

A Study On The Patterns Of Association Participation In Public Policy In Macau

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Abstract—Associations are the core actors in Macau politics, and the associations have a significant influence on public policy-making. This paper attempts to analyze the pattern of association participation in public policy in Macau. The results show that there are two patterns of association participation in public policies in Macau: the insider pattern and the social movement pattern.

Keywords— Association, participation, Public policy, Pattern, Macau,QCA.

INTRODUCTION

Macau is a Special Administrative Region of China, covering just over 30 square kilometers. The political landscape of this former Portuguese colony is distinct from that of Western countries and even from Hong Kong, which is a similar type of city. Unlike those places, Macau has not developed a system of party politics. Instead, associations play a central role as the main political actors and key participants in policymaking. Scholars refer to this phenomenon as "association politics." (shetuan zhengzhi)^[1]

This paper attempts to discuss the association participation pattern in Macau's public policy.

Literature Review and Model Structuring

An association is "the common name for numerous not-for-profit, mutual benefit organizations that serve the interests of social, political, cultural, religious, and professional groups."^[2] When associations try to influence public policy decisions, they are functioning as interest groups^[3]. In the academic literature on Macau, especially in the Chinese context, there is a greater tendency to use the term associations rather than interest groups. The reason may be that the nongovernmental political organizations in Macau have yet to be functionally specialized, and associations play the roles of political parties, interest group, and social movement organization simultaneously. Therefore, associations are the main policy participants in Macau^{[4][5]}. In any attempt to measure the extent of democracy, the degree of popular political participation must constitute one of the indices^[6]. Associations are the mediate organizations between individuals and the state^[7]. One of the oldest claims about the conditions for democratic rule holds that dense intermediary organizations and lively participation in them are of critical importance both for establishing democracy and for the quality of democratic governance^[8]. However, participation is an ambiguous concept in the academic literature. This paper intends to refrain from engaging in the debates but uses Sherry R. Arnstein's classic explanation of participation, which defines participation as the redistribution of power. The so-called association participation in public policy is the phenomenon of associations exerting influence in public policy-making. Considering that associations in Macau play the role of various types of nongovernmental political organizations, the research on different types of nongovernmental political organizations may provide theoretical support for this paper. The public policy process is complex,

and many factors can impact association participation in public policy^{[9][10]}. Taking into account the existing studies, as well as the author's interviews, the main factors affecting the influence of association in public policy in Macau may include the following conditions:

A. Association's Resources

The policy influence of an association is closely related to its resources. Casey regards the organization's characteristics and resources as one of the four most important factors in the access to decision-making domains for non-profit organizations^[11]. It has also been argued that resource constraints limit the monitoring behavior of groups and the extent to which they can engage in policy influence activities^[12]. In fact, governments cannot ignore resource-rich groups^[13]. In general, other things being equal, groups with more resources should have more influence than groups with fewer resources^[14]. For an association, the most critical resources are members and material resources. Member numbers are related to representativeness, which is seen as a source of legitimacy^[15]. Therefore, to increase their representation in the policy process and thus their legitimacy, associations often, though not always, attempt to increase their members. American scholars Ornstein and Elder point out that having more members means that the interest group is speaking for the majority rather than for a small group of people^[16]. Another scholar noted that the more people someone can claim to represent, meaning that he or she can get into the polling booth or onto the streets, the more power he or she is likely to have^[17]. Moreover, it is also essential for the government. Junk states that "to connect policymaking to the people, interest group access should... favor groups able to speak on behalf of larger numbers of individual members or constituents"^[18]. Maloney et al. also pointed out that the government would consider the representative base of interest groups when giving them the status of insiders^[19]. Membership is also essential for party organizations that aim to gain votes. Heidar and Wauters state that the higher the party member/voter ratio, the more substantial the likelihood of representative party membership^[20]. So, modern political parties are very interested in having a large number of members^[21]. Because of this, an association leader interviewed by the author pointed out that the membership base is an essential source of their policy influence. Because it has a large number of members, when the association is involved in policy issues, "we use questionnaires to understand the situation. With that information as a basis, we have resources when we discuss policy with the government." (Interview, Mar. 14, 2023) In addition to membership, material or economic resources are also crucial to the association participation in policy, and the question of whether or not the economic resources possessed by interest groups are decisive for policy influence has been central to the concerns of political scientists^[22]. It is generally recognized that interest groups with more economic resources tend to be more influential^[23]. Ornstein and Elder emphasize that money is perhaps the most critical resource an interest group can use to influence public policy^[24].

