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Creating an entrepreneurs' movement: SME associations as political actors in late twentieth-century Finland

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ABSTRACT

When scholars study business power, they usually focus on big business. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which comprise the vast majority of companies, are therefore excluded. The article looks at how Finnish SMEs have defended their interests in an increasingly corporatist country. It focuses especially on how they have managed to resolve the collective action problem, which prior theoretical studies have identified as a major issue in the heterogonous SME sector. We find that one association managed to build 'a movement' by underlining common threats to SMEs. We also assess the steps taken by other, smaller and less populist SME associations, arguing that that such diversity has brought some benefits, as competing associations have employed different tactics and been active in separate arenas. This article is based on the archives of SME associations and other business associations as well as earlier research, memoirs, other published works and newspaper articles.

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Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) comprise a large and diverse group of companies. In this article, we look at their organised attempts to influence political decision-making processes. Three interconnected questions are at the centre of our analysis: How can you convince small business owners, who often have limited resources, to join a business interest association and pay membership fees? Should they form a united front with big business or a separate SME association, or even several of them? What are the sources of small business power? The article explores these questions by looking at the case of Finland, a Nordic capitalist country, between the late 1960s and the end of the 1990s. By doing so, we expand our knowledge of the role of SMEs in the political economy, a topic that has received relatively little attention from historians, who have been more interested in the political activity of big business.

To be precise, we explore the political activities of SMEs in a highly corporatist environment. In the late twentieth century, trade unions and employers' associations in Finland acquired substantial power in political and societal decision-making processes.

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Policymakers were eager to reduce inflation, increase stability, and improve the price competitiveness of Finnish exports. From the late 1960s onwards, peak employers' and employees' associations and the government concluded numerous, usually annual, tripartite agreements, where they jointly made decisions about wages and welfare benefits (Wuokko, 2020).

There were originally several competing SME associations in Finland, but one of them, *Suomen Yrittäjäin Keskusliitto* (Central Association of Finnish Entrepreneurs, SYKL), managed to attract so many supporters that the association could call itself, with some justification, an 'entrepreneurs' movement' (Yrittäjäliike) (Bühler, 1987, p. 10; Terho, 1983, p. 38). SYKL later merged with a smaller rival to form the association currently called *Suomen Yrittäjät* (the Federation of Finnish Enterprises, SY). Today, SY and its subunits have, according to SY, a total of 115,000 members, more than any other business interest association (BIA) in Finland. *Elinkeinoelämän Keskusliitto* (the Confederation of Finnish Industries, EK), the peak Finnish business association, widely considered the most influential BIA in the country, has just 15,000 members. Most large Finnish companies and exporters are members of EK, and hence EK's members employ, in total, 900,000 people in a country that only has approximately 5.6 million inhabitants. In contrast, 660,000 people (including entrepreneurs themselves) work in SY's member companies. Many medium-sized companies have probably joined both organisations since 96% of EK's members are SMEs.[1]

As we discuss in more detail below, many national-level organisations have claimed to represent SMEs over the years, and we argue that this diversity has in some ways been beneficial for SMEs. Competing associations have employed different tactics and been active in different arenas. Hence, their activities have often complemented each other.

Entrepreneurship is a popular research topic. Some studies focus on the heroic, yet often in some ways flawed, individual entrepreneurs (e.g. Chernow, 1999; Isaacson, 2011), while others take a broader perspective. Scholars have for a long time been interested in what role entrepreneurs play in economies, particularly in their renewal, how entrepreneurship can be promoted, and how individuals have built successful companies (on the long history of entrepreneurship research, see, e.g. Casson & Casson, 2013; Hébert & Link, 2009; Jones & Wadhwani, 2009). Since the 1970s, these topics have become even more popular.

Historians and social scientists who have analysed corporate political activity have usually turned their attention more to large companies or the business associations dominated by them. Many studies have focused on employers' associations and trade associations (for an overview, see Lanzalaco, 2009). Some of the studies include important insights about and information on the role of smaller companies in the associations, but they usually also, either implicitly or explicitly, show that it was the 'big business' that has had a crucial role in the formulation of associations' policies. Hence, and in many ways naturally, large companies and their managers have taken centre stage in such studies (for exceptions, see, e.g. Young, 2008; Babb, 2014). When small business owners have been analysed, they have often been approached not as an organised group but as a social group or a class, which supports certain—usually right-wing—political parties or ideologies (Schaffer, Wilson Sokhey, & Yildirim, 2019; Trow, 1958).

To summarise: when scholars have looked at the role of SMEs in the political economy, they have usually analysed such companies as *targets* of government policies aiming to support or regulate entrepreneurship, or, to use cinema as a metaphor, as supporting actors,

or less commonly actresses, in movies dominated by main characters from the world of politics or big business. In this article, supporting actors receive the attention.

We start by providing a brief contextual and theoretical overview on the study of the political activities of SMEs and particularly their chances of engaging in collective action. We then describe the organisations promoting the interests of SMEs in Finland and continue by analysing how some did so as independent associations, while others worked within the peak associations dominated by big business. In an increasingly corporatist country, the labour market system became a key area of struggle and co-operation between various interest groups, hence we give substantial attention to it. SMEs gradually managed to build bigger associations to defend themselves, but they have never entirely managed to speak with one voice.

Studying the political activities of SMEs

As Franz Traxler (2007a, pp. 6–7) has observed: 'The importance of firm size to the action of business and its interaction with business associations has been a rather neglected issue in the literature,' even though this interest group is particularly heterogeneous, and what has been categorised under 'the notion of business ranges from self-employed persons to big multinational enterprises.' If we hear only the voice of big business, then we get only a partial picture of the 'business interests' invested in various issues. We exclude most companies from the analysis because the vast majority of businesses are SMEs.[2]

SMEs are typically defined as companies with less than 250 employees. Ceilings are often also put in place for balance sheet and turnover purposes; for the European Union, these figures are 43 and 50 million euros, respectively.[3] However, Traxler, Brandl, and Pernicka (2007) have observed that SME associations in the EU are often deliberately vague about where the boundaries lie, as this type of strategy may give them more freedom to recruit new members. Most of their members have less than 50 employees (Traxler, Brandl, & Pernicka, 2007, pp. 358, 363, 400).

Many scholars have argued that companies have substantial political power (see the recent review by Rollings, 2021). Companies are major employers, taxpayers, and economic actors who can also direct substantial funds to lobby or provide electoral funding. Their leaders are often part of influential elite networks in society. Yet, when scholars talk about business power, they explicitly or implicitly usually talk only about big business. Most companies are small, and minor actors lack the kinds of resources that help big companies influence politics. This does not make them less important research topics, though. Historians and scholars studying power relations are frequently interested in how they impact less powerful actors, such as women, ethnic minorities, or the poor, and in how dissatisfied people try to improve their position by, for example, forming social movements (see, e.g. della Porta and Diani, 2015). Social movements combine and mobilise numerous individuals to promote shared political or other goals, and they often work outside traditional institutional channels (Johnston 2014; Westerberg 2024).

An SME might in some cases be an important actor in a local setting, but if it wants to effectively influence national or international politics it has to join forces with other companies or actors. Instead of looking at how big companies have utilised their power resources to influence politics, and whether they managed or failed to do so in particular case, we must instead explore how SMEs have emerged as active political players in the first place.

