

All Puerto Rico with Vieques: Mobilizing Support Through Social Skills and Field Dynamics

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ABSTRACT *This article explains the success of All Puerto Rico with Vieques (TPRCV) in coordinating a broad-based coalition in support of the movement to remove the US Navy from Vieques. Considering the literatures on organizations, strategic fields and social movements, the analysis looks at how environmental conditions and the attributes of the leadership become relevant in the formation and sustainability of coalition work. The article argues that under the conditions of a vibrant political activist sector and a dynamic political field, TPRCV used accumulated social skills to take advantage of network intersection and frame adaptation. Though environmental dynamics may produce favorable conditions for coalition building, these will be limited to the capacity of the social actors to identify them, assimilate their potential and translate them into opportunities.*

KEY WORDS: Vieques, coalitions, social skills, field dynamics, Puerto Rico

In observing the movement to remove the US Navy from the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico, it became evident that the movement's success lay in its capacity to engage a diversity of sectors and sustain a broad mobilization process. In building such support, the Vieques Movement relied on *Todo Puerto Rico con Vieques/All Puerto Rico with Vieques* (TPRCV) to build, manage, and sustain a support campaign on their behalf. This organization used a coalition model to negotiate differences, establish common ground and reframe solidarity around the Vieques Movement. Although at first glance the movement seems to work under favorable popular support, a closer look shows more complex ideological and political dynamics. For instance, ideological conflicts, high partisan/ideological discipline and loyalty, and the gravity pull of other issues (Hathaway & Meyer, 1993; Levi & Murphy, 2006; Staggenborg, 1986; von Bülow, 2011). So, how can we explain the formation of effective coalition work in the Vieques Movement? How did these conditions influence TPRCV's successful coalition building?

The following analysis looks at the case of TPRCV to explain how a supporting organization succeeded in building and sustaining a coalition project for the length of the movement (1999–2004) and identify the mechanisms that facilitated such project. I argue that TPRCV approached their task of coalition building through accumulated social skills

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(Fligstein, 2001) and field overlap architecture (Evans & Kay, 2008). On one hand, the organization capitalized on the experiences of its leadership as political and social activists, which primed them to read and act according to the conditions in the field. On the other hand, the organization thrived on the effervescence of an activated political activist sector, allowing for the brokering of alliances and frame adoption.

This article seeks to address the link between social skills and field dynamics. Through a combination of historical and discursive analysis, I present the case of mobilizing support for Vieques in the 2000s as an example of a coalition built upon sourcing networks and social skills. The article begins with a historical context background to illustrate the dynamics that conditioned the field. After highlighting concepts and approaches of significance for the analysis, I present how social skills, network build-up, and frame adaptation enabled coalition building in TPRCV. The discussion will highlight that effective coalition building requires more than *favorable* environmental conditions, but the interpellation of social skilled actors to negotiate and transform changing field dynamics into favorable ones.

Context Before TPRCV

When considering the emergence of TPRCV as a coalition project in the landscape of Puerto Rico (PR) politics in the 1990s, we must acknowledge the role that actors, networks, and field conditions play in this process. The decade of the 1990s presents a dynamic context of strong ideological conflicts, partisan entrenchment and popular contentious politics. Three events that characterized these features were the mobilization against an electromagnetic radar in Vieques, the fight against privatization, and the status referenda. These events intersected, informed, and contributed to the political ‘preparatory’ for TPRCV as they started seeking external support for Vieques in 1999 (Paralatici, 2006, p. 75).

Vieques and the Relocatable Over-the-Horizon Radar (ROTHR)

In the mid-1990s, the communities of Vieques and Lajas converged in the communion of resistance against the installation of an electromagnetic radar in their heartlands. The elected government of Pedro Rosselló entered into power with an anti-drug agenda tied to the War on Drugs initiatives, including the establishment of a relocatable over-the-horizon radar (ROTHR) in Vieques and Lajas to monitor air traffic of drugs to the USA. In Vieques, the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques had been working on issues of health and the environment as a new approach to their opposition to the military presence (Mullenneaux, 2000). In Lajas, the active sectors were focused on protecting agricultural land and farm sustainability. The ROTHR provided a common ground for the formulation of collaborative work. ‘Confrontation over military expansion and encroachment had been channeled into discussion about the environment and health’ (McCaffrey, 2006, p. 93). In the year 1995, the two groups developed a coalition to oppose the ROTHR, engaging multiple sectors across the island to mobilize popular support (Mullenneaux, 2000). At the center of their mobilization was a clear decoupling of partisan and ideological foundations from the precepts of both collaboration and goal attainment. The anti-radar campaign activated a solidarity network for Vieques that was mostly dormant for over a decade (McCaffrey, 2006).

