Christina Wår Hanssen

Representations of Scale

Influencing EU policy through
transnational networks

Master's thesis in European Studies

Trondheim, spring 2013

Master's thesis

NTNU
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology
Faculty of Humanities
Department of History and Classical Studies

Acknowledgements

Contents

Illustrations and tables

1. Introduction

The topic of this study is *Norwegian regional actors' participation in trans-regional network coalitions, and its effect on their ability to influence EU policy.*

Brussels is a complex conglomerate of actors and interests operating in a multi-level decision-making system, and all actors are continuously competing against each other to have a say in policy development within different sectors. In other words, it is almost impossible to single out the actors in possession of genuine power within this system, and as many researchers have found, it is difficult to make generalisations about influence in the EU policy processes (Richardson, 2006). In other words, the description professor Hugh Heclo gave of the developments in American public policy in the late 70s seems translatable to the situation in the EU today:

> [F]or a host of policy initiatives undertaken in the last twenty years it is all but impossible to identify clearly who the dominant actors are […] *Looking for the few who are powerful we tend to overlook the many whose webs of influence provoke and guide the exercise of power*" (Heclo, 1978 cited in Richardson, 2006: 11 [my emphasis])

The big issues, such as international trade, security and economy are, of course, still very important, and certainly attract the interest of both national governments and others, but the 'European policy game' continues to be played at the lower, detailed policy level, undaunted by the larger circumstances. In short, the Union finds ways to 'legislate in hard times' (Richardson, 2006: 8). As intriguing as this might be, it is still the big 'sexy' questions that continue to draw attention also in the world of academics. There has been done some valuable research on the regional dimension in the EU, and on the functions of policy networks within certain policy areas in the EU decision-making system (Bomberg & Peterson, 1998; Börzel & Heard-Lauréote, 2009; Grindheim, 2009; Huysseune & Jans, 2008; Klepp & Lutnæs, n.d.; Rowe, 2011), however, these have almost entirely focused on exogenous circumstances surrounding these actors, and not on the added value for the actors involved in networks. Moreover, after weeks of searching through existing research on Norwegian regional actors operative in the EU arena, I have not been able to find a single study done on the topic of Norwegian regional participation in transnational policy networks; they all seem to focus on how the EU affects Norwegian regions, and not vice versa.

According to the Official Norwegian report on Norway's relations with the EU (NOU 2012:2) Norway's formal abilities to influence EU policy is limited, at least from a government perspective. However, all Norwegian regions are represented with offices in Brussels. What are these offices doing there? Are they simply listening posts for local and regional actors back home, or are they something more? And, if they are nothing more than information coordinators, then one needs to ask the question of whether there is unrealised potential in these offices. Can they serve as gateways for Norwegian influence in the EU system, and if so, how? All these questions are still unanswered, and therefore, the topic of the present thesis is not about the big and 'sexy' questions of European security issues or international relations, it is not even about what realists would argue is the only sound unit in international politics; the nation states. Rather it is about regions.

Regional policy and regional development constitute a third of the entire EU budget, superseded only by agriculture (European Commission, 2012), and is one of the policy debates that continue to draw a multitude of actors, interests and stakeholders to the debate. Thus, the assumption can be drawn that regions and regional policy are very important in the European Union. It is the regions that are most directly affected by EU legislation, and they are also the ones appointed the task of implementing EU policy in many member states. In short, citizens affected by EU law live in the regions, and according to principle of subsidiarity decisions should be taken as close to the affected parties as possible, and thus encouraging regional mobilisation in EU policy-making (Bomberg & Peterson, 1998). Nevertheless, one cannot, with good reason, argue that regions have a big influence in high politics. The region of Mid Sweden, for instance, would not get far in trying to influence the outcome of EU foreign policy on its own, or in trying to set the agenda in the Economic and Financial Committee in the Council. Why then, are they, along 340 other regions from member states and 19 from non-members (Committee of the Regions, 2011), represented with permanent offices in Brussels, claiming political advocacy as one of their main objectives? Even more interestingly, what are Norwegian regions, which are not even a member in the EU, doing in the EU capital? This thesis argues that regional representations are important stakeholders in the EU policy game within policy issues of regional concern, such as cohesion policy, regional development, and funding programmes, and that they have realistic possibilities of influencing these.

This study is about the effect participation in transnational networks can have on regional actors' abilities to influence EU policy, and the aim is to further increase the understanding of what this effect constitutes. It seeks to do so by examining the added value of such participation for the North Norway European Office and the Mid Sweden European Office, and how such networks are received and perceived by representatives in the European Commission and other relevant actors such as the Norwegian Mission to the EU and the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU.

The main question this thesis seeks to answer is: To what extent, and how, can Norwegian regional offices in Brussels act as gateways for influence in the EU through participation in transnational networks? To answer this, the questions underneath needs to be addressed:

1. What function does Norwegian regional representations serve in Brussels?
2. What function does networks serve in Brussels?
3. Why do regional actors participate in networks?
4. How are the networks perceived in the EU?

Existing research on regional representations in the EU shows that regional representations serve an important purpose (Bomberg & Peterson, 1998; Huysseune & Jans, 2008; Marks, Haesly, & Mbaye, 2002; Moore, 2008), and the very continued existence of these offices reinforce this argument. Furthermore, the purpose served by such offices seems to be of such importance to its end-users that someone back home is willing to pay the bill, time and again. Why are regional representations in Brussels important for Norway, a country that is not even a member of the European Union? And, if political advocacy is an objective for these small-scale regional offices, how do they go about trying to exert such influence?

This study is based on a qualitative research design with a combination of analysis of existing research and theoretic analysis of empirical data collected through interviews. It will combine elements of existing research with data collected from actors operating at the regional level, the network level, and the supranational level. Existing and newly collected information will be analysed based on the theoretical framework of multilevel governance and the policy network approach. The analyses will be conducted at the network level, assessing the effects of participation on regional actors possibilities of gaining *access* to the institutions, the effects on their *reputation* and branding strategies, and on their *continuity*.

The present thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter two accounts for definitions used throughout the study, the context in which this study is done, and the theoretical framework. The context is the regional dimension in the EU and the Norwegian regional actors', and policy networks' position within this dimension. Because this is a study on influence and regional possibilities of influencing EU policies, regions will be defined within two categories: Constitutional and administrative regions. This is due to the fact that existing research show that when studying regional advocacy, the characteristics defining these two types of regions are most decisive for measuring influence. All Norwegian regional representations are subject to the category *administrative regions*, meaning that a conglomerate of local and regional actors govern them, as opposed to *constitutional regions*, which are mandated by legislative bodies in their regions. This arguably limits their possibilities of influencing EU policy, because they are driven by the lowest common denominator approach, making it difficult to achieve collective positions, and the political anchoring needed to pursue advocacy. Furthermore, because the Norwegian regional actors are all small-scale operations with limited resources, they have arguably slim chances of achieving success when trying to influence policy in the complex and competitive political system in the EU. However, the case of the North Norway European office seems to be the exception to this rule, since they are actively, and also successfully (according to their advisor Andreas Østhagen) pursuing advocacy in their daily work.

The theoretical framework used in the analysis is comprised of the theory of *multilevel governance* (MLG) in addition to the *policy network approach*. Multilevel governance theory, with its focus on the relationship between the different levels of power in decision-making may explain why regions is seeking influence in the first place; whereas the policy network approach, which focuses on explaining sub-systemic policy shaping and the interdependencies between actors at the *meso (subnational) level*, might help explain why regions choose to pursue influence in coalitions with others. Subsequently there will be a presentation of methodology and the analytical model in chapter three. The dependent variable in this analysis is *influence*, and the independent variables up for examination are (1) *access*, (2) *reputation*, and (3) *continuity*. The reason for why these variables have been chosen is because these characteristics are considered to be *sine qua non* for successful advocacy in Brussels.

Chapters four, five, and six constitute analyses based on one of the variables in the analytical model. *Access* will first be assessed in chapter four, where the conclusion drawn is that the effect of participation in network creates greater possibilities for gaining access to EU decision-makers because networks are *representations of scale*, covering larger geographic areas, thus making them *representative* and *legitimate* actors in the political system, and finally, because they, due to their wider reach and aggregated interests, are considered to be efficient partners in the decision-making process. Chapter five analyses the effect of participation in a network has on a regional actor's *reputation* as a credible policy actor in Brussels. The main argument is that, when seen from a regional perspective, participation in networks has an ambivalent effect on the reputation; meaning that in some cases using a network to profile and brand oneself can be a sound strategy, whereas in other situations going it alone is the more strategic choice. This is dependent upon the regional actors inherent characteristics and their qualifications within the policy area the actors is seeking to influence. For instance, it would be strategically clever of the North Norway European office to use a regionally oriented policy network to obtain a good reputation as a regional policy actor, whereas it would be counterproductive to use this same network to brand themselves as a actor with arctic policy expertise. However, seen from a supranational perspective, participating in a well-functioning policy network is considered as something entirely positive for a regional actor's reputation and credibility. Finally, networks' effect on *continuity* in regional representations, which are characterised by high employee turnover, is analysed in chapter six. The concludes that through their *human dimension* and socialisation function, networks can enhance continuity for its participants through transferring knowledge and educating its members to becoming functioning policy actors in the EU. Furthermore, networks may have an impact on continuity in a larger sense. By acting as 'meaningful objects of identification', networks can create a sort of *path dependency*, fostering stability, predictability and continuity within the cacophony of political interests in Brussels by setting standards of behaviour in the policy process.

The concluding remarks and findings are presented in the seventh and closing chapter. After assessing and analysing existing research and empirical data, the reality is that Norwegian regions improve their chances of successfully influencing EU policy when participating in networks. However, this is not enough to ascribe them the 'title' of *gateways of Norwegian influence*, since regions advocate regional interests and preferences, as opposed to general Norwegian interest and preferences. Furthermore, regional actors are only decisive policy

actors within the areas concerning regional policy. Hence, Norwegian regional representations become gateways for Norwegian *regional* influence when participating in transnational policy networks, because, as explained by the Counsellor of Regional and Local Affairs at the Norwegian Mission of Norway to the EU, Jan Edøy: "It is absolutely pointless to act outside a network in Brussels. Networks are what the European cooperation is all about, and inputs in the policy process is worthless if it does not stem from a network".

2. Advocating Regional Repercussions

This chapter provides an introduction to the context and theory constituting the point of departure for the subsequent analyses. It accounts for the historical development of a regional dimension in the EU from the 1980s until today, along with existing research on European regions, different types of regional representations, and the area of activities and functions surrounding them. Throughout this account, the Norwegian regional representations will be positioned within this context in order to paint a picture of how they function in the EU system, and how suited they are at pursuing political advocacy in Brussels. This is followed by a presentation of the network dimension, which is the focal point of this study. Finally, the theories applied will be described in short.

