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1. Voluntary Organizations and the Political Participation of Migrant Communities

Political participation by citizens makes or breaks any democratic system. People need to voice their preferences if their political representatives are to act on their behalf, as they are charged to do. Moreover, for a government to have any legitimacy, it is crucial that its citizens express their approval of it. Accordingly, understanding how political participation can be encouraged is a matter of great concern to politicians, and scientists in their wake.

The factors which influence political involvement can be found at the macro, meso and micro levels (Diehl & Blohm, 2001; Krishna, 2002). The opportunities provided by the government, for example by offering enfranchisement to all (or just a select few), as well as its responsiveness to its citizens' demands, are macro-level factors. On the other hand, micro level factors are individual characteristics which differ from person to person, e.g. behavioral resources, such as time, and personal predispositions like motivation, political interest and political trust. The meso level factors are the stimulating (or not) forces that spring from associational participation. It is this level that has attracted the most attention from social scientists, ever since Alexis de Tocqueville wrote his seminal work, *Democracy in America*, in 1840. Tocqueville not only saw voluntary organizations as stimuli of political participation, but he also regarded them as indispensable elements of any well-functioning democracy. If it were not for voluntary organizations, democracy would be reduced to tyranny.

Amongst democratic nations, [...] all the citizens are independent and feeble; they can do hardly anything by themselves, and none of them can oblige his fellow-men to lend him their assistance. They all, therefore, fall into a state of incapacity, if they do not learn voluntarily to help each other. If men living in democratic countries had no right and no inclination to associate for political purposes, their independence would be in great jeopardy; but they might long preserve their wealth and their cultivation: whereas if they never acquired the habit of forming associations in ordinary life, civilization itself would be endangered. A people amongst which individuals should lose the power of achieving great things single-handed, without acquiring the means of producing them by united exertions, would soon relapse into barbarism.

-Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Chapter V

Tocqueville observed that the American people he came across on his travels across the United States displayed an unusual associational inclination. He was astounded by the amount and types of organizations he encountered. According to Tocqueville, there was no activity or goal that was not a reason for an American to form new associations. He wrote that the people in the country had '*carried to the highest perfection the art of pursuing in common the object of their common desires, and have applied this new science to the greatest number of purposes.*' As well as his appraisal of American associational life, Tocqueville was also impressed by the democratic system that had evolved in the US, where all men were equal and free and people displayed highly cultivated customs in the maintenance of their institutions (Almond, 1980). He naturally related these two observations: it was because of a vibrant associational life that democracy was so well developed. Tocqueville emphasized that this positive relationship went beyond primarily political organizations and he attributed non-political organizations with at least as many democracy-enhancing effects as the political ones experienced. Why he ascribed these effects to associations becomes clear from the following quote:

Feelings and opinions are recruited, the heart is enlarged, and the human mind is developed by no other means than by the reciprocal influence of men upon each other. I have shown that these influences are almost null in democratic countries; they must therefore be artificially created, and this can only be accomplished by associations.

- Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Chapter V

He regarded associations as places in which citizens could become and remain civilized. The idea that participation in voluntary organizations is beneficial for citizens and society persisted over time, and it became rooted as a tradition in the political and social sciences that is echoed, even now, in the 21st century.

1.1 Civic culture and why voluntary organizations are promoting political participation

In 1963, Almond and Verba presented their study, '*The Civic Culture*', with which they substantiated Tocqueville's theoretical arguments with empirical evidence gathered in five countries (US, Great Britain, Italy, Germany and Mexico). They argued that for a democracy to function well, it is a prerequisite that a civic culture prevails. The term, civic culture, refers to the special way in which "*political elites make decisions, their norms and attitudes, as well as the norms and attitudes of the ordinary citizen, his relation to government and to his fellow citizens*" (Almond & Verba, 1963, p.3). In other words, a civic culture prevails when citizens have favorable attitudes to participation within the

Political participation

What is understood by the term political participation? Based on a thorough morphological analysis, Elsinga (1985) came to a sound definition thereof. He defines it as '*the collection of activities of citizens, aimed at influencing the preparation, development and/or implementation of governmental policies*' (p.39, own translation from Dutch). It is important to recognize that the emphasis in this definition is on the *activities* one undertakes. As Lelieveldt (1999) summarizes, discussing politics, or showing interest in political affairs, cannot therefore be regarded as participation.

Two types of political participation are commonly distinguished in the literature (e.g. Barnes et al., 1979; Elsinga, 1985; Janda, Berry, & Goldman, 1989): conventional and unconventional participation. The former refers to the more classical and generally accepted forms of participation, such as voting (which is sometimes even regarded as a construct separate from conventional and unconventional participation), writing letters and joining in meetings in which the public can comment on things like new policy proposals. Conventional participation refers to orthodox behavior. More unorthodox activities, like boycotting, painting slogans, protest marches, sit-in strikes and squatting, are classified as unconventional participation. Characteristic of these kinds of activities is that they do not conform to the ruling norms and values in a specific society. Unconventional political participation often touches upon, or exceeds, the boundaries of what is deemed legal and legitimate. What is regarded as (un)conventional can, nonetheless, vary in different settings and over time. Moreover, what Kaase and Marsh (1979, p. 149) stress is that conventional and unconventional political participation should not be seen as opposites (p.149). On the contrary, the two concepts have turned out to be positively correlated. A remarkable finding in this respect is that people who participate in unconventional activities also participate in conventional ones, whereas the reverse is not the case (Muller, 1977).