Telefónica Strike

Along with the War on Drugs, the Rosselló administration adopted neoliberal policies to increase government efficiency and attract more foreign investment through privatization of state-run corporations and services. While previous administrations had also attempted privatizing services, their success and scale was halted by labor organizing. In an environment of forceful privatization and anti-labor rhetoric, a multi-sector front united to oppose the privatization and show solidarity. The formation of the Broad-base Committee of Labor and Social Organizations (CAOS) in 1997 represented a coalition encompassing labor, political, communal, student, religious, and social organizations against privatization (Ayala & Bernabe, 2007). CAOS forged a coalition on the principle of broad-based and diversified affiliated sectors as a strategy to challenge the New Progressive Party's (PNP)¹ privatizing agenda. Under the concept of *amplitud*,² CAOS created broad-based ties and practiced inclusiveness of ideas, sectors, and people within the organization. In 1998, the Rosselló administration proposed to sell the most successful public corporation, Puerto Rico Telephone Co. (PRTC), to which CAOS, in coalition with telephone workers, responded with a general strike that mobilized diverse sectors and showed widespread popular support. Among those mobilized were Democratic Popular Party (PPD)³ supporters, who provided resources in opposition to PNP. Although CAOS did not stop the privatization of the PRTC, the coalition left a network build-up that would continue to linger in the political arena.

Status Plebiscites

Along with privatization, the Rosselló administration revisited the *status issue*, the debate to define US-PR political condition, which is considered by many as the one item with strongest gravity pull in local politics (Diaz, 1995; Rodriguez Orellana, 2002). Since the incorporation of the Estado Libre Asociado (ELA)⁴ in 1952, the debate over the territorial status⁵ of PR has defined and guided the national political landscape (Cabán, 1993; Pabón, 2007). After winning the 1992 elections, PNP proposed to 'solve,' once and for all, the status issue by carrying out a referendum as early as the following year. In the 1993 referendum, the statehood option failed to secure a majority (46.3%) against ELA (48.6%). 'The bright spot for [statehood] leaders was the fact that the ELA failed to reach 50 percent of the vote' (Ayala & Bernabe, 2007, p. 293). In the face of such prospects, Rosselló lobbied Congress to support another plebiscite, but this time under new conditions: (1) newly defined options⁶ and (2) Congress' commitment to consider the results. The public objected the 1998 plebiscite accusing the PNP administration of neglecting the priorities in the island such as insecurity, unemployment, and drugs for the status issue (Negrón-Muntaner, 2007, p. 4). In rejection of the definitions of ELA as 'unincorporated territory,' PPD sued to invalidate the plebiscite resulting in the inclusion of a 'None of the above' option in the ballot to convey their dissatisfaction with the current process (Ayala & Bernabe, 2007; Negrón-Muntaner, 2007). The results of the plebiscite were puzzling on solving the status, but clearly illustrated the national sentiment about the current administration. The 'None of the above' obtained 50.3% of all votes, defeating the statehood by almost 4%. The results were interpreted as a *punishment vote* to the Rosselló administration for its neglect of domestic issues, the forceful privatization agenda and the ideological entrenchment of the PNP (Ayala & Bernabe 2007; Duffy-Burnett, 2007). At the eve of the mobilization for Vieques, the status was a sensitive topic that polarized the

defeated PNP and those associated with the ‘None of the above’ campaign, deepening ideological conflicts and political entrenchment in PR.

By early 1999, three important elements were at work, or at least present, in the political landscape of PR. First, a new coalition model founded on broad-based, non-partisan, or ideological principles had been experimented with by the anti-radar and anti-privatization sectors. Second, a well-networked and self-aware ‘political activist sector’ (Duchesne Winter, 2007) had been forged in the trenches of CAOS and the Lajas-Vieques coalition. Third, the role of PPD as an oppositional force to PNP became evident in the anti-privatization and the ‘None of the above’ campaigns, as well as the limitations of associating Vieques and the status issue. While ideological conflict and partisan entrenchment may have disfavored the formation of sustainable coalitions, the corresponding contentious politics may represent ‘exceptional environmental conditions’ for TPRCV to build their coalition project (Staggenborg, 1986). To best interpret these conditions, we must consider that TPRCV stood in a dynamic and changing field, where the intersection of actors, organizations, and interests may have provided key mechanisms for coalition building: experience, networks, and frames.

Social Skills and Field Dynamics in Coalition Building

In observing the context in which TPRCV coalition work emerges, three items need consideration: (a) where is TPRCV standing in relation to other actors in the political sphere? (b) what capacities (if any) does TPRCV have to build coalition? and (c) what mechanism are at TPRCV’s disposal to build and sustain coalition? In considering these questions, we must explore how social skills and field dynamics play a role in coalition work.

The development of *coalition work* involves the pooling of resources – human and material – along with the formulation of shared objectives and goals, strategies, and tactics with other movement organizations (Benford, 1993; Levi & Murphy, 2006; Staggenborg, 1986; van Dyke, 2003). The premise of these collaborations is to increase their chances of ‘goal achievement’ (Zald & McCarthy, 1980, p. 14). According to Levi and Murphy (2006), most coalitions are driven by the potential of shared resources along with interests and tactics in the creation of change. Although interests and means provide a potential platform for collaboration, the sustainability of coalition work is ‘notoriously difficult to achieve’ (Staggenborg, 1986, p. 374). The delicate process of coalition building depends, among other things, on the effective negotiation of the field (Hathaway & Meyer, 1993; Levi & Murphy, 2006; von Bülow, 2011).

