

Organized Group-Government Relations in Norway: On the Structured Selection of Participants, Problems, Solutions, and Choice Opportunities*

Tom Christensen, University of Tromsø, and
Morten Egeberg, University of Bergen

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1. Interest Representation and Public Problem-Solving Capacity

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that are 'directly affected'. Conversely, maximization of system capability may require organizational structures without much room for directly affected groups to participate. When concentrating on aspects of *interest representation* in the political system, this central dilemma of political theory should be kept in mind. We shall focus on direct organizational representation in government in the case of Norway. Of course, the Norwegian political system has other channels of interest representation, the most important one being public elections – the constitutional channel. There are also more or less spontaneous actions and efforts by individuals or firms to influence public decisions. But these channels are more peripheral to the concerns of this article.

Political organizing may be thought of as various ways of systematically selecting and relating participants, problems, solutions, and choice opportunities. The content of public policy may be viewed as the result of such linkages (Cohen et al. 1972; Olsen 1972; March and Olsen 1976; Olsen 1978). As regards organizational participation in government in Norway, a brief description of *participants, problems, solutions, and choice opportunities* will be provided.¹ We shall then concentrate on two different ways in which participants, problems, solutions, and choice opportunities are *related*. These are *committees* and '*remiss*'. These two organizational forms are both aspects of what can be called *political microorganization*. There are of course other such forms that will not be considered here: these include, for instance, delegation of public authority to private organizations, 'delegation' of private interests to public agencies, and informal contacts in general.

When such micro-linkages themselves are related, they can be termed *political macro-organization*. In the final section '*segments*' and '*corporatism*' will be treated as examples of organizational forms at the political macro-level. But first some trends of development, particularly as regards the organizational society, will be briefly outlined.

2. Characteristics of the Norwegian Organizational Society

Key properties of so-called voluntary organizations are that they are not directly established by any public authority, and that the members – be they individuals or groups – are not remunerated for their membership. In the 1880's the number of organizations began to increase rapidly, particularly at the *local* level. *National* organizations are mainly a product of the 20th century, although many trace their roots back to the 1800's. Eighty-eight per cent of all existing organizations were established after the turn

of the century (Hallenstvedt and Moren 1975:326). In 1975, national organizations in Norway numbered 1211 (Moren et al. 1976).

The organizational society also extends to the next territorial level. In 1970, 2281 *international* voluntary organizations were registered – with staffs, representatives, and statutes. The overwhelming majority have been established in this century, and the growth has been particularly strong and steady since 1945 (Skjælsbæk 1973). 57 per cent of Norwegian interest organizations are members of international associations (Hallenstvedt and Moren 1975:358).

To discuss all the theories about the formation of organizations here would take us too far. But we can mention some: imitation theories (ideas for organizational formation from other sectors or countries), theories of the 'passive state' (organizations handling tasks ignored by government), theories of the 'active state' (organizations for defence, negotiation, conflict resolution), theories of change in production conditions (organizations in response to market crises, professional specialization), theories of social and political revolution (organizations to replace primary ties, and organizations resulting from new political rights), and balance theories (organizations as counter organizations) (for an overview, see Hallenstvedt 1973; Svåsand 1978; Wilson 1973).

Sixty-eight per cent of Norwegian national organizations can be classified as economic interest groups. The rest are cultural, sports, and recreational humanitarian, social, and religious organizations (Hallenstvedt and Moren 1975:332). The handbook *Norske Organisasjoner* estimates that in 1976 national organizations had between 7000 and 8000 people in their secretariats, slightly fewer than the number of employees in the central public bureaucracy. There is, however, considerable variation among organizations. Forty-six per cent of the organizations have *no* permanent employees. Eight per cent have 31 or more. In 9 out of 10 cases, the secretariats are located in the Oslo area. The organizations issue about 10 million copies of some 1000 publications. The average Norwegian organization has about 10,000 individual members. In almost 1/3 of the organizations only companies are members (Moren et al. 1976). About 1/3 of the Norwegian population over 15 years of age are not members of an organization. A little more than 60 per cent do not belong to an economic interest organization (Martinussen 1973).

