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The third sector and the policy process in the Netherlands: a study in invisible ink

Taco Brandsen and Wim van de Donk

June 2005

Number 8

Third Sector European Policy Working Papers

General introduction to TSEP Working Paper series

Editor: Jeremy Kendall
Editorial Assistant: Catherine Will

This paper is part of the **TSEP Working Paper series**, and is based upon work conducted by the authors within the Third Sector European Policy (TSEP) network. The primary, overarching objective of the network is to describe and analyse the trajectory of 'horizontal' (industry cross-cutting) European policy towards the 'third sector', understood as a 'multi-level process' (see Appendix for a Glossary of terms).

All TSEP Partners are funded by the European Commission, Key Action 'Improving the Socio-Economic knowledge Base', 5th Framework Programme; while a subgroup of countries (Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the UK) are also financed by national funders under the European Science Foundation's European Collaborative Research Projects (ECRP) in the Social Science initiative. (The UK funder, for example, is the Economic & Social Research Council.) Charities Aid Foundation are also supporting the research effort in the UK, and overall. This financial support is gratefully acknowledged. More details, including research Partner identities and affiliations, can be found at: www.lse.ac.uk/collections/TSEP/

Individual members of the network share an expertise on the third sector in their countries, but come from diverse disciplinary backgrounds (including political science, sociology, and policy studies). Countries included are the Czech Republic, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.
The sample includes:

- Major geographical regions of the EU/larger as well as smaller countries
- Different types of national constitutional structures and welfare systems
- 7 established Member States, one new Member, and Switzerland

TSEP Working Paper 8

First published in 2005 by:
TSEP Network, Centre for Civil Society
Department of Social Policy
London School of Economics and Political Science
Houghton Street
London
WC2A 2AE

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.
ISBN 07530 1890 X

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October 2005
First published as TSEP Working Paper June 2005

Executive Summary

The Netherlands: economic power not reflected in policy constructs

The objective of the Third Sector European Project (2002-2005) has been to identify and explore the functioning of third sector specific horizontal policy actors and processes. The case of the Netherlands is interesting for what it fails to show. In the Netherlands, such actors and processes barely exist, and those that are evident have come into being very recently. Yet this certainly does not mean that the Dutch third sector is small or weakly institutionalised. For example, in the Johns Hopkins comparative international study, it ranked among the largest in the world (with 12.9% of non-agricultural paid employment), and a relatively strong tradition of volunteering and civic action is also demonstrable from an international perspective. The third sector plays an important role in the provision of public services in key policy fields, such as education, health care and social housing, and is prominent in attending to social problems which demand multiple policy field responses, such as social exclusion. Yet, cross cutting policies and practices are not part of the discourse and are not institutionalised as government or third sector specialisms. How can we explain this situation?

Historical constructs evident….
… but vertical organisation now denies space for significant horizontal processes

One must stress that statistical descriptions of the third sector, though useful in many ways, essentially refer to an abstract category that need not necessarily be linked to policy action. In the Netherlands case, this is the situation *in extremis*: we find little resonance with current mainstream policy discussions. Historically speaking, the terms *particulier initiatief*, *maatschappelijk middenveld*, and *maatschappelijk ondernemerschap* have been used to describe institutions and actions concentrated in what we now refer to as the third sector, each emphasizing a different aspect, and each linking in with particular historical debates. But these labels do not have sustained policy currency. At the present time, third sector organisations - particularly those involved in the provision of services - operate almost solely within vertical policy pillars and see themselves accordingly. For example, a private non-profit hospital will identify with its public or commercial health industry counterparts, rather than with a private non-profit welfare umbrella or intermediary organisation which transcends the health care field. While it is true of course that such vertical orientations dominate in all European countries, what makes the Netherlands distinctive is that this frame of reference is exclusive. There is no significant room at all for cross cutting third sector constructs as an active, supplementary ingredient in the public policy processes that matter.

The legal dimension - which lies at the core of horizontal policy process debates in other countries - is of little significance in the Dutch case. The current legal regime for the third sector generally is fairly flexible and light. While there are well-defined requirements regarding the internal structure of associations and foundations, there are few constraints regarding their objectives, nor is there a strict system of external supervision. Such constraints do exist, but they are attached to funding schemes in particular policy fields rather than to third sector governance per se. If there is any discussion on the position of the third sector, it focuses on those specific arrangements rather than on general governance issues.

Social exclusion and social enterprise:
Currently very weak bases for horizontal policy engagement

A lack of significant current supplementation in policy terms does not imply such processes do not exist at all. Moreover, to indicate the current policy irrelevance of such a notion does not forestall its potential for future development. Indeed, there are some very low level developments towards

horizontal institution building to be found, if one persists with careful scrutiny of the policy landscape. One catalyst has been the issue of social exclusion. In 2000 several organisations (from across previously disparate areas - including churches, trade unions, various care client group organisations, and those concerned with humanitarian issues) banded together into horizontal bodies in order to present a united front in the face of government. At about the same time, six branch associations representing non-profit service providers in education, health care and housing created a network for the promotion of social entrepreneurship. These initiatives come overwhelmingly from within the third sector itself, and as a reaction to ongoing public policy developments. In the former case, the response has been a reaction to weakening domestic political interest in anti-poverty policy; while in the latter case, the impetus has been a perceived loss of autonomy - identified as a shared concern which cuts across each of the vertical fields identified.

Overall conclusion: the third sector as a fragmented but strong policy actor

The wider and longer term significance of such small scale developments towards cross cutting policy linkages are as yet unclear. On the whole, perhaps the best summary judgement we can currently make is that the Dutch third sector remains both economically and politically strong - while at the same time essentially balkanised within separate policy fields. When the Netherland's welfare system was consolidated in the mid twentieth century political and social conditions allowed the third sector the chance to establish a central position as the preferred supplier of public services. As a consequence, it has become strongly intertwined with the vertically integrated policy pillars which evolved as that system matured. This pattern of co-evolving vertical specialisation with the State has apparently neither impeded the sector's growth, nor is it currently seen as a source of weakness for policy purposes.

Acknowledgements

The contribution of research Partners in the TSEP network is gratefully acknowledged, but errors are the responsibility of the authors alone. The financial support of the European Commission and national funders in the European Science Foundation collaboration scheme is gratefully acknowledged.

About the Authors

Taco Brandsen is lecturer at the Tilburg School of Politics and Public Administration, Tilburg University.

Wim van de Donk is professor at the Tilburg School of Politics and Public Administration, Tilburg University, and chairman of the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy.

Correspondence should be addressed to Taco Brandsen, Tilburg University, Faculty of Law, Tilburg School of Politics and Public Administration, PO Box 90153, 5000 LE, Tilburg, Netherlands. Tel: +31 13 4662128; Email: t.brandsen@uvt.nl.

Foreword

While studies of the third sector as an economic and social actor, and their significance within particular fields of policy have grown significantly in recent years, their links to broader policy processes are poorly understood. This paper is part of an effort to fill that gap, and is one in a series which seeks to build our understanding of the nature of the third sector's relationship to the European policy process.

Putting together 'European public policy process' and the 'third sector' suggests an extraordinarily wide range of potential subject matter. This paper, however, has a very particular focus. It feeds into the wider process of knowledge building by developing an analysis of the relationship defined in three ways which limit its scope, but at the same time, which is assumed will ultimately be important in helping us understand the broader European landscape.

First, its primary explanandum is the *national* situation, looking at the position in just one of the nine countries in the TSEP network. The sub-national and supra-national levels feature here only to the extent they allow us to understand the national position. Later papers attend specifically to other levels and their interactions *per se*, but it is assumed that a deeper knowledge of national policy landscapes is a prerequisite to understanding how policy evolves at other levels.

Second, it attends to the third sector using the collective noun or nouns that dominate, or are most prominent in this country's own actually existing policy community or communities. This is important because language and terminology are themselves part of the policy process, providing symbols for mobilisation, as well as being bound up with resource allocation (see the first working paper in this series).

Third, here and throughout the TSEP network's research endeavours, we are interested in 'horizontal third sector-specific policy'. By this, we mean policies and practices that shape the environment of these organisations by virtue of their non-market, non-state arrangements for ownership and control, and which are not limited to their situation in a particular 'industry' or 'vertical field'. (The general meaning of these and other terms used to guide our research can be found in a glossary appendix at the end of this paper.)