Those scholars who have looked at SME BIAs in detail have usually been social scientists, utilising interviews, published works, and survey data and often looking at contemporary events (Lindeque et al., 2022; Wilts & Meyer, 2005). There is therefore much room for the perspective of business historians and the use of historical sources, such as archives, memoirs, and printed primary sources, which can help us form an inside view of SME associations, put them in a proper historical context, and expand our understanding of long-term developments.

This article is based on the archives of SME associations and other employer organisations as well as earlier research, memoirs, other published works, and newspaper articles. The archives of SY and its predecessors have recently been moved from the SY offices to the Suomen Elinkeinoelämän Keskusarkisto (ELKA, Central Archives for Finnish Business Records) in Mikkeli and are freely available to researchers.[4] We have analysed board minutes, speeches, annual reports, and the records of annual meetings of SME associations and the SME advisory boards of the peak Finnish business associations. Finnish SME associations and advisory boards have also, over the decades, ordered several commissioned works on their histories, which contain useful information (Mikkilä, 2016; Ristimäki, 2011; Terho, 1979, 1983). Timo Mikkilä, the author of the most recent of the books, found that no academic research has been done on the Finnish entrepreneurs' movement (Mikkilä, 2016, p. 17).

Business interest associations are usually divided into two groups: trade associations (TAs), which promote business interests in a wide variety of policy sectors, including regulation, research, and taxation, and employers' associations (EAs), which focus on labour market issues, including collective bargaining (Lanzalaco, 2009, pp. 294–295). In Finland, TAs and EAs are involved in most economic sectors, but both groups have also established peak-level national associations to defend their joint interests. This article focuses on national-level organisations. It excludes cartels from the analysis because they are sectoral alliances that promote mainly members' commercial interests. The independent SME associations that the article focuses on specifically are TAs, although they later tried to play a role in the labour market as well.

TAs and EAs acquired a strong role in the post-WWII decades, which were in most Western European countries an era of big government, big business, and big labour. The size and impact of governments grew, while large companies became even larger and membership in trade unions increased (see, e.g. Godley & Casson, 2010, p. 258). Often, all three combined forces in so-called tripartite bodies, which drafted or negotiated economic or labour market policies and, in many coordinated Western European market economies—Finland included—collective bargaining agreements (Hall & Soskice, 2001). When the 'golden era' of European economic growth (1945–1973) ended, governments, think tanks, and business associations began to consider how they could support business growth among new and older SMEs. For a long time, SMEs had been important taxpayers and employers, and the hope was, and continues to be, that they could make countries wealthier and more innovative. Scholars have given substantial attention to such policies (recent examples include Mallett & Robert, 2020; Nikinmaa, 2021).

Though SMEs are usually considered a part of the world of 'business' or as 'employers,' it was not self-evident that small and large businesses had similar interests. Small companies, for example, often operated in a more local setting than larger ones; unlike larger businesses, they could not always relocate their production abroad, if unhappy; they possessed fewer resources; they were relatively more labour intensive; and they found it more difficult to

acquire funding and comply with all the social, labour market, and environmental regulations that post-war governments introduced (Traxler, 2007b, pp. 10–11; Westerberg, 2020, p. 14). The post-war decades were therefore an era when 'reactive' social movements, defined by Burke as, "popular movements of protest against economic or social changes which threaten to destroy a traditional way of life" could emerge amongst SMEs (Burke, 1998, p. 90).

The interests of SMEs were and are often different from those of big business, but there are also many issues where the interests are aligned. No business tends to like higher taxes, increased regulation, or rising labour costs. In many cases, they managed, under the leadership of larger companies, to form a united front against outside threats (see, e.g. Waterhouse, 2013, pp. 3, 6).

Business associations might even be more important for small companies than for large ones. Large companies have their own experts, can lobby governments directly, and have easier access to policymakers. Smaller companies, in contrast, have fewer human resources and less political influence and are more dependent on the lobbying done by business associations as well as the services, such as legal advice, which such institutions often offer to their members. In the post-war era of centralised bargaining, many companies had a strong incentive to join employers' associations because the latter had a central role in defining and spreading information about labour market agreements and regulations (Kenis & Traxler, 2007, p. 247).

Hence, it might be a good idea for an SME to join a peak association that represents business as a whole and/or a trade association representing all companies, big and small, in a certain sector. As Traxler has observed, large companies tend to also do so because they can be reasonably confident that they will, with their abundant resources and through membership fees, be able to dominate the decision-making process in the peak association. In short, large firms 'join and dominate the general association,' but they usually hope that smaller ones will join also. Incorporating smaller companies may help a business association acquire goodwill from politicians and the general public and make its business goals seem more legitimate. SMEs, in comparison, tend to recognise their weaker position within large associations, and hence, may decide to opt-out and set up associations of their own (Traxler, 2007b, pp. 19–23, quote from p. 22).

Setting up an effective SME association is not easy. As Mancur Olson (1965) famously noted, the fact that certain actors have joint interests does not automatically mean that they will defend them collectively. Individual actors have an incentive to free ride. This is particularly likely in the case of SMEs because they have fewer financial resources than larger companies. SMEs also comprise a highly heterogeneous group. Not surprisingly, scholars looking at SME associations have tended to utilise Olson's insights, or at least refer to them (Aitchison, 2014, pp. 15–19; Babb, 2014, p. 4; Schaffer et al. 2019, p. 30; Traxler, 2007a, p. 4).

In some cases, governments or intergovernmental organisations have helped to solve the collective-action problem by subsidising or otherwise supporting SME associations (Aitchison, 2014, pp. 15–18, 154; Babb, 2014, p. 5; Coen & Dannreuther, 2002, p. 123). After all, the existence of such institutions can help governments to implement entrepreneurship measures or other policies. In several cases, policy entrepreneurs have also played a strong role in the formation of SME associations (Babb, 2014, p. 5). The services provided to members is often one of the key reasons why SMEs join associations (Traxler, 2007b, pp. 26–27). They might not, for example, have the resources to hire an in-house lawyer, but business interest association might have one with special expertise in issues relevant to members.

A real or assumed threat is another useful method for recruiting members or encouraging action. Ronald G. Cook and David Barry found in 1993 that SMEs in the United States were more likely to decide to become involved in a public policy issue if they feared that it would have a negative impact on their profitability than in cases where it would have a positive impact (Cook & Barry, 1993, p. 41). Rikard Westerberg's research suggests that an existential threat can be a highly effective way of mobilising SMEs to take action. When the social democratic Swedish government and the country's peak labour organisation tried in the 1970s and 1980s to introduce wage-earner funds that would acquire shares in private companies, Swedish companies of all sizes concluded that this constituted a threat to private ownership. SMEs were particularly concerned, and for more ideological reasons, because ownership and management were usually in the same hands in such companies. BIAs and various companies lobbied, protested, and even managed to organise demonstrations in the streets. Mass protests were only possible because so many businesses felt threatened: small business owners especially took to the streets in large numbers (Westerberg, 2020, pp. 201–202, 241–294). Westerberg (2024) calls these protest movements and social movements, and notes the strong role SMEs had in them.

