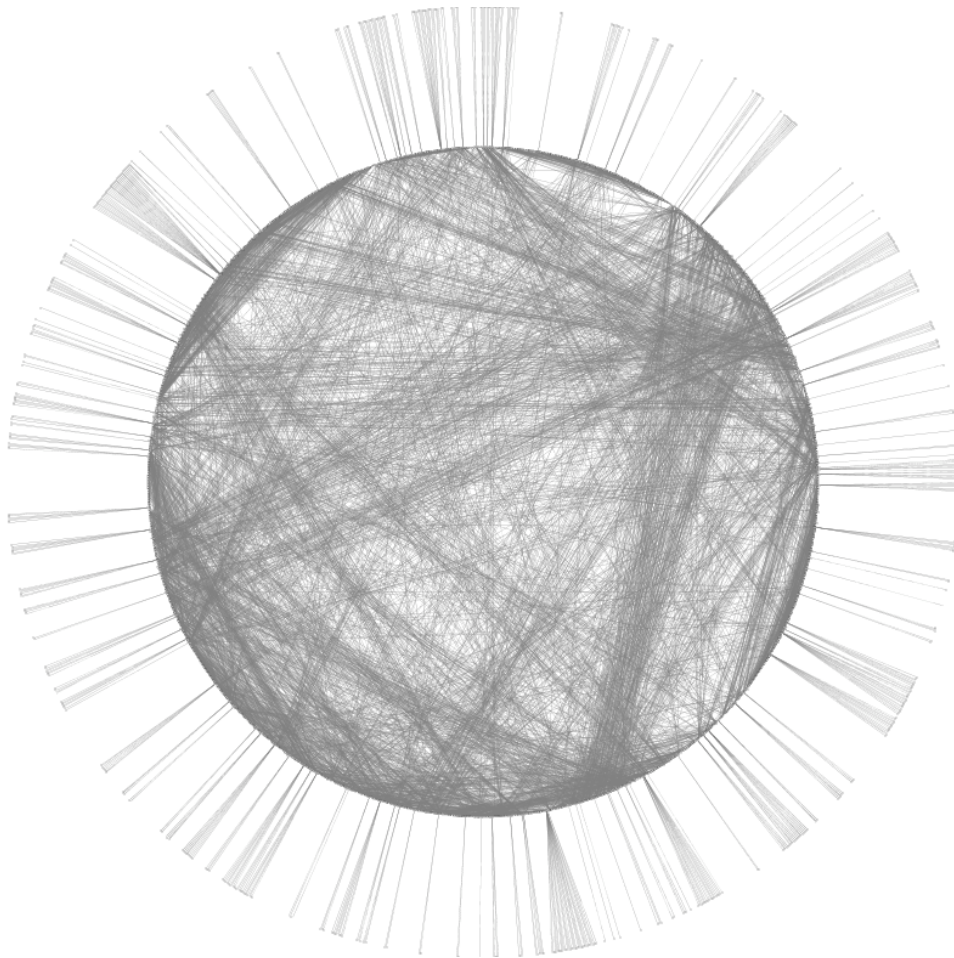


Information flows in the context of EU policy-making

*Affiliation networks and the post-2012 reform
of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy*



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of Doctor of Political Science (Dr. rer. pol.), Department of Economic and
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EIDESSTATTLICHE ERKLÄRUNG

PREFACE

In summer of 2005, short after an inspiring ERASMUS semester in Tartu (Estonia), I went to revisit my French guest family, which had graciously hosted me for one school trimester in the spring of 2000. During the 2005 visit, I was watching *Matrix*, and in the middle of the film an idea was born that I immediately wrote down and that, through a project thesis in 2006 and my diploma thesis in 2008, evolved into this doctoral study on networks and information flows in EU politics. This evolution was possible thanks to a great course on social science methods by Prof. Dr. Tanja A. Börzel, through which I learned to appreciate theory-guided empirical research, and thanks to a fascinating course on business cooperation and enterprise networks by Prof. Dr. Jörg Sydow, through which I became aware of the amazing world of social network analysis, a world in which *matrices* play a great role as I would soon discover. Finishing my studies, I assumed I would not go back into research, and continued my career path in international relations for which I had studied political science in the first place. I realised however that I had misunderstood what it meant to work in the governmental world, and so decided to head back into academia. Fully in line with what Granovetter (1973) called “*The strength of weak ties*”, I then was extremely lucky to get to know Prof. Dr. Klaus Goetz in early 2009. Klaus Goetz would not only become the supervisor of this thesis, which has greatly benefited from his recommendations and constructive criticism, he has also been a perfect mentor and boss with a feeling for the guidance I needed to stay on track while always showing trust in the decisions I made, both during my time at the faculty and after I left. I am extremely grateful for this trust and support of my own academic and professional path! Arriving at this path and actually going along it would have been unthinkable without my parents however. Without them, I may not have become the person who likes the intellectual challenges that have inspired and informed this doctoral research. Without them, I may not have discovered the fascinating world of computers, programming, and digital communications, skills without which I may not have been able to overcome the mathematical and computational challenges I was faced with when analysing the network data I gathered for this study. Without my parents, I would have never gone to France and spent a trimester abroad, which opened up my mind, interest and love for all things European. Without this state of mind, this thesis would not be and without it I might not have watched *Matrix* in the way I did in 2005. I love my parents for this and everything else they have made me learn and discover in my life through their love and support! Honest thanks go to the German taxpayer for having offered me free university education and for providing me, through the *German Ministry of Education and Research* and the *Friedrich Naumann Stiftung für die Freiheit (FNF)*, with a 2.5 year scholarship that has allowed me to do the doctoral research in the way I wanted to do it with the time it needed to do it. I hope I can pay back this support, not just with this study, but with everything else that I do now and later in my life. Finally, while writing this thesis, family members, a family friend, a coordinator of the FNF and a student of one of my courses have died. My thoughts are with you, and you will not be forgotten!

GENERAL DISCLAIMER & DECLARATIONS

This research has been designed while working as a half-time research and teaching assistant at the Faculty of Economics and Social Science of the University of Potsdam (Germany) between April-December 2009. My PhD supervisor Prof. Dr. Klaus H. Goetz has been my direct boss during this period.

The main phase of the research for this study was supported by a 2.5-year scholarship received from the *Friedrich Naumann Stiftung für die Freiheit*, a German political foundation, and financed by the *German Ministry of Education and Research* from January 2010 to June 2012 as my sole regular income. While providing me with the financial and structural conditions for the conduct of the study, a number of networking opportunities and other ideational support, neither the foundation nor the ministry have had any influence on the substance, methodology or other choices made before or during the study. Recommendations for the scholarship have been given by my PhD supervisor Klaus H. Goetz and the supervisor of my diploma thesis, Prof. Dr. Tanja A. Börzel.

During the finalisation phase of the thesis, I have been employed (since July 2012) by the Transparency International (TI) EU Office in Brussels, the advocacy and communications work of which I had assisted as a volunteer since June 2010. While the present research has been informed by observations made and has been enriched by knowledge gained during this work, and *vice versa*, for instance when it comes to the topic of access to EU documents, the substance, methodology or any choices made during the empirical research were guided by my own interests and academic considerations only. As much as possible, academic research and advocacy work conducted both as a volunteer and as an employee of TI EU have been separated in order to limit possibilities for conflicts of interests.

Hence, besides valuable academic guidance received from my supervisor Klaus H. Goetz and other colleagues throughout the whole process, none of the organisations mentioned above or any persons working therein have tried to influence the content of the research or the interpretation of findings and conclusions presented. Consequently, this study also does not necessarily represent the views of any of the afore-mentioned nor anyone quoted herein, and it does not bind them in any way.

Finally, and in the light of recent discussions in Germany around the quality and honesty of doctoral research, I assume personal responsibility for any mistakes in gathering and analysing information and data for this study as well as for any incorrect, misleading or missing citations. I have tried, through continuous quality control, to avoid any of these but will be supportive to inquiries that may raise doubts or that find indications of serious mistakes or academic misbehaviour on my side.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1 Initial questions and general aims of this study

1.2 Research design, methods and structure of the study

1.3 Executive summary / Abstract

1.1 Initial questions and general aims of this study

The thesis you are about to read had two starting points, two initial questions. The first was: *Why are some people better informed about concrete political developments at European level than others?* And the second: *What role do personal networks play to stay informed about EU-level politics?* The implicit assumption that connects these two questions is that unless one is very well positioned in European networks, one will not profit from crucial information flows or one will receive relevant information about decisions at EU level only at a time when it is too late to react (cf. Lauman & Knoke (1987: 13) for US-politics).

Conventional wisdom but also the actual observation of EU politics leads to the quick conclusion that ‘Brussels’ is at the centre of European political networks. Those who work within the Brussels sphere or who have strong personal connections to this sphere are generally much better informed and have earlier and more comprehensive access to EU information, including information that is not meant to be public, than those outside the ‘Brussels bubble’. Yet, looking beyond the bubble, EU politics and the availability of information in political networks in the European Union appears to be so much more complex and understanding the information flows so much more complicated than in narrow networks commonly studied in political science. When starting this study, it seemed impossible to understand how exactly the wider informational system of the European Union works.

What seemed obvious was that having access to the right EU information at the right time is relevant for individual citizens, companies, interest groups or even states, especially when decisions taken by European institutions concern them directly. Those who have access to crucial EU information at the right moment through personal networks and other sources are able to intervene, to organise themselves, to apply more targeted tactics when trying to influence the outcomes of European political processes. And if networks mediate the ability to become or stay involved in decision-making at European level, then it is necessary to understand the nature of these networks, their origins, their dynamics, and their effects. If we find that networks are core factors for informedness and information flows in EU policy-making, then we need appropriate *theoretical* and *methodological* approaches to capture those processes and to make predictions. More than that, only if we understand the functioning of the system are we able to change how it works, for instance when we find that more than just a narrow group of EU insiders should be informed about democratic processes at EU level.

The *first aim* of this research project therefore is to show the relevance of networks in EU policy-making, in particular their relevance for the flow of and access to EU information. The *second aim* of this research project is to prove the applicability of network theory and network analysis for the study of European politics. Network theory and network analysis have gone a long way over the past 30-40 years in a multitude of disciplines, but despite the almost trivial recognition that “networks matter” (Lim 2008; Howlett 2002) there are surprisingly few studies that analyse European political networks. The understanding of the complex political system of the European Union, with its multitude of actors spread geographically and across political and administrative levels, could profit from a theoretically guided empirical analysis of the networked nature of European policy-making. The lack of such studies leaves us with an image of European politics that is often dominated either by a focus on EU institutions or by a comparative analysis of EU member states’ actions in a European political context, for instance when implementing European politics. Both images correspond to certain narratives about European politics, but this research project was conducted with the firm belief that most EU politics is done in networks, networks involving governmental and non-governmental actors, representatives of sectoral, political or geographical interests in a multitude of ways. In many cases, it is difficult to assign clear categories to those individuals that make up the networks shaping EU politics. A network theoretic view on EU politics can work without those *a priori* categories: We may find that EU networks are dominated by European or by national actors, but we can also discover that the complexity of European networks blurs the lines between those categories. In order to come to those conclusions, it is not enough to proclaim the relevance of networks (the first aim), but we need to analyse those networks empirically. We have to embed those empirical analyses in theoretical frameworks so that we move from network analysis as a purely descriptive method to actual network theory, a theory that is supposed to explain how networks affect empirical phenomena that we as social scientists are most interested in, including in the EU context.

The *third aim* of this research project is to shift attention away from a more common perspective on EU information flows. This perspective focuses on how EU institutions access expert information and knowledge from civil society or other external actors. Instead, the aim of this study is to shed light on EU information flows in the opposite direction: Every day, non-institutional actors, whether based inside or outside Brussels, try to obtain information on the plans and decisions of EU institutions. They do so in a myriad of ways, depending on their financial resources, their staff, their knowledge of EU-level politics, and their ability to

develop meaningful relations to EU officials and others who are well-informed about European policy-making. Knowing how those institutional outsiders stay informed has not been studied extensively but is definitely worth studying. Choosing this ‘outside perspective’ on information flows in EU policy-making is compelling because it can offer a view on political and social dynamics in European politics that takes into account the complex interactions between European society and government(s). It is relevant because it can ask and – ideally – answer questions that thousands of individuals and organisations involved in shaping policies in Europe ask and try to answer on a daily basis. And this perspective is also compelling for academic research because it raises a number of challenges, including the problem to choose relevant actors in a Europe-wide political and social network system, the difficulty of operationalising information flows that those actors are – or would like to become – a part of, or the challenge of actually measuring the appropriate network structures that can help to explain why some non-institutional actors are better informed than others.

Confronting these challenges, the *fourth aim* of this research project is to apply the conceptual and theoretical discussions around networks and EU information flows, which have come with the first three aims, to a concrete empirical case. The aim is to combine qualitative and quantitative methods to test network theoretic hypotheses about information flows in EU policy-making as well as to provide a sound empirical background to contextualise these hypotheses in the concrete case – the post-2012 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union.

The choice of this case, which will be explained in more detail in the study, triggered a fifth aim that was not initially planned when designing this rather theory- and method-driven research. This *fifth aim* is to tell certain aspects of the first part of the reform of the EU Common Fisheries Policy, looked at through the network-theoretic and information-flow focussed glasses that have shaped this research project. When digging deeper into the case, the Common Fisheries Policy turned out to be a policy field with very little in-depth political science research, making it difficult to understand the political dynamics of decision-making and reform in this particular policy. Very few scholars have, for instance, documented the previous major reforms in 1983, 1992, and 2002. Understanding the actor constellations that were at work at the time, in particular constellations that included civil society actors, and their impact on the outcomes of the different CFP reforms therefore is only possible up to a certain point. This left the impression that major steps in the development of the policy were

only partially covered, without proper academic debate about causes and effects, main actors and origins of certain policy choices made in the past. As a consequence, and given that time and effort had to be invested to conceptualise and measure EU fisheries policy networks and information flows in the context of the post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy reform anyway, a more narrative coverage of the political and informational dynamics in the early phase of the reform was considered a valid aim of this study. Reaching this aim could allow a more appropriate follow-up research on the later stages of the reform as well as providing crucial background information for the academic analysis of future reforms and developments in EU fisheries policy.

In summary, the *core aim* of this study is to develop a network-theoretic approach to EU information flows towards civil society actors. This approach will be applied to information flows in the context of the early phases of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union up until the moment when the European Commission proposed the details in July 2011. The network that is analysed covers the affiliation of over 1300 individual actors from a diverse group of civil society and governmental actors to a set of 205 events from 10 consultative committees organising stakeholder participation in the European Union's fisheries policy. The study tests whether these network structures could have predicted actors' access to leaked drafts of the European Commission's proposal for the reformed basic CFP regulation, which, if confirmed, and in combination with other findings, would underline the value of analysing EU politics and EU information flows from a network-theoretic perspective.

1.2 Research design, methods and structure of the study

The *research design* and the structure of this study are based on the five aims presented in the previous section: Based on a general assessment of past research on EU information flows, the involvement of civil society in EU policy-making and the theoretical and empirical findings on the role of networks for information flows, one or several cases needed to be found for which this theoretical and empirical knowledge could be tested. These cases needed to be accessible for empirical research, both with regard to Europe-wide network structures and with regard to concrete information flows during a current policy-making process at European level. In other words, it was necessary to develop hypotheses based on past EU-focused

research (inductive approach) and based on network theoretic considerations (deductive approach) which would formulate expectations about why certain actors would be better informed about policy-developments at EU level than others. It was then necessary to find one or several ongoing or upcoming policy-processes at European level for which these hypotheses could actually be tested.

It was obvious from the beginning that working on the first three aims – the establishment of the theoretical and methodological framework based on previous theoretical and empirical research – would be the least problematic part of the research. The most challenging question was how to design an empirical study through which I would be able

- (a) to identify and measure one or several Europe-wide networks of actors involved in EU policy-making,
- (b) to study these networks at the time of relevant ongoing policy-making and information flow processes while
- (c) measuring actors' informedness during these processes without affecting the structure of their networks or the flows of information between them due to direct interference in the process, and while
- (d) trying to conceptualise and measure independent variables (based on network structures) and dependent variables (based on information flows) separately in order to be sure that the hypotheses would not become self-fulfilling prophecies by measuring the network structure based on those information flows that were actually to be predicted or explained by the structure (circular hypothesis).

Hence, a major part of the early phases of this study was dedicated to finding one or several cases of EU policy-making worth studying with those constraints in mind. Once the case – the Common Fisheries Policy of the EU and in particular the post-2012 reform process of that policy – was found to be both a relevant case to study and to be a case for which it appeared to be possible to measure network structures and relevant information flows during the timeframe of the present study, a lot of time had to be invested in figuring out how networks in this field could be studied and what information flows were expected to be best predicted by those network structures.

It were these considerations around the empirical possibilities and limits in studying the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) reform which have shaped the final structure and design of

the thesis as you find it before you right now: The focus on *the role of EU committees* and the study of *affiliation networks as possible predictors for information flows in EU policy-making* was triggered by the realisation that data on civil society actors' affiliation to certain EU committees was not only publicly available but that this data also made it possible to study EU networks beyond the Brussels sphere in the context of the EU fisheries policy. The empirical case chosen thus directed the attention to very specific aspects of EU politics and EU networks, in particular *committees*. It also allowed a focus on a theoretical and methodological section of network theory and network analysis – affiliation networks – for which there were astonishingly little empirical studies in political science (and even less in EU-focused social sciences). This was astonishing because there is a potentially large availability of relatively reliable archival sources in the form of official and unofficial participation and membership lists which can be used for (affiliation) network analysis. These sources do not confront the researcher with linguistic problems that EU studies often face when trying to enter into transnational or comparative studies involving several EU member states because names of individuals or organisations are often the same or very similar across languages. This makes affiliation network analysis a suitable method to comprehensively study Europe-wide networks as long as the respective documents or data are available. And while the design of this study demanded rather recent information on committee participation, there is a lot of potential for the study of more distant processes under other research designs and questions. Future research building on the methodological path chosen for this study could construct a historical evolution of relatively large European networks using affiliation data such as participation lists. Such research could provide an additional layer of empirical knowledge on European (non)integration, both with regard to the main institutional developments as well as the changing nature of policy fields such as the one studied here. In summary, this study is based on a theory-guided empirical research design in which the choice of the case and the availability of certain data have ultimately shaped the specific thematic, theoretical and methodological choices which were available in the context of the wider topics of EU information flows and of network theory and network analysis.

The *methods and sources* used to conduct this study are diverse, but this diversity was necessary to find answers to the two guiding questions formulated for this study. Apart from the review of academic research relating to EU policy-making, research involved the review of legal documents (mainly EU law) and of administrative documents (e.g. EU Commission annual activity reports, EU budget documents, committee meeting documents). Over the

course of the study, I have been monitoring and reviewing media output relating to the Common Fisheries Policy in the traditional press, in specialised fisheries industry media as well as in the evolving social media sphere. I have participated in European Parliament committee meetings as an observer, talked to EU fisheries policy experts to gain background insights into the field and got to know the sector, for instance by visiting the European Seafood Exhibition. For the actual affiliation network analysis, a particular form of social network analysis that is the core of this study, I have gathered empirical data in the form of participation lists for hundreds of events relating to EU fisheries policy, some of them being easily accessible via official websites, others acquired through freedom of information requests to EU institutions and other organisations, requests that in some cases took several months before receiving the information needed for this study. In the end, over 200 of these participation lists were transformed by hand in affiliation matrices (Excel files), which involved research into names and organisations to address different styles in recording participation as well as variations in names for which it was necessary to check whether they referred to the same or different individuals. To create, transform and analyse the resulting network(s) of over 1000 people, I tested and learned to use several different network analysis and visualisation software (in particular visone, Gephi and yEd). To study information flows in EU fisheries policy, I made some early information tracing, contacting individuals who had participated in the public consultation for the Common Fisheries Policy reform Green Paper (research not included in this thesis). I requested non-public information in the form of draft European Commission proposals, and went as far as complaining to the EU Ombudsman for not receiving the documents requested. I gathered contact data for several hundred persons included in the network database created for the study. A short questionnaire was developed that was first tested with Members of the European Parliament (or their assistants) and then adapted and sent out to the contacts gathered earlier in the form of an email survey (complemented with phone interviews where needed) to understand if, when and how the draft Commission documents I had formally requested had been leaked and distributed in the fisheries policy network. Answers received from several dozen respondents were first analysed separately. Finally, responses from the email and phone survey were analysed in the light of the network positions of respondents to see whether this network position had an influence on the level of informedness of respondents. Through this range of methods, with the social network analyses of affiliation data being the core of the study, it was possible to get an insight into EU fisheries policy reform and its actor networks that connect micro-level processes into a specific macro-level onto a so far under-studied EU policy field.

Finally, the *basic structure of this thesis* is quite close to the original plans made for the original research design, while the specific details of chapter, section, and section design have evolved considerably throughout the research process. Following this introductory chapter, Chapters II, III and IV will introduce the overall topic, the theoretical backgrounds, and the specificities of the case. Chapters V, VI and VII will present the empirical research and the respective findings, starting with the affiliation network analysis underlying the independent variable(s). This is followed by the analysis of information flows based on a survey and other observations made in the context of the early phases of the post-2012 Common Fisheries policy-reform. These findings are then synthesised through the test of the hypotheses in order to see whether the theoretical assumptions made could be confirmed or falsified with the empirical data gathered. The final Chapter XIII summarises the findings, discusses in how far the aims presented in this introduction have been reached, and looks into specific findings and open questions that can inform future research on EU information flows, affiliation networks and other aspects presented throughout the thesis.

The *detailed structure* of the individual chapters is presented in the first section of each of these main chapters.

1.3 Executive summary / Abstract

Information flows in EU policy-making are heavily dependent on personal networks, both within the Brussels sphere but also reaching outside the narrow limits of the Belgian capital. These networks develop in the course of formal and informal meetings or at the sidelines of such meetings. A plethora of committees at European, transnational and regional level provides the basis for the establishment of pan-European networks. By studying affiliation to those committees, basic network structures can be uncovered. These affiliation network structures can then be used to predict EU information flows, assuming that certain positions within the network are advantageous for tapping into streams of information while others are too remote and peripheral to provide access to information early enough. This study has tested those assumptions for the case of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy for the time after 2012. Through the analysis of an affiliation network based on participation in 10 different committees over two years, network data for an EU-wide network of about 1300 fisheries interest group representatives was collected. The structure of this network showed a number of interesting patterns, such as – not surprisingly – a rather central role of Brussels-based committees but also close relations of very specific interests to the Brussels-cluster and stronger relations between geographically closer maritime regions. The analysis of information flows then focussed on access to draft EU Commission documents containing the upcoming proposal for a new basic regulation of the Common Fisheries Policy. It was first documented that it would have been impossible to officially obtain this document and that personal networks were thus the most likely sources for fisheries policy actors to obtain access to these drafts in early 2011. A survey of a limited sample of 65 actors from the initial ~1300 network actors supported these findings: Only a very small group had accessed the draft directly from the Commission. Most respondents who obtained access to the draft had received it from other actors, highlighting the networked flow of informal information in EU politics. Furthermore, the testing of the hypotheses connecting network positions and the level of informedness indicated – though not statistically robust – that presence in or connections to the Brussels sphere had both advantages for overall access to the draft document and with regard to timing. Methodologically, challenges of both the network analysis and the analysis of information flows but also their relevance for the study of EU politics have been documented. In summary, this study has laid the foundation for a different way to study EU policy-making by connecting topical and methodological elements which so far have not been considered together, thereby contributing in various ways to political science and EU studies.

CHAPTER II

Information dynamics, civil society and committee governance in EU policy-making

2.1 Chapter structure

2.2 Information & EU policy-making

2.2.1 An informational turn in EU policy research?

2.2.2 Leaks in EU politics

2.3 Informational aspects of EU committee governance

2.3.1 Committee governance and informational affiliation

2.3.2 Comitology

2.3.3 Commission expert groups

2.3.4 Social Sectoral Dialogue Committees (SSDC)

2.3.5 Summary

2.4 EU civil society: EU information and access for non-institutional actors

2.5 Conclusions and hypotheses

2.1 Chapter structure

This chapter will provide an overview over recent research on EU information flows, with a particular focus on the role of EU committees and the involvement of EU civil society. Section 2.2 will discuss whether research on EU policy and administration has had an ‘information turn’ recently and will also present a particular aspect of EU information flows – leaks – which will play an important role in the empirical research of this thesis. Section 2.3 will identify information flow aspects in previous research on EU committees and discuss a selection of committees with specific relevance in the context of this study. Section 2.4 will then look at how civil society actors gain access to information in EU policy-making and how research has covered this type of information flows until today. These three sections will help to systematise existing research and to give a topical introduction into the thesis. They form the basis for the theoretical and methodological discussions on network theory and network analysis in the next chapter as well as for the empirical case – the Common Fisheries Policy reform – presented in the chapter following thereafter. Section 2.5 will therefore summarise these findings and present general hypotheses, which shall guide the further theoretical and empirical research in this thesis.

2.2 Information & EU policy-making

2.2.1 An informational turn in EU policy research?

"Information, the communication or reception of intelligence, is a precondition for governance and a core aspect of decision-making." (Gornitzka & Sverdrup 2011: 49)

There seems to be an informational turn in EU policy research and if there were not, there would be a need for such a turn. Indeed, recent publications give more and more specific scholarly attention to the role of information in EU policy processes. A relevant number of studies published in the last years looks concretely at information and information flows in EU policy-making. These studies discuss the role of information along a diverse set of subjects from fundamental rights such as access to documents in EU governance (Hoffmann 2009; Héritier 2003), accountability and parliamentary oversight in Comitology (Brandsma 2010, 2012) and EU expert group membership (Gornitzka & Sverup 2011) to informational aspects of EU foreign policy coordination (Bicchi & Carta 2010; Dijkstra & Vanhoonacker 2011), expert knowledge in European Parliament committees (Dobbels & Neuhold 2012),

information flows between EU officials and journalists (Martins et al. 2012), information gathering and provision by EU interest groups (Klüwers 2009; Chalmers 2011a,b), interinstitutional arrangements for information exchanges between EU Commission, EU Parliament and the Council (Brandsma 2011), or the informational involvement of subnational governments in EU Council affairs (Noferini 2012).

As the introductory quote indicates, it is no speciality of the political system of the European Union that all kinds of actors, institutional and non-institutional, need all kinds of information to cope with the demands of decision-making and the related strategic positioning in negotiations and power plays. The turn towards information in EU studies may thus only be a hint to the fact that current EU-focussed political science and public administration research are opening their eyes for some of the *specific* aspects of EU governance related to informational dynamics. These informational dynamics may be one of the keys to understanding the multilevel, plurilingual and pluricultural political system of the European Union, the ways in which its politics are organised and its policies are shaped. This is even truer as the EU system has both grown significantly over the last decade(s) and has recently reshuffled part of its constitutional basis with the Lisbon Treaty. Under these conditions of increased complexity and systemic restructuring, EU politics are almost by definition sentenced to face challenges with regard to the (re-)organisation and coordination of information flows across the different administrative levels, actors, and political cultures involved. In addition, the context of the discourse on the "digital/information age/society" (see for example Goodwin & Spittle 2002) seems to have raised attention in all social spheres including academia to phenomena related to access to and distribution of data, information, and knowledge, not just as mediated through new technologies. This is not to say that the issue of online and offline information distribution has been totally ignored in EU research in the past (see for example Pau 1981). Still, despite the importance of information in the digital age, research on the general ecology of information flows in EU politics is still scattered at best and has the potential to be both broadened with regard to the subjects and theoretical approaches covered and deepened with regard to the specific empirical phenomena observed.

In the light of the so far scattered research on EU information flows, it is time to develop a research agenda that links the different strands of the informational turn in EU research. Such an agenda will have to cover a number of aspects and questions such as (non-exhaustive):

- **Normative aspects:** Which EU/non-EU actors should get what kind of EU/non-EU information at what time through which means?
- **Legal aspects:** How can EU information sharing regimes be formalised into procedural law and how can these norms be enforced?
- **Theoretical aspects:** Why do certain types of information flow better than others and where are the obstacles for information or knowledge exchanges in an EU policy context?
- **Empirical aspects:** What types of phenomena are worth studying to understand informational dynamics in EU policy-making? What actors and what information are relevant objects to study?
- **Methodological aspects:** How do we find relevant formal and informal informational regimes in the complex EU system? How to measure EU-related informational practices within, across and outside EU, national and subnational institutions?
- **Systematic aspects:** What of the aspects above have already been covered, including in studies without a particular focus on informational questions?

If we follow along the path of these questions, we will be able to identify why certain actors have informational advantages over other actors in EU policy-making. We will be in the position to discuss how certain processes could be restructured to satisfy normative expectations regarding good governance and accountability of public bodies, how specific societal interests can be included in informational dynamics or how the proper organisation of information flows could make the system meet normative expectations on the well-informed rationality of public decisions. Along these lines, it may be possible to explain why some EU information spreads more easily than other information within the Brussels environment and outside this sphere. Beyond the direct mechanisms and effects of information flows, understanding informational dynamics could also enable us to approach other types of processes such as influence (cf. Chalmers 2011a) or the (non-)emergence of one or several European Public Spheres. Finally, information-focused EU research can also be the link connecting institution-oriented and society-oriented EU studies.

The latter aspect – the link between the work of EU institutions and the informational interaction with societal actors outside these institutions – is the most compelling subject of EU information research for me. The combined perspective on intra-, inter- and extra-institutional information diffusion is necessary to develop a more accurate and holistic view

on the empirical nature of EU policy-making, its interrelations and its interdependencies. However, the challenges that such a multi-facet research perspective is facing are manifold. Already more narrowly focussed research analysing "only" intra- or interinstitutional relations and informational processes in the institutional sphere (e.g. Brandsma 2010, 2011, 2012) is relatively demanding, from the selection of actors to the identification of formal and informal rules, routines and practices for access to and distribution of information. Yet, even if the boundaries of institutions and organisations may be blurry sometimes, there is, in most cases, at least a clearly identifiable core set of rules, structures, processes and actors involved that research can start with. On this ground, there are conceptual frameworks providing a clear-cut starting point for empirical research. These grounds even exist for more complex multi-institutional and multi-level perspectives on information and communication networks between EU institutions (as demonstrated in von Bogdandy 2003). In such an institution-focused approach, one can for instance analyse whether the rules guiding information flows are actually followed or replaced by more (or less) efficient informal practices showing "*The Hidden Power of Social Networks*" (Cross 2004). Alternatively, one may look for bottlenecks in communication processes, the lack of efficient control in principle-agent relations due to incomplete information (Brandsma 2010) or the role of certain actors that serve as gatekeepers or "relais actors" controlling information flows between organisations in EU decision-making (Judge & Earnshaw 2011: 56). At the same time, research on intra-institutional informational processes can encounter problems of access to relevant documents (cf. Chapter 6.3 and Annex 3 on experiences for this research). Institutions-focused research also has to deal with actors who are bound by organisational confidentiality rules or other constraints imposed by organisational and political leaders, making certain inquiries difficult to conduct (cf. Tallberg 2008: 686).

However, if we take into account that EU information flows are not limited to intra- and interinstitutional dynamics, the research perspective and the objects we need to study diversify. The processes we have to take into account multiply and the causal mechanism can get chaotically interwoven, which complicates convincing explanations of concrete outcomes that we observe. Explaining or predicting who was informed how in an information system that combines institutions and the wider non-institutional sphere may appear to be of no avail. Nevertheless, limiting our attention to the institutional sphere will not be enough to grasp the networked nature of information flows in EU policy-making. Non-institutional actors such as journalists (Martins et al. 2012), lobbyists, participants in social movements and other types

of civil society actors as well as national and subnational officials (Nosferini 2012) are both receivers and senders of information from and to EU institutions. In some cases, these external actors may even serve as information brokers when inter-departmental or inter-institutional communication is deficient, making use of their brokerage roles to gain credibility and influence. Not to include this non-institutional sphere in research on EU information flows therefore means to ignore a relevant share of the empirical reality. The challenge however is that the nature of rules and practices guiding this type of information flows towards non-institutional actors and within what one may call ‘EU civil society’ (or ‘EU society’) is quite diffuse. Furthermore, while institutions usually have a clear set of functional roles and institutional procedures that can be identified through systematic research, the scope (a) of actors and (b) of possibly relevant information to be studied becomes much larger once research moves beyond the borders of EU institutions into the wider realm of EU civil society.

The turn to a broad information-focused research in EU studies involving both institutional and extra-institutional dynamics thus faces specific challenges depending on the questions asked. As said above, this becomes most evident when making informed choices about the empirical phenomena and sets of actors to be studied: The choice of study objects seems rather clearly defined in institution-focused information research (for instance: ‘all MEPs in a specific committee’), even though access to the objects may be limited to the researcher. In return, the difficulty in civil society-oriented research is to conceptualise the actor-set and its boundaries:

- Who are relevant non-institutional actors in EU competition policy?
- What geographical or temporal limitations should be made, what policy issues to be focussed on to be able to make all relevant observations that our theoretical or conceptual frameworks require?
- How to get access to all those involved for interviews, surveys or other types of observations?

It may well be that, compared to institution-focussed research, civil society actors and political or societal information processes outside or at the margins of formal and well-defined institutional boundaries may in some cases be more visible or accessible for the researcher; yet, making well-argued choices which actor to focus on and actually being able to observe non- or semi-formalised informational interactions can be a problem that can be much more demanding than institution-focused approaches. Nevertheless, the research agenda on

informational dynamics in the EU that includes the societal sphere is a path worth following. We should see more studies that investigate the connection between both the institutional and the non-institutional perspectives despite the challenging research design.

Such research - and this is the path this study will follow - could explore *how institutional structures and dynamics allow civil society actors to gain access to information from inside EU institutions*. It should aim to understand dynamics of information diffusion (or lack thereof) among civil society actors once information has been accessed from institutional actors. This might provide insights in the information ecology of EU politics and in particular the informational ecology of a European civil society. These insights, if related to existing research such as studies on multilevel governance and EU political networks, EU-level and transnational interest group activities or on particular governance structures of the EU (e.g. on EU committees and similar fora), can link so far separated aspects of EU politics and EU research thanks to the connecting nature of information.

The ‘information turn’ would then not necessarily be a general paradigmatic shift but a focus on lacunae or related aspects that have either not been covered at all or that have not been systematically recognised because information were not central to previous theoretical and empirical analyses.

2.2.2 Leaks in EU politics

One specific empirical phenomenon in which the informational interrelation between institutions and specific or general public spheres become particularly visible are ‘leaks’. Leaks are official documents or information, which are not (yet) officially published by an institution but available to outside actors through authorised or unauthorised informal information sharing (cf. Flynn 2006: 258) or, in some cases, security problems of document systems. It has been noted for national politics “that leaks occur on all major policy areas” and that “[t]he parties who transmit and receive confidential information from the public sector [...] do so in relatively stable networks” (de Jong & de Vries 2007: 224-5). These observations, made for the case of the Netherlands, seem to be an equally common practice in EU policy-making where early drafts of legislation or relevant policy documents are frequently available to (some) interest representatives, lobbyists and/or the media before they

are officially published and enter into formal decision-making procedures. These leaked documents may circulate widely or in more closed circles and they may even be available in different draft versions, giving possible advantages to those who possess the latest version of an early draft, allowing them to more effectively influence the content of the final version (cf. de Cock 2010: 80-81). Sometimes, these leaks even become part of deliberations at the highest political level, for instance in the case of leaked information on the decision regarding the merger of Deutsche Börse (DB) and the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), an issue which was discussed during the College of Commissioners meeting on 1 February 2012. According to the public minutes of the meeting, it was regretted that "that an external debate had been launched before the Commission's official decision had been taken and that internal information had obviously leaked out" (PV(2012)1988: 7). The Commissioner responsible for the case highlighted "[w]ith regard to the 'leaks' to the press and the question of their source ... the very powerful lobbying campaign run by the two groups [i.e. DB & NYSE; RP]" (PV(2012)1988: 8). This argumentation indicates that there is an interconnection between interest groups and lobbying, the press and the flow of information, an interconnection that will also be in the focus of this study. Two weeks after the above-mentioned discussions, leaks concerning the fiscal compact and the Greek debt restructuring brought the matter of non-official disclosure of information again on the agenda of the College of Commissioners:

"The Commissioners regretted the repeated leaks to the press of non-final versions that they had not yet examined. These practices hindered the collective decision-making process and damaged the Commission's credibility. The Secretary-General was asked to review these problems and to propose improvements in working methods and investigations to establish how these documents were leaked." (PV(2012)1990: 16)

In academic research, leaks of draft legislative proposals and draft policies by the EU Commission have been noticed in several cases: An early version of a 2008 draft post-accession evaluation report on Bulgaria is quoted and a softening towards the final version is noticed in Primatarova (2010: 12). A leaked draft of the Commission budget review in 2009 gave hints about a possible future funding of the Common Agricultural Policy (Jambor & Harvey 2010: 2), and a 2008 draft version of the EU-India free trade negotiations is quoted by Ruse-Khan et al. (2010: 928). In June 2003, one month before the official proposal was published, a leaked draft directive on linking global and EU-level climate policy revealed conflicts between DG Environment and DG Enterprise (Flåm 2007: 26). In November 2006, again about a month ahead of the planned official publication, a draft legislative proposal on the future EU emissions trading scheme (ETS) was leaked (Convery & Redmond 2007: 106).

In a similar ETS-related case, changes between a leaked draft and the final version became obvious (van Asselt & Brewer 2010: 48), although it is unclear in how far external influence had triggered this change. The period of about one month between the leaks and the official publication noticed in the two cases above as well as the inter-DG conflict reported seem to confirm empirically that leaks from the Commission often occur at the moment when a proposal goes into interservice consultation (cf. van Schendelen 2010: 78), for example to create public opposition against a proposal from another DG that cannot easily be changed internally (cf. Eppink 2007: 117). The Secretary General of the European Commission, Catherine Day, confirmed during a European Parliament hearing that in fact “leaks at this stage of the procedure were frequent” (EU Council doc 5770/13: 11). All these observations seem to indicate that leaks are common practice, especially where decisions have concrete political implications for certain actors inside or outside institutions, creating particular interest for such informal information flows. Leaks are thus informational activities involving networks of officials, politicians, journalists, interest representatives and other actors in different constellations depending on the policy or the concrete issues at stake. In these networks, common or diverging interests become combined with certain opportunity structures in which this type of information flow occurs, presumably in exchange for other goods such as legitimacy, political support, or technical expertise.

In the informational ecology of EU politics, leaks are a phenomenon worth studying because they highlight the interaction between institutional and non-institutional spheres and because they provide a very good basis to cover normative, legal, theoretical, empirical, methodological, and systematic aspects of information dynamics in EU-policy making as outlined earlier. The diffusion of leak drafts of the European Commission proposal for a new Common Fisheries Policy that happened during the inter-service consultation stage or the reform that will be in the focus of the empirical research presented later in this study (see Chapters 6 and 7), effectively confirming the overview of observations from this section. What is interesting is to understand how those leaks are spread, at what time(s) this happens and who gets access to them. Network positions derived from personal and affiliation relations are expected to play a major role as the next section will demonstrate.

2.3 Informational aspects of EU committee governance

2.3.1 Committee governance and informational affiliation

"There can be little doubt that the system of governance which is developing within the Community would not be able to function without this committee structure within the policy-development, policy-decision and policy-implementation stages, as there is a need for horizontal and vertical coordination and cooperation. In addition, the exchange of information is required, and committees within all three stages of the policy process provide an arena for this" (Schaefer 1996: 21).

As the last sentence of the quote above indicates, a systematic approach to the study of the role of information in EU governance as outlined in the second section cannot ignore what has been described as "committee governance" (Quaglia et al. 2008; Egeberg et al. 2003). In general, this term characterises the discussion, production or implementation of policies and the related influence processes that take place within the plethora of EU committees. The research on committee governance has in effect covered all kinds of aspects of EU committees (for an overview see the volume edited by Christiansen and Larsson (2007)), and frequently the role of committees in informational and networking dynamics has at least received marginal attention. It is thus pertinent to continue studying these fora under an EU information perspective and to raise the question *why and how affiliation networks may be relevant for the formal and informal flow of information in the context of EU policy-making*.

Without entering into the more theoretical aspects of this question to be presented in the chapter on network theory (in particular the aspect of "affiliation networks" discussed in Sections 3.3.5 and 3.5.2), the simplified argument in response to this question is as follows: Committees "can be seen as arenas around which policy networks are created" (Larsson 2007: 32). They therefore can provide situational and relational frameworks or opportunity structures for the access to information, not just for those actors who participate directly in their activities but also for the networks linked to committees through their members. The relevance of committees for information flows is based on multiple mechanisms: First, membership or participation in committees can be of direct advantage, for example when information is give exclusively to members or provided for the first time during meetings. Second, membership or participation can be of indirect advantage because it allows the development and strengthening of relations to other actors present at or in the margins of

committee meetings. Those others may have access to further information relevant to the policies and issues covered by the committee. This information does not necessarily have to be available through a committee as such, but the joint participation in committees or the links created through its meetings can be essential for the access to contextual or related information. Committees such as EU Commission expert groups are therefore rightly regarded as "an integral part of ... [informal] policy networks within EU decision-making" (Puetter 2008: 480).

The multiple networking arenas, which committees and other regular fora can offer, provide a balance between the different informational strategies that most actors follow. Networking in the context of committees therefore has certain advantages over dyadic ('bilateral') relationships that actors may build formally and informally in each policy domain. Participation in committees and other regular fora allows both strong and weak ties to develop through recurring interaction with others, including to actors with potentially dissimilar interests if the committee structure allows (e.g. government and opposition in parliamentary committees, industry and environmental groups in EU expert committees). Hence, while committees may bring together actors who not necessarily want to network with each other or to exchange information beyond what is said during formal committee activities, committees still offer the space for further networking for those who actually have an interest to do so, either in bilateral or in multilateral constellations. Weak or even strong ties (for the difference see Section 3.3.1) may even develop between actors that are not necessarily considered *a priori* to develop mutual information relations – for example an industry representative and an activist from an environmental NGO sitting in the same committee – while in reality they may, thanks to their committee relations, cooperate and share information when appropriate. For participants and members, committees are thus arenas in which they receive information and in which they can develop or re-enforce necessary social contacts with their peers through which information flows can take place.

In addition to providing space for direct interaction between members, committees usually also offer the space to get in contact with the same thirds such as committee secretariats provided by the committee's host institution, outside speakers or observers in case the committee is open to these. As a result, actors within the same forum, even when they do not develop a meaningful tie between each other, may still receive similar information because the committee setting allows them to tap into the same social and information sources. Very

weak relations between two actors based only on joint participation in committee meetings (e.g. between two people who would not communicate beyond the obligatory greeting before a meeting begins) can thus still be followed by a similar level of informedness with regard to certain information because the very weak tie still reflects a similar opportunity structure with regard to access to (certain) information.

In summary, we can conclude that committees are involved in all stages of the policy-process of the European Union, existing in a wide range of formats in the context of all EU institutions and bodies, both with formal and informal roles (cf. Christiansen & Larrson 2007: 1-7). Committees can generally be regarded as frameworks and opportunity structures for access to information, making participation or direct access to participants a coveted asset for interested parties. Looking into the research on the specific EU committees and the committee governance associated with them, different types of committees with regard to purpose and composition have been identified as being involved at different points of EU decision-making and implementation. Informational aspects are frequently considered a relevant part but in most cases they are not central in the analysis. In the following sections, different types of EU committees and fora will therefore be discussed with a particular focus on their relevance for the flow of information, including access to information for different actors involved in EU policy-making. Although there are many types of committees associated with different EU institutions and bodies, the focus will be on the networking and informational aspects of three specific types, namely Comitology committees, expert groups and sectoral social dialogue committees. Comitology committees are a pertinent example of the role of interinstitutional information flows while EU Commission expert and similar advisory groups as well as sectoral social dialogue committees are fora in which institutional and non-institutional spheres overlap, therefore providing the basis for networks that can be beneficial for different types of information flows from and towards the spheres of EU civil society. EU Parliament committees (for an overview see Neuhold & Settembri 2007) and working parties or other committees in the Council (see Fouilleux et al. 2007; Duke 2007) will not be specifically discussed, given that they represent more classical elements of institutional design with patterns that are very similar to other patterns described below while at the same time lacking the interinstitutional or intersphere dimension that makes the three types of committees presented below interesting cases for patterns of EU information flows.

2.3.2 Comitology

The best-known and most discussed committees in EU governance are those that together form the so-called "Comitology" system (for a pre-Lisbon Treaty overview see Blom-Hansen 2011; for a historical perspective including recent changes see H  ritier 2012). Under the Lisbon Treaty, the Comitology committees are those committees responsible for implementing measures (Article 291 TFEU), now distinct from committees for delegated acts (Article 290 TFEU). They are generally composed of civil servants of the EU member states, with Commission officials participating in their meetings. First created in the 1960s, their main role in the policy process of the EU was to supervise the European Commission when dealing with "the more complex legal and practical arrangements for the implementation of [European Community] legislation" (Schaefer & T  rk 2007: 183). Beside the generally more technical role of these committees (several hundred of them exist) in the supervision of EU Commission law-making, they have also been regarded as a means for member state representatives "to obtain early and detailed information" (Falke 1996: 119) on the Commission's plans in different policy areas. Comitology committees are therefore not just "part of the constitutional framework for the EC implementing process" (Schaefer & T  rk 2007: 184), but, like all committees, they provide an opportunity structure for information exchanges that go beyond their formal roles. In the case of Comitology, this covers information exchanges mainly between member states' and EU officials. Acknowledging this perspective, recent research has studied committee governance in Comitology committees with a focus on the role of information as well as related questions of democratic accountability (Brandsma 2010). One question asked by Brandsma was "to what extent do comitology committee participants inform their superiors and stakeholders" about the matters discussed and the positions taken within Comitology meetings (Brandsma 2010: 106). He finds that, while direct superiors of Comitology committee representatives are often informed, this is much less the case for interest groups or major sectoral companies (Brandsma 2010: 109). Given the (inter)governmental nature of Comitology committees, this does not come as a surprise. What is more surprising is that this finding highlights that non-governmental actors who are not part of the Comitology sometimes indeed receive information from actors inside the system. As non-governmental actors are not participants to the Comitology fora, these information flows thus happen through formal or informal relations developed to Comitology officials in other contexts. Schaefer and T  rk (2007: 192) report a case in which industry representatives were even invited to participate in some parts of Comitology meetings. In

general, they find that contact with third parties is very common and that Commission officials in preparing Comitology meetings might also consult third actors (ibid.). This underlines that committees are not just self-referential information spheres, but that they are usually linked to an outside environment, formally and informally. On a more formal level, the European Parliament has shown an interest in the work of the Comitology as relevant (implementing) legislation can be passed at this institutional level. The Parliament has tried to use the European Court of Justice as well as its budgetary powers to force the Commission to grant it a “*droit de regard*”, that is the right “to be informed about decision drafts and the right to state an opinion whenever it considered that a draft was not merely a matter of technical implementation” (Héritier 2012: 45). Although this right was not granted (ibid.), parliament step-by-step gained more information rights with regard to the work of the Comitology committees (see Schusterschitz & Kotz 2007). The EU Parliament even requested observer status, arguing that especially in complex matters *participation* would be the only possible way to keep track of the details discussed in some committees. The Commission rejected this but eventually granted additional information rights in the mid-2000s (Schusterschitz & Kotz 2007: 85). Brandsma (2012) discusses how these rights and informational control are linked in practice. What we learn from these discussions is that within the informational ecology of EU policy-making, Comitology committees, given their membership, have mainly been instruments of EU member states. Nevertheless, institutional actors such as the Parliament have tried throughout the EU’s history to develop informational ties to these committees and information rights with regard to their work. Participation in their meetings was indeed considered one way to stay informed about relevant developments, although such participation rights were not granted. Furthermore, it has been shown that participation is not always necessary to stay informed about the work of Comitology committees, not just because of the existence of the Commission’s online Comitology register¹. This happens either, as in the case of the Parliament, when formal information flows are organised or, as shown in the study by Brandsma (2010), if actors participating within these usually closed meetings inform their superiors or non-governmental actors with an interest in the decisions taken at the level of these implementing committees. Knowing about these information flows, it might be interesting to study how the Comitology system helps national administrations to stay informed about the work of the Commission or to try to understand how links from Comitology committees to civil society organisations and other outside actors are formed and maintained.

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regcomitology/index.cfm> (last accessed: 14 April 2013).

2.3.3 Commission expert groups

Unlike the relatively well-studied Comitology system, the even larger system of EU Commission expert groups is less known and researched. Two of the reasons may be the heterogeneity of expert groups and the lack of a *formal* role in the production of legal norms or implementation of binding decisions. Nevertheless, the Commission's expert group system with its about 800 groups² may be considered "the largest and most organised information system" in the EU (Gornitzka & Sverdrup 2011: 51). While Gornitzka and Sverdrup's qualification of the expert group system is referring to the expertise that experts in these expert groups can provide to the Commission, it can be argued that the same can be true in the opposite direction. Galnoor (1975: 36) argues for US and British executive expert group that "what the constituents [i.e. the participants, RP] want from advisory bodies is access to rule-making information and direct influence". In the same line of argument, Commission expert groups should not just be seen as information and expertise pool for EU Commission officials and cabinet members working in specific policy areas, but in consulting experts the Commission is similarly transmitting information about its ideas, plans and initiatives to those participating in expert groups. Especially where this happens at the stage of formulating legislative proposals or even earlier when the agenda on certain topics is to be set with the help of these committees, the information available in the context of these committees may be regarded relevant for a wide set of actors, those participating and those who do not. Who actually participates in these groups is decided by the Commission itself as expert groups are set up by Commission decisions, other types of legal acts or by a decision of the Commission services (Gornitzka & Sverdrup 2011: 50). At the time of writing, this is done in accordance with the framework and guidelines as set out in Commission documents SEC(2010)1360 and C(2010)7649. The argument that expert groups may indeed be a place where relevant policy information is transmitted from the Commission to members of these groups is underlined for example in Rule 11(5) of the Commission President's Communication on the Framework for Commission Expert Groups (C(2010)7649) which states that

"The obligation of professional secrecy which ... applies to all members of the institutions and their staff, is also relevant for expert groups advising the Commission. In the same manner, the provisions of the Commission's rules on security regarding the protection of EU classified

² Gornitzka & Sverdrup (2011) count 1237 groups in 2007. A database received by the author from the EU Commission secretariat lists 808 active expert groups as of 30 January 2012.

information ... shall be applicable to expert groups. Members of expert groups and their representatives, as well as invited experts and observers, are bound by those obligations."

What this implies is that, at least in some cases, the Commission intends to consult "experts" on ideas or documents that it may not (yet) have made available for the general public. It also hints to the fact that when it comes to expert groups, the Commission prefers "retrospective transparency", that is a preference that information about the substance of discussions becomes only known after those expert group meetings (Field 2012: 12).

When talking about "experts" in the case of the Commission's expert group system, we in fact have to consider quite a diverse set of people. The composition of the expert groups depends on their purpose and the decision made at the respective Commission level where the groups are set up. The secretariat is provided by the Commission, and further Commission officials participate depending on the substance or purpose of these groups. The tasks that these groups perform, sometimes spread over several sub-groups or complementary groups with overlapping members (cf. Larsson & Murk 2007: 72), are as diverse as the group population itself, but four types of purposes for setting up such groups have been found to be: (1) "agenda-setting", (2) "preparing an initiative", (3) "mobilizing support and consensus", and (4) "fig leaf" (Larsson & Murk 2007: 86). With regard to composition, Gornitzka and Sverdrup (2011: 52-53) have identified three general types of expert group committees: (1) The "Scientific Expertise type", (2) the "Society Type", and (3) the "Government Type". According to their statistics, 46.6% of expert groups are solely composed of government experts (2011: 54). This composition resembles very much the Comitology committees, and in fact some committees exist in two configurations where "matters that are not of immediate concern for policy implementation" will be discussed in the more informal setting of an expert group, despite the fact that the same persons participate in both (Schaefer & Türk 2007: 192). 5.2% of the expert committees are groups with only scientists, 7.4% are composed solely of society groups and the rest are mixed configurations (Gornitzka and Sverdrup 2011: 54).

This shows the character of expert groups as committees linking not only representatives from different countries but also bringing together persons with diverse roles in the policy-making process of the European Union. These links can be relevant for different processes, including for the establishment of communicative ties, through which information can be exchanged

between the different participants of group meetings even outside the formal setting of the committees. Especially in long-standing groups, it is common that

“many of the experts know each other quite well and communicate freely and frequently on the phone or via the Internet between meetings” (Larsson & Murk 2007: 75).

Compared to the rather closed Comitology system that plays a formal role in the policy-processes at EU-level, the expert group system is a much more diverse committee system, despite the dominance of government-type committees. They range from very technical to very broad subjects, from very narrow sets of participants to broad groups bringing together civil society, academics and representatives of national or European governmental organisations, makes expert groups an intriguing case or starting point when trying to understand interrelations between institutional and non-institutional spheres in EU policy-making. It is very likely that the networks formed within this system matter for the distribution of policy-information from and towards the European Commission but also from and towards member states' officials, civil society and EU-level actors, in particular in the early phases of agenda-setting and policy-formulation. Even where those committees may simply be fig leaf exercises pretending action where there is none, they may still serve in constructing or confirming network and group structures that can be relevant factors in EU decision-making and information flow dynamics.

2.3.4 Social Sectoral Dialogue Committees (SSDC)

Even less known than Comitology and Commission expert groups yet institutionalised and active for several decades are the so-called "Social Sectoral Dialogue Committees". Social Dialogue Committees in their current form were created through Commission Decision 98/500/EC of 20 May 1998 and are meant to promote "dialogue between social partners at European level". These committees may be composed of a maximum of 40 members equally representing workers and employers (Art. 3 of 98/500/EC), with a maximum of 30 participants per meeting for which allowance and travelling expenses are paid (Art.4 of 98/500/EC). In July 2010, there were 40 of these committees (SEC(2010)964: 5).

Previous research on these Social Sectoral Dialogue Committees as summarised by Léonard has found that their role is less formal and less about collective bargaining but more about "political action at European level" (2008: 404), i.e. lobbying the institutions. Léonard (2008:

411) also argues that the interrelation between the Commission and sectoral dialogue committees is quite close, both because the Commission provides necessary resources for the functioning of these committees and because the output of the work of these committees is often directed towards the institution(s), for instance in the form of recommendations. One could conclude from these observations that, even though their purpose may be to foster dialogue between social partners, the actual role of the EU's social dialogue committees may be one that is similar to (certain) society-type expert groups in the fairly diverse expert group population. This similarity is not just organisational, but also stems from an overlap in individual membership and participation in the SSDCs: the major social partners such as Business Europe (employers) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) or their respective sectoral members are represented both in the social dialogue committees as well as in many expert groups³.

The informational dynamics made possible through SSDCs should thus be very similar to the dynamics described for the expert groups. They are however a pertinent example for other types of considerations in relation to information flows. Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees may be an interesting test case because different to "simple" expert groups they can produce directly applicable soft or hard norms, and the informational relationship of their non-governmental members with their membership is thus primordial both for input and output legitimacy of their work. EU-level social partners in these committees represent a wide range of workers' and employers' organisations at the national level. One of the difficulties that this multilevel representation brings about is that it is difficult for the EU-level representatives to monitor the impact of decisions and recommendations made in the EU-level committees across all member states and across all member organisations. This type of systematic information flows can be hard to organise, although normatively it is regarded as desirable (Léonard 2008: 408). This points to an important observation which was one of the starting puzzles of this study, namely the question if and how EU-level information reaches to the national, regional or local level and vice versa. European governance, whether governmental or in corporatist arrangements, can only function (well) and reach everyone if the necessary links between the levels or, in network analytic language, between different clusters of actors have been established and are kept functional. How functional this system is in reality has yet to be studied empirically.

³ A search in the expert group register of the European Commission on 6 March 2012 finds that that Business Europe is represented 41 times and ETUC 28 times in expert groups (note: the search is approximate as the same organisations can be registered under different names in the register).

2.3.5 Summary

The committee system of the European Union provides a large number of fora and events directly or indirectly related to them. Through committees, or at least in their context, a wide range of information dynamics take place, linking institutional actors and non-institutional actors into policy- and issue-networks that structure the political system of the Union. Not all types of fora can have “pronounced networking functions”, especially where they do not manage to regularly bring together the same actors (cf. Quittkat & Finke 2008: 2004). Nevertheless, where committees gather overlapping members and participants, they can provide the basis for smaller and larger clusters or sub-networks of interlinked policy-actors that can structure information flows within these sets of actors.

Studying information flows in the governance system of the European Union will therefore only be possible if we consider what Schaefer (1996: 21) has described as “intens [sic] and complex networks of participation” materialised in the committee system of the European Union. Through committees, rule-making and rule makers on different political levels become linked. These aspects become particularly interesting when we ask the question how non-institutional actors stay informed during EU decision-making. Following the assessment that the “elite pluralist system” of EU interests mediation is based on access to “a wide variety of committees, working groups, conferences and other policy fora” (Broscheid & Coen 2007: 348), one can well assume that understanding the network structures of committee membership and participation may be necessary to make sense of the elite pluralist system in which some civil society actors have clear advantages over others based on the level of access they gain to institutions, including within committees and through the opportunities that committees provide to their participants and observers.

The empirical research in this study will show how Comitology, expert and similar EU advisory groups as well as a Sectoral Social Dialogue committee played a role in information flows in the post-2012 reform of the EU’s Common Fisheries Policy and how network structures deriving from affiliation to these committees can be used to make predictions about EU information flows.

2.4 EU civil society: EU information and access for non-institutional actors

“The social structure of a national policy domain is primarily determined by the network of access to trustworthy and timely information about policy matters. The greater the variety of information and the more diverse the sources that a consequential actor can tap, the better situated the actor is to anticipate and to respond to policy events that can affect its interests” (Lauman & Knoke 1987: 13).

In the second section of this chapter, it has been argued that one of the goals of the informational turn in EU policy research should be to systematise our knowledge on informational dynamics as it has been developed in previous studies. The importance of broadening the attention towards the interrelation between EU institutions and their societal environment when analysing information flows has also been highlighted. This section therefore will present ongoing discussions about the role of the non-institutional sphere, and in particular of the EU civil society, with regard to informational dynamics. It will become obvious that existing research already provides important insights into why institutional information matter for non-institutional actors, how they can get access to information, and what opportunity structures for exchange of information between institutional and non-institutional actors exist. The purpose of this section is to lay the general grounds for an understanding of the information ecology of the EU’s civil society and its principal dynamics, especially in relational to the institutional sphere.

When looking at this information ecology of the European Union and its civil society, it is worth considering some of the characteristics and attributes the EU is frequently labelled with: In one way or another, the EU is often framed as a “plurilinguistic and pluricultural” system (van Els 2001: 333) forming a “multilevel structure of governance” based on “policy networks [as] structures of governance involving private and state actors linked together through varying degrees of resource dependencies” (Risse-Kappen 1996: 60). Given these characteristics, it is no surprise that studies on EU aspects of EU civil society activities cannot ignore “multilevel policy networks” (Eising 2004: 234) and the wide set of actors that are part of these network structures. Especially where we use a wide definition of “civil society” including “any organization or institution that might be said to be some organized form of European civic life” (Mahoney & Beckstrand 2011: 1340), this ecology will include a multitude of non-institutional actors involved in complex informational dynamics among themselves and in relation to institutional actors at international, EU, national, regional, and

local level. “Complex informational dynamics” shall mean that describing, explaining or predicting trajectories of information flows, conditions for access to information or levels of informedness of non-institutional actors at EU-level and throughout the EU involves a large number of general and situational independent variables. Focussing on the right actors, the best situations and the appropriate variables thus is a challenging task.

Probably the most commonly known discussions regarding information access of EU civil society actors can be found in the field of EU interest group and lobby research (at latest for example: Chalmers 2011b). Following Chalmers definition that an interest group is “any group that seeks to influence the policymaking process but does not seek to be elected” (2011b: 51), interest groups are only a sub-set of civil society (as defined above). This sub-set comprises those actors with active links to the political system. However, this sub-set is difficult to distinguish as all civil society organisations may at any time become interested in shaping political processes on different political levels.

For example, a local charity may in general focus on services to those in need, but it may want to intervene in local council politics when a budgetary decision affects the work of the charity or the addressees of its activities. In the same way, an aquaculture producer organisation that usually deals with the coordination of economic activities of its members can become interested in shaping EU policies when a decision at EU level affects its profits or the way its members can carry out their business.

Many civil society organisations that might not be considered interest groups can still be silent listeners, not necessarily recognisable to the researcher studying interest groups in specific political system or policy (cf. Beyers et al. 2008: 1107; cf. Chalmers 2011b: 62). Only when they actually register in lobby registers or when they become active to defend a set of interests through means of direct lobbying, for instance by joining an alliance of groups or by getting involved in media-focused campaigns, they will appear on the radar of interest group studies using the narrow definition of interest groups. For this study, it is assumed that non-governmental actors such as EU civil society and business organisations on all administrative levels may always become interested in policy-relevant information at least to be able to decide whether or not to become involved in policy-making. A distinction between civil society organisations and interest groups is therefore possible but not always useful when analysing informational dynamics. For this study, both terms will be used for all non-institutional actors – actors not representing state or governmental organisations – with a

declared or hypothetical interest in one or more EU policies or a set of related issues. This generalisation seems the more appropriate as, even without directly influencing political decisions through direct links to the institutional sphere, non-institutional actors can perform a role in the political system: When they gather and spread information or knowledge on EU policies in their particular sphere(s) of interest, they may be facilitators for the involvement of others in a policy process, even if they themselves do not have a direct interest or intent to get involved. In certain policy fields where there is no or almost no journalistic coverage of EU-level decisions, civil society actors and their specialised publications can sometimes even fill the role that one would assign to the media, namely taking over detailed reporting and information diffusion tasks (cf. Steffek 2010: 59). This role as information facilitator has been particularly highlighted by the EU Commission:

"Civil society organisations, including professional and sectoral organisations, also have a very important role to play in raising public awareness of European issues and policy debates, and in encouraging people to take an active part in those debates." (COM(2006)35 final)

Despite this known role set, most studies on informational dynamics involving civil society or, more specifically, interest groups and EU institutions focus primarily on information that non-institutional actors provide to institutional actors (e.g. Ruzza 2011; Chalmers 2011b; Dür 2010; Klüver 2009; Bouwen 2002; Crombez 2002). The main argument these studies put forward and try to test empirically is that by providing information to the institutions, non-institutional actors will gain access to institutions. Based on this access as a necessary condition, they can be able to influence the outcome of policy processes, sometimes more and sometimes less. Information in these studies is the key exchange good for access and influence; it is considered the currency for successful lobbying towards EU institutions (Broscheid & Coen 2003: 170; Princen & Kerremans 2008: 1135). As EU institutions need different types of information to make informed decisions, and given their lack of staff and resources, they are expected to be especially in need for such information provided by civil society during legislative decision-making (Ruzza 2011: 465). Lobbying organisations use this informational demand from the side of the institutions to keep the doors open for their attempts to influence outcomes of related decision-making processes. The four main questions to be answered in EU information research derived from this type of argumentation are: (1) What kind of information civil society organisations have to provide (2) in what way (3) at what time to gain what kind access for (4) what types of influence? The answers to these questions help to understand why certain non-institutional actors may get privileged access to EU institutions and to people working at political or administrative level within the institutions

and why others do not get similar access. Studies following this logic of access in exchange for information heavily rely on a *dyadic* logic where *direct relations* are mainly assumed to exist between an institution and an interest group. Yet, this dyadic exchange logic does only marginally capture the more complex nature of information exchanges and information flows that take place in both directions between EU institutions and their environment as well as between institutions and between the actors populating the sphere outside the institutions.

Hence, the logic of *direct* access and influence does not suffice to capture the multilevel political and informational dynamics of the European Union system, nor the corresponding civil society activities. Beyers' (2002: 587) definition of *access* as "the channelling or exchange of policy-relevant information through formal or informal networks with public actors" better captures the importance of two-way flows and the attempt of interest groups to gain "information advantages over other actors" as strategic asset in the policy process (2002: 588). Yet, even where the multilevel character of interest group activities is recognised, there seems to be an implicit assumption that EU interest groups mainly need EU information to exchange them with EU institutions against access and influence. This ignores for example any political process through which civil society organisations may use EU information to influence local, regional, national or international policy-makers (cf. the perspective by Eising 2004). It also ignores all processes in which lower-level civil society organisations, once becoming aware of certain developments at the EU level, might alert or push their EU-level umbrella organisations to become active in a certain manner. Ruzza and Bozzini (2008: 298-9) notice for example that British environmental NGOs gather EU information on the national level to feed this into the lobby activities of other organisations based in Brussels. Consequently, the information ecology of the political system of the EU and its civil society goes beyond the Brussels-focused dynamics that the logic of direct influence may suggest explicitly or implicitly. To capture multilevel informational activities of EU interest groups, Eising (2004: 225-6) develops a useful characterisation of non-governmental actors according to their strategies to obtain information from EU institutions: "*EU players*" stick to processes at EU-level, having many direct informational ties with EU institutions but are usually not involved in national-level policy making. "*Multilevel players*" develop routine contacts with institutions both at national and at EU level, making it quite easy for them to obtain information at all stages of policy-making. "*Traditionalists*" are those actors focussed on the national level with only rare contacts to the EU-level and with limited access to EU-level information.

