

## Getting ethnic questions on the agenda: party formation as a strategy for social movements

### Introduction

Over the last decades, integration policy in Sweden and the Netherlands has undergone a shift towards perceiving the its ethnic communities as permanent settlers rather than as temporary measures to remedy labour scarcity. (Pennix 1989; SIP 1983). Citizenship regulations have been liberalised, allowing non-citizens to obtain almost all the rights connected with a full citizenship status (Soysal 1994). In the Swedish and Dutch case, non-nationals can obtain local voting rights without being fully naturalised (3 years of residence in the former and 5 years in the latter). State policy has in both countries aimed at the inclusion of migrant communities into society in order to promote a notion of *equality* (Sweden) and *emancipation* (the Netherlands) (Hammar 1985; Pennix, 1989). The goal of these policies have been to enable the new population to participate in the new environment in the same way as the native population thereby enjoying the same rights and obligations as the rest of the inhabitants. However, despite the rather favourable reputation that the two countries have had over the past decades, studies have shown that immigrants tend to be underrepresented in political parties and in the different levels of political decisionmaking (Ålund and Schierup 1991; Fennema and Tillie 1999; Soininen and Bäck 1993). Given this situation, the local political arena in Malmö, Sweden was challenged by a new party in the 1998 election. This party, the Rainbow Party, strove to make certain claims and bring certain issues onto the political agenda that were directly related to the status of being a non-national. These included issues such as lack of real political influence and the failure of the governing bodies to reflect the growing ethnic diversity of Swedish society. However, a similar party could not be found in the Dutch case. This brings us to the first question of this article - why was the party formation option adopted in one case and not the other? This question is relevant since both Sweden and the Netherlands practice a similar way of incorporating the new populations into the community structure. The two countries do also display a similar party system

structure in terms of *openness* and in the *capacity of the political regime*. In order to explain this phenomena, closer attention will be paid to the concept of *political opportunity structures* and the way that these influence the choice of action adopted by new challengers. Secondly, the paper addresses the question of why this particular party formation should be understood as a *strategy* adopted by a social movement rather than as a traditional party. Finally, a modest evaluation will be made on the impact and success of this kind of party in the given context, could it be considered a useful strategy to be pursued by other groups?

## The State and political opportunity structures

The concept of power and influence in studies of contemporary society involves not only the study of political parties or political actors. The increased presence of different social movements has brought a new and interesting addition to this field, since these movements strive to put forward their particular claims onto the political agenda. These movements have to be studied in relation to the state or, at least, have the state as a point of reference. The modern democratic state is not only the sole legitimate user of violence but is also the provider, and guarantor, of socially valued goods. In other words, the state is simultaneously target, sponsor and opponent for social movements (Jenkins and Klandermans 1995).

The state provides the settings that make up the political environment and as such does also determine the rules and boundaries that social movements are obliged to follow. In this environment there are certain conditions which can either facilitate or constrain the *political opportunities* that these actors face in order to pursue their goals. These opportunities can be expressed in terms of relative openness or closure of the institutionalised political system, the stability of elite alignments, presence of elite allies and the state's capacity to repress actors (McAdam 1996). But political opportunity structures are not only determined by the presence of the state. This concept does further comprise specific configurations of resources, institutional arrangements and historical precedents for groups to mobilise. The political opportunity structure serves as a

necessary condition of the movements' ability to influence and, more importantly, what strategies it chooses to take (Kitschelt 1986). These structures do not produce social movements or insurgency, but should rather be viewed as consistent dimensions of political struggle that encourage people to engage in politics (Tarrow 1994). Does this then stipulate that mobilisation and political claims making only happens if the surrounding political environment is of a certain kind that allows this transition to be possible? Not necessarily, the point is that these structures shape the way in which social movements are formed and in what way and with what measures they try to act on the political arena. It is the political context that is the important cue to how social movements can draw on resources from this environment. Previous explanations of why collective action emerges tend to neglect the political conditions in which resource-poor and exploited groups could have been expected to mobilise on behalf of their interests. The Marxist tradition emphasises different elements of collective action: cleavages in capitalist society which gave rise to mobilisation potential, certain movement organisation factors necessary to structure movements or the need for consensus building around party goals (Tarrow 1994). Focus has been on the internal structure of the movement rather than taking into account the way in which the movement is shaped and why it chooses a certain strategy.

