benefits for the party: parties gain when they raise the salience of “owned” issues and parties can raise the salience of “owned” issues by inviting interest groups to participate in legislative debates. This participation is by invitation only, a prerogative exercised by legislators with gatekeeping authority (e.g. committee chairs) in the sequential organisation of most legislatures (Cox & McCubbins, 2005). By taking advantage of this prerogative, gatekeepers disseminate information (i.e. raise the salience of an issue) and obtain benefits for the party as a whole from the increased salience.

Interest groups do not engage in this behaviour selflessly. Interest groups gain from this public participation: they are, among other things, granted preferential access to finetune laws that directly affect them, allowing them to suggest modifications. Interest groups are just as interested in the marginal changes to legislation, as much as they are in pursuing sweeping changes. Given the negative agenda-setting power of majority parties and blocs (Cox & McCubbins, 2005), their capacity to stop legislation from reaching the floor, and the pervasiveness with which parties exercise this power, interest groups are usually better off pushing for specific modifications to a law through committee rather than trying to overhaul the status quo.

Most theories on interest group participation focus on the policy goals associated with the exchange between lobbyists and politicians. This research complements the conventional understanding of lobbying where there is no external audience: when lobbying takes place in private e.g. Grossman and Helpman (2001), or when public pressure is the priority, leading to an external-facing strategy e.g. Kollman (1998). In this new framework, the role of interest groups relies heavily on the electoral goals of the party, and the capacity the party has to achieve them through their control of strategic positions in the legislature. This is not to say that interest groups solely work as amplifiers for the party—rather, this framework provides an account of a

rarely studied, yet common enough form of lobbying, which complements other private and many times unobserved means. Unlike our current understanding of the policy-creation process, this approach highlights the role of party coordination and electoral goals to explain interest group participation and the strategic use of their presence within the legislature. Instead of denying the possible policy goals that come from this exchange, I emphasise the importance of the electoral goals.

In the framework I propose, parties coordinate to maximise potential benefits when committee chairs invite interest groups to committees. Much like in cartel theory, parties take advantage of the prerogatives granted to them by the sequential organisation of the legislature. Yet, rather than solely thinking about the effect bills will have on the way party members vote, gatekeepers first rely on interest group participation to increase the media salience of bill initiatives on issues they own. The strategy is in itself a signal to the party, as well as a signal to the voters. To the party, it allows them to make an issue more salient, increasing public and institutional awareness of the legislation. To the voters, it serves as a reminder, or prompt, of who (i.e. which party) is handling the issue. Instead of relying on specialised committees to inform the plenary, *à la* (Krehbiel, 2010), gatekeepers rely on interest groups to raise the salience of an issue, thus informing the party that they can now bank on the political investment of supporting a bill.

To assess this argument, I examine when committee chairs in the Ecuadorian Congress strategically invite interest groups to participate in committee debates. I construct an original dataset of 838 interest groups and 4,902 instances of interest group participation in committee meetings between 1988 and 2018. I draw upon over 30 semi-structured interviews with a range of actors participating in the policy-creation process in Ecuador, including interest group representatives and committee chairs. The results suggest that chairs will strategically invite more interest groups to participate in committees when debating topics the party owns. Extensions of the model show that invited participation increases before an election and declines after an election, with interest group participation providing electoral benefits rather than policy ones.

This work speaks to the participation of interest groups in committees in the Ecuadorian Congress, and it provides a blueprint for exploring similar dynamics across other legislatures. Ecuador is a helpful case to address the interaction between legislators and interest groups. Similar to other legislatures, the organisational structure of the Ecuadorian Congress grants legislators with gatekeeping prerogatives, including the decision to invite, or not, interest groups to comment on bills.² However, Ecuadorian politics have been characterised by weak parties and a fragmented party system. While there is evidence of party coordination within the Ecuadorian

Congress (Gómez Vidal & Vera, 2021), legislators have many personalistic incentives guiding their behaviour (Basabe-Serrano, 2018). Unlike electoral systems that stimulate party loyalties (e.g. closed-list systems) and institutional arrangements that foster party cohesion (e.g. parliamentary systems), the Ecuadorian case is an open-list presidential system where legislative coordination has been more frequent *across* party lines,³ rather than *within* the party (Acosta, 2009). However, even in this hard case, we find evidence of party coordination, at least when it comes to coordinating among party members the invitation of interest groups into committees. We would expect that in legislatures where there are greater incentives for party cohesion or better mechanisms to maintain party discipline, legislative gatekeepers will be more inclined to invite interest group when it benefits the party.

Additionally, the electoral and institutional changes in the period studied offer a unique opportunity to explain variation in patterns of legislative cooperation and interest group participation. First, immediate reelection was allowed for the first time in 1996. These mechanisms gave party leaders more control over members, and an important tool to carry out coordinated action (Acosta, 2009). Second, the new Constitution adopted in 2008 marked a shift from a fragmented party system to a decade-long single-majority government led by then-President Rafael Correa and the Alianza País party. This change led to greater legislative coordination and stronger agenda-setting powers for the majoritarian party (De la Torre, 2018; Polga-Hecimovich, 2019). I take advantage of the transformations of the Ecuadorian political landscape to explore the importance of party coordination on interest group participation. As expected, I find evidence suggesting that greater party coordination in Ecuador after the electoral reform and the adoption of the new Constitution increased the importance of issue ownership as a determinant of interest group invitations to committees.

The organisation of this paper is as follows: I review the literature on issue salience, and its relation to interest group participation in congressional committees. I then offer an overview of gatekeeping in the legislative process, specifically considering how committee chairs use their authority in committee hearings to invite interest groups. I also detail the reciprocal motivations of interest group participation. Next, I provide the Ecuadorian political and institutional context in which the theory is tested. I test the empirical implications of my theory in sections five and six by looking at interest group participation in the Ecuadorian Congress.

2. Issue salience and interest group participation

Parties have many incentives to talk about the issues they own. According to issue ownership theory (Petrocik, 1996), parties hold an advantage on certain

issues. The issues a party “owns” are the policy areas in which their policy-making and handling of the issue are highly rated by voters. Since parties benefit when the issue they own gets the spotlight in the political discourse, parties and their members prime owned issues, using all available venues to do so, from press releases (Grimmer, 2010) to the plenary floor (Pardos-Prado & Sagarzazu, 2016).⁴

Interest group participation in committee debates can yield similar results. In Ecuador, for example, interest groups often bring media outlets to the committee debates or media outlets are attracted by particularly crowded debates. Committee members will take advantage of the situation to gain air time. While committee debates should be an exposition of information and political exchange, legislators will often address the media rather than their interlocutors. Similar media presence has been reported in the U.S. (Sinclair, 1986) and other legislatures (Kubala, 2011).

The effect of issue salience is a two-way street. Raising the salience of an issue can be a strategy employed by interest groups to force legislators to address an issue. Interest groups often use media attention strategically to raise the salience of issues. Interest groups use coverage by mass media as an “outside strategy” to influence the political debate (Kollman, 1998; Trevor Thrall, 2006); they raise the salience of issue through direct democracy initiative (Smith & Tolbert, 2007; Tolbert et al., 2009); and air issue-advocacy ads, oftentimes more credible than those aired by candidates (Groenendyk & Valentino, 2002), all of which are directed towards the constituency taking cues from interest groups, as well as from the public at large.

As a result, both legislators and interest groups have an incentive, albeit different, to make public an otherwise private affair, such as lobbying. For interest groups, the rise of issue salience can pressure legislators in the spotlight to act on legislation. It serves as an accountability mechanism by elevating the cost of legislators reneging on their promises.⁵ For legislators, one of the main incentives is the opportunity to raise the (media) salience of issues the party owns. Since legislators gain collectively from the party’s reputation, legislators will strategically invite interest groups to participate in committee debates to raise the salience of owned issues. Having the prerogative to decide when interest groups are invited grants parties a political benefit, and that prerogative often falls on the legislators with gatekeeping authority. Parties become “gatekeepers of influence”, inviting interest groups that bring attention to the issues that they have an advantage, either to attack groups or policies they want to defeat, or to support policies they want to put forward.

In the following sections, I expand on the role of legislative gatekeepers in the participation of interest groups in the policy-creation process. Next, I turn to the interest groups’ underlying reasons to accept these invitations.

2.1. Delegating gatekeeping to party authorities

Legislators work and vote within the confines of a political and institutional environment. Cox and McCubbins (2007, 2005) argue that parties act as cartels that organise the legislature for partisan benefits. These legislative cartels use procedural powers to gain benefits for their party members. To do so, legislators take advantage of the gatekeeping authority bestowed upon committee chairs and prevent bill initiatives that divide the party from reaching the plenary floor. While the decentralised authority of committee chairs can result in divisive legislation that is not supported by all senior members of the party, there are various instruments to prevent defection from the partisan agenda. In exchange for loyalty, party leaders may offer side payments to members in the form of distributive benefits or favourable committee assignments (Cox & McCubbins, 2007; Frisch & Kelly, 2006). Some institutional arrangements, like the Ecuadorian Congress, grant party leaders the capacity to allocate committee chairs directly, allowing them to preemptively occupy those seats with politicians loyal to the party. In other cases, “safety valves” can be placed to filter unwanted bills. In Argentina, legislation that is reported from committees is subject to review in pre-floor party meetings, before they can be scheduled for a plenary vote by the Chamber Directorate (Calvo & Sagarzazu, 2011).

In countries where legislative committees play an important role in legislative success, the committee chairs have extensive control over the scheduling of the legislation being debated within.⁶ Furthermore, the prerogatives of committee chairs often include the authority to invite external participants of the committee. Common examples include invitations to closed advisory committees (e.g. Balla & Wright, 2001; Binderkrantz & Christiansen, 2015; Fraussen et al., 2015; Rasmussen & Gross, 2015) or to committee hearings (e.g. Helboe Pedersen et al., 2015; Leyden, 1995).⁷ Interest group participation in committee debates in the Ecuadorian Congress falls closer to the latter, even though the details of how gatekeeping authority is exercised can vary.⁸

Gatekeepers control the flow of legislation from committees, as much as they open and close the gates of participation in committees. Committee chairs are the gatekeepers of interest group participation. As suggested in the previous section, opening the gates to interest groups raises the salience of issues, and committee chairs will use this strategically to favour the party.⁹ Next, I turn to the interest groups’ underlying reason to accept these invitations.