“*Occasional players*” are almost not involved in political activities and thus even less implied than the traditionalists. Finally, “*niche organisations*”, similar to occasional players, are those usually not involved in policy-making or implementation and rely on information provided by peer organisations. This perspective not only acknowledges the multi-level dynamics of EU policy-making, but it also recognises that different types of actors have different informational needs and interests when it comes to EU-level decision-making. Depending on their structural positions within the wider political system of the EU and the related civil society, these actors can either tap directly into different institutional sources or make use of their relations with third actors to stay informed. They then only become involved at those occasions where they feel this is absolutely necessary.

The typology of the different actors could be formulated in a more or less fine-grained manner depending on the research perspective. For the purpose of this study, it is however most important to notice that Eising considers that with regard to access to EU information there are (a) those civil society organisations which almost exclusively focus on the EU level, (b) those with a major focus on the national level and only rare contact points with the EU sphere and that there are (c) those that can be called multi-level players with access to institutional players at EU level and within member states. One of the important conclusions derived from the empirical research conducted by Eising – although not a network theoretic approach in the narrow sense – is that in the end these “multilevel players” tend to occupy “a central position in the multilevel policy networks” (Eising 2004: 235). We will see in the following chapter, when network theoretic terms such as *centrality* will be introduced, why this is a pertinent conclusion. What Eising’s perspective lacks is the development of a more general theoretical or analytical framework that can capture and measure information flows not just based on the actors’ self-assessment but with regard to concrete network situations in which information flows matter. These network dynamics of information flows have so far been studied mainly in the context of lobbying in Washington. There, it is recognised that “a considerable amount of policy information is socially distributed in a multi-node lobbying network, and is passed on through social contacts” (Carpenter et al. 1998: 420-1). These contacts are not limited to direct ties with governmental actors; sometimes it is easier for interest groups to get information from other similar organisations (Carpenter et al. 1998: 421). Based on the data gathered by Laumann and Knoke (1987), it has been found that most of these information exchanges happen between actors linked through stronger ties, ties that need a considerable amount of time to develop but that in strategic situations are given priority when it comes to

the forwarding of information (Carpenter et al. 2003: 433). Subsequent studies at EU level have come to similar conclusions, finding that EU interest groups and their representatives tend to network with actors with whom they share common goals or interests (Chalmers 2011b: 115) and who are of a similar organisational type (2011b: 118). As in Washington, interest groups tend to prefer *strong ties* to *weak ties* (see Chapter 3.3.1 for the definitions) to get EU information although both are regarded as relevant (2011b: 120). What is inherent in these studies is that the policy field is regarded as a network of persons and organisations representing different interests in which information flows along the paths created by social relations. An informational perspective on civil society access to policy-information therefore should use a network approach to understand how and why certain actors are better informed than others or why some actors perform particular information roles in a policy area.

Before entering into these more network theoretical debates that will be at the centre of Chapter 3, it is still necessary to ask *how exactly* different non-institutional actors on different political levels receive different types of EU information. The relevance of information received through direct relations or through participation in wider networks as touched upon above is very relevant. Yet, this can only be understood if we consider the wider informational sphere civil society actors face when dealing with EU politics. Comparable to most political spheres, a lot of information on EU policy-making such as plans for new legislation or positions of certain institutions or their representatives on past or future decisions is available through simple research, for instance by studying media reports. Despite ongoing debates about the nature and scope of the European Public Sphere (for a review of recent studies see Nitoiu 2012), quite a wide range of EU-level developments are covered in the European press or other types of media at other levels. However, it is questionable whether – outside specialised EU media such as the Financial Times, European Voice, Europolitics and EurActiv or outside publications specialised on certain policies or issues – the media can provide the necessary level of detailed reporting that most civil society actors may need to decide if and how to become concretely involved in EU policy-making. As it has already been argued earlier, in EU affairs it may often be civil society actors themselves that are gathering information on the latest developments in their fields of interest before reporting them directly to an interested audience (Steffek 2010: 59). A source for information for these reports may be official websites, press releases, or public newsletters provided by EU institutions, thus sources that are available without the necessity of having personal contacts and being part of specific networks, as long as one has the necessary research and language skills to find

relevant information. For civil society actors, there are even special information systems. For example, those organisations registering in the ‘Transparency Register’ (i.e. the EU lobby register) of the European Commission and the European Parliament will “receive an alert each time the Commission publishes a new roadmap or launches a public consultation in the field where you have an interest”⁴. Through alerts, civil society organisations can become aware of occasions to participate, for example when Green Paper consultation are launched or when a new legislative proposal is put forward by the Commission. Since 2001, the European Union also has an access to documents regulation (Regulation 1049/2001) that not only makes it possible to request documents from the EU institutions but that also stipulated the introduction of document registers through which a wide range of preparatory and final policy documents from the main institutions is available, either directly on the institutional websites or via requests. In 2010, 8.18 % of the 6361 requests for access to documents to the EU Commission were made by civil society organisations (COM(2011)492: 9, 11). 18.3% of 2764 requests made to the Council came from civil society, more than half of which were made by the industrial or commercial sector (EU Council doc. 9322/11: 27-28)⁵. Civil society organisation as “elite specialists” may thus make use of the search functions of public registers or request access to official documents, making their content accessible for themselves and available to a wider public where appropriate (Greenwood 2007: 335). On the basis of such monitoring, EU-level umbrella organisations or commercial information providers serving as “information brokers” can keep their members or clients updated about new developments at EU-level (Fiala et al. 2009: 52; Eising 2007: 395), already without the need for networked information flows. However, as the websites, registers and requests for documents do not provide access to all documents relevant to civil society organisations or do not always do so before final decisions have been taken, civil society organisations and other non-governmental actors may have to make use of other access routes. The EU Council even recognises these alternative routes in the case of journalists when it states in its 2011 report on access to documents that journalists “accounted for only 3,3 % of the requests at the initial stage [...] mainly due to the fact that the institutions' public registers of documents represent only one of several possible sources of information for the press” (EU Council doc 8260/12: 10).

⁴ “Transparency Register: Why register your organisation?”, Source: http://europa.eu/transparency-register/your-organisation/why-register/index_en.htm (Last accessed: 14 April 2013).

⁵ The actual figures can be higher because both reports list 32.68% (Commission) and 13.4% (Council) of requests for 2010 from non-specified applicants.

Given these constraints, civil society actors have to pursue active strategies to receive documents or information that they need for their work. One strategy, which actors pursue to create specific occasions of information access or information diffusion, is the participation in committee and fora governance structures (see the previous section for an in-depth argumentation on the role of these structures). Networking through EU expert committees or consultative fora is one of the many methods with which EU-level but also lower-level non-institutional actors get information directly from the Commission. These structures also serve as opportunity structures for civil society actors to develop contacts among themselves and with third actors such as academics or EU officials. Through these committee-based contact structures interest groups thus cannot only transmit information to EU institutions (Crombez 2002: 10), but they can also gain access to relevant information from inside the institutions. Interest groups, even those on the local or national level, are aware of the necessity to foster informational activities through participation in policy- or issue-related activities (including committees) and, where they possess the necessary resources, they try to become involved. However, such active participation is faced with constraints (cf. Ruzza & Bozzini 2008: 302), not least because travels to distant venues in which EU policies are shaped or discussed can be both time- and cost-intensive for some organisations. It is thus no surprise that in a multi-level political system, formal or ad-hoc alliances of like-minded organisations are created in the form of umbrella organisations or issue coalitions in which networking at different levels, information gathering and information distribution are shared activities. Actors participating in such umbrella organisations, alliances or coalitions try to pool their resources in ways that keeps them informed about the latest developments at EU or lower administrative levels (cf. Mahoney 2007: 369), thereby allowing to react at the right time to political developments that are of interest for them. For them, “[n]etwork power is derived from patterns of information flows ... within the network”, and the network patterns are shaped by horizontal and vertical ties between the actors in the multilevel system (Newman 2008: 122).

In the end, not all relevant information is easily or quickly available to non-institutional actors, even if they are involved in all sorts of monitoring activities or are members in different types of umbrella organisations and committees that can help to become alerted when new developments happen. Where information from EU institutions is not openly accessible, some actors will try to access information through informal channels that they have with actors inside EU institutions or with others who have direct access to inside information (see also the discussion about “leaks” in the second section of this Chapter). A lot of communication

takes place informally and personal relations to institutional actors are considered an important prerequisite for interest groups to stay informed (cf. Fiala et al. 2009: 71). As discussed above, these dynamics are very similar throughout political systems and can be observed in Washington (cf. Wise 2007: 367) as they can be observed in Brussels. Accessing information through informal relations with EU officials may be of strategic or even financial relevance for some actors. This is why many interest groups have opened offices in Brussels or make use of the professionalised services of lobby and public affairs agencies based in Brussels that can develop these direct informal and formal contacts with EU institutions. Such early and exclusive access to EU sources and EU information was even official recognised as being used to sell this information for financial gains: In the early 1990s, when the internet did not yet allow wide access to EU documents, the Commission published a Communication (SEC(92)2272) titled "*An open and structured dialogue between the Commission and special interest groups*" in which it acknowledged that it had happened that "lobbyists [were] selling draft and official documents". It was argued at the time, that "one of the reasons cited for the success of the trade in Commission documents is *the length of time it takes to obtain them through official channels*" (own highlight). Even if the practice of selling documents may not be the most relevant topic today 20 years later given the possibilities of accessing databases of EU documents online or getting relatively easy access through networks formed in and around the Brussels sphere, the idea that information can be sold reveals that non-accessible EU information can have a price for certain interest groups or civil society organisations that they may be ready to pay if this helps to promote their interests. In times of mass information, "non-accessible information" can refer both to the fact that information is indeed held confidential but it can also mean that relevant information has to be searched and filtered out of masses of other information – which is a business model for a number of specialised companies in Brussels (EUobserver 2012)

In the light of the findings and discussions presented so far, one can easily formulate the expectation that EU- or multi-level players with a strong presence in Brussels are much better placed to profit from such informal information flows. Empirically, we do however not have enough knowledge to what extent information diffuses once it has reached someone outside the institutions, which actors on which levels do have access to information when and through which channels. The more interesting question for the multi-level governance system of the European Union thus is: Does the informational ecology of EU politics allow for actors without direct ties to EU institutions to receive informal information and at what time does

this happen? The relevance of this question is self-explanatory: Being better informed may, in the logic of access, raise the expertise profile of these actors vis-à-vis EU officials (for EU-level players) or vis-à-vis national officials (for players working on the national level), which can allow them preferential access to other formal or informal venues where they can access additional information. Being well-informed or informed early enough allows civil society actors to decide on and plan their strategies in order to shape the substance of legislative or regulatory proposals or the way rules are implemented. From a political science perspective, it is important to know which actors are informed to what extent at what time because it not only reveals civil society actors' position in concrete decision-making situations but it may help to understand why some actors are generally better able to gain access or to influence outcomes of policy-making in the European Union.

In summary, we know that non-institutional actors are by definition not *a priori* part of crucial (inter)institutional information flows during EU decision-making process. Different to institutional actors, including member states officials where they are part of formal EU decision-making, non-institutional actors therefore have to develop particular research and networking strategies to receive information that matter for them; they cannot expect to be informed automatically. Making use of legal means such as consulting the media, websites or participating in public or semi-public fora is complemented with informal practices through which civil society actors try to position themselves within policy- and issue networks at different levels of the political system to become or stay part of relevant formal and informal informational dynamics. Research so far has acknowledged some of the dynamics underlying access to relevant information, but has until now only rarely studied the nature of the networks that matter for access to information in an EU context. Research therefore should be starting to identify the structural properties of the informational ecology of the EU's policy-system(s), analysing networks of institutional and non-institutional actors in EU policy-making and their effects on information access or influence opportunities for the wider civil society within the different policy fields.

2.5 Conclusions and hypotheses

This chapter has provided an introduction into different aspects of EU information flows and into research that could be regarded as hints to an 'informational turn' in EU policy research.

Such a turn would have to cover a wide range of aspects related to all kinds of topics already and yet-to-be covered when studying the political system of the European Union. While informational dynamics have already been discussed in many contexts, our knowledge thereon is not yet systematised and very often lacks a clear theoretical perspective (cf. the second section). Such a theoretical perspective needs to incorporate the structural perspective that one can find in the idea of committee structures covered in the third section as well as the actor perspective presented for the case on civil society actors in the fourth section.

Both in the study of civil society and of the committee governance system of the European Union, different aspects of the relevance and importance of EU information flows could be highlighted: The EU regulation on access to documents provides a legal basis for several thousand information requests every year that civil society actors make. The European Parliament has been fighting for a right to access information from Comitology committees while the Commission's expert group framework has clear legal provisions that put governmental and non-governmental members of these groups under the professional secrecy clause that EU staff has to respect. Empirical research has shown that different civil society actors network on different levels of the multi-level system of the European Union, some preferring to gather information directly at the EU-level while others depend on information from umbrella organisations. We know that information from inside Comitology committees reaches not just the direct superiors of the member states' officials participating but also outside actors such as industry representatives. Research has also shown that members of expert groups tend to develop communicative relations that they make use of even outside the frameworks of group meetings. Through the theoretical concepts such as the 'logic of access' we can understand why certain actors may be able to develop preferential information relations with institutional actors.

Most of these legal, empirical or theoretical aspects also involve implicit or explicit normative and methodological questions: Is it right that some actors in a principally pluralist system form an elite with more access than the rest? Can a system like Comitology be accountable if the amount of political supervision is only limited? How do we know which expert groups are the most relevant for access to information of civil society actors? How can we know what kind of information civil society actors can get from inside EU institutions and how do we identify different types of actors according to their informational strategies?

One recurring theme comes up in many studies on information flows, civil society involvement in EU politics and committee governance in the European Union: networks. The importance of formal or informal relations to gain access to information seems to be a common assumption throughout EU-related research. The role of access to and participation in committees to stay informed about the latest developments and to develop network relations with well-informed others seems equally recognised. However, there is a lack of convincing theoretical perspectives that links all these aspects. Network theory can provide this link. A network theoretical perspective offers suitable causal models and explanations connecting different types of actors, the relevance of committee affiliation, informal network structures and all kinds of information flows. It is also able to capture these empirical in an EU context. Hence, the main hypotheses that one could derive from the research presented throughout this chapter would be:

H1: Personal networks will have an impact on which actors are receiving what type of information at what time during EU decision-making.

Given the relevance of committees on building information networks within a policy, a more precise hypothesis could also be:

H2: Information networks based on the involvement of actors in different committees or other types of policy-events should be advantageous for those actors during EU decision-making process.

As it will be demonstrated in the following chapter, these hypotheses formulated above derived inductively from previous EU research and general observations can also be deduced from a purely network theoretical argumentation. It will be shown that network structures of policy networks and the positions that different actors occupy within these networks (independent variables) should be a strong predictor for which actors or clusters of actors get informed timelier or which of these actors receive more relevant information than other (groups of) actors in the network (*'informedness'* being the dependent variable). This could bring us to conclusions similar to the statement that “multilevel players” tend to occupy “a central position in the multilevel policy networks” by Eising (2004: 235) or similar to Knoke’s (1993: 24) hypothesis that “[a]ctors on the periphery of information networks, whose direct and indirect ties link them mainly to other marginal actors, will encounter inadequate quantities and qualities of information.” With regard to EU politics, this could lead to the broad working hypothesis that:

H3: Multi-level actors with good contacts to the Brussels sphere as the central arena in EU policy-making should be better informed than others without this access.

The challenge for the following chapter will be to operationalise this general hypothesis based on the theoretical concepts of network theory, to develop more specific hypotheses and to discuss relevant ways of measuring the hypotheses' variables taking into account EU committee structures.

Chapter III

Network theory, network analysis and networks in political science

3.1 Chapter structure

3.2 Network theory: A distinct social and political science paradigm

3.3 Basic concepts of network theory

3.3.1 Relations

3.3.2 Cohesion

3.3.3 Positions & roles

3.3.4 Small and Real World networks

3.3.5 Focus: Two-mode and affiliation networks

3.4 Information flows in networks

3.4.1 General theoretical thoughts

3.4.2 Characteristics of flow process in networks

3.4.3 Empirical findings on flow processes in networks

3.5 Social network analysis (SNA) in political science

3.5.1 SNA and information flows in political science

3.5.2 Focus: Two-mode and affiliation networks in political science

3.6 Conclusions and hypotheses

3.1 Chapter structure

This chapter introduces all relevant theoretical and methodological bases to understand and study the relationship between networks and information flows. Section 3.2 will present network theory as a distinct social science paradigm. This distinctiveness should lay out why network theory and network analysis can be considered the most appropriate approaches for studying informational aspects that are in the focus of this study. Section 3.3 will define and explain basic concepts that come with network theory and that are necessary to capture empirical phenomena with a network-theoretic perspective. Section 3.4 will then pay particular attention to the link between networks, network structures and information flows before Section 3.5 will provide an overview over network theory and network analysis in political science. Section 3.3 and Section 3.5 also contain specific sections on affiliation networks as a specific type of networks. Affiliation networks will be important in the empirical chapters as the network data presented in Chapter 5 is based on *affiliation* to EU committee events. Section 3.6 will close this chapter and provide a set of hypotheses which will be tested throughout Chapters 5-7.

3.2 Network theory: A distinct social and political science paradigm

Policy networks and networks in the political realm have been studied in a wide range of fields (Schneider et al. 2007), and the relevance of networks and networking in politics is hard to contest to the extent that it is trivial to even make this assessment. Analyses of policy networks, in which governmental and non-governmental actors on different political and administrative levels representing a multitude of interests interact, have for example uncovered the existence of “*iron triangles*” between interest groups, governmental bodies and Congressional committees that formed stable policy subsystems in the political system of the United States of America (Howlett 2002: 238). Follow-up research on such systems in the USA and Europe revealed that the robustness of these iron triangles was not necessarily constant across all policies and all environments but that some systems were more open than others (Howlett 2002: 239). Even within a subsystem, there were different levels of involvement, with “*discourse communities*” in which a general awareness for a policy at hand exists on the one side and more narrow “*interest networks*” in which actors entered into actual exchanges of policy resources such as power and influence on the other side (Howlett 2002:

248). These findings suggest that within each policy field in and across given regional, national, or transnational polities there may be a set of actors with a more or less close involvement in the political discourses and political interactions that form and structure the policy and the outcomes of political processes in the respective policy field. In these studies, the connection between policy networks and outcomes of policy processes is hypothesised as being dependent on three central variables, namely “the structure of the network”, “the interactions between the actors in the network” and “contextual factors” such as “broader political structures and climate” (Marsh 1998: 193). The concept of *policy networks*, and the relevant questions that can be asked when turning the focus to mixed and interdependent actor networks, offer valuable insights into the complex nature of modern policy making.

However, what many of the studies on policy networks lack is a clear conceptualisation of networks and structures, a conceptualisation that allows the formulation of network theoretic hypotheses that take into account empirically measurable structures where *difference in structure* can account for *difference in outcome*. These concepts are available and they have been employed mainly in Social Network Analysis (SNA), a methodological tool set that has been criticised for its lack of theory (Bernhard 2008: 121). This research however is based on the conviction that the study of networks in general and policy networks in particular has to be grounded in network theory as a distinct – yet not necessarily separate – social science paradigm, which is not just a purely methodological approach as is often accused to be. With a few basic assumptions about reality, network theory can generate hypotheses that can be tested against empirical observations, and it has proven to provide explanations for a variety of social and political phenomena that cannot be understood unless we take a network perspective on them. Consequently, if the basic assumptions of network theory are true, we should be able to observe different outcomes of social processes when network structures differ, changing outcomes when structures change, stable outcomes when the network structure remains the same and similar outcomes when network structures are similar (cf. Borgatti et al. 2009: 895). If we apply this to policy networks, for example in the context of EU policy-making, we should be able to find policy subsystems of a variety of state and non-state actors, the structure of which should have an impact on the outcome of related social and political processes. This shall be one of the central claims of this study.

Following this argumentation, the main assumption of network theory in a political science context is that network structures have an influence on policy processes and outcomes

(Howlett 2002: 236), both for individual actors as well as for the systems we study. When looking at empirical reality with glasses coloured by network theory, our focus has to be primarily on relations between political actors, not their attributes as it is often done in social sciences (Heaney & McClurg 2009: 729; Heidler 2006: 24). The reason to do so is that the core concept of political science – *power* – is “inherently relational” (Knoke 1993: 24) both in its coercive and its persuasive form (“dominance” and “domination” in the terminology of Knoke 1993). In the same way, the concept of *influence* is also a relational concept. Hence, if we want to understand power and influence, we need to understand power and influence *structures*, and through network theoretic lenses these structures are detectable in our empirical reality. Network theory can help to see the causal conditions that network structures provide for the emergence of social phenomena, both at the micro-level (individuals), the meso-level (groups) and at the macro level (complex groups; full populations). By focusing on relational patterns, network theory can capture structural embeddedness of individuals as well as structurally induced social process (including the absence of such processes) that affect smaller as well as larger sets of social actors.

With regard to individual actors, network theory starts with the assumption that agency is structurally embedded through direct and indirect relations. The combination of social entities and their *relations* then yields concrete structures that are called “*networks*”. These concrete empirical structures have consequences both for actors occupying certain positions within these structures, positions that are based direct and indirect relation to others, as well as for the collective outcomes that such relational systems can produce (cf. Knoke & Kuklinsky 1982: 13, cited after Heidler 2006). Agency-oriented network theory thus assumes first of all that actors' “attempts at purposive action are embedded in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations” (Granovetter 1985: 487), a view one could call “structural individualism” (Udehn 2002: 495). Different to a structural determinism, actors are seen as capable of perceiving their structural environment and to react in accordance with their pre-existing or socially formed preferences (cf. Frenzen & Nakamoto 1993: 374).

Network theory is based on different assumptions about how network structure unfolds its effects on actors. These effects, which are often interpreted as “social influence” (Leenders 2002) or “contagion” (e.g. Burt 1992: 13), are based in two different views that have their origins or counterparts in different threads of social science theory. Burt (1980: 80; own highlight) summarised this as follows:

*“[T]he **relational approach** develops social-psychological concepts of differentiation. Network structure is described in terms of the typical relations in which individuals are involved and the extent to which actors are connected within cohesive primary groups as cliques. The **positional approach** develops more sociological and anthropological concepts of differentiation. Network structure is described as interlocked, differentially prestigious, status/role-sets, in terms of which actors in a system are stratified.”*

Where networks are explanatory factors for influence on *attitudes* or *behaviours* of individual actors, Leenders (2002: 27) translates these two approaches into “*communication*”, which captures the relational aspects, and “*comparison*”, which captures the positional aspects. Actors' beliefs are expected to be influenced by their direct interaction with others and the influence these others exert on them through communication. At the same time, actors' behaviours are expected to be influenced by the conscious and unconscious imitation through comparison with similarly positioned others to which an actor is not necessarily related but the behaviour of which can still be observed (Leenders 2002: 28). In this view, networks are consequential for the ways in which actors behave because they can either be directly influenced by their immediate contacts or because they imitate the behavioural role sets they can copy from others in the same structural situation. A political advisor can for example influence her boss by conveying certain information (*communication*), while two political advisors to different bosses may do this in the same way because one copies the behaviour of the other in a similar position - both in relation to their bosses and to the rest of their organisations (*comparison*).

There are other theoretical approaches that look at the causal implications of relational and positional aspects of networks with a slightly different theoretical and empirical focus, although the effects may be the same in concrete empirical situations. DiMaggio (1986: 345) differentiates the relational approach (“*cohesion analysis*”) as grounded in exchange theory while the positional approach (“*structural equivalence analysis*”) is seen to be grounded in role theory. The difference of DiMaggio's cohesion argument is that compared to Leenders' social influence perspective with its focus on attitudes and behaviour, the specific attention of DiMaggio is on access to certain resources. Relations provide access to resources; through their relations to others, actors can tap into a resource pool to which those others have direct access and they can acquire these resources in exchange for offering similar access to their own resource pool. The difference to Leenders' argumentation with regard to positional aspects stems from the fact that Leenders is mainly interested in the inter-actor process of influence. DiMaggio's wider sociological argument is that similar behaviour induced by

actors' positions may not just be based on imitation and hence the ability of *ego* to observe *alter's* behaviour but that positional similarity may yield similar behaviour, or at least similar options for behaviour, even beyond the range of observation of *ego* (cf. DiMaggio 1986: 345). In this broader view, actors in similar positions within one network or actors in similar positions in different networks will face similar structural constraints and opportunities even though the substantive nature of these constraints and opportunities may differ. Similar behaviour of actors in similar positions is seen as a direct causal effect of the structure, not necessarily the imitation of similar others. With a view to resource access, this yields the conclusion that certain positions make certain resources generally more easily available to all those occupying the position, no matter who the actor is.

What unites all network theoretic approaches independent of the concrete perspective – often guided by the research question – is that they demand particular empirical attention to *relations* between social entities. Based upon this relational view follows a “twin notions of structure and position” (Borgatti & Halgin 2011: 5), from which then follow certain “network functions”. The most commonly of those functions studied in network theory is “the flow or distribution of information”. In this field of study, networks are considered a cause for information flows in a “flow or pipe model” (Borgatti & Halgin 2011: 5).

If network theory is able to generate valid predictions for social and political phenomena, information flows should be explicable with the help of its two major concepts, cohesion and positions. Network theoretic hypotheses have to be based on an operationalisation of these two concepts through which positions can be defined and cohesion can be measured. Similar positions should have similar consequence with regard to information flows or levels of informedness of actors, while the difference in cohesion between (groups of) actors should cause different levels of informedness or differences in information flows. Cohesion and positions are thus causal conditions or explanatory variables for social processes such as information flows in network theory.

While this is a commonly shared model used by many network theorists, it should be noted that Heaney (2009: 2) raises doubts whether one can import notions of causality from other sciences or whether they need modification when applied to political networks. Fowler (2009: 11) in the same volume argues for example that observations of supposed network effects on attitudes or behaviour may not necessarily prove influence but may also be random, the

consequence of homophily (meaning that actors with a certain set of attributes are more likely to link with actors that have similar attributes) or unobserved “contextual effects” that are not network-related. Information distribution may in this view not always be the result of network structure effects but of other dynamics ignored in a purely relational perspective. Nevertheless, network theory still provides one of the most convincing models and generates hypothesis that we can use to explain information flows.

In summary, analysing networks in political science means to acknowledge the reality of interdependence of actors and processes. This acknowledgement underlines that “[i]nterdependence may be seen as a theoretical statement that stands on its own feet – as a fundamental theoretical postulate that drives politics and political affairs” and which “requires an explicit attentiveness to the attendant observational challenges” (Huckfeldt 2009: 925) that interdependence and networks imply. Extending the actor-centric view on how networks have consequences for individuals and looking to the aggregate level, network theory assumes that social, cultural, and political processes within relational systems are influenced by the overall structural properties of the network. The way in which these social processes take place and the ways in which they affect individuals, sub-groups or even the network as a whole depends on the structural patterns within these networks. They create opportunities and constraints for those involved in the network and they therefore influence processes such as the sharing and diffusion of information throughout the network. Network structure therefore does not just influence how each individual is affected by social processes such as information diffusion, network structure is also influencing if and how certain social processes unfold at all.

3.3 Basic concepts of network theory

3.3.1 Relations

Network theory uses the term “network” not as a metaphor but as a concrete concept that we can observe in the social reality. Networks are sets of *nodes* (vertices, actors) that are connected through directed or undirected, weighted or unweighted, simple or multiplex *ties* (edges, relations). This or similar definitions are used most frequently (cf. Wasserman and Faust 1994: 20) to define the general network concept in social network analysis⁶.

⁶ Throughout this research, unless otherwise specified, a network will be regarded as an undirected graph.

Unlike in classical social enquiry, the relations between social entities in a network are the core element of interest in social network theory. In classical social inquiry, entities and their inherent properties – such as age, gender and education of individuals or size, budget or legal basis of organisations – have mainly been in the focus of causal explanations. However, as relations constitute networks and their structural properties, they are in focus in network theory. Direct and indirect relations and the network structures they form define the shape of networks and the positions of entities within these networks. The presence or absence of relations is regarded as the cause for social processes such as individual behaviour, the flow of information or the stability of social organisations. Properties of the nodes of a network are only secondary in this perspective. Nevertheless, the choice of nodes of a network defines the type of relations, the type of networks and the type of social processes we can and want to observe: two countries cannot be in a *love relationship*, two political leaders are rarely linked through a *motorway*, and a social event is never a *member* of a political party. Relations such as *affectionate ties*, *physical links* or *membership* are all possible ways to link certain social entities. Which type of relation is relevant depends on the research question and related methodological decisions. In other words, what constitutes a concrete network in social science research should be derived from theoretical considerations (cf. Ouelette 2008: 10) about the case(s) at hand and the phenomena that want to be understood or explained through the study of one or several networks. While in one study the frequency of interaction between civil society representatives may be of interest to understand the formation of similar attitudes towards government decisions, a second study of the same population could measure the existence of adversarial relations to explain the lack of cooperation between the respective civil society organisations on issues of common interest. Given the diverse ways in which relations can be conceptualised and measured, the operationalisation of networks, and network relations, needs to be disclosed and explained, because studying the same network with different methods can yield quite diverging findings (Wuchty 2009), for instance depending on whether one uses self-reported relationships or actual behavioural data (Eagle et al. 2009). Using “network” as a metaphor without revealing what constitutes the conceptual framing and without empirical measurement of social relations is thus not sufficient in a stringent network theoretic and network analytic approach.

Probably the best-known theoretical concept in network research is Granovetter's (1973) “Strength of Weak Ties” and the related differentiation between *weak* and *strong* relations. Granovetter used three indicators to measure the strength of relations, namely *frequency of*

interaction, reciprocity of the relation, and the friendship nature of a tie. His main theoretical argument, tested empirically with information flows on job offers, was that weak ties are more suited to provide novel information because they often represent relations actors have to contacts in other social groups where other types of information are exchanged than in their direct sphere of frequent (i.e. *strong*) interaction. Follow-up research on this concept found that the strength of weak ties was especially visible for information outside one's own “organisational subsystem”, while strong ties were better suited to channel intra-subsystem information (Friedkin 1982: 284). In most recent research, it has been found that whether or not information is shared through a weak or a strong tie can also depend on the general context, where weak ties only serve as information flow tubes when the actor possessing the information is aware that the second actor actually has a strong interest in the information, making information transfer through strong relations more likely than Granovetter's findings suggest (Marin 2012). What these perspectives reveal is that when we conceptualise or measure relations as constitutive elements of a network, we may sometimes be focused only on the abstraction of the presence (or the absence) of a relation. However, the type and meaning of relations can also be consequential, for instance to formulate predictions about the type of transactions or interactions that can take place (or not) between actors through the relation (Fuhse 2009: 52). Hypotheses about network effects should therefore have an understanding of why the relations that constitute the network(s) at hand can cause certain phenomena and under what conditions, such as strength or meaning, it is expected that these effects become possible or more likely to occur.

In summary, a network theoretic approach acknowledges that dyadic, actor-to-actor relations are constitutive for the construction of networks and are thus basic units of observation in a network theoretic approach. Yet, the actual theoretical and empirical added value of network theory begins when we leave the dyad and start looking at triads (relations between sets of three actors) and the wider relational pattern of networks. The following sections will therefore define important structural concepts in network theory and network analysis such as clusters and positions, which are needed to understand the idea of Small World networks and the impact of network structures on information flows.

3.3.2 Cohesion

"A common property of social networks is that cliques form, representing circles of friends or acquaintances in which every member knows every other member." (Albert & Barabási 2002: 49)

In everyday language, “network” often means a group of connected persons or organisations. A “network” may or may not be recognisable as a group to the outside world, for instance because those who are part of “the network” rarely meet all at the same time and the same place, which is why the term has often been employed for secretive operations. The idea of cohesion as the close and dense interconnection of network actors is one of the more intuitively understandable concepts in network theory. The relevance of cohesion in networks is seen in the “social forces operating through direct contact of subgroup members”, especially when considering “relative cohesion ... compared to outside the subgroup” (Wassermann & Faust 1994: 251). The existence of cohesive groups is thus consequential for those who are within the group and those who are not in the group as well as for a network as a whole. Given this expected causal relevance of cohesive subgroups, one important task of social network analysis therefore is to detect such groups within wider network structures.

The starting point for the idea of networks as groups or groups in networks is the concept of *density*. As we have seen in the previous section, the presence or absence of ties (of a certain strength or meaning) is constitutive for networks and the effects that can unfold in a network. If we leave the level of dyadic relations and look to triads, groups of three actors, we find that the triad may be connected in several ways, from (a) no relation between the three to (b) one dyad of two and an isolate third, to (c) two dyads where one actor is the link between two others to (d) a fully *transitive* triad in which all three are connected (e.g. Frank 1970: 200). If we add the notion of strong and weak ties or the direction of ties, there are even more possible combinations characterising the density of interrelation between three actors. This density of interconnection in a triad may already give insights about possible dynamics in such a micro-network, for example in case (c) where two actors who are not directly linked may depend on the middle actor as broker until they develop a tie between themselves.

Now, if we take into account the presence or absence of ties between *all* actors within a network, we measure the overall density of the network calculated as the number of realised ties divided by the maximum number of possible ties (cf. Wassermann & Faust 1994: 101-2).

As exemplified for a simple triad, density as a measure that captures the presence or absence of ties across any set of nodes in a network is to be considered an important property for understanding cohesion, both when taking into account overall network density and when looking at the density of sub-sections of a network. A high density of a network or of a set of actors in a network means that the (sub-)network is strongly connected and that certain effects such as the transmission of social behaviour or the flow of information are more likely to happen or can happen more rapidly because there are either many ways through which these transmission processes can occur or because the amount of interaction between all those involved in a dense network is so high that transmission processes are much more likely than in sparse networks. This assumption applies not just for networks as a whole but also for denser subsets of the networks that one could call *groups* or *clusters*. In a network that has a low overall density - many of the theoretically possible relations between all the actors in the network are not realised - there can still be more densely connected cohesive subgroups where groups of actors are much more connected than the a random sample of actors from the whole network would be (see the concept of Small and Real World networks in Section 3.3.4). Identifying those groups is one of the crucial tasks of social network analysis because, as cohesion is considered consequential for social processes such as information flows, finding cohesive groups in a network can help to understand similarities between actors within these groups or to explain differences between actors that belong to different cohesive subgroups.

In order to find subgroups in a network, it is necessary to look at certain properties that can characterise a level of cohesion, which qualifies a set of actors as a group (cf. Wassermann & Faust 1994: 251). Depending on the strictness with which one defines a group, one can be looking for *cliques* – “maximal complete subgraph[s] of three or more nodes” (Wassermann & Faust 1994: 254) where all possible relations are realised, *n-cliques* – “maximal subgraph[s] in which the largest geodesic distance between any two nodes is no greater than n” (Wassermann & Faust 1994: 258), *k-plexes* in which “each node ... may be lacking ties to no more than k subgraph members” (Wassermann & Faust 1994: 256) or *k-cores* “in which each node is adjacent to at least a minimum number, k, of the other nodes in the subgraph” (Wassermann & Faust 1994: 266). By defining *n* for *n-cliques* or *k* for *k-plexes* and *k-cores*, the researcher is also defining the strictness with which the concept of **cohesion** is applied with regard to **social distance** (*n*) or **levels of interconnectedness** (*k*). These distinctions show that everyday notions of “a network” can describe quite different social realities with quite different potential consequences, even at very low complexity levels. Certain social

processes such as the spreading of similar tastes or behaviours may for example not just occur in perfect cliques where everyone is related to everyone else but where it is enough that actors are in a social distance of maximum two or three steps in order to adapt to a certain behaviour or to still receive certain information in the network (cf. effects of social distance on obesity presented by Christakis and Fowler (2007: 375)). Where networks are based on valued relations (e.g. strong and weak ties), subgroup analyses can focus “on subsets of actors among whom ties are strong or frequent” (Wassermann & Faust 1994: 277) in order to detect groups of a relatively strong cohesion. In other words, while one may be able to identify a perfect clique of 20 actors in a network, only a subgroup of 10 actors within this clique can be found to be strongly related. If strength is considered relevant for the social process one wants to study through the network, it may be necessary to ignore all weak relations for an analysis of cohesive subgroups within this network. Over time, other measures than searching for cliques or k-plexes have been developed to discover cohesive subgroups. One of the methods to identify such groups is clustering analysis. The aim of clustering analysis is to separate “sparsely connected dense subgraphs from each other” (Brandes et al. 2007: 2), that is to identify certain groups or subgroups within a network in which nodes are connected more densely while there are relatively few intergroup-ties. This (and other related methods) partition a set of actors into sub-sets so that the more densely connected actors are assigned to the same clusters, thereby separating a network into a number of clusters of larger and small membership. In order to measure in how far network actors actually tend to form such denser sub-networks, Watts and Strogatz (1998: 441) have proposed the *clustering coefficient*, both for individual nodes and for the overall network⁷. The clustering coefficient of an individual node is the number of realised relations of the direct contacts of the node divided by the number of possible relations between all neighbours. The clustering coefficient for the whole network is the average of all individual clustering coefficients. For an individual, the clustering coefficient measures the tendency of the actor to be either part of a dense group (high coefficient) or to link different groups or actors that would otherwise be unconnected (low coefficient). For the whole network, the clustering coefficient indicates the tendency of actors included in the network to form dense groups.

We will see later in this study that one aspect conducive to the creation of dense groups or cliques is **spatial and informational proximity resulting from joint affiliation** to the same

⁷ The clustering coefficient as proposed by Watts and Strogatz is based on dichotomous ties. In order to take into account tie strength, Opsahl and Panzarasa (2009) have proposed a generalised clustering coefficient.

organisations or events (cf. Davies et al. 2003: 307). A clique of friends may be formed and re-enforced because these friends take part in the same social activity such as a sports club (Zachary 1984) or because they have a common meeting space such as a bar. Similar effects may create cliques or dense communities of politicians or officials who are members of the same organisations and meet during regular committee meetings, conferences or social activities related thereto. In particular through the tie-enforcing nature of group-related activities, relations within cliques or dense groups tend to be stronger than relations that reach outside these groups, providing trust and a shared common framework for all members of such a group. Even Granovetter's (1973) argumentation on why weak ties may provide informational advantages (cf. previous section) is actually an argument that goes beyond the single tie but looks further at structural properties of a network such as density and actors' positions within the wider network structures. Granovetter argues that while dense groups based on frequent relations may be able to provide trust-based support, they may not serve as sources of novel information because the frequency of interaction within such groups results in similar levels of awareness for the same (non-novel) information. However, what his argument also suggests is that once novel information reaches a strongly connected group, it is very likely that all actors will receive the information in relatively short time. Following this line of thought, the identification of cohesive subgroups within networks may be one path that may help us to understand why certain actors are similarly (well or badly) informed in a given context.

3.3.3 Positions & roles

In the previous section, the relevance of density and cohesive subgroups in networks has been presented, noting that in everyday speech, the term “network” is frequently used as a description of such groups of actors that are somehow (densely) connected to each other. While this may be the most intuitive way to look at networks, network theory and network analysis allow a perspective on networks that goes beyond this group-centric network term. This second theoretical perspective takes into account the positions that different actors occupy within the overall structure of a network created by the concrete relational patterns between actors. Similarities and differences between the positions of actors within the same network or across different networks are considered consequential for social processes and similarities or differences in actors' roles, their scope of action or their levels influence (cf.

Borgatti & Everett 1994: 1-2). The notion of 'position' has been conceptualised in different ways in network theory and network analysis, and two main approaches have crystallised that capture positions both theoretically and empirically. The *first approach* sees positions in networks as an indicator of importance, using measures that rank nodes according to their status or levels of control in a network. This first approach is probably the best known in network analysis, in particular since Freeman's (1979) seminal article on *centrality*. It looks at actors' positions with regard to the constraints or opportunities that these positions provide to actors and to their environment and ranks actors with regard to their network importance. This importance is measured as centrality. In some central positions, actors have access to more resources or they can get resources such as information quicker than others. In other central positions, actors can have control over the transmission of resources or they can be responsible for the rapid transmission of ideas within the network. The *second approach* sees position as indications of actors' social and structural *similarity*, defining positions according to actors' relations with the same or similar others without necessarily considering one position more important than others. Measures of structural or regular equivalence, measures of relational similarity or blockmodelling are the main methods and concepts used to capture this second type of actors' similarity in networks. These concepts are based on the idea of social roles that actors in certain positions have because of their relations to the same or to similar others (cf. Heidler 2006: 28; cf. Winship & Mandel 1983/84: 324). These similarities can be consequential for actors even if they are not directly related to each other (DiMaggio 1986: 345).

The study of centrality has emerged to be one of the core elements of what quantitative social network analysis is associated with. An ongoing rich theoretical and empirical discussion about the conceptual and mathematical foundations of different centrality measures is a proof of the relevance of this perspective on networks. Current debates on centrality cover for instance temporal node centrality (Kim & Anderson 2012) or centrality in weighted networks (Opsahl et al. 2010). The bases of this debate are usually Freeman's (1979) three basic types of centrality, which have shaped to a large extent and up until today the understanding of what constitutes centrality. These three are '**degree**' as the number of ties a node has to other nodes, '**closeness**' as the average geodesic distance (i.e. distance along the shortest path) to all other nodes in a network, and '**betweenness**' as the frequency with which an actor is on the shortest network paths between all pairs of nodes. There are many more centrality measures, including many derived from the three mentioned here, but these three remain the best known and most

widely used. In an attempt to classify all the different types of centrality measures, Borgatti and Everett (2006) proposed a differentiation into *radial* and *medial* centralities and into centralities that focus on the *volume* or the *length* of walks to measure nodes' positions. The most important distinction for them is the one between radial and medial measures, as "the choice between radial and medial measures can be seen in terms of the distinct roles played by nodes in the network" (Borgatti & Everett 2006: 480). They argue, "radial centrality [such as closeness] summarizes a node's connectedness with the rest of the network" (478) while medial measures such as betweenness capture "the number of walks that pass through a given node" (473-4). Radial centrality measures thus view an actor's position in an assumed core-periphery structure of a network (477), while medial measures can be used to detect actors in positions that serve as "bridges between subgroups" (480). With an information flow perspective, radial measures describe an actor's ability to tap into the informational resources of the whole network, both with regard to quantity and with regard to timing. Medial measures in contrast describe an actor's ability to control information flows. However, both types of centrality measures implicitly assume that the underlying networks ideally possess a core-periphery structure (ibid.) and distinct subgroups between which bridges can exist. If these structural patterns do not exist, for instance in very dense networks, these measures may not be as instructive as they are in sparse and clustered networks.

Different to centrality measures, positional similarity represented through equivalence measures conceptualises actors' positions in networks not according to importance but according to their relations with the same and similar others. *Structural equivalence* of two actors means that both are related to exactly the same others in the same way (Borgatti & Everett 1994: 18). A less strict yet less difficult to capture concept is that of *regular equivalence* considering that two actors are regularly equivalent when they are related to equivalent others (Heidler 2006: 28). Two leaders of different political parties are thus regularly equivalent because they are related to equivalent others, i.e. party members while they are not structurally equivalent because they are not related to exactly the same party members. This would be the case in a political party with two political leaders who could then be structurally equivalent if they indeed were linked to the same others. Winship and Mandel generalise this type of equivalence as *role equivalence* where two actors are equivalent if they are related to others with the same role, independent of the number of actors with these roles (Winship & Mandel 1983/84: 324). Two political leaders from two different political parties will then be role equivalent if they are related to the same roles such as the parties' boards,

their direct political advisors and the party base, no matter with how many persons from each of these role sets they hold direct ties. In order to differentiate positions, a network is partitioned in such a way that each actor belongs to a specific equivalence set. One of the goals of partitioning a network into subsets of equivalent positions is “to simplify the information in network data set”, reducing the network to positions in order to understand the relations between these positions (Wassermann & Faust 1994: 361). A prominent method to do so is blockmodelling as introduced by White et al. (1976).

Both types of positional analysis are ways to describe social structures, to explain actors’ behaviour or to predict the outcome of social processes that take place in the context of a network. Centrality and equivalence measures are relevant ways to study positional similarities and differences between actors, and their mathematical representation helps to analyse large sets of network data in order to detect relevant actors and relevant patterns in the actor structure of networks.

While this quantitative approach is extremely useful, the development of network theory has also profited from more qualitative conceptualisations of positions such as Burt’s (1992) “*structural holes*” which develop the causal models that represent the theoretical added value when interpreting quantitative findings. In his definition, “[a] structural hole is a relationship of nonredundancy between two contacts” (Burt 1992: 18), which means that a structural hole is the relation between two actors who, apart from this relation, have non-overlapping contacts to cohesive groups in which each of them is placed, groups which would thus be unconnected if those two actors would not bridge the “hole”. The existence of bridges can be advantageous for the cohesive subgroups that are linked through them, for instance when resources that would otherwise not pass from one sub-network to the other can eventually flow through a bridge.

The bridge also reduces the relational costs for actors in both groups because they do not need to develop and maintain individual relations between each actor in each group but can rely on the bridging actors to organise intergroup transmissions. For those actor forming the bridge, being positioned at the structural hole gives them specific opportunities such as the ability to control flows between the two groups or access novel or early information from another group, information not yet available in her/his main reference group (cf. Burt 1992: 2). In the terms of the two major perspectives presented before, actors bridging structural holes do not only

hold similar (i.e. regularly equivalent) positions in network structures, they will also be more betweenness central than their direct peers as more shortest paths within a network will go through them thanks to their position *between* the cohesive subnetworks they link. The position they hold is often described as the *gatekeeper* position. Being a gatekeeper allows actors to steer information flows and to possibly trade their bridging role for influence or other exchange goods that they try to acquire.

Understanding positions in a network is therefore not just a methodological endeavour but a way to identify possibly consequential spots of a network in which actors may have advantages or disadvantages when it comes to the rapid access to or distribution of information. Those in similar positions should be similarly informed or should perform similar roles with regard to informational dynamics. Two highly closeness-central actors should in average be better informed than two actors in less central and thus peripheral positions of the network. Finding an actor in a gatekeeping position at a bridge between two dense clusters who does not have access to relevant information can help to explain why the group that depends on her or him is also not well-informed while another group with a better-informed gatekeeper is be more up-to-date. Hence, analysing actors' positions and comparing them to other actors' position can help to generate hypotheses about the levels of informedness and the role actors play in the informational sphere of a network.

3.3.4 Small and Real World networks

One of the reasons why network theory and network analysis provide an interesting framework for the analysis of political networks is that they focus the attention on certain empirical properties that many different types of networks exhibit. These properties, which are found as being regular or at least frequent patterns in real-world networks, may yield certain hypothesis about the effects that emerge from such common structures. Research on empirical network structures suggests that many networks are so-called 'small worlds', structures where - among other things - despite a large number of actors and relatively low density, the average shortest distance ('geodesic path') between all these actors is relatively short. This structural finding yields the hypothesis that in any network with such properties,

information may be able to flow quickly within a few steps between any two actors in the network⁸.

Increased attention to the set of common properties that lead to such short path lengths in many real-world networks⁹ started with the heavily cited contribution by Watts and Strogatz (1998)¹⁰, an article that for some has introduced the “post-1998 network analysis” (Latapy et al. 2008: 33). Real world networks’ properties are neither completely random nor completely regular. They show patterns on the “middle ground” with a high *clustering coefficient* (cf. Section 3.3.2) and comparatively low mean average geodesic path lengths compared to random or completely regular networks (Watts & Strogatz 1998: 440). Real world networks also tend to show a power law distribution of degrees of nodes. With this distribution, a large number of nodes have low degree centrality while only a small number of nodes have a very large degree centrality (Latapy et al. 2008: 33). In other words, there are many people with just a few contacts and few people with a large number of contacts in real-world networks. The reason for the short average path length are so-called “short cuts”, bridges in the network that shorten the distance between otherwise unconnected or very distant actors or clusters of actors (Watts & Strogatz 1998: 440). Due to the positive effects of cohesion in groups, having them connected through short cuts allows information not only to pass from one actor in one cohesive subgroup to another actor in another cohesive subgroup, but afterwards also to spread quickly to many actors in the second cluster as the concept of cohesion suggests.

If we translate these findings to political networks, for example to a social movement, a small world structure should be found where there are many densely connected local groups where everyone knows almost everyone else (property: *clustering*). These groups are linked through intergroup relations that some actors of these groups have with other actors in other groups (property: *bridges* or *short cuts*) or because some mobile actors are members in two or more groups. These patterns result in small worlds because, while most social movement participants only have a few relations to others, usually those in their immediate group or cluster, a few actors manage to get into positions where they link a large number of groups

⁸ This idea represented in the popular myth - based on a simplified interpretation of Milgram's (1967) experiment - that anyone can reach any other person on earth within six steps. The original research however counted only the physical transmission of letters and counted only those few letters that actually arrived.

⁹ Given the non-trivial nature of the network properties of many real world networks, they have also studied under the header "complex networks" (Cairney 2010: 3; Barmpoutis & Murray 2010: 1), some of which with small-world properties.

¹⁰ Cited over 13,000 times in August 2011 according to Google Scholar.

through their many relations to others in different groups (property: *power law distribution* of degrees), eventually becoming quasi-leaders even if no such position exists in the social movement. It is these actors that shorten the average path length between any two actors within the network. As discussed in a previous section, those positions then may provide them with special roles as information and power brokers or gatekeepers, which may either foster information diffusion or hinder it, depending on the number of bridges and information behaviour of actors in such bridging positions.

Small world properties in networks thus raise the expectation that such networks foster the diffusion of information, making that (some) information can theoretically reach anyone in the network quickly (cf. Davies et al. 2003: 322). However, there are not many studies that actually test this hypothesis empirically (Schnettler 2009: 171), and those few that have tested it rather led to the conclusion that:

"one could also argue that only under very specific conditions of extremely high newsworthiness and widespread personal relevance of an information, does diffusion occur rapidly and can thus outperform broadcast media services" (Schnettler 2009: 171).

I will come back to this argument in Section 3.4 with more specific attention to information flows in networks. One type of network that we observe frequently in political contexts - affiliation networks - may by definition exhibit properties of small world networks (as indicated by Davies et al. 2003). Said differently, small world networks may come out of affiliation-induced structures such as membership in organisations or participation in events. In result, we may find that affiliation-based (political) networks may foster information flow effects that are expected in the small world network literature.

3.3.5 Focus: Two-mode and affiliation networks

Social network analysis in its classical form considers dyadic relations between social entities of the same type (or 'mode') forming one-mode networks such as networks of individuals or networks of organisations. In addition to this single-mode view, Breiger's (1974) article on "*The Duality of Persons and Groups*" defines another type of network(s). He highlights that networks of individuals are formed through joint *affiliation* to certain groups where these individuals interact. According to this view, it is affiliation to collective entities that creates ties between individuals. And as much as these entities link individuals, they themselves are

linked through their joint individual members, thus the “*duality of persons and groups*”. Most commonly, co-affiliation is regarded as “a proxy for interpersonal contact, especially if the affiliation group is small and socially cohesive” (Rawlings & McFarland 2011: 1002). It is therefore not surprising that in the empirical part of his article, Breiger uses what has been named “[t]he most used example of a two-mode network” (Doreian et al. 2004: 30), that is the data set by Davis et al. (1941) on a relatively small network of 18 women from the US-American south and their affiliation to and linkage through a number of relatively small joint social events. Breiger’s article can be considered the basis of the current work on affiliation networks and the data set he uses is one of the oldest that still receives frequent scholarly attention. The idea that networks link persons through joint events into social *circles*, *groups* or *cliques* is actually much older than that. Caulkins (1981) rediscovers through an 1857 study of circles of Norwegian farmers that the roots of this concept reach back at least 150 years. Today, research around what Breiger (1974: 183) calls “membership network analysis” has become explicitly recognised (cf. Wassermann & Faust 1994: 292). This subfield of network analysis is usually referenced as *affiliation*, *two-mode* or *bipartite* network analysis and the debate around the analysis and visualisation of such networks has seen contributions from major networks scholars (e.g. Borgatti & Everett 1997).

In abstract terms, such networks are hypernetworks (McPherson 1982) consisting of two sets (modes) of nodes (conventionally named set n and set m) where elements from set n are only linked to elements from set m (and vice versa). In two-mode networks, there are hence neither direct links between elements of set n nor between elements of set m . If n is a set of persons and m a set of events, then persons are only linked to events and events only to persons in a two-mode network. Those bipartite networks can be converted to weighted or unweighted one-mode networks (cf. Breiger 1974: 183; cf. Wassermann & Faust 1994: 307-312) to be analysed with the standard measures of social network analysis. The weighted one-mode person-by-person matrix transposed from a persons-to-events bipartite network represents “the number of events shared by pairs of actors” (Wassermann & Faust 1994: 307) while in the weighted transposed event-by-event matrix we would measure links between events through the number of joint participants (Wassermann & Faust 1994: 308). Transposing two-mode networks into unweighted one-mode networks in the form of binary matrices where a tie between n_i and n_j is either present or absent can be done by applying a threshold to the weighted matrices, for instance considering that a tie between two persons exists when they co-participated in at least one (two, three, the average number, all, etc.) event(s).

Joint affiliation such as co-membership and co-participation are frequently regarded as supportive or even constitutive of the development of ties. Depending on the operationalisation of a social relation, it can either be sufficient to consider co-affiliation as a type of social relation, even if this does not in all cases result in direct interaction. If social relations are operationalised as existent only if there is a direct interaction between two actors, co-affiliation can be considered a necessary yet not a sufficient condition for the development of a concrete dyadic social relation (cf. Rausch 2010). While this view focuses on co-affiliation as a *type of tie*, affiliation is also thought to be “a structural feature which [...] can be useful and important *sui generis*” (McPherson 1982: 227). Being affiliated to an organisation may allow access to organisational resources as much as affiliation to an event may allow access to information distributed (only) during this event. Ties measured through affiliation are also not necessarily “positive affective” ties because rivals or neutral contacts may also be members of the same organisation or participants to the same event. Nevertheless, they can still exert influence on each other (Borgatti & Everett 1997: 246; also: Fujimoto et al. 2011: 2), exchange information (e.g. during a controversial debate) or be exposed to the same thirds or the same affiliation-related influences (i.e. “*affiliation exposure*” in the terminology of Fujimoto et al. 2011). A stronger co-affiliation may thus represent “the potential for some kind of tie to develop” (Borgatti & Everett 1997: 246) as well as exposure to similar influences. Co-affiliation in the latter sense might also be considered a specific type of similarity measure with structural implications.

The most intuitive and most frequently applied way of working with two-mode data is through one-mode projections. An important property of one-mode projections of affiliation networks is that they have high clustering coefficients (Latapy et al. 2008: 34). The reason for this is that, for example, the result of the one-mode projection of a two-mode network including event m_1 in which actors n_1 to n_5 participate generates a clique of the actors n_1 to n_5 with maximal density. A single event thus would create ten inter-person ties in the one-mode projection. In larger sets of persons and events, each event then results in clusters of actors, leading by virtue of the method to a high clustering coefficient. Knowing that high clustering is an important property of real world networks (see Section 3.3.4), one may assume that projections of affiliations may be able to represent real-world network structures correctly. However, one-mode projections of bipartite graphs also tend to be quite dense (Latapy et al. 2008: 34), a property that one does not find in real-world networks which are usually rather sparse because most actors can only keep up relations with a limited amount of other actors.

One-mode projections of bipartite networks therefore very likely *overestimate the amount of relations* between entities in a network, especially if co-affiliation is considered to be a proxy for concrete social relations. The solution to this problem is to work with projected networks in which relations are weighted according to the frequency of co-occurrence (Latapy et al. 2008: 34) or at least a projection that only reflects relations above a certain frequency threshold, for instance by considering only ties in the one-mode projection that represent a minimum number of joints events. Yet, while the threshold method reduces density it may also reduce clustering. When dealing with real data, one could therefore try to choose a threshold for which the reduced matrix represents real world properties. So far, there is however a lack of discussion on such kind of methodological decisions.

One of the most prominent empirical applications of affiliation and two-mode network analysis in social sciences can be found in the study of interlocking directorates (e.g. Mintz & Schwartz 1981; Davis et al. 2003; for a critical review: Mizruchi 1996). Joint membership in a directorate, board, or club (m) is considered to be linking directors (n). This type of research has attracted attention in particular because such interlocks are “simple to identify in publicly available information from highly reliable sources” (Mizruchi 1996: 271) but also because studies on interlocks predict a number of strategic choices of firms (Mizruchi 1996: 292). Similarly easy to obtain is two-mode data on scientific collaboration networks. In this field, links between scientists (n) are measured through co-authorship of academic papers and articles (m) (e.g. Newman 2001; Bettencourt et al. 2009; Yan & Ding 2009). Therefore, those networks are usually much larger than networks of interlocking directorates. Such analyses can be used to study the existence of subfields within each science or the importance of certain scientists (e.g. over time). The particular interest in the fields of co-directorship or co-citation may be explained by comparatively easy access to rather large and complete data sets of such two-mode networks. Getting one-mode network data for the same networks through the most frequently used network data generating methods, surveys or questionnaires, would in some cases require large amounts of researchers to conduct simultaneous field research. These efforts traditional efforts would be confronted with problematic amounts of missing data due to non-response or recall problems when it comes to relations to others (cf. Marsden 1990). In the light of the latter, affiliation data has been recognised as more reliable than data generated in field research through interviews or questionnaires. Information on affiliation (such as membership lists) can be obtained through more or less objective and complete written sources (Newman 2001: 2). This data is also available over long time periods.

The relevance of affiliation networks for information diffusion has also been recognised. Davis et al. (2003: 309) argue for example that, within the network of interlocking directorates of major US firms, interlocked boards of banks would create the inner circle of the US corporate elite, a circle that was important for the rapid spread of “vital information about capital flows”. In their view, “[b]oard ties have the advantage of providing thick, hands-on, high-level intelligence” (2003: 323). Other studies also consider that ties from interlocking directorates are relevant for access to information, although Haunschild and Beckman (1998: 816) assume that this mechanism will be less relevant when there are other information sources available. They find that alternative sources of information than contacts made through joint board membership are more relevant for large companies or companies whose leadership is a member in an important business circle, thereby having alternative routes to access information (Haunschild and Beckman 1998: 839).

This proves that, while joint affiliation may be considered an important basis for the activation of ties and for access to information, alternative sources can in some situations be similarly or even more advantageous. The following sections will look more in detail into the theoretical arguments for why and how network structures matter for information flows.

3.4 Information flows in networks

3.4.1 General theoretical thoughts

“Disseminating information in social networks is a complex and nuanced process that is the sum of many individual actions. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of social networks in the processes of disseminating and receiving information” (Hossain et al. 2007: 21)

It is accepted knowledge in network theory that social networks play “a fundamental role as a medium for the spread of information, ideas, and influence among its members” (quote from Kempe et al. 2003: 137; see also: Zachary 1984, Weimann 1983). The interrelation between network structures therefore has come up naturally in previous sections. The question is why and how certain things flow through networks, and the two main necessary theoretical concepts that help us to understand why and how things flow in networks have also already been presented: Relational cohesion and positional or role differentiation.

In summary, the first concept implies that strength and density of relations between actors are expected to define the level of similar informedness between those actors. The strength of

relations and multitude of very short paths in densely connected clusters should raise the probability and speed of information diffusion considerably. The second concept implies that actors who are not necessarily related but have similar positions in a network should be similarly informed or should perform similar functions with regard to the spread of information within the network. Two peripheral actors, even if placed at different ends of a network, should in average be less well informed than actors at the centre of the network, although there may be differences in specific cases. And two actors who connect different clusters to the “outside world” as brokers or gatekeepers should be able to determine in how far their cluster will be informed about matters that flow in the network.

The theoretical and empirical debates about Small and Real World networks in Section 3.3.4 have shown that we frequently find structural properties in empirical network research suggesting that there are certain common structural patterns characterising real world networks. In these networks, densely connected sub-networks exist as well as bridges in the form of short cuts. At the end of bridges, one often finds gatekeepers who may be responsible for the way in which information spreads in real-life situations. The latter highlights an important issue, namely the role of agency that Yamaguchi (1994: 59) has put forward as an essential factor for the transmission of information in social networks. This view is in line with the idea of “structural individualism” described in Section 3.2. In a socio-political network, the flow of information, although heavily influenced by the network structure, is therefore not a mechanic or deterministic process. Information flow is based upon actors who can make choices, choices that may reflect preferences about how and with whom to share information or that take into account the appropriateness of forwarding information to others (see the debates in: Marin 2012). When we look at these choices from a network theoretic angle, they are made possible or constrained by an actor’s concrete place in a network and by the properties of the structure that surround the actor. The combination of structure and choices are the causes and determinants for information flows in social networks. A network theoretic approach emphasises the structural conditions for these flows, not least because, while individual actors may be able to decide whether they themselves forward information to others, this may not prevent information from flowing through other channels if the structure allows. Understanding information flows or their absence is thus expected to be possible only when considering network theoretic concepts and making use network analytic tools. The rationale for understanding those network-structured information flows, their trajectories and timing, is that those who obtain information gain advantages by having the information and

that getting information later reduces the value of the information (Kim 2010: 96). Depending where the information flow starts and how it propagates, different actors will receive relevant information at different times. The questions that need to be asked are: Who is informed about what at what time in a network? Are all types of information flowing in the same way? What structural features impact information flows in what ways? What do positions tell about the informational role that individual actors play and how can we use positional measures to predict actors' level of informedness?

3.4.2 Characteristics of flow processes in networks and their implication

The recent theoretical and methodological interest in flow processes in social network analysis has gained momentum through Borgatti's "Centrality and network flow"¹¹ and its argument that different types of flow processes have different implications for centrality calculations (Borgatti 2005). According to this argumentation, the two most important types of flow processes in networks are "transference" and "replication" (Borgatti 2005: 57). Information in this view can be transferred either through "move mechanisms" or through "copy mechanisms" (Borgatti 2005: 58). It is obvious from immediate experience that information flow processes in the 21st century usually involve replication-type processes in which information, when passed from one actor to another, is subsequently copied and possessed by both actors. Yet, there may still be occasions where physical documents and not virtual information may be passed around. In replication-type processes, the question is whether the replication will take place in trails, one relation at a time ("gossip"; "serial duplication"), or whether information will diffuse through multiple replication, such as in a mass newsletter ("email", "parallel duplication") (Borgatti 2005: 57, 59). This will depend on the type of information, the underlying social rules of the network defining the "micro-level factors" which impact information transmission in social relations (cf. Frenzen & Nakamoto 1993: 360) as well as the concrete situations in which information is requested or forwarded without request (cf. Saint-Charles & Mongeau 2009: 38). Information that is spread through copying in serial duplication can diffuse much quicker than information that can be passed on through transference only. However, some information, even if it can be transferred through copying, may not pass effectively from one node to a second unless it is confirmed by a second (third, fourth...) contact. These processes of "complex contagion" (Centola & Macy

¹¹ Cited 448 times according to Google Scholar as of 23 March 2012.

2007) can occur in the diffusion of rumours, for instance when a rumour is only believed and eventually forwarded by a person after several contacts have passed on the rumour and thereby “confirmed” it. Complex contagions can generally be differentiated into two different models: “cascade models and threshold models” (Hui et al. 2010: 3). In the cascade model, one assumes a certain probability with which information will spread from one actor to another if the first holds the information. The lower the probability, the less likely it is that the information will be transmitted. In the threshold model, the probability that one actor will receive a piece of information will depend on the share of his direct contacts that already hold the information. The higher the threshold, the more *alters* need to get access to the information before *ego* will get hold of it (cf. *ibid.*). However, information flows are rather “archetypes of simple contagions” (Centola & Macy 2007: 706), because once information is acquired by an actor, he or she can in principle make use of the information independent of its confirmation.

