

# Civil Society Organizations' Experiences of Participative Environmental Mainstreaming: A Political Systems Perspective of a Regional European Polity

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## ABSTRACT

This paper addresses a lacuna in the literature on environmental policy integration by exploring civil society organizations' (CSOs) experiences of participative environmental mainstreaming – a policy imperative to embed environmental concerns in all aspects of policy-making. A raft of international treaties and laws require this to be operationalized through knowledge exchange and critical engagement between governing elites and exogenous groups. Findings reveal how CSOs' participation is shaped by electoral politics, party dynamics, veto players and strategic bridging. Respondents also questioned whether mainstreaming is more concerned with legitimation, performativity and the appearance of participative policy-making than with outcomes. The wider contribution of the study is three-fold: it reveals the issues and challenges facing CSOs, it underlines the need for adaptive engagement strategies and it shows the contingent nature of state attempts to foster civil society participation in environmental policy-making. © 2016 The Authors *Environmental Policy and Governance* published by ERP Environment and John Wiley & Sons Ltd

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## Introduction

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**N**OTWITHSTANDING THEIR SHARED CONCERN WITH FOSTERING THE ENGAGEMENT OF EXOGENOUS GROUPS IN POLICY-making, academia has largely regarded the international phenomena of environmental mainstreaming (EM) and state decentralization as discrete issues. This lacuna is addressed in the following analysis which examines civil society organizations' (CSOs') experience of the opportunities and barriers to participation in environmental policy-making at the meso-level in the UK. In doing this, a political systems perspective (Easton, 1953, 1965a, 1965b) is presented, as the discussion considers how EM is forged by party dynamics and the associated rescaling of electoral politics. This is an appropriate locus of enquiry because of the alignment of

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three factors: the global trend of state decentralization (or ‘devolution’) (Treisman, 2007), legal imperatives on environmental protection (Birnie and Boyle, 2009) and the increasing currency of environmental mainstreaming (cf. UN RES 66/288, 2012).<sup>1</sup> Resurgent interest in EM has also been triggered by ‘the recent global financial crisis, [such that] mainstreaming is emerging as an instrument for rationalising finances and policies and for responding to the failure of sectoral approaches to trans-sectoral and cross-cutting issues’ (Gazzola, 2014: 12).

In definitional terms, EM is part of the environmental policy integration agenda<sup>2</sup> (Jordan and Lenschow, 2010). It denotes a proactive and holistic approach to policy-making. Specifically, ‘the informed inclusion of relevant environmental concerns into the decisions of institutions that drive national, local and sectoral development policy, rules, plans, investment and action’ (Dalal-Clayton and Bass, 2009: 11). This requires that environmental or climate policy goals need to be taken into account in all aspects of policy-making, including ‘other policy fields, with inconsistencies between sectoral goals being recognised and addressed’ (Brouwer *et al.*, 2013: 135; see also Runhaar *et al.*, 2014: 234).

Here we are concerned with a specific dimension to EM, namely civil society participation. Mason (2000: 78) cogently describes the underlying imperatives attached to participatory EM: ‘aside from any normative commitment to democratising policymaking, [it is based on] the pragmatic acceptance of states that participatory decision-making more effectively generates relevant environmental information and democratic legitimacy’. Aongola (2009: xii) concurs; CSOs are ‘often the real drivers of change on environmental matters helping to generate and spread sustainable options for livelihoods and small businesses’. Yet despite longstanding acknowledgment of the perceived benefits of CSO participation in the UK (notably, as highlighted in the Skeffington Report of 1968, see Shapely, 2014) – and, notwithstanding prominent pressure group policy wins in land-use planning cases (cf. Bryner, 2002; Hewitt and Pendlebury, 2014), overall progress in CSO participation has been mixed at best. The reasons for this are not fully understood, resulting in a clearly stated gap in the extant literature on EM: ‘*there remains a limited understanding of the process of mainstreaming in a governance context and the factors that influence that process on local and regional levels in more developed countries*’ (Haywood *et al.*, 2014: 78, emphasis added).

In part, the foregoing knowledge-gap stems from the fact that EM has largely been applied to international development programmes (e.g. Kok and de Coninck, 2007) or examined in the context of supranational governance and environmental policy-making (e.g. Gilek and Kern, 2015). Considerably less attention has centred on the implications of state decentralization and practice at the meso- (or ‘regional’) level. This is a key knowledge-gap because of what Rodríguez-Pose and Gill (2003: 334) describe as ‘a devolutionary trend [that] has swept the world [... involving widespread] transference of power, authority, and resources to subnational levels of government’ (see also Kettl, 2000). Heller (2001: 132) explains the reasons for this: ‘across the political spectrum, the disenchantment with centralized and bureaucratic states has made the call for decentralization an article of faith. Strengthening and empowering local government has been justified not only on the grounds of making government more efficient but also on the grounds of *increasing accountability and participation*.’

Accordingly, the following discussion responds to this, drawing upon evidence from Wales, a constituent nation of the UK; this study’s research aims are to explore CSOs’ experiences of participative EM at the meso-level and how this is shaped by prevailing electoral politics and party dynamics. The remainder of this paper is structured thus: an overview of the literature on civil society, EM and participation in policy making is followed by a summary of the research context and research methodology. Attention then turns to the findings and their implications, which are discussed in relation to existing empirical work and social theory.

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## Civil Society, EM and Participation in Policy-Making

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In this section, attention first centres on defining ‘civil society’. Following this, the extant work on EM is summarized. The emerging knowledge-gaps are then discussed in relation to three (non-discrete) headings: CSOs, political parties and systemic/socio-cultural factors. In the second half of the paper these then are applied to the data analysis.

<sup>1</sup>This United Nations (UN) resolution calls for: ‘implementation and mainstreaming in the United Nations system as a whole’.

<sup>2</sup>EPI is intended to be an important first order principle to guide the transition to sustainability ... Many academics and policy makers consider EPI to be a policy-making ‘principle’ without reflecting too much on its meaning’ (Jordan and Lenschow, 2010: 147–149).

In definitional terms, 'civil society' here denotes the arena of dialogue and human relations that is connected to, but distinct from, the state, markets and personal or familial sphere (Keane, 1988; Cohen and Arato, 1994; Edwards, 2009). It is a socio-political space of pivotal significance to environmental policy-making because of its potential to counter the dominant power of state institutions, act as a basis for pluralism and be a source of knowledge and expertise (Alexander, 2008).