2.2. Accepting the invitation: interest groups and the micro-management of policy

Scholars have conceptualised lobbying in three distinct, though not necessarily exclusionary, ways: as a form of exchange, as a transmission of

information, and as a legislative subsidy. Exchange theory suggests that policymakers and lobbyists engage in an implicit trade or *quid pro quo*, often vote-buying through campaign contributions (Austen-Smith, 1996). Theories on lobbying by the transmission of information understand the role of interest groups as purveyors of information (Grossman & Helpman, 2001), revealing the state of the world and the effect of policy on the status quo as a means of persuasion (Austen-Smith & Wright, 1994; Hansen, 1991). Rather than a mechanism to change legislators' preferences over policies, legislative subsidy theory argues that interest groups "assist natural allies in achieving their own, coincident objectives" (Hall & Deardorff, 2006).

Irrespective of the mechanism driving lobbying, interest groups are just as interested in the marginal gains of specific modifications to policy as they are in pursuing sweeping changes to legislation. The former will often be a more effective strategy since incremental changes in policy are more common than substantial ones (Baumgartner et al., 2009; True et al., 1999). In legislative politics, the devil is in the details. Interest groups seek to manage the "fine print" of policy, even when they have open and broad positions about the state of policy. Interest groups are aware of the complexities of the policy-creation process and the rigidity of the status quo, and hedge their investments by pushing for changes in articles or targeted additions to a legislative initiative. Legislative success is conditional on institutional characteristics and political interactions that are difficult to sway. As previously suggested, negative agenda-setting power is the main driver of legislative success in legislatures where gatekeepers have agenda-setting prerogatives. Even if interest groups have the resources and the political acumen to move the status quo significantly, this push would come before a policy is introduced into the legislature, and not once it has already entered the legislature. Given the characteristics of legislatures and party cartels within legislatures, the rare bill initiatives leaving committees are likely to change the status quo, and at this point, interest groups are better off trying to scrape as much as they can, especially at the margins.

It is within this context that the exchange is realised: interest groups participate in legislative committees and raise the salience of the issues discussed, while legislators allow interest groups to propose marginal changes to legislation. This is the crux of public lobbying. And while this is enough incentive for interest groups to actively seek access to debates, there are additional positive externalities to participation in committees. First, and most relevant to the theory, as described by an interest group representative in Ecuador, public pressure "gets [legislators] into action."¹⁰ Previously, I argued that politicians invite interest groups to raise the salience of an issue. Yet, the effect of issue salience is a two-way street. Raising the salience of an issue can also be a strategy employed by interest groups to force legislators to address it. Interest groups often bring media outlets to committee

debates or use their participation in committee debates to bolster their discourse in the media.¹¹ They also use their ability to “access” the policy-creation process to advertise to their fee-paying members and to the broader constituency that takes policy (Binderkrantz & Christiansen, 2015) and electoral (Anzia, 2011) cues from them. Thus, the strategy of using invitations to committees to raise salience is one embraced by both interest groups and legislators.¹²

Second, interest groups gain in the organisational strength. Their presence in the policy-creation space is a tangible representation of access, something interest groups offer to their fee-paying members. It also reveals their technical capacity and their policy position to all committee members and creates possible links for the future. Notice that “permanence” is not a quality of the Latin American legislator, where the turnover of legislative candidates is high (Samuels, 2002), so networks between politicians and interest groups need to be constantly renewed. This suggests that interest groups might have an incentive to attend committee debates even when they know they face opposition by the members of the committee or when the odds of a positive outcome (for a given interest group) are low.¹³

3. Determinants of interest groups participation in the ecuadorian congress

When will committee chairs invite interest group to committees? Previously, I argued that legislators use the public participation of interest groups in the legislative process to raise issue salience. Committee chairs, legislators endowed with gatekeeping and agenda-setting prerogatives, will open the gates to committees when a bill addresses issues the party owns and will limit participation in the committees when the bill addresses an issue the party does not own. Since parties gain electorally from the increased salience of owned issues, they have an incentive to coordinate, through members in key positions, strategies that maximise the returns from interest group participation. From our theoretical framework, we expect committee chairs to (1) be strategic about invitations; (2) invite more interest groups to participate in debates of issues the party owns; and (3) invite more interest groups to participate when the party can gain more (electorally) from raising issue salience.

Committee chairs in the Ecuadorian Congress¹⁴ are not only able to regulate the flow of legislation, but they decide who is invited to participate in the discussions of a bill. Chairs control the schedule of committee meetings and the order during the meetings. It is often the case that during a legislative period there are more bills entering the committees than time to debate them. Legislators and legislative staff confirmed that chairs (strategically) change the order the bills are debated, and can effectively block bills from

being debated at all.¹⁵ These accounts are corroborated by the data. There are more bills approved by the *Comisión Administrativa Legislativa* (CAL) than bills exiting from committees to the floor.¹⁶ Similarly, chairs also control who participates in committee debates. Constitutionally, any legislator can invite an interest group to participate in committee debates, and every citizen has the right to participate in committee debates. Further, each committee must hold *socialización* forums where bill initiatives are discussed with interested parties. While chairs have a legal obligation to grant interest groups time in committees, in practice, this is not always the case. By changing the order of the day, committee chairs can postpone participation of interests groups until time runs out. Interviews with legislative staff confirm that this is common practice,¹⁷ though exactly how common a practice, it is hard to know. Given the scheduling powers of chairs, there are enough instances where they are capable of limiting access to debates. Even the *socialización* forums are controlled spaces managed by the office of the committee chair. While the lists of possible forums are compiled by a technical team from the Ecuadorian Congress, committee chairs have to give their final approval.¹⁸ Ultimately, the only valid invitation is the one the committee chair offers.

Likewise, the allocation of committee posts and chairmanship is a politically negotiated process led by the larger legislative blocs.¹⁹ Chairs are usually reserved for senior party members, who are less likely to dissent and more likely to favour the party line. Parties in the Ecuadorian Congress were not oblivious to the strategical importance of these posts, which explains the characteristics of the average chair: a four-year national legislator (as opposed to a two-year state legislator) from the majority/plurality party with a longer tenure in the legislature (that for many year had non-consecutive terms). The party leadership is able to preemptively avoid individualistic behaviour by allocating more loyal members to strategic posts.

Having established how the sequential organisation of the Ecuadorian Congress and the constraints for participation meet the main conditions of the theoretical framework, I can now specify a set of testable hypotheses regarding the gatekeeper's strategic considerations to open or not the gates. I propose that chairs invite interest groups to participate in committees to enhance issue salience. First, we should expect for these invitations to be determined by issue ownership. Second, and most importantly, we expect that in situations when issue salience is more impactful, chairs will be more likely to open the gates of committees to interest groups. The first hypothesis is straightforward:

Hypothesis 1: Chairs will invite more interest groups to participate in committees when the party owns the issue of the bill.

Even though the procedural norms in the Ecuadorian Congress have remained fairly the same, including those regarding the participation of interest groups in committees, the 2008 Constitutional reform in Ecuador shifted the fragmented party system to a decade-long single-majority government party (i.e. Alianza País). The new Constitution strengthened the executive, represented at the time by Rafael Correa, a political outsider with populist appeal and high approval that allowed him to gain the majority in Congress (Conaghan & De la Torre, 2008). The popular support and legislative control of the government party led to greater legislative coordination and discipline within party ranks (De la Torre, 2018; Polga-Hecimovich, 2019). This variation in the incentives to coordinate, rather than to defect from the party line or seek individualistic rewards, should affect how chairs invite interest groups to committees. Thus, an extension to Hypothesis 1 is

Hypothesis 1b: The effect of Hypothesis 1 should be more pronounced after the 2008 Constitutional reforms.

Inviting more interest groups to committees could be motivated by vote-seeking via saliency, as argued in this paper, or as a policy-seeking strategy.²⁰ To give further credence to the former, we would expect policymakers to be particularly generous with the access they grant to interest groups before an election. After all, parties maximise their gains from raising the salience of an owned issue during campaigns. It is during political campaigns that politicians are more interested in raising the salience of the issues they own (Bélanger & Meguid, 2008). Since reelection trumps legislative success (Cox & McCubbins, 2005), we should also expect committee chairs to care less about the position of the interest groups, and more about the amount of participation (that raises salience). Campaigns bring the pluralist out of legislators. This can be linked to what was previously said about the motivations for committee chairs to invite opposing interest groups. Before elections, chairs have a dual interest to invite contrasting positions: to publicly antagonise opposition groups and gain support from their own constituency or to approach opposition groups in order to win over undecided voters.

Hypothesis 2: Before elections, chairs will invite more interest groups to participate in committees where their party owns the issue than after elections.

In Ecuador, however, immediate reelection was prohibited until 1996. This reform, combined with other mechanisms in the leaders' toolkit (e.g. promote or block legislative initiatives of party members, the allocation of committee assignments, the distribution of legislative staff and other resources), gave party leaders more power to control and coordinate their members (Acosta, 2009). It follows that

Hypothesis 2b: The effect of Hypothesis 2 should be more pronounced after the 1996 electoral reforms.

In the following section, I provide additional context to the institutional and political environment in Ecuador. In particular, I detail why Ecuador is a “hard case,” a political system where politicians have an incentive to value individualistic behaviour over party coordination.

4. Invitations in context

Even though the rules governing the sequential organisation of legislatures depend on the institutional characteristics of each legislature, the Ecuadorian Congress is by no means an outlier in its norms, organisation, and procedures. Similar to many legislatures in the world, the Ecuadorian Congress is divided across legislative committees and endows committee chairs with gatekeeping authority. The gatekeeping authority of committee chairs in Ecuador allows them to (selectively) invite interest groups to participate in committee debates, effectively granting them access to the policy creation process. The division into committees and the power endowed to the chairs are similar across Latin America (Calvo, 2014; Saiegh, 2005), the United States (Hojnacki & Kimball, 1999), and Europe (Bouwen, 2004). The sequential organisation of the legislatures and the capacity to control the flow of legislation *and* participation is not endemic to Ecuador, and has been studied in similar contexts—e.g. the U.S. Congress (Balla & Wright, 2001; Mahoney & Baumgartner, 2014).