In approaching this particular, but important dimension of the third sector policy process, we have taken additional decisions regarding the disciplinary and topical scope of our inquiry, which are reflected directly in the structure of this paper. Being politically and culturally embedded, national third sector policies are heavily influenced by historical conditions, so we need to at least sketch this formative background. The country's arrangements for building and consolidating its social welfare system have been central to this story. Indeed, our Working Papers show that often - but not always - it is third sector policy actors in and around the social welfare domain who occupy most of the (theoretically available) space for horizontal policy institution building. The papers also explore how three key problems, shared across Europe and linked to the social welfare domain in different ways, play into and are processed by, this component of the policy space: social exclusion, unemployment and (more broadly) governance

Furthermore, while we have noted that language is indeed at the heart of policy development, it is also important to be aware that rhetoric in this sphere of policy is often regarded as particularly prone to emptiness (Kendall, 2003). We have therefore sought to explicate not only the character of the policy discourse, but also to assess the significance of the associated institution building efforts. Wherever possible, the papers seek to point to the relationship between agenda setting and concrete implementation, and refer to the extent of economic and political investment in the process.

Most importantly, throughout the research, we have been guided not only by a desire to explicate *what* is happening, but also a wish to explicitly ask and move towards answering - the *why* question. Each paper seeks therefore to move from a descriptive stock-take of the national policy landscape to a synthesis of the factors which seem to have been particularly important in generating this situation.

In so doing, we have been guided by insights from the more general policy analytic literature. This has been cross disciplinary exploratory research in a new field, so it has not been possible to pre-determine too specifically the range of influences. But we have been aware that some of the most apparently successful efforts at policy process theorising in recent years have sought to judiciously combine structure and agency (Parsons, 1995; Sabatier, 1999). We, therefore, have sought to consider the potential and actual role of

- relatively stable institutional factors, such as broad constitutional design, and deeply embedded aspects of welfare system architecture;
- 'external' shocks and changes to these systems, associated with shifts in societal values, or unanticipated social movements; and
- the role of policy entrepreneurship, in particular the 'internal' role of third sector specialists - inside the sector itself, the State, and as part of the broader policy community - as catalysts, individually or collectively, of policy evolution. What beliefs, values and motivations have characterised those actors who have had proximate responsibility for shaping policy, and how have they been constrained or enabled by the structures that they inhabit?

The evidence base for this paper is two-fold. First, the paper builds on the expertise of the authors in research on the third sector for their own countries, including their familiarity with the national scholarly literature. Second, primary evidence was collected. As the TSEP network started countries presented descriptions characterising the *policy* activities and salience of the sector in their national case. The main data points for these reports were bi-lateral meetings with policy actors - including leaders from third sector bodies, policy makers within the public sector, or academics and other experts. Potentially relevant sources were identified using country-level Partner's familiarity with the general third sector policy community or networks in their country, and by 'snowballing' from actors identified in earlier meetings. Relevant events and fora were also attended and observed. Meetings were used to access documentary sources, in addition to those available publicly, and websites belonging both to third sector organisations and groupings, and to administrative units in government that had some responsibility for working with the sector, were also investigated. The balance between these different sources varied according to the specific national situation: where third sector umbrella groups or government units with a special focus on relationships with the sector were in existence, these formed the focus of research. Elsewhere, Partners were guided by the emergent and more informal activities of third sector actors, especially as they connected to key policy issues (including in relation to the shared European problems of unemployment, social inclusion and governance). Initial reports were produced in May 2003 and circulated, discussed and reviewed in an iterative process over the following two year period.

These are first and tentative efforts to move towards more systematic accounts of third sectors' places in policy processes, but we hope they will provide a platform in the years to come.

Jeremy Kendall
PSSRU and CCS
London School of Economics
June 2005

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The third sector and the policy process in the Netherlands: A study in invisible ink

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1. Introduction

Some years ago, Paul Dekker stated that the Dutch third sector was 'a category, not an entity' (2001: 62). Evidence emerging from the Third Sector European Project (TSEP) does not give cause to question that observation. Although it is possible to explore the third sector in the Netherlands as an analytical construct, it is not a concept with which people working in, or with, the third sector would easily identify. As a consequence, one cannot easily make out a horizontal third sector policy community. Organisations of this type generally do not engage in coalitions with organisations from other vertical policy fields, because the third sector as such is not regarded as a socially meaningful category. Nor is there evidence of coalitions among policymakers, practitioners and academics based on normative beliefs about the role of the third sector.

This certainly does not mean that the Dutch third sector is small or weakly institutionalised. In the Johns Hopkins study in the mid 1990s (the latest year for which systematic comparative data are available), it emerged as among the largest in the world.[1] In fact, in terms of non-agricultural employment, it was the largest with 12.9%. The major share of this employment was in social welfare services - particularly health, education & research, social care and social housing.[2] Voluntary work stood at 6.1%, which again made it proportionately the largest.[3] In other words, the rise of the Welfare State and professional service delivery has not detracted from voluntary work. Revenues in the four fields mentioned above were 66% from public (State) sources, 33% fees and other commercial income, and 1% from private giving; while overall, it is 59% public, 38% fees, 3%

[1] In the Netherlands, figures were collected by the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau (see Hart, 1999; Burger and Dekker, 2001).

[2] The Johns Hopkins statistics do not draw attention to the distinctive nature of the Dutch social housing sector, which has relatively little employment, but large capital stocks and transfers. In the Netherlands, social housing is virtually monopolised by non-profits and controls over a third of total housing stock. This well exceeds the proportion of social housing in other European countries.

[3] The percentage of citizens involved in volunteering is at 40-45% or around 30% according to whether it is measured through survey or diary methods respectively. This proportion has remained quite stable over the years, although there have been some shifts between types of volunteering (e.g. decline of political parties, growth of sports clubs). When using a typology of civil society (Dekker and Van den Broek, 1999) one could classify the country as of a membership type: a broad civil society with many members, but with relatively few active ones. The voluntary sector is highly organised, in the sense that volunteering often involves adherence to a formal organisation.

charity. Such statistics express the historical significance of the non-profit legal form. In terms of employment, it makes a major contribution to the economy. In its service delivery role it is also of great significance in the battle against social exclusion.

Although it is nice to come out on top, it is important to emphasise that this statistical outcome is essentially an abstraction. As far as policy activity is concerned significant third sector processes play out entirely within vertical policy pillars. There are some developments towards horizontality, notably around the concept of social entrepreneurship, which will be described later in this paper. Yet in the short term at least, it is unlikely that those developments will change the overall conclusion about the third sector's non-existence as a socially meaningful category. If one takes a very long-term retrospective view, a striking fact is that the third sector has been moving away from traditional forms of horizontality. As we will see below, the traditions in question were 'bonding' in character, being particularistic, and linked to religious and ideological identities.

In this working paper we will describe and explain the lack of third sector-specific horizontal policy processes in the Dutch third sector, applying the concepts used in the overall project. Section 2 will briefly sketch the development of the Dutch third sector during the 20th century. This development is reflected in the dominant terminology, discussed in section 3. Section 4 underlines the lack of the horizontal processes as a question of the conspicuous absence of an established 'policy community' in the Netherlands, while section 5 will describe the nature and origin of the very limited elements of horizontality that do exist. Section 6 attempts to move from the 'what' to the 'why' with a summary of the socio-political factors that seem to contribute to this state of affairs. Section 7 presents our conclusions.

2. Twentieth Century historical development

To understand the third sector's economic prominence in the Netherlands it is important to take account of its key role in reconciling broader political conflicts in the early 20th century.[4] Dutch society was characterised by strong religious and political diversity. Different social groups were organised in so-called 'pillars': integrated configurations of organisations with a common identity (Catholic, Protestant, and Socialist). For example, a Catholic family would read a Catholic newspaper, send their children to a Catholic school, join the Catholic football club, and so forth. Organisations

4 See for example, Daalder, 1966; Lijphart, 1968; Doorn, 1978; Aquina, 1992; Dekker, 2001b; Donk, 2001; and Donk and Hendriks, 2001.

within the pillars were usually connected through personal networks rather than formal ties. These strong social differences could easily have led to conflicts, but this did not happen because political elites (the elites of each pillar) were pragmatic and pursued consensus-based decision-making between themselves. They encouraged their flock to be loyal to their own pillar (in the literature, usually labelled 'vertical integration') while simultaneously engaging in consensus-based politics and policies at the top level (referred to as 'horizontal integration'). (Note that these references to 'vertical' and 'horizontal' processes are not to be confused with the terminology used elsewhere in this paper; see Appendix 1 for further clarification.)

This kind of accommodation was first brought to a head in one especially significant vertical field: education. In the *schoolstrijd* ('battle of schools'), the highly contentious issue was whether private (especially religious) schools should receive the same funding as public schools. In 1917, the liberals and the religious parties came to a compromise ('pacification'): in exchange for universal suffrage, religious schools received the same funding and rights as their public counterparts. The compromise on education was considered so important that it was actually included in the constitution and the principle developed for schools spread to other vertical fields of service delivery. There was to be no differential treatment between public organisations and third sector organisations. This style of policymaking was aimed at depoliticisation, turning ideological clashes into 'technical' issues. The Catholic notion of subsidiarity and the Calvinist notion of circles of sovereignty sat happily side by side within this system of distribution.[5] The third sector, therefore, not only provided a means for political emancipation but also helped to take difficult issues of distribution out of the political arena.

