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# Environmental Mobilization and Resource-Opportunity Usage: The Examples of WWF-France, FNE and LPO in Policy Processes

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Environmental mobilization in France is traditionally characterized by both small and large-scale manifestations against a seemingly all-powerful state apparatus. From protests against the establishment of nuclear power stations in the 1970s to more recent counter-globalization marches, environmental actors are often portrayed by French politics as reactionary, aggrieved and intransigent. However, this paper argues that environmental activists in France pursue highly sophisticated mobilization strategies in their attempt to influence policy-specific issues. It explores the activities of three environmental associations active in France: World Wildlife Fund France, France Nature Environnement and la Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux. A theoretical framework based on ‘policy opportunity windows’ allows us to fully appreciate the strategic repertoire of such groups. It is argued, above all, that a resource analysis offers important explanatory power for understanding an increasingly proactive, competitive and multi-actor environmental movement.

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**Keywords:** environmental activism; resource mobilization; social movement theory

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## Introduction

Environmental actors in France are often associated with direct action campaigns against nuclear power in the 1970s (Prendiville, 1994). As part of the less reputable (and less researched) ‘promotional groups’ (feminist, anti-racism, solidarity), French environmental associations have, nevertheless, had little success on imposing their will on government (Cole, 2005). As is common among movements that find their origins (though not exclusively) in the New Social Movements (NSMs) of the 1970s, environmental organizations have been largely forced into relations with state actors based on pre-emption, incorporation, contestation and direct action. In this way, state–group accounts have positioned French environmental groups in a largely



subordinate role *vis-à-vis* governmental actors. *And yet*, a detailed group-centric analysis based on resource-opportunity usage will reveal below that such a conclusion is both simplistic and misleading.

As an idea that can be traced back as far as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, interest group pressure more broadly is considered, historically, as being illegitimate (Cohen-Tanugi, 1991). However, the traditional *Jacobin* distaste for interest groups is only partly relevant for contemporary state-group relations. There are three important reasons for this change. Firstly, a transformation has occurred mainly through the loosening of state control of civil society. Secondly, there has been a modernization of public administration that has ensured freedoms of access to information. More recently, the multi-faceted influence of the EU has, thirdly, been accredited with this change (Smith, 2006). Although French pressure group activity would appear to be weaker in France than in the north European democracies, the traditional image of France as a state that pays no attention to associational life is becoming increasingly irrelevant to understanding the reality of French politics (Waters, 2003).

Environmental groups have, moreover, adopted different strategies than the NSMs of the 1970s. Contemporary social movements no longer focus on mass protests, such as the 1968 student uprising (Appleton, 2000). Festivals, petitions, (even) lobbying, civil disobedience and other media-directed events are tools that are being increasingly employed by such actors (Ollitrault, 2001, 2004; Hayes, 2007). Furthermore, contemporary movements tend to operate within a fragmented system of alliances without the domination of one single group (Fillieule *et al.*, 2004). In this way, the French environmental movement could, therefore, be referred to as a 'space or aggregation of interest' (Waters, 1998, 183). This characterization is reinforced by the sustained presence of environmental actors in the multi-interest counter-globalization arena (Fillieule *et al.*, 2004; Fougier, 2004).

The present contribution seeks to add to this literature by examining the activities of three environmental actors in France: *World Wildlife Fund France* (WWF-Fr), *France Nature Environnement* (FNE) and *la Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux* (LPO). They are selected on their official legal status as 'associations'<sup>1</sup> under the 1901 Law, which established the criteria for representing non-state interests or charity designation (JORF, 1901). This paper aims, firstly, to (design and) employ a framework for analysing environmental groups in the form of 'policy opportunity windows'. Indeed, it is argued that the best way to map an increasingly fluid environmental movement is to concentrate on the strategies of individual groups on one policy-specific issue (biodiversity in this case). Secondly, it endeavours to position the explanatory power of *resources* at the core of this operational framework. This approach based on Political Opportunity Structures (POS) and Resource Mobilization



Theory (RMT) provides new insights into the relationship between group and state in France within the context of transforming environmental activism and increasing EU policy influence.

### **Environmental Movements and Social Movement Theory**

There are two distinctive strands of Social Movement Theory (SMT) that perceive environmental movements as based on either fundamentalism or pragmatism. The former believes that environmental groups are driven by anti-establishment values that lead to unconventional and direct forms of action (Tarrow, 2001; Thompson, 2003). The latter conceptualizes environmental groups as actively promoting their cause to government through more conventional lobbying techniques (Dreiling and Wolf, 2001; Richards and Heard, 2005). The traditional dichotomy surrounding NSM research relies on separating those groups who fundamentally oppose the political order, from those who embark on a pragmatic reform of the political system. This leads to a distinction between ‘environmental movement organizations’ that focus on inclusive forms (lobbying, participation on committees) of interaction with the state and ‘direct action groups’ (Barry and Doherty, 2001). In stark contrast, it is argued this dichotomy is *overstated and misplaced* (as underlined by the empirical data below). Environmental groups undertake, in fact, a series of activities (both fundamental and pragmatic) in order to achieve multiple objectives (Dalton *et al.*, 2003, 747).