Despite the organisational and procedural similarities between the Ecuadorian Congress and other legislatures, Ecuadorian political parties are among the weakest in Latin America (Freidenberg, 2006), and some merely serve as electoral platforms for party leaders rather than as programmatic organisations (Acosta, 2009; Mainwaring & Torcal, 2006; Sanchez, 2009). Furthermore, Mustillo and Polga-Hecimovich (2020) find evidence that the Ecuadorian electoral system prioritises individual reputation-building over party ones. These characteristics result in party leaders having few tools to coordinate and control their members (Acosta, 2009) and consequently a large presence of particularistic legislation (Basabe-Serrano, 2018). Thus, Ecuador is a “hard case,” a political system where politicians have more incentives for individualistic behaviour than for party coordination.²¹ The correlation between interest group invitations and party coordination under these conditions would suggest that in other polities, with stronger party systems and more incentives for party coordination, this process might be more prevalent.

Finally, as suggested in the previous section, the institutional reforms in the political history of Ecuador created variation in the incentives parties have to

coordinate. Empirically, we can take advantage of this variation to estimate the extent to which party coordination, in particular coordination around issue ownership, explains the participation of interest groups in committees.

5. Data and empirical strategy

I examine the determinants for invitations to committees by looking at interest group participation in committee meetings in all the legislative periods in the Ecuadorian Congress from 1988 to 2018. Data on bill initiatives provide information on sponsors and cosponsor, party affiliation, the sequential process the bill followed, and where it died (or did not). This original dataset was constructed from data provided by the *Archivo-Biblioteca* of the Ecuadorian Congress and includes the 7278 bills introduced by legislators from 1988 to 2018. The dataset also contains 838 unique interest groups and 4902 instances of interest group participation in committee meetings. The interest groups represent various industries: labour (e.g. unions), commerce (e.g. chambers of commerce), indigenous groups, social movements, student associations, academia, etc.²²

The unit of analysis for all models is the bill initiative. The main outcome of interest is a measure of the number of interest groups participating in the committee debate of a bill initiative. Even if an interest group participates more than once in the same bill initiative, its presence is only counted once. Since interest group participation can only happen once a bill reaches committee, only bill initiatives that reached committees are included, whether interest groups participated or not. In total, 2,394 bills reached committee. [Figure 1](#) shows the distribution of the number of interest groups participating in committee debates. Note that before 2008, nearly half of the bills had no interest groups participation, something that changes after the 2008 Constitution came into effect.

Measuring issue ownership in Ecuador is not straightforward, as there is no established way of determining which issues are owned by which party. In Europe and the U.S., there are detailed surveys that ask respondents which party is most competent at dealing with a series of issues (Green, 2011; Sides, 2006; Wagner & Meyer, 2014). Such surveys are not available (or publicly available) for Ecuador. I use an alternative approach to estimate issue ownership.

Since we are interested in party behaviour and their reaction to voter perceptions of them, focusing on their attention to issues can serve as a proxy to ownership, assuming that parties will strategically focus on the topics they own.²³ The literature has shown that political parties strategically focus on issues they own (Busemeyer et al., 2013; Green & Hobolt, 2008; Guinaudeau & Persico, 2014; Petrocik, 1996; Sides, 2006; Wagner & Meyer, 2014). Various researchers²⁴ argue that parties devote most attention to issues

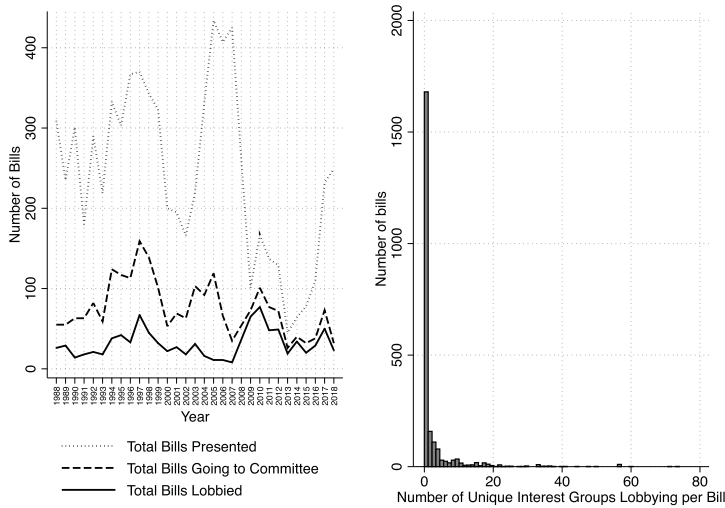


Figure 1. Interest Group Participation in Committees, 1988–2018. Participation of interest groups in committee meetings, from 1988 to 2018. Panel on the left shows at least one participant in committee debates. Panel on the right shows the distribution of the number of interest groups participating in committee debates.

they have ownership over and are perceived as such by the voters at large. Note, however, that these assumptions can also be problematic. Tapping solely into a party’s “history of attention” does not capture their competence to deal with issues—an important component of issue ownership theory.

Issue ownership depends on the social basis of a party, as well as a party’s historical reputation for handling certain issues (Budge & Farlie, 1983; Petrocik, 1996; Petrocik et al., 2003). I assume that parties will focus most of their legislative efforts in issues they own and construct an issue ownership ranking based on the likelihood of presenting a bill initiative on specific topics.²⁵ Ranking the topics assumes that there is the same difference between the attention placed on the first topic and the attention placed on the second topic, and the difference between the attention placed on the second topic and the third topic. This is not necessarily the case. For example, the MPD (*Movimiento Popular Democrático*), the electoral wing of the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Ecuador and a party associated with worker unions, focused 24 per cent of their attention on social security and labour, 12 per cent of their attention on education, 8 per cent of their attention on taxes, and so on. Indeed, this aligns with what we would expect from issue ownership theory. I estimated the models using the proportions, rather than the ranking, and all the conclusions from the models are maintained. In fact, many effects are amplified. Yet, in the main models, I report the more conservative measure.

5.1. Additional variables and controls

We are interested in the conditional effect of elections on interest group participation. Elections should increase the importance of raising the salience of issues owned. I use a dummy variable coded 1 for any committee meeting held six months prior to an election, and 0 otherwise.²⁶ There are a number of additional variables that are of substantive interest and should be introduced to control for other confounding factors. At the bill level, I control for the overall attention given to the topic of a bill over the period. I also control for whether a bill was sent by the executive. Committee-specific controls include the total number of interest groups invited to a committee over a period; whether a bill was sent by the executive; whether the committee chair is a member of majority/plurality party; and whether a committee chair is a member of the legislative president's party. Notice that many of the controls, as well as the variables of interest, are estimated at the committee, period, and party level. Some effectively control for period-specific effects (e.g. total number of interest groups invited to a committee over a period), others are highly correlated with party and committee-specific effects (e.g. topic ranking). Overall topic ranking, for example, is fairly stable across time, and bills from the same topics will usually end up in the same committee. Thus, adding committee-specific, party-specific, or period-specific effects can be problematic for model convergence.²⁷

5.2. Empirical strategy

Studying the determinants of interest group participation in committee debates requires an empirical approach that takes into account the overdispersion of our main count variables of interest. Poisson models for count data assume that the variance of the dependent variable equals its mean. Imposing this condition on overdispersed data produces inefficient estimators. Different from Poisson models, negative binomial models employ an extra parameter, θ that directly address overdispersion. Tests for overdispersion on all models (Cameron & Trivedi, 1990) strongly suggest that the true dispersion is greater than 0 ($p \leq 0.05$).

6. Results

I start by empirically testing whether chairs will invite more interest groups to participate in committees when the party owns the issue of the bill. Various models addressing this hypothesis are presented in Table 1. The dependent variable for Model 1 and Model 2, the main model, is participation by any interest groups in a committee debate.

**Table 1.** Explaining Interest Group Participation in the Ecuadorian Congress, 1988–2018.

	IG Part. (Bill)					
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Rank of Topic by Party of Chair	−0.076*** (0.026)	−0.051** (0.022)			−0.076** (0.032)	−0.029 (0.028)
Rank of Topic (General)	0.107*** (0.025)	0.104*** (0.016)			0.107*** (0.026)	0.101*** (0.016)
Share of Attention to Topic by Party of Chair			2.060*** (0.534)	2.730*** (0.756)		
Share of Attention to Topic (General)			−4.130*** (0.847)	−8.340*** (1.130)		
IG Participation by Committee	0.008*** (0.0004)	0.008*** (0.0004)	0.008*** (0.0004)	0.008*** (0.0004)	0.008*** (0.0004)	0.008*** (0.0004)
Executive Bill	1.080*** (0.112)	0.962*** (0.111)	1.080*** (0.111)	0.891*** (0.112)	1.080*** (0.112)	0.951*** (0.111)
Chair Party of President	0.627*** (0.098)	0.474*** (0.099)	0.706*** (0.099)	0.512*** (0.098)	0.627*** (0.098)	0.470*** (0.099)
Chair from Maj/Plural. Party	−0.029 (0.097)	−0.110 (0.097)	−0.009 (0.097)	−0.112 (0.097)	−0.028 (0.158)	0.055 (0.153)
Rank of Topic by Party of Chair * Chair from Maj/Plural. Party					−0.0001 (0.036)	0.047 (0.034)
Constant	−0.393*** (0.098)	−0.462*** (0.089)	−0.089 (0.102)	0.342** (0.133)	−0.393*** (0.114)	−0.522*** (0.103)
Ranking/Share		Overall	Period	Overall	Period	Overall
N	2029	2029	2029	2029	2029	2029
θ	0.352*** (0.018)	0.367*** (0.019)	0.357*** (0.018)	0.368*** (0.019)	0.352*** (0.018)	0.368*** (0.019)

Note: Standard errors are reported in parentheses, with confidence levels reported as follows: *** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .1$. Negative binomial model that accounts and corrects for over-dispersion. The unit of analysis is all bills that reached committees (whether they were lobbied or not).

The main variable of interest is the rank of the topic of the bill by the party of the chair. Note that the ranking goes from 1 (highest) to 15 (lowest), thus we expect a negative coefficient. Model 1 ranks issue ownership by cohort, while model 2 ranks issue ownership across the whole time examined, thus addressing both the varying and static nature of issue ownership (see Footnote 4). Across both models, the rank variable is, as predicted, negative ($p \leq 0.05$). The higher the rank of an issue for a party, the higher the number of interest groups that will be invited to participate in committee debates. Substantively, this means going from the fifth highest ranked issue to the highest ranked issue of a party increases the predicted number of interest groups participating by 30 per cent (see Figure 2). According to our theory, the general rank of an issue has no predicted effect on the number of invitations to interest groups. After all, we assume that chairs are strategic players, worried about raising the salience of the issues owned by their party, not necessarily the issues that have the most attention. The negative effect, while not expected, is not entirely surprising either. There is an incentive to limit the exposure of all other issues that are not owned by the party.