The ideas behind political opportunity structures are not of a monolithic kind but can be analytically divided into four categories: formal institutional structures, national cleavage structures, informal procedures and alliance structures.

The first concerns the legal and institutional arrangements, which sets the relationship between the state and the new actors. Dimensions involved here are the degrees of centralisation of political institutions, type of electoral system and separation of powers. This dimension establishes the channels of access available for the potential challenger. The second defines the political space that is available for challengers to introduce new conflicts into a polity. The opportunities for mobilisation are related to the politicised cleavages in society concerning, for instance, national identities or class.

The third dimension maps out the rules and procedures that have emerged within the polity for conflict management and resolution. As opposed to

the cleavage approach, the informal channels refer to the modes through which political conflicts have been dealt with by political elites. Finally, alliance structures determine the specific balance of power between different actors at a certain time and place. This includes party composition, party systems and the relative strength of political parties and the government (Tarrow 1994).

The political opportunities available are also depending on the relative openness of the political system. Here, the focus is on the input-side of the policy process, getting demands onto the political agenda. But as Kitschelt (1986) points out, the output phase does also affect the mobilisation and opportunities for social movements to push a certain issue into implementation. The openness of a political regime can be said to be a function of the number of political parties, fractions and groups that try articulate demands. The relationship is: more actors create a centrifugal political system in which cartels of established parties hinder electoral interest articulation.

Secondly, if the capacity of the legislature to develop and control policies is independent from the executive body, openness will increase. Thirdly, if links between the interest groups and the executive branch are fluid, access to decision-making is facilitated. Fourthly, new demands must find their way into the process of policy formation in order to aggregate these demands. Openness is constrained if there are no viable procedures to build effective policy coalitions. On the output-side, the political structure can be either weak or strong, in the sense of getting the demand into action. National policies are implemented more effectively if the state is of a centralised character. The degree of state control, co-ordination or exclusions of certain actors influence political efficiency and limits the resources available for challengers. Finally, policy implementation becomes more difficult if the courts are able to influence executive branch control. However, social movements can bring about changes in the opportunity structure as a result of its own actions - that is, the relationship between the movement and the structure simultaneously influence each other (Tilly 1978). Social movements can also be creative and choose forms of mobilisation which are unexpected by the elite, like for instance registering an organisation as a party, as in the Swedish case. This choice can create new opportunities for them in the existing structure. The movement can also create opportunities for others

in that collective action expands the opportunities for other challenging groups. This works both positively (an issue is put on the agenda which other groups can copy, innovate upon or form alliances with) and negatively (the movement creates a counter movement). The elites and authorities can also respond to the actions taken by the social movement, either positively (forming alliances) and negatively (repressing actions). In the former case, reform of the polity is the most likely outcome, especially if the responding actor gains an advantage from the coalition with the movement. In the latter, opportunities can be shutdown, if the movement is perceived as a threat to the social order (Tarrow 1996).

## Social Movements

In what way does a social movement differ from other mobilising types such as interest groups or parties? The difference between these actors becomes clearer if one distinguishes between three sets of characteristics - modes of operation, main resources and structural features (Rucht 1996). A social movement typically relies on protest activities as their mode of operation rather than aiming for member representation in politics (interest groups) or occupation of political offices (parties). Also, they draw resources from primarily devoted followers rather than access to decision-makers (interest groups) or voters (parties) and are organised informally rather than formally. The Rainbow Party does display characteristics from all three groups, so why would they be better understood if viewed as a social movement, rather than as a party or interest group?

In essence, they were driven by other incentives than those found among interest groups or parties. Here, a set of people with a common problem became grievance conscious of their shared fate and built an organisation for the pursuit of their aims (Tilly 1981). Furthermore, they aimed at influencing public policy (political integration of migrants), frame social problems (discrimination on the labour market) and lacked the necessary political and material resources in order to routinely access political decision-makers (McCarthy *et al* 1996). The similarities with social movements increases further if one invokes the three

traits suggested by Zirakzadeh (1997). Firstly, a social movement is a group of people who consciously try to build a radically new social order. The Rainbow Party not only tried to challenge the decisions made by the local authorities but did also strive to make a long-term and significant change in the texture of the society. Secondly, a social movement consists of people from a wide range of social backgrounds who in their daily lives lack substantial political punch and whose interests are not articulated or represented in the political system<sup>1</sup>. Here, the claim was that immigrants, as a group, lack any form of real political influence and are not properly represented in the local municipality. Thirdly, social movements tend to use politically confrontational or socially disruptive tactics in order to influence government officials, deter social opponents and/or attract supporters or, most likely, to attract media attention, to a greater extent than interest groups or political parties. In this case, by accusing politicians of racism and discrimination in their parties, the party managed to draw a significant amount of media coverage and attention to their cause.