Norwegian regions have, according to existing literature on regional advocacy in the EU, limited possibilities of influencing EU policy. This is because regions pursuing political advocacy in Brussels are largely divided into two categories: constitutional and administrative regions**. All Norwegian regional representations are subject to the category *administrative regions*, meaning that a conglomerate of local and regional actors – both public and private – govern them, as opposed to *constitutional regions*, which have a delegated set of legislative powers. Arguably, this limits possibilities of influencing policy in the EU, because they are driven by the lowest common denominator-position taken by their boards, making it difficult to achieve collective political positions and the political anchoring needed to pursue political advocacy. Furthermore, since advocacy in the EU is a time consuming and costly affair (due to the complex decision-making process that spans across long periods of time), and the Norwegian regional actors are all small-scale operations with limited resources, they should have slim chances of achieving success when trying to influence policy in a complex and competitive political system as the EU. However, participating in transnational policy networks aimed at influencing EU policy could strengthen their chances of success.

2.1 Tracing the Steps

Regions are defined in this thesis as NUTS II (*Nomenclauture des Unités territoriales statistiques*) regions of the European Union, which are described as "basic regions for the application of regional policies" (Eurostat, 2012). In the mid 1980s offices representing such

areas began establishing themselves in Brussels, but it was not until a decade later, when the Maastricht Treaty introduced the principle of subsidiarity and initiated a focus on the regional dimension of European integration, that the real surge in establishing regional offices came. In 1993 there were 54 registered regions, by 2002 the number had risen to 160, and in 2011 there were 340 regions from member countries and 19 from non-EU-member countries (Marks, Haesly, & Mbaye, 2002; CoR, 2011). Few regional offices have left Brussels after being established there, and the surge in newcomers have never really ceased, especially not after the eastward expansion of the Union. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the regional presence in Brussels is moving from an initiation phase and into a consolidation phase, with the EU-expansion slowing down (Huysseune & Jans, 2008). This means that the offices that have been present in Brussels for some time now, are finished with experimenting with ways of how to run their offices, and are now expanding their offices in scope, resources and staffing. The new offices are mirroring the older and more established ones to be able to compete in the crowded space of actors in Brussels. This evolution and the perpetuation of regional engagement in EU affairs can, according to Carolyn Moore (2008), be regarded as an "institutionalisation of a regional voice in Brussels", which has been fostered by the open and responsive attitude of the EU institutions, not to forget the fact that these institution have a real need for input and connections to the local civil society.

Initially, regional offices were seen as, and so criticised for, outflanking national delegations and positions. However, there is no evidence that this is actually the case, since no national government has ever legislated against one of their regional offices (Moore, 2008). Furthermore, there has been established a legal framework to ease the relations between regional authorities and their representations in Brussels, allowing regions some independence and leeway, conditioned upon their operations not contradicting the foreign policy lines of their national governments (Moore, 2008). Instead, funding opportunities and the structural changes including a regional tire in the EU's institutional framework, seem to be the main motivations behind regional engagement in Brussels (Huysseune & Jans, 2008), along with the expansion of EU prerogatives into the regional fields of competence, such as education and the media.

It is evident that there are multiple reasons for why regional offices were drawn to Brussels, but boiled down it can be listed as: a search for funding opportunities, possibilities for influencing policy by advocating regional preferences, and the expanding EU competencies

resulting in growing pressures for regions to be present in Brussels to maintain regional powers. Having said so, the regional offices also serve multiple purposes in the EU system, which is conditioned upon what type of regional office it is.

There is broad consensus among scholars on the existence of two different types of regional actors within the field of regional advocacy: constitutional and administrative regions (Huysseune & Jans, 2008; Marks et al., 2002; Moore, 2008). The difference between the two lies in their domestic political foundation. *Constitutional regions* represent a regional actor with a delegated set of legislative competences, such as the German *Länder* (states), or the Devolved Administrations in the United Kingdom of Wales and Scotland (Moore, 2008). Common to all constitutional regions is a strong political dimension to their work, based on the legitimate role of having a publicly elected legislative body in their region. Additionally, employees at such offices generally have stronger ties with their elected politicians at home, making it easier to pursue activities aimed at influencing EU policy. More precisely, they have a strong political foundation in their region making it easier to pursue political agendas. *Administrative regions*, on the other hand, are not so clear-cut in their goals and functions, due to their multiple stakeholders and diverse ownership. These offices are often public private partnerships, and their mandate may come from a mix of local and regional authorities, or they may be given from a broad range of regional actors partnering up: such as local government actors, educational institutions, business groups and private companies (Moore, 2008).

The Norwegian regional representations in Brussels fall into the category administrative regions: They are either mandated by a conglomerate of official institutions and private enterprises, such as the Mid-Norway European Office, or by a compilation of different local and regional municipalities, such as is the case for the North-Norway European Office. The latter have greater possibilities of gaining political foundation in their region, since civil servants and politicians govern them. Nevertheless, in either case, the work and function of the regional office is decided in a management board with representatives from all stakeholders, following a lowest common denominator approach (Moore, 2008). This complicates the process of getting the political anchoring at home necessary for the pursuit of a political agenda in Brussels, and would result in the Norwegian regional offices having a stronger focus on 'soft' activities, such as gathering information and researching funding opportunities. This is confirmed by the NOU, where most regional representations reported

that advocacy (or lobby) activities were of secondary importance to them, preceded by information work (NOU 2012:2, p. 191). Nonetheless, influencing was reported as being an objective on their agenda, and should not be underestimated.

2.2 Advocacy

In this thesis influencing, or advocacy, is defined as *any actions aimed at influencing policy*. The reason for why the term advocacy is used rather than, for instance, lobbying, is that 'advocacy' allows for a more comprehensive definition of actions aimed at political influence: "Advocacy activities can include public education and influencing public opinion; research for interpreting problems and suggesting preferred solutions; constituent action and public mobilizations; agenda setting and policy design; lobbying; policy implementation, monitoring, and feedback; and election-related activity" (Reid, 2000: 1). In other words, advocacy is the general promotion of an interest, idea, or cause, seeking to influence some aspect of society, such as individuals, employers or the government and its decision-makers. It is a widely used label, and it may, or may not contain measures of *lobbying*.

This definition is consistent with the definition in the Official Norwegian Report on Norway's relations with the EU (NOU 2:2012), which is part of the foundation for this paper, and can translate to information activities, networking, direct contact with EU officials and institutions, as well as more targeted actions and strategies aimed at influencing policy (Eliassen & Peneva, n.d.).

In most cases the aim for advocacy in the EU is to change, or modify, a policy (proposal) to make it more favourable for one self. This is far more easy than trying to 'kill' or 'block' a proposal, as is most common in Washington or in national polities. This is due to the fact that EU officials in the Commission, which have monopoly on initiating policy, are not directly accountable to their constituencies, thus making it harder for advocates (or lobbyists) to credibly threaten direct electoral implications for EU action (Mahoney, 2008). Nevertheless, if one wants to be successful in advocating policy change there are certain aspects one needs to consider.

A trend in earlier research done on lobbyism, or advocacy, in Brussels is that they all claim that advocacy in the EU have certain characteristics that distinguish it from advocacy elsewhere, such as member states or in the US (Bomberg & Peterson, 1998; Börzel & Heard-Lauréote, 2009; Greenwood, 2011; Mahoney, 2008; Mazey & Richardson, 2006). These characteristics, in addition to describing what form advocacy takes in the EU, also say something about the criteria for success in pursuing policy advocacy in Brussels. These characteristics are:

- It is technical rather than political in nature
- It is driven by information input and information exchange
- It is *European*, meaning it favours European solutions to European problems
- Due to the nature of the decision-making system in the EU, it is considered a long-running game

Influence in the EU is essentially technical, rather than political, and it is based on two pillars: credibility and competence (Guéguen, 2008). To be credible you need to see European solutions to European problems, rather than national solutions to national problems. And to be competent you need to be able to provide technical expertise on the issue at hand. Furthermore, it is easiest to exert influence in the early stages of policy making, meaning the Commission is the easiest target for influence. If one wants to succeed it is first and foremost important to be familiar with the decision-making process in the EU, and secondly, one needs to have a long-term perspective and be ahead of, and on top of, this process. A long-term perspective is necessary according to Daniel Guéguen (2008: 97), because "in Brussels, influence is personal", meaning that one needs to establish good contacts within the system, and over time prove to these that one is both credible and competent. Also, since influencing policy and legislation is a time consuming and costly pursuit, success is dependent upon the actor's available resources. In addition to these criteria, there are some criteria that are almost too obvious to mention; you need to have a policy position to advocate; and you need to be able to justify your representativeness above the people for whom you are advocating. The latter meaning that you need to have close ties to publicly elected officials representing the civil society in your region in order to legitimise your activities and create some sort of accountability (Guéguen, 2008).

When regions pursue political advocacy in Brussels they are mainly concerned with policy issues and topics considered to be of regional relevance, such as; cohesion policy, regional development and state aid, structural funds, and the various funding programs intended to facilitate economic support and development in the regions. It is within these policy areas that regional advocacy and influence is deemed to be realistic, because regions are relevant stakeholders in these policy processes. In other words, regions are important stakeholders and players in the regional policy game, whereas on the other hand they would be at the back of the line in other policy areas, such as issues concerning the monetary union, or security and defence. It is furthermore important to note that advocacy in Brussels follows the flow of the EU policy process. Meaning that there are certain periods where it is extremely important for regions to be active advocates for their interests, for instance in the period of negotiating and formulating the financial framework for the next funding periods. And vice versa, there are times, for instance when the financial framework is settled and done, where there is less need for regional advocacy activity.

Norwegian Governmental Influence

'Active European Policy' is the collective term frequently used to describe the Norwegian policy towards the full range of European organisations, states and relations. According to the NOU (2012:2: 164) the term itself can also be understood as a *political objective*, rather than just as an *analytical category*, meaning that it can be used as a collective term to describe Norwegian (governmental) actors efforts to *influence* and *contribute* to EU policy formation. It is no secret that Norway's leverage in the EU is rather feeble. Thus, in an attempt to disarm the controversy surrounding the lack of influence over EU policy, politicians frequently use the buzzword *contribution* to describe the situation instead of *influence* (Støre, 2012).

Norway has relinquished the most important instrument for influencing EU policy by declining membership twice, and thus also the voting and representational rights in the European institutions. In other words, no matter how 'active' the European policy fronted by the Norwegian government is, its impact will still be limited in Brussels. Norway is a considered a 'third country' in the EU, and no matter how *privileged* the *partnership* may be, this will always be dependent upon the EU's goodwill at the time (Hillion, 2011; Sverdrup, 2008). Thus, Norway faces the same treatment and challenges as other third party actors when

seeking to influence EU policy, making general influence, as for instance influence on treaty design or overall policy developments, highly unrealistic (NOU 2012:2).