political system and strongly adhere to nonpolitical attitudes, such as trust in other people and social participation in general. "*The maintenance of these more traditional attitudes and their fusion with the participant orientations lead to a balanced political culture in which political activity, involvement, and rationality exist but are balanced by passivity, traditionality, and commitment to parochial values.*" (ibid., p.30) Almond and Verba's empirical material did indeed reveal that people who are members of voluntary organizations differ in terms of their political customs from those who are not: the former consider themselves to be more confident citizens, are more active in politics, and know and care more about the subject.

Why are voluntary organizations thought to produce such civic citizens? This is primarily because these associations are the main intermediaries between individual citizens and the state. Membership in voluntary organizations provides a person with '*a more structured set of political resources, growing out of his varied interests*' (Almond & Verba, 1963, p.245). Voluntary associations can represent the individual in the political arena and ensure his/her political autonomy by presenting alternative venues for governance, as well as organizing and encouraging cooperation between the citizen and the government (Warren, 2001, p.61). Alternatively, a government can also use voluntary organizations to reach its citizens, by utilizing them as channels of communication. So, as a result of their intermediary function, members of voluntary

organizations are indirectly in touch with their government and its policies, thus at least raising political awareness, if not direct political participation.

But there is more to it than this. The general argument first formulated by Tocqueville, which is often referred to as the socialization-argument, is that voluntary organizations are ‘schools of democracy’ (Olsen, 1972; Warren, 2001). These associations unite people of varying backgrounds who are, nevertheless, all pursuing the same goal within a particular organization, whether it be practicing sports, fighting environmental pollution, or providing support services to single mothers living on social security. To be able to achieve their common goals, members may well have to overcome differences in opinions. Members of voluntary organizations are horizontally connected (in principle, no member has more power than another), and as a result of repeated interactions and the confronting of differences, they learn about other outlooks on life, other interests, other activities (including politics) and other concerns. Thus, they broaden their own horizons and become more aware of public affairs and public interests. People encounter those with different convictions and learn to understand and appreciate another perspective. In turn, these social interactions enable the formation of social trust. Furthermore, as the members of one organization interact with (members of) other organizations, this ‘in-group’ trust is transferred to them, thereby creating generalized trust – a prerequisite in a well-functioning democracy. Not only do members of voluntary organizations develop trust more easily than non-members, they also acquire other civic skills and attitudes because of the collaboration that is ongoing within their particular association. They learn to deliberate, compromise, speak in public, express an opinion, and work in groups (Quintelier, 2008), all of which are skills that a citizen is also able to use in the political arena. Moreover, members become aware of their dependence on their fellow members, and thus develop norms of reciprocity. This involves one member doing something for another, with the former trusting that one day this other member, or perhaps even a third person, will return some other favor. In summary, the socialization argument maintains that voluntary organizations can, in a way, be regarded as political systems in miniature, where members can acquire a civic minded attitude, and can practice civic skills that they can then apply in the ‘real world’. They learn to overcome collective action dilemmas within their organizations, and thereby develop collective action potential for problems that they face outside their associations (Fennema & Tillie, 2004).

1.1.1 Type of organizations

Many scholars have tested and affirmed the relationship between associational membership and political participation (e.g. Erbe, 1964; Pollock III, 1982; Hall, 1999; Wollebaek & Selle, 2002; Zmerli, 2002). Indeed, there is very little empirical evidence that does not clearly demonstrate that members of organizations are more trusting and

more politically involved than non-members (one of the exceptions is Freitag, 2003). Several academics do note that unlike Tocqueville's original claim, the production of civic skills cannot be found in every type of organization, political or otherwise (e.g. Eastis, 1998; Billiet & Cambré, 1999; Warren, 2001; Paxton, 2002; Letki, 2004). Stolle and Rochon (1998), for example, found that members of cultural organizations have higher levels of generalized and political trust than those who belong to political associations. The latter group, on the other hand, are the most politically active. Van der Meer and Van Ingen (2009) found that the correlation between associational involvement and political participation is stronger for interest and activist associations than for leisure organizations. McMiller (2000) quotes studies that have shown that people who are members of expressive groups are less politically active than those who are members of instrumental groups (amongst others: Rogers, Bultena, & Barb, 1975), a finding that Quintelier (2008) recently affirmed. Erickson and Nosanchuk (1990) even concluded that *'intense involvement in a very apolitical organization is at best irrelevant to political participation and may even divert people from political activity'*. Although the debate on what kinds of organizations are more productive of civic skills than others obviously has not been settled, most scholars do maintain that being a member of a organization makes people more civically inclined and more politically active than not being a member at all.