When the welfare state expanded after the Second World War, pillarisation became the organisational principle through which its growth was channelled. In most policy fields, the third sector represented an acceptable compromise between State growth (opposed by liberals of the Right) and market solutions (opposed by the social democrats of the Left). The effects of this policy on the third sector were two-fold. Organisations involved in service delivery could grow at an exponential rate, assured of increasing public funding. Yet with it, the money brought regulation that not only diminished their autonomy but also gradually blurred the distinction between public and non-profit - private - agencies. For instance, it was difficult to maintain bonds with specific client groups when the regulatory framework promoted equal access and uniform standards. This occurred at a time when the system of pillarisation was already eroded by secularisation and individualisation. As a result, the traditional - ideologically and religiously differentiated - pillars were essentially superseded by vertical field-

[5] Subsidiarity means that a higher organ in society must not take over the functions that lower organs perform, starting from the base (persons, families and associations) upwards. The idea of circles of sovereignty encourages the self-regulation and autonomy of groups in society.

specific policy pillars. Organisational growth, bureaucratisation and mergers (often between organisations with different denominational backgrounds) also added to the loss of historical character.

With the welfare state reforms in the 1980s and 1990s direct State control over many non-profits has eased. This can be interpreted as an increase in their autonomy.[6] However, it should not be regarded as ‘a return to the roots’, or a reversal of history. The non-profits in question are very different from the small, semi-philanthropic organisations of a century ago. There is now a far more pronounced split between organisations still relying to great extent on volunteer contributions on one hand and professional service delivery organisations on the other. The latter are still constitutionally part of the third sector but typically are less dependent on voluntarism than on State or commercial funding. The latter often cannot be easily distinguished from privatised public agencies, from public agencies that have adopted certain non-profit characteristics, or from commercial businesses involved in public service delivery. The move towards different forms of governance is a general one that happens to involve the third sector, because it is heavily involved in public service delivery. There is continuity in the sense that private delivery of public services is common and generally accepted, but it is usually defended with reference to supposed technical advantages (innovative qualities, efficiency) rather than to identity or historical origins. In this context of mixed welfare, the third sector can only remain distinctive if it can demonstrate unique, non-transferable qualities in relation to service delivery.

3. Definitions and typologies

Historical developments are reflected in the dominant terminology. In the Netherlands, there are three main terms used to describe (parts of) the third sector: *particulier initiatief, maatschappelijk middenveld*, and *maatschappelijk ondernemerschap.*[7] They refer primarily to certain types of organisations and groups within the third sector, yet they are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they tend to stress the desired role of the third sector as formulated within the context of a particular debate. Other terms, like *civil society* (not translated) and *sociale economie* are only occasionally used and have no strong links to historical developments.

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[6] It has been argued that indirect control through, for example, output measurement diminishes rather than increases autonomy (Veen, 1995).
[7] The descriptions of the first two terms draw on Burger and Dekker (2001) and Dekker (2001b).

Particulier initiatief ('private initiative'), the oldest term, traditionally refers to citizens banding together in voluntary associations to work for a collective purpose (not necessarily the public interest). As the word 'initiative' suggests, the term has been particularly used to evoke images of action and innovation. However, over time the term has also come to include commercial ventures and the established organisations originally stemming from private initiative. Its use has become less frequent over the past years, which may be related to the rise of the notion of social entrepreneurship.

The term *maatschappelijk middenveld* ('societal midfield') was coined by the Dutch sociologist Van Doorn in the 1970s. More so than *particulier initiatief*, it refers to the institutionalised part of the third sector. The term stresses the intermediary position of organisations and groups between the State and its citizens - and not between State and market. Although particularly associated with Christian-Democratic politics, it has general connotations with pillarised society, in which we have seen the third sector has played a key part. Despite attempts to revitalise the term, it remains somewhat old-fashioned and it is not commonly used by third sector organisations wishing to promote themselves.

The term that is currently most widely used is *maatschappelijk ondernemerschap* ('social entrepreneurship'), a generally fashionable term that is used across public, non-profit and commercial organisations. In relation to non-profits, it refers to organisations that hover midway between market and State (not, or at least not primarily, between State and citizens) and fulfil public goals with a private status. Although there is an overlap in terminology and instruments, one must distinguish this notion as used for non-profits and public organisations from the similar notion of social entrepreneurship as advocated among commercial businesses.[8] To begin with, they tend to refer to different issues. While the former is connected with welfare State service delivery, the latter is mainly concerned with environmental issues, human rights and financial accountability. More importantly, the former arises from the specific context of welfare State reforms in the 1980s and 1990s. It is inextricably tied up with the struggle of a certain class of organisations against State control and the imagined benefits of loosening that control.[9]

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[8] In Dutch, one can make a distinction between *maatschappelijk ondernemerschap* and *maatschappelijk verantwoord ondernemen*. The latter refers to the 'social accountability' of private, for-profit firms (see De Waal, 2002).

[9] Defourny (2001) has identified a number of characteristics of social enterprises: (1) a continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services, (2) a high degree of autonomy, (3) a significant level of economic risk, (4) a minimum amount of paid work, (5) an explicit aim to benefit the community, (6) an initiative launched by a group of citizenship, (7) a decision-making power not based on capital ownership; (8) participation by those affected by the activity; and (9) limited profit distribution. The Dutch social entrepreneurs are generally weak on the voluntary/movement element, and not strong on participation - though this may be changing - but do conform to the other characteristics.

Paul Dekker has used the example of schools to clarify the distinction between *maatschappelijk middenveld* and *particulier initiatief*: ‘If people talk about a school as a private initiative, they are referring to the historical background of a non-state school; if they talk about the same school as an organization of the societal midfield, they are probably talking about non-educational functions of the school, such as the expression of some regional or denominational identity, the offering of opportunities to meet other people and discuss neighbourhood problems etc.’ (2001b: 63). If the same school were to refer to its activities as *maatschappelijk ondernemerschap*, this would probably emphasise its service innovations in an effort to legitimise its claim to more autonomy. One could argue (although this is a simplification) that these three terms are linked to different stages of development of the Dutch third sector, and that each refers to different functions aspired by or ascribed to third sector organisations.

Of the three terms, social entrepreneurship is most closely tied up with current policy issues. It is therefore not surprising that the clearest example of horizontality in the Dutch context has arisen around this notion.

4. Third sector horizontality in the Netherlands: conspicuous absence

In the countries studied within the Third Sector European Project, vertical policy processes and actors are far stronger than horizontal ones. However, in the Netherlands horizontality is currently *particularly* weakly developed. A number of dimensions have been suggested as relevant for differentiating between countries in terms of the extent of third sector-specific horizontal public policy orientation (Kendall and Pavolini, 2004). Whether one looks at the scope and scale of intermediary or representative bodies for the third sector within the sector or in government, at general legal recognition of third sector-specific horizontal public policy actors, at State financial underpinnings of third sector-specific horizontal public policy actors; at formalisation of third sector specific policy-relevant epistemic processes, or at media recognition of the policy significance of the third sector, one tends to finds the same pattern. Among these dimensions arguably only the first indicator gives rise to any speculation about emerging horizontality in the Netherlands. In other respects, there is virtually nothing. We will consider each in turn.

Horizontal intermediary bodies

Within the third sector itself, there are indeed some networks of third sector organisations that cut across industries. These cases can be found in two main areas: social exclusion and governance. In the former, there are the so-called *Sociale Alliantie* (Social Alliance[10]), a loose confederation of over fifty organisations, and the *Dutch branch of the European Anti-Poverty Network* (EAPN[11]). In the latter, there is the *Netwerk Toekomst Maatschappelijke Onderneming* (Network for the Future of Social Entrepreneurship, NTMO[12]), an alliance of six associations representing non-profit service delivery organisations. Each of these three networks will be briefly described below (more information can be found in Appendix 2).

The Social Alliantie describes itself as a 'loose thematic network' of organisations such as churches, trade unions, groups for immigrants and the chronically ill, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and the EAPN. While it consists entirely of third sector organisations, the network does not focus on the third sector per se, but on poverty. One could tentatively suggest that it is a Dutch version of the European Social Platform (although, interestingly enough, there is not a single reference to Europe on its website). It issues documents on social policy and its representatives meet with Ministries (especially the Ministries for Social Affairs and Employment, and Health, Sports and Welfare). Its emergence was related both to developments in anti-poverty policy (see below) and, especially in recent times, to the threat of budget cuts among its members.

