

Understanding Environmental Mobilisation in France within the Context of Europeanisation

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Abstract

This paper asserts that understandings of French environmentalism have become entrenched between models of inclusion (pluralism, policy networks) and models of exclusion (protest model, corporatism). French environmental actors have suffered from long-term exclusion from policy-making. However, an increasingly precarious environmental movement continues to diversify its actions. The French political setting is also undergoing processes of decentralisation. Moreover, French state-group relations are unravelling within a multi-level opportunity system *as well as* a continually transforming domestic environment under the pressure of EU processes, policies and institutions. Drawing from empirical evidence, it is argued that the debate should move from a state-centric to a group-centric approach.

Introduction

The study of French state-group relations encounters seemingly innumerable conceptual models describing inclusive or exclusive forms of decision-making. This paper will underline the inadequacies of traditional models while advocating the repositioning of such studies from a state-centric to a group-centric approach in an increasingly multi-level opportunity system. It will concentrate primarily upon French environmentalism as an understudied movement that finds itself between models of exclusion and inclusion. Environmental groups have indeed suffered from long-term exclusion from policy-making. However, the multi-faceted impact of the European Union (EU) creates opportunities for inclusion in local, national and supranational decision-making. State-centric models provide minimal assistance in bridging this conceptual gap. This paper will present evidence from the activities of a regional environmental group in the area of biodiversity. It is, therefore, argued that combining notions of social movement theory and Europeanisation can offer a group-centric perspective in a multi-level system of governance.

There have been few works (Dunkerley and Fudge, 2004; Tarrow, 1995; Warleigh, 2001) that have combined some element of social movement theory with Europeanisation. The concept of political opportunity provides a framework for understanding how the EU has changed present opportunity structures at *both* the supranational and national level. Equally originating from social movement theory, resource mobilisation theory allows us to reposition our analysis firmly on the perspective of groups within an ever-changing multi-level political opportunity structure. It is argued that these approaches should embrace both the appearance of a multi-level political opportunity system *and* the transformative power of European Union processes and actors in the domestic context.

This article will analyse the experiences of a regional environmental group (FRAPNA - *la Fédération Rhône-Alpes de la Nature*) within the EU's cornerstone programme on biodiversity, NATURA2000 (N2000). Addressing the need for a European wide programme on the protection of birds and natural habitats, N2000 has resulted in the establishment of regional level 'N2000 contracts' alongside a powerful financial instrument called LIFE-Nature. New forms of regional-level institutionalised group-state interaction (so called '*comités de pilotages*') have emerged as a direct result of the contracts. In accordance with resource mobilisation theory, it is revealed that groups can

mobilise at different times, in several ways and on different levels throughout the policy cycle of N2000. From this perspective, it is argued that we should also take account of *group specific* factors (such as strategies and resources) within a European context in the analysis of French environmental groups.

The paper will, firstly, introduce French environmentalism within processes of Europeanisation. Traditional models of state-group relations (in particular pluralism, corporatism and policy networks) are then presented as inadequately state-centric and ultimately inapplicable in their purist form to the French case. As a well-established excluded movement in France, environmental actors are habitually restricted to a 'protest model' understanding of state-group relations. In light of a growing diversification of environmental actors and action, I will therefore outline a group-centric approach that could bridge the gap between traditional models of exclusion and inclusion. This approach will be demonstrated through a case study of FRAPNA in N2000. Lastly, the paper will discuss the consequences of this approach for French environmentalism in an increasingly Europeanised context.

1. French Environmentalism and Europeanisation

There are two major groups of interest representation in France. Firstly, the 'occupational' groups (trade unions, business, farmers etc.) are seen to be the most active, with sophisticated networks of power and influence with government. The 'promotional' groups (environment, feminist, consumer groups) have evolved quickly in recent years, but remain much less powerful (Bell, 2002: 129-140). The environmental movement in France is categorised under the first wave of new social movements in the late 1960s. The 'green movement' refers to a large group of actors who promote wide-ranging concerns of ecology, conservationism, environmentalism, even regionalism and pacifism. Like other new social movements, the environmental movement has consisted of large numbers of small groups (Szarka, 2002).

1.1 Environmentalism and Movements in France

The emergence of this movement led to a period in time referred to by Prendiville as the "crazy years" (1994: 10). This characterisation originated from a series of protests in 1968 that eventually resulted in the collapse of the De Gaulle government. At its height, violent clashes between student protesters and the police took place in several areas of Paris. 'May 1968' became known as a watershed moment that led to the replacement of conservative morality by more liberal values. The subsequent period (1970s) witnessed an explosion in the number of 'promotional' groups. At the spearhead of this movement, protests against the installation of nuclear plants emerged throughout France as a direct consequence of more pronounced left-wing social overtones inspired by 'May 1968'.