The diversification of contemporary environmental groups reinforces the need for a group-centric perspective towards state–group relations in France. SMT provides, above all, a framework for studying group behaviour and interaction with the state (Kriesi, 2004). We firstly need to differentiate between NSMs and SMT. Largely attributed to Habermas, NSMs are a response to ‘the colonization of the lifeworld’ and ‘cultural impoverishment’ (Crossley, 2003, 290). These phenomena have taken the form of politics ceasing to address issues of truly public concern. In following, NSMs have arisen in response to this colonized and impoverished context (Habermas, 1989; Crossley, 2003). In France, the student movement of 1968 provided the motor for a variety of NSMs (Bell, 2001, 183). Similar to other Western countries, these NSMs consisted of ‘those who traditional institutions had forgotten or excluded’ (ecologism, anti-nuclearism, feminism, consumerism and postmaterialism) (Fillieule, 2001, 52). The concept of NSMs refers, therefore, specifically to the apparition of movements during the 1960s/1970s (Pichardo, 1997).

SMT provides, rather, a collection of tools for studying group (and movement) behaviour while allowing us to generate questions on how and why social mobilization takes place (Kriesi, 2004). In fact, a range of social movement theories have emerged over the past 30 years: RMT — closely associated



with US organizational studies, POS, Social Psychology (SP) and Social Networks (SN). This largely stems from different approaches and methodological choices from political scientists (mostly RMT and POS) and sociologists (often SP and SN). Similarly, European (SP) and American scholars (RMT) have built up particular approaches to analysing groups and movements (Tourraine, 1977; Freeman, 1979; Castells, 1983). It is argued that a combined approach to these theories has the ability to shed light on how, and to an extent why, these movements (and in this case, groups) are mobilized (Bell, 2001, 183–184). This paper focuses, above all, on combining RMT and POS in an attempt to shed new light on group–state relations in France.

### **Resource mobilization and ‘policy opportunity windows’**

RMT posits that sufficient levels of resources are needed for initial and sustained mobilization. Freeman simply asserts that ‘the group can do no more than its resources...permit’ (1979, 167). Focusing on RMT prioritizes (though not exclusively<sup>2</sup>) the study of ‘movement organizations over movements’ (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991, 21). This paper concentrates, therefore, on the rationality of movement groups through examining the explanatory power of three ‘resource categories’: organizational resources, financial capacity and the size and composition of the workforce. The principal hypothesis maintains that the groups with more resources can exert more effort for all types of political action (Dalton *et al.*, 2003, 756).

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

This paper concentrates on the *policy process* within an EU context in order to evaluate both small and large-scale shifts in POS in France. The policy process consists of three distinct phases: agenda-setting, decision-making and policy implementation (Hayes, 2002, 58–71). Each phase can mobilize different actors in a wide range of multi-level venues. In particular, the strategies undertaken by French non-state and state actors will often differ according to the specific phase of the policy. This idea is termed in this paper as ‘*policy opportunity windows*’. In accordance with (or even irrespective of) the policy



cycle in question, opportunity windows provide a series of timeframes (agenda-setting, decision-making/policy translation and implementation) for analysing environmental mobilization.

## Group Selection and Policy Background

WWF-Fr is a large environmental group in France that is internationally recognized as a global association. The primary objective of WWF-Fr is to ensure the protection of nature and prevent the extinction of threatened species. The majority of its work has, firstly, focused on the N2000 programme (see below). Secondly, it concentrates on promoting the notion of sustainable development. A recent example involved working with a variety of religious institutions to promote and integrate environmental concerns into their practices and beliefs (Thouvenot, 2003). Many campaigns that are undertaken by the French branch have effectively been less successful copies from other national offices. The success of WWF-UK in promoting corporate social responsibility in business has failed to materialize in the French case. In general, WWF-Fr has largely failed to impose its authority on the French environmental movement (Prendiville, 1994; Szarka, 2002).

As an originally French environmental interest group, the second association in focus is FNE. In the form of a large national umbrella organization of regional groups, FNE is the oldest environmental association in France with its establishment dating back to 1854. In terms of membership and size, this association, formerly known as the *Fédération française des sociétés de protection de la nature*, remains the largest environmental grouping in France. It has the potential ability to unite associated regional and local groups, and consequently present one voice. Moreover, this organization creates both *ad hoc* as well as more formal alliances, both nationally and locally, with other environmental groups. Its core principles have always focused on the protection of a well-established natural heritage in France.