As noted, EM is part of the environmental policy integration (EPI) agenda. A full account of the rise of EPI is outwith the present purposes. As Jordan and Lenschow (2010: 147) explain: 'it first emerged in the 1990s as a lagged policy response to the perceived need – forcefully expressed in the 1987 Brundtland Report – to systematically connect the seemingly incompatible goals of economic competitiveness, social development and environmental protection, and hence to ensure sustainable development'. What is particularly notable is the limited attention that the EPI literature has given to exogenous participation in public policy-making (cf. Gorla *et al.*, 2010; Von Homeyer *et al.*, 2010; Nilsson and Eckerberg, 2007). It is in this regard that this paper makes a timely contribution.

While extant work on EM has given greater attention to participation, as the following reveals, it possesses its own lacunae. Thus, it covers: the presence of enabling factors (Dalal-Clayton and Bass, 2009; Pasquini *et al.*, 2013), the way EM practices are driven by the perceived severity of the environmental policy challenge, the state's capacity to regulate and the existence of soft incentives (Sietz *et al.*, 2011; Brouwer *et al.*, 2013). In addition, other work has examined EM and the organizational configuration of government (Nunan *et al.*, 2012; Haywood *et al.*, 2014), as well as the way EM is influenced by the unique biogeographical characteristics of a given polity (Aongola, 2009; Pelsler and Letsela, 2012; Gazzola, 2014).

Evidently, the foregoing body of scholarly work leaves a series of knowledge gaps. These are now considered in relation to three areas: civil society, political parties and systemic/socio-cultural factors. As noted, this provides the analytical framework for the discussion of the research findings in the second half of the paper.

### Civil Society Organizations

Existing work presents a typology of CSOs and policy networks that resonates with the contemporary challenges of EM (cf. Marsh and Rhodes, 1992; Winter, 1996; Grant, 1995). Notably, in terms of exogenous engagement this work sets out an 'insider'–'outsider' dyad (Maloney *et al.*, 1994) that underlines how the two groups behave differently. For example, outsiders do not advance their case quietly through bureaucratic processes, but campaign and raise public awareness and support for their positions. Yet what is lacking in this literature is a political systems view – and how insider/outsider status is shaped by electoral politics and party dynamics. Instead, most extant studies view government as apolitical in nature, when the reality is that the type of party elected (and whether, for example, it is interventionist and prioritizes environmental matters – or, is *laissez-faire* in orientation) will shape the political opportunities open to CSOs. In turn, this will influence the success or otherwise of EM.

Of key importance here is governing party turnover – or, the rate at which the party holding executive office in popular elections is voted out and replaced by another. A key danger in one party dominant systems is that the governing party becomes institutionalized (in other words, through longevity in office, for many observers, the party becomes conflated with government *qua* government). This can have negative consequences such as the rise of 'informal politics'. It occurs when a dominant party can 'short-circuit' formal political channels and processes (McClurg and Lazer, 2014) owing to a fuzzy and permeable boundary between institutionalized and non-institutionalized politics (Goldstone, 2003: 2). It is a scenario at odds with the oppositional model of state–civil society relations whereby exogenous criticality of government is maintained (Evans, 1996).

Those not afforded privileged access to government may face a dynamic of decline, a 'downward spiral'. This is because such 'outsider groups' are denied the 'oxygen' of access to elite decision-makers (Dearlove, 1973). However, some view this as advantageous because the 'arms-length' relations associated with outsider status may confer independence (Mansbridge, 1992; Elster, 1998). Not least, this may ward against the negative effects of (neo-)corporatism – or, 'the exclusive relationship between a handful of privileged groups and the state [... such that] There is little competition from rival groups within the various sectors' (Wilson, 1990: 69). Such a scenario can be undemocratic and promote a situation likely to restrict the input of fresh ideas. Allied to this, as Piattoni (2001: 4) observes, it can lead to the more serious situation of clientelism and patronage. This involves 'the trade of votes and other types of partisan support in exchange for public

decisions with divisible benefits' (see also Blakeley, 2001). A further downside is that (neo-)corporatism concentrates power, thereby subordinating those outside elite circles. Yet for others a contrary view prevails. For them (neo-)corporatism can have benign consequences: 'strong state management of networks is required if policy-making is to proceed in a more inclusive manner ... the most effective routes to participatory policy-making may rely heavily on manipulation strategies' (Hudson *et al.*, 2007: 55; see also Kickert *et al.*, 1997). What is unclear, however, is the way this plays out in attempts at EM. This will be returned to in the findings below.

There are further issues and theoretical strands that attach to the 'insider'–'outsider' dyad that are germane to the present exploration of EM. For example, CSOs' proximity and access to power links to resource dependence theory (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Zhan and Tang, 2013) and how resources (*inter alia*, funding and human capital) are relational, form the basis of power and are key to organizational effectiveness. In turn this relates to CSOs' repertoires of contention – or 'action repertoires' (Tilly, 1995: 42): in other words, the means (e.g. direct action, lobbying, public petitions, use of social media) they employ to advance their policy claims on those in power, and whom they chose to engage among the governing elite. The latter consideration is captured by the term 'strategic bridging' and applies to CSOs' lobbying of parliamentarians (Tilly, 1978: 125–133). It resonates with the idea of bridging social capital, a relational resource linked to networks and associative life (Coleman, 1988). Again, the extant literature is silent on how these matters shape EM; a lacuna this study will address.

### Political Parties

A political systems perspective underlines that attention is needed to the hitherto neglected issue of party dynamics in a given polity. As the study findings will reveal, this shapes the opportunities and challenges facing CSOs as they seek to engage with political parties. In short, this is a two-way process. The type of parties present influences the collective incentives for CSOs' political engagement in relation to EM (cf. Finkel *et al.*, 1989: 39). Allied to this, it also determines parties' propensity to engage with exogenous interests. In turn, this shapes a range of factors including the stage in political and policy cycles that civil society groups participate in public policy-making. In other words, whether they are afforded a role in the design/origination of policy – or, post hoc, they are merely consulted on implementation matters. As Klijn and Skelcher (2007: 561) note, the party dynamics of a polity shape engagement, not least because while some parties are disposed to engage CSOs others 'fear that interactive decision making threatens their primacy as decision makers'.