B. Relationship with Government

The government is the main policy-maker, so a good relationship with the government will enhance the policy influence of the association. Indeed, scholars have long noted the distinction in the relationship between different groups and government, with Elmer Eric Schattschneider distinguishing between insiders and outsiders in the 1930s, whereby insiders enjoy some privileged access to the thinking of decision-makers in the policy process, while outsiders who did not^[25]. It suggests differences in opportunities for associations in the public policy process. Since then, the "insider/outsider" distinction has been widely used in political analysis, and two mutually compatible views have developed, one viewing "insider/outsider" as a strategy - it is a methodology selected by associations, and the other viewing "insider/outsider" as a status - it is ascribed by the government^[26]. The correspondence between them is that organizations with insider status will be more likely to adopt insider strategies (i.e., attempt to

influence policy outcomes by influencing decision-makers) and that the pursuit of insider strategies is a condition for gaining insider status^[27]. Other scholars, however, have argued that the "insider/outsider" distinction essentially reflects the power of the government, "the political power of pressure groups ... depends more on the government's perceptions of it than any objective power it might have." ^[28] Furthermore, it has been argued that interest groups such as associations may lack the freedom to choose between "insider/outsider" strategies. Walker argues that a group's choice of strategies is constrained, most notably by its characteristics of finance and membership. In addition, an organization's strategic choices throughout its history become part of the organization's character, which makes it difficult for the organization's strategy to shift quickly ^[29].

C. Strategies Used by Associations

Scholars imply that different associations will have different strategic choices regarding participation in policy because opportunities and resources are not equal. In order to increase the effectiveness of participation, attention must be paid to the adoption of strategies. Rokkan provided an early analysis of group organizations' strategies for influencing policy. In a 1966 paper, he classified group organizations' channels for influencing policy into three categories: the numerical channel (i.e., the parliamentary channel), the corporatist channel, and the mass media channel^[30]. Around the same time, social movements were proliferating in Western countries, and the interaction between social movement organizations and governments attracted a great deal of attention from scholars, with Zald & Ash pointing out that social movement organizations were unique entities deserving of special consideration^[31]. Since then, social movements have gradually become an essential strategy for non-governmental political organizations to influence the policy process. As a strategy, scholars have identified "operate outside of the institutional arena" as a critical characteristic of social movements^{[32][33]}, distinguishing them from the traditional strategies of group organizations. Some scholars have also integrated traditional strategies and conceptualized four types of strategies for group participation in policy, namely administrative, parliamentary, media, and mobilization strategies^{[34][35]}, with social movements falling under the category of mobilization strategies. In addition, Dür & De Bièvre propose an alternative taxonomy in which they categorize how associations influence policy outcomes into four categories: seeking direct access to policymakers, influencing the selection of decision-makers, using vocal strategies to shape public opinion, and using structural coercion power^[36]. In summary, the existing literature has extensively studied the factors influencing the policy influence of association organizations. However, these studies mainly focus on Europe and the United States, and the research methodology is mainly qualitative. This paper empirically analyzes the association participation in policy in Macau using the QCA method, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Policy influence is taken as the outcome variable, and the association's resources (member numbers and material resources), relationships with government, and the strategies used by associations are the conditional variables to construct a model of the pattern of association participation in policy in Macau.