The establishment of common grounds of understanding – shared interests, goals, and identities – is seen as paramount to coalition work (McAdam, 1983; Tarrow, 1994; Tilly, 2002). The forging of this common ground ‘demands [...] interaction and relies on [...] active bridge building labor’ (Ferree & Roth, 1998, p. 3). Some scholars have pointed out that this bridge building may occur at the intersection of organizational *fields* (Evans & Kay, 2008).

In conceptualizing social movements as fields, we assume a ‘social order where actors (who can be individual or collective) interact with knowledge of one another’ (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 3). These actors are reflexive about their location in space and carry out actions influenced by this awareness. Collective actors are also embedded within fields, like proverbial Russian dolls, intersecting and affecting each other and in complete

awareness of this nature (Evans & Kay, 2008, p. 973). The responsiveness and capacity of any actor to overcome any variations produced by external factors in the field will depend on their awareness of cleavages and innovation to respond (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 8).

This awareness and ‘know-how’ has been conceptualized as *social skills* (Fligstein, 2001). Social skills are pivotal in the forging of collaboration for they involve the interpellation of other’s circumstances by ‘reading people and environments, framing lines of action, and mobilizing people in the service of broader conceptions of the world and of themselves’ (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 17). Social skilled actors translate, beyond their own self-interests, the opportunities and constraints that others cannot see and/or seize in the field. Although scholars are not clear about the source of social skills, I would argue that the acumen of knowledge from practice, and reflexivity of the permutations of particular field dynamics represent important parts of skills (Fligstein, 2001, p. 113; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 47). But social skills represent only part of the puzzle in collaboration; strategic action ‘[depends] on the current organization of the field, [actor’s] place in that field, and the current moves by skilled actors in other groups in the field’ (Fligstein, 2001, p.117).

The landscape of the political space must be assumed to involve the intersection and overlapping of fields as collective actors may claim multiple memberships (parties, associations, unions) at different levels (community, institutional, national). The characterization of fields as embedded within and across other fields stresses not only the interlocked nature of strategic action but also the complex set of dynamics under consideration by actors in their strategizing (Evans & Kay, 2008). These *broad field environments* (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012) or *field dynamics* (Fligstein, 2001) account for the feedback coming from other actors in the field and their interpretation with each other’s actions. ‘Political action, and ultimately social change, frequently occurs through the judicious use of opportunities available at the intersection of multiple fields’ (Evans & Kay, 2008, p. 973). The positioning of an actor at the interstice, or between fields, may provide a vantage point to both identify and bridge structural gaps, furthering its capacity to negotiate collaboration (Lindsay, 2010).

According to Evans and Kay (2008), the intersections or overlaps of fields represent ‘leverage points’ where skillful actors can increase their influence, capitalize on networks, and mobilize resources. They argue that at such intersections, skilled actors may have mechanism at their disposal that would facilitate or enhance their capacities to build coalitions. For instance, ‘[a]ctors who lack influence within a field can draw upon relationships with influential field members to gain direct access to the field, increase their legitimacy within it, or indirectly influence decision making’ (Evans & Kay, 2008, p. 974). *Alliance brokerage* represents more than the social capital of a particular actor, but the affordance to the social capital of others based on the intersection of two fields. In a similar way, how issues are framed, the way ‘shared purpose, enemy, and tactical preference’ are presented to those potential participants of a coalition provides a vehicle to articulate common understanding (Levi & Murphy, 2006, p. 658). ‘[An] actor’s ability to strategically adapt ascendant frames from one field to facilitate the reconceptualization of key political ideas or discursive parameters in another,’ or *frame adaptation*, represents another of these mechanisms (Evans & Kay, 2008, p. 975). These two mechanisms enhance the capacities of skilled actors in a dynamic and changing landscape, where interests, networks, and interpretative frames from other fields may intercede in the advancement of coalition building.

In applying the conceptualizations presented earlier to analyze TPRCV as a coalition building project, I focus our attention to the following: (1) the sources of social skills amongst the membership, particularly the leadership; (2) a mapping of links that stem from the organization into the field that can illustrate overlaps; (3) the intersection of the networks from the steering committee members and other organizations; and (4) the adaptation of a framework that gives logic to their mobilization. Taking into consideration the historical context and interview data, the rest of the article delves into an explanation on how a combination of fields dynamics and accumulated social skills provided TPRCV with the affordance to build and sustain a coalition project for Vieques.

Data and Methods

The data to analyze the case of TPRCV come from nine in-depth qualitative interviews with members of the steering committee of TPRCV collected in 2010, along with documents from the organization produced throughout their active period between 2000 and 2003, as well as a sample of newspaper articles (1999–2000). The focus on the steering committee members instead of general membership responds to interest on the mechanism of decision-making and leadership that guided the organization. Though the intention was to interview all 21 members of the steering committee, the task resulted unfruitful because of natural attrition, unresponsiveness, and refusal to participate. However, the sample included all three spokespersons⁷ along with a good representation of member-affiliates from other organizations sharing the leadership.