The third association in focus is the leading French player in the protection of birds, LPO. It has been a member of the well-known Birdlife International since 1993. Birdlife is indeed active in over 100 countries and territories worldwide for the global preservation of birds and their habitats (Heath, 2006). However, LPO has existed as an independent organization in France since 1912. Supported by an expansive sub-national presence, LPO was originally a loosely federated collection of principally regional associations. Its membership to Birdlife International marked the official recognition of LPO as one national conservation group. Its campaign dossier is predictably restricted to the preservation of bird sanctuaries and their surrounding environment (and therefore N2000). Its current president recently commented on the state of biodiversity protection in France: 'we give lessons to Africans on how to



protect their elephants when we are not capable of protecting our own natural heritage'<sup>3</sup> (Malet, 24/01/2005).

### **Biodiversity and N2000**

The French environment has remained moderately undamaged in comparison with Germany, UK or the Netherlands. The population is extremely unevenly distributed over the country, with a high concentration within cities (80%). As a result, France has been able to sustain a wide range of flora and fauna, supporting 40% of the flora species in Europe (while only covering 12% of the territory) (Duhautois and Hoff, 2004, 1–3). The early 1990s marked a renewed attempt by the European Commission to embark upon ensuring the protection of biodiversity by enforcing Directives and related programmes. In 1992, the EU unanimously approved the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) to complement the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC). It essentially established a comprehensive framework for EU action in this area. In total, both Directives classified over 3,000 sites for the special protection of more than 200 habitats with over 700 species. The Commission effectively introduced a more transparent system of policy processes and deadlines for member states.

The French Environment Ministry responded in 2001 by creating a network of contracts (*les contrats Natura*) for a renewable period of 5 years. Focused uniquely at sub-national level, these contracts were established between the local authorities, environmental associations and a variety of other actors. The contract includes monthly meetings of a special committee (*un comité de pilotage* — consisting of the local authorities and other actors including civil society associations), in order to assess their work in achieving the aims set out in the *document d'objectifs* (in coordination with the relevant *prefet* and local stakeholders) (Le Grand, 2004, 48–58). During the same period, it founded a 'national monitoring committee' (*le comité national de suivi Natura 2000*). This shift in policy content was reinforced by the availability of additional EU financial assistance (known as LIFE) for the establishment and maintenance of N2000 sites.

Three individual 'policy opportunity windows' can be located between 1992 and 2007. The first window is evident during the designation of N2000 sites between 1992 and 1998. Termed as the 'agenda setting' window, a series of protests from hunting and agricultural associations led to the temporary suspension of N2000 activities in France during 1996 and 1997. The second window 'policy translation' (1998–2003) witnessed the project's re-launch through the transformation of decision-making processes in this area. The Environment Ministry established a national monitoring committee, sub-national steering committees, contractual agreements and a complex system of financial assistance. The 'policy implementation' (third) window



appeared as the operationalization of these new opportunity structures and the completion of the French N2000 site designations between 2003 and 2007.

As commented by a representative from the Environment Ministry, ‘Natura has effectively transformed French biodiversity policy ...structure, style and content throughout the last ten years’.<sup>4</sup> The following sections explore the activities of three environmental groups during the *last two opportunity windows* (1998–2007).<sup>5</sup> It is argued that resource base differentiation can explain the strategies of all three groups.

### **Strategies and Policy Translation (1998–2003)**

This period was marked, above all, by the regionalization of all three associations’ mobilization activities in N2000 (Pinton, 2001). By this stage, the Environment Ministry had located the base line number of sites (1,029) to be created throughout France. Each association called upon their sub-national members to assist in the launch and management of these sites. It is not possible to examine the actions of over 80,000 sub-national representations. Nevertheless, it is argued that there were three discernable strategies undertaken by the three associations during this period: participation (FNE), leadership (LPO) and specialization (WWF-Fr).

#### **‘Included’ sub-national mobilization strategies**

In terms of the first strategy (participation), FNE encouraged members to simply participate in relevant steering committees. It benefited from the most substantive network of sub-national representation. As a result, its members were involved in more N2000 sites than WWF-Fr and LPO. Each sub-national member sought a different level of participation in accordance with their own objectives. The degree of involvement varied between acting as the chair within an already agreed N2000 contractual framework and membership of a largely *ad hoc* committee (FNE, 1999, 2000a). By 2003, FNE were represented in 931 (out of 1,029) N2000 sites by sub-national associations.

In contrast, the national office of LPO followed a strategy that prioritized ensuring the leadership of N2000 site management. In other words, LPO only encouraged their members to participate in steering committees that positioned them as the committee’s chair. This association ensured this status by sub-national involvement uniquely in sites designated under the Birds Directive. As the leading bird protection association, LPO enjoyed chairmanship in almost all their N2000 steering committees. In 2003, LPO representatives were involved as chairs in 227 (out of 343) bird sites under N2000 (European Commission, 2006; LPO, 2006a). Practically, LPO succeeded as chair in





establishing eight N2000 contracts with LIFE dedicated financial assistance. These eight contracts included management systems and financial aid for 125 sites (European Commission, 2006). This strategy of leadership provided LPO with a high-profile status within the overall project development.

