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THIRD SECTOR PARTICIPATION IN THE POLICY PROCESS: A FRAMEWORK FOR COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Do third sector organizations (TSOs) participate meaningfully in the public policy process? What factors determine their access to decision-making domains or their ability to otherwise influence political outcomes? This paper presents a framework for the analysis of the participation of TSOs in the policy process based on four factors: the political opportunities offered by the polity in which they operate; the nature of the policies they are seeking to influence; the characteristics and the resources of the organizations themselves; and the network of other political actors. The framework utilizes a multi-disciplinary approach, combining elements from political science, sociology and organizational theory.

Key words: Third Sector, Voluntary Organisations; Participation; Policy Making

INTRODUCTION

The growth in the number and public profile of non-government advocacy and service organizations that has resulted from the 'global associational revolution' of the last decades (Salamon et al., 1999) should, in theory, also translate into a more central role in the public policy process. These Third Sector Organizations (TSOs)¹ have accrued a new level of legitimacy through the mixed economy of welfare service delivery, as exemplified by the British *compact* (Kendall, 2000), as well as through their incorporation into mainstream political discourses such as *civil society* (Walzer, 1992; Boris and Moser-Williams, 1998; Brown et al., 2000) and the *third way* (Giddens, 1994; Giddens, 1998). Some authors go as far as to nominate TSOs as the integral players in an emerging new form of associational democracy that is replacing representative democracy (Barber, 1984; Parry et al., 1992; Hirst, 1994).

However, there is little understanding of the outcomes of TSO participation in the policy process. Are they truly operative actors, able to accrue the power to influence other actors? Are we witnessing the development of TSOs as independent, subsidiary structures that are returning direct control over the political process to the citizens, or is the apparent political space which has opened up for TSOs an illusion, a readjustment that has sought

to incorporate, and so perhaps disarm, an emerging challenge to existing political systems?

Effectiveness in the policy process is difficult to define and even harder to evaluate (G.K. Wilson, 1990; Thomas, 1993; Kriesi et al., 1995; Forbes, 1998; Giugni, 1999; Casey, 2002). Despite these difficulties, most commentators work on the assumption that TSOs operate in a pluralist political context and that a well-organized TSO with the necessary resources will have the potential to influence the policy process through direct interventions or through the strengthening of social capital and the encouragement of social dialogue (Baggot, 1995; Taylor, 1999; Anheier and Kendall, 2001). To confirm these assumptions, analytical tools are needed to explore the factors that might determine the outcomes of TSO political participation, even though we may not be able to use them to construct a scorecard to accurately measure political effectiveness.

TSOs are aided, encouraged or thwarted in their efforts to influence policy by a number of structural and strategic factors that shape their emergence, development, achievements and, perhaps, demise (Meyer and Imig, 1993). International comparisons of TSO have identified diverse patterns of development (Salamon et al. 1999) and differing "national scripts" (Anheier and Kendall, 2001) and we can surmise that the possibility of meaningful TSO participation in the policy process is country-time- and sector-specific and that it is impossible to generalize about TSO outcomes across these variables.

Various authors offer frameworks for analysing TSO participation based on a single dimension. Thomas (1993), for example, provides an excellent comparative tool for analysing the political environment, Tilly (1999) predicts the outcomes of social mobilization on the basis of the internal characteristics of TSOs, represented by the acronym WUNC (worthiness, unity, numbers, commitment), and a number of authors offer instruments for analysing organizational resources (McCarthy and Zald, 1973; Pross, 1992; Maloney, 1996). Yet each of these separate analyses, by definition, leads to an incomplete vision of the dynamics of TSO participation in the policy process.

There have been attempts to bring together elements from different approaches (Fowler, 1999), but they tend to give general overviews and there remains a need for a more extensive analysis on the interplay between political environmental factors, the impact of organizational characteristics and the nature of the public policy process. A comprehensive framework for achieving such an interdisciplinary analysis should include elements from a variety of academic traditions that include the political science perspective of interest group analysis, the sociological perspective of social movement theory and organizational theory perspectives such as resource mobilization theory

(Casey, 1998). The combination of these traditions gives a broad-ranging framework of multiple factors that address the following issues: the political opportunities offered by the polity in which the TSOs operate; the nature of the policies they are seeking to influence; the characteristics and the resources of the organizations themselves; and the network of other political actors involved.

Table 1 provides a summary of the factors that are incorporated into the analytical framework proposed in this article and gives examples of how those factors may serve to exclude TSOs from the policy process.

