

## Introduction

*No chlorinated chicken in our supermarkets and restaurants!* Slogans like this were the clarion calls of the fierce civic opposition to TTIP and CETA, which resulted in uncommon levels of civil society mobilization across Europe, and heavily muddled the waters for CETA, and in part led to the effective death of TTIP (Duina 2019). One set of actors of the mobilization avalanche around TTIP were digital advocacy groups, who, in the wake of their stunning success in lobbying on TTIP and CETA have been surprisingly quiet on a variety of comparable trade agreements. Those ignored agreements include the EU-Australia FTA, and the EU-Singapore FTA. Yet digital advocacy groups have been lobbying on other agreements during that time-period, such as Campact lobbying on the EU-Mercosur agreement. What drives these choices made by digital advocacy groups to lobby so selectively on trade policy issues?

Digital advocacy groups are understood as an online based, social media oriented subset of advocacy groups (Hall and Ireland 2016), that are either nationally or transnationally oriented. Those two types of digital advocacy groups tend to intersect when it comes to international trade policy issues. Digital advocacy groups have grown somewhat rapidly in recent years, be it economically or in power, following their successful lobbying engagement on TTIP. Furthermore, relatively few trade policy issues have seen serious lobbying efforts by digital advocacy groups since TTIP. This work posits that this rather limited lobbying on a select few international trade policy issues since TTIP occurs because digital advocacy groups primarily act entrepreneurially in their international trade policy issue prioritization. As a consequence thereof, the decision where to invest serious effort on lobbying on a certain issue is primarily based on the 'marketability' of said international trade policy issue.

This work proposes that an issue's marketability is of great import to digital advocacy group's agenda setting choices. This work aims to explore this hypothesis by analyzing a number of cases with different levels of lobbying efforts by digital advocacy groups. To that end this work shall dissect digital advocacy agenda setting outcomes in order to ascertain what may drive these differing levels of engagement with issues. In this regard this work found that, for the most part, issue marketability outperforms issue salience as an explanatory variable of agenda setting outcomes. Similarly aligned group activity levels are consistently the most reliable indicator of issue marketability. Further generalization to all agenda setting choices made by digital advocacy groups may require further research. Regarding the impacts of digital advocacy groups on the politicization of international trade policy issues, this work concludes that digital advocacy groups are unlikely to lead the charge. Therefore digital advocacy groups served an amplifying role in the politicization of international trade policy issues in the recent decade at most.

## Literature Review

The literature on digital advocacy groups is relatively sparse, which is why in order to draw upon rival theories to explain agenda setting choices, this work frames digital advocacy groups as part of the wider field of interest groups in general. Thus enabling it to draw upon a vast field of established theories from which this work may draw rival theories. Halpin, Fraussen, and Nownes (2018) have done a lot of the legwork in this regard and provided an excellent synthesis on the prevalent theories on issue prioritization of interest groups. Their work identified five overarching dimensions of interest group issue prioritization, and thus subsequently agenda setting, within the literature on interest groups.

Those dimensions are:

- 1) internal responsiveness, ergo a group's mission and member/donor preferences,
- 2) policy capacities, ergo group expertise,
- 3) niche considerations, ergo the degree of inter-group competition on an issue,
- 4) political opportunity structure, ergo whether the political conditions allow for progress on an issue,
- 5) and issue salience, ergo the degree of issue salience to key audiences.

The literature additionally distinguishes between insider and outsider strategies of interest groups. Insider strategies may be understood as directly influencing policymakers, while outside strategies attempt to shape public opinion. Different kinds of interest groups opt for varying strategic mixes, and thus agenda setting choices are shaped by the type of group and the strategy it pursues. Civil society groups generally opt to utilize outsider strategies more readily than insider strategies (Betzold 2013; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2017; Hanegraaff, Beyers, and Bruycker 2016), which is a distinction they share with digital advocacy groups (Hall 2019). Keck and Sikkink (2014:27) have put forward their observation that issues that are attributable to individuals are on average more attractive to interest groups than structural issues that lack personal attributability. They also note that issues centered on bodily harm to vulnerable individuals, and issues involving legal equality of opportunity do especially well. Regarding digital advocacy groups more specifically, Hall (2019) proposes that digital advocacy groups select their campaigns based entirely on issue salience due to their member-driven nature. Furthermore they posit that due to the capability of digital advocacy groups to gauge members' issue preferences, something this work shall dissect at a later point, issues that are salient to members then become the group's agenda. In spite of said conclusions, Hall noted varying levels of member-drivenness across digital advocacy groups. Johansson and Scaramuzzi (2019) engaged with digital activism and found that, contrary to extant interest group research, which limited itself to the political influence seeking behaviour of interest groups, digital advocacy groups seem to focus on political presence. They therefore propose to treat political influence and political presence as intertwined when dealing with digital advocacy groups. In sum, the field of interest group agenda setting research is left with a somewhat heterogeneous set of explanations for the agenda setting choices made by interest groups in the broader sense, and digital advocacy groups more specifically

## The Theory of Marketability

The past decade has seen both the rise of digital advocacy groups (Hall 2019), as well as a general rise in lobbying on international trade policy issues (Bièvre and Poletti 2020). In this regard, this work observes that digital advocacy groups began lobbying seriously on international trade policy issues starting with TTIP (Bauer 2016; Eliasson and Huet 2018). CETA saw subsequent politicization (Bauer 2016), which was also accompanied by lobbying by various digital advocacy groups. Since then, a host of similar-enough international trade policy issues, such as the EU-Vietnam, the EU-Australia, and the EU-Singapore FTA have been possible agenda items, which saw little to no serious lobbying effort by this work's exemplary digital advocacy groups.

This work posits that this may be due to a tendency of digital advocacy groups to act primarily entrepreneurially in their issue prioritization in international trade policy. This work posits that the cause of this presumed *modus operandi* of digital advocacy groups is linked to the mortality anxiety of the group (Gray and Lowery 1997). In line with the threat of mortality anxiety, digital advocacy groups may then endeavour to maximize resource gains in order to ensure organizational survival. It argues that offering individuals the chance to easily participate in politics to varying degrees of intensity is the core service on offer - a service customers are willing to trade for. Thus it posits that digital advocacy groups serve as a facilitator for people to participate politically utilizing the three resource dimensions established in the literature - giving time, giving money, and voting (Brady, Verba, and Scholzman 1995). Therefore, the theory of marketability proposes that digital advocacy groups select trade policy issues based on how many resources they could gain as a result of their lobbying. In short, this work posits that the marketability of an issue is a key factor in the international trade policy agenda setting of digital advocacy groups. That in turn has serious implications on the understanding of digital advocacy group agenda setting processes on international trade policy issues, yet also allows for the introduction of marketing theory concepts. This understanding of interest groups is not entirely unique, with scholars having paid heed to 'strategic concerns' that impact issue prioritization in interest groups in the past (Hall 2019; Johansson and Scaramuzzino 2019; Strolovitch 2008).

In order to set the frame for the theory of marketability, various terms and concepts beget elaboration, those being mortality anxiety, the nature of lobbying as a service, and the matter of resources. Group mortality anxiety was first introduced by Gray and Lowery (1997) in order to further the field's understanding of the rapid turnover interest groups experience. The rapid turnover of interest groups competing for resources has been observed by various scholars (Dür 2016; Gray and Lowery 1996). The concept has been somewhat neglected by interest group scholars in recent times (Halpin and Thomas 2012). Mortality anxiety is defined as a self-assessment by said group of the likelihood of the group soon facing an existence-threatening crisis within 5 years. Several presumed causes of mortality anxiety, which have since been empirically tested (Halpin and Thomas 2012), are, or were, present in digital advocacy groups. Thus this work posits that in the case of digital advocacy groups, at the time of their lobbying on TTIP, digital advocacy groups, in their mortality anxiety, may have been impelled to act entrepreneurially in an endeavour to acquire resources in order to stem said mortality

anxiety. Those formative organizational experiences continue to inform their behaviour even in contemporary times by virtue of organizational inertia. The theory of marketability at its core presupposes that nationally-based digital advocacy groups select international trade policy issues based on how marketable an issue is to (would-be) supporters, and the amount of resource gains that lobbying on an issue may reward. In the context of the theory of issue marketability, this work proposes that digital advocacy groups be analyzed as service providers. This work condenses the services on offer down to a single overarching product - political participation. In exchange for said product, customers are willing to offer up the resources established by the literature on political participation - time, votes, and money (Brady, Verba, and Scholzman 1995). Any interest group that is not a single-issue group will have two overarching organizational goals, the greatest amount of policy success in line with their vision and the presumed greatest benefit to its members (Klüver 2010), as well as the organization's continued existence (Heylen, Fraussen, and Beyers 2018). As this work has alluded previously, a group suffering from mortality anxiety is bound to prioritize the latter (Heylen, Fraussen, and Beyers 2018). The term resources can mean many things, although the literature on interest groups at the European Union level makes mention of financial resources, personnel resources and representativeness (Klüver 2010). Members play an important role in digital advocacy groups, as they claim to represent at least parts of civic society (Chadwick and Dennis 2017), instead of specific interests, and thus rely on members to legitimize their lobbying (Fraussen and Halpin 2018). Thus this work categorizes digital advocacy group resources into members, money, and presence/influence. All of these resource categories are to some degree interrelated, members plausibly drive presence/influence, money drives presence/influence, presence/influence drives members, and so on. Therefore for the purposes of this work, it proposes to treat all of the aforementioned as one singular variable in the context of the theory of marketability for the sake of coherence - resources.

Therefore this work has set the context for the theory of issue marketability, which proposes that digital advocacy groups act entrepreneurially in their issue prioritization on international trade policy issues. It posits that said behaviour is motivated by mortality anxiety and its echoes, and that in this context digital advocacy groups are to be analyzed as service providers. The aforementioned service providers select their products/issues to lobby on based on their relative marketability. It therefore proposes that an issue which is more marketable in respect of the aforementioned dimensions will be prioritized over another less marketable issue, and that this decision is taken with the aim of maximizing resource acquisition.

This work proposes that digital advocacy groups are not member-driven but customer-oriented in their issue prioritization process of international trade policy issues. Customer orientation implies an organizational commitment to customers and making '*customers and firms share interdependencies, values, and strategies over the long term*'. Therefore the theory of marketability posits that digital advocacy groups have about as great an understanding of their 'members' and their desires as is arguably possible, which implies that they are capable of designing campaigns that are well suited to their customers. These campaigns/products may not necessarily be tailored to the expressed desires of their polled members, as some scholars may posit in line with

their understanding of digital advocacy groups being member-driven. Instead digital advocacy groups design products in a way that, due to their customer orientation capacities, are perfectly capable of satisfying the needs of their customers, yet are also capable of maximizing resource gain.

As this work has elaborated previously, TTIP was the first successful foray into lobbying seriously on international trade policy issues of digital advocacy groups, which is why it argues that the exemplary digital advocacy groups it studies for the purpose of this work, 38 Degrees and Campact, have organizationally internalized their playbook developed for TTIP. Thus, in line with Figure 1, the more similar an issue to TTIP, the lower the degree of newness of both product and market, as observed by some scholars who posited that interest groups ‘learn’ (Halpin, Fraussen, and Nownes 2018). Thus this work concludes that any international trade policy issue has a relative degree of newness for a digital advocacy group, based on the extent to which it differs from TTIP. This degree of newness may furthermore impact an issue’s marketability. Scholars of service development generally claim that the greater the degree of newness in an endeavour, the greater the risk (Johnes and Storey 1998). The conditions of mortality anxiety imply that digital advocacy groups should favour endeavours that pose less risk, and thus should favour campaigns that are less new to them.

The research on first mover and second mover advantage posits that the first mover (the leader) earns more profits than the second mover (follower) if the reaction curves of the players are downward sloping (Gal-Or 1985). A downward sloping reaction curve in this regard refers to a market in which the leader can make a preemptive move, while an upward sloping reaction curve refers to followers being capable of copying and undercutting the leader. Digital advocacy groups lack expertise and are capable of rapid responses. Thus this work argues that these intrinsic organizational features of digital advocacy groups make them inherently likely to be second movers on any issue, and that they are only the more likely to follow, or collaborate, on an issue, the greater the overall newness of said issue to the organization. This is consistent with this work’s assumptions on risk averse behaviour under the threat of mortality anxiety.

Keck and Sikkink (2014) found that interest groups tend to gravitate towards issues that are attributable to individuals rather than ones which are structural in nature. Interest groups especially favour issues related to vulnerable individuals suffering bodily harm, and issues concerning legal equality of opportunity in their agenda setting. They furthermore argue that in order to campaign on an issue, it must be converted into a causal story that establishes a bearer of guilt (ibid:27,28). In the context of the theory of marketability this work posits that this may imply more generally that issues more conducive to emotive messaging may be more attractive to interest groups than other issues. Therefore this work posits that the greater the capacity for emotive messaging of an issue in line with Maslov’s hierarchy of needs, from the bottom up, the more marketable an issue, and thus the more likely an issue will make the agenda of digital advocacy groups when it comes to international trade policy.

In conclusion, this work posits that issue marketability is the criteria by which it argues digital advocacy groups prioritize international trade policy issues. In order to account for the aspects of marketability discussed

in regards to customer and product aspects by this work above, marketability posits that digital advocacy groups are aware of member preferences as well as their products and markets, and thus it posits the following:

1. The more equipped an issue to satisfy extant and attract would-be customers, the more likely it is to be prioritized, and
2. The lower the risk capacity of an issue of a sufficient emotive messaging capacity the more likely it is to be prioritized.

The above conditions are subject to considerations of maximizing both financial and presence/influence gains. Therefore this work puts forward the following hypotheses:

H1: The more marketable an international trade policy issue, the more likely digital advocacy groups are to lobby on it.

and

H2: The more salient an international trade policy issue, the more likely digital advocacy groups are to lobby on it.

### Methodology

This work seeks to verify its claims by studying two exemplary digital advocacy groups and utilizing Mill's method of difference applied to various cases with different lobbying outcomes. This work subsequently elaborates on its choice of digital advocacy groups and attempts an operationalization of both issue marketability and issue salience.

The two digital advocacy groups whose agenda setting outcomes this work shall study in some depth are 38 Degrees and Campact. The aforementioned have been chosen due to them representing parts of the populations of some of the most populous nations in the European Union, and subsequently Europe starting from 2021. Campact is of special interest due to the pivotal role several observers claimed it to have occupied in opposing TTIP (Bauer 2015, 2016a, 2016b). 38 Degrees makes for an interesting comparative study due to them being beholden to a markedly different populace than Campact, and whether the impacts on issue marketability therefrom may be visible in their differing issue prioritization outcomes.

This work operationalizes issue marketability by assessing Twitter activity, combined with whether and how many similarly aligned organizations lobby publicly on said issue comprise the customer aspect of an issue's marketability, while issue newness and associated risk, second mover potential, and emotive messaging capacity comprise the product aspect of issue marketability.

This work ascribes high salience to an issue if national Google search interest in a topic exceeds 20 in the time period prior to campaign start (relative to the interest peak of that year), as a baseline. This work then contextualizes this measure of search interest by comparing normalized search interest data across countries, as well as across issues over time in a specific country. It may deviate from this approach where appropriate or necessary.

Regarding the temporal question of at which points in time to measure both issue marketability and salience, in order to determine the start of lobbying efforts by a digital advocacy group on an issue, this work primarily

relies on data from Twitter, precisely the announcement of lobbying efforts thereon. Digital advocacy groups consistently announce the start of their lobbying efforts on an international trade policy issue on Twitter, which matches with observations by scholars on communication strategies of advocacy groups in other issue categories (Auger 2013; Barrios-O'Neill 2020). This work cross-compares this information gleaned from Twitter with press releases by the group in question, where available.

## Case Analysis

Why did CETA see so little lobbying by 38 Degrees compared to its extensive lobbying on TTIP? The easiest answer to this question is Brexit. This explanation fails to account for three arguments as to why the underlying processes of issue prioritization may not have been impacted by Brexit to the extent it appears to have had at first glance. The first argument being that the date of the Brexit referendum begets the question of why 38 Degrees chose not to engage on CETA prior to that point in time, e.g. as its sister organization Campact did in 2014. The second argument revolves around the fact that Brexit did not impact the short to mid-term impacts of CETA on UK citizens. The third argument this work presents as to why Brexit is not as potent an explanatory event as one may initially assume revolves around CETA's implied future role of serving as a blueprint for a future EU-UK relationship in the event of a Brexit (Davis 2016). The issue salience of TTIP was on the high end, relative to CETA at the very least. Additionally TTIP possessed a high degree of marketability in the UK in the time period prior to May 15th in 2014. This work also assigns a medium level of salience to CETA in the UK prior to 38 Degrees launching their campaign. Lastly, this work assigns a medium level of marketability to CETA relative to TTIP. Hence, the drop in seriousness of lobbying by 38 Degrees relative to TTIP that CETA experienced is not readily attributed to the change in issue salience, nor to the change in issue marketability.

There are two major trading partners of the EU that suffered from large fires that made the news worldwide in recent times, and that are or were in the process of negotiating a trade agreement with the EU. The digital advocacy group this work studies in this regard, Campact, only lobbied on one of these trade agreements - the EU-Mercosur agreement. Prior to Campact launching their campaign, Google search interest was at its peak, therefore this work assigns a salience of medium high to the EU-Mercosur agreement, due to the lower cross-country interest, as well as by virtue of the lag in interest between the fires in the Amazon and interest in the EU-Mercosur agreement. This work regards the marketability of the EU-Mercosur agreement in 2019, as per this work's operationalization thereof, to have been on the high medium end, diminished by the large associated degree of newness risk. This work ascribes a high medium degree of salience to the EU-Australia FTA by virtue of the vastly higher degree of search interest for the fires in Australia, and the opportunity to connect said fires to the EU-Australia FTA. Low emotive messaging capacity combined with the low amount of similarly aligned group activity make up the low issue marketability assessment that this work assigns to the EU-Australia FTA. Therefore this work concludes that in this instance, Campact's observed agenda setting outcome is more readily attributable to issue marketability, and the lack thereof, rather than issue salience.

The EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (JEFTA in short) and the EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (EU-Singapore FTA in short) were presented to the Council and the European Parliament for signature in 2018 (Laufer 2018). This work distinguishes between the EU-Singapore FTA and the EU-Singapore IPA in order to capture the similarities of the EU-Singapore FTA and JEFTA. Neither agreement contains investment protection clauses (Commission 2018a) and both are EU-only. Despite their similarities, Campact elected to limit its lobbying activities almost entirely to JEFTA. This work gauges the issue salience of JEFTA in Germany prior to Campact launching their campaign to have been high, by virtue of the degree of search interest both in Germany, and the large German search interest relative to the most interested country, the Netherlands. JEFTA is ascribed a medium degree of marketability in Germany and thus for Campact. This work is forced to ascribe no degree of salience whatsoever in Germany to the EU-Singapore FTA by virtue of no search interest. The EU-Singapore agreement is ascribed a low issue marketability, by virtue of the lack of similarly aligned group activity, as well as the lack of emotive messaging capacity. Therefore, both issue salience and issue marketability are adequate predictors of the agenda setting outcome this work observed in the case of JEFTA and the EU-Singapore FTA.

The Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA in short) is built upon the WTO framework with the intention of liberalising trade in services between the negotiating parties which include the European Union. TiSA is oftentimes connected to other trade policy issues such as TTIP, CETA, and TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership), and generally used in the same sentence by interest groups aligned against (Sawatzki 2015). This work attributes a low degree of salience to TiSA in the UK in the time period it observes, as well as for 2015 overall. On the other hand, this work assigns a marketability grade of a medium low to TiSA in the UK, buoyed by the relatively large amount of similarly aligned group activity, whilst negatively impacted by the low amount of activity on Twitter, the large issue newness risk, and the low emotive messaging capacity. This work regards the salience of TiSA to have been on the low end in Germany in the time period it observed. Because of the extensive issue framing efforts by other groups and thus the potential for second moving on TiSA ameliorating the associated newness risk, this work attributes a high degree of marketability to TiSA in Germany.

## Conclusions

This work proposed the theory of issue marketability as a driving force of issue prioritization in digital advocacy groups, while also engaging with the claim of issue salience being the primary driver of issue prioritization. It sought to verify or falsify its hypotheses by analyzing a set of cases and gauging their respective issue salience and issue marketability levels. The four distinct cases this work analyzed were as follows: 38 Degrees and its varying levels of lobbying engagement on TTIP and CETA respectively, Campact and its choice to lobby on JEFTA but not against the EU-Singapore agreement, Campact and its choice to lobby on the EU-Mercosur agreement, but not on the EU-Australia agreement, and lastly Campact lobbying on TiSA while 38 Degrees did not.



Having summarized this work's approach, it is imperative that it acknowledges its limitations. Said limitations are threefold and stem in part from being built upon partially still developing theoretical foundations, in part from attempting to achieve more than its resources permitted, and lastly, failing to pierce the veil covering digital advocacy group agenda setting mechanisms to the extent it aimed to. Despite failing to meet its relatively grand ambitions, this work has made somewhat significant contributions towards both advancing the field's understanding of digital advocacy groups, and furthermore also bears the potential to contribute to future studies in the field on interest group behaviour as a whole.

This work has contributed further to the foundation of utilizing Google trend data for the purposes of measuring issue salience in a much more accurate and accessible manner compared to methods such as bi-annual questionnaires that do not explicitly gauge salience of any specific issue. A large part of this work was dedicated to verifying or falsifying its secondary hypotheses, whether issue salience may explain digital advocacy group agenda setting more consistently than issue marketability. In conducting case analyses, this work struggled with a plausible, consistent, and specific operationalization of salience. Other scholars relied on newspaper visibility (Dür and Mateo 2014) or utilized Eurobarometer data, collected bi-annually, as a proxy for the salience of an issue category (Hall 2019). Google trend data on the other hand, despite its many flaws and relative nature, has one distinct advantage: being able to compare search interest (and as the argument goes, salience) across issues, across time, across countries. Scholars have paid previous heed to the implications of utilizing high-frequency google search data to gauge metrics such as issue salience (Reilly, Richey, and Taylor 2012). This approach of utilizing relative search interest suffers from a few flaws, that may be addressable utilizing extant resources. Due to the cross-comparability of search interest, one need only ascertain the exact number of search interest a term received in a given year (if such data is available) and then derive, relative to the known quantity of search interest for that given term, the search interest for the term or issue one aims to determine the salience of.

Having exhaustively addressed this work's limitations and strengths, it shall subsequently consider its findings and draw conclusions therefrom. Analyzing 38 Degrees' engagement on TTIP and CETA, this work was able to find that as per its operationalization, CETA's marketability was more suited than its salience to explain why 38 Degrees' engagement dropped so significantly relative to TTIP. As it has previously alluded, this work's findings in this case suffer from the extraordinary event of Brexit. Nonetheless, it has also presented an argument why its findings in this regard may be valid in spite thereof. This work's analysis of Campacts's lobbying on the EU-Mercosur agreement, and the lack thereof on the EU-Australia agreement, showed that issue salience was not necessarily a reliable predictor of interest group engagement. This work's logic in this regard rests on the proposed opportunity for reaping salience benefits due to high salience events in the region. If one accepts that interest groups possess the capacity to piggyback off the salience of tangentially related events to attribute additional salience to causes they may champion, this work's conclusions in this regard are of great import in understanding the agenda setting of digital advocacy groups. An analysis of Campact's choice to lobby extensively on JEFTA, while barely doing so on the EU-Singapore agreement did not conclusively

support either hypotheses this work seeks to verify or falsify. Campact's prioritization of JEFTA may have been by virtue of the high degree of issue salience associated, yet both salience and marketability were low for the EU-Singapore agreement. Lastly, this work analysed the different issue prioritization choices made by Campact and 38 Degrees, the former of which lobbied on TiSA, while the latter did not. The analysis conducted by this work noted salience as the superior explanatory factor in the case of 38 Degrees, while Campact's issue prioritization is better explained by issue marketability as per this work's operationalization thereof.

