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Business
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THESIS SYNOPSIS

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The Role of the European Parliament in the 2013 Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy

Analysis of the Legislative Amendments of the European Parliament

Ph.D. dissertation

Supervisor:

Dr. FERTŐ, Imre
Professor

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Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development

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1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

In the last 25 years the relationship among the institutions of the European Union (EU) as well as their roles and power in EU legislation have changed significantly. In this process, the treaties of the EU played the key role, out of which the two most important ones were the Treaty of Maastricht and the Treaty of Lisbon. The first one entered into force in 1993 and introduced the co-decision procedure, while the latter one entered into force in 2009 and further extended the scope of co-decision to other policy areas.

There is an array of literature - primarily in the domain of political science - dealing with the changing role of European Parliament (EP) in EU decision-making. Three research areas can be identified: one is examining the EP's relative weight in decision-making compared to the European Commission (EC) or the Council, while one of the others deals with the EP's power and influence under different legislative procedures (Tsebelis and Kalandrakis, 1999; Kreppel, 2002; Tsebelis et al., 2001; Lucic, 2004). The third one concentrates on the factors which influence the adoption of EP amendments (Kreppel, 1999; Shackelton, 1999; Kardasheva, 2009).

The legislative instruments of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for the 2014-2020 EU programming period have been adopted in 2013 after a long and complicated process, which also included fierce institutional and legal battles among the institutions. All the EU institutions took part in this legislative process: the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, the Council of Agricultural Ministers and the European Parliament. From the point of view of the EP, the key question of the 2013 CAP reform was whether the extension of the co-decision procedure to the field of the CAP by the Treaty of Lisbon increased the influence of the EP in the decision-making process.

Based on previous theoretical papers as well as the experiences of other EU policy domains falling under the co-decision procedure, a number of preliminary expectations have been defined regarding the prospective impact of the extension of the co-decision procedure on the legislation of the CAP. Three main points have been defined: 1) the change in the inter-institutional relations; 2) the impact on decision-making (if the EP will be able to take a decision); 3) the impact on the final policy outcome of the CAP reform (Swinnen, 2015). This dissertation contributes to the first area by analysing the relationship between the EP and the Council.

Considering the relationships of EU institutions, preliminary expectations emphasised that the extension of the co-decision procedure could result in the decrease of the power of the European Commission as well as the empowerment of both the European Parliament and the Council (Crombez et al. (2012); Greer and Hind (2012)). Greer and Hind (2012) envisaged four possible scenarios for the new inter-institutional setting after the extension of the co-decision procedure to the EP. One of them is the so-called 'conventional' scenario, which expects the growing power of the EP while the EC and the Council gradually losing power (Swinnen, 2015). This dissertation is partly about the examination of this conventional scenario via analysing the relationship between the EP and the Council.

This Ph.D. research is a case study, which examines the role of the European Parliament in two consecutive EU programming periods 2007-2013 and 2014-2020, regarding the legislation of the EU's highest-budget common policy, the CAP. This research is based on a dataset of amendments tabled to the legislative proposals of the Common Agricultural Policy. In the 2007-2013 EU programming period – before the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon – the EP took part in the formulation of the CAP legislation under the consultation procedure. As for the 2014-2020 period, the EP is already a co-legislator under the co-decision procedure. Therefore, the comparison between the two EU programming periods provides an opportunity for comparing the two legislative procedures in terms of the role of the European Parliament.

The dataset of the research contains more than 8,000 legislative amendments. These amendments have been tabled to the same CAP legislative proposals of the two consecutive EU programming periods, 4 proposals in each. In the dataset, each amendment is described by 15 variables. Most of these variables relate to the political role and personal characteristics of the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) as well as to their Member States (MSs). These variables have not been analysed in previous research yet.

The overall objective of this research is to give a comprehensive picture on the legislative process of the EU through quantifiable and measureable indicators, so that we can better understand the role of the EP in the CAP legislation. Besides its overall objective, this research has three specific objectives.