Table 1:
Factors That Determine TSO Influence in the Policy Process

| PRIMARY FACTOR | SUB FACTORS | POSSIBLE EXCLUSIONARY IMPACTS |
|---|--|---|
| The Political and Socioeconomic Environment | Dominant Political Discourses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welfare State Regimes - Strong versus Weak States - Emerging Political Structures Socioeconomic Development Institutional Policy Structures Strength of Political Parties The Repertoire of Actions | Closed polities can exclude TSOs from policy process Low socioeconomic development impedes the formation of strong TSOs Strong political parties dominate collective action and exclude TSOs Certain actions that may be adopted by TSOs are not considered legitimate |
| The Policy in Question | The Nature of the Policy Conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Centrality - Universalism - Temporal complexity - Technicality - Public profile The Phase of the Policy Cycle | Certain policies will be considered "off limits" to TSO influence Policies with entrenched agendas and operating procedures will be difficult to change |
| The Characteristics of the TSO(s) | The Ideology and Culture of the TSO(s) Organizational Capacity and Resource Mobilization Membership and Representation The Status of the TSO(s) | TSOs with fewer resources will be less likely to influence TSO may, for ideological reasons, choose confrontation and be excluded from formal decision systems |
| The Network of Actors | | An inability to create effective networks will hinder influence efforts |

Source: Author

Details of how these factors operate to promote or hinder TSO influence are provided in the remainder of this article. It is important to note that the “unit of analysis” is primarily an individual TSO, but that the conclusions drawn are generally also valid for coalitions, coordinating bodies, secondary and peak organizations that aggregate and represent the individual organizations. Equally, the policy process is primarily discussed as a national construct, but the framework detailed in this article can be seen as valid in an analysis of both more local or regional policy process and trans-national processes such as that exist in the context of supranational entities such as the European Union and the international advocacy efforts of global TSOs such as Greenpeace.

The Political and Socioeconomic Environment

The political and socioeconomic system in which TSOs operate provides the primary framework for their participation in the policy process. Writers note the differences in strategies and tactics that TSOs employ in diverse national polities: in the United States, TSOs work directly with politicians and legislatures; in Japan they concentrate on the persuasion of administrations and government ministers; in the United Kingdom, political parties are a primary target for interest group activities along with administrations and there is more use of informal communications between individuals (the "old boy's network"); Dutch TSOs contact the administration first and if unsuccessful in their approaches they then try to influence the politicians (Kramer, 1981; G.K Wilson, 1990; Smucker, 1991; Lelieveldt, 1996).

The contextualization of TSO action can be described in terms of the *political opportunity structures* (McAdam, 1982) offered by each polity. Tarrow (1994: 18) describes these opportunity structures as the "dimensions of the political environment which either encourage or discourage people from using collective action" (see also Meyer and Imig, 1993; Dekker, Koopmans and van den Broek, 1998). These opportunity structures have both a stable dimension, in that each polity offers a certain level of consistency in the structures that are likely to either promote or hinder political opportunities, as well as a volatile dimension that offers the historical moments and protest cycles that determine protest levels (Tarrow, 1994).

The political and socioeconomic environment in which TSOs operate is the product of the dominant political discourses, the level of socioeconomic development, the policy structures offered in the polity, the strength of political parties and the repertoire of sanctioned political actions (Thomas, 1993). These factors operate as follows.

1. *Dominant Political Discourses.* Variations in dominant political discourses, and the shared symbolism and attitudes that derive from them, are the major root causes of differences between policy systems. There are three predominant political frameworks which are used to analyse TSO participation in western democracies: welfare state regimes, strong versus weak state, and emerging political structures.

i) Welfare State Regimes. Esping-Andersen (1990) identified variations in welfare state regimes, based on the patterns of working class political formation, political coalition building in the transition from a rural economy to middle-class society and the institutionalisation of class preferences and political behaviours. His analysis of welfare regimes focussed on social wage and labour market issues, but subsequent authors have sought to analyse how such differences in regimes impact on the political opportunities available to TSO. Taylor and Lansley (1992) identify four categories of welfare state ideologies that structure the relationship between the state and market, and identify the role of TSOs within each of them (Table 2).

Table 2: Welfare State Ideologies and the Role of TSOs

| Ideology | Financing of Services By: | Delivery of Services By: | Role of TSOs |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Conservatism | Philanthropy | Voluntary and Private Sectors | Share provider role with private sector; beneficiaries dependent on benefactors' policies; power elite campaign on behalf of people in need. |
| Welfare State | State | State | Residual role; policies controlled through vote and elected representatives |
| Welfare Pluralism | State | Voluntary Sector | Provider role; also participation in decision making, but advocacy may be incompatible with delivery |
| Market Pluralism | Consumer and Market Place | Private Sector | Residual role; policies are decided through consumer choice |

Source: Author, based on categories identified by Taylor and Lansley (1992)

Sarasa (1995) claims that the two variables, *services financed by* and *services delivered by*, used by Taylor and Lansley and by other authors (see, for example, Gidron, Kramer and Salamon, 1992) to classify countries according to welfare regimes are inadequate to explain the differences between national systems. He and adds a third variable, *institutionalized channels of public-private relations*, to identify four welfare state regimes (Table 3).

