

DISCUSSION PAPER / 2007.04



Civil Society Participation in Poverty Reduction Processes: Who is getting a seat at the pro-poor table?

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**Comments on this Discussion Paper are invited.
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October 2007

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The author wishes to thank Bart Kerremans, Nadia Molenaers, Nathalie Holvoet and Robrecht Renard for their valuable input and comments.



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ABSTRACT

Civil society participation in Poverty Reduction

Processes:

Who is getting a seat at the pro-poor table?

The paper starts from the observation that the PRSP logic uses input output logic, meaning that it supposes that the input of 'civil society participation' into the policy cycle will inevitably lead to the output of poverty reduction. We argue that 'civil society participation' is a very vague concept and can constitute very different things depending on who is actually participating, who they represent, what influence they can yield... Consequently the type of input will also determine the extent to which the expected output will in fact be delivered and thus how civil society participation will ultimately contribute to poverty reduction. We test empirically what factors explain CSO participation in PRSP participatory processes based on data gathered from Honduran civil society organizations.

RÉSUMÉ

La participation de la société civile dans le processus de la réduction de la pauvreté:

Qui aura un siège à la table pro-pauvre ?

Le point de départ de cet article est l'observation que la logique de la Stratégie pour la Réduction de la Pauvreté (DRSP) utilise un modèle input output, ce qui signifie qu'on suppose que l'introduction de la 'participation de la société civile' dans le cycle politique mènera inévitablement à une réduction de la pauvreté. Nous argumentons que la 'participation de la société civile' est un concept très vague. Le concept 'société civile' peut aboutir à des choses très différentes, dépendant de ceux qui y participent vraiment, de ceux qu'ils représentent et de leur influence sur le plan politique. La configuration exacte de la société civile déterminera donc dans quelle mesure sa participation pourra effectivement contribuer à une réduction de la pauvreté. Nous avons vérifié empiriquement quels types d'organisations ont participé au processus des DRSP, en nous basant sur des données provenant d'organisations de la société civile au Honduras.

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on explaining the political participation of civil society organisations in Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) processes. We consider the case of civil society organisations' (CSOs) participation in PRS fora in Honduras. Using survey data gathered from 100 CSOs from January to April 2006, the following questions are tackled: what factors explain participation in PRSPs, what types of organisations are participating, and whether they can, in fact, contribute to the ultimate goal of poverty reduction.

The paper explores the underlying assumptions of PRS logic, zooming in on how exactly civil society participation should contribute to poverty reduction. We find that the PRS uses an input/output logic- 'civil society participation' is used as the input and enhanced 'country ownership', increased 'downward accountability' of government, and improved 'pro-poor effectiveness of the strategy' are the intermediary outputs. These three intermediary outputs should eventually lead to poverty reduction (Molenaers & Renard, 2006). We argue that the term 'civil society participation' is very vague and can represent strikingly different conditions depending on who is actually participating, who they represent, what influence they can exert, etc. The type of input will also determine the extent to which the various expected outcomes can potentially be attained, and thus how civil society participation will ultimately advance poverty reduction. Concentrating solely on the input side of the equation, i.e. "CSO participation", we will first turn to the academic debate surrounding this concept. What types of organisations tend to participate politically? What factors determine the decisions of CSOs not to participate? Remarkably though, whereas vast research has been done on what determines the political participation of individuals, theorizing on what influences collective actors to participate is far less extensive (Lavalle et al., 2005)¹. Therefore, to find out what factors explain CSO participation in PRSP's, we start from the model of individual political participation as set out by Brady, Verba and Schlozman in their 1995 article², and subsequently adapt the model for collective actors and for the different institutional settings of a highly aid-dependent developing country. The adapted model tests the availability of organisation resources (e.g. human and financial), the organisation's institutional embeddedness (e.g. networks with state actors, donors, and other CSOs), as well as motivational factors as determinants of participation.

The paper is organised as follows: the first part presents the PRS logic on civil society participation. As present PRS logic is based largely on vague conceptualizations (yet instigates high expectations of reducing poverty), we wish to confront this logic with the academic research on participation. The second part of this paper reviews the civic voluntarism model, an academic model explaining the

¹ Notwithstanding an extensive body of research and literature on participation and the activities of interest groups in the United States of America (Andrews & Edwards, 2004; Caldeira & Wright, 1990; Golden, 1998; Hojnacki & Kimball, 1999; Nownes & Freeman, 1998; Schattschneider, 1960; Schlozman, 1984; Schlozman & Tierney, 1983), models of factors explaining the political participation of interest groups, to the best of our knowledge, do not hold a centre-stage position therein.

² Brady, H., Verba, S. and Schlozman, K. (1995). Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation, *APSR*, Vol.89, No.2, pp. 271- 294.

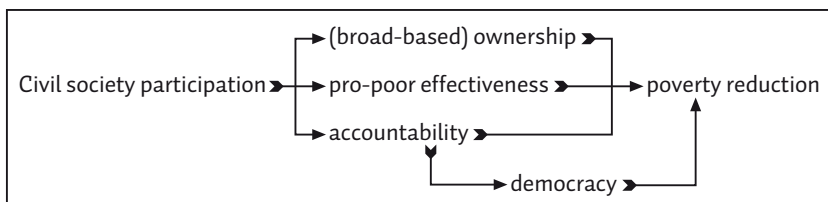
political participation of individuals. In the third section, this model will be adapted from its original context (i.e. the participation of an individual citizen in a predominantly Western context) to the setting of a CSO in an aid-dependent country. The adapted model will then be tested with data from surveys of 100 Honduran CSOs. The final section of the paper compares these findings with previous research, and distils the relevant consequences for the desired output of poverty reduction.

1. PRS LOGIC ON CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION: VAGUELY DEFINED YET HIGHLY AMBITIOUS

This section sets out to explore the underlying logic of the conditionality of civil society participation in the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of PRSP's as imposed by international financial institutions.³ Why is civil society participation believed to be so important for poverty reduction? Molenaers and Renard schematically summarize the underlying logic found implicitly and explicitly in PRSP documents (Molenaers & Renard, 2006). Civil society participation is believed to contribute to poverty reduction by triggering three intermediary outputs that, in turn, stimulate poverty reduction.

³ Although civil society participation is indeed central in the PRSP discourse, there is no critical, consistent scrutiny of compliance with this conditionality (Dewachter, 2005).