The anti-nuclear movement mobilised more protests in France than any other country. French environmental groups (FFSPN, FNE, la Société Nationale de Protection de la Nature) sprang up in the 1970s, initially in an attempt to stop the construction of nuclear plants. As part of the less reputable (and less researched) 'promotional groups' (feminists, anti-racism), French environmental associations have, nevertheless, had little success on imposing their will on government. As is common among movements that find their origins in the new social movements of the 70s, environmental organisations have been largely forced into state relations based on pre-emption, incorporation, contestation and direct action. State-group relations have been generally an impediment to environmental groups even though the EU has changed the political landscape in France (Cole, 1998: 187-189).

These groups have, moreover, adopted different strategies from the new social movements of the 1970s. Contemporary social movements no longer focus on mass protests, such as the 1968 student uprising (Appleton 2000). Festivals, petitions, civil disobedience, and other media-directed events are tools that are being increasingly employed by relevant groups. Additionally, associations prefer participatory forms of mass mobilisation. They bring together a large number of groups on an *ad hoc* basis. Contemporary movements tend to operate within a fragmented system of alliances without the domination of one single group. The French environmental movement could, therefore, be referred to

as a “space or aggregation of interest” (Waters, 1998: 183). As a result, the support base of each individual group is liable to be more diverse and less predictable.

1.2 Applying the conceptual framework of Europeanisation

The role of interest groups played a central part in early research (Haas, 1958) on European integration. Until recently, research on interest groups in European integration has concentrated on the large-scale shift of groups to Brussels largely based on a neo-functionalism¹ logic. The sharp rise of groups and levels of resources devoted to influencing EU policy stimulated the 1990s boom in such literature (Mazey and Richardson, 1993). This type of traditional research on interest groups has been more prevalent in comparison to research on the adaptation of national environmental interest groups to the consequences of European integration. Instead of concentrating on the role of interest groups in a particular political system, Europeanisation deals with the impact of particular external forces on these associations and *their domestic environment*. In other words, it provides a framework for examining how the EU has impacted on the practices and preferences of national associations, and more generally on the *relationship between group and state* (Fairbrass and Jordan, 2002).

The expansion of the EU has, nevertheless, resulted in “an opportunity structure through which ever-increasing numbers of diverse groups have come to claim particularistic representation” (Dunkerley and Fudge, 2004: 246). Through their study of civil society in European integration, they find that interest representation is no longer confined to the nation-state through the multiple access points that are introduced by the impact of the EU. The appearance of this supranational ‘opportunity structure’ should destabilise traditionally inclusive or exclusive states. However, research conducted by Grossman (2004), Rootes (2004), Tarrow (1995) and Warleigh (2001) all underline that national groups do not necessarily take advantage of European level opportunities. The case study on FRAPNA below will examine the empirical validity of their claim.

2. The French State and Interest Groups

As an idea that can be traced back as far as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, interest group pressure is historically seen as illegitimate (Cohen-Tanugi, 1991). The traditional role of the French state is classified as *Jacobin*, which stipulates that elected governments are mandated by the will of the people directly, without the mediation of other interests (Hazareesingh, 2002). Effectively banning interest group representation after the French Revolution, the Chapelier Law of 1791 was the legislative expression of the political culture of Jacobinism in France. Although there has been a history of certain privileged government-group relations, the predominance of Jacobin traditions have led to a deep distrust of interest groups (Knapp and Wright, 2001: 300-302). Interest group politics has been traditionally shaped by the mistrust of interest groups, low rates of group representation and the fragmentation of interest groups (Elgie and Griggs, 2000: 147-148).

The traditional Jacobin distaste for interest groups is only partly relevant for contemporary state-group relations. There are three important reasons for this change. Firstly, a transformation has occurred mainly through the loosening of state control over civil society. Secondly, there has been a modernisation of public administration that has ensured freedoms of access to information. More recently, the multi-faceted influence of the EU has been largely accredited with this change (Hayes, 2002, Szarka, 2002). Although French pressure group activity would appear to be weaker in France than in the north European democracies, the traditional image of France as a state that pays no attention to associational life is becoming increasingly irrelevant to understanding the reality of French politics.

¹ Neo-functionalism (in opposition to intergovernmentalism) originates from international relations theory. It posits that the EU is a group of supranational institutions that seek to expand its powers and competencies in an incremental fashion. As a related consequence, large Brussels-based ‘Euro-groups’ (e.g. Greenpeace-EU) were established as a direct consequence of increasing powers (Mazey and Richardson, 1993).