The four associations

In the 1970s, non-agricultural Finnish SMEs had no less than four important, and partly competing, national organisations. Two were independent organisations and two the advisory boards of peak associations representing all Finnish industrial companies. This fragmentation can be explained partly by history and partly by their different goals and tactics. *Pienteollisuuden Keskusliitto* (Small Industries' Association, PTK) was the oldest: its origins were in the mid-nineteenth-century artisans' organisations. In 1898, artisans and the owners of small industrial factories established an association that changed its name several times, until, in 1963, it adopted the name *Pienteollisuuden Keskusliitto*. The PTK promoted the interests of its members in politics and the press, but it was not known for its harsh rhetoric or radical views (Mikkilä, 2016, pp. 64–181).

In 1933, a new organisation, *Yksityisyrittäjäin Liitto* (Private Entrepreneurs' Association, YYL), was established. Initially it mainly represented shopkeepers. The new association was a defensive alliance but its original enemy was neither the state nor the labour movement, but the Finnish co-operatives, which were expanding rapidly into the retail and wholesale sectors (Ilomäki, 2019; Komulainen, 2018). Like the PTK, the YYL changed its name several times,[5] until in 1977 it became known as SYKL. During these decades, its membership diversified and expanded and the state and trade unions replaced the co-operatives as the association's main opponents. During and after the Second World War, taxation and regulation increased at a rapid pace, and in the late 1940s, the centrist and left-wing parties also considered nationalising some sectors of the Finnish economy. In the 1970s, these ideas resurfaced. In this context, the association adopted a strong ideological position as a defender of free enterprise against socialism and state control. The main tools in this struggle were publicity and lobbying.

In 1907, when the larger Finnish companies founded the country's first national peak employers' organisation, many of them were not at all convinced that small companies should be allowed to join. The big companies feared that the small ones would identify too closely with the employees and would add no value to the association. Neither were many

SMEs convinced that they should join and pay membership fees. In 1917, the same year that Finland became an independent democracy, the employers' organisation decided that only small companies with at least ten workers could join. In 1941, this figure was reduced to five and in 1956 the limit was removed entirely. By this point, many SMEs had decided to join because of post-war fears of socialism and the hope that the *Suomen Työnantajain Keskusliitto* (the Confederation of Finnish Employers, STK), as it was called since 1918, could defend them in an increasingly corporatist society where the influence of labour unions and the state were increasing. Other SMEs decided not to join because they felt that they could not afford to pay the membership fees or argued that membership would make them less independent and less free to negotiate with their employees[6] (Mansner, 1981, pp. 66, 69; 1984, pp. 146, 150–158; 1990, pp. 116–119).

The STK continued to be an organisation dominated by big business, which the SMEs knew quite well. In 1971, STK founded a separate body for its SME members. The chairman of this body, *Pienteollisuuden Neuvottelukunta* [Small industries' advisory board], later *Yrittäjävaltuuskunta* [Entrepreneurs' commission], had a seat on the board of STK and later was always elected as one of the vice-chairpersons of STK (Mansner, 1990, pp. 117–118). The peak association argued that this was a clear indication that SMEs were valued. Yet, one could also draw the opposite conclusion: the chairman and two other vice-chairmen were always from one of the bigger companies, and hence, the SME representative was permanently in a marginal leadership role. The same applied to STK's successor, *Teollisuuden ja Työnantajien Keskusliitto* (TT), established in 1993. Its key decision-making body was the working council of the board. It had 12 members, only one of which represented SMEs. After an intense debate, they received one additional seat (Ristimäki, 2011, pp. 101–102).

STK's sister organisation, *Teollisuuden Keskusliitto* (TKL), the peak association of Finnish industries, also had a separate section for SMEs. TKL was set up in 1975 when three previous industrial associations decided to join forces to better defend their interests. One of them was *Teollisuudenharjoittajain Liitto*, an association founded in 1945 to represent small and medium-sized industrial companies. Its last chairman, industrialist Heikki Tavela, defended the merger in public by saying that larger and smaller companies had similar interests. In private, he was less an idealist, and he made sure that TKL had a Small and Medium-sized Industry's Advisory Body (*PKT neuvottelukunta*) to continue *Teollisuudenharjoittajain Liitto's* work (Pesonen, 1992, pp. 33–36; Ristimäki, 2003, p. 87). In 1979, both STK's and TKL's SME advisory bodies began to arrange joint meetings (Koroma, 2015, p. 345).

'Fighting entrepreneurs' movement'

Entrepreneurs are individualistic: they set up a company of their own, or lead one they have inherited, make key decisions, and take risks (Casson & Casson, 2013, pp. 4, 12–40). Yet, they are also a part of the society they live in, and they utilise social contacts to their benefit (Casson & Casson, 2013, p.121). The activities of the SYKL, the second of the four organisations whose origins were explained in the previous section, show that they can co-operate with each other and even form mass organisations where differences of opinion are ironed out. SYKL leaders, in their speeches and writings from the 1970s and 1980s, talked about their association not as a group of individuals but as an entrepreneurs' movement in a similar way as left-wing politicians and trade unions talked about themselves as part of the labour movement. Although the history of SYKL went back several decades, the late 1970s was later

remembered as an era when the entrepreneurs' movement, or even the 'fighting entrepreneurs' movement' (Bühler, 1987, p. 17; Koskinen, 1998, p. 29), was founded.

The SYKL leaders borrowed tactics and methods from their left-wing opponents' playbooks, including efforts to mobilise large groups of potential supporters and the use of strong political rhetoric (compare with Westerberg 2024). The 1970s was a highly politicised area in Finland: political parties and groups competed with each other not only in parliamentary and municipal elections, but also in, for instance, workplaces, trade unions, schools, and youth organisations. Left-wing parties acquired a stronger presence than before in many organisations and institutions, such as the civil service, media, and universities. In the 1970s, a pro-Soviet Stalinist movement called *The Taistoists*—named after a Finnish communist leader—even managed to capture the hearts and minds of a substantial portion of educated Finnish youth for some time. Entrepreneurs followed these events with an uneasy feeling, and many felt unappreciated or even under threat (PTK Toimintakertomus, 1976, p. 27; Ristimäki, 2000, pp. 14, 31; Tavela, 2003, pp. 54–55; Wuokko, 2017, p. 285).

In the economic sphere, government regulation and taxation increased. The influence of peak labour and employer associations also increased when they, from 1968 onwards, began to conclude national-level, comprehensive income policy agreements (Tulopoliittinen kokonaisratkaisu, TUPO). Crucially, as a result of the first such agreement, employers agreed to deduct trade union membership fees straight from salaries and transfer them to the trade unions. This system was so convenient for the trade unions that the employers' organisations began to regret it almost immediately, but they were now obligated to abide by the new system (Kahri, 2001, pp. 74–76; Mansner, 1990, p. 106). Membership in Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö (the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions, SAK) increased from 650,000 in 1970 to more than 1 million in 1979 (Bergholm, 2018, p. 154).