Figure 1: Civil society causality chain
(Molenaers & Renard, 2006, p. 8)



A primary line of reasoning links civil society participation through broad-based ownership of the strategy to poverty reduction. One of the major flaws of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP's), the PRSP's predecessor, was said to be that recipient governments only paid lip service to policy conditionalities imposed by international financial institutions to secure financial assistance. When granted financial assistance, the prescribed adjustment policies were often not implemented, as they had been externally imposed with neither the recipient government nor the society at large assuming ownership of the proposed policy changes (IMF, 2004). Accordingly, international financial institutions have now deemed ownership to be a crucial factor for the effective implementation of any PRS policy (World Bank, 1998).

The Poverty Reduction Strategy was thus to be elaborated by the recipient government itself. Civil society participation should, in this line of reasoning, expand the scope of ownership beyond the government alone into a broad-based country ownership, which should, in principle, increase the odds of its effective elaboration and implementation. The second intermediary output catalysed by civil society participation is pro-poor effectiveness. CSOs, either by organising poor people themselves, or by working with poor people, accumulate hands-on knowledge about poverty, its causes and remedies, as well as valuable information about the realities on the ground. When feeding this knowledge and expertise into the elabora-

tion of the strategy, as well as using the CSOs' presence in the field to check on progress made, and so serving as a valuable feedback-loop for the policy cycle, civil society participation should raise the pro-poor effectiveness of the strategy thus contributing towards genuine poverty reduction. Finally, CSOs taking on the role of watchdogs can insist on a more accountable attitude from the executing government towards society-at-large, thereby seeing to it that scarce resources are deployed as efficiently as possible. This is, in a nutshell, the logic behind civil society participation in the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (Molenaers & Renard, 2006). As is clear from the above, 'civil society participation' carries with it very high expectations. Conversely, how to actually realize these goals is not clearly stipulated. The PRSP model uses an input-output logic in which various key concepts are vaguely defined. What exactly, for example, constitutes 'civil society participation in PRSPs?' The PRSP source book's chapter on participation states that *"in the design⁴ of national PRS governments generally engage with organized civil society groups in the capital or main urban areas. However, national-level civic engagement also allows governments to reach a wider range of stakeholders and initiate dialogue with civil society organizations such as farmers' associations, cooperatives, unions, chambers of commerce, women's groups and groups that represent the poor and vulnerable through umbrella organizations or networks of ngo's"*. (Tikare et al., 2002, p.245). Higher-level organizations are recommended to function as intermediaries between national government and local level stakeholders as well as stimulating information exchange and building a consensus on poverty reduction efforts (Tikare et al., 2002). Apart from some 'good practices', little more is specified about who should participate, how they should be approached or recruited, or whom they should represent. And many more questions remain unanswered. Which organisations can contribute to these specific goals? Can one organisation realise all three intermediary goals? And if not, can one organisation's efforts negate another's? Do unions and chambers of commerce have common pro-poor perspectives? What exactly is meant by pro-poor perspectives or broad-based ownership? Furthermore, the relationships between the basic inputs, intermediary outputs and eventual outcomes are not unambiguous. Does genuine civil society ownership of and accountability over the PRS strategy inevitably lead to poverty reduction? Many PRS concepts and relationships need clarification. In this paper however, we will only focus on the input side, i.e. 'civil society participation'.

The combination of vague concepts and ambiguous relationships with high expectations compels us to critically scrutinize this concept of 'civil society participation'. We shall, therefore, confront this concept of participation, as proposed by PRS logic with academic theory and empirical findings.

⁴ This quote reviews stakeholder involvement in the design of the PRS. Nevertheless, the same chapter also briefly touches upon stakeholder involvement in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the strategy. The handbook prescribes that a stakeholder analysis is to determine who can be involved in the M&E of the strategy. Further information on who should be participating in order to obtain the desired output is not provided.

2 COMPARING THE PRS LOGIC WITH THE ACADEMIC STANCE ON PARTICIPATION

When reviewing the academic literature on political participation, various stark contrasts are immediately apparent between the use of ‘participation’ in the PRS discourse and in mainstream academic theory and research on participation.

Table 1: Comparing the PRS logic with the academic stance on participation

	Political participation in PRS logic	Political participation in the academic debate
Unit of Analysis	Organisations	Individual (and organisations)
Access and Influence	Unproblematic	Problematic
Nature	Technocratic	Political
Setting	Aid-dependent developing country	Western countries

A first difference concerns the unit of analysis. Whereas the PRS discourse focuses almost exclusively on CSOs as the participating entity, the academic literature on political participation generally centres on individual participation. Moreover, a whole academic debate relates to the question of ‘who participates’, bringing the problem of unequal access to the fore. Research on individual political participation, as well as interest groups, finds political participation to be skewed towards certain groups. Verba, Schlozman and Brady note that, “Voices heard through the medium of citizen participation will be often loud, sometimes clear but rarely equal” (Schlozman, Brady & Verba, 1997, p.6).

Similarly Schattschneider counters the pluralist view of egalitarian access to the US pressure group system by stating that, “the flaw in pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with an upper class accent” (Schattschneider, 1960, p.35).

Empirical research by Schlozman and Tierney on US interest groups led them to conclude that, “the evidence indicates clearly that the pressure system is tilted heavily in favor of the well-off, especially business, at the expense of the representation of broad public interests and the interests of those with few political resources” (Schlozman, 1984, p.1028-1029). These findings point towards a potential and pivotal black hole in the PRS discourse. The virtually non-existent conditions of equal access and influence of different actors in the political participation process render the high expectations placed upon civil society participation in PRSP precarious.⁵ Will poor people’s organisations or organisations defending a pro-poor stance, in fact, be

⁵ The thesis that civil society participation inevitably leads to poverty reduction becomes particularly problematic in countries plagued by high income-inequality; as many developing countries are. Honduras has a Gini coefficient of 53.8 (CIA Gini index 2003). However, the United States of America, where most of the empirical research on interest groups has taken place is, in itself, hardly a role model for income-equality (Gini coefficient : 45, CIA Gini index 2004).

able to secure a seat at the pro-poor table? And if so, will they have enough political leverage to compel vested interests to embark on a pro-poor heading? The PRS approach on participation, in which participation is presented as an unproblematic, technocratic process in which all voices can be heard and pro-poor interests will automatically prevail, has a blind spot for the politics of participation. As Booth puts it, “*the biggest challenge will be to stop relying on the essentially technocratic instrument of the PRS to solve essentially political problems*” (Booth et al., 2006, p8).