With regards to conceptualising a relevant theoretical model, this mixture of a traditionally exclusive and an increasingly open state has reinforced the 'exceptional' status of French state-group relations. The model of French 'exceptionalism' may be defined as the situation where the policy-making style in France is different from the equivalent style in any other country. As such this model might equally be known as the model of French specificity, or the model of French distinctiveness (Elgie and Griggs, 2000). It is, therefore, contended that the French case does not easily fit into the traditional pluralist or corporatist models of state-group relations.

Numerous authors (Bell, 2002; Knapp and Wright, 2001; Wilson, 1987) have applied a variety of models to the French case: the domination-crisis model, the endemic and open conflict model, the Marxist approach, (neo/meso-) corporatism, (neo/meso-) pluralism, the protest model and policy networks. However, there is no predominant model of interest group pattern. The failure of these approaches to adequately capture contemporary state-group relations in France has even resulted in the creation of an 'untidy reality model'. This paper will now demonstrate that a long-standing debate on the three major models (pluralism, corporatism, policy networks) has only served to underline their inapplicability to state-group relations in France.

2.1 Pluralisme à la française or not at all?

By attempting to create the most favourable balance of power, the French government accords a greater official recognition to certain groups than others. During the 1960s and 1970s, the most powerful trade union (CGT) was purposefully disadvantaged by the government as it provided subsidies only for their smaller counterparts. From this perspective, a purist pluralistic standpoint is alien to the institutional and philosophical framework of the Fifth Republic. Interest groups in France are not playing on a completely level playing field. The state is clearly selective in its working relationships with interest groups (Cole, 1998: 202). Contemporary French policy-making now reflects a rather uneasy compromise between Jacobin ideas and pluralism.

However, the recognition that French pluralism is distinctively different to the standard form of pluralism leads to the possibility of concluding that pluralism *à la française* may not be pluralism at all. The continued existence of privileged state-group partnerships underlines a major weakness in the assertion that the French case is pluralist. Not only do many of the privileged state-group relations still remain, they have been partly expanded into new areas where the government confronts new intractable policy problems. With a greater emphasis on social security matters, trade unions and employers confederations have been accorded greater representation during the last decade. The relations between trade unions, employers' confederation and government have been particularly intimate throughout the debate on the 35-hour working week (Keeler and Hall, 2001).

Moreover, public officials in the various consultative bodies have the choice to accept or decline the advice given to them by interest groups. These committees have generally been dismissed as ineffective venues for interest group representation. They are far from being institutionalised into any meaningful regular consultation exercise. Instead, the establishment of these committees depends on the particular strategy of state officials or well-established privileged relations with certain groups. As a result, many less-well organised interest groups bemoan the failure of officials to heed their opinion. French interest organisations rarely feel involved in policy making, despite the recent proliferation of consultative bodies. Pluralism cannot adequately explain the existence and impact of such well-defined privileged relations (Elgie and Griggs, 2000; Wilson, 1983).

2.2 Corporatist accounts of state-group relations

Industrial relations (employers' organisations, trade unions and government) in France are cited as the core element to applying a corporatist viewpoint to French state-group relations. A precondition for successful industrial relations is the regular collaboration of these actors within a well-defined organisational structure. This situation ensures the smooth governing and autonomy of the elites within the bargaining process. Neither the state, nor employers' confederations have, however, been willing to grant trade unions the recognition of institutionalised power. In comparison to trade unions, employers' organisations have sometimes managed to ensure a well-organised and professional

lobby during industrial negotiations. In fact, the state and employers' federations have encouraged the isolation of trade unions by offering alternative institutional arrangements. (Schain, 1980: 191-212)

Attacking the validity of adequately harmonious industrial relations, Wilson (1983) presents a series of arguments against the dominance of a corporatist standpoint on state-group relations in France. In contrast to other Western European countries, there has, firstly, been a feverous resistance among French trade unions to personal relations with government. Despite the large number of groups representing a wide variety of differing interests, there has been a crisis of membership among trade unions from the beginning of the post-war period. This has resulted in an extremely conflictual relationship with the government (and employers' confederations) in an attempt to gain back members (Pickles, 1972: 269-274). Political events have created the situation for a more or less favourable environment for recruitment, where direct political activism (protests, mass mobilisation) has generally encouraged an increase in numbers of members. Loyalties to syndicalism (i.e. trade unionist) traditions have maintained an open unwillingness to participate in any corporatist practice. (Labbe, 1994: 146-155)