At its beginnings this work made mention of the wider context of a drastic increase of politicization of international trade policy issues in the European Union in the 2010s. This work's conclusions may insofar be taken as a contribution to this body of works as it has concluded that issue marketability is consistently expressed through similarly aligned group activity. Therefore, while some may point at digital advocacy groups as part of the initial pebbles to start the landslide of politicization of international trade policy issues (Bauer 2016a), this work's conclusions rather support the argument that digital advocacy groups are more likely to be part of the landslide, rather than part of those initial pebbles to start it all. The drastic increase and the simultaneous rise of digital advocacy groups may be interconnected nonetheless, and digital advocacy groups are certainly part of the group of actors making up the increase in politicization, yet this work finds it somewhat unlikely that digital advocacy groups are responsible for this trend. Instead, by virtue of their mode of issue prioritization, they may function as a perfect amplifier of politicization, as similarly aligned group activity reliably drives digital advocacy group issue prioritization.

Taken as a whole, while digital advocacy groups probably are not the horsemen of the politicization of international trade policy issues, they nonetheless have benefitted from lobbying on various issues such as TTIP. Digital advocacy policies are certainly here to stay, in a contemporary context, the digital space has become more important than ever, and digital advocacy groups are unlikely to stop lobbying on international trade policy issues as long as they remain marketable. Thus there is much to delve deeper into in regards to digital advocacy groups yet. This work has been able to show that issue marketability, or entrepreneurial concerns more generally, impact agenda setting outcomes when it comes to international trade policy issues. On the other hand, digital advocacy groups lobby on various other categories of issues, and whether marketability is applicable to said other categories at all will require further research.

Department of Political Science

Course of International Public Policies

# Chlorine Chicken No Thanks? Explaining Trade Policy Agenda Setting In Digital Advocacy Groups

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## List of Abbreviations

ATTAC	Association pour la Taxation des Transactions financières et pour l'Action Citoyenne (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and for Citizens' Action)
CETA	Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement
DAG	Digital Advocacy Group
EU	European Union
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
ISDS	Investor-State Dispute Settlement
JEFTA	EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement
OPEN	Online Progressive Engagement Network
TiSA	Trade in Services Agreement
TTIP	Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

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## Introduction

*No chlorinated chicken in our supermarkets and restaurants!* Slogans like this were the clarion calls of the fierce civic opposition to TTIP and CETA, which resulted in uncommon levels of civil society mobilization across Europe, and heavily muddled the waters for CETA, and in part led to the effective death of TTIP (Duina 2019). One set of actors of the mobilization avalanche around TTIP were digital advocacy groups, who, in the wake of their stunning success in lobbying on TTIP and CETA have been surprisingly quiet on a variety of comparable trade agreements. Those ignored agreements include the EU-Australia FTA, and the EU-Singapore FTA. Yet digital advocacy groups have been lobbying on other agreements during that time-period, such as Campact lobbying on the EU-Mercosur agreement. What drives these choices made by digital advocacy groups to lobby so selectively on trade policy issues? Could the answer to this question possibly contribute to the wider puzzle of the increased politicization of trade policy issues observed in recent years (Bièvre and Poletti 2020; De Bièvre et al. 2020; Duina 2019; Young 2017)?

Digital advocacy groups are understood as an online based, social media oriented subset of advocacy groups (Hall and Ireland 2016), that are either nationally or transnationally oriented. Those two types of digital advocacy groups tend to intersect when it comes to international trade policy issues. Digital advocacy groups have grown somewhat rapidly in recent years, be it economically or in power, following their successful lobbying engagement on TTIP. For example, Campact (DE) rose from an income of € 2 Million in 2012 to € 10 Million in 2018, and 38 Degrees (UK) went from £ 1.7 Million in 2012-13 to £ 5.5 Million in 2018-19 in income. Thus, one may observe an increase of the politicization of EU trade policy issues, and an increase of lobbying efforts on international trade policy by digital advocacy groups. Additionally, this work notes the stunning growth, of both income and influence/presence, in digital advocacy groups. Furthermore, relatively few trade policy issues have seen serious lobbying efforts by digital advocacy groups since TTIP. This work posits that this rather limited lobbying on a select few international trade policy issues since TTIP occurs because digital advocacy groups primarily act entrepreneurially in their international trade policy issue prioritization. As a consequence thereof, the decision where to invest serious effort on lobbying on a certain issue is primarily based on the ‘marketability’ of said international trade policy issue. Other factors of issue prioritization identified by the literature are arguably inferior to marketability as a predictor of digital advocacy group international trade policy agenda setting outcomes..

Hence this work seeks to explore the phenomenon of generally national issue oriented digital advocacy groups lobbying on select international trade policy issues, while leaving a host of similar ones by the wayside. This work proposes that an issue’s marketability is of great import to digital advocacy group’s

agenda setting choices. This work aims to explore this hypothesis by analyzing a number of cases with different levels of lobbying efforts by digital advocacy groups. To that end this work shall dissect digital advocacy agenda setting outcomes in order to ascertain what may drive these differing levels of engagement with issues. In this regard this work found that, for the most part, issue marketability outperforms issue salience as an explanatory variable of agenda setting outcomes. Similarly aligned group activity levels are consistently the most reliable indicator of issue marketability. Further generalization to all agenda setting choices made by digital advocacy groups may require further research. Regarding the impacts of digital advocacy groups on the politicization of international trade policy issues, this work concludes that digital advocacy groups are unlikely to lead the charge. Therefore digital advocacy groups served an amplifying role in the politicization of international trade policy issues in the recent decade at most.

The literature on digital advocacy groups is relatively sparse, which is why in order to draw upon rival theories to explain agenda setting choices, this work frames digital advocacy groups as part of the wider field of interest groups in general. Thus enabling it to draw upon a vast field of established theories from which this work may draw rival theories. Halpin, Fraussen, and Nownes (2018) have done a lot of the legwork in this regard and provided an excellent synthesis on the prevalent theories on issue prioritization of interest groups. Their work identified five overarching dimensions of interest group issue prioritization, and thus subsequently agenda setting, within the literature on interest groups.

Those dimensions are:

- 1) internal responsiveness, ergo a group's mission and member/donor preferences,
- 2) policy capacities, ergo group expertise,
- 3) niche considerations, ergo the degree of inter-group competition on an issue,
- 4) political opportunity structure, ergo whether the political conditions allow for progress on an issue,
- 5) and issue salience, ergo the degree of issue salience to key audiences.

The literature additionally distinguishes between insider and outsider strategies of interest groups. Insider strategies may be understood as directly influencing policymakers, while outside strategies attempt to shape public opinion. Different kinds of interest groups opt for varying strategic mixes, and thus agenda setting choices are shaped by the type of group and the strategy it pursues. Civil society groups generally opt to utilize outsider strategies more readily than insider strategies (Betzold 2013; Dellmuth and Tallberg 2017; Hanegraaff, Beyers, and Bruycker 2016), which is a distinction they share with digital advocacy groups (Hall 2019). Keck and Sikkink (2014:27) have put forward their observation

that issues that are attributable to individuals are on average more attractive to interest groups than structural issues that lack personal attributability. They also note that issues centered on bodily harm to vulnerable individuals, and issues involving legal equality of opportunity do especially well. Regarding digital advocacy groups more specifically, Hall (2019) proposes that digital advocacy groups select their campaigns based entirely on issue salience due to their member-driven nature. Furthermore they posit that due to the capability of digital advocacy groups to gauge members' issue preferences, something this work shall dissect at a later point, issues that are salient to members then become the group's agenda. In spite of said conclusions, Hall noted varying levels of member-drivenness across digital advocacy groups. Johannson and Scaramuzzi (2019) engaged with digital activism and found that, contrary to extant interest group research, which limited itself to the political influence seeking behaviour of interest groups, digital advocacy groups seem to focus on political presence. They therefore propose to treat political influence and political presence as intertwined when dealing with digital advocacy groups. In sum, the field of interest group agenda setting research is left with a somewhat heterogeneous set of explanations for the agenda setting choices made by interest groups in the broader sense, and digital advocacy groups more specifically.

Why should scholars care about digital advocacy groups, their agenda setting processes, and what drives digital advocacy group issue prioritization? Digital advocacy groups themselves constitute a relatively recently established subgroup of interest groups with a distinct reliance on digital media. Digital advocacy groups have seen a somewhat rapid spread across countries, and individual digital advocacy groups have seen rapid growth in financial capability and societal reach, and thus influence in general. As the introduction has shown, digital advocacy groups constitute an important actor in the political arena, and their agenda choices are thus a factor in driving politicization of international trade policy issues. If this work were to further the field's understanding of digital advocacy group agenda setting, it may also add to the body of research on the aforementioned politicization. Therefore the purpose of this work is to further the understanding of digital advocacy groups and the rise in politicization of trade policy issues utilizing the tool of examining the agenda setting choices made by digital advocacy groups. This research is wholly necessary by virtue of the presently sparse body of research on digital advocacy groups, as well as to better the understanding of the politicization of trade policy issues. Therefore this work poses the question as to why digital advocacy groups selectively lobby on international trade policy issues.

## Literature Review

As alluded in the introduction, interest groups have always played a large part in the structure of contemporary Western democracies (Hacker and Pierson 2014). This is even more true for the European Union, made evident by the fact that the Treaties themselves mandate discourse with ‘representative associations and civil society’ (European Union 2002). This role of interest groups has resulted in a large body of literature on interest groups as a whole. The field has produced various theories on the agenda setting of interest groups more generally over the decades, yet very few attempts have been made to explain the agenda setting of digital advocacy groups.

Thus in the context and for the purposes of this work, it is important to keep digital advocacy groups in mind as part of the larger context of the research on interest groups generally, rather than advocacy group research more specifically. An advocacy group is commonly defined as an organization that does not inherently seek pecuniary and non-pecuniary benefits for its members (Young and Everitt 2004:5). This definition is so broad that in this author’s opinion, this distinction between interest groups and advocacy groups becomes somewhat devoid of value. This is more so the case in the context of digital advocacy groups. Digital advocacy groups have rather broadly worded charters, and are by no means politically neutral. Exemplarily, Campact was found not deserving of tax benefits generally afforded to donors of ‘neutral’ non-profit organizations by the relevant authorities (SPIEGEL 2019). Thus, in order to avoid any unnecessary confusion, this work, despite focusing on digital *advocacy* groups, shall utilize the term interest groups. This concerns any elaborations for the purpose of this work on the currently prevailing theories on the agenda setting of interest groups.

This work features three primary ambitions, it seeks to add to the general body of research on digital advocacy groups, it seeks to explore digital advocacy group agenda setting processes, and it seeks to explore digital advocacy group international trade policy issue prioritization. Additionally, it considers the politicization of trade policy issues that runs parallel to the advent of digital advocacy groups, and digital advocacy groups’ role in said politicization. Hence, in the framing of this work’s arguments, whenever politicization is brought to the fore, it shall imply the usage of de Wilde, Leupold and Schmidtke’s (2016) operationalization of politicization and subsequent attempts at explaining said phenomenon, which posits that the politicization of EU politics in general can be observed in:

*‘(a) the growing salience of European governance, involving (b) a polarisation of opinion, and (c) an expansion of actors and audiences engaged in monitoring EU affairs’*

(de Wilde, Leupold, Schmidtke 2016:4). Especially the latter variable in which politicization can be

observed is of great importance to this work's objective. One may observe an increased level of engagement in select issues by digital advocacy groups, who therefore constitute a part of the observed increased politicization. This overlap is paid heed to, but not made the primary objective of this work.

There has been comparatively little research on the topic of digital advocacy groups, despite the fact that digital advocacy groups themselves have been around for longer than one would assume, with MoveOn, the first and US-based digital advocacy group, having been founded in 1998. The initial 'progressive' focus enshrined in MoveOn (Eaton 2010) was also observed in subsequent sister-groups (Karpf 2013), which is something the literature on digital advocacy groups appears to agree upon (Karpf 2012, Vromen 2017). Other than that, the literature is not very conclusive as to what sets digital advocacy groups apart from regular interest groups, or whether they are to be distinguished at all, although there are two distinct strands of arguments on special characteristics of digital advocacy groups observable in the literature. The first strand posits that digital advocacy groups are intrinsically different from regular interest groups by virtue of a set of intra-organizational features. Said features being digital advocacy group's relative youth, their inherent lack of one core policy field by virtue of a certain lack of specific issue expertise, as well as their proclivity for inter-organisational collaboration, again due to a lack of expertise on their behalf, resulting in a reliance on outside expertise on issues. Hall and Ireland (2016) have termed these distinguishing features as digital advocacy groups inherently being (more) 'nimble and reactive', 'multi-issue', and 'collaborative' than 'traditional' interest groups. In sum, the aforementioned make up the internal argument as to why digital advocacy groups are to be considered distinct. Secondly, some scholars posit that their greater degree of member involvement sets digital advocacy groups apart from their 'traditional' counterparts (Schmitz et al. 2020), which is something that the digital advocacy groups themselves assert (Macintyre 2020). Other scholars distinguish digital advocacy groups from 'traditional' interest groups by virtue of their communication strategy (Asad and Le Dantec 2017, Brady, Young, and McLeod 2015, Shulman 2009). In sum, the aforementioned comprise the external argument as to why digital advocacy groups are distinct from interest groups.

Not much has been produced regarding the agenda setting or issue prioritization of digital advocacy groups themselves, with the exception of Hall (2019) who posit that digital advocacy groups primarily set their agendas based on issue salience. The literature on solely the agenda setting of interest groups on the other hand is more expansive than the literature on digital advocacy groups as a whole. It may be reduced to five primary dimensions that scholars have paid heed to: internal responsiveness, policy capacities, niche considerations, political opportunity structure, and issue salience. Proponents of the internal

responsiveness approach suggest that interest groups focus their attention on issues that ‘accord with or infringe upon the interest of their baseline constituency’ (Halpin, Fraussen, and Nownes 2018). Others emphasize the directive nature of a group’s mission, as well as its constraining nature, pointing out a group’s purpose, supported by members and donors (Minkoff and Powell 2006), in turn supporting the pluralist view of interest groups (Truman 1971). Other scholars have pointed out the inherently limited and limiting nature of resources for interest groups, and the impact thereof on agenda setting choices. In this regard the literature identifies two subdimensions of resources, financial resources (Halpin and Binderkrantz 2011) and ‘staff experience’ (Moe 1980; Salisbury 1969). For the latter the literature additionally distinguishes whether or not a group possesses policy expertise, political knowledge, mobilization, or implementation capacities (Bouwen 2002; Eising 2004; Maloney, Jordan, and McLaughlin 1994; Truman 1971). Another strand of inquiry in the literature are niche considerations, some note that groups who occupy a similar policy domain as others, have a tendency to seek out niches within that domain (Browne 1990). Other scholars observe a tendency to jump onto issues addressed by similar groups, in a sort of *bandwagoning* effect (Baumgartner and Leech 2001). Scholars also propose that external factors, such as the political opportunity structure around an issue, are bound to have an effect on the issue prioritization of interest groups as well (Austen-Smith and Wright 1994). There are two kinds of competing logics attached, the first being that favourable conditions drive issue prioritization (Hojnacki et al. 2012). The alternate logic being that unfavourable conditions drive issue prioritization (Austen-Smith and Wright 1994). The last overarching driver of agenda setting choices identified in the literature is issue salience, to governments (Baumgartner et al. 2011), the public (Rasmussen, Carroll, and Lowery 2014), and the media (Binderkrantz, Christiansen, and Pedersen 2015). The import of this driver of issue prioritization is supported by findings made by other scholars that examined digital advocacy groups specifically, who concluded that digital advocacy groups select issues primarily based on issue salience (Hall 2019).

Whether the above research is immediately fit to be put to work in order to explore the research question this work seeks to answer is uncertain. Caveat number one is that a majority of the above theories are on the agenda setting of interest groups, while this work seeks to answer what drives digital advocacy group issue prioritization. This work has previously made mention of the arguments as to why digital advocacy groups may be sufficiently distinct. It is therefore somewhat problematic to assume that digital advocacy groups are similar enough to apply the extant theories thereupon. As a consequence certain theories may not fit digital advocacy groups due to their different modes of lobbying, their

differing incentives, as well as their differing organizational structures. Whether the extant theories on interest group agenda setting are applicable to digital advocacy groups is something this work shall explore as part of its endeavours to explore the rival to the hypothesis this work proposes. Said rival theory stems from research on digital advocacy group agenda setting (Hall 2019), whose methodological flaws ought to be addressed. Its primary flaw stems from a mismatch of theory and dataset. Hall extensively expounded on the flexibility and rapid response capacities of digital advocacy groups (Hall and Ireland 2016; Hall 2019), yet the dataset they rely on is the bi-annual Eurobarometer. Hall utilized the salience of refugee related crises and subsequent lobbying by digital advocacy groups to argue that issue salience drives digital advocacy group prioritization. Yet the dataset they utilized neither possesses a sufficiently high frequency (it is conducted merely bi-annually) to account for the rapid response capacities of digital advocacy groups, nor is the salience of refugees explicitly part of the Eurobarometer questionnaire, they were instead forced to utilize the salience of migration as a proxy for refugee related issues. Additionally, Hall (2019) suffers from an endogeneity issue in their analysis, with it being somewhat challenging to convincingly demonstrate that digital advocacy groups lobby solely based on salience, accounting for the simultaneity issue associated with issue prioritization and issue salience.

#### Marketability - Chlorinated Chicken as the Progenitor of International Trade Policy Lobbying?

The past decade has seen both the rise of digital advocacy groups (Hall 2019), as well as a general rise in lobbying on international trade policy issues (Bièvre and Poletti 2020). In this regard, this work observes that digital advocacy groups began lobbying seriously on international trade policy issues starting with TTIP (Bauer 2016; Eliasson and Huet 2018). CETA saw subsequent politicization (Bauer 2016), which was also accompanied by lobbying by various digital advocacy groups. Since then, a host of similar-enough international trade policy issues, such as the Vietnam, the Australia, and the Singapore FTA have been possible agenda items, which saw little to no serious lobbying effort by this work's exemplary digital advocacy groups.

This work posits that this may be due to a tendency of digital advocacy groups to act primarily entrepreneurially in their issue prioritization in international trade policy. This work posits that the cause of this presumed *modus operandi* of digital advocacy groups is linked to the mortality anxiety of the group (Gray and Lowery 1997). In line with the threat of mortality anxiety, digital advocacy groups may then endeavour to maximize resource gains in order to ensure organizational survival. It argues that offering individuals the chance to easily participate in politics to varying degrees of intensity is the core

service on offer - a service customers are willing to trade for. Thus it posits that digital advocacy groups serve as a facilitator for people to participate politically utilizing the three resource dimensions established in the literature - giving time, giving money, and voting (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). Therefore, the theory of marketability proposes that digital advocacy groups select trade policy issues based on how many resources they could gain as a result of their lobbying. In short, this work posits that the marketability of an issue is a key factor in the international trade policy agenda setting of digital advocacy groups. That in turn has serious implications on the understanding of digital advocacy group agenda setting processes on international trade policy issues, yet also allows for the introduction of marketing theory concepts. This understanding of interest groups is not entirely unique, with scholars having paid heed to 'strategic concerns' that impact issue prioritization in interest groups in the past (Hall 2019; Johannson and Scaramuzzino 2019; Strolovtich 2008).

### **Mortality Anxiety**

Group mortality anxiety was first introduced by Gray and Lowery (1997) in order to further the field's understanding of the rapid turnover interest groups experience. The rapid turnover of interest groups competing for resources has been observed by various scholars (Dür 2016; Gray and Lowery 1996). The concept has been somewhat neglected by interest group scholars in recent times (Halpin and Thomas 2012). Mortality anxiety is defined as a self-assessment by said group of the likelihood of the group soon facing an existence-threatening crisis within 5 years. Several presumed causes of mortality anxiety, which have since been empirically tested (Halpin and Thomas 2012), are, or were, present in digital advocacy groups. This work argues that digital advocacy groups suffered from an inability to offer selective additional incentives, relative organizational youth, and the threat of growing member heterogeneity, at the time of their first serious foray into lobbying on international trade policy issues - TTIP. Relative organizational youth no longer holds true in contemporary times, seeing as digital advocacy groups as a whole, and this work's exemplary digital advocacy groups specifically, are well established actors in contemporary times. In response to that this work argues that much of digital advocacy group lobbying on international trade policy issues is informed by their 'smashing' success on TTIP - at a time when the exemplary digital advocacy groups for the purpose of this work, Campact and 38 Degrees, were less than ten and five years old respectively. Once these institutional experiences, an internal playbook on trade, so to say, had been established, it argues that the inherent lack of internal staff expertise in digital advocacy groups (Halpin, Fraussen, and Nownes 2018; Hall 2019) resulted in little-to-no deviation from the proven



approach - never change a working system. Thus this work posits that in the case of digital advocacy groups, at the time of their lobbying on TTIP, digital advocacy groups, in their mortality anxiety, may have been impelled to act entrepreneurially in an endeavour to acquire resources in order to stem said mortality anxiety. Those formative organizational experiences continue to inform their behaviour even in contemporary times by virtue of organizational inertia.

### **Lobbying as a Service**

Marketability at its core presupposes that nationally-based digital advocacy groups select international trade policy issues based on how marketable an issue is to (would-be) supporters, and the amount of resource gains that lobbying on an issue may reward. Said gains could then be utilized in service of other objectives of the group, be it continued survival or other causes. This is in line with strategic management approaches and research on the implications of growth sharing matrices, where gains from one service may support development of another (Henderson 1970). In the context of the theory of issue marketability, this work proposes that digital advocacy groups be analyzed as service providers, in order to be able to draw upon established scholarly concepts in marketing. To support this approach, it draws upon a common definition of services, which implies that *‘one part, the service provider, performs a certain activity that includes a specific output and involves certain experiences, while the other party sees value in the output, the experience, or both combined and is willing to pay for it or exchange for something else of equivalent value.’* (Penin 2018:20). What is the service provided in the case of digital advocacy groups? Lobbying on a topic, or an experience, such as participation in demonstrations. If the customer sees value in that act of lobbying or the experiences on offer, they exchange something of value, e.g. their signature, their time, or their money, for lobbying on that issue. In a way, this is where the parallel breaks down, which is why, for coherence and simplicity’s sake, this work condenses the services on offer down to a single overarching product - political participation. In exchange for said product, customers are willing to offer up the resources established by the literature on political participation - time, votes, and money (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). All of these resources can and will be plausibly utilized by digital advocacy groups, time given is used in demonstrations and mailing campaigns (Gray 2011). Votes are strategically utilized in order to get favoured politicians into office (Kolb 2017). Money is of course utilized to fund both the organization, as well as specific campaigns. Therefore for the purposes of this work, it concludes that, at least in the context of marketability, it is plausible to treat digital advocacy groups as service providers, and their campaigns as services they have

on offer - summarily referred to as political participation - which their customers receive in exchange for giving their time, their vote, and their money.