The Social Democratic Party, one of the leading parties in the country, shifted leftwards in the early 1970s and even spoke of, although probably did not seriously, the nationalising of banks and certain other economic sectors. The severe international depression of the 1970s forced the party to rethink its position. Today's corporate profits are tomorrow's pay rises, while corporate losses result in lost jobs, as Kalevi Sorsa, leader of the party, concluded in the late 1970s. Hence, the health of private companies was vital to the nation as a whole (Blåfield and Vuoristo, 1985, p. 113; Meinander, 2022, pp. 188–189, 211–215).

The leaders of industrial peak organisations and large companies concluded that it was wise to co-operate with the leading centrist and left-wing politicians and trade unionists, even if they did not necessarily share their values. Hence, the relations between social democrats and big business became closer, which led to wider co-operation between politicians and interest groups. The era of consensus, as the late 1970s and 1980s are now known in Finland, had begun. Peak organisations such as the industrial association, TKL, and the employers' association, STK, were active political players in the political arena. TKL had an impact on the government's industrial policies, while STK drafted tripartite national agreements with the trade unions and social and economic policies with the unions and government. Many studies have been done on TKL and STK and their links with other interest groups and politicians (see in particular Wuokko, 2016, 2017; Koroma, 2015; Mansner, 1990).

There were some positive signs for SMEs as well: in the late 1970s, Finnish civil servants and politicians from the right, centre, and left increasingly began to underline the significance of small companies as employers. This reflected general Western European trends: large companies seemed unable to create enough new jobs and growth, and hence, SMEs

became increasingly valued (Koroma, 2015, pp. 347–349; Nikinmaa, 2021; Pitteloud, 2019, pp. 301–312; PTK Toimintakertomus, 1978, p. 6). The PTK and the SYKL welcomed the politicians' favourable comments and policies on entrepreneurship, and both recognised that attitudes towards SMEs were improving.[7]

In the following decades, some new sectors of entrepreneurship did indeed emerge in Finland (e.g. Saarikoski & Suominen, 2009, pp. 28–30), but the overall balance of power in society did not change. Major industrial companies tended to dominate the economy (Jensen-Eriksen, 2023), and public and political support for the expanding welfare state remained strong (Sihvo & Uusitalo, 1995). The SME associations argued that the policies promoting SMEs did not properly compensate for the many negative trends, such as the increase in and unpredictability of taxation and government regulation or the rising direct and indirect labour costs (Bühler, 1987, pp. 65–66).[8]

What should small entrepreneurs do if they wanted to be heard and gain influence in the increasingly corporatist society? The two SME organisations adopted different strategies. SYKL (and its predecessors) wanted to become bigger and more influential, and hence, better serve SMEs. To grow, though, it had to attract more members. First, SYKL argued that entrepreneurs had to realise that they were indeed a special interest group and not a diverse collection of individuals. This task was not easy precisely because individualism was a key part of an entrepreneur's self-image and behaviour. There were too many entrepreneur associations, their activities were not properly coordinated, and most entrepreneurs had to date joined none of them (Bühler, 1987, pp. 75–76; Terho, 1983, p. 32).[9]

In the corporatist political context of the day, such fragmentation and individualism were weaknesses. SYKL argued that all the other economic interest groups had already created strong associations of their own. They might claim to value entrepreneurs' contributions to society, but when decisions were being made, all groups put their own interests first. It was naïve to expect anything else. If the entrepreneurs wanted their interests to be taken into account, then they should build a strong association to defend them (Bühler, 1987, p. 21; Terho, 1983, pp. 32, 86).[10] The strategy should be based on the 'power of the masses' (*joukkovoima*)[11] (Terho, 1983, p. 86).

To get the attention of the heterogeneous SME sector, SYKL utilised vocal and even populist rhetoric: the government and other special interest groups were making life difficult for entrepreneurs and SMEs should defend themselves by building a movement of their own. The words fell on fertile ground. Many entrepreneurs did indeed feel threatened in Finland throughout the 1970s, and they responded by joining SYKL, which launched repeated membership recruitment drives. Acquiring new members was not easy. The association was well aware of the free rider problem: individual entrepreneurs were often eager to benefit from others' work for the common good (Terho, 1983, pp. 36–37).[12]

When its managing director, Viljo Terho, retired in 1978, the association already represented 71,000 companies, 17,000 more than when he had started in the position 10 years earlier (Terho, 1983, p. 37).[13] Terho argued that the work needed to build an organised group was still in the preliminary phase, and that it should be speeded up.[14] His successor, Waldemar Bühler, the managing director of the association between 1978 and 1989, did so. He started by explaining to the members that the purpose of the SYKL was, 'in a nutshell, to fight against nationalisation,' and that only an organisation with 'enough power and authority' could succeed in this struggle.[15] As noted above, social democrats were no longer seriously arguing for nationalisation, but this potential threat was still a useful way to mobilise the support of SMEs for SYKL.

Bühler was a skilful orator who oozed belief in the cause that he was promoting, and he knew how to capture the attention of entrepreneurs. Some of those present at his public-speaking events compared them to religious revival meetings (Mikkilä, 2016, pp. 220–221).

The PTK adopted a more moderate approach than its larger rival. In December 1978, Matti Niemi, chairman of PTK, argued that his organisation's strategy should be based on factual information and 'responsible actions' (*vastuuntuntoinen toiminta*) and that this was the only way to acquire sustainable and permanent results. Noisy complaining could create only temporary results. As Mikkilä (2016, pp. 128–129) has concluded, this was obviously a reference to SYKL's behaviour. Niemi felt that the rival association was 'too populist' ('turhan populistista,' Mikkilä, 2016, p. 28). In its annual reports, PTK had many critical things to say about the position of SMEs in Finland, but the association tended to also underline its strong links with government organisations and the role it played on various advisory bodies.[16]

PTK also offered services like advice on legal, tax, finance, and other issues to its members—in fact, more than its two rivals, SYKL and the industrial peak association TKL.[17] In 1989, when PTK and TKL jointly analysed their activities, they concluded the following: 'It is hard to get small companies to join organisations unless you offer them concrete services. Mere general interest promotion is not usually enough for normal members.'[18] If you compare the development of PTK and SYKL, it is easy to come to a different conclusion. Individual SMEs seemed to favour the more political and radical line adopted by SYKL and its predecessors. Membership in the 'movement' grew rapidly during the 1970s and 1980s, while that of PTK grew only gradually from 4,500 in the mid-1970s to approximately 5,500 by 1990.[19] (PTK job advertisement for new managing director, *Helsingin Sanomat*, September 28, 1975). Hence, SYKL's revenues increased more quickly and it could hire new experts to advise members and lobby the government (Mikkilä, 2016, pp. 221–222, 228). In this sense, SYKL's tactic seemed to work. Yet, it is more difficult to say which association was more effective in defending the interests of SMEs. They both lobbied and advised the government on issues most directly impacting SMEs, but each struggled to get seats at the table of the top tripartite bodies.