Table 3: Welfare State Regimes and TSOs

| Regime | Countries (e.g.s.) | Characteristics | Public-Private Relations |
|--------------|--------------------|--|--|
| Scandinavian | Sweden, Norway | Strong centralized TSO sector organized according to service areas | Close, structured, hierarchical relationships. |

| | | | |
|----------------|------------------------------------|---|---|
| | | Relatively strong state that seeks consensus on policies through corporatist arrangements. | |
| Rhineland | Germany, Holland, Belgium, Austria | Strong TSO sector based on strong ideological-religious divisions. The organizations are primarily publicly funded. Based on a principle of subsidiarity, they have significant influence on a relatively weak state through strong corporatist arrangements | Close, structured, hierarchical relationships. |
| Mediterranean | France, Italy, Spain | The Catholic Church has dominated the TSO sector. Non-religious organizations have generally been less organized. State-dominant policy processes. | Relatively few formal channels of communication. Relations often involve distrust and conflict. |
| North American | USA | Strong TSO sector based on multiple ethnic, religious, social and geographic identities. Public funding, but important levels of private funds and sale of services. | Few structured channels of communication, but strength of private sector provides opportunities for entrepreneurial TSOs. |

Source: Author, based on welfare regimes identified by Sarasa (1995)

Brown et al. (2000) provide a new perspective on welfare regimes in “post-modern” societies based on competing models of citizenship. They posit six regimes, each with different roles for TSOs (Table 4).

Table 4: Welfare Regimes and TSO Roles

| | Passive citizenship | Active Citizenship |
|---|---|--|
| Consumer citizenship | <i>McWelfare</i> Corporations become surrogate state providers. TSOs align themselves with corporations or are created by them | <i>Welfare.com</i> TSOs aligned with corporations, but new niche markets allow more choice for consumers with high level of connectivity. |
| Consumer/communitarian citizenship | <i>Contractural Welfare</i> TSO sector likely to expand, with bifurcation between state contractors and others | <i>Market-bounded Associationalism</i> TSOs strong, with high level of social capital and civil society, but with stronger market influences. |
| Communitarian citizenship | <i>Social Democratic Welfare</i> TSOs remain largely concentrated on non-welfare concerns, with the state being more dominant | <i>State-bounded Associationalism</i> TSOs strong, with high level of social capital and civil society, in more state-determined frameworks. |

Source: Author, based on welfare regimes identified by Brown et al. (2000)

These tables illustrate the tendency to ascribe specific roles to TSOs within each welfare regime which serve to legitimate, or delegitimate, their participation in decision making. However, it is difficult to neatly categorize the roles of TSOs, and

many of them do not abide by the roles and functions nominally ascribed for them by dominant ideologies or by the social, economic or cultural context in which they operate. Sarasa (1995) acknowledges that his categories, in Table 3 above, represent ideal types and that there exists convergence and interchange between regimes which allow actors to break with traditional roles. Subirats and Gomà (1993: 42) observe, "the dynamic resulting from the complex relationships that are created between TSOs and [government] undoubtedly goes beyond any categories created."

Additionally, some authors postulate the existence of ideological cycles that move society between competing views of collective responsibility and individualism (Dalton, 1993), and assert that there are endogenous mechanisms that push citizens back and forth between a preference for private, individual choices and collective choice through deliberation. Each alternative brings about its own cycle of disappointment and backlash.

ii) The Continuum of *Strong* versus *Weak* States (also expressed by analogous continuums such as *closed* versus *open*, or even *corporatist* versus *pluralist*). Strong states, characterized by the presence of traditional cleavages and corporatist political structures, are generally closed to extra-governmental organizations, with the exception of a small group of designated corporatist umbrella bodies. These strong states provide fewer opportunities for other outside challengers to enter the polity than more open consociational states that engage in more extensive bargaining between rival groups (Dalton, 1993; Thomas, 1993). Conventional influence strategies are not likely to induce the governments in closed polities to give in to TSO demands and so challengers are forced to use radical unconventional strategies in order to make themselves heard (Dekker, Koopmans and van den Broek, 1998). In contrast, weak-state societies are characterized by greater pluralism and a more open relationship between the public and voluntary sector, potentially including more significant TSO participation in political decision making.

At the same time, G.K Wilson (1990) maintains that TSO activity is not necessarily associated with weak or strong states -- strong states and strong interest groups may be equally mutually supportive -- and some authors provide a contradictory rationale for social movements, regarding them not as the result of the permissiveness of open polities but as the response to closed polities which leave little other option for mobilization (F.L Wilson, 1990). Atkinson and Coleman (in Richardson, 1993) talk of a variety of forms beyond the strong-weak state and

pluralist-corporatist formulations that vary systematically across democratic polities depending on the macro-political institutions.

iii) Emerging Political Structures. The Brown et al. (2000) welfare regimes presented above can be seen as a bridge between older welfare regime discourses and emerging political paradigms. The combined influences of globalization and new public management approaches are creating new opportunities, but also new barriers to TSO participation. Political theorists are just beginning to analyse these changes in terms of the opportunities they may provide.