This paper, therefore, starts from a model of individual political participation. In a later stage, this classical model will be adapted to an organisational and aid-dependent country setting to develop a model for political participation of organizations in the PRSP context. Empirically, we will test what the most important hurdles to CSO participation in the PRS are, and evaluate whether they represent serious constraints on, or constitute a refutation of PRS logic.

3 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS: THE CIVIC VOLUNTARISM MODEL

3.1 Political Participation

Barnes and Kaase use a broad and standard definition of political participation which refers to political participation as, “*all voluntary activities by individual citizens intended to influence either directly or indirectly political choices at various levels of the political system*” (Barnes & Kaase, 1979, p.59).⁶ Various forms of political participation include: voting; letter-writing to political representatives; working for/donating to a campaign; attending a political meeting; etc. One can differentiate between active (e.g. voting) or passive (e.g. attending a ceremony); conventional (e.g. campaign donations) or unconventional (e.g. occupying public buildings); and symbolic (e.g. singing the national anthem at a public rally) or instrumental (e.g. lobbying) political participation (Conway, 1985).

⁶ The definition used by Barnes and Kaase is broader than the definition used by other participation scholars. They wish to incorporate and emphasize the importance of ‘non-classical’ forms of participation, like protesting. A classical definition of political participation provided by Verba & Nie reads, “Political participation refers to those activities by private citizens that aim to influence the government either by affecting the choice of government personnel or their choices.” (Verba & Nie, 1972, p.2).

3.2 The Civic Voluntarism Model

Brady, Verba and Schlozman, in their classic 1995 article, present a model of individual political participation, also referred to as the civic voluntarism model. The authors start by posing the question, “why do people not participate in politics?” A threefold answer helps, in their opinion, to explain a lack of popular political participation: because “they can’t”; because “they do not want to”; and/or because “they were not asked”.

The first part of the puzzle (i.e. “they can’t”) focuses on the **resources** needed to participate politically. This component is elaborated in depth in Brady, Verba and Schlozman’s resource model of political participation.⁷ The second dimension in explaining participation (i.e. “they do not want to”) is the will to participate, which is often labelled as political **engagement** and operationalised by: attitudes such as ‘political participation can make a difference’, an interest in politics or a commitment to a specific issue or cause, etc. The third (i.e. “they were not asked”) relates to the **recruitment** of individuals. Recruitment has been found to importantly increase the propensity of individuals to participate; depending on the recruitment networks they belong to. Having the necessary resources and will to engage in political activity does not always guarantee that individuals will, in fact, participate. Being asked or invited to join/act can increase the likelihood that an individual will indeed participate (Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995). Now we will consider each of these dimensions separately.

⁷ In the 1995 article, these three dimensions were put forward within a model explaining participation. However, only the resource dimension was included in the empirically tested model. In later publications, the two other dimensions were incorporated in empirically tested models (Brady, Schlozman & Verba, 1999)

3.2.1 Resources: “because they can’t”

The civic voluntarism model⁸ distinguishes three different resources for political participation: time; income and civic skills. Whereas time and income are relatively straightforward concepts, civic skills might require a bit of elaboration. Civic skills are a variety of practical capacities accumulated in different ways throughout life. Civic skills can be organizational skills such as chairing a meeting or communication skills like writing letters or giving a presentation. One can acquire civic skills through formal education and/or through skill-building activities in various types of organizations, in church or in one’s professional life. These capacities were found to be an important factor in explaining political participation, next to the income and the time available to the individual (Brady, Verba & Schlozman, 1995). The relative importance of these resources (i.e. time-money-civic skills) in explaining participation depends on the type of participation. It was found that both free time and civic skills were strongly related to voting. Participant income levels were a significant influence on the amount of campaign contributions made (not so surprising considering that one needs “to have money in order to contribute money”).

3.2.2 Engagement: “because they don’t want to”

The second part of the answer as to why people would not participate is because, ‘they don’t want to’. This seems almost too obvious, nevertheless the demand-side of participation has not always been considered when searching for factors influencing an individual’s propensity to participate. Whereas focusing on the supply-side of the equation tends to centre on whether the necessary resources are available to overcome the costs of participation (e.g. time and money), or ways to reduce these costs (e.g. networks or different types of participation), the demand side looks at whether individuals will be more inclined to participate when the benefits of participation (e.g. personal satisfaction) are greater. The demand-side has been conceived in various ways: factors that amplify the rewards of participation, for example: the perception of political efficacy ; ideological profiles ; and political knowledge (Reef & Knoke, 1999). Several studies have found that individuals are more likely to participate if they feel that their participation would make a difference (Almond & Verba, 1963; Campbell et al., 1960; Conway, 2000; Matthews & Prothro, 1966), and/or if they care and are knowledgeable about politics (Conway, 2000; Matthews & Prothro, 1966). Additionally, individuals with a specific partisan preference tend to participate more than individuals without one, other things being equal (Conway, 2000; Campbell et al., 1954; Campbell et al., 1960; Dalton, 2002; Mathews & Prothro, 1966; Schussman & Soule, 2005).

⁸ Before the civic voluntarism model, the SES model was the most used model explaining political participation. The SES model explained political participation on the basis of an individual’s income, occupation, and, most importantly, education level. Although the SES model offers considerable empirical power in predicting political participation, the model was criticized as being apolitical, non-theoretical and overly simplistic (Schlozman, 2002; Leighley, 1995). In spite of the critiques of the SES model, socio-economic variables are included in all models explaining political participation, and continue to be amongst the most important predictors of participation.

3.2.3 Recruitment: “because they weren’t asked”

The final component of the civic voluntarism model is recruitment. This component proposes that when individuals are asked to participate, or have intensive contacts with individuals whom are connected to the political participation process, they are more likely to participate because of these recruitment networks. Research on the mobilisation of voters in elections has shown that political parties have a very important recruiting effect on individual participation (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993). Not only do political parties exert a mobilising influence, research has found that relatives, friends, neighbours and colleagues, amongst others, also recruit persons for participation. Importantly, though not surprisingly, the people approached by recruiters tend to have the profiles of individuals with already a high potential of participating (Brady et al., 1999).