Norwegian influence is to a large extent limited to individual cases and specific policy matters, and it success is hinged upon mutual interests between Norway and the EU (NOU 2012:2: 165). Furthermore, Norwegian influence and contributions on EU policy formation is not about proposing new political ideas or initiatives, rather it is about reacting and responding to the developments within the EU and such initiatives from others. Thus, the NOU suggest that the 'Active European Policy' is not active at all; rather it should be named the 'Reactive European Policy' (NOU 2012:2: 164). On top of this, Norwegian possibilities have been further limited by the recent reforms made by the Lisbon Treaty. Among other things this reform included delegating more power, especially in the areas of implementation and supervision (which is considered to be the areas where Norway's opportunities for successful influence are best) to sub-committees in the Commission to which Norway does not have access (NOU 2012:2); thus, making it even harder for Norway to follow the already complex and opaque decision-making process.

2.3 Norway in the Regional Dimension

To understand the presence of Norwegian regional representations in the EU system, it is important to be familiar with the development of a regional dimension in the EU system and the emergence of regional offices in general. Furthermore, one must account for the functions of such offices, and the general differences between them.

Table 2. 1 - Overview of Norwegian regional offices in Brussels

Office	Permanent/long-term employees in Brussels	Participation in networks
North Norway European Office	3	**3**: NSPA, ERRIN, NEEBOR
Mid-Norway European Office	1	**0**
West Norway Office	3	**1**: ERRIN
South Norway European Office	1	**1**: ERRIN
Stavanger Region European Office	3	**1**: ERRIN
Oslo Region European Office	4	**1**: ERRIN

Functions

Gary Marks, Richard Haesly and Heather A. D. Mbaye (Marks et al., 2002: 4) have found that the overall function of regional offices is "gathering, exchanging, mediating and providing information" between the EU and their domestic constituencies. Huysseune and Jans (2008) adds to this the important functions of networking activities, liaison between regional authorities and the EU, and influencing EU policy. This seems to be true for most Norwegian actors as well. According to the NOU (2012:2: 191) information gathering and dissemination of such, is ranked as the most important function for both Norwegian non-governmental actors, such as regional offices, and national authorities such as the Norwegian Mission to the EU. This might be because of Norway's limited abilities to influence decision-making, thus forcing them to take on a more reactive position of adapting to, rather than influencing, EU policy. Regardless, information is vital not only as an early-warning system, but also for Norway to be able to create more coherent and targeted strategies needed for succeeding in influencing policy cases. Furthermore, since Norway is not a member in the EU, regional offices may serve as some form of educational institution, in that they transfer valuable expertise on EU matters from Brussels to their end-users back home, and in promoting project participation fostering interregional cooperation and information exchange (Moore, 2008). The result is that regional actors gain improved knowledge and competence in EU matters, which can prove to be a fruitful reinforcement in Norway's handling of its agreements with the EU.

The functions served by administrational regions' offices, such as monitoring and gathering information about EU policy, can be labelled *'soft'* benefits. On the other hand, the constitutional regions, which are operating in the political dimension are more focused towards lobbying and influencing decision-making and policy, and can be said to provide *'hard'* benefits (Moore, 2008). To sum up, the functions and activities of regional offices vary in line with the type of office it is, and also with the characteristics of the end users who demand some form of return from their investment.

Marks et al. (2002) further argues that 'soft' benefits, like information gathering and dissemination work, are the first steps on a 'ladder' of subnational office participation, which ends in seeking political influence. If one assumes this position, one can argue that all regional offices have an end goal of influencing policy and decision-making, and that as the process of consolidating the office's representation in Brussels proceeds, the goal of gaining a

position to influence becomes ever more important. This might explain why Norwegian regional representations reported that influencing was part of their agenda in Brussels, but that this was not yet juxtaposed information activities. Furthermore, if one applies Marks' logic to Norwegian regional offices, the ultimate objective for them would be to influence EU policy made relevant for them primarily through the EEA agreement, and they would thus report this being of importance to the office even though it might not be their main concern at the present time.

Efficiency

The efficiency of regional offices is conditioned upon several factors, and is hard to measure. First of all it is dependent upon what function the office serves. If the function is to provide 'soft' benefits they can be obtained more easily than, for instance, policy work like advocacy and influencing, the latter is also harder to measure in terms of being successful or not. Secondly, it is conditioned upon resources. The larger and better funded an office is, the more likely it is to be able to provide 'hard' benefits and to perform its 'soft' activities more effectively (Marks et al., 2002). Furthermore, it is also conditioned upon staff and continuity. According to a study done by Carolyn Moore (2008), it is "noticeable that the offices where staff has been retained for a longer period of time are considered to be more efficient and effective operations". Finally, if the office has close ties to home and a solid political foundation in its region, it can better speak on behalf of its end-users, and thus carry out its tasks more effectively.

The NOU (2012:2) defines Norwegian regional representations as *non-governmental* actors in Brussels, despite the fact that the ownership of the majority of them is comprised of public institutions in the regions (Eliassen & Peneva, 2012). However, according to the NOU (2012:2) the average number of employees in Norwegian non-governmental organisations is 3.6. The regional offices are ranging from 1-2 permanent employees, as in the case of the Mid-Norway and South-Norway offices, to 3-5, as in the case of the North-Norway and Oslo Region office (see Table 2.1.). Furthermore, the majority of Norwegian non-governmental actors have small budgets of around 200 000 euros (NOU 2012:2). Much of the staff at Norwegian regional offices in Brussels are employed in interim positions as trainees or interns, and are frequently replaced. In other words, the Norwegian regional offices are all small offices with limited resources and poor continuity, compared to the larger offices with

which they compete, which can have as many as 30 employees, as in the case of the many of the German Länder/states (Greenwood, 2011). For this reason, the Norwegian regional offices would arguably have limited possibilities of actually pursuing influence activities in the complex system of EU decision-making. Nevertheless, the Norwegian regions themselves reported that budgetary resources and size of staff were of little importance for them in their ability to successfully influence policy; they saw long-term perspective and staff continuity as more important. This is reflected in the size of the different Norwegian offices: The North-Norway European Office, which is an active participant in several lobby-networks and regards advocacy as an important objective, has three permanent employees, whereas the Mid-Norway European Office, which is not concerned with advocacy, has one permanent employee (see Table 2.1).

Relevance

The importance and relevance of regional representations in Brussels depend on which criteria one assumes for making such an assessment. If the ultimate aim for regional offices is considered to be influencing, and the yardstick for such activity is seen as shaping the EU's constitutional structure, then regional offices are rarely relevant actors (Marks et al., 2002). With this yardstick, even the Norwegian governmental actors would be irrelevant (NOU 2012:2, pp. 164-195). But if one gives emphasis to the flow of policy on a case-by-case basis (especially in the policy areas of regional interest), they suddenly become more decisive actors, or stakeholders, engaged in influencing. In fact, in such areas they might be successful in steering funding in their directions, and in influencing the criteria for the distribution of such (Marks et al., 2002). Nevertheless, given that there exist no formal competencies delegated to regional representations in the EU, it is evident that the influence a region is able to exert will be 'soft', as compared to national delegations from member states who have representatives in the Council and the European Parliament (EP), or to constitutional regions with legitimate roles in the decision-making process (Marks et al., 2002). Having said this, if the presence of a regional dimension in the EU did not serve an important function, regional offices would arguably not have existed. They are important, among other things, as representatives of local and regional civil society and providing input in the EU system, and can arguably be perceived as an opportunity to close the EU's infamous democratic deficit (Bomberg & Peterson, 1998; Greenwood, 2011).

For Norway, the regional offices may be important as supplementary channels into the EU system for Norwegian authorities. According to the NOU (2012:2), the Norwegian government's status as an outsider may give them difficulties in achieving their objectives through their established network, or through the existing framework for Norway-EU dialogue. The regional offices on the other hand, often have a wider network through participation in different umbrella organisations and federations, and thus have access to parts of the decision-making system not open to the Norwegian government. One can therefore argue that regional representations are able to advocate Norwegian interests inside arenas closed for the Norwegian national representatives (Eliassen & Peneva, 2012).

Seeing the Norwegian regional offices in light of the success criteria for influencing, one is left with the impression that they have limited possibilities, if any, of influencing EU policy. They might even seem insignificant and irrelevant in this context. Brussels is a crowded space and the competition for attention has grown especially fierce after the eastward expansion in 2004, limiting the possibilities of outsider's such as Norwegian actors. In addition, not only European actors seek influence in the EU; many multinational corporations, such as Microsoft and IKEA, have also established themselves in Brussels to advocate their interests (NOU 2012:2, p 165). In the middle of all this there is a growing desire in the EU institutions to make autonomous decisions, and not be too influenced by external interests. Summed up, this paints a rather grim picture of the possibilities for Norwegian regional offices (or any Norwegian actor) to get a say in the shaping of EU policy. Nevertheless, all Norwegian regional offices reported that EU legislation was of importance and relevance to them, and that seeking information on, and influencing such was an objective (Eliassen & Peneva, 2012). How, then, and by what means do they seek to achieve this objective?

Networks

The term 'network' is frequently used to describe clusters of different kinds of actors who are linked together in political, social or economic life. Networks may be loosely structured but still capable of spreading information or engaging in collective action (Peterson, 2003). The term policy network connotes 'a cluster of actors, each of which has an interest, or "stake" in a given policy sector and the capacity to help determine policy success or failure' (Peterson and Bomberg 1999: 8). It is a form of coalition building among like-minded actors who share certain goals and interests in a given policy area, or in a region. Objectives and goals may vary, but overall they are based around the idea that there is safety and strength in numbers,

and that it is easier to achieve their political goals and objectives when cooperating. In pooling their resources they strengthen their voice, and function as umbrellas of influence on behalf of their members, in that they gain easier access to EU officials and politicians who are seeking collective European interests (Bomberg & Peterson, 1998: NOU 2012:2). Their activities mirror the interests of their members, and ranges from information gathering and information exchange, project participation, profiling and representation, to influencing EU policy in their area of interest (Greenwood, 2011). Furthermore, according to the theoretic assumptions of the 'policy network approach', which will be accounted for in the next chapter, networks exists in all forms and shapes, and exists on a continuum ranging from very loose to tightly integrated coalitions (Peterson, 2003). In one end you find loosely integrated ad hoc issue coalitions, who are temporary networks cooperating on specific policy cases, and in the other you can find interest groups organisations with permanent secretariats and formal internal decision-making procedures (Mahoney, 2008: 168).

Network organisations arguably arises as a response to certain characteristics of the EU system, which encourage cooperative measures in the pursuit of influence (Bomberg & Peterson, 1998). Some of these characteristics are: the sheer size of the EU with nearly 500 million citizens; the tendency for EU institutions to reward collective or 'Europeanised' interests; and the complicated and opaque decision making system.