Relationships among organizations differ from one field to another. Among the organizations in the primary sector of the economy, for example, there is a high degree of formal connection. Indirect connections through joint local and regional associations are, however, more common

than clear-cut hierarchical arrangements. In industry and handicrafts the situation is different – almost all organizations are directly connected through two peak organizations, which are now about to merge into *one*. Organizations in banking, insurance, transportation, and service, on the other hand, are virtually void of formal inter-organizational connections. For both employee and employers' associations, each field has a relatively high level of formal internal connection. The Norwegian Association of Local Authorities, and the government, both representing large employers, are, however, not part of the Norwegian Employers' Confederation. Employee organizations are usually part of larger associations (peak organizations), of which the National Federation of Trade Unions (about 650,000 members), the United Organization of Employees (75,000 to 80,000 members), and the Federation of Professional Organizations (about 80,000 members) are the most important (Christensen 1978). 'The Structural rationalization of the organizational society' (Egeberg et al. 1978) describes the tendency of the merging of organizations (see also Christensen 1977). This phenomenon may be related to a desire for increased 'external effectiveness' towards the government and other organizations.

3. The Relationship between Interest Organizations and Government – Some Underlying Conditions

Organizations may realize their objectives in arenas other than the political: e.g. in markets, and by direct negotiations with other organizations. The main reason for the particular interest in the political arena is that it is the scene of activities that can further or hamper the realization of organizational goals. It is generally assumed that the quantitative and qualitative transformation of public tasks has increased the importance of the public arena to various social groups. It has been argued, for example, that the development of a welfare state has turned groups into pressure groups, organizations into political organizations (Eckstein 1971:323).

Simultaneously, a continuous process of specialization has occurred in the system of public administrative institutions. For example, from 1947 to 1977 the number of ministries has increased from 11 to 14, the number of ministry divisions from 47 to 81, and the number of bureaus from 184 to 304 (Roness 1977). It is often assumed that this development of public institutions has stimulated the formation of organizations and facilitated their search for contacts in government (Almond 1958; Wilson 1973).

Along with some aspects of public activity and structure, there are

certain ideological conditions likely to be associated with the political activity of organizations. A liberalistic ideology, for example, would require economic actors to operate in the market rather than in politics. For labour and employers' associations alike, independent bargaining seems to be an indispensable norm, at least in theory.

The same factors shed light on the government's interest in the organizations. The latter are attractive partners when they can contribute to – or hamper – the realization of the goals of political-administrative institutions. Information requirements often arise when public authorities seek to develop new policies. These are of a technical, economic, or political nature. Interdependence may not, however, be reduced to a question of information exchange. The fact that organizations are able to paralyze important societal functions has necessitated the consulting of affected organizations prior to making and implementing important decisions (Rokkan 1966).

Organizations have searched for relevant points of contact in government. The same goes for the government: it must find relevant contacts in the organizational society. In practice it has often been a question of the representativeness of the organizations relative to the interest they claim to speak for, and of the leadership's actual control of the organization. Hence, several examples exist of the government actively stimulating the formation and merging of organizations (Egeberg et al. 1978).

As with the organizations, government may also encounter ideological constraints on interaction. While the organizational society may have certain norms requiring abstention from politics, some governmental principles may require non-interaction in public policy-making. A traditional principle has been that representatives of affected groups were considered disqualified when administrative decisions were made. A competing norm permitting interest representation has, however, probably become stronger over time (Olsen 1978:58–59). Today the strength of the two norms seems to vary across different issue-areas (Fivelsdal 1978; Grønnegård Christensen 1978). It should be noted that norms that accept – or even require – interest representation, may also include as participants organizations other than those that can contribute to or prevent the realization of the goals of political-administrative institutions.

It should be obvious by now that, for organizations as well as government, interaction has both potential costs and benefits. Organizations may gain influence over public policy, but may become tied to solutions which are difficult to defend before its members. The government may gain support for certain initiatives, but may have to make significant conces-

sions to organizations. The implication is that non-participation does not necessarily mean *exclusion*. It may be by *choice*, i.e. in situations where the costs of participating exceed the benefits (Olsen 1976).

