Resilience of the Silo Organizational Structure in the European Commission

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Abstract

This article investigates whether the organizational reforms that President Jean-Claude Juncker introduced strengthened the Commission's political role, enhanced co-ordination among Directorates General and affected the policy governance with respect to the circular economy. Drawing on organizational theory, the article demonstrates how Juncker's reforms empowered the Commission's leadership by centralization of powers and close monitoring of DGs' work. The inter-institutional interactions among the DGs formally increased, especially with respect to information clarification and the allocation of competences and resources. However, the top-down reforms undermined the DGs' and the services' entrepreneurial role in policy governance and innovation. In response, the individual DGs demonstrated resistance and resilience to these reforms. The article attributes this resistance and resilience to the DG's distinctive administrative capacity, practices, culture and the 'logic of portfolio', that reinvigorated the silo structure in the Commission and intensified inter-DG competition.

Keywords: organizational reforms; resilience; silo structure; circular economy

Introduction

In 2015, President Jean-Claude Juncker (2014–19) introduced organizational reforms in the European Commission (Commission), which increased centralization of powers and hierarchy within the Commission and concretized previous efforts for top-down, centralized steering. These reforms aimed to address structural issues in the Commission, and to strengthen its capacity to pursue its policy agenda (Bauer & Ege, 2012; Ellinas & Suleiman, 2012; Kassim et al., 2013; Trondal, 2012). The reforms also intended to enhance horizontal co-ordination, policy coherence and efficiency by reducing existing fragmentation and overlaps; and eliminate the silo governance structure, by connecting a group of Directorates General (DGs) across policy areas (Becker et al., 2016, p. 1013). 'Silos' refers to a 'lack [of] interaction between parts of an organization, such as between colleagues in different departments beyond their immediate co-workers' (Vantaggiato et al., 2020, p. 2). Juncker appointed seven Vice-Presidents with special competences across areas and the responsibility to co-ordinate a team of Commissioners within one of ten priority policy areas[1] (European Commission, 2014a, p. 2). These changes established 'new ways of working' in the Commission and highlighted Juncker's

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[1] '[A] new boost for jobs, growth and investment; a connected digital single market; a resilient energy union with a forward-looking climate change policy; a deeper and fairer internal market with a strengthened industrial base; a deeper and fairer economic and monetary union; a reasonable and balanced free trade agreement with the USA; an area of justice and fundamental rights based on mutual trust; towards a new policy on migration; Europe as a stronger global actor; and a union of democratic change'; https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/cb5248c4-0639-11e8-b8f5-01aa75ed71a1/language-en.

vision for a stronger political role for the Commission's leadership and a stronger Secretariat General (SecGen) (Kassim & Laffan, 2019).

Organization scholars acknowledge the role of organizational characteristics, structures and culture on the policy process and on actors' perceptions and behaviour within an organization (Egeberg et al., 2016). Organizational characteristics set the patterns for collaboration and/or conflict among the actors (for example, the DGs and/or with the EC leadership) in policy governance. They affect the development of shared norms, culture and identity-building by encouraging socialization internally and externally with stakeholders. Within this context, this article asks *to what extent did Juncker's organizational reforms in the Commission strengthen its political role and horizontal co-ordination among DGs by breaking out of the silo logic in the Commission and affecting the policy governance with respect to the circular economy?*

Furthermore, the extant literature on the Commission has analysed its role in policy-making, resulting from the transfer of policy competences (particularly regulatory) from the Member States to the EU (Edler & James, 2015; Kaunert, 2010; Maltby, 2013; Palmer, 2015; Schön-Quinlivan & Scipioni, 2017; Wendon, 1998). Laffan (1997) characterized the Commission as the EU's 'policy entrepreneur' and 'think-tank'. Hartlapp et al. (2013) examined the impact of organizational reforms on the Commission's legislative activity; specifically, the structural advantages of the lead DG and in particular the SecGen on final legislative proposals. Recently, Bürgin (2020) investigated the Commission's political role within EU energy governance. Kassim & Laffan (2019) analysed the co-operation between the Commission and other EU institutions, including the European Parliament (EP). Lastly, studies have focused on the impact of the Commission's leadership on the EU's international activities (Kassim et al., 2017). Nevertheless, only a few studies concentrate on horizontal organizational co-ordination within the Commission or pay adequate attention to the vertical dimension and its impact on policy governance (exceptions are Kassim et al., 2017 and Rietig & Dupont, 2021).

This article aims to address this lacuna in the literature by investigating how Juncker's organizational reforms in the Commission affect the policy governance of transboundary, cross-sectoral policy fields under the competence of more than one DG, which is mostly neglected in the existing literature. Therefore, the article examines how Juncker's reforms affected the Commission's leadership role and the inter-DGs co-ordination and policy governance within the circular economy (CE). Drawing on organization studies (Egeberg & Trondal, 2020), the article considers the allocation of competences and portfolios of the involved DGs, their organizational norms, values and principles, but also the DGs' connection with their supporting constituencies. Empirically, the article illustrates the argument with examples from the governance of CE that involves two Vice-Presidents and various DGs. The analysis is based on data gathered from official public documents, combined with interviews with high-ranking officials in the DGs involved in the CE.