While globalization is transforming the scale of human social organizations and extending the reach of power relations, it does not necessarily open up opportunities for non-government influence. Nations are ceding authority to multi-layered regional and global governance that supplants national democratic structures with less accountable globalised structures and with capital-minded international institutions (McGrew, 2000; Slaughter, 2000). These new structures often lack the principles of transparency and accessibility of national governments and while TSOs are also internationalizing, and a new breed of international TSOs is emerging, they are finding themselves largely excluded from the new global power relationships. Consequently there appears to be resurgence of more radical forms of protest targeted not at local issues but at globalization itself (McGrew, 2000; Slaughter, 2000).

On a domestic level, the new public management rhetoric which dictates that government should "steer not row" (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000) creates an even greater overlap and possible contradiction between the functional processes of service delivery by TSOs and their increasing contribution to the policy process (Phillips, 2000). The impact of this greater complementarity of government and TSOs in service delivery and the new governance theories of an enabling state which should not provide services but instead determine direction lends itself to both the optimistic analysis that the greater interdependency will lead to increased TSO political influence, and the pessimistic observation that the rowers don't usually participate in decisions about where the boat is going.

2. *Socioeconomic Development.* A higher level of economic and social development is likely to increase the number of TSOs (Salamon et al. 1999). Advanced industrial democracies are characterized by an increase in middle and upper class urban dwellers and a breakdown in traditional class consciousness, and one of the outcomes of such changes in social relationships is an increase in post-industrial concerns and an increase in support

for and participation in TSOs (Wallace and Jenkins, 1995). New social and political concerns are reinforced by the availability of more discretionary time for participation in TSOs, as well as more funds, both public and private, for underwriting TSO activities, greater professionalization of political activities and easier access to mass media technologies, (Richardson, 1993; Thomas, 1993; Wallace and Jenkins, 1995).

3. Institutional Policy Structures. Prevailing ideologies also translate into a number of key structural elements regarding the formal distribution of public authority and the structure of decision-making processes through government institutions. The institutions created within each polity are important because they are the current "peace treaties" of past battles (Richardson, 1993) and the pressure game must be played out in the arenas created by these existing structures and processes.

i) Decentralization and fragmentation. The division of powers between legislative, executive and judicial functions of government and the structures of centralization-decentralization of policy-making determine the channels of possible influence, creating the pressure points at which TSOs can direct their political efforts.

Traditionally, the attempt was to influence the legislative process through parties and individual legislators, but with the extension of public intervention, the focus of the participation has increasingly turned to influencing the work of government agencies (Alderman, 1984; Woodward et al., 1985).

ii) Other available institutional structures. The institutional pressure points in some countries may include other structures such as ombudsmen and the legal system, and supranational bodies such as the UN and the European Union are increasingly becoming targets for lobbying not only on international issues, but also on domestic ones (Tarrow, 1998).

iii) New consultation structures. Increasingly, contact over policy matters between TSOs and administrations is becoming institutionalized through the growing number of consultative bodies and other liaison organs that are complementing and at times replacing previous corporatist structures. The possibilities and perils of these consultative bodies and their effectiveness as channels for TSO input vary from polity to polity. But through their rapid growth over the last decades they constitute a significant new reality of the policy process.

iv) TSO legislation. Most countries have in place legislation that governs the legal forms of TSOs and seeks to place limits on their service, commercial and political activities (Randon and 6, 1994). These laws may both directly affect influence

strategies and determine the form of other legitimization and resource procurement endeavours.

4. *Strength of Political Parties.* One of the core discourses regarding the rise of TSOs has been the issue of whether they are replacing political parties as the conduit for citizens' political will (Richardson, 1995). Not surprisingly then, we can identify the strength of political parties and their relationships to TSOs as a factor in determining participation outcomes.

Weak parties and a fragmented party system are likely to provide more opportunities for independent TSO policy participation; strong parties and a two-party system are likely to exclude TSOs or force them into close relationships with existing party structures. G.K Wilson (1990: 33) contends that although it has commonly been argued that there is an inverse relationship between the importance of interest groups and the importance of political parties, this correlation is too simplistic; strong interest groups can not only coexist with strong political parties but may be allied closely with them.

In Europe, where political parties generally continue to dominate interest articulation, there is a close connection between political parties and TSOs through vertical integration dynamics such as corporatism and pillarisation and many TSOs have identifiable party affiliations, which tend to limit their ability to operate independently on key issues. At the opposite end of the spectrum, in the US, where parties and party platforms are generally weak and positioning by candidates tends to be individualized, interest groups operate with independence and openly support like-minded individual candidates across party lines (Thomas, 1993).

5. *The Repertoire of Actions.* The style of the decision making processes in each country translates into general attitudes towards what constitutes legitimate political behaviour. These attitudes are variable between polities and over time, and are often subject to the dictates of political fashions. They have the effect of creating a set repertoire of participation actions.

