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Interest Groups in a Multi-level Polity:
The Impact of European Integration on National Systems

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Abstract

Authors have forwarded seemingly contradictory hypotheses on how European integration might impact on national interest intermediation. This paper advocates including the meso level in the analysis, i.e. looking systematically at the policy- and sector-specific characteristics in European governance. From that perspective, it seems that the impact of Euro-politics could be much more diverse (in the sense of differentiated between policy areas) than hitherto expected. In addition, we should pay attention to the existence (and limits) of different types of impact potentials of Euro-level patterns on the national systems.

Based on these analytical differentiations, I expect that the public–private interaction styles in the European multi-layer system will – in the long run – rather converge. The result might be a “more uniform pluriformism” in the multi-level system characterised by, on the one hand, the co-existence of different ideal-types of policy networks (the paper distinguishes between statist clusters, issue networks, policy communities and corporatist policy communities) at both the European and the national levels. On the other hand, Europeanisation tends to decrease diversity between the various Member States since basically all national policy networks are nowadays affected by the impact of the specific corresponding EU policy and the relevant network there. Intra-system diversity of forms of public–private interaction might thus be increasingly accompanied by a trend of inter-system convergence due to Europeanisation.

I. Introduction*

Does the EU represent transnational pluralism that will trickle down through the European multi-level system? Or is it a “statist pluralist” model which nevertheless impinges badly on, first, statist national polities and, second, corporatist ones? Or does the EU herald a completely new form of governance, i.e. a problem-solving style of co-operation between public and private actors that will succeed hierarchy between public and private actors as well as competition between interest groups, in both the supra-national and the national spheres?

It seems that there are good arguments for all of these well-known hypotheses that were put forward in recent scholarly writing on European integration and interest intermediation. If so, there must be an analytical key to open the doors between the seemingly contradictory scenarios. I hold that including the meso level in the analysis, i.e. looking systematically at the policy- and sector-specific characteristics in European governance, will do the trick. In addition, we should pay attention to the existence of different types of impact potentials of Euro-level patterns on the national systems. Based on this analytical differentiation, I expect that the public–private interaction styles in the European multi-layer system will – in the long run – rather converge. The result might be a “moderate diversity” characterised by, on the one hand, the co-existence of different ideal-types of policy networks (statist clusters, issue networks, policy communities and corporatist policy communities) at both the European and the national levels. On the other hand, Europeanisation has decreased diversity between the various Member States and will continue to do so, since basically all national policy networks are nowadays affected by the impact of the specific corresponding EU policies and the relevant networks there. Intra-system diversity of forms of public–private interaction might thus be increasingly moderated by a trend of inter-system convergence due to Europeanisation. Since the effect of Euro-politics is in most cases an indirect and “soft” one, to be mediated by national institutions (in the wider sense; see III.3.), no uniform systems of interest intermediation will result even in the longer run.

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Section II reviews the state of the relevant literature and its shortcomings, thus outlining the background for the development of a new approach in section III. The latter rests, first, on meso-level policy networks as the characteristic settings of public–private interaction in policy-making and on four simple ideal-types to characterise them at both the EU and the national level (sub-section III.1). Second, this approach builds on the distinction of three different mechanisms of potential EU impact on national interest intermediation (sub-section III.2). The conclusions then present some preliminary hypotheses on relevant future developments.

Without doubt, the analysis of Europeanisation and national interest politics as outlined here on the basis of four policy network ideal-types and three potential feedback mechanisms represents a research programme to be realised in future comparative empirical studies rather than final results. However, a look at the differing potential influences of Europeanisation on various national policy networks (Table 2) and on the great variety of potential transmission effects of public–private interaction patterns already suggests that a global approach assuming only one EU ideal-type and deriving one similar impetus exerted via just one mechanism for all national policy networks is unrealistic.

II. The State of the Debate on European Integration and National Public–private Relations: Definitions, Classifications and Expectations Vary

In the European Union, there are quite different models of public–private interaction in the making of public policies. At least at first glance, they may be distinguished neatly in three classic political science paradigms: *statism* refers to a model where private interests have no significant role in public decision-making. In *pluralist* polities, there are many interest groups which lobby individually, i.e. they express their views in an effort to influence the politicians who actually take the decisions. In *corporatist* systems, by contrast, a few privileged interest groups (usually the peak associations of labour and industry) are incorporated in public decision-making as decisive co-actors. A closer look reveals that the definitions used in the literature of most notably corporatism, but also pluralism, differ a lot.

1. Differing Definitions of “Corporatism” and “Pluralism”

A specific type of interest group system¹ and a particular form of co-operative policy-making² have, in combination, been regarded as the hallmark of corporatism at least by a mainstream (see e.g. Cawson, 1985a, 8) (this two-dimensional definition of corporatism will inform the ideal-types presented later in this text). But over time, corporatism was also “defined as an ideology, a variant of political culture, a type of state, a form of economy, or even as a kind of society” (Schmitter, 1996, 3).³ What is crucial here: even in most recent

¹ “Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports” (Schmitter, 1974, 13).

² Lehbruch opposed “corporatist” co-operation of organisations and public authorities, and “pluralist” pressure politics (see Lehbruch, 1982, 8 with further references). Along these lines, a corporatist policy-making process was also described as “a mode of policy formation in which formally designated interest associations are incorporated within the process of authoritative decision-making and implementation. As such they are officially recognised by the state not merely as interest intermediaries but as co-responsible *partners* in governance and social guidance” (Schmitter, 1981, 295).