3.2.4 Control Variables

Brady, Verba and Schlozman, like most political participation researchers, include a number of control variables in their civic voluntarism model to capture some of the individual’s characteristics that do not fall within the three dimensions described above, yet which do influence political participation. Those most often included are sex and age (Brady, et al., 1995; Martinez, 2005). Research has found women to participate less politically than their male counterparts, and has observed that the middle-aged are more politically active than young adults or elderly. Even so, these findings are not consistent in all forms of political participation: women for instance do not vote significantly less than men, nor do young people contribute less to campaigns than their elders (Schlozman, 2002).

4 TRANSPLANTING THE MODEL: FROM AN INDIVIDUAL'S PARTICIPATION IN A WESTERN COUNTRY TO AN ORGANISATION'S PARTICIPATION IN AN AID-DEPENDENT SETTING

4.1 Political Participation of Collective Actors

In current development rhetoric, an active role is foreseen for 'civil society'. Although many diverging definitions exist,⁹ civil society is generally seen as comprising organisations, albeit with varying degrees of institutionalisation.¹⁰ The emphasis is most definitely not placed on the individual/citizen. Confronting 'civil society participation logic' with theories of (individual) participation therefore requires adapting models of individual participation to the participation of collective actors. The definition of political participation, as put forward by Barnes and Kaase, can easily be broadened to include civil society participation by replacing 'individual citizens' with 'actors', rendering the definition of political participation as follows: *political participation includes all voluntary activities by actors intended to influence either directly or indirectly political choices at various levels of the political system* (adapted from Barnes & Kaase, 1979, p.59). Three fields of literature, namely interest group research; social movement and non-profit sector research, will be used to supplement existing research on collective actors to develop a modified model explaining political participation.¹¹

4.2 Adapting the Model

In our opinion, the same three categories (i.e. resources, engagement and recruitment) can usefully be included in explaining why CSOs do (or do not) participate politically. We will now focus separately on each of the three dimensions, and modify each to an organisational frame or context.

4.2.1 Resources: "because they can't"

Transposing the resource dimension from an individual to an organizational context does not prove too difficult as the logic behind the lack of resources potentially constraining individual participation also applies to organisations. Therefore, the adapted model also hypothesizes that an organisation faced with a lack of financial resources, time or human capital (e.g. educational level) will be less likely, other things being equal, to participate politically. To operationalize these organisational resources, we now turn to the literature on interest groups, social movements¹² and non-profit organisations. Organisations' resources are used in explaining the emergence or sur-

⁹ For definitions of civil society, see Hadenius & Ugglä, 1996; Foley & Edwards, 1998; and the PRS source book (Tikare et al. , 2002).

¹⁰ Although the PRS source book focuses on the participation of civil society organisations, the participation of individuals is not completely overlooked. Nevertheless, the type of individual participation foreseen is of a very different nature than in classical participation research. There is no reference made to voting, contacting public officials nor protests or other forms of political action. Once again, the technocratic nature of participation in PRS becomes clear. Participation is not seen as a political right (i.e. to express one's political preferences to the policy maker), but rather as a technocratic tool to get information on local-level realities to the policy maker.

¹¹ Various scholars have advised that the divisions between these three disciplines should not stand in the way of learning from the other disciplines. "Overall there is substantial common ground in conceptual definitions of public interest groups, social movement organizations and non-profit advocacy organizations. Most of the divergence comes from differing research strategies and questions. (...) Thus we treat as variables some phenomena that other scholars would use to define subsets of advocacy organisations, such as tactics, strategy, scope, organizational form and targets. (...) The compartmentalization of research within sub-fields and disciplines means that core ideas and findings go unnoticed by scholars studying similar phenomena. In addition, scholars tend to focus on a small subset of advocacy organizations carrying biases of overemphasising the distinctiveness of interest groups, social movement organizations and non-profits (Andrews & Edwards, 2004, p.500).

¹² One of the most prominent theoretical schools in social movement research since the 1970's is resource mobilization. Basically, the theory contends that movements emerge when activists are able to mobilize important resources and pre-existing social networks behind a cause (Guidry et al., 2000). Pre-existing social and organizational resources were found to be important in explaining social movement emergence and mobilization (Cress & Snow, 1996). Nevertheless, Cress and Snow stated that, surprisingly, given the centrality of the concept little progress had been made in anchoring resources empirically or in creating conceptual clarity on what resources should be taken into account (Cress & Snow, 1996).

vival of social movements (Snow et al., 2004), the different forms of non-profit organizations (Barr et al., 2005), and the activity of interest groups (Edwards & Andrews, 2004).

To operationalise financial resources, many researchers have used the organization's budget as an indicator (Lavalle et al., 2005; Guo & Acar, 2005). Other studies use an index based on the material resources available to the organization (Cress & Snow, 1996). In our study, we have opted to use both.¹³

The time available to an individual, as a necessary resource for participation, can find its equivalent in the availability of professional staff within the organization. An organization that depends exclusively on voluntary personnel is less likely to have the time at its disposal to participate in political action than one with paid staff who can.

The third element in the civic voluntarism model are the individuals' civic skills (e.g. writing letters, presenting a proposal, etc.). These skills are generally obtained through education and/or work in an organization. The educational level of an individual was operationalized by asking the respondent what was the highest level of schooling he/she had reached. In our research, the educational level variable will measure the highest education level of the organisation's board.¹⁴ The education factor in participation will thus be included in the adapted model for organisational participation. The second way of accumulating civic skills is by participating in organisations (e.g. church, commercial or non-political organisations, etc.) or at work. Individuals develop these skills by organising and participating in the processes of the organisation. Skills developed by participating in organisations or in the workplace tend to reinforce initial skill inequalities amongst their members/ employees, in that the highly skilled people will be given more responsibilities, thereby developing more extra skills, than the poorly skilled. Participating in organisations or working therefore does not level out differences in skills, on the contrary. The exception may be the church, which is a fairly egalitarian community organisation. The distribution of skills amongst its members is typically independent of their socio-economic status (Brady et al.; 1995). However, since the unit of analysis in our research is the organisation itself, the civic skills learned by its membership need not be incorporated separately as an explanatory factor.