Secondly, the existence of numerous trade unions and employers' associations makes it more difficult than other European countries to present a united voice. In no other European country is there the comparable level of fragmentation. In trade unionism alone, there are over twenty major organisations with an additional myriad of approximately 50-100 smaller organisations (Labbe, 1994: 146-147). Outside a handful of policy areas, it is indeed difficult to demonstrate corporatist patterns in state-group relations in France. Thirdly, most groups face competition within each sector of interest representation, rendering intimate relations with governmental officials potentially dangerous (Knapp and Wright, 2001: 320). Such a group finds itself continually under threat from membership dissension, and movement to rival groups. (Wilson, 1983: 907-908)

2.3 Inadequacies of Policy Networks Applied to France

There are, certainly, criticisms that have been levelled at the study of policy networks in the French context. The decision to employ a policy network analysis ignores the more formalised models, which have been presented above. According to the particular study or policy area, proponents are essentially advocating a meso-pluralistic or a meso-corporatist viewpoint. Consequently, there is little reason to introduce yet another separate model of state-group relations that can be replaced by more traditional models of policymaking. A study of French agricultural policy by Epstein (1997) presents another criticism of the applicability of policy network theory to France. His study demonstrates that policy network analysis was only capable of accounting for a part of state-group relations, as interest group leaders found themselves continually isolated from decision-making. The continual reliance of government on traditional allies rendered policy network analysis inappropriate and ineffective.

From this perspective, the French statist model has ensured that citizens, through associations or not, have little impact on the formulation of national policies (Wilson, 1983: 134-136). Therefore, the policy network model does not explain national policy decision-making in France. Instead, policy networks offer greater potential when applied at the local and European level of state-group relations. In response to Epstein, new local state-group relations have emerged in light of the Deferre laws (for decentralisation) (Hayes, 2002) and the growing importance of EC Directive implementation at the local level (Levy, 2001, Négrier, 2000). Moreover, the introduction of EU-group relations has also destabilised the importance of traditional privileged state-group relations at the national level in France (Ward and Lowe, 1998). This distinction is an attempt to reinforce the need for introducing policy network analysis as a separate model (in response to Elgie).

3. Inclusion, Exclusion and French Environmental Groups

As part of the less reputable (and less researched) 'promotional groups' (feminists, anti-racism), French environmental associations have had little success on imposing their will on government (Bell, 2002: 122-124). Whereas single issue groups, i.e. environmental groups, wreaked havoc in UK or

Germany, the French political system has remained impermeable (Cole, 1998: 200). As is common among movements that find their origins in the new social movements of the 70s, environmental organisations have been largely forced into state relations based on pre-emption, incorporation, contestation and direct action (Stevens, 2003). State-group relations have been so impeding to environmental groups even though the EU has changed the political landscape in France (Cole, 1998: 187-189).

Nevertheless, different environmental groups find themselves in the 'inside', while others remain in the 'outside'. This position is only partly decided by the status that is imposed on them by government. The particular characteristics and strategy adopted by each individual group plays a major role in how far 'inside' they are situated (Szarka, 2002: 45). Tarrow's distinction between institutionalised and non-institutionalised groups underlines the 'insider' status of the former, and the 'outsider' status of the latter (Tarrow, 1995: 225). The tactics employed by environmental groups also differ according to each background and environmental traditions. 'Older' green groups (nature conservationists) approached their relations with government differently from 'newer' groups (political ecologists) (Szarka, 2002: 43). The former (such as *France Nature Environnement*) has largely sought to maximise longstanding relationships through lobbying practices. The latter (such as ATTAC) focus on more direct forms of activity. The empirical example of FRAPNA below reveals that a group can be both 'insider' and 'outsider' throughout the lifespan of a policy. Consequently, it is not constrained in strategy selection as Tarrow's distinction would suggest.

3.1 Dealing with inclusion

A precondition for involvement in national policy-making processes is governmental recognition and legitimisation. To be among those groups officially recognised by the government ensures a certain level of involvement in the policy process through access and membership of over a dozen committees and councils. This process of formalisation and legitimisation offers improved influence for these groups in official decision-making. It does, however, threaten the independence of environmental associations (Szarka, 2002: 45). Through this process, there has been a movement of environmental groups from a status of 'outsider' to 'insider' throughout Europe (Dalton et al., 2003). In France, environmental groups have become involved in 'committee politics' at local and regional level. However, the major national committee (Haut comité de l'environnement) that included environmental groups in the official national policy process disappeared in 1994 (MEDD, 2005).

Over the last decade, one national environmental group in particular, *France Nature Environnement* (FNE), has regularly attempted to lobby political institutions. Serious leadership and financial crises have severely hampered its ability to apply sufficient pressure at national level. FNE is, consequently, dependent on subsidies from government. However, this financial dependency has not resulted in any significant influence over the executive. National decision-making remains the preserve of state officials and a collection of privileged relationships with non-promotional groups (Szarka, 2002: 38-45). As a result, environmental associations have largely failed to make any real impact on policy-making in France. Sainteny underlines the absorption of the environmental movement into the mediocre success of Les Verts (the Green Party), and especially into the policies of mainstream political parties (2001: 210-212).