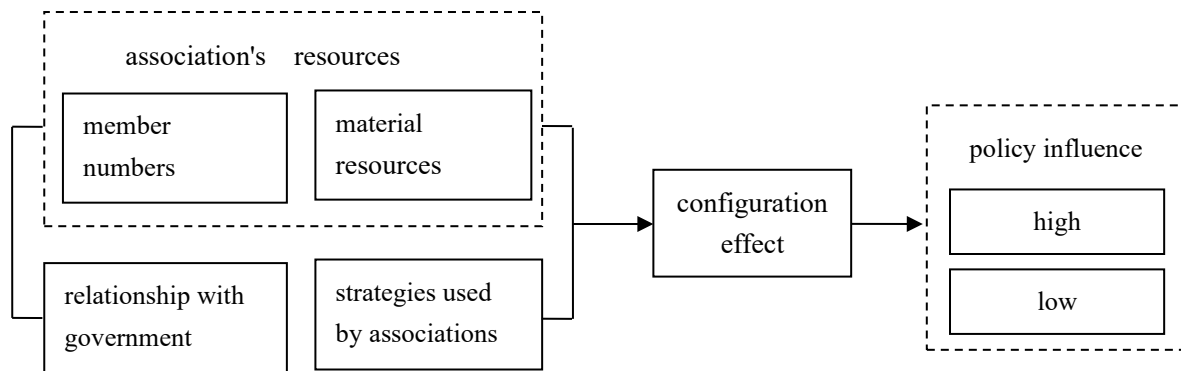


Fig.1 A Model of Policy Influence of Association in Macau

RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Research methodology

This study utilizes Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), a research method developed by Charles C. Ragin in the 1980s, which is seen as well-suited to political science - as it is a "small-N" approach^[37]. As Rihoux and Ragin point out, the maximum number of cases in many political phenomena is quite limited, for example, the current 200 or so independent countries worldwide, 50 states in the United States, or 27 EU member countries^[38]. Although there are more than 10,000 associations in Macau, only a few that consciously participate in the governmental process are recognizable, making it more suitable for the QCA methodology. According to Marx, the QCA method only requires a minimum of 12 samples^[39]. QCA is a configurational analysis approach; a configuration is defined as a specific combination of factors that produces a given outcome of interest^[40]. Currently, QCA methods have developed three more mature analysis techniques; in addition to the earliest crisp-set qualitative comparative analysis (csQCA), there is also multi-value qualitative comparative analysis (mvQCA) and fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA). The main methodological advantage of fsQCA is that it allows continuous and interval variables in the models^[41]. Considering the characteristics of variables, the fsQCA method is used in this paper.

Table I List of the interviewees

| No. | Association name | interviewee | Interview time |
|-----|--|------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | The Macau United Citizens Association (Aliança de Povo de Instituição de Macau) (APIM) | A Member of Executive Board | 2022/10/18 |
| 2 | Macao New Chinese Youth Association (MNCYA) | A Member of Executive Board | 2022/10/18 |
| 3 | Macao Jiangmen Communal Society (MJCS) | A Member of Executive Board | 2022/10/20 |
| 4 | The Women's General Association of Macau (WGAM) | A Member of Executive Board | 2022/10/21 |
| 5 | Caritas Macau(CM) | A Member of Executive Board | 2022/10/28 |
| 6 | Association of Synergy of Macao (ASM) | A Member of Executive Board | 2022/10/31 |
| 7 | Macau Synthetic Social Studies Association (Associação de Estudos Sintético Social de Macau) (AESSM) | A leader of General Assembly | 2022/11/19 |

| | | | |
|----|--|---|------------|
| 8 | Macau Association for the Promotion of Regional Development (Associação para a Promoção do Desenvolvimento Regional de Macau) (APDRM) | A leader of General Assembly | 2022/11/23 |
| 9 | The Chinese Educators' Association of Macau (CEAM) | A Member of Executive Board | 2022/11/23 |
| 10 | Macao Youth Federation (MYF) | A Member of Executive Board | 2022/12/30 |
| 11 | The Macau Civil Servants Association (Associação dos Trabalhadores da Função Pública de Macau) (ATFPM) | A Member of Executive Board | 2023/02/23 |
| 12 | Association of Returned Overseas Chinese Macau (AROCM) | A leader of General Assembly | 2023/03/13 |
| 13 | Macao Federation of Trade Unions (MFTU) | A leader of General Assembly | 2023/03/14 |
| 14 | Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations (União Geral das Associações dos Moradores de Macau) (UGAMM) | A Member of the Association, A Member of Macau Legislative Assembly | 2023/04/06 |
| 15 | New Macau Association (NMA) | A Former Member of the Association, A Former Member of Macau Legislative Assembly | 2023/04/11 |

Notes: Some Associations in the table, such as 1, 7, 8, 11, and 14, only have their official names in Portuguese, while their English names are translated by the authors.

Source(s): Created by authors.

B. Sample selection

QCA method has two general criteria for selecting cases (i.e., samples): sufficient homogeneity of the universe of cases considered and maximum heterogeneity within this universe^[42]. The previous criteria means defining a "domain of investigation"; this paper focuses on the domain as the Macau associations that try to participate in and influence policies; the latter criteria means attention to the extent of diversity within the selected case; this paper considers the differences of resources and strategies among different cases are fully considered when selecting cases. Based on this, the authors selected 15 associations and collected data through interview (the list of the interviewee see Table I) and data retrieval. For the raw data, see Table II.