In 1936 organizations were represented in about 25 per cent of national public committees. By 1951 this figure had risen to more than 40 per cent (Moren 1974:27). It is important to note, however, that interaction between organizations and government has been developed also at levels other than the national. Such connections exist regionally and locally, as well as internationally. In addition there are 'diagonal' connections, i.e. between a nation-wide interest organization and an international governmental organization, or a county association and municipal government (see, e.g., Nokken 1976; Wagtskjold 1978; Skjelsbæk 1973; Soltvedt 1978). In the following, however, we shall restrict ourselves to organizations and government at the *national* level.

4. Participants, Problems, Solutions, and Choice Opportunities

In the interaction between government and organizations, the stream of *participants* is quite diversified. Table 1 shows the proportion of organizations by category that report contact with ministries monthly or more often. It also shows the proportion that has contact with two or more ministries.

Table 1. The Proportion of Organizations – by Category – with Ministerial Contacts. Percent.

Organization category	Direct contact with ministry – monthly or more often	Contact with two or more ministries	(N)
Agriculture, forestry, fishery	76	65	(56)
Industry, handicrafts	70	74	(112)
Commerce	64	54	(104)
Banking, insurance, transport, service	80	78	(61)
Employers associations	73	93	(40)
Employee and professional associations	83	79	(218)
Productivity and technical	85	71	(56)
Science, cultural	80	64	(133)
Humanitarian, social	81	88	(81)
Sports, youth, recreational	73	67	(91)
Religious	79	84	(46)
Research, development, finance	100	74	(60)

Source: Christensen and Rønning 1977: Table 3 (revised).

The proportion of organizations having contact with government monthly or more often, and with at least two ministries is generally very high. It is lowest in one of the business categories, i.e., organizations for commerce. In general, there is a high positive correlation between the size of organization staffs and the frequency and extent of governmental contacts (Christensen and Rønning 1977).

A total of 15 per cent of the organizations reporting governmental contacts consider the *administration* to be the most important contact point in government. The ministries are ranked the most important by 53 per cent of the organizations, the directorates by 32 per cent (Christensen and Rønning 1977). On the basis of the broad organizational participation (Table 1), most ministries and directorates should be expected to be involved in the stream of participation. A survey in the ministries conducted by the Norwegian Power Study (1976) shows that 80 per cent of civil servants had been in contact with economic interest organizations during the past year. Sixty-five per cent had been in contact with other organizations. Organizational contact is lowest in the Ministry of Finance. Here 59 per cent reported to have been in contact with economic organizations, 37 per cent with other organizations. Thus, this information emphasizes the extent of both organizational and governmental participation. It should be noted, however, that other data also indicate that the level of organizational contacts does in fact vary across ministries. Neither the Ministry of Finance nor the Ministry of Justice seems to be central in the contact pattern of any type of organization (Christensen and Rønning 1977; Lægneid and Olsen 1978).

Danish studies indicate a correlation between such variations in the level of contact and varying norms of organizational participation in public affairs. As it appears, cross-sectoral ministries tend to hold norms which are not at all favourable to organizational participation. Most approving of organizational participation are the sectoral ministries of different economic affairs (Fivelsdal 1978; Grønnegård Christensen 1978).

Participants may be 'carriers' of *problems and solutions*. This implies considerable variation in problems and solutions. When relating participants (e.g., Table 1) to central issues in Norwegian party politics, we find that most political problems had their spokesmen in our stream of participants. This should hold for conflicts in the labour and the goods markets (between urban and rural interests), as well as moral-religious questions and socio-cultural problems (Converse and Valen 1972). While the basis of representation in parliament is largely territorial, organizational representation has been characterized as 'functional' (Rokkan 1966;

Strand 1978). However, geographic conflicts are also articulated through the organizational channel, in that they may coincide with other cleavages, e.g. in the goods market and in moral-religious issues. Besides, regional conflicts may be expressed through this channel, since each organization is normally built on local units. The streams of problems and solutions between government and organizations therefore seem – in general – to have much in common with the streams found in the electoral channel.

