

A Pluralist State?

To
Emil and Nils

Örebro Studies in Political Science 38



ERIK LUNDBERG

**A Pluralist State?
Civil Society Organizations' Access to the
Swedish Policy Process 1964-2009**

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Swedish Policy Process 1964-2009

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Abstract

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Including civil society organizations in the policy process is a distinctive trait of democratic governance. But, while being highly valuable from a democratic point of view, not all civil society organizations are represented in the policy process. This dissertation draws attention to the role of the government in shaping the representation of civil society organizations in the Swedish government consultation referred to as the 'remiss procedure'. The overall aim is to increase empirical and theoretical understanding of civil society organizations' access to the national Swedish policy process. Drawing on various empirical data sources, it analyzes how access has changed during the second half of the 20th century, the factors influencing access, and the significance of the access provided by the government.

The results are based on four empirical studies, and show that the government has encouraged an increasing number and more diverse types of civil society organizations to be represented in the remiss procedure. In addition, organizations with plenty of resources, such as labor and business organizations, are not overrepresented. However, access is slightly skewed in favor of civil society organizations with an insider position within other access points at national government level, which is consistent with a privileged pluralistic pattern of interest representation. In addition, civil society organizations seem to be invited into an arena for political influence of less relevance. Theoretically, the dissertation moves beyond the neo-corporatist perspective that dominated Swedish research during the second half of the 20th century by drawing attention to five different theoretical lenses: pluralism, neo-corporatism, political opportunity structures, policy network theory, and resource exchange theory. It concludes that a variety of theories are needed for access to be understood.

Keywords: access, interest representation, civil society, neo-corporatism, pluralism, political opportunity structures, policy network, resource exchange, consultations, governmental commissions, remiss procedure, Sweden.

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Erik Lundberg

Nacka, September 2014

List of Publications

This compilation dissertation is based on the following four articles, which will be referred to by their Roman numerals.

Article I

Erik Lundberg (2012) Changing Balance: The Participation and Role of Voluntary Organisations in the Swedish Policy Process, *Scandinavian Political Studies*. Volume 35, Issue 4, pages 347–371

Article II

Erik Lundberg (2013) Does the Government Selection Process Promote or Hinder Pluralism? Exploring the Characteristics of Voluntary Organizations Invited to Public Consultations, *Journal of Civil Society*. Volume 9, Issue 1, pages 58-77

Article III

Erik Lundberg (2012) En försumbar arena? Organisationerna och remissväsendet 1964-2009, *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift*. Årgång 114, Nummer 1, sida 30-55

Article IV

Erik Lundberg (2014) Is Bureaucratic Policy-Making Eroding Institutions? A Bottom-up Perspective on the Swedish Governmental Commissions, accepted for publication in *International Journal of Public Administration*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Including civil society organizations in the policy process is a common trait of democratic governance. Beyond voting, lobbying and direct contact with public officials, civil society organizations offer channels for collectives to press their public concerns. Civil society organizations operate as ‘mediating structures’ (Grindheim & Selle 1990, 62) between the individual and the political system, providing policy-makers with input from the ordinary lives of various citizens groups and a more detailed and informative view of different policy problems (Fung 2003, 523-524). To paraphrase Mark E. Warren, a civil society organizations ‘communicates the meaning of votes’ by speaking on behalf of its members or the people it represents (Warren 2001, 83). Furthermore, between elections, civil society organizations may provide governments with legitimacy and policy initiatives, ideas and technical know-how to help them to solve complex policy problems (Scholte 2004).

However, including civil society organizations in the policy process not only strengthens democracy, but it may also weaken it. Their inclusion can work against the principles of democracy and contribute to injustice. Robert A. Dahl once noted that civil society organizations are at once “a fact, a value and a source of harm” for democracy (Dahl 1982, 28). Unlike in the representative democratic model, where all citizens have an equal chance to influence policy by voting, not all civil society organizations are represented in the process. Since resources, such as knowledge, money, skills and capabilities, are distributed unequally among civil society organizations, there is always a risk that resourceful organizations dominate the policy process. In addition, while governments need to listen to some civil society organizations, they are limited by time, attention and resources, and so cannot listen to each and every one (Dahl 1961; Dahl 2006, 50-76). Thereby, some organizations may have better opportunities to influence the policy process than others, which poses a challenge to the democratic ideal of political equality.¹

¹ Political equality is often pointed to as a desirable goal and a fundamental principle of democracy. Although it is probably not fully achievable in practice, it is “a standard to which we ought to aspire” in various aspects of a society (Dahl 2006, 8). The meaning of political equality is contested, but often refers to the requirement that democratic institutions should provide citizens with equal procedural opportunities to influence political decisions (Beitz 1984, 4).

The extent to and ways in which civil society organizations are represented in the policy process are often considered dependent on the historical legacy of state-civil society interaction. A distinction is often made between pluralist and neo-corporatist systems of interest representation (e.g. Williamson 1985). In more pluralist systems, such as the United States, the policy process has traditionally been described as open to a numerous competing organizations (Truman 1951). By contrast, neo-corporatist systems are seen as being dominated by a limited number of organizations privileged by the state (Heckscher 1951). Throughout the second half of the 20th century, the question of civil society organizations' representation has been addressed in divergent ways. A repeatedly heard conclusion, often from more pluralist systems, is that resourceful organizations, such as those representing businesses and industries, are overrepresented in comparison with other organizations (Schlozman 1984; Baumgartner & Leech 1998; Yackee & Yackee 2006), thereby reflecting Schattschneider's observation, that "the flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent" (Schattschneider 1960, 35). However, consistent patterns of bias have also been refuted, and variation is often found across political contexts, policy fields and organizations (Dahl 1961; Beyers 2002; Eising 2007a; Persson 2007; Smith 2008; Klüver 2012; Binderkrantz *et al.* 2014b).

The Scandinavian country of Sweden has often been rated as one of the most neo-corporatist countries in the world (Lijphart & Crepaz 1991; Siaroff 1999). During much of the latter part of the 20th century, the major interest organizations representing labor and capital, and also popular movements,² benefited from privileged representation in the policy process (Hadenius 1978; Micheletti 1994). However, during the second half of the 20th century, Swedish policy-making faced a number of other changes of relevance to the representation of civil society organizations in national policy-making. One trend, of particular importance, is related to neo-corporatist systems of representation. From the 1980s onwards, the neo-corporatist patterns in Swedish policy and politics are considered to have declined. Instead, policy-making has come to take on a more varied form through lobbying and the media. Thereby, the representation of civil socie-

² The civil society organizations traditionally associated with popular movements are the temperance movement, the early protestant free-churches, the labour movement, and the consumers' and farmers' movements (e.g. Micheletti 1994; Wijkström 2004).

ty organizations has been considered to be concurrent with pluralism (Hermansson *et al.* 1999; Melin 2000; Feltenius 2004).

Another trend is demonstrated by the incentives taken by the government to open up the policy process to offer more participatory opportunities. Faced by challenges like increasing Europeanization, the drift towards decentralization and privatization, reduced voter turnout and party membership, and decreasing citizen participation in traditional member-based organization, the government has tried out various means of delivering the institutional possibilities of including citizens in various parts of the policy process (SOU 2000; Amnå 2006a; Dahlstedt 2009). At local government level, citizens' panels and e-consultations have been introduced (Montin 1998; Åström 2004; Sedelius & Åström 2011; Karlsson 2012) and, at national government level, participatory forums and formal agreements between the government and civil society organizations have been presented (Jacobsson & Sundström 2006, 130-136; Reuter 2012). Thereby, it is hoped that representative democracy is strengthened, and the formulation of policies made more workable, legitimate and effective, but without neo-corporatist arrangements.

These trends paint a picture of a changing relationship between the government and civil society organizations, which has various potential implications with regard to civil society organizations' representation in the national Swedish policy process. On the one hand, this change may entail an increasing and more diverse number of organizations represented in the policy process in line with a more pluralist pattern of representation. On the other hand, it is possible that (corporatist) organizations with close contact to the government still benefit from their privileged position (Öberg & Svensson 2002; Öberg *et al.* 2011, 391). Moreover, the increasing incentives to include civil society organizations may suggest that the ability to influence policy has increased. Inclusion, though, may also entail the gaining of legitimacy.

In this dissertation, I approach the question of representation by analyzing civil society organizations' access to the Swedish government consultation referred to as the 'remiss procedure'. This is an institutionalized form of written consultation situated in the latter part of the national policy process. There is no agreement in the literature on the definition of access. Eising refer to access as the frequency of contact between interest organizations and political institutions (Eising 2007a, 386), while Dür views access as civil society organizations' "direct expression of demands to decision-makers" (Dür 2008, 1221). Another definition is provided by

Beyers, who equates access to “inside lobbying” (Beyers 2004, 213). In this dissertation, I draw on Hansen who views access “as congressional behavior - a particular inclination toward interest groups”. By granting access, the government gives serious attention to its favored informants, or marks the status of outside actors (Hansen 1994, 22). Specifically, I define access as a process through which the government chooses its preferred partners in policy-making. Empirically it refers to when civil society organizations are invited by the government to participate in the remiss procedure. The definition does not include civil society organizations who respond to the consultation without an invitation from the government.

By contrast with the above-mentioned definitions, which resemble ‘political participation’, my definition emphasizes access as something civil society organizations gain from the government and not something they can take. Thereby, it draws attention to the role of the government in shaping the representation of civil society organizations in the policy process. Studying access is important, since the government has the power to shape the representation of civil society organizations in policy-making (cf. Pierre 1998; Barnes *et al.* 2003). The government establishes the access points and influences who are included, and who are left on the sidelines (Bachrach & Baratz 1962; Fraussen *et al.* 2013). Thus, the government can influence both the numbers and types of civil society organizations represented, and thereby privilege some organizations or give marginalized organizations an incentive to press their claims.

The international literature contains various studies of access. However, a majority of these have concentrated on systems that are relatively pluralist by nature, such as those in the United States and the United Kingdom, and the European decision-making institutions (e.g. Hansen 1994; Leyden 1995; Beyers 2002; Bouwen 2002; Beyers 2004; Yackee & Yackee 2006; Eising 2007a; Eising 2007b; Chalmers 2013). Less attention has been paid to systems rooted in neo-corporatist environments (see however: Beyers & Braun 2013; Fraussen *et al.* 2013; Binderkrantz *et al.* 2014a). With this dissertation, I contribute to this literature by drawing on experiences in Sweden. To my knowledge, the Swedish literature is limited to the study by Uhrwing (2001), which analyzes interest organizations with access to the decision-making processes that focus on environmental policies. In this dissertation, I analyze access from an historical perspective that is rarely considered in the literature (see however Hansen 1994). I cover a 50-year period, considering how various types of civil society organizations gained access to a broad category of policy issues. Such an undertaking is particu-

larly needed in a Swedish perspective, since previous studies have often concentrated on the involvement of major interest organizations, such as labor and producer organizations, in specific policy fields (e.g. Elvander 1966; Melin 2000; Naurin 2000; Feltenius 2004). In addition, and by contrast with Uhrwing, I adopt a quantitative methodological approach to explore which factors influence access, considering both the importance of various types of organizational resources and also factors pertaining to the position of civil society organizations in the policy process. Finally, I assess the value of the access provided by the government. Being invited to the policy process may give civil society organizations an opportunity to influence policy. However, access is not equivalent to influence. The extent to which access leads to actual influence is dependent on various factors. Besides elements relating to the nature of the policy issues, and the resources and influence strategies of the organizations, the significance of the access point impacts the chance to influence policy (Dür 2008). Therefore, I consider how the significance of the remiss procedure and interconnected governmental commissions developed during the second half of the 20th century by drawing evidence from civil society organizations themselves.

Above and beyond these empirical contributions, this dissertation also aims to add to theory. During much of the second half of the 20th century, Swedish research on the relationship between state and civil society organizations has been biased toward neo-corporatism (Vetenskapsrådet 2003; Lundberg 2011). Scholars have focused on the emergence (Rothstein 1992a; Rothstein 1992b), the mechanisms (Öberg 1994), and the degree of neo-corporatism (Lewin 1992; Lewin 1994; Hermansson et al. 1999; Rothstein & Bergström 1999; Johansson 2000; Christiansen *et al.* 2010; Öberg *et al.* 2011). However, despite findings of weak patterns of neo-corporatism, few attempts have been made to consider the relationship using alternative theories. For that reason, and inspired by the international literature, I explore access through five theoretical lenses also of potential relevance to research on the relationship between state and civil society organizations.