³ Until today, the comparative industrial relations literature thus tends to speak about ‘corporatism’ (without further specification) if in a state, labour markets and industrial relations are managed by co-operative governance of industry, unions and (partly) the state (e.g. Traxler, 1995, 5), even if other policy areas in the same political system may follow completely different patterns. In political

writing on European integration, e.g. in accounts of public–private patterns and European integration, authors do not necessarily refer to the same animal when talking about “corporatism”. Vivien Schmidt defines as corporatism a situation where interests have privileged access to both decision-making and implementation and as pluralism a situation where there is large set of interests involved in decision-making but they have no impact in implementation since a regulatory approach prevails there. Finally, she defines as statism a situation where societal interests are not involved in decision-making at all but that they are accommodated during the policy implementation phase (Schmidt, 1996; 1997). Beate Kohler-Koch, by contrast, developed another definition of corporatism for the macro level of political systems. Her typology of “modes of governance” is based on the two categories “organising principle of political relations” (majority rule versus consociation) and “constitutive logic of a polity” (politics as investment in common identity versus reconciliation of competing self-interests). Corporatist governance in her view captures, first, the pursuit of a common interest and, second, the search for consensus instead of majority voting (Kohler-Koch, 1999, 26). Andersen and Eliassen, in turn, implicitly defined as “a corporatist structure” one in which bodies consisting of both interest organisations and Community institutions are decisive (Andersen and Eliassen, 1991, 17).

Such a nominal “mess” is not a novel problem in political science since the older concept of pluralism as well presented to its critics a constantly moving target (Grant, 1985a, 19).⁴ In contrast with the previously dominant elite model, “pluralists” originally assumed widespread, effective, political resources; multiple centres of power; and optimum policy development through competing interests. What seems – at least nowadays – unclear is whether the groups can just make themselves heard at some consultative stage of the decision-making process or if they actually all have equal influence on the decision-makers. The fact that pluralism is typically connected with a clear separation of state and society and with the state being an arbiter of the competition between interest groups

science, Scandinavian scholars take the same approach because in their countries, centralised wage bargaining is empirically the major incident of corporatist patterns (Karlhofer and Sickinger, 1999, 245 with further references). Economists tend to speak about corporatism as a particular style of economic policy and the conceptual incongruencies become even more obvious if we look at the extreme diversity of specific indicators for, and detailed measurements of corporatism (Keman and Pennings, 1995).

⁴ “Since pluralism is so vague a set of ideas it is difficult to understand how opponents can have rejected it with such confidence” (Jordan, 1990, 286). German authors may use a very different concept since “pluralism” has a less specific meaning in German since it was used to distinguish liberal societies from monist ones before the international debate on corporatism started in 1974 (Lehmbruch, 1996, fn 4).

(Cawson, 1978, 182f)⁵ is a strong argument against an equal impact for all groups. Nevertheless, the latter is frequently assumed in contemporary writing that touches pluralist thought, also by Europeanists: e.g. Bomberg speaks of “similar access and influence” (1998, 183; see also Marsh, 1998, 189; and implicitly Schmidt, 1997, 134). With regard to detailed empirical studies, however, one may suspect that the assumption of equal influence for all lobbies will discard almost every extant constellation (hence, the definition of the pluralist form of policy network, i.e. the issue network, used in this paper does not include such a characteristic).⁶

Differing definitions are not only problematic per se for scholarly discourse but have furthermore made classifications of political systems partly inconsistent with each other. This is even worse since there is *no single authoritative classification of the EU member states* with regard to their patterns of interest politics and existing comparative studies do not always draw the same conclusion. In any case, recent Europeanist papers regarded France, Italy and Spain as statist polities while Austria, Germany and the Netherlands are usually considered corporatist – notwithstanding partly differing definitions (Schmidt, 1999; Streeck and Schmitter, 1994, 215; Lenschow, 1999, 16). No agreement exists in the case of the UK: Green Cowles speaks of pluralist government–business relations (1998, 4) while Schmidt takes the UK as a statist example (1999, 1). Interestingly, pluralist systems in Europe are hardly explicitly named but rather exist as a residual category while the US is chosen as the textbook example of pluralism even if a comparison of political systems with the EU is at stake (e.g. Schmidt, 1997, 135).

2. Differing Models and Expectations Concerning the EU

Another interesting feature of the (in quantitative terms meagre) literature on Euro-politics and intermediation is that scholars use to deduce effects on the national systems from one assumed cross-sectoral ideal-type of EU governance style (on empirical meso-level differences see below) but their models as well as

⁵ The “vectors of influence” (Lehmbruch, 1979, 51) were perceived to run only in one direction, i.e. from private lobbies to state agencies. There was no co-operation in the narrow sense assumed, i.e. no multi-directional relations. However, it is most difficult to draw the borderline between “negative co-ordination” (i.e. an implicit mutual adaptation of the competing actors which is included in the pluralist pattern) on the one hand, and the active mobilisation of consensus (i.e. direct negotiations which are a typical feature of corporatism), on the other (Czada, 1994, 53; van Waarden, 1992, 34).

⁶ Equal or unequal influence are here considered a matter of empirics, not of definition.

expected effects differ. In other words: The few available articles⁷ reaching beyond individual case studies usually concentrate, in a first step, on describing the EU as one particular type of state–society relations and, in a second step, deduce from this general model of Euro-politics likely effects on the Member States. The most famous of such accounts – with the telling title “from national corporatism to transnational pluralism” – analyses why the EC falls short of centralised labour-industry-state relations that would, such as in some historical national systems, govern economic policy decisions in the wider sense in a policy-transgressing manner. The authors consider most likely for the European Union “an American-style pattern of *disjointed pluralism* or *competitive federalism*, organised over no less than three levels – regions, nation-states, and *Brussels*” (Streeck and Schmitter, 1991, 215).

Not all scholars, however, agree on these specific characteristics attributed to “EC governance”.⁸ While Streeck and Schmitter described a pluralist style similar to American patterns, Vivien Schmidt detects important differences to the US model since she perceives the EC to be “less *pluralistic* in interest group access, given that business is the interest mainly represented in a majority of policy areas, and it contains statist elements in its control of the process of interest representation and its greater insulation from undue influence” (Schmidt, 1997, 134). She even talks about “statist pluralism” in policy formulation (1997, 138). Like Streeck and Schmitter, Schmidt also deduces impacts on national interest politics from her general ideal-type of EU level governance (1999; 1997). Her conclusion is that “statist polities have had a harder time adjusting to EU level policy formulation, a more difficult task in implementing the policy changes engendered by the EU, and a greater challenge in adapting their national

⁷ The impact of European integration on interest intermediation in the Member States has so far hardly been discussed in detail and broad-based comparative empirical studies on the practical effects in the Member States are missing. There are at least a few recent exceptions offering interesting insights on the sectoral and case study level. Maria Green Cowles looks at the “Transatlantic Business Dialogue” and its impact on national government–business relations in France, Germany and the UK (1998). Andrea Lenschow discusses the implementation of EC environmental policy acts and their impact on state–society relations in Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK (1999). A study of the implementation of four EC-environmental Directives in Britain and Germany also allows some insights on private–public relations in Knill/Lenschow (1998).