Umbrellas of Influence

All Norwegian regional representations, except from the West-Norway Brussels Office, are members in some form of network organisation, and the North-Norway European Office is even member in three (see Table 2.1). Network organisations are invaluable arenas for Norwegian regional offices, as channels to parts of the decision-making process otherwise closed for Norway. According to Eliassen and Peneva (2011) all Norwegian non-governmental actors, including the regional offices, reported that "[t]he most important way of influencing decisions is indirectly through European umbrella associations". Furthermore, due to membership in such network organisations, the regional offices are often better informed on current developments and policy making in the EU than governmental representations such as the Norwegian Mission to the EU, and can thus be a valuable addition to information in the early-warning of Norwegian authorities (Eliassen & Peneva, 2012). The consequence of Norwegian non-membership in the EU and the lack of formal access to the

decision-making process through national representatives in the decision-making bodies is what constitute the importance of such network organisations (NOU 2012:2: 191). Through such networks, Norwegian regional offices can utilise the contacts of their peers in member states, and thus gain direct access to decision-makers and gain unique possibilities for influencing high-level EU officials (Eliassen & Peneva, 2012). Furthermore, since they are small representations with limited resources, networks can serve as an efficient tool enabling them to do much with little.

Measuring network organisation's successfulness in influencing EU policy is bordering on the impossible. Not because the work of these are more complicated than other influence-seeking actors, but because the dividends of such work is hard to measure in general. Nonetheless, there are some who claim their success. Claus J Schultze (2003: 135) argues that: "Through participating in policy networks and through intermediary organizations local politicians and civil servants clearly participate in European preference formation". According to him, participants in network organisations do "[…] not only enjoy access to the policy arena, but they can exert joint influence and/or shared control over policy outcomes" (Schultze, 2003: 135). Schultze find support for his reasoning with Justin Greenwood (2011); and, although Greenwood is less overt in his conclusions, he argues that regional representations serve an important function in the EU system, especially when forming interregional alliances, as carriers and liaisons of civil and public opinions, and that this should not be underestimated.

If one accepts Schultze's argument, network organisations can serve as transnational, or interregional, actors of policy influencing and interest representation. They become important tools for the promotion of information exchange, and the creation of common views and interests, which are much preferred by the EU decision makers and thus makes it more likely to gain approval for their input and interests (Bomberg & Peterson, 1998). This argument is reinforced by the NOU, which assert that Norwegian non-governmental actors participating in network organisation have the ability to adopt more Europeanised attitudes, which are needed to gain leverage in the EU system (NOU 2012:2: 191). All things considered, there seems to be some form of basis for arguing that Norwegian regional actors are valuable gateways for advocating Norwegian interests in the EU system, through their membership in transnational network organisations.

2.4 Multilevel governance and the Policy Network approach

The primary theory used in this thesis is the theory of multi-level governance, as opposed to more state-centric theories, which have a too narrow focus on the relationship between the state and the supranational institutions in the EU for the purpose of the present study. Furthermore, this will be supplemented by the policy networks analysis approach, which according to some can be seen as a natural extension of the theory of multi-level governance, but which focuses more on the interaction between various actors in the policy processes in the EU (Peterson, 2003).

There seems to be only one thing scholars of the European integration project can agree on, and that is that the EU is a complex system of policy-making which cannot be captured by one single theoretic model or approach (Mazey & Richardson, 2006; Peterson, 2003; Richardson, 2006; Rosamond, 2007). Although there have been several attempts at capturing the decision-making processes in the EU with one grand theory, it seems that the legitimate claim a theory can have on explaining the EU system is limited to a sector-by-sector basis. Meaning that one theory which might explain a certain process in one policy area and one level of decision-making, cannot necessarily explain the same in another sector and another level (Rosamond, 2007). Thus, John Peterson and Elizabeth Bomberg, congruent with R. A. W. Rhodes (1990), suggest that "different levels of action in the EU require different sorts of theory", while identifying three levels of EU action: super-systemic, systemic, and meso (sectorial) (Rosamond, 2007: 127). This study is concerned with regional policy, which is located at the sub-national level, and defined as the *meso* level in this thesis. Bomberg and Peterson recommend at this meso level, "where regulatory complexity prevails, and where 'stakeholders' in the policy process exchange information and resources", the deployment of policy network analysis (Peterson, 2003; Rosamond, 2007: 127). Multi-level governance on the other hand, is good for explaining how the various actors at the different levels of decision-making interact. In short, the theory of multi-level governance may explain why regions is seeking influence in the first place, while policy network analysis might help explain why they choose to do so in coalitions with others.

Multi-level governance

Multilevel governance (MLG) is an approach in political science that originated in European integration studies as a response to the more state-centric theories such as intergovernmentalism, neo-functionalism and liberal institutionalism. It was fronted and developed by Gary Marks and Elisabeth Hooghe in the 1990s, and gives expression to the idea that there are many interacting authority structures at work in the emergent global political arena (Marks, Hooghe, & Blank, 1996). The theory focuses on the relationship and entanglement between the different levels of authority both domestically and internationally, and argues that the state no longer monopolizes European level policy-making (Grindheim, 2009). This is not to say that the theory rejects the state as important, or even that it remains the *most* important actor in the European policy game. Rather, it gives way to the idea that authority is increasingly moving away from national governments and has been dispersed both upwards to the supranational institutions, and downwards among a variety of public and private actors (Rosamond, 2007).

The main logic behind MLG is that EU policy processes does not simply happen at the European level; rather it spills over into and integrates with the domestic political and legal systems in the various member states, triggering mobilisation of various actors, both public and private, at all levels of decision-making. Thus, although Robert Putnam's 'two-level game' (1988) goes a long way in explaining how states and supranational institutions interact in international politics, it is not enough to explain the complex relationships between the various actors operating within the EU's decision-making system. Multi-level governance presents three main assumptions regarding the European political system: First, that decision-making competencies are shared by actors at different levels rather than monopolised by state executives; second, collective decision-making among states involves a significant loss of control for individual state executives; and third, political arenas are interconnected rather than nested (Marks et al., 1996). The latter meaning that MLG rejects the idea that subnational actors are nested exclusively within national arenas, and argues that they "operate in both national and supranational arenas, creating *transnational associations* in the process" (Marks et al., 1996: 346 [my emphasis]).

Thus, according to MLG, to explain how policy-making in the EU occurs, one cannot only look to the intergovernmental bargaining process between member states, or between member states and the supranational institutions, but one must also account for, and analyse, the

independent role of actors at the European level, as well as at the local and regional levels (Marks et al., 1996). In other words, this approach rejects the separation between domestic and international politics, which constitute the very backbone of state-centric approaches. According to Simona Piattoni, the essence of MLG consists in three characteristics of contemporary political life: "*Political mobilizatio*n occurs as much within institutional boundaries and through conventional procedures as across these boundaries and outside these procedures. *Policy-making* no longer separates neatly policy-makers from policy-receivers, nor does it distinguish between public and private actors, but rather needs to enlist all types of actors in all types of roles throughout the policy process. The *polity* addressed by political mobilization and producing policy decisions are less and less understandable as fixed and established, as institutions are constantly adjusted and procedures are constantly tinkered with by the decision-making processes themselves." (Piattoni, 2009: 2).

Multilevel governance theory has been criticised for lacking explanatory power and being too descriptive (George, 2004). Nevertheless, this theory provides a good framework for this study, as it incorporates *all* driving forces behind European integration, both at the local, regional, national and supranational level, and because the focus of this study, namely the Norwegian regional representations as actors in this system, must relate to all of the above. Furthermore, MLG makes a clear distinction between institutions, both national and supranational, as sets of rules, and the particular individuals, groups, and organisations which act within those institutions (Marks et al., 1996) - making it an *actor-centred* approach fit to describe the phenomenon constituting the crux of this dissertation; namely public and private subnational actors operating through transnational networks. And finally, the theory of multilevel governance perceives regional influence in the EU system as realistic, as opposed to state-centric theories that largely disregards the existence of actual political power beneath the national level.

The Policy Network Approach

The term 'network' is not a new phenomenon in social sciences, and the concept 'social network analysis' can be traced back to 1950's sociology texts (Rhodes, 1990). However, 'policy network analysis' is a relatively new approach within political science, and even more so within EU studies. The approach was first developed within, and applied to, domestic political contexts; however, the precise origin of policy network analysis is a matter of dispute. Jeremy Richardson (2006) claims British origins of what is now termed the network

approach, congruent with Rhodes' (1990) arguing that 'American political science was not the major formative influence' on early work using network analysis in the late 1970s. A wide range of early work in both the UK, the US and Europe on interest intermediation, have attempted to develop the idea of networks as an analytical concept (Peterson, 2003). It was applied to studies of the decision-making system in the EU out of an understanding that it was impossible to try to explain how policy-making in the EU came about, without analysing how the various actors involved in the different processes interacted (Peterson, 2003). According to Peterson, this approach is especially suitable to apply to the EU because of its ability to explain sub-systemic (meso) policy-shaping, which makes it compatible with other theories of European integration such as intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism (which largely seeks to explain more high-level politics), and because of its ability to explain actual policy outcomes that are hard to explain using either of these other theoretical accounts (Peterson, 2003).

There are multiple interpretations and versions of policy network analysis, and it can therefore be hard to find a single representative version of this approach. For instance, the same terminology can be used to describe different phenomenon within different models, and different meanings are prescribed to the same term. For instance the term 'policy community' means "a particularly tightly integrated and single-minded policy network" in Rhodes' model, where as it elsewhere is used to describe "actors and potential actors who share a common identity or interest" within a policy sector (Peterson, 2003: 4; Rhodes, 1990). Nevertheless, there is some order to this chaos.

Policy network analysis operates on three basic assumptions (Peterson, 2003); first of all, it assumes that modern governance most commonly is non-hierarchical, meaning that there exist a mutuality and interdependence between public and non-public actors, and between the actors in these two groups as well. In other words, policy is not something that is simply enforced upon citizens and non-state actors by public authorities alone; it is created and implemented through interaction between these different actors and stakeholders, and also at different levels in the political system. Second, relationships between the different groups, actors, stakeholders and the governing bodies vary between policy sectors and areas, and also according to what governing institution (body) is in charge. And third, this approach recognises that governments are ultimately in charge of, and responsible for governance, but that this, nevertheless, fails to capture the whole process. Meaning that although elected

politicians are always the ones who finalise policies before they are implemented, these policies have prior to this gone through a formation period, in which they have been shaped and polished in bargaining processes between a multitude of actors and stakeholders, including non-state (subnational) actors, most of whom are acting through networks (Peterson, 2003). In this way, policy networks have, according to Peterson, the possibility to "narrow options and shift the agenda by pursuing strategies that generate new political and economic forces" (Peterson, 2003: 3).