## The potential to mobilise: political opportunity structures in Sweden and the Netherlands

Following Tarrow's disposition, the following section will use the four dimensions of political opportunity structures (POS) and apply them to the Swedish and Dutch context. A distinguishing feature of Swedish and Dutch policy in the area of integration is that they both operate according to a corporatist style of incorporating the new population. This model involves an inclusion of individual influence through party-channels as well as group influence via organisations. These settings constitute an institutional framework - originating from a top-down perspective where government recognises and identifies the needs and rights of the immigrants - and provides the context in which immigrant interests can be mobilised. In the Swedish case, corporatist influence

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<sup>1</sup> These are usually of a non-elite character, lacking any real influence over the decisions taken that will directly influence their lives (McAdam 1982) or the access to the decisions-making procedure (Gamson 1975).

is primarily practised through interest groups, such as the labour organisation. Membership is organised around a belonging to a corporate group, defined by occupational, ethnic, religious or gender identity, with a strong emphasis on *equality*. Immigrants are seen as a natural social grouping and are thus treated like other corporate groups. In the Netherlands, the main goal has been to provide the immigrant groups with opportunities to become *emancipated*. This key term originates from the process of religious liberation which, unlike Sweden, has resulted in a division along religious lines, the so-called 'pillars'. Emancipation resulted in that the organisation of social, cultural and political functions has been according to these pillars. Each of these pillars were allocated their own schools, welfare systems and unions. Immigrant communities were subsequently perceived as yet another pillar in the Dutch system (Soininen 1999; Soysal 1994).

A central feature in both Sweden and the Netherlands is the high level of centralisation and organisation in the field of immigration. In Sweden, the national board of immigration (Statens Invandrarverk, SIV) is the prime authority on the state level. The SIV makes decisions about visas, employment and residence permits and naturalisation. There's a close working relationship with the national labour market board (Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen, AMS) which deals with training and employment projects directed at immigrants. Although highly centralised in one sense, immigrant policy is administered primarily on the local municipality level. The main responsibility lies with the ordinary administration; the social welfare offices, local housing authorities, schools, etc. (Hammar 1985). The Netherlands does not have an SIV equivalent that deals with migrant matters per se. Here, ministerial bodies and intermediary institutions take charge of different aspects of incorporation. Although autonomous in relation to the state, they are fully funded by state spending and centrally organised. Co-ordination is an important aspect of the administration, and is executed by a group of ministerial committees, including the Directorate for the Co-ordination of Minorities Policy (DCM) under the ministry of Home Affairs and the Interministreal Co-ordinating Committee on Minorities Policy. The DCM is the central body between the national government and the migrant groups. In Sweden and the Netherlands, state funds support the institutional

framework for collective organisation. The state allocates certain functions such as interest representation and consultative participation creating a unified and bureaucratic network. Even spontaneous and oppositional movements are incorporated into this scheme by being dependent on state funding (Soysal 1994). Financing a movement or an association is dependent on the number of members enrolled, making member allocation a prime directive for the associations. If an immigrant group or a coalition of groups intend to place issues that concern them onto a political agenda, this has to be done through an organisation which is closely connected to the state. In Sweden, the traditional source of political mobilisation, outside of the mainstream parties, has been through the so-called 'folk rörelser' (people's movements). Closer defined, these movements are highly institutionalised popular movements with a symbiotic relationship with an enlightened and reforming state-bearing elite (Ålund and Schierup 1991; Micheletti 1994).