So far, the information transmission in network has mainly been considered as an inter-actor process between one possible receiver and the neighbouring nodes of the actor. When information is passed on from actor to actor in longer chains, it can flow and diffuse in different types of trajectories. These trajectories can come in the form of *walks* where “trajectories can ... revisit nodes and lines multiple times”, *trails* - i.e. “sequences of incident links in which no link is repeated” or *paths* - i.e. “sequences in which not only links but also nodes cannot be repeated” (Borgatti 2005: 56-57). A rumour that has started at one particular node in the network can for example arrive at an actor several times from different other actors who do not necessarily know that the former already heard the rumour, i.e. the information passes through the same actor several times. What will not happen in most cases is that the same person tells the same rumour a second time to the same contact, i.e. not repeating the same link. Such a flow process would be qualified as a trail. A physical document such as a signature list that is passed from person to person in a network may go back and forth even between the same actors, for example when the former actor wants to hand over the signature list to other persons that the signatory may not necessarily know. This flow process would be a walk.

In the light of these concepts, it is worth reiterating Borgatti's conclusion that

"[t]he characteristics of the flow process affect which nodes will receive flows (quickly, frequently, and certainly) and which are in a position to control flows." (2005: 69)

and that

"[t]he Freeman [centrality] measures which dominate empirical network analysis are largely misapplied, since the processes of interest are typically not based on geodesic paths. Thus, there is a real need for new measures that apply to more realistic flow processes." (2005: 70)

In other words, when we analyse information flows in social networks, we should either try to understand empirically how specific flow processes took place or we should have clear theoretical expectations about what kind of flow process we are going to observe in a given social or political situation, being aware that not all types of information will spread in the same way. Borgatti's conclusions also underline the importance to identify the flow specifics of the information and network under investigation before choosing network measures in order to explain or predict flow processes based on these measures (Ortiz-Arroyo 2010: 29). If we now translate those transmission characteristics and diffusion models discussed above into the political realm, the following assumptions or broad hypotheses might therefore be formulated:

- a) In a political network, very sensitive information may only be forwarded in personalised emails or direct talks between closely related actors one by one (i.e. information flow through serial duplication) while public news on a political event may spread quickly through online social networks, quickly reaching a wider set of more or less interested actors (i.e. information flow through parallel duplication).
- b) It is unlikely that an information sent by one actor to another actor will be resent a second time in either direction - unless the information is a unique copy of a confidential document that is passed back and forth in a small group of actors – making that most information in political networks will flow in trails. When information flow in trails, it is possible that one actor gets the same information twice through different contacts, but it is less likely that he or she will get it twice through the same tie with an *alter*. Most political information flows will thus have trail properties. In some occasions it may come in the form of paths, for instance when the previous trajectory of information is known so that actors would not receive information twice because their contacts are aware when the information is passed to them in the first instance.
- c) When it comes to the diffusion models, political networks will very likely see both cascade and threshold dynamics: While in some cases, the social nature and strength of single relations as well as the confidentiality of information may define a

probability with which information spreads through single relations, there may also be situations in which, once a certain number of *alters* above a threshold holds an information, it becomes very likely that somehow this information will reach *ego*, even if the individual probabilities for transmission are quite low. Said differently, in some cases it may be enough to assume from a strong relation between two politicians that once the first receives an information, the second will also get it, while in other cases it may be enough to know that when 50% of the political advisors to a political leader have an information it will be very likely that this information eventually spreads towards the leader, too.

3.4.3 Empirical findings on flow processes in networks

Many aspects of how relations and structural properties such as cohesion and positions influence information flows have been discussed up until now. These aspects contain implicit and explicit hypotheses about how networks impact information flows or how we can make use of network properties in order to predict or explain information flows. Despite these long theoretical discussions on networks and information flows, there are astonishingly few empirical political science studies with a particular focus on flow processes (such as Koger et al. 2009; to a lesser extent: Aerni 2005). Other social sciences but in particular the natural sciences have decades of experience dealing with those phenomena in network contexts. Word-of-mouth on technical innovations, propagation of viruses in human or animal networks (“contagion”) (Morris 1993), social search processes (Dodds et al. 2003) or the spreading of news in online networks (Lerman & Gosh 2010) are just some examples in which flow processes are of central importance. Given their diverse interests and study objects, the findings of these empirical studies can provide indications for the relevance of network theoretical concepts in the context of the analysis of information flows. Their results should however be interpreted with caution when generating hypotheses about information flows in other contexts. Depending on the context, quite divergent mechanisms have been identified throughout the literature, both with regard to dyadic relations, cohesion, positions and general network structures.

In the study of word-of-mouth (WOM) dynamics, it has been established already 25 years ago to link relational structures and information flows, tracing WOM referrals backwards through

interviews until the source to see which path information have taken (Brown & Reingen 1987). Testing a set of hypotheses, Brown and Reingen (1987: 257) concluded among other things that weak ties are more likely to be bridges. When an actor has both strong and weak ties, the former would be activated with higher probability to forward information and that homophilous ties (relations to similar others) had a higher chance of being activated. The interrelation between direct ties and access to information was also confirmed in a study on rumour diffusion in Hongkong. Lai and Wong (2002: 72-3) conclude that “[i]nformation transmitted via kin ties is likely to arrive at the respondent relatively sooner than via nonkin ties or other communication channels”, hereby confirming the view that tie strength appears to be a good indicator for the timing of information access through personal relations. However, they also underline that the connection between tie strength and the forwarding of information may depend on social or cultural situations where it is appropriate to forward certain types of information only to close contacts.

Strong ties in this view provide early access to information because they are more frequently activated and embedded in social structures that foster mutual sharing through transitivity. If an actor has a strong relation to one actor and a weak relation to a second actor who both possess the same information, it should be expected that information will be passed along the strong tie first. However, it is more likely that weak ties that connect actors to densely and strongly connected groups provide novel information whenever the weak tie is activated. This will be especially true if the weak tie is in fact the only bridge between two dense clusters. Said differently, weak ties can be “strong in the structural sense” because they “provide shortcuts across the social topology” while strong ties between two actors can be weak in a structural sense because they usually represent transitive relations in which two strongly related actors know the same thirds and thereby do not get novel information (Centola & Macy 2007: 704). Centola and Macy test this in an experiment and find that the strength of weak ties results from the fact that they tend to bridge long distances, both in physical but also in a structural sense (2007: 731), while for clusters that are socially or spatially close the width of a bridge may be more significant for information diffusion (2007: 729). In other words, the information flow between socially close clusters depends on the strength of inter-cluster cohesion as defined by the number and strength of ties that bridge between these more dense clusters. Information is expected to flow with higher probability or with shorter delay when two groups are more densely connected. This view follows the previously established argumentation considering that cohesion and strong ties are strong arguments for the

effectiveness and timeliness of information flows. These effects of cohesion have also been studied in earlier studies on information flows in real-life networks. Those studies have shown that information diffusion is likely to be quicker in smaller communities because smaller communities “more often share common foci of interaction” and thus develop a higher level of transitivity (Richardson et al. 1979: 390). By comparing the effects of two neighbourhood programs in communities with different levels of density, Weening and Midden (1991: 739) found that the level of awareness for the community program was significantly higher in the densely connected neighbourhood. Furthermore, they found that a particular rumour spread more quickly in the more cohesive neighbourhood than in the less cohesive one (Weening & Midden 1991: 737). On the individual level, it was clear that direct ties to volunteers, who were active in the community program, was a significant additional predictor for information awareness (Weening & Midden 1991: 739), which again reaffirms the direct-tie hypothesis described above.

Yet, while the strength of intra- and inter-cluster cohesion appears to be a strong predictor for rapid and complete information diffusion, the small-world concept by Watts and Strogatz (1998) has revealed that the patterns of real-life network structures are not only defined by cohesion but that cohesion often is a rather local phenomenon, while inter-cluster bridges and a few very well connected nodes provide for the overall connectedness of the network. Recent simulation studies on word-of-mouth diffusion processes confirm the view that highly clustered networks, especially those with some random shortcuts, as we will find in small-world networks, see faster diffusion than more random networks (Delre et al. 2007: 194, 199). However, a study on information cascades in a viral campaign comes to the conclusion that “the viral cascades features depend more on the individuals’ reaction to the message than on the substrate network topology”, although admitting that this finding could not be empirically verified “since the structure of our campaigns substrate network being unknown, a comparison between the Cascades Network and the substrate email network was impossible” (Iribarren & Moro 2011: 142). What this cautious finding reveals is that while existing network structures may provide the paths along which information can flow, the effects of the underlying structure may not always be as strong as a network theoretic approach predicts, making network-embedded agency (see Section 3.2) a more likely driver of concrete information flows. Combining these findings, Jürgens et al. (2011) show through the analysis of discussions in a network of German Twitter users that while the network they analysed indeed had small-world properties (2011: 2), the effects of information diffusion were dependent on

a relatively small group of well-connected actors who may appear to be positioned as information hubs but who in reality act as information gatekeepers structuring a partisan information distribution in the online network (Jürgens et al. 2011: 4-5). We thus see that a small-world network structure that, in theory, is favourable for rapid information diffusion can, in reality, be less prone to rapid information spread than expected.

Finally, recent research has criticised the use of static networks that “treat all links as appearing at the same time” and that “do not capture key temporal characteristics such as duration of contacts, inter-contact time, recurrent contacts and time order of contacts along a path”. Their argument is that static network data lets us “overestimate the potential paths connecting pairs of nodes” so that “they cannot provide any information about the delay associated with the information spreading process” (Tang et al. 2009: 32). These assumptions are then tested and proved on real-life data. While such an assessment is true and gathering detailed temporal data would be useful to best understand information flow dynamics, it should be noted that these findings have been made in the context of online networks where gathering temporal data is much easier than it is in real-life situations. The temporal dimensions of networks and their effects on information flows is therefore a relevant feature to study but the necessary data will rarely be available in political science contexts. We will see in the following sections and chapters on two-mode networks, in particular event-based two-mode networks, that valued one-mode projects of actor-event networks can be a way to at least measure certain aspects of the temporal strength (frequency) of a relation, but not with accuracy to capture the preciseness of flow process that Tang et al. (2009) can cover through the analysis of digital data. Constraints in empirical research therefore limit our ability to test network theoretic assumptions on information flows in more dynamic and temporal networks.

What all the empirical research presented here underlines is that information flows in social networks are closely tied to the network structures in and along which informational dynamics can take place. Actors connected by strong ties and cohesive subgroups are more likely to become quickly informed once information has reached one actor in the dyad or has been made available to one or more actors in a group. The diffusion of information in a network depends on the place where the information is entered into the network (cf. Kim 2010), the structures that surround the initial seed, and the information referral behaviour of actors within the network, especially of those in gatekeeping positions. The existence and width of bridges between more cohesive clusters within the network is expected to be decisive for the

spread of information from the initial seed-group to other groups. All findings have however been made in specific social environments, and formulating overly generalised expectations about information flows should be avoided. Hypotheses need to be formulated carefully, and they need to take into account the types of information flow processes at hand, the likely spots in which information diffusion will start as well as the expected mechanism of information referral by individual actors in the network.

3.5 Social network analysis (SNA) in political science

3.5.1 SNA and information flows in political science

In 2007, Schneider et al. (2007) listed 1160 publications that covered political networks, showing the broad interest that networks have generated in political science and others disciplines that deal with networks in political contexts. Not all publications listed in the structured bibliography by Schneider et al. can be summarised as applications of social network analysis in political science, but those that are not part of the core network theoretic and analytic research body are still part of the theoretical and empirical work for the debate on how and why networks matter.

Despite this long list and the time that has passed since this list was set up, the amount of studies researching social network structures in political contexts is not huge. It is probably exaggerated to call SNA research in political science “rare” as Koger et al. (2009: 634) did, especially since one can get the impression that the amount of network studies is rising throughout all social sciences. Still, one of the reasons for the relatively small number of studies may be that relational “data on political actors are generally scarce and specialised, or its access is limited to government institutions” (Hämmerli et al. 2006: 161). Gathering relational data necessary for social network analysis in contexts that are of interest for political scientists appears to be particularly difficult according to this conclusion. Getting access to all relevant actors can be quite problematic for some questions, especially where one wants to study large and whole networks. Getting accurate relational data on such networks, for instance through surveys, can be close to impossible when politicians or lobbyists may not be ready to reveal (all) their relations and the information or support they have received through their networks (cf. Hamill (2006: 12, 34) on “non-cooperative networks”). Nevertheless, network analytic accounts of political phenomena have described and explained

such diverse aspects as the rise of political power of the Medici in the early 15th century (Padgett & Ansell 1993) or government-industry networks in the Netherlands at the end of the 1960s (Mokken & Stokman 1978/79), networks in the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (Pappi & Henning 1999) or in the Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union (Mérand et al. 2011).

While the amount of research combining social network analysis and political information flows is low, the pertinence of studying political information flows through networks has been acknowledged in political science (Heaney & McClurg 2009: 729). Villadsen (2011: 6) for instance finds that social networks of mayors in Denmark emerging from joint affiliation in organisations serve as information filter and that these informal information sharing structures function better than formal cooperation structures. Carpenter et al. (1998, 2003), building on the seminal empirical research by Laumann and Knoke (1987) on health care policy-making in the US, found that interest group representatives gain information both through weak and through strong ties, but that in crucial and time dependent situations strong ties are more valuable than weak ties (Carpenter et al. 2003: 412). In particular for “broad decisions” there was a “tendency for a policy community to shatter into competing cliques that do not share information” (Carpenter et al. 2003: 433). This finding suggests that weak ties that bridge between cliques and dense clusters may not be as valuable for the spreading of information in real-life political networks as their structural function – shortening paths in otherwise sparse networks – suggests. Nevertheless, having many weak ties to others in the lobbying network was found to be of advantage for individual lobbyists as this was correlated with more access to government officials (Carpenter et al. 1998: 419). A recent and very innovative study on information diffusion in political networks by Koger et al. (2009) used a quasi-experimental design to study information flows in party-political networks in the USA. Through donations under different fake names to different supporting organisations or political magazines affiliated to Democrats and Republicans, the researchers were able to track how information on names and addresses were shared within these networks. Compilations of address lists revealed that “information sharing is much more likely to occur within two distinct camps than across the spectrum” (Koger et al. 2009: 647) and that “the gap between the formal party organizations extends to the constellations of interest groups and magazines that trade information with each formal party” as revealed by the lack of paths between the polarised clusters (Koger et al. 2009: 652). Similar to Carpenter et al. (2003) the importance of dense clusters emerges as a focal issue.

Such studies in an EU policy context are still sparse. One exception is Sissenich (2008) who analysed communication flows in a network of 32 EU-level, international, Hungarian and Polish state and non-state organisations in the field of social policy using survey data. For each organisation, one representative was questioned. The study found that it were “certain EU and other international actors [who] controlled communication flows” (478) and that transnational links between non-governmental organisation did not exist as expected (478-9). Those findings suggest that information flows in an EU context would not take place in non-governmental networks but are rather steered through governmental actors. These information flows would rather not have a transnational dimension. Another study taking into account the value of networks for the gathering of EU-policy information, though not network theoretic in the narrow sense, finds that Commission officials in Brussels tend to build their professional networks to a very large (over 90%) extend through Commission-related activities, especially through contacts made within their administrative unit and in meetings (Suvarierol 2009: 423). While this study is exclusively focussed on Commission officials, it could still be interpreted at a hint that professional networks at EU-level are mainly built through more or less formal activities in the context of one’s own policy-field. However, it is difficult to generalise these findings beyond the obvious: social occasions tend to shape network structures as we have seen in the discussions on two-mode networks.

Finally, most of the research studying information flows in political networks use rather traditional network survey designs, with Koger et al. (2009) being an exception with a more experimental approach used to uncover otherwise invisible networks and the informational dynamics therein. Yet, a specific trend seems to emerge in the more mathematically oriented SNA studies, including in the political realm. The use of SNA techniques is more and more employed in studying online networks, for which relatively large data sets containing both structural and time-dependent interaction information about huge numbers of actors are available. Recent studies employing social network analysis to political Twitter networks (Grabowicz et al. 2011; Jürgens et al. 2011) are a strong sign that this trend will also spill over into political science research in the near future. The appeal of these studies is the availability of data. However, the question that online network researchers will have to answer is in how far the structures they find actually represent networks outside the digital sphere. Are two actors interacting on a social network also exchanging information that is not related to the digital sphere? Many aspects of political networks will not be reflected in digital networks, and so in order to study offline realities, other methods may be needed. Two-mode network

analysis could be one possible technique to gather data on medium- and large-scale networks that are relevant for information flows.

3.5.2 Focus: Two-mode and affiliation networks in political science

Networks matter theoretically in social and political sciences (see Section 3.2) and network analysis has seen increased interest in political science in recent years (see Section 3.5.1). This is also true for the analysis of two-mode networks, although attention on this particular sub-field of network analysis has not generated a more coherent interest in political science¹² where it has been used for a number of diverse subjects in recent years. Affiliation is a relatively important phenomenon in politics and political processes. Membership in political parties, interest groups and other organisations or participation in (often related) committee meetings, conventions or demonstrations are constitutive for most political and administrative processes. Attention to the resulting affiliation networks is however comparatively low and rather eclectic; the existing studies researching affiliation networks in political processes use quite diverse interpretations of what constitutes an affiliation.

Hence, a multitude of concepts are used to fill the n and m modes of the $n \times m$ bipartite networks and the methods to study them differ as one can see in the selection of studies in Table 1 below. Most studies in this list show that a frequent approach (yet by far not the only one) is to transform two-mode networks into one-mode representations for one of the modes that are of particular interest for each analysis. Especially where the analysis of centrality of actors in a network is of interest as an independent variable, this seems to be the preferred method. The examples in Table 1 also show that two-mode data is used with quite diverse theoretical backgrounds and descriptive or explanatory purposes. In several cases, two-mode analysis is departing from a more narrow interpretation of the duality of individuals and groups that Breiger (1974) has used as a theoretical underpinning of the concept of affiliation networks. In other words, some authors are moving more towards a methodologically oriented analysis of two-mode data, rather with an interest to find similarities between certain entities (clearly: Maoz & Somer-Topcu 2010; to some extent: Hughes et al. 2009, Scott & Gitterman

¹² In the "Structured Bibliography" on political networks (Schneider et al. 2007) only half a dozen out of 1160 references mention affiliation or events and they are not presented as a distinct field of study.

Setting	n	m	Methods	Authors
Political power struggles of Chinese villagers between 1950-1980	people	events	Blockmodelling of the 2-mode data	Schweitzer 1991
Agricultural interest groups in EU Commission advisory groups	interest groups	committees	Analysis of the centrality of interest groups based on the 1-mode projection of n	Pappi & Henning 1999
Network of 67 leading Soviet political and military figures in the Brezhnev era	leaders	events	Correspondence analysis of 1-mode projection of n	Faust et al. 2002
Network of organisations in the UN Framework Convention on Climate	organisations	events	Actor-Process-Event-Scheme + 1-mode projection of n	Serdült & Hirschi 2004
Voting patterns of US Supreme Court judges	judges	decisions	Blockmodelling of the 2-mode data	Doreian et al. 2004
US House Representatives' (sub-)committees membership	House members	(sub-)committees	Analysis of the 1-mode projection of m	Porter et al. 2005
US Congress member members' co-sponsoring of bills	Congress members	bills	Centrality & cohesiveness analysis based on 1-mode projection of n	Fowler 2006
Organisations' participation in protests in Greece in 2002 & 2003	organisations	events	Analysis of structural equivalence of organisations	Boudourides & Botetzagias 2007
Membership of deputies of the Bundestag in business associations	Bundestag members	associations	Theory testing with original 2-mode data	Schmid 2009
Inequalities in the world system	countries	International NGOs	Analysis of centrality of countries based on 1-mode projection of n	Hughes et al. 2009
The rise of a pro-Putin coalition in the city of Tambov in the early 1990s	persons	civic organisations	Analysis of the 1-mode projection of n	Buck 2010
Least Developed Countries' (LDCs) strategies in UNFCCC negotiations	LDCs	events	Analysis of participation patterns in the 2-mode network	Cornell 2010
Polarisation of the political system and duration of cabinet terms	political parties	issue positions	Analysis of the 1-mode projection of n	Maoz & Somer-Topcu 2010
Medicare lobbying in the USA	clients	lobby organisations	Analysis of the 2-mode data and of both 1-mode projections	Scott & Gitterman 2010
Policy isomorphism of Danish mayors	mayors	boards & organisations	Analysis of the 1-mode projection of n	Villadsen 2011
Adoption of European standards on the national level	national regulatory agencies	boards (by years)	Analysis of centrality of the national agencies in the 1-mode projection of n	Magetti & Gillardi 2012

Table 1: Publications using affiliation network analysis to study political phenomena.

2010) than to actually uncover social network structures that one would also find through direct measurements of ties in single-mode dyads. Others use affiliation more in a sense of the ‘duality of organisations and groups’ by measuring organisational membership in committee-networks (e.g. Magetti & Gilardi 2011) or organisational actors’ participation in events (e.g. Serdült & Hirschi 2004). In some circumstances, this may stretch the theoretical argument one step too far as links created between collective actors may not reflect actual social ties.

Surprisingly, there is a lack of study of affiliation networks through real event data in political science, which would be more close to Breiger’s original conceptualisation. While membership in directorates or organisations seems to be the preferred option for studies acknowledging the core idea of the duality of persons and groups in network analytic research, both in economic and social sciences, approaches using concrete events such as the ones by Faust et al. (2002), by Serdült and Hirschi (2004) or by Cornell (2010) appear to be rare. And only Faust et al. (2002) actually deal with individuals’ participation in events. The reason for this preference of membership over participation may be that event data is less openly available or that organisations are regarded as more appropriate study objects in a political science context. In principle, these choices are not problematic from a purely methodological point of view. However, when they depart from the more narrow logic of the duality of persons and groups, the explanatory value of the network structures created through these measures may be questioned. Does an organisation that is a member of two different committees really link both committees when it is represented by different persons sitting in the committee meetings resulting in the transfer of social resources such as information and knowledge from one social setting to the other? The implicit assumption would be that organisations actually function like individuals, and in the case of information flows this assumption actually represents the expectation that information flows within organisations are perfect, so that whoever sits in a committee representing an organisation will make sure that what she or he has learned will be exactly transferred to any other person representing the organisation in the future. Real life experience from complex organisations tells that this is by far not the standard case.

Given that the aim of this study is to use network structures – and in particular those that can be derived from affiliation networks – to explain information flows, the idea of a duality of persons and groups is an important basis because the social network concept and its theoretical implications, while applicable to all sorts of context, are most consistent when

working with individuals. An affiliation network analysis thus seems more appropriate both theoretically and methodologically if it at least involves individual actors as one of the two modes, and the second mode should be chosen in such a way that co-affiliation actually implies the development of mutual ties or the exposure to similar information in order to be theoretically appropriate when trying to describe and explain information flows in social network structures.

3.6 Conclusions and hypotheses

This chapter has shown that network theory as a relational approach to social realities provides a conceptual framework for the analysis of central phenomena of political science such as power and influence and that it offers models of structure-induced processes such as information flows. These phenomena can only be understood if relational structures are taken into account, and if network theory comes with a set of methods that allow the empirical representation and measurement of its concepts and models. In order to describe and explain information flows, network theory can draw hypotheses from its two main theoretical concepts, **cohesion** and **positions**. When networks provide strong and dense interrelations between social actors, information flows are expected to be quicker and actors who are more closely and densely related are expected to be similarly informed. Network structures also provide informational advantages and disadvantages by differentiating the actors in the network into different positions and roles. Actors in equivalent positions, even when they are not directly connected, are expected to be similarly informed or to perform similar informational roles. Actors in more central positions are expected to be better or earlier informed when they are close to many others in the network or they are expected to perform information control and distribution functions when they are located between many others, in particular when they hold these positions exclusively.

Following these theoretical discussions, four simple hypotheses shall be considered in the context of this research, the first one related to the theoretical concept of ‘cohesion’ (see in particular Section 3.3.2). In more dense and better-connected parts of the network, information is expected to spread more rapidly, which should result in similar levels of informedness in those cohesive subgroups:

H4.1: Actors that are part of the same cohesive subgroup (IV4.1) in a network have similar levels of informedness (DV).

The other three hypotheses are related to the concept of ‘position’. They will focus on the most common concepts of centrality – degree, closeness, and betweenness (see in particular Section 3.3.3) – as these three represent three different yet commonly understandable notions of network position. Degree generally represents the number of contacts of an actor and thus the number of alternative sources s/he can tap into – the more the better. Closeness represents, in particular in networks with clear core-periphery structure, the spot an actor has taken in the network – the more in the centre s/he is, the more likely and the more quickly information should generally reach her/him. Betweenness represents the idea of information control and information brokerage. The more one actor is between others, the more those others depend on her/his brokerage and may thus be more eager to share information with her/him. Being more betweenness central may also mean that an actor has a good view into different cohesive subgroups, thereby noticing new information more rapidly than her/his peers. There are many more centrality measures and it is also relevant to reconsider those three main centrality measures in the context of the discussions that Borgatti (2005) has introduced. However, given that these three are the most used and other measures are expected to correlate strongly with one of the three (e.g. eigenvector with degree as shown by Valente et al. 2008), the focus shall be on these three to construct three further hypotheses:

H4.2: The more contacts an actor has, i.e. the higher her/his degree centrality (IV4.2), the better informed the actor is (DV).

H4.3: The more closeness central an actor is (IV4.3), the better the actor is informed (DV).

H4.4: The more betweenness central an actor is (IV4.4), the better informed the actor is (DV).

All four hypotheses seen in conjunction with Hypothesis H3 presented in the conclusions of the previous chapter might yield the joint hypothesis that *actors within the (assumed) central Brussels-cluster within EU policy-networks should be similarly informed and their level of informedness should be generally higher* than that of the rest of the network. A “multilevel actor with good contacts to the Brussels sphere” as formulated in H3 could be an actor who is within the Brussels subgroup, composed of rather closeness-central actors who at the same time has a high level of betweenness centrality because s/he also links the Brussels-cluster to

one or several other clusters of actors outside the central group – always assuming that an empirical analysis actually reveals a network of such type.

Methodologically, these four hypotheses demand a social network analysis of a network that is complex enough to produce sufficient variation on all independent variables and that includes actors from inside and from outside Brussels. The challenge for the analysis of social networks relevant for information flows in political contexts then is to collect valid data that can actually reflect network structures of political actors for which these hypotheses can be tested. Given that an important share of political activities, in the EU and elsewhere, is shaped through membership in organisation and through participation in meetings and events, this chapter has shown that affiliation networks are expected to be one useful method to gather such data, especially since affiliation data tends to be available quite reliably given that membership or participation lists are standard data recorded and stored on a regular basis. Furthermore, joint affiliation does not just represent occasions for the formation of ties between actors, it also represents exposure to similar information. Similar to the general argument on cohesion and positions, one could expect that actors in equivalent positions in affiliation networks should be similarly informed as should be actors who are closely related through their frequent joint affiliation to organisations or events. Measuring network structures and actors' positions in an affiliation network therefore should allow to explain or predict the level of informedness of actors measured as the timing and amount of network-relevant information an actor or a group of actors receives. If affiliation networks can represent the network structures that are relevant for information flows, the hypotheses presented above should therefore also apply to actors in affiliation networks and the one-mode actor-by-actor projections of these affiliation networks should be usable to make predictions about actors' level of informedness. This will be tested in this study in an affiliation network of advisory committees in the field of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) of the European Union and the flow of information in the context of the post-2012 reform of the CFP. After presenting the general case at hand in the following chapter, in Chapter 5 the data collection and analysis of the affiliation network will be presented followed by Chapter 6 in which the measurement of and analysis of the information flow will be described. In Chapter 7, the hypotheses will be tested and the findings will be discussed in order to be able to conclude whether the network analytic approach in general and the hypotheses as well as the affiliation network selected in particular were useful to describe and explain the information flows in this particular case.

Chapter IV

Committees and civil society in the Common Fisheries Policy

4.1 Chapter structure

4.2 Case selection: The reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)

4.3 Development of the Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union

4.4 The European Commission and the Common Fisheries Policy

4.5 EU committees in the Common Fisheries Policy

4.5.1 Overview

4.5.2 Comitology

4.5.3 Expert groups and similar consultative bodies: ACFA, RACs and more

4.6 Civil society actors in the Common Fisheries Policy

4.7 The early phases of the post-2012 reform of the CFP

4.8 Conclusions and hypotheses

4.1 Chapter structure

After the previous chapters in which the general context of information flows in EU policy-making and the network theoretic foundations have been laid out, this chapter will present the case chosen for the empirical research of this study: the reform of the post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union. Section 4.2 will explain the case selection in detail, both with regard to the information flow dimension but also with regard to the appropriateness for the (affiliation) network theoretic context of this study. Section 4.3 will present the historical development of the Common Fisheries Policy. In Section 4.4, the responsibilities within the European Commission in this policy field will be explained to provide context to the analysis of the diffusion of leaked documents later in this study. Given the importance of committees and affiliation network structures, Section 4.5 will introduce the committee system in the EU fisheries policy in more detail. The general civil society actor constellation in EU fisheries policy will be laid out in Section 4.6 before summarising the general political activities during the early phases of the post-2012 CFP reform process in Section 4.7. Section 4.8 will conclude the presentation of the case and the relevant backgrounds and close with some case-related hypotheses in addition to the hypotheses presented in at the end of the previous two chapters.

4.2 Case selection: The reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)

The previous chapters have introduced the relevance of information flows in the context of EU policy-making. The role of committees in structuring EU policy-making and the role of committee-related affiliation networks have been discussed both with regard to the EU context and with regard to the theoretical discussions on affiliation network analysis. The pertinence of understanding how non-institutional and civil society actors receive information from inside the EU institutions, for example in the form of leaked documents, was demonstrated. The theoretical arguments on why network structures and emerging phenomena such as cohesion and positions influence the diffusion of information have been laid out. This chapter will demonstrate in how far the context of the reform of the post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy allows it to make use of the topical, theoretical and methodological toolset laid out previously.

In order to test the hypotheses formulated in the course of the previous two chapters argumentation, one or several concrete model cases needed to be chosen. A case had to fulfil a number of criteria in order to fully match the thematic and theoretical setting developed in the previous chapters. At the same time, it had to be accessible to empirical research. Such a (set of) model case(s) was to serve as the basis for more refined research in the future as very limited cases of information flow analysis are known so far, in particular in an EU environment. Hence, while there are all kinds of relevant information flows in EU policy-making, the model cases were meant to test the applicability of the theoretical ideas developed so far as well as to test the hypotheses presented in the previous chapters as robustly as possible. At the same time, each case needed to be broad enough to represent a non-trivial EU policy-process, the analysis of which could be projected to other cases, too. The following five criteria served to choose such a case:

First, a policy field or policy process on the EU level needed to be selected in which a wider set of non-institutional actors from around the European Union was involved in order to find a sufficiently complex network with variation on the different independent variables and causal conditions. If the field or process was too narrow, there was the risk that only a very small network of people would have been involved. The structure of such a small network might not have been useful for a refined network analysis. *Second*, the decision-making process at EU level should be of concrete regulatory and/or financial relevance for a wider set of actors because this would guarantee a broad interest in many types of information flows related to that policy or policy process across the whole population of the actors, not just for a small sub-set of network actors. Through the assumption that all actors in a network are broadly interested in many types of related information, it was not necessary to hypothesise or survey the informational interests of every individual actor *ex ante*, which could have raised the research effort considerably. *Third*, informal and network-structured information flows had to be observed or had at least to be expected in order to be able to test the hypotheses on how network structures influence the way in which information spreads. Given that most political processes involve informal processes anyway, this meant in particular that crucial information in the case chosen would *not* be easily available for the public, for instance information not being published on a well-known website, so that mass access via official channels was ruled out, at least for a very large sub-set of actors in the network. *Fourth*, the network structures to be observed should be detectable, for instance through event affiliation as generated by committees or by other relevant fora in that policy field. *Fifth*, the network

data and information flow data obviously needed to be accessible for research purposes, which was not very likely in the majority of cases.

A policy field that matched these criteria was the Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union. The Common Fisheries Policy is one of the few policy fields in which the European Union has gained exclusive competencies through the Lisbon Treaty (cf. Section 4.3). Regulatory and financial decisions taken at EU level therefore concern individual and collective actors on all political levels within the European Union (and beyond, given the CFP's external dimension), in particular in geographical areas where fisheries and aquaculture play a significant role. While being a strongly supranationalised policy in a competitive global market environment, fisheries have remained a policy with important national or regional identities. On the basis of those conflicting constellations, an actor- and network-system is created in which regional, national, transregional and European actors become linked in complex collaborative as well as competitive structures (see Sections 4.3-4.5).

The *reform of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy for the post-2012 period*, which was expected to tackle all major regulatory and financial elements of this policy field, was therefore considered of major importance for a wide set of civil society actors including different industries and their associations, social partners as well as non-governmental organisations such as environmental groups at European but also at national level (*criterion 2*). This broad interest was demonstrated for example in a variety of contributions to the Green Paper consultation for the CFP reform, 382 in total (SEC(2010)428: 3). The scope of the reform and the interest generated allowed the assumption that close to all actors involved in or affected by the fisheries policy could be interested in the plans, drafts and final proposals for the future EU fisheries policy. Given that past observations of EU decision-making had shown that it was very likely that drafts of the Commission proposal would be leaked around the time the inter-service consultation started (cf. Section 2.2.2), it was expected that the same would happen during this reform process, too. Studying these – expected – leaks became the main aim of the empirical analysis of actors' informedness (cf. Chapter 6), although it was unclear at the stage of designing the research whether such a leak would actually take place, whether diffusion of the leak would actually be mitigated by network structures and whether this process would be accessible to academic research.

In the end, there was clear evidence from public sources about such a leak, for instance in international, European, national and regional press reports (AFP 2011, European Voice 2011, Le Marin 2011, La Opinion Coruña 2011, Fishing News 2011), a meeting document from a Regional Advisory Council (NSRAC 2011), statements of regional governments (Junta de Andalucía 2011), a local fisheries website (Comité des Pêches Guilvinec 2011), fisheries industry press statements (NFFO 2011) as well as informal accounts the author could get from two different actors representing different interests in the process, confirming the expectations from the initial design. Hence, it became clear that starting from early April over early May going until 13 July 2011, when the Commission's reform proposals were finally published, there had been a number of leaked documents containing different draft versions of the reform proposal documents which were available to a set of actors ahead of the official publication in July 2011. Since there was no indication that these documents had been officially or formally circulated, (early) access to these leaks was expected to be only possible through informal channels (*criterion 3*). Furthermore, there were also clear indications from personal accounts and discussions on social media channels such as Twitter that different leaks seemed to have reached different actors at different times during that period, therefore allowing variance for the dependent variable ("*informedness*"). Finally, the committee structure in the field of EU fisheries policy allowed the study of a comparatively complex affiliation network, which included a large set of actors and which reached beyond the EU-level arena of Brussels (*criteria 1 and 4*).

This last observation was probably the most crucial aspect for considering the field of fisheries policy a valid empirical model case for a network study of EU politics. In fact, a special feature of the committee system in the Common Fisheries Policy allowed the assumption that this would be a very good case for a *pan-European affiliation network analysis*: Following the last major CFP reform in 2002, seven Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) had been created, five of which cover transnational EU maritime regions (the Baltic Sea RAC, the North Sea RAC, North Western Waters RAC, South Western Waters RAC, and the Mediterranean RAC) while the two other cover transversal issues and the external dimension of EU fisheries (the Pelagic RAC and the Long Distance/High Seas RAC). Together with the two relevant Brussels-based consultative committees, the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA), including its four working groups, and the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) for Sea Fisheries, as well as the RACs coordination expert group, there were 10 relevant stakeholder bodies with partially overlapping participants whose primary focus was the EU's

fisheries and aquaculture policy (cf. also DG MARE 2008a: 65-68). With these committees meeting regularly at different venues, including Brussels, Copenhagen, Aberdeen, Amsterdam, Paris, Vigo, Rome and other cities of the European Union and with participants – official members as well as observers – including a wide range of fisheries-related interests and actors representing local, regional, national, European and international non-governmental, public and governmental organisations, it appeared that all the conditions for a complex yet connected EU-wide affiliation network were given. Furthermore, according to public meeting protocols, all of these committees had dealt frequently with CFP reform issues in the years previous to the formal proposal made by the European Commission in July 2011, making the resulting affiliation network a likely structural predictor for CFP reform related information flows.

More abstractly spoken, the empirical setting available allowed the expectation that affiliation to relevant stakeholder committees and access to CFP reform related information could be connected. The resulting affiliation network structures could possibly be used to predict the level of informedness of actors involved in these networks. Furthermore, the wide *geographical* and *substantive* range that the related events covered made it very likely that a relevant set of the EU fisheries-related interest groups and their representatives could be covered through affiliation analysis. This analysis could provide comprehensive view of the overall structure of the EU policy field instead of just offering a limited narrative insight into the case based on a number of semi-structured interviews (see discussion in Diefenbach 2009). In addition, the geographical and functional diversity of actors allowed sufficient differentiation of cohesive subgroups and actors' positions to guarantee variation for the network measures (centrality, cluster membership) that constitute the independent variable. Finally, it turned out that affiliation data for the main committees in this policy field were although widely available either through public sources or through requests for access to documents to the EU Commission or to the respective committee secretariats, making this a viable case to study rather complex empirical affiliation network structures (*criterion 5*).

The data gathered for the construction of the affiliation network and the calculation of the independent variables are thus participation lists to the main CFP-related expert and consultative committees involving civil society actors with an interest in EU fisheries policy during the early stages of the post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy Reform (see Chapter 5). As there were indications for leaked draft versions of the proposed basic fisheries policy

regulation (see above), access to such a draft was chosen as the main element of measuring *informedness* of actors for the dependent variable. This was measured through an email (and telephone) survey conducted in early 2012 (see Chapter 6). Both the affiliation network and the description and measurement of the informal information flows in itself constitute very interesting case-related empirical findings as the following two chapters will demonstrate. Chapter 7 then will test in addition whether the affiliation network data for 2009 and 2010 could have been used to predict timing and scope of access to the leaked drafts in the first half of 2011 for those actors who decided to participate in the survey. This should allow some conclusions about the predictive qualities of the network data gathered, at least with regard to the flow of policy-information in the specific context(s) studied. Since the amount of actors covered in Chapters 5 and 6 differ considerably, the findings in Chapter 7 could in the end not be as statistically robust as expected when designing the study and choosing the case. Nevertheless, while this study is a classical case study in some regards, it involves quantitative methods such as social network analysis and more qualitative approaches such as direct observation or document analysis. This mix allowed the construction of a larger number of micro-cases and the comparison of network and informedness variables for each of these micro-cases, which will allow inferences to more general information flow and information access dynamics in networks and in an EU context that go beyond this single case. The case study will also provide the framework for methodological considerations that are of relevance for future analyses connecting network and information flows analyses.

4.3 Development of the Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union

The development of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) of the European Union can be seen as a gradual process of the European integration of a policy area, moving from national policy-making and intergovernmental bargaining towards more and more supranational governance

“in which centralized governmental structures (those organizations constituted at the supranational level) possess jurisdiction over specific policy domains within the territory comprised by the member states” (Stone Sweet & Sandholtz 1997: 303)

This gradual approach which started in the early phases of the establishment of the European Union has been shaped by path dependencies as “reactive sequences” (Mahoney 2000: 509), which make that past decisions and events still influence the present substance and reform of

the Common Fisheries Policy (Hegland & Raakjær 2008). Today, the CFP is one of the few policies in which the EU Treaties assign exclusive competencies to the EU-level (Article 3 TFEU). Through the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament has gained considerable co-decision rights in fisheries policies, strengthening the supranational scope of the policy. Yet, despite this supranationalisation, the Common Fisheries Policy is still a domain with strong national and regional interests as fisheries are economically, socially and culturally important in several member states and in particular in certain coastal regions such as Galicia in Spain, Brittany in France or Scotland in the United Kingdom. The historic evolution of the Common Fisheries policy is thus a process of conflict of strong and diverging national, regional and European interests over a partially shared natural resource within a political and economic union and a more and more integrated single market. The post-2012 reform process one which this study focuses should therefore be seen as a further bargain and power struggle about where to situate the competencies in a continuum ranging from pure intergovernmental to complete supranational governance (Stone Sweet & Sandholtz 1997: 303). This struggle and the path to the present state of EU fisheries policies is at least 30 years old. Most authors underline 1983 as the year in which the European Union's Common Fisheries Policy was introduced (e.g. Symes 1997: 137). Some are pointing to the establishment of the “Community system for the conservation and management of fisheries resources” (Song 1995: 31) in 1983 as being the crucial step towards a “true” (Song 1995: 37) or “comprehensive CFP” (Song 1995: 36), although many also account for the fact that the CFP has evolved incrementally from the late 1960s (cf. Song 1995: 31, 36; cf. Symes 1997: 138-9; cf. Lequesne 2000a: 346). In order to capture the gradual nature of the development, it is probably most appropriate to use Princen’s assessment that “the CFP was established ... in 1970” (2009: 134) and that it “was finally complete” when it “included a fully fledged fisheries management policy” after the adoption of the 1983 Regulation on the Conservation and Management of Fisheries Resources (2009: 136). In order to understand some of the conflicts that have been solved or still prevail today, it is however necessary to take a deeper look into the development of the EU fisheries policy from its early beginnings until today.

In an information note from July 1966 titled “Main cutlines for a common fisheries policy for EEC”, the European Commission announced that it had sent a ten chapters and 340 pages strong document to the European Economic and Social Committee for consultation (European Commission 1966: 1). Churchill and Owens (2010: 4-5) reference this document as “Report on the Situation in the Fisheries Sector of EEC Member States and the Basic Principles for a

Common Policy”¹³, documenting that the “Common Policy” terminology had in fact been introduced almost 50 years ago. Back then the European Community included only six countries – Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxemburg and the Netherlands – for all of which fisheries were only of minor relative importance. This explains why the policy formulation of the CFP started quite late compared to the agricultural policy (Churchill & Owen 2010: 4). According to the 1966 information note (COM(66)250: 3-4), the Common Fisheries Policy should serve three main aims:

1. Harmonisation of member states measures to support the fisheries sector (e.g. subsidies) in order to prevent market distortions;
2. Stabilisation of markets through quality standards and price guarantees; and
3. Definition of social standards such as working and living conditions.

It took the Commission another two years until it announced that it had submitted three proposals for regulations to the EU Council (European Commission 1968: 1), two of which came into force in 1970. *Regulation (EEC) 2141/70* laying down a common structural policy for the fishing industry and *Regulation (EEC) 2142/70* on the common organisation of the market in fishery products (both of 20 October 1970) then formed the basis for the European Union's fisheries policy, which already in the 1970s was called “common fisheries policy” by some (for example by Volle & Wallace 1977). In the early 1970s, there was a particular pressure to adopt these regulations in the light of the upcoming first enlargement of the European Communities by Denmark, Ireland, Norway, and the UK, all with considerable fishing grounds and interests in fisheries. The founding member states, in order to create a favourable existing legal framework in the field of fisheries before enlargement, wanted in particular to adopt the principle of *equal access* to Community waters in order to profit from the new fishing grounds. This principle was then included in Regulation 2141/70 (Churchill & Owen 2010: 5). When joining the EC in January 1973, Denmark, Ireland and the UK thus had to accept these provisions although a ten-year exemption for access to coastal zones of six nautical miles (12 nautical miles for some regions) was agreed during accession negotiations (Churchill & Owen 2010: 5-6). In Norway however, a referendum on joining the EU failed mainly because of the public opinion regarding the impact of EU accession on Norway's fisheries (Leigh 1983: 6). Shaping the grand lines of the EU fisheries policy in the light of upcoming enlargements then became a regular pattern in the subsequent decades (as noted several times by Churchill & Owen 2010: 12-22). However, one important intermediate

¹³ COM[66]250 according to Churchill & Owens (2010: 5).

stage was shaped by international developments, namely negotiation and ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1976 that, among other things, introduced the 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which also included exclusive access of coastal states to fish stocks within their own zones. The extension of Community waters to 200 miles and “the large increase in waters to which the Common Fisheries Policy relates” let the Commission conclude that there was a “need to supplement the existing regulations”, especially giving “the urgency of an effective conservation policy on a Community level in order to safeguard and ... re-establish fisheries stocks within Community waters” (COM(76)500). The realisation of this conservation policy came however only through the 1983 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, which finally led to the “consolidation” (Churchill & Owen 2010: 12) of what today is called the Common Fisheries Policy. Four main elements have been included in the CFP since then (Churchill & Owen 2010: 12; cf. also Song 1995: 38-9):

1. fisheries management (including quotas, total allowable catches, technical measures such as gear, mesh sizes or landing sizes for fish);
2. relations with third states (e.g. fisheries agreements over access rights);
3. structural adjustment (e.g. scrapping of boats); and
4. organisation of the market.

The 1983 reform, in order to prevent “lengthy negotiations over the distribution of quotas” every year, also introduced the principle of “relative stability” of fishing quotas in order to ensure that all member states would benefit from the same share of total allowable catches (TACs) in the regular distribution of catch limits (Payne 2000: 305-6). The calculation of relative stability is mainly based on the consideration of past catches and the protection of coastal areas with a particular dependence on fisheries and has been upheld until today (Payne 2000: 312). The pressure to come to an agreement in 1983 and to consolidate the Common Fisheries Policy was again done in the strong shadow of enlargement, not so much with Greece joining in 1982 but in particular with the larger fishery nations Spain and Portugal joining in 1986. Their accession increased the EU’s fishing capacity by 75% (Symes 1997: 144) and especially Great Britain and Ireland demanded a long transition period in order to protect their waters from Spanish and Portuguese boats, thereby limiting the equal access principle for a period of ten years (Symes 1997: 144). These and other examples of protectionist impulses by member states, which continue to shape discourses until today, have been interpreted as indicators that despite a continuous supranationalisation of the policy, the territorial principle and the interest of member states to protect their national waters and

national industries remain strong forces, especially in the eyes of the fishermen and -women (cf. Lequesne 2000b: 783). Despite strong integration and supranationalisation, territoriality introduced into the DNA of the fisheries policy thus remains a particular feature of the Common Fisheries Policy (cf. Carter & Smith 2008: 270-273).

The next reform followed ten years later. This would become a regular rhythm for the following reform steps. Already at the end of 1991, the European Commission had issued a report that laid out a number of urgent problems related to the CFP at the time, many of which are still relevant in the debates around the post-2012 reform today: overcapacity, discards, the need for a balance of the biological or environmental with the economic and social dimensions of the policy, lack of coherence between different CFP measures as well as the need to tackle illegal, unreported and unregulated fisheries (cf. SEC(91)2228: Executive Summary III-IV). It is particularly noteworthy that one of the major issues of the post-2012 reform, discards, was also noted as an important issue at the time¹⁴. The 1992 reform took place in the shadow of the next enlargement. The coastal or island states Finland, Sweden, Malta and Cyprus had issued their applications for EU accession ahead of the post-1992 reform, with Finland and Sweden eventually joining together with Austria in 1995, although the scope of the reform did not indicate a major relevance of this enlargement for the particular policy choices. In the end, the reform introduced, in particular, measures to balance social and economic interests in fisheries and the need to sustain the fish resources for the future. Mechanisms like multiannual management and resource allocation plans, a control system as well as a fishing license system were part of the reform. Basic principles like relative stability and the exclusion of the 12-mile coastal zone for boats from other member states were however upheld (Song 1995: 44), proving the path dependence of certain past policy choices that had introduced integration barriers into the CFP.

Again ten years later, the post-2002 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy followed the acknowledgement that the CFP had failed because not only were a number of fish stocks outside safe biological limits but also because its top-down approach without the inclusion of relevant stakeholders had not had considerable positive effects (Gray & Hatchard 2003: 545-6). One of the core goals of the 2002 reform therefore was to strengthen participation. Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) were introduced as one way to involve stakeholders at

¹⁴ See also Song (1995: 42) referencing a 1985 report of the UK's Sea Fish Industry Authority showing that discards have been considered an important issue for a while already.

an early stage in the management process, although this did not mean a formal inclusion in the actual decision-making (Gray & Hatchard 2003: 547). Further aims of the 2002 reform were, among others, to include environmental objectives, the reduction of the fleets, and measures to counter the negative social and economic effects, which came with such fleet reductions, into the Common Fisheries Policy (Churchill & Owen 2010: 19). During the 2002 reform, another round of EU enlargement was also on the horizon. The Eastern enlargement in 2004, with countries like Poland, the three Baltic States and Slovenia plus the two Mediterranean countries Malta and Cyprus joining, brought a number of new coastal and island states into the European Union. However, the four Baltic Sea countries Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had lost a large share of their previously large fishing fleets even before joining the Union and the amount of EU legislation concerning the Mediterranean Sea was low, so unlike the 1973 and 1986 enlargement, this enlargement did not pose any major problems to the EU's fishing policy (Churchill & Owen 2010: 21-22). In the same way, the enlargement to Romania and Bulgaria was relatively easy because the Black Sea had not been part of the Union waters before and could therefore be integrated in the general CFP measures without problems (Churchill & Owen 2010: 22). So the 2002 CFP reform – while happening in the shadow of enlargement, including the expansion of the Union waters to most of the Baltic Sea, to further parts of the Mediterranean and, in 2007 and to the Black Sea – still had to solve the broader, overarching problems such as overfishing or the negative socio-economic consequences of a sector and European regions faced with job losses, sectoral concentration, and a challenging European and global market.

Finally, and although not considered a proper reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and its entry into force in 2009 have had a considerable impact on the Common Fisheries Policy. This policy now for the first time explicitly referenced (separately) in the basic EU treaties and it has become one of the exclusive competencies of the EU (Article 3.1d TFEU). The Lisbon Treaty has also shifted competencies towards the European Parliament, which became a co-legislator in many CFP-related matters. The changing role of the Parliament in the decision-making on EU legislation related to fisheries does not only make it a co-legislator on (almost) equal footing with the Council, it also offers a new decisive venue for European civil society actors interested in the Common Fisheries Policy. Lobbying processes that formerly had to be focussed on the Commission and the national ministries represented in the Council, now also have to be directed towards the members of the European Parliament, in particular those in the Fisheries Committee – not

least proven by a total of more than 2500 amendments submitted for the post-2012 CFP reform proposal in the Fisheries Committee by June 2012 (see numbers of amendments in European Parliament (2012b)). This number can be considered a sign of heavy lobby activity. Given their closer connection to their electorates, especially Members of the European Parliament from coastal regions are likely to bring in new actors or strengthen others, thereby creating new dynamics in the political processes around the Common Fisheries Policy. This multiplication of actors was also re-enforced by the 2004 and 2007 enlargement, which has not just enlarged the number of actors involved in the European Parliament, in the Council and on the side of civil society actors interested in the fisheries policy, it has also introduced new conflicts into the CFP. For example, landlocked countries such as Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are now demanding their share in the funds that are spent on fisheries, in their case in particular for freshwater aquaculture (cf. EU Council doc. 11904/11). The enlargement to the Black Sea countries Bulgaria and Romania has also created the need to include this sea area into a future Common Fisheries Policy (European Parliament 2011), giving new national and regional actors a role in shaping the Union's fisheries policy.

Throughout the history of the Common Fisheries Policy, we have therefore seen that subsequent enlargements have brought in new waters, new actors, and new conflicts into the policy-making on the Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union while at the same time the integration process has strengthened the European level. These countervailing forces shape the political dynamics in this policy, and they impact the successes and shortcomings in the implementation of the CFP. Given the complexity of this setting and the strength of these forces, it seems therefore very likely that Volle and Wallace's final sentence will still be valid after the current Common Fisheries Policy reform for the time after 2012:

"It looks as if the CFP and its problems will be with us for some time to come." (1977: 72)

4.4 The European Commission and the Common Fisheries Policy

With the gradual supranationalisation of the EU's fisheries policy, the European Commission has acquired a central role in shaping the CFP and in steering the political debates surrounding the evolution of this policy domain. Within the Commission, the Commissioner for Maritime

Affairs and Fisheries¹⁵ and her/his cabinet as well as the Directorate-General (DG) for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE, formerly: DG FISH)¹⁶ are at the core of this policy. According to the annexes to the 2011 Annual Activity Report of DG MARE (DG MARE 2012b: 7), it had a staff of 382 (76 of which are external (DG MARE 2012c)) as of 31 December 2011. The 2011 EU budget allocated 949 million Euro in commitments (i.e. less than 1% of the 2011 EU budget expenditure) to Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. In 2004, DG FISH had a permanent staff of 277 and a budget that represented about 1% of the Commission's overall budget (DG FISH 2005: 40). As can be seen in the change of names from DG FISH to DG MARE, the fisheries Directorate-General has undergone relevant changes in the last decade: DG FISH was separated from DG Agriculture and Fisheries following EU enlargement in May 2004 and gained maritime affairs and law of the sea matters as part of its competencies following the appointment of Commissioner Joe Borg (Malta) in November 2004. Its full name was therefore enlarged from *DG Fisheries* to *DG Fisheries and Maritime Affairs*, but it still remained DG FISH (DG FISH 2005, Brown 2006: 8). On 29 March 2008, DG FISH was renamed *DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries* – DG MARE (Fisheries and Aquaculture in Europe 2008: 8).

The organisational charts of DG MARE of July 2010 and August 2012 both show a structure with six directorates, one (Directorate A, headed by Ernesto Penas Lado) for policy development, one for international affairs, three for different maritime regions and one for administration. The main coordinating role for the Common Fisheries Policy reform was set in unit A/2 “*Common Fisheries Policy and Aquaculture*”, headed by Jean-Claude Cueff (organisational chart July 2010) and Ernesto Bianchi (charts in Feb & August 2012). Directorate A also had a special advisor for Fisheries Policy – Franz Lamplmair – with core responsibilities in coordinating the CFP reform.

DG FISH/DG MARE, while central in the policy-coordination of EU fisheries policy, is however not the only Directorate General involved in EU fisheries policy and the CFP reform. Princen (2010: 40) noted that especially with the growing role of the environmental dimension of fisheries policy, DG Environment gained more relevance in this policy domain. This led to a “de-compartmentalisation of fisheries policy”. Looking into the participation patterns of Commission officials in the main stakeholder bodies at EU level – the Advisory Committee

¹⁵ During the post 2012-reform: Joe Borg (Malta, until January 2010) and Maria Damanaki (Greece).

¹⁶ Under Damanaki headed by Lowri Evans.

on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA) and the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) for Sea Fisheries (for background see Section 4.5.3) – it can be noted that the DGs directly involved in meetings of these committees during 2009 and 2010 encompass in total **10 DGs** (cf. Chapter 5.3) out of the 33 DGs of the Commission. The Impact Assessment (IA) accompanying the reform proposal for the Basic Regulation of the Common Fisheries Policy presented by the European Commission in July 2011 was executed by a group of officials representing a total of 17 DGs and the Legal Service, the same number of services that were also involved in the impact assessment of the Green Paper preparing the post-2012 CFP reform (SEC(2011)891: 1). Table 2 below lists the 19 DGs and 1 service involved around the CFP reform altogether (left column: DGs involved in 2009-10 meetings of ACFA & SSDC, ordered by number of officials involved¹⁷; right column: other DGs and services referenced in the Impact Assessment):

Maritime Affairs & Fisheries (MARE)	Budget (BUDG)
Health & Consumers (SANCO)	Enlargement (ELARG)
Environment (ENV)	Legal Service (SJ) (<i>not a DG</i>)
Trade (TRADE)	Joint Research Centre (JRC)
Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (EMPL)	EuropeAid Development & Cooperation (DEVCO)
Research & Innovation (RTD)	Eurostat (ESTAT)
Informatics (DIGIT)	Economic & Financial Affairs (ECFIN)
Agriculture & Rural Development (AGRI)	Competition (COMP)
Taxation & Customs Union (TAXUD)	Regional Policy (REGIO)
Enterprise & Industry (ENTR)	Secretariat-General (SG)

Table 2: List of Directorates General actively involved in the CFP reform process.

In addition to the DGs and services from this list, DG Internal Market and Services (DG MARKT) was part of the Impact Assessment for the reform proposal on the Common Market Organisation (CMO) for fishery and aquaculture products (SEC(2011)883: 6). Throughout the reform process, a “CFP reform task force” which was “bringing together senior management and relevant experts” and as well as a “CFP reform inter-service steering group” (DG MARE AAR 2010: 5, 13) had been created, too.

With regard to information flows in the context of the Common Fisheries Policy reform, this highlights that while DG MARE had the lead in the reform process – and generally has the

¹⁷ Number of officials based on data gathered for the empirical research presented in Chapter V.

lead in EU fisheries policy – a wide array of officials from the majority of Directorate Generals is involved in major reform processes. Leaks of documents and information may therefore come most likely from the DG MARE as the part of the Commission that is most involved and will have closest relations to interest representatives and government officials involved in EU fisheries policy. Yet, there are high chances that information available to political and administrative officials from other DGs can also be shared informally with the outside world, in particular in situations of inter-DG conflicts. Furthermore, and given the number of total actors involved, situations in which the amount of intra-Commission actors with access to particular documents raises during multi-DG or cabinet-level consultations, the dynamics of EU leaks identified in Section 2.2.2 are likely to occur.

4.5 EU committees in the Common Fisheries Policy

4.5.1 Overview

The Section 2.3 on the role of EU committees concluded that, in order to understand EU information flows, it is necessary to study the committee system underlying EU policy-making. The study of information flows in the field of EU fisheries policies can therefore also profit from considering relevant committees and their possible role in networking and information diffusion. These committee governance structures exist in EU fisheries as they exist in most other policy areas of the European Union, but each policy has its particular landscape. The landscape of committees with relevance for the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) consists in particular of the European Parliament's Fisheries Committee, the Council Working Parties on Internal and on External Fisheries Policy (usually meeting in a joint format) reporting to COREPER, several comitology and expert committees, regional (and interregional) advisory councils as well as the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Seas Fisheries. These committees, through their meetings and activities, allow the participation of a wide set of interests, spanning a European affiliation network of organisations and their representatives that reaches far beyond the institutional sphere of Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg. Not surprisingly, the Commission and other European actors made use of the committee structures existing in the field of fisheries in the preparation of the proposal for the future Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), involving member states' representatives, Parliamentarians and various stakeholders in committees and consultation structures available at European, (inter)regional and national level.

In most of these committees, the discussions on the post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy started already in 2008, ahead of the Commission Green Paper, or at latest after the Green Paper was published¹⁸. Reform discussions thus were present within the relevant committees all along the process studied here, including in the phase of intra-Commission drafting of the future proposal in early 2011. In the following sections, after a short presentation of the Comitology committees in the CFP, the focus will be on the expert and consultative groups as these constitute the affiliation network relevant for civil society actor involvement analysed in the next chapter(s) of this study. For a presentation of the Fisheries Committee of the European Parliament, including the role of committee secretariats in providing policy information to the committee members, see Dobbels and Neuhold (2012: 7-10). The respective Council Working Parties have not been considered for this study.

4.5.2 Comitology

The general nature of the Comitology system has been described in Section 2.3.2. For EU fisheries policy, the Comitology register of the European Union¹⁹ at the time of writing listed four committees with a total of 27 meetings during 2009 and 2010²⁰, the two years in focus for the social network analysis to be presented in the following chapter. These four are:

- the Management Committee for the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector (MCFAS) with no meeting in 2009-10 (committee abolished in May 2012 according to the register);
- the Management Committee for Fisheries Products (MCFP) with five meetings in 2009-10;
- the European Fisheries Fund Committee (EFFC) with five meetings in 2009-10; and
- the Committee for the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector (CFAS) with 17 meetings in 2009-10.

Together, these committees decided on 23 opinions and implementing measures in 2010 (COM(2011)879: 6). In line with the number of meetings, most of these decisions, 20 in total, were taken in CFAS (COM(2011)879: 32). Given that Comitology committees only include

¹⁸ The North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council and the Long Distance RAC discussed the CFP reform and the future Green Paper as early as November 2008 (NWWRAC 2008; LDRAC 2008). The Council Working Party on Internal and External Fisheries Policy discussed the Green Paper for the first time on 21 April 2009 (Council doc. CM 1685/09).

¹⁹ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regcomitology/index.cfm> (Last accessed: 14 April 2013).

²⁰ According to the Annual Report from the Commission on the Working Committees During 2010 (COM(2011)879: 5) there were only 26; figures here own counting in the Comitology Register.

member states' and Commission representatives, they do by definition not involve civil society actors, which are in the focus of this study. However, and conform with the observations made in Section 2.3.2, these Comitology committees may serve as fora in which member states' administrations can be informed not just about the implementation of existing legislation but also about ongoing legislative processes such as the Common Fisheries Policy reform. When member states' officials gain advance information through these channels, they may share them with actors not present in the committee meetings, including with national or European civil society actors. For example, during the EFFC meeting on 5 May 2011, one month into the intra-Commission interservice consultation on the CFP reform package, the Commission, represented by a lead administrator for the CFP reform, Ernesto Penas, "gave an overview of the state of play of the CFP reform and of the preparations for the adoption of new, post 2013 financial regulation" (EFFC 2011). The meeting protocol does not reveal in what depth this information was given to member states' representatives. However, this still exemplifies that even during formal committee meetings, member states were briefed on internal developments within the European Commission at stages where these developments were not publicly communicated. Comitology committees were therefore one likely source for national administrations to stay informed in the early phases of EU decision-making, informational advantages administrators could use in exchanges with national and EU interest representatives. The lack of names in the public summary records of meetings made Comitology committees not very useful for an inclusion in an affiliation network study in the context of the CFP reform and the other committee data available. They were therefore excluded from the empirical research, although understanding the interaction between Comitology committee participants and other committees involved in EU fisheries policies would have allowed an even deeper look into the system of Common Fisheries Policy networks.

4.5.3 Expert groups and similar consultative bodies: ACFA, RACs and SSDC

While the Comitology only assembles governmental actors, the EU Commission expert group landscape in EU fisheries policy is much more diverse in scope and in nature. As of 30 January 2012, the EU Commission expert group register lists 10 expert groups and similar entities with DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries as the lead Commission Directorate General in the Common Fisheries Policy. These 10 groups represented only 1.24% of the 808 active

expert groups in the Commission register at that time. This number can be seen as an indicator of the relatively small size of this policy field. Nevertheless, the expert committees in EU fisheries policy include all three types of actors identified by Gornitzka and Sverdrup (2011), that is *societal*, *governmental* and *scientific* representatives, in different constellations in the following groups:

- the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA);
- Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) Coordination meetings;
- the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF).
- the European Commission preparatory group for the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT);
- European Commission preparatory group for the North West Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO);
- the Fisheries Control Expert Group;
- the Group of Contact Points for the Maritime Strand of the Adriatic Ionian Macro-region;
- the Marine Observation and Data Expert Group;
- the Maritime Policy Member State Experts Group; and
- the Technical Advisory Group on the integration of maritime surveillance.

According to the information provided by the expert group register, ACFA is exclusively composed of NGOs. The RACs coordination meetings bring together representatives of the seven RACs as well as observers from ACFA and from member states. The ICCAT and NAFO preparatory groups as well as the Fisheries control group and the Maritime Policy Member State Experts Groups are composed of representatives of national administrations. The Marine Observation and Data Expert Group and STECF consist of scientists while the Technical Advisory Group on the integration of maritime surveillance consists of (national) experts and representatives of different EU agencies.

The most important expert groups in the Commission's policy-making process from this list are ACFA for political advice and the STECF for scientific advice. However, this list only contains expert groups in the narrow definition. The European Commission expert group system is not the only one would miss relevant committees such as the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) as well as the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) for Sea Fisheries. It is probably one of the interesting findings of this study that the EU expert and

advisory committee system is probably much larger and more diverse than one could expect. This makes it more interesting for (affiliation) network analysis in order to understand the connections within a wider system of groups and actors. An analysis of the relevant committee structures involving civil society in EU fisheries policy-making needs to take this into account. In a study that would rely solely on the European Commission's definition of an expert group, main aspects of the EU fisheries committee system might have been ignored. The Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) are not considered expert groups because, although created by EU law, they are independent organisations with independent secretariats (see below). This is why only their coordination meetings with the EU Commission are considered expert group meetings in the narrow sense²¹. The SSDC is not considered an expert group because, despite its similarity to the expert groups (see also Section 2.3.4) and its direct interconnection with ACFA, sectoral social dialogue committees are regarded a class of committees apart in order to account for the independence of social partners. Alongside the purely governmental or scientific Commission expert groups, the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA), the seven (Regional) Advisory Councils (RACs/ACs), the RACs coordination expert group and the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) for Sea Fisheries constitute the 10 main institutionalised fora involving civil society actors and thus the backbone of participatory governance in the CFP (cf. Wetzel 2011: 987). This view is shared by the DG MARE in its 2010 Annual Activity Report (although the SSDC is not mentioned), where it states that:

"The CFP ... provides for stakeholders to be consulted on an ongoing basis through the seven Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) and the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA), as well as through ad hoc meetings on specific subjects and stakeholder involvement in public consultations." (DG MARE 2011: 13).