1.1.2 Socialization or self-selection?

Recent debates address the question of whether there is actually a socialization process taking place, or if it is more a matter of self-selection: the people who become members of an association already have more civic skills and norms and values than those who do not. The evidence for this proposition is mixed. Some authors, indeed, claim to have shown that the relationship between associational membership and political participation is the result of self-selection (van der Meer & van Ingen, 2009), while others found proof of a more moderate adaptation of the original argument. Hooghe (2008), for example, reports that both self-selection and socialization mechanisms occur: *'It is only because self-selection occurs that associations constitute distinct interaction environments, leading to contact-specific socialization effects'* (p.588). This discussion of self-selection or socialization is far from being resolved and requires more attention in the scientific debate. Although the current study is not concerned with this particular matter, it is important that assumed mechanisms are thoroughly put to the test. As I will show later in this chapter, the self-selection/socialization issue is not the only blind spot in the study of the relationship between associational membership and political participation.

1.2 Quality of governance

In the mid-1990s, Robert Putnam gave a jolt to the civic culture tradition by shifting the focus from relating it to individual political participation to the collective effect of a civic culture on the quality of governance. In fact, Putnam took the extent to which citizens partake in the political process (such as voting turnout) as an *indicator* of civiness instead of the *result* of it. In his well-known book *Making Democracy Work* (1993), Putnam explains the success of governments in different regions in Italy in terms of the presence or absence of a civic community. In the regions where Putnam concluded that there was an active civic community, the government was revealed to be more efficient than in the places where this community was less, or not at all, prevalent. Putnam regards a community as having a civic culture when all of its citizens actively participate in public affairs, not only on their own behalf, but also on behalf of the common good; in other words, citizens have civic virtue. Furthermore, in a civic community, all citizens have both equal political rights as well as equal obligations. Because of this, they are expected to follow the norms of reciprocity and are engaged in self-government. Within such a community, citizens can disagree with each other, and differences of opinion are resolved without conflict because people are helpful, respectful and trustful. These virtues are fostered in the social networks within which each citizen is engaged. The places in which all of the norms and values that are connected to the civic community are predominantly promoted are voluntary associations.

According to Putnam, social capital and the civiness of a community are closely related. He defined social capital (which I will discuss in detail in the next chapter) as the *features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions*' (Putnam, 1993, p.167). This shows that Putnam's characterizations of a civic community and social capital are very much alike. In fact, throughout his book, it is unclear whether he equates the two concepts (as his definitions seem to suggest), whether social capital is a prerequisite for a civic community, or whether it is the result of the presence of a civic community. Given the extensive research into the effect of voluntary organizations on their members, as discussed above, and in particular being mindful of Hooghe's findings (2008), I think it is fair to assume that members of organizations perhaps already possess a degree of social capital, but that their social capital is largely the *result* of their civic associationalism. In any event, it was Putnam who both connected the concepts of civic culture and social capital, and re-emphasized the relevance of civic organizations in relation to democracy. He has certainly put social capital on the scientific agenda as a relevant and vital factor regarding the condition of democratic states, and many scholars have followed his lead, whether in a critical or an appreciative manner.

1.3 Multicultural democracies and the participation of ethnic minorities and immigrants

I began this chapter with the statement that all political scientists agree that any representative democracy requires the involvement and participation of its citizens. This applies as much to monocultural states as it does to multicultural democracies. So far as the latter is concerned, it is important that not only the voices of the cultural majority are heard, but also those of the cultural minorities. Western-European countries have been dealing with large groups of immigrants since the middle of the 20th century, and since that time the (political) integration of allochthonous minority groups has become a salient concern.

The opportunity for minority groups and, in particular, migrant minorities to participate in the political process varies from country to country. In some, it is relatively easy for migrants to become naturalized and obtain all attendant rights, including the right to vote; in others, migrants are allowed to vote even when they have not yet been naturalized. Still other countries hamper the political participation of this group by denying them suffrage whatever the circumstances. However, even if political integration is enabled by a government, it is still up to the minorities to take this opportunity. The level of participation by minorities differs between countries and between groups. Indeed, in some contexts, they are more involved in voting than native citizens. For example, Chui et al. (1991) found that the offspring of migrants in Canada had equal or higher voting participation rates than 'deeply rooted Canadians'. In other contexts, immigrants or ethnic minorities and native citizens demonstrated similar patterns of involvement, as seen in a study in the US by Verba et al. (1993). Of course, evidence of the third possible outcome has also been found: immigrants participating less than natives (Diehl & Blohm, 2001).

As the participation of immigrants in multicultural democracies is generally deemed to be important⁸, many studies have been carried out into the determinants of the political participation of these groups. Some scholars point to features which relate, in particular, to the ethnic minority status of immigrants; for example, a reduced feeling of political efficiency would lead to lower levels of participation, or an increased ethnic group consciousness would be related to greater involvement (and the effects can differ from group to group (London & Hearn, 1977; Uhlaner, Cain, & Kiewiet, 1989; Lien, 1994)). Others, however, dismiss the ethnic factor as an explanatory variable (Jedwab, 2006; Bevelander & Pendakur, 2007). A majority of the studies found that demographic and social-economic characteristics did have an influence on the participation levels of

⁸ Some scholars, such as Junn (1999), do warn that (greater) political participation by immigrants and minorities is only desirable under the circumstances in which '*the process of decision making incorporates difference and when the conceptualization of the citizen is contested and fluid*' (p.1434)

immigrants. In fact, these characteristics have as much an effect on immigrant participation as they do on the likelihood of participation by non-migrants. They include factors such as age, education and income (Verba & Nie, 1972; Bevelander & Pendakur, 2007). On the whole, there is no reason to believe that the general determinants of political participation (i.e. the factors on the micro, meso and macro levels) would not be applicable to immigrants. Thus, since it is universally assumed that social capital and membership of voluntary organizations further political participation, this should also be the case for migrants and ethnic minorities.