The next section presents the theoretical foundations of the study followed by Juncker's organizational reforms in the Commission with respect to the CE. The article analyses how the top-down organizational reforms affect the interactions between the DGs and the Commission's leadership (vertically) and among DGs (horizontally), specifically whether the reforms strengthen the inter-DG co-ordination. Lastly, the article demonstrates how the DGs distinctive organizational characteristics (that is, administrative capacity, 'logic of portfolio' and connections to their constituencies) lead to resilience and

resistance to the reforms, enhancing competition and reinvigorating the silo logic in the DGs. The article ends with the conclusion.

I. Organizational Characteristics in the Commission

Organizations are assigned authority and purpose by their legal principles, which direct their priorities and interests (Bach & Wegrich, 2019, pp. 11–12). Organizational characteristics denote (a) the 'organizational structure', which refers to how the various functions are connected (for example, top-down/bottom-up, centralized/decentralized and hierarchical) within an organization, the resources, the allocation of competences among the actors and units and procedures, and (b) the 'organizational culture', which denotes the informal norms, principles and values to which the involved actors aspire, as well as the styles of an organization (Egeberg & Trondal, 2020). These characteristics matter for an organization's everyday activities, determine who does what, when and how, and they emerge in response to internal and external pressures within a process that involves power struggles (Christensen, 2019).

In Weberian terms, 'the bureaucratic structure can contribute to unity and coordination, precision and speed, predictability, obedience, loyalty, impartiality, cost reduction' (Olsen, 2008, p. 16). 'Organizational structures' go beyond their *de jure* legal design and 'provide frames for storing experiences, cognitive maps' (Trondal, 2016, p. 1101), systematize complex information and help reduce transaction costs. They create distinctive common organizational understandings, 'patterns of interaction' and 'forms of attitude' (for example, sharing administrative practices) (Rosamond, 2019, p. 91). 'Organizational culture', norms and principles of an organization are communicated and become institutionalized points of reference that guide behaviour in governance of policy. By being part of the bureau and the administrative process, bureaucrats gain direct access and expertise regarding the functioning of the governance machinery (Olsen, 2008). Moreover, bureaucrats develop preferences, which are reflected in how they define problems, policy proposals and appropriate solutions that they can exclusively offer due to their technocratic impartiality and expertise (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004, p. 9). They identify, initiate and expand their activities (for example, new policy issues) gradually, always within the boundaries of their organizational structures, acting as 'norm and policy entrepreneurs'.

Expertise and knowledge enable organizations to specialize, to provide informed solutions to complex problems (for example, on the environment), and to avoid multiple, conflicting goals. Nevertheless, increased specialization can create fragmentation and silo structures with overlaps among unit activities and competences, resulting in inefficiencies and co-ordination failures (Bach & Wegrich, 2019, p. 12). Specialization can also drive organizations to address specific issues and disregard problems that fall outside their boundaries, referred to as 'blind spots', or involve certain 'responsibility', potential 'blame', 'low credit', competition for scarce resources (Bach & Wegrich, 2019, pp. 12, 19; Christensen, 2019). Consequently, organizations become inward-focused and insulated during the institutionalization process, possibly overlooking diverse views that could otherwise trigger innovation (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999). This results in particular framings of information and the involvement of certain actors due to 'selective perception' bias. These characteristics become more salient when organizations' status quo is

challenged by reforms. Organizations try to protect their organizational identity but also their reputation and relations with their supporting environment (for example, interest groups).

Within these lines, this article investigates specifically Juncker's top-down organizational reforms in the Commission, and how these affected organizational co-ordination and policy governance of the transboundary, cross-sectoral CE policy, an area that is under-researched. While scholars have investigated the functioning and the power relations within the Commission, they have not paid adequate attention to the vertical and horizontal organizational co-ordination within the Commission (exceptions are Kassim et al., 2017 and Rietig & Dupont, 2021) and/or its impact on policy governance. Therefore, studying the impact of the organizational reforms on CE policy governance is useful, because it differs to the usual organizational structure in the Commission, where one DG is responsible for one particular area and purpose. According to the new organizational structure, Juncker placed the CE under the competence of more than one DG. Nevertheless, top-down-induced organizational reforms, such as shared allocation of competences among units, do not always eliminate the 'logic of portfolio' and purpose. Instead, they can become prominent, induce potential cross-sectoral conflicts, intensify horizontal competition and impede bottom-up policy innovation. This occurs because the individual DGs focus on safeguarding their organizational identity and constituencies, strengthening their role in policy agenda-setting and protecting their share of resources. Consequently, the intended aims of organizational reforms are challenged, despite increased inter-institutional interactions and activities. Thus, while top-down organizational reforms strengthen the Commission leadership's role in relation to the DGs (leadership and services), silo structures remain as hindrances to policy coherence and integration.