TSOs that seek to participate in the public policy process have their standard operating procedures and so solve the problem of participation through the use of known forms of action (Richardson, 1993; Tarrow, 1998). The standardization may be due to legitimacy of certain types of activities and a normative bias towards "knowledgeable and responsible" organizations (Mathews, 1993). This standardization is increasingly global, as a result of the convergence of the techniques of access and influence and of the growth of international single issue groups (Rees, 1999; Thomas, 1993; McAdam and Rucht, 1993). At

the same time, there is the opposite dynamic that seeks innovative forms of participation to capture media attention or simply to drive home a message to a society somewhat jaded by demonstrations and other familiar political activities. Frustrated by the lack of impact of current activities, some TSOs may move to more radical actions.

The Policy in Question

The peculiarities of each policy area are a key factor in determining the outcomes of TSOs efforts to influence that policy. Lowi (in G. K. Wilson, 1990: 11) indicates that: "policy shapes politics and not politics shape policy" and authors such as Kingdon (1995) argue that a combination of circumstances create "policy windows" that are likely to determine the possibilities for influence. There are two dimensions to this factor: the nature of the policy conflict and the stage of the policy cycle.

1. The Nature of the Policy Conflict. Different policy areas are likely to offer diverse possibilities for participation and require different strategies and tactics on the part of interested TSOs. There are five key issues that determine the nature outcomes of policy involvement: centrality, universalism, temporal complexity, technicality and public profile:

i) Centrality: Does the policy concern a fundamental issue of distribution of power, economic resources and authority? Lowi (in G.K. Wilson, 1990: 13) distinguished between redistributive, distributive or regulatory policies, Richardson (1993: 128) talks of outcomes in *high* and *low* politics, whereas corporatist discourses speak of the spheres of production and consumption.

Two apparently opposed discourses exist. It can be argued that collective action will occur around the more fundamental economic cleavages of production and redistribution and that the state need not respond to the weaker imperatives for collective action over consumption issues. The contradictory argument is that redistribution is "off limits" in a society dominated by economic elites and so participation is limited to regulatory and consumption issues. These contradictory doctrines can be reconciled by differentiating between the type of collective actions (e.g. union collective action tends to be related to distribution issues), and between historical eras (non-economic issues predominate in periods of ascendancy of a post-materialist middle class).

Centrality can also be analysed in terms of the relationship to historical agendas. New issues emerge in all polities, but may have to compete with overriding traditional concerns or more pressing political interests.

ii) Universalism. The degree of universalism of the goods and services or the perceived level of marginalization of a population can be a driver of participation. If it is considered that there is an unequal distribution of services, TSOs advocate for the extension of these services to the unserved population or the creation of specific services aimed at them. In contrast, if the goods and services are universal, the role of the TSOs may focus on exercising oversight to ensure quality.

iii) Temporal complexity. Dalton (1993) distinguishes between issues that require permanent attention and continuous demand for collective decisions and those that require intermittent attention and more discrete decisions. Given the cost of organizing and maintaining on-going monitoring structures, TSOs are more likely to influence in more discrete visible moments, using these to mobilize their latent base of activists and supporters.

iv) Technicality. Butcher et al. (1980) talk about whether an issue is a merely technical question, arguing that if there is agreement on the needs expressed and the resources available, but technical differences on how to structure service delivery, then the tendency is towards collaboration.

v) Public profile. The lower the partisanship, ideological cast and campaign visibility of the issue, the greater the importance of interest groups. Kingdon (1995) sees more influence of TSOs in transport (than health) because it is less visible, it isn't exciting and so the public isn't involved, giving more leeway to a few vested interests.

2. *The Phase of the Policy Cycle.* Numerous authors suggest that TSOs generally seek to participate in the first problem identification phases and the later reformulation phases of policy cycle, such as those postulated by Charles Jones (Jones, 1984; Subirats and Gomà, 1993; Kingdon, 1995). The attempts by TSOs to influence public policy are directed towards convincing or obliging institutional actors to pay attention to a policy area which is being ignored or to change existing policies, rather than to the more bureaucratic phases of policy implementation. TSOs, in effect, work to change the paradigms within which the policy development process takes place.

Lelieveldt (1996) talks about political influence as equivalent to agenda setting and it is precisely in this role that TSOs appear to have more impact (see also Baggot, 1995).

According to Jenkins (1987), TSOs are more successful in influencing public opinion and in bringing problems to the public agenda than in determining the form of public policies or in the functioning of public administrations. They can try to influence the framing process of public policy which creates a belief system, but have less success in influencing specific actions.

From a different perspective on cycles, Downs (in Davis, 1993; 171) claims that the reality imposed by an "issue attention cycle" determines the manner in which the public policy participants will act, given that significant changes tend to occur only during high-interest phases. Meyer and Imig (1993) offer a policy model, similar to that of Downs that postulates the existence of cycles of growth and decline in TSO political activity, which assumes periods of expansion based on general social or media recognition of problems, followed by contraction, either after policy successes that satisfy concerned supporters or after unambiguous defeats.