Governing party turnover is also germane to understanding EM because it determines the presence and power of veto players. These are individuals that may be opposed to CSOs' policy demands (owing to factors such as ideology, education, beliefs, alliance with business and so on). They can block CSO demands owing to their office or position. Their power derives from the fact that, when in government (e.g. holding ministerial office) CSOs have no choice but to deal with them when advancing their policy demands (Tsebelis, 1995). While they are present in 'regular' liberal democratic systems, one party dominance (OPD) makes their power particularly significant and challenging. This is because of their comparative longevity in office. Unlike 'regular' democracies, they are not 'swept away' by electoral defeat – but may endure over successive election cycles. Typically they have longer ministerial careers and circulate in the power elite over extended periods.

Parties' propensity to engage with exogenous interests can also be understood in the context of performativity and legitimation: in other words whether there is genuine commitment to civil society input to policy making or whether a process of legitimation applies. This denotes 'communicative actions aimed at managing the public's perception that government actions are effective in promoting their desired ends, whether that is in fact true' (Moore, 2001: 712). It is also captured by the term 'performativity'. This is 'a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition' (Price and Shildrick, 1999: 241). Both strands of theory can be used to explore whether the structures and practices of participative EM are about genuine engagement and knowledge-sharing in a context where power elites are willing to modify their policies in light of critical input from outside – or, as some interviewees' comments suggest (see below), EM is more about government *being seen* to engage CSOs.

### Systemic/Socio-Cultural Factors

A further knowledge-gap stems from the fact that existing studies of EM generally give limited attention to systemic factors such as the effects of constitutionalism on CSOs' participation in policy-making. 'Constitutionalism' here describes the policy-making responsibilities and procedures of different tiers of government and how they interact. This is a curious oversight, one alluded to in Thiel's (2014: 290) study that points to how the rescaling of environmental governance shapes: 'actors' possibilities for bringing their interests to bear on negotiations ... [and is] constitutionally determined' (see also Chaney, 2014). He continues, 'thus far, explanations proposed for scalar reorganization of [... environmental] governance have often been more partial and often have not considered the role of constitutional rules'. The neo-institutionalist literature (cf. Peters, 2012) offers potential to address this lacuna. Yet, even here the environmental policy literature has tended to privilege the national and supranational tiers at the expense of meso-government (see, for example, Buhr *et al.*, 2012).

A further systemic issue is how opaque constitutional arrangements may undermine government accountability (Bingham Powell, 1989). To ward against this, effective monitoring and regulation is required (Richards *et al.*, 2000; Percival and Schroeder, 2009). However, observers of regulatory frameworks note how these too may be influenced by party dynamics in a given political system. In particular, OPD may lead some to question regulators' independence from government: 'distrust amongst government, business and environmental groups ... diverts efforts away from desirable environmental results' (Fiorino, 2006: 7). This perceived loss of impartiality may reduce CSOs' propensity to engage in government policy-making as predicated by EM.

A further systemic factor relates to social capital and civic activism (cf. Putnam *et al.*, 1993; Putnam, 2000) in a given polity. As Shutkin (2000: 77, emphasis added) observes, 'without strong reserves of social capital, neighbourhoods lack the capacity to assess, monitor and prevent environmental harms. In effect, *no one is minding the community.*' Allied to this, recent decades have seen a burgeoning literature on changing societal attitudes to environmental issues (Van Liere and Dunlap, 1980; Tranter, 2014). Extant studies chart how these are shaped by a complex range of factors including formal education (Pooley and O'Connor, 2000) as well as socio-psychological attributes (e.g. world view, ideology and socialization) (Dietz *et al.*, 1998). In turn, these influence citizens' willingness to engage in EM.

A vibrant and engaged civil society lies at the heart of the political vision for EM (e.g. 'we recognize that opportunities for people to influence their lives and future, participate in decision-making and voice their concerns are fundamental ... [this] requires concrete and urgent action. It can only be achieved with a broad alliance of people, governments, civil society and the private sector, all working together to secure the future we want for present and future generations.' UN RES 66/288). Yet in this regard Van Laerhoven (2014: 91) points to a key lacuna in the EM literature, one that validates the current focus on the meso-level: 'it needs to be explored to what extent social capital and learning facilitates the emergence of participatory governance ... for those pushing the agenda of democratic decentralization as a way towards good governance, investing in civil society seems a safe bet'.

In summary, as the foregoing review confirms, there are significant gaps in existing literature related to CSOs' experiences of participative EM at the meso-level and how this is shaped by prevailing electoral politics in liberal democracies. The following discussion will offer an empirically based starting point to address these. First, attention turns to a succinct outline of the research context and methods used.

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### Research Context

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State decentralization (or 'devolution') in 1998–1999 redefined the UK as a quasi-federal state made up of four polities. The (re-)establishment of legislatures for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (circa 1998/1999) has accelerated divergence of the prevailing legal and policy frameworks and governance practices in which environmental non-governmental organizations operate (cf. Birrell, 2012). Crucially, it has meant civil society–state relations have been shaped by territorially specific patterns and processes of meso-level politics and constitutional law associated with devolution. In Wales these have been singular. With regard to meso-level politics the Labour Party has been the main political force (Hopkin *et al.*, 2001).

Over recent decades, at a UK level, the Labour Party has shifted from its 20th century socialist roots to occupy the political centre-ground (sharing much in common with other European social democratic parties) (Thorpe, 2015). In contrast, Welsh Labour has eschewed this. Instead, it has positioned itself as avowedly socialist. Drakeford (2007: 175–176) summarizes the principles that the Party stands for as including: ‘progressive universalism’ (or, ‘an enduring belief in universal rather than only means-tested services’); collectivism (‘cooperation is better than competition’ ... ‘in Wales the collective ownership by individuals of public services, and public assets, matters’); and ‘social justice’ (‘a unifying preference for improving collective voice rather than relying solely on individual choice’).