Furthermore, the SYKL's strong rhetoric considerably annoyed not only left-wing parties and trade unionists but also the peak Finnish business associations. (See Hannu Leinonen, 'Työsuhdeturva jakamassa yrittäjät' and 'Sorretun yrittäjän totuudentorvi,' *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 30, 1982; also 'SYKL ei voi ymmärtää toimiensa arvostelua,' *Helsingin Sanomat*, October 28, 1983.) Several of the leaders of peak BIAs have in their memoirs and interviews had negative things to say about SYKL and its successor, SY. They criticise the associations for overt hostility as well as a general lack of expertise, and they argue that SYKL and SY did not have a mandate to be involved in the labour market negotiations and that the interests of SMEs were covered by the actual employers' organisations (Kahri, 2001, pp. 100–103; Korhonen, 2018, pp. 108–109; Laatunen & Nieminen, 2017, p. 282).

Annoyingly for the peak associations, the two biggest non-socialist political parties, the conservative *Kokoomus* and the centrist *Keskusta* parties, seemed to be listening closely to what SYKL was saying. Small entrepreneurs and their families formed a substantial voting bloc, and their companies were vital employers in many electoral districts (Kahri, 2001, p. 102; Laatunen & Nieminen, 2017, pp. 133, 222, 225, 230). Yet, SYKL did not want to tie itself to any individual political party. The Finnish party system was fragmented, and all governments tended to be coalitions. *Kokoomus,* the most popular party among small business owners, was in opposition between 1966 and 1987. SYKL's records indicate that it tried to

establish links with pro-SME politicians and candidates in a number of parties—and also to help them get elected.[20] As Terho wrote, SYKL 'had to act like a political party without being a political party.' Or, in other words, it had to act within 'political parties and *via* them.'[21]

It is important not to overemphasise these links. SYKL learned to play the political game better, but other interest groups were already good at it. *Keskusta* was mainly interested in supporting farmers, their main voting group, and in cooperating with their central organisation, as the party's former name *Maalaisliitto* (Agrarian League) suggested. The social democrats and communists had strong ties with the trade unions. Big companies and the BIAs dominated by them traditionally had solid links with non-socialist parties, which they also funded. When *Kokoomus* was in opposition, leading (big) businessmen realised that for pragmatic purposes, it was useful to build ties with *Keskusta* and even with the social democrats (Jensen-Eriksen, 2019; Wuokko, 2016, pp. 117–157).

An alternative road: fighting from within the system

> One would imagine that also the big boys understand that they cannot win the battle without divisions. Small and medium-sized enterprises are needed, because there are many of them and politicians listen to them more carefully than they do the leaders of big companies.[22]

The statement was made in the mid-1970s by Orvo Kiesi, a printing industry entrepreneur. Kiesi was speaking to the deputy managing director of the peak association TKL. This interest and lobbying organisation represented all Finnish industrial companies, but it was dominated by the largest ones. The issue that Kiesi highlighted was not uniquely Finnish. According to Traxler et al. (2007, p. 366), the division of power between big and small companies within a business association is often 'a delicate issue, all the more since business associations and their members are especially anxious to conceal internal conflicts.'

Kiesi seemed agitated, but his official biography suggests that this was partly acting. The entrepreneur spoke a great deal, but at the same time he tried to observe the effect that his words had on his discussion partner. The words did have an impact: Kiesi was soon recruited to important positions in the administration of the TKL and the STK, the peak Finnish employer association. He worked at both for several decades 'on the behalf of small and medium-sized industry,' as the title of his biography suggests (Ristimäki, 2000, pp. 9–10).

It was important for the peak organisations that people like Kiesi were involved in their operations. Both the TKL and STK, as well as their successors, could and did argue that the presence of small entrepreneurs in the decision-making bodies proved that these peak associations promoted the business sector on the whole and not just the interests of large companies. Therefore, the presence of the independent SME associations, the SYKL, and the PTK as members of the tripartite bodies was not necessary. If the members of the SYKL and the PTK were unhappy with the current state of labour market policies, they should join the STK (Kahri, 2001, p. 102; Korhonen, 2018, p. 109).

People like Orvo Kiesi, who had an insider's view on the activities of peak associations, were not at all convinced that the position of the SMEs within them was as good as the leaders of the peak associations claimed. The official commissioned history of their SME advisory bodies (2011) contains quotes suggesting that the SMEs were valued members of the peak associations, but numerous comments from entrepreneurs also suggest that their influence was limited and that SME activists had to work hard to get the big companies and

hired staff at peak associations to take their views seriously (Ristimäki, 2011, pp. 31, 34, 55, 67, 98, 100–103, 283). Similar conclusions can be drawn from Kiesi's biography (Ristimäki, 2000, pp. 55, 61, 63, 69, 75, 94, 146).

SME advisory bodies were, as the name suggests, just that, advisory, as a brief internal history written in the mid-1990s clearly recognised. They had little independent decision-making power within the peak organisations. They therefore often ended up behaving like pressure groups within interest groups: their leaders and members gave direct, and if necessary, critical feedback to their associations' leaders and hired staff, and naturally to the government as well.[23]

STK and TKL did want SMEs to become members, for reasons that both Kiesi (in practice) and Traxler (in theory) recognised. As the number, economic significance, and prestige of SMEs increased from the 1970s onwards, they became increasingly useful members for peak associations. TKL noticed that it was often tactically wiser to describe to politicians and the media how a certain issue affected the growth of SMEs and their ability to employ people than to talk about its impact on the competitiveness of big companies (Koroma, 2015, p. 354).

TKL and STK could not, however, take it for granted that SMEs would indeed join their associations because both the SYKL and PTK offered an alternative avenue for SMEs to influence public policies. In the late 1960s, when SYKL began to build a mass movement, STK stepped up its efforts to show that it indeed also represented smaller companies. At this time, most of STK's members were already SMEs, although the association was still widely considered to be dominated by big business (Ristimäki, 2011, pp. 24, 27–28). In a way, the SME advisory boards of peak associations and the SMEs' own associations were competitors in the corporatist market place (Ristimäki, 2011, p. 284; see also Jussi Jalkanen, 'Järjestöt kilpailevat yrittäjistä,' *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 31, 1981). Each SME could decide for itself whether the best tactic was to join forces with the big companies or with other smaller ones. Many realised that they could have a foot in both camps and decided to join both a peak association and an SME association (SYKL Vuosikirja, 1982, p. 44).

From a political and ideological standpoint, it did not matter what road an SME chose to take. The associations competing for the attention of SMEs had similar views regarding the position of SMEs in Finland. As with SYKL, the SME advisory boards within peak associations argued that big business, trade unions, and the government were not giving enough attention the special problems of the SMEs when drafting laws and collective agreements and that increased taxation and regulation of business was placing a particularly severe burden on smaller companies[24] (Ristimäki, 2011, pp. 27–29, 48, 53, 67–68, 109–125, 186–195; 2000, pp. 116–120, 144).

Attack on the labour market system

The relationship between trade unions and SME associations and activists was, at best, only lukewarm. The latter felt that the big trade unions preferred to deal with big companies and had an arrogant attitude when dealing with smaller companies (Koroma, 2015, pp. 345, 350; Ristimäki, 2000, pp. 14, 76; 2011, pp. 29, 70). As trade unions had become more powerful, they had also expanded 'their activities beyond their natural borders and pressured others into solutions that exceed economic realities and place a heavy burden on companies.'[25] The benefits that trade unions could acquire for their members often came at a particularly

high cost for small companies, which had fewer resources to comply with them (see Babb, 2014, p. 7).