The concept of policy networks enables us to rationalise about complex decision-making situations constituted by multiple stakeholders and actors providing input when trying to influence policy outcomes (Rosamond, 2007). Such situations are most commonly defined not by a lack of politics and ideology, but by expertise and facts taking precedence over such in policy-making, and are an almost undisputed central feature of the EU decision-making system (Guéguen, 2008; Peterson, 2003; Richardson, 2006; Rosamond, 2000, 2007; Stone, 2002, 2008). Furthermore, policy network analysis builds on assumptions put forward by the MLG theory, in that it "deals with the politics of influence and mutual dependency in situations where power is dispersed" (Rosamond, 2007: 127). When this approach was first developed and applied in domestic contexts, emphasis was put on the relationship and interdependencies between government departments, pressure groups, and various agencies and actors with an interest in policy outcomes. The main impact and legacy of this early work was that it guided us away from thinking about policy-making in terms of rule-bound interactions between (constitutionally defined) institutions that are organised hierarchically, and that it emphasised the need to understand the mutual dependency that obtain in different sectors (Rosamond, 2007).

3. Methodology

My point of departure in this study is previous research done on the regional dimension and regional advocacy in the EU, presented in the academic work of the likes of Gary Marks, Elisabeth Hooghe, Elisabeth Bomberg, Carolyn Moore, and Carolyn Rowe (and others). The primary sources are the Official Norwegian Report on Norway's relations with the EU (NOU 2012:2) along with empirical data collected through semi-structured interviews with respondents in Brussels (see Table 3.1). Together these provide a solid foundation for understanding the regional dimension in the EU; the functions and objectives of regional representations; what purpose they serve in Brussels; and, how Norwegian regional representations fit into this picture. It also provides some understanding of the basic logic behind transnational networks, and why regions choose to participate in such, however, it says little to nothing about the added value such participation brings to the associated actors. In other words, although this study initially was intended to be a theoretical analysis of previous research, I discovered that there was not enough basis in the existing research to conduct such an analysis, and that to be able to analyse the effect that participation in transnational networks have on regions' abilities to influence policy, new empirical data needed to be collected through interviews.

The approach used is based on interplay between theory, existing research and empirical observations through interviews. A theoretical framework creates a guiding foundation for the empirical research, and the analyses draw on this framework and the existing research on the subject, in order to increase the understanding of what effect the network-dimension has on regional actors in the EU. In other words, the aim is to create new concepts and understandings based on an analysis of what is already known, by extending concepts of advocacy in the EU to the context of regional participation in transnational networks.

3.1 Lost in Translation

The selection of interviewees that have contributed in this study was based on informal communication with regional actors in Brussels, namely employees at the Mid Sweden European Office, North Norway European Office and the Mid Norway European Office, and I was fortunate enough to be able to tap into their network of contacts in Brussels. For my

interviews I wanted a variety of respondents, both at the regional level, the network level, and at the supranational level, and my assessment of the final selection in this study is that it in fact does reflect all these levels (see Table 3.1). I would have preferred to have interviewees from both the Commission *and* the EP, since these two institutions are considered the main targets for advocates in Brussels. However, this proved to be logistically hard to accomplish since the EP was in session in Strasbourg the week the interviews were conducted in Brussels. Having said this, I am very pleased with the variety in the backgrounds of the respondents I ended up with, since they represent; a regional actor in both a member state and Norway; Commission officials with experiences from different Directorate Generals; the director of a transnational network; and Counsellors from the national delegations of both Sweden and Norway.

Table 3. 1 - List of interviewees

Name	Title	Organisation/Institution
Richard Tuffs	Director	**ERRIN** European Regions Research and Innovation Network
Anonymous	Program Manager	**European Commission** Directorate General for Regional Policy
Fredrik Tiger	Program Manager	**European Commission** Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Former employee at DG Regio
Anders Lindholm	Counsellor for regional policy, competition and state aid	**Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU** Former National Expert from Sweden to the Commission
Jan Edøy	Counsellor for regional and local affairs	**The Norwegian Mission to the EU** Former National Expert from Norway to the Commission
Kerstin Brandelius-Johansson	Director	**Mid Sweden European Office**
Marlene Deogan	Advisor	**Mid Sweden European Office**
Andreas Østhagen	Advisor	**North Norway European Office**

All the respondents have extensive experience with, and knowledge of the regional dimension in the EU. They are also familiar with each other's work and the relationships between the different levels applied in this study. However, because the topic of *influence* is quite diffuse and hard to conceptualise, and the fact that it is next to impossible to successfully measure influence, especially in the diverse policy environment in Brussels, some of the interviewees were somewhat reluctant to express concrete opinions and statements on transnational networks' effect on regional influence. This was especially true for the two respondents from the Commission (in particular the one who wishes to remain anonymous), who both repeatedly stated that what they said might not be the official opinion of the Commission. However, they did provide valuable insights into the mind-set of EU officials, and good examples from their previous experiences with working with regions in the Commission.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, where the interviewees were provided with a guide several days before the interview, in which a synopsis of this study and the topics of conversation I wanted to cover were presented. They did however not receive the actual questions I had prepared. In this way they had the opportunity to prepare for the interview, without being able to construct their answers beforehand, thus limiting the risk of them becoming preconceived or influenced by others in their responses. Consequently, I was able to capture the initial responses to my questions when asked, and arguably in this way also a truer picture of reality. Additionally it gave me more freedom when conducting the interviews, so that I could steer the interviewees through the topics in way more similar to a natural conversation and with better opportunities of asking follow-up questions, as opposed to following a list of questions slavishly. My experience was that by making the interview seem more like a conversation, the atmosphere became more relaxed and it was easier to establish trust and confidence with the respondents.

When conducting interviews there is always a risk that you might steer you interviewees in a certain direction by asking too suggestive and leading questions. Because I was aware of this possibility, I took ample time when preparing the interview guide, and ran the questions by several of my fellow students and my supervisor before traveling to Brussels, in order to make sure they were not suggestive or leading. Furthermore, I was very conscious of this during the interviews, and formulated the questions carefully. However, the real challenge when conducting the interviews was linguistically related. A challenge both related to the execution

of the interviews, and to the follow-up work with the interview data. Since all my interviewees were either Norwegian or Swedish, I conducted all the interviews in Norwegian. There were some communication difficulties related to the interviews with some of the Swedish respondents, who did not understand certain Norwegian words and phrases. I resolved this by either explaining these words and phrases in English, or if I knew the Swedish translation, by speaking 'svorsk' (a mix of Swedish and Norwegian). The post-interview difficulties were concerned with the risk of losing nuances in the Swedish information during the transcription period, when I translated the Swedish responses into Norwegian. I resolved this by sending the finished transcription to all interviewees, in order for them to read through it, give feedback and approve the translated version of the interview. Seven of the eight interviewees responded and approved the transcription, and the one that neglected to give feedback was one of the Norwegian interviewees, so the necessity for translation approval was absent.

3.2 Modelling the Analytical Approach

In order to analyse the data collected through the interviews in a comprehensible and unambiguous manner, the next step, after conducting and transcribing the interviews, was to put together a simple analytical model based on the theoretic foundation and previous research presented in chapter two, along with my first impressions from the interviewees' responses. Very simplified and reduced to its bare essence, there are some assumptions that can be drawn (or hypotheses which can be presented) regarding the explanation of a networks effect on political advocacy in the EU. These assumptions can be divided into two categories: 1) assumptions based on the EU institution's position in the policy process; and 2) assumptions based on the position of single actors in the EU policy arena. In the first category, seen from the position of the EU institutions, the main assumptions can be presented as follows:

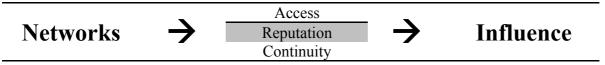(a) Networks have greater possibilities of gaining access to decision-makers due to their claim of representativeness and legitimacy
(b) Networks are time and resource effective partners for an already small EU bureaucracy
(c) Networks are seen as credible and competent partners for the EU institutions
(d) Networks have greater possibilities to influence EU policy than single actors in Brussels

In the second category, seen from the position of single regional actors in Brussels, the assumptions can be listed as follows:

(a) The chaotic and competitive policy environment in Brussels favours cooperation with networks

(b) Networks can improve the reputation of small-scale, single actors in Brussels by profiling them as credible and competent policy actors

(c) Networks are favourable arenas for small actors in Brussels when seeking to influence policy because networks are considered to be cost and risk reducing

(d) Networks are favourable in that they provide a sense of continuity in a policy environment with a high degree of political uncertainty and employee turnover

(e) Participation in networks can lead to extended use of the lowest common denominator-approach when preparing policy positions for influencing EU policy

All these assumptions can be further reduced and simplified into three independent variables that can be used to measure the effect of network coalitions on the dependent variable *influence* for regional actors in the EU; (a) access, (b) reputation, (c) continuity. These variables constitute the analytical model that will be applied to the data collected from the interviews, and they are organised as follows:

Figure 3. 1 - Analytical Model

| **Networks** | → | Access
Reputation
Continuity | → | **Influence** |

The reason for why these specific independent variables have been chosen, and not for instance *resources* or *legitimacy*, is because *access*, *reputation*, and *continuity* are considered to be *sine qua non* for having influence in Brussels. Furthermore, these variables inhabit and transcend the other characteristics, such as legitimacy and resources, and are thus profound enough to be able to measure the broad effect participation in networks can have on regional actors' possibilities of gaining influence.

After having conducted all the interviews and collected information on how actors in Brussels themselves define influence, one thing in particular became very obvious; access is the dependent variable in their own definition of having influence in the EU, followed by 'being heard'. Thus, *access* constitutes the first part of the analysis, which will be addressed in chapter four. I will extract the information given by the interviewees directly related to the topic of access, and link this to the context and theory described in chapter two. However, access alone does not create influence – it is only a necessary prerequisite for having influence. It is what one does after gaining access that determines the success of advocacy. According to existing literature (Guéguen, 2008), and indeed also the interviewees responses, gaining access is strongly linked to an actors *reputation*, which will be discussed further in the analysis in chapter five. Finally, these two variables are again influenced by systemic factors inherent in the EU (the chaotic and dynamic policy environment of high employment turnover) favouring continuity. Therefore, *continuity* will be the focal of the final analysis in chapter six. All three analyses will be approached in the same manner; by extracting relevant information given by the interviewees, relating it to the context of this thesis, and then testing the validity of the information presented in chapter two and in the assumptions above.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that there are multiple other variables that may impact a regional actor's ability to influence EU policy, such as the actor's economic resources; the time of experience it has had in the EU system; its connections to the national government and regional officials; and, the nature of the actor's mandate, objectives, and activities. If an actor has not been given the mandate, from its end-users, to pursue advocacy in Brussels, then, of course, this will impact the actor's abilities to influence EU policy. Moreover, if it has limited economic resources, this will affect its operations and activities. However, due to the scope of this thesis, the variables generally deemed most important in existing research will be assessed, as further analyses of other variables is not considered feasible. My assessment of the variables chosen in the analytical model is that their generality and overarching qualities make them sufficient for answering the research questions in this study.