The most famous example is the Swedish national labour organisation which not only worked in a close relationship with the Socialdemocratic party but also managed to influence the shape of the welfare-system (Kjellberg 1988; Lundquist 1992). Immigrant associations are part of this organisational system and thus Sweden displays the highest proportion of organised immigrants in Europe. These associations are organised in a parallel fashion corresponding to ethnic identity and supervised by the SIV. This mode of incorporation aggregates interest groups into federations, which are formally or informally involved in the policy-process. The result is either direct consultation of interest groups or self-administration by federations at the local, regional or national level (Janoski 1998). In the Netherlands the relationship between the state and the immigrant organisations are similar. The government supports associations financially and is supervised by an intermediary body, the National Advisory Council for Ethnic Minorities (LAO). Claims and requests are made through the LAO, which then channels these claims via sub-councils. These formal institutional structures do to a large extent determine the levels of access to the state as well as the capacity for different actors to participate. States in this case can be characterised as being either strong or weak in terms of three institutional arenas – the parliamentary, administrative and direct-democratic arena. In the parliamentary arena the critical indicators are the number of parties, factions and groups as well the



possibility of forming viable policy coalitions (Laver and Schofield 1991). The number of parties is a function of the national conflict structure and the electoral system. The relationship is, the more heterogeneous the national conflict structure is and the higher degree of proportionality, the larger the number of parties. As a challenger, the proportional system facilitates access compared to plurality or majority systems. Seen from the established parties' point of view, this means a greater risk of being subjected to competition from challengers than in the plural or majority case. A higher number of parties will also facilitate for social movements to find established support within the party system.

The second aspect, the administrative arena, concerns the formal access as well as the capacity to act and is determined by the amount of resources at the disposal of the administration, by the structure of the interest groups and by the structural arrangements established between the two. The relationship is, the greater amount of resources available for the administration and the greater the degree of coherence and internal co-ordination, the stronger the connection. Both Sweden and the Netherlands have multiple levels of state co-ordination and steering of both immigrant associations and the intermediate bodies that handle the relation between organisations and the state apparatus. Challengers not part of this highly institutionalised and encompassing arrangement of policy negotiation will find the system inaccessible and difficult to influence. The corporatist trait prevailing hinders certain types of new challengers, especially those not based on social class. In for instance the Social Democratic Party, decisions have to be anchored in one of the party's many sub-branches such as the labour union or labour communes. Immigrants are not perceived to be representing any social class or organisation. (Westin 1998). The final point about the relative strength of the state regards the direct-democratic arena. Here, formal access is a function of the degree to which direct-democratic procedures are institutionalised, most commonly in the form of a referendum. As a challenger to the system, the most important direct-democratic procedure is the popular initiative which allows them to put an issue on the agenda of the political system and to ask the whole electorate to vote on the subject (as practised in Switzerland). The downturn of this option is that it only gives oppositional intervention *after* an elite decision has been taken. In the Netherlands, citizens do have rights to appeal (the so-called *inspraak*) in the course of implementation of public policies (Duyvendak and Koopmans 1992). In the Swedish

case the political culture has been characterised by its consensual democratic appearance and its long-term stability. The former involves a liberal democratic state with a low level of opposition to the framework of rules and regulations for the resolutions of political conflict within the state (Elder *et al* 1988). The latter indicates the status of the political structure. Firstly, the 349 seats in the parliament are distributed proportionally to the parties who manage to pass the four-percentage barrier (or twelve percent in the territorial constituency). Although a certain amount of the governing power is decentralised to the regional and municipal levels, there is still a close relationship between the different authorities since the municipal assemblies are responsible for implementing national decisions on a local level. However, the local authorities do have a strong independence in relation to the central authorities when it comes to managing their own affairs, such as health and educational issues. Local politics are furthermore strongly focused on local needs, giving the participating parties the opportunity to sharpen their profiles as well as facilitating for smaller parties to pursue specific questions (Wallin 1991). Setting up a new, local party is relatively easy, seeing that no major formal requirements are involved apart from a simple registration procedure. This setting enabled the Rainbow Party to quickly establish themselves as a party challenger. The party profile was explicitly local in that their prime concern was that the existing local parties did not represent the immigrant population in Malmö in a satisfactory way and in being an immigrant in Malmö the opportunities to influence were narrowed.

As in Sweden, the Netherlands practices a proportional distribution of parliamentary seats. This system converts the nation into one constituency and has weakened the basis for strong regional identification (Goudsblom 1967). The party-system is characterised by a multi-party system, much more so than in Sweden. Parties are organised according to the basic social and religious cleavages formed by the pillarisation. This division has rendered the creation of a considerable amount of parties that are not only of a purely local kind, but do also extend nationally and beyond one issue politics. Since the proportional system was introduced in 1933, the relative access to entry became easier in terms of establishing new parties attempting to access the political arena. Since 1967, approximately twenty parties have been active in the elections. However, as in Sweden, five parties have been dominating the electoral system in the post-war period. Despite being decentralised to a certain