Due to their compositions, these 10 committees mentioned above were expected to be most relevant with regard to information flows towards civil society actors. Participation in their meetings might either be of direct added value or access to these fora might represent, as a proxy, already existing or supplementary contact structures that favour information access during EU decision-making. In 2011 DG MARE published a study it had commissioned to analyse its external communication activities (Ernest & Young 2010a). One part of the study was an online survey in which several hundred persons involved in EU fisheries and maritime

²¹ This became particularly obvious in the empirical research when the participation lists of RACs were requested from the European Commission, which in reply underlined that it would not hold these documents and could only provide information on participants in the RACs coordination meetings (email received on 3 February 2012).

policies participated. Among these, 32 who had identified themselves as members of ACFA or RACs responded to a set of questions regarding their level of informedness and their role as information distributors. 30 (94%) agreed fully or partially that they felt well informed about the CFP as RAC of ACFA members. 26 (82%) agreed fully or partially that they had to play an active role in disseminating information from DG MARE. However, only 19 (60%) agreed fully or partially that the Commission would provide them with the appropriate information needed to communicate with the stakeholders the respondents represented (Ernest & Young 2010b: 72). The general informational role of the committees and their members is therefore clearly acknowledged, with a majority of respondents indicating a good level of informedness and an active involvement in the sharing of information received. The following sections will present ACFA, RACs (including their coordination meeting) and the SSDC more in detail. These 10 committees will later serve as the basis for the affiliation network analysis and the testing of the study's hypotheses in the following chapters.

Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA)

"The Committee may be consulted by the Commission, or upon the initiative of its chairman or of one or more of its members, for questions relating to rules of the common fisheries policy. In particular it concentrates on measures that the Commission has to take under these regulations as well as economic and social issues of fisheries sector with the exception of those related, as social partners, to employers and workers in the fishery sector. The committee conducts its work through four working groups: Access to resources and management of fishing activities; Aquaculture: fish, crustaceans and molluscs; Markets and trade policy matters and general economic analysis of the sector." (Expert Group Database, Excel sheet as of 30 January 2012 received from the Secretariat General of the European Commission)

The Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture with its general assembly and four standing working groups is a "classic" expert group. It is classic because one can find ACFA in the Commission's expert group register and the Commission provides the secretariat as well as financial support for travel costs and daily allowance of members. Preparatory meetings of the trade organisations represented in ACFA are also financed through the EU budget²² (see table below for the amount per organisation in 2009 and 2010).

²² European Commission budget line "Closer dialogue with the fishing industry and those affected by the common fisheries policy" (11.04.01).

Organisation²³	Grants awarded (in €)		
	2009	2010	Total
Europêche	102.941,18	102.941,18	205.882,36
COGECA	73.529,41	73.529,41	147.058,82
AIPCE	58.823,53	58.823,53	117.647,06
EAPO	58.823,53	58.823,53	117.647,06
CEP	58.823,53	58.823,53	117.647,06
ETF	58.823,53	58.823,53	117.647,06
FEAP	44.117,65	44.117,65	88.235,30
EMPA	44.117,65	44.117,65	88.235,30
<i>Total</i>	<i>500.000,01</i>	<i>500.000,01</i>	<i>1.000.000,02</i>

Table 3: Grants awarded to trade organisations in ACFA; Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/budget/fts>.

Different to the Regional Advisory Councils, ACFA is not explicitly foreseen in the 2002 basic CFP regulation. However, its predecessor, the Advisory Committee on Fisheries (ACF) was created as early as 1971 (see van Hoof & van Tatenhove 2009: 728) by Commission Decision 71/128/EEC of 25 February 1971, one year after the first European regulations on fisheries were passed. This original advisory committee with 45 members was transformed in 1999 into ACFA. The reduction to only 20 members in the new committee was done with the goal encourage the committee members to develop “truly European positions” instead of representing national positions. In the larger setting of the ACF, most participants were sent by national organisations from most relevant member states and therefore lacked the necessity to come to joint European positions (Fishing in Europe 2000: 9). The reduced membership was expected to limit the availability of seats for all national representatives, forcing more European-level representation. This change also reflected the will of the European Commission’s DG FISH and its Commissioner Emma Bonino (Italy) to change the role of the committee from expert input to a more inclusive view on civil society positions (O’Mahoney & Coffey 2007: 244). Hence, ACFA in its present form has been put in place in 1999 through Commission Decision 1999/478/EC which was amended by Commission Decision 2004/864/EC that enlarged the membership to 21 members by giving a second representative of the aquaculture working group (WG 2) a seat in ACFA’s general assembly, thereby accounting for the increased importance of this sub-sector. Commission Decision

²³ Europêche = Association of National Organisations of Fishery Enterprises in the European Union; COGECA = General Committee for Agricultural Cooperation in the European Union (Note: The Secretary General of the fisheries section of COGECA is the same as the SG of Europêche); AIPCE = European Fish Processors Association; CEP = European Federation of National Organisations of Importers and Exporters of Fish (Note: AIPCE and CEP have a joint secretariat); EAPO = European Association of Fish Producers Organisations; ETF = European Transport Workers’ Federation; FEAP = Federation of European Aquaculture Producers; EMPA = European Mollusc Producers Association. All organisations are listed in the Joint Transparency Register.

1999/478/EC specifies that the basic members of ACFA are “appointed by the Commission on proposals from the organisations set up at Community level which are most representative of the interests” for a period of three years²⁴. A clear definition for this rather corporatist arrangement to account for members’ representativeness is not given by the law, but the Decision specifies the following general interests to be represented in the committee:

- *fishing companies*: private ship-owners (Europêche²⁵), co-operative ship-owners (COGECA), producer organisations (EAPO);
- *aquaculture companies*: stock-breeders of molluscs and shellfish (EMPA), stock-breeders of fish (FEAP);
- *downstream companies*: processors (AIPCE), traders (CEP)
- *trade unions*: fishermen and salaried employees of those companies (ETF)
- *non-professional organisations concerned with the CFP*: consumers (BEUC²⁶ nominated by the Consumer Committee), environment, development (groups organised in the NGO Contact Group).
- *the chairperson and vice-chairperson of*: ACFA Working Group 1 (‘Access to fisheries resources and management of fishing activity’, 15 seats), Working Group 2 (‘Aquaculture: fish, shellfish and molluscs’, 15 seats), Working Group 3 (‘Markets and trade policy’, 19 seats), Working Group 4 (‘General questions: economics and sectoral analysis’, 18 seats) and the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Sea Fisheries (see below).

The membership in the different working groups of ACFA varies from the composition of the general assembly according to the fields of expertise of the members, with further interests representing the *banking sector* (WGs 3 & 4), *auctions and ports* (WG 3) as well as experts on *economic affairs* (all WGs) and on *biological matters* (WGs 1 & 2) chosen by the STECF. The turnover of membership is moderate: Of the 30 original members and substitute members appointed in 1999, 7 were still member or substitute when the committee membership was renewed in May 2010. Compared to the period 2007-10, 18 members or substitutes remained

²⁴ The current members have been appointed by the Commission for the period 1 May 2010 to 30 April 2013 (OJ C 104, 23.4.2010, p. 13). The previous members were in office from 1 May 2007-30 April 2010 (OJ C 103, 8.5.2007, p.6).

²⁵ The concrete organisations in brackets are actually neither mentioned in the Commission Decision setting up ACFA nor in the decisions through which its members are appointed (see previous FN). The organisations mentioned here are the current members.

²⁶ The European Consumers’ Organisation.

in the committee for 2010-13²⁷. In the period 2006-08, ACFA met 60 times, 12 times in the General Assembly and 48 times in the Working Groups to fulfil its mission. During this time, 18 advices, 10 resolutions and 14 oral advices were given by ACFA to the Commission (Council doc. 14960/08). Yet, the 2008 “Intermediate Evaluation of the Advisory Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA)” (DG MARE 2008a: 70) found that there was a “lack of clear objective of what ACFA should achieve”, which made it difficult to even assess the level or representativeness of its members or the composition of the committee. It was concluded that the “relevance [of ACFA] lies in its existence itself and the process of dialogue which it facilitates” (DG MARE 2008a: 69) but that, at the same time, several relevant fisheries interests were missing from its membership: *retail chains, recreational fishermen, small scale fishermen, breeders of ornamental fish* as well as the *fishmeal and fish oil industry* (DG MARE 2008a: 71). Still members considered that “ACFA adds value” and they were “satisfied with the timeliness of the consultation process”. In addition, ACFA had started to foster a dialogue between the industry and the NGOs (DG MARE 2008a: 72-73) that was said to not have existed previously. With regard to the specific interests of this study – information flows – the evaluation found that:

“The ACFA stakeholders appreciate the meetings as a possibility to meet and network with each other and relevant Commission officials. Still, it is considered that there is an overly focus on information during the meetings taking up valuable time which could be used for the detailed discussions and debates. Also, the quality of the information differs considerably. It is assessed that much of the information could be distributed electronically instead saving meeting time and ensuring a more uniform quality of information [...]. To further improve the efficiency of ACFA structures, much greater use should be made of the intranet and internet for the circulation of information and material.” (DG MARE 2008a: 75).

In summary, ACFA, despite its shortcomings, has clearly evolved as one of the most relevant fora for civil society actors in EU fisheries policy, providing a space for networking and access to information, both through formal channels but also through the contacts that can develop in its context. These contacts develop not just between interests that *a priori* share the same goals but also between possibly adversarial interests. However, given its size and composition, the variety of the interest group population (see Section 4.6) can only in parts be

²⁷ Own calculations based on the names published in the Official Journal of the European Union. In 2007-10 and 2010-13, only 29 persons were formally appointed as the consumers interest group did not nominate a substitute. SSDC representatives are not included.

represented by and in ACFA. Regional Advisory Councils created by the 2002 Common Fisheries Policy reform could be regarded as an extension of the scope of ACFA and its predecessor committees.

Regional Advisory Councils (RACs)

The introduction of the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) as transregional consultation bodies came with the 2002 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. Interestingly, the initial design of the system quite explicitly incorporated the joint perspective on (affiliation) networks and information that has guided this research. In the Green Paper that started the reform process ahead of 2002, the Commission had proposed to establish "a *network* of regional advisory committees on fisheries" that "could, in the Commission's view, involve *more* and *earlier* the stakeholders in discussions about fisheries management" (COM(2001)135f: 28; own highlights). Empirically, the interesting question was whether this expectation to create a Europe-wide affiliation network had been realised in reality – and Chapter 5 will show that in fact such a network was created through interlocking participation of fisheries stakeholders in different committees.

These Regional Advisory Councils, which will very likely be re-named “Advisory Councils” (ACs) under the post-2012 CFP because several do not actually represent geographical regions but rather specialised activities, are less classic advisory structures though they very much resemble Commission expert groups in their activities and composition. Their creation was foreseen by the basic CFP regulation that resulted from the 2002 CFP reform (Art. 31, Council Regulation 2371/2002). The minimum requirement for setting up a RAC is that it covers “sea areas falling under the jurisdiction of at least two Member States” (Art 32, Council Regulation 2371/2002). The purpose of the RACs is to

“contribute to the objectives [of the Common Fisheries Policy] and in particular to advise the Commission on matters of fisheries management in respect to certain sea areas or fishing zones. [...]. Regional Advisory Councils may be consulted by the Commission in respect of proposals for measures, such as multi-annual recovery or management plans [...]. They may also be consulted by the Commission and by the Member States in respect of other measures.” (Art. 31, Council Regulation 2371/2002).

After their creation through the 2002 basic regulation, RACs were formally established through Council Decision 2004/585/EC of 19 July 2004²⁸ and each of these councils was then set up by a separate Commission Decision²⁹. They are supranational entities (Long 2010: 311) but are usually registered as organisations under the national law of their host country. After their formal creation through the 2002 CFP reform and the subsequent Council and Commission decisions, it took until April 2009 until the latest RAC had its first meeting, almost 4.5 years after the first RAC had met for the first time. All RACs were then ready to contribute the post-2012 CFP reform process as the Green Paper that started the general public consultation was also issued in April of 2009.

As indicated above, there are in fact two types of RACs. Five of them deal with specific maritime regions – the Baltic Sea, the North Sea, the north western waters of the Atlantic Ocean, the south western waters of the Atlantic, and the Mediterranean Sea. The sixth RAC covers a specific type of fishing activity across all EU waters – pelagic fisheries:

“In pelagic fisheries fishing time is largely spent searching for fish schools [...]. It is typically a single species fishery, due to the biological nature of the targeted species, which group into schools, most often without mixing with other species.” (Coers et al. 2012: 690)

The seventh – the Long Distance RAC – covers high seas fisheries outside EU waters³⁰. As the table below shows, the RACs differ not only in regional or substantive focus, they also vary in size, composition and level of activity. This divergence in the composition of the RACs is the result of a lack of the specification of who should be represented in the RACs beyond the following general guidelines:

"Regional Advisory Councils shall be composed principally of fishermen and other representatives of interests affected by the Common Fisheries Policy, such as representatives of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, environment and consumer interests and scientific experts from all Member States having fisheries interests in the sea area or fishing zone concerned."
(Art. 31.2 of Regulation 2371/2002)

²⁸ Later amended by Council Decision 2007/409/EC of 11 June 2007 in order to allow continued funding support of the RACs from the EU budget.

²⁹ E.g. Commission Decision 2008/695/EC of 29 August 2008 declaring operational the Regional Advisory Council for Mediterranean Sea under the Common Fisheries Policy.

³⁰ The Commission has proposed the setting up of an Advisory Council of Aquaculture and of an Advisory Council for the Black Sea in its reform proposal for the post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy.

Name	Location	Members	First meeting	Meetings in 2009 & 2010	Member States involved
North Sea RAC	Aberdeen (UK)	33	04.11.04	11 & 13	BE, DK, DE, ES, FR, NL, PL, SE, UK
Pelagic RAC	Rijswijk (The Netherlands)	35	05.09.05	15 & 13	DK, DE, ES, FR, IR, NL, PL, PT, SE, UK
North Western Waters RAC	Dublin (Ireland)	55	30.09.05	20 & 20	BE, ES, FR, IR, NL, UK
Baltic Sea RAC	Copenhagen (Denmark)	37	15.03.06	13 & 9	DK, DE, EE, LV, LT, PL, FI, SE
South Western Waters RAC	Lorient (France)	103	10.04.07	28 & 25	BE, ES, FR, PT, NL
Long Distance RAC	Madrid (Spain)	58	29.05.07	18 & 15	DK, DE, EE, ES, FR, IR, IT, LT, NL, PR, PT, UK
Mediterranean RAC	Rome (Italy)	34	01.04.09	4 & 8	CY, ES, FR, GR, IT, MT, SI

Table 4: Details on the Regional Advisory Councils; Source: Location, first meeting and meetings in 2009 & 2010 from RAC websites as of April 2012; Number of members for 2010 (MedRAC own counting on website) from Ernst & Young (2010a: 65) and own counting in RAC reports available; Member States involved from House of Lords (2007: 38) & COM Decision 2008/695/EC.

These general guidelines are then concretised in Article 1 of the establishing Council Decision. The interests considered for RAC membership are divided between the "fisheries sector" and "other interest groups" with certain sub-categories that are enlisted in a non-exhaustive fashion ("amongst others")

"'Fisheries sector' shall mean the catching sub-sector, including ship-owners, small-scale fishermen, employed fishermen, producer organisations as well as, amongst others, processors, traders and other market organisations and women's networks" (Art. 1.2)

"'Other interest groups' shall mean, amongst others, environmental organisations and groups, aquaculture producers, consumers and recreational or sport fishermen." (Art. 1.3)

What is interesting to note is that, compared to ACFA, some additional interests not formally represented at European level are specifically mentioned for the RACs such as small-scale fishermen and women's networks on the side of the fisheries sector and recreational and sport fishermen among the other interest groups. Furthermore, the RACs are "stakeholder-led ... where the status of the representatives of the Commission and national/regional administrations is limited to the role of 'active observers'" (Long 2010: 293). Given the principal openness of the RAC structures to additional and not *a priori* limited interests, the size of RACs is not specifically limited, although the Executive Committee in each RAC can

only have a maximum of 24 members (Art. 4.3, Council Decision 2004/585/EC). The only indication with regard to the general size of the RACs is that they should neither be too large nor too small, although the difference in the size of membership are still considerable as Table 4 above shows:

"In the interests of efficiency, it is necessary to limit the size of Regional Advisory Councils whilst ensuring that they include all the interests affected by the Common Fisheries Policy and while recognising the primacy of fishing interests given the effects on them of management decisions and policies." (Council Decision 2004/585/EC as amended, indent 4).

The composition of the RACs is also not clearly defined, only some basic principles are prescribed by EU law. According to Article 5 of the Council Decision establishing the RACs, two thirds of the representatives shall come from the fisheries sector, at least one from the catching sector of each member state associated to the respective RAC, while the rest shall be filled with other interest groups. It has however proven difficult in some RACs to fill the seats for the latter. For example, when the Pelagic RAC was founded, NGO members still had to be addressed and their seats could not be filled initially (PELRAC 2005). Reasons that have been mentioned for the lack of membership and participation of, for example, environmental interest organisations are that they do not have enough time, knowledge and the funds to finance membership in RACs (Hegland & Wilson 2009: 85). Participation may also be refused due to political considerations, i.e. refusing industry dominance within these fora. Hegland and Wilson (2009: 86) argue that while industry representatives in the RACs represent concrete financial interests they are ready to voice vigorously, more diffuse societal interests with, at least in some cases, less resources have difficulties to make their voices heard. This may result in situations where the interaction of the different interests within a RAC can become quite conflictual (as shown for the BSRAC by Linke et al. (2011)). In the end, the concrete composition of each RAC depends on the set of interests involved in the different maritime regions or specific fisheries. For example, it has been observed that in the Pelagic RAC "catching sector representatives [...] sit there on behalf of large-scale fishing enterprises employing large, highly capital-intensive, modern vessels" (Hegland & Wilson 2009: 80), which is in line with the specific nature of the pelagic fisheries. Given the particular nature of Long Distance and High Seas fisheries, one could expect a similar composition, with special interests representing highly industrialised fleets that are needed to conduct long distance fisheries. In the RACs associated to particular sea areas, the mixture is likely to be more diverse as the regional fishing interests may cover the whole spectrum of civil society and fishing interests.

Both, their purpose, their legal set-up and their composition characterise RACs as special types of expert groups. Their main addressee is the European Commission but which may also advise the Member States concerned when necessary. This status of the RACs as structures similar to EU expert committees is underlined by the financial support they receive from the European Commission to support secretariats and other necessary costs. In 2009 and 2010, all seven Regional Advisory Councils have been awarded 250,000 Euro as subsistence finance from the European Commission's budget line "Closer dialogue with the fishing industry and those affected by the common fisheries policy" (11 04 01)³¹. In addition, RACs receive membership fees and support from national and regional administrations.

In the 2008 review of the functioning of RACs, it was concluded that "RACs have ... helped create *regional networks* where experiences and ideas circulate more readily" (COM(2008)364: 8; own highlight). This underlines the initial intention to create networks that would function as structures through which information on EU fisheries policy could circulate. This networking effect was made possible because "the RACs have helped soften hostility towards the CFP, thus facilitating further *direct contacts between stakeholders, EU officials, Member States and scientists*" (COM(2008)364: 8; own highlight). With regard to access to information, the report found that while "RACs cannot provide translation and interpretation in all the languages of their members [...], they must guarantee *equal access to information* as far as possible" (COM(2008)364: 7; own highlight). Yet, there was a risk that this equal access could not be guaranteed, in particular because it could be observed that within RACs information were kept "*within a small circle* composed mainly of Executive Committee members", which could bring about the "risk that RACs may lose touch with the grass-roots level and develop a life of their own" (COM(2008)364: 7; own highlight). Nevertheless, the Commission concluded that "RACs have delivered *better access to information* and better understanding of decisions taken at European level" (COM(2008)364: 8, own highlight), even to a point where some "RAC members sometimes feel overwhelmed with information" (COM(2008)364: 10).

Finally, with regard to the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, the assessment that there was a generally higher level of informedness due to the existence of RACs should be considered correct. RACs were involved in the reform process early on, as all seven of them provided official contributions to the Green Paper process during 2009 (SEC(2010)428:

³¹ Cf. the EU beneficiaries database at <http://ec.europa.eu/budget/fts> (Last accessed: 14 April 2013).

Annex) after discussions throughout 2009. This made it very likely that all those actors (actively) involved in the RACs were generally aware and informed about the CFP reform process early on and could position themselves to follow the developments or influence the outcomes of the reform process. Together with a broad availability of participation lists from their meetings, the Regional Advisory Councils were therefore considered affiliation structures relevant for information flows and also accessible for the empirical study of trans-European (affiliation) networks.

The Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Sea Fisheries

When starting the empirical research on affiliation networks in EU fisheries policy, the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) for Sea Fisheries was not considered particularly relevant in the analysis of information flows in the context of the CFP reform. However, given that, similar to the chairs of the ACFA working groups, two representatives from the SSDC for Sea Fisheries are statutory members of ACFA, this committee needed to be taken into account as it was by definition connected to the ACFA-RAC affiliation network.

As presented in Section 2.3.4, Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees were created through Commission Decision 98/500/EC of 20 May 1998 and are meant to promote “dialogue between social partners at European level”. These committees may be composed of a maximum of 40 members equally representing workers and employers (Art. 3 of 98/500/EC), with a maximum of 30 participants per meeting for which allowance and travelling expenses are paid (Art. 4 of 98/500/EC). In July 2010, there were 40 of these committees (SEC(2010)964: 5). In the area of the CFP, the 1998 Commission Decision to create these committees replaced the formerly existing “Joint Committee on Social Problems in Sea Fishing” established by Commission Decision 74/441/EEC in 1974 with the current SSDC. The previous Joint Committee was itself the follow-up to the “Joint Advisory Committee on Social Questions arising in the Sea Fishing Industry” that was already set up in 1968 by Commission Decision 68/252/EEC (Dufresne 2006: 53, 80) as a first generation joint committee under the Rome Treaty. In the current Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee, the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) represents the workers while *Europêche* (private ship-owners) as well as COGECA (cooperative ship-owners) represent the employers (SEC(2010)964: 8). Similar to classical expert groups, the SSDC for Sea Fisheries is meeting in Brussels and its secretariat is provided by the European Commission.

In the same way as ACFA and RACs, the SSDC was involved in the CFP reform process early on. During its plenary meeting in May 2009, the Green Paper was discussed and it was decided to formulate a joint position focussing on sustainability and social aspects (SSDC 2009a). The draft of this joint declaration to be prepared by the ETF was discussed at a Working Group meeting in October (SSDC 2009b) and the final declaration was adopted in December 2009 despite remaining differences over the scope and substance of the proposal (SSDC 2009c), which was submitted to the Commission afterwards (SSDC 2009d). In 2010, the SSDC discussed issues related to the CFP reform during its meetings in October (SSDC 2010). The involvement of the SSDC in the early phases of the CFP reform process including the interest of its members to receive early information on the Commission's plans was also underlined when ETF and Europêche issued a joint press statement on 10 May 2011 in which the social partners declared that

“The Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on sea fisheries deplores not having received to date any information on the socio-economic impact assessments of the future Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) despite its repeated requests to the Commission at previous meetings of the Committee.” (Europêche & ETF 2011)

It is thus obvious that the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Sea Fisheries is a relevant forum in the Common Fisheries Policy, that its members were actively trying to get information in the context of the CFP reform and that even organisations with adversarial interests such as workers and employers can have shared interest in receiving policy information, underlining the networking effects of such committees. It is interesting to note that the social partners only publicly asked for access to the impact assessment, not to any other document related to the CFP reform. One could conclude that it might have been easier to get these other documents (i.e. the draft of the future basic CFP regulation) while other related documents such as the impact assessment were not as easily accessible, yet still necessary in making the case for specific aspects the SSDC's members considered most interesting such as “the social dimension” (Europêche & ETF 2011). This may be an indication that different information flow differently also in the network of CFP committees and interest groups in the EU's fisheries policy. The members of the SSDC wanted to be part of all them, but apparently their position(s) in the network were not good enough to receive all information they wanted.

4.6 Civil society actors in the Common Fisheries Policy

"Consultations with stakeholders have been carried out at various levels since 2008: Wide consultation of the sector (producers, importers, processors, retailers) and of non-governmental actors (development and environmental NGOs, consumers' organisations) within the consultative bodies in place under the CFP and thematic seminars." (COM(2011)416: 3)

One of the initial tasks for a whole network analysis is to define the actor population. Yet, trying to map the overall actor population involved in the EU's policy domains such as the Common Fisheries Policy or to count the number of organisations active in a policy field based on *a priori* definitions is close to impossible. Trying to get a broad view on the full population of civil society actors involved in EU policy-making appears to be in vain without a focus on certain *activities* linking those actors to EU politics. Such an endeavour should be seen in relation to other research projects trying to map the EU's interest group population. For instance, Wonka et al. (2010: 466) were able to construct a list of 3700 EU interest groups from different sources. Yet, their database does not include the policy fields in which the organisations listed are active or interested in, so there is no use for the present study. The new Transparency Register of the European Commission and the European Parliament lists 4483 organisations, with 555 still in the old register, allowing an estimate of about 5000 registered organisations as of April 2012³². Out of the 4483 organisations in the new Transparency Register, 641 (14%) have registered as being interested in "Fisheries and Aquaculture". However, looking into the actual list of organisations, one finds a large number that have checked their interest in fisheries and aquaculture as one interest among many. Given that checking an interest in a policy field provides news alerts in this field, organisations instead of focussing on their main area of interest tend to give the widest possible list in order to stay informed. The Transparency Register therefore is only of limited use when estimating the amount of fisheries civil society organisation. Nevertheless, among the 14% of registrants interested in "fisheries and aquaculture", one can find a number of relevant actors such as all organisations that are members of the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA), which could be a hint that using such sources as starting points may still be an option for some types of research.

Instead of using pre-existing databases and stakeholder lists of general nature, it seemed more useful to look into the concrete involvement of civil society actors in activities related to EU

³² The completeness and quality of the register are subject to discussions.

fisheries policy both at the European and the sub-European level. The formulation of the proposal for the new Common Fisheries Policy has seen a wide range of activities through which many ‘stakeholders’ in civil society and public or state administrations have been heard. The European Commission is not just fostering those activities of interest groups during the Common Fisheries Policy reform but provides support more generally and on a regular basis. Under its budget line "Closer dialogue with the fishing industry and those affected by the common fisheries policy" (11 04 01) actual payments (‘outturn’) of 5.13 million Euros in 2009 and 4.06 million Euro in 2010 were made (cf. EU Budget 2011 & 2012). The budget line includes grants to the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs), grants for European trade organisations in the field of fisheries for preparatory meetings to the Advisory Council on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA) as well as communication measures to document and explain the Common Fisheries Policy. However, while these payments directly and indirectly reach many actors, they do not in themselves allow any concrete conclusions about the range of interests involved.

Looking into more obvious links of civil society actors to EU fisheries policy seems to be of more use. For the 2002 CFP reform, the Commission received “175 responses from 350 organizations” and reported “an estimated 1500 participants” in thirty regional face-to-face meetings (O’Mahoney & Coffey 2007: 245). The synthesis of the Green Paper for the post-2012 CFP reform (SEC(2010)428 final: 3-4) lists contributions from 117 industry groups, 63 NGOs (labelled "civil society organisations"), 35 regional or local governmental bodies, 16 academic organisations, 30 member state administrations, 8 European bodies (including ACFA and RACs) as well as 8 non-EU countries. In addition, there were 1443 individual contributions, 1329 of which were identical emails based on an online campaign by Greenpeace Germany. If one excludes national administrations, EU-level bodies and individual contributions, there are 231 contributions actors that may fall under a very wide definition of civil society (including local and regional authorities and academia) or 180 organisations under a conservative definition (only industry and NGOs). However, looking at the individual contributions it is obvious that this does not in itself represents a directly usable sample. Industry contributions include EU-level umbrella organisations like *Europêche/Cogeca* or *AIPCE-CEP* that are members in ACFA as well as national-level organisations like the English *National Federation Fishermen's Organisation* (NFFO, member of *Europêche*) or the French *Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des Elevages Marins* (CNPMEM) down to individual companies or bodies representing local fisheries

management organisations. A similarly diverse picture can be seen with the NGO contributions where one finds coalition contributions of several dozens of organisations, over EU-level representations of global environmental organisations like the WWF with offices and specialised fisheries policy officers at EU level and in several member states (which are sometimes members in the respective Regional Advisory Councils) down to national organisations such as the Dutch Union of Vegetarians or local commercial organisations like Kenna Eco Diving (SEC(2010)428: Annex 1). Judging from the list of contributions, one could expect that most major EU-level and international organisations frequently dealing with fisheries policy have sent in their contribution, but in how far these cover the wider population of civil society organisations cannot be concluded from the Green Paper process.

Another possibility was to construct a list of members in ACFA, RACs and SSDC as the baseline population. ACFA includes about a dozen European organisations while the combined membership of the seven RACs in 2010 was 355 (cf. Table 4, Section 4.5.3; own counting, double membership possible). As the membership between the different RACs and ACFA is overlapping, the combined figure would probably be around an estimated 250-300 member organisations, which is clearly higher than the number of civil society organisations' (*narrow definition*) contributions to the Green Paper that formally started the CFP reform process. Those organisations, which have contributed to the Green Paper and those which are members in ACFA, RACs and the SSDC, probably constitute the core population of organised civil society involved in EU fisheries policy. Even a very conservative figure of 250 organisations in this core group would however be a clear indicator that the estimations for the EU interest groups population such as put forward by Wonka et al. (2010) are very likely underestimating the *actual* size of the relevant EU civil society population. With fisheries policy being a rather small policy field, the number of actors involved in concrete activities just throughout the recent CFP process yields a projection of a considerably larger population than the very restrictive 3700 actor list by Wonka et al. suggests.

The difficulty to map the actual interest group population beyond a core group of those actively involved can be exemplified through a specific type of organisation in the field of fisheries, the so-called "Producer Organisations" (POs). According to the regulation setting up the Common Market Organisation (CMO), POs are groups of producers of fish or aquaculture products that are established for a number of purposes such as the implementation of catch plans, price stabilisation, supply concentration or the encouragement of sustainable

fishing (cf. Article 5 of Council Regulation 104/2000). There were 214 of those in January 2012, 85% of which are located in Spain, Italy, France, UK, Germany, Portugal and the Netherlands (European Parliament 2012a: 2). 34 of those were organised in the European Association of Fish Producers Organisations³³, and some of these 34 are also members of Regional Advisory Councils. Some POs therefore are obviously interest groups and part of the civil society in EU fisheries policy in their own right. Should one, as a consequence, consider all 214 producer organisations interest groups or civil society organisations or only those that involve in some kind of EU-related activity? If the answer is yes for the former, the conservative calculation of the size of the civil society population in EU fisheries could not stand and we might probably get to much higher figures of organisations that in one way or another are not just hypothetically but practically part of EU policy-making.

While it is therefore difficult to count the number of organisations, it is possible in principle to classify the civil society population according to the interests different organisations represent and the level at which they are organised. The enumeration of membership categories in ACFA and in the RACs as well as those organisations that have been identified as missing in ACFA by the 2008 intermediate evaluation (DG MARE 2008a) probably gives a widely comprehensive categorical list of organisations most likely to be involved in EU fisheries policy: The most obvious group of civil society organisations are professional fishing interests including *private ship-owners, co-operative ship-owners, producer organisations, small-scale fishermen and fisherwomen's networks*. In certain circumstances, i.e. in social dialogue, some of these organisations are also employers' facing trade unions representing employed fisheries workers. Then there are those organisations that deal with the interests working with fish as a product or that support the activities of the fishing industry such as *ports, auctions, fish processors, traders and retail chains or the fishmeal and fish oil industry*. A growing role in European and international fisheries is assigned to the *aquaculture industry* as aquaculture represents about 20% of EU fisheries production (DG MARE 2012a: 26). Civil society organisations active in this field represent companies of *stock-breeders of molluscs and shellfish, stock-breeders of fish* as well as *breeders of ornamental fish*. Aquaculture companies may produce fisheries products both inshore and offshore, thereby enlarging the range of possible interests in this field. Further interests involved in EU fisheries policy are *recreational or sport fishermen*, whose interests may also be concerned when decisions on the wider fisheries policy are taken but who are more generally counted among

³³ Own counting on the list of members of EAPO on their website (<http://www.eapo.com>) on 24 Jan 2011.

the “non-professional” organisations. Further “non-professional” organisations which represent general or specific societal interests such as *consumer organisations*, *environmental NGOs (eNGOs)* and *development organisations*, the latter usually active in the external dimension of EU fisheries to account for the interests of fishermen and societies in third states with which the EU has or can have fisheries agreements. In the field of “non-professional” organisations, there is also quite a variety of groups active in EU policy-making, with eNGOs like Greenpeace who have a more confrontational approach both to industry and to the state actors, groups like the WWF who generally have a more cooperative approach with industry and the state or groups like the European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD) which is regarded by some as an industry-sponsored NGO³⁴. It should also be noted that non-professional organisations have been complemented at the EU level by EU-wide coalitions, most prominently during the post-2012 reform by OCEAN2012 launched in June 2009 by five eNGOs and funded by the Oak Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trust and The Tubney Charitable Trust³⁵. This coalition of NGOs of different types grew to 100 members within 1 1/2 years³⁶, many of which have not individually contributed to the CFP reform Green Paper and are not members in ACFA or RACs. Furthermore, private pressure campaigns such as the highly visible, UK-started “Fish Fight” campaign that called to end discards³⁷ have had their role on the side of non-professional organisations, too.

After this general categorisation of interests existing in the context of EU fisheries policy, another level of complexity can be added when one considers that some of these interests may overlap or can be represented by the same umbrella organisations or by campaigns that create mix-type *de facto* interest groups. Some interests can also have sub-interests, such as fishermen and their organisations that deal with just one type of fish (e.g. tuna fisheries). Others may not be “stable” interests because their positioning in the space of possible policy choices is unclear or fluid, for example when *retail chains* react to consumer demands for more sustainable fish. And given the complex nature of marine politics, the increasing overlap of the more specific fisheries policy and the broader EU maritime policy brings new conflicts (van Hoof & van Tatenhove 2009) and new actors into the formerly distinct fisheries policy.

³⁴ This view was shared by two independent sources in background talks/interviews. The private shipowner association *Europêche* confirms in its entry in the EU Transparency Register that it “disposes of a collaboration contract with the EBCD” (Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/displaylobbyist.do?id=2312395253-25>, last accessed: 14 April 2013).

³⁵ Source: <http://www.ocean2012.eu/funders> (as of: 29 April 2012).

³⁶ Source: <http://www.fishsec.org/2010/12/07/ocean2012-going-for-200/> (Last accessed: 13 April 2013).

³⁷ <http://www.fishfight.eu/> (Last accessed: 14 April 2013).

Furthermore, all interests can and many do exist on all administrative and political levels, from the local fishermen to the European trade organisation. It is also important to note that, depending on the national context, the interest organisations come from quite different political and administrative political systems (Mikalsen & Jentoft 2008). For example, while the Netherlands and France have strong corporatist structures of fisheries management with more or less exclusive access for fisheries industry stakeholders but closed to other actors, Danish environmental and consumer organisations have been included into management institutions. In Spain, the federal system with a strong position of the regions has contributed to the involvement of a wider set of actors while in Great Britain the involvement of civil society is usually less formalised and follows more a logic of lobbying than the logic of involvement and delegation within the more corporate systems (Mikalsen & Jentoft 2008: 171-2). These national differences can account for different types of actors involved in EU politics, but this may also impact the level of informedness, for instance when more corporate systems provide better yet exclusive access to information for some organisations but not for others.

Altogether, the landscape of civil society groups in the Common Fisheries Policy is relatively diverse and includes several hundred actors, despite the rather limited substantive scope of the policy. Cataloguing a comprehensive list *a priori* is difficult and the most promising approach seems to be to use information on affiliation (membership and/or participation) to relevant consultative bodies such as ACFA and RACs or participation in EU consultations such as the Green Paper process ahead of the CFP reform. Based on those choices, researcher can assess which organisations are to be counted as European civil society in the field of the EU fisheries policy.

4.7 The early phases of the post-2012 reform of the CFP

It has been explained in Section 4.2 why the goal of this study is to understand information flows in the context of the early phases of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), in particular during the stage of drafting the Commission proposal. The Section 4.3 then laid out that the post-2012 CFP reform is part of a longer process of Europeanisation and countervailing national or regional forces in the development of the Common Fisheries Policy. Through successive expansions of the policy and under the condition of an enlarged

European Union, the EU's fisheries policy has become more complex over the last decades. This complexity is reflected in the number of Commission Directorates General involved in the CFP reform (Section 4.4), in the range of actors active in this policy domain (Section 4.6) and the variety of committee structures (Section 4.5) that have evolved over time. The evolution of the reform proposal for the EU's future Common Fisheries Policy, which included a set of regulations and communications and which was presented by the European Commission on 13 July 2011, should be seen with these complexities in mind. The goal of this section is to present some relevant aspects of this early phase of the post-2012 CFP reform process. The aim is to put into context the detailed empirical research on affiliation networks and information flows of leaked documents during this period that will be discussed in the following chapters.

Part of the complexity of the reform is the time period that it took just to arrive at the Commission's proposals in July of 2011. In fact, the preparations for the CFP reform began already in 2008. The Maltese Joe Borg was still Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs and only in February 2010, at about half time of the early phase of the CFP reform process, Commissioner Maria Damanaki, under whose responsibility the Commission proposal was finally put forward, took office in her new function as Fisheries Commissioner. This change in office also came with a change in the leadership on top of the Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) and the previous Director General Fokion Fotiadis was replaced by Lowri Evans in June of 2010. In addition, the treaty basis of the European Union was changed with the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009 in the middle of this early phase of the CFP reform. This was very relevant for the Common Fisheries Policy as through this new treaty the European Parliament became a co-legislator together with the Council also in fisheries policy, setting the stage for a political reform process in which the Parliament and in particular the members of the fisheries committee, who were newly or re-elected to the European Parliament in June 2009, would play a much stronger political role than in previous reforms. It is important to keep these developments in mind as they form the backdrop not just of the first phase of the reform but also for the negotiation stage that started in the summer of 2011 and will last until 2013.

The reform process for the post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy started with a note from fisheries Commissioner Joe Borg to the College of Commissioners in September 2008. This note with the subject "Further reform of the Common Fisheries Policy" was presented in the

weekly meeting of the chefs de cabinets of the Commissioners (the HEBDO) on 1 September 2008 and then discussed in the College of Commissioners on 17 September 2008, before being transformed into a Commission Working Paper with the title “Reflections on further reform of the Common Fisheries Policy” (SEC(2008)2505/2)³⁸. This working Paper was to be discussed at an informal Fisheries Council meeting of 29 September 2008 headed by the French Council Presidency³⁹. Already three days later, on 2 October 2008, the outcome of these informal discussions were presented to over 30 fisheries interest group representatives in the plenary meeting of the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA). The Commission representative announced, that “after some mixed reactions, the Commission received the support of the Member States to start the preparations for this reform” (ACFA 2008a). At the same meeting, a Green Paper on the CFP reform was announced for early 2009, “probably in April”, and the ACFA plenary decided to set up an ad-hoc group on the CFP reform. This ad-hoc group held its first meetings on 19 November and 3 December 2008 and envisaged to put forward a position already ahead of the publication of the Green Paper. In order to save resources for this work, the activities of Working Group 4 (General Questions) of ACFA were halted in favour of the ad-hoc group (ACFA 2008b).

The plans of the European Commission as presented to the Council and to ACFA were also noticed in the European Parliament. On 17 October 2008, Socialist MEP Paulo Casaca clearly referenced the Commission's Working Document and its content in a parliamentary question on financial aspects of the CFP to the European Commission (Europarl 2008). And in the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) the CFP reform process became an issue, too, for example at the General Assembly of North Western Waters RAC where on 19 November 2008 a Commission representative presented the upcoming reform, followed by a discussion (NWWRAC 2008). But even if this presentation might not have taken place, it would have been very likely that NWWRAC members would have noticed that several RAC members were excused from the meeting as, on the same day, the ad-hoc CFP reform group of ACFA was meeting in Brussels (see above).

³⁸ Upon my request for access to the document from the EU Commission, I have received SEC(2008)2505/2 as a Word document with track changes, thus including both the original note and the final working document. This allowed the tracing of the evolution of this title.

³⁹ Michel Barnier, who became EU Commissioner for the Internal Market in 2009, was the French fisheries minister at the time (cf. Council doc. 13522/08). This is in so far interesting as Barnier was later said to have voiced major concerns at the late stages of the Commission's internal drafting process.

The reform process discussions for the post-2012 CFP reform thus started in late summer and autumn of 2008 and it is clear from the evidence presented above that all relevant actors – Commission, Council, Parliament and ACFA as well as RAC members – were involved from that moment. The Commission’s Working Document laid out in a very general way some of the major topics that in some way or another would later materialise in the Green Paper and the final legislative proposal presented by the Commission in July 2011:

- prioritisation of ecological sustainability,
- regional management solutions,
- tackling fleet overcapacity,
- creating incentives for responsible fishing “through longer term access rights”,
- “results based management” and
- the necessity to consider not just the interests of the large-scale fishing industry but also those of “coastal, artisanal, recreational and semi-professional fishermen” (SEC(2008)2505/2).

In a Council document drawn up for the discussions of fisheries ministers on 26-27 April 2012, almost one year into the discussions and negotiations on the CFP reform, the main points of the reform are listed. These almost exactly reflect the main issues put forward ~3.5 years earlier in late 2008 by the European Commission (EU Council Doc 8442/12: 2; own highlights):

- “stock management at *maximum sustainable yield as a legal obligation* ("by 2015" for all stocks);
- implementation decisions by Member States in a *regional context*, under Union multiannual plans or technical measures frameworks;
- *discard ban* (landing obligation irrespective of quotas and minimum reference sizes, prohibition of operations under insufficient quota, related marketing standards for over-quota catches);
- *Transferable Fishing Concessions* as an obligatory system at national level, with a *possibility to exclude small vessels* from the scheme.”

This conclusion, i.e. the similarity of the initial 2008 proposals and the main issues that made it into the final reform proposal in 2011, is in so far remarkable as the process that led from the 2008 Commission Working Document to the final Commission proposals took almost

three years, included a large scale consultation process, first through the Green Paper process in 2009 and then through a number of formal and semi-formal events throughout 2010, and saw the change of the responsible Commissioner and Director General.

Despite the similarity between the broad themes laid out in 2008 and the final proposal in 2011, the reform process involved a large amount of actors, inside and outside the Commission (see also Sections 4.4 and 4.6). Following the initial discussion based on the Commission Working document and the presentation to Council and several civil society advisory groups, the actual public consultation processes was launched with the Green Paper (COM(2009)163) issued by the European Commission on 22 April 2009 inviting “all interested parties to comment on the questions set out in this Green Paper” and to submit contributions until 31 December 2011 (COM(2009)163: 26). Through the massive amount of 69 often quite broad questions under fourteen different headlines, the Commission intended to structure the consultation process. Its main starting point was the assessment that the CFP had indeed partially failed with 30% of European fish stocks being “outside safe biological limits” due to overcapacity and a vast amount of political and administrative measures and exceptions, oriented more on the short than on the long term, that hindered a comprehensive success of the policy (COM(2009)163: 7). Organisations participating were thus faced with this very wide set of reform issues, and contributions were sent in throughout 2009. The results of the Green Paper consultation were then presented on 16 April 2010 (SEC(2010)428). 382 full contributions had been received by the Commission, complemented by 1329 identical responses from a mass email campaign (SEC(2010)428: 3). The mass email was based on a campaign by Greenpeace Germany⁴⁰ and therefore contained mainly responses in German language. Out of the 382 contributions, 117 came from industry groups, 63 from civil society organisations, 16 from academia, 30 from member state administrations or agencies and 114 from individual citizens or groups of citizens (SEC(2010):428: 3).

Without a proper text analysis, which is not within the scope of this research, it is difficult to assess in how far the synthesis by the European Commission represents the actual substance of the contributions received or the interest population represented by the different submissions (given that a citizen contribution may have a different weight than the contribution by an EU-level umbrella organisation). The shortness of the summaries under

⁴⁰ Confirmed by one of the participants in the mass email action contacted by the authors as well as by a Greenpeace employee in a background talk.

each headline also makes it difficult to assess the relevance that the Commission gave to different contributions and what concrete conclusions it drew from the process, i.e. whether the Green Paper contributions actually had any concrete policy impact in scope or detail of the future proposals for the CFP reform. It is even more difficult to draw any particular conclusions given that throughout 2009, 2010 and up until mid-2011, the European Commission organised or was present during a large number of public hearings and consultations in which different aspects of the Common Fisheries Policy fully or partially covered in the Green Paper were presented and discussed with Commission officials, parliamentarians, stakeholders, scientists and other interested parties. The Commission itself lists 130 events for 2009 and 73 events for 2010 (see Annex 2 to the CFP reform impact assessment (SEC(2011)891)), followed by a major stakeholder meeting on discards on 3 May 2011 when the drafting of the CFP reform proposal already went into its final phase⁴¹. In how far the written contributions received through the Green Paper consultations or the oral and written intervention in the context of the many meetings during and after that phase impacted the concrete formulation of the CFP reform proposal needs a separate assessment. This assessment may yield interesting insights into policy formulation processes with the EU, in particular since the issues with which the Commission went into the process in 2008 and the results in 2011 very much remained the same. The draft proposal eventually went into formal interservice consultation on 6 April 2011 and, following a number of relevant changes, was finally published on 13 July 2011. Leaks of these drafts were reported in the press and other sources (see Section 4.2), which made this an interesting case for studying network-dependent information flows in the context of the Common Fisheries Policy reform (Chapter 6)

This overview over the early phase of the post-2012 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy has shown that when the Commission's proposals were adopted in July 2011 and formal discussions and negotiations in the EU Council and the European Parliament started, a significant consultation process had already taken place. Once this process was initiated in late 2008, the relevant civil society actors were involved individually in the Green Paper process as well as through the respective committee structures and so the substantive scope of the CFP reform was basically clear right from the start. All actors involved throughout the years 2009 and 2010 therefore had the chance to position themselves both in the space of policy options but also in the policy networks that would constitute or develop in that period. Different civil society actors participated in all sorts of committee meetings, including in

⁴¹ The author participated in this meeting as an observer.

ACFA and the RACs, that dealt with CFP reform, and given the theoretical framework(s) presented in Chapters 2 and 3 one could expect that the structural positioning of these actors throughout 2009 and 2010 should have served as the basis for informational advantages and disadvantages these actors would face in the crucial stage of intra-Commission drafting of the future reform proposals in the first half of 2011.

At the time of finalising this text in spring 2013, the Commission's proposals from July 2011 had gone through the hands of the European Parliament's Fisheries Committee, which had voted on more than 2500 amendments or related compromise amendments to the Commission proposal in early February 2013. At the end of February, the Council of Ministers agreed on a general approach and in early March both institutions and the Commission started their informal trilogue negotiations. During the discussion both in Council and in Parliament, it has become obvious that core elements of the Commission's proposal such as tradable fishing rights/concessions or specific environmental targets such as reaching Maximum Sustainable Yield by 2015 were heavily contested and would be subject to amendments towards the status quo, which could be regarded as a confirmation of the path dependence observed throughout the continuous development in the Common Fisheries Policy (cf. Section 4.3). Future studies will have to take a closer look into those negotiations to assess why and how each institutions came to its position(s) and how the trilogue negotiations led to the final agreement on a reformed EU Common Fisheries Policy.

4.8 Conclusions and hypotheses

This chapter has provided a broad introduction into the case for which the analysis of affiliation networks and information flows in the following three chapters will be conducted. The Common Fisheries Policy was presented as a policy in which strong opposing forces between European, regional, national, subnational and local actors melt together in general policy-making and in particular during the recurring major reform processes that repeat themselves every 10 years. This mix has made the CFP a policy with considerable path dependence effects, despite the decades-long realisation that overfishing has not been ended. A multitude of actors (Section 4.6) forming Europe-wide networks involving representatives from many different governmental and non-governmental organisations come together in networks created through fora such as the committees presented in Section 4.5. The leaks of

documents during the early phases of the post-2012 CFP reform process (Sections 4.2 and 4.7) and the sharing of these leaks in those wider European networks were considered pertinent empirical phenomena for which the link between (affiliation) network structures of the main committees identified and the level of informedness of actors in these structures could be studied in order to test the hypotheses developed throughout the previous chapters. In the light of these observations, the Common Fisheries Policy has been chosen as a case worth studying in the context of the questions raised for this study.

The goal of the following three chapters therefore is to *first* analyse the affiliation network that evolved through meetings of ACFA, RACs and the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee in 2009 and 2010, *second* to analyse information flows in the drafting phase in the first half of 2011, in particular actors' access to leaked drafts of the Commission proposal for the future Basic Regulation of the Common Fisheries Policy, and *third* to test whether the structural properties that emerge from the affiliation network structures would have been able to predict the level of informedness of different actors involved in this early phase of the post-2012 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy.

Chapter V

Committee affiliation networks in the context of the post-2012 CFP reform

5.1 Chapter structure

5.2 The independent variable: CFP committee network structures

5.3 The data: Overview and data collection process

5.4 Network generation, data transformation, and data analysis

5.5 The Common Fisheries Policy network

5.5.1 Expected observations for the CFP network

5.5.2 The CFP affiliation network

5.5.3 The CFP event network

5.5.4 The CFP actor network

5.6 Summary and conclusions

5.1 Chapter structure

This chapter aims to present the establishment of an affiliation network of 205 events from 10 advisory committees in EU fisheries policy. The display and analysis of this affiliation network is expected to provide an insight into broader network structures in EU fisheries policy, in particular networks involving civil society organisations. At the same time, the affiliation network analysis laid out throughout this chapter will establish the necessary actor-related data for the independent variable(s) of the main hypotheses of this study – actors' position within a network and their connectedness with others – which assume that an actor's position within a network should predict the level of informedness of that actor. Hence, the main purpose of this chapter is to operationalise and to measure the independent variable(s), while the presentation of the general affiliation network structures based on participation in the 10 advisory committees should also give hints about structural pattern of EU fisheries policy and some general conclusions about information flows in these structures.

As a first step, I will therefore introduce, more in detail, the conceptualisation of the independent variable, explaining in Section 5.2 the choice of data and the focus on CFP committee events during 2009 and 2010. In Section 5.3, both the available data and the data collection process will be discussed in detail, before presenting the transformation of the available data into network data in Section 5.4. In Section 5.5, the findings on the affiliation network will be presented, with a particular focus on the one-mode structures of events and actors. The chapter will close with general assumptions about possible information flows that one could predict from the structures observed, which will be tested empirically in the following chapter.

5.2 The independent variable: CFP committee network structures

Throughout the three previous chapters, it has been established that EU information flows matter in many ways. It has been highlighted that civil society organisations have a particular interest in accessing EU information at a stage when they might still be able to influence the outcome of policy-processes. Access to confidential or only partially public information may in many cases only happen through personal networks. In political contexts, those networks frequently form through affiliation to certain groups or events, for instance in the context of

EU committees. It was therefore shown above, both very generally but also theoretically, why and how affiliation is a relevant phenomenon for informational networking in a European context. The *general hypothesis* emerging from these discussions was that network structures as *independent variable* impact information flows so that the individual or group positions in a network have an impact on the level of informedness of these (groups of) actors as the *dependent variable*. Given the importance of affiliation, the networks underlying the independent variable were supposed to be affiliation ('two-mode') networks or their respective one-mode projections.

The main aim of this chapter is to describe the construction of such an affiliation network, the structure of which will become the basis for the independent variable of the general hypothesis as well as the basis for a number of independent variables in the more refined sub-hypothesis that follow from the general hypothesis (see conclusions of Chapters 2 and 3). Taking into account the pertinence of studying the post-2012 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union, and given the existence of a good number of advisory committees that involve representatives of civil society organisations active in this policy field across different administrative levels and geographical regions in Europe, the network to be studied for this case is an affiliation network based on meetings of advisory and expert committees in the Common Fisheries Policy, including the actors participating in these meetings.

The particular case at hand provided the main guidance for the **boundary specification** of the concrete network to be studied. Defining the boundaries of a network is an important starting point for any network analysis as these specifications define what can and what cannot be found (cf. Marsden 1990: 439). Fujimoto et al. (2011: 232) have argued, rather *en passant*, that it is most usual in two-mode networks to first define the boundaries for the actor set (i.e. the first mode) and then to include all events that these actors participated in into the second mode. However, there is no particular reason to define the boundaries of a two-mode network through the actors only. When we are interested in all actors who are members to a certain set of organisations or who were participants in a set of events that we would like to study, it is this second mode that defines the boundaries of the actor set. For the affiliation network in this study, the boundaries of the network are specified through the theoretical interest and the particular contextual conditions of the case: As the interest is to study networks involving civil society interests in EU policy-making, only those major advisory committees in the field of the

Common Fisheries Policy that formally involve civil society actors are included. In total, ten such committees have been identified, three ‘based’ in Brussels and linked directly to the European Commission – ACFA, the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Sea Fisheries, and the Commission expert group for the coordination of the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) – and seven RACs based in coastal EU member states. Each RAC covers a concrete maritime region or specific types of fisheries and during the post-2012 EU fisheries policy reform there were only seven of those (see Section 4.5.3). Participation in those fora represent occasions for networking, interaction, and access to policy-relevant information, and it was considered that affiliation to concrete events was a better predictor for information flows than general membership. The **second mode** of the affiliation network in this study thus comprises a set of committee *events*, not membership affiliation to the respective committees.

The temporal boundaries of this second mode were defined (a) by the general timeline of the CFP reform process, which started in late 2008, (b) the fact that the last of the 10 committees only became operational in Spring 2009, as well as (c) the interest to explain informal information flows during the phase of intra-Commission drafting of the CFP reform proposal, which was expected to take place in early 2011. Taking into account these time stamps, the ‘event mode’ was defined as comprising all formal meetings of the 10 committees that took place during 2009 (the year of the Green Paper) and 2010 (a year of preparatory consultations with stakeholders). The boundaries of the **first mode** – i.e. the ‘actor mode’ – of the affiliation were then defined through the boundaries of the event mode, considering all *actors* part of the network who had been registered as participants in at least one of the respective meetings during the two years. Having specified the boundaries of the affiliation network, the major remaining methodological question was the definition of the sources for the network data. While in the past, “[s]urveys and questionnaires soliciting self-reports [...] [were] the predominant research method used” (Marsden 1990: 440) and while, due to the availability of large-scale data sets from online social networks, today’s quantitative social network analysis seems to shift to digital databases as its preferred **data source**, the study of political affiliation networks can rely on archival sources (cf. the studies summarised in Section 3.5.2). The quasi-archival sources for the 2009-10 affiliation network were *participation lists* as recorded by the respective committee secretariats. In the following section, the details of this data will be presented and discussed, followed by a section in which the necessary data transformation is described before discussing the actual network(s) throughout Section 5.5.

5.3 The data: Overview and data collection process

The affiliation network database used for the analyses in this study is based on participation lists of 10 expert and advisory committees identified as relevant fora involving civil society organisations in the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) of the European Union. The database contains events that took place in 2009 and 2010 as these years represent the main years in which civil society actors were consulted ahead of the main intra-Commission drafting phase in the first half of 2011. In total, the affiliation data set contains **205 events** (mode m) and **1333 individual actors** (mode n) listed as participants in these events. The respective participation lists were gathered through public sources (websites) and requests for documents to the European Commission or the respective secretariats of the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) where no or no sufficient amount of lists were available online⁴². In this section, the data set will be described and basic descriptive statistics for the individual committees and for the full database will be presented. At the end of this section, the quality and consistency of the data set will then be discussed separately. What is important to notice is that the majority of actors represent non-governmental organisations (including academia or representatives of regions), which are the main interest of this study. However, all committee participation lists also include participants from European, national and international governmental organisations (e.g. European Commission officials or representatives of national member states). While the main focus is on non-governmental actors, those government representatives have been included in order to be able to estimate the share of these actors in the different committees. The fact that both governmental and non-governmental actors interact through those committees also adds to the argument that those committee affiliation structures support networking through which civil society organisations gain better access to information flows originating from public authorities.

Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA)

ACFA's meeting schedule for 2009⁴³ foresaw 16-20 meetings, the meeting schedule for 2010⁴⁴, a total of 14-16 meetings, thus a total of 30-36 possible meetings. While some of these were available online, a freedom of information request to the European Commission

⁴² A request to the RACs coordinator of the European Commission made on 30 January 2011 to receive all participation lists of all RACs, was answered on 3 February 2011 with the information that the coordinator would not gather such records. It was therefore necessary to collect the data from different sources.

⁴³ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/content/221> (Last accessed: 14 April 2013).

⁴⁴ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/content/1280> (Last accessed: 14 April 2013).

allowed access to the participation lists for the time period 2009 to 2011 (mid-year) which were received via email in February and September 2011. The final database contains 17 meetings for 2009 and 12 meetings for 2010, lacking in particular both ACFA Bureau meetings for which no participation lists could be accessed. There are thus a **total number of 29 ACFA meetings** contained in the database, including both plenary and working group meetings. 332 individual participants (members and observers) have participated in at least one of these ACFA meeting in 2009 and 2010. This means that ~25% of all 1333 individuals contained in the overall database have participated in at least one ACFA meeting. In return, this means that 75% of all those involved within the system of CFP consultative committees have *not* been involved within this main Commission expert group during the period of time studied. Of those who participated in ACFA, 128 (39%) represented Commission officials, 89 (70%) of which represented DG MARE. The rest came from DG SANCO (22), DG ENVI (5), DG TRADE (4), DG RTD (3), DG DIGIT (2), DG AGRI (1), DG TAXUD (1) and DG ENTR (1). Three individuals participated in more than 25 ACFA meetings, two of which represented the ACFA secretariat and one represented a fisheries industry organisation. All other ACFA participants in the database have attended 20 or less meetings, with 160 individuals participating just once, revealing a type an uneven distribution in the participation patterns of individuals (see Diagram 1 below). This distribution of the frequency in participation, even when ignoring the two secretariat members, is an indication that there is (a) a small elite of about 15 individuals, which was involved in at least a third of the ACFA meetings during 2009 and 2010, (b) a group of about 50 individuals still with frequent involvement and (c) a large group of participants that were involved in less than five meetings. It should be noted that in particular the secretaries-general of the EU-level organisations represented in ACFA, who have permanent observer status in the committee, tend to be regular participants in the meetings. This indicates their role as information gatherers and distributors within their European organisations.

The power law distribution of the participation frequency (first mode) that can be seen in Diagram 1 is not matched for the second mode of the data set as the size of the meetings is rather normally distributed. The average number of participants per meeting was 36.8, with the largest ACFA meeting recorded having 52 participants and the smallest meeting with 16 participants in 2009-10 period.

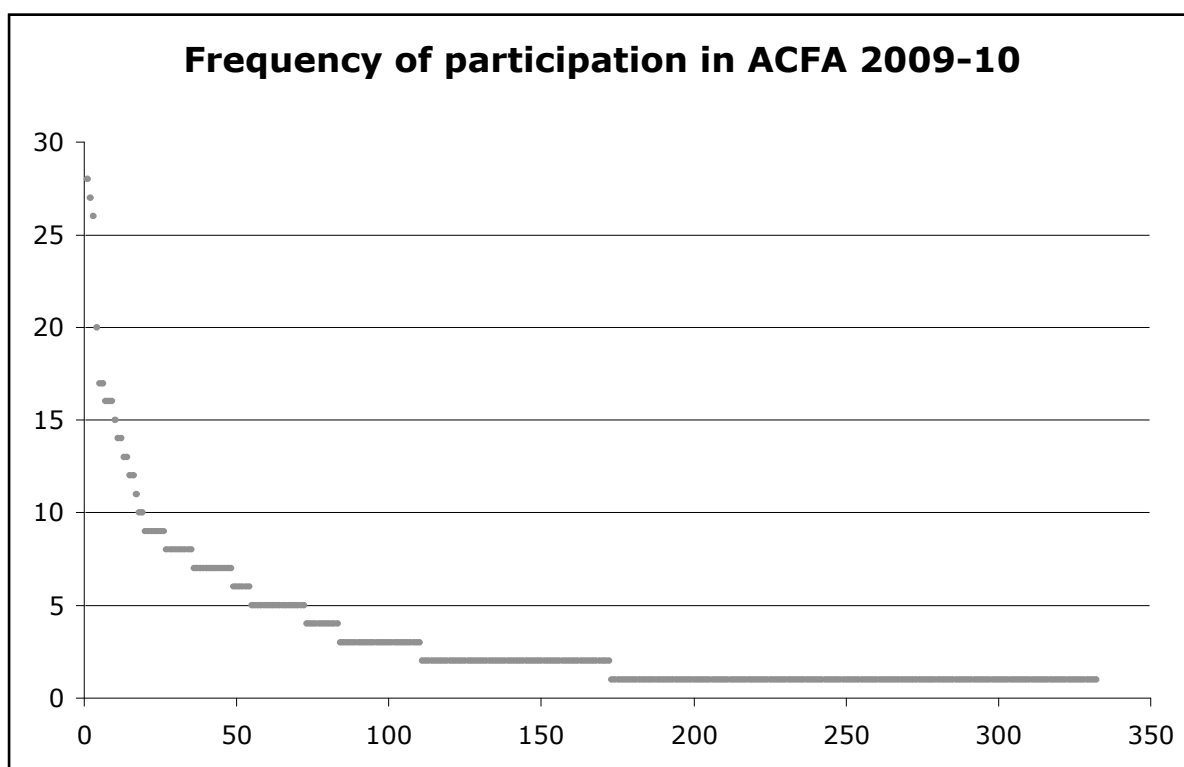


Diagram 1: x-axis: Participants ranked from 1 to 332. Y-axis: number of events participated in.

Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) for Sea Fisheries

The database contains 5 meetings for 2009 and 4 meetings for 2010⁴⁵. Thus, **a total of 9 SSDC meetings** are included. In total, there were 79 individuals, who participated in the nine meetings. 7 of these represented the European Commission, 4 from DG EMPL and 3 from DG MARE. 4 were representatives of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). 40 (50.6%) of the individuals participated in only one event, while three participated in all 9. One of these three represented the Commission, the other two the employed fishermen, that is the trade unions for fisherwomen and -men.

⁴⁵ At the time of writing, the website containing the participation lists is not functional anymore (cf. http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/empl/sectoral_social_dialogue/library?l=/sea_fisheries&vm=detailed&sb=Title). 10 meetings were listed for the SSDC for 2009 and 2010.

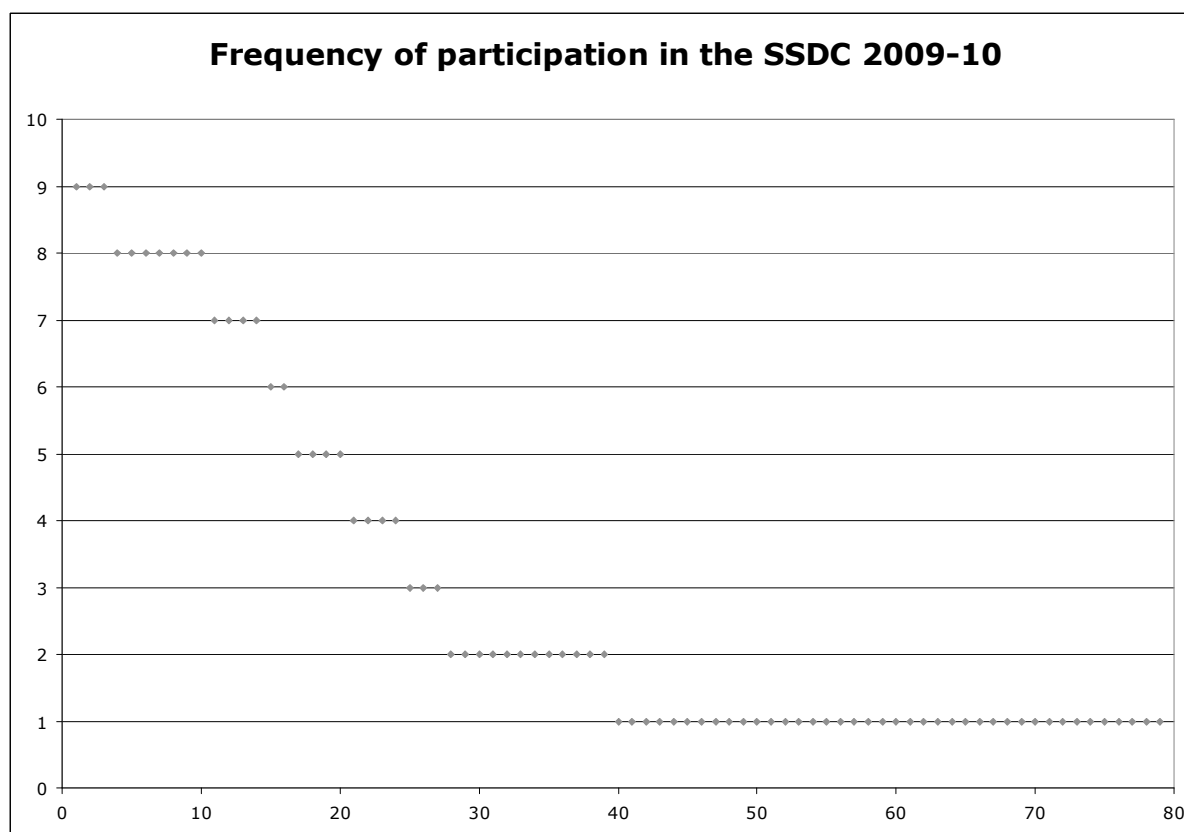


Diagram 2: x-axis: Participants ranked from 1 to 79. Y-axis: number of events participated in.