EAPN itself is a 'social action' type of network, consisting largely of associations of the clients of service providers (for example the homeless, welfare recipients, drug users). This brings to light the clear difference between the professional side of the Dutch third sector and the voluntary side. The Dutch EAPN deliberately includes only representatives of clients and not of service providers, which makes it distinct not only from other Dutch third sector networks, but also from its sister networks in other countries.[13]

NTMO is an alliance of six branch organisations of private non-profit organisations in higher education, health care and housing. The network champions 'social entrepreneurship', in the sense described above. The aims of this network are undoubtedly political. The associations lobby for

[10] www.socialealliantie.nl
[11] See www.eapn.org
[12] www.ntmo.nl
[13] For instance, the Federatie Opvang (the association of homeless shelters) represents over 90% of all homeless shelters, whereas the Vereniging voor Dak- en Thuislozen (the association of the homeless) represents the homeless themselves.

deregulation, arguing that the kind of organisations they represent merit a special status. The focus of the network is on this cross-cutting identity rather than the specific services its members deliver. These members are non-profits only (associations representing commercial providers have been deliberately excluded). Although its members have close ties with government, the intermediary body itself is not yet recognised as an established partner.

Recognition

These bodies exist and have regular interactions with government, yet they are not legally or financially recognised as having a third sector frame of reference, or third sector-specific expertise per se. More generally, within government there is no such thing as 'third sector policy', nor is there any specific policy unit in any of the Ministries with a focus on the third sector. The institution that comes closest is the Department of Social Policy within the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, which has volunteering listed as one of the elements in its policy field. However, this is only a minor unit within a Ministry that is largely concerned with health care. Even within this unit, volunteering is not a major issue. The volunteer-involving organisations it subsidises and monitors have far less influence on its priorities and discussions than the large, professional institutes with which it is also involved. More generally, there have been no significant policy initiatives directly focused on the third sector in recent years.

As a unified concept, the third sector is rarely discussed in politics. Although it is occasionally used in the margins of broader discussions, these are debates about the status and governance of certain types of organisations or activities (for example about funding for volunteering in elderly care) rather than discussions about the third sector. There are certain policy issues that could easily be given a third sector twist, but are not. For example, deregulation is encouraged by the present government, but the discussion and initiatives focus as much on business as on the third sector, if not more. The two large political parties that would be the most likely champions of the third sector have not pushed the issue. The Christian-Democratic Party (CDA) has historically been the most fervent supporter of the *middenveld*, but in recent years it has focused its energy primarily on individual responsibility, not on support for the third sector. Its removal from government in 1994 and return in 2002 have not been marked by a change of attitude towards the third sector. The Social-Democratic Party (PvdA) has reinvented itself, along with many of its European counterparts, opening up to market-based solutions. However, unlike its British equivalent, this has not involved a claimed discovery, or rediscovery, of civil society. The third major party, the Liberals, have always supported business rather than the third sector, even if they accepted the latter as a compromise.

In terms of experts and think-tanks, the ground is also thin. Formally located within the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau (Paul Dekker in particular) have published reports on volunteering and the third sector. In the academic world, there are a small number of third sector researchers scattered over several universities (especially Rotterdam, Tilburg and the Free University of Amsterdam) but they have no common approach or focus. Dutch research on the third sector does not tend to have an overtly political agenda.

In conclusion, there are some traces of horizontality, but there is no horizontal third sector policy community. What little horizontality that can be said to exist comes essentially from within the sector itself, rather than from political parties, or the governments they form.

5. A closer look at horizontality

So what is the meaning of these meagre elements of horizontal policy? Are they possible indications of an emerging trend or merely the exception confirming the rule? To answer this, we must start by taking a closer look. The three elements we found can be categorised under the labels of voluntary labour, social exclusion and unemployment, and governance.

Voluntary labour

As noted in the introduction, volunteering in the Netherlands is still important (for further information see Dekker, 1999). Yet there is no national alliance of voluntary organisations. Attempts to encourage and facilitate volunteering as such are largely oriented towards a single Department, driven by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports. However, policy of this kind does not feature highly on the political agenda. Volunteering is situated under the general heading of ‘welfare’, which comprises a wide variety of organisations, both professional and voluntary. The influence of voluntary organisations is dwarfed by that of the larger, professional organisations active in this field, such as research institutes and think-tanks. It is illustrative that within dozens of ‘policy dossiers’ identified on the ministry’s website, there is not a single one that specifically concerns volunteering.

The most significant initiative of recent years was the government’s move to establish a Committee on Volunteering Policy (*Commissie Vrijwilligersbeleid*) in 2001. This does not so much initiate public policy as devise instruments for encouraging and facilitating volunteering at the local level by public (local or regional) authorities. There is also a ‘framework’ for supporting volunteers (*Tijdelijke*

stimuleringsregeling vrijwilligerswerk), which channels its subsidies through local and regional authorities, and a 2004 measure awarding €7 million for youth volunteering. However, these are explicitly temporary and not formulated as components of a programme of investment. In addition, the Ministry supports the *Nederlandse Organisatie Vrijwilligerswerk* (Dutch Organisation for Volunteering), which represents and lobbies for the interests of volunteers.[14] This body was responsible for organising the International Year for Volunteers in the Netherlands in 2002. This combination of ingredients does not amount to a significant policy commitment, since most measures are of a temporary nature only, amount to only a minor part of the overall budget, and are not tied to a distinct voluntary or third sector unit within the responsible Department. While various voluntary organisations are subsidised, there is little effort to draw all this into a coherent policy framework. Finally, policy initiatives with respect to volunteering largely remain confined to this one Department and are not linked with other major policy issues.

Even if theoretically they do not form a free standing policy in their own right, efforts to promote volunteering could of course be significant to the extent they are linked to two broader current policy debates on the generation of employment and on citizenship. Nevertheless, the focus in employment issues is very much on paid employment, and there are no direct links between volunteering policy and general employment policy (policies which reside with different Ministries). Such links as do exist are mainly related to issues of care, for example the recognition and compensation of care for diseased or elderly relatives. The debate on citizenship, linked to issues of security and integration, has flared up in recent years as a result of perceived problems with Islamic groups in society. Yet the discussion has focussed on individual norms and values, rather than active participation. When voluntary associations of Islamic groups are discussed, they are more often regarded as a cause of problems than as potential solutions.

Social exclusion and unemployment

Although Dutch third sector organisations hold a large share of paid employment, they play no significant role in employment policy. The latter has always been the domain of social partners (trade unions and employers), whose relationship with the government has been institutionalised within a number of organisations, such as the Social and Economic Council (‘Sociaal-Economische Raad’). They are at the core of the Dutch ‘polder model’ (see Visser and Hemerijck, 1997). Efforts from other types of organisations to gain access to these bodies have been fiercely contested. As elsewhere

[14] In 2003, its professional units merged with the *Stichting Vrijwilligersmanagement to form Civiq*, a non-profit organisation that encourages the dissemination of best practices, sets up pilot projects and helps voluntary organisations to work more ‘professionally’.

in Europe, recent years have seen the rise of concepts such as employability and reintegration. There have been various experiments in this field, ranging from State domination (until 1991), an agency under tripartite control (1991-2000) to contracting out (the present). In solving new unemployment issues, the commercial for-profit sector is believed to be the innovative partner for the government to work with rather than the third sector.

The sector has a far stronger position in the field of social exclusion. Historically, its significance here evolved from anti-poverty policies that were high on the Dutch political agenda from 1995 onwards. They involved increased research into poverty issues (by the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau and the Central Office for Statistics), wider consultation with third sector organisations, and various 'social conferences'. By the end of the 1990s, rapid economic growth had taken the issue off the political agenda (even the long-term unemployed were getting jobs) and the outcome of the Lisbon strategy provided a welcome impulse to take anti-poverty policy into a second phase. The organisations involved in the social conferences joined in the Social Alliance, the research was maintained in a scaled-down format, and policy was broadened from its original focus on financial deprivation to 'mainstreaming' socially excluded groups. The introduction of National Action Plan for Social Inclusion did not fundamentally alter the role of the third sector in the field, but did allow previously established policies to retain a toehold on the political agenda.

The two horizontal networks active in this field are quite different. EAPN consists only of 'self-organisations' (organisations staffed entirely by the people they represent). Its member associations are on the whole fairly small and only some are well-integrated into vertical policy arenas. This is partly a question of resources: they largely depend on volunteers and do not have any direct influence on service provision. It is also related to difficulties in maintaining stable boards. The Association of the Homeless is inert because its organiser had a relapse; one of the most active members of the association of the long-term unemployed had to go because he found a job; and so forth. EAPN itself is one of the established partners for consultation in issues of social exclusion (for example in drawing up National Action Plans). Social Alliance contains many of the organisations that are part of the Dutch EAPN, but also many larger organisations that are part of the 'established' third sector (churches, trade unions, policy institutes). With its excellent contacts, it is involved in discussions at the Cabinet level. Although EAPN has stronger European links, Social Alliance has far more political clout at the national level.