extent, the Dutch regions and municipalities have a limited impact on policy-making as such and operate similarly as its Swedish counterparts (Andeweg and Galen 1993). Constitutionally, two concepts are leading for the local government - autonomy and co-government. The former refers to the policy domain in which the municipal government has independent authority, whereas the latter states its position in terms of national legislation implementation. Both systems can hence be characterised as being relatively open. Closer defined, this means that the determining factors of this 'openness' are present in both the Swedish and the Dutch political structures, that is the capacity to of the political system to convert demands into public policy. Both countries have several political parties and modes of interest groups to channel their demands. The intermediary structures between interest groups and the executive branch is plural and fluid which facilitates access for new interests to access decision-making (Kitschelt 1986).

Tarrow's second category examines the political space available to social movement challengers. The chances to mobilise are here shaped by prevailing politicised cleavages in society, for instance class conflicts or controversy of national identities. If an issue divides the elite and creates internal conflict, the new social movement can exploit this or make allegiances with opposing parties. In Sweden this has evolved around class-based issues, juxtaposing the two dominant parties, Social Democrats and Conservatives, over time. The labour organisation in Sweden, with its' strong ties to the Social Democratic Party, got involved with the Agrarian Party when the latter pressured for extended citizenship and workers rights in the 1930s and 40s (Lewin 1988). Similarly, the Socialdemocrats have tried to establish links with the different immigrant organisations in order to gain their electoral support since a majority of the Swedish immigrants have been part of the 'working class' (Widgren 1982). However, an explicit attempt was made by the Conservative Party in 1999 to challenge the left's dominance over the immigrants' votes (Friborg 1999). A report put forward at the annual Conservative congress in June 1999 suggested that the party needed to profile themselves more explicitly towards the different migrant communities (Rojas 1999). The opportunity available here is to affiliate with the party that might provide the best outcome. The Rainbow Party tried to take advantage of the competitive element. However, when trying to establish

working relationships with other parties, the responses received were moderate and in some cases even hostile. Especially the Socialdemocrats became very concerned with this new challenger. The following quote highlights this situation.

“As we joined in the campaign in 1998, the Social Demorats became very interested and preoccupied with the Rosengård area (a immigrant dominated area in Malmö, my note) /.../ on election day they asked, “Are you going to vote?” and a lot of people understood that as “Are you going to vote for us?” (Laukkanen 2000)

The Rainbow Party was also much of a response to the lack of action taken by the several immigrant associations. These organisations had not used this channel to introduce their demands as much as one might had expected. Predominantly, these organisations have not functioned as spokespersons for the immigrants’ social, political or cultural interests but have rather been preoccupied with sporting and traditional cultural preservation activities. Since voting rights for denizens and certain linguistic rights have already been implemented, specific immigrant interests have been subordinated (Soininen 1999). The opportunity available for the individual migrant is then to affiliate with a certain party or an interest group. The difficulty with this approach is that the corporatist model of representation is primarily based around class interest that hinders, for instance, the labour union to recognise interests stemming from other causes. Immigrant questions were given low priority and politicians with an immigrant background faced difficulties obtaining party support for nominations in elections (Ålund and Schierup 1991), an experience which was also true for the Rainbow Party candidates.

“We had the experience that it was not easy to get involved in the established parties and we did often discuss the alternative to go to other parties...and we did see some immigrants who had succeeded, but they were forced to transform themselves, so suddenly they were no longer part of “us” but of “them” instead” (Laukkanen 2000).

The Dutch case differs slightly in this sense in that it gives rise to a rather paradoxical situation in terms of the political system. As Lijphart (1968) observes, the Netherlands should be overshadowed by conflicts and antagonism rather than consensus and co-operation. Seeing that Dutch society is characterised by a plethora of social cleavages where religious and class divisions separate distinct and self-contained parts of the population, one would tend to expect ideological tension and extremism instead of pragmatism and moderation. The pillarisation that occurred due to the religious segmentation created a form of civic organisation, which was interconnected through personal links at the elite level, what Lijphart calls the 'consociational democracy'. This condition determines the mobilisation potential (Klandermans and Oegema 1987) to which people could be mobilised by a social movement. The mobilisation potential varies according to the degree to which the cleavages constitute social groups that are clearly segmented from each other and internally highly integrated. Bartolini and Mair (1990) refer to this as the relative degree of closure where the cleavage is a structure of processes that restrict mobility in a variety of ways including marriage, educational system, social customs, religious practices, etc. The notion of closure is important since a highly integrated group in a fragmented surrounding constitutes a suitable foundation for political mobilisation. That is, it is the groups' distinctiveness, in terms of collective identity, common interests or a shared consciousness of belonging to a unique group that is crucial for their mobilisation potential (Oberschall 1973).