RACs and EU Commission coordination meetings (Commission expert group)

Unlike the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) themselves, RACs and EU Commission coordination meetings are considered a formal expert group. They bring together secretariats and leaderships of the seven RACs as well as a number of relevant Commission officials. In 2009 and 2010, there were **3 coordination meetings** between the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) and the European Commission. The participation lists of the RAC representatives involved in these meetings were received from the RACs coordinator in DG MARE via email on 3 February 2011. The minutes and participation list for one of the meetings were available online⁴⁶. This document also included the Commission officials who participated, which were not listed in the document received from the Commission. The comparison between the list received via email and the meeting report revealed that these were not fully overlapping. The participation list annexed to the meeting report lacked at least one name also mentioned in the report itself, therefore the list provided by the Commission via email was considered more accurate with regard to RAC representatives. Only the names of the Commission officials

⁴⁶ http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/DG_MARE_Report_EC_RACs_Coordination_Meeting_021210_EN.pdf (Last accessed: 14 April 2013).

where then used from the meeting report and added to the database. In total, there were 34 individual participants recorded for the three meetings, 6 of which represented DG MARE. The average meeting size without Commission officials was 16, with officials 18.

Baltic Sea RAC (BSRAC)

According to the list of events contained in the 3rd, 4th and 5th annual report⁴⁷ of the Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council, there was a total number of 16 BSRAC meetings in 2009 and 11 meetings in 2010. The database contains 11 meetings for 2009 and 8 meetings for 2010 which were retrieved from the BSRAC website. The database thus contains **a total number of 19 meetings** for 2009 and 2010. There were 177 individuals who participated in the 19 meetings. 82 individuals (46.3%) participated in only one meeting. Six individuals participated in more than 15 meetings, one representing the RAC secretariat, the others representing the fishery industry. In general, the distribution of the participation frequencies basically follows the patterns observed before, with a few actors participating in a major share of events. 11 participants (6.2%) represented the European Commission (10 DG MARE, 1 DG ENVI) and one the European Fisheries Control Agency. 15 persons represented national governments, 6 from Denmark, 4 from Poland, 2 (each) from Estonia and Germany, and 1 from Sweden.

⁴⁷ 3 meetings for 2009 in the 3rd annual report (source: [http://www.bsrac.org/archive/Dokumenter/General%20Assembly/080509/GA2DraftAnnualReport2008-2009\[1\].pdf](http://www.bsrac.org/archive/Dokumenter/General%20Assembly/080509/GA2DraftAnnualReport2008-2009[1].pdf)), 13 meetings for 2009 and 2 meetings for 2010 in the 4th annual report (source: <http://www.bsrac.org/archive/Dokumenter/General%20Assembly/11052010/Annex%201DraftFinalreportyear4.pdf>) 9 meetings for 2010 in the 5th annual report (source: http://www.bsrac.org/archive/Basis%20documenter/Finalreportyear5_2010_2011.pdf). Last accessed: 14 April 2013.

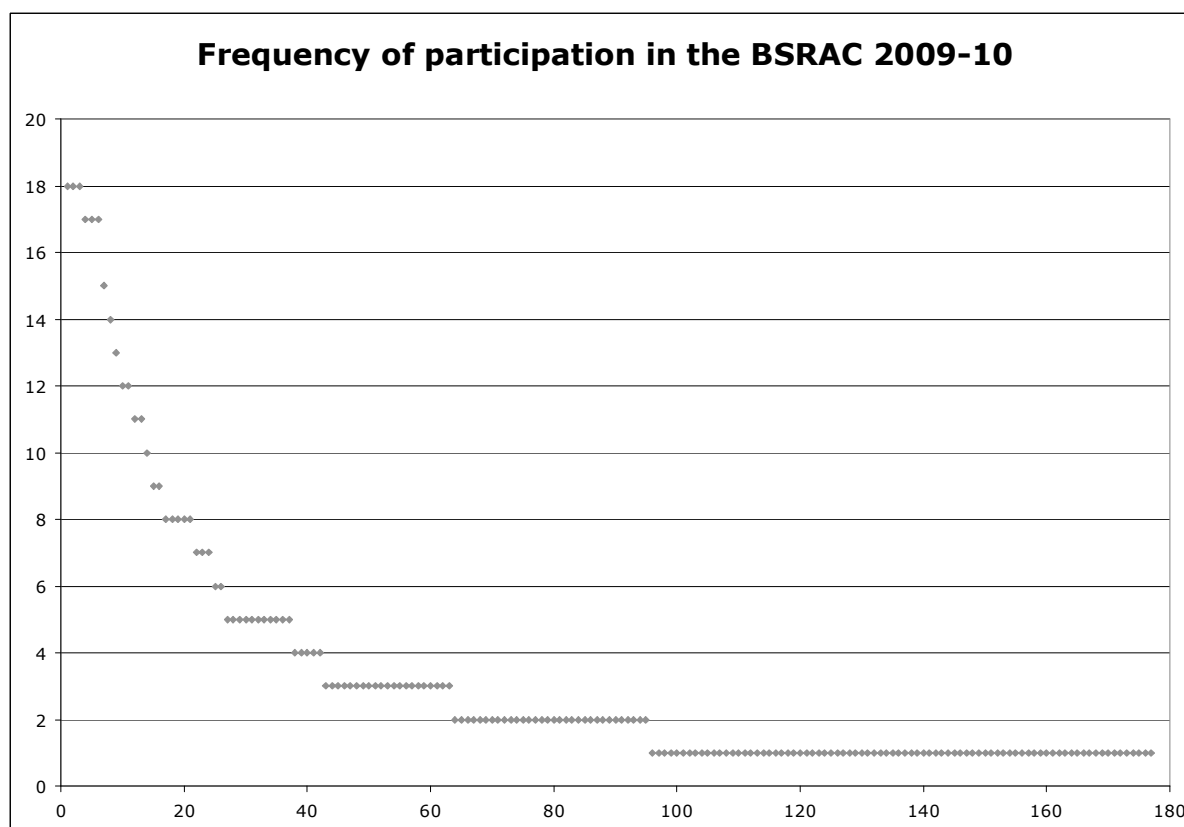


Diagram 3: x-axis: Participants ranked from 1 to 177. Y-axis: number of events participated in.

Long Distance RAC (LDRAC)

According to the list of events presented on its website, the Long Distance Regional Advisory Council had only 3 meetings in 2009 and 7 meetings in 2010. However, in an email received from the LDRAC secretariat on 9 March 2011, participants list for a **total number of 26 meetings** was received, 15 for 2009 and 11 for 2010. Given the lack of alternative sources, this is considered the full set of LDRAC meetings that took place during the two years. In total, there were 196 individuals registered in the 26 participation lists, 107 (54.6%) of which only participated in one meeting. Two individuals representing the RAC secretariat participated in all meetings, and the distribution of frequencies again follows the patterns observed before. 24 individuals (12.2%) represented the European Commission, 23 from DG MARE and one from DG TRADE. 2 persons represented the European Fisheries Control Agency; 3 participants were members of the European Parliament. 33 participants (16.8%) were representatives of national governments, 21 from Spain, 4 from the Seychelles, 2 (each) from France, Portugal and the UK, and 1 (each) from Estonia and Germany.

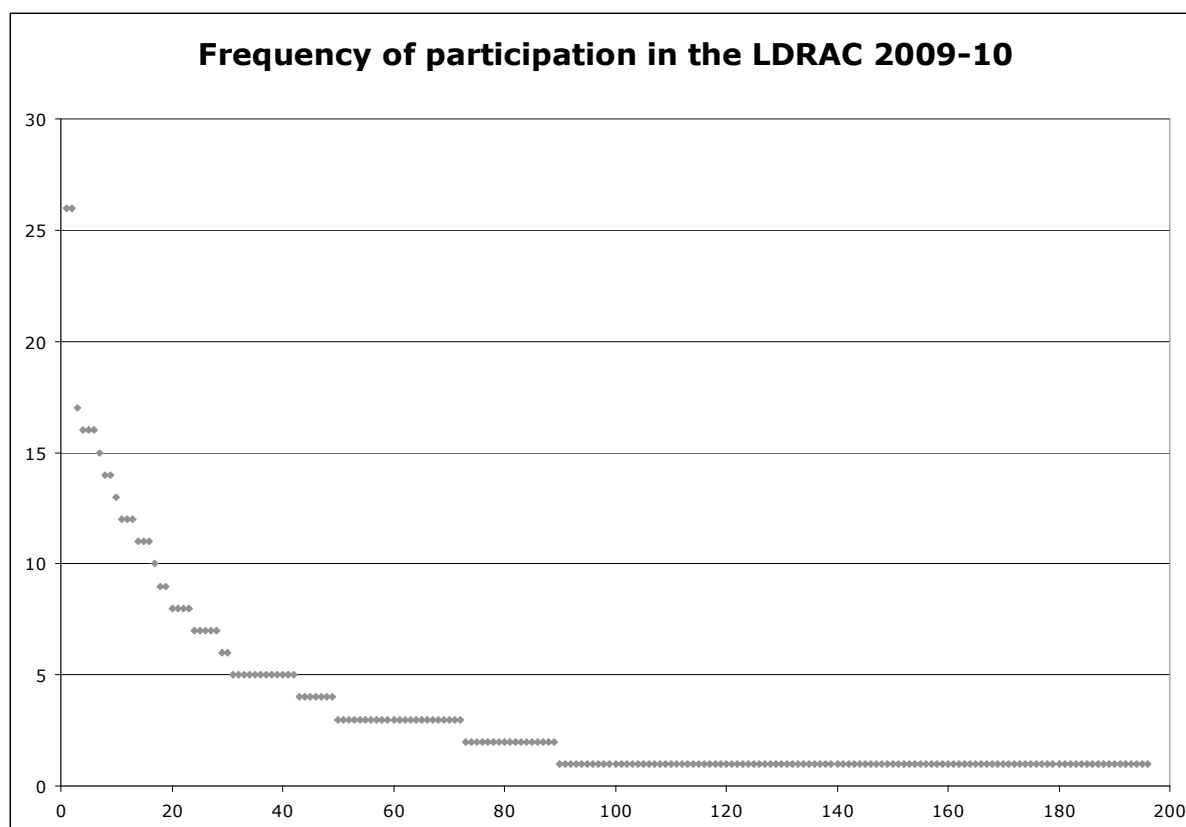


Diagram 4: x-axis: Participants ranked from 1 to 196. Y-axis: number of events participated in.

Mediterranean RAC (MedRAC)

According to the list of events provided on its website, the Mediterranean Regional Advisory Council had 5 meetings in 2009 and 9 meetings in 2010. The database contains 5 meetings for 2009 and 8 meetings for 2010, thus there is a **total number of 13 meetings** in the database. The respective participation lists for 2009 were retrieved from the website, the lists for 2010 were received from the MedRAC secretariat on 25 October 2011. Since some of the lists were scanned documents containing handwritten or signed lists, only entries that clearly indicated participation were considered for the database. In total, there were 141 participants involved in the 13 meetings included in the database, 47 (33.3%) of which only participated once. Of the three individuals participating in more than 10 meetings, one represented the RAC secretariat and two the fisheries industry. 8 individuals represented the European Commission (DG MARE), 1 the European Fisheries Control Agency and 10 member states' governments (3 [each] from France, Greece and Spain, 1 from Italy). There were also 2 representatives of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which like the MedRAC is based in Rome.

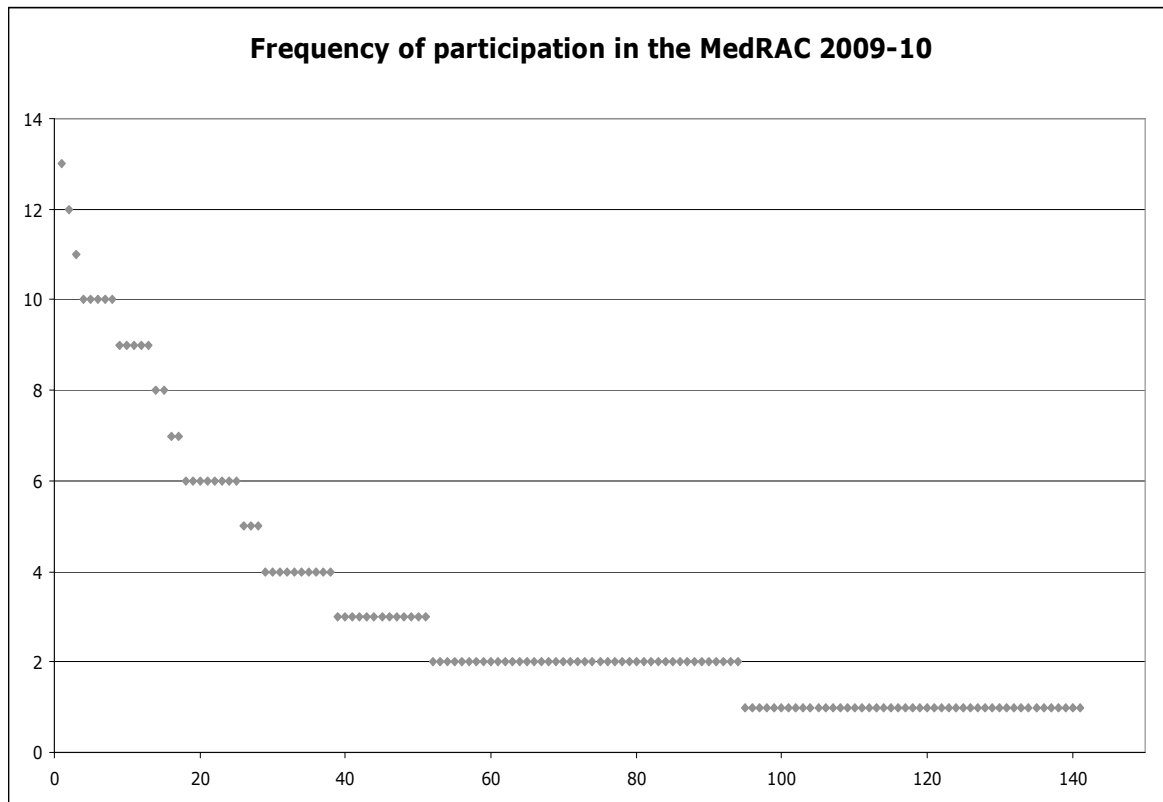


Diagram 5: x-axis: Participants ranked from 1 to 141. Y-axis: number of events participated in.

North Sea RAC (NSRAC)

According to the list of events contained in the 5th, 6th and the 7th annual report⁴⁸ of the North Sea Advisory Council, there were a total of 12 genuine NSRAC meetings both of the years 2009 and 2010. The database contains 11 meetings for 2009 and 9 meetings for 2010, which could be retrieved via the NSRAC website. Thus, a **total number of 20 NSRAC meetings** for 2009 and 2010 is contained in the database. In total, there were 199 participants involved in these meetings, 122 (61.3%) of which only participated once. 11 of the participants represented DG MARE and 2 the EU Court of Auditors. Among the 11 representatives of national governments, 3 represented Denmark and France, 2 Germany and the UK, and 1 the Netherlands.

⁴⁸ Ten meetings for 2009 in the 5th annual report including two Inter-RAC & RAC-ACFA meetings (source: <http://www.nsrac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/NSRAC-Annual-report2008-09.doc> [offline]), four meetings for 2009 and eight meetings for 2010 in the 6th annual report (source: <http://www.nsrac.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/2010-Report-to-Aberdeen-GA.pdf>), and four meetings for 2010 in the 7th annual report (source: <http://www.nsrac.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/2011-10-10-GA-Paper-1-Annual-Report-to-Boulogne-GA.pdf>). Reports for 2010 last accessed: 13 April 2014.

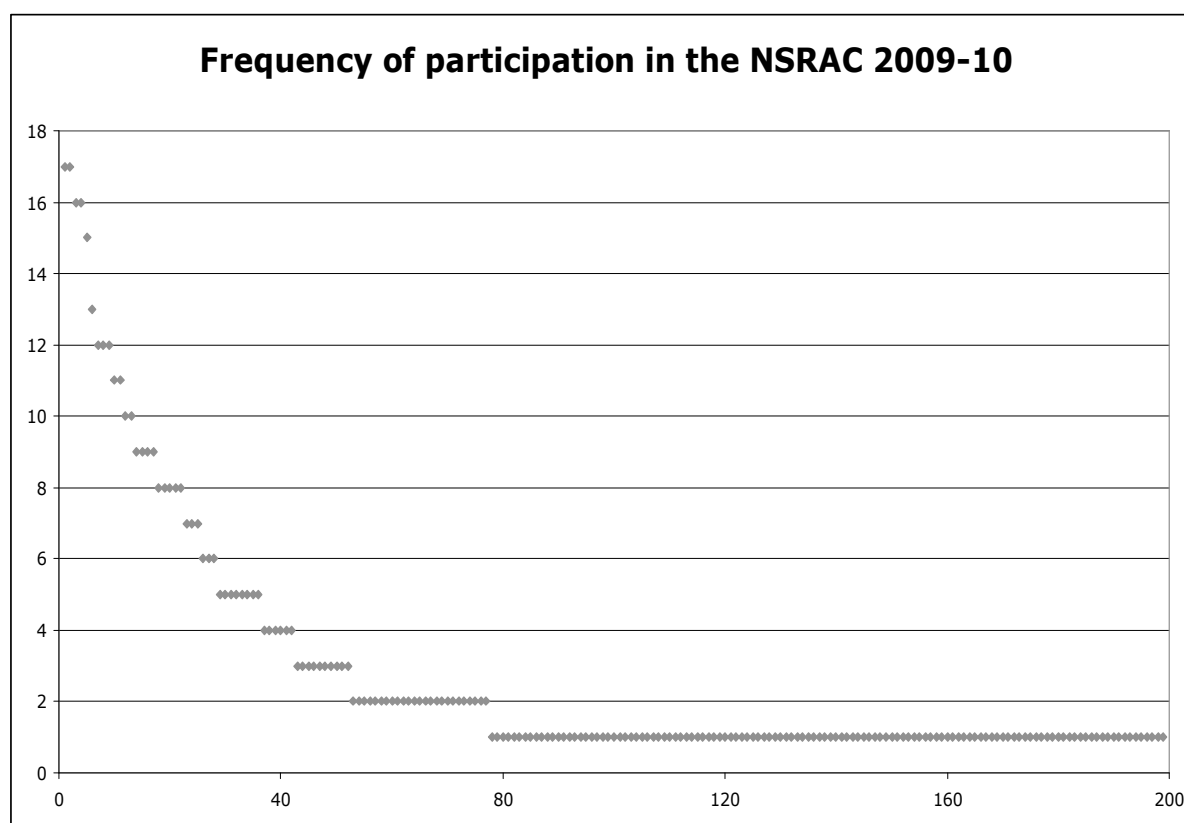


Diagram 6: x-axis: Participants counted from 1 to 199; y-axis: number of events participated in.

North Western Waters RAC (NWWRAC)

According to the list of events contained in the 4th, 5th and the 6th annual report⁴⁹ of the North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council, there were a total of 17 NWWRAC meetings in 2009 and 20 meetings in 2010. The database contains 17 meetings for 2009 and 18 meetings for 2010, which were retrieved from the NWWRAC website. Thus, a **total number of 35 NWWRAC meetings** are contained in the database. In total, there were 178 participants in these meeting, 71 (39.9%) participated just once. 7 participants represented DG MARE, 3 the European Fisheries Control Agency and 2 the EU Court of Auditors. 12 national governmental officials represented the UK (5), France and Spain (3) as well as Ireland (1).

⁴⁹ Fourteen meetings for 2009 in the 4th annual report (source: http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/Report_Chairman_NWWRAC_Work_Progress_GA_Dublin_281009_EN.pdf), three meetings for 2009 and sixteen for 2010 in the 5th annual report (source: http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/Report_Chairman_NWWRAC_Work_Progress_GA_Dublin_271010_FINAL_EN.pdf), four meetings for 2010 in the 6th annual report, one of which was a joint meeting with the NSRAC and ICES (source: http://www.nwwrac.org/admin/publication/upload/Annual_Report_Chairperson_NWWRAC_Work_Progress_GA_Dublin_271011_EN.pdf). Last accessed: 14 April 2013.

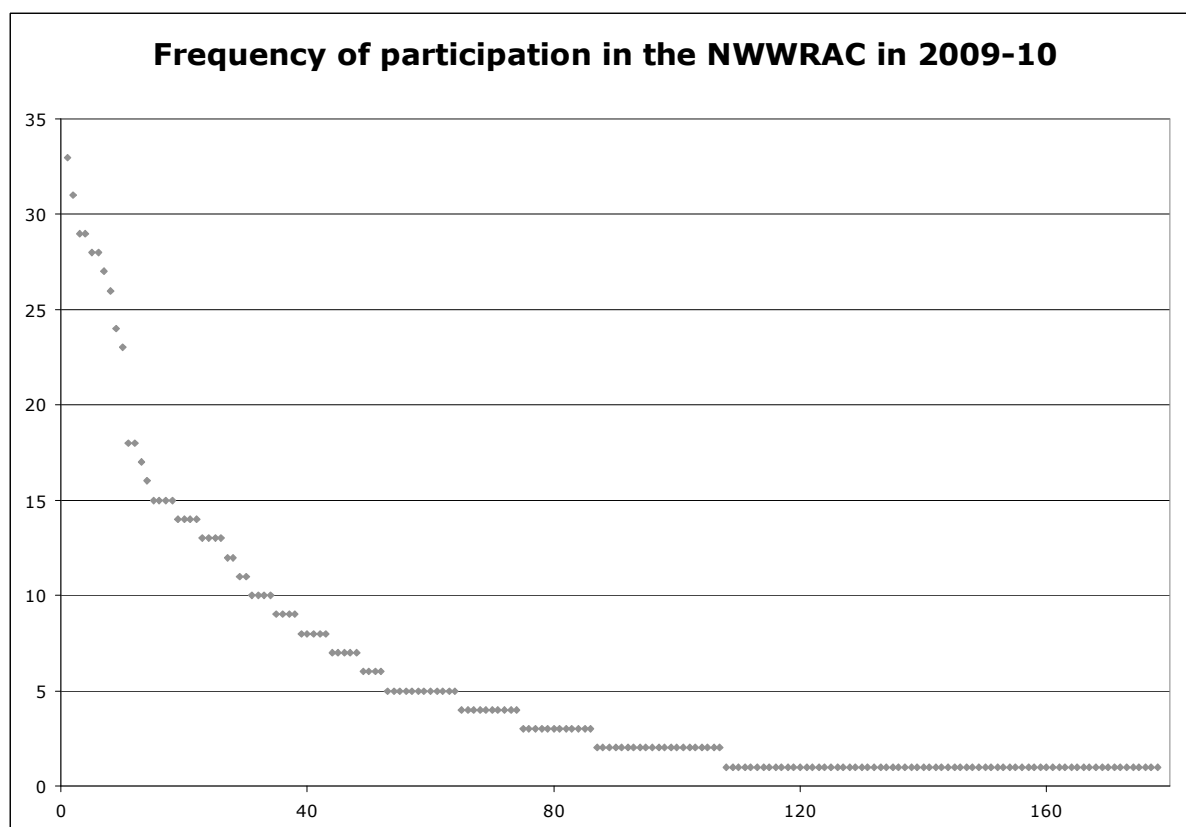


Diagram 7: x-axis: Participants ranked from 1 to 178; y-axis: number of events participated in.

Pelagic RAC (PRAC)

According to the list of events presented on its website, the Pelagic Regional Advisory Council, there were a total of 10 PRAC meetings in 2009 and 7 meetings in 2010⁵⁰. The database contains 9 meetings for 2009 and 6 meetings for 2010, which were retrieved from the PRAC website. Thus, a **total number of 15 PRAC meetings** are contained in the database. 122 participants were involved in these meetings, 67 (54.9%) of these only once. Among the participants, there were 10 DG MARE officials, 1 MEP and 1 representative of the European Court of Auditors. Furthermore, there were 12 participants representing EU member states, 3 from France, 2 from Germany and the Netherlands, as well as one from Denmark, Ireland, Poland, Spain and the UK.

⁵⁰ The list of events is available at <http://www.pelagic-rac.org/prac-meetings> (Last accessed 14 April 2013). Joint events with one attendance list were counted as single events.

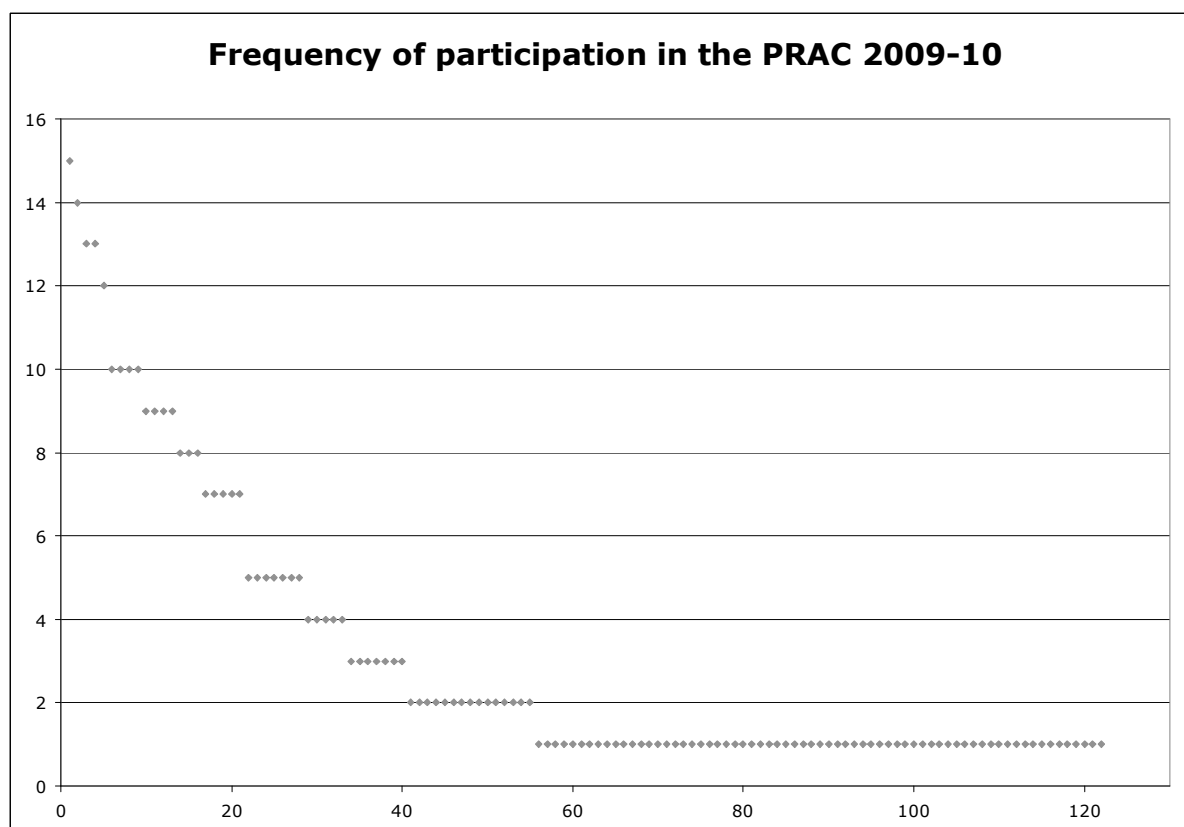


Diagram 8: x-axis: Participants ranked from 1 to 122; y-axis: number of events participated in.

South Western Waters RAC (SWWRAC)

According to the list of events on the SWWRAC website⁵¹, the SWWRAC organised 30 meetings in 2009 and 26 meetings in 2010. Of these meetings, the database contains 22 meetings for 2009 and 14 for 2010. The database thus includes **a total of 36 SWWRAC meetings**. The respective participation lists were retrieved from the SWWRAC website. Altogether, there were 248 participants in these 36 meetings, 101 (40.4%) of which participated only once.

⁵¹ The annual reports for 2008/09 (source: http://www.ccr-s.eu/Upload/EN/Agenda/DocsAnnexes/RapportActivit%C3%A909_EN_V4_avex_couv.pdf) and 2009/10 (source: http://www.ccr-s.eu/Upload/EN/Agenda/DocsAnnexes/RA_0910V2.2_EN_couv.pdf) do not allow a clear counting of the number of events. The annual report for 2010/11 (source: <http://www.ccr-s.eu/Upload/EN/Agenda/DocsAnnexes/RapportActivite-COUV-EN2.pdf>) lists 14 events for April-December 2010, which is one less than the website indicates. Last accessed: 14 April 2013.

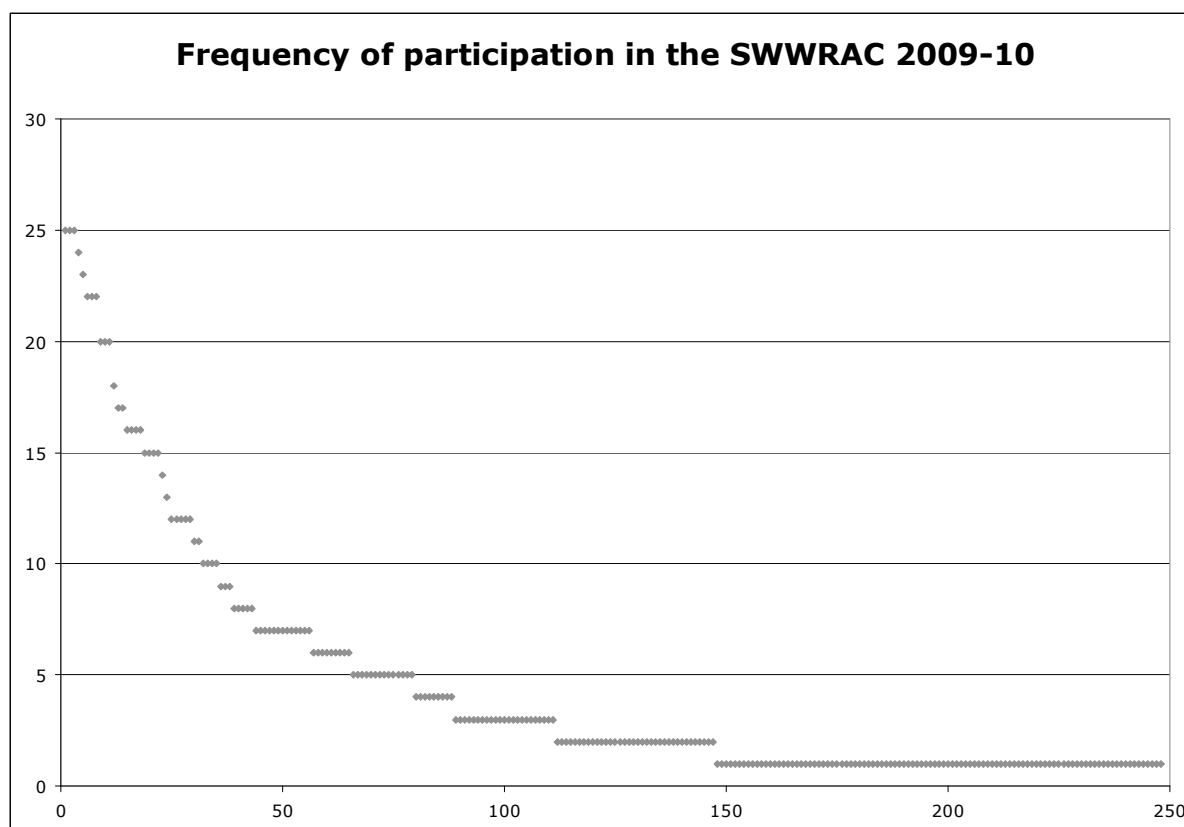


Diagram 9: x-axis: Participants ranked from 1 to 248; y-axis: number of events participated in.

Complete database

The total number of committee meetings (i.e. elements of the second mode) contained in the affiliation network database is 205 out of an informed estimation of 250 meetings that according to the sources available took place in 2009 and 2010 in all ten committees⁵². The database thus includes about 82% of all relevant official meetings of the 10 committees, with 44.4% of the missing 18% accounting for SWWRAC events, for which the database still contains a large amount of meetings. Out of the 1333 individuals included in the data, 592 (44.4%) participated in just one meeting. Calculated per meeting, there were thus 2.89 one-time participants on average per meeting. Assuming this average over the estimated 45 meetings that could not be included in the database, there might be 130 individuals missing in the database. If these were added to the database, the overall number of individuals included would be 1463. Taking this estimation as a basis for calculation of the missing data for the first mode, the 1333 individuals in the database would represent 91.1% of all individual participants in the committee system during 2009-10.

⁵² Including the maximum number of planned meetings for ACFA and the known meetings of all RACs.

Looking into the participation data of those 1333 individuals included in the database (Diagram 10 below), the distribution of events per individual is again uneven: 3 individuals participated in more than 45 meetings, 68 individuals participating in at least 20 meetings while 1033 participated in only 5 or less meetings. In average, each individual participated in 4.55 meetings. The three individuals above 45 events represented European and/or national fisheries industry associations, which could be interpreted as an indication of the scope of the formal inclusion of fisheries industry interest in EU fisheries policy making.

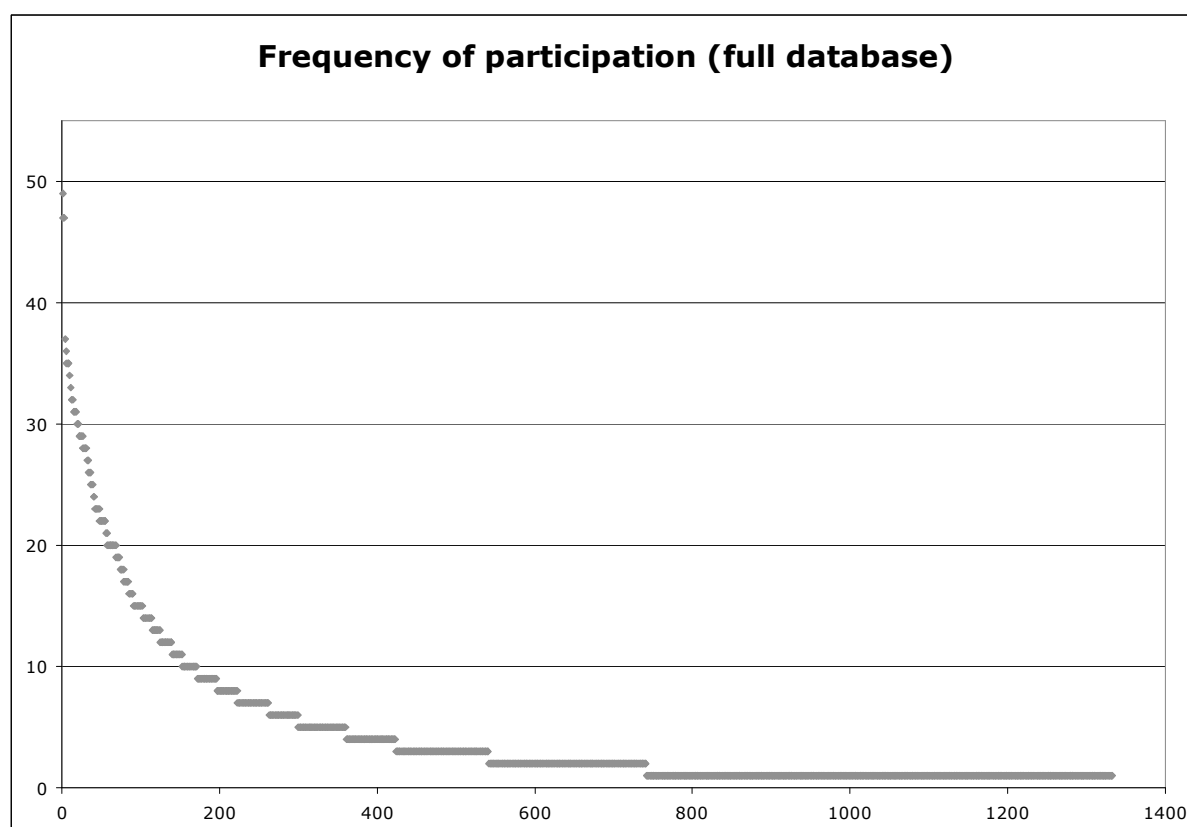


Diagram 10: x-axis: Participants ranked from 1 to 1333. Y-axis: Number of events participated in.

It is an interesting observation that participation patterns observable at the individual committee level are reproduced at the system level, too. A set of *unrelated* committees and their events showing these individual patterns would rather have yielded a much flatter curve if brought together in a single database. For such a dataset, the most frequent participants from *each* committee would have been grouped together at the left of the diagram instead of the showing the steep slope we can see above. The distribution of event participation frequencies at the whole network level in the case of the fisheries policy committee network shows that **elite patterns** at the scale of the individual committees are repeated at higher scale. This could be interpreted as an indication for the “*small-world-ness*” of the system of

EU fisheries policy committees where a few individuals that are frequent and cross-committee are the shortcuts that lower the mean distance of actors in the overall network (cf. Section 3.3.4) In contrast, the distribution of the size of committee events is more regular (Diagram 11 below). The average number of participants across all committee meetings in the database is 29.57, the smallest event with 8, the largest with 86 participants. This underlines that the **event mode** and the **actor mode** are in fact two **distinct modes** in the affiliation network, with quite different patterns that are worth considering separately.

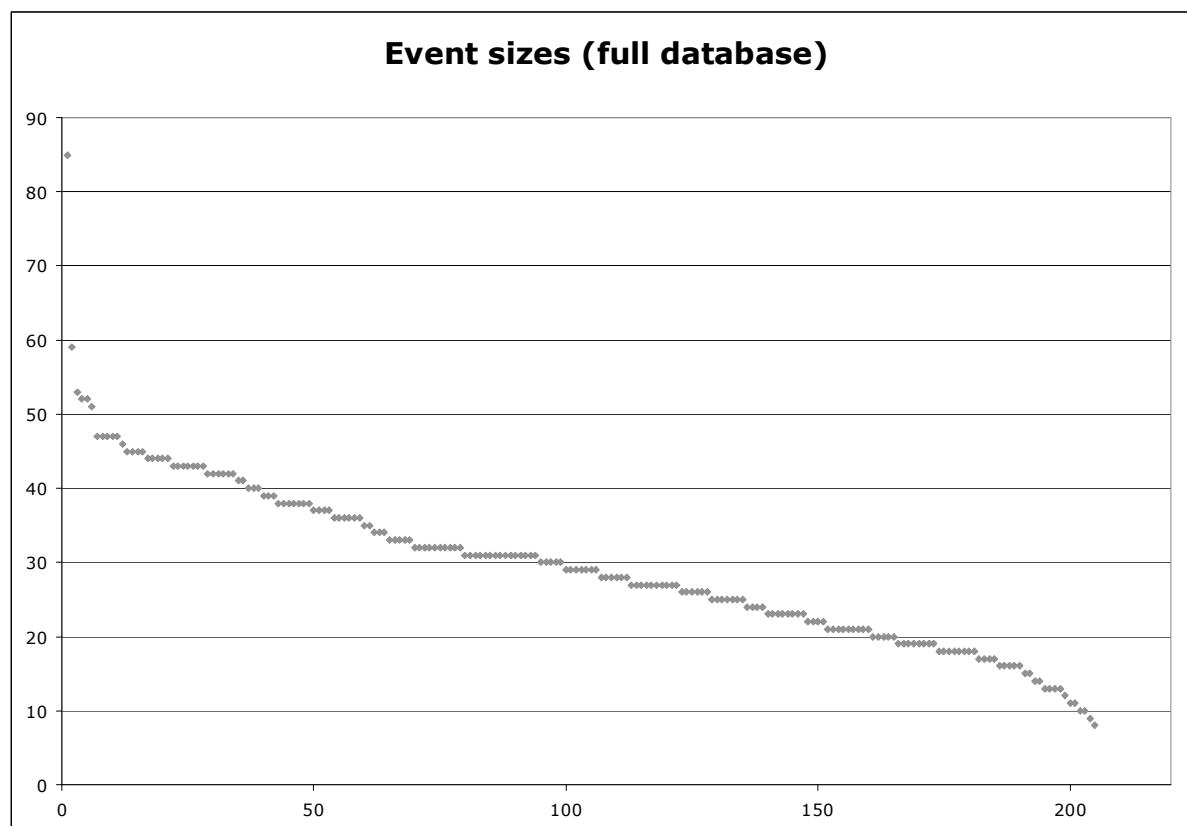


Diagram 11: x-axis: Events ranked from 1 to 205. Y-axis: Number of participants.

Quality and consistency of the data

The quality and consistency of the overall dataset first of all depends both on the quality and comparability of the sources. In principle, all participation lists used to construct the database are made available by the respective committee secretariats. It is difficult to estimate the level of error that is made when registering participants and when drafting the documents containing the participation lists. In principle, errors are very likely to occur, but there is no reason to assume a systematic error with considerable impact on the network structure. It should be noted that for all committees, regular participants and observers have been considered affiliated to an event if they were listed on a participation list. As some

committees such as the North Sea RAC do not separately list observers, it is unclear whether observers are included automatically under participants in this case. Although there is no indication that observers were excluded from these lists, this could produce a non-random error as the NSRAC could lose in centrality compared to other countries if less people were registered as participants.

Another possible consistency problem when combining the events from ten different committees into one database is the definition of what constitutes an event. Events that are registered as separate events with several separate participation lists in one committee may be considered a single event with one single participation list in another committee. In other cases, the length of events may differ considerably both within the same committee but also between different committees. A working group meeting may for example last two or three hours while a general assembly meeting can take two days. Both would then be listed as one single event each in the database, although they might represent quite different *qualities* of affiliations. For example, on 10-11 June 2010, the SWWRAC held five meetings in the course of two days in San Sebastian (Spain). Out of the 63 participants across all meetings, 19 participated in just one meeting, 9 in two, 13 in three, 9 in four, and 12 in all five. Individuals that took part in four or five of these meetings may consider that they have been at one single event with several sub-events, using the time during and between the meetings to gather information and to network, while individuals that participated in just one meeting may have just shortly passed by to represent a particular interest but might not have had the same level of personal involvement. Recording each meeting separately can reveal those differences. In contrast to the SWWRAC example with separate participation lists, the Pelagic RAC for instance registered the participants to its executive committee meeting and two working group meetings that took place on 13 July 2010 in Amsterdam in one single attendance list. In how far this list reflects participation patterns similar to the ones identified for separate meetings in the SWWRAC case is difficult to say. Hence, there is no *a priori* theoretical argument on how to deal with these inconsistencies in the data. One possibility to normalise the dataset when combining the different committees would be to collapse clearly related events, i.e. those that took place at the same or subsequent days in the same venue into single events. These combined events would include any participant involved in at least one of the (sub-)events as a participant. Through this method, the number of individuals in the database would not be reduced, just the number of events. If we reduce the database established for this study so that events that took place at the same place *on the same day* are merged, the two-mode

dataset containing 205 events will be reduced by 27 events (0 for ACFA, RACs-COM, SSDC, BSRAC and PRAC, 7 for LDRAC, 1 for MedRAC, 1 for NSRAC, 8 for NWWRAC and 10 for SWWRAC). If we combine events that took place at the same place *on subsequent days*, the two-mode dataset will be reduced by 65 events (0 for RACs-COM and SSDC, 2 for ACFA, 4 for BSRAC, 12 for LDRAC, 5 for MedRAC, 3 NSRAC⁵³, 17 for NWWRAC, 1 for PRAC, 21 for SWWRAC) to 140 events. Below the participation frequencies of individual actors (Diagram 12) and the distribution of event size (Diagram 13) of the reduced dataset with 140 events are portrayed.

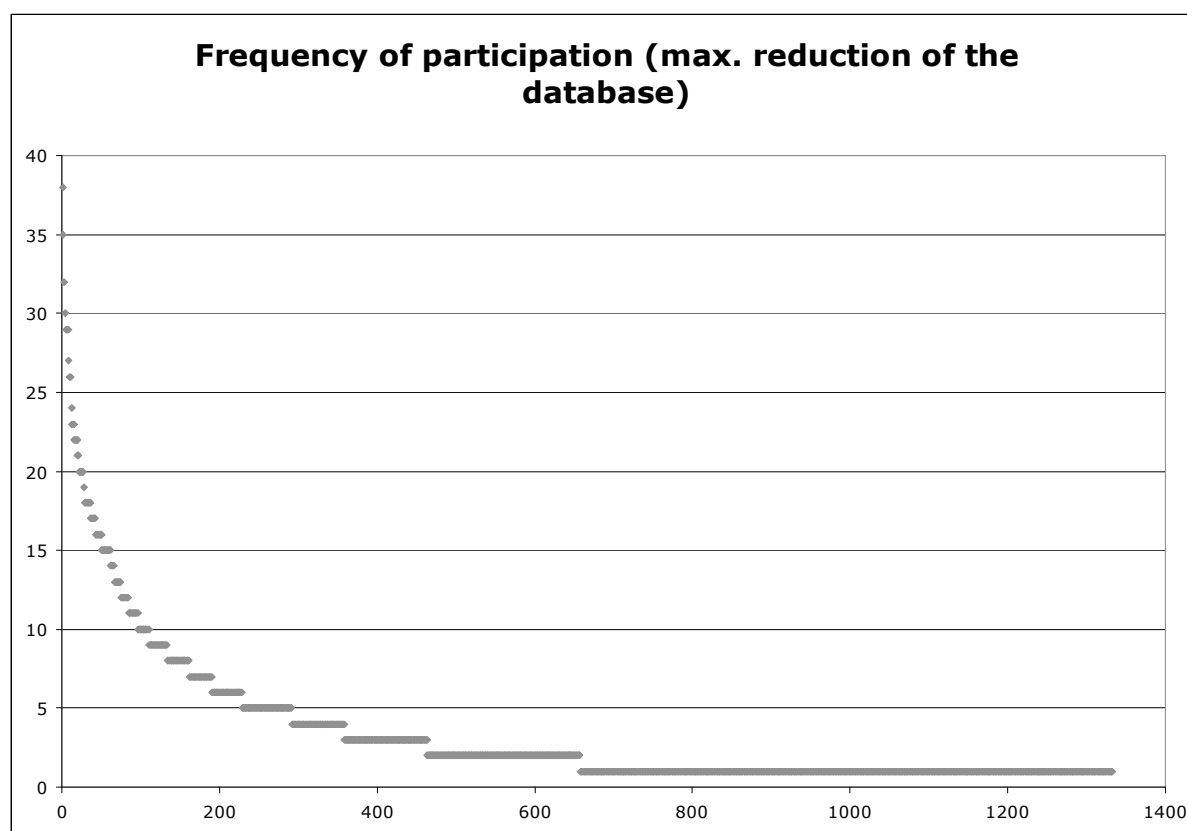


Diagram 12: x-axis: Participants ranked from 1 to 1333. Y-axis: Number of events participated in.

One can see in the distribution of participation frequencies in the reduced dataset, that the extremes with regard to participation frequencies are a little smaller and that there are more one-time participants (676 [50%] in total). The latter is a natural result of the fact that individuals who participated in a set of connected events are registered several times in the original dataset but may be reduced to one-time participants in the reduced dataset with merged events. In consequence of the reduction of the number of events, one of the three most

⁵³ Two NSRAC meetings in October 2009 that took place on subsequent days are registered in two different places, which are in fact neighbouring towns thus so close together that the meetings could be considered a single meeting under the criteria set.

frequent participants of the initial dataset falls to place four in the new dataset. In turn, the most frequent participant of ACFA moves up in rank, as ACFA gains in weight in this modified dataset, especially relative to the NWWRAC and the SWWRAC, both of which have a high share of multiple events that become merged in the second dataset. The distribution of event sizes does not alter considerably in the new dataset, only the average event size rises from 29.57 to 33.01 as the merger of events creates larger meetings and eliminates smaller ones.

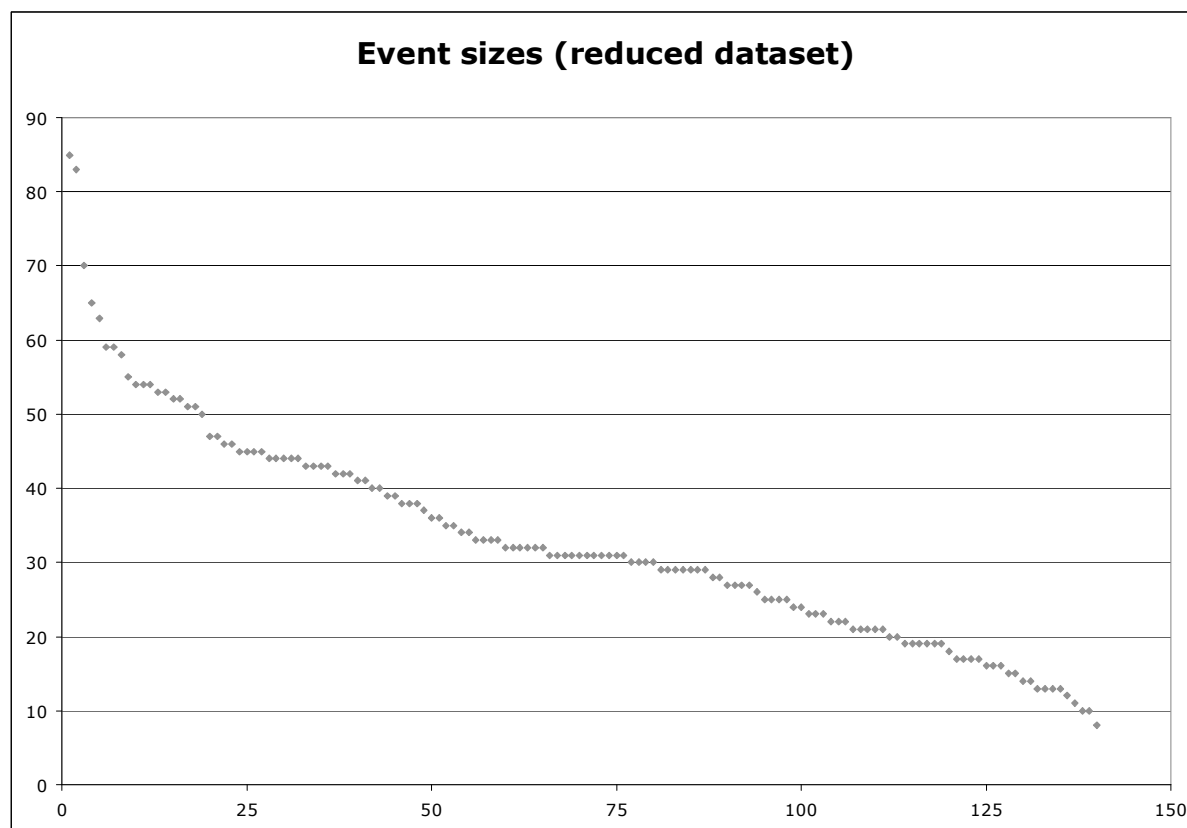


Diagram 13: x-axis: Events ranked from 1 to 140. Y-axis: Number of participants.

In general, the comparison of the patterns both in participation frequencies (Diagrams 10 and 12) and in event sizes (Diagrams 11 and 13) shows that the general patterns are not altered by the merging of events. The distribution of participation frequencies in both versions of the database reveals that there is, in both cases, a relatively small group of people participating in many of the events while there is a very large portion of actors who became involved only once or twice. The distribution of event sizes is more regular, with a few very large and a few very small events and a large number of medium-size events around the average, independent of the definition of what constitutes an event. It will be shown in Section 5.5 in how far these different two-mode datasets might still produce different network structures, for instance

whether these modifications have an impact on the clustering or the centrality of events and actors in the respective one-mode projections of the network.

5.4 Network generation, data transformation, and data analysis

The database described in Sections 5.2 and 5.3 is the basis for the creation and analysis of the affiliation network, including the one-mode projections of the network. So far, the affiliation matrix with 205 columns (events) and 1333 lines (actors) where a cell[n,m] is coded 1 if actor n participated in event m represents the data basis of the affiliation network. In this section, the path from this initial dataset to the different network projections will be presented step-by-step. These different networks are needed (a) to describe and visualise the network of actors and (committee) events in the Common Fisheries Policy and (b) to calculate the independent variables (centralities and group affiliation) that will be used to test the hypotheses presented at the end of Chapter 3. These transformations involve a set of different network analytic software tools, all of which are freeware and usable under multiple operation systems.

In a first step, the file containing the simple actor-event matrix was transformed from an Excel file into a network file (here: Graph Modelling Language (GML)) with *yEd* (Version 3.8)⁵⁴. This undirected two-mode network contains all nodes (events and actors) as well an edge between event m and actor n whenever the cell[n,m] in the original file was coded 1. The resulting network was then transformed with *iGraph* (Csárdi & Nepusz 2006) for *R* (R Development Core Team 2011) into two separate one-mode projections. In the actor-by-actor [n-n] network, two actors are linked by a tie of the strength *s* representing the number of joint events. In the event-by-event [m-m] network, two events are linked by a tie of the strength *t* representing the number of joint participants. The following algorithm was used to process this transformation with *iGraph*:

- (1) Read the two-mode network into *R*.
- (2) Link all nodes of mode n (or m) with the amount of ties representing shared events (or participants).
- (3) Recognise the resulting data as a new network.
- (4) Use the same IDs and labels for the new network as were used in the initial network.

⁵⁴ Downloadable at http://www.yworks.com/en/products_yed_download.html (Last accessed: 16 March 2013).

- (5) Count the number of ties between all pairs of nodes and define the weight (i.e. strength) s (or t) of all ties according to the resulting number.
- (6) Delete all multiple ties between nodes and leave only one (bidirectional) tie of strength s or t .
- (7) Remove all nodes of degree 0, i.e. all nodes of the second mode.
- (8) Save the new one-mode network as a new network file.

This algorithm in R code (iGraph installed) writes as follows:

```
(1) g <- read.graph("initialfile.gml", c("gml"))
(2) g2 <- cocitation(g,V(g)) ["cocitation" for event-event, "bibcoupling" for actor-actor]
(3) g3 <- graph.adjacency(g2)
(4.1) V(g3)$id <- V(g)$id
(4.2) V(g3)$label <- V(g)$label
(5) E(g3)$weight <- count.multiple(g3)
(6) g3 <- simplify(g3)
(7.1) V(g3)$degree <- degree(g3,mode=c("all"))
(7.2) g4 <- subgraph(g3,V(g3)[ degree > 0 ])
(8) write.graph(g4, "resultingfile.graphml", "graphml")
```

Given the high density of the resulting one-mode networks, it may be necessary to eliminate all ties of a strength below a certain threshold in order to detect groups or certain patterns in the network (9). This can be done with iGraph using the following code, for instance to eliminate all ties with strength 1:

```
(9) g5 <- delete.edges(g4,E(g4)[weight < 2])
(10) write.graph(g5, "resultingfile2.graphml", "graphml")
```

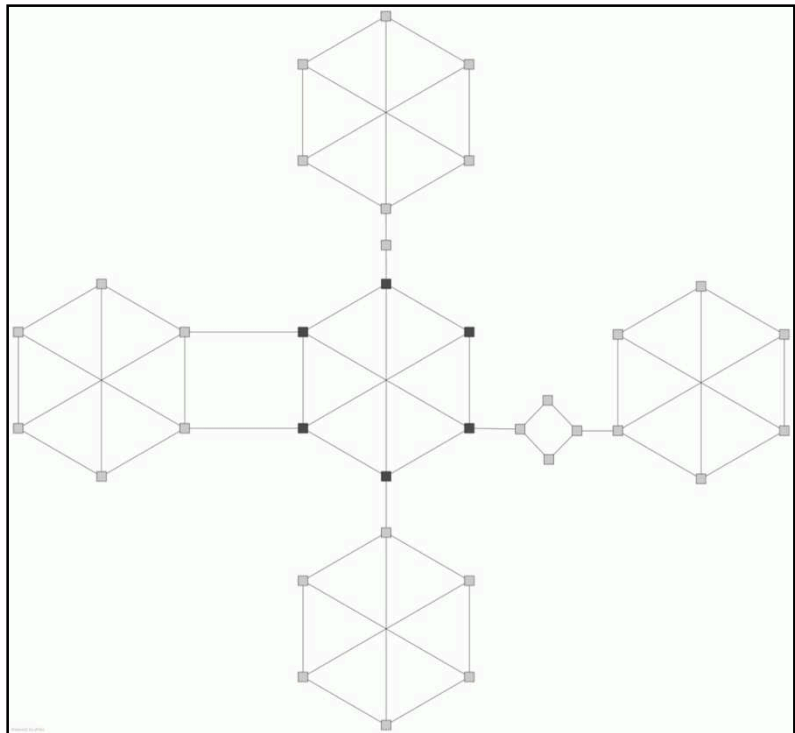
The analysis, that is the calculation of centrality scores or the clustering of the network, and the visualisation of the resulting networks were then performed, where possible, with *visone* (Brandes & Wagner 2004; Baur 2008) in version 2.6.3. Where the available processing power was not sufficient to calculate centralities and other network variables in very large networks (in particular the complete actor-actor one-mode projection) with *visone*, *Gephi* (Bastian et al. 2009) in its version 0.8.1 beta was instead used. *Gephi* also provides functions such as the

analysis of graph diameter, average path length, density and average clustering coefficient, which will be used to characterise the networks in the following section.

5.5 The Common Fisheries Policy network

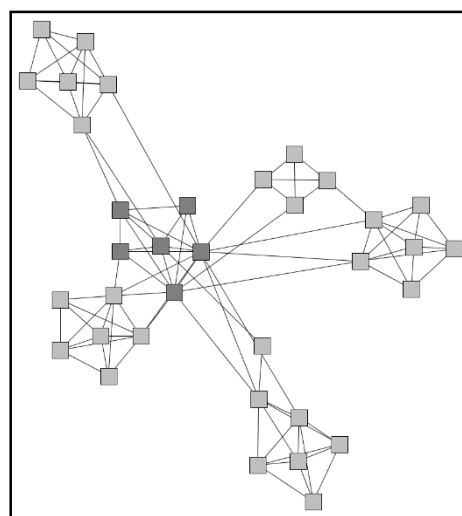
5.5.1 Expected observations for the CFP network

The Common Fisheries Policy has been characterised in the previous chapter as a policy with strong competencies on the EU level but with political dynamics in which national and regional interests still play a considerable role. In the past, the main fisheries industry organisation at European level, Europêche, has been described as a body that simply determined, which national fisheries organisations were to



be represented with the European Commission (Lequesne 2000: 353). When we translate these very general observations into expectations with regard to the subsequent European network structures of the civil society and interest groups involved in this policy, one could have predicted a Brussels-focussed network with a central cluster of actors involved at the European level. This central cluster would also involve a relevant share of national actors who would be the brokers to their respective national or regional spheres. The principle empirical expectation for the European fisheries policy network therefore was a hub-spoke network with a central cluster and a number of national or regional clusters that are well-linked to the Brussels sphere through those actors also involved at European level. *Network Image 1* above represents an idealised version of such a network, presenting different possibilities of how several national/regional clusters could be linked to the central (i.e. European) cluster.

However, a number of questions arise once we take into account the concrete network of 10 consultative committees that is analysed in this study. Taking into account the different functions of these committees, the first question would be in how far the hub-spoke structure would be “disturbed” by the fact that two of the Regional Advisory Councils – the Pelagic RAC and the Long Distance RAC – do not fit into the more obvious regional patterns of the five other RACs. Two possible observations could be made: Either, the interests represented in both of these committees are drawn both from ACFA as well as from the different geographical regions, making the PRAC and the LDRAC and the individuals involved therein part of the central cluster. Or, if these two committees only involve separate interests, they may constitute separate clusters whose connection to the central cluster would depend on the level of representation of these specific interests in ACFA. Similar questions could be raised with regard to the role of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee, which is represented in ACFA and whose members come from organisations with separate representation in ACFA, too. However, since the SSDC is attached to DG Employment and not (mainly) to DG MARE, and given that very specific topics are discussed in the SSDC, it may be that the actual individuals involved in this committee may not be represented in ACFA beyond the two formal seats assigned to SSDC in ACFA, leading to a ‘divided’ Brussels cluster. A third interesting question follows from the observation of the participation patterns described in Section 5.3. What we could see was that, for almost all committees, there was a distribution in the frequency of participation that revealed a small group of individuals who participated in many meetings while a large share of individuals participated only once or twice. These patterns were not just observed for individual committees but also for the whole database. This indicates that in the actor network (i.e. the actor-actor one-mode projection of the affiliation network) we may find a small elite of very well connected individuals who would not just link the ACFA or Brussels cluster with their respective RAC clusters but who would in fact be brokers between several clusters. In the simplified expected network shown in *Network Image 1* above, we might therefore have to add links to some of the actors in the central cluster who so far only link *one* peripheral cluster to make them link *several* actors in *several* clusters with whom they may have come into contact. These added



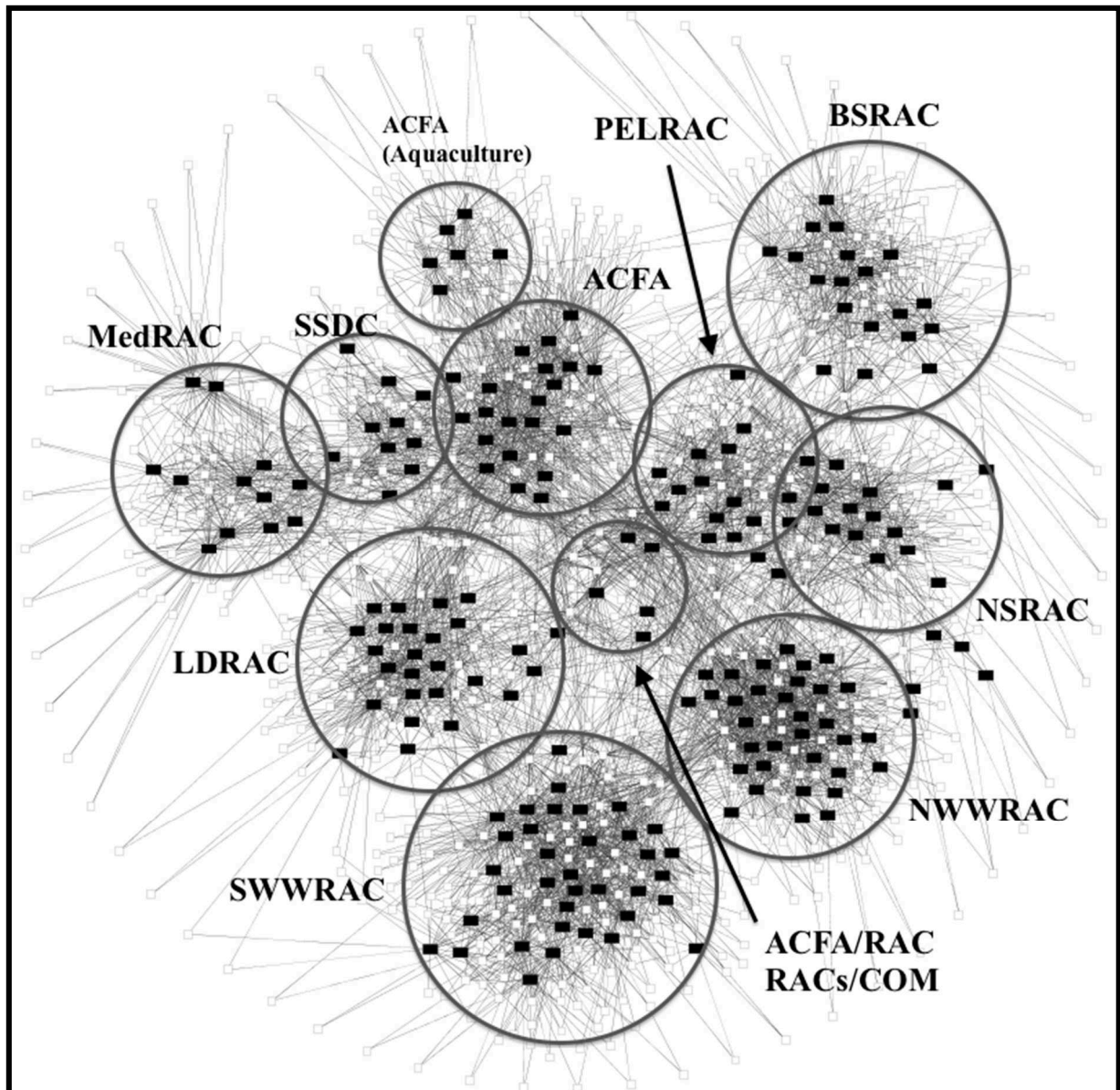
links would disturb the idealised hub-spoke structure as can be seen in *Network Image 2* above. How significant this disturbance is cannot be predicted *a priori*.