Table II Raw data table

| Case | Conditions | | | | outcome | |
|------|----------------|------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|
| | Member Numbers | Service Networks | Relationship with Government | adopt social movement strategy | depth of participation | |
| | | | | | have representative in the Legislative Assembly (long | Number of representatives in advisory committees |

| | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|----|--|-----|-------|----|
| | | | | | time) | |
| APIM | 30000 | 7 | pan-"love China, love Macau" association | No | Yes | 18 |
| MNCYA | 6200 | 4 | pan-"love China, love Macau" association | No | No | 16 |
| MJCS | 60000 | 3 | pan-"love China, love Macau" association | No | Yes | 3 |
| WGAM | 52000 | 23 | Traditional "love China, love Macau" association | No | Yes | 25 |
| CM | 9 | 69 | pan-"love China, love Macau" association | No | No | 12 |
| ASM | 60 | 1 | intermediate association | No | No | 1 |
| AESSM | 150 | 1 | pan-"love China, love Macau" association | No | No | 2 |
| APDRM | 200 | 1 | intermediate association | No | No | 0 |
| CEAM | 6000 | 1 | Traditional "love China, love Macau" association | No | Yes | 8 |
| MYF | 2000 | 2 | pan-"love China, love Macau" association | No | No | 13 |
| ATFPM | 18000 | 1 | intermediate association | Yes | Yes | 0 |
| AROCM | 3000 | 1 | Traditional "love China, love Macau" association | No | No | 10 |
| MFTU | 90000 | 40 | Traditional "love China, love Macau" association | No | Yes | 60 |
| UGAMM | 50000 | 43 | Traditional "love China, love Macau" association | No | Yes | 23 |
| NMA | 40 | 1 | pro-democracy association | Yes | Yes | 0 |

Notes: (1)"Have (one or more) representatives in the Legislative Assembly (long time)" refers to associations that, since the handover of Macau, have won seats in at least three out of the six Legislative Assembly elections held in 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2017, and 2021.. (2) The member numbers and the number of service networks are based on interviews, so they are ballpark figures. Where official data were available, the authors calibrated it. In the absence of official data, interview data shall prevail.

C. Operationalization and calibration of outcome and conditions

1) Operationalization

Outcome Variable: This paper uses the depth of participation of Macau's associations in the policy process as the outcome variable, defined as the influence of associations in the policy process. Based on the ladder of participation of Arnstein^[43], Shand and Arnberg^[44], with the reality of Macau, this paper categorizes the association participation in policy in Macau into four ladders based on whether the association is represented in the Macau Legislative Assembly and advisory committees. There is consultation (no representation in the Legislative Assembly and advisory committees); partnership (representation in advisory committees but not in the Legislative Assembly); participation in decision-making (representation in the Legislative Assembly but not in advisory committees); decision partner (both representation in the Legislative Assembly and advisory committees). It reflects the growing power of the associations in the policy process.

Condition Variables: Based on the review and analysis of the literature, this paper takes member numbers, service networks (material resources), relationships with government and the strategies used by associations as the condition variables. The operationalization of the condition variable is as follows.

Member Numbers: The member numbers can be categorized into absolute and relative. An absolute number is the total number of current members of the association, and a relative number is the proportion of current members to the total number of potential members. The absolute number is used in this paper.

Service Networks: Service networks represent the material resources of associations in this paper, as measured by the number of service outlets in different associations.

Relationship with Government: A government is generally defined in two senses: the narrow and the broad sense. In the broad sense, a government consists of the legislature, executive, and judiciary branches; in the narrow sense, it means the executive branch. A narrow sense of government is used here; based on this concept, the government can decide the relationship with the Associations. According to their relationship with the Government, Macau associations can be categorized into Traditional "love China, love Macau" associations, pan-"love China, love Macau" associations, pro-democracy associations, and intermediate associations. Intermediate associations are those between the pan-"love China, love Macau" associations and the pro-democracy associations - some of them may have been established for a relatively short time, such as the Association of Synergy of Macau, and some are more difficult to define their relationship with the government, such as the Macau Government Officers Association.