A second aspect is the salience of the cleavage, that is to what degree it dominates the conflicts on the political arena in terms of its relative importance with respect to other cleavages. The more institutionalised the political cleavage is the more regulated it becomes by established procedures and the groups involved become more integrated into the political networks of the administrative and parliamentary arena. The Dutch pillar system consisting of class and religious cleavages constitute highly integrated groups with rather peaceful relationships with each other marking an instrumental stabilisation of the relationship on an elite level where the elites are able to exercise control over the grassroots movement. Since immigrant communities are seen as yet

another form of 'pillar' in the Dutch society they are also subdued to work within a system that promotes the maintenance of an existing system (Bagley 1973). As in Sweden, organisational activities are primarily concerned with non-political activities such as community development, cultural activities or emancipation activities. Seeing that the Netherlands displays a similar amount of immigrant organisations as in Sweden, a unified organisation of, for instance, specific Turkish interests requires the collaboration of internally diverse groups. A task which has proven to be difficult in practice (Soysal 1994). Seeing that the major source of political discrepancy would most probably be found in terms of religious affiliation, creating alignments with different parties would have to be based on this notion rather than class belonging, as in Sweden. The two major religious groups are Protestants and Catholics but among the four dominating immigrant groups, two of them (Turks and Moroccans) are mainly of Islamic belief, which could make religious collaboration slightly problematic. Therefore, it seems that alignment with a certain party in the Dutch case is less probable than in Sweden.

Tarrow's third dimension deals with the more indirect and informal channels that have been shaped within a polity in order to deal with conflicts and resolutions. How has the political elite dealt with the demands of new challengers? For instance, one could view the extensive nature of the rights and benefits available to the new population working in the opposite way and actually pacifying these groups since there is not much more to struggle for. As the president of the Association of Women from Turkey in Sweden expressed it, "we cannot mobilise the Turkish population around any real demands...Most rights and freedoms are already given by the state, and there is already an organisation for every problem that migrants face in this country" (Soysal 1994:99). In the Netherlands, attempts were made to establish separate immigrant parties, but their life-span was relatively short and their impact minor, especially after local voting rights were introduced in 1985 (van der Wusten and Roessingh 1997). However, immigrant parties could theoretically stand a chance of obtaining parliamentary seats. Seeing that the Netherlands practice a proportional representational system by the means of a party list (described further in Steiner 1998), small fringe parties have a chance of winning

parliamentary representation. This environment differs from the Swedish case in which parties must pass a 4-percent threshold. Also, emerging parties are not eligible for governmental party funding aid unless they manage to obtain seats in the municipality. This threshold singles out a majority of prospering parties, in that they might not have the economic resources to continue. Conflict resolution in corporatist states is very much dependent on negotiations between the state and the different corporate groupings. Traditionally, this has been done between the labour movement and the state. The former must have a high degree of membership in order to not be ignored by the negotiating partner. The same goes for immigrant organisations. However, membership rates have not been sufficiently high (at least not compared with other actors) and are also scattered around Swedish and Dutch society. Therefore, immigrants wishing to put their interests on the political agenda have been redirected towards the major actors rather than through their own organisations. Furthermore, immigrant associations are relying on a healthy relationship with the authorities in order to receive funding for their activities, which in practice could mean that their organisational freedom is constrained. This precarious relationship is described by a Rainbow Party member as a major obstacle for migrant political participation.

“...through these structures and mechanisms those organisations are tamed and practically all they think about is to get funds for their activities, so they are really tamed and don’t dare to think about those questions that we have, They know they will be punished, just like the IPF got punished, because all aid and funds will disappear” (Laczak 2000).