The third strategy towards N2000 during this period was adopted by WWF-Fr as the 'specialization' of sub-national activities. In contrast to the other associations, WWF-Fr focused their actions almost uniquely on two projects within the remit of N2000. Firstly, it established the LINDA project in Corsica in order to maintain the populations of bottlenose dolphins (WWF-Fr, 2003). This association had full responsibility for setting up a steering committee and finding a contractual agreement. It was granted full LIFE status by the end of 2003 (WWF-Fr, 2006). Secondly, WWF-Fr participated in a joint project for 'improving the coexistence of large carnivores in Southern Europe' that spanned five European countries (Croatia, France, Greece, Italy and Spain) (European Commission, 2003). As the leading French association, it secured leadership on introducing steering committees throughout five regions. The project was granted LIFE financial aid in early 2004.

### **'Representative' national lobbying**

WWF-Fr did not follow a clear national-level lobbying strategy. It frequently joined FNE and LPO in statements of support for the N2000 process. However, this association concentrated its activities at the EU (as explained below), and at the sub-national level. In contrast, the other two associations (FNE and LPO) attempted to lobby government officials primarily through their expanded involvement in the 'national monitoring committee'. By early 2000, Environment Minister Dominique Voynet invited both FNE and LPO to become full members of this committee (MEDD, 03/04/2000). The Ministry accorded both associations two places each. Moreover, FNE benefited from an additional member on the basis of its involvement on the Minister's scientific advisory board. The Minister acknowledged that the successful implementation of N2000 could only be achieved with the agreement of all interests, including environmental (Voynet, 11/04/2001). However, WWF-Fr was still not represented on this committee.

From 1998 (and 2000 in particular), there was a convergence in the consultative and cooperative lobbying strategies of FNE and LPO. Firstly, they were now involved in a progressively structured dialogue with national government via the national monitoring committee. The role of these associations included, secondly, representing a growing network of sub-national participants in N2000. During this second opportunity window, the communication of N2000 sites marked the establishment of steering committees and contractual agreements throughout France. Thirdly, both



associations now had a responsibility to make the N2000 process more efficient and ultimately successful. In this new context, FNE and LPO lobbied in the more narrow interest of their members rather than on the basis of support for or against N2000 as a whole.

### **European ‘media’-related strategies**

It is argued that the omission of WWF-Fr from the national monitoring committee encouraged attempts towards lobbying at the EU level. Moreover, its participation in two large sub-national and international projects (see above) positioned WWF-Fr as an important French representative for the work of WWF-EU. Both LPO and WWF-Fr maintained regular contact with their European offices throughout this period. However, the former association placed greater emphasis on its national and particularly sub-national representations. In contrast, the latter association prioritized its contribution to several European media campaigns led by WWF-EU. A representative from WWF-Fr underlined that the centralized structure of WWF in general allowed their association to lobby their European counterpart on a regular basis.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, it was involved in three WWF-EU media campaigns: ‘Making Natura an Opportunity’, the ‘EU shadow lists’, and ‘Member state evaluations’.

‘Making Natura an Opportunity’ was directly aimed at the European Commission. A series of reports called for a more promotional approach to N2000. WWF-EU highlighted the poor records experienced in France and Luxembourg. Above all, it argued that implementation problems resulted from the Commission’s inability to promote the project. WWF-Fr provided the French data used by its European office in these reports (WWF-EU, 1999). The French office was more directly involved in compiling ‘a shadow list’ of N2000 sites (i.e. indicating those sites missing) and ‘evaluating’ the performance of France on an annual basis. The WWF-Fr biodiversity policy officers Christine Sourd and Laurent Poncet were key figures in the compilation and writing of the WWF Shadow lists (WWF-EU, 2000, 5). Christine Sourd and Sandrine Belier were the main authors in both the 2001 and 2002 annual ‘member state evaluations’ for France (WWF-EU, 2001, 2002).

### **Strategies and Policy Implementation (2003/4–2007)**

Throughout this period, it is revealed below that the strategies of all three associations changed from ‘representing the local’ to ‘pressurizing the national’. At all levels, there is clear evidence that these associations focused on using their growing legitimacy to pressurize the Environment Ministry on two issues. Firstly, the Ministry failed to communicate enough sites for inclusion in the EU wide N2000 project. Secondly, these associations claimed that national and



regional authorities were neglecting some already communicated sites. As explored below, each association pursued distinctive strategies to underline these issues at various levels.