⁸ I choose the term EC (and not EU) in this section primarily because this diminishes chances that readers include the national level (since EU governance is often used to describe the entire multi-level system, not only the EU as a specific supra-national political system). Since the debate on patterns of governance focuses on EC policy fields and usually neglects the second and third EU pillars with their very special style, using EC here is even correct in legal terms. The typology presented below can nevertheless be applied to the second and third pillars as well.

governance patterns to the new realities” while “the EU’s quasi-pluralist process is in most ways more charitable to systems characterized by corporatist processes [...] because the “fit” is greater in such areas as societal actors’ interest organisation and access and governing bodies’ decision-making culture and adaptability” (1999, 2). Schmidt argues that European integration enhances the autonomy of political leaders in pluralist or even corporatist states, but not in statist France where it has “diminished the overall autonomy of the executive at the formulation stage, while it has undermined its flexibility at the implementation stage” (1996, 249).

Beate Kohler-Koch’s ideal-typical EC-style, “network governance”, finally refers to a quite different animal that is characterised by co-operation among all interested actors (instead of competition) and by joint learning processes (1996). According to her, hierarchy and subordination give way to an interchange on a more equal footing aimed at joint problem-solving (Kohler-Koch, 1999, 32) that will dissipate in the multi-level system. This suggests a much more co-operative process than self-interested lobbying of many individual private groups according to the pluralist ideal-type. There are thus differing accounts of the basic characteristics of EC-public–private relations and, based on them, diverse expectations with a view to effects of European integration on national interest intermediation.

My suspicion is that the existing accounts are not necessarily contradictory. I suggest reading them less as alternative accounts than as useful pieces in a larger jigsaw. Breaking down the level of analysis to include the meso level (for both the EC/EU and its Member States) might allow one to integrate these analyses as each referring to different co-existing ideal-types of governance at the EU level and/or to specific forms of impact on the national systems.⁹ Existing confusion resulted mainly from the absence of, first, a systematic connection of research on interest intermediation pointing at great meso-level differences both in the Member States and in Euro-politics (see below) and, second, an analytical distinction of various kinds of potential effects of EC-level patterns in the Member States. The remainder of this article will try to fill this gap. This should lead not to a general reversal of previous expectations but to an important differentiation.

⁹ In terms of our discussion of the impact of Europeanisation on *national* interest politics, it is important to note that much of the literature does not systematically distinguish changes in the *national* policy process due to a trickling down of impacts from the EU level, on the one hand, and the participation of national actors in the *European* decision process, on the other.

III. A New Approach for Studying the Impact of European Integration on National Interest Intermediation

1. Varying networks rather than “...isms” throughout the multi-level system

The approach to be presented here acknowledges differentiated governance sub-systems at both the national and the EU level. Instead of “pluralism”, “corporatism” or “statism”, it is therefore useful to speak about specific policy networks with particular characteristics. The following sub-sections sum up existing insights on the importance of the meso-level in interest politics at the national (a) and European levels (b). Sub-section (c) then presents a scheme of ideal types for both national and European politics. On that basis, the effects of European integration on particular policy networks at the national level can be established much more precisely than hitherto.

a) The national level

It was in fact clear from the beginning of the corporatism debate in the 1970s that in some policy areas, notably in social policy, corporatist patterns were much more frequent than in others.¹⁰ A multitude of case studies on patterns of interest intermediation in EU member states quickly uncovered that even in non-corporatist political systems, corporatist “arenas” did indeed emerge at the level of industrial sectors, of sub-national political units and/or of single policy arenas (see e.g. the contributions in Berger, 1981; Cawson, 1985b; Grant, 1985b; Streeck and Schmitter, 1985). Meanwhile, changes at the economic and the political level made it even more improbable that within otherwise increasingly fragmented political systems, corporatism should still cover all crucial issues of policy-making such as Lehmbruch's ideal-type assumed (1985, 94).

Empirically, a strong trend towards sectoralisation of interest-politics was recently acknowledged even for the corporatist “role model” Austria. In fact, “social partnership” is much less uniformly characterised by interest group co-decision in public policy-making than often assumed. In areas such as judicial policy, education, research policy, consumer protection, defence policy and telecommunications, the influence of the Austrian social partners is at best marginal (Kittel and Tálos, 1999, 118; see also Müller, 1985, 220; Tálos, 1993, 27; Tálos et al., 1993; Traxler, 1996, 19). Corporatist patterns are only

¹⁰ “In point of fact, all the interest intermediation systems of Western Europe are *mixed*. They may be predominantly of one type, but different sectors and subsectors, classes and class factions, regions and subregions are likely to be operating simultaneously according to different principles and procedures” (Schmitter, 1979, 70; see also Lehmbruch, 1982, 27).

prominent in a few core areas (i.e. in social, economic and agricultural policies) and even there not in all relevant issue areas and notably not in all specific decision processes.

The Austrian case is by no means extraordinary since sectoralisation of politics and a shift of industrial relations towards the sectoral level seem to represent a rather broad trend (Karlhofer and Sickinger, 1999, 242). Compared to the “classic” 1970s corporatism (which indeed was often macro-corporatism with demand-side steering of the economy) contemporary corporatist arrangements now seem significantly restricted in functional scope as the policy-making process is broken down and varies across policy subsystems (e.g. Atkinson and Coleman, 1989, 157).¹¹ Nevertheless, meso-level diversity has so far hardly been reflected in comparisons of the political systems of the EU member states. Political scientists still tend to label whole countries as pluralist, corporatist or statist without referring to the important intra-state differences identified in the state-specific literature although in single-country studies, a refined heuristic approach is now frequently chosen on the basis of the policy networks typology developed by British scholars.