The Commission's organizational architecture reflects its mandate and competences as they are defined by the EU treaties, secondary law and implementing and delegated acts (European Commission, 2014a). These provide the Commission with the authority to define autonomous preferences and goals (autonomy of will) and the ability to translate its preferences into actions (autonomy of action) (Bauer & Ege, 2016), to pursue a politically relevant agenda, and to push its policy goals beyond the Member States and other EU institutions (Bailer, 2013; Bürgin, 2020; Hartlapp, 2017; Sandholtz & Sweet, 1998, p. 6). In a dynamic bureaucratization process within the 'European executive order', the Commission 'eurocrats' strengthened their authority and autonomy to initiate and promote policy and institutional integration (Peters, 2010, p. 3; Trondal, 2010). As existing studies on the Commission have shown, increased competences within economic governance (European Semester, co-ordination and monitoring tasks) enable the Commission to pursue its interests, characterizing the Commission as the 'unexpected winner' (Bauer & Becker, 2014, p. 214; Brandsma et al., 2016; Egeberg, 2016; Kassim, 2015; Nugent & Rhinard, 2016, pp. 1208–9). This empowerment occurs through various mechanisms, such as 'control', depending on the level of hierarchy and order from above, 'discipline' through incentives and/or 'socialization' through deliberative processes among actors at various levels within and outside their organization (for example, supporting constituencies) (Bauer, 2006; Bauer & Ege, 2012; Trondal, 2012, 2016, p. 1100). DG officials develop their own 'logic of portfolio' that 'safeguards informed decisions and due administrative practices and styles, emphasizes divergent agendas, coordinates actions inside

sub-units rather than across them, emphasizes signals, concerns and considerations of their sub-unit, giving loyalty primarily to sub-unit' (Trondal, 2012, p. 426). In addition, it enables an adaptability and resilience to emerging organizational reforms, and an ability to manoeuvre and overcome constraints that impede their objectives and activities, often against the leadership of the system.

For civil servants to accept and comply with emerging top-down organizational reforms, their content must be compatible with the organizational purpose, culture and practices of the reformed organization (Christensen, 2019). When reforms threaten this purpose, organizational dynamics can turn inwards, trigger resistance and conflict, while the 'logic of portfolio' becomes salient. Organizations may engage in 'turf-protecting strategies', even if they impede the accomplishment of assigned tasks. Similarly, the DG officials depend on the formal decision rule, they distance themselves from potential collaborators with overlapping competences, guard information and promote their distinctive expertise (Wilson, 1989 cited in Bach & Wegrich, 2019, p. 16). Furthermore, the long-term horizon of the DG officials (compared to the frequent rotation in the EP and the Council) can ensure the continuity of policy scope and resources. DG officials rely on their relations with the Member States' bureaucrats, they count on their supporting networks and constituencies (NGOs, agencies, expert groups and business interests) and, supported by their reputation, develop collaborations in connection with their portfolio and purpose. These supporting communities differ among DGs, (for example, DG transport is connected to the transport industry, DG SANTE to the food industry), develop certain expectations of the DGs in relation to their portfolio and exert pressure on them to ensure the inclusion of their interests in the policy proposals. Consequently, the DGs are incentivized to safeguard their distinctive portfolios and maintain the logic of the silo, as organizational reforms can also threaten their collaborations with existing networks that empower them and who are willing to loosen or shift their support to another DG. Consequently, instead of strengthening inter-institutional collaboration, reforms may also stimulate horizontal competition within the Commission, among DGs.

Despite similarities in formal organizational structures across the DGs, the Commission does not constitute a 'unitary' body (Cram, 1994). The transnational civil servants in the Commission differ, they bring with them different languages, professional qualifications, diverse functions, administrative styles and purposes; they have different cultural attachments to their national backgrounds and loyalties to their institutions, and they represent distinct constituencies (for example, DG ENV officials have been characterized as 'environmental freaks') (Ellinas & Suleiman, 2012, p. 936; Wettestad, 2005). Consequently, due to their embeddedness in the organization's norms and culture and logic of portfolio, their preferences regarding the future direction of their organization and European integration may differ from those of their leadership or the system they serve.

Juncker's organizational reforms aimed to increase inter-DG collaboration under the close co-ordination of the Commission's leadership and SecGen. Nevertheless, top-down organizational reforms may change the allocation of resources and competences, but they cannot change instantaneously the organizational norms, practices and officials' perceptions, preferences and behaviour. While the former indicate change, the latter demonstrate stickiness and path dependence (Pierson, 2000).

II. Data

To answer the research question, the article pursues a single case, specifically the organization of the CE in the Commission. This study does not aim to draw generalizations, but to provide valuable insights on how organizational reforms affect (a) the Commission's political role; and (b) the co-ordination among the DGs and the governance of transboundary policies, specifically the CE. The CE represents a cross-sectoral policy and constitutes '*a transformative model for a new production … a holistic way to look at industrial policy in the future, a new common socio-economic narrative to sustainability*'.[2] Since 2015, the governance of the CE package differs from other EU regulatory policies that are under the competence of a single DG. Instead, the CE constitutes a joint initiative of DG ENV and DG GROW and its governance is shared by various DGs that represent various policy areas, including environment, climate, food and agriculture, energy, industry and research and innovation. This sharing of competences contributed to CE's scope expansion. Hence, the CE constitutes a useful case to study the implications of the Commission's reforms regarding the role of the Commission, co-ordination and policy governance.

For this study, information was collected during two stakeholder conferences on the CE targets, challenges and obstacles, organized by the European Environmental Agency in 2015 and 2017. Moreover, secondary literature guides the theoretical concepts. Additionally, data were gathered through official documents, press releases and Communication reports published by the EU institutions concerning the policy developments, scope and instruments. These documents provided information about the DG portfolios concerning the CE policy scope and legislation. Furthermore, qualitative data were collected through ten semi-structured interviews (lasting approximately 90 minutes each) during 2017 and 2019.[3] Nine of these interviews were conducted in person with DG officials (three Heads of Units and six policy officers) involved in the CE, namely in DG Environment (ENV) (2), DG Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) (2), DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (GROW) (2), DG Health and Food (SANTE) (1), DG Regional and Urban Policy (REGIO) (1) and DG Research and Innovation (RTD) (1) and one by phone with the European Parliament Research Service (EPRS). With the agreement of the interviewees, eight of the interviews were recorded and transcribed, while written notes were kept for the two non-recorded interviews. Due to anonymity requests, the article provides information about the organization and day of the interview (see footnotes). The first interview was conducted with DG ENV, because of its

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[2]DGENV, 6/6/2017.