### **Exploiting 'local empowerment'**

All three associations elaborated different strategies in order to highlight implementation problems at the sub-national level. Of course, there were clearly numerous successful introductions of N2000 sites and their accompanying management infrastructures. An area in the South East of France (*La Charente*) engendered this achievement by displaying fully operational sites. All three associations participated in the conservation of the 23 N2000 sites located in this area (Carin, 08/03/2006). As underlined during 'policy translation', sub-national groups became important actors in the establishment and management of these sites. During 'policy implementation', these associations attempted to exploit this representative power. Above all, the sub-national representatives of the associations were primarily involved in two different 'complaint' strategies against the Environment Ministry: regional lobbying and local protests. Most notably, there was a growing split between employing these strategies for promoting (WWF-Fr, FNE and LPO) and hindering (largely hunting organizations) the extension of N2000.

The extension of N2000 to include a site in *Languedoc-Roussillon* (Southern France) became a high-profile dispute between environmentalists and hunting associations in the early 2005. A representative from a local hunting association commented 'we are not against the protection of endangered species...just the form it takes'.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, members of *LPO de l'Aude* set out the need to extend the inadequate N2000 network in France.<sup>8</sup> The DIREN (*Directions Régionales de l'Environnement*) underlined that the contractual nature of agreements 'frightened' these local stakeholders with an essentially 'anglo-saxon' tool<sup>9</sup> (Durand, 15/01/2005). In terms of individual strategies, hunting associations lobbied *le Conseil Municipal* and mobilized local support for the eventual rejections of two newly proposed N2000 sites in Western and Southern France (*Maine-et-Loire* and *Saint-Georges-de-Didonne*) (David, 14/12/2005; Guyon, 13/01/2006). In a contrasting example, two associations within the FNE network were involved in both the protection and extension of a N2000 site (against the expansion of a Lafarge factory) in *Grand-Angoulême* (Southern France) (Gervais, 07/10/2006).

### **'Expert' national lobbying**

The national monitoring committee was officially recognized as the primary advisory body on N2000 during this period. Despite its undoubted presence at



the sub-national level, the Environment Ministry persisted in its decision to exclude WWF-Fr from formal membership of the committee. In contrast to the limited 'representative' strategies during policy translation, there were evidently two approaches employed by the remaining three associations. These groups were, firstly, able to provide 'expert knowledge' on the actual status of the implementation process. As the designated specialists in the field, they drew upon the experiences of their members in order to provide data on the N2000 process. Secondly, they could use this information to apply 'expert pressure' on the Ministry for amendments. In order to achieve their own objectives, coalitions formed among and between environmentalists and non-environmentalists. Among other issues, this resulted in a majority lobby (including FNE and LPO) for an expansion in the number of N2000 sites and a minority bloc (including hunting organizations) for its reduction.

### **Applying 'European' pressure**

The targets for both WWF-EU and Birdlife-EU largely changed from France and Luxembourg to the new member states. Indeed, both concentrated heavily on lobbying for a robust approach to N2000 implementation in the new member states. Consequently, the high-profile media campaigns of WWF-EU no longer focused on France. Nevertheless, both WWF-Fr and LPO encouraged their European offices to apply pressure on the Commission. They highlighted the specifically poor communication of N2000 sites by France. Both European offices claimed to have used links with the DG for Environment on this matter.<sup>10</sup> However, 'European' strategies were not limited to the national offices of WWF-Fr and LPO. There is some evidence that the regional associations of FNE have been involved in directly contacting Commission officials to apply pressure on the French government.

As the biggest regional group within the FNE network, FRAPNA<sup>11</sup> demonstrated that sub-national associations could also apply pressure directly at the European level. Despite finding agreement within the committee, two sites (FR8201653 and FR8201696) were temporarily suspended throughout 2004 due to the members' inability to agree with regional authorities upon the demarcation of the zones in question. The text of the two Directives (Habitats and Birds) does not include any instructions on management or the appropriate action to be taken. FRAPNA sent letters of complaint directly to the DG for Environment at the Commission. It challenged the government's ability to set demarcations against the preferences of the committee. Under threat from infringement proceedings, both FR8201653 and FR8201696 were restarted in 2005 with different demarcations in accordance with the committee's preferences. FRAPNA tried to use N2000 contracts<sup>12</sup> in order to review and reshape policy in this area.



## A Resource Account of Strategy Selection

It is revealed below that an analysis of each resource category can provide insight into the strategies pursued. This section presents data on the associations' budgets and expenditure on N2000 (financial resources). Furthermore, it underlines the importance of examining the size and composition of an association's workforce and the sub-national and supranational representations (organizational resources) of all three associations.

### Organizational resources

The size of an association in terms of its representation has been presented in other studies on resource analysis (Carmin and Balsler, 2002). Data presented in this section underline that a powerful explanatory variable of strategy selection is the structure of an association's representation. Table 1 outlines the key information on the organizational resources for the associations in focus. WWF-Fr is represented at sub-national, national and supranational levels. However, its regional/local presence is significantly dwarfed in comparison to the other groups. It is argued that this factor severely disadvantaged its ability to lobby at the national level. As underlined in the strategies employed by this association, WWF-Fr had to rely upon well-established links with its N2000 active European office. It was evident throughout the lifespan of N2000 that WWF-EU provided an integral resource for the national bureau.