1.1 Aims and research questions

The overall aim of this dissertation is to increase empirical and theoretical understanding of civil society organizations' access to the national Swedish policy process. More specifically, the dissertation seeks to analyze whether access has changed during the second half of the 20th century, what factors

influence access, and how the significance of formal access points has developed. In addition, it seeks to explore various theories in terms of their comparative contributions to the understanding of civil society organizations' access. The dissertation focuses on two main access points, governmental commissions and the remiss procedure, and addresses the following questions:

1. Has the access of various types of civil society organizations changed from 1964 to 2009 in terms of the remiss procedure?
2. What are the factors that influence civil society organizations' access to the remiss procedure?
3. How did the significance of the remiss procedure and the governmental commissions develop during the second half of the 20th century?
4. How can we, with theories other than neo-corporatism, increase our understanding of civil society organizations' access to the Swedish remiss procedure?

The first question is covered in Article I, which analyzes the participation of civil society organizations in the remiss procedure between 1964 and 2009. The second question is addressed in Article II, which explores and analyzes the organizational characteristics of civil society organizations invited to the remiss procedure. The third question is considered in Article III and Article IV. Article III analyzes how the significance of the remiss procedure developed between 1964 and 2009, using data on the participation of civil society organizations in the procedure. Article IV analyzes the significance of the governmental commissions, drawing on the perceptions of civil society organizations with 'insider' status. The fourth question is addressed in the summarizing chapter.

1.2 Organization of the dissertation

This dissertation has five main parts. In the next part, following the Introduction, I provide an overview of various theoretical lenses of access, namely: pluralism; neo-corporatism; political opportunity structures; policy network theory, and resource exchange theory. In the third part, I introduce the governmental commissions and the remiss procedure, and

present arguments for their relevance to the study of access by considering their histories, organizational settings and roles. In the fourth part, I present the research design and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the dissertation's methodological points of departure. The fifth part presents the main empirical and theoretical results, and proposes some potential areas for future studies.

2. THEORETICAL LENSES

In this section, I present a broad picture of various theoretical approaches to civil society organizations' access. I acknowledge five theoretical lenses relevant to the study of access, namely: pluralism; neo-corporatism; political opportunity structures; policy network theory, and resource exchange theory. These theories have their foundation in the international literature on access, where more or less explicit traces of these lenses can be found. However, we lack studies elaborating on all available theoretical approaches to the study of access and their contributions, in particular in countries rooted in a neo-corporatist political setting. There are certainly other theories that could be included, and this presentation does not claim to be exhaustive. Yet, these theories focus on the role of government in shaping access to the policy process. The lenses should be considered as refined theoretical models for discussing general features of access, and do not cover every dimension of and discussion within and between each theory. After discussing how each lens perceives access and the factors that influence access, I summarize by making some comparisons. The lenses are communicated in order of the time they were originally developed.

2.1 Pluralism

The first lens is pluralism, which is a diverse theory holding various positions, particularly on the role of the state in a democracy. The classical pluralist case emanates from American scholars, such as Arthur Bentley, David B. Truman, Elmer Eric Schattschneider, and Robert A. Dahl. Their work concerns how power is distributed in a policy process, which is regarded as key to understanding civil society organizations' access. Classical pluralism is a descriptive theory and rests on the assumption of a democratic system characterized by numerous civil society organizations that compete with each other in relation to the government to advance their own interests (Dahl 1961; Dahl 1967). The government is depicted as a relatively neutral arena for mediating and finding compromises between various interests. Policy-making institutions are relatively open, and the government does not erect any barriers to access; no single civil society organization is licensed, recognized or subsidized by the government. This does not entail, however, that pluralists believe that power is equally dispersed among civil society organizations. Rather, power in society is considered to be unequally distributed among organizations due to their possession of different resources (Dahl 1961, 228).

However, despite the unequal distribution of resources, pluralists argue that the dispersal of power is assisted by checks and balances that prevent power from being concentrated in the hands of the few (Smith 1990, 305). These checks are found both outside and inside political institutions and ensure that, even though civil society organizations may lack access, over time they are welcome to the policy process. One such external check is described under the heading of ‘countervailing powers’ (Galbraith 1970, 125), and suggests that the existence of one organization promoting one side of an issue is matched by an alternative group promoting the other side. In cases where no group is organized, individuals in the society may become organized if their interests are significantly threatened. Further, individuals often have multiple memberships and are in possession of a wide range of influence techniques, which limit the power of any one individual organization (Truman 1951, chapter 2, 3, 5, 448-449). The internal checks on government suggest that, in order for a government to be reelected and win support for its policies, it needs to listen to a wide assortment of civil society organizations (Smith 1990, 307). Together, these checks tend to block any one group in various policy arenas from dominating the policy process.

Later on, ‘neo-pluralists’ criticized the case presented by the classical pluralists. Although the system is relatively open, organizational resources, such as ability to mobilize, size of membership, financial resources, strategic position in society, and professional expertise, influence an organization’s capacity to access the policy process (Walker 1991; Maloney *et al.* 1994, 32-36). Civil society organizations with armies of members may have greater capacity to gain access since politicians are interested in maximizing their votes (Hansen 1994, 215). Collaborating with large-membership organizations may enable politicians to collect more votes. Likewise, the extent to which civil society organizations possess financial resources may influence access (Grant 2000, 63-66). The government needs information in order to form legitimate policy proposals. However, the government is not able to collect all the information needed, so collection depends upon civil society organizations. This suggests that civil society organizations with plenty of financial resources have greater capacity to provide the knowledge and information needed by the government, and therefore enjoy better access. The critique of the classical pluralist did not only come from within the America-based pluralist field, but also from overseas, where the prevalence of a corporatist mode of governing fits rather poorly with the classic pluralist understanding.

2.2 Neo-corporatism

Neo-corporatist theory was developed mostly during the 1980s as an alternative to pluralism. As with pluralism, there is an abundance of neo-corporatism, and the definitions and usages of the concept vary greatly (Williamson 1989; Molina & Rhodes 2002). However, it holds a far more restricted view of access where the government plays an active role in determining which organizations to invite to the policy process.

In general, neo-corporatism can be understood as a system of interest representation or intermediation in democratic states. In this type of institutional arrangement, civil society organizations operate as a link between the state and its citizens. One of the most widely recognized definitions of corporatism is provided by Philippe C. Schmitter:

Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, noncompetitive, hierarchical ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports (Schmitter 1979, 13).

This definition reveals that neo-corporatism rests on an exchange relationship, and suggests that the government and civil society organizations have a close relationship, and are assumed to want to negotiate the policy issue that is subject to consideration (Schmitter 1974).³ The government is assumed to be interested in building a relationship with civil society organizations licensed or recognized (if not created) by the state. Therefore, these civil society organizations will benefit from privileged access to the policy process. In exchange for access, the organizations will legitimize the policy process and create stability in society by controlling their members. This leads to citizens being more likely to accept the policy that emerges, and to a reduction in the potential for the government and civil society organizations to clash (Schmitter 1981; Cawson 1985; Molina & Rhodes 2002).

³ This definition also highlights two different dimensions of corporatism. One concerns the relationship between civil society organizations and citizens, and stipulates that citizens are organized in national membership organizations with monopolies in their areas of interest. The other dimension, in focus here, is the relationship between civil society organizations and the government (e.g. Williamson 1989, 98-101)

Neo-corporatism provides various explanations with regard to the characteristics of the organizations with access. One key explanation lies in the extent to which 'public status' is attributed to civil society organizations (Offe 1981, 136-138; Streeck & Schmitter 1985, 18-21). According to Offe, public status has four dimensions: resources, representation, organization, and procedure. Resource status refers to the extent to which the organization benefits from, for example, subsidies and tax exceptions offered by government. Organization status refers to the extent to which the internal relations between individual and executive members in the organization are regulated. Representational status stands for the number of members and the range of substantive policy arenas within which civil society organizations operate. Finally, procedural status refers to an organization's designated right to participate in consultations, decision-making and legislative proposals (Offe 1981, 136-138).

Another key explanation with regard to access, often mentioned in the Scandinavian literature, has its foundation in the relationship between class organizations and the state, and emphasizes the organizations that represent labor and capital (Blom-Hansen 2000).⁴ The reason why these civil society organizations benefit from privileged access is that they have a central role in developing various policies, often involving economic issues (Cawson 1985, 5). The labor unions benefit from access due to their large memberships and their ability to control their members and gain legitimacy within the policy process, while business organizations control production (Williamson 1989, 169). As a result, the government is dependent on them to implement policies and establish a stable society. By contrast, the civil society organizations that bring together more specific and competitive organizations are less costly for the government to exclude from the policy process, and do not benefit from privileged access (Panitch 1980; Cawson 1985).

However, even though labor and business interests loom large in the neo-corporatist literature, scholars have also drawn attention to welfare

⁴ The importance of business organizations has also been noted by scholars in the pluralist field. In a reaction against classical pluralism, Lindblom (1977) claimed that the policy process is more closed than often supposed, and is dominated by specific groups. He stressed that in market economies many decisions are taken by business, and the government needs business interests to be successful in the economy. Therefore, business organizations benefit from privileged access to the policy process.

organizations. As the need for and interest in adjusting or reducing public expenditure on welfare has emerged, support for the welfare state has shifted from labor unions to welfare organizations. Therefore, the government needs to reach out to the interests that evolve in relation to existing welfare programs (Pierson 2006). The issue of whether or not welfare organizations can be held to be neo-corporatist organizations has been addressed (e.g. Williamson 1989; Feltenius 2004). One key question is whether or not these civil society organizations possess the resources or status to control the implementation of policies among their members, thereby creating stability in society.

2.3 Political opportunity structures

A third lens can be found in the social movement literature. Contrary to pluralism and neo-corporatism, which stress the importance of organizational resources, the theory of political opportunity structures emphasizes the institutions of government. Initially, political opportunity structures were used to understand the relationship between conditions in the environment and political protest activities directed at public institutions (Eisinger 1973; Kitschelt 1986; Tarrow 1988). Early on, Eisinger referred to the “structure of political opportunities” as an element in the environment that imposes certain constraints on political activity or opens avenues for it (Eisinger 1973, 11-12). There may be relevant factors, such as the nature of the chief executive, the mode of election, governmental responsiveness and the distribution of social skills and status, among social movement organizations. Another definition is provided by McAdam, who defines political opportunity structures as a set of political factors, namely: 1) the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system; 2) the stability or instability of the broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity; 3) the presence or absence of elite allies,⁵ and 4) the state's capacity and propensity for repression (McAdam *et al.* 1996, 27). The first refers to the formal institutional structures, the others to more informal structures of power relations.

The concept has been criticized for being vague and conceptually fuzzy, in that it includes virtually all the factors in the larger environment in which civil society organizations are embedded (Goodwin *et al.* 1999, 52),

⁵ Elite allies have been referred to in terms of the informal structures of power relations between specific organizations and the government (cf. Kriesi 1996, 155-156).

including those internal to organizations, such as the transaction costs of mobilization, organizational resources, existing networks, and political alliances (Kriesi *et al.* 1992). As a result, political opportunity structures have been likened to a “sponge that soaks up virtually every aspect of the social movement environment-political institutions and culture, crises of various sorts, political alliances, and policy shifts” (Gamson & Meyer 1996, 275).