From securing 58.6% of the vote in the 1945 election, Welsh Labour has since held a majority of Welsh Members of Parliament (and frequently an absolute majority of Welsh votes). Moreover, Labour’s ascendancy is underlined by the fact that, in post-1999 ‘regional’ elections it has always gained the largest share of the vote. This is striking as the singular electoral system in Wales was purposely designed to prevent OPD through a hybrid system whereby two-thirds of National Assembly seats are elected by first-past-the-post votes and the remainder by proportional representation. Yet, notwithstanding this, Labour predominates. This is in contrast to Westminster’s sole reliance on first-past-the-post ballots. In this way the Welsh hybrid system may provide opportunities for opposition parties to combine with CSOs to provide alternative policies in ways that contrast with practices at Westminster.<sup>3</sup> The statistics underline Labour’s dominance. In 1999, the Party won 28 of the 60 seats in the National Assembly for Wales (attaining 37.6% of the vote, 9.4% more than their nearest rivals). In the next three ballots Labour gained half of the seats in the legislature – the same as its three main rivals *combined* (with 40% of the vote in 2003, 32.2% in 2007 and 36.9% in 2011). This electoral record has ensured that Labour has remained in government office since the National Assembly for Wales was created in 1999.<sup>4</sup>

Among the reasons for the Party’s dominance in Wales (compared to Scotland and at a UK level) is the fact that the Party’s principal rival, the Conservative Party, has widely been perceived of as alien to Welsh cultural values; notably, being regarded as an ‘English party’. In consequence, for over a century it has always fared worse in Wales in terms of electoral support than across the border. A second reason is the interplay of class, the Welsh economy and labour market. Notably, industrialization in Wales in the 19th century (with, for example, the emergence of coal, iron, steel, tin and copper industries) was integral to the Party’s development, not only in Wales itself – but in the UK. Leading figures in the Party represented Welsh constituencies and they benefited from the emergence of a strong working class support base that has endured through to the present. In later decades, Labour has been viewed by Welsh voters as a key defender of these industries in the face of what are sometimes perceived of as imposed policies from Westminster (Hopkin *et al.*, 2001).

In terms of the constitutional law associated with devolution, under Schedule 7 of the Government of Wales Act (2006) the National Assembly for Wales has legislative competence to make and pass Acts within areas where Welsh Ministers exercise executive functions. The environment is one such area.<sup>5</sup> However, as in many multi-level and federal systems (Bryner, 2002), the reality is more complex than this suggests. First, the Welsh Government is bound by European Directives. At the time of writing, the scheduled referendum on the UK’s continued membership of the European Union (EU) means that a ‘no’ vote to leave the Union would end this practice. In such a scenario there would almost certainly be a loss of momentum on environmental policy as a considerable amount of policy is shaped by EC Directives. It is also unclear if this were to happen whether the Welsh Government would seek to use its own powers to continue to mirror subsequent EC Directives in its policy programmes on a voluntary basis.

Such issues aside, within the UK the division of powers between central government and the Welsh executive is based on an extensive, complicated and ongoing set of accrued executive functions derived from individual Westminster enactments (‘conferred powers’). This means *de jure* Westminster still retains some control within the broad arena of ‘the environment’. As the following discussion reveals, this creates problems for environmental organizations because the division of responsibility between the two legislatures is often unclear (see, for example, Rawlings, 2003). A further singular aspect of the devolution arrangements is the fact that constitutional law requires Welsh Government ministers to publish a Sustainable Development Scheme setting out how they propose, in the

<sup>3</sup>For example, in theory proportional representation (PR) seats make it easier for smaller, single-issue parties to get elected. However, as this has yet to happen in Wales.

<sup>4</sup>In coalition with the Liberal Democrats and Plaid Cymru in 2000–2003 and 2007–2011, respectively.

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, <https://www.gov.uk/devolution-settlement-wales> [accessed 28 October 2014].

<sup>6</sup><http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/32/section/79> [accessed 30 October 2014].

exercise of their functions, to promote sustainable development. Moreover, it obliges them to publish periodic reports 'containing an assessment of how effective their proposals (as set out in the scheme and implemented) have been in promoting sustainable development' (Government of Wales Act, 2006, s. 79).<sup>6</sup> Importantly, the resulting Scheme makes explicit reference to EM. For example, 'Vision: The Welsh Government is an exemplar organisation in the way that it *mainstreams sustainable development as its central organising principle*' (p. 25); 'Sustainable development will be fully *mainstreamed* as our central organising principle within the lifetime of this Scheme' (p. 26); and 'sustainable development places an emphasis on involving citizens in the decisions that affect them so that they can place an active part in society' (Welsh Government, 2014: 29).

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## Methodology

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This study explores data gathered from 75 semi-structured interviews with managers and members of CSOs in Wales during 2003–2015. These not only include environmental CSOs concerned with safeguarding the biosphere and promoting sustainable living, but, reflecting EM's objective of transforming practice across government, also a purposive sample of organizations spanning a range of policy areas.<sup>7</sup> The interviewees were managers, directors and policy officers with the CSOs. The interviews were carried out by the author and project research assistant. They were based on an interview schedule consisting of core questions developed from leading texts on environmental policy (e.g. Lenshow, 2001; Carter, 2007; Nilsson and Eckerberg, 2007). Semi-structured interviews were particularly suited to the present task because they permitted the use of probes and secondary, supplementary questions (King and Horrocks, 2010). This boosted reliability of the data by enabling the exploration and clarification of the issues and experiences described by participants.

The interviews were conducted in either Welsh or English and lasted approximately 1 h. Data gathering and analysis adhered to established ethical practice; *inter alia*, this extended assurances to participants regarding anonymity, confidentiality and use of research data. Interviews were recorded and selective contemporaneous note-taking was also employed (*inter alia*, to deepen data gathering in relation to core themes and capture non-verbal cues, see Brughna and Varvasovszky, 2000). An inductive coding frame (Sayer, 1992) was employed as the most appropriate means of 'creating meaning in complex data through the development of summary themes or categories from the raw data' (Thomas, 2006: 239).

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## Findings

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The following analysis is structured around three (non-discrete) domains: CSOs, political parties, and systemic and socio-cultural factors. Their wider significance lies in identifying the barriers and challenges to securing the sought-after participative mode of EM – as set out in international policy and law. The themes constitute a 'political systems perspective' on EM and are summarized in Table 1 (see below).

### Civil Society Organizations

The interview data underline the salience of resource dependence theory (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Zhan and Tang, 2013) to EM. Limited resources were cited as a barrier to EM engagement by most CSO interviewees.<sup>8</sup> However, in a manner that frustrates the policy aim of engaging a diversity of interests (Welsh Government, 2006: 39), this issue had a disproportionately adverse impact on smaller organizations. Many referred to what they saw as a lack of

<sup>7</sup>Environment 8, arts 2, equalities 5, housing 4, agriculture 5, transport 2, health/social care 3, economic/community development 4, education 2, advice 5, sport 3, misc. 14.

<sup>8</sup> $n = 62$ .