The interviews took place in Rio Piedras and San Juan, PR, during the summer of 2010 and varied from 2 to 3 h in length. The interviews focused on: (1) the social background of participants, which included experience in political/social activism previous to TPRCV, and the origins of their association with the issue of Vieques and later TPRCV; (2) profile of their participation with TPRCV, including an account of their involvement in events, their role within the organization, and assessment of their contribution; (3) profile of TPRCV as an organization per se, its structure, association with other organizations, membership composition, strategies, etc.; and finally, (4) assessment of impact of TPRCV on the Vieques Movement, the political public sphere and current events (labor and student movements).

Following a discourse analysis, the interviews of the three spokespersons were coded first to identify overlapping themes that may provide an organizational narrative. This code was tested on the other six interviews, which produced additional subthemes. The additional materials – documents and newspapers – were used to corroborate facts as well as to establish historical perspective. The resulting profile provided a rich account of the origins, structure, composition, strategies and dynamics of the organization, as well as the footprint of this process on the local political field. The data speak of a coalition process guided by field conditions as well as individuals' capacities. The following analysis dissects TPRCV's coalition building by revealing those features that facilitated its formulation and implementation in the field.

Analyzing TPRCV as a Coalition Project

In the aftermath of David Sanes' death on 19 April 1999, a mass mobilization started to take momentum in the island of Vieques driven by pre-existing organizations, experienced

leadership, and new adherents who saw in the incident the last straw to bear. In PR, civil society organizations made a call to create a front in solidarity with the people of Vieques. The initial response gathered well-known personalities from diverse sectors of PR that set in motion the formation of an organization to support the objective of ending all military presence in the municipal island. The organization was founded at a general assembly in the summer of 1999, where a steering committee of 21 members was selected and a manifesto/declaration was written. *Todo Puerto Rico con Vieques* (TPRCV) was charged to establish a bridge that facilitated the flow of support from PR to Vieques. TPRCV was structured as an ad hoc organization, founded on principles of consensus, horizontality, and inclusion.

TPRCV stood at the crossroads of a civil society sphere primarily driven by two forces: long-established civic organizations, and a vibrant and growing ‘political activist sector’ stemming from recent social protest processes. Both of these spheres represented two aspects of a dynamic political landscape. On one hand, the Ateneo Puertorriqueño (AP), a civic, cultural, and social entity, and the Colegio de Abogados (CA), a lawyers’ guild, represented two long-standing organizations that had enjoyed the status of defining the high moral ground on issues of consequence for PR society. Both organizations had built their legitimacy of non-partisan scrutiny and transparency in serving as counter-balance to political institutions and state authorities. Though both of these organizations are self-defined as carrying non-ideological agendas, they also have a long commitment to politics of social justice, national identity, and democratic values. On the other hand, the local (national) political sphere had been bursting with diverse sectors taking their issues to the streets and engaging in collective actions. The formation of CAOS, the anti-privatization struggle, and the anti-ROTHR campaign had mobilized and activated a broad spectrum of actors, generating significant amount of energy and giving publicity to a wide array of voices. Many of the organizations involved had overlapped on certain issues throughout the history of social activism in the island. It is in the context of a circulation of the organizations within a space of shared politics that they are conceived as a *political activist sector*. Within the intersection of these two forces, TPRCV emerges by condensing the tactics, language, legitimacy, networks, membership, and approaches into a platform to build solidarity for Vieques.

The following analysis establishes the links between social skills and two mechanisms that facilitate coalition building: alliance brokering and frame adaptation (Evans & Kay, 2008; Fligstein, 2001). First, we establish that TPRCV’s leadership had the awareness and ‘know-how’ to ‘see and seize’ the opportunities in accordance to their location. Second, we situate TPRCV at the interstice of two fields and examine the mechanism for coalition building that become available from that vantage point.

Social Skills

The concept of social skills is operationalized as a factor of (1) previous experience in social activism in general and on the issue of Vieques in particular and (2) knowledge on how the field operates. Fligstein (2001), along with others, has stressed that the ability to engage others in collaborative work rests on their capacity to empathize with the cause or situation of others and act beyond their self-interests (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). The identification of sources of the social skills within TPRCV’s leadership illustrates great experience in engaging the cause of others.

Experience

The significance of previous experience has long been established within social movement literature as a variable for participation and leadership (McAdam, 1983; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). While the literature on social skills does not specify the source of these capacities, field experience in situations of collective action may inform us on the accumulation and activation of these capacities by social actors. According to the interview data, all members of the steering committee shared previous experience in political organizing and with the Vieques issue, as well as affiliations to civil society organizations (see Table 1). The two areas of experience with the most members' overlapping are labor organizing and political activism. Concerning labor organizing, most members' experience involved their affiliation to labor associations and/or participation in labor issues involving direct action. Some of the steering committee members engaged TPRCV as 'representatives' of labor organizations as part of the initial call for action. Concerning political activism, all but one of the interviewed members had participated in political activism of some sort; from party-associated work to community or issue-specific political advocacy. While most of the interviewed members were identified with leftist politics, their political activism went beyond ideological trends and stemmed from civic association membership. In addition to a general experience in social organizing, all members of the steering committee had some previous experience with the issue of Vieques.