## **Resources**

Any interest group that is not a single-issue group will have two overarching organizational goals, the greatest amount of policy success in line with their vision and the presumed greatest benefit to its members (Klüver 2010), as well as the organization's continued existence (Heylen, Fraussen, and Beyers 2018). As this work has alluded previously, a group suffering from mortality anxiety is bound to prioritize the latter (Heylen, Fraussen, and Beyers 2018). What is required in order to ensure the continued existence of a group? Resources. The term resources can mean many things, although the literature on interest groups at the European Union level makes mention of financial resources, personnel resources and representativeness (Klüver 2010). Members play an important role in digital advocacy groups, as they claim to represent at least parts of civic society (Chadwick and Dennis 2017), instead of specific interests, and thus rely on members to legitimize their lobbying (Fraussen and Halpin 2018). This may also explain why digital advocacy groups advertise their 'member' numbers prominently.<sup>1</sup> Any person to sign up for their newsletter is considered a member - the bar for entry is low, and the number of members is utilized as a tool to legitimize digital advocacy group lobbying. Thus this work posits that the member-reliant nature of digital advocacy groups results in an intrinsic organizational focus on the satisfaction of current members, as well as the acquisition of new ones. On the other hand, personnel expertise resources don't really matter to digital advocacy groups for the most part (Hall 2019), as they are inherently personnel expertise poor. Representativeness is valuable to digital advocacy groups because it positively impacts a group's influence. Additionally scholars in the field note that digital advocacy groups appear to pursue political presence just as much as political influence (Johansson and Scaramuzzino 2019). Influence and presence are thus strongly interrelated, making a disentanglement a challenge. Thus this work categorizes digital advocacy group resources into members, money, and presence/influence. All of these resource categories are to some degree interrelated, members plausibly drive presence/influence, money drives presence/influence, presence/influence drives members, and so on. Therefore for the purposes of this work, it proposes to treat all of the aforementioned as one singular variable in the context of the theory of marketability for the sake of coherence - resources.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.campact.de/> and <https://home.38degrees.org.uk/>

Therefore this work has set the context for the theory of issue marketability, which proposes that digital advocacy groups act entrepreneurially in their issue prioritization on international trade policy issues. It posits that said behaviour is motivated by mortality anxiety and its echoes, and that in this context digital advocacy groups are to be analyzed as service providers. The aforementioned service providers select their products/issues to lobby on based on their relative marketability. It therefore proposes that an issue which is more marketable in respect of the aforementioned dimensions will be prioritized over another less marketable issue, and that this decision is taken with the aim of maximizing resource acquisition.

### **Theory of Issue Marketability**

The first aspect of marketability makes the claim that, in spite of the traditional understanding of digital advocacy groups as considerably more member-driven than traditional interest groups (Hall and Ireland 2016, Hall 2019, and Karpf 2016), this work proposes that digital advocacy groups are not member-driven but customer-oriented in their issue prioritization process of international trade policy issues. This difference may seem superfluous at first, but carries serious implications on digital advocacy group agenda setting as this work shall subsequently elaborate. Customer orientation is generally understood as a firm concentrating on providing products and services that fulfill customer needs (Dean and Bowen 1994). Other scholars consider said understanding insufficient, and add that customer orientation implies an organizational commitment to customers and making ‘*customers and firms share interdependencies, values, and strategies over the long term*’. Thus firms rely on direct customer contact, gather information from them on their needs, and utilize customer-supplied information in the design and delivery of products and services (Schneider and Bowen 1995). Having established this work’s working definition of what constitutes customer-orientation, making the leap from a member-driven understanding of digital advocacy groups to a customer-oriented understanding requires some underpinning. Towards this end, this work dissects digital advocacy group’s self-reported agenda setting mechanisms, contextualizes them by revealing the technological status quo, and underpins its argument by taking stock of digital advocacy group executive personnel statements on the nature of their groups. The exemplary digital advocacy groups for the purposes of this argument, and the object of this work, are Campact and 38 Degrees. Campact reports as its agenda setting process a decision made by its CEO based on 1) the result of a discussion within its campaigning team, 2) input from cooperating groups with expertise, and 3) the results of a survey of randomly selected members within their newsletter list (Campact 2019c, see

also Annex). 38 Degrees is structured similarly, with inputs from social media, staff deliberation, and 3rd party inputs being factored in, combined with polls (see Annex for an example), and the 38 Degrees staff then launching campaigns based on that information (38 Degrees 2015b). To reiterate the specifics of what constitutes a customer-oriented firm, it is an organizational commitment to customers, and endeavours to share interdependencies, values, and strategies over the long-term with its customers. This work argues that there is a significant, admittedly possibly coincidental, overlap between the self-reported, observed, and possible capabilities of digital advocacy groups, and the prescribed activities outlined by Schneider and Bowen (1995). Yet it also observes that digital advocacy groups appear to be actively engaged in building and maintaining said capabilities. An analysis of staff of the groups in question surfaced a relatively large amount of staff in support of activities in service of customer-oriented strategic actions outlined above. 38 Degrees has three dedicated ‘member insight’ positions, relative to its 41.8 full-time employees (38 Degrees 2020). Campact on the other hand refers to its ‘listening’ staff as data analysts, who are numbered four, relative to its 64 full-time employees (Campact 2020). Digital advocacy groups appear to be especially adept at gathering information on the ‘needs’ of customers, and possess the capacity to utilize customer-supplied information in the design and delivery of services at a rapid pace. These capabilities are, at that scale, unique to digital advocacy groups (Hall 2019). This has also been observed by other scholars (Karpf 2016; 2018) who elaborated on the ability of digital advocacy groups to ‘listen’, terming it ‘analytic activism’, which is essentially an euphemistic term for extensive large scale analytics and data mining capabilities. Exemplary organizations capable of ‘listening’, or analytic activism, noted in their work (Karpf 2016) include Campact and 38 Degrees. Additionally, the state of the art of data analysis has seen - in parallel with the rise of social media and greater amounts of available data - a rapid increase in what is feasible. Examples for automated processing of information include aspect-based opinion polling from customer reviews (Zhu et al. 2011), detecting general opinions from customer surveys (Stepanov and Riccardi 2011), opinion mining (Bhuiyan, Xu, and Jøsang 2009), social media sentiment analysis (Habernal, Ptáček, and Steinberger 2014; Salas-Zárate et al. 2017), and large scale opinionated content analysis (Pirani, Madhavi, and Singh 2017). Thus this work notes that its two exemplary digital advocacy organizations possess all the pre-requisite capacities to support a customer-oriented firm framework. Admittedly the mere existence of such capabilities to do so does not necessarily imply that digital advocacy groups actually behave in a customer-oriented manner.

Having established that digital advocacy groups possess the capabilities to support a customer-oriented business approach, this work presents the argument as to why digital advocacy groups may plausibly act

in a customer-oriented manner, rather than member-driven, as suggested by the literature. Its argument is in part based on the previously presupposed impetus of mortality anxiety, meaning that an interest group facing mortality anxiety will prioritize resource gains over policy gains (Halpin and Thomas 2012). Additionally, the fact that Campact, in a ruling by the German authorities, was declared unworthy of tax benefits universally afforded to donors of ‘regular’ non-profit organizations merits consideration in service of this argument (SPIEGEL 2019). Said decision sets Campact decisively apart from traditional non-profits that brand themselves in similar ways and donations to which are tax deductible, such as Greenpeace Germany, and Amnesty International. 38 Degrees similarly does not qualify for charity status in the UK, and thus donations thereto are not tax deductible, setting 38 Degrees apart from ‘traditional’ UK-based NGOs as well. Adding onto that legal distinction made by the courts, are the observations made by scholars on the tendency of digital advocacy groups to act in a strategic manner in service of organizational ambitions (Fraussen, Halpin, and Nownes 2020; Johansson and Scaramuzzino 2019; Hall 2019; Strolovitch 2008). Lastly, this work argues that to some extent, this entrepreneurial, customer-oriented approach is very much ingrained in digital advocacy groups. This work notes statements made by the founder of 38 Degrees, who stated in a 2016 interview, ‘When we started we were surveying our members as they signed up and that then shaped our campaigning agenda going forward.’ (Babbs 2016). Furthermore Christoph Bautz, founder and CEO of Campact, stated in a 2010 interview that he views Campact as a facilitator of media access and a mobilization base in exchange for expertise from collaborating groups, with a propensity towards media coverage friendly campaigns in service of organizational goals (Bautz 2010). In this vein, it must be mentioned that members constitute legitimacy to civil society groups (Kohler-Koch 2012) and are thus of inherent importance. This work argues furthermore that members are of even greater importance for digital advocacy groups than for other groups. They tend to display their ‘member’ numbers proudly, and merely signing up to their newsletter constitutes membership for both Campact and 38 Degrees. To reiterate, the argument as to why the purposes of this work, it presumes that digital advocacy groups act in a customer oriented fashion in line with their capabilities is based on mortality anxiety, their legal distinction from traditional advocacy groups, the scholarly observations on the tendency of digital advocacy groups to act strategically, and the customer-oriented approach very much ingrained in digital advocacy groups, both according to their founders, as well as their general behaviour on display.

Therefore the theory of marketability posits that digital advocacy groups have about as great an understanding of their ‘members’ and their desires as is arguably possible, which implies that they are

capable of designing campaigns that are well suited to their customers. These campaigns/products may not necessarily be tailored to the expressed desires of their polled members, as some scholars may posit in line with their understanding of digital advocacy groups being member-driven. Instead digital advocacy groups design products in a way that, due to their customer orientation capacities, are perfectly capable of satisfying the needs of their customers, yet are also capable of maximizing resource gain. This may seem like an entirely rhetorical distinction, but carries relevant implications on issue prioritization. For example, two issues that are similar in the capacity to progress policy, but differ in their capacity to maximize resource gains will result in the resource maximization issue being prioritized. This may even be true if the issue with a larger capacity for policy progress features a markedly lower capacity for resource maximization.

Marketability posits that digital advocacy groups, motivated by mortality anxiety, act entrepreneurially in their agenda setting on international trade policy issues. This work has furthermore demonstrated previously that it is plausible to treat causes and campaigns put on the agenda by digital advocacy groups as products they offer to ‘consumers’ for analysis’ sake. It is therefore able to draw upon established concepts that serve to analyze the product development choices made by entrepreneurial actors based on seminal research by scholars. Concepts this work introduces include the Ansoff matrix (Ansoff 1987), first and second mover advantages (Gal-Or 1985), and it also extends observations made by Keck and Sikkink (2014) on transnational interest group agenda setting to international trade policy issue prioritization. The Ansoff matrix posits that businesses (ought to) consider two dimensions in regard to product development choices - market newness and product newness - which produces four opportunity vectors for product development. The digital advocacy groups this work seeks to understand are nationally-oriented, meaning that customers situated in their nation are more valuable to digital advocacy groups than customers from other nations. This is furthermore compounded by the legitimacy that digital advocacy groups derive from their members, and that they subsequently utilize when lobbying their national governments (Fraussen and Halpin 2018). Thus this work posits that a market in the context of the theory of marketability is a certain subset of people within a nation that is interested in participating politically on a specific agenda item in a certain direction - the latter distinction is of importance due to there being two subsets of customers within a population with competing views on any issue, e.g. pro and anti TTIP sentiments, and that the product at hand is political participation on an issue towards a direction.

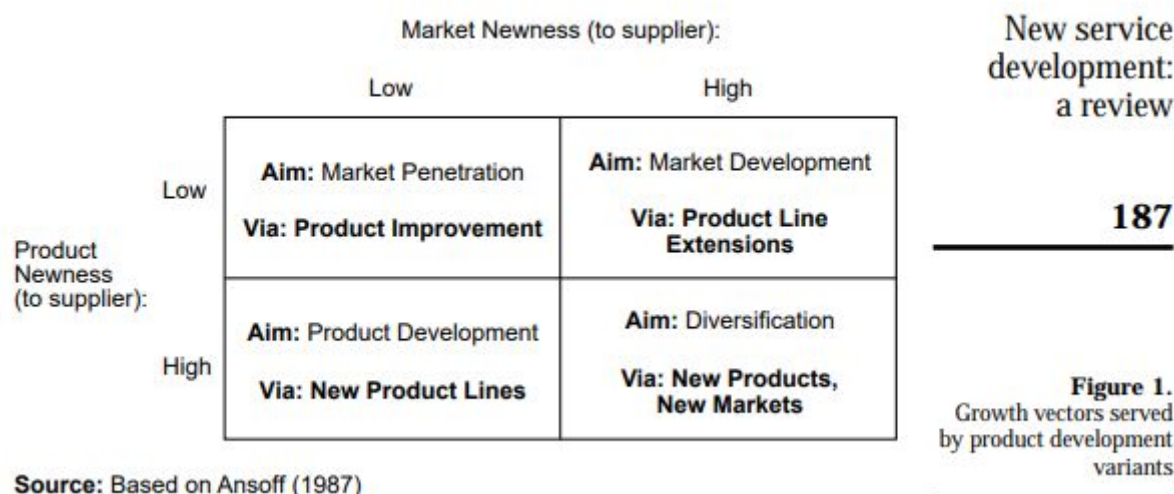


Figure 1. The Ansoff matrix (Johne and Storey 1998)

As this work has elaborated previously, TTIP was the first successful foray into lobbying seriously on international trade policy issues of digital advocacy groups, which is why it argues that the exemplary digital advocacy groups it studies for the purpose of this work, 38 Degrees and Campact, have organizationally internalized their playbook developed for TTIP. Thus, in line with Figure 1, the more similar an issue to TTIP, the lower the degree of newness of both product and market, as observed by some scholars who posited that interest groups ‘learn’ (Halpin, Fraussen, and Nownes 2018). Thus this work concludes that any international trade policy issue has a relative degree of newness for a digital advocacy group, based on the extent to which it differs from TTIP. This degree of newness may furthermore impact an issue’s marketability. Scholars of service development generally claim that the greater the degree of newness in an endeavour, the greater the risk (Johne and Storey 1998). The conditions of mortality anxiety imply that digital advocacy groups should favour endeavours that pose less risk, and thus should favour campaigns that are less new to them.

The introduction of the concept of first and second mover advantages serves the purpose of addressing a certain dissent in the literature on interest group issue prioritization within niches in general, where rational choice theories would imply that interest groups should be niche-seeking (Gray and Lowery 1996), yet research by other scholars has shown a tendency of interest groups towards policy bandwagoning (Baumgartner and Leech 2001), and certain scholars have even posited that ‘*an organization is more likely to lobby on a piece of legislation as the number of other organizations lobbying on that legislation increases*’ (Scott 2013:614). This work posits that the introduction of the first mover and second mover advantage concept and its implications will do much to further scholarly

understanding of the choices made in this regard by interest groups, but especially for digital advocacy groups. The research on first mover and second mover advantage posits that the first mover (the leader) earns more profits than the second mover (follower) if the reaction curves of the players are downward sloping (Gal-Or 1985). A downward sloping reaction curve in this regard refers to a market in which the leader can make a preemptive move, while an upward sloping reaction curve refers to followers being capable of copying and undercutting the leader. The literature has dissected this in more detail and derived first mover advantages and disadvantages, the advantages being - technological leadership, preemption of assets, and buyer switching costs - with the disadvantages, and thus the second mover's advantages, being - the ability to 'freeride' on first mover investments, resolution of technological and market uncertainty, technological discontinuities that provide 'gateways' for new entry, and various types of 'incumbent inertia' that make it hard for the first mover to adjust (Lieberman and Montgomery 1988:41, 42, 47). In a nutshell, there are advantages and disadvantages to either one, depending on organizational characteristics, market characteristics, and product characteristics. For the purposes of this work, it takes note of some of the special organizational characteristics of digital advocacy groups - lack of expertise and their inherently collaborative nature (Hall and Ireland 2016; Hall 2019), as well as their propensity to avoid risk under the conditions of mortality anxiety. Thus this work argues that these intrinsic organizational features of digital advocacy groups make them inherently likely to be second movers on any issue, and that they are only the more likely to follow, or collaborate, on an issue, the greater the overall newness of said issue to the organization. This is consistent with this work's assumptions on risk averse behaviour under the threat of mortality anxiety.

Keck and Sikkink (2014) found that interest groups tend to gravitate towards issues that are attributable to individuals rather than ones which are structural in nature. Interest groups especially favour issues related to vulnerable individuals suffering bodily harm, and issues concerning legal equality of opportunity in their agenda setting. They furthermore argue that in order to campaign on an issue, it must be converted into a causal story that establishes a bearer of guilt (ibid:27,28). In the context of the theory of marketability this work posits that this may imply more generally that issues more conducive to emotive messaging may be more attractive to interest groups than other issues. This in turn would imply that this effect is not limited to the parameters outlined by Keck and Sikkink (2014). This work links this presumed approach of digital advocacy groups to Maslov's hierarchy of needs in an attempt to codify said parameters of issues. There are some issues with this explanatory approach, for example that any issue may technically be reduced to allow for sufficiently emotive messaging, which would imply that this



approach of trying to identify emotive messaging opportunities in international trade policies, and thus attempting to derive a degree of issue attractiveness as per marketability, is inherently bound to fail by virtue of selecting by outcome. It is reasonable to assume that the average international trade policy issue in all its complexity and associated legal language is not an issue that is not necessarily conducive to being marketed, while a trade policy issue that can be linked or reduced to certain key emotive messages with a high marketability value, e.g. food, workers' exploitation, is more likely to make the agenda than other international trade policy issues. Thus this work offers a weak supportive argument resting on the role of emotions in marketing (Poels and Dewitte 2019) and link it to Maslov's hierarchy of needs - a concept that has been heavily utilized in marketing despite not a lot of publicly available empirical research on the topic (Andrews 2019). Therefore it posits that the greater the capacity for emotive messaging of an issue in line with Maslov's hierarchy of needs, from the bottom up, the more marketable an issue, and thus the more likely an issue will make the agenda of digital advocacy groups when it comes to international trade policy. For the purposes of this work it is considered a very weak factor due to the aforementioned caveats.

In conclusion, marketability proposes that digital advocacy groups act entrepreneurially in their agenda setting on international trade policy issues due to mortality anxiety, and thus seek to maximize customer satisfaction and acquisition in their product creation process. Digital advocacy groups allegedly furthermore attempt to minimize risk, which this work posits is quantifiable by assessing product newness relative to TTIP in accordance with the schema laid out by Ansoff (1987) in the two dimensions given, as well as the option to 'follow', and the capacity for emotive messaging of an issue, to then determine its marketability. Therefore the more familiar an issue, the more attractive it becomes due to less associated risk exposure. On the other hand, the newer an issue the greater the associated risk exposure. The risk aversion of digital advocacy groups results in a propensity towards 'following', which ameliorates the impacts of newness on risk exposure if following is possible. Lastly, the greater the capacity for emotive messaging, the more marketable an issue. Thus between two issues that carry about the same amount of newness, risk, and emotive messaging capacity, a digital advocacy group will prioritize the one that promises greater resource gains. This shall be referred to as the product aspect henceforth. Having elaborated on both customer and product aspects of this work's theory, marketability in sum posits that digital advocacy groups act entrepreneurially in their issue prioritization. Therefore, the greater an issue's marketability, the more likely it is to get prioritized. This work attempts an operationalization of issue marketability subsequently.

Having introduced the theoretical and logical argument as to why marketability may be a determinant factor in issue prioritization, as well as having introduced relevant marketing concepts and theories, this work has yet to present an operationalization of issue marketability. This work posits said marketability is the criteria by which it argues digital advocacy groups prioritize international trade policy issues after all. In order to account for the aspects of marketability discussed in regards to customer and product aspects by this work, marketability posits that digital advocacy groups are aware of member preferences as well as their products and markets, and thus it posits the following:

1. The more equipped an issue to satisfy extant and attract would-be customers, the more likely it is to be prioritized, and
2. The lower the risk capacity of an issue of a sufficient emotive messaging capacity the more likely it is to be prioritized.

The above conditions are subject to considerations of maximizing both financial and presence/influence gains. Therefore this work puts forward the following hypotheses:

H1: The more marketable an international trade policy issue, the more likely digital advocacy groups are to lobby on it.

and

H2: The more salient an international trade policy issue, the more likely digital advocacy groups are to lobby on it.

The rival hypothesis is drawn from a previous work on digital advocacy group agenda setting (Hall 2019).

## Methodology

Why do digital advocacy groups lobby on certain international trade policy issues, but not on others? Much has been posited on the underlying international trade policy issue prioritization processes of digital advocacy groups and their impacts on agenda setting outcomes - the core claim of this work is that issue marketability may explain digital advocacy group agenda setting better than extant rival theories. This work seeks to verify its claims by studying two exemplary digital advocacy groups and utilizing Mill's method of difference applied to various cases with different lobbying outcomes. This work furthermore attempts an operationalization of both issue marketability and issue salience.

### Case Selection

The two digital advocacy groups whose agenda setting outcomes this work shall study in some depth are 38 Degrees and Campact. The aforementioned have been chosen due to them representing parts of the

populations of some of the most populous nations in the European Union, and subsequently Europe starting from 2021. France is not accounted for because it was late to the digital advocacy group trend, with its largest digital advocacy group, ~ *le mouvement*, which was belatedly founded in late 2017, having less than 130,000 members at the end of 2020. Of the European members of the Online Progressive Engagement Network (OPEN in short), an umbrella organization for digital advocacy groups worldwide, 38 Degrees and Campact are by far the largest and most well funded. This reliance on OPEN as a register of important digital advocacy groups in Europe reflects other scholar's works on digital advocacy (Hall 2019). Aside from their size and financial means, Campact is of special interest due to the pivotal role several observers claimed it to have occupied in opposing TTIP (Bauer 2015, 2016a, 2016b).

38 Degrees makes for an interesting comparative study due to them being beholden to a markedly different populace than Campact, and whether the impacts on issue marketability therefrom may be visible in their differing issue prioritization outcomes.

Regarding case-selection, the underlying assumption is that any issue possesses an inherent degree of marketability by virtue of being able to be politicized, although said marketability may be next to nothing, e.g. a highly technical issue on the parameters of product packaging standards in a trade agreement. Other issues are clearly more marketable at a surface level, e.g. environmental concerns linked to a trade agreement. Regarding the characteristics of internal trade policy issues other than marketability or salience, as this work has pointed out previously, digital advocacy groups distinguish themselves from other interest groups by their lack of technical expertise, which results in a lack of capability to analyze individual trade policy issues in sufficient depth in a manner that may credibly influence their prioritization decisions - international trade policy issues feature a large body of related technical reports, from impact assessments to in-depth dissections of economical structures and extensive schedules. This results in two conceivable outcomes, either digital advocacy groups are forced to follow the lead of other interest groups that possess more expertise and echo their sentiments, or they commission third-party assistance, such as in the case of Campact and its campaign on JEFTA (Fritz 2018). As a logical consequence, this work posits that digital advocacy groups observe little more than the superficial characteristics of trade policy issues, by virtue of them simply lacking the capacities to analyze trade policy issues to the same extent as other organizations lobbying on trade policy issues possess, e.g. such as Greenpeace having a dedicated expert on trade (Hollender 2020). This in turn impacts this work's case selection by limiting it to selecting trade issues on the basis of the severity of lobbying by digital advocacy groups thereon, or lack thereof, in order to account for this lack of in-depth analytical capacity

by digital advocacy groups. What use would there be in accounting for various variables of international trade policies, if digital advocacy groups pay little heed to said differences. Thus this work limits its international trade policy similar issue selection analysis process to those same broad strokes that digital advocacy groups deal in.