1.4 Voluntary organizations and migrant political participation

Studies in both the United States (e.g. McMiller, 2000) and Europe (e.g. Togeby, 1999) have demonstrated a positive relationship between organizational membership and political participation, in particular voting behavior. The research into the political involvement of migrants in Western-Europe was triggered by the fact that there seemed to be noticeable differences between countries (Togeby, 1999). Moreover, different ethnic groups have turned out to have considerably divergent patterns of participation within countries (Fennema & Tillie, 1999). These differences led two Dutch political scientists to set up a rigorous research program. Fennema and Tillie's study took place in Amsterdam, with their student, Maria Berger, and close colleagues conducting the same work in Berlin (Berger, Galonska, & Koopmans, 2002). The core notion of this research paradigm was that an ethnic group's degree of political participation is positively related to the degree of ethnic organization.

1.5 Ethnic communities, ethnic organizations and political participation: the relationship explained

Fennema and Tillie's starting point was the finding that the four major ethnic groups in Amsterdam displayed obviously different patterns of political participation. So far as the turnout in local elections was concerned, (migrants living in the Netherlands for longer than five years have been granted local voting rights since 1985) they found that Turks participated the most (in one year, this figure was even greater than the municipal average), followed by Moroccans, the Surinamese and the Antilleans. This ranking persisted over elections. Moreover, when other indicators of political involvement were considered, such as attending meetings in which neighborhood issues are discussed and lobbying activities, it transpired that the Turks again participated the most, followed by the other three groups in the same order. So far as the degree of political trust and political interest was concerned, the same ranking again emerged.

Reasoning in the tradition of Tocqueville and Putnam, Fennema and Tillie argued that the markedly different levels of political participation by the various ethnic groups in Amsterdam could be explained by the extent of their civicness (who is considered to be part of an ethnic group is based upon the CBS (*Statistics Netherlands*) definition which says that a person belongs to a certain ethnic group when either the individual him/herself or at least one of his/her parents was born in a particular country.) When examining each ethnic community separately, Fennema and Tillie expected those that were more 'civic' to also be more politically active. To establish the degree of civicness, the researchers created a *Civic Community Index (CCI)*, in which the elements refer to the number of voluntary ethnic organizations and the ties that bind them together, i.e. the network of ethnic voluntary organizations. Before I turn to a description of the elements of the CCI, I first want to explain why the focus is on the *network of ethnic voluntary organizations* (these three words are in italics deliberately, as each of them needs attention).

First of all, the emphasis on voluntary organizations obviously has its roots in the assumption that these are the breeding ground for the civicness of their members. Moreover, it is not only assumed that this civicness is furthered by membership of an association, but that the non-members in the community can also profit. Civicness is regarded as 'contagious': members, for example, become more trusting towards fellow members *and* non-members alike (generalized trust). This affects the degree of trust of this latter group in a positive way.

The second emphasis is on the *network* of voluntary organizations. A single organization promotes trust and stimulates community members to active participation, but cooperation between associations is said to do this even better (Fennema, 2004). This notion of the importance of social connectedness has already been underlined by Putnam, who states that '*a dense network of secondary associations both embodies and contributes to effective social collaboration*' (p.90, emphasis added), and that networks are '*an essential form of social capital*' (p.173). Putnam, nevertheless, failed to include any network measures in his analysis of the civic community. Indeed, his only indicator of the 'networks' of secondary associations is the number of sports and cultural associations relative to the number of regional inhabitants. Yet the mere presence or absence of voluntary organizations clearly does not say anything about their interconnectedness. Therefore, when they were assessing the civicness of ethnic communities, Fennema and Tillie focused on the network of interlocking directorates in particular. A network of interlocking directorates arises when members are seated on the boards of two or more organizations simultaneously. For example, the chairman of an organization of stamp collectors is also the treasurer of the biggest mosque in town, thus creating an interlocking directorate. Some organizations may have several board members with dual functions, while others have none. And some people might be active on one board only, while others are busy managing four board memberships. All of these interlocking directorates mean that the organizations form a network together.

Although there are many other characteristics upon which a network can be based⁹, the emphasis in Fennema and Tillie's CCI is on this operationalization, because it reflects the relationships within a community at the elite level. With the principle of 'pillarization' in mind, (a social structure which characterized Dutch society until the 1960s, in which groups of different ideologies provided social services for members of their respective groups, and in which the only contact between the different groups took place by way of agreements made by their leaders), it is thought that the most effective way of communicating within a community is by top-down connections from leaders to the grassroots and horizontal relationships on the elite level. *'Interlocking directorates increase trust between organizations by increasing communication between them'* (Fennema & Tillie, 1999, p.713). A network of organizations is thus thought to multiply the promoting effect that voluntary organizations already have on civicness.

