



## UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

### Consensus social movements

*Strategic interaction in Dutch LGBTI politics*

Davidson, R.J.

### Publication date

2021

[Link to publication](#)

### Citation for published version (APA):

Davidson, R. J. (2021). *Consensus social movements: Strategic interaction in Dutch LGBTI politics*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

### General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

### Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

## English Language Summary: **Consensus Social Movements: Strategic Interaction in Dutch LGBTI Politics**

The concept of social movement conjures up images of mass demonstrations and people protesting in the streets against a government and its policies. Such an understanding of social movement engagement, grounded in conflict, is prominent within a large amount of media, which tend to focus on the drama of protest, and within social movement studies, where scholars often assume that government actors are inherently opposed to movements and work to resist them. Movement actors, however, engage in various types of work outside of the public eye, which may seem less dramatic than protest but is not necessarily less meaningful for advocacy. By being overly focused on contention and protest, the field of social movement studies might miss other ways in which movement actors go about influencing society and politics. Instead of viewing contention as the only or central mode in which social movements engage, I view contention as one end of a spectrum of potential ways movement actors engage in advocacy. In order to redress the balance in the field of social movement studies, in this book I will primarily focus on what happens at the other end of the spectrum, namely how movement actors deploy consensus in their advocacy.

As detailed in Chapter 1, the following central questions are examined in the book: what constitutes consensual social movement advocacy, how can consensual relations between movement actors and other actors be established, and what implications can consensual advocacy have for activism and the actors involved? Utilizing insights from the strategic interaction perspective, I refer to 'government actors' and 'movement actors' in order to analytically move beyond monolithic concepts, such as 'government' and 'social movement', to examine which specific actors interact in which ways. In order to account for the varied ways in which movement actors engage in advocacy, I define a social movement as a network including various types of non-governmental and governmental actors that advocates based on shared goals and uses institutionalized and non-institutionalized tactics in attempts to influence politics and culture. That definition, coupled with the micro-sociological conceptual tools of the strategic interaction perspective, enable me to examine movement repertoires of both contention and consensus, diverse actors that can take part in movements, and the multiple types of relations in which movement actors and government actors can engage. The research questions are examined by studying the case of the central social movement organization (SMO) of the Dutch lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\*,

and intersex (LGBTI) social movement, *Federatie COC Nederland* (hereafter: COC), and its advocacy, interactions with government actors, and outcomes from the 1960s until 2019.

In Chapter 2 I analyse the period from the 1960s until 1982. The chapter is focused on the transition that took place within the COC from an internal orientation toward making demands of the Dutch government and the conflictual relations between the COC and Dutch government actors that were characteristic of that period of advocacy. During the 1960s and 1970s the COC demanded that the Dutch government remove legislation that was discriminatory towards gays and lesbians. The COC was successful in its campaigns to equalize ages of consent and remove the ban on homosexuals serving in the military. Within the context of a proposed constitutional change toward protection from more forms of discrimination and through working together with organizations that had been institutionalized to facilitate public policy on women, the COC began to deploy a repertoire of consensus from early 1982. Chapter 2 documents the processes through which the COC began to see certain politicians, civil servants, and government organizations as potential policy partners and transitioned to pursuing a public policy strategy. Both of those shifts were important for the way in which the COC's relationship with Dutch government actors would further develop.

In Chapter 3 I address the period between 1982 and 1986. The chapter is concerned with how the COC was able to see its demands for public policy on homosexuality met. Through its policy advocacy, the COC established alliances with academics as well as government actors in the executive and legislative branches of government. It formed a movement-government policy coalition, which was ultimately successful in pressuring the ruling cabinet to introduce the white paper *Overheidsbeleid en homoseksualiteit* (hereafter: *Government Policy and Homosexuality*). With the introduction of *Government Policy and Homosexuality*, a certain degree of goal alignment occurred, which enabled consensual relations to be established between the COC and actors of the Dutch national government.

Chapter 4 focuses on the ways in which the COC and Dutch government actors worked together to formulate and implement *Government Policy and Homosexuality* from 1986 to 1994. The chapter highlights the ways in which corporatism affected relations between the COC and Dutch government actors and how corporatism gave form to consensual movement-government relations through policy formulation and implementation. Dutch government actors consulted the COC and provided the COC with structural and project-based subsidies for the role it played in policy formulation and implementation. The COC and Dutch government actors worked together during the peri-

od toward common goals, but inequalities existed both between the COC and other gay/lesbian organizations and between the COC and government actors.