Both networks consist entirely of non-profit organisations, but they use this fact in different ways. The Social Alliance does not particularly emphasise its non-profit nature. In encompassing such a

broad range of organisations, it can launch a powerful lobby, but the common identity of its members is based on their involvement in tackling social exclusion rather than on their legal form (which receives little attention in its manifestos). EAPN does explicitly argue that, as it is composed of organised individuals, it better understands the needs of the socially excluded than the service providers. However, its primary concern is poverty, not self-organisation.

Both networks originated in the 1990s, EAPN as a European initiative, the Social Alliance as the outcome of national policy. The period from 1995 onwards saw a surge in national poverty policy, leading among other things to social conferences, a considerable research output, and the creation of a specific platform (the Social Alliance itself). However, the booming economy at the turn of the century led to a decline in the political priority of poverty. As the economy declined rapidly, organisations dealing with social exclusion were hit hard by budget cuts, while simultaneously poverty rates began rising again. Under these conditions, both networks face an uphill struggle.

Governance

Under Dutch law, there is no specific legal form for private bodies working in the general interest (Van der Ploeg and Van Veen, 2001). While there are specific privileges the State grants to such bodies, these tend to be of a financial, rather than a legal, nature. The common legal forms for third sector organisations are the association and the foundation, whose required objectives are phrased very broadly. The only major constraint is a negative one, the non-distribution of profits to members or founders. There are no provisions regarding the goals and activities of either associations or foundations, which makes them more flexible than some of the forms prominent in other parts of Europe's third sector, such as charities in the UK. For example, there is no requirement to act in the general interest (any collective purpose suffices), nor is there close supervision by any public or private body. However, requirements regarding internal organisational structure (for example the voting rights of association members) are strictly defined in comparison with other European countries. On the whole, Dutch law trusts in internal rather than external mechanisms of accountability within the third sector.

This is not to say that there are no detailed regulations regarding third sector organisations, but that these are mostly vertical field-specific and tied to financial arrangements. Fiscally, there is a formal distinction between private non-profits generally and non-profits working in the general interest. The former only receive exemption from corporation tax for their non-commercial activities, while the latter are mostly or wholly exempt. The requirements that come with State subsidies tend to be stricter, but their scope and effect depends on the particular scheme and government department to

which they are attached. If the organisations in question are involved in public service provision, they also become subject to administrative law.

As a result, there is no coherent governance of the third sector as a whole. The emergence of a network such as the NTMO is therefore not a reaction to any general regulation of the third sector, but rather to the collection of field-specific institutional arrangements that have historically emerged from funding structures. It describes such arrangements as dated and argues that there should be deregulation as well as more self-regulation. This was another push behind initiatives already started in each of the member associations. All had to some extent developed and implemented instruments of self-regulation (for example peer reviews, benchmarks, codes of conduct), in the hope that this would make a more convincing argument in favour of deregulation. The NTMO has tried to present these efforts as a coherent effort, based not only on common problems, but also on a common identity.

At the start of 2003 the NTMO issued the *Branche Code*, a code of conduct for social entrepreneurs, which had two functions (Van Heffen-Oude Vrielink and Brandsen, 2004). First, it was explicitly used as a lobbying instrument, for instance, it was formally presented to Prime Minister Balkenende (who during his academic career took a keen interest in the concept of social entrepreneurship). The second function of the code was to answer the following questions: what kinds of activities it would entail, what values it would represent and what safeguards for the public interest should exist. These are to be translated into sector-specific codes. The NTMO also organised a well-publicised conference on 21 June 2004, and it keeps up a sustained lobby through its member associations, particularly their chairmen. At this point, the results of these efforts are unclear. Although there have been some developments in each of the members' fields, there has so far been no cross-cutting response on the part of the government.

It does, however, have close links to government in that high-ranking advisory bodies have recently issued reports on governance, which (though more balanced) have essentially been favourable for them in recognising the specific role of the organisations NTMO represents. A major report with background studies by the *Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid* (Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy) on 'social services' in December 2004, and a report of the *Sociaal-Economische Raad* (Dutch Social and Economic Council[15]) in February 2005, can be seen as a sign of growing recognition of the specific role that 'social and non-profit organisations' play in delivering public services (Sociaal-Economische Raad, 2005). Furthermore, the scientific institute of the

[15] Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid, 2004; Dijstelbloem et al, 2004.

Christian Democratic Party has published a major report on social enterprises in January 2005 (CDA, 2005). All three reports indicate the need for some specific policies regarding these non-profit social enterprises (for example accountability, legal and statutory issues).

In this way, the NTMO's efforts do feed directly into current policy debate. Although not directly focused on the third sector, the current policy debate deals with the question of how to organise relations between the State and other actors in society. This does not only affect non-profits, but also decentralised and privatised public agencies and commercial business. On the one hand, there is a general call for deregulation and greater reliance on self-regulation (which in principle is shared by the current government). On the other hand, there are concerns that deregulation may lead to greater inequality and to a deterioration of quality standards. The argument provoked by the NTMO links into this. Discussions on the desire of increasing involvement of citizens (and more generally 'stakeholders') are part of this debate, but rarely as a goal in itself. In this debate, citizens are referred to as clients, and the object is the quality of services.

Conclusion

After a closer look at these three elements of potential horizontal public policy, it is clear that only governance could potentially represent an emerging trend towards a third sector policy community. Despite the continued strength of volunteering in practice, there seems to be no drive to take forward volunteering as a matter of public policy, neither from the top down nor from the bottom up. The social exclusion networks are cross-cutting, but the Social Alliance - potentially a strong third sector advocate - does not emphatically present itself as being part of the third sector, reflecting the cross-cutting nature of the issue of social exclusion more so than anything else. The Dutch EAPN does explicitly present itself as a network of self-organisations, but with its limited resources and untypical approach, it is hardly capable of becoming a driver behind the emergence of a third sector policy community.

The NTMO may potentially have the ability to spark such a development. Through its members' integration into the vertical policy pillars and its excellent political contacts, it reaches straight into the heart of government. The problem is that NTMO has not yet managed to forge a wider coalition with politicians, officials and thinkers. The type of legislation they desire has not yet been established, nor even extensively discussed. Rather the debate seems to have turned against them in some policy fields. What is promising for them, though, is that recent reports by high-ranking advisory bodies on public service delivery seem to have adopted a similar notion of social entrepreneurship as NTMO.

6. Understanding the lack of third sector-specific horizontal policy processes

It might seem odd that a country with such a large third sector does not officially recognise it. It might seem equally strange that organisations and groups from this sector do not organise themselves more effectively to safeguard their interests. But one must take care not to confuse research and reality in the Netherlands. The object of third sector research is an *analytical* category. The properties of this analytical category may or may not be reflected in the way third sector organisations and groups are actually organised, but this has no bearing on their significance and strength in the policy process. By implication, the fact that there are hardly any formal public policy institutions in the Dutch third sector does not, in itself, say anything about its significance or strength. The concept of horizontality can, however, serve as a marker for interesting developments in Dutch society. The traces of horizontality that might be emerging could be interpreted both as a confirmation and as a denial of third sector identity.

Recognition

In explaining the absence of horizontality, it certainly matters that the Dutch third sector is already economically well endowed, while also treated with a legal light touch. As noted above, the legal regime regarding the activities of associations and foundations - the most commonly used legal forms - is fairly light. Apart from field-specific requirements attached to State subsidies and fiscal privileges, there are no major constraints on private non-profit activity. Nevertheless, they create favourable conditions, with tax relief, easy entry and little direct intervention from the State (except when organisations are subsidised). Also, as noted before, the service delivery part of the third sector has traditionally been closely involved with the development of the welfare State, which explains its large size in terms of employment.[16] Any potential promoters of third sector specific horizontal policies could hardly argue that its role is too small, or that it lacks support.

[16] Salamon (2001) has labelled the Dutch welfare state as 'corporatist', following Esping-Andersen's (1990) terminology. This term must be used with caution, though, as it refers to a different notion of corporatism than the one commonly referred to in third sector research. Also, Esping-Andersen's analysis classes the Dutch welfare state as a cross between corporatist and social-democratic. While the explanatory basis for Salamon's welfare regimes may partly apply, it seems forced to try to apply these types to third sector issues.