Model 3 and 4 are robustness checks to the main models. Rather than using the ranking of issues as an independent variable, we use the share of

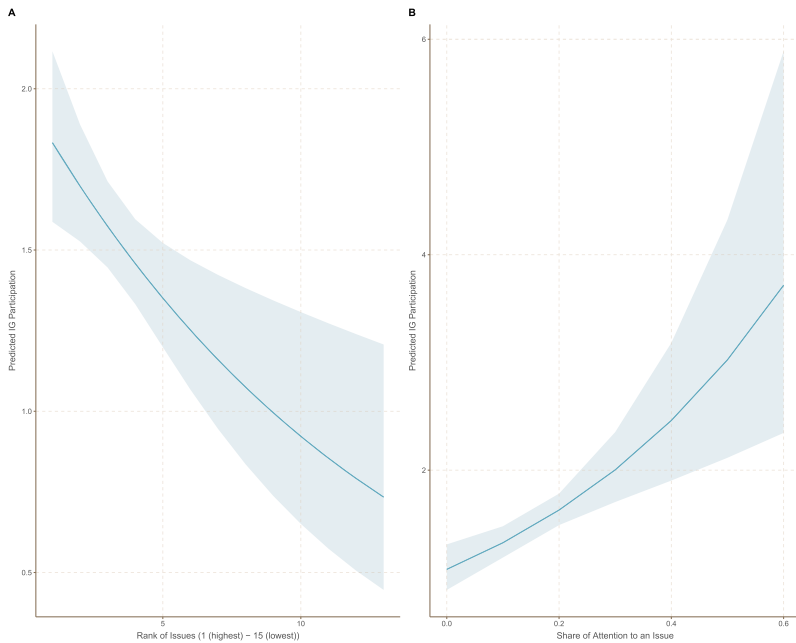


Figure 2. Invitations to Committee by the level of issue ranking (ownership) and share of attention to issue by party of committee chair. Note that the ranking goes from 1 (highest) to 15 (lowest), thus we expect a descending line for Figure A.

attention a topic received. In this model we expect the coefficients of interest to be positive. In effect, we find that going from a topic a party devotes 20 per cent of its attention to one that the party devotes 40 per cent of its attention would increase interest group participation by more than 30 per cent (see Figure 2).

It is worth noting that bills sent by the executive will see more interest group participation than those sent by a legislator. Committee chairs that are of the same party as the legislative president, usually the majority or plurality party, will invite more interest groups to participate. This result is likely related to the strategic coordination of the party. The legislative president is the first gatekeeper in the Ecuadorian Congress.

Our argument suggests that committee chairs, when inviting interest groups, have vote-oriented goals, rather than policy-oriented goals. However, the results from Models 1 to 4 in Table 1 can also be due to internal legislative dynamics. For example, committee chairs from the majority coalition may have enough means to raise issue saliency through policy, and have little incentive to risk a change (even if marginal) in their preferred policy outcome by inviting external actors. The model could be thought as trade-off between increasing issue ownership and risking amendments to their ideal bill proposal (i.e. vote vs. policy seeking). To rule out that internal legislative dynamics, we interact the rank of an issue by the party of the chair with the majority status of the party of the chair. The results of the interaction are non-significant (see Models 5 and 6) suggesting that internal legislative dynamics are not partly responsible for the issue ownership effect.

In Hypothesis 1b we argue that, given the presence of a single majority government party after the 2008 constitutional reform, the effect of party coordination on interest group participation between 2009 and 2019 should be stronger than between 1988 and 2008. To test if such differences exist, I divide the sample between pre- and post-2008 and present the results in Table 2. As expected, our variable of interest, the ranking of issues by the committee chair's party, is negative and statistically significant for the post-2008 period (see Model 1 in Table 2). While the direction of the effect is negative, the coefficient for the pre-2008 period is not statistically significant. These results bolster the importance of party strategy and issue salience when inviting interest groups to committees. During the post-2008 period, the single-majority government party (i.e. Alianza País) was able to exert strong control over party members, and sustain a coordinated legislative strategy. The results from Table 2 suggest that this coordination extended to the strategic invitation of interest groups to raise the salience of issue owned by the party.

One of the most compelling empirical findings of the model is the behaviour of chairs before elections, a time when issue salience matters most. Conditional on owning an issue, we see more interest groups invited to

Table 2. Interest Group Participation in the Ecuadorian Congress Pre- and Post-2008.

	IG Part. (Bill)	
	Model 1	Model 2
Rank of Topic by Party of Chair	−0.017 (0.024)	−0.122* (0.073)
Rank of Topic (General)	0.088*** (0.024)	0.168** (0.068)
IG Participation by Committee	0.027*** (0.003)	0.004*** (0.0003)
Executive Bill	0.772*** (0.121)	1.083*** (0.147)
Chair Party of President	−0.088 (0.097)	−0.234 (0.173)
Constant	−0.991*** (0.108)	1.106*** (0.177)
Period	Pre-2008	Post-2008
N	1869	525
θ	0.409*** (0.027)	0.652*** (0.051)

Note: Standard errors are reported in parentheses, with confidence levels reported as follows: *** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .1$. Negative binomial model that accounts and corrects for over-dispersion. The unit of analysis is all bills that reached committees (whether they were lobbied or not).

committees before an election. Table A5 in Appendix 3 shows the interactive effect of elections (six months prior) and our main variable of interest. For off-election months, the effect of issue ownership is maintained. In election season, the effect for each unit change is increased two-fold. This effect intensifies progressively as the election nears, too. In Figure 3, we can more clearly see this progression. Starting on the top left panel, the effect of issue ownership becomes more pronounced on interest group participation as we get closer to elections. The start of the more substantive effects appear five months before an election when the participation of interest groups in an owned issue will increase by 50 per cent when compared to non-election periods. By the time we get to the month prior to an election, chairs will invite three times as many interest groups as they would in any other period. Furthermore, Model 7 in Table A5 in Appendix 3 shows how the effect of issue ownership on participation declines six months *after* an election, giving additional evidence that salience provides electoral benefits rather than policy ones.

Of course, these results could also be a reflection of opportunistic legislators aiming to obtain benefits from direct and personalistic exchanges with interest groups. Towards the end of their tenure, when there is no possibility of reelection and no fear of punishment by the party, legislators might be inclined to invite more interest group to gain some outside benefit. For example, interest groups, keen in gaining access, might offer compensation for participation in the form of a job (e.g. revolving door). If this was the case, just like our theory predicts, we would expect to see more invitations to issues owned by the party before elections. After all, people leaving want to show their capacity to their future employer, and they can better

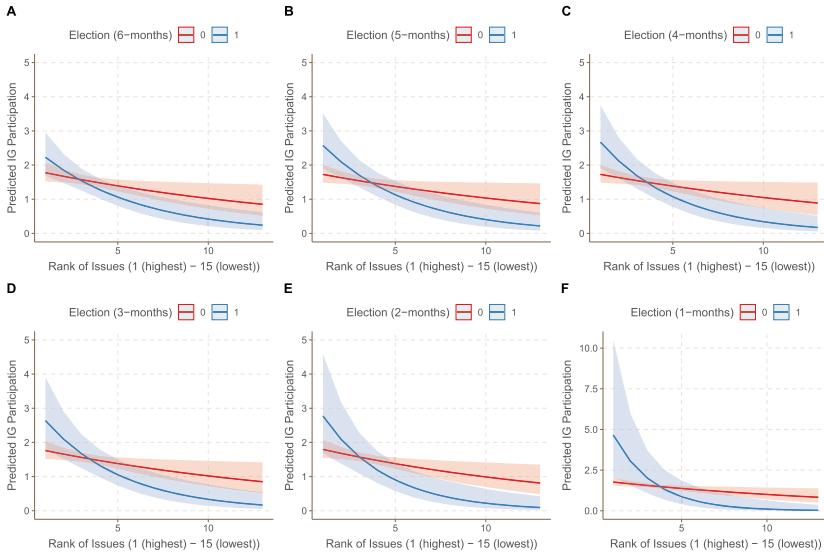


Figure 3. Predicted count of interest group participation across different levels of issue salience, conditional on elections. Based on Table A5 from Appendix 3.

achieve that by inviting interest groups to issues they own (i.e. issues in which they are perceived as more competent). To discard this possibility, I divide my sample into cohorts that could run for reelection and cohorts that could not. Models 1 and 2 in Table 3 present the results. Model 1 shows the estimates for cohorts that could run for reelection and Model 2 shows the estimates for cohorts that could not. As expected, the effects found in the full sample (Table 1) only hold for those legislators that could run for reelection (Model 1 in Table 3), providing additional evidence to the theory of party coordination to raise issue salience.

Finally, because the electoral rules in Ecuador changed over the period analysed, we expect the incentives for legislators to change as well. Before 1996, immediate reelection was prohibited in Ecuador. Party leaders had few mechanisms to control (i.e. punish) the behaviour legislators. Thus, legislators had little motivation to heed the party strategy. With the electoral reform of 1996 that dynamic changed. In Hypothesis 2b I argue that issue salience will matter most to chairs after 1996. To empirically analyse this claim, I divide the sample into pre- and post 1996 cohorts (see Table 4). The results provide support for Hypothesis 2b: the conditional effect of elections on issue ownership are statistically significant only for the post-1996 sample. For the pre-1996 sample, the interaction is not statistically significant and the direction of the coefficient is opposite to what is expected.

Table 3. The Effect of Election Cycles on Interest Group Participation.