The first objective of the research is to compare the legislative influence of the European Parliament between the consultation and the co-decision procedures. The objective is to analyse whether the power and influence of the European Parliament increased after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon in the domain of the CAP legislation.

The second objective of the research is to identify and test those factors which influence the adoption of the EP legislative amendments. The key objective here is to name those explanatory variables which influence the success of EP amendments in a statistically significant way. The related structural equation model (SEM) aims at identifying those groups of variables – factors –, which have an impact on the adoption of amendments at various levels of decision-making.

Finally, the social network analysis (SNA) of the 2013 CAP reform has three objectives. First, to identify those EP Groups and Member States, which were the most active ones in tabling legislative amendments. Second, the analysis reveals the most frequent and most powerful relationships both between MSs and EP Groups. Finally, the social network analysis highlights what factors influence the cooperation between MEPs – both EP Groups and Member States – in the intra-EP network.

It is important to emphasise that one of the objectives during the elaboration of the dissertation was to apply novel methodologies for the evaluation of EU decision-making, which have not been applied in the context of EU legislation.

The structure of the dissertation is as follows. The introduction is followed by the literature review, then I introduce the objectives and define the research questions and hypotheses. The description of the research methodology and the dataset is followed by the analysis, which is divided into three separate chapters. First, I present the analysis of the success rates of EP amendments. Second, I analyse the factors influencing the adoption of the EP amendments and I present the structural equations model. Finally, I present the social network analysis, which concentrates on the networks of MEPs. At the end of the dissertation I summarize and discuss the results.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The role and legislative influence of the European Parliament are analyzed from different point of views in line with the different methodologies applied in the research. The calculation of adoption rates of EP amendments in both of the legislative procedures and at various levels of the decision-making procedure, the analysis of factors influencing the adoption of EP amendments as well as the social network analysis of the MEPs tabling joint amendments all contribute to the objective of the research to get a fine-tuned picture on the role of the EP in the legislation of the 2013 CAP reform.

The simplest way to measure the legislative influence of the European Parliament is to calculate the adoption rates of EP amendments and apply them as indicators for legislative power. Most of the articles analysing EP amendments apply success rates of amendments as indicators for legislative influence (Kreppel 1999; Tsebelis and Kalandrakis 1999; Kreppel 2002; Tsebelis et al., 2001; Lucic 2004). The key research question is whether the legislative influence of the European Parliament is higher under the co-decision procedure compared to the consultation procedure. The objective of this analysis is to reinforce the conclusions of Tsebelis et al. (2001), Tsebelis and Garrett (2001), Hix (2002), Kreppel (2002), Selck and Steunenberg (2004) and Thomson et al. (2006) about the increasing power of the EP. Therefore, the hypothesis connected to this research question is as follows:

H1. hypothesis: The European Parliament increased its legislative influence in the field of the Common Agricultural Policy with the extension of the co-decision procedure by the Treaty of Lisbon.

In previous articles connected to the European Parliament, binary logistic regression has been applied to test and measure the impact of explanatory variables on the adoption of the legislative amendments (Kreppel, 1999; Lucic, 2004; Kardasheva, 2009; Burns et al., 2009). Their main conclusion was that both the type of the amendment and the characteristics of the decision-making process influence the adoption of amendments.

In the dissertation I present the SEM model connected to the logistic regression, given that both approach analyse the variables of the research, either observed or latent.

Structural equation modelling is mostly used in social sciences – primarily in sociology, marketing and political science –, and also in psychology. In political science, it is used to describe voters' behaviour and decisions as well as the factors influencing them. SEM is a type of confirmatory analysis, in which the relationships are specified prior to the analysis. Based on theory, experience and research objectives, the researcher preliminary defines which independent variables predict each dependent variable.

With the analysis of the explanatory variables, the key question of the research is which variables or groups of variables influence the adoption of the EP legislative amendments in the field of the Common Agricultural Policy and how. Based on this, the relevant hypothesis is defined as follows:

H2. hypothesis: The characteristics of the amendment as well as the proposing MEP and his or her Member State have an impact on the adoption of EP amendments at each decision-making level of the EP in the field of the CAP.