In a stricter sense, political opportunity structures refer to the openness and receptivity of the political institutions that determine the ability of outside groups to influence the policy process within each institution (Princen & Kerremans 2008, 1130). As such, the ability of civil society organizations to access the policy process is shaped by the characteristics of a given institution (Eisinger 1973, 25). These include mainly fixed institutional structures external to the organizations (Tarrow 1994, 85), such as the electoral system and constitutional and institutional arrangements of relevance to the access point. They may also include more shifting administrative procedures and the attitudes of politicians and civil servants in the government. Eisinger, for example, refers to the status ascribed by the government to organizations as a factor influencing their efforts to exert influence (Eisinger 1973, 11). In a similar manner, Kitschelt speaks about the importance of being an organization regarded as a legitimate representative of demands (Kitschelt 1986, 67; see also Kriesi 1996, 155-156). The theory is not very precise with regard to what determines an organization that is considered legitimate by the government. One suggestion is that the civil society organizations that are more prone to use conflict, and to adopt influence strategies such as protest and civil disobedience, reduce their chances of access since they are not considered as legitimate by the government (Costain 1992).

However, although political opportunity structures, as the term suggests, can be expected to be fairly stable, they may change as civil society organizations are also able to influence these structures. As Princen and Kerremans remark, political opportunity structures can be understood from two perspectives: one that views political opportunity structures as ‘exogenous’ to the behavior of civil society organizations or as fixed external constraints on civil society organizations’ activities, and one that views them as a result of the activities of organizations and the outcomes of the political process, an ‘endogenous’ perspective (Princen & Kerremans 2008).

2.4 Policy network

The fourth lens is found in the policy network literature, which was developed as a direct critique of the pluralist understanding of the relationship between government and civil society organizations. Derived from descriptions of the relationship as “iron-triangles” (Jordan 1981) and “sub-governments” (McFarland 1987), policy network theory suggests that a relatively limited number of civil society organizations, government actors and politicians interact in a fairly closed and stable relationship to determine policy (Marsh & Rhodes 1992; Daugbjerg 1998). Policy networks have been defined as:

[...] sets of formal institutional and informal linkages between governmental and other actors structured around shared if endlessly negotiated beliefs and interests in public policy-making and implementation. These actors are interdependent and policy emerges from the interactions between them (Rhodes 2007, 1244).

The existence of policy networks has relevance to the understanding of access since policy networks are assumed to reflect the status or power of particular organizations in the policy process (Marsh *et al.* 2009). While networks may have a potential to open up policy-making and contribute to efficient governance (Klijn & Koppenjan 2004), the existence of policy networks gives the government an opportunity to shape policy outcomes by granting access to the civil society organizations considered to be appropriate. Thereby, certain actors may be constrained within or excluded from the policy process. According to Van Waarden, policy networks have the function of “channeling access to decision-making processes” (Van Waarden 1992, 33). Since network actors follow their strategies, and use networks to satisfy their needs and interests, selecting or ordering the actors within a network is of crucial importance in satisfying the needs, interests and goals of a government. This is done preferably by recognizing certain actors and sometimes giving them privileged or exclusive access to the policy process.

According to policy network theory, access is influenced by resource dependencies between the actors in the network (Börzel 1998, 256; Rhodes 2007). While civil society organizations need access to the legislative authority that only the government can provide (Rhodes 2007, 1244), a government needs to collaborate with actors considered to be the ‘legitimated’ spokespersons in a particular policy area. They could be members of a civil society organization that provides policy information and politi-

cal intelligence (Hall & Deardorff 2006, 75), or has a prominent position within a coalition of other civil society organizations (Beyers & Braun 2013), or one that is willing to cooperate in the implementation of policy, thereby reducing implementation costs (Klijn 2008, 512).

The idea that there are some civil society organizations with a competitive advantage over other organizations and with close formal and informal linkages to the government is closely linked to the theoretical distinction between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ (Marsh *et al.* 2009). Insiders are members of a limited group of organizations that enjoy a higher degree of acceptance and status from the government. Outsiders, on the other hand, do not benefit from such a consultative relationship; they influence policies by more indirect means (Walker 1991, 9; Maloney *et al.* 1994, 28-29; Grant 2000).

The very nature of a policy network, such as the number of actors in the network and the frequency of their interactions, can vary. Various attempts have been made to understand how civil society organizations and the government may be linked in policy networks (e.g. Jordan & Schubert 1992; Van Waarden 1992). Marsh and Rhodes have argued that policy networks differ along a continuum from policy communities at one end to issue networks at the other. Policy communities are characterized by a limited number of organizations with permanent memberships, whose members interact frequently and share policy preferences. In issue networks, membership is larger and fluctuate more; interaction takes place less often, and so there are more conflicting policy preferences (Marsh & Rhodes 1992).

2.5 Resource exchange

The fifth and final theoretical lens relevant to understanding of civil society organizations’ access is resource exchange theory. This theory goes beyond the traditional pluralist–corporatist divide to incorporate characteristics of both. It acknowledges pluralism with regard to the plurality of civil society organizations and draws from the literature in sociology and economics that stresses resource exchange as an explanation for interdependence between interacting organizations (Emerson 1962). In the early sociological literature, exchange was related to the distribution of power between actors. The economics literature has stressed that organizations are not self-sufficient, but depend on resources from their environment for their continuance and for accomplishing their goals. In order to acquire

resources, the organizations need to interact with their environment (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978).

Scholars in the interest group field have taken the notion of exchange relationship further, and recognize that civil society organizations need access in order to influence policy-making (Bouwen 2002; Beyers & Kerremans 2007; Berkhout 2013). In return for access, governments demand certain goods that are crucial to their own functioning. The resources are essential for both actors to fulfil their own roles in the policy process. Most attention has been paid to various types of knowledge, such as technical expertise and policy information, since governments need knowledge in order to increase the possibility of writing effective policies (Bouwen 2002, 369; Poppelaars 2009). However, resource dependency theory is not restricted to a particular type of resource, such as knowledge. Resources can entail various things as long as they are attributed to the relationship between government and civil society organizations and have role in policy-making.

Consequently, civil society organizations are granted access only if the resources they provide are demanded by the government. This also implies that not all types of civil society organizations benefit from access, since organizations may have different capacities to provide the government with policy-relevant or politically strategic policy information.

2.6 Comparing the lenses

Having described various theories of access, this concluding sub-section discusses how these five lenses increase our understanding of access. On a general basis, they may be seen as rival approaches borne out of different political contexts and research traditions. Pluralism is rooted in an Anglo-Saxon tradition, while neo-corporatism, as it is defined here, has evolved in a European political setting. The theory of political opportunity structures has grown out of political sociology, while resource exchange theory draws in part on economics. While all this may be expected to render very different understanding of access, the lenses have developed in relation to each other, and some of them have assumptions in common. This sometimes makes it difficult to make clear distinctions between them.

As illustrated in Table 1 below, classical pluralism and resource exchange theory recognize access as relatively open to all civil society organizations. The government does not erect any barriers to access, and no organization is licensed or recognized by the government. By contrast, neo-corporatism, political opportunity structures and policy network the-

ory portray access as more restricted and controlled by the government. Furthermore, neo-corporatism, policy network theory and resource exchange theory rest on the principle of an exchange between the government and civil society organizations, while classical pluralism and political opportunity structures interpret the relationship as more detached.

With regard to factors that influence access, the lenses are not always explicit and features overlap. Apart from classical pluralism, which perceives access as open to all organizations, several of the lenses stress the importance of various types of organizational resources. Evidently, organizational resources can include many things (Maloney *et al.* 1994). However, neo-pluralism and neo-corporatism pay much attention to membership resources, and resource exchange theory and policy network theory to policy knowledge, as key factors that influence access. Neo-corporatists holds the position that civil society organizations representing labor and capital have better access than other types of organization. In addition, they emphasize the importance of 'public status', which denotes various factors, such as plentiful member resources and having an advantaged position in the policy process. With regard to the theory of political opportunity structures, access is shaped by factors pertaining to government institutions, which paves the way for consideration of a range of factors, such as formal constitutional arrangements and informal administrative procedures. That said, the literature stresses the importance of being regarded as legitimate by the government. Finally, policy network theory suggests that organizations with formal and informal linkage to the government find it easier to gain access.

Although some of the factors overlap the lenses, the explanations for why these factors are important clarify to some extent the differences. For neo-pluralism and resource exchange, plenty of members and policy knowledge are important, since policy-makers are interested in maximizing their share of the vote. Neo-corporatism suggests that governments give preferential access to civil society organizations with a large membership to create stability in society by controlling their members. Policy network theory shares with resource exchange theory and neo-pluralism an emphasis on policy-makers' need for policy knowledge, which demands plenty of financial resources. However, it also emphasizes the selective incentives of the government to shape policy by granting access to civil society organizations considered as appropriate (Van Waarden 1992). Finally, political opportunity structures are somewhat vague, but stress the governments' need for organizations accepted as legitimate.

As made clear above, these theoretical lenses can be seen as refined theoretical models, which provide different ways of understanding access. Running the risk of simplifying, they also give a rough idea of what characterizes the civil society organizations that are invited in. While a classical pluralist holds the position of access being open to all civil society organizations, neo-pluralism suggests that access is open but observes that civil society organizations with plenty of organizational resources, and in particular a large pool of members or financial resources, gain privileged access. Neo-corporatism holds the position that the government limits access and gives privileged access particularly to labor and business organizations, and organizations with public status. Political opportunity structures stress that being considered as legitimate by the government promotes access. Further, policy network theory suggests that civil society organizations with close formal or informal ties to the government benefit from access. In agreement with neo-pluralism, resource exchange theory stresses the importance of policy knowledge, yet points out that the civil society organizations with the resources demanded by the government are the ones to gain access.

Table 1. Access through different theoretical lenses

	Classical pluralism	Neo-pluralism	Neo-corporatism	Political opportunity structures	Policy network theory	Resource exchange theory
General view on access	Open	Restricted	Restricted and based on exchange	Restricted	Restricted and based on exchange	Open and based on exchange
Factors influencing access	None	Organizational resources, especially members and knowledge	Member resources and public status	Institutional structures	Formal and informal government linkages	Organizational resources, especially knowledge
Why these factors are important	None	To maximize vote/support. Need for policy knowledge	Societal stability	Not clearly defined	Governments' need for policy knowledge and legitimate representatives	Governments' need for policy knowledge
Privileged organizations	None	Organizations with armies of members and plenty of financial resources	Labor and business organizations and organizations with public status	Organizations accepted as legitimate	Organizations with close ties to the government	Organizations with resources demanded by the government

3. TWO ACCESS POINTS

In understanding civil society organizations' access to the national Swedish policy process, it is necessary to describe the two access points analyzed in this dissertation in greater detail. After situating the governmental commissions and the remiss procedure in context and in relation to other access points at government level, I explain the governmental commissions and the remiss procedure by reviewing the literature on their historical foundations and roles in the policy process during the second half of the 20th century. I conclude by presenting my arguments as to why the governmental commissions and, in particular, the remiss procedure are suited for the study of access.

3.1 The institutional context

One of the best-known features of Swedish public administration is its tradition of the close and high degree of formal influence of civil society. By tradition, the legislative process has been open to the influence of civil society. This is maintained in the Swedish constitution, which states that:

In preparing government business, the necessary information and opinions shall be obtained from the public authorities concerned. Information and opinions shall be obtained from local authorities if deemed necessary. Organizations and individuals shall also be given an opportunity to express an opinion if necessary (Regeringsformen 7:2, my translation).

This principle has been closely linked to the governmental commissions and the remiss procedure. These access points stood at the center of the Swedish policy process during much of the early 20th century but operated alongside a number of other access points at national government level, such as the government agencies and the parliament.

On the whole, the inclusion of civil society organizations in the policy process has been associated with a neo-corporatist mode of governing. Up to the 1990s, civil society organizations had direct access as representatives on the laymen boards of various government agencies, and thereby also had an opportunity to influence the implementation of policies produced by governmental commissions. These boards served the overall purpose of controlling the agencies, to adduce knowledge and the perspective of citizens, and, in some cases, also to have formal decision-making power over the agencies. In 1968, civil society organizations were represented on the boards of up to 68 per cent of the central government agen-

cies in Sweden (SOU 1983:39, 83). Next to state actors, civil society organizations were the largest group of actors on the boards heavily dominated by producer and labor interests and popular movements (Meijer 1956, 51; Meijer 1966, 70-1, 79-80; Hadenius 1978).