The policy networks approach was developed explicitly to capture the sectoral constellations emerging as a response to the growing dispersion among public and private actors of resources and capacities for political action (Kenis and Schneider, 1991, 28). With the scope of state intervention targets, decentralisation and fragmentation of the state also increased over time and was complemented by increased intervention and participation in decision-making by ever more social and political actors. Policy networks were thus characterised as “integrated hybrid structures of political governance” with the distinctive capacity for mixing different combinations of bureaucracy, market, community, or corporatist association as integrative logics (Kenis and Schneider, 1991, 42; Mayntz, 1993, 44f).

While continental authors were more concerned with the characteristics of “network governance” in general (see e.g. Marin and Mayntz, 1991b; Scharpf, 1993; Kooiman, 1993),¹² British political scientists tended to concentrate on the

¹¹ The fact that the sectoral economies, in turn, are increasingly internationalised represents one of several challenges to cross-sectoral corporatist regimes (Hollingsworth and Streeck, 1994, 289).

¹² A common conceptual approach to “policy networks” was however not developed: “By definition of what makes a theoretical *fashion*, this term is attributed great analytical promise by its proponents, whereas critical commentators argue that its meaning is still vague and that the perspective it implies has not yet matured into anything like a coherent (middle range) theory. What they agree on is their subject of concern, discourse and dispute, and that is sufficient to establish

development of policy network ideal-types. On the basis of earlier work by authors such as Jordan and Richardson (1983), David Marsh and R.A.W. Rhodes elaborated the dominant typology (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992; Rhodes and Marsh, 1992) that distinguishes closed and stable policy communities from loose and open issue networks as the two polar ends of a multi-dimensional continuum (the term “policy network” is thus a generic one encompassing all types). The characteristics of both groups focus on the dimensions membership,¹³ integration,¹⁴ resources¹⁵ and power.¹⁶ Marsh and Rhodes stress that the characteristics form an ideal-type to be compared with actual relationships between governments and interests because no policy area would conform exactly to either list of characteristics (1992, 187). These ideal-types cannot explain politics within networks¹⁷ but they may be heuristically useful,

policy networks on the theoretical agenda of contemporary social science, without necessarily guaranteeing the declared value. On the contrary, a speculative oversupply of networking terminology may inflate its explanatory power so that some form of intellectual control over the conceptual currency in circulation, both its precise designations and its amount of diffusion, become inevitably a clearance process within the profession” (Marin and Mayntz, 1991a, 11).

¹³ A policy community has a very limited number of participants and some groups are consciously excluded while issue networks comprise large numbers of participants; concerning the type of interest, in a policy community “economic and/or professional interest dominate”, while an issue network encompasses a “range of affected interests”.

¹⁴ There are three sub-dimensions: *frequency of interaction* (in policy communities, there is “frequent, high-quality, interaction of all groups on all matters related to policy issue”, whereas in issue networks contacts fluctuate in frequency and intensity) *continuity* (changes from “membership, values and outcomes persistent over time” to “access fluctuates significantly”) and the *consensus* variable that reaches from “all participants share basic values and accept the legitimacy of the outcome” to “a measure of agreement exists but conflict is ever present”.

¹⁵ Two sub-dimensions, i.e. distribution within network and distribution within participating organisations: a policy community is characterised by all participants having resources and the basic relationship being an exchange relationship in which leaders can deliver members; in an issue network, by contrast, some participants may have resources, but they are limited and the basic relationship is consultative, plus there is varied and variable distribution and capacity to regulate members.

¹⁶ Rhodes' and Marsh's policy community is characterised by the somewhat contradictory statement “There is a balance of power between the members. Although one group may dominate, it must be a positive sum game if community is to persist”. By contrast, an issue network comprises “unequal powers, reflects unequal resources and unequal access. It is a zero-sum game” Rhodes and Marsh 1992, 187).

¹⁷ Ideal-types never “explain” anything. One may certainly add on to the original Marsh/Rhodes approach hypotheses from theoretical concepts in political science (e.g. structuralism) and thus change it, see suggestions in (Marsh, 1998). When adding different potential explanatory variables, however, there is a danger one will end up with only an over-complex inventory for empirical research.

notably also for comparisons of national and EU-level networks with a view to determining the potential impact of the latter on the former (see below).¹⁸

b) The EU level

That the emergence of a supranational form of macro-corporatism comparable to national patterns in the 1970s is unlikely was underlined in a number of studies on EC interest politics (Streeck and Schmitter, 1994, 227, first published in 1991; Kohler-Koch, 1992, 103; Traxler and Schmitter, 1995, 213).¹⁹

Almost at the same time, scholars increasingly pointed to *fragmentation* as a typical feature of the EU's political system. Enormous cross-sectoral differences are even laid down in the Treaties since the participation of the EP and the ECOSOC varies and so do voting procedures in the Council and its sub-groups. Such constitutionally fixed differences are however merely the tip of the iceberg since they were further refined in long-standing political practice and different DGs now have very particular styles of interaction with private interests. This was acknowledged by a whole new generation of meso-level studies that addressed the question of EC governance at the area- and sector-specific level (Greenwood et al., 1992; Mazey and Richardson, 1993; Pedler and Van Schendelen, 1994; Eichener and Voelzkow, 1994a; Greenwood, 1995b; Wallace and Young, 1997).

The diverse styles of public–private interaction thus discovered in various EC policy networks included statist, pluralist and corporatist patterns (most recently see Kohler-Koch, 1999). To give just a few examples, private interest governments (Streeck and Schmitter, 1985) and quasi-corporatist regimes were detected in the regulation of pharmaceuticals (Greenwood and Ronit, 1992; 1995c), consumer electronics (Cawson, 1992), steel production (Grunert, 1987), health and safety at work (Eichener and Voelzkow, 1994b; 1994c) technical standardisation (Eichener, 1993) and social policy (Falkner, 1998). These findings indicate that there is a plurality of sector-specific constellations rather than a pluralist macro-system of Euro-politics (see already Cawson, 1992).

¹⁸ Without doubt, there is also some impact of the national on the European level but this is beyond the scope of this article.