3.2 Strategies in exclusion

Excluded associations tend to initiate a series of targeted protests when their voice is considered to be ignored by decision-makers. This has given rise to the 'protest model' of state-group relations in France. It alludes to an alleged inclination towards protest behaviour among French citizens and groups (Wilson, 1987: 39-44). Many high profile cases have managed to successfully influence government policy. The 1998 back down by the government over plans to reduce the pensions of transport workers is a recent example. There has also been a long list of protests from more excluded agriculture groups against certain objectives of the CAP, and the decision of the EU and government to allow market driven priorities to transform the countryside (Thompson, 2003: 299-304). Most recently, the anti-globalisation movement has recently become the focus for renewed protest activity.

Baptised “le mouvement altermondialiste” in France, the anti-globalisation movement is essentially conceptualised as the Confédération Paysanne-ATTAC, certain trade unions and “les sans” (‘the have nots’). New protest groups are, principally, associations (ATTAC), networks (CADTM-France) or observatories (Coordination contre l’AMI) created specifically in reaction to the globalisation process (Cassen, 2004; Fougier, 2002; Lavoux, 2002). Indeed, the founding members of ATTAC include an environmental group, *les Amis de la Terre*. French environmental groups are an integral part of what Fougier (2002, 2004) calls “la mouvance contestataire” (the sphere of protest). There are three French environmental groups that are highlighted as being particularly involved in this sphere: Amis de la Terre, Ecoropa and Greenpeace. Their participation in protest activities allows environmental groups to identify with the larger anti-globalisation movement (Fougier, 2002, 2004; Lauverjat and Veillerette, 2005: 25-28).

3.3 A ‘movement’ framework for examining ‘groups’

There are two distinctive strands of social movement theory that perceive environmental movements as based on either fundamentalism or pragmatism. The former believes that environmental groups are driven by anti-establishment values that lead to unconventional and direct forms of action (Thompson, 2003, Tarrow, 2001). The later conceptualises environmental groups as actively promoting their cause to government through more conventional lobbying techniques (Dreiling and Wolf, 2001, Richards and Heard, 2005). The traditional dichotomy surrounding new social movement research relies on separating those groups who oppose the political order from those who embark on a pragmatic reform of the political system. This leads to a distinction between “environmental movement organisations” that focus on inclusive forms (lobbying, participation on committees) of interaction with the state and “direct action groups” (Barry and Doherty, 2001). However, this dichotomy is overstated and misplaced (as demonstrated by the FRAPNA case study below). Environmental groups undertake, in fact, a series of activities (both fundamental and pragmatic) in order to achieve multiple objectives (Dalton et al., 2003: 747).

The diversification of contemporary environmental groups reinforces the need for a group-centric perspective towards state-group relations in France. Social movement theory provides, above all, a framework for studying group behaviour and interaction with the state (Kriesi, 2004). It has the ability to shed light on how and why groups are mobilised and detail how they interact with the state via two revitalised concepts: resource mobilisation theory and political opportunity structures.

Resource mobilisation theory posits that sufficient levels of resources are needed for initial and sustained mobilisation. Freeman simply asserts that “the group can do no more than its resources...permit” (1979: 167). Focusing on resource mobilisation theory prioritises, in effect, the study of “movement organisations over movements” (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991: 21). It concentrates on the rationality of movement groups through emphasizing a range of ‘resources’, which is conceptualised both from a classical (labour and capital) and a modern (experience, information, beliefs and networks) perspective. The principal hypothesis maintains that the activity of any group is increased when it acquires more resources. As a result, the groups with more resources can exert more effort for all types of political action. Poorer resourced environmental groups are more likely to perform more confrontational activities (Dalton et al., 2003: 756).

Political opportunity can simply be defined as “institutional incentives and/or constraints upon...(group) action” (Appleton, 2000: 59). Collective action involves, therefore, rational actors who attempt to realise certain objectives within an ever-changing larger political apparatus. In contrast to resource mobilisation theory, this approach does not reveal the direct causes for the mobilisation or actions of an environmental group. Political opportunity offers a framework for understanding the “cues that signal movement actors toward possible venues for action” (Dreiling and Wolf, 2001: 37). These cues from the political environment are, of course, interpreted differently by various organisations. Political opportunity allows us to explore what prompts a movement activist to respond to a changing political environment.