One mode of reasoning, however, would indicate that the *scope* of solutions is limited. *Redistribution* in response to problems will be included in the ‘stream of solutions’ only to a limited extent. The point is that goods and burdens simply cannot be appreciably redistributed between organizations and the ‘counterparts’ in the public administration. The problems would have to be channeled to arenas where various political processes flow together. Such an arena may be the politically elected institutions: coordinating ministries, such as the Ministry of Finance, may be another. However, a political process involving only administrative units can easily remain at a status quo. Administrative units tend to respect one another’s spheres of interest (Lægreid and Olsen 1978). Hence, the opportunities for redistribution may hinge on the inclusion of larger groups (Schattschneider 1975). In elected bodies this can be achieved with a legitimacy necessary for such solutions. Therefore, when organizations are engaged in searching for such solutions, they will seek to channel their activities to political parties and parliament rather than to the administration (Peterson 1971; Elvander 1972; Newton and Morris 1975). It is perhaps symptomatic in this respect that the two organizational groups that have been the frontrunners in the politics of redistribution, labour unions and the organizations of the primary economy, particularly emphasize the importance of having spokesmen in parties and parliament (Moren 1974: table 2).

Finally in this section we consider the stream of choice opportunities in the relationship between government and organizations. A choice opportunity is a situation where it is assumed that a choice has to be made. The decision may, for example, concern appointments or budgeting. Table 2 presents the correlation between the main tasks of ministerial civil servants and their contacts with economic interest organizations.

The choice opportunities seem to appear particularly in personnel administration, preparation of laws and regulations, and coordination. The stream of such choice opportunities is considerable. A study of the period 1971–74 showed, for example, that *every year* an average of 88 laws and

Table 2. Correlation Between the Main Tasks of Ministerial Civil Servants and Their Contact Frequency with Economic Interest Organizations in 1975. In Percentages

Contact Frequency (economic organizations)	Personnel administration, adm. development	Budgeting	Formation of laws, rules	Research, planning	Orders (law-subsuming)	Controlling, accounting	Coordination	Information (public relations)	Other	Total
Monthly or more often	53	15	47	39	47	21	48	43	52	43
A few times	34	46	41	38	33	26	40	44	28	36
Never	13	39	11	24	20	53	12	13	21	21
(N) = 100 per cent	(86)	(46)	(70)	(143)	(190)	(38)	(57)	(32)	(39)	(701)

Missing data: 83.

Source: Questionnaire administered in the ministries, conducted by the Norwegian Power Study.

288 rules were passed (Aubert 1976:119). Budgeting and accounting represent routinized choice opportunities, but these seem to play only a minor role in the relationship between government and economic organizations. The pattern is similar for other kinds of organizations, except that there are fewer choice opportunities in personnel administration (source: as in Table 2).

5. Political Micro-Organization: Linkages among Participants, Problems, Solutions, and Choice Opportunities

5.1. Committees

Committees include commissions, governing and advisory boards, etc., appointed by a ministry or by royal resolution. Ministerial appointments generally follow law, parliamentary resolutions or agreements. An annual listing of the committees is provided in *St.meld. nr. 7*. Permanent committees may have decision authority in accordance with laws or rules, or their status may be strictly advisory or controlling. Temporary committees often conclude with a report. An example is committees on legislative proposals. The reports form a basis for further ministerial action and for parliamentary proposals. Temporary committees have been used since 1814; and permanent committees such as expert panels have been in use since the middle of last century.

Table 3. Permanent and Temporary Committees at Various Points in Time. Absolute Numbers

	1936	1951	1966	1971	1976
Permanent	192	378	804	838	912
Temporary	69	125	150	231	229
Total	261	503	954	1069	1141

Source: Hallenstvedt and Hoven 1974; St.meld. nr. 7 (1976-77).

The breakthrough for committees in the administration came during World War I. A likely explanation is that various schemes of coping with public crises required close cooperation with affected groups, and the general atmosphere caused by the national crisis made such cooperation possible (Hallenstvedt and Hoven 1974; Olsen 1976). Although many of these committees were discontinued at the end of the war, the experience gained may have inspired the long-term development of the committee system.