The Characteristics of the TSO(s)

To a certain extent, TSOs are masters of their own destiny in that their capacity to influence, and the strategies they choose, will also depend on factors internal to the organization. First, a TSO must choose to participate; second, they often have a choice between alternate strategic options; and third, they must have the organizational skills and the resource capacity to bear the transaction costs of their choices and to ensure their legitimacy to carry out their activities. These internal factors depend on the ideology and culture of the TSO, its command of resource mobilization, its representativity among its client population and its leadership, and the status of the organization in regard to the policy process.

1. *The Ideology and Culture of the TSO(s)*. There is a certain level of intent in the decision to participate in the policy process. TSOs may choose to be "political", and within these activities there is a level of choice about whether they adopt moderate or radical tactics. The choice of tactics may be made according to the political affiliation, ideologies and culture of the TSO and in any given situation, TSOs may choose different strategies according to their political relationship with the party in power or the manifest ideology of the organization (Casey, 2002). These ideologies translate into the "world view" of individual TSOs in which they see themselves as part of a policy decision-making system which requires either consensus, pluralism, or more radical structural conflict, and so act accordingly (Butcher et al., 1980).

Many TSOs are likely to claim that they are "non-political" and that their goals are to provide services to their client and not to influence government policies. The exact proportion of organizations that have overt political activity as their main objective is difficult to establish, and figures vary widely between researchers and countries. At best, we can say that survey research indicates that a substantial minority of TSOs would be regarded as manifestly political (Parry et al., 1992; Van Deth, 1997; Taylor, 1999). At the same time, the reality is that many TSOs that claim to be non-political service organizations do participate in consultative committees or other decision-making mechanisms and most engage in some form of indirect policy action through the processes of social discussion and negotiation that constitute politics in western industrial democracies. Moreover, many seemingly non-political activities, such as the creation of innovative programs with the expectation that they will be incorporated into future government guidelines, do in fact intend to influence policies and other TSO activities such as community education and community development, while not necessarily directly constituting intervention in the policy process, seek to empower communities to promote their political participation (Checkoway, 1987). As Knoke notes (1990: 220), "social groups lobby and lobby groups socialize".

TSOs develop a preferred tactical style that may be hard to change. Moderate or radical intervention becomes a fundamental characteristic of many TSOs to an extent that, for example, for those identified as radical, conflict strategies may help maintain member contributions, even though they may not be the most effective for influencing policy. Leaders of both moderate and radical groups may lack the political sophistication, know-how or resources to follow strategies other than those that already define the character of the organization.

2. *Organizational Capacity and Resource Mobilization.* As Van Deth (1997) notes "participation is organization". To effectively participate in the policy process, TSOs must have the organizational capacity to oversee government actions, influence the creation of new legislation or to lobby for reforms while at the same time continuing to ensure the means necessary for their own operations. They must be the critics and the dilettantes, the watchdogs of public action, and to effectively influence policies, they need cohesion, efficiency and discipline. In a more complex policy environment it is considered fundamental that movement activism have access to expert knowledge and organizational sophistication (Hecl, 1996), yet for many TSOs, particularly those focused on public interest advocacy or conflictive issues, ensuring mere organizational survival often becomes a challenge in itself and it is increasingly difficult to maintain currency in the level of expertise necessary for effective action (Nownes and Cigler, 1995).

This organizational capacity of TSOs is examined from the perspective of the literature on "resource mobilization" (McCarthy and Zald, 1973), which analyses the ability to mobilize political and cognitive resources and translate them into political power, both at critical moments of political opportunity, and for the on-going maintenance of the organization. In the political arena, TSOs can seek to mobilize support among the political elites and professionals as well as from the users of the services and general "public opinion". For the cognitive resources they must be able to create the technical capacity and expertise to participate meaningfully in the knowledge flow around the issues that effect their client population. In new policy areas it is more than likely that there will be few actors with technical knowledge and so those organizations that control this knowledge are more likely to wield influence. Notwithstanding their intention to participate in the policy process, TSOs often suffer from a lack of resources, management skills and technical knowledge.

The literature on resource mobilization provides the framework for investigating the parameters of organizational capacity. These include tangible resources such as finances and volunteer participation, as well as more intangible ones such as the ability to provide leadership, create clear goals and objectives, good board-staff relations, and to foster community involvement and cooperation with others (Rees, 1999; Checkoway, 1987; Pross, 1992).

There are two competing views on which organizational characteristics are likely to lead to better control of resources and subsequent positive policy outcomes (Schaffer, 1995), essentially based on competing ideological perspectives on the policy process. Those that see a more pluralist process deem that desired outcomes are likely to be achieved by centralized, professionalized institutions with incremental goals (Gamson, 1990); while a more radical view considers that gains are achieved by organizations with active membership that have rupture goals and use disruptive tactics to advance them (Piven and Cloward, 1977).