The third point to require attention relates to the qualification of organizations as *'ethnic'*. When immigrants attempt to settle in their country of destination, this process of settlement usually also involves the establishment of voluntary organizations that are aimed at these immigrant populations in particular. Immigrants form organizations to function as their advocates, or to provide a secure social environment in which they can meet others with similar experiences (Jenkins, 1988; Hein, 1997; Rijkschroeff & Duyvendak, 2004; Cordero-Guzmán, Martin, Quiroz-Becerra, & Theodore, 2008). Moreover, immigrants may establish their own organizations because they have needs that are not fulfilled by existing, native associations, such as certain religious requirements. An organization is deemed to be *ethnic* when at least 50 percent of the board members are of the same foreign descent (recall the CBS definition of who is considered ethnic: people who are born, or who have parents born, in a foreign country.)

The Civic Community Index that was used to establish the relationship between civicness and the political participation of ethnic communities consisted of four elements: the number of voluntary organizations within a particular ethnic group that were registered in the files of the Chamber of Commerce; the relative number of organizations compared to group size; the percentage of organizations that have at least one interlocking directorate and the complementary percentage of isolated organizations (those that have no interlocking directorate); and the number of interlocks (i.e. the number of connections between two organizations). Including the latter makes it possible to demonstrate how dense a network is: the more interlocks it

⁹ One common alternative way in which a network between organizations can be based is dual membership. That is, the links between organizations are the result of people being members of more than one organization. For example, someone who is a member of a photography club and a tennis club is then regarded as a link between the two associations. In this case, the network is based upon the rank and file, instead of the elite. The difficulty of a study on the rank and file network, however interesting and important, is that the data are very complicated to gather.

has, the denser it is, and denser networks are potentially more capable of effective communication. On each of these elements, Fennema and Tillie ordered the groups that they had included in their study. The sum of the ranking scores per group produced the ultimate civic community scores, with the lowest mark being assigned to the group with the greatest degree of civicness.

Recall that Fennema and Tillie's research was conducted in Amsterdam. Here, the civic community index revealed clear differences between the four groups under study. The Turkish community had the lowest score, meaning that it could be regarded as the most civic. The Antilleans, on the other hand, were indexed as being the least civic because they scored the highest for each element on the CCI (i.e. they were ranked fourth each time). The Moroccan and Surinamese communities were, in that order, between the two groups referred to. These rankings precisely fitted the order of political participation. Fennema and Tillie thus argued that the theory about the relationship between the degree of civicness and levels of political participation was confirmed: ethnic groups with a more civic community were more politically involved, as evidenced by a high number of ethnic voluntary organizations that were mutually connected via interlocking directorates. In particular, the network of interlocking directorates allows for the rapid development and spread of civic skills and communication throughout the community.

1.5.1 Same idea, different setting

Several scholars have tested this theory about the relationship between ethnic civic communities and ethnic political participation in a variety of cities and countries in Western Europe: studies were carried out in Denmark (Togeby, 2004), Berlin in Germany (Berger, Galonska, & Koopmans, 2004) and Brussels in Belgium (Jacobs, Phalet, & Swyngedouw, 2004). This research was performed as part of a special issue of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (JEMS). In addition, another group of academics studied immigrant communities and their political participation in Zürich (Switzerland), Stockholm (Sweden), and Oslo (Norway). These studies are performed, respectively, by Eggert & Giugni (2007), Myrberg (forthcoming 2010), and Rogstad (2007).

Of the studies to be published in JEMS, the researchers agreed upon a general model that they would test in the respective countries/cities (later, the other group adopted the model in a slightly moderated form). This model focused more on the individual level than Fennema and Tillie had done in their original study, which only used aggregate data on community structure (network measures) and political participation (community means on diverse measures). Yet this caused the JEMS' researchers some practical difficulties. For example, some of them did not have data about the networks of

interlocking directorates in the various cities. Accordingly, the model that was used was designed to explain, on the *individual level*, how membership of ethnic organizations was related to political involvement. The rationale was that what is true on the aggregate level is expected to have consequences on the individual level as well (Jacobs & Tillie, 2004). So, if the assumption about the former was that the presence of connected ethnic organizations leads to political participation by members of a particular community, the individual hypothesis would be that those who belong to an ethnic association are likely to be more politically involved than those who do not. This hypothesis was tested in the six locations mentioned before, and in the discussion of this research which follows, I will refer to them as the ‘replication studies’.