From Table 3 we can see that the greatest expansion occurred after World War II. As mentioned before, in 1936 there were organization representatives on some 25 per cent of the committees. By 1951 the share had increased to more than 40 per cent and seems to have stabilized at that level (Moren 1974:27).

Committees relate participants, problems, solutions, and choice opportunities. A choice opportunity (e.g. a legislative proposal) is available only for *specified* participants (those appointed) and *specified* problems

Table 4. The Distribution of Organizational Representations by Type of Committee. In Per cent

Governing and control boards, law-subsuming committees	Advisory boards	Law formation, other committees on formal policy formulation	Other	Total
28	64	5	3	100 (2625)*

Source: Kvavik 1976: Table 4.4. (revised)

* Kvavik ascribes these 2625 representations to interest groups. The figure seems high compared to those of Brautaset and Dovland (1974: Table 1) and Hallenstvedt and Hoven (1974). From Table 4.4 in Kvavik (1976) 'Interest groups' would seem to include more than interest *organizations*.

and solutions (those provided by the members or the mandate). By far the largest portion of organizational representation is *not* connected with any formal choice opportunity; the primary opportunity for the organizations to voice their problems is as advisers (Table 4). However, a comparatively large part is involved in the administration of public policy, through governing and controlling boards and law-subsuming committees. A negligible share of organizational representation (5 per cent) is in committees involved in formal policy formulation. Given the small number of committees here, organizational representation may still constitute a significant part of the total representation on these committees. Table 4 shows, however, that the organizations' share of representation in formal policy formulation does not exceed one-fourth. The organizations' largest share of representation is as advisers.

Table 5. Committees: Participants and 'Choice Opportunities'. In Per Cent

Participants	Governing and control boards, law-subsuming committees	Advisory boards	Law formation, other committees on formal policy formulation	Other	Total
Civil servants	41	36	52	71	42
Scientific research/teaching	11	13	20	10	13
Politicians	3	2	4	3	3
Interest groups	45	48	24	16	43*
N = 100 per cent	1631	3495	503	546	6175

Source: Kvavik 1976: Table 4.4 (revised).

* Cf. comment to Table 4.

Table 5 leads to the question how the committees 'select' participants. As it appears, the organizations primarily face civil servants. By studying organizational participation (Table 6) in more detail, the committees as an *organizational form* appear to be rather 'selective'. They primarily relate economic organizations (the six first categories) to the choice opportunities.

A comparison of Tables 1 and 6 clearly shows the 'effect' of the organizational form of committees on the selection of participants. It should be noted that the selection of this organizational form does not necessarily imply deliberate exclusion of anyone from participation. The actual selection may depend on the organizations' own choice: in some situations the costs of participation may be thought to exceed the benefits. This may in

Table 6. Committee Participation of Various Organizational Categories. In Percent

Organization category	No committees	One committee	Two or more committees	N = 100 per cent = No. of organizations
Agriculture, forestry, fishery	63	11	26	(56)
Industry, handicrafts	62	17	21	(112)
Commerce	79	8	13	(104)
Banking, insurance, transport	56	7	37	(61)
Employers' associations	74	–	26	(40)
Employee and professional associations	47	16	37	(218)
Productivity, technical	72	11	17	(56)
Science, culture, international relations	84	8	8	(133)
Humanitarian, social	69	11	20	(81)
Sports, youth, recreational	80	15	5	(91)
Religious	83	15	2	(46)
Research, development	73	17	10	(60)

Source: Organization Archives 1976.

some instances be due to the operating style of the committees. It is characterized by compromise, emphasizing mutual adjustment rather than confrontation (Hallenstvedt 1974; Fivelsdal 1978). Certain types of problems, such as economic ones, are better suited for compromise than others. In moral-religious issues, for example, it is difficult to come to terms. Hence, religious organizations perhaps rarely find the committee well suited for its needs, and may choose to remain unattached (Olsen 1976).