Vertical field orientation

The traditional forms of recognition have had a strong impact on the organisations in question. As they were incorporated into the welfare state, they became increasingly subject to State regulation. This has had profound effects both upon their relations with other actors and upon their identity as a specific type of organisation. Within the pillarised framework, third sector organisations had ties with politics through informal personal networks cutting across industries. Although such networks still partially exist, their co-ordination and extent have diminished with depillarisation. Secularisation and individualisation have eroded the old pillars, of which little more remains than institutional remnants. Notions like *middenveld*, *subsidiarity* and *circles of sovereignty* are associated with the past, not with current issues. Simultaneously, the organisations have become integrated with bureaucratically defined policy fields. Many still bear a particular denominational label, but it has only minor effects on what they do, who they work with and who they work for.[17]

This means that the significance of institutional channels within the policy fields has grown, while the social structure supporting cross-cutting networks has crumbled. One could say that the 'pillars' of State organisation have replaced (or at least been grafted on to) the religious and political pillars into which the Dutch third sector was traditionally divided. The organisations involved are now visibly influenced by intra-field policy rather than visible politics. Awareness of an overarching third sector understood in the traditional way has consequently faded, making the emergence of third sector horizontal bodies less likely.

Political problem-solving

Looking back over the past hundred years, the third sector was able to grow so extensively because it was key player in resolving two major problems of 20th century Dutch society. First was the effort to resolve religious and political conflicts. Through the third sector, social groups could receive State funding and simultaneously retain their autonomy. Second was post-war reconstruction and welfare State expansion. The third sector allowed the realisation of grand ambitions while limiting State growth, which was more controversial. In other words, the third sector has historically served as a

[17] This 'loss of identity' is, to some extent, a driver for some of them to re-align along the traditional identities that dominated the era of pillarisation. The Catholic organisations do still meet regularly in the framework of the Association of Catholic Social Organisations. Here, the traditional Catholic 'umbrella' organisations of schools, agriculture, women's organisations, hospitals, broadcasting, care for the elderly and others have a platform to discuss the meaning of the 'Catholic identity'. To see this activity alone as constitutive of the third sector policy community would be a mistake, however. It is not a very strong organisation, reproducing its historical orientation as a particularistic and inward-looking one.

framework for resolving policy paradoxes, and third sector organisations have become the main agents for the delivery of public services.

Paradoxically perhaps, this background makes it *less* likely that the third sector will be regarded as a solution to current societal problems. Because it has been closely intertwined with social policy, the difficulties of social policy are also the difficulties of the third sector. In many countries, its involvement is regarded as a potential solution to problems of innovation, accountability and participation, but this is hardly a credible policy position in a country where it has been involved in service provision for many years. Rather, as part of the broader group of service providers, it is often regarded as part of the problem (for example, in being unresponsive to clients) (Dekker, 2001a). The same applies to policy themes such as social inclusion and unemployment. The third sector has been active in combating poverty and social exclusion for many years, a role recognised and funded by the State. If the institutionalised structure of policy formation, product supply and operating methods is incapable of dealing with social exclusion, then the third sector is again part of the problem. In unemployment, solutions have been sought in State-funded employment programmes and in new commercial entrants (reintegration businesses, temporary job agencies, small- and medium-sized businesses).

All of this means that there is no fertile breeding-ground for third sector-specific horizontal policy. Such a development would make sense if there was a case to be fought, a solution to be promoted.[18] But the third sector is well-established and does not need championing. Nor could it claim to be an alternative to the present State of affairs, as already underlined. It is, of course, possible that a ‘new’ third sector could emerge and present itself as an alternative to ‘old’ third sector provision, but the framework of social policy would be quick in integrating such new initiatives. Another possibility is that established organisations try to argue their distinctiveness, as the advocates of social entrepreneurship appear to do.

A new class of organisations?

The third sector organisations involved in service delivery often celebrate their roots as private initiative, but in terms of the realities of policy action, they are now far removed from the semi-philanthropic bodies from which they evolved in the early 20th century. With regard to activities and organisational features they are no longer very different from the public and commercial

[18] A possible threat would be European policymaking in the field of services of general interest, which might weaken the position of non-profit associations in relation to market, for-profit parties.

organisations in the same fields. Third sector organisations have adopted bureaucratic features and, under the influence of (quasi-)marketisation drives, the characteristics of commercial businesses. Simultaneously, public and commercial organisations have adopted qualities traditionally associated with the third sector, particularly in relation to client involvement. The result is that, more clearly than ever, the third sector has become a category of organisational features rather than of organisations. The organisations are subsumed within mixed ('hybrid') welfare arrangements, in which the distinctions between different sectors have become less visible in terms of goals, resources and mechanisms (Hupe and Mijs, 2001; Brandsen, 2004; Dekker, 2004; Evers, 2004; Brandsen et al, 2005).

The horizontal concept of social entrepreneurship reflects the complex nature of this new type of organisation. One could argue that it has a fair chance of becoming part of institutionalised discourse: not only do its advocates have access to powerful resources, but it also builds upon general developments within the welfare state. Its emergence has more to it than the ambitions of individual policy entrepreneurs. However, it may be premature to hail this as the bud of a new horizontal third sector policy community, for at least three reasons.

Firstly, there are as yet no clear signs that the concept is taking hold in Dutch policy. So far there have been no major events to signal its institutionalisation. It can even prove awkward when organisations have to juggle different requirements.[19] A mixed identity can offer the best, but also the worst, of both worlds and it is not yet clear which factors are decisive in making their identity and decisions legitimate in the eyes of their stakeholders. As Adalbert Evers has argued one 'can quite easily develop conceptual answers that help to balance the need for guaranteeing more choice and diversity on the one hand and equality of access and standards on the other. However, the real question [...] is how to cope with changes that are clearly unbalanced in this respect' (2004: 249). Furthermore, the future of social entrepreneurs is threatened by the twin dangers of European competition regulation (which demands a more strict separation between economic and non-economic services) and increasing competition from commercial providers.

There are also more fundamental reasons to be cautious. It is questionable (or at least it is still largely unclear) whether social entrepreneurship can really be regarded as a third sector identity in the Dutch context. The NTMO has deliberately included only private non-profits among its members to strengthen its case. Yet many more organisations have adopted the notion of social entrepreneurship:

[19] For instance, whereas the Dutch social housing providers go out of their way to present themselves as entrepreneurs in the Netherlands (with a commercial flavour) their involvement in the European housing network CECODHAS requires them to emphasise that they are not commercially oriented.

many of them public agencies by origin, some even commercial. Rather than being exclusive to the third sector, the concept seems to have caught on with the entire class of organisations involved in public service delivery. This makes sense when one considers the earlier observation that the differences between the various types of organisations have faded over time. If there were to be policy based on the concept of social entrepreneurship, it would be difficult to restrict it to third sector organisations only. That does not make it any less relevant from the perspective of third sector research, but there is a risk that we may fall into the trap of interpreting current phenomena through models that are no longer suitable.

Finally, one must wonder whether the concept of social entrepreneurship is sufficiently powerful to support a broad coalition. As noted before, the Dutch third sector grew to prominence because it provided the answer to wider political problems. The term *middenveld* reflects the historical compromise that the third sector facilitated. However, although the increasing popularity of ideas about social entrepreneurship can be explained as the result of State policy, the emergence of a network such as the NTMO is essentially a bottom-up development. It is not yet clear whether the translation of the concept of social entrepreneurship into policy (for example establishing a new legal framework for this type of organisation) would have demonstrable effects for policymakers, which might be a necessary prerequisite for a broader coalition to emerge.

7. Conclusion: a study in invisible ink

Third sector horizontality in the Netherlands is at best latent, but the blank sheets documenting our empirical findings do show the intriguing development of the Dutch third sector. No-one could seriously argue that it is weak: yet it is barely visible as a separate policy entity. Even more than in most countries, it has been integrated into a class of organisations that comprises both public and private non-profit bodies, all charged with executing public tasks and all with a certain autonomy from the State (Donk and Brandsen, 2005). The only horizontal institution building that appears to be emerging is among those third sector organisations whose distinctiveness as ‘third sector’ has blurred the most. Whether this type of horizontality will become broader, deeper and endure remains uncertain. Their claim to a distinct identity runs against a number of contemporary policy developments, of which European competition regulation may prove the most damaging.

So what it is that the strength or weakness of horizontal third sector-specific policy tells us? One could hypothesise that it is inversely related to the third sector’s role in solving past social problems.

In the Dutch case, the third sector has been one of the foundation stones of the welfare state, which has meant that third sector characteristics have seeped into public and commercial organisations within a single encompassing framework. The downside is that new policy problems often ride on the back of old solutions, and a major part of the third sector is already ‘implicated’. Alternative solutions to welfare issues may have to come from new movements and private initiatives, which might then develop a shared and jointly advocated identity over time. On the basis of history, one could then hypothesise further that such new groups and organisations would eventually be absorbed into the system. It may be, in the Dutch case, that third sector horizontality is a cyclical phenomenon. It tells us little about the influence and impact of the third sector, and more about the interplay between the institutional architecture of the welfare state, new social problems framed by that architecture, and external social and political developments. That makes it of interest to policy analysts more generally.