Strategies Used by Associations: According to existing research, to achieve its policy goals, an association often uses different strategies (or combinations of strategies) when it participates in the policy process. In Macau, a recognizable difference is that some associations do not go into social movements, even if they use a combination of strategies. In contrast, others are more involved in social movements.

2) Calibration

QCA is based on set theory^[45], and fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) is built on fuzzy set theory. Since fuzzy sets go beyond the classical set theory dichotomy of "full membership/ full nonmembership" and admit to partial set membership, it is, therefore, necessary to determine the degree of membership of any object in a specified set^[46]. In other words, it needs to be calibrated.

Calibration is a transformational process based on a certain number of qualitative anchors or thresholds, from the raw numerical data to set membership scores^[47]. It can use any values in the interval between [0] and [1] to represent the degree of membership in a set, and there are three breakpoints in the calibration process: [1] full membership, [0] full nonmembership, and [0.5] maximum ambiguity. There are different calibration methods for fuzzy sets for different types of variables. For continuous variables,

according to Charles C. Ragin's direct method of calibration^[48], the authors established the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles as three qualitative anchors, calibrating the data by fs/QCA 3.0 software. In contrast, Categorical variables are calibrated by the researcher based on theoretical and substantive knowledge, i.e., they are assigned values by the researcher. Thus, Duşa argues that "calibration" is not actually improper for categorical variables, as it is just a simple recording of the raw data^[49]. For the calibration of the variables in this paper, see Table III.

Table III Conditions and outcome: calibration of the raw data

| Variables | | Target set | Anchors | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|-----------------|---------------------------|
| | | | full membershi p | crossover point | full nonmembershi p |
| Condition s | MN - Member Numbers | more member numbers | 40000 | 6000 | 175 |
| | SN - Service Networks | more service networks | 15 | 2 | 1 |
| | RG - Relationship with Government | stronger relationship with the government | 1= fully in: Traditional "love China, love Macau" associations 0.67 = more in than out: pan-"love China, love Macau" associations 0.33 = more out than in: intermediate associations 0= fully out: pro-democracy associations | | |
| | SA - Strategies Used by Associations | organize social movements | 1= fully in: Yes 0= fully out: No | | |
| Outcomes | PI - Policy Influence | higher policy influence | 1= fully in: decision partner 0.67 = more in than out: participation in decision-making 0.33 = more out than in: partnership 0= fully out: consultation | | |

IV. RESULTS

This paper analyzes the data using fs/QCA 3.0 software, and the process and results are as follows.

A. Analysis of the necessary conditions

During the operation of QCA, the necessary conditions are often eliminated from parsimonious solution. Before the configuration analysis, a necessary condition analysis is required to identify possible necessary conditions. The result, see Table IV.

Table 4: Analysis of the necessary conditions

| Condition variables | Outcome variable: high policy influence | |
|---------------------|---|----------|
| | Consistency | Coverage |
| MN | 0.766474 | 0.935120 |
| ~MN | 0.393064 | 0.429836 |
| SN | 0.647399 | 0.827179 |
| ~SN | 0.463584 | 0.487242 |

| | | |
|-----|----------|----------|
| RG | 0.729480 | 0.701111 |
| ~RG | 0.461272 | 0.665000 |
| SA | 0.154913 | 0.670000 |
| ~SA | 0.845087 | 0.562308 |

Note: ~ indicates the absence of a condition

In QCA, consistency is a measure of necessary conditions, and a condition is considered necessary for the outcome variable when the Consistency Score of that condition is higher than 0.9. Table IV shows that none of these are necessary conditions to lead to high policy influence.

B. Configuration analysis

A configuration is a specific set of causal variables with a synergetic nature, that serves as a screen indicating an observed outcome or an outcome of interest. The use of fsQCA for configuration analysis requires attention to the followings: (1) unlike the necessary conditions analysis, a consistency score of not less than 0.75 in the sufficiency analysis is acceptable; (2) the frequency threshold should be set to cover at least 75% of the cases, and when the sample is small, a reasonable frequency threshold is one case^[50]. In summary, the consistency threshold is set at 0.75, and the frequency threshold is set at 1 in this paper. In this paper, Standard Analyses are selected to analyze the truth table. Three solutions can be obtained simultaneously: Complex, Parsimonious, and Intermediate. In general, the intermediate solution strikes a balance between complexity and parsimony. Thus, the authors mainly report on intermediate solutions and distinguish between core and peripheral conditions in conjunction with Parsimonious solutions, see Table V.