On the basis of previous considerations, the committees' selection of participants should indirectly provide considerable information about the selection of *problems and solutions*. In this regard, however, we should mention that many economic organizations probably 'carry' a wide range of problems and solutions. The Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions, for example, has over time become involved in an increasing number of issue areas (Solvang 1974). Some findings, however, indicate that the involvement of such organizations in areas peripheral to – or even beyond – the scope of labour and industry represents *secondary* goals for them (Stø 1978).

Paralleling our findings about organizational participation in general,

we would expect a positive correlation between organizational resources and committee membership. Danish studies seem to confirm such a correlation (Buksti and Johansen 1978).

Civil servants often hold key positions on the committees. Of the chairmen of the temporary committees, about half are from the administration, the rest from the judicial system or from university and scientific research institutions. Of the *secretaries*, who usually formulate the proposals, 62 per cent are from the central administration. Some 20 per cent come from other public institutions, scientific research and teaching (Kavli 1975:78–79).

Power and influence may be related to representation in committees. Participation may provide influence on the choice of solutions. But power and influence may also be related to the *organizing* of committees. Who, if anyone, controls the establishment of committees, the formulation of the mandates, and the composition? Who, if anyone, controls, in other words, the relating of the streams: who are to meet, which problems and solutions are they to face, and on which occasion? Organizing control and understanding the relationship between organizational form and content of public policy may be important instruments of political leadership. Of the civil servants in the ministries, only 3 to 7 per cent consider their own ministry to have *little* control of the *establishment, mandate formulation, and composition* of committees with interest representation. On the whole, ministerial control seems considerable, though somewhat less, with regard to the composition than to establishment and mandate formulation (Egeberg 1978b). Another study, based on questionnaires to 434 committees, presents the ministries as *initiators* of 65 per cent of the committees (Kvavik 1976:139). Such considerable control by the ministries of the organizing of committees with interest representation is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for the political leadership to be able to use the committees as an instrument of policy formulation. Also crucial to proposed legislation are, however, the later phases of the political process, i.e. after the committee has concluded its report. A study of committees in the transport sector indicates that if the 'culture of compromise' prevails and proposals are presented without dissent, there is a high probability that the proposals will be approved in the ministry and in parliament without substantial changes. Where there is dissent, however, the ministry and parliament are likely to alter the proposals. The study indicates that dissent is particularly common in committees dealing with issues with a high potential for conflict and with interest representation (Grimsbo 1974).

5.2. The 'Remiss' System

'Remiss' is a system whereby the government receives written comments from 'affected parties' on a proposal before the final decision is made. This practice is widely used. In 1973 the Ministry of Agriculture submitted 913 cases for comments (Gjedrem 1975), the Ministry of Social Affairs (excl. the Directorate of Health) submitted 361 cases (Lund 1976), and the Ministry of Environmental Protection 868 cases (Svendal 1977). With a few exceptions, comments are most often sought from various public institutions. The same seems to be the case in Sweden (Bjurulf 1976).

The 'remiss' system, however, can also be regarded as a way of relating the four streams of participants, problems, solutions, and choice opportunities between government and organizations. In fact, some 10 per cent of the cases are submitted to one or more interest organizations for comment (Egeberg 1976). The formal base of the 'remiss' system is primarily a matter of tradition and practice, particularly as regards proposed legislation (Knoph 1960:20). Paragraph 37 of the 'Administration Act' is, however, quite explicit about the preparation of rules, i.e. supplementary legislation delegated to the administration. Here, particularly affected interest groups are given an opportunity to comment before rules are formulated, altered, or annulled.

'Remiss' as an organizational form has a varying status in the political decision-making system. The pattern of committee reports *followed by* 'remiss' is fairly common in the preparation of new legislation. Often, however, the two stages – committee and 'remiss' – are closely *connected*. This is demonstrated by the fact that of 157 committees surveyed, 64 per cent requested written comments from outsiders *during* their work (Kavli 1975:107). Finally, 'remiss' can be considered an *alternative* way of organizing group-government relations. The Product Control Act, for example, was prepared in an *interministerial* committee. The organizations were not involved until the 'remiss': there are many indications that the choice of this organizational form had considerable impact on the content of the law (Grotle 1977).