The relevance of political organizing experience as a social skill rests in organizers knowing how to enable cooperation that inexperienced actors may lack. For instance, some of the interviewees made direct reference to protest events that 'prepared' and 'initiated' them for Vieques. Two events that were highlighted were the direct participation in the 1975 Culebra anti-military actions and the 1998 Telefónica strike.

The kind of opposition that took place in Vieques had to ripen with time. What I mean is, I cannot conceive the struggle for Vieques without the struggle we kept in Culebra. I mean, what was created is a build-up of commitment. (Alejandro)

The struggle is gaining knowledge, and changing attitudes on people about the process. That's why when you looked at the people involved in the struggle of Vieques, those people were immersed and, in some instances, were protagonists within the struggle to stop the [privatization] of the Telefónica. (Manuel)

These events provided organizers with tactical knowledge – civil disobedience training, police management and media use – that can be transferred to TPRCV. The link between experience and social skills can be further observed when considering that all but two of the members of the steering committee count with *leadership* as part of their previous experience.

Know-How

Another source of TPRCV's social skills was their capacity to read and manage the differences, loyalties and perceptions among actors in the field, especially oppositional parties (Brewster Stearn & Almeida, 2004; von Bülow, 2011). In strategizing, TPRCV used previous knowledge of the field to move within their environment and be effective bridge builders (Bourdieu, 1977; Coleman, 1988). To an organization having the *right*

Table 1. Participant's experience and affiliation profile

Participants ^b	Field of experience					Affiliations					Previous experience with Vieques
	Labor organizing	Political activism	Education	Social justice	Educational institutions	Political organization	Labor organization	Community organization	Other		
Pilar Belendez ^a		✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Manuel Baez	✓	✓		Community	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Camilo Feliciano	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Daniel Ortiz	✓	✓	✓	Environmental	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Josefina Pantoja	✓	✓		Civil/Human Rights		✓	✓				✓
Oquendo ^a				Militarization	✓	✓	✓				✓
Jose Paraltici ^a	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓				✓
Alenjandro Paz	✓	✓				✓	✓			✓	✓
Enrique Pedroza		✓				✓	✓			✓	✓
Saul Perez				Civil/Human Rights	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

^a Served as spokesperson of the organization.

^b All names are pseudonyms with exception of the spokespersons; anonymity could not be preserved because of their public roles.

know-how is as much a factor of the experience of social actors as the access they possess to the field (Beamish & Luebbers, 2009). Within the accumulated knowledge that fostered TPRCV's know-how, we can identify the recognition of partisan self-interests and the identification of institutional cleavages.

Ever since the establishment of the US Navy in Vieques in the 1940s, political interests had been a source of caution for any organization seeking to establish alliances outside the island of Vieques (McCaffrey, 2002). So, even though the Rosselló administration adopted a progressive stand on Vieques, the leadership of TPRCV was conscientious of the political dynamics that had governed the field. One of the issues to be negotiated was the relationship that TPRCV was to maintain with political parties.

When the PNP is in power, PPD becomes the opposition; [so] it is normal that PPD [would] move their resources. We were talking about [money], material, press, etc. Along with the strength that [TPRCV] developed through their issue and the people they attracted, they negotiated these [partisan] dynamics. (Camilo)

The negotiation of partisan dynamics involved an arbitration of ideological associations in search of neutral footing. For instance, the issue of Vieques had long been associated with the cause of independence, which owes its history to the affirmation by Pedro Albizu Campos of the colonial juncture that the military presence in Vieques represented for PR. Being aware of the gravity pull of the status issue meant knowing that any association of Vieques with the status may hinder any attempt to build cross-partisan alliances, and potentially subordinate the issue of Vieques to the interests and goals of political parties.

[The issue] of Vieques had historically been divided, like everything in the island, along political party [lines] that not always had [Vieques'] interests as we [TPRCV] had, and we knew that. (Alejandro)

We did not want the support [to Vieques] that was being generated from the people in PR to be compromised by approaches that were . . . How to say it? By being politically partisan. (Josefina)

The TPRCV actors utilized their political knowledge about these dynamics to navigate the waters of partisan politics by cautiously playing the field and balancing the expectations (or limitations) that each alliance would bring to the table.

Those that cooperated with us [TPRCV] were primarily the [PPD] and, obviously, the independentistas. [. . .] But we [TPRCV] were not competing against the PNP. On the contrary, we wanted the PNP to be inside [the movement . . .] So, we knew that any support from the [PPD] was there only because they opposed the PNP, and they wanted to win the elections to the PNP. (José)

Levi and Murphy (2006) sustained that by managing any 'tensions and conflicts, the skilled actors would increase their chances of collaboration' (p. 652).

The delicate balance of seeking opportunities and negotiating partisan interests illustrated a set of actors who were capable of taking risks in pursuit of collaboration and challenging themselves as builders of cooperation.