The final question to be raised with regard to the expected network structures is related to possible differences between the different modes of the network. In the previous section, it has been explained how the initial two-mode affiliation network is transformed into two separate one-mode projections. However, in Section 5.3 we have seen that the frequency curves of actors (i.e. the number of event participations per actor) and the curve of the size of events (i.e. the number of participants per event) have different shapes, with the event sizes being more normally distributed than the participation frequencies. Given these differences, one could expect also expect differently shaped networks depending on the mode we look at.

Taking into account the questions raised and the possible implications that the different answers to these questions have for the structure of the network(s), the following sections will present the affiliation network as well as more in detail the two one-mode projections and their structural properties. It will be shown that we indeed observe difference in the two network modes. In the conclusions of this chapter, it will be discussed in how far these potential differences affect the hypotheses or the predictions they make. Given that the main hypothesis and the derived sub-hypotheses mainly focus on the informedness of *individual actors* whose network structure is represented only in the second one-mode projection (see Section 5.5.4), it will be interesting in how far the event mode or the two-mode view of the affiliation network can provide further context for expected or actual information flows.

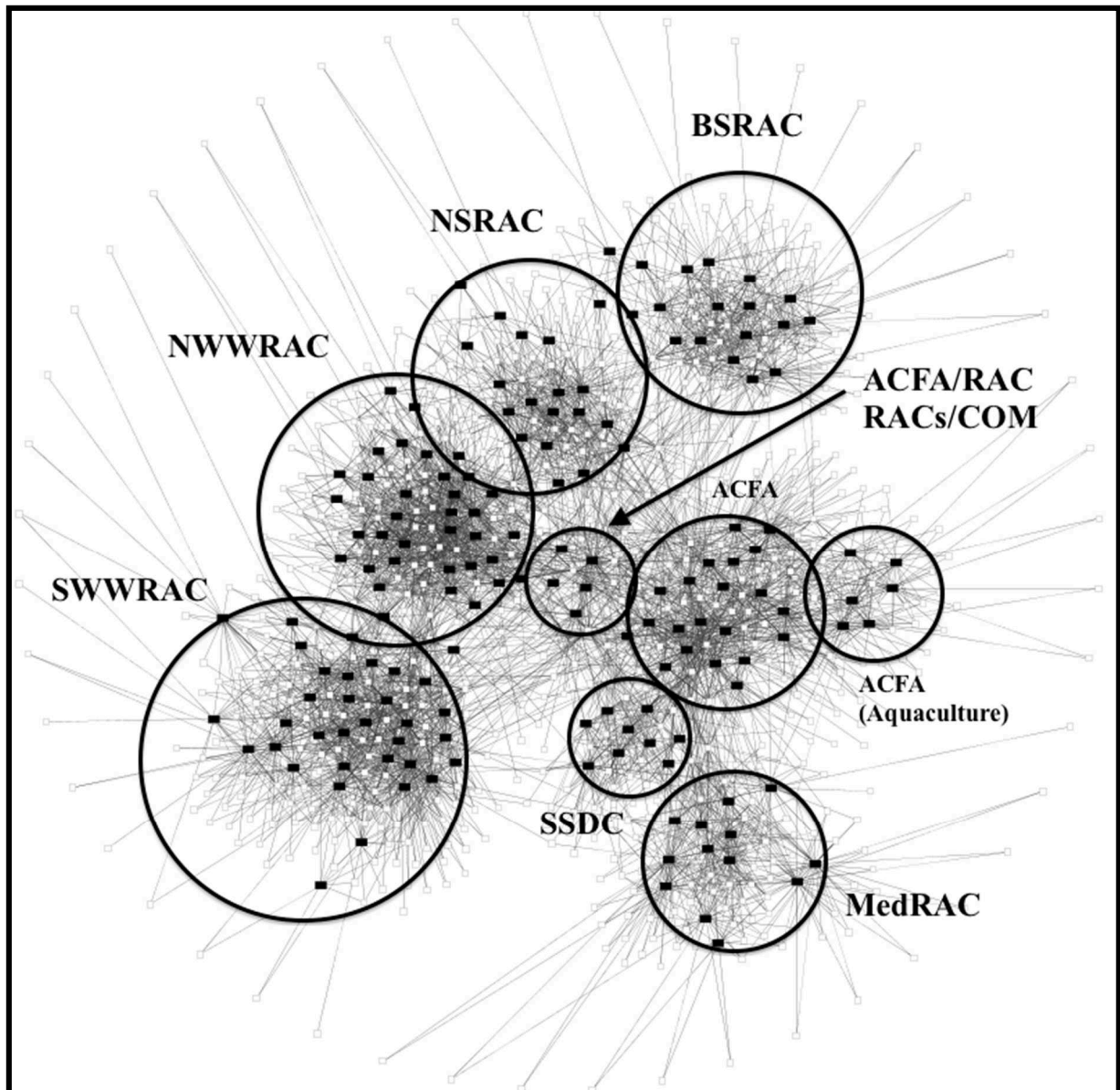
5.5.2 The CFP affiliation network

Network Image 3 below shows CFP affiliation network with all 205 events for the years 2009 and 2010 from the 10 committees included. For visual reasons, actors who participated in only one event were excluded from the projection. This two-mode view provides a first insight into actual structure of the network. A clear hub-spoke pattern such as in *Network Image 1* does not emerge. Instead, the network visualisation reveals a more complex affiliation pattern, not just for the interrelation between the different event clusters but also for a number of specific events and a number of persons placed in strategic positions in the network.



Network Image 3: Two-mode affiliation network based on the full database including all actors with at least 2 event participations. Black rectangles represent events, white squares actors. A tie represents participation in an event. Network visualisation has been made with yEd in a circular layout, organic disc option. The cluster selection (circles) and cluster description (tags) have been added manually.

While two following sections will decipher these structural patterns through the analysis of the one-mode projections for the event-event and the actor-actor network more in detail, it is worth noticing that the expectation formulated in Section 5.5.1 what both the Long Distance RAC and the Pelagic RAC might have a particular position in the network. In fact, removing both committees from the network actually produces a network structures that is closer to an ideal hub-spoke structure than the “full” picture (see Network Image 4 below). In both views, the close connection of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) for Sea Fisheries to the ACFA cluster seems to confirm that it is a Brussels-based committee with strong links to main CFP-related expert group.



Network Image 4: Two-mode affiliation network based on the full database including all actors with at least 2 event participations. LDRAC and PELRAC events have been removed as well as isolate actors resulting from this removal. Visualisation as in Network Image 3.

Another specific observation that will not be in the focus in Sections 5.5.3 and 5.5.4 is the distance of the ACFA Working Group on Aquaculture sub-cluster. This aspect will be discussed in Section 8.3 under “Unexpected findings”, as this finding can be related to theoretical discussions in network theory that are not central in this study but still interesting. Those observations in the present data set may give rise to further research into the use of (affiliation) network theory for the analysis of EU politics and other politico-administrative processes.

5.5.3 The CFP event network

Having transformed the two-mode affiliation network of the 205 (140⁵⁵) CFP advisory committee events involving 1333 participants into its one-mode event-by-event projection (see Section 5.4), we can make a number of observations. The first important observation is the *high density* of 0.4866 (0.535) of the network. This means that, in average, each committee meeting that is included in the database is linked to about 50% of all other committee meetings through at least one person. This high density can be interpreted as an indicator for a generally well-connected committee system that is held together across space and time – at least by a few individuals, as each tie contributing to the density represents a minimum of one joint participant in two connected meetings. The degrees in the event-event network are rather normally distributed, with a mean and median at a degree of 99 for the original event network. With the maximum degree being limited by the size of the network to 204 ($m-1$), the mean degree actually represents the overall density of the network almost exactly.

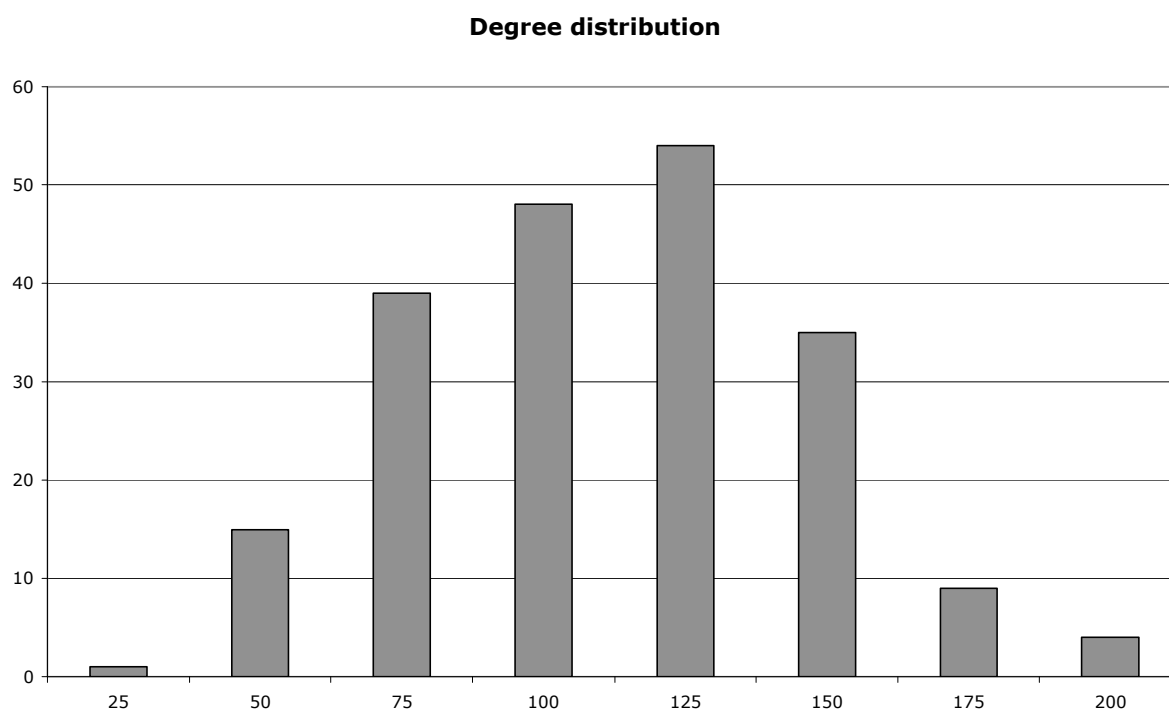


Diagram 14: x-axis: Degree (1-25, 25-50, etc.); y-axis: number of event nodes with these degrees (1-25, etc.)

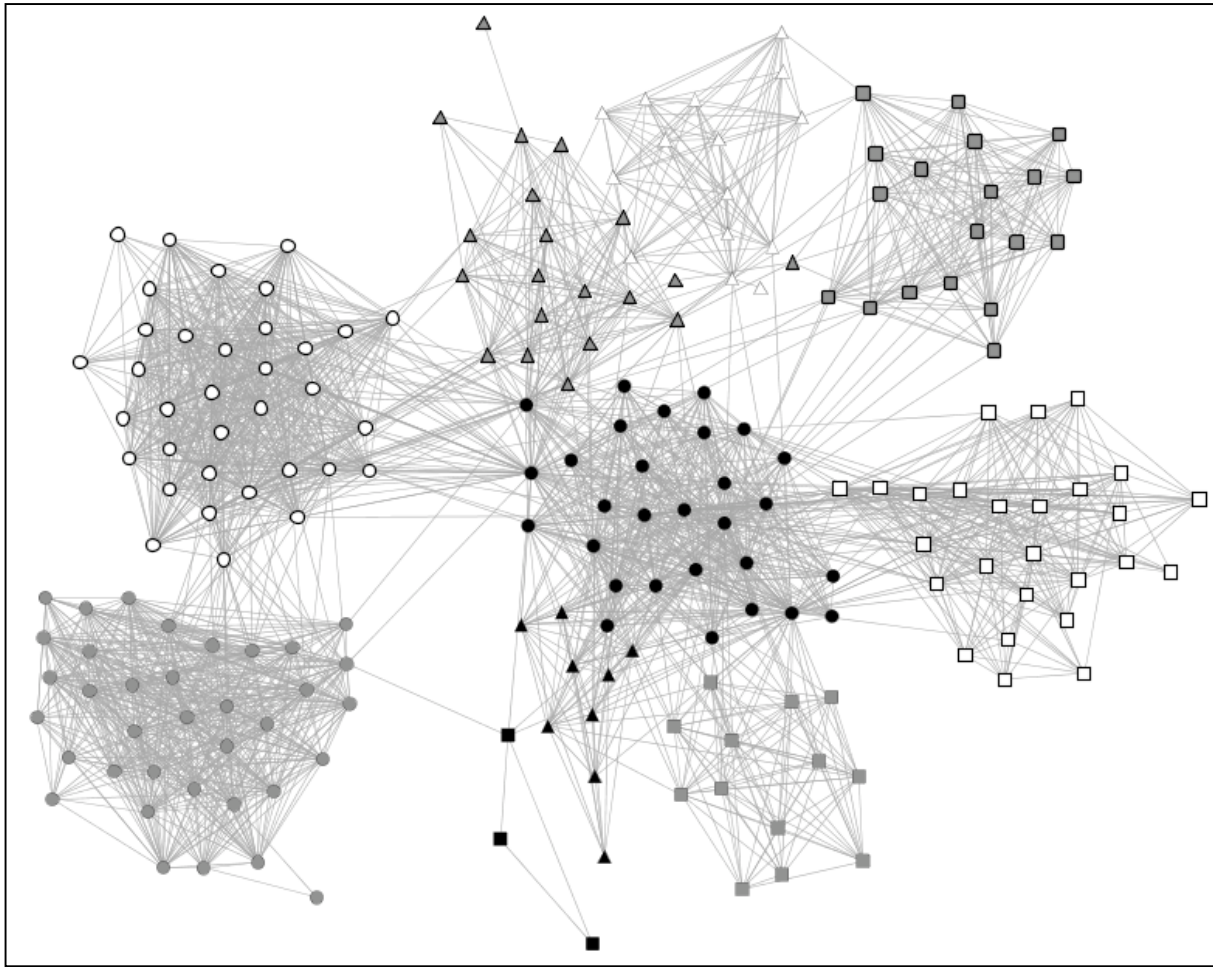
The degree of an event represents the number of other events it is connected to through its own participants, independent of which participants establish this connection. A degree of 100

⁵⁵ The figures in brackets represent the reduced event-event network, in which all events on subsequent days have been merged into single events (cf. Chapter 5.3).

of an event with 22 participants could for example be established by two of its participants who each participated in 40 other meetings (never together) and the 20 others participating in 20 separate meetings (also never together). A meeting with a very high degree that took place *early* in a process could be interpreted as (potentially) having had a strong effect on the future developments as there will almost always be someone from this meeting in most other meetings afterwards who could recall what was said during this meeting and remind others of commitments made or information shared at the time. If such a high degree meeting takes place *later* in the process, it could serve as a summarising or stocktaking meeting as the participants in that meeting will be able to collectively gather memories of most meetings that have taken place before. Whether a degree central meeting actually fulfils this function naturally depends on its set-up and the substance of discussions that take place before, during and after the meeting. The committee meeting with the highest degree in the network is linked to 198 (136) other meetings, meaning that there was a chance of 97.05% (97.84%) to meet a participant of this meeting in any random of the other 204 (139) meetings that took place before and afterwards. The two meetings with the highest *degree* (198 and 187) are in fact two ACFA meetings (one in 2009, the other 2010) with special involvement of RACs representatives, in which mainly the future fishing opportunities were discussed, one of the most controversial annual issues in EU fisheries policy. In the affiliation network projection in Network Images 3 and 4, their central role (in addition to the RACs-Commission coordination expert group) can be easily detected. With 46 and 38 participants, these two meetings had above average (29.57 [33.01] participants) participation rates, but from the general event size curve (Diagrams 11 and 13), they would not have stuck out sufficiently to identify them as very remarkable events in the network. This shows that **important coordination meetings** can be identified with the help of *degree centrality*. It should be noted that both meetings are also the most central meetings with regard to *closeness*, *current flow closeness*, *betweenness* and *current flow betweenness*. The meetings ranked 3 and 4 with regard to degree centrality were two of the three coordination meetings between the Commission and the RACs (one in 2009, one in 2010), which again shows the particular structural role of joint meetings between representatives of all major committees⁵⁶. The meetings ranked 5 to 7 are three plenary meetings of the Advisory Council for Fisheries and Aquaculture (two in 2009, one in 2010), which might be seen as an indicator that ACFA serves

⁵⁶ This central role can be seen in the affiliation network view in Network Images 3 and 4. In Network Image 5 (below), the rather small RACs-COM expert group meetings (black rectangles) appear less central due to the elimination of all ties below the strength of 5. With just 2-3 participants from each RAC, the tie strength of these events to other RAC events is usually lower than 5.

indeed as a focal point in the overall network. Among the top 20 degree central meetings, there are 9 from ACFA, including two 2009 meetings of the Ad-hoc CFP Reform Group that met mainly to discuss ACFA's contribution to the Green Paper. Given the high density of the event network, the actual patterns of the committee and event network can be best observed when we only consider ties of certain strength. As indicated above, a large number of ties of low strength can be created by one or two individuals who participate in many meetings. To control for this particular role of very frequent participants in the event-event network (their role is better captured in the actor network), we can eliminate ties of low strength to only see events connected by several persons. This reduction of the network to ties above a certain strength is also relevant when considering information flows. In how far a single individual actually connects two meetings, i.e. in how far single individuals guarantee the temporal and spatial flow of information from one meeting to another, depends on the social role, the memory and informational behaviour of this individual. If we consider two events connected when they have at least five joint participants, this will raise the chance that information can actually flow from one event to the other more independent of the agency of individual persons. In the case of committees with diverse and opposing interests, a stronger inter-event connection may for example raise the chances that *all* interests will receive information that were acquired at a previous meeting. The chances are higher that the strong ties between two events are established by individuals representing several interests who each are ready to share the information with their respective peers. The patterns that emerge when reducing the event-event network to ties that only represent five or more participants show a (not perfect) hub-spoke network (Network Image 5 below). The main Commission expert group ACFA forms the centre and the other committees more or less group as distinct clusters around this centre. This can be seen as a representation of a Brussels-focused EU policy-making system, a hierarchical structure that is organised as a core-periphery model. What is noticeable is that the Long Distant RAC that has a more intermediate position in the affiliation network (Network Image 3) appears to be more strongly related to the ACFA cluster than to other event clusters in the set. Also visible is that, at this tie strength, the network is much sparser than the unedited network with a density of 0.117. However, it is still completely connected and no isolate meetings are created. The first isolate meeting meetings appear when also erasing all ties of the strength 5, which shows that for any event in the database there is at least one other event with which it shares at least 5 participants.



Network Image 5 (full database): ACFA meetings (black circles), RACs-Commission coordination (black rectangles), Social Dialogue (black triangles), SWWRAC (grey circles), NWWRAC (white circles), NSRAC (grey triangles), Pelagic RAC (white triangles), BSRAC (grey rectangles, black frame), LDRAC (white rectangles), MedRAC (grey rectangles). A tie represents at least 5 joint participants.

Looking more closely at the visualised network, it can be noticed that the *Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Sea Fisheries* (black triangles) is actually quite densely interwoven with ACFA, which underlines both its base in Brussels as well as the facts that (a) SSDC is both formally represented in ACFA and (b) that the interests represented in this committee (Europêche, COGECA, ETF) also have individual seats within ACFA. The expert group meetings for the *coordination of the RACs with the Commission* (also Brussels-based), which in the complete network have a very central position (see above), now appear rather sidelined in the reduced network (black rectangles). This sidelining happens because they involve less than five representatives from each RAC, so the strength of connection to the events in each individual RAC cluster at strength 5 and higher is rather weak. Two of the three meetings are even more sidelined because the respective participation lists did not include the Commission officials involved in these meetings, which means that in reality they may have had a slightly better connection at least to the central cluster. However, even with officials included they would still be only very weakly connected, which can be seen as an indication of lower

political relevance of the RACs-Commission meeting and their function as administrative coordination, not as core political advisory meetings.

The two RACs that have the strongest interconnections with the central Brussels event cluster are the *Long Distance RAC* (white rectangles) and the *Mediterranean RAC* (grey rectangles). In the case of the former, this may be an indication of the importance that the long distance fleets attach to Brussels decisions, given that the EU is responsible for deciding upon the international trade agreements that secure fishing rights for these fleets. It could also be an indication that the organisations or persons representing long distance fleets or development interests have a certain prominence at the national or European level and are therefore also members in or frequent observers of ACFA meetings. In the case of the MedRAC, the strong connection to the Brussels event cluster could result from the relative youth of this committee and the fact that its creation was fostered from Brussels, including by a number of individuals who were already involved in the Brussels committee structures, both in ACFA and in the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee. The MedRAC is well-connected to both of these committees, highlighting its origins. What is worth noting is that (at tie strength 5 or higher) the LDRAC and the MedRAC fit most clearly in the hub-spoke characteristics among all the RACs. Their events do not have any connections of strength 5 or larger with any other committees but the ones in the central (the 'Brussels') cluster. This probably shows that the particular interests in these two committees do not overlap much with the other (Regional) Advisory Councils. Hence, even though France and Spain both have coasts in the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic, the Mediterranean fisheries is quite distinct from the Atlantic fisheries, so there are no strong connections between the interests represented in the MedRAC and the two Western Waters RACs (NWWRAC and SWWRAC), either. In the same way, the particular interests of the long distance fleets seem to lie mainly outside the geographical range of the other Regional Advisory Councils, and thus there is no overlap between the LDRAC and the other RACs at this strength.

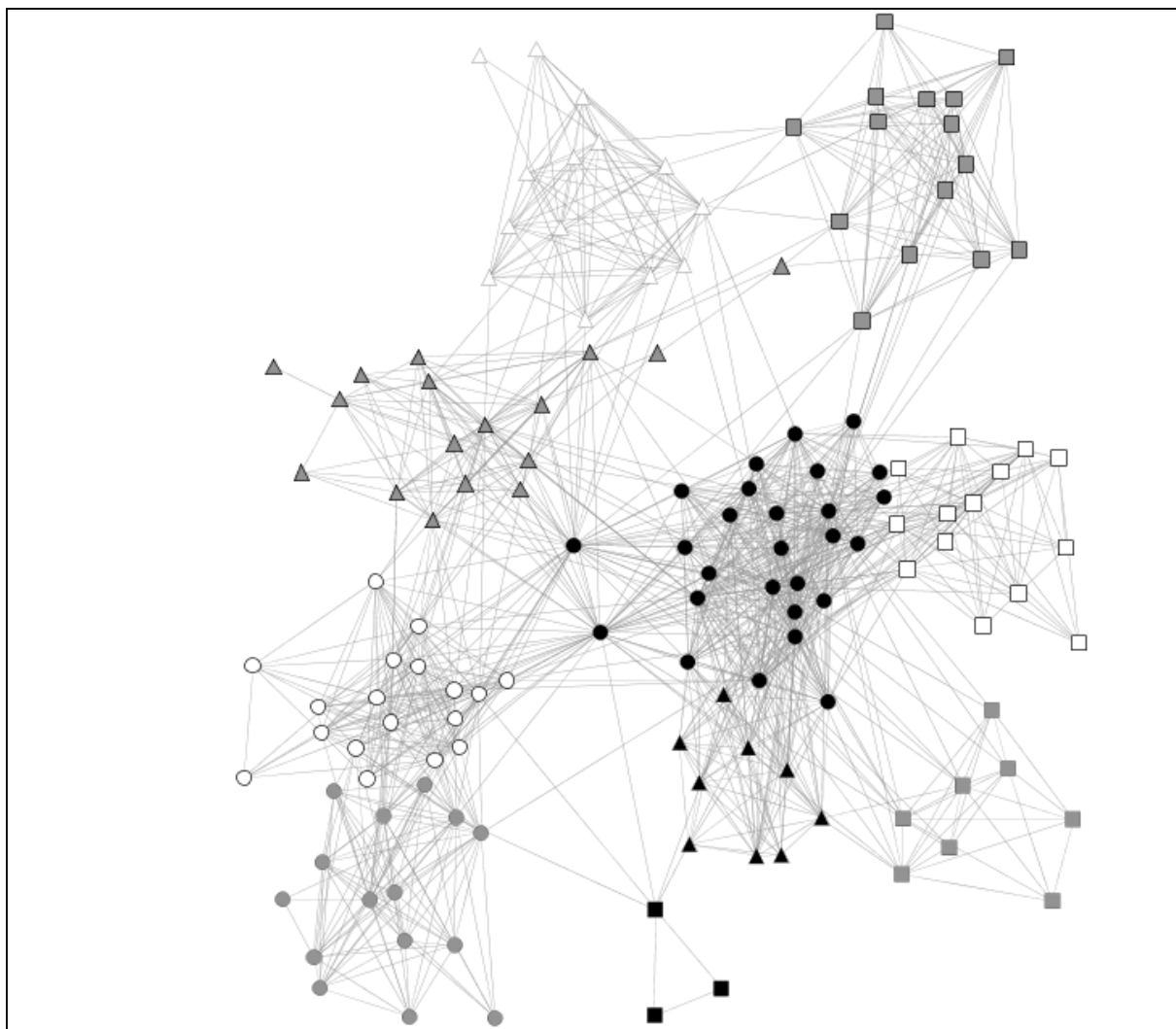
The meetings of the remaining five Regional Advisory Councils are more weakly connected to the central Brussels cluster. It can be seen for example in the case of the *North Western Waters RAC* (white circles, Network Image 3) that the main connections at tie strength 5 or larger come through two ACFA meetings (see the two upper left black circles), which are in fact the two ACFA-RACs meetings that have been identified as the most central meetings earlier. These two meetings also appear to be important anchors to the Brussels sphere for the

South Western Waters RAC (grey circles): If one was to erase these two meetings, the SWWRAC loses its last connections (at this strength) to the ACFA cluster. In return, the NWWRAC and the SWWRAC are much more strongly connected, which indicates the overlap in interests from countries like France for both committees, as French fishermen fish both in the northern and the southern parts of the Western Waters. In the same way, the connections between the NWWRAC and the North Sea RAC (grey rectangles) can be explained by fleets that fish both in the northern Atlantic and the North Sea. Similarly, the relations between the NSRAC and the Baltic Sea RAC (grey rectangles with black frame) show that the national interests in both committees overlap, but the observation that there are very few strong relations in the event-event dataset at this tie strength also indicates that the actual overlap in concrete interests between the North and the Baltic Sea may be rather low, that is that the respective fleets are rather distinct. An interesting outlier is the NSRAC event that is mapped very close to the BSRAC cluster (grey triangle near the grey rectangles), which represents a group meeting dealing with Skagerrak and Kattegat matters, linking both committees in a similar way that the waters of the Skagerrak and Kattegat link the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. This particular event underlines possible added value in using the one-mode projection not just for actors but also for events: Network analysis can identify events with specific roles and functions in a policy process, in this case it makes us discover an event that serves as bridge between the communities of two committees. It is fascinating to see how actual geographical connections are represented in abstract network structures, and the discovery of such elements may help, in other contexts, to uncover dynamics that might be invisible before looking into the empirical details of political network structure.

Altogether, the event-event network structure of these four Regional Advisory Councils covering clear maritime regions follows their geographical structure, with neighbouring regions being connected (at this tie strength), while non-neighbouring regions are not connected as strongly. Finally, the Pelagic RAC (white rectangles) seems to have a particular position, with some stronger relations to ACFA and in particular to the North Sea RAC events and then a few connections of strength 5 or stronger to the Baltic Sea RAC. This indicates that the interests represented in the Pelagic RAC seem to be most active in the North Sea, or, that the pelagic fisheries interests of the North Sea manage to have the strongest representation in this committee based in the Netherlands.

The descriptions made above generally hold for the version of the database with merged events (140 instead of 205 events), too. As can be seen on Network Image 4 (next page), we observe the same basic patterns that we observe in the original database. The SWWRAC and NWWRAC as the two committees most affected by these modifications are a little better connected to the central cluster in the reduced database due to the larger average event size of their meetings. For the rest, the structure of the network is not considerably affected by the modifications, which could speak for the relative robustness of the analysis of affiliation network structures observed here also with regard to possible missing data (events or participants) or with regard to the definition of what constitutes a separate event.

When interpreting this network structure of the event-event network with regard to information flows, it could be expected that information about CFP-related developments at European level will flow from the centre to the periphery, with actors involved in ACFA and in the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) being closest to the source for all information that starts its flow in Brussels, given that these committees have the highest share in Commission officials. One could expect the members of the different committees to be differently informed as their connection to the central cluster differs. Judging from the structure, actors in the LDRAC and MedRAC might be better informed in average than members of the SWWRAC as the latter cluster is only very weakly connected to the Brussels cluster. However, while this interpretation comes easily, it needs to be taken with a grain of salt. First, the clear-cut structure evolves as a representation of the network at a tie strength above five, while the original network is more than four times as dense, showing that the different committees (i.e. their respective meetings) are much better connected when we consider it sufficient if only one or two individuals participated in two meetings for them to be connected. Second, from a theoretical point of view it may be difficult to derive conclusions from an event-network to actual information flows towards individual actors. A strong connection between two committee-clusters in this network indicates an overlap in participants, but theoretically this overlap (and thus the connections) might be generated by the same people. Remembering the theoretical foundations established in Section 3.2 and the concept of “structural individualism” (Udehn 2002: 495), the extent to which a so-called “strong” interconnection leads to stronger information flows may depend on how actors forming these links behave, how they take up and how they distribute information.



Network Image 6 (reduced database): ACFA meetings (black circles), RACs-Commission coordination (black rectangles) Social Dialogue (black triangles), SWWRAC (grey circles), NWWRAC (white circles), NSRAC (grey triangles), Pelagic RAC (white triangles), BSRAC (grey rectangles, black frame), LDRAC (white rectangles), MedRAC (grey rectangles). A tie represents at least 5 joint participants.

In other words, all the links from the ACFA-cluster to the other clusters could have been generated by a delegation of five Commission officials that travels to RAC meetings, and the amount of ties between ACFA and the RACs would then just reflect the travels of this group of people. If those officials do not report information from one event to participants of another event, they do not contribute to information diffusion in the network. In other words, one can use the structure to draw conclusions on how well-informed the members and participants of the different RACs would or should be, but in the end the actual informal flow of information may not be derived from the event-mode structure but more from the actor-mode structure.

In summary, the event-event projection generally portrays a picture of a relatively dense structure of the CFP advisory committee system in which Brussels seems to form the centre. The overlap in participation between the different committees, in particular between the

Brussels committees and the RACs differs considerably. Whether this event structure represents individual informedness now needs to be discussed with the actor-actor projection.

5.5.4 The CFP actor network

While the event-event network can be used to describe the most obvious structural patterns of the network and to formulate brought expectations about possible information flows, the actor-actor projection of the CFP committee network is supposed to provide insights into positions and roles of individual actors in the network. The event-event projection of the network hides one important aspect that has been portrayed when presenting the database in Chapter 5.3: There are a small number of actors who participated in a large number of meetings. These actors can be involved in several committees and their meetings. Hence, while the event-event structure at first sight indicates clearly distinguishable roles (e.g. centre or periphery), the participation patterns that we see in the raw data already hint to the important conclusion that some people do not fit this clear-cut role separation, for instance when they are involved in more than one region (as represented in the RACs) or both in Brussels and in their “home” region (meaning the region where their interests are).

After the transformation described in Section 5.4, the actor-actor network consists of 1333 nodes (individuals) and 50317 (55089⁵⁷) ties, with a tie between two actors representing at least one joint event that both actors participated in. The density of the network is 0.057 (0.062), i.e. in average about 1 in 18 possible ties is realised. The average path length (the mean distance of all pairs of nodes) is 2.264 (2.224), thus in average every actor is at about a social distance of 2 from any other actor if one ignores the temporality of the underlying data. The diameter of the network is 4, which means that any actor is at maximum 4 steps away from any other actor in the network. The clustering coefficient of the network is 0.792 (0.799), which is very high. This means that most contacts of any actor in the network are also related to each other. The high clustering coefficient is in fact a known effect of one-mode projections of two-mode networks (Latapy 2008: 34). Average path length and clustering coefficient found here are characterising the network as a small world network, as it fulfils the criteria set by Watts and Strogatz (1999): The average path length is similar to that of a random network

⁵⁷ Figures in brackets represent the one-mode projection of the reduced affiliation network containing only 140 instead of 205 events.

with the same number of nodes and edges (average path length in a comparable random network is ~ 2), while the clustering coefficient is significantly higher (in a comparable random network the clustering coefficient would be 0.06 [0.07])⁵⁸. The degree distribution (see Diagrams 15 and 16) with many nodes having a low degree and a few nodes having a very high degree is another indicator that the network at hand is not a random network and that beyond its Small-World-ness it also has properties similar to scale-free networks (cf. Barabási 2009). It is interesting to note the difference in the degree distribution of the actor-actor network compared to normal distribution for event-event network (compare Diagrams 14 and 15). This shows that although these two networks are derived from the same original two-mode network they represent different types of the network that deserve separate attention.

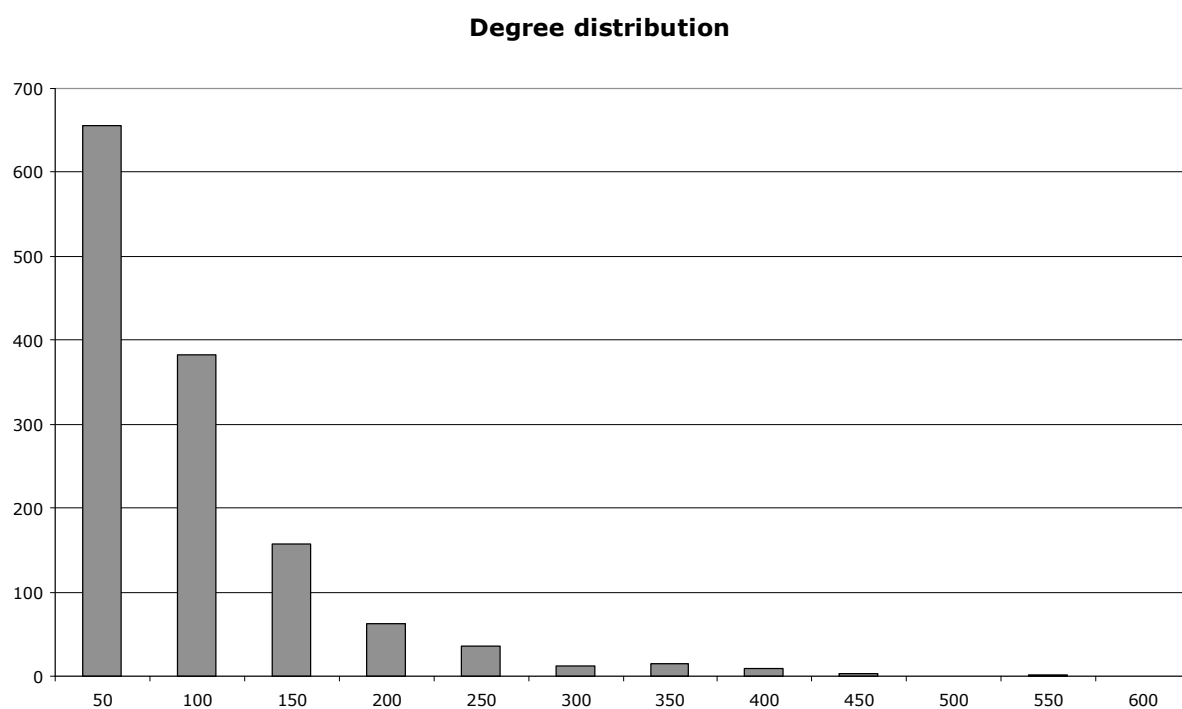


Diagram 15: x-axis: Degree (1-50, 51-100, etc.); y-axis: number of actor nodes with these degrees (1-50, etc.)

⁵⁸ Random graph generated with the `erdos.renyi.game` function in iGraph for R.

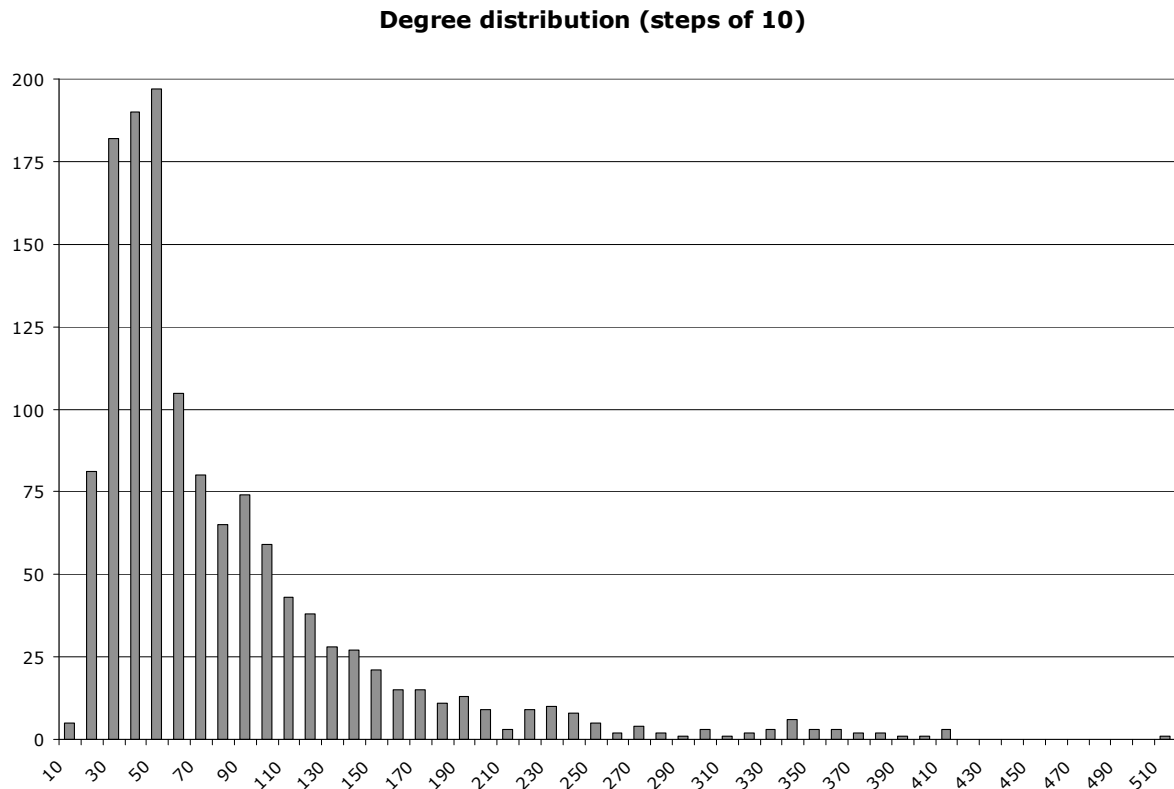


Diagram 16: x-axis: Degree (1-10, 11-20, etc.); y-axis: number of actor nodes with these degrees (1-10, etc.)

It should be noted that the degree of an actor in the unedited one-mode projection reflects the amount of other actors s/he has co-participated with. Hence, if an actor has participated in one event of size 25, this actor will have a degree of 24. If the actor participated in two events of size 25 and 4 others have done so, too, the actor will have a degree of 44. 40 of the ties the actor has developed will have weight of 1, 4 ties will have weight 2. The degree distribution as portrayed in Diagram 16 shows that due to the dependency of the degree to the event sizes and the diversity of actors involved in these events, there are actually only a few nodes with very low degrees and actually none below 8. Theoretically, the minimum degree could have been 7 as the smallest event in the database has only 8 participants. However, as all participants in that meeting were also present in other (larger) meetings, their degree is higher than 7. The minimum degree of 8 thus comes from a one-time participant to a meeting with 9 participants. The peak in degree 20-50 thus clearly is the result of the majority of actors in the database participating in only 1-2 meetings, with the average meeting size being at 29.57. The actor with by far the highest degree (510) in the network is actually the RACs coordinator of the European Commission who holds this position although only ranked 6 with regard to the amount of events participated in. The degree of this actor is more than 25% higher than the degree of the second-ranked degree central actor. A degree of 510 means that in 2009-10, the Commission's RAC coordinator has co-participated with 38.3% of all actors contained in the

database. Given these figures and its position in the network (the person is also the most closeness and betweenness central actor), the actor clearly seems to fulfil this coordinating and oversight role.

In order to understand the structural patterns of the actor network, it is again of advantage to look at a reduced version of the network that only reflects ties of certain strength. Different to the event-event network, where the first isolate event only appears when deleting all ties up to strength 5, the particular nature of the actor-actor network containing a large number of one-time participants, who can only have ties of strength 1 at maximum, any elimination of ties creates isolates. At minimum, all actors with participation frequency n become isolated when reducing the network to tie of strength higher than n . In other words, if we look at the actor network including only ties of strength 5 and higher (see Network Image 7 below), all actors who have not participated in 5 or more meetings will automatically become isolates. They will be joined by those actors with 5 or more meetings who have not participated in 5 or more meetings together with at least one other actor. In the case of the present network this reduces the network from 1333 actors (nodes) to 348 nodes, out of 360 actors who participated in 5 or more meetings (i.e. 12 persons participated in > 4 meetings but not together with at least one other contact).

The actor network at tie strengths 5 or higher in principle shows similar structural pattern to the ones identified for the one-mode projection for the events. The conductance cutting clustering algorithm implemented in visone (for a discussion on graph clustering including conductance see Brandes et al. 2007) identifies 8 distinct clusters, which can be assigned to the distinct committees, with the three Brussels-based committees being clustered together (black circles). The “geographical chain” from the South Western Waters RAC (grey circles) to the North Western Waters RAC (white circles) to the North Sea RAC (grey triangles) up to the Baltic Sea RAC (black rectangles) that can be found both in affiliation network (Network Image 3) and in the event network (Network Image 5) remains intact. The close connection between the Brussels cluster and the Long Distance RAC (white rectangles) as well as the Mediterranean RAC (grey rectangles) can also be easily detected. However, the actor network reveals some specialities that can only be discovered at this level.



Network image 7 (full database): ACFA, Sectoral & Social Dialogue (black circles), SWWRAC (grey circles), NWWRAC (white circles), NSRAC (grey triangles), Pelagic RAC (white triangles), BSRAC (black rectangles), LDRAC (white rectangles), MedRAC (grey rectangles). A tie represents at least 5 joint meetings. The clustering (colour and shape) is based on the conductance cutting algorithm (strength 0.2) implemented in visone, the nominal identification of the clusters is based on key individuals of the respective committees. Nodes that were placed far away from the clusters were manually placed at the out rim of their respective clusters for visual reasons.

First, the Brussels cluster does not appear to be as central in the system as it appears in the event-event network. Instead, there are a number of actors that the clustering algorithm assigns to distinct clusters that are forming the centre of the overall network. Although assigned to a specific cluster to which they hold more dense relations, those actors actually connect different parts of the system, for instance the Brussels cluster, the Pelagic RAC cluster and the North Western Waters RAC cluster (see the white triangle in the centre of Network Image 7), which means they may still have participated in Brussels-cluster events.

One also discovers small groups of actors or single individuals who connect individual RAC clusters, for example the SWWRAC and the LDRAC (see grey circle with ties to the white rectangles), or who actually appear to be the main connections to the system as in the case of the two individuals who connect the BSRAC to the rest of the network. In fact, in this reduced one-mode projection, the Baltic Sea RAC appears to be much more isolated than it does in the event-network while the South Western Waters RAC seems to have better connections at least through a small number of individuals connecting it with the Brussels sphere as well as with the well-placed Long Distance RAC.

With regard to information flows, the structural patterns of the actor-actor network would generate the hypothesis that there might be a certain elite of brokers and gatekeepers who can control the flows of information from and to the Brussels clusters while there is a large group of individuals who, although frequently involved in the system, are only active on a regional level and is thus dependent on the informational behaviour of those that connect them with other RACs or with the Brussels sphere.

5.6 Summary and conclusions

In this chapter, the operationalisation and measurement of the affiliation network underlying the independent variable of the general hypothesis – network structure and actors' positions resulting from this structure – have been conducted. The underlying event affiliation data set of 205 events related to 10 consultative committees in the Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union – ACFA, SSDC, RACs and the RACs-Commission coordination expert group – with 1333 individual participants during the years 2009 and 2010 have been described, and the resulting network structures have been presented. The most interesting observation is that the resulting network patterns differ considerably between affiliation network, the one-mode event projection and the one-mode actor projection. This could be interpreted as an indication that the measurement of a two-mode network indeed measures two different networks that could and should be looked at separately to fully capture the system. The event mode network reveals the general administrative patterns of the political and administrative system established by the design of the network of CFP-related committees. The network in the event mode very much resembles a hub-spoke network when only considering stronger ties. The Brussels-based committees, in particular ACFA, at the

centre of a network in which the Regional Advisory Councils appear to be the periphery. This network structures yields the expectations that for information flows that leave from the Brussels centre of the network – for instance information coming from the European Commission – would indeed be first accessible by the central Brussels-cluster and later in the other clusters depending on the frequency of interactions between the different spheres. The close relation of the Long Distance RAC cluster with the central Brussels clusters could be regarded as a hint that those represented in this (Regional) Advisory Council have indeed the closest connections to Brussels and thus probably higher levels of informedness of their peers in other clusters. The event network also reveals the very central role of particular coordination events such as the two ACFA-RACs meetings in 2009 and 2010 which very much hold together the network for these years by providing strong links between ACFA and several Regional Advisory Committees.

The actor-network reveals a more complex picture with a set of persons being most central who effectively belong to different clusters of the network. In the first place, this shows that individual participation behaviour is not necessarily a simple reproduction of the administratively design affiliation structure. As discussed above, the administrative structure is reflected more accurately in the event-mode network. The patterns observed in the actor-mode projection could yield the hypothesis that there is an elite of actors with access to a number of different fora, actors whose temporal and financial resources allow them to be present at many different events on different levels (that is in different clusters) of the system. Their affiliation to a particular cluster may reflect their main focus in the two years studied here, but their actual profile is that of a ‘multilevel actor’ as described in Hypotheses 3 in the conclusions of Chapter 2.

In both modes, the most central events or actors, depending on the mode, actually perform specific roles, which make them the most *central* nodes in the network in several meanings. By far the most central person in the actor-network network is the coordinator of the Regional Advisory Committees in the European Commission. The role of this person is in fact to be present at many different events in the different committees and the network analysis confirms that the administrative role is actually matched with the network position. In a similar way, the most central event in the event-network was an ACFA-RACs coordination meeting bringing together actors from all relevant committees in the dataset. The fact that all centrality measures can identify the RAC coordinator and the ACFA-RAC coordination

shows that the centrality measures which have been chosen as independent variables in the Hypotheses 4.2-4.4 (see conclusions of Chapter 3) can be expected to have explanatory relevance. This expectation is furthermore strengthened by the finding that several of the most central persons in the actor-network hold/held important posts as presidents or secretaries general of European fishing interests organisations, persons which through their functions might be expected to be well informed. In addition, this highlights that an affiliation network analysis is in fact able to identify persons with specific roles in the network studied and even without the qualitative knowledge of the individual's jobs or administrative positions (which was not part of the analysis conducted here).

With regard to the study of EU committees described in Sections 2.3 and 4.5, the network analysis in this chapter could show that the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) for Sea Fisheries is effectively part of the cluster of events or persons related to the Advisory Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA). This shows empirically that considering SSDCs as a class of committees apart in academic research is not necessarily useful. At least for the Common Fisheries Policy, the SSDC is an integral part of the expert and advisory group committee system and the inclusion of this committee in the present analysis was therefore pertinent to understand the overall involvement of civil society organisations in the affiliation network in EU fisheries policy.

Altogether, the analysis of the affiliation network in its two modes throughout this chapter does provide a general picture in which the Brussels sphere seems to be in the centre of European politics but that there is a diverse group of actors with quite different roles within this system based on their participation behaviour throughout the different fora available. With regard to the Hypotheses 4.1-4.4, this mixed picture does not provide a clear indication whether one would expect presence in the 'Brussels cluster' more important for high(er) levels of informedness than the level of centrality, independent of the specific cluster into which an actor is assigned. It will thus be the information flow analysis in the following chapter and the synthesis in Chapter 7 which will give an indication on which hypotheses will actually be supported and which might be falsified.

Chapter VI

Information flows in the early phases of the post-2012 CFP reform

6.1 Chapter structure

6.2 The dependent variable: Informedness in the CFP reform

6.3 Testing public access to EU documents in the CFP reform

6.4 The scope of changes to the draft CFP reform proposal

6.5 Data collection

6.5.1 Questionnaire design: Measuring informedness

6.5.2 Questionnaire pre-test: Did MEPs receive leaked documents?

6.5.3 The data collection process

6.6 Data analysis: Informedness and information flows in the early CFP reform

6.7 Summary and conclusions

6.1. Chapter structure

In this chapter, the dependent variable will be established and findings related to major information flows in the context of the post-2012 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy will be presented. The focus of the study is on the distribution of leaked drafts of the EU Commission's proposal for the post-2012 Basic Regulation of the Common Fisheries Policy as the central reform proposal. Section 6.2 will, in a first step, discuss the concept of 'informedness' and operationalise this dependent variable. Section 6.3 will then provide evidence that information flow of the drafts of the basic CFP regulation had to be network-like by showing that the opposite was impossible. This proof is necessary to establish in order to justify that the affiliation network structures presented in Chapter 5 could reasonably be expected to be predicting information flows. Then, some general observations on the scope of changes to the CFP reform proposal during inter-service consultation will be presented in Section 6.4 in order to underline the relevance of measuring informedness with regard to the access to different drafts version of the document in focus. Subsequently, the development and execution of the survey to measure actors' informedness will be described in Section 6.5 before the findings on information flows and actors' informedness in the early phases of the CFP reform will be discussed in Section 6.6. Finally, the chapter will be summarised and some general conclusion drawn ahead of the test of the hypotheses in Chapter 7.

6.2 The dependent variable: Informedness in the CFP reform

In the previous chapter, the independent variable has been established. The affiliation network of actors and events of ten consultative committees in the context of the Common Fisheries Policy has been presented in detail. These empirical network structures have then been interpreted with regard to the expected information flows in this policy field, both for the event-mode and for the actor-mode projection of the affiliation network. However, these expectations result solely from the participation patterns of individual actors in committee meetings. While these network structures are expected to cause or to allow predictions of information flows, they do not represent *actual* information flows. The goal of this chapter therefore is to present the measurement of information flows and the informedness of actors involved through the 10 committees included in the network database of this study during the early phases of the post-2012 CFP reform process. Those information flows and the resulting

level of informedness of actors constitute the dependent variable in this analysis. In a first step, this dependent variable will have to be conceptualised more clearly before entering into the empirical measurement of informational dynamics of the CFP reform. The two main methodological questions for this conceptualisation were: (1) How is it possible to trace particular information flows in a policy field and (2) how is it possible to establish the level of informedness of individual actors with regard to information available in that policy field?

In order to answer these questions, it is worth considering the methodological choices made in similar or related research. In the past, there have been several ways in which individual actors' informedness has been operationalised and measured in political and social science studies. Seeing the diverse contexts in which this has been done, there is not necessarily clear guidance which concept(s) to apply in the present case: Some researchers use the subjective perception of survey respondents regarding their informedness on a specific issue to explain voting behaviour (Lassen 2005: 107). Informedness in this study represented *actors' self-confidence* with regard to a non-limited set of topical information. Speer and Basurto (2010: 9) measure the degree of access to information through "availability of news on local politics" to test the effect of this availability on local government responsiveness. Informedness here was not a measure of individual informedness but rather a measure of the *general availability of relevant information sources* in a particular area. Carpenter et al. (1998), whose relational and network theoretic approach comes closest to the one applied in this study, measure the general informedness of health policy interest groups in Washington through the perception of governmental officials and other interest groups, that is through third actors' evaluation. They support their operationalisation of informedness with the argument that they "cannot observe directly how informed ... a group is" (1998: 428), and thus resort to this assessment of the *general level of informedness of their network actors through a peer-based information prestige measure*. New studies measuring information flow and word-of-mouth processes in online networks prove that these (assumed) limitations of the ability to observe informedness are not necessarily valid. Researchers in those studies assume that an actor is informed or part of certain information flows for example when specific keywords (Jürgens et al. 2011), URLs (Rodrigues et al. 2011), or (sets of) phrases (Gruhl et al. 2004) are used on Web 2.0 platforms such as Twitter or blogs. Informedness in these cases represents *publicly displayed use of pre-defined information*. The measurement of informedness in these studies is simplified by the fact that, by definition, actors reveal that they are informed voluntarily. It is also simplified because the respective messages indicating the informedness come with relatively precise

time stamps, which allows tracking the temporal paths of the diffusion of specific information or topics. A third advantage of this approach is that it can scale up its precision; depending on whether one is searching for a general topic (e.g. ‘fisheries’), specific document titles (e.g. ‘the basic regulation of the Common Fisheries Policy’) or for longer texts (e.g. the substance of an article of the basic CFP regulation), one will get different levels of informedness with regard to specific issues or documents. However, by *not* using the respective phrases, actors do not reveal that they are *not* informed, limiting the possibility to infer the actual population of informed actors.

As these studies show, *informedness* can be measured in different ways, for instance through (1) respondents’ self-assessment, (2) assessment by others, (3), general availability of information sources and (4) direct observation. These studies also show that the operationalisation of what substance constitutes informedness varies, ranging from (a) general knowledge in a policy field over (b) possessing concrete expertise to (c) having received or sent concrete bits of information related to a specific topic or discussion. The general design of this study with an interest in concrete information flows in the context of a clearly defined policy process demanded an approach that was closest to (c), while not being able to trace information flows through direct observation as online word-of-mouth studies could do.

The *main practical question* was what type of information should be considered the concrete bit(s) that would be traced through the research. A principle decision was taken quite early in the research process. This decision took into account the author’s observation of EU policy-making processes, the findings on EU information flows presented in Chapter 2 as well as the findings by Janse (2006: 588). In a study on the information search behaviour of different actors involved in European forest policy, she found that the information valued the highest by the 58 organisations in her survey was information on the “status of ongoing policy processes”. As a consequence of these considerations, it became clear that the goal of this study had to be to trace the diffusion of *concrete* information such as a set of documents, documents that would be of (assumed) interest for all or at least most actors in the network studied (cf. Chapter 5). The information contained in these documents had to be (a) specific enough to be clearly traceable, but (b) general enough to concern everyone in the network at hand.

The *second question* was how to measure the information flow and the informedness of actors. As said above, the network that was to be studied was a real-life network and not an online network⁵⁹. Hence, it was unlikely that direct observation of the level of informedness of actors and the diffusion of the relevant documents would be possible. It was therefore obvious from the start that some sort of survey covering the actors included in the network boundaries was necessary. Through this survey, actors would be questioned about their level of informedness with regard to the specific information and documents defined as relevant for the study. This approach questions the hesitation voiced by Carpenter et al. (1998) that informedness of interest groups could *only* be measured through third party assessments.

As said before, the decision on the basic methodology was taken quite early in the research process. What needed to be defined once the case – the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy – had been selected was which information was to be considered a relevant indicator for actors' informedness in the reform process. In the course of a decision-making process like the CFP reform, there is a myriad of information worth tracking. Information flows happen through a complex mix of sources, from publicly available news, online discussions and official documents published on official websites to interest group mailing lists and confidential personal assessments shared in one-to-one talks. Depending on the stage of the decision-making, different information give hints about the status of the ongoing policy-process. Political actors involved are interested in that information because they allow them to take decisions on whether or not they need to try to influence the final outcome of the decision-making and how to do it. For the early stages of the reform process of the Common Fisheries Policy, one could ask for example: Who was informed about the Green Paper consultations and in how far did the level of informedness with regard to that process impact the ability of non-governmental actors and citizens to participate individually or through the Regional Advisory Councils? One could also ask: Who received invitations to consultation and discussion events such as European Parliament hearings or Commission seminars? One might ask for the Commission drafting phase of the CFP reform proposal: Which governmental and non-governmental actors had access to intermediate drafts – and did this allow those actors to influence the substance of the final draft? For the co-decision phase, pertinent questions might have been: Who gets to read the first versions of the draft report of a rapporteur dealing with one or the other element of the CFP reform package? Which actors

⁵⁹ Although some of the actors studied also actively discussed the Common Fisheries Policy on online social networks such as Twitter, Facebook as well as in a specific CFP Reform group on LinkedIn or in blogs.

know the exact positions and amendments that member states' representatives in the Council Working Party on Internal and External Fisheries Policy and other relevant intergovernmental fora put forward? Who knows what is discussed in informal trilogues at first or second reading?

In the end, there were several reasons for this research to focus on information flows during the Commission stage of the decision-making process and in particular on the phase from inter-service consultation to the publication of the official Commission proposal in the first half of 2011. In this phase, not just in the case of the CFP reform, the very first consolidated draft of a future regulative proposal goes through internal revision within the Commission, first at administrative and then at political level. This stage is not meant to be for the public. In theory, it happens only between the officials of different Directorates General and the Cabinets of Commissioners. This constitutes an important condition in order to measure information flows in the network(s): Given that the documents and the information on which discussions in this stage are based are not generally available for the public, access to those intermediary documents of the CFP reform proposal is, in principle, only possible through personal relations to those with access to the draft. Furthermore, unlike at any other stage of the legislative process, the information is or at least seems to be fully in the hands of the Commission at this point in time. The draft documents are dealt with only within this single institution, i.e. one single original source. There, they evolve into the final legislative proposal that then forms the basis for the future negotiations. In the present case, they possibly form the basis of the Common Fisheries Policy for at least a decade. The attention of actors involved in the process at this stage thus is very much focussed on the Commission as the only source from which updates on possible policy choices can flow through personal relations to the outside world. More than that, while drafting and intra-Commission discussions take place already before the inter-service consultation stage in order to come to the first draft that is sent into consultation, the inter-service consultation phase is particularly interesting with regard to information flows: At this moment, the amount of actors within the Commission who can access and have to access the draft proposals rises significantly. The enlargement of the group of intra-Commission actors with access to relevant documents not only raises the number of persons who can potentially share the information with civil society and other actors, it also raises the number of parties within the Commission that oppose or support certain aspects of the proposal as DGs with diverging policy preferences become involved beyond the initial interdepartmental focus group. For these diverse actors – DGs and in

particular Commissioners' cabinets – sharing the draft(s) with the public may be necessary to gain or keep up external support for their position(s). At this moment, it becomes more difficult to track the origins of leaks because so many more people become involved. For a Commission official or cabinet member, the lower risk for detection and subsequent sanction raises the likelihood of leaks to external actors in Brussels and beyond. In short, this stage in the policy process involves a comparatively limited set of relevant information, in particular the intermediary drafts of the future legislative proposals, originating from a single yet diverse institution with many (theoretically) possible leakage points – and it has been shown in Section 2.2.2 that this indeed a stage in the Commission decision making when most leaks seem to happen. At later stages, many more actors become formally involved. Once the European Parliament and the Council join in co-decision making, many more documents containing individual and collective positions, draft and final decisions are produced, making it much more difficult to define and trace information flows as well as to define the networks and network structures that matter for each individual flow process.

The latter is another substantial reason to focus on the Commission stage in the context of this research: The independent variable presented in Chapter 5 is based on fora that are defined by or at least primarily linked to the Commission. ACFA, the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for High Sea Fisheries and the expert group for the coordination of the Regional Advisory Council are Brussels-based fora with a Commission secretariat. RACs are independent yet strongly linked to the Commission, not just because of relevant co-financing but because most of the RACs' advice is requested from and directed towards the EU Commission. All of these committees usually see participation by EU Commission officials, some more and some less (see Chapter 5.3 for the figures). This means that anybody involved in one of the ten committees that form the affiliation network presented in Chapter 5 has been in contact with Commission officials or has been in contact with someone with relations to Commission officials. Consequently, it could be expected that network structures defined by these committees could more likely be used to predicting information flows that originated from the European Commission than any other type of CFP-related information flows.

As it turned out during the research, there were clear indications of leaks of the Common Fisheries Policy reform proposal occurred at the time of the inter-service consultation (cf. Chapter 4.2). This confirmed the hypothetical expectations formulated above and supported the selection of this stage of the decision-making process. Through these

observations, it was also possible to define more clearly what exactly would be considered the information constituting the *informedness* in the present case so a large enough group of actors from the affiliation network established in Chapter 5 was actually covered. It turned out that, although the CFP reform package encompassed a number of documents – the Communication on the reform of the common fisheries policy (COM(2011)417), the proposal for a new (basic) regulation on the CFP (COM(2011)425), the proposal for a new regulation on the Common Market Policy in fisheries (COM(2011)416), the Communication on the external dimension of the CFP (COM(2011)424), and the proposal for a regulation on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (COM(2011)804)⁶⁰ – the actual leaks, or at least the public discussions around these leaks, mainly concerned the proposal for the new basic CFP regulation. This was not surprising as this is the main legal instrument of the Common Fisheries Policy and thus by definition of interest for most policy actors involved in the CFP reform process while the other instruments concerned or interested only parts of the actor population.

The dependent variable - *informedness* - was thus defined for the context of this case study as *an actor's access to the different draft versions of the proposal for a Regulation on the Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union*. Indicators for *the level of informedness* are *the number of draft versions received and the timing of access to the draft(s)*. Thus, an actor would be considered better informed than another actor if he or she received more draft versions of this reform proposal and/or if he or she received these documents earlier than the second actor. In the following chapter, the level of informedness will be operationalised as an ordinal variable ranging from 0 to 4 in order to be able to test Hypotheses 4.1-4.4.

6.3 Testing public access to EU documents in the CFP reform

A major (assumed) condition for the network-like flow of information in political environments is present when information is not publicly available, or at least when it is difficult to get. When information is made available on websites, shared via generally available traditional and new media or when it can be requested through freedom of information requests, anybody with the means to access one of these routes can also access

⁶⁰ While the first four documents were published on 13 July 2011, the EMFF proposal was only issued on 2 December 2011 and too late to be included in the study.

the information directly, without relying on personal relations. This does not exclude network-like information flows in these cases, for instance when links to interesting news are spread on online social networks like Facebook, when a friend brings the copy of a newspaper talking about one's favourite topics, or when one NGO requests a document from a government and then shares what it got with a wider community of NGOs. However, when the information is not available through public routes, the only way it can reach actors is through personal relations in the smaller and wider networks that are spanned by these relations. Measuring information flows and informedness under conditions of difficult public access to information can be attributed with more confidence to network effects. Under those conditions, it is more likely that someone who has received information, that is someone who is informed, has obtained the information through personal relations and not through public sources.

In order to test the effect of network structures in the case of the post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy reform, it was therefore preferable to select information that was not publicly available, because then it was easier to exclude that access to such information was not indeed framed by access to the relevant public sources but rather by network structures. Having chosen drafts of the Commission proposal for the Basic Regulation of the Common Fisheries Policy as the objects to trace for the informedness analysis, it was hence necessary to establish that these drafts were not publicly available but that access to leaks was only possible through network structures. If this test would see a positive result, that is that documents were *not* published online, had *not* been officially shared with all or many relevant stakeholders, or had *not* been accessible through official requests for documents, it was indeed guaranteed with a high probability that the position of actors in the relevant network structures could have been a predictor for their level of informedness with regard to the documents in question.

The main test to be made in order to establish the lack of publicity of the draft CFP reform proposals was to see whether the European Commission considered these documents to be public and had or might have given them out prior to the release of the official draft proposals in July 2011. In order to test this, **a series of freedom of information requests was made in July and September 2011 to the European Commission** (see Annex 3 for details). Through these requests and the negative replies received, it could be established that no draft of the CFP Basic Regulation proposal had been or could have been accessed officially from the European Commission before the final proposal was officially published on 13 July 2011. As

the access to two drafts of the proposal was refused following the initial request as late as September 2011, it was definite that no civil society organisation could have received the drafts through official means, because once public access is given to a document it is considered public for everybody. Thus, had the Commission granted official access to a civil society organisation earlier in the process, it would have also granted access following the requests made for this study. In addition, in an email received from the secretariat of the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA) on 16 September 2011, the author was informed, that “nobody received earlier drafts for consultation” through the official ACFA channels, confirming that access to the drafts was not even foreseen in the major stakeholder body of the Common Fisheries Policy.