4. Assessing Access

Regardless of the political system, country, or organisation in question, *access,* as in access to the policy process and decision-makers, is arguably *the* most important variable for pursuing advocacy activities and influencing policy outcomes. Without access there is no channel to influencing through – no way of reaching the decision-makers one wish to affect. According to Börzel and Heard-Lauréote, the emergence of networks is commonly motivated by a desire for such *access*, especially in a complex decision-making system such as the EU (2009). In other words, it might be argued that the very existence of networks in Brussels is founded on a desire for access, and that the EU's complexity makes it necessary to create networks and pool resources in order to gain such. However, it is important to stress that having *access* is not juxtaposed to having *influence*; it is merely a necessary prerequisite.

There are multiple levels in the EU decision-making system and multiple actors, besides the national government, that have both the possibility and the objective to influence EU policy. Based on the analytical model presented in the previous This analysis investigates the following hypotheses:

- 1 (a) Networks have greater possibilities of gaining access to decision-makers due to their claim of representativeness and legitimacy
- 1 (b) Networks are time and resource effective partners for an already small EU bureaucracy
- 2 (a) The chaotic and competitive policy environment in Brussels favours cooperation with networks based
- 2 (c) Network coalitions are favourable arenas for small actors in Brussels when seeking to influence policy because networks are considered to be cost and risk reducing

The empirical basis of this analysis is the data collected through the interviews, and the effect participation in a network has on a region's possibilities to gain access to decision-makers in Brussels is its focal point.

Norwegian regional offices have greater possibilities of gaining *access* to EU decision-makers when participating in transnational networks because; (1) they become part of *'representations of scale'* representing a lager geographic area which is, (2) considered to be *efficient* in the policy process, and (3) they become part of aggregated European interests

furthering *legitimacy*. In addition, the possibility of utilising contacts inside the EU institutions, which Norwegian actors lack, further increases the likelihood of gaining access.

4.1 Representations of scale

Advocacy is not just about influencing or changing public policy, it is equally much about minimising surprises. *Knowing* what is going may be just as important as to trying to *influence* what is going on. Thus, the ability to *influence* is arguably dependent upon *knowing*, because it is difficult to influence policy without knowledge of policy, or at least the policy process. This is especially true for the EU with its complex and opaque system, and might be why Guéguen argues that in the EU "information is the main source of influence" (Guéguen, 2008: 70). Commission officials with responsibility for drafting new policy are dependent upon substantial amounts of expert knowledge and information, and because the EU bureaucracy is relatively small, they have limited capabilities for gathering such expertise and information on their own, and are dependent upon this being provided by 'outsiders' (Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008). This is in line with the logic of the policy network approach, which argues that there exists interdependence between different levels of public actors, and between public and private actors. Jan Edøy underpins this by stating that "the Commission is entirely dependent upon having a dialogue with the regions in Europe to be able to make a cohesion policy". This is supported by the director of the Mid Sweden European Office, Kerstin Brandelius-Johansson, stating that "the Commission is always seeking regional input and opinions". Marlene Deogan, advisor at the Mid Sweden European Office, further emphasised that "the Commission use regional network organisations to get in touch with regions, and vice versa, the regions use networks to get in touch with the Commission, or other institutions, such as the EP". In other words, they are all supporting the argument of interdependency.

There are numerous actors, from regions to corporations and NGOs, in the EU capital that are craving and competing to provide input to the institutions. The result is that EU officials are operating in what the Commission official in DG Regio calls 'an existence of information abundance', with limited abilities and resources to sift out what is relevant and not. I argue that the systemic effect of this chaotic environment coupled with the information and input dependency that exist in the EU policy process, has created a bias towards compounded

European interests representing larger geographic areas through transnational networks; an effect I have chosen to call the *'representation of scale-effect'*. The logic behind the representations of scale-effect is founded in the very nature of networks. Since they are commonly comprised of many smaller actors from different member states working together to overcome differences and provide input to the institutions, networks become symbols of collected, representative European interests, and have arguably greater possibilities of gaining access to the decision-makers.

The representation of scale-effect seems to be one of the main motivations pulling regions into network participation. Andreas Østhagen, from the North Norway European Office, listed "large-scale impact and effect" as one of the main motivations behind his office's participation in policy networks such as the Northern Sparsely Populated Area network (NSPA). Furthermore, according to Marlene Deogan, advisor at the Mid Sweden European Office, another essential pull factor for a small region, such as themselves was the idea that pooling resources and cooperating with others gave them "a stronger voice towards the EU institutions". Jan Edøy substantiates this by explaining that since pursuing advocacy activities in the EU is a costly and uncertain matter, participation in a network "diversifies potential risks and losses" for small regions, and thus "enhances the likelihood of success". In short, there is both safety and strength in numbers – representations of scale – when seeking to influence EU policy.

From the institutions point of view, as expressed by Commission official Fredrik Tiger, representations of scale, as in the form of networks, are preferable 'because a network covers a lager geographic area', and thus 'makes a greater impact' than actors acting single-handedly. He describes the situation as such:

> During my time at DG Regio I got an extreme amount of enquiries to attend different events, and it was impossible to attend them all, but if [the event] is organised by a network comprised of actors covering areas in three different countries, it makes a greater impact than if the event is organised by one single region. It is also easier to get someone from higher up in the hierarchy if you represent a lager geographic area. In other words, it is much easier for a network to get heard, listened to, get in touch with and engage in dialogue with, the institutions and bring their views and interests forward.

However, Tiger also emphasised that gaining access to high-level politicians not always was the best way of gaining influence, since "one should always seek to influence the person holding the pen". Meaning that it could be equally rewarding to gain access to and be heard by lower-level bureaucrats in charge of drafting the policy before higher-level politicians and bureaucrats approves it.

Policymakers are constantly searching for broad support for their policies (Esterling, 2005; Mahoney, 2008). Thus, another argument for why representations of scale, such as networks, is favoured by the institutions, and especially by the policymakers in the Commission, is that they provide a way for them to test for support of the policy. In other words, networks can provide policymakers with an indication of the lay of the land, so to speak. Including a network of many actors in the policy process increases the chances of this network (with its participating actors) supporting the policy proposal, which in turn may foster additional support by demonstrating that a large set of interests already stand behind it (Mahoney, 2008). Hence, according to Anders Lindholm, Counsellor at the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU, regions can "by building a network representing several actors and interests, become someone the decision-makers *have to* listen to, *have to* get input and information from, because they represent something larger".

4.2 Legitimacy

Another argument supporting the claim that networks provide avenues of access to decision-makers for the participants involved is that networks function as a source of legitimacy for the EU institutions, and thus making them important partners to consult in the policy-making process. By aggregating regional interests at the transnational level, and by their broad and arguably representative membership foundation comprised of both public and private actors, networks can be seen as "an important way to generate legitimacy for, and increase the acceptance of, the Commission's initiatives" (Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008: 175). In other words, networks provide legitimacy by meeting demands for more citizens' participation in the policy process (Börzel & Heard-Lauréote, 2009: 144). Furthermore, by "enabling societal actors to participate directly in making and implementing the services that affect them" networks may help the construction of more widely accepted policy outcomes, by providing

feedback to the EU institutions. In this manner they "smooth the way for implementation" (Börzel & Heard-Lauréote, 2009: 144).

The presented arguments and reasoning is underpinned by data collected through the interviews. According to Jan Edøy, "the Commission is dependent upon regional input in order to be able make a cohesion policy", and "the *interaction* between the Commission and the networks regions participate in is crucial for the Commission, both in terms of policy content, policy implementation, and for what they ultimately decide on doing". There also seems to be some truth in the idea that EU officials, especially in the Commission, use networks to strengthen their own policy proposals. Former Commission official, now counsellor on regional policy, competition and state aid to the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU, describes the networks' effect on EU legitimacy as such:

> The legitimacy of the decision is improved, because even if the policy does not end up just the way [advocates] want it to, important groups feel they have been heard, and that they have been part of the decision-making process, and been able to fight for their cause, and that [the decision-makers] have considered their input in the process. In the end it is all about legitimacy.

One could, based on these arguments, draw the conclusion that participation in a network would result in access to, and inclusion in, the policy process, because the EU institutions are dependent upon societal input to legitimise their policies. However, this is not as straightforward as it may seem. Although "networks can enhance participation by posing as intermediaries between levels of governance and can help improve the correspondence between 'rulers' and 'the ruled'", and in this way strengthen legitimacy, "the extent to which networks can enhance legitimacy depends on certain scope conditions" (Börzel & Heard-Lauréote, 2009: 144). That is to say that legitimacy provided by networks is to some extent dependent on how the network is structured (Peterson, 2003). Networks are theoretically based on the voluntary participation of actors. But, because participation in policy networks aimed at advocacy activities is highly time and resource consuming, networks tend to encourage the participation of the most active and resourceful interests/actors, which could result in networks having an 'elitist' and unrepresentative quality (Börzel & Heard-Lauréote, 2009). Furthermore, although networks are to some extent comprised of publicly elected actors, such as local and regional municipalities, they are not subject to external democratic

control and accountability, and often have informal and opaque decisional procedures. Thus, the legitimacy argument is challenged. According to Fredrik Tiger, one of the main challenges for EU officials when dealing with networks is;

> One cannot know for sure if the entire network represents the interests and opinions put forward by the network, or if their interests are sufficiently anchored within the entire area the network represents. In other words, sometimes there can be a divergence between opinions of individual actors within the network, and what the network presents as its official standpoint. And there is little we can do about that.

This was also reported as a challenge from Anders Lindholm, however, he emphasised that networks' challenge related to reconciling diverging interests "is a human challenge more than a structural one". Regardless of the strength of the legitimacy argument regarding networks, it is reasonable to argue that local and regional actors use networks as "a means to attain both *legitimacy* and *access* to the European institutions" in substitution for the existence of a European public space for expressing opinions and interests (Börzel & Heard-Lauréote, 2009: 144 [my emphasis]).

Legitimacy is not only about gaining access to EU decision-makers for regions, but is equally concerned with justification of the region's presence in Brussels. According to Østhagen,

> An important effect of participating in networks for us is that we are perceived as active in the EU arena, but it is also related to how we are perceived at home. Our participation, especially in the Northern Sparsely Populated Area Network, demonstrates [to our end-users] that we have opportunities for exercising influence in Brussels, and this strengthens our legitimacy at home.

In this way, the Norwegian regional representations in Brussels use participation in transnational networks both as a means to gain access to EU decision-makers, but also as an argument to underpin the legitimacy of their existence in Brussels to their end users. Thus, one can say, that the legitimacy argument is a two way street. Networks are important for gaining access to EU institutions because they inhabit the weight of democratic legitimacy at the subnational level, and they are important for legitimising regional actors' presence in Brussels because they create such access (2008: 521). In the words of Østhagen;

It is in the regions that legitimacy is anchored. If regions can find utility value in, and ways to access, deal with, and relate to the supranational EU-level, above and besides the national level, it brings extra legitimacy to the EU. It provides added value to the EU.