In the case of the Rainbow Party, they emerged from an association called the IPF<sup>2</sup>. As an association, the IPF was interested in issues such as the declining political interest among the immigrant communities and how to get more people with a non-Swedish heritage involved in local politics. These interests and

pursuits were rather unique when compared to the activities performed by other immigrant associations, who mainly deal with general cultural events or sporting activities (Ålund and Schierup 1991). The interviewees argued that that being an immigrant organisation trying to make demands and political claims was not perceived as appropriate associational behaviour by the Swedish society. Continuing as the old association proved to be very difficult. By forming a party, they would be perceived as being more serious and also become more independent in relation with the Swedish state. Furthermore, immigrant interests seem to get lost when they enter, for instance, the labour union, since this movement is primarily concerned with issues of class rather than ethnicity. Although membership rates in unions are similar to that of the native Swedes, immigrants are less likely to be a union representative and are also notoriously underrepresented in both interest groups and political parties (Bäck and Soininen 1996). The Netherlands does also display a large amount of organised immigrants whose prime directives are to support religious and cultural activities, and to a lesser extent, to promote immigrant interests and political ends. However, the Dutch case provides representation for migrants to a larger extent than in Sweden through the LAO. This central administrative body serves as an intermediary and provides the migrant associations with a channel for participation on the national level through sub-councils that represents nationality and minority groups. This has enabled, primarily, the Turkish community to become very active and influential in establishing an Islamic identity in the Dutch society.

However, migrant associations are only eligible for state subsidising if they operate on a national level and perform certain functions decided by the state. These include promoting migrants' interests, providing informational, cultural and emancipation activities for their national constituencies (Soysal 1994). Although being categorised as relatively open, the corporatist states often limit the number of relevant interest groups, in which there is in essence one single group for each interest sector. To gain entry to the political arena is constrained by the state through requirements and the goal of the organisation to be 'representative' of its members, which in turn forces the association to

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<sup>2</sup> Invandrarpolitiska Föreningen: trans. the Political Association for Immigrants.



accumulate a large number of members (Wilson 1990). Corporatism can thus be viewed as way to domesticate uncontrolled (and unrecognised) political claims making by channelling action into acceptable forms.

Finally, with regards the opportunities for challengers to mobilise when the political elites are internally divided and/or forming strategic balance of power relationships, the Swedish and Dutch case displays a rather stable scenario. In Sweden, the Social Democratic party has enjoyed a long-term stay as the party in government, more or less uninterrupted since the 1930s. Traditionally, the Socialdemocrats had relied on the support from the Left Party in order to secure their minority government position (Ersson 1991). The ideological division has created a block system in which a Left - Right division prevails. The strategy available here is what Smith (1991) calls the 'third party problem' in which a small party positions itself between the two dominating blocks and becomes a potential coalition partner. This was the case in the 1988 election in which the Green Party managed to influence the agenda by forming an alliance with the Social Democratic block. In Malmö local politics, this traditional left-right division and alliance was disrupted when the Scania Party (Skånepartiet) appeared in the 1985 election and managed to gain five seats in the local municipality<sup>3</sup>. The presence of anti-immigrant sentiments produced a counter movement in the form of an explicit immigrant party. However, alignment formation proved to be difficult despite a vast amount of media coverage and access to the political platforms through debates and press conferences. The party formation strategy proved to be far more problematic than initially perceived, not only in terms of resistance faced by a majority of the established political actors, but also in terms of financing the movement. Seeing that governmental party support is only available *after* a party gains representation, the Rainbow Party had to rely on voluntary work and donations from sponsors. This obstacle relates to what McCarthy and Zald (1977) labels "resource-mobilisation". This term not only refers to the need of one or more

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<sup>3</sup> The Scania Party can be, briefly, described as a populist party with xenophobic ideas (see Peterson *et al* 1998 for a more thorough discussion on the party and its ideas). The appearance of the Scania Party was followed-up by a local referendum in the municipality of Sjöbo (a neighbour to Malmö), in which the voters were asked whether they wanted the municipality to arrange settlement for a group of refugees. The outcome was negative, despite positive encouragement from the national parties, and no refugees were placed in Sjöbo (Hammar 1991).

persons within a social movement to bring in monetary resources from a third party, but also to the ability to access political, legal and media support. As mentioned above, when trying to establish working relationships with the dominating parties, the response received was moderate, and in some cases even hostile, except from the Green Party (Miljöpartiet).

“...they tried to establish a dialogue with us from the start. They said that their manifesto was compatible with ours. The Green Party took it more seriously, they wanted to co-operate with us and they wanted us to join their organisation. We got invited to a debate, which we re-named a dialogue, there wasn't much to debate against, more of a discussion about questions that were similar for the both of us...they paid for newspaper advertisement. That was very positive for us, it made us look more legitimate, that they took us seriously” (Laukkanen 2000).