The third pillar of the research contains the analysis of the relationships and networks of the MEPs who participated in the legislative process.

The term ‘network’ is frequently used to describe clusters of different kinds of actors who are linked together in political, social or economic life. Social network analysis is based on an assumption of the importance of relationships among interacting units. Relations defined by linkages among units are a fundamental component of network theories. Both statistical and descriptive uses of network analysis are distinct from more standard social science analysis and require concepts and analytic procedures that are different from traditional statistics (Wasserman and Faust, 1994).

The political networks embedded in the institutional-governmental system of the European Union were already subject to scientific analyses. Kaiser (2009) states that given its complex multilevel governance structures, the European Union is an obvious focus for studying policy networks. Peterson (2004) identified three key features that justify the use of policy network analysis for the EU’ multi-level governance.

Regarding the European Parliament, Patz (2011) analysed the networks of the EP intergroups as well as the networks of EP Committees (Patz, 2012). One of his conclusions was that EP Groups – and their members – cluster together on the same political side more frequently.

Stubb (1996) concluded that MEPs from EU-15 MSs form a relationship with each other more frequently than with MEPs from EU-12 MSs. Thurner and Binder (2009) states that established long-term economic and political relations may imply lower transactions and coordination costs. This statement reinforces the expectation that MEPs from Member States with closer geographical, historical, economic, political or linguistic connections form relationships more frequently in the legislative process.

To date, research combining social network analysis with the analysis of the Common Agricultural Policy is very limited. Daugbjerg (1999) examined the network of the CAP and its influence on the outcome of the 1992 MacSharry reform. His main conclusion was that the

structure of policy networks influence policy reform outcomes. Peterson (2004) also analysed the policy network of the Common Agricultural Policy. He found that CAP legislation is mostly influenced by supranational networks.

Based on the above literature, the third research question of this dissertation relates to the applicability of social network analysis in the context of CAP decision-making. The research aims at analysing what factors influence the cooperation of MEPs in the network. Therefore, the hypothesis is as follows:

H3. hypothesis: When tabling amendments to CAP legislative instruments, the characteristics of MEPs and their Member States influence the cooperation and networks among them in the European Parliament.

There are several novelties of this research. First and foremost, it is important to note that this research is the first one to compare the legislative influence of the European Parliament between the consultation and co-decision procedures in the Common Agricultural Policy via amendment analysis. Although Selck and Steunenberg (2004) compared these two legislative procedures with regards to the Treaty of Amsterdam, the transition from the consultation to the co-decision procedure in light of the Treaty of Lisbon has not been analysed yet.

Another novel element in this dissertation is that when calculating amendment success rates, amendments have been categorised according to their characteristics and the internal decision-making phase in which they were proposed. Based on this, five categories have been defined: draft report amendment, open amendments, compromise amendments, amendments tabled by opinion-giving committees and plenary amendments. Previous research only focused on one type of EP amendments: either plenary amendments (Yordanova, 2009) or open amendments (Tsebelis and Kalandrakis, 1999; Tsebelis et al., 2001), but the simultaneous analysis of various types of amendments during the legislative procedure of a policy domain has not been conducted yet. Additionally, during the 2013 CAP reform, I also created the categories of ‘agricultural policy amendments’ and ‘CAP reform amendments’ to calculate success rates along these categories, which is also a novelty in CAP-related research.

Unlike previous researches, this research applies MEP- and Member State-related explanatory variables in determining the factors influencing the adoption of EP amendments. Previous research tested a number of explanatory variables – type of amendment, internal EP unity, number of readings, recital amendment (Kreppel, 1999), rapporteur’s amendment (Tsebelis,

1995), but the testing of MEP and Member State-related variables is a new element in the context of both the CAP and the European Parliament.