[3]In addition to the same question on their data (academic background, their position and professional role), all interviewees were asked the same questions. Some of the questions were also repeated in different formulations to ensure consistency. Questions asked: Did the reforms change the hierarchical structures? If yes, how did the reforms change the Commission's organization? How did they experience the organizational reforms, what were the aims of the reforms in their view? Did the reforms strengthen horizontal co-ordination? Did they change collaboration among DGs? Did they induce competition between DGs, Units or employees? Did the reforms change their practices internally? Did the reforms change their practices and collaboration with stakeholders? How did these practices and collaboration differ in the case of CE compared to business as usual, one DG – one policy areas (based on their experience)? What was, in their view, the biggest challenge for the co-ordination among DGs and Member States with respect to CE? What was the biggest challenge for the co-ordination among the leadership and DGs with respect to CE? Did the reforms change the silo structure? If yes, where do you attribute this change? If not, why? They were asked to identify internal reasons for change/non change. They were asked to identify external reasons (for example, relations with stakeholders). Did the reforms contribute to policy coherence and effectiveness? How was this exemplified in the CE? How did the changes benefit or not the CE that cuts across policy areas?

significant role in the initial stages of the CE development, followed by an interview at EPRS, due to their active response to the CE initiative. A second round of interviews followed including more DGs as their role increased in the process.

The first two interviews (2017) (especially the one at DG ENV) provided information on the formalities of the CE developments and policy instruments. The interviews that followed differed; they were more reflective and detailed in content and offered insights on the organizational reforms and their impact on informal processes, the interactions among DGs, and the perceptions and experiences of the interviewees on how the reforms affected their activities and role in policy governance. These differences can be attributed to the fact that in the second round of interviews, the interviewees, especially from certain DGs, had accumulated more in-depth knowledge both on the policy content and the process. For example, the interviewees in DG ENV and DG GROW, which had more formal competences and mandates, knew more by then and were more informative and reflective. They also focused more on the benefits and challenges compared to interviewees in DG AGRI, SANTE, REGIO and RTD. This is attributed to the degree of involvement of the DGs in the process and their interest in ensuring their inclusion in the CE governance. These differences also explain the use of longer quotes from certain DGs than others in the article.

Data collected through interviews can raise concerns about how the researcher uses and interprets the interviewees' subjective opinions, which can be affected by personality and experience. Therefore, we compared carefully and systematically the responses of the interviewees from the different DGs to the same questions. The answers did not present contradictory views among DGs; instead, they confirmed the differences in the degree of collaboration and interactions, which is also indicated in documents about the DGs' competences and shared activities.

III. Juncker's Organizational Reforms and CE

After his appointment in November 2014, President Juncker emphasized the 'political drive' of his College of Commissioners, which 'rests on a political mandate' and is reflected in the priorities of his organizational reforms (Nugent & Rhinard, 2019, p. 204). Organizational reforms in the Commission already started under President José Manuel Barroso, who followed a more bottom-up leadership style than Juncker (Rietig & Dupont, 2021). Juncker's reforms were concrete and distinctive and aimed 'to produce integrated, well-grounded and well-explained initiatives that lead to clear results' (European Commission, 2014a, p. 2). As President Juncker stated: 'I want us to overcome *silo* mentalities by working jointly on those areas where we can really make a difference' (European Commission, 2014a, p. 2). Juncker entrusted *ten* 'well-defined priority projects to the seven Vice-Presidents' to '*steer and coordinate work across the Commission* in the key areas of the Political Guidelines' (European Commission, 2014a, p. 2). Juncker created DG clusters, in order to strengthen horizontal co-ordination through close collaboration among the various DGs, the leadership (Directors General) and the services, to reduce the overlap of activities and increase efficiency. A cluster represented a team of several Commissioners, under the leadership of one Vice-President, whose composition changed according to the needs of a project and co-operated across portfolios. These

reforms also responded to the budgetary pressure that increased during the eurozone crisis and affected the allocation of resources among DGs.

Furthermore, the establishment of the Inter-institutional Relations Group ('GRI'), which consisted of the Deputy Heads of Cabinets of the Commissioners, and assisted by the SecGen, met weekly. The GRI formalized the intra-institutional relations within the Commission and supported its work (European Commission, 2014a, p. 9). Prior to each meeting, the Vice-Presidents and Commissioners approved the documents discussed by the GRI, which confirms the Vice-Presidents' close monitoring and empowerment in the process.