The positive response from the Green Party is not very surprising given that the Rainbow Party's manifesto is, if not identical, at least very similar to that of the Greens, something that the interviewees openly admit to. By affiliating the Rainbow Party with the Greens, the party gained access to a wider scope of opportunities to influence the local agenda. The candidates could use the means available offered by an established party, but this did also mean that their previous profile had to be re-negotiated. In the 1998 election the Rainbow Party only managed to receive 0.7 percent of the votes in Malmö and thus were not entitled to any municipality seats or monetary support. This outcome and the previous engagement with the Greens generated an outflow of Rainbow Party candidates to the Green party. In retrospect, the Rainbow Party does not only share similarities with a social movement utilising the opportunities provided by the Swedish system and organising a suitable strategy according to these, they also share similarities with what Johnson (1981) has identified as a tribune party. Drawing on the experiences from the French PCF party, Johnson suggest that a tribune party works according to a principle in which gaining political representation is not the prime directive. Although, this line of thought seems rather contradictive in that it lies in the very core of a party to be interested in

gaining at least a minimum of parliamentary influence, the idea of a tribune party can highlight the particularity of the Rainbow Party. The function of the party was to organise and defend a social group who were excluded and/or felt themselves to be excluded from the process of participation in the political system and the benefits of the economic and cultural system. The existence of a tribune party relies on three preconditions. Firstly, there must prevail a large and relatively homogenous group that it represents. A group which, despite its size, is poorly integrated into the political and cultural system and thus placed in a position of inferiority. Secondly, the political structure in which such a party operates must tolerate a tribune party's actions by legitimating the right of political defence. That is, the recognition of the party's right to oppose the perceived imperfections of the system. Thirdly, the group or groups must be willing to settle for political defence primarily rather than passiveness or open revolt (see also Lavou 1969).

## Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to examine the opportunities that exist for non-established actors to influence and challenge the Swedish and Dutch political system. More specifically, the actors addressed have been the immigrant population and the possibilities available for them in a corporatist environment. The new population in Sweden and the Netherlands are encouraged by official policy to become integrated in the receiving society. Citizenship regulations are liberal, public funding is available for organisational activities and the state supports and recognises difference in ethnic or cultural backgrounds. Both countries are relatively open in terms of the capacity to convert demands into public policy. However, this seems to be limited to the larger parties or interest groups such as the labour movements. Minor scale social movements lack the necessary means in order to pursue their goals and are directed to the major actors. Taking advantages of political cleavages is a second form of opportunity structure in which a movement or group can establish an alliance with a party, disrupting the equilibrium. In Sweden this has been done in accordance to class-

membership through large corporatist groups. The channels available for immigrants here is by using their organisational or associational platform, which have been predominately used for other, non-politicised, purposes. Seeing that class issues dominate the public discourse, an explicit ethnic agenda has been difficult to pursue. The Dutch case is slightly different, mainly relying on religious affiliation rather than class, but this strategy has been under-utilised since the dominating religious beliefs differs from the main religious practice of the Dutch immigrants. The formal and informal ways of conflict resolution is a third possibility. Once again, non-party affiliators have to rely on a strong organisational backup, which means a large organisation that will not be ignored by the negotiating partner. Immigrant interests are not actively promoted by their representing associations, steering them towards other organisations in which their particular interest might get lost. However, this channel seems to be used more often in the Netherlands than in Sweden. The immigrant organisations in Sweden are sponsored by the state but are strictly regulated and have to perform certain tasks in order to receive monetary funding. Finally, challenging groups can find an opportunity to mobilise when the political elites are internally divided over a specific issue. This does however presuppose that the political system is unstable. The internal division has to be such that challenging actors have a realistic chance of gaining influence by affiliation with a certain party. Both Sweden and in some sense also the Netherlands have enjoyed rather stable scenarios over time, rendering this last dimension also largely under-utilised.

To conclude, despite that both countries pursue an explicit multicultural agenda, pursuing immigrant specific issues seems to be rather difficult. The challenger can experience numerous thresholds in order to become an influential actor on the political arena. As highlighted by the example of the Rainbow Party, choosing the party strategy as an alternative to group orientated pressure led the candidates to eventually join the party that responded most positively to their demands since the opportunities available for new parties were limited.

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