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Appendix 1: Working Glossary
Version of 23 June 2005

Case refers to the TSEP unit of analysis in relation to public policy as a multi-level process: there are 'closed cases', being particular policy events/programmes chosen to capture a range of policy modes and stages in the policy process of relevance to the third sector in Europe; or 'open cases', which are more thematic and diffuse in character. The former include the European Statute of Association; Global grants for social capital; the Convention/Constitution; National Actions Plans for social exclusion and employment; and the United Nations Year of Volunteering; the latter include Services of General Interest; and the European Structural Funds and the third sector at the sub-national level.

Coalition refers to alliances of policy actors, who can be individuals or organisations, who come together to pursue shared values, concretely expressed in policy change or policy perpetuation goals. Understanding the functioning and roles of such coalitions in national, EU or multi-level contexts requires accounting for the nature of their values and goals; the economic, political and cultural resources they are able to mobilise, and the political opportunity structure within which they operate. In the TSEP network, research effort has been directed at describing and analysing coalitions formed and perpetuated by full or part time *specialist third sector-specific policy actors*.

Collective noun refers to the language used by domestic or EU level actors to group organisations sectorally at a level higher than *vertical policy fields*, and involving some implicit or explicit reference to ownership and control not reducible to either the market or the state. In some countries the collective noun and associated expressions involves a relatively stable or dominant language supported by formal or informal institutions and practices, while in others there is a more open field, with competing concepts and formulations, often fluidly co-existing and interacting with one another. Examples in Europe at the EU and national levels of expressions sometimes used in this way (and sometimes also used in other ways) include associations, [social] [action] NGOs, non-profit sector, nonprofits, organised civil society, popular movements, social economy, social enterprise, solidarity economy, third system, voluntary [and community] sector.

Community method has been described by the Commission as 'a procedure leading to decisions or Act, involving balanced participation [at the EU institutional level] between Council, the European Parliament and the Commission'. It was the 'classical' or 'traditional' method of processing EU policy in the second half of the twentieth century, but in the twenty-first is increasingly supplemented or displaced by the *Open Method of Co-ordination* which rebalances control away from the EU institutional level, towards Member State level actors.

Cross-cutting is used as shorthand for third sector relevant cross-cutting, and refers to concepts/beliefs or policies/practices/actions which are not confined to within *vertical policy fields*, but which are (a) either held to be relevant or applied discretely but according to common principles within two or more vertical policy fields, especially in the social welfare domain; or (b) which are held to be relevant/applied as a matter of 'generic' policy. Policy development in relation to these processes typically involves *specialist third sector-specific policy actors* within and outside the State, forming relatively loosely coupled 'policy networks' and/or a more formally institutionalised and recognised 'policy community' nominally involving a core of shared values and beliefs expressed in political rhetoric and/or the technical codified discourse associated with specialist policy instruments. The result can be the creation and perpetuation of a policy space jointly recognised by these experts as constituting the subject matter of third sector policy (using some collective noun) which is not reducible to the policy contents of a particular vertical field.

Domain Used to specify the level of policy between vertical policy field and the macro system of policy and politics. In relation to the third sector, the domain which TSEP has demonstrated is of most (but not universal) relevance is the *social welfare domain*.

European problem set refers to the cluster of high salience European policy issues or problems with which the third sector has most consistently been linked by policy actors at European, national and sub-national levels. Included here are *governance*; *social exclusion*; and unemployment. Third sector organisations may be seen as 'partners' whose contributions can and should be mobilised as part of the process of problem management, or problem solving.

Governance has multiple and contested meanings; but at its broadest, it can be used to refer to institutionally ordered arrangements for shaping the processing of policy at the key stages of agenda setting, decision making, implementation and evaluation. It tends to be linked to steering or strategic - as opposed to tactical - processes; patterned as opposed to unstructured relationships and interactions; and to be associated with such values as accountability, transparency, and effectiveness. The ways in which the third sector is linked to governance varies significantly across contexts, but often considered in scope are issues both in relation to internal governance - the design and application of appropriate legal structures and micro-constitutional models in the light of third sector specificities such as voluntarism and non-profit-distribution; and issues in relation to external governance, including how the third sector can and should fit as an actor at each of the policy stages, wherein it is one policy actor amongst many.

Horizontal policy is synonymous with *cross cutting* policy. Note that there are 'pure' cases of horizontality, whereby policies or concepts are related to the entire third sector as defined in the relevant collective nouns. But we *also* include as 'horizontal' narrower-in-scope concepts or policies which cut across some but not all *vertical fields*. In particular, overarching social welfare regime policies and practices, social inclusion policies and community development policies can be considered in scope, even if not extending outside the *social welfare domain*, to the extent that they necessarily suggest, involve or imply, participation by the third sector and its stakeholders.[1]

Industry-specific policies that are relevant to a particular *vertical field* only.

Mainstreaming is shorthand for *public policy* mainstreaming and refers to a situation in which the mainstreamed policy issue or problem (here, the third sector) is not only supported by technical institutions, but has high political and social visibility, and is seen by systemically powerful actors as of high generic public policy salience.

Multi-level process refers to how the European, national and subnational levels of public policy are inter-related. The extent to which this constitutes third sector policies is examined in the TSEP network by policy *cases*. Note that this is not synonymous with multi-level *governance* - which is typically used as a framing concept to claim that substantive power is situated at more than one level. The extent to which multi-level processes involve a reconfiguration towards multi level governance is treated as an open question for research.

Open Method of Coordination is based on mutual agreement of policy objectives by Member States; the development of common guidelines, indicators, and targets; benchmarking of performance and exchange of good practices, formulation of national action plans; and peer review and joint monitoring of implementation in an iterative multi-year cycle. It increasingly supplements and even displaces the *Community Method*.

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[1] Note that other writers use this term differently, often including *intra-vertical* policy field *multi-sector* initiatives as horizontal, while we do not consider *per se* as the core subject matter of our network. However, indirectly such policies may lead indirectly to our notion of horizontality, through spillover effects or *ex post* political construction of policy, as noted elsewhere.

Path dependency Refers to how historical policy decisions create a 'policy legacy', which can have long term consequences for the possibilities of current and future policies

Policy is used in TSEP as shorthand for *public policy*.

Policy entrepreneurship refers to actions taken either to deliberately change, or to deliberately protect, public policies - here, third sector specific policies. Such efforts typically involve the formation of *coalitions* between individuals or organisations, or both and are heavily constrained by national political opportunity structures. In the TSEP network, research effort has been directed at describing and analysing the entrepreneurship of full or part time *specialist third sector-specific policy actors*. Most horizontal third sector policy entrepreneurship takes place at the national level or below, but there are some individuals and organisations that specialise at the EU level, and some who operate on multiple levels.

Policy field is shorthand for *vertical policy field*.

Policy mode is a helpful way of recognising and analysing the different types of broad policy approaches that jointly constitute the highly complex EU public policy process. Examples of distinctive modes are the *community method* (relevant to the third sector in the European Statute of Association case) and the *open method of co-ordination* (relevant to the third sector in the case of National Action Plans for *social exclusion* and employment).

Policy learning refers to the impetus for policy change which occurs when actors adopt strategies, or various forms of policy belief, in the light of experience; or policy changes due to new information and analysis, generated by *policy entrepreneurs*, perhaps operating as part of *coalitions*.

Public policy comprises two elements. Unless otherwise qualified, 'policy' refers to intended courses of action which are explicitly and proactively articulated by actors with significant levels of political authority, and reflected in patterned policy discourse, events and institutions. If past policy decisions continue to be relevant because (due to *path dependency*) they shape current administration practices, resource allocation and the distribution of power, but they are *not* actively sustained and pushed as a categorical, proactive policy, they can be described as 'latent', that is implicit, policy. 'Public' refers to institutions and events involving 'that dimension of human activity which is regarded as requiring governmental or social regulation or intervention, or at least common action' (Parsons, 1995).

Social exclusion has been defined by the European commission as 'referring to the multiple and changing factors resulting in people being excluded from the normal exchanges, practices and rights of modern society. Poverty is one of the most obvious factors, but social exclusion also refers to housing, education, health and access to services'.

Social welfare domain This corresponds to the 'welfare state regime' policy space. It is a 'meso level' concept nested within, and developmentally bound up with, the prevailing generic national political and public policy system, while being broader than a single *vertical field*. Within it are the family of 'human services' or 'social [welfare] services' whose vertical components include ICNPO groups 4 ('personal' social services, or social care, and income maintenance), group 6 (development and housing, including employment & training), part of group 7 (advocacy, to the extent it is geared towards social welfare; and excluding political parties); group 3 (health) and group 2 (education and research). Many of these services are (jointly) implicated in tackling *social exclusion*. Note that this formulation is not limited to 'service provision' in the sense of ownership and management of establishments (as with provision of care homes, social housing) but inclusive also of social welfare oriented activities in addition to/separate from direct services, including social welfare oriented self-help and community based activities, advocacy

(campaigning on social policy issues, and individual clients' rights etc), involvement in social welfare and social policy design, monitoring etc.