Another aspect of the skillful maneuvering of TPRCV's leadership involved the recognition of institutional cleavages in the field (Brewster Stearn & Almeida, 2004; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). In reading the field, skilled actors would capitalize on institutional spaces as entry points to articulate influence and exercise pressure. Responding to the rising protests in Vieques, governor Rosselló ordered the creation of the Comisión Especial de Vieques (CEV), an institutional instrument to study the situation of the military presence in Vieques and present recommendations on how to proceed. Among its members were representatives of political parties, civil society as well as community members of Vieques. TPRCV mobilized its network to reach into the CEV, establish connections, and lobby on behalf of Vieques, taking advantage of its newness (Brewster Stearn & Almeida, 2004, p. 481).

The idea was that the state remained firm and supported [the cause]. Rosselló had started [with CEV], so I mobilized a group to talk to Sila [Calderón], who was the mayor of San Juan; I took them there because she was part of the [Commission] named by the governor. Then we met with Norma [Burgos] because she was Secretary of State and was heading the [Commission]. (José)

TPRCV recognized the ad hoc agency as an arbiter to negotiate with the state and a structural opportunity in the field (Brewster Stearn & Almeida, 2004). The use of networks for lobbying this agency shows TPRCV's strategic reading of the CEV as an entry point into the decision-making process.

In a similar manner, the TPRCV sought to capitalize on the progressive stand of the governor in front of the US Navy and the Federal Government. In that instance, TPRCV reached directly to the executive office and sought to establish a line for dialogue.

TPRCV made contacts at the state level, [back] then the administration of [Pedro] Rosselló, and we tried to maintain the contact, looking to meet with them. I remember a day when José [Paralítico] came to a meeting very happy because he got a meeting with then Secretary of Government. We had reached that capacity. (Camilo)

The access of these spaces was mostly achieved through their skillful leverage of party actors, brokering alliances, and arbitrating gatekeepers (von Bülow, 2011, p. 168). By utilizing their social skills, TPRCV leveraged their positions with other actors and furthered the Vieques issue for policy-making or holding it.

We knew some people in the [Legislative branch] so we were aware of the hearings, their schedules. We met with them and set agendas. We were like, 'People this is your work, and we are doing it for you!' (Saul)

Their experience in political organizing allowed them to tactically make headway, seize opportunities, and build bridges with institutional actors. Their knowledge on how to read field dynamics facilitated their negotiation with state structures, enabling the effective instrumentation of the available cleavages.

But to argue that social skills count for all the advancement of TPRCV in the field would represent a short-sighted conclusion because it would have assumed partisan

dynamics and institutional cleavages to be the only influential forces in the field. The political context in which TPRCV was emerging involved a contentious environment, particularly influenced by recent protest events, the mobilization (and formation) of collective actors, and the articulation of relatively new ideas about coalition building. TPRCV would take advantage of being in the middle of a vibrant and shifting political space, by engaging old and new actors as well as considering alternative political discourses. The examination of network infrastructure at the disposal of TPRCV and the adoption of *amplitud* as a coalition framework would complete the picture of how TPRCV was capable of building and mobilizing a broad-based coalition.

Mechanisms of Coalition Building

The formation of coalitions is directly affected by the conditions that govern a field where actors intend to collaborate (Staggenborg, 1986). How actors relate to each other is an important aspect of the set of conditions that would come under consideration by skilled actors in seeking and negotiating coalitions with other actors (Hathaway & Meyer, 1993). ‘Group success in managing tendencies toward cooperation and competition reflect the relationship of the groups in a sector to a larger political environment’ (Hathaway & Meyer, 1993, p. 162). Evans and Kay (2008) argue that being at the intersection of fields provides unique conditions for collaborative work. The assumptions that spaces where policy is created are ‘an aggregation of multiple fields that overlap with non-state fields’ and that social actors ‘straddle multiple arenas’ illustrate that such a location provides particular mechanisms for organizations to better ‘leverage’ their influence (Evans & Kay, 2008, p. 973). The emergence of TPRCV takes place in the middle of a political sphere where privatization and militarization were rallying in this space, bringing into close proximity two unrelated sets of actors. Considering the architecture of field overlap that such a scenario created, there were two mechanisms at the disposal of TPRCV organizers that could serve for the development and mobilization of a coalition project for Vieques: first, the use of interpersonal connections with CAOS to produce influence on intersecting fields, and second, the adoption and adaptation of *amplitud* as an effective frame (Evans & Kay, 2008, p. 975).

Network Intersection

The call for support of Vieques brought a response from the same ‘political activist sector’ that had been activated against the privatization of public sector services and corporations and under the umbrella of CAOS since 1997. Though the group disbanded after the general strike of October 1998, the successful coalition building had left behind well-webbed networks of similarly minded activists.

[B]ecause of this committee, [CAOS], there were links outside the syndical sector, with other social, religious, communitarian, coops, and student organizations [...] And from there I started to weave webs of communication, of trust, right. [I started] to meet other activists that, like me, were involved in other struggles. (Daniel)

Stemming from the accumulated experience of TPRCV's leadership, the organization also enjoyed an expansive network of organizations and influential players in and outside the political field.