Another novel method in the dissertation is that both in calculating success rates and in case of the logistic regression, there are three dependent variables in line with the key stages of the EU legislative procedure: (1) adoption by the EP Committee in charge; (2) adoption by the EP plenary session; (3) adoption by the Council. While previous analysis only focused on one of these decision-making points, my approach enables to identify and compare the success rates and the significant explanatory variables at each of these three stages.

Regarding the application of the SEM model, it can be stated that the political decision-making as well as the legislative processes of the European Union, including the European Parliament, have not been the subject of neither explorative nor confirmative factor analysis. Obviously, this is also true for analyses based on the legislative amendments – and the connected variables – of the European Parliament.

The novelty of this type of research is that most of the confirmative factor models that were applied in political science analysed political participation or voting patterns – factors influencing the voting decision of voters – with the use of structural equations (Barbaranelli et al., 2007; de Vries–de Graaf–Eisinga, 2008; Leimgruber, 2011). Nevertheless, it has not been applied for analysing the EU’s legislative procedures.

As for the social network analysis presented in the dissertation, to date, social network analysis has only been applied in the context of the European Parliament in order to see the relationships of EP committees (Patz 2011, 2012). Nevertheless, the network of MEPs – expressed in their party affiliation and nationality – has not been analysed yet. Besides, in the European parliamentary context, previous analyses concentrated on national and party coalitions in the EP, but these analyses were based on EP plenary voting results (CEPS-Votewatch, 2012; *Votewatch*, 2014). This research comes up with national and party coalitions embedded in the jointly tabled EP amendments, which have not been analysed yet.

Previous articles analysing the networks of the CAP (Daugbjerg, 1999; Moschitz and Stolze, 2009) investigated the consultation procedure, but this research investigates intra-EP political networks in light of the extension of the co-decision procedure to the CAP in 2009 by the Treaty of Lisbon.

Finally, social network analysing methods have been already applied in the field of the Common Security and Defence Policy (Mérand et al., 2011) or in a special segment of the CAP, i.e. organic farming (Moschitz and Stolze, 2009), but a comprehensive social network analysis of the CAP hasn't been subject of analysis yet.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

One of the key results of the research presented in the dissertation is that it gives a quantified answer to a number of EP and CAP-related research questions based on a newly elaborated dataset. Based on previous related literature, preliminary expectations and on my own personal experiences, I defined three main research questions and hypotheses. In this chapter, I present the results of the research along these hypotheses.

Results of the amendment success rates

Regarding the H1. hypothesis, which says that the EP managed to increase its legislative influence under the codecision procedure, I tested the hypothesis by calculating and comparing the adoption rates of EP amendments under both the consultation and co-decision procedure.

The main conclusion of our analysis is that the rates of adoption of EP amendments is higher under the co-decision procedure compared to the consultation procedure along all the observed amendment categories. Based on this we can firmly state that the European Parliament increased its legislative influence in the field of CAP after the Treaty of Lisbon. Therefore, we confirm the H1. hypothesis of this research.

In general, these results confirm the findings by Corbett et al. (1995) and Tsebelis et al. (2001) that the adoption rates of Parliament amendments are higher under the co-decision procedure. The results also confirm the conclusions of Hix (2002), Kreppel (2002), Thomson et al. (2006) and Jupille (2007) that the EP could increase its legislative influence under the co-decision procedure.

The results are also in line with the findings of Crombez & Swinnen (2011) on the CAP reform, namely that the Parliament gains legislative influence in the move from consultation to co-decision procedure. The results also support the conclusions of Roederer-Rynning and Schimmelfennig (2012) that the Treaty of Lisbon increased the influence of the Parliament in legislative terms in the CAP.

One of the key findings of this research is that in the legislative process of the 2013 CAP reform, more than 50% of the agricultural policy amendments in the Parliament negotiation mandate were incorporated in the final regulations, which appears to make the Parliament an equal partner with the Council during the trilogue negotiations. In general, this result reinforces the positions of Crombez (1997), Tsebelis and Garrett (2001) as well as Selck and Steunenberg (2004) that the Parliament became a real co-legislator with the Council after the introduction of the co-decision procedure.