The relationship between resources and political participation, according to the civic voluntarism model, would be that the more resources an organisation has at its disposal, the more likely political participation will be, other things being equal. However, with PRSP logic there should be no relationship (or a negative relationship, if any) between an organisation's resources and its political participation,¹⁵ since the whole purpose of civil society participation was to incorporate the interests of the poor into the policy cycle.¹⁶

¹³ Nevertheless, we believe that the quality of data on the index of physical assets of an organisation is better than that on its financial budget. This is due to a higher number of missing values on budget information, which is understandable since exact data on an organisation's budget is more complicated than that on its physical infrastructure. Secondly, the tendency for socially desirable answering is less when answering the physical infrastructure questions, given the fact that the interviewer can actually verify, to a large extent, the answers of the respondent. Finally, and most importantly, given the theoretical purpose of explaining participation (e.g. how a lack of resources could, in fact, constrain participation), the type of resources we wish to incorporate into the research include assets relevant to participation, like: a computer, internet, a telephone, a car, a motorcycle or other means of transportation, etc. Therefore, the index of physical assets reflects better the resources relevant for participation than the organisation's budget. Given these three advantages, we rely more on the index of material resources than the organisation's budget. Fortunately, there is a strong correlation between both (Spearman's rho = 0.838).

¹⁴ To compare the educational level among the various organisations, and given the fact that all organisations indicated the Board as the highest authority of the organisation, we opted to record the highest and the average level of schooling of the members of the Board. The hypothesis is that since the Board is the showpiece of the organisation, qualified persons would therefore try to be on the Board or even be pushed into it. Therefore the highest educational level of the organisation's Board can serve as a good proxy for the highest educational level of the whole organisation.

¹⁵ It is assumed that poor peoples' organisations have equal or fewer available resources than do other organisations.

¹⁶ This is not to say that pro-poor interests cannot be represented by organisations that have sufficient resources. Yet, research tends to reveal skewness in what interests and concerns reach the political fora, if indeed participation is skewed in terms of resources (Verba et al., 1993). The link between the policy preferences of an organization and resource availability is beyond the scope of this research.

Table 2: Comparing the civic voluntarism model with the adapted model

Individual participation (Civic voluntarism model)		Organisation's participation (Adapted model)	
Variable	Indicator	Variable	Indicator
Resources		Resources	
Financial Resources	Household income	Financial Resources	Organisation's budget Index of material resources
Time	Hours of individual leisure time	Time	Presence of paid staff
Education	Highest diploma of individual	Education	Highest diploma on the board
Engagement		Engagement	
Political Efficacy	'Can people like you influence public policy through participation?'	Political Efficacy	'Can civil society organisations like yours influence public policy?'
Political Ideology	Partisan preferences	Political Ideology	Partisan preferences
Recruitment		Recruitment	
Direct Recruitment	'Were you invited to participate?'	Direct Recruitment	Contact with an organisation from the PRSP council
Indirect Recruitment	/	Indirect Recruitment	Contact with a PRS donor
Control Variables		Control Variables	
Gender	Male/Female	Organisational Type	Level of organisation
Age	Years	Age of the Organisation	Number of years it exists

4.2.2 Engagement: "because they don't want to"

An actor's perception of the efficacy of political participation can influence his intention to participate (Almond & Verba, 1963; Campbell et al., 1960; Conway, 2000; Matthews & Prothro, 1966). Why would any actor participate if he does not believe that there is a potential benefit to participation? If an actor, therefore, believes that a political action enhances the pursuit of a specific goal, his propensity to participate will be greater, other things being equal, than that of an actor who believes his participation will be useless. We will, therefore, test whether the perceived efficacy of an actor's political participation - in a CSO in the adapted model - increases the likelihood of its participation.

The previous hypothesis explains the intentions of organisations to participate when incentives to do so are present. However, there can also be strong incentives not to participate. A situation could arise where an organisation might actually stand to lose by participating, rather than simply not gaining anything. This could be the case for organisations with a pronounced ideological profile very incongruent

with what is perceived as the ideological profile of the organising actors of the participatory council. In such cases, CSOs might fear losing credibility with their (grass roots) supporters (Gidron et al., 1999). The hypothesized relationship is that the more incongruent the ideological profile of the organisation with the organizers' profile,¹⁷ the less likely the organisation will tend to participate.

4.2.3 Recruitment: "because they weren't asked"

In the context of our research, recruitment networks could be translated into organisations' contacts with actors related to the PRSP participation process. In the Honduran setting, the participatory meetings, in fact, are 'open-access' activities, as are most other forms of political participation (e.g. like letter-writing to political representatives, protests, etc.). The PRSP progress report meetings are 'open-access'. Everybody can attend but only some are invited to participate, either formally or informally. Formally, it is the responsibility of the twelve CSOs on the PRS council,¹⁸ each representing a certain sector of civil society, to invite organisations of their sector to participate in the participatory councils. Informally, other PRS-related actors (i.e. international donors or technical units within the Ministries) may recruit organisations into the PRS process by informing them about the process, or by strengthening their perception of the potential effectiveness of their participation. These 'PRS'-related actors, as we will henceforth label them in our research, will be operationalised as those actors typically involved in the 'new PRS game'. First of all, the members of the PRS council are contacts of formal or direct recruitment. Secondly, a number of international donors¹⁹ that value the PRS process and especially the participation process can be seen as informal or indirect recruitment contacts. Therefore, the hypothesized relationship between direct (and/or indirect) recruitment contacts²⁰ and participation will be that the more recruitment contacts are made, the more likely it is that the organisations contacted will join and participate.

4.2.4 Control variables

Empirical research on organisations often uses variables that can be compared to the control variables used in survey research on individuals (e.g. sex, age, etc.). We found that existing research generally used the type, size and age of the organisation as control variables (Barret et al., 2005; Guo & Acar, 2005; Lavallo et al., 2005).

The first control variable is the type of the organisation, which has been operationalised in our research as the organizational level. First-level organisations do not have any other organizations as their members, whereas higher-level organizations are essentially

¹⁷ The ideological profile of the organisation was measured in several ways: The respondent was asked to indicate the programme/ideas of which political party the organisation could subscribe to most. Moreover, he/ she was asked to situate him/herself on a left- right continuum (Robinson et al., 1972). Furthermore, the respondent's active personal support for a political candidate during the last national elections (November 2005) was noted. All three measures were tested for, though only one (partisan preferences) is mentioned in Table 2.