¹⁹ The mainstream of scholarly writing on interest politics at the European level describes specific groups and their development without asking explicitly about the pattern of interest politics being corporatist or pluralist. The focus tends to be on the number of groups in a given field and the date of their foundation as well as on specifics of group membership and reasons for joining Euro-groups.

This insight bears important consequences with regard to the effects of European integration on national public–private interaction styles: If Europeanisation does not necessarily imply that a policy is decided according to pluralist patterns, the assumptions on feedback into the national systems must be adapted, too. It seems that the impact of Euro-politics could be much more diverse (in the sense of differentiated between policy areas) than hitherto expected.

c) A simple typology connecting two strands of literature

Needed are thus models of public–private interaction in the making of public policies that allow a differentiation between varying situations in distinct policy areas or economic sectors, like the British policy networks typology. At the same time however, the well-established differentiation between statist, pluralist and corporatist patterns which is still frequently used by scholars occupied with Euro-politics (Streeck and Schmitter, 1994; 1997; 1999) should not be discarded. Therefore, I suggest a combination of the two strands of literature and incorporate a corporatist ideal type (see already Falkner, 1998) as well as a statist one in the well-known issue network/policy community dichotomy. Since the elaborated catalogue of characteristics by Rhodes and Marsh is in fact quite complex and may easily result in blurred empirical types, my typology is a slimmer form of theirs. I suggest choosing only two decisive dimensions and treating all other characteristics mentioned by Marsh and Rhodes as empirical matters to be described in empirical case studies.²⁰

The typology proposed here thus includes four basic ideal-types of policy networks grouped along the continua “stability of public–private interaction” and “role of interest groups” (see Table 2 below). A *statist cluster* is thus a form of policy network where interests groups either do not exist at all²¹ or are not paid any attention since there is no public–private interaction (and certainly not a stable one). An *issue network* has interaction between state and societal actors but the interests groups’ role is merely consultative as the public actors decide quite independently (this form is close to the pluralist paradigm). The *policy community*, by contrast, is characterised by rather stable interaction patterns with private groups being incorporated into the process of decision-shaping,

²⁰ In practice, this necessarily happens anyway since authors are confronted with partly antagonistic findings on different dimensions of the complex typology but nevertheless have to choose one ideal-typical label for the specific policy network in the end. This is much easier and more objectively possible with a more economic typology.

²¹ This would then be a network of exclusively public actors (e.g. a para-state agency, a parliamentary committee and one or two ministries).

although without actual veto power. Only in a *corporatist policy community* do interest groups actually come to share state authority. In this very stable form of network, a few privileged groups (co-)decide public policies with or under the control of public actors. As regards functionally oriented writing on policy networks and European integration (e.g. Kohler-Koch, 1996) it is important to mention that *network governance* would in the understanding proposed here apply to policy communities as well as to corporatist policy communities. In both constellations, the participating public and private actors co-operate in trying to find a consensual approach whenever possible.²²

Table 1: Four Simple Ideal-types for the Analysis of Meso-level Interest Intermediation

	statist cluster	issue network	policy community	Corporatist policy community
Stability of public-private interaction	<i>none</i>	<i>low:</i> network is loose and open	<i>high:</i> network is rather closed	<i>Very high:</i> Always same, few and privileged interests
Role of interest groups	<i>insignificant</i> lobbies don't exist or aren't heard	<i>consultative</i> no interest aggregation but lobbying	<i>participate</i> in process of joint decision-shaping	<i>Decisive</i> Co-actors in the making of binding decisions

This simple typology allows us to distinguish between four basic types of policy networks *at all levels of the European multi-layer system*. The following section (III.2.a) will outline in detail how such a differentiated approach matters in the analysis of potential impact of specific European networks on the national ones (see notably Table 2). When networks of the same kind operate at the Member State and EU levels, no great effects are to be expected. By contrast, an encounter of adverse types, e.g. if a statist cluster at EU level co-exists with a

²² This fits in very well with the style where “political goals are not just determined by (legislation, regulations and public administration) alone, but by way of the multi-stratified informal decision-making process between groups” (Kohler-Koch, 1996, 370), where “the state” is more an arena than an actor and where the upgrading of common interests is as common as the pursuit of particular interests. Accordingly, the EU is seen to perform process management instead of steering from above while the borderlines between the private and the public become blurred. It is perceived to bring together interested actors and promote social learning based on discourse and political entrepreneurship (Kohler-Koch, 1996, 372 with further references; see also 1999, 32).

corporatist policy community in a Member State, or vice versa, heralds the highest degree of potential²³ destabilisation (see in more detail below).

III.2. Types of Potential Impact on National Interest Intermediation

This section will (a) further specify the variegated influence of EU decision-patterns as already briefly outlined above. It will furthermore present two other mechanisms by which European integration may effect national public–private co-operation (b and c).

a) EU decision patterns

As argued in section II, papers on the influence of Europeanisation on national interest intermediation so far used to describe one specific form of interest politics as the typical one for the EC and to deduce from that an impact on the national systems which were again assumed to show one ideal-type each. By doing so, sectoral differences on both the EU and the national level were overlooked. The mechanism by which the pattern of public–private co-operation practised at the EU level would impact on the Member States, in turn, was usually not paid much attention. At least implicitly it was assumed that the EC style would trickle down into the national systems since national actors (including groups) participate in Euro-politics in one way or the other and can transfer new ideas on “good practice” or new tactics into their domestic environment.

This kind of (potential) effect on national interest politics is thus top-down and indirect. Acknowledging that EU-level public–private interaction is as variegated as at the national level, such effects stemming from EC decision patterns must be highly area-specific: an issue network at the EU level will tend to trigger different reactions at the national level than e.g. a corporatist policy community. Participation in an EC network of the former type might encourage some interest groups to show a lobbyist behaviour also at the national level (usually, it will be those groups who are the more powerful players under market conditions), at the expense of interest aggregation with other actors. If at the EU level a corporatist policy community exists, national social partnerships in the same field should have comparatively less to fear.

²³ Whether or not changes actually take place in practice depends on mediating factors such as institutions and agency at the national level and should be studied empirically in much more detail than hitherto.