In July 2014, the Barroso Commission launched the first CE package, 'Towards a Circular Economy: A Zero Waste Programme for Europe', under the initiative of DG ENV. The 2014 CE package provided a holistic approach to organizing resource efficiency and waste reduction, while strengthening EU competitiveness. Specifically, it stated: 'moving towards a more circular economy is essential to deliver the resource efficiency agenda established under the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Higher and sustained improvements of resource efficiency performance are within reach and can bring major economic benefits' (European Commission, 2014b). The package reflected the DG ENV logic of portfolio, purpose and culture and represented topics influenced by the DG ENV's expertise and knowledge ('blind spots') and/or interests ('selective perception' bias). Initially, DG GROW criticized the 2014 CE package as unrealistic because it did not include various important aspects related to competitiveness and jobs, reflecting its own purpose and interests. One month after Juncker took office, he announced the replacement of the 2014 package by a revised proposal with a 'broader and more ambitious approach' to CE (European Commission, 2014b). Pro-environmental actors contested the withdrawal of the 2014 package, indicating controversy and politicization. They interpreted this as the abandoning and/or diluting of the existing plans in order to protect the perceived industry interests (Green 10, 2014).

In December 2015, the Commission launched 'The Circular Economy Action Plan', which expanded the CE scope and became part of the first priority on *Jobs Growth Investment and Competitiveness*, responding to the criticism from DG GROW. The 2015 CE aimed to 'boost the EU's competitiveness by protecting businesses against scarcity of resources and volatile prices, helping to create new business opportunities and innovative, more efficient ways of producing and consuming' (European Commission, 2015). The package originally consisted of four directives (waste, packaging waste, landfill waste and electrical and electronic waste) and one regulation (market fertilizing). In 2017, the EU guidelines for food donation were added, mainly to facilitate the redistribution of surplus food (Bassot & Hiller, 2018). The inclusion of new areas (for example, food waste plans) in the CE package demonstrate the expansion in scope of the CE that resulted in the involvement of DG SANTE and DG AGRI. The 2015 CE Action Plan was condemned by 'green' campaigners as being less ambitious than the 2014 package (European Greens, 2017).

IV. The Commission's Political Role

Juncker, the first President elected according to the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, envisioned the strengthening and concretizing of the political role of the Presidency. According to one

interviewee, it was unclear among civil servants 'what it meant when Juncker said that this [being political] is going to happen in the Commission. Because for us, the Commission is always political. But we came to understand over time that what he [Juncker] meant by a political Commission was a much stronger direct influence of the political level of the work of the services, much stronger than ever before'. The same interviewee continues: 'concretization [of the political role] … really meant … increased centralization of powers and decisions at the higher level, the Vice-Presidents and the SecGen and in relative terms weakened the Directors General … I think if anything, it had really an impact on the extent to which Directors General shape actually policy'.[4] Another interviewee concurs: 'all Commissions have been political. The major difference with the Juncker Commission is that proposals and decisions come from above. When decisions come from above, the rest is theatre politics. We observe a dramatic centralization of powers in the SecGen, increased hierarchy and luck of transparency, combined with a lack of expertise. Where is the suggested effectiveness in the model? Closed processes impede effectiveness, as there is no possibility for feedback and corrections by the services that acquire the expertise. These changes not only decreased the effectiveness but also the motivation of the services'.[5] Another interviewee added, 'monitoring increased and intensified at all stages. All our work is subject to political validation as we go along from early on, from the decision, the development and the final decisions and enable the political leadership – not only to get involved, but also to control effectiveness and the fulfilment of its targets'.[6] Similarly, another interviewee states: 'even guidance has to go through the Vice-Presidents'.[7] These statements from three different DGs demonstrate the strengthening of the leadership's political role, and changes in the relations between the leadership and the services. 'Political' did not refer to the Commission's political role in policy-making, 'policy political' (Nugent & Rhinard, 2019), but to the political empowerment of the Commission leadership by the transfer of the delegated decisions from the services to the leadership (Kassim & Laffan, 2019).

  In line with organization theory (Egeberg et al., 2016), Juncker's reforms challenged the internal power dynamics, the organizational principles and patterns of collaboration among the actors within the Commission. While they empowered the Vice-Presidents and SecGen, they weakened the Directors General. Bürgin (2020, p. 379) confirms 'a centralization of the powers and functions that constrain the role of the services, from the preparation to the execution of legislation', under the seven Vice-Presidents' control in the effort to 'ensure that the priorities of the president are respected in inter-service coordination'. Intensified monitoring and control by the political leadership aimed to improve effectiveness and impede surprises in later stages of the policy process. According to one interviewee, 'many people in the Commission see that negatively – the task teams with a range of commissioners under one or two Vice-Presidents', and continues: 'there's a loss of collegiality in the approach, because what was in the past the inter-service in the Commission, is much less important than it used to be, because if you haven't spoken up before, you're very likely to be pushed aside. Which is very good if you're on the right side of the argument'.[8]

[4]DGENV, 8/4/2019.
[5]DGAGRI, 11/4/2019.
[6]DGENV, 8/4/2019.
[7]DGSANTE, 8/4/2019.
[8]DGENV, 8/4/2019.

Furthermore, focus on the empowerment of the Commission's political role undermined the regulatory activities, as reflected in the lower number of legislative initiatives (Kassim et al., 2017). Although reduced legislative activities addressed the Member States' criticism of over-regulation, it weakened the entrepreneurial role of the civil servants and the services in policy and institutional integration within the EU regulatory state. Instead, the Commission introduced strategic initiatives (for example, the European Union Global Strategy) that are in line with Juncker's ninth priority on the EU's global actorness and pragmatic approach to 'do more with less'. These initiatives address broad transboundary international problems, and they respond to the international strategies, namely the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (third priority), to which the CE is closely connected.