The first cases analyzed as part of this work are the varying intensities of lobbying efforts employed by 38 Degrees on CETA compared to its intense and extended engagement on TTIP. Keep in mind that CETA and TTIP were often framed as a singular issue, e.g. ‘Dubbed TTIP through the backdoor...’ (Frack Free Planet 2017). 38 Degrees lobbied extensively against TTIP, and extrapolating from such serious engagement one would assume that they would engage to a similar degree on CETA. Yet not only did they launch their campaign two years after their German sister organization, Campact, launched theirs, they also lobbied far less seriously than one would assume. This work seeks to assess whether the respective issue marketability and salience levels of TTIP and CETA to 38 Degrees differed and explore explanatory consequences as well as the role Brexit may have played in the observed outcome.

The second case analyzes the different agenda setting choices made by Campact on the EU-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement relative to the EU-Australia Free Trade Agreement. The EU-Mercosur agreement saw serious lobbying efforts by Campact because of the fires in the Amazon. Australia experienced similarly visible fires, yet Campact did not lobby on the EU-Australia FTA that began negotiations in 2018 (Commission 2018b). This work explores whether issue marketability or salience for said agreements differ, and whether said differences are capable of explaining the outcome observed.

This work’s third case analysis shines a light on the lobbying surrounding the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (JEFTA in short), and the repeated and extensive lobbying by Campact on said agreement, while a rather similar agreement, the EU-Singapore agreement did not see such serious lobbying efforts by Campact.

The fourth case this work analyzes is that of the choices made in regards to lobbying on the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA in short), which saw serious lobbying by Campact, but none by 38 Degrees. This case allows this work to study why one digital advocacy group may prioritize an issue, while another may refrain, and whether that may be explained by national issue marketability or issue salience differences. This case has the distinct analytical advantage of not suffering from a possible reduction in its explanatory capacity due to the Brexit referendum occurring during the process of issue prioritization.

This work has presented two competing hypotheses on the agenda setting process of digital advocacy groups on international trade policy issues, the rival theory derived from Hall (2019) - with salience being

the deciding factors in issue prioritization, the second one in line with the theory of marketability proposed by this work - marketability being the deciding factor in issue prioritization. This work aims to analyse four cases in order to explore the explanatory strengths of this work's hypotheses, with the first one studying a drop in lobbying engagement contrary to expectations. The second seeks to explore why one non-trade occurrence led to lobbying on one issue, while a similar non-trade occurrence did not lead to lobbying on a similar issue. The third case seeks to explore why out of a selection of possible issues in a region, one is prioritized but others are not. The fourth case seeks to explore why one nation's eminent digital advocacy group may prioritize an international trade policy issue, while another country's may not.

### **Operationalization**

The question this work seeks to answer, and thus this work's dependent variable, is varying degrees of lobbying of digital advocacy groups on international trade policy issues. It has presented two core hypotheses that seek to explain why certain international trade policy issues make the agenda of digital advocacy groups, while others do not. These hypotheses center on two independent variables that may influence digital advocacy group issue prioritization, issue marketability and issue salience.

Issue marketability is, as this work has elaborated previously, consisting of at least two aspects, the customer and product aspects of any issue. The method utilized in assessing the marketability of issues that are prioritized differs slightly from the one this work shall utilize for those who did not make the digital advocacy group policy agenda. In regards to the customer aspects of issue marketability this work has elaborated previously that the customer-oriented manner in which digital advocacy groups operate results in tailoring their campaign offerings in a manner that satisfies both current customers, while also being capable of acquiring new customers. This work has furthermore posited that those decisions are made by digital advocacy groups on the basis of extensive internal data analysis processes and member surveys. This work has little insight into these internal processes by virtue of its position as an outside observer, although some groups do publish their member polls on their websites (see Annex), the polls published are far too incomplete to reliably provide a consistent perspective of the decision basis for digital advocacy groups, and are furthermore limited to very few points in time. To create a proxy of both a group's member sentiment towards an issue, as well as its potential to acquire new customers, this work draws on the research on the mobilization against TTIP. Some of the research on TTIP has unearthed the pivotal role that Twitter has played in organizing and mobilizing around TTIP (Bauer 2016a). This work posits that this pivotal trade agreement lobbying role of Twitter persisted after TTIP and is thus applicable

to subsequent instances of lobbying on international trade policy issues. Additionally, social media analysis is validated by the degree to which social media and digital advocacy groups are intertwined (Chadwick and Dennis 2017; Johansson and Scaramuzzino 2019). Thus this work assesses Twitter primary hashtag usage in the seven day period prior to campaign launch. This approach suffers from a lack of non-arbitrary cross-comparability across time and issues of tweet volumes, due to noise created by antiquated retweet systems (that'd create their own tweets), flawed geo-locating, flawed language-tagging, random noise due to organizations making up large amounts of the tweets in a hashtag prior to widespread salience, and just generally rising levels of tweets overall on the platform that muddle comparability. Yet, this work can not in good conscience disregard the importance of Twitter in creating its proxy for issue marketability due to the reasons outlined above. Therefore it resorts to a case-by-case assessment of Twitter activity in the week prior to issue prioritization to infer the marketability of an issue. This work supplements this flawed measure by assessing whether similarly aligned groups were actively engaged on an issue prior to the digital advocacy group prioritizing it, as other groups engaging on an issue arguably allows for an inference of marketability. The more groups engage on an issue in the direction the digital advocacy group ends up adopting for its campaign, the more marketable an issue must be. This is plausible due to these similarly aligned groups' members constituting both potential customers, or an opportunity to satisfy extant customers, the latter by virtue of customer overlap between similarly aligned groups (e.g. members of ATTAC, a globalization-skeptic group, may already be members of Campact), as well as as by virtue of preparing markets that digital advocacy groups may want to enter. Some issues that did not make digital advocacy group agendas may not have central keywords, nor related hashtags, to form around, in which instance three issue related keywords shall replace the central keyword of prioritized issues for the sake of analysis.

As for the product, and thus risk exposure potential, aspect of the marketability of international trade policy issues, this work has previously elaborated that the factors of consideration for digital advocacy groups are likely the relative newness of a product, the new campaign, to the organization, as well as whether other like organizations already publicly lobby on the issue, and lastly, whether an issue possesses a sufficiently emotive messaging capacity. The information on how many like organizations publicly engaged on an issue prior to prioritization is doubly of use here, both as an assessment of the potential for customer satisfaction, and for potential customer gains, as this work has outlined above, as well as by illuminating whether digital advocacy groups had the option to 'follow' other like groups and piggyback on their efforts to frame an issue. The latter is in line with the implications of this work's

theory, and thus digital advocacy group's tendency to follow, borne from their risk averse approach this work has surmised, which it claims to be a product of their facing mortality anxiety. This work therefore operationalizes the product aspect marketability of an issue by first deriving a measure of issue newness relative to TTIP based on the nature of the agreement in question (e.g. TTIP was a mixed agreement, an EU-only agreement thus naturally possesses a higher degree of newness to digital advocacy groups) in combination with the rhetoric used, as well as superficial aspects of said agreement, a more in-depth analysis of the core aspects of an international trade policy issue is insofar superfluous as this work posits that digital advocacy groups do not comprehensively nor extensively engage with said issues themselves. This work then factors in the amount of third groups lobbying on an issue prior to campaign launch, in order to assess the second mover potential of an issue. It additionally considers those interest groups listed as collaborating groups by the digital advocacy group for the issues that made the agenda, which is essentially a culmination of an issue's second mover potential, available for those issues that made the agenda. Lastly, it performs an assessment of the issue's emotive messaging capacity based on the messaging rhetoric utilized by interest groups lobbying on the issue, which essentially depends on whether the group was capable of linking the issue to a concern that is of high importance in line with Pavlov's hierarchy of needs. On the other hand, if an issue did not make the agenda, the assessment of newness remains as such, while only similarly aligned organizations lobbying on the issue are considered, due to an impossibility of collaborating entities to exist, additionally an assessment of the emotive messaging capacity of an issue shall be based on the messaging rhetoric of other organizations lobbying on the issue, and the framing they employ. These combined approaches allow an inference on how marketable the product dimension of an issue may be. Combining the marketability of an issue in the customer and product dimensions, this work creates a measure of issue marketability. In summary, Twitter activity, combined with whether and how many similarly aligned organizations lobby publicly on said issue comprise the customer aspect of an issue's marketability, while issue newness and associated risk, second mover potential, and emotive messaging capacity comprise the product aspect of issue marketability.

Issue salience, determined as the key factor of issue prioritization for digital advocacy groups by Hall (2019), is somewhat challenging to operationalize, previous research (Rasmussen, Carroll, and Lowery 2014; Hall 2019) relied on Eurobarometer data to gauge issue salience. In the absence of issue specific Eurobarometer salience data, this work instead turns to the space in which digital advocacy groups operate - the internet. This work seeks to gauge issues salience by drawing on methodology utilized by

previous research on the anti-TTIP mobilization (Bauer 2015). It analyzes Google search trend data for relevant keywords in a nation prior to campaign start, in order to measure issue salience. Underlying this approach is the simple assumption that people searching for a term on Google constitutes interest, the more people search for a term, the more salient it is. Google trend data is automatically normalized before being made accessible, by dividing each data point by the total searches within the geography and time range to compare relative popularity, with the results being scaled from 0 to 100, based on a topic's proportion to all searches on all topics (Google 2021). This lack of absolute numbers is circumvented by extensively contextualizing the relative search interest on an issue. This work seeks to contextualize this relative value where possible by comparing the world-wide interest normalized search data to that within the nation, which is corrected for population size, in order to gain an understanding of how salient said issue is in other countries by comparison. This method has previously been utilized to contextualize Google search interest data (Bauer 2016a). This approach suffers from the caveat of not being applicable to issues that suffer from lack of an associated global acronym, such as the ones used for issues such as TTIP or CETA, which precludes said contextualization approach from being applied to all issues. Therefore this work supplements said approach by comparing the search interest of different issues across time within a country over certain time periods with each other. It is thus able to contextualize individual relative search interest data per keyword to search interest on other keywords, allowing for a better understanding of relative interest in keywords. This approach of gauging issue salience suffers from the caveat of the data being utilized not being entirely scientifically sound nor fully reliable (Google 2021). For a more comprehensive analysis of the limitations of using said approach, see Reilly, Richey, and Taylor (2012), who nonetheless assuaged the capabilities of Google trend data as a proxy for interest. In the context of merely gauging issue salience, this work argues that Google trend data is accurate and reliable enough, especially in comparison to methods utilized by other scholars, who rely on e.g. bi-annual proxy data (Hall 2019). In addition to being more specific than Eurobarometer proxy data, this work has made mention of the rapid-response capabilities of digital advocacy groups in its critique of previous research on digital advocacy group agenda setting. This work is more capable of accounting for said capacities in its exploration by virtue of utilizing higher frequency measurement data. This work ascribes high salience to an issue if national search interest in a topic exceeds 20 in the time period prior to campaign start (relative to the interest peak of that year), as a baseline. This work then contextualizes this measure of search interest by comparing normalized search interest data across countries, as well as across issues over time in a specific country. It may deviate from this approach where appropriate or



necessary. This operationalization of salience allows for a more accurate assessment of issue salience in the time period before digital advocacy groups decide to prioritize an issue.

Regarding the temporal question of at which points in time to measure both issue marketability and salience, in order to determine the start of lobbying efforts by a digital advocacy group on an issue, this work primarily relies on data from Twitter, precisely the announcement of lobbying efforts thereon. Digital advocacy groups consistently announce the start of their lobbying efforts on an international trade policy issue on Twitter, which matches with observations by scholars on communication strategies of advocacy groups in other issue categories (Auger 2013; Barrios-O'Neill 2020). This work cross-compares this information gleaned from Twitter with press releases by the group in question, where available. The caveat of this method is that it is limited to issues that made the agenda. For issues that do not make the agenda, it instead assesses issue marketability and salience prior to the moment in time that its comparative issue made the agenda, an approach from which it deviates when appropriate.

### TTIP, CETA and 38 Degrees

TTIP was once an ambitious trade and investment agreement between the United States and the European Union, and was meant to reduce barriers on transatlantic barriers to exports, imports and investment activity (Forrest 2015). This was obviously not to be, and as history has shown, TTIP fell, in part, victim to harsh opposition from civil society (Eliasson and Huet 2018). The lobbying on TTIP was a proto-action of sorts for digital advocacy groups' engagement on trade issues, and saw participation by all of the premier European digital advocacy groups: Campact (DE), 38 Degrees (UK), aufstehn (AT), skiftet (SE), DeClic (RO), and UpLift (IR), and was centered around claims of GMO proliferation, it being an attack on democracy and the right to regulate, giving multinational corporations the ability to block EU laws, and giving US companies the ability to sue EU governments (Bauer 2016b). This work's object of study in this regard, 38 Degrees, was, as aforementioned, a part of this fierce civic opposition to TTIP, starting from around the 15th of May 2014 (Walker 2014). They published over 100 blog posts on their website on their fight against TTIP<sup>2</sup>, and as they themselves reported, they got 718 636 signatures in their petitions, raised over £ 270 000 for newspaper ads, over £190 000 for information leaflets, et cetera (Whalley 2016). In sum, 38 Degrees lobbied quite heavily on TTIP.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://home.38degrees.org.uk/category/ttip/>

Yet, when CETA rolled around, 38 Degrees, who started its campaign against CETA on the 1st of October 2016 (bex 2016), merely rallied support for one public plea to the Austrian Chancellor to block CETA, which they had printed as an advertisement in 'Der Standard' (38 Degrees 2016). Said newspaper plea was almost the full extent of their lobbying on CETA, aside from a call to message Scottish Members of Parliament prior to a vote on CETA at the end of October that year (Maloney 2016). This call to influence an upcoming vote was 38 Degrees' last act of lobbying on CETA. In sum, 'TTIP's evil twin CETA', as it was often referred to by similarly aligned interest groups (WarOnWant 2021), saw very little lobbying by 38 Degrees. Why did CETA see so little lobbying by 38 Degrees compared to its extensive lobbying on TTIP? The easiest answer to this question is Brexit. This work considers this explanation below, and additionally pays heed to the hypotheses of this work and its primary explanations, differences in issue marketability and issue salience. In order to fully explore whether either had any impact, this work shall thus assess the marketability and salience of TTIP and CETA in the UK respectively.

As previously alluded, one could make a convincing argument that the lower level of lobbying intensity with regards to CETA stems from the impacts of Brexit which occurred on the 23rd of June 2016. Therefore Brexit occurred after their lobbying on TTIP and before 38 Degrees began lobbying on CETA. It is no stretch of imagination that the impacts of Brexit would be severely felt in the severity of the campaigning efforts on an agreement between the European Union and Canada, the former of which the UK was bound to leave in some shape or form in a certain timeframe.

This explanation fails to account for three arguments as to why the underlying processes of issue prioritization may not have been impacted by Brexit to the extent it appears to have had at first glance. The first argument being that the date of the Brexit referendum begets the question of why 38 Degrees chose not to engage on CETA prior to that point in time, e.g. as its sister organization Campact did in 2014. The second argument revolves around the fact that Brexit did not impact the short to mid-term impacts of CETA on UK citizens. This argument has been utilized by groups in the UK lobbying against CETA (Global Justice Now 2016; Lee and Savage 2016). The basis of said argument is a legal analysis that concluded that CETA may bind the UK for up to 20 years even in the event of a Brexit in a breach of parliamentary sovereignty (Fowles 2015). Said findings were subsequently utilized by groups lobbying on CETA such as War on Want and openDemocracy (Lee and Savage 2016; War on Want 2017). This purported long-lasting impact of CETA in spite of Brexit invalidates Brexit as a monocausal event to a certain extent. The third argument this work presents as to why Brexit is not as potent an explanatory event as one may initially assume revolves around CETA's implied future role of serving as a blueprint

for a future EU-UK relationship in the event of a Brexit (Davis 2016). This elevated role of a future blueprint in the wake of Brexit could credibly have positively impacted the importance of CETA in spite of Brexit. In summary, the argument as to why Brexit is not a viable monocausal event for the lessened seriousness of 38 Degrees’ lobbying on CETA by virtue of not being able to account for the time period prior to Brexit, by failing to account for the impacts of CETA in spite of Brexit, and by not accounting for the elevation of CETA as a future relationship blueprint.

This being a case study with the explicit purpose of exploring whether issue salience or issue marketability drove the difference in issue prioritization outcomes one may subsequently observe, this work subsequently assesses issue salience and issue marketability for TTIP and CETA respectively.

**Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership**

Regarding the salience of TTIP in the UK, Google search interest for TTIP prior to 38 Degrees’ campaign start on the 15th of May 2014 was on the low end (11% relative to the peak interest of 2014 in November).

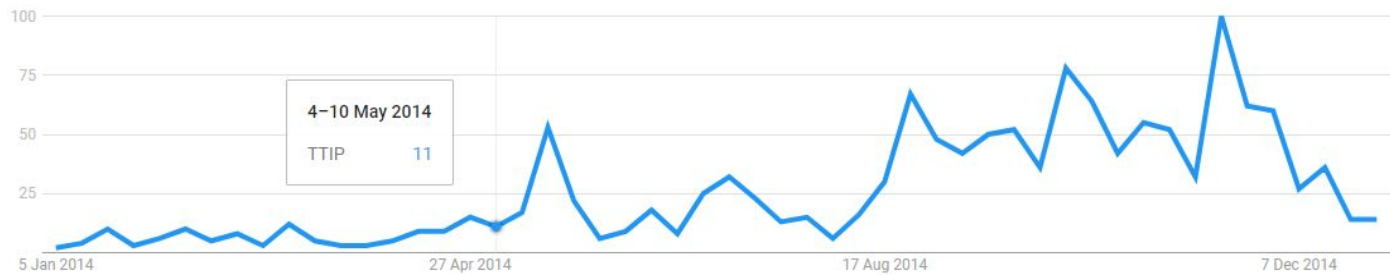


Figure 2. Relative search interest in the United Kingdom for TTIP in 2014; Google trend data

To contextualize this figure, Germany, Austria, and Luxembourg each had approximately four times the amount of Google searches for TTIP in 2014, corrected for population size.

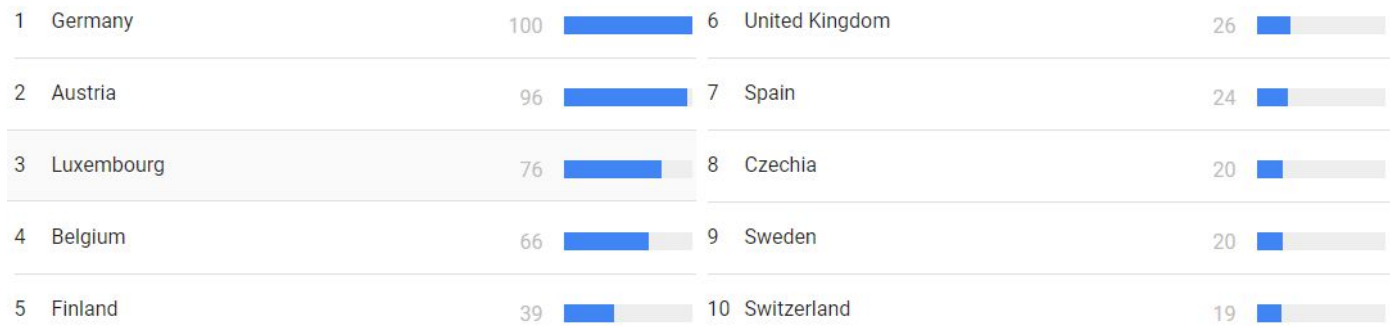


Figure 3. Global relative search interest corrected for population size for TTIP in 2014; Google trend data

If one assumes that TTIP in 2014 had attained high salience in said countries, that in turn implies that

issue salience for TTIP was at least comparatively lower in the United Kingdom in 2014 overall, compared to said countries. If countries such as Germany and Austria had three to four times as much search interest for TTIP in 2014, and the interest for TTIP in the UK prior to 38 Degrees launching their campaign was 11% of peak interest, that in turn implies that TTIP in 2014, and especially prior to 38 Degrees launching their campaign, was not that salient. For contextual reasons relating to CETA elaborated below, the issue salience of TTIP was on the high end, relative to CETA at the very least.

The issue marketability of TTIP in the UK in 2014 shall be gauged by utilizing the aspects of marketability this work has outlined previously, starting with an assessment of the customer acquisition and customer satisfaction potential of TTIP as an issue in 2014. As previously stated, this work takes stock of Twitter activity on the #TTIP hashtag prior to campaign start, which it found to be extensive, implying that customer interest in TTIP was present<sup>3</sup>. This work's secondary indicator of an issue's customer acquisition and customer satisfaction potential relies on the extent to which similarly aligned groups engage on an issue prior to digital advocacy group issue prioritization. In the United Kingdom in 2014, and thus in the time prior to 38 Degrees launching their public lobbying efforts on TTIP, the list of lobbying on TTIP was long, and included, but was not limited to, War on Want, various NHS focused groups, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, and the Green Party (see Figure 7 for details) - a flawed accounting based on a list published by the UK government results in a count of 49 organizations taking issue with TTIP at the very least (Corporate Observatory Europe 2015). The presence of such activity on Twitter, as well as engagement by such a wide variety of similarly aligned groups, prior to 38 Degrees' campaign start, implies large potential for customer acquisition and customer satisfaction, and thus marketability's customer aspect is certainly on the high end for the time period preceding 38 Degrees' campaign on TTIP.

As to the product aspect of issue marketability, much of it is contingent upon product newness - TTIP as the proto-action on trade policy was entirely new to 38 Degrees, which implies a certain hesitation towards prioritizing an issue with such a large degree of newness by virtue of associated risk. As this work has previously elaborated, it posits that the more similarly aligned groups lobby on an issue, the more the impact of said newness is ameliorated. In this regard, as TTIP saw opposition by a vast variety of groups (Eliasson and Huet 2018), where especially the European members of OPEN lobbied extensively, and started a variety of inter-organizational undertakings such as the European Citizen's

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<sup>3</sup> Twitter search queries: #TTIP lang:en until\_time:1431727199 & #TTIP NHS lang:en until\_time:1431727199, the NHS is utilized as a corrective term to ensure capture of UK residents in particular, in parallel with a country of origin check of users

Initiative ‘Stop TTIP’ (Commission 2017a). Digital advocacy groups that are part of OPEN have been noted to be open to sharing notes with their ‘sister’-groups (Karpf 2013; 2016). Thus, while TTIP was entirely new to 38 Degrees at the time, the amount of collaborators from whom they could ‘copy the homework’ lessened the impacts of newness, in line with this work’s theory. Lastly, regarding the emotive messaging capacity of TTIP, this work notes that certain scholars have remarked (Bauer 2015; 2016a; 2016b) that the messaging on TTIP was based on ‘metaphoric messages and far-fetched myths’ to induce emotions in customers. Thus it concludes that TTIP possessed a high degree of emotive messaging capacity as an issue in the UK in 2014, ranging from topics such as food (chlorinated chicken, GMOs), environmental protection (fracking) to rule of law (investor-state dispute settlement). Furthermore, with the widespread renown that said topics have achieved in conjunction with trade issues, it is reasonable to assume that if a subsequent issue is capable of evoking similar sentiments, it may possess a similar emotive messaging capacity. In summary, this work concludes that TTIP possessed a high degree of marketability in the UK in the time period prior to May 15th in 2014.