However, in the mid-1980s, the neo-corporatist mode of governing was challenged. The representation of civil society organizations on government boards was criticized as lacking accountability and clear principles on the role and responsibility of the organizations (SOU 1983:39, 39, 100-101; SOU 1985:40, 40, 19-20). Subsequently, in the early 1990s, the formal inclusion of civil society organizations on government boards and agencies was formally abolished. As a replacement, civil society organizations came to play more of an advisory role without any formal decision-making powers. Research has suggested various explanations for the decline in neo-corporatism, such as a changing mode of state governance (Lewin 1994; Rothstein & Bergström 1999), a more heterogeneous civil society, and an unwillingness on the part of civil society organizations to participate in neo-corporatist institutions (De Geer 1992, 174-175; Micheletti 1994).

After these most prominent features of neo-corporatism disappeared, Swedish policy-making was claimed to be more congruent with pluralism. Next to participation in neo-corporatist policy-making institutions, personal contacts with decision-makers and civil servants came to be used more frequently to influence policy (Hermansson et al. 1999; Öberg & Svensson 2012). In addition, during the last decade, research indicates that interactions between the government and civil society organizations have come to take on a more varied form, through policy networks where civil society organizations, civil servants and stakeholders interact (Montin & Hedlund 2009; Pierre & Sundström 2009; Hysing 2010).

At national government level, informal access points referred to as 'reference groups', 'dialogues' and 'compacts', used during the preparation of public policies, appear to have risen in prominence. Alongside formal consultations such as in the remiss procedure, the Governmental Offices of Sweden have tried various forms of dialogues (*samråd*) to include civil society organizations in the policy process. In 2010, 80 different dialogues were activated in the Government Offices of Sweden, thereby equaling the number of governmental commissions that year (Prop. 2012/13:1, part 17, 117). During 2008, formal agreements ('compacts') between the government and organizations in the social field were introduced; they resemble those introduced in the United Kingdom in the late 1990s (Kendall 2000;

Reuter 2012). In addition, informal ‘reference groups’ used for the preparation of EU policies where civil society organizations participate rose in number from 61 in 1999 to 108 in 2005 (Jacobsson & Sundström 2006, 132).

3.2 The governmental commissions

Alongside the remiss procedure, the governmental commissions constitute key institutions in the national policy process in Sweden. Committees are found in various countries, but their operating procedures and roles in the policy process vary (Marier 2009). In the United Kingdom, Royal Commissions are created by the head of state on the advice of the government, and used for matters of great importance or controversy. In the United States, advisory committees are established by congress or government agencies to obtain advices and recommendations for various issues and purposes (Balla & Wright 2001, 802). In Flanders, Belgium, advisory councils are set up by the government with the general aim of countering the reduced analytical capacity of governments on various policy issues (Fobé *et al.* 2013).

Governmental commissions are used in the initial, preparatory part of a legislative process. A governmental commission was first defined academically as “a temporary and freestanding body of inquiry aimed at formulating political goals and to prepare or solve legislation on specific policy issues” (Hesslén 1927, 6), a definition that is still relevant today (Amnå 2010). Swedish governmental commissions are very similar to the ones existing in other Nordic countries, Denmark and Norway (Christiansen *et al.* 2010), and those that operated in Finland up to 2002 when they were abolished (Rainio-Niemi 2010). Governmental commissions in Sweden are relatively highly integrated into the official policy process and used to prepare or finalize legislation on specific policy issues. But they are also used to collect information on particular matters. They can be initiated by the government or the parliament, and are appointed and formally organized under the Government Offices of Sweden. Their aims are always regulated by “directives”, written documents assigned by the head of department in question. However, a commission is formally an independent body, and, once constituted, is treated as autonomous.

The operating procedures of a governmental commission are regulated in a specific decree (Kommittéförordningen, 1998:1474), and further specified in a government report (Kommittéhandboken, Ds 2000:1). A governmental commission is a freestanding body and a separate authority,

with its own budget and personnel. However, the government is able to steer a governmental commission in various ways. Besides appointing the member(s) of the commission, initiating the directives and having the final say on its budget, the government has some influence on the appointment of its secretariat. In addition, the government may have informal contacts with an ongoing commission and/or its members, and can thereby influence the process of inquiry.

A defining character of governmental commissions, at least historically, is their involvement with civil society organizations, a feature that they share with their Scandinavian counterparts, and also the advisory councils in Belgium. In Sweden, civil society organizations can participate in governmental commissions in various ways. A distinction is frequently made between single-member commissions (*särskilda utredningar*) and multi-member commissions (*parlamentariska kommittéer*). A single-member commission is run by a specifically appointed individual, who may be a politician, a civil servant, a representative of a civil society organization, or another person considered by the government to be appropriate. Multi-member commissions are run by a (representative) body of parliamentarians and/or civil servants, and/or civil society organizations and/or experts. As well as being invited as members of governmental commissions, civil society organizations can take part as inside experts (*expert*) or outside experts (*sakkunnig*). Inside experts and the member(s) of a commission have the right to take part in the on-going work of the commission, and its meetings and considerations, and can adduce a specific written statement in the policy proposal. This procedure is often used to add, reject or comment on the work of the commission. Outside experts do not have this right, and are entitled to take part in a commission only if the member(s) of the commission allow(s) them to do so (*Kommittéförordning*, 1998:1474 § 19-21). In addition, throughout its work, a governmental commission can arrange hearings and invite civil society organizations. Civil society organizations are also able to seek access by sending written statements to and lobby the commission. The reports and policy proposals produced by governmental commissions are published in a specific series of reports (*Statens Offentliga Utredningar*, *SOU*) and presented to the government.

The system of governmental commissions is often associated with the neo-corporative mode of governing. However, governmental commissions preceded the Swedish corporatism that emerged in the 1930s (Rothstein 1992b). According to Gunnar Hesselén (1927), the governmental commis-

sions can be traced as far back as to the 1600s. At this time, commission-like forms of institution were used as means to gain knowledge and information on issues and to prepare legislation. These governmental commissions were represented by civil servants, and carefully controlled by the sovereign. On rare occasions, representatives of different social classes in society were consulted. During the 1700s, governmental commissions were used primarily as a means of expanding the government administration (Hesslén 1927, 44-45, 69, 102), and between 1719 and 1772 about 90 governmental commissions were in operation (Zetterberg 1990, 284). Most commissions were initiated by the sovereign, and represented by the experts (*sakkunniga*) regarded as the most “reliable” employees. Less frequently, the representatives of different social classes participated in governmental commissions (Hesslén 1927, 70-71, 93-94). In the 1800s, the number of governmental commissions increased, as did the representation of politicians. Governmental commissions came to be used in more politically contentious matters (Hesslén 1927, 377), playing a role as an instrument to reach consensus, thereby creating stability in society (Nyman 1999, 173-174). This is also the time when civil society organizations and citizens gained access to governmental commissions on various specific issues; for example, there was a governmental commission investigating the home-distilling of alcohol in 1845, and one investigating forestry in 1855 (Hesslén 1927, 106-107). During the 1900s, the number of governmental commissions continued to increase, and in 1968-1976, 20 per cent of all Swedish legislative proposals were prepared through the work of governmental commissions (Brantgärde 1979, 41), and represented in many major pieces of legislation (Premfors 1983).

Governmental commissions have been ascribed a range of pertinent functions, mostly from the perspective of the government. The most expansive list is provided by Ståhlberg, who identified 15 partly overlapping roles played by governmental commissions (Ståhlberg 1976, 244-254). Most scholars, however, ascribe governmental commissions the role of providing a flexible solution for the government to prepare, solve or investigate specific policy problems (Hesslén 1927; Meijer 1956; Elvander 1966; Anton 1969; Johansson 1979; Zetterberg 1990; Amnå 2010). The presence of this function has been explained by the relatively small size of Swedish government departments, each with a limited number of personnel. Setting-up a governmental commission allows a temporary expansion of the government in order to prepare policy issues by bringing knowledge and information into the policy process.

Furthermore, scholars have pointed to the role of governmental commissions in creating an arena for political negotiations in order to reach consensus and thereby generate stability in society (e.g. Helander & Johansson 1998; Ruin 2008). This role is closely attached to the neo-corporatist mode of governing. By including representatives from the political opposition and relevant civil society organizations in governmental commissions, agreements on specific policy issues can be reached through negotiation. According to Nyman (1999), governmental commissions played this role at the very beginning of the Swedish parliamentary system in the 1900s to create stability between the government and the parliament, and as a means for the government to control the political agenda and test the levels of parliamentary support for particular issues.

Further, on controversial issues, or when power in parliament is shared by more than one political party, it has been claimed that initiating a governmental commission is used to postpone or bury a problem issue (Ståhlberg 1976; Premfors 1983). Also, governmental commissions have been ascribed the roles of spreading information, initiating a debate on a particular issue, and co-opting civil society organizations (Elvander 1966; Trägårdh 2007b). At a general level, governmental commissions have been considered as sources of legitimacy for policies and programs, and ultimately for the state (Lindvall & Rothstein 2006). While many of the roles ascribed to governmental commissions may exist, the empirical evidence is rather sparse. In addition, there is a slight tendency in the literature to report traits of governmental commissions that they may have had, but only earlier on.

One recurring theme in the literature on governmental commissions concerns the extent to which they have changed and the ways changes may have occurred (Hesslén 1927; Meijer 1956; Johansson 1992). With regard to the number of governmental commissions, there was an average of about 65 governmental commissions each year. In the 1970s the corresponding number were 87 and in 1980s about 76. In the 1990s the number of commissions increased, reaching an average of 148, but declined to 132 during the 2000s. In recent years the numbers of commissions appears to have declined (see Appendix 1).

Second, the literature shows that the proportion of governmental commissions led by single members has increased, while the proportion of multi-member commissions has decreased. When analyzing 1 901 members on 509 governmental commissions in 1960, 1970, 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1995, Hermansson and colleagues (1999, 29) found that the share of

single-member commissions increased from about 30 per cent in 1960 to 60 per cent in 1995. Simultaneously, the proportion of multi-member commissions shrank. This suggests that the opportunity for civil society organizations to be represented in governmental commissions has been reduced.

Third, it has been found that the time available for each commission has also been reduced (Johansson 1992; Gunnarsson & Lemne 1998). In the 1960s and 1970s, governmental commissions operated for lengthy periods of time, up to about 6–8 years (Premfors 1983). At the beginning of the 1980s, a range of political initiatives were taken in order to accelerate the commission process, for example, by reducing the operating time of a governmental commission to not more than two years (Bergström 1987, 358). Between 1982 and 1995, the median and average time of all governmental commissions decreased from 4 years to 1 year, and in 2002 the average time for a governmental commission was 1 year and 8 months. Single-member commissions are generally shorter (Riksrevisionen 2004).

Fourth, analyses have pointed to low quality in commission reports (Riksrevisionen 2004; Juhlin *et al.* 2014). An evaluation of the quality of 20 commission reports from 1996 and 1997 concluded that a majority of the reports were of relatively low quality and, in particular, had flawed methods and analysis (Gunnarsson & Lemne 1998). As a result, various measures have been proposed in order to improve the quality of commission reports (Ds 1984:1; Regeringskansliet 2005).

3.3 The remiss procedure

After being presented to the government, a policy proposal produced by a governmental commission (SOU report) is distributed for review and comments to a large number of actors that are considered to have a stake in the policy according to a list created by the government. This process is referred to as ‘the remiss procedure’ and resembles an extensive written consultation. The government selects the recipients of the SOU report, but a list of proposals is often provided by the governmental commission. Although the commission reports are distributed to a selection of actors, it is an open process, which means that citizens and all types of organizations can access the remiss procedure by sending written comments (if they know about it). Comments on a commission report are collected and analyzed by the government. These documents, together with the commission report, constitute the basis on which to draft a parliamentary bill.

Written consultation is used in various countries as a method to include citizens and civil society organizations in the policy process. The rule-making process in the United States is a form of written consultation that bears some resemblance to the remiss procedure. In this process, laws proposed by Congress or the President are sent to appropriate agencies where a draft rule is open for written public comment. These comments are used by the agency during the preparation of the final version of the rule (Yackee 2006, 104). In the European Union, the European Commission increasingly makes use of e-consultations, to be exact, consultations that are announced on the Internet and that allow for answers by electronic mail or in online questionnaires, as a means to enhance the quality of rules and decisions, and improve the democratic quality of European decision-making (Quittkat 2011).