V. Breaking the Silo Logic

The DGs' behaviour and practices are embedded in their distinctive administrative functions, expertise, resources, 'logic of portfolio' (for example, food, agriculture, environment) and the organizational culture that develops over time. These characteristics provide the DGs with a specialized capacity and ability to act as policy and norms 'entrepreneurs'. However, as the EU's competences and administrative workload grow, internal specialization and fragmentation increase, affecting the coherence of the policy process as well as inter- and intra-institutional relations (Kassim et al., 2013; Trondal, 2012). The institutionalization of each DG's organizational distinctiveness led to silo mentalities. Organizations tend to maintain these silos and preserve their distinctive roles and activities when reforms threaten their survival and distinctiveness, despite inefficiencies due to overlaps and fragmentation.

In line with Juncker's reforms and teamwork vision among the DGs activities,[9] the Commission involved a core project team in the preparation of the 2015 CE Plan. The CE team was co-chaired by First Vice-President Frans Timmermans and Vice-President Jyrki Katainen. The team included DG ENV (Commissioner for Environment Karmenu Vella), which focused on the environmental benefits of the CE; DG GROW (Commissioner Elżbieta Bieńkowska), concerning the impact of CE on jobs and innovation as well as the overall activities; and DG RTD on issues related to CE research and development. Although the CE had not been included in Juncker's ten priorities, the Commission acknowledged its importance early on, and referred to it in the confirmation hearings to the EP.[10] However, the College of Commissioners was divided on the direction of the CE.[11] Nevertheless, due to internal and external pressure[12] and the long-term efforts of the project team, CE became part of priority one. The collaboration between the selected DGs reflects the change in the content of the 2015 CE compared to the 2014 version, namely the significance of the economic aspects and growth, which were in line with

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[9]Circular Economy conference, 27/3/2017.
[10]https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2014/539070/EPRS_BRI(2014)539070_REV1_EN.pdf;   https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/documents/envi/dv/vella_mission_letter_/vella_mission_letter_en.pdf; https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_15_6203.
[11]EPRS, 29/6/2017.
[12]https://rreuse.org/joint-letter-to-president-juncker-concerning-potential-withdrawal-of-the-circular-economy-package/.

Juncker's first priority. For example, the initial focus on resource efficiency by DG ENV shifted to an emphasis on eco-design and energy efficiency.[13]

Furthermore, the 2015 CE Plan broadened the scope of the CE (for example, on food waste and loss) and expanded the CE governance team, including DG SANTE, which focused on the regulatory framework of food waste management; and DG AGRI on CE in agricultural production. DG AGRI could condition the distribution of financial resources and 'persuade' farmers to adapt more CE methods in their agricultural activities.[14] These differences in scope represent the diverse 'logics of portfolio', functions and competences of the DGs. An interviewee stated, 'the 2015 CE Plan aimed to include aspects that were absent in the 2014 CE package',[15] reflecting the blind spots; and continues: '[T]rying to focus too much on the outcome of recycling or the raw materials sufficiency, it [2014 package] did not offer sufficient tools or instruments for how we get there. … we connected with our colleagues in raw materials policy, in critical raw materials and resource efficiency. We discovered that, well, we can actually do it. Not only because we have the financial environment, but we have other pressures that CE will sort out or will help to address the benefit of the industry. So that became the pillars of the new strategy that tries to address environmental concerns while at the same time improving the industrial competitiveness, and that's why the new plan was within the priority one, priority for growth under the Juncker Commission'.[16] This statement demonstrates how the DG GROW's organizational purpose and different interests and specialized expertise affected the direction of the 2015 CE Plan, influencing the inclusion of CE in Juncker's priorities. Consequently, the changes in the 2015 CE Plan strengthened the economic aspects in CE and demonstrated a slight turn away from the initial environmental focus and priorities.

Responding to the reforms, inter-DG interactions about the CE became more frequent. As one interviewee said, 'the CE cannot be led only by one DG. Therefore, we sit together with the corresponding units from other DGs to foster cooperation, exchange information and align our efforts'.[17] However, these interactions do not necessarily create profound synergies and breaking of the silos. An interviewee explains how, 'despite the strong message in the Juncker reform regarding increased collaboration, in reality, collaboration requires a change in organizational culture. When it comes to management, the Commission doesn't have one organizational culture, but at least four related to the national backgrounds of the civil servants'.[18] This statement refers to the distinctive role of organizational culture in collaboration, which cannot often be abolished by top-down reforms. Furthermore, expressions such as 'We did that' were used by the interviewees to distinguish their role in the CE, portraying the 'logic of portfolio' and reinvigorating the silo structure within the Commission. The purpose and 'logic of portfolio' dominate the co-ordination process, which concentrates on clarifications of allocation of tasks, at least initially. Top-down attempts are viewed as a threat to the survival of the organizational environment and are unable to dissolve these distinctive organizational characteristics (Nugent & Rhinard, 2019, pp. 206–207). Instead, civil servants resist the top-down

[13]EPRS, 29/06/2017.
[14]DGAGRI, 11/4/2019.
[15]DGGROW, 11/4/2019.
[16]DGGROW, 11/4/2019.
[17]DGENV, 6/6/2017.
[18]DGAGRI, 11/4/2019.

filtering and monitoring of DG activities out of fear of disempowerment and the loss of their autonomy, despite the socialization processes that construct the transnational bureaucratic identity of the eurocrats.