Contingent factor	Effect on participative environmental mainstreaming
<b>Civil society organizations</b>	
Resources	Limited resources act as a barrier to EM engagement. This case study shows how the issue can be compounded by constitutional issues of policy competency undermining accountability.
Human capital/capacity	Skills/human capital cited as key issue affecting CSOs' ability to engage in EM.
Strategic bridging	CSOs must deal with key individuals over successive electoral cycles (OPD greatly increases power of incumbents).
Neo-corporatism/resource dependency	CSOs may be forced into ever closer relationship with party over successive electoral cycles (through neo-corporatist measures such as government-sponsored policy networks, state funding, etc.). Exacerbated under OPD.
Trust	Dominant/electorally strong parties under less pressure to compromise – more likely to put party interest first.
Action repertoires/strategic coordination	Change of governing party catalyst for shifts in CSOs' repertoire of contention/heightened accountability (absent under OPD). Greater need for alliance building to counter power of dominant parties (especially under OPD).
Informal/extra-parliamentary politics	CSOs' critical engagement with government routinely takes place outside legislative channels through internal party contacts/networks (reduces accountability/transparency; exacerbated under OPD).
<b>Political parties</b>	
Collective incentives	Presence of dominant/electorally strong parties distorts collective incentives for CSOs to engage opposition parties. These are much diminished – they are unlikely to form future government. Incentive of future policy gains lessened/removed.
Legitimation/performativity	Raises questions – are attempts at environmental mainstreaming about genuine engagement with CSOs – or managing the perception of participation and government responsiveness?
Veto players	Presence of dominant/electorally strong parties limits membership of political elite. Resultant (re-)circulation of elite heightens the significance of veto players – they have enduring influence/less likely to lose ministerial office through electoral defeat. Situation exacerbated under OPD.
Blurred party–civil society boundaries	Overlapping membership of movements and political parties. CSOs' criticality of government may be lessened with presence of electorally strong/dominant party.
<b>Systemic/socio-cultural factors</b>	
Constitutional law	Opaque constitutional division of policy competencies undermines government accountability and operates as a barrier to EM as CSOs are uncertain which legislature to engage on given issues.
Regulatory regime	Ineffective regulation undermines accountability/reduces CSOs' propensity to engage government via EM structures and procedures.
Party institutionalization	The result of extended incumbency/'normalization' and strengthening of relationships and co-dependency norms though interaction over successive electoral cycles. Significant risks and costs (declining criticality/lack of openness/innovation, etc.) arise from party system institutionalization. Exacerbated under OPD.
Party politicization	The conflation of incumbent party with government as institution – thus to criticize government is seen as criticism of the party <i>qua</i> party. Exacerbated under OPD.
Social capital/civic activism	Prevailing levels of social capital (norms, networks, trust and reciprocity) shape CSOs' propensity to engage in EM. Policy-making traditions also shape policy capacity in a given polity/society.

**Table 1.** A political systems view of the contingent factors shaping environmental mainstreaming and CSOs' political engagement



understanding on the part of officials and parliamentarians that policy work placed considerable financial and human capital demands on CSOs, a burden that they struggled to meet in the face of competing priorities (cf. Casey, 2004).

It was a problem compounded by constitutional factors. As Jordan and Lenschow (2010: 150) explain: ‘from an institutional perspective [... EM] is a multi-sectoral and multi-level coordination [policy] challenge...’. In the current case, larger, strategic aspects of environmental policy (e.g. nuclear power, international treaty negotiations) are reserved to central government, with much (though not all) of the remainder determined at a regional level. Crucially, interviewees alluded to how the opaque nature of the constitutional arrangements relating to Wales (see Commission on Devolution in Wales, 2014) had adverse resource implications. These presented a key barrier to participative EM.<sup>9</sup> Thus, for example, a chief executive of a CSO explained: ‘One thing for us see, that people don’t realise, like with [power] generation – smaller stuff “fine”, but anything [of] say a reasonable size is Westminster. ...same with other infrastructure and planning stuff [i.e. it’s not devolved] now for us that’s a headache ... [we’ve got to] ‘look both ways’ if you like ... Yes, we’re supposed to know the situation here *and* keep an eye on Westminster ... have a voice there too ... now that’s a stretch’ (Participant 08). Another added, ‘as far as transport policy – building regs [regulations] too ... we have to rely on the goodwill of [named UK CSO] – their policy people at Westminster ... now that’s on a “favour basis” ... we don’t pay for it ... but it’s hardly an ideal arrangement ... truth is we can’t monitor both [legislatures] ... there’s not the budget’ (Participant 23).

Allied to the foregoing, interviewees alluded to the link between human capital and constitutionalism. They referred to the demands made by the meso-legislature’s gaining of primary law-making powers in 2011: ‘yeah, it’s a bit of a headache ... its positive, it’ll give policy “teeth” you know – but for us ... [it’s all] rather arcane stuff ... committee stages, draft [parliamentary] bills, opposition [party] amendments [to bills] ... it takes a huge amount of time to try and keep on top of this’ (Participant 71). Others referred to resource issues in relation to the post-2008 global recession: ‘staffing is the big issue, it’s our [organization’s] major cost ... it’s our expertise ... the terrible thing is – and I’ve seen this in several cases ... when it comes to staff cuts because of the current austerity thing its always the policy and researcher people that get chopped [i.e. lose their jobs] to save costs ... there a big knock-on from that ... [a] loss of voice’ (Participant 11).

‘Strategic bridging’ applies to CSOs’ lobbying of parliamentarians (Tilly, 1978: 125–133). In this regard, CSOs face a challenge: specifically, *which* parliamentarians to engage to best advance their policy demands. The current study makes an original contribution by highlighting how governing party turnover (GPT) shapes mainstreaming. As noted, the Welsh polity is characterized by OPD. As Greene (2010: 155) notes, such ‘systems are “odd ducks” that combine genuine electoral competition with the absence of turnover’. Interviewees comments underline how GPT and, in the case study, OPD, is significant to EM. This is because opposition parties are often not viewed by CSOs as being as influential (as in ‘regular’ systems) because they are believed to be less likely to attain future government office. In turn, this distorts the political dynamic and has the concomitant effect of channelling CSOs’ engagement towards the dominant party. For example, a policy coordinator said: ‘it’s frustrating really ... we’ve got good connections with the Liberal Democrats [opposition party] ... they’re really supportive ... trouble is its Labour, they’re the ones that *really* count ... so that’s where we put most of our emphasis’. Another stated, ‘you got to concentrate on [government] ministers ... you[ve] just got too ... they [Labour] call the shots today, and they’ll call the shots after the election ... simple, that’s the system we’ve got ... it isn’t gonna change any time soon’ (Participant 62).