Table 2: Direction of Impact of EC Decision Patterns on Specific National Policy Networks

		Statist cluster	issue network	policy community	corporatist policy community
	statist cluster	(confirmation and potentially reinforcement)	impact towards more openness	impact towards more participation for private interests	impact towards more participation and co-decision for private interests
On national	issue network	impact towards less openness for private interests	(confirmation and potentially reinforcement)	impact towards more participation for private interests	impact towards more participation and co-decision for private interests
Policy networks	policy community	impact towards less participation for private interests	impact towards less particip. for private interests (example 2)	(confirmation and potentially reinforcement)	impact towards more co-decision for private interests
	corporatist policy community	impact towards less co-decision for private interests	impact towards less co-decision for private interests	impact towards less participation for private interests	(confirmation and potentially reinforcement) (example 1)

This table suggests that if we consider that various “cultures” of EU-level decision-making can trickle down, we must expect the recent corporatist patterns of EC social policy to provoke effects quite different from those of a statist or rather pluralist field of EU activity (if any changes at all take place).²⁴ To start with the left column, a *statist cluster* (such as e.g. in European monetary policy, see Dyson in Kohler-Koch and Eising, 1999; tourism, see Greenwood, 1995d, 139) will tend to confirm or even reinforce another statist cluster at the national level (e.g., in Germany and Austria, where independent central banks have existed for a long time already, the role of private interests in this field will not be hampered by a similar style at the European level). If a statist cluster meets an issue network, a policy community or a corporatist policy community in a Member State, the potential effect will be to the detriment of the role of private interests. A pluralist²⁵ EC *issue network*, in turn (such as e.g.

²⁴ As already mentioned above, the definitions for various public–private constellations in EU policy-making differ. The following examples are hence necessarily taken from case studies with differing conceptual backgrounds and even thematic focuses. I nevertheless thought that the presented evidence allowed characterisation of the cases with one of my policy network ideal-types – even though the author of the particular study may not necessarily have referred to a network ideal-type or even a label such as pluralist, statist or corporatist patterns.

²⁵ In the sense of the definition used here, i.e. not assuming equal influence for all groups.

described by Bomberg, 1998 for environmental policy; for biotechnology see Greenwood, 1995a; for water supply see Maloney, 1995, 155) will rather promote more openness for interest groups in a national statist cluster and reinforce another issue network. If a Member State features a policy community in the field, a possible impact will be in the direction of rather less participation for private interests. National corporatist communities, too, will rather be pushed towards less public–private co-decision. Further pursuing this logic, an EC *policy community* (like there seems to be in the automobile sector, McLaughlin, 1995, 175) will tend to influence statist constellations as well as issue networks in the direction of more participation of societal actors. Only the groups in national corporatist policy communities will probably feel an impact to the detriment of their co-decisive role. Finally, a *corporatist policy community* (such as in EC social policy, Falkner, 1998) will rather increase the chances for participation and co-decision in national statist clusters, issue networks and policy communities.

Although much more research is needed and other factors (see below) matter too, it is still encouraging to note that empirical research on Austrian EU-adaptation supports this approach. A study recently revealed that corporatist patterns in the core area of Austrian social partnership, i.e. social policy and particularly labour law (Kittel and Tálós, 1999), were not significantly impinged upon after EU membership (Karlhofer and Tálós, 1996; Tálós, 1999; Falkner et al., 1999; 1999b). This fits the above hypothesis neatly since in the aftermath of the Maastricht Treaty, a corporatist policy community was established in the realm of EU social policy, too.²⁶ By contrast, environmental policy in Austria is not regulated in a “social partnership” pattern but managed in a policy community without such a crucial role for labour and industry (Falkner et al., 1999). At the EU level, an issue network exists in the environmental field, as described in detail by Bomberg (1998). As far as a shift in the Austrian network can be discerned so far,²⁷ it is in the direction of more influence for the involved Ministries but rather less for the interest groups (notably for the environmentalists). These social and environmental policy cases in Austria appear as examples numbered 1 and 2 in the Table 2 above.

²⁶ As in Austria, labour law issues are predominant also in EC-level tripartite social policy-making under the Maastricht Social Agreement (incorporated in the EC-Treaty at Amsterdam) that includes labour (ETUC), employers (UNICE/CEEP) and “the state” (the Commission and the Council) (for details see Falkner, 1998).

²⁷ The basic type of network was changed neither in social nor in environmental policy since EU adhesion.

This suggests that breaking down the European policy-making patterns in meso-level constellations results in what seem more realistic assumptions on their effects in the also variegated national public–private networks. These expectations should be tested in comparative empirical studies that are based on research designs which explicitly include the meso level.²⁸ The mechanism by which Euro-patterns as outlined here could work as an impetus for change at the national level is *elite learning* (see also *table 3* below). Although this is a “soft” form of influence, recent studies have underlined that supra-national policy networks should not be underestimated since the EU involves national actors and thus confronts them with a potentially new style. The latter may have advantages which were not obvious to some before and may contribute to a change in culture also at the national level (e.g. Kohler-Koch, 1999, 19). (On various general conditions for the “viscosity” of national styles see below III.3). While potential effects on the Member States stemming from EU decision patterns were discussed by various authors already (and the purpose here was only to refine the state of the art in a meso-level approach), almost no attention has so far been paid to the fact that the EU may also influence national styles somewhat more directly than this.

b) Positive integration measures

During the past decades, the EU Member States were confronted with an increasingly high incidence of European legislation in meanwhile basically all issue areas. It has aroused little scholarly attention so far that not only policies may be transmitted in that way but also public-private interaction patterns. Partly only as a side-effect of some policy goal, but at times clearly on purpose, the EU quite frequently impinges on national interest intermediation in acts of secondary law.