Numerous authors indicate that more bureaucratic, professional organizations seem to have more capacity to lobby effectively (see Knoke, 1990) while conceding that, even though professionalization may improve external efficacy, the trade off is often in the internal democracy of the TSO. Walker (in Maloney et al., 1994: 33) indicates that tensions are often created within these organizations as the central staff have a powerful influence in moving towards pluralist incremental strategies, while sub-units push for more disruptive rupture strategies. Other authors question the type of outcomes achieved by the professionalized organizations of the "protest business" (Maloney, 1996) and even deride

them as "not grassroots but astroturf" (Cigler and Loomis 1983). Checkoway (1987) speaks of incomplete empowerment in which effective organizational management does not necessarily create community change. Organization leaders in the TSOs he studied reported that they perceived feelings of powerlessness and low levels of adequacy in political influence.

3. Membership and Representation. While the size of the TSO and its representativity can be seen as a direct result of other internal factors such as ideology and resource mobilization, it is also important to emphasize that the "numbers game" is fundamental in itself. The more people you can claim to represent, and so imply you can get into the polling booth or onto the streets, the more power you are likely to have. Moreover, members are an important source of voluntary human resources and financial support.

The power associated with membership depends to some extent on absolute numbers, but also on the coverage of the potential membership base, and on the socioeconomic status of the members (Pross, 1992). This variable reflects a bias towards organizations that work on issues concerned with, or sponsored by, those with a higher economic status and those that represent economic producer groups. Various empirical research studies demonstrate how elite bias influences a wide range of TSO work: Parry et al. (1992) conclude that British associations are clearly weighted towards male, middle-aged and middle-class segments and it is the socially advantaged who are more ready to join than the disadvantaged; Knoke (1990) indicates that "the [survey] concludes that the overall mobilization effect of voluntary group involvement serves to widen class differences in political participation."

Moreover, the relationship with the membership base can be conflictive, despite the fact that TSOs, in theory, originate from those populations as representatives of their interests. In the case of marginalized minority populations, the first professionals in TSOs that lobby for their rights tend to be not from the same population but concerned activists from the majority population. As more professionals from the marginalized population come into the ranks, there are often conflicts between these new professionals -- who demand to speak with "their own voice" -- and the existing activists. Throughout the TSO movement it is common to hear accusations that an organization is losing touch with its original base, particularly if the organization's policies are too closely aligned with those of the government. Perhaps they are simply complying with Michels's iron law of oligarchy which holds that the leaders of political organizations are bound sooner or later to become isolated from the mass membership (Newton, 1976: 170).

Another dimension of membership is the relationship between the TSOs and elected politicians or administration professionals who are also current or ex-members of the organizations. There is a constant circulation of influential people between TSOs and government: prominent TSO activists are often appointed or elected to government positions, at the same time that TSOs are often refuges for those who leave government administration but seek to continue as policy entrepreneurs (Kendall, 2000). Almost all studies of city politics in Britain, for example, show that council members are integrated into a wide range of community associations (Newton, 1976). These relationships can be an important part of a TSOs political assets. Moreover, in some polities, political elites use TSOs as platforms for election, as a complement to political parties or an independent power bases (Casey, 1998).

4. *The Status of the TSO(s)*. Many of the factors outlined above are reflected in the apparent standing or status that a TSO has achieved. Grant (1995) divided the world of interest groups into two camps: "insiders" and "outsiders" (see also Baggot, 1995; Maloney et al., 1994) The insiders are those organizations that are accorded legitimate status for meaningful consultation and enjoy privileged access to and advanced intelligence on the thinking of decision makers; while the outsiders are those that are excluded from the process and unable to obtain such a favourable status. In earlier work, Newton (1976: 46) noted that groups become "part of the establishment" and Dearlove talked in 1971 about the "degree of helpfulness" and Stacy in 1969 about "involvement" and "political standing" (Browne, 1990).

Insiders are the TSOs seen as respectable, reliable, and responsible. They are allegedly able to build up a close set of relationships with public officials and so are regularly consulted without needing to take the initiative. Insiders are more likely to receive direct information, get funding, participate in collaborative activities such as close consultation, using their expertise in committees as a basis for influence, and even friendly lunchtime meetings with officials. They are the restricted number of actors that count as the "big players" and they function in an environment of mutual support and resource exchange with administrations who turn to them for technical knowledge and expertise, as well as support for policies agreed between them. Outsiders are not in this favoured position and so are obliged to use different tactics, which often results in them entering into conflict with administrations through appeals to the public through mass media and the broad scale mobilization of citizens at the grassroots.

This first level of division between insiders and outsiders has been fine-tuned by later authors who introduce distinctions within these categories. Grant (1995) divides insiders into prisoner groups, low profile groups and high profile groups; Maloney et al. (1994)

divide outsiders into potential insiders, outsiders by necessity (they want to be "in", but lack the means) and ideological outsiders and identify a category of thresholders, TSOs characterized by strategic ambiguity and oscillation between insider and outsider strategies.