From a mainstreaming perspective, lack of governing party turnover and/or single party dominance can act as a barrier to effective engagement, as highlighted by interviewees. First, it can affect CSOs’ trust in government. This is a key component of bridging social capital and shapes CSOs’ propensity towards policy engagement (Mishler and Rose, 2001). In the present study interview data show how OPD increased CSOs’ *mistrust* of government. Interviewees spoke of how the power of the dominant party meant it could afford to ignore exogenous claims. Thus, several interviewees said parliamentarians were more concerned with party interests than fostering dialogue and engagement. For example, the policy officer with an environmental organization

<sup>9</sup>Wales presently has a conferred powers model, meaning that the National Assembly for Wales has specific powers granted to it by the UK Parliament. These powers are incremental and have accrued over decades from hundreds of enactments affecting Wales. This often makes determining whether powers on a given issue are ‘devolved’ a complex and technical exercise. It has prompted a series of legal challenges in the UK Supreme Court.

said: ‘there has been a loss of trust in the government ... we were naïve I suppose ... [then] one of our trustees said look at the politics of it! As a party their support base is mostly urban and in the south of the country ... now you can hardly trust them to put rural interests ahead of that! ... no matter what they promised [at the election].’ (Participant 35).

A second, related issue that emerged in the data was the negative aspects (opaqueness and undermining of accountability) of informal networks and how these can undermine EM. With a dominant party in place these can ‘short-circuit’ formal political channels and processes (McClurg and Lazer, 2014). Whereas in ‘regular’ turnover democracies governing party–CSO relations are ‘re-written’ when a new party is elected to power, the absence of turnover means they become regularized and sustained over successive electoral cycles. Accordingly, some interviewees explained how this resulted in lobbying via party contacts being preferred over parliamentary procedures. For interviewees this raised questions over transparency and accountability. As one CSO Director said of a key leisure development with negative environmental aspects: ‘we have it on good authority that that decisions were shaped in a party political context ... now that doesn’t do anything for democracy in my view’ (Participant 58). Another alluded to how some CSOs ‘were on an inside track ... [they] got the “heads up” on policy through party links’ (Participant 69).

Interviewees also alluded to the manner in which turnover influenced CSOs’ repertoires of contention (Tilly, 1995: 42). This is the varied means by which CSOs seek to mainstream their environmental policy demands through engagement with government. Thus, for example, respondents referred to deliberate tactical coordination and a differentiated mode of engagement between organizations to address OPD. One manager asserted:

‘I see the environmental movement as being on a bit of a continuum, [named organization] are going to be able to do some of the “far out there – really critical stuff”, others like [named CSO] keep mainly to new media stuff, whereas we [named organization] are more mainstream – and we are going to be more ‘in the tent’, but when we do “chuck our toys out of the pram” [in other words, a significant intensification of campaigning against government policy] – we will do it when we really need to’ (Participant 43).

Another key finding that emerged from this study was the way CSOs’ institutional structures and practices shaped mainstreaming (cf. Sietz *et al.*, 2011). Thus, interviewees repeatedly alluded to what they viewed as limitations and barriers stemming from a failure to adapt to the realities of multi-level governance in the UK. Specifically, they underlined the need for cross-border CSOs to put in place effective organizational structures and management to fully avail themselves of the political opportunity structures of EM at the meso-level. Thus, one said: ‘this is sensitive, shall we say our colleagues in London don’t really get it ... they don’t really understand there’s a growing legislature here ... there’s not the awareness, I think, or the will to let us try and shape the agenda here...’ (Participant 29). Another opined: “it’s still predominantly our [England-based] HQ that has sign-off on things ... now I can challenge that ... sometimes I win, but that’s not the point. It’s a drag to be honest, y’ know having to constantly fight for the authority to decide how we relate to the [National] Assembly ... At the last Exec I was talking to my opposite number from Edinburgh, she couldn’t believe it ... they don’t have this problem...” (Participant 65).

### Political Parties

The interview data also reveal another influence of governing party turnover on EM: namely, the power of veto players in political parties. These are individuals who may be opposed to CSOs’ policy demands (owing to factors such as ideology, education, beliefs, alliance with business and so on). They can block CSO demands owing to their office or position in a given party. Their power derives from the fact that, when in government (e.g. holding ministerial office) CSOs have no choice but to deal with them when advancing their policy demands (Tsebelis, 1995). While they are present in ‘regular’ liberal democratic systems, OPD makes their power even more significant and challenging. This is because of their comparative longevity in office. Unlike ‘regular’ democracies, they are not ‘swept away’ by electoral defeat – but may endure over successive election cycles. Typically they have longer ministerial careers and circulate in the power elite over extended periods. Their influence is felt particularly at the initiation stage of policy when they can resist direct lobbying requests over new policy ideas (they have less ability to restrict involvement in public policy consultations). Thus, one interviewee observed:

'I used to work in housing [policy] we'd been trying to persuade [named government minister] to listen to us ... yet he didn't "get it" [i.e. understand their policy demands] – or didn't *want to* get it – either way, we made no progress – unlike with [named minister]<sup>10</sup> his predecessor ... there was a willingness to engage there even if we didn't always agree' (Participant 72).

Interviewees' comments also provide an insight into the impact of governing party turnover on collective incentives for CSOs' political engagement in relation to EM (cf. Finkel *et al.*, 1989: 39). In the present political context OPD was felt by interviewees to *dis*-incentivize engagement with opposition party members because they were seen as unlikely to be elected to government office over future election cycles. Significantly for mainstreaming this may create a negative feedback loop: over time reduced engagement between CSOs and opposition parliamentarians may further weaken the opposition, thereby dis-incentivizing CSOs from future engagement to advance policy claims. Thus, the director of an environmental CSO recalled: 'it is tricky, you want to be seen as even-handed ... we still target all the [party] leaders and their teams ... like our renewables [campaign] last year ... yeah, if I'm honest some soft-peddalling does go on with them [opposition parties]. It's the minister you want ... that's the big one ... [where] we really put in the time...' (Participant 46).

Recent decades have seen increased academic attention to a perceived decline in social capital and civic activism. This is widely seen as having a negative impact on governments and public administration because, *inter alia*, it undermines representation and responsiveness (Putnam, 2000). It has spurred governments to use neo-corporatist practices to intervene in an attempt to boost engagement between exogenous interests – such as CSOs – and government (Mansbridge, 1992). Here a key driver is government's need to avail itself of the knowledge and expertise in civil society (Schroeder and Lovell, 2012). In the present study such interventions took the form of government-sponsored policy networks – as well as state support for policy forums.