In terms of organizational structure, it is argued that the highly centralized WWF framework ensured a close relationship with its EU office. Similarly, LPO had maintained a connection with their established Brussels office. In contrast, the decentralized structure of Birdlife International made this connection weaker. As a result, WWF-Fr consistently maintained strategies at the EU level. Nevertheless, LPO benefited from a complex and highly integrated network of sub-national representations. Fourteen local-level delegations control directly the activities of 95 sub-ordinate local associations. In addition, seven regional delegations are involved in coordinating the actions of all 109 groups. Moreover,

**Table 1** Organizational and network structures

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Regional/local</i>		<i>National office</i>	<i>European</i>
	<i>No.</i>	<i>N2000</i>	<i>Active on N2000</i>	<i>Active on N2000</i>
WWF-Fr	15	Yes	Yes	Yes
FNE	3,084	Yes	Yes	NA
LPO	117	Yes	Yes	Yes



eight LPO associations were created for the specific task of protecting long-established natural reserves and bird sanctuaries.<sup>13</sup> In contrast to WWF-Fr, the long-term presence of LPO in France ensured the pursuit of numerous strategies at national and sub-national levels.

In terms of organizational resources, FNE is the most represented environmental association in France. It enjoys a formidable sub-national presence in 84 departmental associations and 3,000 local associations. The expansive organizational structure of FNE ensured involvement in N2000. Throughout policy translation and implementation, their representatives were more active than WWF-Fr and LPO in sub-national and national strategies. However, FNE did not participate in any European-level strategies. The absence of members at this level restricted their strategies to domestic arenas. With regards their organizational structures, the national office of FNE has little control on their sub-national members. The independence of these offices was another crucial distinction in contrast to WWF-Fr and LPO.

### Financial resources

It is often argued that the financial resources of an association are paramount in its ability to mobilize on an issue (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004; Richards and Heard, 2005). Similarly, the budget and expenditure of the associations in focus are important explanatory variables in understanding their strategies on N2000. Table 2 shows the level of expenditure by all three *national*<sup>14</sup> associations on the N2000 dossier during two separate years indicative of the two opportunity windows (2000 and 2006). LPO clearly dedicated more financial resources to the N2000 project than the other associations throughout the representative years of policy translation and implementation. Additionally, this group committed more finances to N2000 related activities than any other policy area (LPO, 2000; LPO, 2006b). As a result, it was able to pursue national lobbying strategies as well as a ‘leadership’ approach to sub-national representation.

However, the main conclusion that emerges from Table 2 is the considerable divergence in the expenditure of LPO and WWF-Fr in contrast to FNE. Despite the vastly superior organizational resources of FNE, it was able to

**Table 2** Expenditure on Natura 2000 campaign (euros)

<i>Organization</i>	<i>2000</i>		<i>2006</i>	
WWF-Fr	245,000	3.5%	272,000	4.7%
FNE	3,934	5.3%	3,445	5.2%
LPO	712,000	38%	733,000	36%



spend a significantly less proportion on N2000. At the same time, it was actively present in a number of strategies at the national and sub-national levels. It is argued that the key to understanding this puzzle lies in the data presented above on organizational structures. The LPO and WWF-Fr sub-national representations were highly dependent upon the financial assistance of their national offices. In contrast, the departmental and regional associations of FNE maintained almost complete financial independence. As a result, only the former national groups financed the work of sub-national associations in N2000 sites.

In order to contextualize this divergence, Table 2 also shows the different levels of expenditure on N2000 as a percentage of overall campaign spending. These figures reveal the comparative importance of N2000 activities to the national offices irrespective of individual spending power. Moreover, it reduces the ‘organizational paradox’ (above) by analysing N2000 within the context of expenditure in other policy areas. Evidently, the LPO results underline N2000 as a high-priority issue throughout policy development. As the only association to maintain strategies at all levels, the table underlines the importance of its financial dominance as an explanatory factor. In contrast, the extensive spending power of WWF-Fr is placed into context (i.e. only 3.5 and 4.7 % of overall campaign spending). The superior presence of FNE in national and sub-national strategies is reflected by its higher percentages. In this way, it is argued that financial capabilities must be considered within a larger resource framework (particularly with regards to organizational resources in this case).