### **Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement**

Regarding the issue salience of CETA, Google search interest in the week prior to 38 Degrees’ campaign start on the 1st of October 2014 was at 28% relative to the year’s peak.

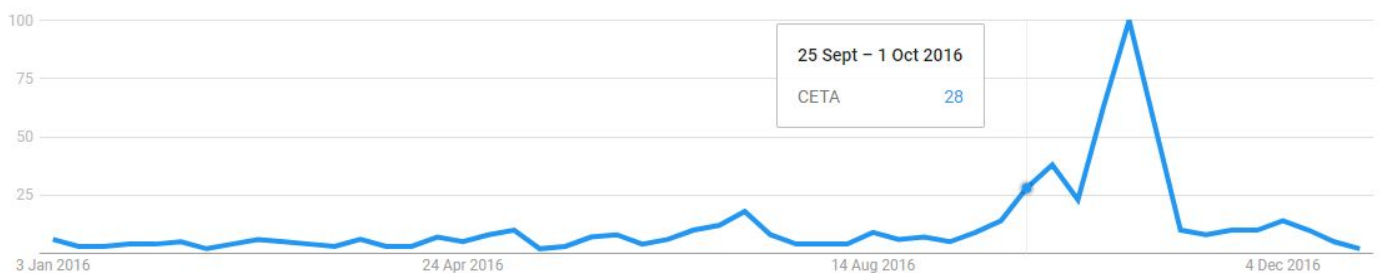


Figure 4. Relative search interest in the United Kingdom for CETA in 2016; Google trend data

Of further note in this regard is the google search interest for CETA relative to the search interest for TTIP. Search interest for CETA eclipsed search interest for TTIP for the first time in years in the time prior to 38 Degrees launching their campaign. Search interest for TTIP was markedly higher on average than search interest for CETA in the time period of 2013 to 2016.

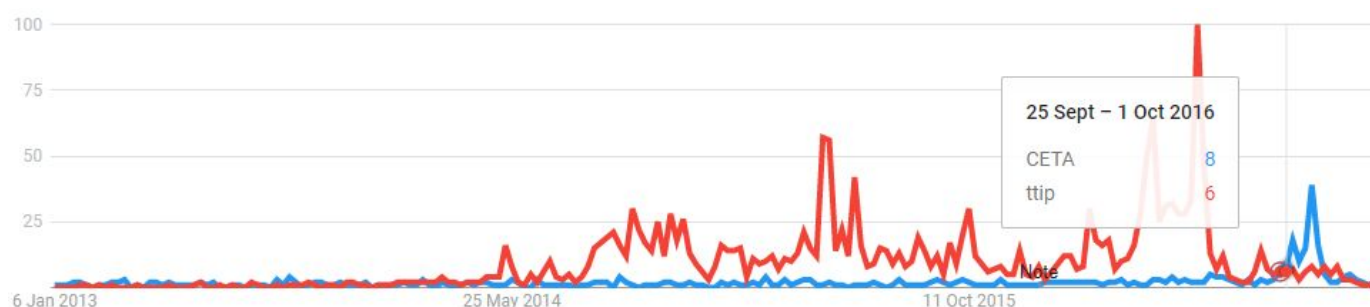


Figure 5: Relative search interest in the United Kingdom for TTIP and CETA from 1.1.2013 to 1.1.2017;

Google trend data

Nonetheless, the search interest for CETA relative to the year's peak interest was markedly higher than it was for TTIP prior to prioritization (28% of interest for CETA prior to prioritization versus 11% interest for TTIP prior to prioritization). Yet, normalized search interest corrected for population size for CETA was rather low in the UK relative to other countries. Disregarding Argentina, European presumed high salience countries such as Belgium, Austria, and Germany, had eight to twelve times the amount of search interest on CETA, corrected for population size (see Figure 6). Therefore, due to the relatively high interest of 28% prior to prioritization, but also the overall low interest for CETA in the UK relative to the countries in which CETA was more salient in 2016, this work assigns a medium level of salience to CETA in the UK prior to 38 Degrees launching their campaign.



Figure 6. Global relative search interest corrected for population size for CETA in 2016; Google trend data

On the marketability of CETA, its Twitter hashtag #CETA saw frequent use prior to 38 Degrees starting their campaign<sup>4</sup>, which does not diverge from TTIP. Yet engagement on CETA by similarly aligned groups prior to 38 Degrees' campaign start was comparatively low, with the previously active National Health Service centric groups, such as the National Health Action Party, as well as various regional chapters of National Health Service centric groups opting not to engage on CETA prior to 38 Degrees lobbying on CETA - a flawed account puts the amount of actors at about 16 based on a letter

<sup>4</sup> Twitter search query: #CETA lang:en until\_time:1475359199

authored by the Seattle to Brussels Network (Lucile 2016). The presence of such engagement on both Twitter, contrasted with relatively low levels of engagement by similarly aligned groups relative to TTIP, prior to 38 Degrees' campaign start, implies a lower potential for customer acquisition and customer satisfaction than TTIP, and thus marketability's customer aspect is certainly lower relative to TTIP, yet certainly present, for the time period preceding 38 Degrees' campaign on CETA.

While assessing the issue newness of CETA to 38 Degrees, this work relies on several indicators. The rhetoric 38 Degrees itself utilizes in regards to CETA, which primarily relates CETA to TTIP (bex 2016), indicates a high degree of similarity. Furthermore, CETA in its superficial legal features is rather similar to TTIP, in that it is a mixed agreement by virtue of its investment protection clauses, with all that distinction entails. The fact that a host of single-issue anti-TTIP groups went straight from lobbying against TTIP to lobbying against CETA without changing their name (no TTIP uk 2016; Students Against TTIP UK 2016) is but another indicator that most anti-CETA groups treated CETA as if it was but a second TTIP, a singular issue, so to say. Thus this work gauges the issue newness of CETA to 38 Degrees to be low, and thus the newness risk associated with lobbying on CETA was rather limited by virtue of 38 Degrees' experiences on TTIP. As to the second mover potential for 38 Degrees on CETA, as this work has previously elaborated, engagement by similarly aligned groups on CETA was comparatively lower in the UK than it was for TTIP, yet, in the context of OPEN, 38 Degrees had the option to rely on extensive issue framing conducted by its OPEN sister groups such as Campact (Bauer 2015). Regarding the emotive messaging capacity of CETA that 38 Degrees was able to utilize, most of 38 Degrees' anti-CETA messaging was centered around claims of TTP-likeness, focusing on '*it'd allow big businesses to sue our governments*' (bex 2016). Compared to the strong emotive messages utilized by the anti-TTIP campaign of 38 Degrees that featured choice emotive items such as chlorine chicken, threats to the NHS, as well as investor protection clauses, this work assesses the emotive messaging capacity of CETA to be lower in comparison. In summary, regarding the product features of CETA as an issue, 38 Degrees was rather familiar with both the product and market dimensions of CETA, yet it was limited in its second moving options relative to its efforts on TTIP, and CETA as a product also seems to have suffered from a comparatively lower emotive messaging capacity than TTIP. Therefore this work assesses CETA to be less marketable than TTIP by virtue of a lessened customer acquisition and satisfaction potential (relative to TTIP), which is somewhat ameliorated by 38 Degrees' familiarity with CETA as an issue, yet lessened by the diminished second-moving potential and emotive messaging capacity. Thus this work assigns a medium level of marketability to CETA relative to TTIP.



Marketability	38 Degrees TTIP 15.05.2014
Twitter activity	High
Similarly aligned group activity	ASH, ABC, AHDB, Baby Milk Action, Big Brother Watch, BEIC, BMA, BPC, British Starch Industry Association, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Church of England, Compassion in World Farming, Dairy UK, European Services Strategy Unit, Fairtrade Association, Friends of the Earth, GMB, Greenpeace, Jubilee Debt Campaign, Keep Our NHS Public, MAGB, NABIM, NFU, National Union of Teachers, Open Rights Group, People and Planet, Privacy International, PTF, Public and Commercial Services Union, Quality Meat Scotland, Rice Association, Scottish Farmed Salmon, Seafish, Soil Association, Stilton Cheese Maker's Association, Stop Aids Campaign, SumOfUs, Trade Justice Movement, TUC, Traidcraft, UK Food Group, Ulster Farmers' Union, UNISON, University and College Union, War on Want, West Country Farmhouse Cheddar Cheese, Women's International Leagues for Peace and Freedom, World Development Movement [49]
Issue newness risk	High
Second-mover potential	High
Emotive messaging capacity	High (NHS, food, ISDS)
<b>Salience</b>	
Search interest in country in week prior to campaign start relative to annual peak /100	11
Search interest relative to most interested nation corrected for population size /100	26
Marketability	38 Degrees CETA 1.10.2016
Twitter activity	High
Similarly aligned group activity	Alliance for Cancer Prevention, Campaign against Climate Change, Cancer Prevention & Education Society, Frack Free Nottinghamshire, Global Justice Now, GMB Trade Union, Hazards Campaign, Letterbreen and Mullaghduin Community, National Justice and Peace Network, PCS, People Before Profit, StopTTIP uk, Students against TTIP UK, Trade Justice Movement, Trades Union Congress, War on Want [16]
Issue newness risk	Low
Second-mover potential	Medium
Emotive messaging capacity	Medium (recycled TTIP messaging)
<b>Salience</b>	
Search interest in country in week prior to campaign start relative to annual peak /100	28
Search interest relative to most interested nation corrected for population size /100	7

Figure 7. Overview of issue marketability and issue salience assessments for TTIP and CETA

In summary, in line with this work's operationalization of salience, TTIP appears to have been markedly less salient than CETA was prior to the start of their respective campaigns in 2014 and 2016. Yet TTIP was more salient in comparison to other countries overall, which is furthermore underpinned by the larger overall search interest for TTIP in the UK. Therefore this work gauges the salience of TTIP to



have been high, in spite of the low relative degree of interest it received prior to campaign start, due to seeing a competitively large degree of interest in the UK relative to other countries, as well as outperforming CETA's search interest for most of the time period observed (see Figure 5). The inverse is true for CETA, as it saw a large relative degree of interest prior to campaign start, yet overall less interest in the UK compared to other countries, which is why this work assigns CETA a medium level of salience prior to campaign start. Regarding the marketability of TTIP and CETA, this work found CETA to be less marketable by virtue of a diminished emotive messaging capacity, as well as due to markedly less similarly aligned group activity and said similarly aligned group activity drop's implications on CETA's potential to attract and satisfy customers, as well as due to its lower potential for second-moving. This results in an overall low level of marketability for CETA relative to TTIP. Hence, the drop in seriousness of lobbying by 38 Degrees relative to TTIP that CETA experienced is not readily attributed to the change in issue salience, nor to the change in issue marketability.

### Mercosur, Australia, and Campact

There are two major trading partners of the EU that suffered from large fires that made the news worldwide in recent times, and that are or were in the process of negotiating a trade agreement with the EU. The digital advocacy group this work studies in this regard, Campact, only lobbied on one of these trade agreements - the EU-Mercosur agreement. This work shall subsequently examine the differences in issue marketability and issue salience of these issues, which may serve to explain these different issue prioritization outcomes.

The countries that make up Mercosur are Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay and the EU-Mercosur agreement essentially centers around easing the tariffs placed on EU chocolate, wines, spirits, soft drinks, and industrial exports, such as cars, car parts, and chemicals (Commission 2019), in exchange for easing the barriers to agricultural exports from the Mercosur member countries (Hagelüken and Mühlauer 2018). The EU-Australia free trade agreement (EU-Australia FTA in short) similarly seeks to boost EU exports in the sectors of machinery and appliances, chemicals, motor vehicles, food and drink, electronic equipment, and metals, in exchange for easing imports from Australia such as mineral products, metals, and agricultural products (Commission 2018b). The EU-Australia FTA has been under negotiations since 2018 (Commission 2018b) and did not make Campact's agenda.

The prospect of allowing for the somewhat unfettered import of South American agricultural products has resulted in Campact lobbying against the EU-Mercosur trade agreement not once, but twice. Their

first campaign started in 2018 and was centered on the prevention of imports of cheap low-quality meat (Campact 2018b). This first foray into lobbying on the EU-Mercosur agreement by Campact was not nearly as serious as efforts on comparative issues<sup>5</sup> and was thus unsuccessful enough to be struck from Campact's records (both their press releases, as well as their list of actions on trade policy issues<sup>6</sup>). This work therefore deems it plausible to dismiss this initial foray for the purpose of this work's analysis due to the low degree of effort devoted towards lobbying on said agreement, as well as the lack of acknowledgement of said effort by Campact. The efforts of Campact to lobby on the EU-Mercosur agreement saw a revival in 2019, as they renewed their lobbying during the fires in the Amazon on the 23rd of October 2019 (Campact 2019a). As this work subsequently elaborates in more detail, the fires came first, and the lobbying on the trade agreement came after. Why did the fires in Australia and the subsequent interest for Australia not lead to Campact lobbying on the EU-Australia FTA? This work considers two possible explanations for this difference in lobbying engagement on these relatively similar trade issues, their differences in issue marketability and salience.

The comparative point of analysis in time is derived from the date of peak search interest on Australian fires ('australien feuer') in Germany, which occurred on the 7th of January 2020. This work considers this approach of deriving a comparative point in time as valid by virtue of the fact that Campact's lobbying on the EU-Mercosur agreement was preceded by peak search interest on the fires in the Amazon, which is why this work is confident in deriving its comparative point in time from the peak search interest for the fires in Australia.

### **EU-Mercosur Agreement**

Regarding the salience of the EU-Mercosur agreement in Germany prior to Campact launching their campaign on the 23rd of August, there are two dates worthy of consideration in 2019. The first date of high search interest for the term 'mercosur' was the 28th of June (see Figure 9), which saw the EU and the Mercosur states reach a political agreement, and in the time period of 18-24th of August, in which search interest in Germany for the fires in the region was at its peak, which coincided with Campact starting their public lobbying against the EU-Mercosur agreement by launching a petition on the 23rd of August. Due to the high-frequency salience assessment capabilities made available by this work's

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<sup>5</sup> Their initial efforts were accompanied by three tweets on the EU-mercosur agreement, while serious efforts are usually accompanied by 40+ tweets (see also Campact campaigns on TTIP, CETA, 2nd attempt at lobbying on the EU-Mercosur agreement)

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.campact.de/handelspolitik/> & <https://www.campact.de/presse/>

utilization of Google search trends data, this work was able to assess the relative search interest in the days prior Campact launching their campaign. Search interest for the fires in the Amazon in Germany peaked two days before Campact launched their campaign, on the 21st of August.

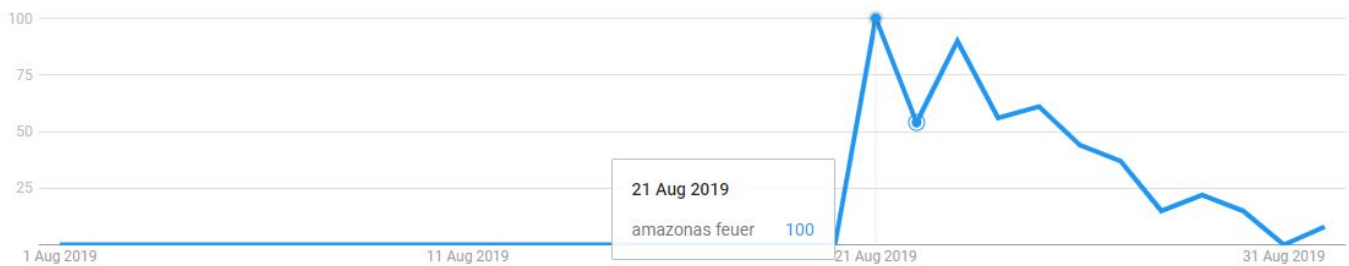


Figure 8: Relative search interest in Germany for the fires in the Amazon in August 2019; Google trend data

Of additional noteworthiness is the fact that prior to Campaign launching their campaign, which expressively connected the fires to the EU-Mercosur agreement (Campact 2019a), there was little to no search interest for the term mercosur agreement ('mercotur abkommen') in Germany (see Figure 9), yet starting from the 23rd of October, the term 'mercotur agreement' saw a marked increase in Google search interest.

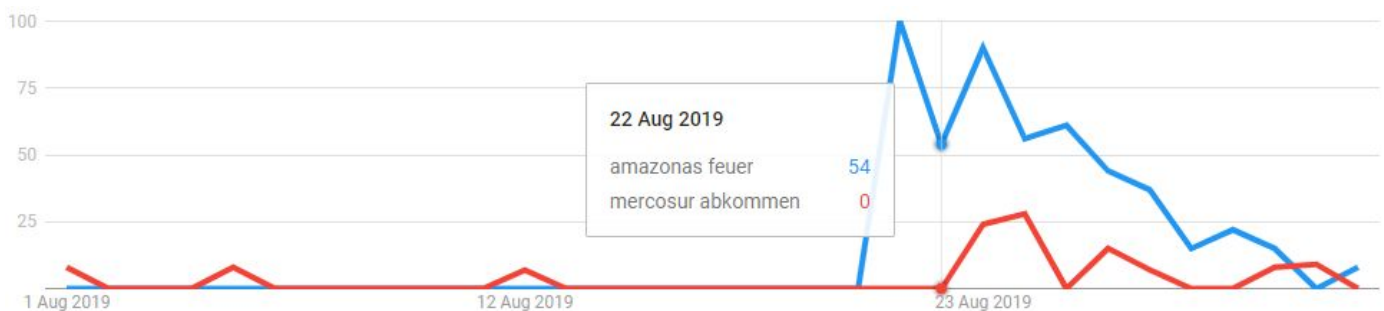


Figure 9: Relative search interest in Germany for the fires in the Amazon and the EU-Mercosur agreement in August 2019; Google trend data

(amazonas feuer = amazonas fire, mercotur abkommen = mercotur agreement)

This work furthermore notes that at first glance search interest in the fires and for the more general search term 'mercotur' in Germany appear to overlap wholly in the time period it observes. On the other hand more detailed observation laid bare a degree of lag between search interest for the Amazon fires and the subsequent rise in search interest for the Mercosur agreement specifically (see Figure 8), as well as for the search term Mercosur more generally. This work posits that this phenomenon was caused by the framing efforts of Campact which endeavoured to connect the fires to the EU-Mercosur agreement mentioned previously (Campact 2019a). As evidenced by Figure 9, prior to the launch of Campact's campaign against the EU-Mercosur agreement on the 23rd of August, there was next to search interest for the

agreement, despite large interest in the fires in the Amazon. Thus this work posits that the salience of the EU-Mercosur agreement was partially driven, or at the very least intensified by connecting the agreement to the fires.

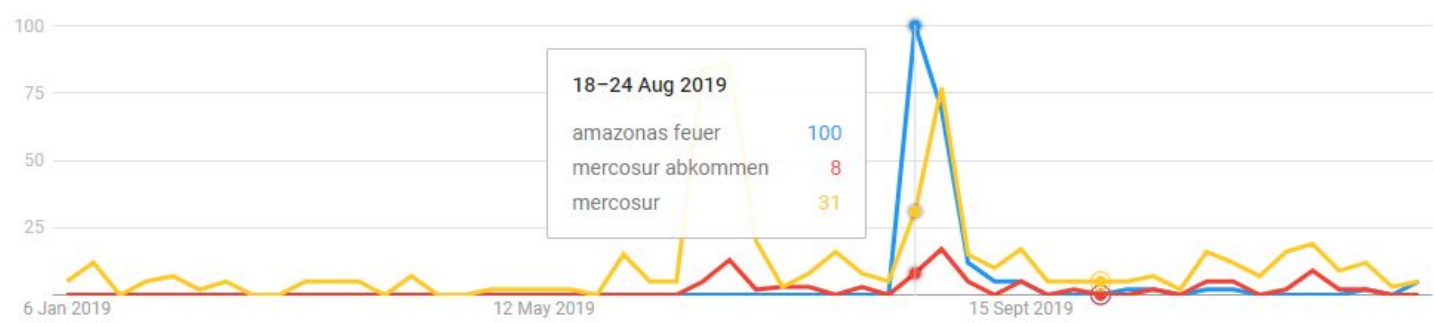


Figure 10. Relative search interest in Germany for the fires in the Amazon and the EU-Mercosur agreement in 2019; Google trend data  
*(amazonas feuer = amazonas fire, mercosur abkommen = mercosur agreement)*

This work also seeks to contextualize this search interest data by introducing worldwide levels of search interest for the term ‘mercosur’ (the term mercosur being applicable due to its universal and multilingual nature), with Paraguay having the largest amount of search interest for said term, corrected for population size, while the most interested European country is Austria at 3% interest relative to Paraguay. Germany features 1% search interest in ‘mercosur’ relative to Paraguay (see Figure 11), corrected for population size. By virtue of proximity, this work utilizes Austria as the country to contextualize its search data. The fact that Mercosur saw three times more search interest in Austria than in Germany does imply that the term was not as salient in Germany as an initial observation of the peak interest may imply. Yyet neither can it negate that said interest, and thus salience, was at its peak during the periods this work has pointed out above.

1 Paraguay	100	21 Spain	1
2 Uruguay	47	22 Réunion	1
3 Argentina	36	23 Morocco	1
4 Bolivia	29	24 Germany	1
5 Venezuela	13	25 Brazil	1

Figure 11. Global relative search interest corrected for population size for ‘mercosur’ in 2019; Google trend data

Therefore one might conclude that the EU-Mercosur agreement was highly salient prior to Campact launching their lobbying efforts, both by virtue of Google search interest for the Amazon fires, which Campact tied their lobbying efforts to, as well as by virtue of the search interest for Mercosur. This

conclusion suffers from caveats made apparent by contextualizing this search interest data, such as the disparity between the search interest for Mercosur in Austria and Germany, as shown above, and from the disparity in the search interest for the Amazon fires relative to the fires in Australia, as this work shall elaborate below. Taking said caveats into account, this work concludes that, relative to the fires in Australia, and thus the salience potential for the EU-Australia FTA, the salience of the EU-Mercosur agreement was certainly not high, nor was it especially low. Particularly prior to Campact launching their campaign, search interest was at its peak, therefore this work assigns a salience of medium high to the EU-Mercosur agreement.