Specialist third sector-specific policy actors are the carriers of purposive *third sector specific policy* who claim to hold relevant expertise and knowledge. They may be full time specialist individuals or organisations, but such actors are often part time, fulfilling this role separately and/or in conjunction with other contributions to the policy system (particularly in the social welfare domain). They operate within and outside the State, forming relatively loosely coupled 'policy networks' and/or a more formally institutionalised and recognised 'policy community', or 'policy communities'. At a minimum they share a language involving third sector collective nouns (otherwise they cannot be specialists); they may nominally claim to share a core of values and beliefs in relation to the third sector, expressed in political rhetoric and/or the technical codified discourse associated with the relevant specialist policy instruments. The result can be the creation and perpetuation of a policy space jointly recognised by these experts as constituting the subject matter of third sector policy (using some collective noun) which is not reducible to the policy contents of any particular vertical field[2].

Spill over effects Policy effects and actions designed to apply in one domain or field which have consequences once adopted - and thus implicitly or explicitly, shape policies in other domains or fields.

Third sector at the highest level of generality refers to organisations situated between the market and the state in terms of ownership and control. TSEP needed more specificity to initiate research into this construct as an object of policy: It was therefore provisionally taken to include those organisations which are self-governing and constitutionally independent of the state; do not involve the distribution of profits to shareholders; and benefit to a significant degree from voluntarism. This was an initial orienting working definition of the third sector - but in application, this has had to be sensitive to national conditions, since our unit of analysis has been the actual existing horizontal policy community or communities with its associated constructs. In other words, the specific 'indigenous' conceptualisation (or conceptualisations) deployed in practice was a question to be determined empirically, not *a priori* imposed. By referring to more than one collective noun, and the relative salience of each from the perspective of policy network or community members, we are also able to reflect differences within countries, where boundary disputes and the contest between competing definitions is itself part of the policy process (since notions putting the accent on 'civil society', 'voluntarism', and 'social economy' for example, typically co-exist).

Third sector [specific] policy is usually used either as shorthand for *horizontal* third sector policy; or to refer to the sum of horizontal cross cutting policies, policies which are partly horizontal and partly vertical. As used in this network, it is by definition concerned *only* with public policy that is horizontal to at least a certain extent. It thus can contain both 'deliberate' policy designed or constructed for the third sector, and policies which are more accidental, *ex post* constructed as third sector policies, and therefore seen as relevant by actors who style themselves as third sector stakeholders. Third sector specific policies are sustained by policy networks and/or policy communities, where the latter are characterised by specialisation, involving claims-making in relation to expertise. In these specialist networks and/or communities, the third sector is often - but not always - coupled to problems and issues associated with the social welfare domain,

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[2] Policies may not be cross cutting *initially* if developed independently within vertical policy fields; but *become* cross cutting if *ex post* 'joined up' by significant policy actors coordinating across or (if powerful) able to authoritatively transcend vertical policy fields. These policies can then be viewed after, and only after, the formative, politically constructive event of 'joining up' by policy actors as jointly constituting a shared 'horizontal' policy; otherwise they are considered not to exist as 'horizontal', or only 'latent'.

particularly social exclusion and unemployment. The agendas of these policy networks or communities tend to include reference to the third sector's policy environment in terms of legal structures and wider governance arrangements; institutional processes for mediating third sector-public sector/State relations; arrangements for involvement across policy stages and policy modes; and the promotion of voluntarism, including volunteering.

Third sector stakeholders include actors who consciously have a significant role in third sector policy. It includes third sector organisations themselves, but also other actors including politicians, public officials, academics, the media, trade unions and (for-profit) business.

Vertical policy field Policies that are developed and apply essentially *within* a particular field or domain: here, horizontal institutions may differentiate between organisations but in the background or incidentally, rather than as the focal point of policy activity. To define 'field' boundaries, we follow the standard industrial classification adapted to account for the specificities of the third sector, as represented in the International Classification of Nonprofit Organisations (ICNPO). Policies which relate to a particular Group or subgroup of the ICNPO are considered 'vertical'; while those which relate to two or more fields may be considered horizontal, either 'narrower' or 'broader' according to the range of fields in scope. Empirically in Europe, relevant policies are often (but not always) closely linked to the *social welfare domain*.

Further Reading

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Appendix 2: Basic descriptive information on third sector horizontal policy actors

This appendix contains additional information about the three horizontal networks described in section 4 of this working paper.

Horizontal policy actors	**EAPN-The Netherlands (*EAPN-Nederland*)**	**Social Alliance (*Sociale Alliantie*)**	**Network for the Future of Social Entrepreneurship (Netwerk Toekomst Maatschappelijke Onderneming)**
Year of origin	In 1989 the international EAPN was founded after a call from Delors, which then resulted to the creation of a Dutch branch shortly afterwards.	At the end of 2000, a number of organisations concerned with anti-poverty policy wrote a joint manifesto, which was the start of the Social Alliance.	The NTMO started off at a meeting in October 2000, although it only took the current name and membership some years later.
Members	The EAPN-Netherlands consists entirely of voluntary groups, notably Women on Welfare (Landelijk Steunpunt Vrouwen in de Bijstand), the Association of the Disabled (Landelijke Vereniging for Arbeidsongeschikten), ATD 4th World, and the Union of the Unemployed (Samenwerkingsverband Mensen zonder Betaald Werk).	Over fifty organisations, including the Council of Churches (Raad van Kerken), unions (FNV, CNV), anti-poverty organisations (EAPN, Sjakuus), Forum (an institute for multi-cultural development), various associations of minorities, client groups (including many members of the EAPN), women's groups, various regional organisations, and humanitarian organisations (Salvation Army, Red Cross).	The NTMO consists of six branch associations of providers in social housing, education and health care: Aedes (social housing), Arcares (nursing care), Bve Raad (adult and professional education, HBO-raad (polytechnics), LVT (home care) en NVZ (hospital care).
Funding	The resource base is mainly indirect, through facilities and personnel contributions from member organisations. Indirectly, most of the resources come from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports.	The resource base largely derives from member organisations, which receive their funds through a mix of member contributions (e.g. unions and churches) and subsidies (mainly from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, and local authorities.	The resource base largely derives from the member organisations, both in terms of staff and financial resources. The NTMO has no clearly defined budget of its own.

Staffing	EAPN has no paid staff and depends on (unspecified) voluntary contributions from voluntary members of its constituent organisations.	The secretariat of the Social Alliance has been handled by one of its members (Sjakuus). Five staff from member organisations have been assigned to carry out the Alliance's programme, though they remain within their own organisations.	The NTMO has a steering group consisting of six directors/managers from the members, flanked by six working groups members. It employs no staff of its own. The secretariat is with Aedes.
Activities	Its activities largely concern the organisation of seminars and official reactions (which together make up the bulk of its operations) and acting as a consultation partner for the government in anti-poverty policy.	One core activity of the Social Alliance is to act as a consultation partner for the government, channelling the contributions of its members (e.g. through joint manifestoes). Its other activity is to share information about, and publicise the activities, of its members.	The main activity of the NTMO is to publicise its cause through conferences, newsletters, website and so forth, as well as to bring attention to activities of its member associations. The development of a joint code of conduct has been its major showpiece in recent years.
Priorities	Recent priorities have been to develop qualitative indicators of social exclusion that may be included in National Action Plans, and to organise local seminars to translate European anti-poverty to the local level.	The priorities in recent years were to influence the various elections we have had, as well as to protest against the diverse cuts made in the subsidies of its members.	The main priority of the NTMO has been to support greater autonomy for the providers it represents, as well as the creation of forms of self-regulation that could replace detailed state regulation (e.g. the code of conduct).
Relations	EAPN is a member of the Social Alliance.	Members of EAPN, as well as EAPN itself, are members.	No direct links with other horizontal third sector bodies.
Website address	http://www.eapnned.nl	http://www.socialealliantie.nl	http://www.ntmo.nl

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For general information about the Centre, please contact

Sue Roebuck
Tel: +44 (0)20 7955 7375\7205
Fax: +44 (0)20 7955 6039
Email: s.roebuck@lse.ac.uk

or Jane Schiemann
Tel: +44 (0)20 7955 7375\7205
Fax: +44 (0)20 7955 6039
Email: i.j.schiemann@lse.ac.uk

For further information on this or any of the CCS publications contact:

Centre for Civil Society
Department of Social Policy
The London School of Economics and Political Science
Houghton Street
London WC2A 2AE

Tel: +44 (0)20 7955 7375/7205 Fax: +44 (0)20 7955 6039
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