Table V Configurations for High Policy Influence

| Configuration | Solution | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| | 1 (insider pattern) | 2 (social movement pattern) |
| Member Numbers | ● | |
| Service Networks | | ○ |
| Relationship with Government | ● | ○ |
| Strategies Used by Associations | ○ | ● |
| Consistency | 0.961712 | 0.827160 |
| Raw coverage | 0.595601 | 0.143777 |
| Unique coverage | 0.595601 | 0.143777 |
| Overall solution consistency | 0.932224 | |
| Overall solution coverage | 0.739378 | |

Note: Black circles indicate condition presence, and circles with "×" indicate condition absence; large circles indicate core conditions, and small circles indicate peripheral conditions. Blank spaces indicate "don't care." In this table, all circles with "×" are small. The analysis results show two patterns (i.e., configurations) through which Macau associations achieve high policy influence. They can be called insider pattern (pattern 1) and social movement pattern (pattern 2). Pattern 1 (insider pattern) shows that regardless of the size of the service network, associations that have more member numbers (core condition), have a stronger relationship with the government (peripheral condition), and do not adopt social movement strategies (peripheral condition) will have a higher policy influence. The insider pattern is the one chosen by most associations in Macau. Since associations in Macau enter into the core policy

process (the Legislative Assembly, advisory committee), it requires the support from either the public or the government, or ideally both. In order to establish good relations with the government, these associations do not seek to organize social movements, as this does not cause the government to "loss of face." "At the same time, these associations will seek more members - on the one hand; members can be an essential source of votes when participating in the elections of the Legislative Assembly (which represents public support), and on the other hand, when these associations seek to have seats on advisory committees, having more members will be evidence that the associations have representativeness. With the above conditions in place, an association has the basis for being an insider, but whether the government accepts an association as an insider may require a test for a long time.

Pattern 2 (social movement pattern) shows that regardless of the member numbers, associations that have smaller size of service networks (peripheral condition) and have weaker relationships with the government (peripheral condition) but adopt social movement strategies (core condition) will have higher policy influence. When an association has weaker relationships with the government - perhaps because they actively distance themselves from the government or have fought the government on specific policy issues - they can only rely on the public or their members if they seek policy influence. However, for associations in Macau, the quest for expanding membership presents unique challenges without governmental backing, as associations mainly rely on government-provided material resources. Consequently, interacting with the public through social movements is a critical way to win policy influence for such associations. The overall coverage of the above two configurations is 0.74, indicating that these two configurations have explanatory power for higher policy influence. In addition, the two configurations' consistency is above 0.82, and the overall consistency is 0.93, significantly greater than the threshold (0.75) suggested by Ragin. Therefore, The two configurations can be considered sufficient conditions for the outcome variable. However, the explanatory power of the two configurations is different; the coverage of configuration 1 is 0.60, and the coverage of configuration 2 is 0.14, indicating that the explanatory power of configuration 1 is greater. It shows that the insider pattern is the choice by most Macau associations. The reason is that the government has far more resources to offer to associations seeking policy influence than the public. First, the government would have the power to decide which associations have representatives in the advisory committee, and those unpopular with the government would be excluded. Secondly, the government also has significant impact on the representatives of associations enter into the Legislative Assembly, including: (1) the Chief Executive has the power to appoint some members of the Legislative Assembly; (2) due to the special institutional arrangement, the government has significant influence in the indirect election of the Legislative Assembly - members of the pro-democracy camp have never been elected to the Legislative Assembly by indirect election; (3) even in the direct election, the government has significant influence. By funding associations, the government enhances the ability of the relevant associations to provide social services, which can help these associations obtain votes.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Based on interviews with the leaders of 15 associations, this paper uses fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) to analyze the pattern of association participation in public policy in Macau. The research results show that the association participation in public policy in Macau can be summarized into insider and social movement patterns. The insider pattern refers to a configuration that has more member numbers, has a stronger relationship with the government, and does not adopt social movement strategies. The social movement pattern refers to the configuration of the smaller size of service networks and has weaker relationships with the government but adopts social movement strategies. However, this only

represents the situation before 2021. With the significant constitutional reform in Macau in recent years, the pattern of association participation in public policy in Macau may change accordingly, which deserves further attention from researchers.

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