Even though some of the researchers agreed upon the model to be tested, and others intended to repeat the procedure in their work, the characteristics of the respective cases prevented a uniform approach from being utilized; both the dependent and independent variables differed between studies. All of them aimed to look at ‘political participation’ in the general sense, but in some cities it was not possible to include data about voting behavior because migrants were not allowed to vote (Berlin, Brussels, and Zürich), whereas in others, such as Stockholm, Oslo and Denmark, they could. All of the studies, save for those in Zürich and Stockholm, included data about political interest. The only dependent variable assessed in all of the cases was unconventional political participation,¹⁰ by some termed informal participation, although the way in which this was operationalized varied. The explanatory variables also differed between cases. Four of six studies distinguished ethnic, non-ethnic and trade union membership, whereas in the Stockholm research only the numbers of active and passive memberships were counted, and in Oslo a composed social capital index was used¹¹. All of the studies used demographic variables, including gender, education and employment, but they differed in terms of additional characteristics. Some, for example, included social or institutional trust, or interest or participation in homeland politics. In other words, even though the aim of each study was to examine the relationship between civicness (or social capital) and political participation, a comparison and the opportunity to draw overall conclusions was hindered by this diversity of operationalizations. Nevertheless, each study does have its merits and the conclusions that are reached do encourage further work.

First of all, both the Berlin (Berger et al.) and Zürich studies (Eggert and Giugni) make clear that political activities and political interest are not two sides of the same coin that is termed political participation. Berger et al. demonstrated that people who are active in voluntary organizations tend to be more politically active, but are less

¹⁰ Recall that this refers to political actions, such as writing a letter to a politician or joining a demonstration.

¹¹ Containing items on generalized trust, institutional trust, active or passive membership, socializing with friends and acquaintances, level of political interest and following the news.

interested in politics. Likewise, in the study by Eggert and Giugni, it transpired that involvement in voluntary organizations, and the social capital arising therefrom, encourage political participation more than political interest.

In line with these findings, Myrberg revealed that in Stockholm, organizational membership does promote political participation, as much among the ethnic minorities as the native majority, but that only particular kinds of involvement are improved. In particular, there was no additional effect on conventional participation (voting), which is often regarded as the key indicator of political participation. Associational membership did, however, positively influence the contact that individuals have with the media and government bodies and officials, as well as the participation rates in unconventional political involvement.

Another important finding from the study in Denmark (Togeby, 2004) was that the mechanism that is at work between associational and political participation varies between groups. Membership of an ethnic organization had a positive effect on the informal political participation (e.g. signing a petition and contacting a politician) of the Turks and the Pakistanis, and was the most important explanatory variable for these groups. Yet ethnic membership had no effect on the political participation of the group of ex-Yugoslavs in the country. There were also differences with respect to formal political participation. For the ex-Yugoslavs and the Turks, membership of ethnic bodies had a positive effect on formal political participation, but there was no impact at all among the Pakistanis. In this latter group, *cross-ethnic* membership did, however, have a positive effect, which was absent in the other two groups. Togeby, therefore, concluded that the impact of organizational membership on political participation was mainly found among the Turkish migrants. Togeby (2004) "*There is no doubt that a political mobilization of the Turks has taken place via their organizational networks.*" (p.526). However, she went on to add that it was questionable whether organizational participation actually built social capital among the Turks. She based this on her finding that social trust among them was the lowest of all groups. Moreover, the regression analysis she performed, with social trust as the dependent variable, revealed that ethnic membership had no effect. There was also no significant relationship between social trust and political participation. This was true not only for the Turks, but also for the other groups. The final conclusion that Togeby drew was that the Fennema and Tillie thesis could not be generalized: the relationship between organizational membership and political participation was group specific. Indeed, according to Togeby, '*it would be an exaggeration to talk about [the] generation of social capital*' (p.528).

The study in Stockholm (Myrberg) also highlighted that the mechanism between organizational membership and political participation is not universal. The ethnic majority (i.e. the native population) were mainly influenced by their organizations because they asked them directly to become involved in political actions. In other words, natives are 'recruited' by their organizations. The mechanism in the ethnic population,

however, is based on the Tocquevillean principle of 'schools of democracy'. Myrberg's data showed that members of ethnic organizations benefit from the opportunities that are provided to help them to develop civic skills, for instance by writing official letters or giving a speech. Overall, it has been demonstrated that it is very important to not only rely on input and outcome variables, because what is taking place in-between can vary considerably. This is a point I will pick up on below.

The conclusions that Jacobs et al. draw in the Brussels case are cautionary in nature. They determined that there was no clear and positive effect of ethnic membership and political involvement, whether it be in the form of activities or interest. Only in one ethnic group, the Moroccans, did the authors find an indirect impact of ethnic membership, namely through belonging to cross-ethnic trade unions. Based upon these findings, the researchers recommended that in future work a distinction should be made between ethnic and cross-ethnic social capital.

Furthermore, Jacobs et al. had to draw the conclusion that the Fennema and Tillie thesis was not substantiated by their findings. According to their data, political participation depended more on ties to mainstream society via language proficiency and specific political opportunity structures. An alternative explanation that they suggested, but did not investigate, is that the type of organization is of importance, which is something that Hooghe (2001) had proposed earlier, and is a refrain often put forward as an explanation of the effect that organizational membership has in general.