Compared to committees, we would intuitively assume that 'remiss' would imply less regulation of the access of participants and problems to the choice opportunities. While the size of the committee is very limited (in 1966 averaging 6.4 members per committee (Solvang and Moren 1974:35)), the 'remiss' system in principle allows for a large number of participants. Studies show, however, that as regards types of organizations, the selection made by the 'remiss' system largely coincides with that of the committees. This is also mainly where economic organizations are

related to choice opportunities (Egeberg 1978b).

Since the participants are 'carriers' of *problems and solutions*, we would expect, as with the committee system, that the problems and solutions presented mainly concern economic issues. Where 'remiss' is one of many phases of a political process, there is little reason to think that the problems should differ significantly from, for instance, the problems in the committees. Where 'remiss' represents an *alternative* organizational form, problems may be somewhat more complex – they may be borderline problems, either between different economic sectors or relative to other issue areas. An example is the problems and the proposed solutions concerning the Product Control Act mentioned above (Grotle 1977). In such cases it is far from obvious which organizations should get the few committee memberships available. Hence, ministries may actually be *forced* to utilize an organizational form other than committees, but the ambiguity may also *allow* for a choice of organizational form (cf. Olsen 1976). This may in turn influence the policy content.

Only a rough sketch can be made of the *choice opportunities* provided for the participants by the 'remiss' system. As opposed to only 10 per cent of all cases, 25 per cent of the laws, rules, etc. are submitted to one or more organizations for comments. But only 6 per cent of the orders (cases concerning specific, named persons, institutions, etc.) are submitted (Egeberg 1976).

6. Political Macro-Organization: Linkages among Micro Linkages

6.1. Political Segments

In this context a segment is a set of micro linkages; i.e., a set of committees, 'remiss', delegations, etc., characterized by *related selection* as regards participants, problems, and solutions. Such segments may be found within a particular economic issue area (agriculture, fisheries, industry, etc.), or around such functions as health care, communications, education, and defence. The participants may come from various institutions. One segment may include representatives of interest organizations, ministries, parliamentarians, representatives of research institutions, the mass media, etc. There will not necessarily be complete agreement within each segment, but the participants are assumed to share certain basic values and perceptions, such that their models of the world coincide more with one another than with those of the representatives of other segments, or of those who are not part of any segment. Public policy as such, then,

may be a by-product of the events which take place within each segment (Egeberg et al. 1978).

In the relationship between organizations and government, the tendency towards segmented interaction is fairly clear (Organizational Archives 1976). A study of Danish legislative processes shows that this tendency is particularly marked with regard to economic affairs (Damgaard and Eliassen 1979). When considering the political system as a whole, however, the coordinating and integrating forces also become apparent. The party programs as well as the role of the Ministry of Finance are examples of this (Saglie 1978; Torgersen 1978).

6.2. Corporate Traits

Philippe Schmitter has argued that the term 'corporatism' should be reserved for systems of organizational representation with specific characteristics, and not be applied to this system of representation in general. Corporate traits are found if, within functionally differentiated areas, interest groups are hierarchically organized and have a virtual monopoly on representation. Membership in the organizations is coercive. In this system, the position of the organizations is approved by the government; in return, the organizations have to accept a certain amount of public control of internal processes, e.g. the selection of leadership (Schmitter 1974).

In this context, 'corporatism' describes certain aspects of the political macro-organization. Corporatism is not only a segmented system of interaction: it also has the above-mentioned properties. Within a segment, corporate traits imply, for example, that the organizations involved are hierarchically arranged, hence constituting a monopoly of representation.