Internationally, the Swedish remiss procedure bears the strongest resemblance to the Danish bill consultation (Binderkrantz *et al.* 2014b) and the Finnish remiss participation that prevailed earlier (Anckar & Helander 1980). However, the remiss procedure, and also its Nordic counterparts, differ from other consultations in that they take place prior to a vote in parliament. The general procedure through which the Swedish government consults with government agencies before a decision is made is well-established, and can be traced back at least to the 1809 constitution (see Regeringsformen 1809, 7§).⁶ The constitution does not explicitly refer to the remiss procedure, since the preparation of government business has been considered as a concern for the government alone (Holmberg & Stjernquist 2002, 118). However, consultation through the remiss procedure has been considered as an established praxis supported by the constitution (Petrén & Ragnemalm 1980, 154-155). Civil society organizations were not formally included in the Swedish constitution until the beginning of the 1970s when the constitution was considerably reworked into its present form.

The remiss procedure has no formal rules or guidelines regarding the extent to which and what types of organizations government should consult. The government is the only actor that is obliged to respond to a remiss. According to general practice, actors ought to have at least three months to answer a consultation. However, the time to respond to a con-

⁶ In 1840 this law was revised to stipulate that, before policy issues are decided, essential information must be collected from the public authorities concerned (Regeringsformen 10§).

sultation varies, and has been criticized for being made too short (SvD 2008; Journalisten.se 2011). Based on 123 governmental commissions during 1997-1998, Eriksson, Lemne and Pålsson (1999, 121-122) show that the average time for answering a remiss was 93 days, but that it varied greatly, from 28 to 216 days. Thirty-one per cent of the consultations were shorter than three months, and only 12 per cent were shorter than two months.

In comparison with the governmental commissions, knowledge of the role of the remiss procedure, as well as the extent to which civil society organizations are consulted, is rather sparse. The remiss procedure has been referred to as a quality control of a proposal produced by a governmental commission. By sending policy proposals to government agencies, market actors and civil society organizations, ill-prepared or politically improper policy proposals can be enhanced or blocked before they reach parliament. In addition, it has been proclaimed as offering a role for civil society organizations to influence policy-making by promoting internal policy positions and disseminating information (Elvander 1966, 163-173). However, empirical studies are lacking.

Pertaining to the representation of civil society organizations, the practice of consulting such organizations emerged at the beginning of the 1930s, which coincides with the breakthrough of neo-corporatism (cf. Rothstein 1992b). According to Nilsson-Stjernquist, the number of consultations directed to the Swedish Trade Union Confederation increased from 5 in 1930 to 78 in 1947 (Nilsson-Stjernquist 1947, 204). During the second half of the 1900s the number of invited actors has tended to increase. Between 1922 and 1978 the number of actors subject for remiss doubled and continued to increase during the period 1971-1997 (Urban Swahn in Lewin 1992, 64-65).

Taken together, the governmental commissions and the remiss procedure are appropriate for the study of access for various reasons. They have stood at the center of the Swedish policy process during much of the 20th century, and have been proclaimed as the most central arenas for the formation of public policies. Furthermore, although they have faced challenges, they have been durable during this period in comparison with other access points. Finally, the operating procedures, in particular with regard to remiss, are highly institutionalized, relying on written documents that allow firm comparisons over time.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to study civil society organizations' access this dissertation uses a mixed method, combining content analyses of official documents, surveys and qualitative interviews. Mixed methods refers to research that combines alternative approaches within a single research project (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie 2010). The strength of combining various methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon is that the weaknesses of one method are compensated for by the strengths of another, thereby allowing for greater accuracy in the drawing of conclusions (Denscombe 2010, 138-139). Below, each method is described, with details on the material used, its advantages and disadvantages, and how it relates to the research questions addressed in the Introduction.

4.1 The document analysis

Document analysis is used to address the first research question, whether the access of various types of civil society organizations changed from 1964 to 2009 (cf. Johnson & Reynolds 2005, 211). Document analysis is used in Article I & Article III, and provides a general descriptive picture of civil society organizations' access over time as well as the significance of the remiss procedure. Specifically, I use official documents of a sample of remiss lists, which are the written records of actors that have commented on a report produced by a governmental commission (SOU). All in all, the sample includes 1874 different actors. Of these, 728 are civil society organizations, 888 state actors, 108 market actors and 129 private actors. There are 20 other actors that have been difficult to code due to handwritten remiss lists that could not be read, and were therefore excluded from the analysis. Using official documents is beneficial since there is no overestimation of civil society organizations' access, as might be the case if data based on civil society organizations' self-reports are used. In addition, it allows for comparisons over time.

The remiss lists were retrieved from public archives, or electronically from various government departments. A total number of 33 governmental commissions between 1964 and 2009 were selected (see Appendix 2). The remiss lists represent major governmental commissions covering rather extensive policy reforms and programs. Consequently, governmental commissions aimed at making minor adjustments to existing policies or those that produce research reports have not been included. One merit of this approach is that variation due to type of governmental commission is

avoided. However, it is important to note that choosing relatively extensive governmental commissions with far-reaching political implications may benefit civil society organizations with a more comprehensive agenda, such as trade unions and producer interest groups (cf. Quittkat 2011, 670).

The 33 remiss lists cover nine different policy fields, namely alcohol, housing, fishing, integration, hunting, nuclear energy, public service broadcasting, social policies, and education policies. From each policy field, three to five comparable governmental commissions were chosen to enable comparisons over time. Each governmental commission in the selected policy fields addresses comparable questions or problems, but the scope and exact purposes of the governmental commissions are not the same. Alternatively, a population or random sample of all governmental commissions conducted during a period of time could have been used. But, this would have resulted in a sample too large to be handled within the research project. Further, in some cases, such as education policies, governmental commissions from all the periods would have been impossible to find. This means that relative numbers are most reliable when analyzing changes over time.

The rationale for the selection of policy fields is to include a broad category of issues where one might expect to find a variety of civil society organizations. These policy fields do not cover the whole range of policies open for remiss and do not represent the overall access pattern in the remiss procedure. However, it is broad enough to lend itself to drawing conclusions about the access of civil society organizations. The sample can be criticized for being biased toward policy issues that had their breakthrough during the development of the welfare state, referred to as the “second generation” of policy issues. These issues emerged from 1930 up to the late 1980s, and is marked by the corporatist mode of governing (Montin & Hedlund 2009, 14-23). As a result, “third generation” policy issues, such as sustainable development, public health, urbanization and climate, that emerged in the 1990s, and were characterized by a new mode of governance, are not included. At the same time, policy issues such as sustainable development, climate change and public health are often considered under ‘all issues’, which suggests that the sample is sensitive to this shift to some extent.

The starting point for the document analysis is the mid-1960s. This is chosen since it is the period when the corporatist elements of the relationship between civil society and the state were apparent, when the develop-

ment of the welfare state culminated (Esping-Andersen 1996), and popular movements and interest organizations were the strongest actors in the policy process (Micheletti 1994). 1964 was chosen as the starting point, since it is the year of the oldest commission in one of the policy fields, namely housing policy.

All the remiss lists were recoded from a non-numerical to a numerical form to permit analysis. These remiss lists include information on: 1) the names of the actors invited by the government to answer the remiss; 2) whether the actors responded; and 3) the names of the actors that responded to the remiss without an invitation from the government. The remiss lists were coded on the basis of type of actor (state, civil society organization, market actor, and other), type of civil society organization (interest organization, critical organization, community-based organization, service organization), and mode of participation.

Civil society organizations can act in three ways in relation to the remiss procedure, namely: 1) reply to the invitation; 2) chose not to reply to the invitation; and 3) reply spontaneously to the consultation. Access refers to those that have been invited and chosen to reply, and those that have been invited and chosen not to reply. No analysis was made of the actual substance of the answers, which means that a response to a remiss can be more or less extensive. Pertaining to the measures of access, data on civil society organizations' access rely on written data and not on own assessments, which suggest adequate internal validity. However, one critical part of a document analysis is that researchers are unable to control or influence the data collection practices and procedures of the record-keeping organizations themselves (Johnson & Reynolds 2005, 218). For this dissertation, the data were collected by various record-keeping actors (departments and civil servants), which opens up the chance for variation in the handling of the remiss lists. But very few differences in the practices between the governments departments have been identified between 1964 and 2009. This suggests that the overall arrangement of the remiss lists remained unaltered, therefore allowing for comparisons over time.

Another critical part of a content analysis is how the researcher defines categories so they are both valid and reliable (Johnson & Reynolds 2005, 219). 'Civil society' often refers to the intermediate associations, movements, interest groups, etc. operating between the state and the market (Cohen & Arato 1992; Foley & Edwards 1996; Amnå 2005). However, the conceptualizations and definitions of this term vary greatly, and there is no consensus over exactly how civil society ought to be defined or what

to include in the concept. In some conceptualizations, the family and the market are included (Trägårdh 2010). In the Swedish context, the concept of ‘civil society’ was introduced in a political debate at the beginning of the 1990s as a critique of a (social democratic) welfare state that was considered to crowd out non-profit organizations, such as churches, charities and foundations (Trägårdh 1995; Trägårdh 2007a). Initially, scholars greeted the concept with skepticism, and it was criticized for being conceptually fuzzy, even useless in a scientific context (Dahlkvist 1995; Lidskog 1995). Gradually, however, it has come to occupy a pivotal position in the scientific literature (Amnå 2005), and is used in international comparisons (e.g. Wijkström & Zimmer 2011).

I focus on the part of civil society included in almost all definitions – namely voluntary organizations (Volkhart 2005; Wollebæk & Selle 2008). Civil society organizations are defined as formal or informal on the basis of their voluntarism, and characterized by four traits. First, members or followers are free to enter and exit the organizations and take part in their activities. Second, civil society organizations are characterized by formality; that is, the purpose and activities of the organizations are to some extent formalized and institutionalized. Third, civil society organizations are private and, in that sense, separate from the state. Fourth, civil society organizations are marked by common interests and norms that unify supporters in the organization (Warren 2001; Ahrne *et al.* 2004).

To distinguish between different types of civil society organizations, I use a typology formed from a differentiated conceptualization of civil society organizations based on different roles of the organizations in society (Wollebæk & Selle 2002; 2008). The typology is based on different theoretical perspectives of civil society, and makes distinctions between conflict- and consensus-oriented organizations and between member-benefit-oriented and public-benefit-oriented organizations. Four types of civil society organizations are identified: interest organizations, critical organizations, community-based organizations, and service organizations.⁷ In Article III, critical organizations are divided into two sub-groups, namely: popular movements, and social movement organizations.

It is possible to use legitimate terms other than ‘civil society organization’. One alternative is to use ‘interest organization’, which has been defined as a membership organization working to obtain political influence.

⁷ See Article I for full information on the categories, the theoretical bases and examples of organizations.

Group members can be individuals, firms, governmental institutions, or even other interest organizations (Jordan *et al.* 2004). However, by using ‘civil society organization’ I am able to include a wide variety of organizations operating at both the input side and output side of the political system, a distinction that is not emphasized in the concept of ‘interest organization’.

In order to identify different types of civil society organizations, I have used the official purpose or goal of the organizations provided on each organization’s website. In cases where there is no website, secondary sources have been used, for example, the websites of other organizations, or investigations and reports. It is important to note that all organizations appearing in the remiss lists have been categorized individually. This means that local organizations, for example, local hunting organizations or assemblies, have been classified as individual organizations (e.g. community-based organizations) separate from the national umbrella organizations they might be associated with (e.g. interest organizations). Furthermore, in a few cases, civil society organizations defied categorization and were excluded from the study. In most of these cases, this was due to the handwriting being impossible to decipher.