	IG Part. (Bill)	
	Model 1	Model 2
Rank of Topic by Party of Chair	-0.070** (0.031)	-0.005 (0.058)
Election (6-Month)	0.331 (0.215)	0.320 (0.402)
Rank of Topic (General)	0.121*** (0.030)	0.035 (0.049)
IG Participation by Committee	0.009*** (0.0005)	0.004*** (0.001)
Executive Bill	1.140*** (0.139)	0.884*** (0.183)
Chair Party of President	0.348*** (0.103)	1.460*** (0.172)
Rank Party X Election (6-Month)	-0.140*** (0.052)	-0.032 (0.117)
Constant	-0.417*** (0.118)	-0.540*** (0.200)
Reelection Allowed?	Yes	No
N	1510	519
θ	0.352*** (0.021)	0.419*** (0.043)

Note: Standard errors are reported in parentheses, with confidence levels reported as follows: *** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .1$. Negative binomial model that accounts and corrects for over-dispersion. The unit of analysis is bills that reached committees, whether they were lobbied by interest groups or not. The Election dummy is coded 1 for any bill debated six months prior to an election, and 0 otherwise.

Table 4. The Effect of Election Cycles on Interest Group Participation Pre- and Post-1996.

	IG Part. (Bill)	
	Model 1	Model 2
Rank of Topic by Party of Chair	-0.029 (0.046)	-0.088*** (0.033)
Election (6-Month)	0.126 (0.316)	0.420* (0.232)
Rank of Topic (General)	0.077* (0.043)	0.120*** (0.031)
IG Participation by Committee	0.021*** (0.006)	0.007*** (0.0004)
Executive Bill	0.780*** (0.200)	1.204*** (0.131)
Chair Party of President	0.317 (0.220)	0.420*** (0.105)
Rank Party X Election (6-Month)	0.038 (0.089)	-0.167*** (0.056)
Constant	-1.113*** (0.214)	-0.137 (0.124)
Period	Pre-1996	Post-1996
N	605	1424
θ	0.476*** (0.060)	0.354*** (0.020)

Note: Standard errors are reported in parentheses, with confidence levels reported as follows: *** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .1$. Negative binomial model that accounts and corrects for over-dispersion. The unit of analysis is all bills that reached committees (whether they were lobbied or not).

7. Conclusion

This paper proposes an alternative information model to explain the interaction between interest groups and legislators. My theory suggests that committee chairs, endowed with gatekeeping authority, will strategically invite interest groups to raise the salience of issues owned by the party. I find that interest groups are willing to participate in this process given the prospects of micro-managing policy. Fully aware of the political hurdles required to overcome before passing legislation, interest groups try to gain access to bill initiatives already in motion, and aim for the marginal gains obtained from changing specific articles –the “fine print”– that could benefit them. In our framework, the ability parties have to both coordinate and control interest group participation makes committee chairs “gatekeepers of influence”, similar to the role of chairs in legislative cartel theory. Yet, unlike cartel theory, the role of chairs is to strategically disseminate information by opening the gates to interest groups and, thus, raising the salience of issues.

Committee chairs appear to be highly strategic about invitations to debates on bill initiatives. Chairs will invite more interest groups to participate in debates of issues that the party owns, a relation that is increased when raising the salience of issues becomes more appealing. Particularly, as elections approach, committee chairs become more generous with their invitations to debates, a sign that indeed salience is one of the main drivers of interest group participation.

In addition to Ecuador being a “hard case,” a country characterised by a highly fragmented party system where politicians have few incentives to coordinate, it is also a particularly attractive case to study the strategic behaviour around interest group participation in the policy-creation process. The sequential organisation of the Ecuadorian Congress is similar to other legislatures that grant gatekeeping prerogatives to committee chairs. Furthermore, many of the institutional conditions that shape the party and legislative system in Ecuador are found in the rest of Latin America. Weak institutions and electoral systems that debilitate parties (e.g. open-list systems) are common in the region (Mainwaring, 2018). The Ecuadorian Congress, as well as other legislatures in Latin America, functions in a low institutionalisation setting, particularly when it comes to regulating interest groups and lobby. Unlike in industrialised democracies, lobbying in Latin America is seldom regulated and often informal. Thus, showing that even in this context committee chairs are strategic about inviting interest groups should provide evidence that this theory is not necessarily mediated by institutions and norms regulating lobbying.

However, there are limitations of the Ecuadorian case that are important to point out, but that also open new lines for future research. Ecuador, as well as

most of the countries in the Americas, is a presidential system where divided governments are common occurrences. Can the implications of our argument travel across parliamentary systems with stable coalition governments or semi-majoritarian electoral systems? This is difficult to assess without comparable studies. Our theory suggests there is a trade-off between voter-oriented saliency and policy goals. Parties and party coordination have an important role in parliamentary systems. Members of Parliament, on the one hand, have strong incentives to attract voters and, on the other, are constantly exposed to interest groups. The literature on parliamentary systems has found that interest groups influence policy outcome considerably (Giger & Klüver, 2016), suggesting that the theory proposed in this paper is not incompatible with the empirical findings in other systems of government.²⁸

It is also important to note that not all legislatures grant committee chairs the same gatekeeping prerogatives (Sieberer & Höhmann, 2017). The quantitative analysis presented in this paper corresponds to a legislature where committee chairs have the authority to invite (or not) interest groups. It does not speak to legislatures where this type of coordination is not possible. Further comparative research is required to see how the *electoral* incentives in the interaction between legislators and interest groups affect their relationship in legislatures where there are no spaces for public lobbying, or where party coordination is carried out differently. Likewise, legislative organisation is mostly endogenous (Krehbiel, 2004), and the relation between interest groups and parties might influence the composition and characteristics of committees and committee chairs.

The theory advanced in this paper, as well as the empirical findings, highlights the importance of committee chairs in the participation of interest groups and the policy-creation process. Rather than focusing solely on the strategic considerations of politicians when interacting with interest groups, I stress the importance of the broader party strategy to further understand this relation. This research extends our understanding of intra-party coordination in the legislature, often studied with other legislative actors in mind, by bringing in external actors, such as interest groups. The strategy advanced by parties goes beyond the diffusion of information or a quid pro quo, emphasising the electoral gains that come from public lobbying. In this exchange of influence—both within and outside of the chamber—we are presented with further evidence of the mechanisms that govern the policy-creation process, inter-party preference, and interest group behaviour.

Notes

1. In “outside lobbying” (Kollman, 1998) – or the attempts to send signals to policymaker by communicating public support – the policymaker has little control over the strategic considerations of interest groups.

2. It is worth noting that in some legislatures there is either no space for the participation of interest groups during the policy-creation process (e.g. Bolivia) or that the participation of interest groups is not conditioned by the gatekeeping prerogatives of a legislator (e.g. Colombia).
3. The legislative coalition in the Ecuadorian Congress has often been clandestine, what Acosta (2009) defines as “ghost coalitions”.
4. Even though there are strong electoral (Iyengar, 1993; Sides, 2006) and policy (Cox & McCubbins, 2005) incentives for politicians to focus on issue the party owns, there are instances when the parties might choose to focus on an issue they do not own. For example, when the salience of an unowned issue rises, parties cannot avoid engaging with the issue (Petrocik, 1996; Sides, 2006). Furthermore, parties can also improve their reputation in contested issues or can expand their issue repertoire by promoting unowned issues (Bos et al., 2017)
5. Since interest groups can benefit from committee participation, it is possible for them to directly lobby party leaders, the executive, or legislative authorities to get invitations to participate. Indeed, this is often the case. In an interview, the president of the Chamber of Commerce of Quito (Ecuador) highlighted the importance of meeting with the executive to gain access to the legislative process. However, he, as well as other interviewees (e.g. president of the Association of Textile Industries of Ecuador, representative of the Association of Private Bank of Ecuador) suggested that the bottleneck at the executive was much narrower. The decentralised nature of the Ecuadorian Congress allowed them to pursue multiple strategies, approaching different political actors that were relevant in the process. The alternative routes of gain access are not in contradiction with one another. Rather, they are carried out simultaneously. Since the invitation of interest groups is determined by a party strategy (i.e. raising the salience of owned issues) we would expect party leaders, the executive, and legislative authorities to grant access based, partially, on that strategy.
6. Not all institutional arrangements grant committee chairs the same prerogatives described here. Sieberer and Höhmann (2017), for example, show the variation of committee chair power across European countries, and its relation to the number of “shadow” ministers used to monitor coalition partners. I discuss the implications of possible differences in committee strength and their effect on the strategy used by parties to strategically invite interest groups in the discussion section.
7. This body of research focuses more on the characteristics of interest groups that gain access to committees, than on the strategic decisions made by gatekeepers to invite them.
8. A more detailed account of the prerogatives of committee chairs in the Ecuadorian Congress is presented in Section 3.
9. Do you need to agree with the groups that you invite? Issue ownership and salience, rather than ideological congruence, is what matters. Consider, for example, a Democrat in the U.S. Senate that invites the CEO of Facebook to discuss possible foreign interference in the 2016 election. (See “Mark Zuckerberg Testimony: Senators Question Facebook’s Commitment to Privacy”, New York Times, April 10, 2018. Access: June 26, 2019. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/10/us/politics/mark-zuckerberg-testimony.html>). Democratic senators did not invite Mark Zuckerberg because they agreed with him, but rather to raise the salience of an issue by publicly scolding him. Inviting someone to have a public interaction sometimes means confronting them.

In other words, legislators can still raise the salience of an issue by inviting groups that they do not agree with. Even though this might not be often the case, the theory advanced in this paper does not hinge on the ideological congruence between the policymakers and interest groups. Rather, it stresses the importance of raising issues salience and is agnostic about the means to achieve this.

10. Interview with Christian Walhi, Executive President of ANFAB. October 15, 2018. Similar, researchers have argued that raising the salience of an issue forces politicians to participate and act on those issues (Niemi & Bartels, 1985; Petrocik, 1996; Sides, 2006).
11. This strategy is not at odds with the idea of interest groups focusing on the “fine print” of the law. Even when bills have a broad impact on an issue, the discussion usually focuses on one or two articles.
12. Legislators, however, get to decide which interest group gets to publicise their “access”.
13. As previously mentioned, at the committee level bills are discussed article by article which can provide interest groups facing opposition a window to change some specific article in their benefit even when the bill as a whole will not favour them. This is one extension of the idea of micromanaging policy.
14. The gatekeeping authority extends to the first hurdle in the flow of legislation: the CAL (*Comisión Administrativa Legislativa*). The CAL is not only in charge of assigning bills to specific committees but also in charge of letting these reach committee in the first place. Often a technical committee (e.g. Argentina), in Ecuador the president of Congress also chairs the CAL.
15. Interview with Gabriela Larreátegui, Congresswoman of the *Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador*. October 19, 2018; interview with Congressional Staff Member 2. October 20, 2018.
16. Procedural rules require that all bills approved by the CAL are reviewed in committees and sent to the plenary floor. We should see the same number of bills approved by the CAL as bills exiting from committees to the floor.
17. Interview with Congressional Staff Member 1 of the *Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador*. March 25, 2019; interview with Gabriela Larreátegui, Congresswoman of the *Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador*. October 19, 2018; interview with Congressional Staff Member 2. October 20, 2018.
18. Interview with Congressional Staff Member 1 of the *Asamblea Nacional del Ecuador*. March 25, 2019.
19. The chair of the CAL is not negotiated, but is also one of the roles of the president of the legislature. The president of the legislature, by law, is a member of the majority/plurality party.
20. For example, selectively inviting groups to provide information on a policy position to bolster the likelihood of a bill being supported by other legislators.
21. There is some evidence suggesting that, despite the incentives for individualist behaviour, there is party coordination in Ecuador. First, as previously explained, there is party coordination when it comes to assigning important members to gatekeeping positions in the legislature. Second, committee chairs, as part of a broader coordination strategy, invite more interest groups to participate in those bills that are favored by their own coalition (see [Appendix 4](#)).
22. See [Appendix 1](#) for a detailed explanation on how interest groups were identified and their distribution across industries.