Some examples from social policy will reveal that in this field, there have been manifold efforts to encourage corporatist patterns at the national level. In some cases, derogations from common EC standards need to be negotiated or at least discussed with the social partners in the Member State concerned. The

²⁸ This is crucial in order not to simply confirm our limited advance knowledge on presumably “national” styles. Clearly, the meso-level is not necessarily always the ideal level of analysis (and this should by no means be claimed here). In fact, the most appropriate level of (dis)aggregation (national/policy-specific/single decision) for a given research question has to be established in empirical research and may differ from country to country. With a view to interest intermediation, however, it seems that the meso-level is the comparatively most adequate: there is a rich literature pointing at increased sectoralisation of formerly national systems, on the one hand, and it is, on the other hand, practically impossible to disaggregate further and study, say, all single decision-processes in the field of environmental affairs for all (or even several) Member States.

working time Directive thus allows for derogations “by way of collective agreements or agreements concluded between the two sides of industry at the appropriate collective level” (OJ 93/L 307/18, Art. 17.3). The Directive on the posting of workers in the framework of the free provision of services (OJ 97/L 18/1, Art. 3.3) states that “Member States may, after consulting employers and labour, in accordance with the traditions and practices of each Member State, decide” not to grant equal minimum pay to posted workers during the first month of their stay abroad. This means that even a national government that has no interest at all in cooperating with labour and industry on labour law matters, must now consult these societal actors if it wants to derogate from specific EC norms.

Contacts between public and private national actors in all Member States are furthermore prompted by several recent EC social Directives prescribing that in the national reports to the Commission on the practical implementation of the respective Directive, the viewpoints “of the two sides of industry” must be indicated (e.g. Art. 17.4 Directive on the protection of young people at work, OJ 94/L 216/12). This is also common practice in the field of health and safety at work (e.g. rules concerning chemical agents at work).

In other cases, consultation or co-decision of interest groups is not directly prescribed as a condition for certain national actions or needed to complete a national report on implementation, but still encouraged and facilitated. For example, the recent parental leave (OJ 98/L 14/9) and part-time work Directives (OJ 96/L 145/4) allow for one additional year of implementation delay if the EC provisions are implemented by a collective agreement instead of a law. The recent part-time rules (that actually stem from a Euro-agreement between the major interest groups of labour and employers that was incorporated in the relevant Council Directive) also provide that “Member States, following consultations with the social partners in accordance with national law or practice, should [...] review obstacles [...] which may limit the opportunities for part-time work and [...] eliminate them” (clause 5, emphasis added).²⁹ The EC standards furthermore do “not prejudice the right of the social partners to conclude, at the appropriate level [...] agreements adapting and/or complementing the provisions of this Agreement in a manner which will take account of the specific needs of the social partners concerned” (clause 6.3). Finally, the provisions on implementation provide that “Member States and/or social partners may maintain or introduce more favourable provisions [...]”

²⁹ In the following sub-paragraph, the national social partners are directly addressed and asked to review such obstacles “within their sphere of competence and through the procedures set out in collective agreements”.

(clause 6.1 of part-time Agreement; very similar passages are to be found in the parental leave Directive and Agreement).

In environmental policy, too, a few recent Directives could impact on national public–private interaction since they encourage more open structures vis-à-vis private groups. “The plurality of actors associated with the different instruments will result in new complexity in territorial and public–private terms, counter-acting old hierarchical chains of command” (Lenschow, 1999, 9). However, such patterns are only in single Directives while others might impact in the adverse direction, so that it is “doubtful whether EC governance in the field of environmental policy is sufficiently comprehensive, coherent and stable to trigger a decisive and uniform response” (ibid., 17). This points to the fact that potential “positive integration effects” as outlined in this sub-section may well be contradictory. Only if the aggregate impetus from the various EC Directives in a specific policy area exceeds “zero” can such influence be expected to produce adaptational pressure in a national policy network.

Research on the influences on public–private co-operation in the Member States exerted by positive integration measures is another field where systematic and comparative empirical studies are still missing.

c) Competence transfers

The third influence on the Member States’ public–private relations stemming from European integration results from shifts of manifold competences to the EU level. It is a quite direct effect on the national systems that the latter can no longer decide these matters. The overall realm of national action capacity decreases parallel to each issue area that is covered by EU policy. This “size” effect on the national interest intermediation systems exists regardless of any specific actor constellation in the Member State.

However, it is possible that not all public–private interaction patterns are affected by this to the same extent. In particular, it seems reasonable to expect that cross-sectoral corporatist systems (macro-corporatism) would be impinged on more adversely, since the number of issue areas available for corporatist exchange between the state and national interest groups has decreased. This suggests that the impact of competence transfers would nowadays impede the old-style national macro-corporatism in EU Member States anyway, i.e. even if sectoral differentiation had not already changed the national patterns. At the macro level, Streeck and Schmitter were thus without any doubt right in pointing out that “corporatism as a national-level accord between encompassingly organized socio-economic classes and the state, by which an entire economy is

comprehensively governed, would seem to be a matter of the past”, not least due to European integration (1994, 203). However, this correct diagnosis is only part of the story about effects of Europeanisation on national interest intermediation – since at least at the meso level, the effects stemming from EC decision patterns and positive integration measures may be countervailing impulses.³⁰

By the way: Even where “only” negative integration (Scharpf, 1996) prevails in Euro-policies (e.g. where positive integration measures are blocked in the Council), there may be an effect on national interest politics since the neo-liberal options chosen at the EU level may pose restraints. National networks in the relevant area are in such cases restricted in their policy choices. De facto, this affects the opportunity structure for national actors (see also Cowles and Risse, forthcoming, 5), often at the expense of unions or consumer groups with an interest in state interventions that are no longer legal under EC law. As Streeck and Schmitter pointed out, mutual recognition in the Internal Market and the resulting inter-regime competition tend to devalue the power resources and political strength of organised labour (1991, 203).

It follows from this sub-chapter that in fact, neither of the three different types of (potential) impact on national interest intermediation should be neglected in thorough empirical studies.

III.3. The role of Mediating Factors

It has already been mentioned several times that this text is about influences that European integration *might* exert on national interest intermediation. This is to say that the Euro-level side of the coin is the primary topic, notwithstanding the fact that the national processes of adaptation (or non-adaptation) are another fascinating issue which is not necessarily less significant in terms of the final result of the overall process (Lenschow, 1999; Risse et al., forthcoming; Knill and Lenschow, 1998).