One limitation of the typology used in this dissertation is that it is not fully capable of uncovering “hybrid organizations” (Hasenfeld & Gidron 2005; Bills 2010), a restriction that must be kept in mind when interpreting the results. Civil society organizations may have a bearing on several categories, for example, both service provision and political influence. However, this has been handled systematically by studying how organizations have ranked their preferences in their own statutes. Here, it is assumed that the hierarchy of the organization’s objectives plays a role in the organization’s “identity” in each category. In cases where the statutes are not sufficient, consideration has been given to information on the activities and tasks of the organization. As such, the identities of the organizations are based on the most significant element in each organization’s self-defined purpose.

Another limitation is related to the longitudinal study. Organizations and institutions can be considered as ‘moving objects’, and their identities may change over time. A civil society organization may be transformed into a market actor, and an interest organization into a service organization. This has been noted in a very small number of cases, and has been factored into the research. However, in general, this is considered as a relatively limited problem due to the large sample. In addition, Hannan

and Freeman (1984) suggest that the basic characteristics of an organization, defined at its foundation, are unlikely to change entirely over time.

4.2 The survey

While content analysis provides a general picture of civil society organizations' access, it is weak as a method for explaining the factors that influence access. To provide more detailed knowledge on civil society organizations' access to the remiss procedure, and to enable an answer to the second research question, a survey was conducted. The survey was primarily used for Article II, and was directed at 302 civil society organizations participating in the remiss procedure between 2003 and 2009. The organizations were identified from ten of the remiss lists used in the content analysis (see Appendix 3). Together, the remiss lists represent a broad range of policy fields (listed above). The online survey was e-mailed to the official mail address or to leading representatives of each civil society organization. The response rate to the survey was 75 per cent, and the lowest response rate to a single question was 51 per cent. Three reminders were sent to increase the response rate. Nineteen civil society organizations had ceased to exist from the time when the remiss lists were established to the time when the survey was administered, and were excluded from the study.

The survey included a total of 34 questions about the features of the civil society organizations, their strategies to influence policy, and their perceptions of the remiss system. Most questions, except those on the features of the organizations, were multiple-choice. Forced-response questions were preferred since they are often considered to be easy to answer, especially in a long survey. In addition, they simplify the coding of responses (Johnson & Reynolds 2005, 280-281). However, the researcher is restricted to the categories defined in the survey, and the responses may not fully represent the position of the organization in question.

The survey was administered between June 2011 and October 2011. This means that the times when the civil society organizations participated in the remiss procedure and when the survey was distributed are not the same. Therefore, the data collected in the survey may not correspond exactly to the traits of the civil society organizations during their participation. Yet, the time differences are not severe enough for this problem to be considered a limitation (cf. Hannan & Freeman 1984). Failure analysis shows that small and locally oriented organizations, such as the hunting organizations and assemblies, service organizations and organizations that

responded to a remiss spontaneously, more often refrained from responding to the survey. This may be explained by a lack of resources. In addition, when contacting these organizations, some referred to the umbrella organization with which they are associated to answer the survey.

It is important to note that the results of the survey only account for variation between organizations participating in a remiss, and no control is made for Swedish civil society as a whole. In addition, although the sample covers a variety of policy areas, the sample is not fully representative of all organizations participating in the remiss procedure. As with the content analysis, the sample of relatively extensive governmental commissions may have benefited civil society organizations with a more comprehensive agenda, such as trade unions and producer interest groups (cf. Quittkat 2011, 670). However, as demonstrated in Article II, this is a relatively limited problem.

One limitation of the survey is that the measures of civil society organizations' use of informal policy-making arenas at national government level, such as reference groups, workshops, hearings, and internal inquiries (Ds, see Article II), rely on the organizations' own assessments of their degree of involvement. Hence, organizations may overestimate their level of involvement (cf. Marsh *et al.* 2009, 636). In addition, there is a small risk that the variable measuring such involvement also includes reports on participation in single-member governmental commissions. The phrase 'reference group' is sometimes used for both single-member commissions and informal policy-making arenas at national government level. However, the survey makes a distinction between these forms, which makes this a minor problem. If problems still exist, they do not influence the overall conclusion that some civil society organizations gain privileged access to various access points at national government level.

4.3 The interview study

To deepen understanding of civil society organizations' perceptions of the governmental commissions and prepare the ground for addressing the third research question, qualitative 'elite interviews' were conducted. The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions. In semi-structured interviews, the interview is conducted in an individualized manner, and the interviewer follows a pre-designed interview guide with short and thematic questions, but is also flexible about the number and order of the questions. This differs from highly structured and standard-

ized interviews, where the respondent has to choose between a fixed number of questions (Kvale 1997; Esaiasson *et al.* 2007).

The interviews were conducted with 18 representatives from 15 civil society organizations (see Appendix 4). The civil society organizations were identified from the sample of organizations found in the survey. Organizations participating six times or more in governmental commissions between 2006 and 2011 were selected. The motive for using this sample was to include organizations with plenty of experience of governmental commissions. However, the sample is representative neither of all Swedish interest organizations nor of organizations participating in the governmental commissions.

The interviewees were selected on the basis of having plenty of experience of participating in governmental commissions and having a leading position in their organizations, such as secretary general, union secretary, head of finance, legal expert, or policy director. The representatives were identified on the websites of the organizations or with the help of personnel within the organizations. An important element in selection was to find representatives with plenty of experience of participating in governmental commissions as members or outside experts. In a few instances, finding interviewees with experience on governmental commissions from the 1980s and onwards was not possible. In these cases, the interviewees were encouraged to accumulate such experience from colleagues within their organization. The interviewees were first contacted by phone and informed that the aim of the interview was to increase understanding of how interest organizations perceive the roles and development of governmental commissions and the remiss procedure during the last three decades. All the representatives first contacted were willing to participate in the interview.

The face-to-face interviews were conducted between November 2012 and April 2013, and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. The location of the interviews was selected by the interviewees, and took place at their offices or at cafés in Stockholm and, in one instance, at Örebro University. The interview covered interest organizations' participation in and perceptions of the governmental commissions, how these have changed during the last three decades, and the role of the commissions compared with other venues for policy influence. In some cases, follow-up questions were sent to the interviewees in order to clarify their answers. In practice, many of the interviewees began the interview by giving their view of the governmental commissions and how it has changed. In some cases, such in-

formation was provided during the first contact on the phone. These reports came to be used as vital information to address the question posed in Article IV.

The analysis of the interviews proceeded in roughly three stages. First, the interviews were transcribed. In most cases, this was done directly after the interview, giving close-up contact with the data, and enabling first general reflection and drawing of conclusions. However, as pointed out by Kvale (1997, 171), data analysis also takes place during the interview as the interviewee and the interviewees interact. After being transcribed, each interview was summarized. I focused on the parts of the interviews of relevance to the third research question, namely to the significance of the governmental commissions. This constituted about two thirds of each interview. The other part concerned the remiss procedure. At this stage, reflections and opinions presented by the interviewees during the first contact on the phone and before the interview were added. In addition, informative citations were noted and cross-references to other interviewees were made. At the third stage, the general findings from all the interviews were categorized in a table. This was done in order to provide a general picture of the results of the interviews, and thereby prepare for the writing of the article.

It is important to note that the sample comes from organizations with insider status, that is, organizations with a consultative relationship with the government and benefiting from privileged access (Grant 2000). Therefore, one potential limitation is that the organizations in this sample may overestimate the position of the governmental commissions in order to legitimize their insider position in relation to the government. Furthermore, when using a retrospective design, there is always a risk that the interviewees may fail to recall, omit or alter circumstances from an earlier time (Bernard *et al.* 1984). Although the interviewees had no difficulties in bringing to mind the circumstances surrounding earlier governmental commissions, this needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results. The interview study was used for Article IV.

5. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation has aimed to increase empirical and theoretical understanding of civil society organizations' access to the national Swedish policy process. More specifically, it has sought to analyze whether access changed during the second half of the 20th century, what factors influence access, and how the significance of formal access points developed. In addition, it has sought to explore various theories with regard to their comparative contributions to the understanding of civil society organizations' access. Focusing on two main access points, the governmental commissions and the remiss procedure, four questions were raised in the dissertation.

1. Did the access of various types of civil society organizations change from 1964 to 2009 in terms of the remiss procedure?
2. What are the factors that influence civil society organizations' access to the remiss procedure?
3. How did the significance of the remiss procedure and the governmental commissions develop during the second half of the 20th century?
4. How can we, with theories other than neo-corporatism, increase our understanding of civil society organizations' access to the Swedish remiss procedure?

The first three empirical questions are addressed in the following subsection (5.1), followed by a discussion of implications with regard to the equal representation of civil society organizations and some perspectives on future research in a further subsection (5.2). The fourth question is addressed in the final sub-section (5.3).

5.1 Main empirical results

5.1.1 Access over time

Based on the results presented in the four articles, there are three main empirical contributions of this dissertation. First, it has presented one of the first empirical analyses of access of various types of civil society organ-

izations during the second half of the 20th century (Article I, 359). The results show that the number of actors invited to the remiss procedure continuously increased. Between the first (1964-1979) and the final period (2000-2009) the number of invited actors increased by over 400. The number of state actors increased by nearly 300, while market actors and civil society organizations each account for about 60. However, in relative terms, the access of civil society organizations declined. Between the first and the final period, the share of invited civil society organizations declined, from 35 per cent to about 26 per cent, while that of state actors increased from 64 to 68 per cent. Market actors' share increased from about 1 to nearly 4 per cent.

In addition, it is shown that the diversity of civil society organizations gaining access to the remiss procedure increased. During the first period, interest organizations, popular movements and community-based organizations dominated the remiss procedure. However, over time, the entry of service organizations contributed to more varied types of organizations gaining access to the procedure. In absolute numbers, service organizations increased from 6 during the first period to 44 during the final period. During this time, popular movements and community-based organizations declined slightly in number. Interest organizations increased from 157 during the first period to 179 during the final period. In relative terms, service organizations increased, accounting for about 1 per cent during the first period but nearly 4 per cent during the final period. Interest organizations declined from about 22 per cent during the first period to 16 per cent during the final period. The corresponding proportions for popular movements are about 7 per cent to 4 per cent (from first to final period), and for community-based organizations 6 to 3 per cent.

Taken together, over time, a greater and more diverse number of civil society organizations gained access to the remiss procedure. However, and in relative terms, civil society organizations' access decreased while that of state and market actors increased. Clear changes can be observed with regard to the absolute numbers of civil society organizations, and state and market actors, while changes within civil society were less pronounced. An exception is service organizations, which increased both relatively and absolutely.

5.1.2 Factors influencing access

A second important contribution of this dissertation concerns the factors that influence civil society organizations' access (Article II). It is shown

that, when analyzing the characteristics of the civil society organizations participating in the remiss procedure, organizations with insider status, that is, with privileged access to informal policy-making arenas at national government level, are slightly more frequently invited to take part in the remiss procedure. This suggests that organizations with privileged access in one arena have a better chance of accessing another.⁸ To some extent, the government relies on its favored informants or ‘legitimated’ organizations when granting access. This resembles the pattern of interest representation found in Denmark, where some organizations benefit from better access at various access points (Binderkrantz *et al.* 2014a). It is also in line with findings from Finnish remiss participation where some organizations were consulted often by many different authorities (Anckar & Helander 1980).

However, no strong and statistically significant effect can be found in favor of civil society organizations with corporatist resources, such as labor and business organizations, plenty of members, financial resources, or volunteer resources. The finding of the limited importance of organizational resources differs from findings elsewhere, where access is biased towards organizations with plenty of organizational resources (e.g. Schlozman & Tierney 1986; Baumgartner & Leech 2001; Lowery & Gray 2004; Gullberg 2011). However, it tallies well with the results of Uhrwing (2001), who considered access to the Swedish remiss procedure with regard to environmental policies. This may be explained by the relatively open and inclusive setting of the remiss procedure, which allows plenty of organizations to be heard. In addition, it is possible that the government regards the remiss procedure as merely symbolic, as a means for the government to acknowledge both a broad category of organizations and its favored informants before a decision is made in parliament.