However, such measures bring with them attendant dangers. Thus, interviewees' comments support Hunold's (2005: 325) assessment that in relation to the state–civil society nexus 'efforts to green and democratize ... are better served by a non-integrated ... civil society'. For example, the director of an environmental CSO reflected:

'They've set up [a policy] network. [with] a lot of fanfare. Now for us it's a double-edge sword ... Yes, it gets us in [to policy-making circles] but we've yet to make any headway with what we're pressing for ... It's [government response] always "no" ... more than that, it's run on their lines if you like, *they* set the agenda ... for us there's a cost [you] see, 'cos some of our members don't like it [i.e. participating in government-sponsored structures]'. (Participant 31)

Another interviewee reflected on the overall impact of OPD and neo-corporatist practices:

'in effect you now have state sponsored civil society which compounds the problem that it's hard to criticise government. So they've created a civil society but it's an anaemic one because they control the flow of blood and they don't want it [civil society] to get too strong' (Participant 66).

A further aspect to the findings was interviewees' view that EM was in part to be understood in the context of performativity and as a form of legitimation. As noted, Moore (2001: 712) explains the latter term: 'legitimation involves communicative actions aimed at managing the public's perception that government actions are effective in promoting their desired ends, whether that is in fact true'. These strands of theory can be used to question whether the structures and practices of participative EM are about genuine engagement and knowledge-sharing in a context where power elites are willing to modify their policies in light of critical input from exogenous groups – or, as some interviewees' comments suggest, EM is more about government *being seen* to engage CSOs. For example, the manager of one CSO said: 'yes, we have attended meetings with officials ... yes, we have sent in consultation responses ... yes, we have spoken to ministers and [special] advisers ... it came out at our Exec[utive] meeting, a colleague put their finger on it in my view, she said ... "is this just camouflage?"' (Participant 34). Another observed, 'well, they're going

<sup>10</sup>The minister referred to here was from a different party that was in coalition government with the dominant Labour Parliament in the previous term of the National Assembly.

through the motions aren't they? ... Question is, do they listen? Does it make any difference? The [named motorway extension project] makes it pretty [...] obvious, it's all a veneer ... they carry on regardless of what anyone says...' (Participant 27).

Allied to this, as Piattoni (2001: 4) observes, clientelism and patronage involve 'the trade of votes and other types of partisan support in exchange for public decisions with divisible benefits'. Blakeley (2001: 104) goes further, outlining how 'clientelism is likely to remain an inevitable feature of liberal democratic polities'. The current interview data support this conclusion. They also suggest the situation is compounded in systems with low governing party turnover because it may weaken civil society and undermine CSOs' scrutiny capacity. For example, the director of an environmental CSO said:

'We have a "client state". The government – either directly or indirectly through its various agencies – puts an awful lot of funding into ... organizations: *that shuts them up*. We are very lucky that we don't receive any funding from the Welsh Government or any government, that means we are free to stand-up and to criticise and to challenge. Whereas an awful lot of organisations feel they can't do that' (Participant 54).

### Systemic and Socio-Cultural Factors

Interviewees alluded to how the opaque constitutional arrangements in the case study polity undermined government accountability (Bingham Powell, 1989). This is because, on many issues, the lack of clarity acted as a barrier to EM because CSOs were often uncertain which legislature (regional or Westminster) to engage. Thus, one CSO chief executive complained: 'the lack of clarity about where the [constitutional] boundaries lie are an enduring problem ... its making life pretty difficult for voluntary organisations like us but also our clients ... bottom line can we explain to our clients who is to blame if they have a problem? Some areas it's really obvious others, it's a real problem: it's not clear' (Participant 33). Another said, 'to me the current [constitutional] settlement rather suits government ... not just the present lot – but previous administrations too ... there's been a chronic lack of progress, as soon as voices of protest are raised though, it becomes Westminster that's to blame ... [it's] all very convenient, [regional government says] "we haven't got the necessary powers"...' (Participant 18).

A burgeoning literature attests to the fact that effective monitoring and regulation is integral to effective environmental protection (Richards *et al.*, 2000; Percival and Schroeder, 2009). Yet, as Fiorino (2006: 7) observes of regulatory frameworks, 'distrust amongst government, business and environmental groups ... diverts efforts away from desirable environmental results', not least by reducing CSOs' propensity to engage in government policy-making as predicated by EM. In the present case study respondents viewed the constitutional sustainability duty on government as a generally positive factor. Yet, notwithstanding the existence of an independent commissioner,<sup>11</sup> a number also expressed concerns over the robustness of the monitoring and enforcement of the duty. For example, the policy officer with one CSO said, 'it's a bit of a case of "marking your own homework" ... the [Government of Wales] Act says the government will report on how good its policies have been ... talk about a waste of ink ... they're *not* gonna say we've [...messed]-up, [or] we're after votes for the next election so forget long-term planning' (Participant 17).<sup>12</sup> Another stated: 'it is touted as significant, unique – all that ... it's a bit toothless if you ask me...' (Participant 47).

Existing work underlines how electoral politics shapes modes and methods of civil society participation owing to peaks or 'cycles of contention' (Tarrow and Tilly, 2001). The present findings show how OPD can impact on participative EM because it disrupts such cycles – as the catalytic effect of a change of governing party (which often sparks new modes and phases of engagement) is lacking. Instead, under OPD party institutionalization sets in (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995: 4). Interviewees concurred with the latter view. According to one policy officer, 'it can get a bit stale if you know what I mean ... the best way to be heard is to link in with Labour [Party] spads [special advisors] to ministers and senior officials ... it can get a bit like *Groundhog Day*,<sup>13</sup> mind...' (Participant 42). Another alluded to 'that thing of sort of trying to get round that political roadblock' (Participant 18).

<sup>11</sup>Commissioner for Sustainable Futures (formerly the Sustainable Development Commission).

<sup>12</sup>Government of Wales Act (2006) s.79 (7) 'the Welsh Ministers must ... publish a report containing an assessment of how effective their proposals (as set out in the scheme and implemented) have been in promoting sustainable development, and (b) lay a copy of the report before the Assembly'.

<sup>13</sup>*Groundhog Day* – a 1993 film directed by Harold Ramis concerning a time loop – cited here by the interviewee as a simile for repetition.