¹⁸ The PRS council, or the 'Consejo Consultivo de la Estrategia para la Reducción de la Pobreza', consists of twelve representatives from civil society and five representatives from the government. Two representatives from the international donor community attend the meetings as observers. The twelve civil sectors are: children & youth; women; the disabled; the elderly; domestic ngo's; social economy; patronatos; farmers; labour movements; formal economy; small and median enterprises and municipalities. Regional representatives often participate but do not have a formal vote.

¹⁹ The categorizing of international donors as 'PRS donors' was based on the centrality of 'PRS participation' in their programme documents as well as distilled from interviews with various donors, CSOs and government actors.

²⁰ Recruitment contacts are measured as the out-degree of a CSO in the network (relations between CSOs and donors/ prsp council). The concept of outdegree refers to the number of ties an actor (CSO) has established with another actor (in this case international donors / the PRS council) (Diani, 1995). Apart from contact itself (as a dichotomous yes/no variable) with actors, we have also taken into account the frequency of the contact with those actors.

umbrella bodies. Lavallo found coordinating organisations to be more inclined to participate politically than other types of organizations (Lavallo et al., 2005). The PRS source book has also pointed out the important role of these organisations as intermediaries between government and grass roots organisations.

The second control variable is the age of the organisation, expressed in the number of years that the organization has existed. The number of years since the organisation was founded is introduced as a continuous variable.²¹ Interest group research has found a substantial increase in the number of certain types of CSOs in Western countries since the 1960s (e.g. public interest, civil rights and social welfare organisations) and hypothesized that given their specific profile they might be more inclined to participate politically. These organisations are, nevertheless, still relatively under-represented in terms of political participation.²² We wish, therefore, to check in the Honduran setting for any relationship between the date of an organisation's foundation and its tendency to participate politically.

²¹ Furthermore, we have checked two more alternative hypotheses regarding the organizational age. First, the organisation's year of foundation is also introduced into the model as a dummy variable, coding 0/1 for foundations before or after the transition to democracy, which we have set as 1982 in Honduras' case. Organisations created in times of democratization are theorized to be more inclined to participate politically (Lavallo et al., 2005). Additionally, a third variable is also tested, namely an ordinal variable introducing Hurricane Mitch as an important landmark in the history of CSOs in Honduras. However, neither of the age variables were found to be significant

²² Scholzman found that although there has been an increase in the number of these type of organisations since the 1960's, there has not been an increased participation of these 'new public interest groups' in the US pressure or lobbying system, thereby not altering the bias towards business groups (Scholzman, 1984).

5 METHODOLOGY²³

The research is conducted using survey data gathered between January and September 2006 on 100 CSOs in Honduras. The research set up required a comparison of ‘participating organisations’ with ‘non-participating organisations’. A non-stratified random sample of organizations would probably have led to the selection of only a limited number of participating organisations, therefore a theoretical sampling frame was used. First, a random sample of fifty organisations was taken from a sub-population of participating organisations. Subsequently, a random sample of fifty organisations from the population of non-participating organisations was drawn.

Let’s start with the construction of the population of participating CSOs. Listings were obtained from the last participatory evaluation meeting of the PRSP progress report. These meetings were held in six different regions (Table 3). Four of the six regions were incorporated into the research. A random sample of each of the regional participant’s lists was taken, but checking on the number of organisations from each region, so that the relative weight of each of the regions is comparable to that in the original list of participants.

Table 3: The four selected regions in the sample

City of consultation	Number of CSOs in the selected regions	Percentage in population	Number participating CSOs in sample	Percentage per region of participating CSOs (sample)
Santa Rosa de Copan	127	28.9%	17	30.9%
La Ceiba	85	19%	12	21.8%
Tegucigalpa	171	38.95%	20	36.4%
Choluteca	56	12.7%	6	10.9%
Total	439	100%	55	100%

Why those four regions? The research design set out to incorporate variations between the different regions. The chosen indicators were: the location of the region; the poverty profile²⁴ of the region; and the involvement of regional CSOs²⁵ in the PRSP process. Moreover, we have checked for differences in political preferences²⁶ in the regions (Table 4).

²³ At the outset of this methodological section, it would be worth stressing that at certain points in setting up the empirical research we were confronted with methodological pitfalls and constraints compelling us to trade-off methodological rigour in favour of staying close to the original research question. Since there is little empirical research on the political participation of CSOs to build on, one occasionally needs to balance the needs of external validity against the potential relevance of the research outcome.

²⁴ Based on Datos del Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda 2001 – INE

²⁵ Based on various interviews with CSO representatives.

²⁶ Based on election results of congressional and presidential elections between 1980- 2005 (Tribunal Supremo Electoral de Honduras).

Table 4: Comparison of the six regions

Region	Relatively rich /poor	Centre/ periphery	PRSP involvement of the region	Political preferences
Choluteca	Poor	Periphery	Low	Mixed
Copan	Poor	Periphery	High	Mixed
Tegucigalpa	Rich	Centre	High	Mixed
La Ceiba	Rich	Centre	Low	Mixed
Tocoa	Poor	Periphery	High	Mixed
San Pedro Sula	Rich	Centre	Low	Mixed

Given that there are no readily available, all-encompassing lists of Honduran CSOs, a universe had to be constructed. An initial review of data sources provided us with a CSO database, based on a civil society mapping exercise²⁷ organised by the civil society ad hoc committee in September 2000-March 2001 (Espinoza, 2003). This mapping exercise provided a directory of CSOs based on what organisations could be found in a variety of documents. In order to construct that universe of active CSOs in Honduras, information from various sources was compiled into one listing. Among the sources used were: listings from the Ministry of Governance and Justice of registries of organizations which had obtained the ‘personeria juridica’ from 1990 through 2001; listings from bi- and multilateral donors of organizations they had worked with or had been in contact with; and listings from umbrella organisations of their members.

For constructing our population of non-participating organizations, we started from this mapping exercise. These organisations were segregated according to regions with only organisations from the four selected regions (i.e. Choluteca, Copan, La Ceiba and Tegucigalpa) retained. However, using only this mapping exercise as a basis for our population would create population biases.²⁸ For example, although interest group research very often uses state registries of tax exemptions (Schlozman & Tierney 1986; Knoke, 1990) and/or other types of government registrations (Barr et al., 2005) as population listings, this can be problematic. Some scholars have pointed out that there are, in fact, a number of biases related to this manner of constructing a population. In their research, they compared the population obtained through the government listings method with that obtained through the triangulation method and found important differences between the two, namely a large organisation bias possibly combined with an ideological bias (Caldeira & Wright, 1990). Other scholars (i.e. Andrews & Edwards, 2004) concur with these findings in arguing for a triangulation of sources (e.g. press, government, other organisations, etc.) when constructing a population of CSOs.