It is noteworthy to mention two new results of the research here, one of them is connected to the role of the rapporteur MEPs, while the other one is related to the opinion-giving committees. First, the adoption rates of compromise amendments was the highest out of all amendment categories. The high success rates of both compromise and draft report amendments show the key role of the rapporteurs and their significant legislative influence. On the other hand, the adoption rates of amendments tabled by opinion-giving committees were the lowest, highlighting their limited and marginal role in the legislative process.

Results of the logistic regression and the SEM model

The second hypothesis of the research states that the type of amendment as well as the characteristics of the MEPs tabling the amendments have an impact on their adoption. We can draw the following conclusions after the analysis.

The results of the binary logistic regression show that there are a number of significant explanatory variables at all three levels of the decision-making under both legislative procedures. These variables have an impact on the adoption of the EP amendments: the positive classification of some of them increases, while the positive classification of others decreases the odds of adoption of the amendment. We can conclude that the existence of significant variables confirm the H2. hypothesis.

The logistic regression identified the following significant explanatory variables. Out of the amendment-related variables, the Compromise amendment and Draft report amendment variables were significant under both the consultation and the co-decision procedures in most of the three decision-making levels. The positive classification of the variables increased the odds of adoption. Additionally, in the co-decision procedure, the Recital amendment variable

was also significant at the intra-EP decision-making levels: its positive classification also increased the odds of adoption. This latter result confirms the conclusions of Kreppel (1999).

Regarding the variables attached to the MEPs, under the consultation procedure some of them – for example, European People’s Party (EPP) of the liberal EP Group – were significant. Under the co-decision procedure, besides the EPP variable, also the Member and Substitute Member of COMAGRI variables were significant. In case of all these variables, the positive classification increased the odds of adoption. The results regarding the EP Groups confirm the conclusions of Hix et al. (2005) and Yordanova (2009).

As for the variables connected to the Member States of MEPs, under the consultation procedure the EU-15 Member States and the Agricultural Member States variables were significant. Their positive classification increased the odds of adoption. However, under the co-decision procedure, there were four significant Member State related variables: Net contributor MS, EU-15 MS, Cohesion MS, Constituency. Their positive classification had varied impact on the odds of adoption of amendments at the different decision-making levels.

Besides analyzing the impact of explanatory variables with logistic regression, I also developed a structural equation model to test the impact of five groups of variables – so-called latent variables – on the adoption of amendments. Given the generally weak fit of the model, the conclusions regarding the impact of latent variables shall be treated and interpreted with reservations.

The results confirm that legal and institutional factors have an impact on the adoption of EP amendments in COMAGRI. This confirms the findings of Tsebelis–Kalandrakis (1999), Tsebelis et al. (2001), Lucic (2004) and Kardasheva (2009).

The results of the model show that factors connected to the Member State of the MEP have an impact on the adoption of EP amendments both at EP plenary and in the Council. The results confirm the results of Sigalas (2010) and Kovács (2014). We can also conclude that Member State related factors have higher impact on the adoption of amendments by the Council.

It can be also concluded that amendment-related factors have an impact on the adoption of the amendments in the COMAGRI. This result confirms the conclusions of Shackleton (1999) and Kreppel (1999).

Finally, based on the results of the SEM model we can conclude that political factors have an impact on the adoption of EP amendments at all three levels of the decision-making. It is important to note that political factors have the highest impact on the decision-making in the Council, which shows the significant influence of MEPs whose political affiliation is the same with that of their respective national governments. These results confirm the conclusions of Kreppel (1999) and Kardasheva (2009).

Results of the Social Network Analysis

According to the third hypothesis of the research, the characteristics of the MEPs as well as their Member States influence the cooperation of MEPs when tabling amendments to the CAP legislative proposals and also the evolution of networks among them.