4. Evidence from FRAPNA and N2000

With 40% of Europe's flora located in France, and over 100 endangered species of mammals, politics on the protection of nature have represented a core element of French environmental policy: the *natural history* tradition (Duhautois and Hoff, 2004). In contrast, the protection of nature has traditionally been low on the EU environmental policy agenda. Other areas such as chemicals, air, waste and water quality have had a more immediate relationship to building the single market (McCormick, 2001: 237). However, the EU unanimously approved the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) in 1992 in order to complement the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC). As a result, the N2000 network was created with the aim to contribute to the preservation of biodiversity throughout the European Union. It is, essentially, a framework for designating zones for special protection (ZSP) in each member state in accordance with the Habitats and Birds Directives. This case study offers empirical evidence from the experiences of FRAPNA, a regional environmental group located in the Rhône-Alpes region.

4.1 N2000 and France

The Ministry for the Environment organised the first stage (1992-1995) of N2000 by compiling scientific inventories and identifying the most relevant sites for protection. This Inventory of Natural Areas of Ecology, Fauna and Flora (37 ZSPs in total) was then sent to the Commission under the obligations established by N2000. The second stage (1995-1998) focused on a consultation exercise with scientists and environmental associations undertaken by the European Commission to decide upon which ZSPs would make up the N2000 network. The third stage (1998+) involved the preparation, establishment and maintenance of ZSPs by each member state in accordance with N2000 (Rémy and Mougnot, 2002: 315). From this perspective, we underline that the first, second and third stages of N2000 are translated in policy terms to phases of *agenda-setting*, *decision-making* and *policy implementation* respectively.

The establishment of N2000 in France has been an arduous process. The procedures that were drawn up by the Ministry for the Environment for the implementation of the project were actually suspended for almost two years (1996-98). The Ministry largely neglected the consultation process, believing that it would take too long. As a result, it endured significant opposition from various actors from French civil society (Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001; Thompson, 2003). Above all, delays in establishing N2000 originate from a multitude of misunderstandings among different sectors as to the objectives and implications of the project. Each policy area (agriculture, transport, fisheries) adopted individual standpoints as to what implementation of N2000 should actually involve (Julien, 2000: 363).

4.2 Empowering the 'Local' through Contracts and Finance

Under the requirements of N2000, the Ministry created a network of contracts (*les contrats Natura 2000*), for a renewable period of five years. Focused uniquely at sub-national level, these contracts were established between the local authorities, environmental associations and a variety of other actors. The contract includes monthly meetings of a special committee (*un comité de pilotage* - consisting of the local authorities and other actors including environmental associations), in order to assess their work in achieving the aims set out in the *document d'objectifs* (set by central government and the N2000 scheme) (Le Grand 2004a: 48-58). Therefore, instead of the national association, it was the regional/local environmental groups that played a decisive role in the establishment of N2000. From this perspective, N2000 has largely restructured domestic political opportunity structures in favour of regional environmental groups.

LIFE (The Financial Instrument for the Environment) was designed by the European Commission to encourage the development of environmental projects in member states. We are currently in the third cycle (2000-2007) of LIFE offering 957 million euro in total. LIFE-Nature, -Environment and -Third countries are the three thematic components of the larger LIFE programme. The specific objective of LIFE-Nature is to contribute to the establishment of the N2000 project. All other environmental issues are funded through LIFE-Environment (in non accession / candidate countries). Funding is distributed on a project basis within the N2000 framework. Therefore, financial and technical assistance is only

offered at the regional / local level where the specific project is due to be implemented. Therefore, involvement in the preparation and maintenance of a N2000 ZSP is accompanied by significant resources. We present one regional group (FRAPNA) that has essentially responded differently at various stages of European policy processes.

4.3 FRAPNA: Increased Resources, Multiple Strategies

Involvement in the N2000 project has had a major effect on the resources of FRAPNA. In terms of material resources, this regional group benefits from project information and finance related to the LIFE project. This capital was used for maintaining an effective program of protection for the designated ZSP. In turn, it has also helped to develop the organisation's internal capacity. Similarly, the group has increased (and partially restructured) its labour force for the protection of certain zones (human resources). Moreover, FRAPNA has been involved in legal proceedings against the state for not upholding certain responsibilities under the programme. More often, the group has attempted to negotiate (more so lobby) regional government on such areas of tension. The contractual framework (above) of N2000 has, at least, institutionalised cooperation between state authorities, FRAPNA and other regional stakeholders.

This regional group has focused on four forms of influence: 'sensitising, procedural, substantive and *re-sensitising*'. In 1995, the establishment of N2000 was at an early stage in France. As detailed above, state and non-state actors were encountering a number of problems in its development. FRAPNA and other regional associations became discontented with the methods used by local government in compiling inventories. They lobbied local government in an attempt to persuade them to change their N2000 strategy. By the end of 1996, the failure of these procedures triggered the formation of an entirely new umbrella organisation, an "alliance of fear" (Pinton, 2001: 339). Their power and influence became apparent when its political voice in the Senate resulted in the suspension of the implementation of N2000 in 1996. The French government was subsequently forced to engage on a much deeper consultation exercise with all regional stakeholders concerned.