In recording the affiliations of the leadership in TPRCV, we can see that all members shared links with other organizations within a diversity of sectors of political and civic life (see Table 1). For instance, some members held ties with institutions such as the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), the Ateneo Puertorriqueño (AP), and the Colegio de Abogados (CA); political organizations such as Comité Nacional Hostosiano (CNH) and the Pro-Independence University Front (FUPI); and labor organizations such as the Association of Puerto Rican University Professors (APPU), the Teachers Federation (FMPR), and Working Women's Organization of Puerto Rico (OPMT). More telling of the transfer of networks that members could mobilize was the overlapping between the field of collaboration and influence that TPRCV and CAOS as coalitions had in common.

A mapping of the pool of organizations active for the issue of privatization, in particular the Telefónica strike, illustrates that a significant number of mobilized organizations also responded to the call for TPRCV. As illustrated in Figure 1, at least three organizations, based on reported connections by the interviewees, were linked to both organizations. All these connections potentially served as vital lifelines for TPRCV's initial mobilization of resources. For instance, according to documents and interview data, AP was the first to support the organization by providing office space, access to telephones, office materials, and a meeting place for their press conferences. Later, the Brotherhood of Non-Academic Employees (HEEND) also expended similar forms of support. Interviewees corroborated that such linkages were the result of their affiliation with APPU and FMPR and personal participation in the Telefónica strike.

The existence of mature and relatively established networks between organizations was a favorable condition for the activation of communication between the new coalition builders and potential adherent organizations. The mobilization of resources and members was facilitated, in part by the use of the connections that the leadership brought into TPRCV as well the architecture of fields' overlap with CAOS. But this overlap provided more than a transfer of resources and connections; there was also a crosspollination of ideas and discourses about how to approach such coalition project.

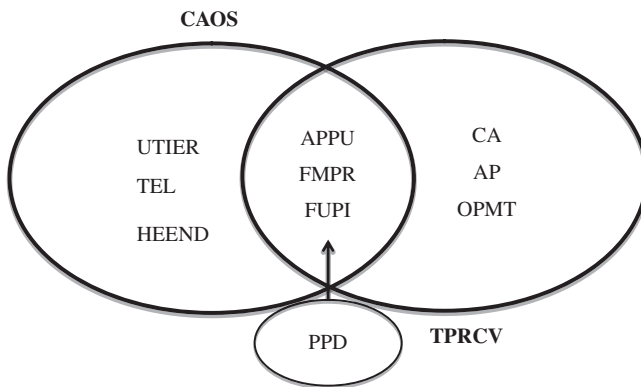


Figure 1. Architecture of Fields Overlap in the Political Sphere in Puerto Rico 1990s.

Frame Adaptation

In the context of the Vieques Movement, TPRCV was grounded on the principle of fostering solidarity through coalition building across diverse sectors of Puerto Rican society. The task of uniting groups behind the issue of Vieques involved overcoming longstanding barriers of ideological and partisan loyalty that permeate local politics in PR. The goal of TPRCV's coalition building was to change the partisan discourse by calling on 'national unity' in support of the movement (Paralatici, 2006; Sosa Pascual, 2000).

The task that TPRCV had for itself was to demonstrate that it was in fact all PR that supported Vieques, and behind this was our non-partisan policy, to be inclusive, try to engage people from all sectors. It was a delicate balance to open up, so people, from the left and the right, felt welcome in the organization. (Camilo)

In drawing their boundaries, TPRCV proposed to welcome 'anyone' who supported and was in solidarity with the cause of removing the military from Vieques. Through an open-door policy, they sought to break the 'exclusionary' model of solidarity that dominated the solidarity to Vieques (Ferree & Roth, 1998).

The 'non-partisan' approach for collaboration building fostered the principles of inclusion and openness, which certainly separated TPRCV from other organizations, particularly political parties. Lifting ideological and partisan filters also meant separating the ideas of the status and elections from Vieques (Benford, 1993; Hathaway & Meyer, 1993; Snow & Benford, 1988). Organizers of TPRCV characterized this inclusion and openness as *unprecedented* in their experience of political organizing in PR.

I think that [the Vieques Movement] set a new standard, a new style of struggle here in PR. It was a message of respect to the adversary. I mean, respect to those that think differently. And I am confident to say that TPRCV was essential in this. We [TPRCV] led the voice of such inclusiveness, of *amplitud*. (José)

The concept of *amplitud* was again used as a frame grounded on broad-baseness and inclusiveness. The emphasis on *amplitud* as an instrument for national unity suggested that by broadening the scope of their ideological paradigm, they could successfully reach a critical mass of sympathizers and move them into participation. This frame was translated into three principles: welcome support from diverse sectors, be open to ideas and criticism from within, and reach out to previously labeled 'adversarial' groups. Considering the role of identity in coalition building, TPRCV sought to reduce the incongruence of a narrowly defined identity within a diverse participation body (Diaz-Veizades & Chang, 1996; Lichterman, 1995)

[Our] *amplitud* was in terms of having [...] in that no one would feel excluded; "Well, I [belong to] PNP and this is an *independentistas* group, I do not fit here"; or, "I do not sympathize with *populares*⁸ so I would not belong". You know? I think this [being inclusive] was essential because we have the common objective of removing the [US Navy] from Vieques, which we accomplished. We had differences but the ideology was placed aside; we had [another] objective first. (Pilar)

The concept of *amplitud* certainly provided an alternative approach to reaching their goal of broad-based coalition building, which involved setting new views to carry out their project in the field. While TPRCV has claimed their ownership over the concept of *amplitud*, this mobilization approach was most likely adopted from the coalition projects of CAOS. Considering the organizational overlap of these two entities, the approach of coalition building as broad-based and non-partisan used by CAOS could have influenced TPRCV views of effective coalition work.