We do not intend to undertake an analysis here of the Norwegian system in the light of Schmitter's dimensions. The description in the previous sections has disclosed a complex system for which a singular characterization is inappropriate. Industrial organizations, for example, are quite hierarchically arranged, but they do not have a monopoly of representation in industrial matters. Labour organizations have an equal representation in this issue area (Brautaset and Dovland 1974:65). The Norwegian Fishermen's Association and the farmers' associations, for example, have a representational monopoly as regards the 'fishery agreement' and the 'agricultural agreement' respectively, but the connections between the organizations in the primary economy are generally characterized more by indirect links between local and regional groups than by hierarchical arrangements. The monopoly of these organizations is mostly limited to

the above mentioned agreements. In policy matters pertaining to agriculture and fisheries in general, various commercial, producer, shipping, and employee interests are also represented (Brautaset and Dovland 1974:65; Organizational Archives 1976). A study of committees within the issue area of fisheries concludes for example that 'the Norwegian Fishermen's Association is becoming one of an increasing number of other interested parties' (Sagdahl 1974:149).

Through public grants the government can gain formal or informal control of internal processes in the organizations. Data indicate, however, that this control mechanism is not really practisable as regards organizations normally associated with 'corporatism', i.e. economic organizations. Government grants often go to other types of organizations, such as humanitarian, social and religious organizations, and those in science, culture, recreation, sports, and youth work (Organizational Archives 1976). On the other hand, because of the interdependence of government and economic organizations, there is an increasing similarity in recruiting to the bureaucracy on both sides, e.g. as regards education (Gaasemyr 1977). Since professional education poses constraints on a person's thought and behaviour (cf. Læg Reid and Olsen 1978), the predictability and the feeling of control increase for all participants.

7. Interest Organizations, Government, and Public Policy

Public policy is formulated and implemented through a vast network of various institutions and organizations. In order to understand why public policy turns out as it does, some of the aspects to be considered are: the relationship to the parties and the political elections, the relationship to the interest organizations, how public administration is organized, the relationship between the national government and local and regional administrations, and the relationship to international organizations and foreign governments (cf. Olsen 1978). The relationship between organizations and government outlined in this article is thus only one of many relationships influencing the content and implementation of policies.

A survey conducted by the Norwegian Power Study in the ministries and among employees and elected representatives in economic interest organizations demonstrates considerable agreement among these groups in the assessment of the importance of some institutions and organizations in making major political decisions. About half of the respondents in the three groups considered economic organizations to be very or fairly important. But some 70 per cent considered parliament important in major

decisions. The figure is somewhat higher for the government (cabinet) (Lægreid and Olsen 1978: Table 6.1). These figures seem to indicate that the concept of 'corporatism' is somewhat inadequate for the purposes of describing the Norwegian system in general. This does not imply a lack of corporate *traits* with regard to organizational representation in government. Another point is, however, that the interest groups most integrated in public policy-making – the economic organizations – have interests coinciding with those of the largest political parties: the Labour Party and the Conservatives (Gaasemyr 1977). As compared with most organizational goals, however, party programmes are very inclusive. And parliament also has a territorial base of representation. Finally, as mentioned before, some problems can normally be solved only by elected political organs ('redistributive policies').

Characteristics of the bureaucracy are also important in assessing the influence of organizations on policy content (Egeberg 1978a). The content of the Product Control Act, for example, cannot be explained solely on the basis of the organizations involved. The Ministry of Consumer Affairs and the Ministry of Environmental Protection were both involved in preparing the law (Grotle 1977). Both are organized to articulate interests which are quite poorly organized *privately*. Characteristics of civil servants are also important. Civil servants with a client oriented professional background may, for example, be more attentive to the demands of special organizations than are other civil servants (Jacobsen 1965). The above mentioned surveys show that by far the largest share considered the ministries as very or fairly important in major political decisions (Lægreid and Olsen 1978: Table 6.1).

A closer look at the organizations reveals, from our point of view, a considerable difference between economic organizations and other organizations. While 48 per cent of the ministerial civil servants consider economic organizations to be very or fairly important in major political decisions, only 16 per cent say the same for other types of organizations (Lægreid and Olsen 1978: Table 6.1). The importance ascribed to the organizations seems to be related to their ways of interacting with government, and there were considerable differences between organizations on this point.

NOTE

1. A choice opportunity is a situation in which the political-administrative system is expected to make a choice regarding, e.g., an appointment, a budget, or a bill (cf. Olsen 1978:84; March and Olsen 1976:27).

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