In other words, networks can, by being perceived as legitimate and representative actors, demonstrate that the services of both the EU institutions, *and* the regional representations, are justifiable to the European, regional and local citizens. Due to this, networks have arguably greater possibilities of gaining access to decision-makers, because they are considered important partners and players in the EU policy game for both the institutions and the regional actors.

4.3 Efficiency

Political systems, such as the EU, exist in order to produce solutions to societal problems and satisfy the demands of the citizens. This is dependent upon efficiency, which by Börzel and Heard-Lauréote is defined as "the production of sufficient policy output without delays or deadlocks at reasonable cost" (2009: 140). In other words, efficiency, or effective policymaking, like legitimacy, is fundamental in sustaining a political system. However, the EU is not just any political system. It is more complex than any national system and not even comparable to international organisations. According to Börzel and Heard-Lauréote "the emergence of networks has been closely related to the declining effectiveness of hierarchy (state failure) in domestic politics and the absence of hierarchy (anarchy) in international politics" (2009: 141). Hence, since governments no longer possess or control all the resources necessary for producing effective policies to solve societal problems, as argued by MLG theory, networks comprised of both public and private actors at the sub-national level can augment the quality of policymaking.

There are several ways in which a network can improve the efficiency of a policy process. They can do so, as explained earlier, by offering the EU institutions organised and collective *European* input; and thus also improve the legitimacy of the policy. However, networks may also enhance efficiency in virtue of their very nature, by being a transnational cooperation covering larger geographic areas with diverse participation – which leads us back to the representations of scale argument. Additionally, because of their dispersed geographic

representation and diverse composition of actors spread over different levels of government, networks arguably allow EU policy-makers and officials to reach larger societal groups more easily, and also to mobilise these resources more effectively. Efficiency is also a recurring topic throughout the data collected in the interviews. According to Jan Edøy, "single actors might not be taken seriously, because there are too many actors competing, making it too time consuming for the institutions to recognise them all". Thus, if several regions, or actors, can arrive at a common position it is, according to Edøy, "simply worth more". Furthermore, networks, to the extent that these are founded on communication and trust and manage to arrive at a common positions, have the ability to negotiate with EU officials in pursuit of brokering a compromise to solve policy problems (Börzel & Heard-Lauréote, 2009). Through this negotiation function, networks may enhance efficiency in that the EU officials can broker an agreement with a network comprised of, for instance, several regions, rather than having to speak to each region separately. According to Anders Lindholm, there is truth to this argument, since the added value of working with networks is much appreciated in the Commission:

> When I worked in the Commission, we benefitted from the existence of, and interaction with, the Baltic Sea Group network; partly because it enabled us to anchor the policy in the regions affected, and to disseminate information about it more efficiently, but it also helped strengthen the legitimacy of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

Based on these statements one can argue that the decision-makers in the EU favour working with networks, because they are resource effective partners for officials operating within an already strained bureaucracy.

The efficiency argument is also applicable to the regional participants in networks, and both the North Norway European Office and the Mid Sweden European Office reported that enhanced efficiency was one of the main motivations behind joining a network. It was also reported as being one of the most important dividends from participation. According to Deogan, participation in a network results in better utilisation of the office's resource. Since their office is relatively small both in terms of staff and budget, they are dependent upon pooling their resources with others in order to achieve their objectives. In the words of the director Brandelius-Johansson: "We are dependent upon cooperating with others to become strong". Østhagen at the North Norway Office concurs with Deogan and Brandelius-

Johansson by stating that one of the most important added values of participation in networks is that it is "resource-effective". According to him his office "saves time and resources not only in regard to gathering information, but also when organising events, seminars, conferences" when participating in a network. In other words, networks can spread the costs of expensive advocacy work, so as to enable small actors to do more with less. According to Richard Tuffs, director of ERRIN (European Regions Research and Innovation Network) "to be able to compete in Brussels one has to keep on working, keep on moving". Meaning that one continuously has to organise events, meetings and seminars so as not to "fall of the map". In a network, such as ERRIN, one can do this together with several other actors collectively, providing an easy way to gain ear with high-level politicians and bureaucrats while spreading the bill among several small actors. For small regional representations in Brussels with limited personnel and resources (which is the case of the Norwegian regions) this is not only time efficient but also cost efficient. Consequently, in the words of Østhagen, participation in networks is about "pooling resources to amplify ones voice towards the EU institutions in order to gain access to the decision-makers, making it easier to get heard." Additionally, regional representations from Norway can reap benefits from cooperating with other actors from member states, by utilising these actors' contacts inside the institutions. In this manner, networks can make the process of gaining contacts and access to decision-makers in Brussels easier; and hence, be considered as an efficiency-enhancing instrument for actors that are seeking political influence outside EU membership. When asked if he could describe how participation in a network could add value to his office's advocacy work, Østhagen replied:

> Plain and simple: Additional influence and improved impact. In terms of contacts, and in the sense that it opens doors in to the bureaucrats in the Commission who come from these countries; or MEPs [Members of the European Parliament]; or other networks that they have access too that we don't. There are quite a few doors that are closed for Norway. So it opens a lot of doors in a system where we, as Norwegians, do not have formal access.

Börzel and Heard-Lauréote (2009: 143) argue that by facilitating the reconciliation of diverging interests "networks possess a real capacity to engender increased compliance and reduced resistance to policy implementation […] insofar as participating actors go beyond the lowest common denominator of their individual interests". In other words, there are limitations to the efficiency-effect of network participation. Most networks are founded on

consensus, resulting in that they are driven by the lowest common denominator approach. This does not necessarily hinder, or limit, efficiency, as long as the network is comprised of rather homogenous actors with similar interests. If this is the case, consensus can be reached quite effectively. However, most networks are heterogeneous and are therefore in greater risk of ending up in time and resource consuming negotiations, and ultimately a potential deadlock (Börzel & Heard-Lauréote, 2009; Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008; Peterson, 2003).

According to both the Mid Sweden and the North Norway office, the main challenge related to network participation is the concept of the lowest common denominator; or in other words, to reach consensus. An example would be the process of drafting a position paper in the ERRIN networks. The director of the network, Richard Tuffs, explained that they have working and policy groups within different policy areas, comprised of members especially interested in these topics. These groups draft position papers on behalf of the network's 94 members. All members can send inn contributions in this process and it will be incorporated into ERRIN's official statement. If one contribution diverges widely from another region's contribution, the diverging interest would be specified in the position paper as a dissent. A second option would be to find a way down the middle of position X and position Y, or a third option would be to exclude it entirely from the statement. However, ERRIN is not altogether dependent upon consensus on all issues. If the network decides to write a statement on a policy proposal, and they are restricted on time, they do not have to reach consensus among all of their 94 member regions; as long as they include a disclaimer at the end stating that it might not reflect the whole opinions of all of its members, the network is free to turn in whatever position paper it wants. Having said this, it is important to note that ERRIN, being dependent upon active participation form its members for policy input, and their working and policy groups being comprised of representatives from members, the network is in good condition to reflect the general interests of its participating regions. Nevertheless, the sheer size of the network and its aspiration towards achieving consensus endanger the network of ending up with position papers and policy statements that are fairly watered down. The Northern Sparsely Populated Areas Network (NSPA), on the other hand, operates solely on consensus. In this case, a policy position cannot become an official NSPA stance without the full consent of all parties involved, which can be a time consuming and difficult process. According to Østhagen, an important challenge related to participation in networks is thus "finding a balance in resource utilisation";

Network activity and participation is time consuming. You have to ask yourself if it is worth it; [network participation] is resource-effective in terms of information activities, and in terms of the work you do after you have arrived at a common policy position. But, to get to that point takes time. So, one positive aspect of participating in a network can be that it is efficient; a negative aspect can be that it is time consuming. It all depends on the policy area in question, the balancing of resources and the dynamic in the network. In out case we have found that it is worth it. If we found the network not to be worth it, we would quit and it would eventually be closed down.

Summed up, the effect of participation in a network on an actor's possibility of gaining access to EU decision-makers is twofold. Following the logic of the representations of scale argument, small actors gain greater possibilities of accessing EU officials based on the argument that aggregated interests are preferred because they provide collective, aggregated European interests, legitimacy, and enhance efficiency in the policy process. Furthermore, networks have the possibility of gathering support for EU policies and presenting regional actors with utility value in the supranational institutions; however, the argument of utility value is dependent upon the actors actually being included in the decision-making process. Hence, I argue that it is a rational choice from EU officials point of view, to cooperate with networks, rather than single actors out of three reasons; (1) they provide input and information which is otherwise costly to attain; (2) they gather policy support and add utility value to the supranational institutions when involved in the policy process; and (3) they are legitimate in that they represent sub-national societal actors in the policy process – all of which is linked to the representations of scale-effect. Due to this, one could furthermore assume that the Commission is using networks in order to attain some sort of 'negotiated order' and stable policy environment (Mazey & Richardson, 2006).

Regarding the legitimacy argument it has become evident that all networks are not legitimate *in se*, due to their potentially exclusive, opaque and elitist structure. Furthermore, the efficiency argument seems to be a double-edged sword, since participating in a network can be resource effective when it comes to sharing the costs and risks involved in advocacy activities; while it simultaneously can be equally resource intensive considering challenges related to reaching consensus among multiple distinct actors. However, as stated by Østhagen, this is a question of balancing, and whether it is worth it or not. Moreover, a network would

arguably cease to exist once its participants deem it irrelevant, or superfluous. Hence, the conclusion can be drawn that the networks that are active and operating must be considered to serve such an important function to its members, that the benefits of participation balances the costs. One of these benefits is that they provide their participants with an arena for acting out their interests and objectives, and gaining access to the institutions. This is underpinned by the fact that both the North Norway and the Mid Sweden office responded that above fifty per cent of all contact their offices had with EU institutions was a direct consequence of their participation in a network. However, gaining access to decision-makers is closely linked, and somewhat dependent upon the next variable up for analysis, namely having a good *reputation*.

5. Reaping a Reputation

Having a reputation as being competent and credible is, perhaps painfully obvious, among the most important criteria for gaining influence in the EU (Guéguen, 2008: 76-78). However, the existing literature does not go far beyond stating that it is important, before leaving the topic altogether, and it says next to nothing about how regional actors proceed when building a reputation (Donas & Beyers, 2012; Eliassen & Peneva, 2012; Guéguen, 2008). This chapter is concerned with how the network dimension influences regional actors' reputation, and investigates further the following assumptions:

- 1 (c) Networks are seen as credible and competent partners for the EU institutions
- 2 (b) Networks can improve the reputation of small-scale, single actors in
  Brussels by profiling them as credible policy actors

According to Diane Stone (Stone, 2002: 3 [My emphasis]), the positive effect a network can have on an actor's reputation can be described as such:

> The knowledge credentials and expertise of network actors […] *bestow credibility and special status in policy debates and give weight to their recommendations*. A network amplifies and disseminates ideas, research and information *to an extent that could not be achieved by individuals* or institutions alone. Moreover, *a network mutually confers legitimacy and pools authority and respectability in a positive-sum manner.* In other words, a network can often be greater than its constituent parts.