### Size and composition of workforce

It is often assumed that an association with a large staff will be more likely to participate in more actions (Dalton *et al.*, 2003, 757). In order to test this statement, Table 3 sets out data on the size and composition of each association’s

**Table 3** Size and composition of the workforce

Organization	2000		2006	
	Staff (Biodiversity)	Leader	Staff (Biodiversity)	Leader
WWF-Fr	18 (2)	Yvonne Turpin	25 (3)	M-P. Poidevin
FNE	69 (9)	Christophe Aubel	72 (9)	Christophe Aubel
LPO	23 (2)	David Nunez	23 (2)	Fabienne David



workforce. FNE has evidently the largest overall and N2000 dedicated permanent staff. In fact, it has the most complex network of staff organization. A designated president oversees the work of three vice-presidents, two national secretaries, two treasuries, and a 16 strong board of directors (applicable 2000 and 2006) (FNE, 2000b, 2006). The remaining staff is arranged in accordance with five broad campaigns and eight specific networks. The superior size of FNE's workforce partly explains its ability to pursue a consistent national lobbying strategy. In particular, its biodiversity staff benefited from a scientific background throughout N2000.<sup>15</sup> This was certainly an advantage in securing its inclusion in the 'national monitoring committee'.

LPO and WWF-Fr had recourse to similar levels of full-time staff. However, both groups maintained a small department that concentrated on biodiversity policy issues. More generally, WWF-Fr organized their personnel on a campaign basis. This allowed the development of N2000 specialists who communicated regularly with their European office. LPO organized their work based on sub-national site management issues (LPO, 2006a). The members of an association are equally integral to its mobilization capabilities. Table 3 also reveals that the 'leader impact' on N2000 is not discernable at WWF-Fr and LPO. It is evident that both associations changed their N2000 staff more frequently.<sup>16</sup> This structural pattern did not allow one individual to emerge as a leader on the issue. In the case of FNE, Christophe Aubel undoubtedly asserted his personality on the association's strategies. With a background in biomedical science, he has led the 'nature and biodiversity' campaign since 2000. As the FNE representative on the national steering committee, he has maintained the FNE scientific approach to biodiversity matters.

### **Discussion: A Group-Centric Approach to French Environmentalism**

It is evident that LPO followed more strategies on more levels than the other three associations. Throughout policy translation and implementation, it followed 'leadership' and 'promoting' strategies in sub-national participation on the project. Nationally, LPO developed into full 'expert' members of the national monitoring committee. At the EU level, it maintained a close relationship with its Brussels based office in order to sustain pressure on the French Environment Ministry. FNE concentrated on national and sub-national level mobilization throughout policy development. In contrast, WWF-Fr pursued strategies at the sub-national and supranational levels. It is argued that the category of '*organizational resources*' was the most decisive factor in explaining all three groups' strategies. Firstly, the superior presence of FNE at the national and sub-national levels (supported by the scientific background of its members) ensured its representation on the national monitoring committee as well as on almost every N2000 site.





The existence of an active European-level office allowed both WWF-Fr and LPO to pursue strategies at this level. Secondly, the structure of these organizational resources proved crucial in understanding the limited control of FNE on sub-national organizations. As a direct result, it was able to spend less money on N2000 activities while enjoying the benefits of a substantial regional and departmental presence. In contrast, the dependency of sub-national members necessitated much higher expenditure for WWF-Fr and LPO. Notably, the centralized structure of WWF International/EU accounted for the higher level of WWF-Fr European strategies (in comparison with LPO). Finally, the superior mobilization of LPO in this area was similarly explained by its decision to concentrate almost 40% of its campaign budget to N2000-related activities.

It is therefore necessary to combine concepts within RMT and POS in order to link together micro-, meso- and macro-level approaches to non-state mobilization. A key component missing from combined RMT/POS research (Freeman, 1979; Dreiling and Wolf, 2001; Dalton *et al.*, 2003; Edwards and McCarthy, 2004) is the crucial factor of policy processes. As explored briefly above, policy development can result in both significant and minor shifts in POS, actor configuration and the overall interaction context for social movement groups (Hayes, 2002). Moreover, policy evolution can significantly influence the strategies undertaken by non-state actors in an attempt for greater impact. Essentially, policy processes through '*opportunity windows*' allow for an examination of ever-shifting structures, configurations and interaction, as well as both proactive and responsive group strategies. Within this context, it is argued that resources are imperative to the evolving strategies of the particular group in question.

Above all, this group-centric approach examines the strategies of environmental groups within shifting opportunities. The three resource categories (organizational, financial and human resources) all feed into the particular group in question. It is argued that the specific size and composition of their resource base largely defines the group's ability to employ both proactive and reactive strategies over the life-span of the policy process. Strategies are essentially defined as the employment of particular forms of action (action repertoires) at certain points in the development of a policy (defined according to the particular case study). As groups are not restricted to being labelled either 'fundamentalists' or 'pragmatists', the group has a choice between a wide collection of activities that are described in the model as 'direct'<sup>17</sup> (most associated with the former) or 'soft'<sup>18</sup> (connected with the later) action repertoires. The particular strategy (one or more direct and/or soft action repertoires) targets the interaction context. More precisely, the group attempts to influence the collective/individual strategies of both EU and domestic policy actors.