I understood that *we* [APPU] were an association that had resources... people with knowledge in many areas that could be useful for a broad, national and international movement in support of Vieques. And because we had gone through the experience of the Telefónica, me and others, have the certainty that what happened in [TPRCV] would not have happened, in the way it happened, had the broad-based movement against the [privatization] of the Telefónica not occurred before. (Daniel)

The way of struggle that took place in the Telefónica [strike] was the fermenting ground for Vieques' [struggle]. It's not that all aspects, but significant aspects, those of direction and leadership were present in Vieques. (Manuel)

They implied that TPRCV had adapted the frame of non-partisan and broad-based mobilization from CAOS as a vehicle of coalition building. The adoption and adaptation of *amplitud* as a practice certainly enhanced their chances for coalition building, particularly across ideological boundaries.

The practice of *amplitud* permeated TPRCV's membership recruitment, language, public image, and style of mobilizing. In particular, *amplitud* served as a seminal instrument in engaging sectors previously ostracized from the mobilization for Vieques (Barreto, 2002; McCaffrey, 2002; Murillo, 2001).

[TPRCV] gave the opportunity of participation to people who shared our concept of social justice, but because they were [from] PNP or [PPD] and their organizations did not engage in these struggles, they would not get involved. [TPRCV] was, like, the scenario for everyone to participate. (Manuel)

TPRCV's *amplitud* produced a new meaning to Vieques and the goal of ending the military presence. The implementation of this frame depended strongly on the experience and knowledge of organizers, who utilized their social skills in the promotion, practice, and legitimization of this new frame (Fligstein, 2001).

Conclusion

Earlier in this analysis, I identified three items that needed consideration in order to better understand the process of coalition building that took place with TPRCV: (1) where is TPRCV standing in relation to other actors in the political sphere? (2) what capacities does TPRCV have to build coalition work? and (3) what mechanisms does TPRCV have at its disposal to build and sustain such coalition?

Through the article, I established that TPRCV was emerging at a historical moment that could have hindered or enhanced the chances of carrying their coalition-building project. It is the location of TPRCV at the interstice of a growing and rising political activist sector and an established civil society what contextualizes the field dynamics as favorable of particular tactical and discursive orientations to coalition building. Considering the architecture of fields' overlap that CAOS, the anti-ROTHR, and the political sphere provided to TPRCV, I identified potential leverage points that allowed for the mobilization of a broad-based coalition. The network intersection between CAOS and TPRCV-affiliated organizations allowed for the mobilization of resources and support in an effective manner, enhancing the reach of the organization. The experience of the leadership with the coalition building frames used in CAOS influenced TPRCV non-partisan and non-ideological approach making *amplitud* the core of their discursive frame. Thus, their location in the field (in between) was a significant variable in defining the mechanisms at the disposal of TPRCV's coalition project.

However, environmental conditions and the mechanisms available under such conditions were limited to the capacity of social actors to read and seize them as opportunities instead of hindering factors. It is the prerogative of this article to situate the acumen of social skills by TPRCV leadership at the center of their potential for coalition building. While the 1990s political context may have produced conditions for an active political activist sector, a networking build-up, and a broad-based coalition discourse, these could only serve TPRCV as long as coalition builders possessed the experience and knowledge to identify them, assimilate their potential, and translate them into opportunities. The analysis of TPRCV contributes to explain the significance that social skills have over how field dynamics guide coalition building.

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Notes

1. The PNP represents the pro-statehood sector.
2. The choice of using the term *amplitud* in Spanish reflects the absence of a better appropriate term in English. Though the author uses 'broad base' as an equivalent, there are certain subtleties that would not be conveyed if we were to substitute the former for the latter.
3. The Democratic Popular Party (PPD) was responsible for formulating the constitution that gave formation to the unincorporated territorial status to the island known as ELA.
4. ELA, misleadingly translated to *Commonwealth*, was constituted by PPD in 1952, which precluded the sovereignty of the insular state from the USA in exchange for certain autonomy.
5. The territorial clause defines Puerto Rico as an *unincorporated territory* under jurisdiction of the USA Department of Interior.
6. The 1993 plebiscite used the options of ELA, statehood, or independence. In 1998, the options followed definitions that US Congress deemed valid based on the constitution: unincorporated territory (ELA), free association, independence, and statehood.
7. Because of the size of the sample frame and the publicity of the three spokespersons, anonymity could not be guaranteed, and they agreed to use their actual names. Other participants will be referred to by pseudonyms.
8. *Populares* is the term used to refer to members and sympathizers of the PPD.

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