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Social participation in science: the perspective of third sector organizations

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Introduction: Social participation in science

- **Social opinions on scientific and technological issues** have begun to be **included** during scientific policy decision-making (Fischer, C. et alt. 2004)
  - Trade in GMOs in EU vs USA (Prakash, A. et alt. 2003)
  - Pricing of anti-viral pharmaceuticals in developing countries (Duncan, 2003 and Jordan, 2003)
  - Kyoto Agreement on Climate Change (Long, et alt. 2002)
- To **combine NGO activism with institutional corporate strategy** to address social responsibilities (Doh, JP. et alt. 2006)
- Will of society to acquire **more responsibility** in decision-making (Rogers, KH, 2006)
- Analysis of "**undone science**" can help to implement **alternative research agendas** (Frickel, S. et alt. 2010)

Introduction: Social participation in science

- The **active participation** of different sectors' actors in the process of solving a problem helps to **promote a vision of a shared future** as well as a **better acceptance of the research** and the feeling of belonging to it by all actors. (Calder, IR, 2002 and Rogers, KH, 2006)

Third Sector organizations (platforms, NGOs, associations…) are often consulted or engaged in studies as representatives of diverse societal views and concerns.

Objectives

To diagnose the **current state** of the participation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Third Sector associations **throughout the R&D&I process:**

To identify what **their current role is**

To identify what they consider **this role should be**

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Methods

Advisory council formed by 10 representatives of Spanish Scientific Culture Units*

31 semi-structured interviews with representatives of CSOs based in Spain

Qualitative content analysis

*** Scientific Culture Units:** structures in universities or research centres whose aim is to bridge the gap between public and research staff. These structures are one of the main actors in the dissemination of science and innovation in Spain, and are a key service to improve and increase the training, culture and scientific knowledge of citizens (Capeans. R, 2012)

Methods

Selection criteria

- First level entities (19)
- Second level entities (7)
- Third level entities (3)
- Singular entities (2)

They represent the majority of Third Sector volunteers in Spain (Ramírez, A. et alt. 2015)

- Diversity of CSOs: animalists, environmentalists, patients, parents, consumers, LGBTI+ ...

Dimensions of study

Current participation in R&D&I

Limitations to participate in R&D&I

Ideal relationship with R&D&I system

Results: current participation in R&D&I

	Subcategory	Findings
Current participation in R & D & I	Own research activity	**Research carried out directly by the CSO**
	Advisory	The representative, the CSO or some of its members have been **consulted or are part of groups of people who advise** in some way researchers or research projects related to the area of interest of the organization
	Research funding	The CSO **funds research related to its area of interest** by seeking funds, awarding prizes or subcontracting other institutions to conduct research.
	Subject of study	The representative, the members of the CSO or of the CSO itself participate as **subjects of research studies (interviews, clinical trials ...)**
	Field work / data collection	The CSO or its members participate in the process of field work or data collection **of an investigation carried out by an external institution**
	Training	The representative, the CSO or some of its members participate in training activities at the university or in the research environment **(conferences, master classes, mentoring, courses ...)**
	Unspecific collaborations	It refers to **different types of collaborations with universities, companies or other entities** linked to R&D&I (agreements, internships ...)

Results: current participation in R&D&I

	Category	Findings
Current participation in R&D&I	Useful for CSOs	It is considered that the investigation, generally in a field related to the activity of the CSO, **is useful for their interests**
	Does not participate in research	The representative of the CSO considers that the organization **does not participate in any way in the research system**

Results: Limitations to participate in R&D&I

	Subcategory	Findings
Limitations to participate in R & D & I	Ignorance / lack of communication	It refers to the **ignorance of the activity** of the CSO by the research entities or the lack of knowledge of the CSO about the **possibility of participating** in R&D&I issues and / or the **lack of communication between the two actors**
	Lack of resources	It refers to the limited resources of the CSO **(financial, personnel, time ...)** as a major constraint for not participating in R&D&I
	Lack of capabilities	It refers to the **lack of knowledge** (of the representative or members of the CSO) to conduct research

Results: Ideal relationship with R&D&I system

	Subcategory	Findings
Ideal relationship between the CSO and the R & D & I system	Advisory	It refers to the need for CSOs to be **consulted on research topics related to their area of interest**. Either forming part of a formalized advisory committee or through more informal consultations.
	Request for more research	There is a need for **more research carried out by agents external to the CSO** either at a generic level or in the specific field in which their CSO works.
	Identification of necessities	It refers to different needs that should be solved to strengthen the links between CSOs and the R&D&I system: **lack of communication, formalized relationships, different objectives between the research and the CSO ...**
	Active participation in R&D&I	It refers to **the willingness of the CSO to participate in the R&D&I process** by getting involved in the research, whether by carrying out field work, collecting data or as a "guinea pig" or subject of study.
	Own research activity	It refers to the **willingness to carry out research activity within the CSO itself,** including becoming a research centre

Conclusions

Current participation in R & D & I

- Many of the CSO representatives consider that their organizations **do not participate in research**. However, during the interview they have referred to some kind of collaboration with the R&D&I system.
- CSOs especially contribute as **subjects of study, funders, providing data or in field work**.
- But several organizations carry out their **own research**, usually social research on the activity of the organization itself.
- The participation of CSOs in **training activities** (conferences, master classes, mentoring, courses ...) at the university or research level is quite frequent.

Conclusions

Limitations to participate in R&D&I

- The main limitations that prevent CSOs from participating in the R&D&I system is the lack of knowledge or **lack of communication** between the Third Sector and the research entities and the **lack of resources** (financial, personnel, time ...)

Conclusions

Ideal relationship with R & D & I system

- CSOs representatives **do not want research's main tasks to be done inside their organization**.
- Instead, they prefer to **associate** with universities or research centres in some way:
  - Through **agreements** to develop **doctoral or master's theses** in the framework of their activity, or as part of **advisory boards**…
- **Different needs** should be solved to strengthen the links between CSOs and the R&D&I system:
  - Improve communication, establish formalized relationships, unify objectives between researchers and the CSOs, establish greater continuity of research projects…

Thanks for your attention!

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