The PTK, SYKL, and their predecessors had traditionally not been labour market organisations. From the late 1970s onwards, SYKL in particular started to take an active interest in national labour market negotiations. This move was understandable. Finland was becoming increasingly corporatist: tripartite structurers within Finnish society expanded considerably during the late 1960s and 1970s. So did the influence of the trade unions and the employers' associations. The scope of annual incomes policy negotiations expanded to include an ever-increasing number of economic and social policy issues[26] (Mansner, 1990; Wuokko, 2020).

From 1971 onwards, it was even harder for SMEs to ignore the corporatist system. A new law decreed that if a collective agreement between an employers' association and a trade union in a certain field covered a dominant proportion of companies and workers in it, then the agreement would be universally binding, meaning that companies would have to comply with the agreement even if they did not belong to the employers' association (Hietanen & Traxler, 2007, pp. 110, 113). For those SMEs that had not, did not want to, or could not afford to join the employers' association, this law created a *Kafkaesque* situation: They had to follow the letter of an agreement, but they did not necessarily have access to the text or to the supplementary protocols and instructions that the employers' associations and unions usually drafted to complement it. Employers' associations sent the documents to their members but not to outsiders. PTK, which represented many such outsiders, complained to the authorities about this issue for years. The availability of the documents gradually improved, but even in the 1990s, it could still take months before an SME obtained a copy of an agreement covering the sector in which it operated[27] (PTK Toimintakertomus, 1977, p. 26; 1979, pp. 22–23). It seems likely that many SMEs solved the problems themselves by reluctantly joining the employers' association.

The SMEs, along with their ambitious association SYKL, were only weakly represented in the powerful corporatist structures. Most small companies were not members of the actual employers' organisations, and SYKL and PTK did not have seats at any of the tables where collective bargaining occurred. Those seats were occupied by traditional peak employer and employee organisations. But did SYKL even need to be represented in labour market negotiations? Tapani Kahri, the managing director of STK, said 'no,' arguing that STK and the SME associations had similar views on nine out of every ten issues (Kahri, 2001, pp. 102–103). If one compares the views expressed by both parties in their internal debates, it is indeed easy to see a long list of similarities. Both, for example, demanded more flexibility on agreements, both would have liked to expand workplace-level bargaining, and both were worried about the growing influence of trade unions. There were also crucial differences, though. The peak associations and their hired managers were more pragmatic: Maiju Wuokko has shown how they, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, became increasingly unhappy with national-level centralised bargaining, but they nevertheless repeatedly agreed to conclude national-level agreements with the powerful trade unions, in particular SAK[28] (Wuokko, 2020, pp. 208–214, 240, 255–260).

It was not necessarily self-evident that the SME association would or even should oppose centralised bargaining. Unlike SY, some European SME associations have supported and participated in national- or sectoral-level collective bargaining because it reduces transaction costs and the need for companies to negotiate individually and might also support the demand for goods and services in the domestic markets where most SMEs operate (Bulfone

& Afonso, 2020; Voskeritsian et al., 2020, pp. 694–695, 699). However, not all associations were welcome at the key negotiating tables. European corporatist structures were 'often a closed shop,' where 'insiders' frequently prevented outsiders, including SME associations, from participating (Traxler, et al. 2007, pp. 376–377). In the late 1990s, SY was reminded of this fact quite clearly.

(Almost) united front

Both SYKL and PTK as well as outside observers gradually recognised that closer co-operation between them, or even a merger, could strengthen the position of the SME sector in Finnish society. Government representatives seemed to agree: they were often confused about the existence of two competing organisations: with whom should the government consult, and who should it listen to? Both the centrist Prime Minister Esko Aho (1991–1995) and his successor, social democrat Paavo Lipponen (1995–2003), stated that it would be a good idea if the two associations would join forces. Both also underlined the significance of SMEs for the Finnish economy (Mikkilä, 2016, pp. 25–26, 43–44, 53, 59). This was not surprising: the main supporters of Aho's party were independent farmers, and many other provincial entrepreneurs tended to vote for the party as well. Lipponen, in turn, belonged to the right-wing faction of his party. Even more importantly, a severe economic depression in the early 1990s severely damaged the Finnish economy, bankrupted thousands of companies, and led to mass unemployment. Entrepreneurship might help ease the country's economic problems.[29]

Relations between the PTK and SYKL were nevertheless so tense and distrustful that it took a couple of years, and a series of intense debates and negotiations before the two associations finally agreed to merge. The new organisation, *Suomen Yrittäjät* (SY), began its operations at the beginning of 1996 (Mikkilä, 2016, pp. 26–61). SY was anxious to unite all entrepreneurs under one roof. SYKL had calculated that, in 1994, Finland had 125,000 companies with people on their payroll. Ninety-five per cent of them employed less than 20 people. In addition, there were 85,000 self-employed people without hired staff.[30] In short, there were roughly 200,000 potential SY members in Finland. Many of them either joined SY or its regional and branch sister organisations in the late 1990s. By 2000, it had acquired 86,000 members.[31]

SY was recognised by the government as an important interest organisation. When Lipponen's second cabinet formulated its program following parliamentary elections in 1999, SY was allowed to take part in the negotiations alongside the more traditional and influential interest organisations, like the employer and industry peak association TT and the main peak labour union SAK. SY concluded that it did have some impact on the government's program in ways that helped its members, including the cutting of red tape and launching of a new program to ease and promote entrepreneurship.[32]

SY wanted more. In their final years, SYKL and PTK had gradually tried to strengthen their decision-making role concerning labour market issues and in tripartite negotiations.[33] SY continued on this path.[34] In 1999, it decided that it wanted a seat at the famous 'TUPO table,' a national-level collective bargaining body. This decision was an indication of its pragmatism and ideological flexibility. The organisation concluded that it should be present in rooms where decisions were being made, even though it did not like the system.[35] ('Lisää tilaa pöytään,' *Helsingin Sanomat*, June 6, 1999). Peak employer and employee organisations, and even TT's SME advisory body, all said 'no' to SY's attempt to gain a seat at the table. As those

already sitting there pointed out, only a small proportion of SY's members had given the association a proper mandate to negotiate collective agreements. This technicality was not the only reason, though. *Helsingin Sanomat,* the leading Finnish daily paper, suspected that the peak organisations on both sides were anxious to protect their own position by blocking an unwelcome intruder[36] (Jensen-Eriksen, 2020, pp. 346–349; 'Pieniä ihmisiä,' *Helsingin Sanomat*, June 8, 1999). SY was certainly not an association with which the trade unions preferred to negotiate. A memo written by a group of leading trade unionists stated that SY was 'applying finely-tuned lobbying and harsh hooligan politics' to gain a seat at the collective bargaining table.[37]

In 1997, the SY got a new and more polite rival, when 48 Finnish family companies, including many large ones with a distinguished history, set up a new organisation to promote their interests. At the top of the list was the desire to reduce taxes on the transfer of ownership from one generation to the next. In the worst-case scenarios, such taxes could force families to sell their companies. The family-owned companies consulted with numerous foreign experts before setting up their own organisation. It was originally known as the Family Business Network Finland, because it was a national subsidiary of the international Family Business Network. This English-language name did not work well in domestic discussions, and it was soon replaced with a Finnish name, *Perheyritysten Liitto* (the Finnish Family Firm Association, PL). By 2007, it had acquired 260 members employing a total of 144,000 persons (Timonen, 2007, pp. 8–9, 12; Kallioinen, 2022, p. 291).