Furthermore, I show in Article III that civil society organizations with the features of social movement organizations, that is, organizations that are loosely structured and adopt alternative strategies, such as protests and civil disobedience, to influence policy-making have sparse access. This suggests that adopting such strategies may impede access to the remiss procedure, which runs counter to the finding of Uhrwing (2001). Nevertheless, this finding must be interpreted with caution, since very few social

⁸ It is important to note that ascertaining an effect of insider status does not reveal the direction of that effect, that is, whether access to informal access points improves access to the remiss procedure or vice-versa.

movement organizations exist with regard to several of the policy issues investigated here.

5.1.3 The significance of formal access points

The third key finding of this dissertation is that formalized access points tended to decline during the second half of the 20th century (Article III & Article IV). Based on the perceptions of civil society organizations with plenty of experience of participating in governmental commissions, I have shown that a reduced number of multi-member commissions with the representation of interest organizations, a more prompt commission process, and seemingly increased governmental steering of the governmental commissions have reduced the significance of the governmental commissions in influencing policy (Article IV). This corresponds to earlier findings in the neo-corporatist literature indicating that the role of governmental commissions in the Swedish policy process has been reduced (Hermansson *et al.* 1999). However, the results also show that, due to the relatively formalized and predictable procedure, civil society organizations have not entirely lost faith in the comparative advantages of the governmental commissions in relation to more informal access points at national government level, such as reference groups and various forms of dialogue.

On the remiss procedure, I show that an increasing proportion of civil society organizations have refrained from taking part in such consultation (Article III). The number of abstentions increased by about 33 percentage points during the whole period. Over 40 per cent of the recipients chose not to respond to a remiss during the period 2000–2009. Interest organizations, more than any other type, can be trusted to reply, abstaining ‘only’ 29 per cent of times during the final period, while service organizations showed the highest proportion of abstentions, with 60 per cent during the same period. Fifty-four per cent of the popular movements and 47 per cent of the community-based organizations abstained. However, abstaining from the remiss procedure cannot be explained solely by reduced significance of the access point. The government may routinely invite organizations, thereby providing access to “peripheral” organizations that are not active in the policy arena subject to consideration (Article III). This may, in turn, give rise to a high rate of abstention. That said, the results indicate that the significance of the remiss procedure in influencing policy-making tends to have declined. These results are in line with a broader trend in the governance literature, suggesting that the authoritative, hierarchical and state-centered way of governing societies has been displaced, and policies

are formed to a greater extent in more society-centered venues and networks (cf. Pierre & Sundström 2009; Bartolini 2011).

To conclude, while civil society organizations' access to the remiss procedure in some ways has increased and become more diverse, this appears to have occurred in an arena that is less relevant to political influence. In short, there is increased access, but to a less relevant access point. Considering the major changes in the governance structures of the Swedish state, such as the decline in neo-corporatism and Europeanization and challenges faced by the welfare state (Article I), perhaps a more dramatic change in access might have been expected. However, a recurring theme in the literature is one of relative stability and inertia in the structures of Swedish governance (Premfors 1998; Ehn *et al.* 2003; Sundström 2003; Jacobsson & Sundström 2006). From this perspective, the finding indicates a relatively persistent, though not dramatic change in access to the national Swedish policy process. The changes to the governmental commissions and the remiss procedure over the last two to three decades further underline this conclusion.

To what extent is it possible to generalize these results to other countries? It is important to note that civil society organizations' access has been claimed to be conditioned by the design of the access points and the historical structure of the state-society relation (Eising 2007b). Sweden is often said to rely on a relatively high degree of involvement of civil society organizations in the policy process. In addition, the remiss procedure is situated at a late stage of the process, where the cost of including plenty of organizations is relatively low, in particular compared with more face-to-face negotiations. Together, these factors may make for a relatively high number of invited organizations. However, taking into account the incentives provided by governments in other Western countries to open up the policy process by offering more participatory opportunities (Amnå & Brundin 2010), comparable findings on access over time may be found elsewhere, perhaps most notably in countries experiencing a similar decline in neo-corporatism (Öberg *et al.* 2011).

5.2 Broader perspectives

5.2.1 Equal and effective representation?

Returning to the question addressed in the Introduction, what do these results imply with regard to the equal representation of civil society organizations in the national Swedish policy process? At a general level, the

results suggest that the representation of civil society organizations is relatively inclusive. The development of access over time indicates that the government has encouraged an increasing and a broader range of civil society organizations to be represented in the process. In addition, the government selection process does not tilt representation either toward organizations with corporatist resources, such as labor and business organizations, or toward organizations with plenty of members, financial resources or volunteer resources.

One flaw is that the civil society organizations frequently consulted by the government at other national access points are slightly favored by the government in the remiss procedure. Accordingly, behind the scene of relatively inclusive representation, a limited group of insiders appears to constitute the preferred reference point for the government in the policy process (Montpetit 2003). Possibly, the dominant organizations in various policy fields provide the government with a continuous flow of information, knowledge and legitimacy on a regular basis at various access points. These points include governmental commissions, reference groups and dialogues at national government level, as in the government boards and agencies (see Section 3.1).

At the same time, the preference for insiders is not so pronounced that it makes for a strong bias. In addition, the open setting of the remiss procedure enables organizations not invited by the government to press their claims. To paraphrase Schattschneider, the government seems to have given the 'heavenly chorus' opportunities to sing more strongly and in relatively diverse accents. However, the seemingly inclusive representation does not automatically denote that civil society organizations are being listened to. Although access has increased, civil society organizations seem to have become invited to an arena perceived by organizations as less relevant to influencing policy in comparison with the position they had some two to three decades ago.

5.2.2 Alternative interpretations and future directions

Measuring patterns in civil society organizations' access is a complex matter, and involves a variety of factors. In Article I and Article III, the changing patterns of access are discussed in relation to general trends in the governance structure of the Swedish state. It is also possible to interpret the findings in relation to transformations within Swedish civil society. Over time, traditional member-based organizations, such as popular movements and interest organizations, have come to be accompanied by

social movements, less formalized organizations, and service-oriented organizations (e.g. Micheletti 1994; Meeuwisse 1997). As a result, more and increasingly diverse types of organizations have gained access to the remiss procedure.

Furthermore, it is important to add that access points may play different roles for different actors during various parts of the policy process (Article IV).⁹ Being invited to and participate at these access points may still be essential for civil society organizations to be considered by the public and other competing organizations as legitimate players in the Swedish policy process. In addition, the remiss procedure may play other roles for civil society organizations. The response to a consultation may be used to communicate their position in other arenas, such as the parliament (Article III). From the perspective of the government, it might be added that the patterns of access suggest continuing relevance of the remiss procedure, and possibly also of the governmental commissions, as instruments of the government to legitimize the policy process and ultimately the state. In order to be perceived as legitimate, public policy-making needs to be justified by reference to procedures and beliefs shared by the government and its citizens (Beetham 1991, 15-17). In principle, this is what scholars have articulated when referring to the governmental commissions and the remiss procedure as images of “the very essence of the Swedish political culture” (Trägårdh 2007b, 263) and the “strong state model” (Lindvall & Rothstein 2006). In an environment where policy-making increasingly relies on informal policy procedures and networks, which have been criticized as not being compatible with democratic principles, such as inclusion, transparency, and accountability (Pierre 2009, 592), and ambiguous in terms of their objectives, purposes, and functions (Swyngedouw 2005), long-standing arenas, such as the governmental commissions and the remiss procedure, may still be of special importance in establishing broad legitimacy for policy solutions, perhaps already adopted at earlier phases of the process.

Finally, although this dissertation has a number of strengths, it also has limitations that suggest the need for further analyses. As well as the re-

⁹ In addition, conclusions on the relevance of the governmental commissions and remiss procedure are not related to the development of other policy-making arenas, such as the parliament, the media, and institutions at European and international level. Although the results indicate that the governmental commissions and the remiss procedure have declined in importance, comparisons need to be made to understand the relative positions of the various access points.

strictions relating to the research design (see Section 4), one limitation concerns the measures of access, since organizations differ in so many ways (Lowery & Gray 2004). Possibly, civil society organizations with certain characteristics, resources and capabilities not considered here benefit from privileged access. Therefore, I suggest that future studies should consider other types of organizational resources and variation between policy fields in order to identify factors that stimulate or impede access. In addition, the results of this dissertation underscore the need to follow what characterizes those privileged organizations with access at various points, for example, by analyzing the resources exchanged between insiders and the government. Finally, this dissertation has concentrated on two access points, which makes broad generalization difficult. To obtain a more complete picture, there is a need for additional historical studies to reveal whether the trend in access found here reflects a general pattern found elsewhere, that is, whether it is a distinguishing feature of former neo-corporatist countries or merely of the Swedish remiss procedure.

5.3 Evaluating the lenses

In the Introduction to this dissertation, I concluded that Swedish research on the relationship between the state and civil society during the second half of the 20th century has been biased toward neo-corporatism. Inspired by the international literature on access, this dissertation has drawn attention to a number of alternative theories. Up till now, we have lacked studies elaborating on central theoretical approaches to the study of access. A main theoretical ambition of this dissertation has therefore been to identify, discuss and compare central theoretical points of departure, and to evaluate their contributions in a Swedish political context. From the perspective of the empirical findings, what are the theoretical implications of the results?

To begin with, the results on how access has evolved over time runs counter to the neo-corporatist case, which assumes that access is restricted to a limited number of privileged organizations. Although neo-corporatism does not specify what a limited number of organizations actually means, the figures presented here speak against the restricted view on access suggested by the theory. In addition, organizations with corporatist resources are not advantaged in comparison with other resourceful organizations, a finding that diverges from the neo-corporatist understanding that organizations representing labor and capital gain privileged access. Yet, it is important to note that, over time, market actors have

strengthened their relative position in the remiss procedure. That said, these things taken together further underscore earlier research findings that there are weak patterns of neo-corporatism in the national Swedish policy process (Lewin 1994; Rothstein & Bergström 1999; Feltenius 2004; Lindvall & Sebring 2005).

Furthermore, the neo-pluralist understanding that civil society organizations with plenty of members or professional resources enjoy privileged access cannot be confirmed. However, this does not provide evidence for the classical pluralist case that access is open and without barriers, and that no organization is licensed, recognized or subsidized by the government. The significance of insider status points to the relevance of policy network theory. The theory suggests that formal and informal linkages between the government and civil society organizations channel access to the policy process. Although the government now appears to engage with a vast and more diverse number of different organizations, a limited group of advantaged organizations constitute the preferred reference point for the government in the policy process (cf. Montpetit 2003). Rather than pointing to neo-corporatist 'rules of the game' where labor and business organizations dominate the process, this provides evidence of a 'sponsored' or privileged pluralist representation (Van Waarden 1992; Binderkrantz *et al.* 2014a).

The effect of insider status may also be understood in relation to the theory of political opportunity structures. Corresponding to the 'exogenous' perspective, elite allies (based on the informal structures of power relations between specific organizations and the government) influence the openness and receptivity of the remiss procedure and explain why organizations with insider status have better access than others. The effect of insider status, however, may also be explained by adopting the 'endogenous' perspective (Princen & Kerremans 2008). As civil society organizations increasingly choose to refrain from responding to consultations, the government may choose to trust civil society organizations to deliver thorough and informative replies.

In addition, it is possible that the government may have increased civil society organizations' access to the remiss procedure to compensate for seemingly decreased opportunities in governmental commissions. Thereby, the government can both facilitate an inclusive policy process and simultaneously increase control over the policy process and policy proposals. Pertaining to the sparse access of social movement organizations, this can be understood in terms of their divergent influence strategies, such as pro-

test and civil disobedience, which make social movement organizations less legitimate actors in the eyes of the government. However, for the reasons pointed to above, this conclusion needs to be interpreted with caution.

Resource exchange theory may shed light on the increased access of service organizations. The transformation of the Swedish welfare state during the second half of the 20th century can be understood as a move away from a social democratic model of welfare, characterized by universal, redistributive, non-market-based welfare services, to one relying more on the role of private organizations and civil society organizations as welfare-service providers (Esping-Andersen 1996; Amnå 2006b; Wijkström & Zimmer 2011). It is possible that service organizations operating on the output side of the political system are granted access due to their possession of the policy expertise needed to adjust the welfare system to arrange for a greater role for civil society organizations as welfare providers. In return for access, the government obtains the knowledge it requires. However, although previous studies using this theory often focus on knowledge as the primary 'access good' (Bouwen 2002) demanded by the government, service organizations may also be important in gaining legitimacy to policy-making. As these organizations have advanced their position in relation to the Swedish welfare state (cf. Trydegård 2001; Hartman 2011, 23), providing them with access may be important as a means of recognizing new and emerging players in the national policy process in order to gain votes, or societal stability, or ease the implementation of public policies.