23. Note that using survey data to explain issue ownership is problematic on its own: voters often conflate issue ownership with voting preference and ideological position, especially in multiparty systems (for a review, see Walgrave et al., 2015).
24. Budge and Farlie (1983), Guinaudeau and Persico (2014), and Walgrave and De Swert (2004).
25. I estimate the topics using Structural Topic modelling (STM). For a detailed recount on the process and the decision to use STM over other alternatives, see Appendix 2.
26. As a robustness check, I see the effect on interest group participation from one to six months before an election.
27. Full summary statistics are presented in Appendix 3.
28. For example, members of Parliament might be granting interest groups access to policy, but doing so strategically, as to increase the salience of issues the party owns.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendix 1. Interest Group Data

Each committee in the Ecuadorian Congress produces a report detailing all the changes to the bill initiatives, as well as the interest groups participating in the meetings held. The reports were generously provided by staff from the *Archivo-Biblioteca* of the Ecuadorian Congress. Before 2008, not all reports are available. Between 1979 and 2007, there was no systematization for the format of the reports or for the actual delivery of the reports to the Archive. The committee secretary, the person in charge of writing the reports and delivering them to the Archive, is assigned by each committee chair. It is not a career post, and it changes with each new committee chair ; thus, there is no formal training nor an office to hold them accountable. While there is a legal requirement for chairs to distribute the reports written up in the committees to the plenary floor before a debate, there is no legal requirement to have those reports delivered to the Archive. Many committee secretaries ended their tenure without entering the reports into the Archive. Interviews with the Archive staff suggest that reports are missing at random, even though the lack of norms could also lead committee chairs to purposefully withhold reports if there was information they did not want to be made public.

From 1979 to 2007, 17.7 per cent of the committee reports are missing ($N=379$). There are no reports missing between 1979 and 1985. Comparing the expected number of missing and non-missing committee reports by year,²⁹ only after 2002

Table A1. T-test comparing missing and non-missing reports.

	(1)	(2)
Voted into Law (Diff.)	–0.566 (–21.47)	
Discharged to Second Debate (Diff.)		–0.505 (–26.14)
Observations	1824	1824

t statistics in parentheses.

Table A2. Missing and non-missing reports by committee.

Committee	Reports		
	Missing %	Not-Missing %	Expected %
Asuntos Amazónicos, Desarrollo F	1.9	2.5	2.3
Asuntos Constitucionales	4.1	0.8	2.1
Asuntos Indígenas y Otras Etnias	0.7	0.8	0.8
Asuntos Internacionales y de Defensa	0.4	0.3	0.3
De la Mujer, el Niño, la Juventud	1.5	1.3	1.4
De lo Civil y Penal	28.7	22.7	25.2
De lo Laboral y Social	13.1	11.6	12.2
Defensa del Consumidor	2.2	2.0	2.1
Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda	1.1	2.0	1.7
Descentralización, Desconcentración	3.7	6.6	5.4
Económico, Agrario, Industrial	6.3	11.9	9.6
Educación, Cultura y Deporte	8.6	11.1	10.1
Especial	1.1	0.5	0.8
Gestión Pública Y Universalización	19.4	6.3	11.6
Legislativa y Fiscalización	0.0	0.3	0.2
Salud, Medio Ambiente y Ecología	3.4	7.8	6.0
Tributario, Fiscal, Bancario	3.7	11.6	8.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	268	396	664
Pearson $\chi^2(16) =$	62.9439	Pr =	0.000

Note: only looking at committees between 1998 and 2006.

there are more missing reports than expected. For 2007 and 2008, the aggravated institutional and political crisis might explain the absence of reports. It was during that time when half of the legislators were removed from office after opposing a referendum and Congress was eventually dissolved. Focusing on the period between 1985 and 2006, the average missing report is less likely to reach second debate and to eventually turn into law ($p \leq 0.05$; see Table A1). Apart from the Civil and Penal committee, the other three main committees (i.e. Tributary, Economic, Labour) have less-than-expected missing reports. The Civil and Penal committee has more missing reports than expected, but not considerably (see Table A2). Proportionally, most of the reports are missing from smaller committees. Similarly, bills introduced by larger parties are less likely to have missing reports. Referring to the plenary floor debates, some of the missing reports might be due to similarity with other bills being debated. Overall, while it is important to take into account how missing observations will affect the outcome of our estimation, especially concerning interest group participation, unavailable reports appear to be mostly on those bills expected to be voted down anyway.

From the total available reports ($N=2784$; 86 per cent), I extract information on interest group participation. Interest group participation is defined as any instance where an interest group is mentioned in a report. When interest groups participate in committee meetings, reports mention them by name. Interest groups can be invited more than once to a meeting, but to avoid Type I errors from interest groups being mentioned more than once for other reasons other than multiple participation, I only count one invitation per interest group per bill debate. This can lead to underreporting (Type II error), but I am comfortable with taking the more conservative approach. To identify interest groups, I use Natural Language Processing (NLP) to predict linguistic annotations—for example, whether a word is a verb or a noun or a company—in my text. Using the spaCy NLP library (Honnibal &

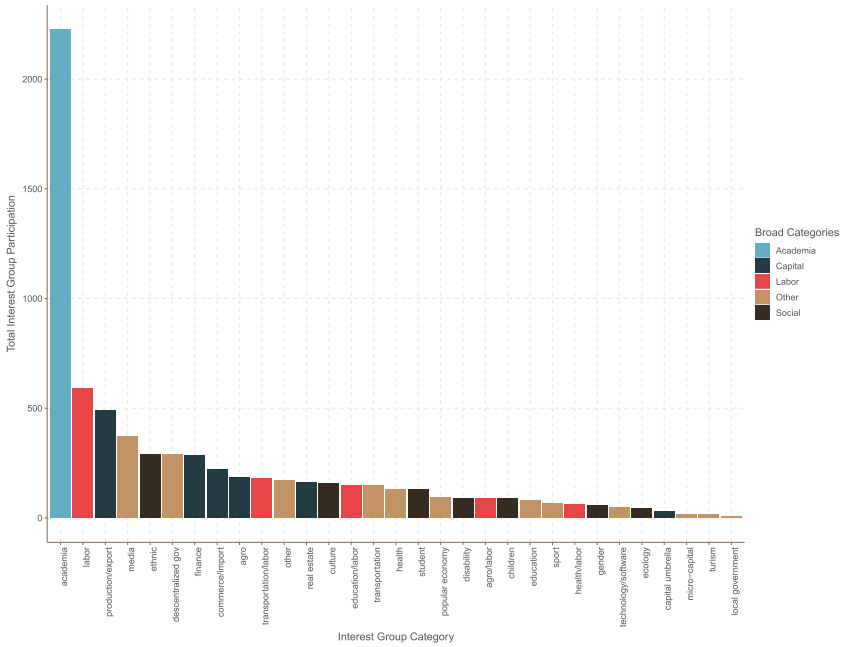


Figure A1. Interest Group Participation in Committees, 1979–2018. Participation of interest groups in committee meeting by category, from 1979 to 2018.

Montani, 2017) I am able to identify parts of speech, including nouns, verbs, proper nouns, organizations, and geopolitical entities. I look at the organizations tagged, identify the interest group names, and create a list of interest group. With this list, I search the documents again to locate where each interest groups appeared. Furthermore, I manually examine the documents with the highest density of recognised entities and add the names of interest groups not identified. I repeat this process several times. There are occurrences where different interest groups have similar names yet different geographical locations (e.g. *Cámara de Comercio de Quito* and *Cámara de Comercio de Guayaquil*). These are also picked up separately by the algorithm. In total, the dataset contains 838 unique interest groups and 6,989 instances of interest group participation in committee meetings.

There are three main limitations to this method. First, there might be interest groups that have not been picked by the algorithm (Type II error). Interest groups fluctuate across time and identifying older groups that have disappeared can be difficult. Manually coding each interest group from the reports is complicated, as each document can contain more than a hundred pages. Second, there are no unique identification codes for interest groups participating in committee debates, so I have to identify interest groups by name. This means that any change to the spelling of a name (e.g. *Asociación de Bancos del Ecuador* and *Asociación de Bancos Privados del Ecuador*) or the use of the abbreviated form of a name (e.g. CONAIE and *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*) will fail to identify the presence of an interest group (Type II error). I try to provide as many alternative names to each group as possible, but some forms might not have been captured. Third, the poor quality of some of the earlier documents, and different

marks (e.g. official stamps, signatures, etc.) in all the documents, can corrupt the text. This will change how the text is processed and read by the algorithm. This too can reduce the number of interest groups identified (Type II error), but I assume that these mistakes are at-random.

Figure A1 shows the participation of interest groups in committee debates by category. Most invited groups are from the academic space, which is not surprising. Often, committees will invite university professors to clarify or expand on the possible legal effects of reform. Less frequent, but not uncommon, is for specialised research centres to argue, on technical ground, the impact a reform can have on the economy, on collective rights, or on the market. This is not to say that the participation of academic representatives is void of ideology or political preferences.