The vast majority of small and medium-sized Finnish companies were family companies in the 1990s, and therefore one could easily assume that existing organisations, including SY, already represented such companies. 'Some eyebrows were raised,' one of the activists from PL commented when the new association was founded, but they also pointed out that PL, whose leading members included numerous large companies, had 'doubts' about SY (Timonen, 2007, pp. 10, 12). PL's relationship with the peak employers' association TT was better. The founders of the PL association were careful to not step on the toes of TT. They left labour market issues to it and focused on ownership matters instead (Blom, 2007, pp. 105–107; 2018, pp. 227–230; Kallioinen 2022, p. 285; Timonen, 2007, pp. 9–13).

PL could and did also build on the increasingly positive view that policymakers and citizens had about family companies. In the new globalised world, where foreign investors bought shares in Finnish enterprises and many companies moved jobs abroad, families looked like safer and more committed employers and businesses than many others. PL skilfully exploited this positive image by supporting research on family companies, distributing information, and educating new owner generations of the member companies. It also formed close links with the political parties. This contributed to several successful outcomes, including a much hoped-for reduction in taxes on generational ownership changes (Blom, 2018, pp. 227–230).

Conclusions

This article has underlined the need to study the organised political activities of SMEs. The topic has attracted little attention in previous studies. When scholars talk about business power, they usually are in fact only talking about big business. While the influence of large companies is a vital research topic, ignoring SMEs means that we are overlooking most companies.

How can you convince small business owners to join an association and act collectively in politics? Experts often argue that the services provided to members, such as legal advice, are a crucial reason for them choosing to join. The service-oriented PTK failed to increase its membership, though. In comparison, SYKL grew by underlining common threats and interests to potential members and built a movement out of a heterogeneous group of individualistic people. These efforts to mobilise most businesses to join an association meant that the political activities of SMEs were also more public than in the case of big business, which often promotes its interests behind closed doors in private discussions or *via* lobbying.

How wide should such a coalition of business be? Lanzalaco (2009, p. 310) has argued that the fragmentation of business interest associations is a promising research topic, but little historical research has been done on how it affected the ability of SME associations to promote the interests of their members. Finnish business, both big and small, certainly thought that bigger is usually better, and, as a result, numerous mergers of BIAs occurred during the period studied here.

However, this article suggests that business unity is not necessarily quite as useful as business people themselves have thought. The Finnish peak associations tended to be dominated by big business, as such associations usually, according to previous theoretical studies, are. The Finnish associations had SME advisory boards, but activists in those organs often felt that their influence was limited. Hence, it was better for the SMEs to have associations of their own.

The existence of different and even overlapping institutions brought more broad-based benefits. They promoted slightly different issues, but with drastically different tactics. SYKL and SY utilised a populist strategy, which received a great deal of attention from the media and policymakers, but they also burned several bridges in the process. PTK had a lower profile but gained recognition as an organisation with substantial expertise in SME issues. SMEs also had some influence in the peak employer and industry organisations because the larger companies had to take those member companies seriously. Otherwise, they could defect to SYKL or SY, and then the peak business associations would no longer have been able to claim that they represented all companies, big and small. The Finnish Family Firm Association (PL), was only established in the 1990s, but brought together both large and smaller family companies and managed to help family-owned companies, regardless of their size, to acquire substantial tax benefits.

The relations between big and small companies were often tense, but all such companies had a long list of similar goals: less taxation and regulation, more freedom for employers, and a smaller state. SME associations and activists simply promoted those issues in a more uncompromising way than the more pragmatic, and often hired, managers of big companies, or their hired hands in the peak associations. Capitalists were not always united during the later decades of the twentieth century, but in the end it may have been beneficial for them all, big and small.

What were the sources of small business power? SMEs benefitted from certain advantages, in particular their widely perceived economic significance, but on the whole a small company has fewer advantages than a big company. SMEs are a more heterogeneous group, and individual companies have fewer resources and possibilities to lobby policymakers. SME associations skilfully utilised those trends and aspects of lobbying that were most in their favour. Policymakers both in Finland and in other countries recognised from the 1970s onwards that SMEs were crucial for employment and economic renewal. When governments

became interested in promoting entrepreneurship, it was natural that they listened more carefully to those who had an ear to the ground in the entrepreneurial landscape. After all, SME associations could claim to know what weakened or strengthened the abilities of SMEs to do business.

Left-wing parties continued to be closely allied with the trade unions, but politicians from non-socialist parties competed for the attention of SMEs. The tens of thousands of small business owners and their families comprised a far larger voting group than the, otherwise influential, managing directors of the biggest companies. Big businesses had the money, but small companies had the numbers.

Notes

1. 'Tietoa Yrittäjistä' https://www.yrittajat.fi/yrittajajarjesto/tietoa-yrittajista/; Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto EK https://ek.fi/tietoa-meista/mika-on-ek/; 'Yrittäjägallup: Yrittäjän jaksaminen, terveys ja talous yrittäjäriskin ytimessä' https://www.sttinfo.fi/tiedote/70009722/yrittajagallup-yrittajan-jaksaminen-terveys-ja-talous-yrittajariskin-ytimessa?publisherId=1624&lang=fi (accessed November 12, 2023).
2. In the European Union, their share is 99% of all companies. For a definition of SMEs, see https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-definition_en (accessed March 28, 2023).
3. SME definition https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-definition_en (accessed March 28, 2023).
4. When the research was conducted, this material had not yet been properly organized by ELKA's staff. In the future, the documents will probably be found in slightly different categories and files than what the references in this article indicate.
5. In 1961, it changed its name to *Yrittäjäin Liitto* (Entrepreneurs' Association, YL), and in 1972 to *Yrittäjäin Keskusiitto* (Central Association of Entrepreneurs, YKL). In 1977, the YKL merged with its regional organization to form SYKL. To reduce confusion, we use the acronym SYKL.
6. ELKA. TT. File 152. 'PKT-neuvottelukunnat – pitkäjänteistä edunvalvontaa Etelärannassa'. Timo Immonen, 1995.
7. ELKA. SYKL. Speech by Arne Berner, September 15, 1980. An attachment to the minutes of the association meeting (liittokokous), September 15, 1980; ELKA. SYKL. Speech by Arne Berner, September 15, 1981. An attachment to the minutes of the association meeting (liittokokous), September 15, 1981; PTK Toimintakertomus (1984, p. 35).
8. ELKA. YL to political parties' entrepreneur delegations, June 26, 1972. An attachment to YL board minutes; PTK. Minutes 1986. Toimintasuunnitelma vuodeksi 1987; PTK. Board minutes 1987. Toimintasuunnitelma vuodeksi 1988.
9. ELKA. Yrittäjäin Keskusliitto, vuosikirja 1973, p. 40.
10. ELKA. Yrittäjäin Keskusliitto, vuosikirja 1973, p. 40; SYKL. Speech by Arne Berner. An attachment to the minutes of the association's spring meeting, March 15, 1980; SYKL. Speech by Arne Berner, March 4, 1981. An attachment to the minutes of the association's spring meeting, March 4, 1981.
11. ELKA. SYKL. Speech by Waldemar Bühler, September 15, 1980. An attachment to the minutes of the association meeting (liittokokous), September 15, 1980.
12. ELKA, SYKL, Hallituksen työvaliokunnan pöytäkirjat 1978, Toimintasuunnitelma vuodelle 1979. An attachment to the board minutes, August 30, 1978; SYKL. Speech by Waldemar Bühler, September 15, 1981. An attachment to the minutes of the association meeting (liittokokous), September 15, 1981.
13. ELKA. SYKL, Press release on the creation of SYKL. An attachment to the board minutes, August 10, 1977.
14. ELKA, SYKL, Hallituksen työvaliokunnan pöytäkirjat 1978, Toimitusjohtajien neuvottelupäivä, kokousmuistio, 16 January 1978. An attachment to board minutes, January 24, 1978.