The only exception to this general lack of accessibility of the draft CFP reform proposals was the publication of a draft version of the proposal for the Basic Regulation on a French website on 21 June 2011 (Comité des Pêches Guilvinec 2011). This publicly available document very likely represented the first draft version following the initial inter-service consultations, and was the only document leaked online the author became aware of through the monitoring of online discussions around the CFP reform in the first half of 2011. Despite this online leak about three weeks before the publication of the official reform proposal, there were indications of different leaks much earlier in the process. Consequently, anyone who had received a draft before 21 June 2011 should have received the document through personal networks. For anyone who received drafts later than 21 June 2011, it could not be excluded *a priori* that the document had not been downloaded from the respective website.

In summary, it could be established with great confidence that except for one version published in the second half of June, the drafts of the CFP reform proposal were not publicly available before the official version was published by the European Commission on 13 July 2011. This general assessment would be sufficient to establish that most related information flows observed should be based on network structures.

6.4 The scope of changes to the CFP reform proposal during inter-service consultation

Before discussing the measurement of the information flows and the development of the survey, it was important to know in how far the different draft versions of the proposal for the

new Basic Regulation of the Common Fisheries Policy actually differed, that is in how far it was relevant to have access to these different versions. And indeed, the evolution of the CFP reform proposal within the Commission from the early drafts to the final text shows that major administrative and political bargaining must have taken place between April and July 2011. The text in its April version as proposed by DG MARE for inter-service consultation was significantly changed until the final version published on 13 July 2011. This section will map the general scope of these changes without providing a complete content analysis. The scope of these changes supports the argument that information flows in the form of leaks of these drafts did not only happen but that such information flows could have been of interest for many actors involved in the reform process. Since the earliest draft proposal could only give a limited insight to what was finally adopted as the official Commission proposal, receiving at least one second version following the initial inter-service consultation may have been of advantage for those interested in shaping the final outcome. The empirical bases for the analysis of the evolution of the proposal are the following five documents:

- a) the *inter-service consultation draft* registered on 7 April 2011⁶¹ in the Commission's internal inter-service consultation (CIS) register received in a complete yet *redacted* version from the European Commission on 21 December 2011;
- b) a partial yet *unredacted version of the draft* regulation in its 7 April version received through a source outside the European Commission in autumn 2011⁶².
- c) An *intermediate draft version* published by René Chever on the website of the local fisheries committee of Le Guilvinec (Bretagne/France) on 21 June 2011 (Comité des Pêches Guilvinec 2011)⁶³.
- d) The *first officially registered version* of the draft CFP reform proposal listed publicly in Commission's public register of documents on 1 July 2011 as COM(2011)425/1 for which partial (redacted) access was granted by the Commission on 21 December 2011.
- e) The *proposal adopted by the Commission* on 13 July 2011 as COM(2011)425 final.

⁶¹ The date is contained in the name of the PDF document received from the Commission through the freedom of information request as well as in the ENVI submission to the inter-service consultation.

⁶² According to its meta-data, the Word document containing this partial version was created on 10 May 2011. It only contains the articles of the draft regulation but not the explanatory memorandum or the indents. A comparison with the redacted inter-service consultation draft from 7 April shows that these two documents are with very high probability containing the same versions of the CFP reform proposal.

⁶³ The metadata of this PDF file show that this file has been created on 6 June 2011, it must be from May or beginning of June as the interservice consultation submission went at least until early May. This date is derived from the fact that as the DG ENVI submission for interservice consultation received through a freedom of information request is dated 2 May 2011.

The general scope of the changes from the inter-service consultation draft (a & b) to the final proposal (e) can be easily identified already with the help of the two redacted versions received from the EU Commission (documents (a) and (d)). According to the reply received from the Secretariat General of the Commission on 21 December 2011 following the confirmatory application to these documents,

"[t]he undisclosed parts of [these] documents [...] contain wording and positions that the Commission has not maintained in the final version of the proposal"

Hence, the quantity of parts deleted in these documents constitutes an important indication of the amount of changes because all redacted parts were deleted. The assessment of the deleted parts needs to be complemented with a look at passages that have been added.

The redacted inter-service consultation draft contains 48 times the word "DELETED". Assuming a correct analysis by the Commission services, 4 passages from the explanatory memorandum, 15 recitals, 31 complete articles (including those where only the title remained) as well as parts of 7 further articles were not maintained from the initial inter-service consultation draft. Both the inter-service consultation draft as well as the final proposal contained 63 recitals. The final proposal with its 59 articles had only one article less than the inter-service consultation draft. This means that the above-mentioned deletions signify that almost 25% of the recitals and more than 50% of the articles in the final proposal were either new or had been substantially changed in the course of the intra-Commission processes. Comparing the first publicly registered draft version of the CFP reform proposal contained in COM(2012)425/1, which represents the document as of 1 July 2011, with the final version adopted two weeks later shows that at this stage, that is before the final political struggles at Cabinet and College level, the vast majority of, yet not all, issues had been resolved at this time. The redacted draft proposal of COM(2011)425/1 contains 7 times the word "DELETED". 1 of 58 recitals, 2 complete articles (Articles 12 and 31 of COM(2011)425/1) and parts of 4 other articles (Articles 2, 3, 28 and 42 of COM(2011)425/1) out of 60 articles in this version were not retained or substantially rewritten in the final version judging from the redactions. In total, with its 46 pages (without annexes), the final version (e) is three pages shorter than the draft that went into inter-service consultation (a+b) but one page longer than the draft as of 1 July 2011 (d).

While these are clear quantitative indications for the amounts of deletions between the different draft versions, there are also a number of substantive additions, which show the

scope of amendments to the text during the different stages. One of the most politically salient and most discussed issues of the EU fisheries policy reform were individual transferable fishing quotas (ITQs) called Transferable Fishing Concessions (TFCs) in the final version of the text. The introduction of ITQs as a specific form of access and harvesting rights is one measure that was considered appropriate to fight overfishing and to reduce discarding. However, the debate over who was favoured by this market-based system and over the question whether it was actually useful to reach its goals is long and was heavily contested throughout all stages of the CFP reform. It is therefore not surprising that changes to the CFP reform proposal drafts have been made in this field. In the inter-service consultation draft, ITQs are denominated “transferable *fishing shares*” defined as

“revocable user entitlements to a specific share of a Member State's allocated fishing opportunities, which the holder may transfer to other eligible share holders” (Article 3.16, April draft).

In the leaked June version (d), this single concept is split into two different concepts, “transferable *catch quotas*” and “transferable *fishing effort*” (cf. definitions Article 5.17 and 5.18 in June leak), while in the draft version as of 1 July 2011, ITQs were called “transferable fishing *concessions*”, defined as

“revocable user entitlements to a specific part of fishing opportunities allocated to a Member State or established in management plans adopted by a Member State in accordance with Article 19 of Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006/34, which the holder may transfer to other eligible holders of such transferable fishing concessions;”.

This definition of TFCs is kept in Article 5 of the final proposal, and the changes in the definition of the concept are not just found in the definitions but are also reflected in all corresponding articles that reference this concept. The fact that in four versions of the proposal between April and July 2011 there were each time changes to the definitions and corresponding articles indicates that the transferable fishing rights were one of the main points for legal and political discussions throughout the formulation of the CFP reform proposal. This underlines the possible and actual scope of political negotiations during the Commission stage of the process.

Besides the changes made with regard to the ITQs throughout the whole process, there are more noticeable changes in all parts of the proposal. Some of these changes have appeared even in the last two weeks of the negotiations. For instance, there was one important passage

added under the headline “Subsidiarity principle” in the explanatory memorandum of the final version compared to the 1 July draft (d):

“Provisions in the proposal relating to the Common Market Organization fall under the shared competence between the Union and the Member States. The objectives for the common market organization include increased competitiveness of the Union fishery and aquaculture industry, improvement of the transparency of the markets and the contribution to ensuring a level playing field for all products marketed in the Union. To achieve these objectives the measures, which comprise the organization of the industry including measures for stabilisation of the markets and marketing standards, and consumer information requirements, need to be consistent throughout the Union” (COM(2011)425: 4)

This passage, given its focus on market issues, could be an indication that it was particular DG MARKT and the Commissioner for the internal market, Michel Barnier, or his cabinet who had particular influence at this stage in the process. This view is supported by another addition in the explanatory memorandum where the sentence

"Member States may regulate transferable fishing concessions to ensure a close link between them and the fishing communities (for example, by limiting the transferability within fleet segments)"

has been added between 1 and 13 July (COM(2011)425: 8). This added passage tends to confirm the press reports that covered Barnier's objections to the transferable concession proposals, introducing a softer formulation where possible to strengthen member states' scope of action with regard to ITQs/TFCs. Having these changes in mind, it is again interesting to remind that according to the reply received from the Commission to the request for documents the author made to three DGs, DG MARKT had *not* submitted any concrete amendment proposals for the inter-service consultation. This could be an indication that it was indeed the political process following the press reports and leaks of the earlier drafts that alerted the Commissioner and his cabinet to intervene at a later stage. There were some further small changes in the explanatory memorandum at this late stage of the process: While under the emergency measures for conservation of marine biological resources (d) refers to “Natura 2000 and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive”, the (e) refers to “environmental law obligations”. It is not clear whether this is was considered strengthening or weakening of the environmental aspects, but it must have been politically relevant⁶⁴. Under the headline “External policy” it was added that Sustainable Fisheries Agreements (SFAs) should “be

⁶⁴ The political importance of the issue could be observed for example during co-decision, when this formulation became part of the discussions on a general approach in the Council in May 2012.

coherent with development policy objectives”. The concept of “sustainable fisheries agreements” was then defined in Article 5 of the legislative proposal; this definition did not exist in the draft two weeks earlier. The proposal to create an Advisory Council for the Black Sea by 2015 was added in this last phase of the intra-Commission consultation. And in the final version, the following recital (n° 11) was added:

“The Common Fisheries Policy should pay full regard, where relevant, to animal health, animal welfare, food and feed safety.”

In recital 24, new references to the 2009 Wild Birds Conservation Directive and the Maritime Strategy Framework Directive were added. In recital 29, it was added that

“Member States may exclude vessels up to 12 meters' length other than vessels using towed gear from transferable fishing concession”,

Recital 41 on the respect for democratic principles and human rights in Sustainable Fisheries Agreements was not in the text as of 1 July 2011 but was included in the final version (e). Furthermore, recital 44 included a reference to the Europe 2020 strategy, an addition that may have come from Barroso's cabinet or the Secretariat General as Europe 2020 was the overarching Commission framework for all growth-related policies at the time of the CFP reform. These are just some of the substantive additions that can be found when comparing the drafts (d) as of 1 July and the final version (e) as of 13 July 2011, showing that even at those late stages, relevant additions can be and have been introduced to the text.

Comparing the July draft contained in (d) with the leaked draft (c) created in early June and published on the website of the French local fisheries committee at the end of June, one can observe that these are very similar yet not identical, raising the question what exact stages of the process both represent given that the Commission had informed in reaction to the freedom of information request that (d) contained the draft as it came out from inter-service consultation. It is obvious from this version that throughout the formal inter-service consultation the draft proposal had been significantly amended in substance and in structure. The end-of-May or beginning-of-June version (c) is not surprisingly much closer to the final proposal. However, there are still noticeable differences to the first officially recorded draft in (d). Most significant may be that “transferable catch quotas” and “transferable fishing effort” are separated concepts in the earlier draft. In the early July version, these two concepts have been re-merged to become “transferable fishing concessions”, which is also retained in the final proposal (e) adopted by the European Commission. Article 16 on “Fishing opportunities” has also been visibly reformulated and adapted between June and July.

The selected changes presented above show that, from the inter-service consultation until the official adoption of the Commission proposal, changes of technical and political nature have been made to the different draft proposals. It is outside the scope of this research to analyse the relevance and origins of these changes, and further research once the CFP reform is finalised may help to trace the interests and actors within and outside the European Commission that proposed and opposed the changes made. What is obvious is that the changes to the draft are substantial enough to make them interesting for civil society and other actors outside the Commission. Those involved in influencing the outcome of the negotiations within the Commission may therefore have profited from tracking these changes – and in order to track them it was necessary to access the different draft versions as they were leaked throughout the process. In the following section, the design and execution of the survey questioning actors involved in the network presented in Chapter 5 whether they had indeed had access to one or several draft versions of the proposal of the Basic Regulation of the Common Fisheries Policy.

6.5 Data collection

6.5.1 Questionnaire design: Measuring informedness

In Section 6.2, the dependent variable ‘informedness’ has been conceptualised for the context of the CFP reform process and this study. An actors’ informedness is defined through her/his access to draft versions of the Commission proposal for a new Basic Regulation of the Common Fisheries Policy. The level of informedness is indicated by the number of drafts received – the more the better – and the timing of the reception of these drafts – the earlier the better. In the light of this conceptualisation, it was necessary to design a questionnaire to measure the level of informedness of the actors involved in the network presented in Chapter 5. The goal in designing this survey was to make it as easy as possible for as many individual respondents from the initial network population to respond. It was important to take into account the sensitivity of disclosing the access to confidential information while the decision-making process was still ongoing. At the same time, the survey also needed to generate contextual information beyond the pure measurement of the (level of) informedness.

The particular challenge was that, in order to be able to connect the network position of the individuals included in the affiliation network with their respective level of informedness, the

survey questions could *not* be answered anonymously. It was therefore necessary to reassure the recipients of the questionnaire that disclosing personally to the researcher that they had received leaked drafts was socially acceptable. Secondly, it was important to guarantee that, although the questionnaire could not be answered anonymously, the attribution of answers to particular persons would not be possible unless the respondent agreed. In other words, the design of the survey had to (a) prevent the expected high rates of non-response related to the political sensitivity of the questions and (b) address the impossibility to anonymise the survey. Furthermore, the survey needed to fit, in principle, a population of 1333 individual actors contained in the affiliation network database constituting the basis for the measurement of the independent variable. Those actors had quite different social, political and linguistic backgrounds, and when designing the survey it was necessary to account for this to the extent possible. So in order take account of these considerations, a number of design elements were included when preparing the survey:

- a) The questionnaire was designed as an email survey. This would assure that respondents' answers would be received and read directly by the author. The email survey also guaranteed the necessary attribution of the answers to concrete individuals contained in the network database, while still allowing a relatively easy coverage of a large subset of the population included in the network. In addition, an email survey was expected to ease possible reactions in case of misunderstanding or in case there was a need for clarification and reassurance, as email was expected to be more inviting to follow-up questions than an impersonal website-based survey. Furthermore, the email survey design allowed the respondents to see all questions in advance so that they could take their decision to participate based on their overall assessment of the questions they would have to answer.
- b) The cover letter and introductory text of the questionnaire had to be formulated in such a way that respondents felt confident in answering the questions. Several reassurances therefore were included: First, the introductory text had to introduce the topic in such a way that respondents knew that by reporting their access to leaked documents they would not report something new but that these leaks were a known facts for the researcher. Second, respondents had to be informed that their answers would only be published in aggregated form and that the respective databases would only be shared with other academics with their names pseudonymised. Third, the cover letter offered a telephone interview for those respondents who felt more comfortable if their answers were not documented in an email that could be attributed to them. The telephone

interview was also meant for those who preferred to answer in a language other than English.

In the end, the email sent out to respondents consisted of a cover letter and a questionnaire with a short introduction followed by seven questions, five of which had to be answered at maximum by each respondent. The detailed survey formulation can be seen in Annex 1 for the pre-test version and Annex 2 for the final version, but the general idea and reasoning for particular formulations are explained below:

- *Question 1* asked respondents whether they were able to see an early draft. The verb “see” was used in case the actor had not been given a copy but might have only been given the chance to look at a (physical) draft version possessed by others.
- *Question 2* asked respondents who had affirmed *Question 1* how many drafts or parts thereof they had received. This question was supposed to measure the first indicator for the level of informedness. Adding the possibility to count also partial leaks was given because it could be seen from the leaked draft versions the author had accessed that they were not necessarily complete versions. In addition, some actors were expected to only have received different draft versions of specific parts of the proposal that concerned them directly, for instance to provide comments upon the informal request from a Commission official or cabinet member.
- *Question 3* asked respondents who had affirmed *Question 1* when they had received the different drafts. This question was supposed to measure the second indicator for the level of informedness. Ideally, the responses to that question would allow the temporal ordering of who got the documents earlier than others, especially if the timing was in relative conformity with the data on which the documents were issued.
- *Question 4* asked respondents who had affirmed *Question 1* from which source they had received the drafts, proposing an open list of options as guidance. This question was supposed to give contextual information given that the density of the network presented in Chapter 5 made it difficult to project the actual source from which an actor could have received the drafts. In addition, this item would give a hint at the relevance of having direct relations with the European Commission in order to receive draft documents.
- *Question 5* (not in the pre-test) asked respondents who had affirmed *Question 1* whether they had forwarded the draft(s) to others. The answers to this question was

expected to indicate how much information referral behaviour exists in the network more generally, that is whether information tends to flow just along direct relations or whether it is passed on frequently to third actors, too. Actors who would confirm they forwarded leaked drafts received to other contacts would highlight the networked flow of EU information.

- *Question 6* asked respondents who had negated *Question 1* whether they had tried to get earlier drafts even though they did not manage to get them. Through this question, it could be determined whether actors with a demand for the documents might not have been given access, for instance due to their disadvantaged position in the network.
- *Question 7* asked respondents who had negated *Question 1* (note: condition not in pre-test) whether they knew others who had received the respective documents. Through this question, the perceived social distance to and awareness of the information in question would be measured. Knowing someone in one's social neighbourhood with access to the information but not having had access could be an indicator of (a) lack of interest (expressed through question 3.2) or the particular confidentiality of the information due to which even known contacts would not be able or willing to share the information. The latter might be the case for example with rather central individuals who might be able to witness the existence of a particular information due to their good position in a network, but who for particular reasons may not have the right connection to actually access the information themselves.

Eventually, these questions were formulated as short and as simple as possible. In order to test whether they were understandable and to see how respondents would react in particular to the more open questions, a pre-test was conducted which will be described hereafter.

6.5.2 Questionnaire pre-test: Did MEPs receive leaked documents?

Given that there was no previous example of a questionnaire of this design, a pre-test was considered useful (cf. Collins 2003). In order not to eliminate too many possible respondents from the population of 1333 individuals contained in the network database by already questioning them for the pre-test, an alternative set of actors linked to the population in the database was chosen for the pre-test: Members of the Fisheries Committee of the European

Parliament and/or their assistants⁶⁵. These persons were considered strongly involved in the CFP reform process and potentially interested in knowing the Commission's plans early on. This pre-test would not just help to adjust the questionnaire, but the answers received from MEPs' offices could potentially give further insights into the dynamics of information flows in EU policy-making. This was relevant because in its initial refusal to grant access to the early drafts of the CFP reform proposal, received via email on 13 October 2011, DG MARE had argued that

“Disclosure of the Commission's internal opinions and views in preparation of its proposals can also seriously undermine its position and role in the context of the inter-institutional legislative procedure on the CFP Reform that has just started”

The reference to the “inter-institutional legislative procedure” implies that representatives in other institutions, in particular in the Parliament and the Council, would not have access to the documents requests. The pre-test with the MEPs could help to clarify whether this claim was actually true. For this pre-test, the questionnaire was sent out to 40 Members of the European Parliament who were either listed as members of the European Parliament Fisheries (PECH) Committee during the first week of 2012, when the pre-test population was defined, or who had participated in a PECH meeting between 6 April 2011 and 13 July 2011 according to the meeting protocols published on the EP website, that is the period in which the leaks of the draft document had happened. The survey was sent out in mid-January 2012 and after two weeks, 5 out 40 MEPs or their respective offices had replied. After a reminder sent two weeks later, another 8 MEP offices replied, thus there were 13 out of 40 possible responses (32.5%). Out of the 13, 3 informed that they could not participate for time reasons or because they never participated in surveys, making the effective participation rate 10 out of 40 (25%) representing four political groups and six countries. 3 out of these 10 had received one leaked draft about a month or some weeks before 13 July 2011, one from “EP colleagues”, one from “interest groups” and the third from “Colleagues in the Parliament and an external source”. The two who had received the draft from Parliament sources were from the same political group but not the same country. They were aware of other colleagues who had received drafts, while the third who had received the draft from interest groups was not aware of colleagues with access to the draft. Of the 7 who had not received a draft, none had tried to get such a draft and only 1 was aware of other MEPs or assistants who had had access to such drafts.

⁶⁵ In fact, the database even includes a few MEPs or assistants who participated in meetings as observers but they were not considered for the survey (see 6.4.3).

Now, the aim of a pre-test in general is to test whether respondents (a) comprehend the questions, (b) can recall or retrieve the information that are needed to answer the questions, (c) judge the question correctly so that they give the information retrieved in a way that suits the research interest, and (d) are able and willing to provide a response (following theoretical considerations by Collins 2003). The first observation of the pre-test was that respondents seemed to have understood all questions. No questions or remarks with regard to the meaning or substance of the questions were raised. All respondents also understood the conditions set ('If YES/NO (question 1)') for questions 2-5 and only answered in case their response to the first question had been YES/NO. The comprehension (a) of the survey thus seemed to be good. With regard to information retrieval (b) there was no indication that there had been any particular problems, at least no respondent mentioned recall problems. With regard to judgement (c) and the ability to respond in line with the research interest, two important observations could be made for those who had received a draft and thus responded to questions 2-5: First, the responses to the open question on the timing in *Question 3* were given in more descriptive terms ("one month", "several weeks"), which made it difficult derive a temporal order. As a consequence, the question was transformed from a completely open question to a closed question with 11 options following the pre-test (see Annex 2). Second, the responses to the open question on sources for the leak in *Question 4* were made with the exact or very similar formulations as the ones provided as possible examples following the question in the questionnaire. It thus seemed that in their judgement, respondents would orient very much along this list of options even though it was just meant to be exemplary. A possibility in reaction to this finding was to give no examples at all following the question. However, in order give guidance with regard to the expected minimum precision for the sources, the list of examples was enlarged from 5 to 10 items so that respondents in the main survey would be aware of the detailed range of possibilities to describe their source(s) when trying to process the information they had retrieved from memory.

Five further relevant changes were made to the questionnaire following the pre-test (see Annex 1 and Annex 2): First, the cover letter was adapted to the non-EP audience, including the offer for telephone interviews in four languages that the author is able to speak and understand to account for the fact that certain actors from the survey population were expected be able to read English but might not be able or willing to respond in this

language⁶⁶. Second, in the introductory text of the questionnaire, the document reference of the Commission proposal for the new Basic Regulation was replaced with a link to the proposal itself so that respondents with less EU knowledge – MEPs’ offices were expected to understand references to Commission documents – could compare the leaked documents they had received with the final version of the text. Third, the questions were slightly adapted for the non-EP audience. Fourth, one question (Question 5/2.4) was added in order to capture also information referral behaviour of respondents. This question that is theoretically relevant (see the hypotheses in Chapter 3) had been forgotten in the pre-test. This became obvious when two respondents from the same political group answered they had received a draft, raising the question whether one might have informed the other. Fifth, the last question on the awareness of contacts who had had access to a leaked draft was made conditional to a negative response to the first question. While in the EP context of the pre-test, it was possible to distinguish between inside and outside sources, this clear distinction was not possible anymore in the network context of the (networked) survey population. The only case in which someone who had access to a draft document could not be aware of contacts with access was in case the draft had been downloaded from a website. In any other case, at least the contact, which had forwarded the draft to the respondent, would force a positive answer to this question by the definition of the act. What remained interesting was whether someone who knew others with access to leaked drafts would still not have had access to those drafts.

In summary, the pre-test gave a number of hints for the adaptation of the questionnaire. However, we will see in the following section that despite the findings in the pre-test, there were still a number of problems in the data collection process that were not discovered in the pre-test or that came with the adaptation of the questionnaire following the pre-test. Yet, the pre-test also provided some valuable insights into information flows in EU policy-making: A number of MEPs had indeed received leaked drafts of the Commission proposal, and they did so through both internal and external sources, highlighting the role of networks inside and outside the EU institutions for MEPs’ informedness. The fact that one respondent had received a draft from interest groups also underlines the relevance of studying information flows towards civil society organisations as these are part of the wider information flow networks in EU affairs, sometimes even serving as relay actors between the EU institutions.

⁶⁶ It is very likely that still not everyone addressed in the email survey actually understood the email. However, given that the leaked drafts were only available in English as far as could be assessed by the author, it was very likely that those who had received a draft would be able to read English. In theory, this could still have fostered a higher share of responses from those who had received a draft.

6.5.3 The data collection process

In order to conduct the email survey, an email database had to be built up based on the list of names contained in the affiliation network database presented in Chapter 5. In total, this database contained 1333 individuals. Since the interest for the survey was in information flows that reached actors outside EU institutions, in particular outside the Commission from where the draft proposals had been leaked, all individuals who could be identified as representatives of the European Commission, the Parliament, EU agencies or other official EU bodies – 179 in total – as well as representatives of international organisations – 10 in total – were excluded from the potential list. Hence, the list of potential recipients of the survey contained 1144 individuals. Through the websites of the Regional Advisory Councils, participation lists of RAC meetings, through the websites of organisations represented in the 10 committees included in the CFP affiliation network as well as through other websites found via web search, email contacts for 426 individuals could be found, that is 32% of the full database and 37% of the database without EU and international organisations. For some individuals, there were email addresses available that were clearly attributed to the individual actor. In other cases, only emails of the organisations they represented could be found. These 426 individuals were contacted with personalised emails between 27 February and 6 March 2012. For emails that returned due to invalid addresses, alternative email addresses were used if possible. However, 59 email contacts remained invalid, making the effective number of individuals/email addresses⁶⁷ reached 367. Between 15 and 20 March 2012, a reminder was sent out to those who had not replied until then.

In total 92 conclusive responses were received, 6 of which indicated through automatic replies or colleagues that the person had left the organisation or would be absent for maternity/paternity leave and could not respond. 21 individuals personally declined to answer the questionnaire for different reasons (see next section). 65 individuals answered the questionnaire⁶⁸, 5 of which chose the telephone interview option offered in the cover letter. Four of these phone interviews were held in English, one in French. In total, the 65 participants represent 17.7% of the 367 effectively reached, which would be considered a relatively low response rate (cf. Baruch & Holtom 2008). Despite the facilitation measures employed to

⁶⁷ For some individuals representing the same organisations, only one organisational address could be found. In these cases, several emails addressing different persons were sent to the same email address.

⁶⁸ Out of the 65, 5 responded also for a second person who had been addressed in the survey and who was working as a colleague in the same organisation. See the next section for possible interpretations. One of the 65 answered the first question of questionnaire with a “maybe”.

foster participation in the survey, the possibility that emails did not reach the right person where only organisational email addresses were available, language problems or the unwillingness to respond to the rather sensitive questions might explain this level of participation. It should be noted, too, that the sample of usable questionnaires covers 5.7% of the 1144 individuals considered for the survey or 4.9% of the 1333 in the overall network population established in Chapter 5. Given the way the sample has been drawn and considering the relatively low response rate, the following data analysis can neither be considered a representative sample from the original population nor is it large enough for a useful statistical analysis (see discussion in Chapter 7). Nevertheless, the analysis of the responses received allow both qualitative and quantitative conclusions with regard to information flows in the case at hand. The findings give hints to the possible dimension of the information flows in the context of the early phases of the post-2012 CFP reform, which will be presented in the following section together with the analysis of the non-responses to the questionnaire, which may give valuable hints for future research on the flow of public and non-public information.

6.6 Data analysis: Informedness and information flows in the early CFP reform

When this research project was started and the case was chosen, one of the crucial expectations was that leaks of documents not just happen in a one-step flow from the European Commission to outside actors, but that information continued to flow around in the wider policy networks and are made available to a wide range of actors through these flow processes. The analysis of the data of the survey presented in the previous sections clearly confirms this expectation, even without considering the results of the quantitative network analysis made in Chapter 5.

Reception of leaks and referral behaviour

Out of 65 participants in the survey, 36 responded that they had received one or several leaked draft versions⁶⁹ (Question 1). Out of these 36 individuals, 27 responded that they had forwarded the drafts to others (Question 2.4), proving the network-like diffusion of the leaked drafts. While these figures are not representative for the whole affiliation network of 1333

⁶⁹ The one respondent who answered the first questions with “maybe” is counted conservatively as a “No”.

actors but just represent the survey population, they still show that – assuming that the respondents' answers were reliable – at least 2.7% of the whole population or 3.1% of the maximum survey population (1144 individuals) has received a leaked draft. Furthermore, at least 2% of the network population (2.4% of the survey population) has participated in the diffusion of the leaked drafts in the network(s) of civil society and other organisations involved in the CFP reform process. From anecdotal evidence and the observation of public sources, it is very likely that these figures are much higher throughout the network observed.

Diagram 17: Question 1 – Received a leaked draft? [N = 65]

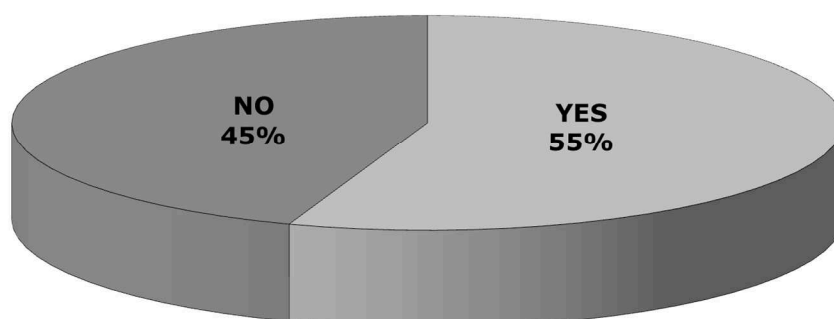
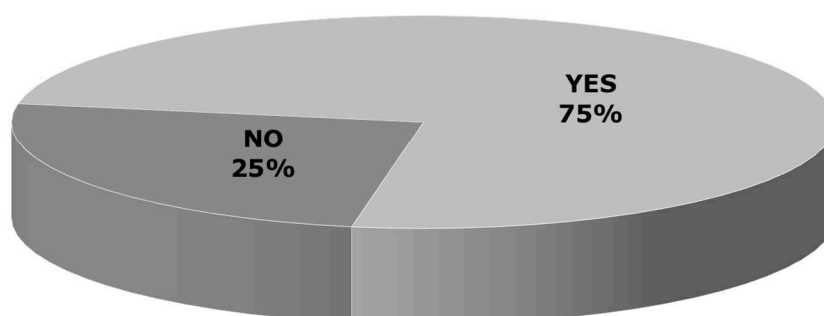
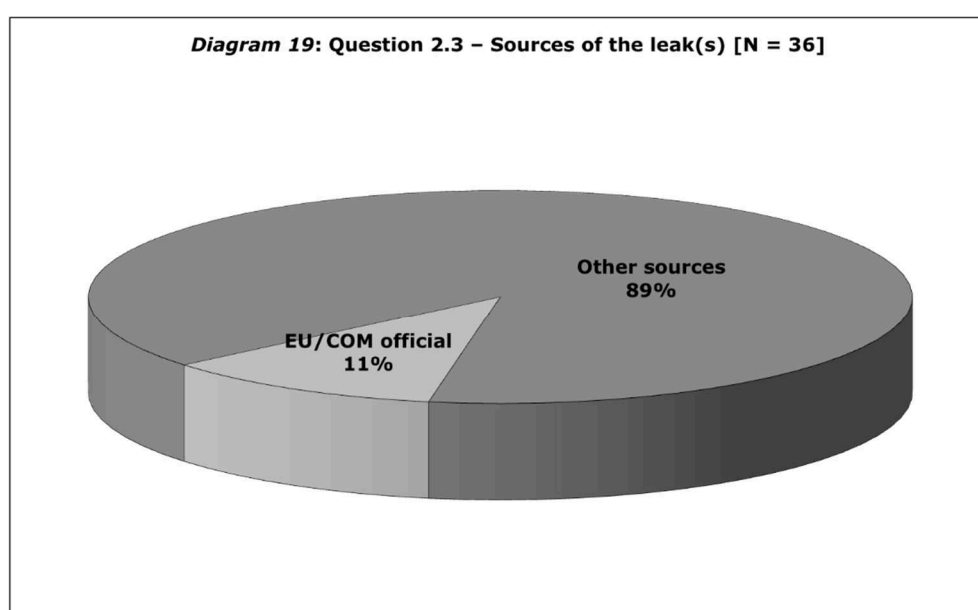


Diagram 18: Question 2.4 – Forwarded the leaked draft(s) [N = 36]



Sources of the leak(s)

Equally important to support the assertion that information flows in EU policy-making happen in network-like diffusion process, is the variety of sources that respondents named when asked how they received the leak drafts of the proposal for a basic CFP regulation (Question 2.3). Only 3 of the 36 respondents reported clearly that they had received at least one the drafts directly from a Commission official, two further reported the Commission/EU officials among a wider range of sources. Counting the latter with 0.5, there were 4 out 36 respondents who received the leak from EU/Commission sources.



What this shows is that a large majority of those who participated in the survey did not receive the leak originating from the European Commission through direct relations with the European Commission. Instead, they received the leaks through relations in a wider network of industry representatives, NGOs, journalists or national and regional governmental organisations (see Image 1 below). This mix of actors represents the range of actors present as members and observers in the 10 committees used to construct the affiliation network in Chapter 5. From methodological view, it is worth noting that some respondents listed individuals (using formulations like ‘representatives’, ‘contacts’, ‘officials’) while others just referred to organisations as sources. While the network perspective employed in this study focuses on individuals, their positions in the network and their level of informedness, this



Image 1: Responses to Question 2.3 on the sources from which the leak(s) were received. Names or concrete hints to organisations or countries have been replaced with general formulations. Exact repetitions (after adaptation) are removed, similar answers with different (possible) meaning have been retained. Image created with *Wordle.net*.

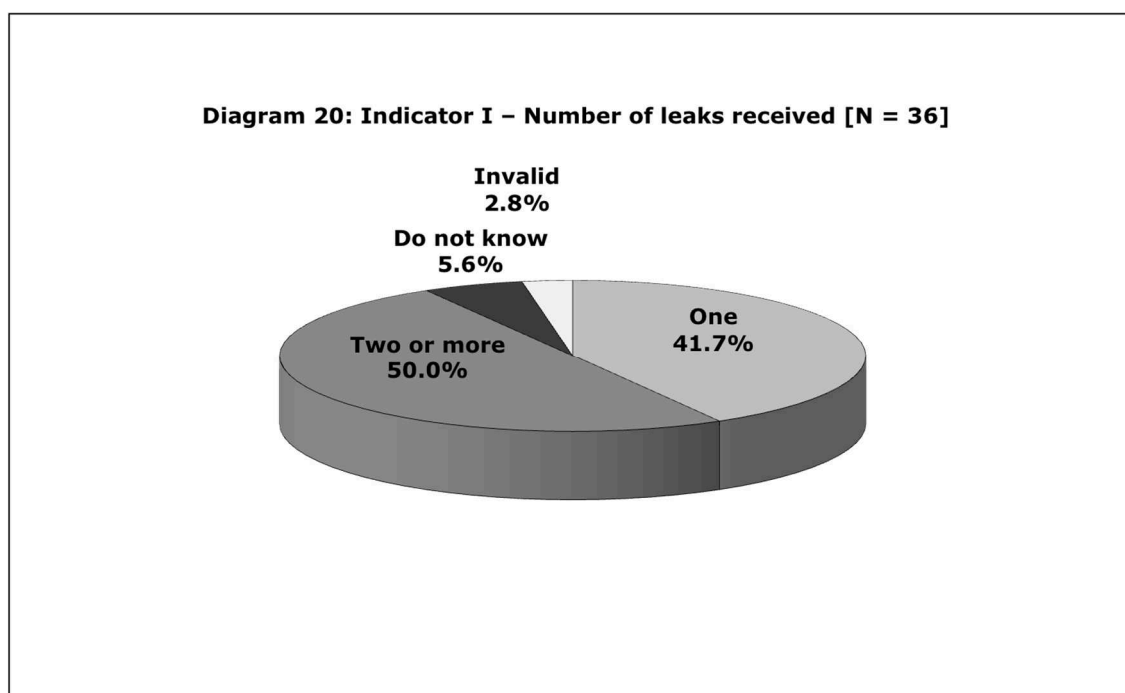
mixed use of individual and organisational sources may be an indicator that some yet not all of the information flows observed may be the result of inter-organisational relations, even when the actual flow takes place between individuals working within these organisations. This perspective highlights that in future research the interpersonal network perspective could be superposed with an interorganisational perspective. However, the assumption of the unitary organisational actor that underlines the hypothesis that interorganisational relations drive information flows is not necessarily valid. In one of the telephone interviews, a respondent informed that a colleague from the same organisation had had access to a draft much earlier without the respondent's awareness and that this colleague had received the information through other sources. This underlines the importance to consider individual actors when measuring information flows. If people from the same organisation are equally informed, this is likely to be a hint to well-functioning intra-organisational information networks, but it is not possible to assume these *a priori*.

The level of informedness – Indicator I: Number of drafts

Out of the 36 individuals who had confirmed in the first question that they had received leaked drafts, 2 reported to Question 2.1 that they *did not know* how many versions they had had access to. 14 reported that they had received only *one* version, 1 individual told that s/he had

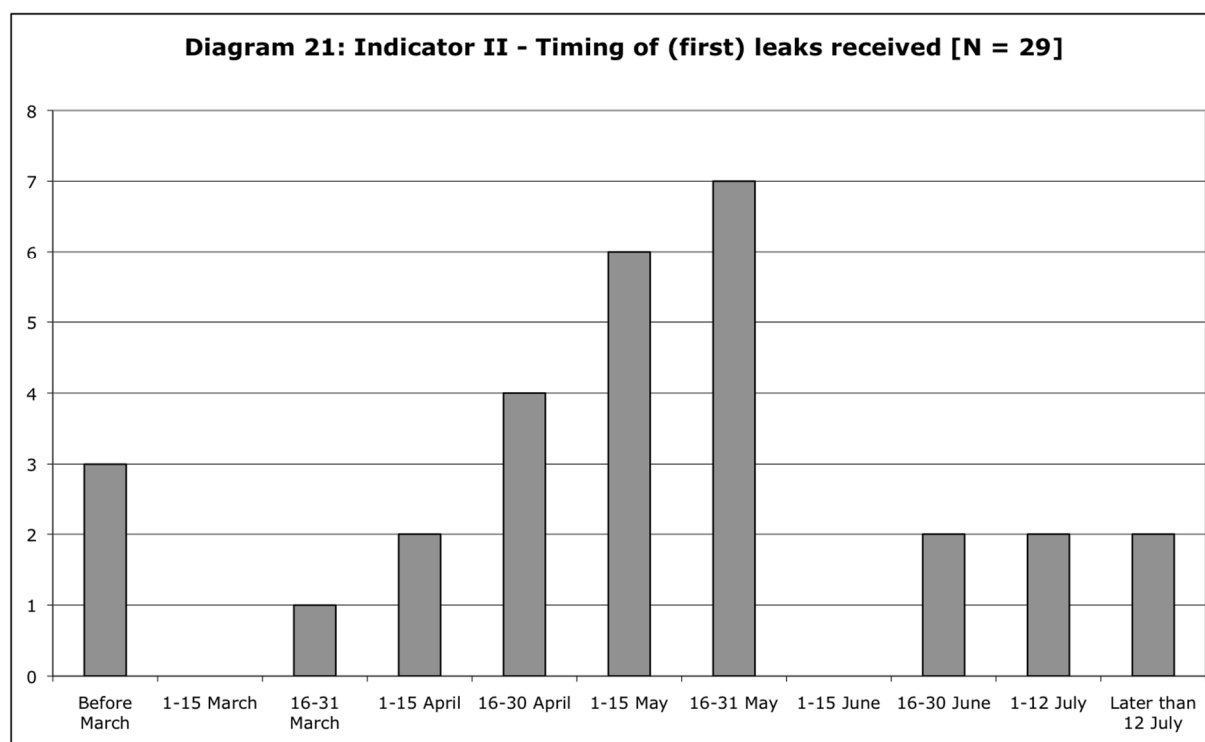
received *one or two* versions, 8 that they had received *two* versions, 1 had received *two or more* versions, 4 had received *two or three* versions, 1 person *two or three or four* versions, 1 person had received *two versions and fragments*, 1 person had received *three*, 1 other person *three and an extract*, 1 person *four*, and 1 person *ten* versions. All but the respondent who reported that s/he received ten versions – which is more than the number of intermediate drafts that existed as far as this research could identify – can generally be considered valid answers. Thus, 18 respondents out of the 36 individuals with at least one draft definitively received two or more drafts according to their own assessment.

The invalid answer shows that there may have been problems in the comprehension of the introductory explanations and the scope of the first question. Yet, the responses appeared to be rather consistent and were therefore considered reliable. However, the fact that a further 9 out of the 36 respondents (25%) who answered Question 1 positively either did not know how many versions they had received or were unsure about the exact number of drafts received shows that recall problems have had a relevant effect in the survey (similar problems could be observed with the second indicator, see below). This may be a hint to the reliability of the findings due to the timing of the survey. As there was no hint whether these recall problems might have affected the number of reported leaks received upwards or downwards, the responses have been interpreted conservatively. In Diagram 20 below, answers containing an “OR” have been interpreted towards the lowest figure given, and a differentiation has been made only between those who received one and those actors who reported they had received several drafts.



The level of informedness – Indicator II: Timing of information reception

Out of the 36 individuals who had replied positively to Question 1, 30 gave information regarding the timing of information reception. Of the remaining 6, 1 did not provide an answer to Question 2.2 and 5 reported that they did not know when they received the information. The 2 actors who did not recall how many versions they received also were among these 5, 2 others were among those who were unsure about the exact number of leaked drafts, thereby confirming recall problems. Of the 30 individuals who provided answers, 11 (36.7%) indicated recall problems by choosing several options from the list of time periods provided in (a) to (k) when they were unsure when they had received the leaked draft(s) (10 cases) or provided only the timing of the last draft received (1 case). Diagram 21 shows the distribution of time (periods) during which the 29 individuals who had provided answers with regard to the timing when they received the first (or all) leaked versions. Where answers were given that encompassed several of the time periods due to recall problems, the latest time period was chosen. Since only some of the actors who had received several drafts gave clear indications for when this happened or reported only one time period for all drafts, the indicator was therefore limited to the timing of the first or all drafts.



Despite the low N (29 respondents), the peak in May – about one month and a half into inter-service consultation that started on 7 April 2011 – appears to be a valid observation. Information provided from actors involved in the process but not included in the survey

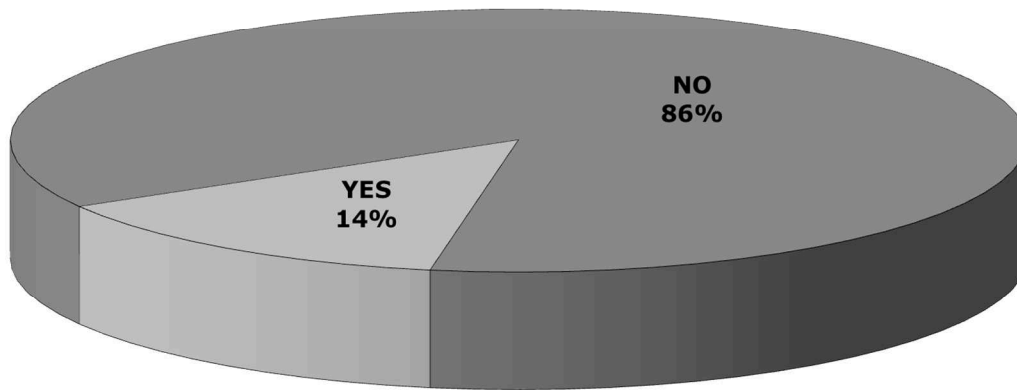
indicated that access to the draft(s) was limited to a smaller group until May, and discussions held in the North Sea RAC Demersal Group on 5 May 2011 (NSRAC 2011) as well as press reports on details of the proposal published in the second half of May (European Voice 2011; Le Marin 2011; Fishing News 2011) also confirm the observation that a major diffusion of the draft seems to have happened during that period. The four respondents who indicated that they had received one or several drafts before the start of the inter-service consultation, that is before April 2011, may either point to the fact that a very early version (e.g. a desk officer version) may have circulated in a very limited group beforehand. It may also be a hint to invalid answers, i.e. respondents reporting access to an early draft that may have been another document. From the qualitative indications given by respondents, both variants seem likely for different respondents.

What is noticeable is that 12 out of the 16 respondents (75%) who reported to have received a draft before mid-May reported that they had received more than one version. Or, said differently, 12 out of the 18 respondents (67%) which had received more than one version had received the first version before mid-May. This could be (a weak) indicator (given the number of cases) that early access and the amount of access are indeed related aspects, supporting the conceptualisation of informedness that includes both.

Respondents without access to early drafts

Out of the 65 respondents who replied to the survey, 29 indicated that they had not received earlier drafts of the proposal for a new Basic CFP Regulation. Only 4 of these reported that they had they had tried to get access to such a draft, while 11 indicated that they were aware of contacts who had received such drafts. 2 respondents knew others who had gained access to drafts and tried to get them, but still reported that they had not been able to access the document. The latter indicates that not all personal relations are able to actually allow information flows of non-public information.

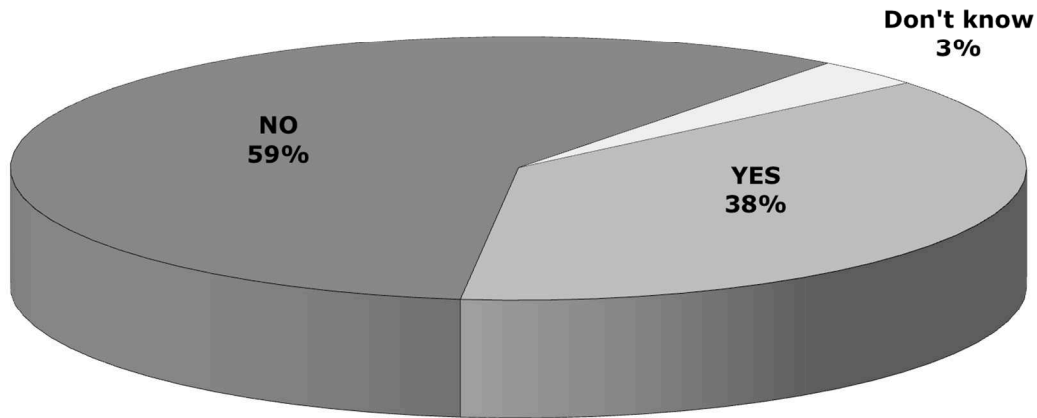
Diagram 22: Question 3.1 Search for drafts but no access [N = 29]



Some respondents indicated in (voluntary) qualitative remarks why they did not have access to such a draft: One respondent clarified that his/her organisation would do this “via [their] lobbyist in Brussels”, another one that s/he was not working on the CFP reform file at that time but that colleagues had the drafts, another one that s/he “didn’t look for this specifically at the time”, and yet another one reported s/he was “waiting for the official proposal from the Commission”. One respondent claimed that while s/he had not seen a draft, s/he might have been able to get one “if [s/he] had pursued the question”.

These qualitative responses prove that an active interest in receiving draft documents is not necessarily assumed even when actors participate(d) in one of the ten advisory bodies used to construct the affiliation network in Chapter 5. From a methodological point of view, these voluntary responses showed the advantage of the email survey with space for remarks compared to an online survey with just closed questions: Some respondents felt compelled to provide some background information that would explain their answers, and the openness of an email response left room for these remarks.

Diagram 23: Question 3.2 - Contacts with access to draft but no access
[N = 29]



Respondents who replied but did not fill out the questionnaire

20 persons replied personally but did not fill out the questionnaire. 1 person declined to respond because of the “sensitivity” of the questionnaire. 2 respondents declined to the recall problems. 2 respondents indicated that they had forwarded the questionnaire to someone in their organisation who was more appropriate to answer. 7 respondents informed that while they had participated in RAC meetings they were not involved in fisheries policy beyond this (anymore), 1 of these pointing out that s/he was aware of leaks and had confidence his/her colleagues would properly deal with the CFP reform. 1 person referred to their Europe-level organisation as more appropriate interlocutor for this questionnaire. Others declined due to lack of responsibility, work overload etc. 1 respondent replied with a general email on the CFP reform process without answering the questions.

These active non-responses to the questionnaire, which may also be regarded as indicative for a number of those who did not reply at all, point to two major issues in the methodology of the survey: The first is non-response due to strategic considerations given that the questionnaire touched rather sensitive matters. The questionnaire design was meant to

facilitate responses, but it is very like that a number of core actors will not have replied to protect their strategic position in the process and not to reveal how well they were included in relevant information flows. The second issue is related to the selection of the population. The individuals included in the survey had participated at least once in one of the meetings of the 10 committees selected to construct the affiliation network in Chapter 5 during the years 2009 and 2010, while the information flows analysed took place during the first half of 2011. While this temporal separation was chosen to test whether network positions measured for this period could be used to predict access to information in the period following soon after, the active non-responses show that the network is not necessarily stable, that is that actors involved during 2009 and/or 2010 were not part of the CFP reform in 2011 anymore. Some of the responses indicate that participation in one or several of the advisory group meetings does not guarantee an interest or involvement of the CFP reform at all. These findings point to possible limits in using affiliation network data to predict information flows or levels of informedness of actors involved in this network or the need to be more specific of the temporal nature of affiliation data.

6.7 Summary and conclusions

This chapter has shown that despite doubts raised in previous research, it is possible to measure the level of informedness of actors by directly questioning the actors. It has been argued why the level of informedness could be measured in the context of this study through the access to leaked drafts of the Commission proposal for a new Basic Regulation for the post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy of the European Union. It was proven through a freedom of information request to the European Commission that the drafts were at no time considered to be public documents. Hence, information flows of these documents were solely based on network-related processes. Through a comparative content analysis of some of the drafts, it could be shown that the versions of the draft proposal during the internal Commission consultation changed considerably, making access to several drafts one of the two major indicators for the level of informedness, the second one being timing. Based on the theoretical and topical considerations, a questionnaire was designed and pre-tested with offices of MEPs represented in the European Parliament Fisheries Committee. This survey showed that several MEPs had indeed had access to one draft version, and that access to these drafts was made possible through non-Commission outside sources, underline the relevance of understanding

if and how civil society actors and other non-EU institutional actors could have accessed those documents.

With some changes following the pre-test, the email survey was sent out to 367 individuals. 65 persons replied substantively to the questionnaire. 36 of those reported that they had indeed accessed one or several of the documents. 50% of those respondents who reported that they had received a draft reported that they had in fact received several of them (indicator I). 29 respondents gave indications with regard to the timing (indicator II) but given that the responses did not in all cases allow a clear distinction of the timing of access for each of the drafts, the second indicator was specified as covering only access to the first or all drafts (where only one time period was reported). It could be shown, in line with observations from public sources, that a large share of respondents who had accessed at least one draft seemed to have accessed the draft(s) for the first time during May 2011, about one to 1.5 months after the start of the Commission's inter-service consultation in early April and 1.5 to two months before the official adoption of the proposal in mid-July. In principle, this would have given enough time to try to influence the outcome of the proposal.

Altogether, although the number of respondents was relatively low, a clear variance regarding the level of informedness could be observed which is a necessary condition to test whether different network positions yield different levels of informedness. In the next chapter, it will be tested whether the centrality of actors and/or their position in a specific cluster of the network could have predicted informedness. For this purpose, the 'level' of informedness, which through this chapter has been used more generally, will be operationalised more precisely as an ordinal variable ranging from 0 to 4. Based on centrality and clustering measures that can be derived from the network data established in Chapter 5, the hypotheses developed in Chapters 2 and 3 will then be tested by seeing whether network position and level of informedness were in fact related.

Chapter VII

*Testing the hypotheses: Affiliation networks and informedness
during the early phases of the post-2012 CFP reform*

7.1 Chapter structure

7.2 Reconsiderations: Hypotheses and available data

7.3 Testing the hypotheses: Descriptive statistics and possible interpretations

7.4 Insights from individual cases

7.5 Conclusions

7.1 Chapter structure

This final of the core main chapters will bring together data and insights from the previous two chapters to test whether the general hypothesis that *actors' positions in a network* could be used to predict their *level of informedness* is valid. The mostly descriptive test in this chapter will in particular try to establish whether the affiliation network presented in Chapter 5 could be used to predict the outcomes regarding the level of informedness of actors related to the leaked CFP reform drafts presented in Chapter 6. In Section 7.2, the main hypotheses will be reconsidered to see in how far, in the light of the data available, these can be tested. In Section 7.3, it will then be demonstrated with basic descriptive statistics in how far the data available provides backup for the hypotheses formulated or indicates possible general flaws in the construction of the hypotheses or the operationalisation of the current research. Given the lack of statistical robustness of the findings, Section 7.4 will build on the previous section and present insights from some of the individual cases in order to hint to empirical details that may enrich the future development of theories connecting networks and information flows in EU policy-making. Section 7.5 will conclude the case at hand and the particular findings for the early phases of the post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy reform and lead to the final conclusions of this study in Chapter 8.

7.2 Reconsiderations: Hypotheses and available data

The final chapter of this study aims at bringing together independent (IV) and dependent variable (DV) which have been broadly identified as network structure (IV) and information flows (DV), or, more focused on individual actors, as actors' positions in a network (IV) and their level of informedness (DV) in a given policy process. This broad hypothesis and a set of related hypotheses have been tested in the context of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy of the EU for the post-2012 period. While conceptualised as a single-case study, the scope of this macro-case and the network-theoretic design were expected to allow different types of conclusions: On the one hand, the aim was to explore hypotheses of a broader nature in order to establish the empirical relevance of networks for access to information in EU policy-making, in particular the relevance of networks formed by or represented through event affiliation. On the other hand, more refined hypotheses were presented to link concrete network structures from a quantitative (affiliation) network analysis and actors' positions in

that network to the level of informedness of the actors included in the network. These hypotheses meant to test on a more narrow level in how far network theory and the particular network structures observed in the context of the Common Fisheries Policy reform could have (had) predictive qualities for information flows and actors' informedness. It should be recalled that in the conclusions of Chapter 2, three broad hypotheses have been established more or less inductively based on previous theoretical and empirical research on information flows in EU policy-making, the involvement of civil society in such policy-making and the role of committees in the EU system:

- **H1:** Personal networks will have an impact on which actors are receiving what type of information at what time during EU decision-making.
- **H2:** Information networks based on the involvement of actors in different committees or other types of policy-events should be advantageous for those actors during EU decision-making processes.
- **H3:** Multi-level actors with good contacts to the Brussels sphere as the central arena in EU policy-making should be better informed than other actors.

Translating these three broad hypotheses to the macro-case of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, it was shown in Chapter 6 that the rather trivial first hypothesis (H1) is particularly pertinent when information is not publicly available. Early access to the Commission draft for the proposal of a reformed Basic Regulation for the Common Fisheries Policy was only possible through personal networks as there was no way to get the document through fully official or open channels. The fact that a large majority of respondents in the survey presented in Chapter 6 who had received a draft version had received it through personal contacts and only few received them through direct contacts with the European Commission further underlined the role of wider personal networks play in accessing such information early on. The expectation formulated in the second hypothesis (H2) that actors involved in committees and affiliation-related networks should have informational advantages over actors outside those structures was confirmed qualitatively in Chapter 4 by showing how different fisheries policy committees had been involved in the process of the Common Fisheries Policy reform, providing participating actors direct and indirect informational advantages, for example when civil society actors could discuss the upcoming Green Paper on the CFP reform in consultative committees such as the Advisory Council on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA) way ahead of its publication to the wider public. Another example in

this regard was the Commission briefing member states' officials in the Comitology committee dealing with EU fisheries funds about the state of their drafting of the CFP reform package in the spring of 2011.

These first two hypotheses could be tested or at least be explored qualitatively by looking at the macro-case. By using a broad notion of “being part of a network” through personal relations or through affiliation to committees as compared to “not being part”, there were clear indications that the former was indeed advantageous for being well-informed. However, the third hypothesis (H3) could only be captured through a more refined network-theoretic perspective that took into account actors' positions in an empirically determined network. The hypothesis that “multilevel actors” with “good contacts to Brussels” should be better informed during EU decision-making processes than other actors encompasses two network-theoretic concepts discussed in Chapter 3 – cohesion (‘being part of the Brussels sphere’) and positions (‘being present in Brussels as the centre of the network’, ‘being part of and connecting Brussels and the national sphere(s)'). This hypothesis thus needed to be tested through a different type of empirical research, which was set out through the theoretical reflections in Chapter 3, contextualised for the particular macro-case of the post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy reform in Chapter 4 and executed throughout Chapter 5 (independent variable) and Chapter 6 (dependent variable). The main outline of this research was set by the four deductively developed hypotheses connecting network structure and informedness and presented in the conclusions of Chapter 3. A fifth hypothesis was included to test the particular role of possible gatekeepers for the diffusion of information in the CFP reform network, testing whether higher betweenness centrality would come with information control or information distribution behaviour. Thus, the following four hypotheses were to be tested through the empirical research presented in Chapters 5 and 6:

H4.1: Actors that are part of the same cohesive subgroup (IV4.1) in a network have similar levels of informedness (DV).

H4.2: The more contacts an actor has, i.e. the higher her/his degree centrality (IV4.2), the better informed the actor is (DV).

H4.3: The more closeness central an actor is (IV4.3), the better the actor is informed (DV).

H4.4: The more betweenness central an actor is (IV4.4), the better informed the actor is (DV).

Once both sets of variables were finally established through Chapters 5 and 6, the data gathered and the first separate observations on the findings related to these variables made, it became obvious that several questions had to be raised with regard to the operationalisation of the variables, the availability of data and the ability of testing the hypotheses quantitatively. Said differently, the initial expectation to use the network data and to see clear pattern emerge with regard to the level of informedness based on actors' positions within the resulting network turned out to be less conclusive on an aggregate level than hoped for. This was both because of the considerably lower number of cases on the dependent variable compared to the independent variable(s) (65 out 1333 possible cases) and also because the 65 cases for which there was data available for the dependent variable did not provide a clear-cut picture. The aim of this chapter therefore is to give a more qualitative picture of the connection network positions in the CFP committee network and the level of informedness with regard to the leaked draft CFP reform proposal the access to which was used to operationalise the dependent variable ("informedness") for the present study. The statistics presented in this chapter, although portraying quantitative relationships between the independent variable(s) and the dependent variable, thus will serve mainly as a further exploration of the hypotheses developed, less to test them robustly.

7.3 Testing the hypothesis: Descriptive statistics and possible interpretations

For the 65 actors who had responded to the survey questions (Chapter 6), three major centrality measures – degree, betweenness and closeness (the latter standardised) as well as their membership in particular clusters were calculated in order test hypotheses H4.1 to H4.4. These four independent variables are the major indicators of a particular network positions within the 1-mode projection of the affiliation network based on 205 events from 10 EU advisory committees on EU fisheries policy involving mainly civil society actors⁷⁰. In this 1-mode network, the tie of strength s between two actors indicates that both actors have co-participated in s events of these 10 committees during 2009 and 2010. The resulting 1-mode network (see Section 5.5.3) consists of 1333 nodes and 50317 undirected ties. The (unweighted) density of the network is 0.057. The overall network has a mean degree of 75.49 (non-normal distribution; median: 51; max: 510; min: 8), a mean betweenness of 841.76 (non-normal distribution; median: 5.94; max: 55392; min: 0) and a mean standardised closeness of

⁷⁰ ACFA, SSDC for Sea Fisheries and the RAC coordination expert group as Brussels-based committees; the 7 RACs as committees based outside Brussels. See Chapter 4 for details.

0.4465 (normal distribution; median: 0.4428; max: 0.6184; min: 0.3489). The clustering of the network needed for the independent variable of the first hypothesis (H4.1) was calculated based on (a) the randomised Modularity algorithm by Blondel et al. (2008) at resolution 1.0 and taking into account tie strength (as implemented in *Gephi 0.8.1*) and (b) the same algorithm in its non-randomised version at resolution 0.5. It should be noted that Option (a) produced 7 distinct clusters for the overall network of 1333 actors while Option (b) produced 10 clusters, 2 of which however were small artefact clusters, which means that the effective number of relevant clusters in (b) was 8. The difference between (a) and (b) comes to a large extent from the fact that (b) identifies the group of actors with strong presence in the Long Distance Regional Advisory Council (LDRAC) as a distinct cluster while (a) includes these actors in what can be called the ‘Brussels cluster’, even though the LDRAC’s secretariat is not Brussels-based. It should be reminded that in Chapter 5.5.4 the conductance-cutting algorithm implemented in *visone*⁷¹ also found 8 clusters for the reduced network comprising all actors with a minimum of five event participations throughout the 205 events included. This clustering algorithm also distinguished the LDRAC cluster from the Brussels-cluster. However, it could be seen in particular in the visualisation of the 1-mode projection of the event-event network that the Long Distance RAC seemed to be very closely linked to the Brussels-cluster, making both (a) and (b) likely results of a clustering. Table 5 below shows the results of the clustering for (a) and (b) as well as the number of cases for each cluster available for analysis with data on both variables. As can be seen, all 7 clusters of (a) and all 8 main clusters of (b) are represented with at least 2 cases among the 65 cases available for the testing of the hypotheses.

The 65 cases for which data on the dependent variable was available have a mean degree of 140.02 (median: 130; max: 402; min: 28), a mean betweenness of 2714.11 (median: 723.04; max: 30411; min: 0) and a mean standardised closeness of 0.4892 (median: 0.4961; max: 0.5868; min: 0.4005). The generally higher mean and median centralities compared to the centralities of actors in the overall network (see Table 6 below) are with very strong likelihood the result of the sampling as contact information for actors with higher centrality (more frequent participation in meetings) were more easily to acquire via public sources.

⁷¹ *Gephi* was used for the cluster analysis at this stage because it is better able to handle larger networks while *visone* fitted better for the general description and visualisation of the network in Chapter 5.

Clustering (a)	Actors	Cases DV	Clustering (b)	Actors	Cases DV
Cluster 1 (NWW)	139	7	Cluster 1 (NWW)	140	6
Cluster 2 (BXL+LDRAC)	412	21	Cluster 2 (Pelagic)	84	6
Cluster 3 (Pelagic)	106	6	Cluster 3 (BXL)	276	17
Cluster 4 (SWW)	220	6	Cluster 4 (SWW)	193	6
Cluster 5 (Baltic)	172	13	Cluster 5 (LDRAC)	162	4
Cluster 6 (North Sea)	153	10	Cluster 6 (Baltic)	159	13
Cluster 7 (Med)	131	2	Cluster 7 (North Sea)	161	11
Number of cases	1333	65	Cluster 8 (Med)	126	2
			Cluster 9 (Artefact1)	23	0
			Cluster 10 (Artefact2)	9	0
			Number of cases	1333	65

Table 5: Clustering results & distribution of cases available on the dependent variable following the survey

	Mean Centralities	
	Network	Sample (N=65)
Degree	75.49	140.02
Closeness	0.4465	0.4892
Betweenness	841.76	2714.11

Table 6: Mean centralities complete network & sample cases

In order to test the hypotheses H4.1 to H4.4 (see Section 7.3), the dependent variable “*level of informedness*” was constructed as an *ordinal variable* with *five levels* based on the theoretical discussions and survey findings presented in Chapter 6 (see below). In order to be able to work with a maximum number of cases (65), missing, improbably or “don’t know” values were coded as “0”. This choice of coding has the general risk of underestimating actors’ level of informedness by creating false negatives, but it was considered that creating false positives that would raise the level of informedness or missing cases would be more problematic. The most questionable choice in defining the levels was between Level 2 and Level 3, i.e. whether timing was considered more important than quantity of drafts received. In the end, early access to one draft giving time to react with lobbying activities if necessary was considered a higher level of informedness than getting several drafts at a time when organising support for possible changes became more difficult.

The following *levels of informedness* were established for the main DV:

- **Level 0:** No leaked draft of the reform proposal for the Basic Regulation on the Common Fisheries Policy of the EU was received.
- **Level 1:** One draft was received, but later than 15 May 2011⁷².
- **Level 2:** Two or more drafts were received, but the first one later than 15 May 2011.
- **Level 3:** One draft was received until 15 May 2011⁷³.
- **Level 4:** Several drafts were received, the first one before 15 May 2011.

The 65 cases available were then grouped according to the informedness level of the respondents and the averages for the three centrality measures used as dependent variables in Hypotheses H4.2-H4.4 were calculated (see Table 7 below). If these three hypotheses were to be confirmed, the minimum expectation was that average centralities should rise with the level of informedness – that is better informed actors should be more central.