Rogstad, on the other hand, was able to confirm a relationship between social capital and the political participation of ethnic minorities. In his study in Oslo, he used a composed index of social capital, which included measures of trust, network and engagement in politics. The network aspects of social capital in particular turned out to be relevant. As Rogstad stated: '*the main conclusion to be drawn is that networks are the key to ethnic mobilization*'. However, it was not the membership of formal networks (i.e. organizational membership) to which Rogstad referred. Instead, belonging to informal networks (i.e. friendship networks) seemed to be crucial for conventional political participation (voting). On the other hand, migrants' participation in unconventional activities was increased by membership of both formal and informal networks. Again, the factors that were relevant for political involvement did vary between ethnic groups.

In summary, the replication studies have highlighted that the relationship between ethnic civic communities and ethnic political participation, although present in most cases, is still unclear. In any event, the data provided no grounds for the often-heard fear that ethnic groups are too focused on their communities instead of society as a whole, thereby isolating and even disintegrating themselves. If there was any effect of membership of ethnic organizations it was a positive one, at least with respect to the activities that people undertake. Only political interest declined with increased associational membership in some cases. However, the mechanisms at work differed

between cities as well as between groups, sometimes without obvious reasons. As Eggert and Giugni (2007) conclude, "*We can say that social participation spurs political integration to an important extent, although the mechanisms through which this occurs still need to be clarified.*" I would add that it is not only these mechanisms that need to be investigated. They are only one link in the chain of the steps that are assumed to link ethnic civic communities to ethnic political participation.

Recall that in the initial line of reasoning, it is supposed that the mechanism which makes voluntary organizations crucial for political participation is twofold. On the one hand, it is assumed that immigrants who are members of (ethnic) voluntary associations are more inclined to participate politically. On the other hand, it is argued that this effect is enhanced by ties between organizations, i.e. the organizational network, which is regarded as an indicator of the civiness of the ethnic community as a whole. The connections at board level facilitate the spread of social and political trust through the community, as well as enabling the norms and values regarding the importance of political participation to be passed on. The replication studies discussed focus solely on the first part of the theory and, unfortunately, failed to test the second aspect because of the limitations of their data. However, this second part is at least as important in any attempt to explain the relationship between organizational and political participation, because *'the amount of social capital generated by the membership of an organization is dependent upon the position of the organization in the organizational network'* (Tillie, 2004, p.532; emphasis added). In other words, to fully know the effect of organizational membership on the individual, it is necessary to be aware of the social capital of the organization. An isolated organization yields only a limited amount of surplus value for its members, whereas a connected one not only (potentially) provides the members with its own resources, but also those of other organizations. A study by Paxton (2002) underlines this. She found that *'connected associations had a strong positive influence on democracy, while isolated associations had a strong negative influence on democracy'* (p.273). Thus, with respect to the inconsistency of the findings in the replication studies, one would expect to find that the organizational networks in the various cities are different. In the cases where the positive relationship between membership and political participation is absent, one would expect – following Fennema and Tillie's logic – that there would rarely be a network of interlocking directorates. It is to be hoped that in the near future this kind of hypothesis will be tested. Yet, even if the connectedness of the organizations is taken into account, the *mechanisms* within them and between them continue to be hidden. Fennema and Tillie, who argued that organizational connectedness is crucial for the functioning of an ethnic civic community, did not substantiate their assumptions about the mechanisms of organizational interaction with empirical evidence. It is my view that it is not enough to just study 'static symptoms' like the number of organizations and interlocks on the one hand and outcome figures on the other, when one is actually interested in what is going on within and between those

organizations. At this moment, these processes are unknown; there is a 'black box' between the input and output variables, and it is about time some light was shed on it.

1.6 The black box: what is in it?

From a general community perspective, the black box between ethnic civic community and ethnic political participation concerns the processes of interaction between three groups: the board members of ethnic organizations, normal members, and those who belong to the ethnic group but do not belong to any ethnic association. The theory (Fennema & Tillie, 2008) states that the board members, as representatives of their organizations, interact with each other at the elite level to resolve collective action dilemmas, and by doing so develop social trust. Through their encounters with governmental bodies, they also develop political trust, for example when organizations apply for grants from the municipality or collaborate with the police (see also Lelieveldt & Caiani (2007) who studied the relationships between associations and governments in six European cities). The connections between organizations are supposed to function as channels of communication, through which social and political trust, as well as information in general, is easily exchanged, thereby increasing the degree of trust. The civic skills and social and political trust that the organizational leaders have acquired are subsequently passed on to their members, who also develop civic skills by their participation in the associations (see Figure 1.1 for a schematic representation).