Taken together, the theoretical results further underscore the need to move beyond a neo-corporatist theoretical point of departure when understanding the relationship between the government and civil society organizations. However, by contrast with much of the earlier research, this dissertation offers a number of alternative theories. Although the results are to some extent in line with policy network theory, this theory is not alone able to explain the broader puzzle of civil society organizations' access. All the theories have their own strengths and weaknesses. Whereas pluralism provides an (idealistic) reference point for open and unbiased policy-making, the other theoretical lenses offer various tools to recognize variations in the access of civil society organizations. The strength of neo-corporatism lies in the attention it pays to particular types of organizations, namely labor and business organizations, and provides a robust empirical measure for the study of access, in particular over time. It is

weak, however, with regard to the access of other types of organizations and the factors at play. This weakness is balanced by neo-pluralism and resource exchange theory, which view access as dependent on organizational resources. Even though neo-pluralism often accentuates the importance of members and financial resources, it allows elaboration of the various types of organizational resources of importance for access (Maloney *et al.* 1994; Fraussen *et al.* 2013).

The neo-corporatist notion of 'political status' does, however, opens up the possibility of moving beyond a strict focus on labor and business organizations (Offe 1981). But it is unclear how this concept relates to the corporatist idea of societal stability. More specifically, do all types of civil society organizations with political status possess the resources to control the implementation of policies among their members, thereby creating stability in society?

However, neither neo-pluralism nor neo-corporatism nor resource exchange theory takes into account the formal and informal linkages between government and civil society organizations offered by the policy network perspective. Although neo-corporatists tend to assume that the government's relationship with societal partners is strengthened by such things as social norms and cultures (Öberg 2002), policy network theory enables a more distinct exploration of how the informal and formal linkages between the government and civil society organizations shape access within and across various access points.

The theory of political opportunity structure - although it may be criticized for being vague - is helpful, since it focuses on the institutional opportunities that determine civil society organizations' access. As illuminated in this dissertation, such a perspective is useful in historical studies where the institutional structure of the access point is subject to change, but may also be relevant in comparative studies where the institutional structures of the access points differ. Furthermore, the theory points to the role of civil society organizations in shaping access. Although the government sets the rules of the game to a great extent, civil society organizations can be a powerful force, and their actions may have potential implications for whom the government invites to the table.

In conclusion, the theoretical contribution of this dissertation highlights the need for renewed attention to the relationship between the government and civil society organizations in Sweden. My hopes are that the dissertation will encourage analyses that move beyond the neo-corporatist-pluralist divide that has characterized earlier research, and pave the way

for new knowledge of the relationship between the government and civil society organizations in Sweden.

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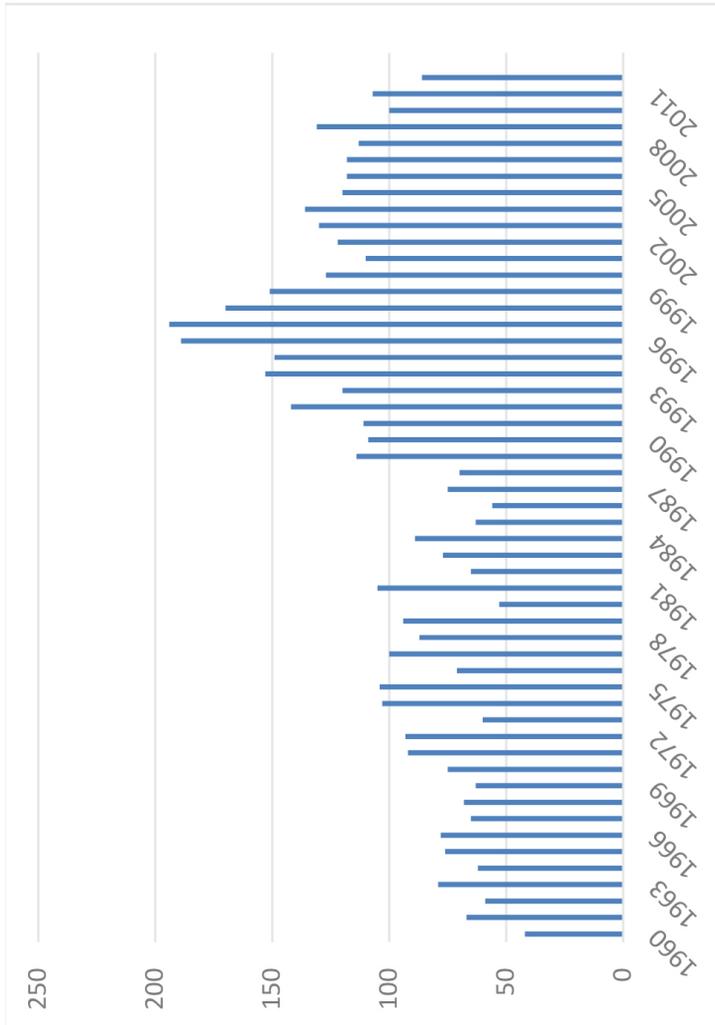
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APPENDIX 1

Number of governmental commissions 1960-2013



APPENDIX 2

Selected remiss lists for the content analysis

Alcohol policy

SOU 1974:91 Alkoholpolitik (Alkoholpolitiska utredningen, APU)

SOU 1986:35 Handel med teknisk sprit m.m. Slutbetänkande från Alkoholhandelsutredningen

SOU 1994:24 Svensk alkoholpolitik – en strategi för framtiden (Alkoholpolitiska kommissionen)

SOU 2009:22 En ny alkohollag

Housing policy

SOU 1964:41 Bostadsstöd för pensionärer: förslag av Bostadsförbättringsutredningen

SOU 1984:78 Bo på egna villkor: om att förbättra boendet för gamla, handikappade och långvarigt sjuka: mål, överväganden, åtgärder inom bostadspolitiken: betänkande från arbetsgruppen för vissa boendefrågor avseende äldre och handikappade m.fl.

SOU 1992:21 Bostadsstöd till pensionärer, betänkande av KBT-utredningen

SOU 2008:113 Bo bra hela livet: slutbetänkande av Äldreboendedelegationen

Fishing policy

SOU 1977:74 Fiskerinäringen i framtiden betänkande av Fiskerikommissionen

SOU 1989:56 Fiskprisregleringen och fiskerid administrationen, betänkande av 1989 års fiskeriutredning

SOU 1993:103 Svenskt fiske: slutbetänkande av Utredningen om fiskerinäringens utvecklingsmöjligheter

SOU 2007:20 Administrativa sanktioner på yrkesfiskets område betänkande av Fiskesanktionsutredningen

Integration policy

SOU 1974:69 Invandrarutredningen

SOU 1984:58 Invandrar- och minoritetspolitiken, slutbetänkande av Invandrapolitiska kommittén

SOU 1996:55 Sverige, framtiden och mångfalden: slutbetänkande från Invandrapolitiska kommittén

SOU 2008:58 Egenansvar med professionellt stöd

Hunting policy

SOU 1974:80 Jaktmarker, betänkande av Jaktmarksutredningen

SOU 1983:21 Vilt och jakt, betänkande av Jakt och viltvårdsberedningen

SOU 1997:91 Jaktens villkor, en utredning om vissa jaktfrågor

SOU 2009:54 Uthållig älgförvaltning i samverkan

Nuclear energy policy

SOU 1976:30-31 Använt kärnbränsle och radioaktivt avfall

SOU 1980:14 Kärnkraftens avfall, betänkande från utredningen om kärnkraftens radioaktiva avfall - organiserings- och finansieringsfrågor

SOU 1991:95 Översyn av lagstiftningen på kärnenergiområdet, betänkande av utredningen om översyn av kärntekniklagstiftningen

SOU 2009:88 Kärnkraft - nya reaktorer och ökat skadeståndsansvar (delbetänkande)

Public service broadcasting policy

SOU 1977:19 Radio och TV 1978–1985

SOU 2000:55 Radio och TV i allmänhetens tjänst – ett beredningsunderlag

SOU 2008:64 Kontinuitet och förändring: betänkande av Public-serviceutredningen.

Social policy

SOU 1970:64, Bättre socialtjänst för handikappade: förslag från Handikapputredningen om bättre färdmöjligheter för handikappade och bättre samordning i handikappfrågor

SOU 1982:26 Omsorger om vissa handikappade: betänkande av Omsorgskommittén

SOU 1992:52 Ett samhälle för alla, Handikapputredningens slutbetänkande, 1989 års Handikapputredning

SOU 2008:77 Möjlighet att leva som andra: ny lag om stöd och service till vissa personer med funktionsnedsättning: slutbetänkande

Education policy

SOU 1978:86 Lärare för skola i utveckling, betänkande av 1974 års lärarutbildningsutredning, LUT 74

SOU 1999:63 Att lära och leda. En lärarutbildning för samverkan och utveckling

SOU 2008:109 En hållbar lärarutbildning

Appendix 3

Selected remiss lists for the survey

Alcohol policy

SOU 2009:22 En ny alkohollag

Housing policy

SOU 2008:113 Bo bra hela livet: slutbetänkande av Äldreboendedelegationen

Fishing policy

SOU 2007:20 Administrativa sanktioner på yrkesfiskets område betänkande av Fiskesanktionsutredningen

Integration policy

SOU 2008:58 Egenansvar med professionellt stöd

Hunting policy

SOU 2009:54 Uthållig älgförvaltning i samverkan

Nuclear energy policy

SOU 2009:88 Kärnkraft - nya reaktorer och ökat skadeståndsansvar (delbetänkande)

Public service broadcasting policy

SOU 2008:64 Kontinuitet och förändring: betänkande av Public serviceutredningen

Social policy

SOU 2008:77 Möjlighet att leva som andra: ny lag om stöd och service till vissa personer med funktionsnedsättning: slutbetänkande

Education policy

SOU 2008:109 En hållbar lärarutbildning

Appendix 4

Interviewees

Lars Berge-Kleber, general secretary, Afasiförbundet, 2012-10-23

Mikael Klein, policy director the Swedish Disability Federation (Handikappförbunden), 2012-10-24

Ulrika Källén Löreljus, legal expert, the Swedish Joint Committee for Artistic and Literary Professionals (KLYS), 2012-10-30

Lars-Erik Lundkvist, policy director, the Federation of Swedish Farmers (Lantbrukarnas riksförbund), 2012-10-31

Milinko Mijatovic, secretary, the Cooperation Groups for Ethnic Associations in Sweden (SIOS), 2012-11-02

Maicen Ekman, former secretary general, the Swedish Adult Education Association (Folkbildningsförbundet), 2012-11-09

Jan Terstad, policy director, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (Naturskyddsföreningen), 2012-11-23

Martina Krüger, policy director, Greenpeace, 2012-11-26

Lars Pettersson, secretary general, the Swedish Association for Non-Profit Health and Social Services (Famna) 2013-01-16

Guy Lööf, policy director, the National Pensioners' Organization (Pensionärernas riksorganization), 2013-01-10

Peter Moilanen, secretary general, the International Organization of Good Templars (IOGT-NTO), 2013-01-21

Göran Nordén, policy director, the Swedish Trade Federation (Svenskt näringsliv) 2013-02-21

Anders Torstensson, legal expert, the Swedish Trade Federation (Svenskt näringsliv) 2013-02-21

Anne Wigart, legal expert, the Swedish Trade Federation (Svenskt näringsliv) 2013-02-21

Helene Lindstrand, secretary general, the Swedish Teachers' Union (Läraryrket) 2013-03-08

Samuel Engblom, legal expert, the Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees (TCO), 2013-03-25

Ola Pettersson, head of finance, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), 2013-04-22

Linda Grape, investigator, at the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), 2013-04-22

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