Regarding the issue marketability of the EU-Mercosur agreement, this work observed a large degree of activity on the hashtag #Mercosur prior to Campact launching their campaign<sup>7</sup>, in part fuelled by farmers' protests in the days and weeks prior (Zinke 2019). In that same vein, a lot of the activity by similarly aligned groups comes from farmer's interest groups, as well as the regular crop of globalization skeptic interest groups such as ATTAC Germany, Power Shift and others (see Figure 15 for additional details). In line with this work's operationalization of marketability, this indicates great potential for the acquisition of new customers, as well as for the satisfaction of current ones associated with the EU-Mercosur agreement as an issue. On the product aspects of the EU-Mercosur agreement, this work observes that the EU-Mercosur agreement, relative to TTIP, was largely new to Campact as an issue. The EU-Mercosur agreement is legally structured in a way that innately negated a core aspect of the international trade policy product that Campact had hitherto relied on when campaigning on TTIP and CETA by virtue of their absence. Investor-state dispute settlement and its implications on the rule of law (Gotev 2020) are absent in the EU-Mercosur agreement. Furthermore, there was no real place for general Genetically Modified Organism skepticism, since GMOs were not as readily associated with the Mercosur states, despite indicators that GMO related products may be part of the EU-Mercosur agreement (Ghiotto and Echaide 2019). Both of these departures from TTIP increased the degree of newness of both product and market associated with said issue. Said risks are anathema to an organization facing the conditions of mortality anxiety in line with the theory this work put forward. The impacts of this large degree of newness were somewhat ameliorated by the fact that Campact was able to largely rely upon extensive and in-depth issue framing efforts by similarly aligned groups, as evidenced by their co-authoring of a factsheet on the EU-Mercosur agreement (Fritz 2019). This extensive networking prior to public campaign launch implies that they were able to draw on extensive external competences in their lobbying

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<sup>7</sup> #mercotur lang:de until\_time:1566511199

on this unfamiliar issue. This is ultimately best expressed in the groups they list as collaborators in their efforts, which are *Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft* (a farmer's interest group), *Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung* (a sustainable international development interest group), and *Meine Landwirtschaft* (an interest group focused on agrarian change). Regarding the emotive messaging capacity associated with lobbying on the EU-Mercosur agreement, this work notes that interest groups lobbying on the agreement were able to rely upon notions such as environmental concerns, as well as food safety concerns, which one may plausibly consider to be rather emotive messages, and thus assess the emotive messaging capacity of the EU-Mercosur agreement to be on the high end. In summary, this work regards the marketability of the EU-Mercosur agreement in 2019, as per this work's operationalization thereof, to have been on the high medium end, diminished by the large associated degree of newness risk.

### EU-Australia Free Trade Agreement

As previously noted, search interest for the fires in Australia peaked on the 7th of January 2020, which is why this work has proposed that it utilize this point in time as the temporal determinator of its analysis.

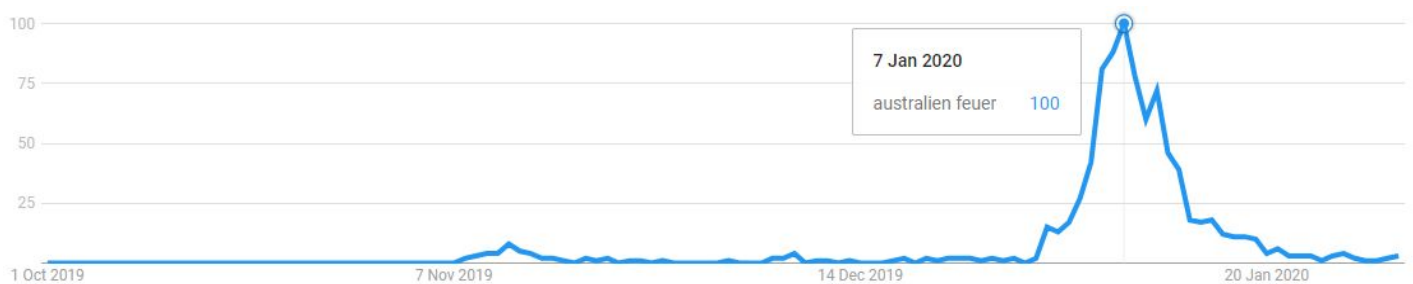


Figure 12. Search interest in Germany for the fires in Australia from 1.1.2019 to 1.2.2020; Google trend data ('australien feuer' = Australia fire)

This peak interest graph does not yet paint a complete picture of the search interest for the fires in Australia. This work seeks to contextualize the search interest in Germany for that time period for the fires in Australia by comparing it to the search interest for the fires in the Amazon (see Figure 13). Said contextualization reveals the disparity in search interest in Germany for those two different events. There was more than twenty-five times as much search interest for the fires in Australia than there was for the fires in the Amazon, at their respective peaks. That in turn implies that the fires in Australia were significantly more salient than those in the Amazon in their respective time periods if solely measured by search interest.

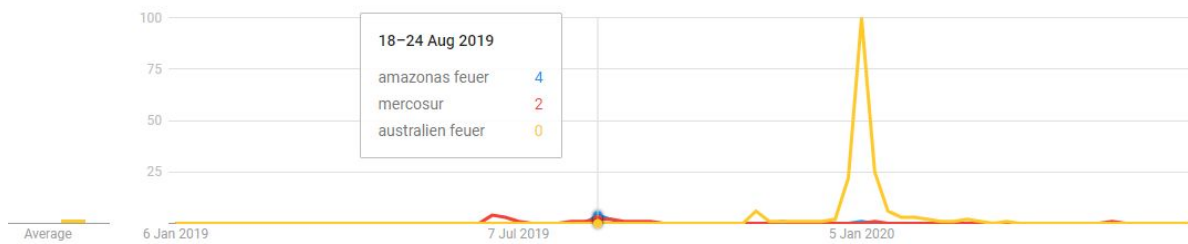


Figure 13. Search interest for the fires in the Amazon and Australia from 1.1.2019 to 1.7.2020 in Germany; Google trend data ('amazonas feuer' = Amazonas fire, 'australien feuer' = Australia fire)

On top of the large disparity in search interest between the fires in the Amazon and Australia, this work also notes that Germany was the German-speaking country with the largest amount of search interest for said fires in Australia (see Figure 14), which implies that said fires were at their most salient in Germany.

This leaves us with a high degree of salience for the fires in Australia, yet the EU-Australia FTA had next to no salience.

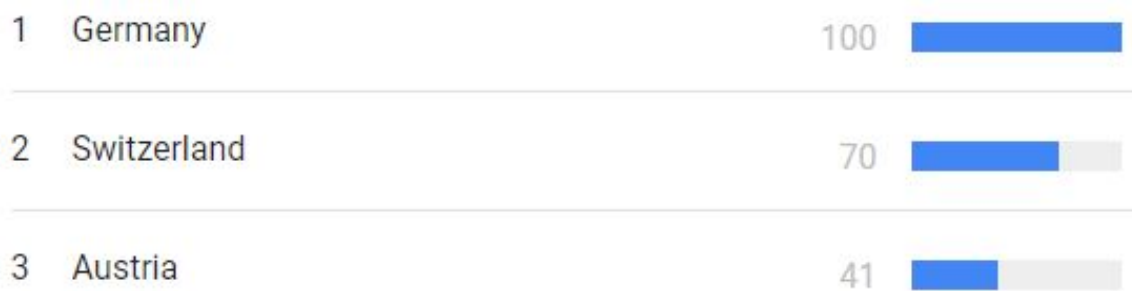


Figure 14. Global relative search interest corrected for population size for 'australien feuer' from 1.1.2019 to 1.7.2020; Google trend data

This work posits that interest groups who had a desire to lobby on said agreement would have chosen that moment in time to co-link the fires in Australia with the EU-Australia FTA, in order to piggyback off the high degree of salience the fires in Australia enjoyed. In regards to the EU-Mercosur agreement this work noted that Campact framed the EU-Mercosur agreement and the fires as interconnected in order to benefit from the public's attention directed towards the fires in the Amazon. This work argues that Campact had the opportunity to frame the fires in Australia and the EU-Australia FTA as a singular issue. Certain commentators warned of the potential negative impacts on small-scale farmers in the EU caused by importing agricultural products from Australia and New Zealand (Buchner 2017). In a similar vein, a readily available avenue of challenging the EU-Australia FTA stems from the impact assessments associated - a projected 0.02% of growth in EU GDP in exchange for an 0.04% increase in greenhouse gas emissions (Buchner 2017;

Commission 2017b). Any interest group lobbying on the EU-Australia FTA would have had the opportunity to benefit from vastly larger issue salience relative to that of the fires in the Amazon and thus the EU-Mercosur agreement. Thus it is reasonable to ascribe high medium salience to the EU-Australia agreement by virtue of the large amount of search interest for the fires in Australia.

Regarding the marketability of the EU-Australia FTA as an issue, this work noted large amounts of Twitter activity on the hashtag #Australien, while a search for terms relating to the EU-Australia FTA shows next to no activity prior to the search interest peak for the fires<sup>8</sup>. In a similar vein, there was next to no activity by similarly aligned groups on the EU-Australia FTA, with the exception of the German Ecological Democratic Party (Buchner 2017). On the other hand, business interest groups were openly and more commonly in favour of the EU-Australia FTA in Germany. Such interest groups include the German industrial and trade association IHK (Klingler 2018). Regarding the product aspects of marketability, the EU-Australia FTA was just as new to Campact as the EU-Mercosur agreement. Both issues are rather similar legally, neither are mixed agreements, and there is little overlap with claims that were previously utilized by the TTIP campaign, both in a product and market sense, as this work has elaborated previously. Regarding the emotive messaging capacity of the product EU-Australia FTA, this work argues that said capacity is rather low, due to the agricultural products in question not intuitively sparking food safety concerns, by virtue of a lack of readily available GMO-associations (Australian Government Office of the Gene Technology Regulator 2020), and a lack of investor-state dispute settlement claims to be made. Said low emotive messaging capacity combined with the low amount of similarly aligned group activity make up the low issue marketability assessment that this work assigns to the EU-Australia FTA.

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<sup>8</sup> #australien lang:de until\_time:1578437999; australien freihandel lang:de until\_time:1578437999; australien abkommen lang:de until\_time:1578437999



Marketability	Campact Mercosur Agreement 23.08.2019
Twitter activity	High
Similarly aligned group activity	Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung, Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerlicher Landwirtschaft, Meine Landwirtschaft, ila, Attac Deutschland, Brot für die Welt - Evangelisches Werk für Diakonie und Entwicklung, Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland, Forschungs- und Dokumentationszentrum Chile-Lateinamerika, NaturFreunde Deutschlands, Netzwerk Gerechter Welthandel, Power Shift, foodwatch, Mehr Demokratie, Slow Food Deutschland [14+]
Issue newness risk	High
Second-mover potential	High
Emotive messaging capacity	High (food, environmental concerns e.g. <i>'lungs of the planet'</i> )
Salience	
Search interest in country in week prior to campaign start /100	'mercosur' = 6, 'amazonas feuer' = 0, 'mercosur abkommen' = 0
Search interest relative to world corrected for population size /100	'mercosur' = 1
Marketability	Campact Australia FTA 7.1.2020
Twitter activity	High
Similarly aligned group activity	Ecological Democratic Party (ÖDP)
Issue newness risk	High
Second-mover potential	Low
Emotive messaging capacity	Low
Salience	
Search interest in country in week prior to campaign start /100	'australien feuer' = 24
Search interest relative to world corrected for population size /100	n/a

Figure 15. Overview of issue marketability and issue salience assessments for EU-Mercosur and EU-Australia

In summary, as elaborated extensively above (see also Figure 15), this work attributed to the EU-Mercosur agreement an issue salience of medium at most, solely by virtue of piggybacking off the salience of the fires in the Amazon, while issue marketability for the EU-Mercosur agreement was rather high, as evidenced by the amount of similarly aligned group activity, as well as by the high capacity for emotive messaging. The salience of the EU-Australia FTA on the other hand at the very least had the potential to be rather high, if successfully linked to the fires in Australia, as Campact did for the EU-Mercosur agreement, as elaborated above. The salience of the fires in Australia was remarkably high, especially when compared to the salience of the fires in the Amazon. The marketability of the EU-Australia FTA on the other hand was rather low, especially by virtue of next to no similarly aligned group activity, as well as a diminished capacity for emotive messaging. Therefore this work concludes that in this instance, Campact's observed agenda setting outcome is more readily attributable to issue marketability, and the lack thereof, rather than issue salience.

## JEFTA, Singapore, and Campact

The EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (JEFTA in short) and the EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (EU-Singapore FTA in short) were presented to the Council and the European Parliament for signature in 2018 (Laufer 2018). This work distinguishes between the EU-Singapore FTA and the EU-Singapore IPA in order to capture the similarities of the EU-Singapore FTA and JEFTA. Neither agreement contains investment protection clauses (Commission 2018a) and both are EU-only. Despite their similarities, Campact elected to limit its lobbying activities almost entirely to JEFTA. Campact began lobbying on JEFTA on the 25th June of 2017. Initial efforts included gathering signatures against what they termed ‘TTIP with Japan’ (Campact 2017a; 2017b). These lobbying efforts were kickstarted by a leak of the contents to the German press (Hagelüken, Mühlauer, and Deininger 2017) and were rather sustained and ultimately reached their peak at the end of June 2018 when Campact managed to frame utility privatization and JEFTA as interconnected (Campact 2018a) prior to the Council voting on said agreement. Their last act of lobbying on JEFTA took place at the beginning of 2019, after which JEFTA entered into force. In sum, Campact lobbied extensively on JEFTA, in fact making it one of their flagship campaigns of actions on international trade policy<sup>9</sup>. This work endeavours to measure the issue salience and issue marketability of JEFTA prior to Campact’s initial engagement on the 25th June of 2017.

The EU-Singapore agreement on the other hand enjoyed a moment that was similarly pivotal as the leak of JEFTA’s contents - the European Court of Justice’ opinion on the competence of the European Union to conclude international agreements not containing rules on portfolio investments and investor-state dispute settlement provisions (European Court of Justice 2017). This opinion prompted lobbying by a variety of groups (Greenpeace 2017a), while Campact on the other hand waited until 2019 to devote a modicum of effort to lobbying on the EU-Singapore FTA. Allied with foodwatch international and Mehr Demokratie, Campact submitted a constitutional complaint regarding the compatibility of the EU-Singapore FTA with the German constitution (Campact 2019b). Said constitutional complaint was also the full extent of their lobbying on the EU-Singapore FTA. In sum, Campact devoted very little effort towards campaigning on the EU-Singapore FTA. This work thus attempts to measure the issue salience and issue marketability of the EU-Singapore FTA prior to Campact’s engagement on the 11th February of 2019.

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<sup>9</sup> Over its various lobbying campaigns on international trade policy issues, Campact has established six flagship issues: TTIP, CETA, TiSA, Mercosur, Multilateral Investment Court, and JEFTA, see also <https://www.campact.de/handelspolitik/>

## EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement

Regarding the issue salience of JEFTA, this work notes three instances of extraordinary search interest for the term JEFTA in Germany in the years 2015 to 2020, initially around the time the contents were leaked for the first time, which coincides with Campact launching their lobbying efforts, secondarily when Campact successfully connected JEFTA to public utility privatization (search interest in Germany hit an all-time peak at this point in time), and lastly, when JEFTA entered into force at the beginning of February 2019.

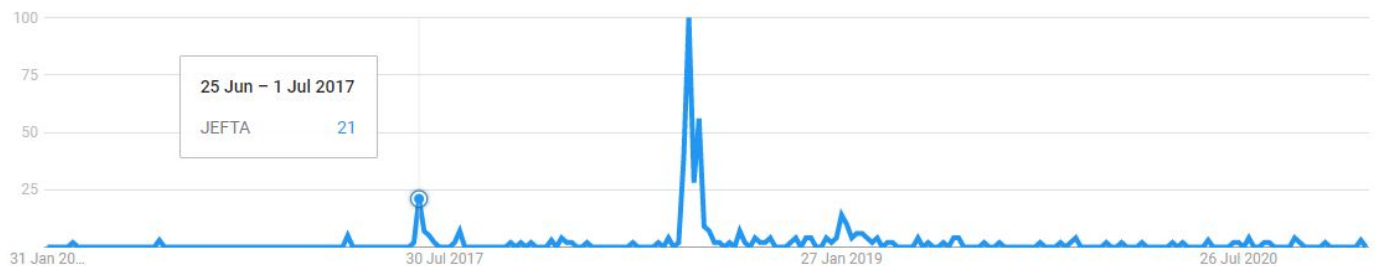


Figure 16. Relative search interest in Germany for JEFTA in the time period of 2016 to 2021; Google trend data  
At first glance this would imply that the issue prioritization of JEFTA was driven by salience, an inference which this work subjects to further examination by assessing search interest prior to campaign launch at a higher frequency, assessing search interest daily prior to the day of their campaign launch.



Figure 17. Relative search interest in Germany for JEFTA in the time period of 1.6.2017 to 1.8.2017; Google trend data

As this work previously noted, Campact launched their initial lobbying efforts on the 25th, which was preceded by a rise in salience over a two-day period, yet the average search interest in the week prior to

prioritization relative to 2017’s interest was but 9% of the year’s peak (see Figure 18).

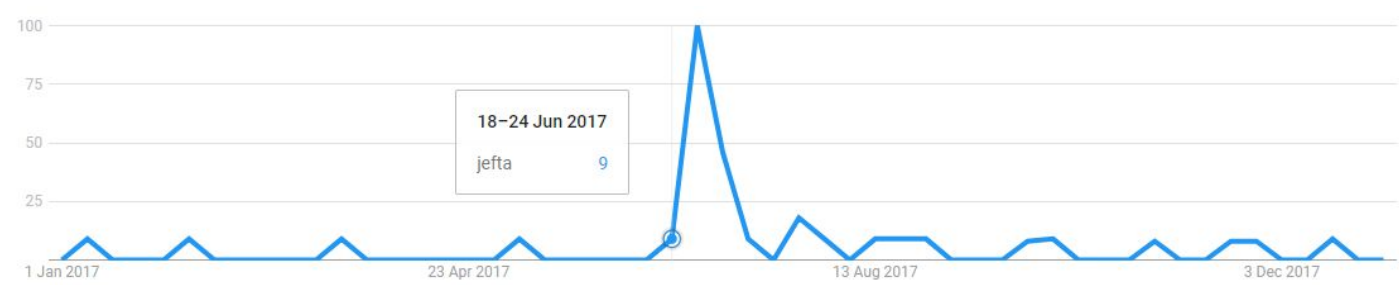


Figure 18. Relative search interest in Germany for JEFTA in 2017; Google trend data

This work seeks to further contextualize all of the above observations by assessing search interest in Germany relative to search interest worldwide in 2017 by virtue of the term JEFTA’s universality. Regarding Figure 19 below, it notes that Serbia is to be excluded<sup>10</sup>. Germany had about one third of the search interest of the Netherlands for JEFTA in 2017, which, if one excludes Serbia, leaves us with a search interest of 29% in Germany relative to the Netherlands' 100%<sup>11</sup>, which implies a relatively high degree of salience in Germany by virtue of inter-country comparison (see Figure 19).

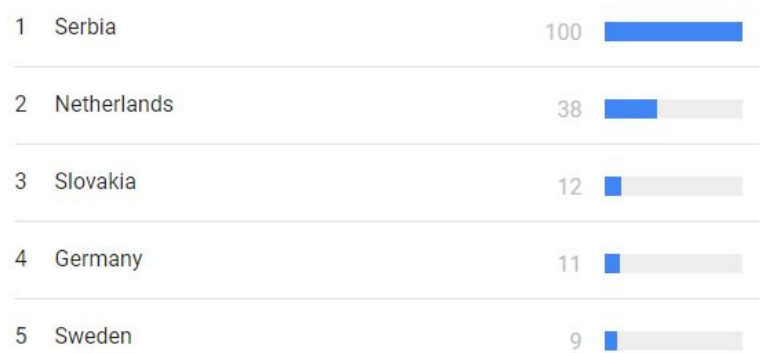


Figure 19. Global relative search interest corrected for population size for JEFTA in 2017

In summary this work gauges the issue salience of JEFTA in Germany prior to Campact launching their campaign to have been high, by virtue of the degree of search interest both in Germany, and the large German search interest relative to the most interested country, the Netherlands.

Regarding the marketability of JEFTA as per this work’s operationalization prior to Campact’s campaign launch in 2017, this work was able to observe large amounts of activity on Twitter prior to prioritization<sup>12</sup> spurred by Greenpeace Netherlands leaking parts of the agreement (Greenpeace 2017b), as

<sup>10</sup> The term JEFTA is used to search for a tennis player in Serbia - Jefta Kecic  
<sup>11</sup> The Netherlands’ 38% to Germany’s 11% increases Germany’s search interest to 29% if the Netherlands becomes the new 100%  
<sup>12</sup> Twitter query: #jefta lang:de until\_time:1498255199 & jefta lang:de until\_time:1498255199

well as a reasonable amount of engagement by similarly aligned groups (see Figure 18). As to the newness of JEFTA to Campact, although their rhetoric referred to JEFTA as ‘TTIP with Japan’ (Campact 2017b), JEFTA itself is EU-only, and neither does it feature many of the clarion calls Campact had come to rely on as part of their campaigning on TTIP and CETA - such as food safety, and investor-state dispute settlement. It is for these reasons that this work gauged the issue newness of JEFTA to Campact to have been rather high, albeit this newness was ameliorated to some extent by the option to second-move (see Figure 20), in line with this work’s theory. Regarding the emotive messaging capacity of JEFTA, the emotive messaging capacity of JEFTA prior to Campact starting their campaign in 2017 is insofar severely diminished as they were initially forced to again rely on evoking TTIP, as they had done with CETA. This changed at a later point when Campact was successfully able to connect JEFTA to utility privatization, but prior to issue prioritization this work gauges the emotive messaging capacity to have been rather low. Thus JEFTA is ascribed a medium degree of marketability in Germany and thus for Campact.

### **EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement**

Regarding the salience of the EU-Singapore FTA as per the outlined operationalization, this work notes that no search term relating to the agreement other than a search solely for the term Singapore yields any remotely credible results. This work is thus forced to ascribe no degree of salience whatsoever in Germany to the EU-Singapore FTA prior to Campact launching their constitutional complaint.

Regarding the marketability of the EU-Singapore FTA this work was able to observe extensive activity on Twitter concerning the EU-Singapore Investment Protection Agreement, but very little on the EU-Singapore FTA<sup>13</sup>. This low degree of activity on Twitter was mirrored by very little similarly aligned group activity, as a matter of fact, foodwatch and Mehr Demokratie, Campact’s partners in launching their constitutional complaint were the only groups lobbying against the EU-Singapore FTA specifically, whilst other German globalization-skeptic interest groups honed in on the previously mentioned EU-Singapore Investment Protection Agreement. Regarding the issue newness of the EU-Singapore agreement, similarly as JEFTA, the EU-Singapore FTA was largely new to Campact, in that it bore little to no semblance to TTIP. Unlike in the case of JEFTA, this newness was not ameliorated by being able to move second. Additionally, the emotive messaging capacity of the EU-Singapore FTA was limited to not

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<sup>13</sup> Twitter query: eu singapur -#stopISDS -#ISDS lang:de until\_time:1549925999

very emotive legal concerns, as expressed by their avenue of lobbying - the constitutional court. In summary, the EU-Singapore agreement is ascribed a low issue marketability.