Appendix 2. Estimating Issue Ownership

Measuring issue ownership in Ecuador is not straightforward as there is no established way of determining which issues are owned by which party. In Europe and the U.S., there are detailed surveys that ask respondents which party is most competent at dealing with each of a series of issues (Green, 2011; Sides, 2006; Wagner & Meyer, 2014). Such surveys are not publicly available for Ecuador. I use an alternative approach to estimate issue ownership. As discussed in the main text, I determine issue ownership by estimating the number of bills initiative of each topic presented by each party. Once the distribution of topics by party is estimated, I rank the topics by frequency by party.

To extract the theme covered by a bill, I run a structural topic model (STM) (Roberts et al., 2014) and estimate the likelihood of each bill being within a given topic. STM relies on the information each word in each text reveals. The names of the bills in the Ecuadorian Congress reveal most of the information we need to identify the topic they address: they are concrete and descriptive summaries of the issue treated by a bill.³⁰ STM, rather than relying on an assumed topic defined ex-ante, infer the content of the topics under study. In statistical topic models, topics are defined as distributions over a vocabulary of words that represent interpretable themes (Roberts et al., 2014). STM is a type of multi-membership model,³¹ where each document is represented as a mixture of topics, so all words within it are generated from the same distribution. A multi-membership model will estimate the likelihood a bill initiative fits within each topic, allowing us to categorise out bills by theme. Furthermore, STM allows all estimations to include document-level metadata that explain topical prevalence, such as party affiliation, fitting the results closer to our priors (i.e. that the sponsor's party is correlated with the topic of the bill).

We are interested in addressing how parties prioritise issues. The hierarchical structure of our data has three levels (from top to bottom): $party_i$, $legislator_{jfromparty_i}$, $bill_{kfromlegislator_j}$. As Grimmer (2010) suggests, this structure is employed "anytime the quantities of interest are the priorities a set of actors allocate to issue". Once the distribution of topics by party is estimated, I rank the topics by frequency by party. I estimate the model for each legislative period as well as for the whole period analysed, to get at both the dynamic and static nature of issue ownership. The ranking of topics by party is then matched to each committee chair.

To prepare and evaluate my data, I follow Roberts et al. (2014) process on STM. I start by pre-processing my text data by stemming (reducing words to their root form), dropping punctuation and removing stop words (e.g. de, el, y). Additionally, I drop words that are common to most bill names and that provide little



Figure A2. Graphical display of estimated topic proportions.

<p>T1: Agro/Labor</p> <p>REFORMATORIA A LA CODIFICACIÓN DE LA LEY DEL FONDO PARA EL ECODesarrollo REGIONAL AMAZONICO Y DE FORTALECIMIENTO DE SUS ORGANISMOS SECCIONALES.</p> <p>FLUJACION DE SUELDOS Y SALARIOS MINIMOS VITALES Y ELEVACION DE SUELDOS Y SALARIOS.</p>	<p>T2: Regional Funds</p> <p>ESTABLECESE EN FAVOR DE LA MUNICIPALIDAD DE GUAYACIL EL GRAVAMEN DE 30 CENTAVOS DE DOLAR POR CADA BARRIL DE PETROLEO EMBAJADO EN PUERTO BALAO Y 20 CENTAVOS POR CADA BARRIL QUE SE TRANSPORTE POR EL OLEODUCTO LAGO AGRO-BALAO.</p> <p>ASIGNASE LA CANTIDAD DE CINCO SUCRES POR CADA BARRIL DE PETROLEO EN FAVOR DEL BENEFICIO DE LOS MUNICIPIOS DEL PAS EN CUYA JURISDICCION SE ENCUENTREN LOS POZOS PRODUCTORES QUE GENEREN DICHAS EXPORTACIONES.</p>	<p>T3: Public Service</p> <p>REFORMATORIA A LA LEY DE SERVICIO CIVIL Y CARRERA ADMINISTRATIVA UNIFICACION SALARIAL Y HOMOLOGACION DE LAS REMUNERACIONES DEL SECTOR PUBLICO. (No podrá ejercer su profesión en forma libre)</p> <p>SUSTITUTIVA A LA LEY DE SERVICIO CIVIL Y CARRERA ADMINISTRATIVA Y DE UNIFICACION Y HOMOLOGACION DE LAS REMUNERACIONES DEL SECTOR PUBLICO.</p>	<p>T4: Taxes</p> <p>INTERPRETATIVA DEL NUMERAL 19 DEL ARTICULO 55 DE LA LEY DE REGIMEN TRIBUTARIO INTERNO.</p> <p>REFORMATORIA DE LOS ARTICULOS 28, 30 Y 31 DE LA LEY DE REGIMEN MUNICIPAL Y ARTICULOS 8, 15 Y DISPOSICIONES TRANSITORIAS DE LA LEY DE REGIMEN PROVINCIAL.</p>	<p>T5: Public Works</p> <p>REFORMATORIA A LA LEY DE CREACION DE LA CORPORACION EJECUTIVA PARA LA RECONSTRUCCION DE LAS ZONAS AFECTADAS POR EL FENOMENO DEL NIÑO -CORPECUADOR-</p> <p>REFORMATORIA A LA LEY DE CREACION DE LA CORPORACION EJECUTIVA PARA LA RECONSTRUCCION DE LAS ZONAS AFECTADAS POR EL FENOMENO DEL NIÑO -CORPECUADOR-</p>
<p>T6: Environment</p> <p>REFORMA A LA LEY QUE CREA EL FONDO DE SANEAMIENTO AMBIENTAL Y RIEGO DE LA PROVINCIA DE EL ORO, FONDORO.</p> <p>FORESTACION Y REFORESTACION DE LA PROVINCIA DE EL ORO.</p>	<p>T7: Education</p> <p>EXPROPIA CON FINES DE UTILIDAD PUBLICA EL PREDIO DENOMINADO ALEGRIA UBICADO EN LA PARROQUIA INSCUALES DE LA CIUDAD DE GUAYACIL, A FAVOR DE LOS MIEMBROS DE LA COOPERATIVA PANCHO JACOME.</p> <p>AUTORIZASE AL MINISTERIO DE SALUD PUBLICA LA VENTA DE SOLARES UBICADOS EN LOS BARRIOS NUEVA ESPERANZA SUR, DE LA PARROQUIA CINCO DE AGOSTO EN FAVOR DE LOS ACTUALES POSESIONARIOS.</p>	<p>T8: Social Security/Labor</p> <p>REFORMATORIA A LA LEY DE SEGURIDAD SOCIAL.</p> <p>ESCALAFON Y SUELDOS DE PERIODISTAS PROFESIONALES.</p>	<p>T9: Commerce</p> <p>REFORMATORIA A LA LEY PARA ESTIMULAR Y CONTROLAR LA PRODUCCION Y COMERCIALIZACION DEL BANANO.</p> <p>REFORMATORIA A LA LEY DE CENTROS AGRICOLAS Y CAMARAS DE AGRICULTURA.</p>	<p>T10: Public Investment</p> <p>REBAJA EL 75% DEL PAGO DE LAS PLANILLAS POR CONSUMO DE ENERGIA ELECTRICA QUE LAS JUNTAS ADMINISTRADORAS DE AGUA POTABLE ADEUDEN A LA EMPRESA ELECTRICA, PARA FUNCIONAMIENTO DE SISTEMAS DE AGUA POTABLE A BOMBEO.</p> <p>CONGELASE LAS TARIFAS DE CONSUMO DE ENERGIA ELECTRICA, AGUA POTABLE Y TELEFONO.</p>
<p>T11: Ethnic</p> <p>Proyecto de Ley Orgánica de Consulta a las Comunas, Comunidades, Pueblos y Nacionalidades</p> <p>Proyecto de Ley Orgánica de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos y Nacionalidades Indígenas</p>	<p>T12: Rights</p> <p>REFORMATORIA AL CÓDIGO DE LA NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA, Que determine que el domicilio para demandar la tenencia, alimentos y demás casos contemplados en la ley, sea el domicilio de los menores)</p> <p>Ley Orgánica Reformatoria a la Ley Contra la Violencia a la Mujer y la Familia (Ley 103) Denominada Ley Orgánica Contra la Violencia de Género Hacia las Mujeres</p>	<p>T13: Decentralization</p> <p>Proyecto de Ley Reformatoria al Código Orgánico de Organización Territorial, Autonomía y Descentralización</p> <p>Proyecto de Ley Orgánica Reformatoria al Código Orgánico de Organización Territorial, Autonomía y Descentralización</p>	<p>T14: Civil and Penal</p> <p>ORGANICA REFORMATORIA A LA LEY ORGANICA DE LA FUNCION JUDICIAL Y AL CODIGO DE PROCEDIMIENTO PENAL.</p> <p>Proyecto de Ley Reformatoria al Código de Procedimiento Penal y Normas Penales</p>	<p>T15: Security</p> <p>REFORMATORIA A LA LEY ORGANICA DE LA POLICIA NACIONAL. (Supervisar, evaluar y controlar a la Policia)</p> <p>REFORMATORIA A LA LEY ESPECIAL DE TELECOMUNICACIONES. ARTICULO 38.</p>

Figure A3. Example Documents Highly Associated with Topics.

information to the model.³² I also eliminate any word that appears less than five times across all documents. I estimate the model using $K = 15$ topics.³³ The main words estimated by topics, and their proportions across the texts, are presented in Figure A2.³⁴ From these topics, I assign themes to each and match the most prevalent topic of each bill to that theme. I determine the topics based on the categories found in the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) Master Codebook (Baumgartner et al., 2019). The topics included in the CAP Master Codebook include: Macroeconomics, Civil Rights, Health, Agriculture, Labour, Education, Environment, Energy, Immigration, Transportation, Law and Crime, Social

Welfare, Housing, Domestic Commerce, Defense, Technology, Foreign Trade, International Affairs, Government Operations, Public Lands, Culture. There are, however, important differences that reflect the particularities of Ecuador and of legislation. For example, in Ecuador, “Ethnic/Indigenous” topics are highly salient. However, in the CAP they are a subdivision of Civil Rights. Thus, I separate both topics in categorisation. I also change the Macroeconomic category to Taxes, as in Ecuador, Congress is the only institution allowed to create or modify taxes, and hence this is an important topic. The assigned themes and examples of bills fitting that description are shown in [Figure A3](#).