A general but important conclusion of the social network analysis is that the role of the EP in EU legislation can be analysed with SNA methods and these results can be interpreted in real life environment. The results make it possible to get a better insight into the role of EP in EU-level decision-making, and how this role is influenced by the nationality and party affiliation of the MEPs.

The analysis identified several factors both regarding the MEPs and their MSs, which influence the cooperation of among MEPs in the European Parliament. Therefore, we confirm the H3 hypothesis.

The outcomes of the research contributed to the existing literature several ways. First, the outcomes of the analysis of the network of Member States confirmed the conclusions of Thurner and Binder (2009) that net contributor Member States establish relationship with each other more frequently. The results of this analysis also confirmed that MEPs from EU-15 Member States form relationships with each other more frequently than with their counterparts from EU-12 Member States. This supports the concept of Stubb (1996) and Thurner and Binder (2009). Regarding the network of Member States, the results are also in line with the conclusions of Thurner and Binder (2009) as MEPs from Member States with higher bilateral economic interdependency tie with each other more frequently. However, contrary to the hypothesis, the research outcomes did not confirm that MEPs from EU Member States which are geographically closer to each other would cooperate with each other more frequently in tabling amendments. Finally, the results confirm that ideological differences between MEPs – more precisely between EP Groups – are less a fragmenting factor, which impedes cooperation:

MEPs tie with each other more likely along ideological lines. It supports the conclusions of CEPS-Votewatch (2012) and is also partly in line with the statements of Mérand et al. (2011).

Theoretical and practical relevance of the research

The research presented in the dissertation contributes significantly to the extension of existing theories and research methods both regarding research on the European Parliament in general as well as research connected to the analysis of the Common Agricultural Policy. This research has the most scientific added value concerning the analysis of the co-decision procedure, the analysis of the amendment and MEP-related explanatory variables as well as the application of the SNA methodology in the context of the EP legislation.

As for the practical relevance and applicability of the research, the outcomes of this dissertation are the most valuable for those aimed at analysing or even influencing EU decision-making. Umbrella and interest-representing organizations as well as stakeholders in the agri-food industry could capitalise on the results and the methodology presented in the dissertation. This latter one could help them identify the key players of the decision-making as well as the relationships among them, which helps carry out a deeper analysis compared to currently applied methodologies.

Limitations and areas for future research

Regarding the limitations of the research, it is important to emphasise two factors. First, the amendments analysed in this research haven't been categorised or weighted according to their importance. It naturally causes distortions in the calculations of adoption rates: it can happen that the adoption of less important amendments increases the success rates, although there is not real political success behind it. Second, given that this research is a case study in the field of the Common Agricultural Policy, it also means that at this moment, it is not possible to compare the results of this dissertation with results of similar research in other EU policy domains. Therefore, when interpreting the results of this dissertation, especially that of concerning the impact of co-decision on the European Parliament, we have to treat them with reservations.

Concerning the future directions of research, when measuring the change in the legislative influence of the EP after the extension of the co-decision procedure to the CAP, it would be

advisable to analyse also the content of amendments and to take into account the different weighting of amendments in line with their policy importance.

It is also important to mention that although the comparison between the two legislative procedures shows the growing influence of the European Parliament – which is most likely attributable to the extension of the co-decision procedure –, theoretically it is possible that the increased power of the EP is not the result of the Treaty of Lisbon but other factors, which have not been analysed in the framework of the dissertation. Further research could clarify this issue via the comparison of the results of this dissertation with the influence of the EP in the field of other EU policy domains falling under the 2014-2020 legislative package, like the Common Fisheries Policy or the Cohesion Policy.

Finally, the social network analysis presented in the dissertation may be further elaborated in the future with the analysis of relationships embodied in the adopted EP amendments through which it will be possible to analyse the "winning" networks and to compare it with the networks described in this study. In addition, the analysis may also be extended to other policy areas in respect of which the European Parliament tables amendments to the legislative proposals of the European Commission. This would further allow a comparison of EP networks that exist in the various policy areas of the EU.

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