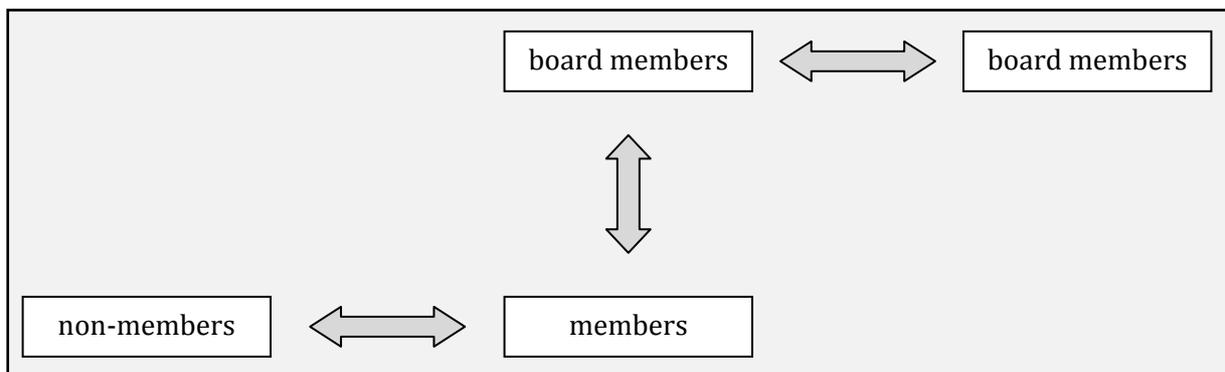


Figure 1.1 Schematic representation of the three levels at which information and trust are assumed to spread.

The organizational members in their turn transfer the trust and information to the non-members of their community. As social trust, political trust and relevant information is present in all layers of the community, so will the political participation of all of the members of this community increase.

1.7 The black box: the first rays of light

The processes which take place between board members and members, and between members and non-members, have been addressed in several studies. The idea that people who are not members of a voluntary organization can still have some access to social capital at the group level via friends who are (and will thus become 'contaminated' with the 'civic virus' and participate politically) is affirmed in a study by Tillie (2004), although further investigations are necessary.

Strömblad and Bengtsson (2008) tried to unravel the relationship between organizational leaders and their members. They found that organizations which are bigger (i.e. have more members) and offer a wide range of activities stimulate their members to become politically active more than smaller organizations with only a single objective do. Furthermore, the organizations that are better engaged in political life tend to support their members more than those that are not. This support included assisting members with bureaucratic, judicial, financial, employment and discrimination issues. This help, in turn, gives members the opportunity to develop political skills, and they tend to be encouraged to take part in the political life of the host society. This study thus provides some of the first evidence of the tenability of the assumption that the social capital of organizational leaders is passed down to members.

The third step in the assumed process, which is in fact the first in the causality of the mechanism as a whole, concerns the development of trust and the exchange of information on the organizational level. To the best of my knowledge, no research has been conducted into this topic, and the aim of the current study is, therefore, to address this.

1.8 Problematic features of the assumptions about the organizational level

Fennema and Tillie operationalized the relationships between organizations with the network of interlocking directorates. They regarded these formal connections as a reflection of inter-organizational trust, and the network of trusting relationships that the interlocks create as the social capital of the community.

Sunier (2001) objected to the way in which Fennema and Tillie had established the elite network, because they had chosen to rely on data from the Chamber of Commerce. This meant that only organizations that were officially registered were included in the study. Their motivation was that the mere fact that people have registered as an organization indicates that they are aware of and adhere to the formal procedures that apply in society. It is '*a formalization of the civic community*' (Fennema & Tillie, 2001, p.33). But Sunier argued that many official organizations exist on paper only and are not

active at all. He maintained that for many of these associations, the only reason to become officially registered is that this is a requirement of any application for a municipal grant. After the money has been secured, the 'organization' has lost its main reason to exist. However, Vermeulen (2006, p.33), who has studied migrant organizations intensively, formed the impression that "*the 'paper' organizations do not form a significant part of the organizational population of the groups studied*". (As I am investigating the same groups as Vermeulen, this threat to the validity of the data I am using is averted. However, in other groups this may remain a possible and serious problem.)

Flap (2001) has cast doubt on the assumption that interlocking directorates can be regarded as indicators of mutual trust between associations, and are thereby valuable social capital for organizations in particular and the community in general. He suggested that they might well be the result of a strategic plan to achieve personal gain on the part of the political leaders and the front men of ethnic associations. I would add to this that it is questionable whether organizations actively use the network of interlocking directorates to either pass on information or collaborate, and there may be other ways in which they are connected that are much more likely channels of communication. Do board members really transfer information from one organization to another? Indeed, it may be that the interlocks represent a formal network that only emerged coincidentally in the foundation process, while the actual contacts and collaborations take place with actors from outside this network. In other words, if a community's social capital is regarded as being a network of trusting relationships between ethnic organizations, what does this network look like and what is it based on?

1.9 Opening up the black box: the primary step

The aim of the current study is to open up the black box in terms of the processes taking place at the organizational level. The objective is to unravel what the organizational networks within ethnic communities look like and how they are used. The organizational network of an ethnic community is *a social organization that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions*, which is Robert Putnam's definition of social capital (1993, p.167). Hence, the current study is a research into the social capital of ethnic communities in general and ethnic organizations in particular. The research questions are, therefore, the following.

1. What does the social capital of ethnic civic communities look like?
2. What is the relationship between the social capital that ethnic organizations have at their disposal and the ways in which they mobilize it?

The next chapter

Putnam's definition of social capital is not undisputed. The concept thereof has been interpreted in numerous different ways, and has been adopted by many scholars in a wide variety of different fields. In the next chapter, I will expound the dominant views on social capital and explain the position of this study in relation to them.