This attempt at 'sensitising' the agenda-setting stage of the policy making process preceded a period of 'procedural and substantive' influence. The success of regional groups during the period 1995-1997 had encouraged the establishment of *les contrats Natura 2000*. Since 1998, FRAPNA has volunteers active in the conservation of all 25 ZSP in the Rhone-Alpes area. It has had one representative on the *comité de pilotage regional de Rhone-Alpes*. The committee meets biannually to discuss progress on the establishment of all the special interest zones in this region. The group collaborates with other stakeholders in contractual agreements on the preservation of such sites. The committee must publish documents on their aims and objectives, as well as their annual results. Under article R 214-32 in *Code Rural*, non-compliance with contractual agreements established in these committees can result in the official suspension of financial aid (Truilhe-Marengo, 2005).

Indeed, FRAPNA has benefited from this article as a lever for '*re-sensitising*' the policy process through directly appealing to the European Commission. Two sites (FR8201653 and FR8201696) were temporarily suspended throughout 2003 due to the committee's inability to agree upon the demarcation of the zones in question. The text of the two Directives (Habitats and Birds) does not include any instructions on management or the appropriate action to be taken. Ultimately, the French government suffers during such a suspension for delayed implementation. The European Commission applied pressure on France for slow implementation of N2000 on several occasions since 1998 (European Commission 2002). Moreover, the Commission has twice pushed back and redefined implementation deadlines. Both FR8201653 and FR8201696 were restarted in 2004 with different demarcations from the original policy outline. FRAPNA (alongside other regional representatives) tried to use this measure in order to review and reshape ('re-sensitise') N2000 agenda-setting, decision-making and ultimately policy implementation.

5. Implications for Understanding Europeanisation and Mobilisation in France

The case study on N2000 underlined the value of resource examination to understanding the mobilisation capabilities of civil society actors. This section reveals two important conclusions from the study. Firstly, the European Commission (via N2000 and the LIFE instrument) had a substantial influence on the resource base of FRAPNA. Overall, it significantly changed its material, human, cultural, moral and network categories throughout the project. The second conclusion focuses on the resulting influence of these resources on the *amount and venue* of groups' strategies. FRAPNA was clearly able to pursue a greater number of strategies than its regional counterpart. In addition to sensitising, substantive and procedural strategies, the experiences of this association also revealed that it can *seek* (even if unsuccessfully) to have a *re-sensitising* influence on EU institutions and decision-making. From this perspective, increased resources allowed FRAPNA to avoid the regional and national level through directly contacting the European Commission. FRAPNA sought to apply pressure on the French government to reshape specifications on policy implementation. Consequently, the European Commission adapted zone allocation in France, as well as establishing new deadlines. Benefiting from the substantial resources offered via the LIFE-Nature financial instrument, FRAPNA succeeded in "using" EU level opportunities for re-shaping the implementation process (Jacquot and Woll 2003).

5.1 Fundamentalists, pragmatists and turncoats all under one roof

This study confirms that environmental groups are adopting different strategies from those associated with the new social movements of the 1970s. Contemporary groups no longer focus uniquely on mass protests, such as the 1968 student uprising. In terms of direct action repertoires, petitions, civil disobedience, and other media-directed events are tools that are being increasingly employed by groups. In contrast to more recent observations (Filleule, 2004), the case study on N2000 revealed that associations are involved in both mass mobilisation and lobbying activities. In the case of FRAPNA, it was involved in direct protests against the government on the establishment of N2000. Within two years, its members played an integral consultative role in local committee meetings that shaped policy development in France. In this way, movement research fundamentally (Barry and Doherty, 2001; Dreiling and Wolf, 2001; Tarrow, 1995) over-stereotypes groups as fundamentalists or pragmatists.

A group-centric (rather than movement) approach to examining the activities of environmental groups allows the researcher to appreciate intra-group diversity. Moreover, a longitudinal policy-based approach teases out how one actor can alter its strategies over time. This study has underlined the integral explanatory variables of resources and opportunities within this framework (see McCauley, 2007 for an in-depth discussion on the explanatory power of resources in the same policy field). Overall, it is argued that French environmental groups are increasingly defined by a heterogeneous response to cross-issue shared values. As underlined throughout, the multi-strategic reaction of such actors is, above all, shaped by fluctuating resource capacity levels. The next section will, therefore, re-analyse the approach to exploring the group-state relations in France.