15. ‘Hän totesi että pelkistetysti lausuttuna [yrittäjäjärjestön] tavoitteena on taistelu sosialisointia vastaan. Tämä tehtävä voi onnistua vain siinä tapauksessa, että sitä suorittaa organisaatio, jolla on riittävästi voimaa ja arvovaltaa.’ ELKA, SYKL, Hallituksen työvaliokunnan pöytäkirjat 1978, Toimitusjohtajien neuvottelupäivä, kokousmuistio, January 16, 1978. An attachment to the board minutes, January 24, 1978.
16. ELKA. PTK. Toimintakertomukset.
17. ELKA. PTK. Minutes 1986. Toimintasuunnitelma vuodeksi 1987; PTK. Minutes 1989. ‘PTK:n ja TKL:n yhteistyövaihtoehdoista,’ PTK, TKL, Tarmo Korpela, Tapio Vasara, August 29, 1989; PTK. Minutes 1991. ‘PTK:n strategiaprojekti’. Tapio Vasara, June 18, 1991.
18. ‘[P]ienyrityksiä on vaikea saada järjestötoimintaa mukaan, ellei heille tarjota konkreettisia palveluja. Pelkkä yleinen edunvalvonta ei yleensä riitä perusjäsenistölle.’ ELKA. PTK. Minutes 1989. ‘PTK:n ja TKL:n yhteistyövaihtoehdoista.’ PTK, TKL, Tarmo Korpela, Tapio Vasara, August 29, 1989.
19. ELKA. PTK. Liitokokous Pori 1990. ‘Katsaus liittokokoukselle PTK:n toimintaan ja talouteen.’ Matti Niemi, September 15, 1990.
20. See for example, ELKA. SYKL, minutes of economic policy committee (talouspoliittinen valiokunta), May 5, 1970, and the attached letter to members of parliament, as well as the text of Tapani Tikanoja’s speech.
21. ‘[L]iiton on toimittava kuten puolue olematta silti puolue, toisin sanoen sen on toimittava eduskunnassa ja kunnallisvaltuustoissa edustettuina olevien puolueiden sisällä ja niiden avulla’ (Terho, 1983, p. 34).
22. ‘Luulisi isojenkin poikien ymmärtävän, etteivät he voi voittaa taistelua ilman divisiooneja. Pieniä ja keskisuuria yrityksiä tarvitaan, koska niitä on paljon ja niiden ääntä poliitikot kuuntelevat selvästi herkemmällä korvalla kuin suuryritysten johtajia’ (Ristimäki, 2000, 9).
23. ELKA. TT. File 152. ‘PKT-neuvottelukunnat – pitkäjänteistä edunvalvontaa Etelärannassa.’ Timo Immonen, 1995.
24. ELKA. TT. File 153. ‘Päämääränä kehityskykyinen ja vahva PKT.’ Draft press release, April 3, 1996; File 152. ‘PKT-neuvottelukunnat – pitkäjänteistä edunvalvontaa Etelärannassa.’ Timo Immonen (1995).
25. ‘[Ammattiyhdistysliike] on voimistuessaan laajentanut toiminta-aluettaan yli sille luonnostaan kuuluvien rajojen ja painostanut ratkaisuihin, jotka ovat ylittäneet taloudelliset realiteetit ja luoneet yritykselle raskaita rasitteita.’ ELKA. SYKL. ‘Keskusliiton työmarkkinapoliittinen ohjelma 23.3.1983’. An attachment to board minutes, March 8, 1983.
26. ELKA. SYKL. Board minutes, May 5, 1980.
27. ELKA. PTK. Board minutes 1987. PTK letter to the Chancellor of Justice, May 4, 1987; PTK. Minutes 1992. PTK letter to Minister of Labour Ilkka Kanerva, January 12, 1992.
28. ELKA. SYKL. ‘SYKL:n kannanottoja työelämän kehittämiseksi.’ March 20, 1991; ‘Suomen Yrittäjäin Keskusliitto ry:n toimintasuunnitelma ja talousarvion perusteet vuodelle 1992.’ Attachments to board minutes 1990–1991; PTK. Minutes 1992. Press release September 12, 1992.
29. ELKA. PTK. Minutes 1992. A speech by Ensio Romo, September 12, 1992; PTK. Minutes 1993, volume I. A speech by Esko Aho, September 3, 1993.
30. ELKA. SYKL. ‘SYKL:n yhteiskuntapoliittisia tavoitteita vaalikaudelle 1995–1999.’ An attachment to the board minutes, September 13, 1994.
31. ELKA. TT. File 267. ‘Jäsenten lukumäärä 31.12.2000.’ SY.
32. ELKA. SY. Board minutes 1999. Attachments: The minutes of the working council of the board, April 13, 1999; ‘Vuoden 1999 ensimmäisen vuosipuoliskon toiminnan tulokset’.
33. For example, ELKA. SYKL. ‘Suomen Yrittäjäin Keskusliiton hallituksen kertomus vuoden 1993 toiminnasta.’ An attachment to the board minutes, April 12, 1994; Board minutes, January 12, 1993; ‘Suomen Yrittäjäin Keskusliiton tavoiteohjelma, toimintasuunnitelma sekä talousarvion perusteet vuodelle 1994.’ Attachments to the board minutes, September 7, 1993; PTK. Minutes 1994, volume I. ‘Hallituksen katsaus PTK:n talouteen ja toimintaan vuonna 1994.’ Ensio Romo, September 10, 1994; ‘Valtuuskunnan esitys liittokokoukselle Pienteollisuuden Keskusliitto ry:n sääntömuutokseksi.’ August 9, 1994.

34. ELKA. SY. Suomen Yrittäjät ry:n vuoden 1996 alustava toimintasuunnitelman runko.' November 21, 1995. An attachment to the board minutes, November 28, 1995.
35. ELKA. SY board minutes, January 26, 1999, March 30, 1999, June 1, 1999.
36. ELKA. TT. File 193. TT board meetings, May 6, 1999, November 11, 1999, November 25, 1999.
37. 'Se on soveltanut sekä pitkälle hiottua lobbausta että härskiä häirikköpolitikointia' (Korhonen, 2018, p. 34).

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