In Chapter 5 I address the ways in which the COC's corporatist relationship with Dutch government actors affected the organization between 1986 and 1994. The chapter traces the ways in which the COC engaged in institutionalization and evaluates the assumption that social movement institutionalization results in co-optation. Five ways of conceptualizing co-optation, as a shift in a social movement's tactics; deradicalization; neutralization of a movement; a shift to becoming a service provider; and an inability to achieve movement goals, were empirically evaluated. The COC did not become co-opted, and institutionalization is shown to be a tactic SMOs can use to help achieve their goals. As a result of institutionalization, it was necessary for the COC to make strategic trade-offs. The chapter points to the role strategic trade-offs played in maintaining a close policy relationship with government actors and demonstrates how the COC as an organization changed through its relations with government actors.

Chapter 6 covers a broad span of time, but its central focus is on how the COC was able to maintain a close relationship with government actors and how the gay/lesbian advocacy field was re-shaped through movement actors' interactions with government actors during the 1990s. Chapter 6 compares corporatist arrangements for the gay/lesbian movement, represented by the COC, with those for the women's movement, which were institutionalized in a more formal way. The chapter argues that the COC was able to profit from its low level of formalization, because that allowed the organization to continue to generate and mobilize its own, bottom-up resources during a period in which the Dutch government provided fewer top-down resources. The COC continued to work together with Dutch government actors despite changes that occurred in democratic corporatism during the 1990s, but austerity measures and a low level of political prioritization meant that cooperation was also mixed with conflict.

Chapter 7 identifies the tactics the COC used in deploying a repertoire of consensus and focuses on how relations between the COC and Dutch government actors were strengthened from 2000 until 2019. The chapter traces the process through which the COC and Dutch government actors intensified their consensual relations of cooperation and collaboration. Movement and government actors cooperated by exchanging and sharing resources to pursue common goals, and they collaborated by co-creating goals and tactics to pursue them and facilitating each other in collectively pursuing those goals. The Dutch government further decreased as a target of the COC's advocacy and increasingly became a partner with which to target the collective prob-

lem of LGBTI discrimination and promote LGBTI equality in the Netherlands and abroad. Strengthened relations between the COC and Dutch government actors contributed to the expansion of LGBTI public policy in the Netherlands and abroad. Through consensual relations, the COC and actors from the Dutch government came to increasingly resemble each other, as the COC became more involved in governance practices and the Dutch government became more involved in LGBTI activism.

In Chapter 8 I summarize the findings for the case-specific sub-questions to provide an answer to the central research questions, set out the theoretical contributions of the study, address the limits of consensus, and suggest avenues for future research. The chapter provides an answer to the case-specific sub-questions by describing how the COC deployed a repertoire of consensus, the conditions that enabled the COC to develop consensual relations with actors of the Dutch national government, how consensual relations between the COC and actors of the Dutch national government were maintained and expanded over time, and the ways in which consensual relations between the COC and actors of the Dutch national government influenced public policy in relation to LGBTI issues as well as the actors involved.

The findings from the case are used to make seven theoretical contributions to the study of social movements. First, the study demonstrates that movement actors do not have to choose between a repertoire of contention and a repertoire of consensus, and they may combine those repertoires. Second, many types of actors, including government actors and even a government more or less as a whole, can participate in a social movement. Third, if the concept of social movement is broad enough to include government actors, social movements cannot be defined based on being located outside of government institutions. Fourth, the research contributed to conceptualizing two forms of consensual movement-government relations: cooperative and collaborative movement-government relations. Fifth, the research demonstrated that pursuing a public policy strategy can result in an SMO establishing consensual relations with government actors, as public policy can be a point of entry into government for movement actors and a point of entry into movements for government actors. Sixth, government actors can become part of a social movement, and SMOs can participate in the practice of governing. Seventh, I conceptualize consensus social movements as those in which the primary SMO(s) of the social movement in question deploys a repertoire of consensus, where consensual relations have been established between the primary SMO(s) of the movement and a diversity of other types of actors, and movement actors and government actors cooperate and collaborate in challenging a common target or common targets.

The research is an appraisal of consensus and was not written in praise of consensus. Consensus can be effective, but it may be limited to particular types of political engagement. The COC engaged in an evolutionary approach, which involved altering how LGBTI issues are addressed through government policy. An evolutionary approach enabled the COC to achieve a large number of successes. Consensus may, however, have been less effective in pursuing a revolutionary approach in which LGBTI identity categories and the identity category of heterosexuality that is dependent upon them were challenged.

Consensual movement-government relations can result in a movement's goals expanding, resources increasing, and increased chances of success. Consensual movement-government relations do not, however, necessarily result in an expansion of democracy. Such relations instead raise empirical questions about how democracy functions and might be changing, as well as theoretical, if not ideological, questions about the type of democratic system to be desired and how to arrange and structure democratic inclusion, for which groups, and in which ways.