VI. Organizational Change and Supporting Communities

In policy governance, the DGs interact regularly with working groups and committees in the Council and EP, and gather diverse information about different issues. Furthermore, each DG interacts with actors (for example, expert groups, agencies, industry, civil society) with a direct interest in the DG's portfolio and expertise. Thus, the DGs develop their own support networks and constituencies. These supporting actors 'have become more active with the use of the media and digitalization that offer a new opportunity to express their preferences and criticism',[19] exerting more pressure on the DGs. As one interviewee indicates, the CE was relevant 'not only because we have the pressure on the environment, but we also have some other pressures that circular economy will help to work out or will help to the benefit of the industry on the whole. So that became the pillars of the new [CE] strategy, that tries to be … addressing the environmental concerns, but at the same time pushing for industry competitiveness. And that's why the new plan was under the Priority 1 on growth under the Juncker Commission, and that's where we are now'.[20] Another interviewee states 'the role of business interests became important in shaping the CE strategy, but not necessarily negatively'.[21] This statement demonstrates the consideration of broader interests and pressure on the CE policy governance. In the effort to guard their portfolios and the purpose served, the individual DGs mobilize their efforts both internally, as shown in DG GROW, and with their supporting communities to safeguard their position and role within the existing organizational settings (teams of Commissioners). Consequently, Juncker's organizational reforms did not necessarily transform the distinctive silos' governance structures.

VII. Inter-DG Collaboration and Competition

Juncker's reforms and the close monitoring of the DG activities and service tasks by the Vice-Presidents[22] threatened and constrained the autonomy of the DGs' transnational civil servants to develop innovative policy initiatives based on their expert knowledge and administrative capacity within a bottom-up technocratic process. Instead, the focus of these reforms was to increase co-ordination and ensure that civil servants follow the leadership's guidelines and safeguard the effective and accurate implementation of policy decisions. One interviewee states, 'the top-down structure contributed to the increased co-ordination and, for example, the relationship between DG ENV and DG GROW went from being antagonistic to a more collaborative co-operation. It would not happen automatically, as competition is stronger bottom-up due to different corporate cultures, different views. The political checks all along keep the process in line', and continues 'Initially, it felt as though the role of the services diminished. But this changed. Initially, people can

[19]DGAGRI, 11/4/2019.
[20]DGGROW, 11/4/2019.
[21]DGRTD, 27/3/2017.
[22]DGSANTE, 8/4/2019.

have separate agendas. But as they socialize within the organization, they either [both] clash and conflict or they can manage to achieve something and develop the separate agendas into a shared agenda'.[23]

The involvement of two Vice-Presidents and a number of DGs in the governance of the 2015 CE Plan amplified the frequency of the inter-DGs interactions, horizontally and vertically. The DGs increased interactions also through the co-organization of collaborative workshops,[24] created administrative networks and contributed to the emergence of a hybrid transnational administrative polity around the CE. Initially, interactions concentrated on clarifications regarding the allocation of responsibilities and competences. Later, however, the frequent interactions and exchanges of ideas enabled learning and led to policy proposals that incorporated the DGs' diverse interests. According to one interviewee[25]: 'It can be safely said that this [change] happened in the case of CE relatively quickly. It started as a separate agenda in September 2014 and within 6 months developed into a common agenda strengthening horizontal co-ordination. The reorganization encouraged greater horizontal ownership. It was started in 2014 by [DG] ENV, but in December developed as a true Commission initiative, spearheaded initially by two antagonistic services. As the agenda develops, it becomes clearer what it means for the different services. There is an assessment of what specific agendas mean for specific services; for example, DG Grow was less enthusiastic in the very beginning, but it changed over the years that this was a winning agenda that led to a change in attitude'.[26] Nevertheless, increased collaborations did not shift the civil servants' loyalty from their own DG to another centre, neither their purpose nor sectoral interests. While adjusting to the reforms, the civil servants try to safeguard their purpose and organizational interests.

The DGs often seek collaborations due to a lack of resources, changes in the corps of civil servants and the need to address external challenges and transboundary cross-cutting policy problems (for example, environment, agriculture, climate). The governance challenge is to impede overlaps and increase policy coherence while justifying and ensuring the inclusion of the DGs' diverse interests and their role in the governance process. One interviewee states, 'the DGs did not agree on how to define the result indicators in order to reach the performance targets with respect to environment (for example, DG AGRI and ENV on biodiversity and resilience indicators). In the process, disagreements emerge due to the involvement of different levels; namely, the services prepare and analyse the policy details, while the high-level officials negotiate based on these proposals. Disagreements usually emerge at the negotiation level among the Directors General due to the diverse cultures of the DGs, which have been based on the silos' structure'.[27]

In the CE, the first movers (DG ENV and DG GROW) acted as pacesetters; the later entrants (for example, DG SANTE, DG AGRI) were excluded from the initial agenda-setting and landed in the CE governance periphery, struggling to enjoy a share of the 'unequally' distributed resources. One interviewee stated 'the main competition

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[23]DGENV, 8/4/2019.
[24]DGAGRI, DGENV and Joint Research Centre collaboration workshop on environmental best practices; DG AGRI and DGSANTE workshop on societal challenges with a focus on microbial resistance; workshop including a number of DGs on risk management.
[25]DGENV, 8/4/2019.
[26]DGENV, 8/4/2019.
[27]DGAGRI, 11/4/2019.