5.2 Europeanisation as a two-way process

The present case study on FRAPNA partly supports research conducted by Grossman (2004), Rootes (2004), Tarrow (1995) and Warleigh (2001). It clearly emphasised the dominant role of national and local opportunities for the activities of FRAPNA. Nevertheless, this group did use supranational opportunities in the form of the Commission (albeit on a particular issue – i.e. inconsistently). In this way, the case study demonstrates that groups have 'windows of opportunity' throughout a European policy process that they can exploit with 'adequate resources'.

However, we must not limit our understanding of Europeanisation to supranational opportunity structures. This paper reinforces the point that Europeanisation is, in fact, a two-way process. It is a matter of reciprocity between two moving features (the EU and member states). The EU influences groups as part of a wider series of changes at the national level. Europeanisation has transformed the

relations between state and group at the EU, national and regional levels because it modifies national opportunities and threats to each actor. As a result, this process encourages a change in the objectives, resources and behaviour of environmental interest groups (Fairbrass and Jordan 2002: 139-143). The ability of groups to maximise these supranational structures is, therefore, shaped by the opportunity structures that are available at the national level (Ward and Lowe 1998: 2).

We should, in fact, view Europeanisation as both “pressure” (as explained above) and “usage” (Jacquot and Woll, 2003; Radaelli, 2004). By introducing the sociological perspective of ‘usage’ we provide further understanding of Europeanisation. As demonstrated in the FRAPNA case, the term ‘usage’ underlines that national actors actively transform opportunities or constraints presented by the introduction of the EU and integration process into concrete political action. This term refers, secondly, to the habitual nature that such a process takes after a period of time (such as the N2000 policy cycle). From this standpoint, European integration can only happen if an actor seizes these national / EU opportunities or constraints. Europeanisation is, therefore, considered to be a non-linear and dynamic process, where actors proactively (as opposed to reactively) seek to maximise their new national and supranational environment.

5.3 Making Sense of Group-State Modelling in France

Commentators continue to struggle with the nature of state-group relations in France. The seemingly exceptional circumstances posed by the French case have led numerous authors to elaborate specific frameworks. Domination-crisis, endemic/open and Marxist models have all been unsuccessful in fully explaining the relationship between the French state and interest groups. Perhaps this failure is best summed up by the ‘untidy reality model’. It admits overtly that the best description for such relations would simply be ‘complex and untidy’. However, a myriad of authors maintain that this complexity is best understood as variations on both traditional and more recently applied approaches in this area. It is argued here that these attempts have also failed to adequately describe state-group relations in France.

We still find ourselves unsatisfied with both traditional and more recent attempts to understand French state-group relations. This article argues that we need to include concepts found in social movement theory to our understanding of state-group interaction. The ‘protest model’ has traditionally expressed basic notions of social movement theory in the French case. From locating a French inclination for protest to explaining ‘le mouvement altermondialiste’, the protest model has sought to include largely ‘excluded’ groups in the analysis of state-group relations. Under the first wave of new social movements, this model has also attempted to include French environmentalism within its analysis. Environmental associations in France have, indeed, experienced little success in dealing with an imposing state. While this model introduces new perspectives, it cannot adequately explain state-group relations outside notions of exclusion and protest.

This paper argues for the abandonment of such models in preference for the group-centric perspective employed in the case study. Group-state relations are essentially studied within the context of resources and political opportunity. Europeanisation is firstly perceived as a pressure resulting in the redistribution of power in national politics. From this top-down or ‘downloading’ perspective, power will be defined as being located within country-specific opportunity structures, configuration of actors and interaction context (Kriesi, 2004). In turn, these factors influence the resources available to environmental movement organisations and direct action groups. Secondly, Europeanisation is a pressure, “which leads in turn to the active ‘usage’ of political opportunity structures” (Jacquot and Woll, 2003). Essentially, pressure leads to environmental groups exploiting new domestic and/or supranational opportunities and/or new resources.

5.4 Overall Conclusions

This paper argues, above all, that we can bridge the gaps in our understanding of French state-group interaction by combining several notions within both social movement theory and approaches to Europeanisation. ‘Resource mobilisation’ depended traditionally on very rationalist perspectives of group resources. A collection of authors (particularly Hayes, 2002) has allowed us to re-apply political

opportunity to state-group relations in France. Moreover, the multi-faceted influence of the EU has been worryingly under-developed in this area. It is argued that we must move beyond perceiving the EU simply as an opportunity structure. Europeanisation is a distinct two-way process between two ever-changing entities.

Traditionally embedded between state-centric models of inclusion and exclusion, the study of French environmentalism demands a group-centric approach. Through combining concepts within social movement theory and Europeanisation, we can arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of non-state mobilisation and its relationship with the French state.

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