This environmental mobilization analysis calls into question the state-centric models that have dominated our understanding of group–state relations in French politics. The environmental movement is classified by classic (neo-) pluralist and (neo-) corporatist accounts of French politics as an inert, dwindling and excluded set of actors (Wilson, 1987; Elgie and Griggs, 2000; Knapp and Wright, 2006). A group-centric perspective reveals a multiplicity of actor capability. Above all, the ‘protest model’ has wrongly resulted in largely outdated (or at least restricted) and static caricatures of environmental activism. Initially promoted by Wilson (1987), this approach is equally visible in more recent works (Hayes, 2002, 2006, 2007; Fillieule, 2003). Of course, the observation of protest activities among movement actors is empirically valid. However, the current study argues that a group-centric perspective also offers insight into non-protest-oriented strategies.

At the heart of this research, it is argued that environmental movement actors can adopt both a ‘fundamentalist’ and a ‘pragmatist’ stance depending on their resource capabilities and changes in opportunity structures. This group-centric approach underlines the ongoing mobilization efforts of associations within the environmental movement in France. In this way, we must change the focus of analysis from ‘how *Jacobin* is the French State’ to ‘how *able* are French associations’. This paper supports Waters (2003) by concluding that movements are heavily populated fluid spaces of interest. In addition, it is revealed here that actors are in a state of ongoing competition for occupying the most ‘space’. Throughout the lifespan of a given policy, movement actors seek to maximize their individual ‘resource mix’ for pursuing the most strategies on the most levels. As a result, certain groups are able to mobilize for longer and on more levels than others.

Environmental groups in France are, therefore, constantly attempting to influence policy through translating their resource base into mobilization strategies. It is no longer justified to restrict our understanding of such actors as irrevocably locked into anti-establishment movements. This paper has sought to reconceptualize environmental associations in France as competing rational actors that are incessantly vying for inter and intra policy influence on a multi-level basis. Moreover, it has dispelled the simplistic myth that the French environmental movement as a whole is hampered by a ‘*contrainte financière*’ (Grossman and Saurugger, 2006). A policy analysis of resource mobilization reveals that this conclusion varies across groups and in accordance with other resource categories (such as organizational structure and human resources). Future research is invited to examine other movements through a similar group-centric approach. In particular, its application to cross-movement mobilization (such as on Global Justice or Sustainable Development issues) would prove insightful into the contemporary relationship between group and state in France.



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## Notes

- 1 The author maintains that all three are comparable in spite of differences in organizational structure. It is argued that structural variation offers additional explanatory power for deviating levels of mobilization potential (instead of a 'definitional' roadblock for comparative analysis).
- 2 For an example of a resource mobilisation analysis of a movement, please see Ruggiero (2000).
- 3 'On donne des leçons aux Africains pour protéger leurs éléphants, alors qu'on n'est pas capable de protéger notre patrimoine'.
- 4 This quotation originates from an interview with a representative from the 'direction de la nature et les paysages' in the Environment Ministry (27/08/2006).
- 5 For an in-depth discussion on events throughout the first opportunity window, please see Pinton (2001).
- 6 Interview conducted with a representative from WWF-Fr on 29/08/2006.
- 7 'Sur le fond, on ne peut pas être contre la protection des espèces menacées. Sur la forme, c'est autre chose'.
- 8 'Avec les nombreux étangs fréquentés par les migrateurs, l'ensemble du littoral audois est concerné par Natura 2000. L'enjeu des prochaines années sera de concilier développement et protection du patrimoine naturel'.
- 9 'Il s'agit d'une conception d'esprit anglo-saxon. On définit un périmètre et on demande aux gens de terrain de se mettre d'accord pour le gérer'.
- 10 Interviews with representatives from the national and European offices of WWF and LPO.
- 11 It had one representative on the *comité de pilotage régional de Rhone-Alpes*. The committee must publish documents on their aims and objectives, as well as their annual results.
- 12 Under article R 214-32 in *Code Rural*, non-compliance with contractual agreements established in these committees can result in the official suspension of activities. Committee members could use this measure in the event of government opposition to already agreed contractual agreements.
- 13 This presentation of its organizational resources does not account for 32 further reserves throughout France that are monitored by already existing departmental groups.
- 14 These figures do not include the expenditure of all sub-national groups that are related to each national association for the reasons explored above (organizational structures).
- 15 During two interviews, it was clear that FNE has a long tradition of scientific expertise. As a result, the Environment Ministry has often sought its involvement in policy.
- 16 Interviews with both associations underlined that their international presence attracts a wide range of interests for a position.
- 17 Various forms of protests, violence and disobedience represent 'direct' forms of action repertoires.
- 18 Lobbying, publishing reports, providing expertise (and generally non-confrontational activities) is basically characterized as 'soft' forms of action repertoires.

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