²⁷ The definition of civil society used in this mapping exercise is the definition offered by the Johns Hopkins Center “Estudio comparativo del tercer sector”, which defines civil society organisations as those displaying a number of common traits (i.e. they are organisations, non-governmental, self-governing, non-profit distributing and voluntary). For the remainder of the study the same definition of civil society will be used (Espinoza, 2003).

²⁸ A first possible bias in only using the mapping exercise (which was compiled in 2000-2001) is, of course, time. Organisations founded after 2001 are not included in the sample. Furthermore, not only fairly young organisations could be discriminated against. As ministries’ records on registries of organisations begin from 1990, there could be a bias against organisations founded before 1990. However, this could already be countered, to some extent, by the fact that listings were also obtained from other sources, like umbrella organisations and donors. A second possible bias in this type of directory might be an ideological one. This bias can originate from the fact that the official listing(s) from the ministries list organizations that have obtained a legal status. To obtain this status, they need to be recognized by the state. It does not require a lot of imagination to come up with the possibility that the least government-friendly organisations might not be included in this list. Moreover, various organizations in Honduras have complained of not being able to obtain the ‘personeria juridica’ based on subjective government objections, or that organisations have been threatened with losing their legal status if they do not comply with certain prescriptions (such as a number of Gay and Lesbian organisations) (Amnesty International, 2005). This bias will not so easily be countered by the inclusion of listings offered by donors and organisations. Donors and CSOs might not be willing to jeopardise their relations with the government or their own legal status respectively. Apart from the (potential) ideological bias created by the ‘personeria juridica’ listings, these listing also induce a resource bias, as it might be costly, both in terms of time, human and financial resources, to obtain legal status. Once again, the alternative sources of CSOs can remedy this bias to a degree. This concise review makes clear that for our research purposes two very important biases exist in the mapping exercise, namely time and ideological bias.

Therefore, in our research we have used a triangulation of different sources: a review of newspapers;²⁹ the internet; an inquiry in the municipality of the largest “city” in the region; and finally, each of the respondents from the participating sample was asked to enumerate the CSOs with which they are in contact.³⁰ All of these CSO listings were then combined with the listings from the original mapping exercise to constitute our universe of CSOs. It can be argued that the press sample from three different domestic newspapers is an especially good way to tackle the time bias of the previous population. Furthermore, given that newspapers in Honduras are not without ideological tendencies, news coverage may be somewhat one-sided (Leyva, 2002). Regardless of the content of the articles though, even the more controversial organisations are mentioned in newspapers, and will thus be incorporated into our listing, thereby mitigating the ideological bias. We do realise that this constructed universe of CSOs is hardly equivalent to ‘the’ civil society in Honduras or, better yet, to civil society in those regions under review. However, we also believe that our methodology of constructing the population, compared to similar empirical CSO research, is definitely not less accurate, encompassing or more biased than other authors who often choose only one of the above methods. Nevertheless, it needs to be acknowledged that the external validity of our results is not without reservations, and therefore particular caution should be given not to extrapolate our results to ‘Honduran civil society’ in general. As was done with participating CSOs, a random sample was drawn from each of the four regions. A total of 99 organisations were interviewed. The survey response rate was high (i.e. 75%),³¹ thanks to an active approach³² to eliminate non-responses. The duration of the interviews ranged between half an hour and two hours. The way in which the various organisations were approached was uniform to the extent possible (e.g. the telephone conversation, the introduction, the same interviewer for all interviews, etc.).

²⁹ Three different newspapers (i.e. El Heraldo, La Tribuna and La Prensa) were screened to capture differences in ideological tendencies as well as differences between regions.

³⁰ The snowball method is a well-established technique to construct a population (Lavallo et al., 2005)

³¹ Academic practice differs on whether or not to include untraceable respondents in the non-response rates. Our 75 % response rate is based on treating untraceable organisations as non-responses. All organisations that we were able to trace agreed to participate in the research. Therefore, some researchers would present this as a 100 % response rate.

³² For participating organisations, we had the names and sometimes the telephone and/or identity card numbers of the members that participated. For the non-participating organisations, we often only had the name of the organisation to go by and the source where we found their name (e.g. a newspaper, contact person, internet address, etc.). Tracking organisations was not always easy (e.g. the lack of address, telephone number, and/or members names). Some names on the lists of participating organisations were not readable, but as the participants also needed to record their identity card number thereon, inquiries at the register of births sometimes solved the problem. Furthermore, inquiries in the local city hall, the local ‘pulperia’ or other key organisations helped us track down some of the less visible organisations. Twenty-five organisations remained untraceable. It goes without saying that the face-to-face interview approach dramatically heightened respondents’ willingness to dedicate time to answering our questions. None of the organisations that were traced and contacted refused to participate in the interview. One respondent did agree to the interview, but said however that their organisation had recently ceased to exist.

6 RESULTS

6.1 The dependent variable: intention to participate

The theoretical sample was constructed on the basis of participation in the last participatory meetings organised for reviewing the third PRSP progress report. However, the problem with measuring participation is that for a number of variables there needs to be a time lag to connect them meaningfully. For example, perceptions of political efficacy cannot be measured after (actual) political participation. The same goes for contacts with recruitment actors. In order to relate the perceived efficacy of participation or recruitment contacts with participation, the former needs to precede the latter. If not, the explanatory factors may well be the result of the political participation. Our survey was conducted almost a year after the previous participation experience. As we cannot examine previous participation, we inquired about organisations' intentions to participate again (or not) when a similar meeting would be held. The phrasing of the question was made as precise and concrete as possible and was loaded³³ to limit socially-desirable answering. Almost forty percent of the organisations surveyed said that they would not participate in any future (similar) meetings to review the PRS Progress Report, sixty percent indicated that they would.³⁴ The intention to participate variable was to be cross-checked with the attendance lists of the next participatory meetings organised for the fourth Progress Report. However, government changes in 2006 resulted in the PRS being rewritten, and so no further Progress Reports will be produced on the previous PRSP. There is, however, the chance that a nationwide, civil society participatory process will be held to review the revised PRSP. It is our intention to use data on participation from these fora to cross-check intentions to participate with actual participation.