in the Commission is related to the scarcity of resources and budget cuts, which does not allow competition in a number of circumstances. This led to increased negative competition for not doing things when resources have been taken away'.[28] Another interviewee added 'the fact that we also have fewer resources indicates that they put the resources in the priorities. We are struggling, at the moment, to develop narratives that show that we are in line with the 10 priorities and not only us'.[29]

Consequently, not all DGs manage to sustain their power (in type or degree), as their power varies from area to area, depending on the DGs' expertise, competences and resources. Hence, the top-down monitoring has been unable to establish shared thinking within the Commission. The individual DGs mobilized in-turf strategies, fighting to ensure the inclusion of their purpose in the leadership's priorities, reflecting the resilience of the silos' logic. The services develop policy strategies to remain competitive. Moreover, the peripheral DGs have been concerned about how their weakening in the governance process would affect their relations with their constituencies, industry, NGOs and civil society, who tend to shift their support to other DGs to ensure the inclusion of their interests in policy decisions. For example, DG SANTE's efforts concentrated on linking food waste, new diets and consumption patterns to environmental benefits through the CE,[30] which DG ENV did not initially consider ambitious enough, reflecting the different views among the DGs. DG AGRI linked the CAP financial resources to CE, which 'should attribute to it [DG AGRI] a strong role in the process'; moreover, 'since the CAP has been successful on issues of competitiveness and income support', the CE provided the opportunity to deal 'with concerns about the environmental performance of the CAP as they are expressed in the deliberation procedures with the stakeholders'.[31]

Competition among DGs is hardly a new phenomenon. Peterson (1995, cited in Bürgin, 2020, p. 380) attributes it to 'the absence of centralized political authority [that] contributed to the development of quasi-autonomous DGs able to pursue their own agendas, relatively free from the control of the political level, leading to intense rivalries between particular DGs and the private offices of individual Commissioners'. While the Commissioners represent some of the inter-governmental differences on a political level (Kassim et al., 2017, p. 657), the officials represent loyalties to their individual departments and DGs rather than the EC as a whole (Kassim, 2008, p. 652), which can lead to administrative-level inter-departmental conflicts. One interviewee states 'the establishment of task teams, a range of Commissioners and Vice-Presidents led to a loss of collegiality, which was important in the past through the inter-service at the Commission … many view this as negative. So, if someone from the inter-service spoke early on and it was not accepted, it was pushed aside. Moreover, it [the task teams] increased hierarchy. It was designed to increase the control that the political level has over the services. So to that extent, there's competition'.[32] Thus, empowerment of the leadership in setting and monitoring policy priorities and allocating scarce resources, intensified inter-DGs' horizontal and vertical competition. Moreover, the strengthening of the Presidency by the

[28]DGENV, 8/4/2019.
[29]DGSANTE, 8/4/2019.
[30]DGSANTE, 8/4/2019.
[31]DGAGRI, 11/4/2019.
[32]DGENV, 8/4/2019.

reforms provided a 'new' venue to the Member States to exert direct pressure for the inclusion and promotion of their policy interests.

Conclusion

This article investigates Juncker's organizational reforms in the Commission and their implications for its political role, co-ordination among the DGs and policy governance of the CE, which has been under-researched. Drawing on organization theory, the article demonstrates that Juncker's reforms empowered the Commission's leadership, through the centralization of powers, hierarchical governance and close monitoring of the work of the DGs. However, the DGs demonstrated resistance and resilience to top-down organizational reforms, guided by their organizational characteristics and 'logic of portfolio'. Officials remain primarily loyal to their DG affiliation, their purpose and the interests of their constituencies.

Responding to reforms, horizontal inter-institutional (among DGs) and vertical (DGs–leadership) interactions, participation and collaboration in working groups on the CE policy governance increased. Despite their increased frequency, interactions among the DGs mostly concentrate on the clarification of competences and allocation of scarce resources. Besides, the leadership's close monitoring of the tasks by the DGs' services undermines their role and hinders bottom-up innovative policy-making. Although these interactions may result in co-ordinated policy agreements between the leadership and DGs (vertically), they do not necessarily lead to administrative synergies, cohesiveness and policy integration with a shared 'purpose' horizontally (among DGs). Instead, they lead to compatible un-contradictory sub-sectoral policies that convey broadly accepted policy ideas that complement each-other. Overall, the DGs try to safeguard their 'logic of portfolio', administrative practices and distinctive organizational culture, aiming at organizational maintenance and turf protection.

Organization studies have acknowledged resistance to organizational reforms. However, they have not examined adequately how, while reforms can enhance inter-institutional interactions, they also intensify competition and bureaucratic rivalries within shared governance competences. As the article demonstrates, competition among the DGs increased, particularly among the first-movers (DG ENV and DG GROW) and the latter entrants in the governance of CE. This is due both to the budget cuts in the Commission with winners (for example, DG GROW) and losers (for example, DG AGRI), but also conflicting interests in the different policy subfields about whose interests and purpose should be prioritized in the policy formulation. The DGs mobilize to ensure their own and their constituencies' interests are included in the leadership's priorities, expanding the scope of CE. Thus, in contrast to the initial targets, the reforms have not achieved the breaking out of the silos' structure.

The article contributes to organization studies with respect to governance and co-ordination in the Commission of policy areas under the competence of more than one DG, following Juncker's reforms. Moreover, it is hoped to initiate a discussion for further research on the governance of cross-cutting transboundary policies in the Commission, where the DGs share competences and authority and under what conditions reforms can strengthen policy integration.

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