<b>Marketability</b>	<b>Campact JEFTA 25.06.2018</b>
<b>Twitter activity</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Similarly aligned group activity</b>	<b>Greenpeace, Berliner Wassertisch, Lobby Control, Power Shift, Netzwerk Gerechter Welthandel [5]</b>
<b>Issue newness risk</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>Second-mover potential</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>Emotive messaging capacity</b>	<b>Low (re-recycled TTIP messaging, EU-only agreement)</b>
<b>Salience</b>	
<b>Search interest in country in week prior to campaign start /100</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Search interest relative to world corrected for population size /100</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Marketability</b>	<b>Campact EU-Singapore 12.2.2019</b>
<b>Twitter activity</b>	<b>Some</b>
<b>Similarly aligned group activity</b>	<b>Mehr Demokratie, foodwatch [2]</b>
<b>Issue newness risk</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Second-mover potential</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Emotive messaging capacity</b>	<b>Low (technical arguments)</b>
<b>Salience</b>	
<b>Search interest in country in week prior to campaign start /100</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Search interest relative to world corrected for population size /100</b>	<b>n/a</b>

Figure 20. Overview of issue marketability and issue salience assessments for JEFTA and the EU-Singapore FTA

In summary, as this work has outlined above, it gauged the issue salience of JEFTA to have been high, and the issue marketability of JEFTA to have been medium, by virtue of the limited amount of similarly aligned group activity in Germany, the medium degree of newness associated with JEFTA, the limited opportunities for second-moving, as well as the diminished emotive messaging capacity prior to prioritization. The issue salience of the EU-Singapore FTA on the other hand was none, while the issue marketability of the EU-Singapore FTA was on the low end as well, by virtue of the limited amount of Twitter activity, next to no similarly aligned group activity, a high degree of issue newness, a limited degree of opportunities for second-moving, and a very limited emotive messaging capacity. Therefore, both issue salience and issue marketability are adequate predictors of the agenda setting outcome this



work observed in the case of JEFTA and the EU-Singapore FTA.

### TiSA, 38 Degrees and Campact

The Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA in short) is built upon the WTO framework with the intention of liberalising trade in services between the negotiating parties which include the European Union. TiSA is oftentimes connected to other trade policy issues such as TTIP, CETA, and TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership), and generally used in the same sentence by interest groups aligned against (Sawatzki 2015).

Campact first made mention of TiSA in 2014 in the wake of WikiLeaks leaking parts of the agreement in 2014 (WikiLeaks 2014), thereafter they made mention of TiSA sparingly up until their launch of a petition against TiSA on the 3rd of June 2015, following a repeated leak of TiSA documents. It is this moment in time at which Campact started lobbying against TiSA specifically instead of merely lambasting it as an aside to TTIP and CETA, and therefore the point in time prior to which this work shall assess the marketability of TiSA as an issue in Germany of. 38 Degrees on the other hand has never made a single mention of TiSA in its organizational history. Neither on Twitter, nor on their blog, nor as part of their actions. This complete lack of lobbying on TiSA by 38 Degrees forces this work to depend on the pivotal moment that was the second, larger, leak of TiSA texts on WikiLeaks that spurred Campact into concrete action on TiSA. Therefore this work derives its point in time prior to which it assesses issue salience and issue marketability in the UK and thus for 38 Degrees from said second set of leaks, establishing the 3rd of June 2015 as the point in time this work utilizes to conduct its analysis. This variance in agenda setting outcome in Germany by Campact, compared to that in the United Kingdom by 38 Degrees, is apt to assist this work in further exploring whether issue salience or issue marketability predict agenda setting outcomes. Due to the timing of this inquiry, this work is more confident in the explanatory value of this work's findings by virtue of Brexit occurring after agenda setting choices had been made.

### **Trade in Services Agreement in the United Kingdom**

Regarding the salience of TiSA in the UK prior to the point of measurement, this work notes that the sporadicity of the search interest levels for TiSA in 2015 imply a relatively small overall volume, resulting in small changes of the absolute number of searches having large impacts and thus making interest appear sporadic. The rapid changes in relative search interest on a weekly basis stem from a low volume of search results overall. A salience assessment of TiSA on the basis of Google search interest



furthermore suffers from the caveats of TiSA also being a search term associated with fashion brand TISA, as well as actress Tisa Farrow. This work seeks to ameliorate this by comparing search interest for the term TiSA with search interest for the explicit topic of the Trade in Services Agreement (see Figure 21).



Figure 21. Relative search interest for TiSA in the UK in 2015; Google trend data

Comparing search interest in the UK for TiSA relative to other countries, search interest was rather low in the UK as evidenced by Figure 22 on top of the little search interest for TiSA in the week prior to issue prioritization. Therefore this work attributes a low degree of salience to TiSA in the UK in the time period it observes, as well as for 2015 overall.



Figure 22. Global relative search interest corrected for population size for the topic of the Trade in Services Agreement in 2015

Regarding the marketability of TiSA in the UK in the observed time period this work notes that Twitter in the United Kingdom had relatively little activity on any terms relating to TiSA in spite of a high notoriety event occurring<sup>14</sup>, the leaking of some of the contents by WikiLeaks. Regarding similarly aligned group activity, various United Kingdom interest groups called for a stop of the TiSA negotiations

<sup>14</sup> Twitter queries are #tisa lang:en until\_time:1433368799, #tisa nhs lang:en until\_time:1433368799, #tisa uk lang:en until\_time:1433368799, #tisa -#stopfasttrack -#nofasttrack lang:en until\_time:1433368799 and #NoTISA -#stopfasttrack -#nofasttrack lang:en until\_time:1433368799, fast track related hashtags relate to legislative procedures in the United States and are thus excluded.

in tandem with the Seattle to Brussels Network (Hilde 2013), the United Kingdom ATTAC subsidiary, Global Justice Now, began lobbying on TiSA prior to the 3rd of June as well, for a complete list see Figure 23. Taken as a whole this work notes significant levels of activity by similarly aligned groups. Regarding the issue newness of TiSA to 38 Degrees, this work notes that TiSA differs from TTIP in various aspects by virtue of being a multilateral treaty primarily concerning liberalisation of services. This newness is furthermore evident in interest group's rhetoric on TiSA, who primarily address the privatization of public services in their engagement (Hillary 2016; Scrivener 2015). This work therefore assigns a high degree of newness to TiSA. Concerning 38 Degrees' second moving options that may ameliorate said newness risk, this work notes that despite a relatively significant amount of similarly aligned group activity, little issue framing had been done prior to the observed point in time, made evident by the lack of specific lobbying on TiSA in the observed time period. As this work has previously alluded, TiSA at the time was generally mentioned as an aside to TTIP and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP in short), and lobbying around TiSA was limited as a consequence (Malcolm 2015). This work surmises that this may have been due to other issues consuming groups' capacities, such as TTIP and CETA. The emotive messaging capacity associated with TiSA primarily stems from issues such as public service liberalisation, data protection, as well as the general lack of transparency in the negotiations (Moody 2015). Compared to issues which are highly emotive such as food and rule of law, the aforementioned are rather lacklustre. Thus as a whole, this work assigns a marketability grade of a medium low, buoyed by the relatively large amount of similarly aligned group activity, whilst negatively impacted by the low amount of activity on Twitter, the large issue newness risk, and the low emotive messaging capacity.

### Trade in Services Agreement in Germany

Regarding the salience of TiSA in Germany prior to the 3rd of June 2015 this work notes that search interest for TiSA prior to Campact lobbying against TiSA specifically was rather low.

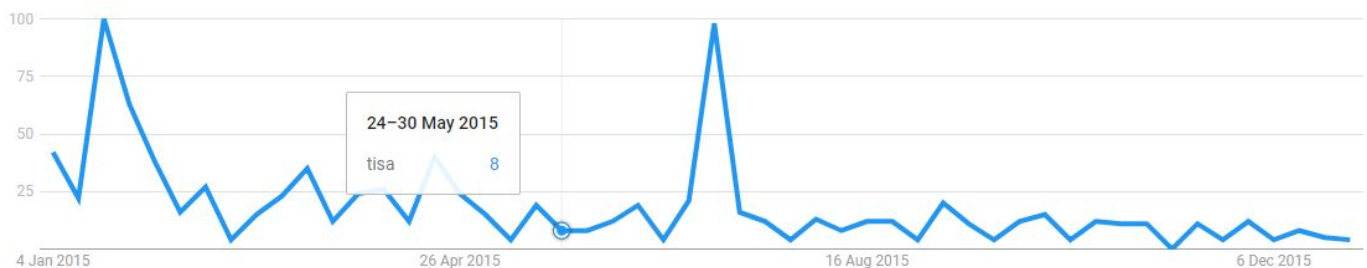


Figure 23. Relative search interest for TiSA in Germany in 2015; Google trend data

Additionally, search interest volumes corrected for population size in Germany relative to those in other countries reveal that search interest for the topic of the Trade in Services Agreement overall was at a similar level in Germany as it was in other European countries in 2015. Thus this work regards the salience of TiSA to have been on the low end in Germany in the time period it observed.

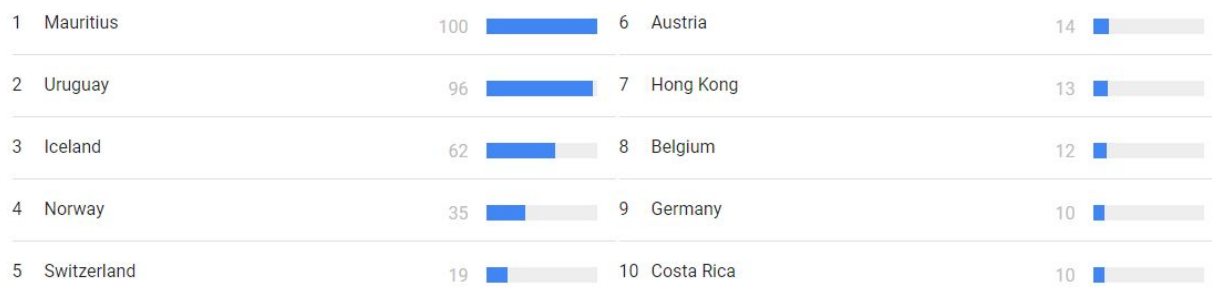


Figure 24. Global relative search interest corrected for population size for the topic of the Trade in Services Agreement in 2015

Regarding the marketability of TiSA in Germany in 2015, this work noted a large degree of activity on Twitter relating to TiSA in Germany<sup>15</sup>. In addition, it observed rather extensive similarly aligned group activity, both via the previously mentioned letter via the Seattle to Brussels Network (Hilde 2013), but also via a book released by ATTAC Germany (Klimenta et al. 2015), for a detailed breakdown of similarly aligned group activity see Figure 23. Regarding the issue newness dimension of TiSA to Campact this work reiterates previous statements made in regards to 38 Degrees, meaning that various product aspects that defined TTIP, such as its bilateral nature and comprehensive nature concerning goods of all kinds, do not apply to TiSA. The impact of said newness is, unlike in the United Kingdom, ameliorated in Germany on the other hand, by virtue of the large degree of similarly aligned group activity. Furthermore as a consequence of said activity, issue framing in Germany had been much more extensive at the time than in the United Kingdom. Examples include the publishing of entire books containing arguments against TiSA (Klimenta et al. 2015). Regarding the emotive messaging capacity of TiSA in Germany, this work considers it to be higher than it was in the United Kingdom, by virtue of interest groups evoking data protection concerns, which historically have been more sensitive in Germany than other countries (Devins 2017). Because of the extensive issue framing efforts by other groups and thus the potential for second moving on TiSA ameliorating the associated newness risk, this work attributes a high degree of marketability to TiSA in Germany.

<sup>15</sup>Twitter query: #tisa lang:de until\_time:1433368799

<b>Marketability</b>	<b>38 Degrees TiSA</b>
<b>Twitter activity</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Similarly aligned group activity</b>	<b>Banana Link, Farms Not Factories, Jubilee Debt Campaign, Roj Women's Association, The Corner House, Trade Justice Movement, UNISON, War on Want, William's Desk, World Development Movement, Global Justice Now [10]</b>
<b>Issue newness risk</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Second-mover potential</b>	<b>Medium</b>
<b>Emotive messaging capacity</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Salience</b>	
<b>Search interest in country in week prior to campaign start /100</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Search interest relative to world corrected for population size /100</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Marketability</b>	<b>Campact TiSA 3.6.2015</b>
<b>Twitter activity</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Similarly aligned group activity</b>	<b>Berliner Wassertisch, Umweltinstitut München, Lobby Control, Attac Deutschland, Colibri, Die AnStifter, Ecumenical Service on Southern Africa, FDCL, GiB, PowerShift, Stuttgarter Wasserforum, Wasser in Bürgerhand, WEED, Zukunftskonvent [14]</b>
<b>Issue newness risk</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Second-mover potential</b>	<b>Large</b>
<b>Emotive messaging capacity</b>	
<b>Salience</b>	
<b>Search interest in country in week prior to campaign start /100</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Search interest relative to world corrected for population size /100</b>	<b>10</b>

Figure 25. Overview of issue marketability and issue salience assessments for TiSA in the UK and Germany

## Conclusions

This work sought to delve into the agenda setting of digital advocacy groups. It attempted to do so by posing the question of what drives international trade policy issue prioritization in digital advocacy groups. By framing digital advocacy groups as part of the wider field of interest groups, this work provided a synthesis of generally acknowledged drivers of issue prioritization in interest groups. Furthermore considered was a previous work on digital advocacy group issue prioritization. Two hypotheses were presented of what may constitute the primary driving force in digital advocacy group international trade policy issue prioritization, issue salience and issue marketability.

This work proposed the theory of issue marketability as a driving force of issue prioritization in digital advocacy groups, while also engaging with the claim of issue salience being the primary driver of issue prioritization. It sought to verify or falsify its hypotheses by analyzing a set of cases and gauging their respective issue salience and issue marketability levels. The four distinct case this work analyzed were as follows: 38 Degrees and its varying levels of lobbying engagement on TTIP and CETA respectively, Campact and its choice to lobby on JEFTA but not against the EU-Singapore agreement, Campact and its choice to lobby on the EU-Mercosur agreement, but not on the EU-Australia agreement, and lastly Campact lobbying on TiSA while 38 Degrees did not.

Having summarized this work's approach, it is imperative that it acknowledges its limitations. Said limitations are threefold and stem in part from being built upon partially still developing theoretical foundations, in part from attempting to achieve more than its resources permitted, and lastly, failing to pierce the veil covering digital advocacy group agenda setting mechanisms to the extent it aimed to. Despite failing to meet its relatively grand ambitions, this work has made somewhat significant contributions towards both advancing the field's understanding of digital advocacy groups, and furthermore also bears the potential to contribute to future studies in the field on interest group behaviour as a whole.

This work's primary limitation stems from the challenges of operationalizing issue marketability in line with the theory of marketability this work has proposed. The theory of marketability presumes that digital advocacy international trade policy agenda setting choices take into account a variety of issue-related factors, from issue newness and associated risk due to lack of familiarity, to an issue's capacity to satisfy and acquire customers. The theory of marketability presupposes that this behaviour

occurs due to group mortality anxiety. To adequately account for said complexity has proven a challenge. Accounting for digital advocacy group's presumed social media monitoring by accounting for Twitter activity has proven to be somewhat superfluous. Additionally, attempting to account for issue newness and associated risk requires a more sophisticated rubric than was utilized. Accounting for the emotive messaging capacity of issues has proven to be somewhat more robust in predicting issue prioritization, but nigh impossible to quantify in a manner that is scientifically satisfactory. By far the most consistent predictor of digital advocacy group agenda setting across all issues observed has been the amount of similarly aligned group activity. This finding lands squarely in the middle of a dissent amongst scholars of interest groups. The literature on interest group issue prioritization diverges regarding its understanding of the impact of prior interest group activity on issue prioritization outcomes. Various scholars posit that interest groups are naturally niche seeking and should thus endeavour to lobby on issues that are reserved for them (Browne 1990; Gray and Lowery 1996; Heaney 2004). On the other hand, scholars also note that a few issues see most of the lobbying by interest groups, observing lobbying bandwagons (Baumgartner and Leech 2001). This work found that international trade policy issues that feature the greater amount of similarly aligned group activity have consistently made the agenda, beating out other international trade policy issues that featured less similarly aligned group activity. Said findings pose future challenges for the field of interest group research, as well as for more specific research on digital advocacy groups. Nonetheless, if digital advocacy groups persist, policy bandwagons may be around to stay.

This work's secondary limitation stems from the specificity of issues it analyzed. In a perfect world, any findings made regarding digital advocacy group's international trade policy agenda setting would be perfectly generalizable to all other categories of issues that digital advocacy groups may lobby on. This work previously noted two kinds of digital advocacy groups that differentiate themselves via their either transnational and intranational lobbying activity. While transnational digital advocacy groups such as Avaaz may seamlessly transition from lobbying the US administration to lobbying on EU climate policy, intranational digital advocacy groups generally limit themselves to lobbying their chosen nation's government. International trade policy issues are a rare case during which lobbying efforts by both types of digital advocacy groups overlaps. International trade policy issues involve wholly different sets of actors, operating in various countries, increasing the complexity of said issues to such an extent that it is somewhat implausible to assume this increase in complexity would not impact agenda setting choices made by digital advocacy groups. The generalizability of this work's conclusions is thus hampered by the inherent difference in complexity between international trade policy issues relative to regular issues that

national-oriented interest groups may engage with. The generalizability of this work's conclusions furthermore suffers from a possible ideological taint on agenda setting, as previous scholars have alleged that personal ideologies and motivations may unduly influence international trade policy issue prioritization (Bauer 2016a; 2016b). The possible impacts of staff ideological leanings on issue prioritization certainly requires additional research. The generalizability of this work's findings additionally suffers from the implications of the condition it presupposes on groups, mortality anxiety. This work has presented an argument based on mortality anxiety, as to why it is plausible that agenda setting choices made by digital advocacy groups may rather be entrepreneurial with the aim of maximizing resource gains than any other criteria for issue prioritization, such as maximum policy accomplishment in line with group vision. Conflating the condition of mortality anxiety as part of the theory of marketability results in a hampering of generalizability. The reasoning is that in order to have the conditions of mortality anxiety be present in contemporary times, despite conditions for mortality anxiety, such as organizational youth, changing, this work presumed the continued effects of mortality anxiety due to organizational inertia. This work claims that the conditions of mortality anxiety were present at least in part at the time of various European digital advocacy group's lobbying on TTIP, and that said inertia carried the effects of said mortality anxiety into contemporary times. Said presumption of organizational inertia limits the generalizability of this work's conclusions regarding digital advocacy group international trade policy issue prioritization, as it rests on an organizational lack of capability, that may not be presumed of other issue categories without careful consideration. Thus the generalizability of this work's findings is limited by virtue of the 'special' nature of international trade policy issues, as well as by the presumption of mortality anxiety to uphold the logics of the entrepreneurial behaviour this work has observed in multiple cases.

The last major limitation this work suffered from are its limited resources relative to other works in the field, who were able to rely on extensive coding capabilities and extensive datasets. Despite the detailed dissection of the four sets of cases this work conducted, it would have very much benefited from access to a dataset of interest group engagement on various rather recent international trade policy issues. Said dataset would have enabled this work to make much stronger claims both towards the verification and falsification of its hypotheses, as well as the confidence of said verification and falsification.

Having laboriously expounded on the limitations of this work, it is apt time to address some of its stronger points. This work suffered but also greatly benefited from engaging with a subset of interest groups that had seen little interest in the scholarly literature up to this point. Digital advocacy groups may

hold the keys to a key challenge facing all forms of interest groups - establishing legitimacy. As this work has noted previously, interest groups play an important role in legitimizing EU policy, the more and broad legitimacy claims interest groups can establish, the more likely their lobbying is to succeed (Greenwood 2017). Digital advocacy groups confidently and visibly proclaim their legitimizing factor, its members, as both a marketing tool, but also to signal their legitimacy to policy makers. An organization such as Campact claiming two million members as their base, in a country such as Germany with an electorate of 60 million people, may be somewhat intimidating to policy makers. On the other hand, mere newsletter subscription, as is industry standard for digital advocacy groups to be considered a member, is such an unstable and thin connection to the group that, as policy makers become more experienced in dealing with digital advocacy groups, the impacts of big member numbers may lessen. Nonetheless, the validity of this approach towards establishing legitimacy through member-drivenness that digital advocacy groups embody may be more widely adopted, by virtue of two concurrent developments. First of all, the advent of social media and increased technological savvy of the electorate eases the transition towards directly and consistently engaging with one's members, and thus enables the creation of a member-driven group framework, at least to a superficial extent. Secondly, the incentives of being as legitimate as possible are ever increasing due to an increasing degree of European Union legislative process involvement in most policy fields. When lobbying the European Union, legitimacy, or a credible claim to represent parts of civil society, is a force multiplier for a group's lobbying efforts. Therefore, as it is becoming easier, and more attractive to derive legitimacy from group members in a more streamlined fashion, the digital advocacy model may very well see some amounts of success in the interest group ecosystem.

This work furthermore enjoyed the opportunity to invoke some arguably underutilized concepts that were left by the wayside somewhat in recent times, such as mortality anxiety. In order to foster understanding of interest group agenda setting, a group's strategic aims need to be considered. The field has done much in this regard, and most scholars note that a group generally aims to maximize policy success in line with its vision. Yet, there is reasonable cause to assume that not all interest groups operate in said manners, especially those facing mortality anxiety may be optimizing their lobbying in order to ensure its survival. It is imperative that the study of interest group agenda setting make note of the possibly confounding effects of mortality anxiety, or the impacts thereof. The findings of Hall (2019) may very well have been influenced by digital advocacy group mortality anxiety, methodological critique this world has fielded regarding said work notwithstanding. The impacts of mortality anxiety on interest group agenda setting more generally may pose a challenging and rewarding field of research, provided future



researchers engage in crafting a framework that accurately accounts for group mortality anxiety. There may be a distinct possibility that the current five overarching drivers of issue prioritization in interest groups may be influenced to various extents by mortality anxiety.

Additionally, by virtue of the theory this work proposed and the way it framed said theory, this work was in a position to attempt developing a multi-discipline agenda setting theory framework, especially drawing upon established concepts developed by scholars of marketing theory, such as customer-oriented marketing, product and market newness, and first and second mover theory, to various degrees of success. This work has made a somewhat convincing case that lobbying services may be treated as products for the sake of analysis. The political participation via campaigns and the like on offer by digital advocacy groups in exchange for resources fits marketing theory rather well. The viability of introducing marketing theory in turn opens the way for a whole host of concepts, while this work was forced to limit itself due to space constraints, there is ample space for combining the approach introduced by this work and elaborating the implications of marketing theorems on the research on interest groups. Exemplarily, the impact of organizational experiences of interest groups on agenda setting may be enhanced by introducing learning effects, economies of scale, in a bid to more readily quantify and make comprehensible such. Problematic in this regard is that this work made the introduction of marketing theory conditional on the observed interest group facing mortality anxiety, whether marketing theory applies to interest groups not facing mortality anxiety may require further research.