Thus, in our research an attempt is made to explain the intention (or none) to participate in PRS participatory fora. The dependent variable is a dichotomous variable, with zero indicating no intention to participate and 1 indicating an intention to participate. Given the nature of the dependent variable, a logistic regression model is applied. The adapted civic voluntarism model is used to explain participation. To check for the multi-collinearity of independent variables, correlation analysis was performed.

³³The question asked was, 'Nowadays many meetings are organised for all sorts of purposes. People cannot always attend all meetings because of any number of reasons. If next week, in Tegucigalpa, a meeting would be organised in order to evaluate the Fourth Progress Report of the PRSP, would you attend this meeting?'

³⁴ Although there is a significant positive correlation between previous participation and the intention to participate ($\gamma = 0.524$), it is not as strong as we would have expected. Many of the organisations that did indeed participate indicated that they would not participate in the next time. In interviews, some said that they wouldn't go because they did not find it useful, others because they had only participated in the previous meeting by chance.

6.2 Testing the model

The model contains eight variables (Table 5). The analysis finds that four variables significantly explain CSOs' intentions to participate in PRS participatory meetings. They are: material resources; educational level; direct recruitment contacts; and the organization's type. Since they are categorical variables, each level of the variable must be interpreted in relation to the reference category to provide meaningful results.

Table 5: Binary Logistic Regression Analysis of the Adapted Model

Dimension	Variables	Adapted Model		
		B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Resources	Material resources index**		,039	
	material resources index (moderate)**	-2,059	,011	,128
	material resources index (high)*	-1,357	,098	,257
	Availability of staff	,001	,825	1,001
	Education *		,056	
	Education (secondary)**	1,800	,044	6,052
	Education (university) **	1,888	,022	6,608
Engagement	Perception cso influence on public policy		,300	
	perception cso influence on public policy (moderate)	-1,273	,153	,280
	perception cso influence on public policy (high)	-,701	,471	,496
Recruitment	Contact PRS council (yes)***	1,773	,005	5,888
	Contact PRS donor frequency	-,011	,912	,989
Control	Year foundation (after 1982)	,739	,215	2,095
	Organisational level (high) **	1,228	,046	3,414
	Constant	-,767	,470	,465

Nagelkerke R Square = 0.421 Percentage correctly predicted 78.1

* = significant at 0.1 level ** = significant at 0.05 level *** = significant at 0.01 level

We find that the odds of a higher-level organization intending to participate are more than three times greater than those of a first-level organization intending to participate. This finding seems to corroborate the importance of umbrella organisations in the participation process, as was suggested by the PRS source book that higher level organisations should play an important role as intermediaries between national government and local level stakeholders.

Furthermore, we find that the educational level of an organization as well as recruitment contacts with the central PRSP council are of crucial importance in explaining intention to participate.

The odds of a secondary-or university education level organization intending to participate are six times those of a primary educational level organization participating. Nevertheless, we find that the variable 'educational level' on the aggregate is only borderline significant (at the 0.056 level). We believe that the relation between educational level and participation should be conceptualised as a treshhold. We find there to be no significant difference between secondary or universitary education in explaining intention to participate. Once a primary level of education is surpassed the educational level is not very important in explaining intention to participate.

Finally, the odds of an organization with central PRSP council contact intending to participate are almost six times higher than those of an organization with no contacts. This finding highlights the importance of networks for recruiting CSOs into participation, especially contacts with the PRS council. Remarkably the data shows no recruitment by the ' PRS ' donors.

The relationship between resources and intention to participate is somewhat suprising. The odds of an organization with medium resource availability intending to participate are lower than those of an organization with few resources available. Moreover, a bivariate analysis of the relation between material resources and intention to participate indicates that there is no clear relation between resources and participation.

As was clear from the logistic regression, the perception of civil society's influence on public policy does not seem to have a significant influence on the intention to participate, which is, in itself, quite a remarkable finding.

6.3 Comparison with previous findings

Summarizing the analytical results of the adapted model, we find that high-level organizations, organizations with high-levels of education and those that maintain contacts with the PRS council are more likely to intend to participate than other organizations. Basically, in explaining the intention to participate the type of organization, its educational level and its relational ties with other groups matter. Furthermore, we find an ambiguous inverse relationship between material resources and the intention to participate, although this finding should be interpreted with caution. We can state, therefore, that more resources do not increase the odds of an organization participating. These findings concur with one of the rare studies on the same subject, albeit at the local level (i.e. Lavalle, Acharya and Houtzager's research into CSO participation in Sao Paolo's participatory councils). When juxtaposing the findings of their research with ours, remarkable parallels appear. Both studies find that neither the age of the organization,

the type of issues it is involved in significantly explain participation (or, as is the case in the adapted model, “the intention to participate”). On the other hand, both models find the type of organization, as well as relational ties to be important factors in explaining participation. Nevertheless, whereas institutional embeddedness³⁵ (especially contacts with political parties) was the variable explaining participation in Sao Paulo, in Honduras direct recruitment contacts with the PRS council were crucial. Overall, the parallel findings of both analyses, though significant differences do exist, seem to suggest some consistency of factors explaining the political participation of CSOs in participatory fora.

³⁵ In our research, we have checked for institutional embeddedness, as well as the nature of issues in which the organisations are involved. Neither variable significantly contributed to explaining

Table 6: Comparison of results of the adapted model with the model explaining CSO participation in Sao Paulo (Lavalle et al., 2005)

CSO participation in Sao Paulo (Lavalle et al, 2005)		CSO participation in Honduras (Adapted model)		Conclusions endorsed by both studies
Variable	Relation with political participation	Findings	Relation with political participation	
Budget	X	Budget	-	'Poorer organizations do not participate less'
/		Education	+	
Institutional Embeddedness	+	Institutional Embeddedness	X	'ties matter'
/		Direct Recruitment Contacts	+	
Organisational type	+	Organisational type	+	'coordinators (higher level organizations) participate more'
Organisational Age	X	Organisational Age	X	Organisational age does not influence political participation
Issue Areas	X	Issue Areas	X	
Type of Participatory Fora	+	(Type of Participatory Fora)		

Source: Lavalle et al., 2005

Further research on this topic is needed to clarify how exactly the relational ties and financial resources of these organisations matter for their political participation.

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