As noted, social capital and civic activism (cf. Putnam *et al.*, 1993; Putnam, 2000) play key roles in the normative pursuit of participatory democracy. Allied to this, recent decades have seen a burgeoning literature on changing societal attitudes to environmental issues (Van Liere and Dunlap, 1980; Tranter, 2014). Extant studies chart how these are shaped by a complex range of factors, including formal education (Pooley and O'Connor, 2000) as well as socio-psychological attributes (e.g. world view, ideology and socialization) (Dietz *et al.*, 1998). In turn, these influence citizens' willingness to engage in EM. While interviewees underlined significant demand from CSOs to raise environmental concerns with government, they also alluded to the limiting effects of the constitutional history of the polity under study. While these are specific to this polity, they nevertheless have wider salience in underlining the way civic traditions shape EM.

In the present case, Wales was subject to administrative devolution in the period before 1999. Although public administration operated through a territorial ministry (the Welsh Office), the reality was that policy-making was predominantly conducted at Westminster (Rawlings, 2003) – such that there was no thoroughgoing 'indigenous' tradition of policy-making and developed policy communities. Thus, one interviewee stated, 'I don't really get a sense of organisations reacting as perhaps they should have as if they properly understood devolution' (Participant 17). According to a policy officer:

'we weren't really used to all the policy side of things. Then, 'bam'! Its "can you respond to this?", "can we have your views – y'know what do our members want to see on this one? [policy consultation] ... and its like h-o-l-d o-n! You know, we're not just here to fill-in forms and chat to [National Assembly Members] ... it's a mega-step-up in a way ... now everyone wants to hear from us. That's a "big ask" for an organization like ours ... it's clear ... talking to other CSOs we're not there yet in engaging the way we'd like – I know we're not alone ... It's not going to happen overnight is it? Like Westminster's been going hundreds of years and they've still not got it right either" ' (Participant 05).

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## Discussion

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This study's core aim was to address a lacuna in the international literature on EM with a qualitative account of CSOs' experiences of participation in public policy-making at the meso-level. The interview data reveal a series of issues and challenges to achieving effective practice as required by international treaties and domestic policy and law. These are manifold and in conceptual terms they underline the contingent nature of EM and the appropriateness of a political systems perspective. As Jones and Hanham (1995: 188, emphasis added) explain: 'contingency is conceived not as a residual category, that is, as a new linguistic veil for particularity, but as an intervention in a process caused by *context-dependent differences within which that process is embedded*. Contingencies interrupt the operation of processes, thereby producing different empirical outcomes in different contexts'. As the foregoing discussion makes plain, EM processes are intimately related to the political system in a given territory and, in particular, electoral politics and governing party turnover.

A range of implications stem from the empirical findings. For example, the literature on mainstreaming equality into public policy highlights the dual nature of mainstreaming as both a coercive and a voluntary 'project' (cf. Payne, 2011: 528). Such a tension was also evident in the present case study of environmental policy-making. Notably, both government and CSO actions were heavily influenced by OPD, a distinctive feature of the case study polity. This presented a range of barriers to CSOs' participation in public policy-making – including the presence of veto players, skewed patterns of strategic bridging and the negative effects of governing party institutionalization. The wider significance of this to other liberal democratic polities is in highlighting the role of electoral politics and governing party turnover on EM. Historical and constitutional factors were also at play. The opaque division of environmental policy responsibilities between tiers of government, coupled with weak indigenous policy-making traditions, presented further barriers. Notably, interviewees questioned whether EM translated into policy outcomes; some advanced the idea that neo-corporatist structures (e.g. sponsored policy forums, state support for policy networks) were more concerned with legitimation, performativity and the appearance of participative policy-making on the environment – rather than being indicative of the governing elite's willingness to compromise and incorporate exogenous policy demands. The question of

outcomes was further raised in the context of policy monitoring and regulation. Specifically, study participants questioned the enforcement of the constitutional duty on ministers to mainstream sustainable development. Notably, participants also pointed to limiting factors in relation to CSOs' own structures and procedures. These included issues of institutional capacity, resources and expertise to engage in policy work – as well as the need to reconfigure cross-border CSOs to reflect the UK's move to quasi-federalism and give sufficient autonomy to managers at the regional level.

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## Conclusions

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The global trend of state decentralization, legal imperatives on environmental protection and the increasing currency of EM each share a core concern with fostering exogenous engagement in the work of government. However, existing scholarly work has tended to treat these as discrete topics. Moreover, most extant analyses of EM view government as apolitical in nature. This is curious given that EM is a *deeply political* 'project' – one that challenges a range of actors to rethink their approach to policy. To address these lacunae the foregoing discussion adopted a political systems perspective. This original approach emphasized the impact of the rescaling of electoral politics (the holding of regional elections) and underlined the influence of party dynamics on CSOs' engagement in environmental policy-making. This is an appropriate focus because the type of party elected – and its electoral strength (in particular, whether OPD is present) – shapes the political opportunities open to CSOs. In turn, this will influence the success, or otherwise, of EM.

In highlighting the challenges facing CSOs as they attempt to engage government, the present study also provides transferable lessons for EM in other contexts. Foremost, the data suggest the need for CSOs to employ adaptive engagement strategies to counter some of the negative effects of dominant parties. As interviewees' accounts attest, these skew the political dynamic. Their disproportionate power introduces a series of pathologies that may frustrate or arrest attempts at participative EM. As the foregoing analysis explicates, these can be self-sustaining over election cycles. They arise because CSOs are drawn into engaging the dominant party at the expense of opposition parties. This is because opposition parties are perceived to lack influence – and thus the ability to advance CSOs' policy demands on the environment because they are unlikely to hold future government office. Over time this further weakens such parties and strengthens the dominant party, diminishing its need to compromise on its policy agenda. In response, CSOs should act to ward against such distortions by compensatory engagement across parties. Moreover, rather than sole reliance on the structures and procedures associated with government attempts at EM, CSOs should remain vigilant and employ broad action repertoires that not only involve routinized and largely bureaucratic engagement with government – but also diverse means of protest, campaigning and boycotts.

In summary, the wider significance of the present study is three-fold.

- 1 It provides empirical data revealing the issues and challenges that CSOs face in attempting to influence public policy-making on the environment.
- 2 It underlines the need for CSOs to employ adaptive engagement strategies to overcome the challenges identified.
- 3 It shows the contingent nature of state attempts to foster participative EM.

Accordingly, future study needs to employ a political systems perspective and be cognizant of the way that contingent factors shaping EM operate across three domains and include historical and constitutional factors – as well as patterns and processes operating in civil society as organizations seek to shape government policy-making on the environment.

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