The topics assigned to bills are closely related to the issue we would expect parties in Ecuador would own and sponsor.³⁵ For example, the most prevalent topics presented by the MUPP-NP, the political arm of the indigenous movement, are those related to ethnics rights (topic 11) and the environment (topic 6). The MPD, the electoral wing of the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Ecuador, and a party associated with worker unions presented most bill initiatives on social security, labour (topic 8), and education (topic 7). Likewise, of the bill initiatives on social security and labour that eventually reached a committee, 72 per cent were assigned to the *De lo Laboral y Social* committee. For civil and penal (topic 14), 60 per cent were assigned to the *De lo Civil y Penal* committee.

One final note on this measure. To keep in line with how surveys usually report issue ownership, I rank the attention on each topic by party. Ranking the topics assumes that there is the same difference between the attention placed on the first topic and the attention placed on the second topic, and the difference between the attention placed on the second topic and the third topic. This is not necessarily the case. For example, the MPD focused 24 per cent of their attention on social security and labour, 12 per cent of their attention on education, 8 per cent of their attention on taxes, and so on. Indeed, this aligns with what we would expect from issue ownership theory. I estimate the models using the proportions, rather than the ranking, and all the conclusions from the models are maintained. In fact, many effects are amplified. Yet, in the main models, I mostly report the more conservative measure.

Appendix 3. Summary Statistics

Full summary statistics of the data used throughout the empirical section:

Table A3. Summary Statistics.

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Interest Groups Participation (per Bill)	2029	2.510	6.800	0	73
Labour Groups Participation (per Bill)	2029	0.382	1.230	0	12
Finance Groups Participation (per Bill)	2029	0.091	0.606	0	15
Export Groups Participation (per Bill)	2029	0.283	1.470	0	30
Import Groups Participation (per Bill)	2029	0.158	0.749	0	15
Interest Group Participation (per Committee)	2029	37.500	92.700	0	865
Executive Bill	2029	0.150	0.357	0	1
Chair Party of the President	2029	0.439	0.496	0	1
Chair Party of the Maj/Plur Party	2029	0.540	0.499	0	1
Elections (6 Months)	2029	0.170	0.376	0	1
Wage and Salaried Workers (% of Workers)	1930	53.100	1.230	50.700	57.100
Domestic Credit (% GDP)	1958	23.100	7.080	10.500	37.700
Export Value Index	1958	185.000	142.000	39.100	522.000
Import Value Index	1958	253.000	210.000	46.000	745.000

Appendix 4. Party Coordination in the Ecuadorian Congress

In the main text I argue that committee chairs, as part of a broader coordination strategy, invite more interest groups to participate in those bills that are favored by their own coalition. To show this relation, I extend Calvo and Sagarzazu (2011) who show that committee chairs take into account ideology when advancing (or not) bills. Ultimately, chairs will favour those ideological positions that will be preferred by their own party members. As part of a broader party strategy, committee chairs should invite more interest groups to participate in those bills that are also favored by their own coalition.

To estimate the ideological position of legislator, I use cosponsorship data for *all* available bills – including those bills that did not reach a committee or that reached a committee but had no interest group participation – to retrieve ideal point estimates describing the spatial preferences of Congress members (Alemán et al., 2009). The ideological location of legislators was retrieved using principal component analysis on the agreement matrix of cosponsored legislation. The independent variables used as ideological determinants are the squared ideological distance between the sponsor and the **committee chair**, and the **median party member of the plenary floor**.

The models in Table A4 provide evidence for intra-party coordination in the Ecuadorian Congress. First, notice the evolution of the estimates of ideological proximity of the sponsor of the bill to the committee chair in the unconditional model (Model 1). The negative estimate suggests that the shorter the distance between the ideological position of the chair and the sponsor of the bill, the

Table A4. Ideological Distance and Interest Group Participation.

	IG Part. (Bill)	
	Model 1	Model 2
Distance of Sponsor to Chair	–0.238*** (0.077)	–0.069 (0.103)
Distance of Sponsor to Floor Median	0.154 (0.105)	0.192 (0.142)
Rank of Topic by Party of Chair	–0.059** (0.024)	–0.057** (0.024)
Rank of Topic by Period	0.075*** (0.024)	0.076*** (0.024)
IG Participation by Committee	0.009*** (0.0004)	0.009*** (0.0004)
Executive Bill	0.992*** (0.104)	0.965*** (0.105)
Chair Party of President	0.540*** (0.083)	0.692*** (0.101)
Sponsor to Chair * Chair Party of President		–0.402*** (0.155)
Sponsor to Floor * Chair Party of President		–0.053 (0.208)
Constant	–0.300*** (0.093)	–0.380*** (0.096)
N	2093	2093
θ	0.385*** (0.019)	0.388*** (0.020)

Note: Standard errors are reported in parentheses, with confidence levels reported as follows:

*** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .1$. Negative binomial model that accounts and corrects for over-dispersion. The unit of analysis is bills that reached committees, whether they were lobbied by interest groups or not. For bills introduced by the executive, the assigned ideal position was the median position of the party for that cohort.

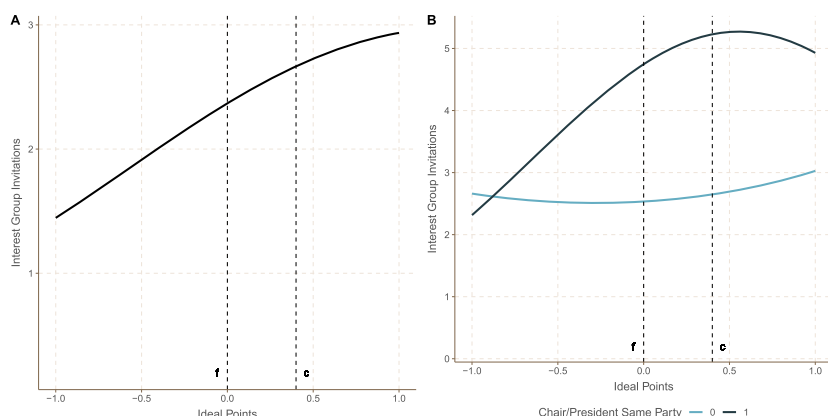


Figure A4. Invitations to Committee; Ecuadorian Congress, 1979–2019. Note: Median Floor voter (f) set to 0.0. Committee Chair (c) set to 0.4.

more interest groups will be invited to participate in those debate. Ideological proximity is important to the chair when deciding whether to invite interest groups or not, since the chair is strategically inviting interest groups based on the preferences of the party. The chair of the CAL – the president of the legislature – acts as the first gatekeeper. Inasmuch as there is coordination within parties among all stages of the policy-creation process, we see an increased importance of the ideological proximity when the chair of a committee is from the same party as the president of the legislature (Model 2).

The effect of ideological proximity to the committee chairs is more easily interpretable as presented in Figure A4. The horizontal axis in Figure A4 describes the ideological position of sponsors as estimated from the cosponsorship data. The vertical axis describes the number of invitations to a committee. The median floor voter is represented with the letter F and the position of the committee chair with the letter C. The median floor voter is pegged at the centre and the committee chair right-of-centre.³⁶ As shown in the left plot of Figure A4 and consistent with intra-party coordination, more interest groups are invited to participate in committee hearings of bill sponsored by representatives who are deep in the chair's coalition. The right plot in Figure A4 describes the conditional effect of the committee chairs and the legislative president being from the same party. As can be observed, the dramatic increase in participation when the chair and president are from the same party is noteworthy. The participation of interest groups increases almost two-fold when committee chair and the legislative president share party affiliation.

Appendix 5. Interest Group Participation and Election Cycles

To provide empirical evidence to Hypothesis 2 in the main text, I interact the elections variable (six months prior) and our main variable of interest (ranking of issues by party of chair). I also estimate the effect of the interaction as the election nears. The results of the interactions are presented in Table A5. Additionally, Model 7 in Table A5 shows how the effect of issue ownership on participation declines six months *after* an election.

Table A5. The Effect of Election Cycles on Interest Group Participation.

	IG Part. (Bill)						
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Rank of Topic by Party of Chair	-0.061** (0.027)	-0.057** (0.027)	-0.055** (0.027)	-0.061** (0.027)	-0.066** (0.026)	-0.063** (0.026)	-0.088*** (0.027)
Election (6-month)	0.351* (0.188)						
Election (5-month)		0.548*** (0.205)					
Election (4-month)			0.609*** (0.221)				
Election (3-month)				0.573** (0.252)			
Election (2-month)					0.650** (0.320)		
Election (1-month)						1.330*** (0.510)	
After Election (6-month)							-0.728*** (0.184)
Rank of Topic (General)	0.109*** (0.025)	0.106*** (0.025)	0.105*** (0.025)	0.106*** (0.025)	0.109*** (0.025)	0.104*** (0.025)	0.106*** (0.025)
IG Participation by Committee	0.008*** (0.0004)	0.008*** (0.0004)	0.008*** (0.0004)	0.008*** (0.0004)	0.008*** (0.0004)	0.008*** (0.0004)	0.008*** (0.0004)
Executive Bill	1.090*** (0.112)	1.100*** (0.112)	1.110*** (0.112)	1.100*** (0.112)	1.090*** (0.112)	1.090*** (0.112)	1.120*** (0.111)
Chair Party of President	0.610*** (0.088)	0.622*** (0.088)	0.621*** (0.088)	0.610*** (0.088)	0.613*** (0.088)	0.615*** (0.087)	0.597*** (0.088)
Rank Party X Election (6-month)	-0.124*** (0.048)						
Rank Party X Election (5-month)		-0.149*** (0.052)					
Rank Party X Election (4-month)			-0.173***				

(Continued)

Table A5. Continued.

	IG Part. (Bill)						
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Rank Party X Election (3-month)			(0.055)	−0.169*** (0.060)			
Rank Party X Election (2-month)					−0.215*** (0.077)		
Rank Party X Election (1-month)						−0.359*** (0.127)	
Rank Party X After Election (6-month)							0.061 (0.046)
Constant	−0.456*** (0.100) 2029	−0.487*** (0.099) 2029	−0.486*** (0.098) 2029	−0.458*** (0.096) 2029	−0.440*** (0.095) 2029	−0.449*** (0.093) 2029	−0.239*** (0.099) 2029
N	0.354***	0.355***	0.355***	0.355***	0.355***	0.356***	0.362***
θ	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)

Note: Standard errors are reported in parentheses, with confidence levels reported as follows: *** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .1$. Negative binomial model that accounts and corrects for over-dispersion. The unit of analysis is bills that reached committees, whether they were lobbied by interest groups or not.