Various authors point to problems with this conceptual division into either insiders and outsiders and the implications it has for the analysis of the participation of TSOs in the policy process. There is a debate about whether groups gain their status or whether the administrations grant it. Maloney et al.(1994) say that governments cannot afford to ignore resource-rich groups but also concede that bureaucracies deliberately set out to cultivate an interest group clientele, given that policy-making is seen as more legitimate when pressure groups participate. Government actors have preference for organizations with which they want to stay in touch, and the organizations are for the large part at the mercy of administrations when it comes to getting access. As Lelieveldt notes (1996: 15): "Some organizations are organized in while others are organized out." Moreover, as insider status is the result of a pattern of behaviour that is acceptable to government, there is an incentive for groups to behave and so groups are tamed and domesticated with only the ideological rejectionists remaining outside the system. As part of the evolution from out to in, groups have to develop resources, but also appropriate, non-controversial, goals (Maloney et al., 1994).

The Network of Actors

In each issue area, there operates a network of interlocking actors willing to engage in actions. These actors include individuals, informal groups and formal organizations, and the patterns of alliances and adversarial relationships among them can be a key factor in determining outcomes and strategies (Browne, 1990; Tarrow, 1998). The characteristics of the actors in the network focused on a particular policy is a key factor in determining TSO influence, and for individual TSOs it is essential to understand how they work with other interested actors, allies and support groups from their own sector, as well as from other governmental and extra-governmental sectors.

The presence of particularly powerful actors and corporatist arrangements between a restricted group of actors and administrations are of particular importance to TSOs seeking to participate in the policy process, as is the presence of vertical integration between actors and strong coalitions and alliances that link groups of some actors but exclude others (Schlager, 1995). Between networks in different issue areas there are important differences in coverage, density and degree of sectorial segmentation. The

relations to be analysed are not only the formal institutional relationships, but also personal contacts and the social networks that have important maintenance functions.

Diani and Eyerman (1992) identify specific network models that include cliques, circles, wheels and bipolar relationships, all of which involve the fundamental network characteristics of collective identity, shared beliefs and personal exchanges. But there are real problems in defining boundaries, identifying the participants in the networks, and identifying the links between them. The recent increase in TSO activity leads invariably to the conclusion that there is increasing fluidity and fragmentation of existing networks and of the power distribution within them (Thomas, 1993).

CONCLUSIONS

This article has sought to identify the intervening factors that determine the outcomes of the attempts by TSOs to influence the political process. While any definitive evaluation of these outcomes has proved to be elusive, an understanding of the environmental (external) and organizational (internal) factors that are likely to influence them continues to be an important element in analysing the political dimensions of the work of TSOs.

I have proposed a framework consisting of four general categories of factors: the social and political environment the TSOs operate in; the characteristics of policies they are seeking to influence; the organizational resources and culture of the TSOs; and the network of other actors involved in the negotiations. The framework is essentially conceptual and no real attempt has been made to consider its operationalisation.

Clearly, for the framework to be used for comparative studies, the next stage is to think about the empirical measures that might be devised and the availability of data, especially cross-national and other comparative data. At the same time, it can be used in its current form as the analytical framework for case studies of TSO political activities or of the structural position of TSOs in a specific policy field or political system.

My own case study of immigration policy in Spain demonstrated that the Spanish political environment provides few opportunity structures to the fragmented network of under-resourced TSOs seeking to influence a core economic and social policy (Casey, 1998). Not surprisingly the conclusion was that TSOs had little influence in that policy arena. Studies from other industrialized countries indicate that other political systems are potentially more open to TSO intervention in the policy process through an apparently more pluralist distribution of power or because access to decision-making

circles is granted to a select group of TSOs through strong corporatist arrangements (G.K Wilson, 1990; Thomas, 1993). Individual case studies suggest that some policy areas are dominated by one powerful TSO actor that is able to exclude other potential actors thorough political patronage or through their unequal access to considerable resources (Guigni et al., 1999).

None of these factors are static. In a world of economic rationalism, globalization and new technologies they are in constant flux. The increase in privatization and competitive tendering in most industrialized countries has created a new generation of TSOs that have become "insiders" by virtue of their contracting arrangements with government. These contracts confer proximity to decision-makers, legitimacy as experts, and the resources to strengthen service capacity, but they may also serve to exclude TSOs from policy influence as governments use these contracts to increase patronage over politically like-minded organization and to exclude those that question current policies (Roelofs, 1987; Baggot, 1995). Meanwhile, new technologies mean that a TSO with access to multiple mailing lists can create a tsunami of electronic petitions that floods the offices of a lobbying target, and recent mobilizations against international economic forums have graphically demonstrated that some TSOs are moving to redefine political opportunity structures in a global polity.

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¹ The term 'third sector' is used to emphasise the separation from the public and private sectors. Other common terms used to designate these non-government advocacy and service associations.organisations include 'voluntary', 'nonprofit', 'community' and 'civil society'.