To demonstrate the potentially crucial role of national mediation of impacts stemming from the EU-level, European Economic and Monetary Union

³⁰ An additional general aspect should at least be mentioned here: From the Member State perspective, influencing EU level decisions often seems much easier if a “concerted approach” of all national actors is achieved. In many cases, “the *politics of uncertainty* (might therefore, GF) lead national governments and national interest groups to try to co-ordinate their Euro-strategies. In that sense, Euro-policy-making may bring them closer together” (Richardson 1996, 31).

is a good case in point. The effect of the Maastricht convergence criteria for membership in the EMU on public–private relations in various Member States couldn't have been more divergent. It allowed several governments to reform their national budgets by cutting public spending at a speed and in a form that would otherwise not have been accepted by either employer or labour associations, most notably in Austria (Unger, 1999; Tálos and Falkner, 1996). Euro-policies may thus increase chances for governments to “cut slack” and gain leverage vis-à-vis their major private players. At the same time, however, this EC policy triggered reinforced public-private cooperation in other Member States where issue-specific³¹ and fixed-term tripartite pacts were concluded with a view to reaching the convergence criteria (usually labelled “social pacts”, e.g. Fajertag and Pochet, 1997; Hassel, 1998). Although EMU surely constitutes a special case, and other EU influences will be comparatively more direct in their effect, this indicates that mitigation in the national networks of EU impetuses indeed plays a major role in the field of interest intermediation.

With regard to empirical studies, it seems that the role of various factors such as institutions and agency at the national level should be studied in much more detail than hitherto, not least taking into consideration different policy networks in the same Member State. Here, only a *few plausible hypotheses* can be put forward regarding the potential transmission mechanisms and the forms of policy networks as outlined above:

- 1) The more *direct* the type of potential impact, the more probable an effect on the national level seems. This means that a transfer of competences will often matter regardless of national action/reaction thereto. A positive integration measure that e.g. allows a Member State a derogation from EC law only under the condition of approval by labour and industry, will involve national action but is more likely to show some effects than just EU decision patterns that are different from the national ones would. The latter were much discussed in the existing literature although they are, in fact, the least direct of the mechanisms described here, since they are only transmitted via accommodation and learning processes.

³¹ This is another indicator that corporatist patterns nowadays tend to be located at a lower structural level and to fulfil more narrow functions than formerly. Notably, they often facilitate labour law and pay adaptations to EMU (Falkner, 1999a) rather than being a macro-level governance pattern as was the case during the 1970s.

2) Common institutionalist assumptions suggest that the more engrained the specific national policy network, the lesser and slower the probable impact of European integration on it is likely to be.

3) Concurring competences within the same policy field should promote learning and adaptation processes. The impact of EU decision patterns (if diverging from the relevant national ones) should in such cases matter comparatively more. In general, the higher the EU share of activity in a policy field, the more influential the EU patterns of policy-making should be.

4) The more demanding the conditions of a specific form of public-private cooperation pattern, the greater the danger of its being called into question by challenges from outside. The fact that corporatist patterns seem more difficult to establish than pluralist competition of societal actors suggests that they might be rather more vulnerable in the multi-level system.³²

IV. Conclusions: Converging towards “more uniform pluriformism”?

This paper advocates *including the meso level* of policy networks in the analysis of interest intermediation, not only at both the European and the national levels but particularly with a view to determining possible influences of the former on the latter (see *table 1*). Only such a differentiated approach will result in realistic assumptions concerning the impact on national policy networks of EC patterns of public-private interaction (and some preliminary results of empirical research presented above confirm this; see *table 2*). Clearly, much more research is needed on both the EU's and the national policy networks, in particular systematically comparative work.

The second main argument of this paper is that there is more than one type of EU impact on national interest intermediation. Most frequently discussed so far were EC decision patterns that might trickle down. By contrast, the more direct impact of interest intermediation patterns imposed on the Member States in EC Directives was hardly paid attention to as a relevant influence. Finally, the effects of the transfer of various competences to the EU level must also be

³² Note that this is notwithstanding the possibility that at the same time, European integration or the EU as an institution might promote corporatist patterns in particular areas, by other means.

taken into account. The three mechanisms all have to be considered when it comes to assessing the effect of Europeanisation on national interest intermediation. At times, they may counteract each other.

A third important aspect, although not tackled in detail in this paper, is that European integration influences the national public–private interaction patterns mostly in an indirect manner. This points to the crucial role of mediating factors at the national or sectoral level. Nevertheless, one can deduce some general expectations from the innovative approach chosen in this paper, in the form of preliminary hypotheses on future trends in European interest intermediation.

First, our meso-level approach suggests that *inter-sectoral diversity* in private–public interaction during the policy process *will persist or even increase*. As outlined above, both the national and the European layers of the multi-level system are in fact characterised by highly divergent styles of interest intermediation at the meso level. Since the EC is a very strongly sectoralised system, even formerly rather unitary states in terms of public–private interaction could be expected to increase inter-sectoral differences. Since policy networks were recently described as relevant meso-level constellations in the European states anyway, the EU will only reinforce an already existing trend towards sectoral differentiation in national states.

Secondly, and at the same time, the *inter-systemic diversity* (i.e. both between different EU Member States, and between the EU and its Member States) of policy networks will in the future be a rather more moderate one: Since the EC patterns will influence all national systems in the same direction, the effect over time should be some convergence towards the EC model since the latter is the point of reference for all national networks. In the words of Adrienne Héritier et al. (1994), one may think of path-dependent corridors of adaptation that are open to each of the national policy networks. Since all national networks are, however, influenced by the same Euro-level pattern existing in the relevant field (which may be perceived as the end-point of the corridor in a distant future), the result should nevertheless be “adaptation towards similarity”. Some divergence will persist, but probably in a more moderated form than before the EU gained any influence at all on national policy networks.

In other words, there is a trend towards *cross-sectorally divergent* styles of public–private interaction that will nevertheless bring about rather more convergence than before between the geographic layers of the European Union

and between the different Member States. We could thus be heading “towards more uniform pluriformism” in the multi-level system.

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