Lastly, this work has contributed further to the foundation of utilizing Google trend data for the purposes of measuring issue salience in a much more accurate and accessible manner compared to methods such as bi-annual questionnaires that do not explicitly gauge salience of any specific issue. A large part of this work was dedicated to verifying or falsifying its secondary hypotheses, whether issue salience may explain digital advocacy group agenda setting more consistently than issue marketability. In conducting case analyses, this work struggled with a plausible, consistent, and specific operationalization of salience. Other scholars relied on newspaper visibility (Dür and Mateo 2014) or utilized Eurobarometer data, collected bi-annually, as a proxy for the salience of an issue category (Hall 2019). Google trend data on the other hand, despite its many flaws and relative nature, has one distinct advantage: being able to compare search interest (and as the argument goes, salience) across issues, across time, across countries. Scholars have paid previous heed to the implications of utilizing high-frequency google search data to gauge metrics such as issue salience (Reilly, Richey, and Taylor 2012). This approach of utilizing relative search interest suffers from a few flaws, that may be addressable utilizing extant resources. Due to the

cross-comparability of search interest, one need only ascertain the exact number of search interest a term received in a given year (if such data is available) and then derive, relative to the known quantity of search interest for that given term, the search interest for the term or issue one aims to determine the salience of.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, increased utilization of Google trend data, which is free on top, may allow for more accurate assessments of issue salience in future research.

Taken as a whole, this work has previously acknowledged its major limitations, those being its attempts to convincingly operationalize marketability in order to do right by the theory this work has proposed, the challenge to make a convincing claim of generalizability of any findings made by virtue of the specificity of international trade policy issues, and the resources, or lack thereof, that made a more convincing quantitative work challenging. Yet, despite its limitations, this work also possess strengths to boast of, those being its attempts to make use of various disciplines in order to enhance its theory, engaging with a subset of interest groups that has been studied little so far, yet may play a greater role in the future developments of interest groups, as well as its introduction of theorems from the world of marketing, and lastly its utilization of Google search trends, that may enable future issue salience researchers to more accurately and confidently assess salience levels across a variety of issues across various nations.

Having exhaustively addressed this work's limitations and strengths, it shall subsequently consider its findings and draw conclusions therefrom. Analyzing 38 Degrees' engagement on TTIP and CETA, this work was able to find that as per its operationalization, CETA's marketability was more suited than its salience to explain why 38 Degrees' engagement dropped so significantly relative to TTIP. As it has previously alluded, this work's findings in this case suffer from the extraordinary event of Brexit. Nonetheless, it has also presented an argument why its findings in this regard may be valid in spite thereof. This work's analysis of Campacts's lobbying on the EU-Mercosur agreement, and the lack thereof on the EU-Australia agreement, showed that issue salience was not necessarily a reliable predictor of interest group engagement. This work's logic in this regard rests on the proposed opportunity for reaping salience benefits due to high salience events in the region. If one accepts that interest groups possess the capacity to piggyback off the salience of tangentially related events to attribute additional salience to causes they may champion, this work's conclusions in this regard are of great import in

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<sup>16</sup> Various service providers tend to publish keyword usage explorers that feature absolute numbers of searches relative to certain keywords, if e.g. search for 'bing' is at a constant 200,000 annual searches in Germany, one need only relate search interest on any issue relative to said 200,000, and if said issue, e.g. CETA, averages 30% of search interest for bing, one gains knowledge of approximately how many people searched for CETA that year

understanding the agenda setting of digital advocacy groups. An analysis of Campact's choice to lobby extensively on JEFTA, while barely doing so on the EU-Singapore agreement did not conclusively support either hypotheses this work seeks to verify or falsify. Campact's prioritization of JEFTA may have been by virtue of the high degree of issue salience associated, yet both salience and marketability were low for the EU-Singapore agreement. Lastly, this work analysed the different issue prioritization choices made by Campact and 38 Degrees, the former of which lobbied on TiSA, while the latter did not. The analysis conducted by this work noted salience as the superior explanatory factor in the case of 38 Degrees, while Campact's issue prioritization is better explained by issue marketability as per this work's operationalization thereof.

38 Degrees		
TTIP	High salience	High marketability
CETA	Medium salience	<b>Low marketability</b>
TiSA	<b>Low salience</b>	Medium-Low marketability
Campact		
EU-Mercosur	Medium-High salience	<b>High-Medium marketability</b>
EU-Australia	High-Medium salience	<b>Low marketability</b>
JEFTA	<b>High salience</b>	Medium marketability
EU-Singapore	Low salience	Low marketability
TiSA	Low salience	<b>High marketability</b>

Figure 26. An overview of this work's findings

*(in bold are superior explanatory factors, same colour signifies one set of cases subjected to comparative analysis)*

This work has produced eight measures of issue salience and eight measures of issue marketability in order to determine whether agenda setting outcomes may be explained utilizing either. In regards to the prioritization of TTIP by 38 Degrees in the United Kingdom, and the lack of serious lobbying on the EU-Singapore agreement in Germany by Campact this work found no significant difference between issue salience and issue marketability. Regarding TiSA in the United Kingdom and JEFTA in Germany this work concluded that the degree of issue salience this work assigned to either issues in line with this work's operationalization beat out issue marketability in explaining agenda setting outcomes. And finally, this work found that the issue prioritization of CETA in the United Kingdom, the EU-Mercosur agreement in Germany, the EU-Australia agreement in Germany, and TiSA in Germany are best

explained by issue marketability. Thus it draws its conclusions based on two inconclusive individual observations, two individual observations that appear to support the claim that issue salience drives prioritization, and four observations that support the hypothesis of issue marketability being the driving force in digital advocacy group international trade policy issue prioritization. Excluding the inconclusive observations, issue marketability is the superior explanatory variable in four relative to issue salience's two observations. In assessing issue marketability, the most consistent indicator appears to be similarly aligned group activity prior to prioritization. This does not come as a large surprise as the theory of marketability puts great importance on second-moving, which inherently relies on other groups moving first, whilst similarly aligned group activity serves as a proxy for various aspects of issue marketability, such as its potential to acquire or satisfy customers. Thus this work concludes that issue marketability may be a viable predictor of agenda setting choice outcomes, provided it is a digital advocacy group selecting amongst international trade policy issues (mortality anxiety is implied in any choice of international trade policy issues). The specificity of the aforementioned sentence exemplifies the trouble with generalizing the findings of this work. The marketability of international trade policy issues is a reliable predictor of digital advocacy group agenda setting, but also just that. Future research is required to assess whether other policy categories that digital advocacy groups may lobby on are also subject to a similar underlying agenda setting mechanism as this work has outlined as part of its theory. Applying the underlying logic of marketability to other policy areas arguably requires that two primary conditions be met, groups must face mortality anxiety to some extent, and organizational/staff expertise must be lacking to some extent.

At its beginnings this work made mention of the wider context of a drastic increase of politicization of international trade policy issues in the European Union in the 2010s. This work's conclusions may insofar be taken as a contribution to this body of works as it has concluded that issue marketability is consistently expressed through similarly aligned group activity. Therefore, while some may point at digital advocacy groups as part of the initial pebbles to start the landslide of politicization of international trade policy issues (Bauer 2016a), this work's conclusions rather support the argument that digital advocacy groups are more likely to be part of the landslide, rather than part of those initial pebbles to start it all. The drastic increase and the simultaneous rise of digital advocacy groups may be interconnected nonetheless, and digital advocacy groups are certainly part of the group of actors making up the increase in politicization, yet this work finds it somewhat unlikely that digital advocacy groups are responsible for this trend. Instead, by virtue of their mode of issue prioritization, they may function as a perfect amplifier of

politicization, as similarly aligned group activity reliably drives digital advocacy group issue prioritization.

As a last aside, where might or could the field of research on digital advocacy groups, as well as interest groups in general, go from here? Little heed has been paid to the main mechanism that sustains the legitimacy claims of digital advocacy groups, and consecutively informs much of their agenda setting, their member polls. This work has previously posited that the way digital advocacy groups achieve legitimacy may prove to be a successful model that may find its way into various different types of interest groups, both to achieve greater degrees of organizational maintenance, as well as greater legitimacy, and thus greater influence at the European Union level (Greenwood 2017). These member polls are the vector by which digital advocacy groups acquire strategic direction and political weight, further study of the way they craft these polls, their legitimacy, and whether they have seen adoption by other types of interest groups in some shape or form, are questions that are surely worthy of special consideration. Adding onto that, digital advocacy group's capabilities and thus tendencies to make strong inter-group linkages may be deserving of further attention. General rational choice interest group scholars frame all interest groups in constant competition for limited resources. Yet, with the advent of social media, and nationally oriented digital advocacy groups, there are groups that are not in direct competition, that nonetheless stand to benefit from cooperation that would have been previously prevented by their competitive relationship. A digital advocacy group situated in Germany is entirely unthreatened by an Indian digital advocacy group, allowing them to collaborate and exchange expertise freely. As some authors have previously made note of, most of the largest digital advocacy groups share similar origins and tend to network quite frequently, occasionally even at in-person summits (Karpf 2013). The impacts and competitive advantages that digital advocacy stand to gain from these transnational group linkages may prove a fruitful ground for research should digital advocacy groups continue to rise in income and influence at a similar rate as they have in the past decade.

Taken as a whole, while digital advocacy groups probably are not the horsemen of the politicization of international trade policy issues, they nonetheless have benefitted from lobbying on various issues such as TTIP. Digital advocacy policies are certainly here to stay, in a contemporary context, the digital space has become more important than ever, and digital advocacy groups are unlikely to stop lobbying on international trade policy issues as long as they remain marketable. Thus there is much to delve deeper into in regards to digital advocacy groups yet. This work has been able to show that issue marketability, or entrepreneurial concerns more generally, impact agenda setting outcomes when it comes to

international trade policy issues. On the other hand, digital advocacy groups lobby on various other categories of issues, and whether marketability is applicable to said other categories at all will require further research.

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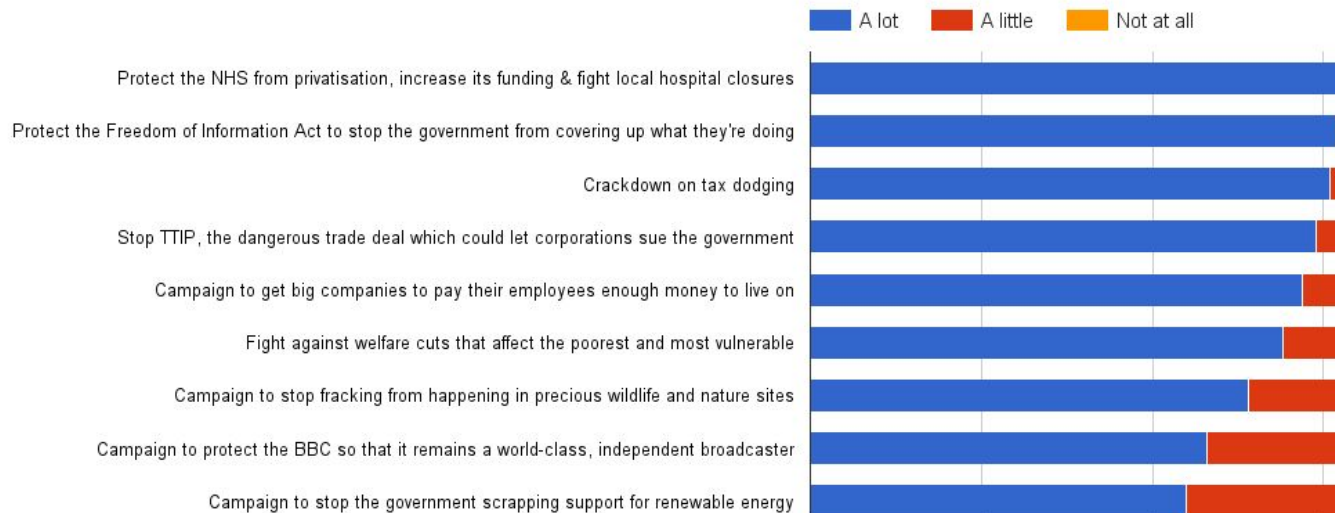
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## Annex

1: 38 Degrees Member Poll from 1.9.2015, taken from

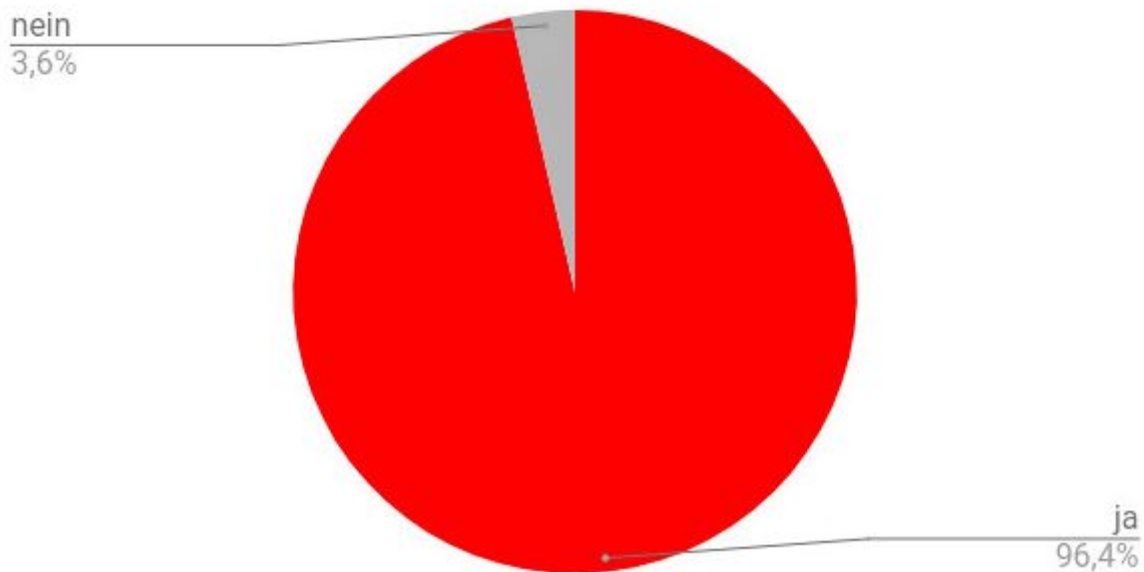
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2: Campact Member Poll for 2018 uploaded 19.1.2018 taken from

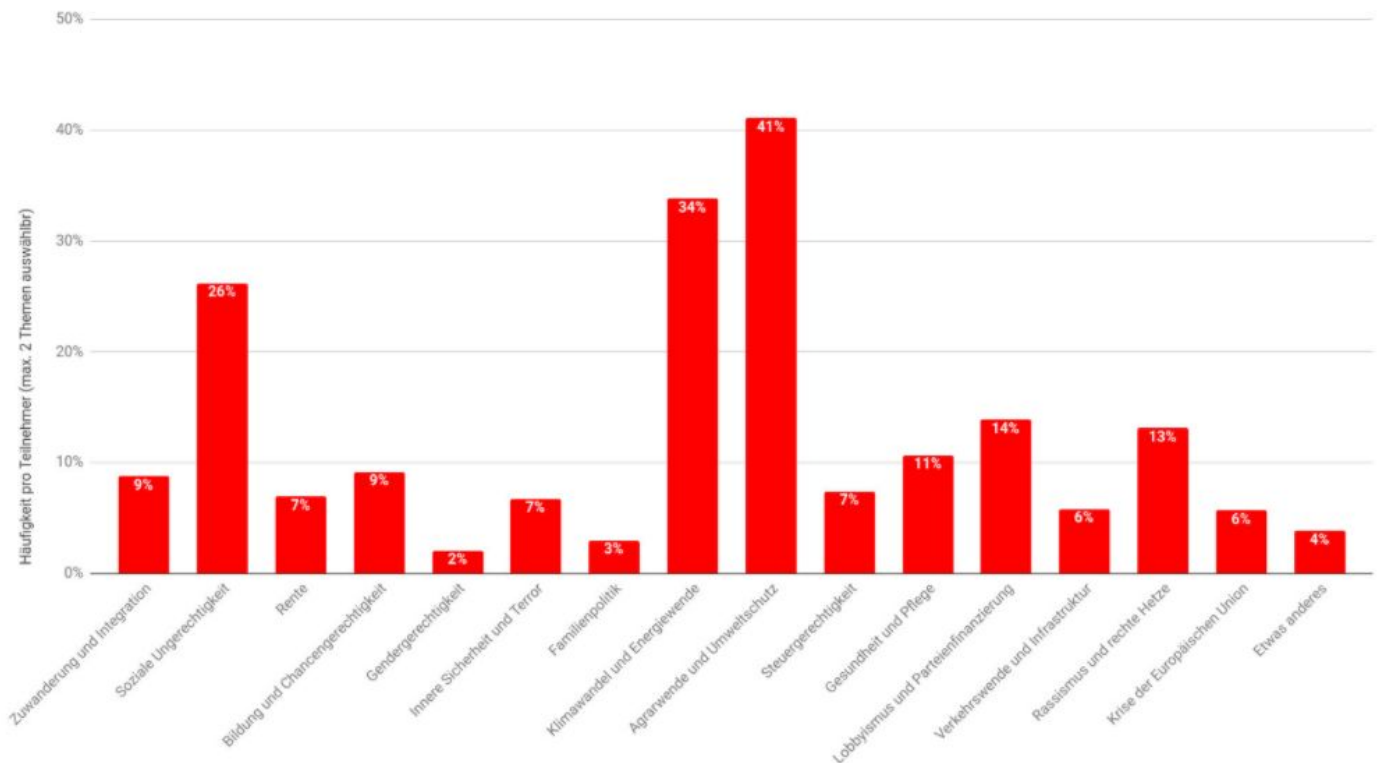
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/campact/albums/72157668644405559/with/24910648717/>

**Würden Sie eine Kampagne für ein Glyphosat-Verbot in Deutschland unterstützen?**



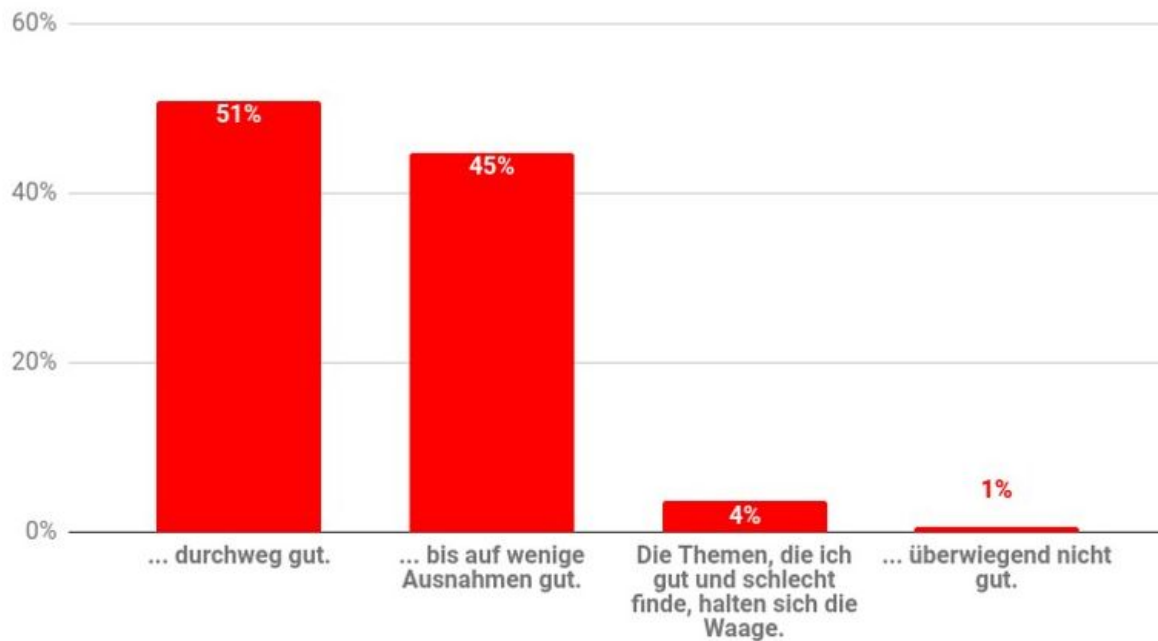
A question to supporters of Campact whether they would support lobbying towards a ban on Glyphosates in Germany

Welches sind in Ihren Augen die wichtigsten politischen Probleme in Deutschland, die vordringlich gelöst werden müssen?



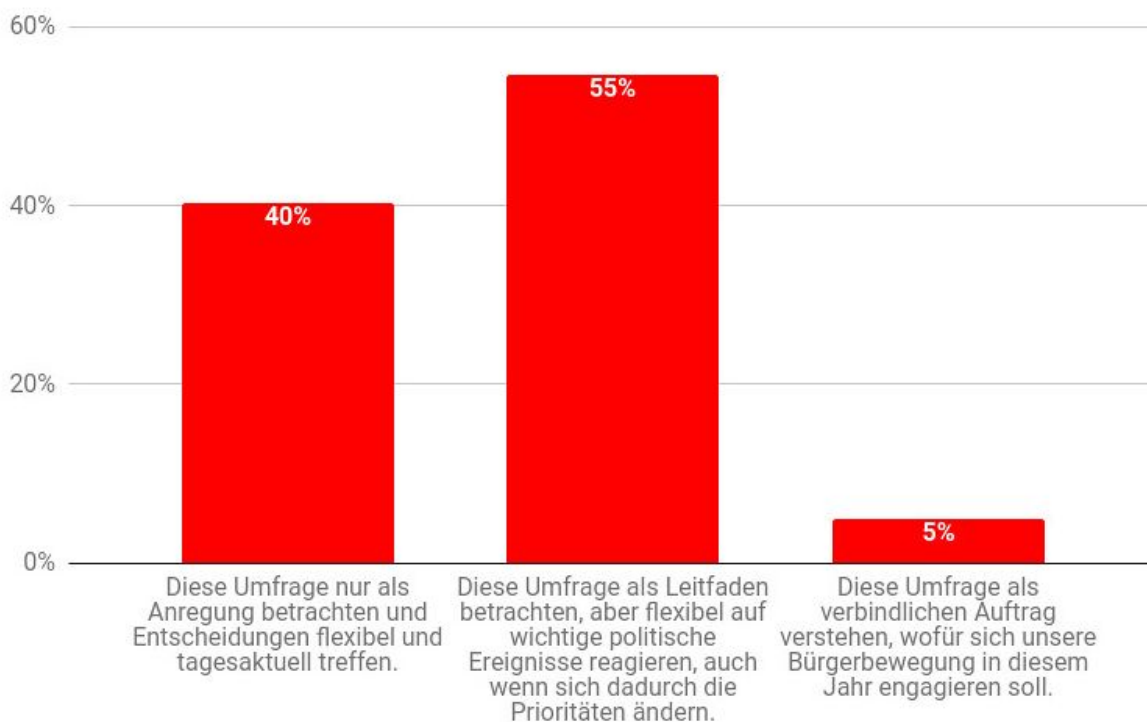
A question to Campact supporters asking which challenges most need solving in Germany - Winners were agricultural turnaround and environmental protection, climate change and energy turnaround, and social injustice; international trade issues were not considered

### Wie finden Sie die Themen, die Campact bisher mit Kampagnen aufgreift?



A question to Campact supporters as to the extent of their satisfaction, scaled from wholly positive, mostly positive, neutral, to largely negative.

### Wie sollen wir die Ergebnisse dieser Umfrage nutzen?



A question to Campact supporters how to act on the results of said poll, scaled from 'take as inspiration

and maintain daily flexibility’, to ‘take poll as guidance and react to important issues, even if that results in a change of priorities’, and ‘take as a binding mandate on what to lobby in the coming year.