Informedness Level (DV)	Average			N° of cases
	Degree (H4.2)	Betweenness (H4.4)	Closeness (H4.3)	
0	130,517241	2659,50462	0,47702978	29
1	149,230769	2749,539711	0,49216265	13
2	150	2600,650984	0,5040729	6
3	198	6707,189128	0,52501755	5
4	123,833333	1200,615031	0,49292286	12
Average	140,015385	2714,105879	0,48917812	65

Table 7: Informedness levels & centrality over the 65 cases available

When looking at the connection between the level of informedness and the average centrality scores of the actors in the different levels, it appears that average degree and closeness centrality grow steadily from Level 0 to Level 3 while the average betweenness centrality for Levels 0-2 is rather similar but spikes at Level 3. The averages for degree and closeness of the 29 cases at Level 0 are below the general average centralities for the whole sample, while Levels 1-3 are above. Given the low number of cases, this should not be considered a

⁷² The date 15 May 2011 (answering options a-f to Question 2.2 of the survey meant reception of the draft until 15 May 2011) was chosen because this separates the number of actors who answered the question on the timing of receiving the draft (29 cases) into two similarly (16 actors until 15 May 2011, 13 later). In the second half of May there were also a number of press reports (Le Marin 2011, Fishing News 2011, European Voice 2011) which covered the details of the plan, allowing even those without detailed access to the drafts to get a better idea about where the policy might head.

⁷³ Having received a draft earlier than 15 May 2011 was considered “more informed” than having received two or more drafts after this date because the latter could still have meant that the actor received several drafts at such a late stage that no intervention would have been possible.

statistically robust statement. This could simply be seen as an indication that more contacts and a position with low social distance to many others in the network are indeed advantageous when it comes to the level of informedness. Nevertheless, actors that were very well informed (Level 4) in the sample available here had a very low degree and betweenness centrality and a closeness centrality only slightly above average. Hence, while the data for Levels 0-3 could be interpreted as a possible indication for the validity of hypotheses H4.2-H4.4, the findings for Level 4 show that the data cannot be read as a clear-cut confirmation of the hypotheses. The obvious deviation for actors at Level 4 could highlight

- (a) the limited number of cases in the sample with strong *outlier case effects*;
- (b) the existence of *other types of networks* that are not constituted through the 10 advisory committees considered for the affiliation network (thus questioning the operationalisation of the network underlying the independent variable(s)); or
- (c) general problems relating to the measurement and construction of the dependent variable (thus questioning that validity of the dependent variable).

All three would also question the rather supportive findings for the Levels 0-3. It will therefore be shown in Section 7.4 how a look at some individual cases with actors at Level 4 and at Level 0 on the dependent variable indeed point to *explanation (b)*, that is cases indicating other types of networks than those represented by committee networks, and *explanation (c)*, problems in operationalisation. And (a) remains a strong argument that looking at any causal conclusions should be made with caution when it comes to the connection between centrality and informedness based on the cases available here. In return, there is still a strong likelihood judging from a more qualitative look at the actors in the network, for instance by considering their leadership positions in specific interest groups (which was not in the scope of this research in order not to compromise anonymity/pseudonymity of respondents) that more central actors in the affiliation network who did not respond to the survey may have had quite high levels of informedness. In the same way, many of those more peripheral actors who were not reached with the survey would rather have been on the lower levels of the informedness scale. This remains in the field of speculation, but it may underline that the weak indications presented above may still represent a generally valid picture.

Leaving the three hypotheses related to the network theoretic concept of position and turning towards the network theoretic concept of ‘cohesion’ – which translates into ‘position in a specific cluster’ in this research – the focus will be on Hypothesis H4.1 which is predicting

that actors of the same cluster should be similarly informed. The first observation with regard to this hypothesis is that we find that the data available rather shows diverse levels of informedness *within* the same clusters. Tables 8 and 9 (see below) show that for all clusters there is at least one case at informedness Level 0 (“*not informed at all*”) and at least one case at a higher level among the 65 cases available. Most clusters actually include cases at three or four informedness levels.

Cluster	Number of cases at informedness level:					
	0	1	2	3	4	All
Cluster 1 (NWW)	3	0	1	1	2	7
Cluster 2 (BXL+LDRAC)	5	5	3	1	7	21
Cluster 3 (Pelagic)	3	2	0	0	1	6
Cluster 4 (SWW)	4	1	0	1	0	6
Cluster 5 (Baltic Sea)	7	3	1	0	2	13
Cluster 6 (North Sea)	6	2	0	2	0	10
Cluster 7 (Mediterranean)	1	0	1	0	0	2
All	29	13	6	5	12	65

Table 8: Distribution of cases on Levels 0-5 according to randomised Modularity clustering at resolution 1.0.

Cluster	Number of cases at informedness level:					
	0	1	2	3	4	All
Cluster 1 (NWW)	2	0	1	1	2	6
Cluster 2 (Pelagic)	3	2	0	0	1	6
Cluster 3 (BXL)	4	4	2	1	6	17
Cluster 4 (SWW)	4	1	0	1	0	6
Cluster 5 (LDRAC)	1	1	1	0	1	4
Cluster 6 (Baltic Sea)	7	3	1	0	2	13
Cluster 7 (North Sea)	7	2	0	2	0	11
Cluster 8 (Mediterranean)	1	0	1	0	0	2
All	29	13	6	5	12	65

Table 9: Distribution of cases on Levels 0-5 according to non-randomised Modularity clustering at resolution 0.5.

On the one hand side, this shows that information such as the leaked draft for a reformed Basic Regulation of the Common Fisheries Policy has indeed reached actors involved in EU fisheries policy-making at different levels and in all geographical regions, not just actors assigned to the Brussels sphere. On the other hand, the data at hand, although limited, rather falsifies the broad assumption of Hypothesis 4.1 because the levels of informedness within each cluster seem to vary considerably. However, the intuitive expectation formulated in the general hypothesis H3 that actors with good connection to the Brussels sphere are in average better informed than others sees some confirmation in the limited sample data available. In

both clustering results presented in Tables 8 and 9, the “Brussels cluster” (which in Table 8 includes 4 actors attributed to the Long Distance RAC clusters in Table 9) has the highest share of cases at informedness level 4, that is 58.3% and 50% of all cases at Level 4 while representing only 32.3% and 26.2% of the cases in the overall sample. When looking at the share of cases at an informedness level higher than 0, both clustering results also show that the share of those cases for the Brussels and LDRAC cluster are clearly higher than the overall average across all 65 cases in the sample (Table 10 below):

Cluster (a)	% cases above Level 0	Cluster (b)	% cases above Level 0
Cluster 1 (NWW)	57.14	Cluster 1 (NWW)	66.67
Cluster 2 (BXL+LDRAC)	76.19	Cluster 2 (Pelagic)	50
Cluster 3 (Pelagic)	50	Cluster 3 (BXL)	76.47
Cluster 4 (SWW)	33.33	Cluster 4 (SWW)	33.33
Cluster 5 (Baltic Sea)	46.15	Cluster 5 (LDRAC)	75
Cluster 6 (North Sea)	40	Cluster 6 (Baltic Sea)	46.15
Cluster 7 (Mediterranean)	50	Cluster 7 (North Sea)	36.36
All	55.38	Cluster 8 (Mediterranean)	50
		All	55.38

Table 10: Distribution of cases at informedness level > 0 to the different clusters

We therefore see that having higher levels of degree and closeness centrality (H4.2 and H4.3) and presence in the combined Brussels and Long Distance RAC cluster (H3) were rather advantageous for having access to the leaked draft document. The number of cases available here does not allow a statistically significant conclusion to support or falsify the Hypotheses 4.1-4.4, but there are at least good indications that H4.2 and H4.3 as well as H4.1 in combination with H3 might be the most promising hypotheses formulated.

The following section will now look into some individual cases to draw some further conclusions from the data available before concluding this last main chapter.

7.4 Insights from individual cases

Testing the hypotheses in the previous section could give some indications on major mechanisms that made some actors better informed than others in the early phases of the post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy reform process. Yet, both the effects of centrality on informedness and the relation between cluster membership and the level of informedness

showed incoherent results, despite some indications in favour of Hypotheses 3, H4.2 and H4.3. This underlines that other aspects have not been properly considered, aspects which can influence that some actors are better informed while other are less well informed than their position in the *affiliation* network would let expect. It should therefore be shown how, in some of these individual cases, there might be hints for reasons for these cases to deviate from the expectations formulated. This will allow a more refined operationalisation and measurement of the variables in future research or confirmed certain aspects of the empirical research design considered but not employed here.

Case 1: Networks of governmental actors

Probably the most interesting finding based on a closer look at the individual cases comes from 3 actors out of the 65 cases who could be identified as representatives of national governments, i.e. ministries involved in fisheries policy. All three turned out to have very low centrality scores, based on their involvement in just one or two meetings of the population of events used for the construction of the affiliation network. Yet, all three had had early access to drafts of the CFP reform proposal, one referring to the national Permanent Representation in Brussels, one to NGOs and the other to her/his “own organisation” as sources to access the document(s). These cases could be a hint to the fact that member states’ officials involved in EU policy making could be in particular good positions to be well-informed about developments at EU level, making use of their contacts with relevant Commission officials, civil society actors as well as being able to tap into the information networks of their colleagues based in Brussels, who through their involvement in daily EU politics may (not surprisingly) be valuable sources of information. The observation that governmental officials with only limited involvement in the mainly stakeholder-oriented EU fisheries policy committees still can be very well informed and have access to the non-public drafts of Commission proposals shows that there are other types of networks that matter for certain categories of actors. These networks may go beyond affiliation to advisory committees or at least beyond affiliation to those committees used for this study. This is in fact not a dismissal of the hypothesis that being well-positioned in a network should lead to a higher level of informedness. It only underlines that, for some actors, participation in consultative committees is not necessary because they have other means to acquire information through relations they have developed in other contexts (e.g. affiliation to Comitology or Council committees). The finding that different networks than the affiliations measured in this study could also be

confirmed in background talks with two further Brussels-based non-governmental actors who were not frequent participants in meetings of the 10 committees studied for this thesis but who still had access to the leaked documents through their relatively good network positions in Brussels.

Case 2: Ad-hoc networks of civil society actors

One of the respondents in a very peripheral/non-central position within the Brussels cluster reported that s/he had received one draft of the leaked document at a relatively late stage of the process through the OCEAN2012 coalition (cf. Section 4.6). This shows that ad-hoc coalitions and other information sharing organisations can contribute in keeping otherwise peripheral actors informed. In this case, affiliation to the coalition was more conducive to being informed than affiliation to the committee network.

Case 3: The relevance of event affiliation for access to documents

One interviewee who had participated in the survey via the telephone option told that s/he only got access to the leaked documents during “a meeting in Brussels” without giving more precision to the type of meeting. At the same time, s/he remarked to her/his dissatisfaction that other organisations had had earlier access. This confirmed both the relevance of events-based networks for access to information (or at least realisation that such information exist) and also the fact that it matters for actors when information reaches them later than other actors in the network.

Case 4: Individual vs. organisational access to information

A second interviewee remarked that one of her/his colleagues with longer involvement in Brussels policy-making had accessed the leaked draft way ahead of her/him through a different source. This confirms the relevance of looking at *individuals'* network positions instead of assuming that certain organisations are generally better or worse informed than others. Differences in the level of informedness may be the result of the different general network positions that people in the same organisation may have, so considering individuals separately was a relevant methodological choice for this study.

Case 5: Separation of tasks and time lapse between network measured and information flows

One actor who was very central, in particular very betweenness central as s/he was one of the main connections between one of the regional clusters and the Brussels cluster in the 2009-10 affiliation network, informed that s/he had not received the documents because s/he was not any longer involved in CFP reform related matters and that s/he was relying on her/his colleagues following the process to be informed about possible developments. This case shows first of all that even when an actor is central in the affiliation network that matters for the information in the focus of the study, it is not necessarily pre-defined that the actor is actually *interested* in all information available. This can be the case when there is a separation of tasks within an organisation that does allow this actor to remain ‘ignorant’ of certain information while focussing on other issues. And this case shows second of all that since the measurement of the affiliation network focussed on the years 2009 and 2010 and the information flow studied for the measurement of the level of informedness took place mostly during the second quarter of 2011, a person that was central one year earlier may not necessarily remain in that position. In fact, there were several respondents who declined to reply to the survey presented in Chapter 6 or reported that they had not received a leaked draft because they were no longer (directly) involved in CFP-related matters or not involved with the file in the first half of 2011. This highlights the need to be attentive to the temporal dimension of affiliation network data, both in the construction of hypothesis but also in the choice of the time scale that is considered relevant for the phenomena we want to explain.

Case 6: Operationalising the level of informedness & measurement problems

One very central actor replied that s/he had not had access to the draft proposal for the Common Fisheries Policy reform but that s/he had seen “some working documents” on the CFP reform. While this response has been coded as informedness at Level 0, it could well be that “working documents” actually encompassed drafts of the proposal, showing that the operationalisation of informedness in this study may have underestimated the level of informedness of some actors. A more in-depth survey may have revealed the nature of those “working documents” and might have revealed that they were indeed early drafts, allowing the actor to reply to the full survey.

Case 7: Unlikely answers in the light of the network position of an actor

A second, extremely central actor also replied that s/he had not had access to any of the drafts. However, given her/his position in the network and rather wide availability of the draft including to actors with whom this person had co-participated in many events, it may be that this person may have had access to *other* draft documents more relevant to her/his activities that were not asked for in the survey. Still, this was the only case where there was also a possibility that the respondent did not tell the full story in responding to the survey, i.e. not to reveal her/his strategic position. Doubts about the accuracy of the reply remain in particular because the actor also responded that s/he was not aware of any contacts with access to the draft, which appeared a quite unlikely answer in this position knowing that co-affiliates were quite well informed.

Case 8: Conflicting observations with regard to the source of the leak

One respondent informed that there had been a “massive leak by DG MARE to all main stakeholders” in order to get comments on the draft proposal. None of the other respondents reported such a “massive leaks”, although one telephone interviewee indicated that s/he the feeling that everyone had a copy. The fact that a relevant number of respondents in the survey did *not* have access to the draft documents (or at least reported so) and background discussions with two actors not involved in the survey who indicated that the process actually appeared to be quite secretive shows that the perception of the scope of the leak and the possible sources of the leak vary considerably. The fact that only very few of the respondents who had received leaked drafts reported that they had received the draft from the European Commission is an additional conflicting information that is impossible to dissolve without knowing who leaked the documents at what time to what actors. This finding could be a hint that the perception of the scope of leaks and the reality differs. It could also indicate that those who responded were not truthful or that those who did not respond did not participate in the survey not to reveal their good access to European Commission information.

Case 9: Different information flows differently during the same process

One rather central actor from the Brussels cluster reported that s/he had indeed received several drafts of the proposal for the basic CFP regulation but that in return s/he had not

received the CFP reform impact assessment. This confirmed the assumption formulated in Section 4.5.3 that the reason Europêche and ETF only requested access to the impact assessment in their press release because the other documents were readily accessible to them.

(Non-)Case 10: Actors not included in the database

A final aspect not covered in this chapter are cases/actors which are not included in the affiliation network of participants of the CFP advisory committees but who still received the information. Those positive non-cases, two of which are definitely known to the author, underline that access to a leaked draft was clearly not dependent on direct involvement in one of the 10 committees studied for 2009 and 2010 but that other networks allowed access to draft documents at some point in time when they were still not officially published. Future research would need to study these cases more systematically in order to estimate the relevance of affiliation to the events studied compared to other means for accessing the certain information.

7.5 Conclusions

In conclusion of this chapter, two broad statements could be made: First, the data available did not obviously falsify the hypotheses presented although there is considerable variation. The survey in Chapter 6 had shown that personal networks were indeed impacting level of informedness of actors (Hypothesis H1) questioned in this survey as all but one respondent had received the documents through personal relations. Although statistically not significant, there are some indications that higher degree and closeness centrality (H4.2 + H4.3) in the affiliation network could be regarded as indicators for higher levels of informedness while presence in the ‘Brussels cluster’ (H3 in connection with H4.1) was with greater likelihood conducive for higher levels of informedness than a stronger involvement in the other clusters. The fact that the betweenness centrality for the cases availability did not provide a clear indication with regard to the level of informedness (H4.4) could be a hint to the fact that presence on several levels, i.e. being a ‘multilevel actor’ (or better: a ‘multi-cluster actor’) may not be as advantageous than simply being an actor with good connections to the Brussels sphere.

Second, and similarly interesting, the individual cases presented in Section 7.4 raise a number of methodological questions, which are important for future research. The fact that a very peripheral governmental or a very peripheral non-governmental actor could be very well informed highlights that the affiliation structures measured through the 10 advisory committees do not reflect the entire reality of EU fisheries policy networks. They reflect first of all the structural reality of the advisory committee system as such, not necessarily the whole network of all EU fisheries policy related actors. The existence of shortcuts in the networks based on digital networks (e.g. mailing lists) or on permanent and ad-hoc organisational ties allows information flows that are independent of the committees studied. These alternative relations can only be detected with access to affiliation data related to those organisations' activities. Said differently, for some actors, involvement in the advisory committee network is not really necessary to be informed because they are affiliated to other structures providing alternate direct and indirect routes for accessing relevant information.

The individual cases also showed that temporal aspects matter: The events on which the network data are based have all taken place in 2009 and 2010 while the information flow measured took place in the first half of 2011 in order to be sure that the causal order (network position -> level of informedness) could be clearly established. Some of the actors questioned indicated that at the time of the relevant information flows they were not involved in matters related to the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. This clearly indicates that network positions derived from past affiliation may only be predictive for the level of informedness of an actor when there is confirmation that at the time of the information flows s/he is still part of network. Future research would need to work more intensively with the temporal dimension of event affiliation data, for instance to test in how far back in time affiliation network structures could be predictive for the levels of informedness of actors at the present time.

The individual cases presented, while generally confirming the basic assumptions of this study that event affiliation and persona networks matter, that information flows unequally towards different actors and that measuring individual actors' network position and not the positions of organisations they represent, some of the cases also have shown that there is a lack of precision in measuring informedness due to possible misunderstandings or to possible false answers. The individual cases also showed that the exact tracing of how the leaked documents have spread throughout the overall system and how they reached certain actors very early and

others never will need a more investigative follow-up than this could be done in the context of this research.

Finally, this chapter has not been as rich as expected when initially designing the research, not least because the lack of cases for which both independent and dependent variables have been available. While this may be related to specific decisions made for the present study about how and when to measure both (sets of) variables, this could also be a hint that empirical research connecting network structures and levels of informedness (or, in future studies: levels of influence) may face considerable constraints, either because valid network data for large actor sets is difficult to access or because a relevant amount of respondents may be unwilling to disclose their levels of informedness or are unable to do so for recall reasons. As a consequence, designing future studies with similar goals will need to work on particular sampling strategies and additional qualitative methods that may allow more robust and significant conclusions.

Chapter VIII

Conclusions

8.1 General conclusions

8.2 Special conclusions

8.2.1 Information flows in EU policy-making

8.2.2 The role of committees in the European Union

8.2.3 Social network analysis in EU studies & political science

8.2.4 The post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy reform

8.3 Unexpected findings

8.4 Unexplored avenues

8.5 Final conclusions

8.1 General conclusions

The study had two starting points, two initial questions. The first was: *Why are some people better informed about concrete political developments at European level than others?* And the second: *What role do personal networks play to stay informed about EU-level politics?* These questions that laid out the general course of the studied where then broken down into five different aims.

The *first aim* of this research project was to show the relevance of networks in EU policy-making, in particular their relevance for the flow of and access to information. I have shown in Chapter 2 both with regard to specifically information-focused research but also with regard to the study of committees and interest group activities how networks and information flows are clearly interlinked in EU policy-making. While there have been frequent accounts of this connection, empirical research thereon remains rare. This more general account has been further underlined by the introduction of the case of the post-2012 EU Common Fisheries Policy Reform in Chapter 4 and through the empirical research presented in the further chapters of this study. Empirically, there has been no doubt that network formation and information flows in political networks are core aspects of EU policy-making, frequently noticed but rarely studied systematically. Hence, the first aim was reached both theoretically and empirically.

The *second aim* of this research project was to prove the applicability of network theory and network analysis for the study of European politics. In Chapter 3, the contribution of network theory with its focus on relational aspects of policy-making and theoretical concepts such as positions and cohesion has been highlighted. The special relevance of affiliation, both for political practice but also for the study of political and administrative relational structures, was explained based on abstract considerations but also based on existing empirical research on affiliation networks. Throughout Chapter 5, the applicability of these theoretical and methodological concepts have been demonstrated to the concrete case of the Common Fisheries Policy, showing how a network of events and actors from 10 different advisory committees in EU fisheries policy unfolds and portrays a Europe-wide social system of governmental and non-governmental actors. In combination with the survey on the level of informedness of a sample of actors from the network studied presented in Chapter 6, Chapter 7 could provide indications that the network theoretic assumptions linking structure and

informedness could indeed be traced in a concrete EU policy-making process. Thus, despite some shortcomings, this aim has been reached, too.

The *third aim* of this research project was to shift attention away from an EU information flow perspective that focuses on how EU institutions access expert information and knowledge from civil society or other external actors, and to shed light on information flows in the opposite direction. With a major focus on stakeholder committees mainly designed to allow the involvement of civil society actors, the empirical research in Chapters 5-7 has indeed contributed to the understanding of the 'if and how' of civil society actor access to EU information. It could be demonstrated that, as a citizen requesting information, it was impossible to get documents containing draft legislative proposals from the European Commission through a formal request while the same information was available to a non-trivial group of civil society actors as well as other non-EU institutional actors such as national officials through their networks. In this sense, the initial perspective on civil society actors was enlarged to external actors more generally, which allowed some additional insights into other types of networks not studied here. The third aim therefore was reached.

The *fourth aim* of this research project was to apply the conceptual and theoretical discussions, which have come with the first three aims, to a concrete empirical case, mixing qualitative and quantitative methods to test network theoretic hypotheses about information flows in EU policy-making as well as to provide a sound empirical background to contextualise these hypotheses in the concrete case – the post-2012 reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. This aim has been reached throughout Chapters 4 to 7, first laying out the general case of the Common Fisheries Policy, including the relevance of committees and of non-institutional actors, and then combining a quantitative network analysis with a medium-size survey of actors who were part of the network studied to test whether network positions could predict the level of informedness of these individuals. The experiences made throughout the empirical research and the limited number of cases available for both variables (independent and dependent variable) make that this aim has not been fully reached but the pursuit of this aim still provided crucial insights for this and future research in the same or similar directions.

This *fifth aim* became to tell the first part of the story of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, looked at through the network-theoretic and information-flow focussed glasses that

have shaped this research project. This aim has probably also not been reached to the extent it could have been. While I was able to witness at first hand and through the reports of others many smaller and larger details of the Common Fisheries Policy reform, many of these details did not fit into the narrative of this study which more narrowly focused on the impact of networks on information flows. There will probably be others with a stronger focus on fisheries policy – although there are not many – who may have to trace the detailed process of the CFP reform into a coherent narrative. The present study supplies a number of relevant findings in this context and gives a condensed overview over the early stages of the post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy reform including the actor constellation present during this time period. It did not go deep enough to capture all the details worth studying, however. Nevertheless, anyone who might study the co-decision stage of the CFP reform and the discussions in the European Parliament and the Agriculture and Fisheries Council as well as the trilogue negotiations in 2013 should strongly take into account the observations made for this study as most conflicts present in within the EU institutions can clearly be traced back to conflicts which were visible long before the European Commission proposed the new Common Fisheries Policy in July 2011. And the actor setting has largely remained the same throughout the whole period, too.

Altogether, the *core aim* of this study was to develop a network-theoretic approach to EU information flows towards civil society actors. This core aim has been clearly pursued in a way not done before for EU politics and with very few comparable examples for other political systems and policy fields, with Laumann and Knoke (1987) and the studies based on their empirical research being the most noticeable among them. The network approach applied here for the case of the Common Fisheries Policy has shown that taking into account affiliation networks provides valuable insights into policy domains, not just in an EU context but also beyond. The study has also shows that while it is worth asking how civil society actors can get access to information through their networks, it is difficult to separate organised civil society and governmental organisations (including EU institutions) which in the end form strongly interlinked networks that are difficult to separate into clearly distinguishable sub-networks of state- and non-state actors. Hence, this study is probably best seen as an approach based on affiliation networks in EU policy-making more generally, with a special focus on non-institutional actors, indeed, but with a potentially wider applicability in the study of EU politics and EU information flows.

8.2 Special conclusions

8.2.1 Information flows in EU policy-making

This study is titled “*Information flows in the context of EU policy-making*” and while the empirical research was dedicated to only narrow yet relevant aspects of this large topic, it is possible to draw a number of conclusions from the topical and empirical findings made throughout the previous chapters. The first observation is that there is a European informational sphere around EU politics. Having studied the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, it is difficult to judge whether this informational sphere is actually so much different from a national informational sphere if one ignores the obvious plurilingual nature of the EU system. I am avoiding the term ‘European Public Sphere’ because the idea behind the study of information flows in EU policy-making was not so much the question whether an idealised communicative space would develop but more whether individual and organisational actors interested in certain policies, either because they are directly concerned or because they are generally interested in the topic, would be able to be informed during EU policy-making. The empirical research presented here could show that, at least in EU fisheries policy, there was a system of organisational and communicative linkages that would in general allow wide parts of European and national civil society organisations to stay informed about political developments in Brussels, from very early stages of policy development to the main political negotiations in co-decision. It could furthermore be shown that even information one would expect to circulate mainly in the Brussels bubble, such as leaked drafts of a legislative proposal of the European Commission, would eventually become available for a wide group of actors ahead of publication through personal networks reaching from Brussels across Europe. It is unlikely that this will look much different in national policy-making, and the only difference may be that certain types of information-sharing networks are easier to build within a single cultural and linguistic space than between them, so that some networks may be more densely interconnected nationally than in the European system.

Still, the observation of the CFP reform process over more than two years and the tracing of the process over a period of four years have demonstrated to me that the difference in being informed about developments at EU level and not being informed seems to be more dominated by the interest in finding or at least asking for information than in the fact at what political level the information is published (EU, national, regional etc.). In other words, the ability to be part of policy-relevant EU information flows is as much a networking and

information search activity as this is the case for being part of such information flows in decision-making at other political levels. The case of the Common Fisheries Policy reform may be special in a sense that it is a policy domain which is both heavily regulated at European level while being quite politicised in several national systems, thereby focussing attention to EU decision-making and creating public attention through politicisation. Yet, this underlines that where EU politics develop dynamics similar to national politics, interest in the inclusion in information flows rises and a wider involvement in policy-making becomes more likely. The study has shown that the difference may lay in timing and scope of informedness between actors, and this difference seems largely mediated by network structures.

8.2.2 The role of committees in the European Union

When I started this research, I knew that I was going to study EU networks. Yet, at that time, I had not considered affiliation networks and the system of EU committees as a theoretical and empirical focus of this study. As already indicated in the introductory chapter, this specific focus developed through the exploration of the case – the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy – and through the realisation of the existence of Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) in EU fisheries policy. The understanding that there was an affiliation system in place that would allow the study of EU-wide networks then drew the attention to previous EU research, which had already dealt with the role of committees such as expert groups in EU governance.

The case of the Common Fisheries Policy could show that it might not only be worth considering all these committees as a single system or network with varying overlap, but that research on committee governance in EU policy-making should also take into account less visible fora such as the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees or non-standard committees such as the RACs. The empirical research could show that the overlap between the major stakeholder committee ACFA (the Advisory Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture), the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) for Sea Fisheries and the Regional Advisory Council was clearly visible, highlighting the need for future research to consider all types of committees in order to understand the full scale of the participation and decision-making within a given policy field. And although no affiliation data for other expert groups or the Comitology committees in EU fisheries policy have been collected for lack of access to data and because they usually do not include civil society actors, it is very likely that a combined

affiliation network analysis of the whole system could have provided quite a complete view on large parts of the socio-political network of actors involved in EU fisheries policy. Taken together with affiliation data from other types of events such as NGO seminars, industry conferences or European Parliament intergroup meetings, it might be possible to actually understand a full policy system to an extent not existent so far – given that time and resources for such research are available.

This type of study applied to other policy-fields could not only show the overlap (or lack thereof) of certain fora in each policy domains. Studying committee affiliation structures across policy domains could also allow the comparison of the organisational patterns of each field. This study has shown that if such a comparison looks beyond a narrow Brussels environment, a better understanding of Europe-wide policy-systems becomes possible. In other words, network analyses of complex affiliation structures as in this study could allow a much better understanding of structural features of EU governance. Affiliation networks may reveal aspects of European policy systems that are invisible to an EU institution-focused approach or to more common comparative analyses that focus on similarities or dissimilarities between different EU member states instead of studying systemic aspects. Affiliation network structures may reveal how European committees create or prevent transnational or supranational dynamics and how differences in affiliation structures between policy domains may yield different outcomes that could not have been discovered or explained otherwise.

8.2.3 Social network analysis in EU studies and political science

Some social science scholars tend to play down the relevance of social network analysis because of its proclaimed lack of theoretical value. The point they are missing is that social network analysis as a method is most valuable when built on network theory. With a number of simple assumptions about reality such as that (a) concrete social relations matter and that (b) agency is embedded in network structures, network theory comes to two main theoretical concepts – (1) cohesion and (2) positions – which, when operationalised for empirical research, can have predictive qualities. Studying networks in political science and in EU-focused research opens eyes for causal mechanisms that are much more suited to describe and explain very common relational political and administrative phenomena such as information flows, influence, power, coalition building or dysfunctional hierarchies. Concepts such as

‘multilevel governance’ which have close to zero empirical meaning can be filled with empirical reality when one starts looking at actual networks behind those governance mechanisms. Almost idealistic concepts such as the ‘European Public Sphere’ can be filled with realism once one starts analysing information and knowledge flows in concrete networks and then combining this research with the study of public media, i.e. by analysing if journalists are (not) part of European information networks and what effect this has on their reporting. In fact, network theoretic and network analytic studies could cover a range of interesting issues in EU policy-making: Dissenting voting behaviour in the European Parliament, (non)cooperation between different Directorates General of the European Commission, appointment decisions for specific leadership positions in European institutions, or the effectiveness of lobbying, all of which are relevant phenomena in which personal or organisational networks can play major roles. Using a network perspective can uncover the actual causal mechanisms behind certain individual or collective behaviours that traditionally might be assigned to proxy variables such as nationality (hinting to networks based on nationality) or the time an actor has been present in the Brussels sphere (hinting to the time s/he had to build diverse networks).

The problem in studying relevant networks in political and administrative science, including in an EU context, is to get access to relevant quantitative data or thick information about existing relations and network structures. Studying networks at a time when they are most relevant is difficult because actors involved may be reluctant to reveal to the researcher their relations and interactions with others due to strategic considerations. Measuring networks retrospectively can become difficult because of recall problems or general lack of availability of actors for relevant studies. Hence, empirical studies of political networks have to use methods that are quasi-ethnographic and thereby depend on actors’ willingness to give access to the researcher. Those studies can only have limited reach because of the intensive involvement needed, and such research influences the processes observed to a certain extent. Alternatively, the study of political networks can use fairly abstract methods constructing relations based on similar behaviour or eclectic collection of publicly available information about personal contacts, making an empirically consistent study of a wider network and the measurement of actual social relations difficult.

This study has shown that affiliation network analysis may be a suitable compromise for the study of political networks, avoiding major shortcomings of the two approaches described

above: Affiliation data is often produced by default in political and administrative processes by registering membership and participation in events. It is non-invasive in a way that the individuals and organisations studied do not have to reveal their relations themselves, thereby also preventing direct intervention in ongoing processes. The great advantage is that, while not necessarily accurate data, affiliation data can often be based on rather reliable sources so that initial research can be cross-checked by other researchers with the same access to initial sources. In the same way, studying networks even years after a process has ended may be possible through archival sources in which affiliation information are stored. Hence, network theory, when using appropriate methods such as affiliation network analysis, may be able to add considerable value to the theoretical and empirical toolbox of social science researchers.

Finally, studying EU-wide political and administrative dynamics is often hampered by the lack of language skills of individual researchers or the difficulty to develop and coordinate transnational research projects, limiting comparative EU studies to a small number of national cases instead of studying the full systemic interactions in the multilevel governance system in Europe. In this study, affiliation or two-mode network analysis has proven to be a method through which those limitations can be circumvented. Individual names and organisational names are usually very similar or easily comparable across languages (with some exceptions). Using network data based on participation and membership list therefore is possible even in cross- and transnational contexts as long as it is possible to get access to respective sources and a sufficiently large set of events (or other types of second modes). If it is possible to define specific criteria for the selection of events, this method may also be very useful in comparing networks across policy domains, in a European but also in any other context. The question could be whether and how affiliation network structures in fisheries, agriculture and health differ and what effects this has on how civil society actors are informed, on how policy processes in these fields evolve or on how some policy fields are more supranationalised (centralised, compartmentalised etc.) than others.

8.2.4 The post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy reform

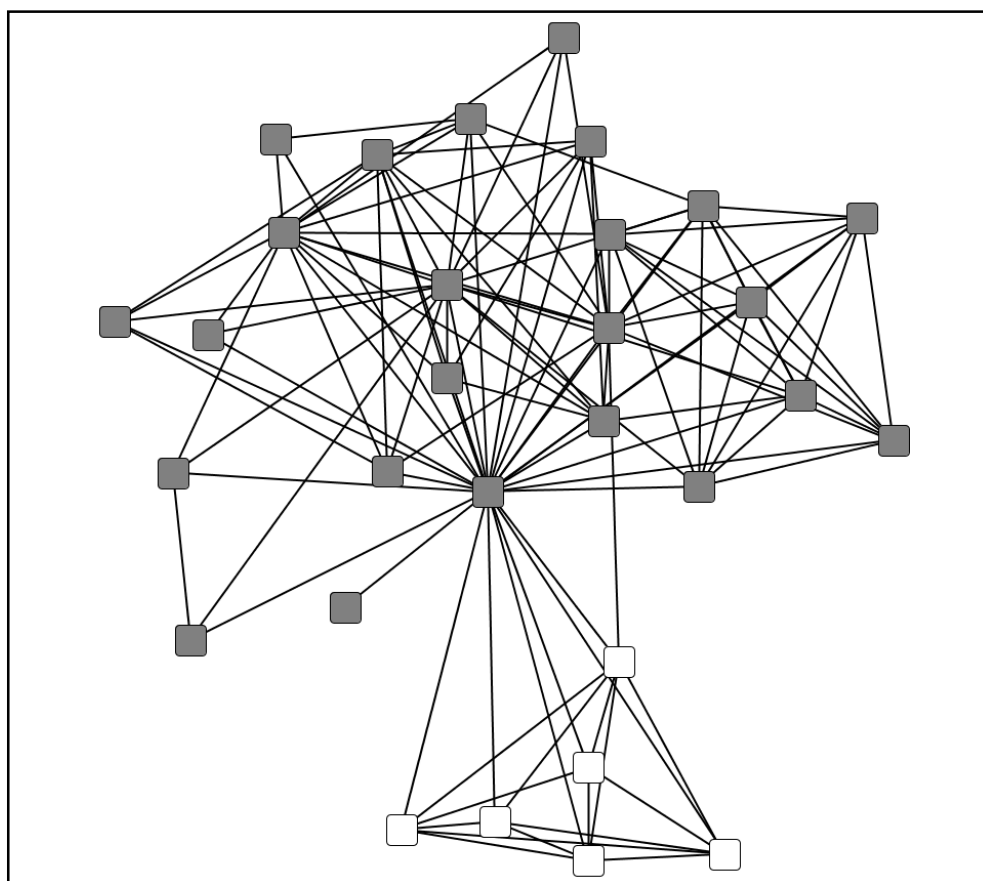
The reform of the Common Fisheries Policy for the post-2012 period has turned out to be a fascinating empirical case with a lot of insights on EU policy-making, not just for the study of networks and information flows. The choice of this case to test the theoretical concepts and

methods selected for this study seems to be the right one retrospectively. While this study has focused only on the first part of the CFP reform and could only cover a limited set of issues, it became obvious throughout the research that the Common Fisheries Policy would reveal a number of interesting findings that I did not expect when starting the research: The discovery of national and international newspapers covering fisheries policy and other subject related to the fishing industry was a surprise. Some publications would dedicate considerable space to analysing EU decision-making, which could be regarded as a hint to a largely invisible (European) public sphere that might also exist in other policy areas if one only starts looking more closely. The media attention of the Fish Fight campaign that started in the UK and was then pushed to become a pan-European campaign highlighting particular aspects of the CFP reform showed that it was possible to mediatise EU policy-making to an extend that few might consider possible outside the Eurocrisis discussions that have dominated the political agenda throughout the years of this research. The existence of a network of Regional Advisory Councils and the proposals voiced in the course of the CFP reform to enlarge the network, for instance towards the Black Sea, allowed insights in a Europe wide system of governmental and non-governmental actors that appeared to be more diverse than I expected to find. The discovery of this diverse set of actors in a limited policy domain such as fisheries policy makes the study of other, much larger policy fields even more interesting. The study of the CFP reform also gives a sense of the time periods in which major EU-laws are made. The ability of journalists, civil society actors or academics to study such long processes needs considerable temporal and financial resources and the approach chosen for the present study has avoided resource-intensive studies “on the ground” except for a prolonged presence in Brussels, which has allowed access to some events and some relevant actors but left the study of the overall policy system to the analysis of documents and the survey conducted and presented in Chapter 6. All these aspects taken together made me realise that, in retrospective, it would have been worth designing a much broader study on information flows in EU policy-making that would have taken into account more types of information flows, that would have measured more types of relations and that would have conducted more in-depth studies in cooperation with different groups of actors involved. Yet, given the limited knowledge on this policy domain when starting the research and taking into account that many of the phenomena observed during the research could not really be foreseen in the research design, this conclusion rather asks for a proper ex-post study of the whole CFP reform process taking into account the findings from this study than allowing any regret of missed opportunities during this study. Finally, the struggle to officially access those EU documents from the European

Commission that have been leaked throughout the period of the inter-service consultation process in 2011 has clearly proven that the basic assumption of this study, that is that personal networks matter more for the timely access to relevant EU information than official sources, was correct.

8.3 Unexpected findings

While the causal relation between network structures and the level of informedness of actors could not be proven with statistical robustness, this study still gave some indications that the hypotheses would point in the right direction. Yet, the network data gathered also offered insights into dynamics that were not necessarily related to information flows but to previous network theoretic research. Zachary (1984) concluded that that separation of a karate club into two separate clubs he studied was based on the lack of communication structures between members of both resulting groups. When looking into the network patterns of the Advisory Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA) in the 1-mode event-event transformation, it turned out quickly that there were two visibly distinct dense clusters of events, one smaller and one larger (see Network Image 8 below), also visible in Network Images 3 and 4.



The smaller cluster (white) represented events from the aquaculture working group of ACFA during 2009 and 2010, while the larger cluster (grey) represents all other ACFA meetings. A tie in the image represents at least 12 common participants between two meetings and the colouring has been done based on the conductance cutting algorithm at granularity 0.2 as implemented in visone 2.6.3. The resulting clustering basically underlines that the aquaculture meetings involve quite a distinct group of actors with much less overlap with the rest of the network than the other working groups have. This pattern is confirmed when one looks into the ACFA event data even before 2009.

The relevance of this observation – which I made already in early 2011 – became obvious when EU fisheries policy Commissioner Maria Damanaki announced in April 2011, even before the final details of the CFP reform were made public, that she intended to propose the creation of **a distinct Advisory Council for Aquaculture** (Fishsec 2011). The network analysis (cf. the theoretical concept of *cohesion*) of the committee network of previous years thus could have been used to predict that there might be a possible separation of the aquaculture working group from the rest of the ACFA expert group. Or, interpreted differently, the proposed separation of the aquaculture working group into a distinct Advisory Council only confirms a reality that a social network analysis could have brought to light even before. In any case, Zachary's prediction that one can predict or at least explain the split of a network based on the lack of interconnection between distinct clusters could be confirmed in this case.

What this shows is that the analysis of rather complex (affiliation) network structures can reveal dynamics that have not been foreseen in the initial research design. It underlines that the added value of network theory goes beyond the explanation of information flows but provides the framework for the understanding of a number of social and political phenomena.

8.4 Unexplored avenues

Probably the most striking *unexplored avenue* of this research project is the inherent temporal nature of the affiliation network data gathered and presented in Chapter 5. Simple theories are better theories, but the dynamic complexity of affiliation network data has been completely ignored (a) for theoretical reasons – I have no idea how to intelligently model dynamic

affiliation network positions to predict present or future levels of informedness – and (b) for empirical reasons – it would have been very difficult to gather data for dynamic network positions of actors from participation lists and then to predict their respective informedness at different times corresponding to the network position at that respective moment. Yet, the temporality of event affiliation data, especially when gathered over long time periods, may not only be helpful to make more accurate predictions about information flows, it may also allow to trace changes of a network over time. In the case studied here, a temporal analysis of the CFP committee network over a longer period than two years could for example reveal how certain actors move from the periphery of the network towards the centre or how certain events started to link formerly unconnected parts of the network. Such studies could then explain how new phenomena such as policy change or political cooperation emerge from those structural changes. Future research with a more methodologically advanced understanding of affiliation networks and dynamic network analysis could follow that avenue and provide much more revealing insights than presented here.

A second unexplored avenue is the comparison with other EU policy-fields or with comparable systems and decision-making process at other levels of government. This study has looked at a single macro-case and any conclusions can only be made with the specificities of this case in mind. The theoretic and methodological elements brought together for this research are however easily applicable to other cases, too. Applying them to other context could tell in how far affiliation network structures based on advisory groups and other committees can help to describe the nature of EU policy-fields or in how far affiliation networks in other context are useful (or useless) to predict the level of informedness of actors involved.

A third unexplored avenue is the combination of different relational information to construct more robust networks. The focus of this thesis has been on affiliation networks and the data used to construct the fisheries policy network was solely based on participation lists for a limited set of committees and events over a two-year period. However, it has become clear throughout the research process that there are myriads of information that give hints to personal relations not captured in the event affiliation data. This information is available through digital networks, contained in reports, observable in other occasions than the events used to measure the affiliation network or through interviews with the actors concerned as well as third persons able to evaluate the quality and quantity of relations in the networks

studied. Adding more rich relational information to affiliation data may even be extremely necessary because affiliation data may effectively underestimate some personal relations: Closely related individuals may choose not to participate in the same events simply as a division of labour so that they would never appear to be linked through affiliation data. The problem that those alternative measurements pose have been discussed previously, especially the difficulty to systematise this process in the same way in which an affiliation network analysis can be systematised. Yet, additional relational information may still be used to explain deviations in individual cases. Additional information could for example help explaining the difference in the level of informedness between two actors who are strongly related because of frequent co-affiliation to certain events but who in reality dislike each other, would never share information with each other and would usually interact with other persons outside their joint events. In other words, additional relational information may reveal relations that are invisible to affiliation network analysis or may provide meaning to affiliation-based relations helping to determine what influence those relations have on the social phenomena (such as information sharing) we are interested in.

A fourth unexplored avenue is the relation between online social networks and information flows in EU policy-making. Since the advent of Facebook, the concept of “Social Network” is heavily connected with online social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or networks of blogs. Online social networks are considered to become social media, sources of information and spaces of interaction through which existing social networks are reinforced and new ones created. In Chapter 3, it has been remarked that online social networks have also become a field of study for network researchers thanks to the availability of large quantities of relational and interaction data as well as the rise in computational capacities to deal with those large-scale datasets. The growing importance of online social networks will impact the distribution of policy-information in the context of EU decision-making, and already during the early phases of the current Common Fisheries Policy reform the growing relevance of these channels could be felt, at least for an attentive observer of the policy field. It is important to remark this because, as has been shown through some of the individual cases in Section 7.4, the idea that networks generated by or represented through committee affiliation can help to predict or explain information flows in EU policy-making is faced with other network dynamics that are not necessarily limited to event affiliation or that make informational advantages gained from traditional affiliation-based networks less consequential. In fact, when designing this research, a major “fear” was that the draft CFP

reform proposal would actually leak online (which it eventually did but without making any obvious buzz) and thereby make the prediction of information flows based on committee affiliation obsolete. The fact that none of the 36 respondents who had received an early draft reported having received it via a website confirmed that digital social networks did not seem to play a major role this time – but they may well do in the future. This study therefore has ignored that the distribution of public information in the context of the Common Fisheries Policy reform has been happening quite intensively through online social networks. The EU Commissioner for fisheries policy, Maria Damanaki joined Twitter during the time of this research and a number of actors used different social networking channels to share information about latest developments in the Common Fisheries Policy reform and to raise awareness about ongoing policy debates⁷⁴. While these have not been systematically studied in the context of the present research, studying those channels still offers additional insights when considering the connection between networks and informedness in EU policy-making – and those channels will gain in relevance in the future.

8.5 Final conclusions

When I started this research, my initial assumption was that presence in the ‘Brussels Bubble’ and the narrow networks resulting from this presence were more or less the only ways for civil society organisations to stay on top of policy developments at the EU level. I expected some relevant information to leave the bubble, but I was wondering if and how information from the institutional spheres of Brussels would reach those outside the invisible borders of the Euro-District east of the centre of the Belgian capital.

In the course of this project, I realised that the system of EU information flows was much more complex than I expected, with regional and specialised press and an evolving digital European sphere contributing to the diffusion of EU policy-information well beyond the narrow audiences I had expected to be informed about EU politics, in particular on such a seemingly small topic such as fisheries. The discovery of the network of advisory committees in EU fisheries policy with meetings all around Europe made me realise that, although focused around Brussels, there was a wider European societal sphere, at least in this policy field and

⁷⁴ See for example <http://polscieu.ideasoneurope.eu/2012/04/02/hughs-fish-fight-and-live-streaming-statistics-of-the-eu-council/> (Last accessed: 14 April 2013).

probably in other policy domains, too. The situation in the Common Fisheries Policy may be special with the Regional Advisory Councils providing a pre-designed opportunity structure for transregional and pan-European affiliation and networking. Other policy areas which do not dispose of such committees may look different and the limitations of this research are obvious when it comes to making assumptions about European policy networks in general. Yet, I have no doubt that most if not all EU policy domains are structured through existing public and private fora. Affiliation opportunities provided by committees, ad-hoc coalitions, umbrella organisations or specialised conferences exist in all policy domains, and by studying event affiliation of organisations or individuals one should be able to study Europe-wide networks in a multitude of fields. So even if there would not have been a network of Regional Advisory Committees, the broad dynamics of networking would have been similar, just the occasions and the actual structures might have looked different and the diffusion of information may have had to take different routes than it could take during the early phases of the post-2012 Common Fisheries Policy reform. And while this study has focused on very specific affiliation structures, it has more or less ignored the many other occasions for networking in Brussels and beyond that are taking place in EU fisheries on a regular basis.

What final conclusion does this allow for the study of *information flows in the context of EU policy making*? The main conclusion may be that there is much more EU information out there in a wider European sphere than a casual observer may notice and that one of the reasons for this is the existence of the multitude of fora through which information can leave the Brussels sphere.

The actual question therefore is why some people have better and quicker access to information and knowledge. Two answers can be given: On the one hand, realising developments at EU level and getting information thereon heavily depends on one's focus on particular issues. Until I started to study EU fisheries policy, I never noticed any fisheries policy news. Once I started opening my eyes, I could see in global and local media, on Facebook and Twitter, on EU websites and national websites, that at crucial moments there were loads of relevant public discussions about this policy – and about many other EU policies, too. On the other hand, access to information crucial for concrete lobbying, such as draft documents, circulate mostly in personal networks, sometimes limited to personal relations between EU officials and civil society actors, sometimes extended to Europe-wide structures through which even a leaked draft of a regulatory proposal can be diffused.

Nevertheless, it seems a valid – and not surprising – conclusion that presence in the EU sphere is probably a very good predictor for access to EU information, both because those in this sphere generally have a more sharpened eye for policy developments in that sphere and because the network distances to possible sources are shortest and direct relations to EU officials most likely. Hence, the more surprising discovery remains the fact that even quite sensitive information and documents can spread quite widely and that EU information networks exist within civil society and between civil society and governmental organisations that allow a Europe-wide flow of political gossip and hard political and administrative facts.

Predicting who will actually get information or documents is another story. In theory, it is indeed possible to study Europe-wide policy networks, and affiliation network analysis based on participation and membership lists is probably a very promising method for academics and practitioners. However, this study has shown that making predictions on the level of informedness of individuals based on their affiliation information is not sufficient because it ignores all those who are not part of the events studies, because it ignores invisible or adversary relations and because specific situational aspects of each information flow may make that sometimes a very central actor does not get information at all even though all her contacts received the information while a very peripheral actor receives an information just because she has been at the right place at the right time. Still, this study could show that, with sufficiently complex network data, the prediction of who knows what at what time becomes more accurate, and in a digitalised world where more network data is available, information flows in policy-making may be better and better understandable soon. The question that academic research cannot answer is whether it is actually good or bad to be able to make such predictions. For the moment, it is probably good and necessary to understand information flows in the context of EU policy-making more accurately because it would give a more reliable account of how EU politics functions and how the system could be adapted in case we do not like what we see. However, applying network analytic methods can hardly be limited to applications with academic or public interests in mind. The risk that a network analyst can know more about persons involved in (EU) policy-making than the persons themselves is real and this will remain a topic of ethics in social network analysis in the years to come. This study has been conducted with an academic interest in the complexities of networks and network theory and I can only wish that the substantive and methodological insights gained from this study will be used responsibly, by academics and by practitioners.

ANNEXES (for Chapter VI)

Annex 1 - Pre-test questionnaire

Dear [Name],

please find below this email a short questionnaire. I would be grateful if you were ready to answer these questions as the data can only be used with a sufficiently large set of respondents.

This survey is part of my independent PhD research project with the working title "Information flows in the context of EU policy-making". It is supervised by Professor Dr. Klaus Goetz at the faculty of Economics and Social Sciences of the University of Potsdam (Germany).

If you are not participating in this survey, I would still be glad to receive a short notice. If you prefer to answer these questions via telephone, I would also be ready to call you at your preferred time.

Yours sincerely,

Ronny Patz

PS: Unless you explicitly allow publication under your name, the results will only be published in aggregated form. For academic purposes (i.e. to check the correctness of my findings), it may however be necessary to share raw data derived from your answers with my supervisor, journal reviewers or other researchers. If this is done, your name will be pseudonymised (i.e. MEP001, MEP002 etc.) in the respective data sets.

Ronny Patz

University of Potsdam

Chair for Politics and Governance in Germany and Europe

Email: Ronny.Patz@uni-potsdam.de

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QUESTIONNAIRE

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On 13 July 2011, the European Commission published its Proposal for a Regulation on the Common Fisheries Policy (COM(2011)425 final). However, public debates about the substance of this proposal started already in April and May 2011 and continued into June and July as the press and other interested organisations were able to get hold of several working drafts of the proposal before it was officially published in mid-July.

1) Were you and/or your assistants able to see such earlier drafts of the proposal? (Yes/No)

1.1) If YES (question 1), how many different versions of the earlier drafts (or parts of these drafts) were you able to see?

1.2) If YES (question 1), when did you get the (different) draft proposal(s)?

1.3) If YES (question 1), through which channels were you able to get these drafts (e.g. through European Parliament colleagues, Commission officials, permanent representations, interest groups, public websites etc.)?

1.4) If NO (question 1), did you try to get earlier drafts of the CFP reform proposal?

2) Do you know other Members of the European Parliament or their assistants who received early drafts of the CFP reform proposal? (Yes/No)

Annex 2 – Final version of the questionnaire

Dear [Name],

I am a political scientist from the University of Potsdam (Germany) and I am contacting you because you have been a participant in meetings of EU advisory councils in the field of fisheries (ACFA, RACs or the Social Dialogue Committee for Sea Fisheries) in the past years.

Please find below this email a short questionnaire. I would be grateful if you were ready to answer the questions of the survey. This survey is part of my independent PhD research project with the working title "Information flows in the context of EU policy-making". It is supervised by Professor Dr. Klaus Goetz (<http://tinyurl.com/KlausHGoetz>) at the faculty of Economics and Social Sciences of the University of Potsdam.

If you are not participating in this survey, I would still be glad to receive a short notice. If you prefer to answer these questions via telephone, I would also be ready to call you at your preferred time. We could hold this telephone interview in English, French, Spanish or German.

Please note that unless you explicitly allow publication under your name, the results will only be published in aggregated form. For academic purposes (i.e. to check the correctness of my findings), it may however be necessary to share raw data derived from your answers with my supervisor, journal reviewers or other researchers. If this is done, your name will be pseudonymised (i.e. Person0001, Person0002 etc.) in the respective data sets.

Yours sincerely,

Ronny Patz

University of Potsdam

Chair for Politics and Governance in Germany and Europe

Email: Ronny.Patz@uni-potsdam.de

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QUESTIONNAIRE

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On 13 July 2011, the European Commission published its Proposal for a Regulation on the Common Fisheries Policy (<http://tinyurl.com/CFPreformProposal>). However, public debates about the substance of this proposal started already in April and May 2011 and continued into June and July as the press and some interested organisations were able to get hold of several working drafts of the proposal before it was officially published in mid-July.

1) Were you personally able to see such earlier drafts of the proposal for a new basic CFP regulation? [YES/NO]

2.1) If YES (question 1), how many different versions of the earlier drafts (or parts of these drafts) were you able to see?

2.2) If YES (question 1), when did you get the (different) draft proposal(s)? [Please choose from (a)-(k)]

a) before March 2011

b) 1-15 March 2011

c) 16-31 March 2011

d) 1-15 April 2011

e) 16-30 April 2011

f) 1-15 May 2011

g) 16-31 May 2011

h) 1-15 June 2011

i) 16-30 June 2011

j) 1-12 July 2011

k) later than 12 July 2011

2.3) If YES (question 1), from which sources were you able to get these drafts? [Examples: from someone within your organisation; from an EU Commission official or cabinet member, a national or regional government official, a journalist, a representative of a business organisation or of an environmental group, from a public website, a mailing list etc.]

2.4) If YES (question 1), did you forward the draft proposals to other persons once you received them? [YES/NO]

3.1) If NO (question 1), did you try to get earlier drafts of the CFP reform proposal? [YES/NO]

3.2) If NO (question 1), do you personally know others who received early drafts of the CFP reform proposal? [YES/NO]

Annex 3 – Accessing the draft CFP reform proposal through an official request

The process of obtaining (parts) of the CFP reform proposal documents through an official request for documents to the Commission as done by the author is worth considering more in detail. The difficulty in getting the respective documents officially sets out more broadly the relevance of network-based information flows of leaked documents. It is not surprising to see civil society actors rely on leaks and the diffusion of the leaks through their personal networks if the time and effort it takes to officially request information of great interest for a large number of actors exceeds the time limits within which influence can be exerted on the substance of these documents. The following section describes the process of (partially) acquiring some of the documents access to which constitutes the level of informedness of actors in this study. When the author was able to obtain these documents officially, almost three quarters of a year had passed since the first observations of leaks and five month after the CFP reform proposals had been officially agreed upon by the European Commission.

Through public sources, the first relevant leaks of substantive parts of the CFP reform proposal could be observed as early as April 2011 (see Chapter 4.x). However, the first official draft version of the draft CFP Basic Regulation that was publicly registered in the Commission's register of documents⁷⁵ appeared on 1 July 2011 as document COM(2011)425/1. Hence, the general public could have observed the existence of draft documents about two weeks before the final decisions by the Commission were taken and the final version of COM(2011)425 was published on 13 July 2011⁷⁶. According to an email received on 9 November 2011 from the European Commission, the document registered on 1 July 2011 contained the "draft CFP proposal as amended after the inter-service consultation". While this document was listed in the public register, the document itself was not made available online.

As this was the first publicly referenced version, the initial test request for documents made in accordance with Regulation 1049/2001 on Access to EU Documents was made for this document to test whether it would be considered public by the European Commission and would be published before 13 July 2011. A first request for this document as well as to

⁷⁵ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/registre.cfm?CL=en> (Last accessed: 14 April 2013).

⁷⁶ The Commission's register lists COM(2011)425 final as published on 27 July, probably because translation into all EU languages took more time. In total, six versions of COM(2011)425 appeared between 1 July 2011 and 27 July 2011, indicating a number of changes made in the final phases.

COM(2011)425/2, which was said to be non-existent by the responsible Commission services, was filed to the EU Commission on 5 July 2011⁷⁷.

The regulation gives 15 working days to the institutions to react to such a request, but past experience made in other contexts by the author had shown that documents, which were already considered public, had been sent out within 2-3 working days. In the present case, a first response to the request was received on 29 July 2011. The email received at this date only contained the final version of the proposal as published on 13 July 2011, not the post-inter-service consultation draft from early July that had been requested. After clarifying that another version had actually been requested, the Commission informed on 3 August 2011 via email that it had to take a decision within the hierarchy of DG MARE until the end of August on whether access to the document could be granted. As no decision was reached by the end of this time limit, the document was re-requested in a confirmatory application (an appeal in accordance with Regulation 1049/2001) registered on 2 September 2011 with the General Secretariat of the European Commission.

Given that no decision on this confirmatory application had been received by mid-September 2011 and it was still necessary to establish whether the draft version that had gone into inter-service consultation would be considered public, another request for access to documents was launched to three different Directorates General of the EU Commission - DG ENVI, MARKT and SANCO - on 19 and 20 September 2011 via their respective website forms for requesting documents. Through these requests, all three were asked to provide access to (a) the draft of the CFP reform proposal in the version that they had received for inter-service consultation as well as (b) the amendments they provided to this draft during the consultation. In principle, these three DGs were chosen to see how they would handle the request to a document similar to the one for which no decision had been made by DG MARE or the Commission's Secretariat General until this point in time. It was also a test to see whether different DGs would show different levels of readiness to publish their own consultation contributions. The selection of these three DGs was related to their specificities: DG ENVI was chosen because this DG was expected to be more transparency friendly and might have been willing to use the more access-friendly Aarhus Regulation on access to environmental information to provide access to the documents requested. In addition, the DG ENVI input to the process was of

⁷⁷ From the observations made through public sources, it was clear that the press and interest groups had had access to one or several versions of the draft much earlier than this July version, some as early as the beginning of April or May.

special interest because environmental interests and concerns were expected having gained influence in the CFP. Especially since the Marine Strategy Directive (2008/56/EC), for which DG ENVI is responsible, has been put in place, this DG has become a major legislative counterpart to the CFP and the Maritime Policy of DG MARE (cf. van Hoof & van Tatenhove 2009). DG MARKT was selected because there had been press reports that Commissioner Barnier had voiced fundamental opposition to the draft version of the CFP reform proposal, in particular with regard to the proposal on transferable fishing rights (CFP Reform Watch 2011). It was expected that providing access to information concerning this opposition contained in the DG MARKT contribution was more political and thus less likely to be granted. Given Barnier's opposition, it was also of interest whether DG MARKT's contribution had already pointed to this opposition or whether the political intervention by French Commissioner might only have happened once he was alerted by actors opposing transferable fishing rights who had learned about the substance of the Commission's draft proposals. If the latter had been the case, it might have been possible to prove the importance of having accessed drafts of the reform proposal and the existence of subsequent lobbying processes with visible influence. Finally, DG SANCO's contributions were expected to include more technical input, and this DG was therefore expected to be somewhere in the middle ground with regard to its readiness to provide access to these documents between DG ENVI and DG MARKT. Their contribution also appeared to be most interesting with regard to aquaculture, a part of the Common Fisheries Policy that was to gain more importance in the future CFP.

However, all three requests were finally forwarded by the three DGs to DG MARE as the lead DG for a decision. This contravened the expectation that these requests would be dealt with differently, making a decision on access to the documents requested equal for all three. In fact, through a letter on 13 October 2011 signed by the Director General of DG MARE, Lowri Evans, the requests were declined. DG MARE informed that all documents requested from the three DGs were considered to be falling under the exceptions provided by Regulation 1049/2001, arguing that

"[d]isclosure of these documents would seriously undermine the Commission's decision-making process and its right for enjoying a free 'space-to-think' area."

Hence, three months after the official reform proposal had been published, it was sure that the draft that went into inter-service consultation could not have been officially accessed previously and was clearly not meant for the public, even after a decision had been taken.

Since there had also been no decision on the confirmatory application regarding the draft proposal contained in COM(2011)425/1, it was thus clear that, even as late as mid-October 2011, no civil society organisation could have received the draft CFP reform proposals in any early or late version or details of submissions of individual DGs through a formal request to the European Commission. If a formal request had been answered positively in the past, the requests filed in the course of this research would also have been answered positively until then because a previous positive decision to release documents would have given public access to such documents for anyone. Given this fact and supported by the information of the ACFA secretariat that no earlier version of the CFP reform proposal had been handed over to members of participants of ACFA meetings (email received on 16 September 2011), it was obvious that no actor outside the institutions could have gained access to these documents before mid-July unless through informal contacts, information networks or online leaks. In fact, only after a confirmatory application for access to the documents requested from the three DGs followed by a formal complaint to the EU Ombudsman, partial access to all documents requested was granted on 21 December 2011. At the time of finalising this study in spring of 2013, the complaint with the Ombudsman asking full access to the documents is still not settled.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACF	Advisory Committee on Fisheries
ACFA	Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture
AFP	Agence France Press
AIPCE	European Fish Processors Association
BEUC	European Consumers' Organisation
BSRAC	Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council
CEP	European Federation of National Organisations of Importers and Exporters of Fish
CFAS	Committee for the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CMO	Common Market Organisation
CNPMEM	Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des Elevages Marins
COGECA	General Committee for Agricultural Cooperation in the European Union
COM	European Commission
COREPER	Committee of Permanent Representatives (EU Council)
DB	Deutsche Börse
DG	Directorate General
DG AGRI	Directorate General Agriculture & Rural Development
DG BUDG	Directorate General Budget
DG COMP	Directorate General Competition
DG DEVCO	Directorate General EuropeAid Development & Coope
DG DIGIT	Directorate General Informatics
DG ECFIN	Directorate General Economic & Financial Affairs
DG ELARG	Directorate General Enlargement
DG EMPL	Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion
DG ENTR	Directorate General Enterprise & Industry
DG ESTAT	Directorate General Eurostat
DG ENV	Directorate General Environment
DG FISH	Directorate General Fisheries [and Maritime Affairs]
DG MARE	Directorate General Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
DG MARKT	Directorate General Internal Market
DG REGIO	Directorate General Regional & Urban Policy
DG RTD	Directorate General Research & Innovation
DG SANCO	Directorate General Health & Consumers
DG TAXUD	Directorate General Taxation & Customs Union
DG TRADE	Directorate General Trade
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
DV	Dependent Variable
EAPO	European Association of Fish Producers Organisations
EBCD	European Bureau for Conservation and Development
EC	European Communities
EEC	European Economic Community
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EFFC	European Fisheries Fund Committee
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
EMPA	European Mollusc Producers Association

eNGO	Environmental Non-Governmental Organisation
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
Europêche	Association of National Organisations of Fishery Enterprises in the European Union
ETF	European Transport Forum
ETS	EU emissions trading scheme
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
FEAP	Federation of European Aquaculture Producers
ICCAT	European Commission preparatory group for the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
ITQs	Individual Transferable Quotas
IV	Independent Variable
LDRAC	Long Distance Regional Advisory Council
MCFAS	Management Committee for the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector
MCFP	Management Committee for Fisheries Products
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
NAFO	North West Atlantic Fisheries Organisation
NFFO	National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations (UK)
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NSRAC	North Sea Regional Advisory Council
NWWRAC	North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council
NYSE	New York Stock Exchange
PECH	European Parliament Fisheries Committee
PRAC/PELRAC	Pelagic Regional Advisory Council
PO	Producer Organisation
PV	Procès-verbal [minutes]
RAC	Regional Advisory Council
RP	Ronny Patz [i.e. the author]
SEC	Secretariat General of the European Commission (document)
SFA	Sustainable Fisheries Agreements
SG	Secretariat General
SNA	Social Network Analysis
SSDC	Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee
STECF	Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries
SWWRAC	South Western Waters Regional Advisory Council
TACs	Total Allowable Catches
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFCs	Transferable Fishing Concessions
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
USA	United States of America
WG	Working Group
WOM	Word-Of-Mouth
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature

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EIDESSTATTLICHE ERKLÄRUNG

Hiermit versichere ich an Eides statt, dass ich die vorliegende Dissertation ohne fremde Hilfe angefertigt und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt habe. Alle Teile, die wörtlich oder sinngemäß einer Veröffentlichung entstammen, sind als solche kenntlich gemacht. Die Arbeit wurde noch nicht veröffentlicht oder einer anderen Prüfungsbehörde vorgelegt.

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Brüssel, 7. August 2013