However, when seen from a regional perspective, the effect of network participation on a regional actor's reputation, as in the policy environment in Brussels, is ambivalent. Meaning that it can have positive effects on the reputation and image of an actor within one policy area, whilst at the same time, have negative implications for the same actor's reputation within another. For instance, if the actor has a special status on matters of energy policy, it might do better advocating its special qualities, interests and objectives on its own than in a network; while simultaneously, the actor could benefit from cooperation with, and the assistance and expertise of other actors, on issues such as competition and state aid policy. In other words, since the effect participation in a network has on a regional actor's reputation is dependent upon the regional actors inherent characteristics and their qualifications within the policy area

in question, a *promiscuous branding strategy* combining elements of both network participation and independent branding would seem to be the rational choice for most regions.

There is an interesting discovery in the empirical data, when viewing this from a Norwegian perspective: In the case of the Norwegian regional offices, only the North Norway European Office, and to some extent also the Stavanger Region European Office, inhabit the expertise and qualities that enable them to promote and profile themselves individually. The South Norway European Office and the Oslo Region European Office, on the other hand, are almost entirely operating through the ERRIN network when branding themselves, while the Mid-Norway and West Norway offices are to date not fully committed to such activities.

Finally, all of the interviewees from the supranational and national level confirmed that the institutions and other policy actors in Brussels in general considered networks positively, and perceived them as credible policy actors, as opposed to single actors.

5.1 Promiscuous Branding

According to Richardson, the very nature of the EU system with its multiple levels of power, access point and venues, have resulted in that the "traditional 'clients' of national governments have become *transnationally promiscuous* in their relationships" (Richardson, 2006: 25 [my emphasis]). Accordingly, 'traditional clients', such as regions, are increasingly looking for multiple ways of ensuring access to decision-makers and possibilities of influencing policy. Since the Norwegian government has restricted access to the decision-making process in the EU, this is especially true in the case of Norwegian regional representations. Furthermore, Mazey and Richardson argue that the need to be manoeuvrable and have flexible strategies have increased for actors pursuing advocacy. This is due to the fact that the 'multi-venue Euro-policy game' favours safeguarding by small actors', by applying several strategies simultaneously, in order improve possibilities of success in advocacy (Mazey & Richardson, 2006: 256).

This seems to be the case of the North Norway European Office. According to their advisor Andreas Østhagen, whether or not they choose to use a network to promote and profile themselves "depends on what policy area [they] are seeking to influence", and how they

evaluate their chances of success independently versus in the network. He emphasised that "we do utilise our participation in networks when building our reputation, however, in terms of the challenges of participating in networks related to the risk of losing our own voice, we are extremely happy when we are able to promote ourselves on our own. It is all about finding a balance using both channels". The North Norway European Office inhabits certain characteristics that distinguish them from other regional actors in Brussels (and also from the other Norwegian regions): It is an Arctic region with abundant natural resources and expertise on arctic conditions. These characteristics and features give them some leeway when building a reputation as a credible and competent policy actor, because not many actors can compete with their expertise and knowledge on issues concerning Arctic policy. The result is that the North Norway European Office has the potential of becoming an important stakeholder and dialogue partner for the Commission and the EP on policy issues concerning Arctic policy, because they can provide exclusive and unique information. In this sense, they can use their exclusive and unique competence to promote themselves as a credible policy actor towards the institutions. Østhagen emphasises that this is a strategy the office attempts to use as much as possible. When asked if it was correct to say that their office promoted themselves as being competent and professional policy actors within these policy issues, in order to gain hearing for their input and enhanced influence and impact, he answered: "Most definitely". He further elaborated:

> If we return to one of you first questions, on 'how regional representations are perceived in Brussels', it is obvious that we are not the first actors that are approached for input and information. That we [the North Norway European Office] are increasingly being consulted, however, is result of a lot of work on our behalf. You'd think that because we are arctic, everyone would come to us and ask our opinions on these issues, but they don't. We have to constantly be present and remind them [the decision-makers] of what we are, of our expertise and competence, and of why we are here. And we have to change our pitch depending on the topic of discussion, and remind them that they can consult us on issues we have expertise on, such as arctic policy, or fisheries. In this sense, building our reputation is an important part of underpinning our policy impact in general.

However, the North Norway European Office also utilise network participation when managing their branding and reputation building, though, only on issues concerning other policy areas, such as regional and state aid policy. In the words of Østhagen:

Concerning arctic policy we have sufficient credibility, because there aren't very many arctic actors in Brussels, meaning we don't have to join forces with Sweden or Greenland. However, within the areas of domestic policy, such as regional policy and state aid regulations, we are firstly, a very small and insignificant actor in terms of economy and population; secondly, we are not members of the EU. Thus, in order to gain greater influence, and access channels into the EU system, we act within the NSPA network on these issues.

According to the director of the Mid Sweden European Office, Kerstin Brandelius-Johansson, their office acts mostly through the NSPA network regarding activities involving advocacy. Marlene Deogan, advisor at Mid Sweden, states "in terms of promoting ourselves politically towards the institutions, the NSPA networks has played a major role for Mid Sweden. It opens up access to, and provides a way for us to relate to them, and vice versa". However, she further emphasised that not all activities were carried out under the NSPA banner: "We can use the NSPA branding and add to it more information about who we are and what the region of Mid Sweden represents. Brussels is a broad arena, and what you chose to promote, or how you chose to brand yourself is dependent upon the context in which you are operating". In other words, the case of Mid Sweden further strengthens the argument that regional actors Brussels use multiple arenas and strategies for gaining a good reputation and enhancing their possibilities of gaining influence in the EU. Deogan further explains how they utilise the NSPA network in their branding:

We only use the NSPA banner when acting within the network […] However, there are times when we are acting with the NSPA logo, but still promote one of the participating regions, Mid Sweden, North Sweden, North Finland, or North Norway, individually. However, we use the NSPA banner, and the brand and reputation that comes with it, exclusively for the promotion of our advocacy and influencing activities.

Not all Norwegian regions are as unique as North Norway, however, and other regions are to a larger extent dependent upon participation in networks in order to be perceived as credible policy actors. The South Norway European Office is one of the Norwegian regional offices with only one permanent employee in Brussels (see Table 2.1). However, the office is an active player within certain policy areas, such as the EU funding programs, and is also an active participant in the ERRIN network (see Table 2.1). According to Bodil Agasøster, the

manager of the South Norway European Office in Brussels, "ERRIN makes it possible to do more with fewer resources" (Hanssen, 2012: 18). An example being that they were able to (with only one permanent employee and one trainee) host a seminar attended by several regional actors along with representatives from both the Commission and the EP, and at this event promote and profile their end users and key stakeholders at home (Hanssen, 2012: 18). All Norwegian regions, except the West Norway Office, are members in ERRIN, and according to Hanssen (2012) they all reported using the network for promoting their regions and branding themselves in Brussels, due to the fact that ERRIN was considered to add credibility and weight to their reputation. Richard Tuffs, the director of ERRIN, confirms that on of the main functions of the network is profiling their participating regions, along with the network itself, in Brussels.

Uniqueness might not be the only reason why the North Norway office has advantages over other Norwegian regional actors when building a reputation as an advocate in the EU system. One of the reasons why the North Norway office is considered successful in influencing policy, is, according to Østhagen, because they have a solid political foundation at home as their point of departure in Brussels. By actively involving political representatives from the three different counties constituting parts of the office's ownership, in defining the office's objectives and activities, they are able to provide the sort of accountability needed to produce a collective platform for branding the region politically. Østhagen explains that this is "an essential prerequisite for being able to pursue advocacy and influence in Brussels". Deogan at the Mid Sweden office support Østhagen's argument by stating: "if we don't have a solid political foundation at home, we cannot pursue advocacy and influence here [in Brussels]. Involving local and regional politicians in our work is crucial for being perceived as a credible and competent player". However, according to the NOU (2012:2), most of the Norwegian regional representations does not consider advocacy as one of their main objectives, explained by the need to adhere to the wishes of their end-users and stakeholders responsible for creating the framework of their activities in Brussels. In other words, since the people paying the bills are not concerned with influencing EU policy, the representations in Brussels not concerned with it either. Accordingly, on might argue that the only thing standing in the way of Norwegian regional influence in Brussels, are the regions themselves. However, this is not justifiable in the data collected for this thesis, though it could constitute an interesting research topic for the future.

5.2 Institutional Approval

All of the interviewees from the supranational and national level confirmed that the institutions and other policy actors in Brussels in general considered and perceived networks positively, and as credible and competent actors. They did not argue that *all* networks in general was perceived this way, but that the networks they knew of and had experiences with dealing with, had a good reputation.

According to the Commission official, networks are a "normal part of our every day reality", and he/she further explained that the relationship between the Commission and policy networks is reciprocal; "We provide them a service and they provide us a service. It is a mutual informative interaction between the two, from which I have personally benefitted in my work". Fredrik Tiger, also Commission official, stated that: "my assessment and understanding, based on my experience at DG Regio, is that NSPA and its participants have a good reputation", and that it is "perceived as something that clearly brings added value to the work of the Commission". In his opinion, networks are perceived positively because they represent a lager geographic area, thus helping to simplify and streamline information exchange in the 'existence of information abundance', as described by the other Commission official. This is also evident in existing literature on the topic, with Börzel and Heard-Lauréote arguing: "the European Commission has promoted the creation of networks to increase the problem-solving capacity of EU policy-making to develop elements of substitute democratic legitimacy" (2009: 146).

When asked to give reasons for why networks were considered in such positive a manner, all interviewees responded with various versions of an efficiency argument. According to Jan Edøy, the positive perception of networks in the Commission is due to the fact that through interacting with transnational policy networks, the Commission has found a way of 'bypassing the national capitals', which in some cases is 'much more efficient than going the national route'. Anders Linholm, on the other hand, underpinned Tiger's response by saying that networks have a positive reputation because "it is quite simply easier for the Commission, or any other institution for that matter, to interact with a network comprised of several actors, as opposed to dealing with each and every one of them individually".

According to him, networks are furthermore considered to be credible policy actors, providing professional information and input to the institutions. This might be due to the fact that they are representing aggregated and collective European interest fostering legitimacy, but it could also be linked to the fact that well-established networks often have a secretariat with people working solely on information gathering and preparing position papers, hence, according to Lindholm, enabling them to "obtain a professional level on their input". Accordingly, one could argue that having a secretariat would enhance a networks *reputation* as being competent and professional, hence improving its abilities to gain *access* to decision-makers, and thus also strengthen its abilities to *influence* EU policy on behalf of its participants.

The effect of participation in a network on a regional actor's reputation seem to be exclusively positive when viewed from the perspective of the supranational institutions. According to the interviewees themselves, this is explained by the effectiveness of interacting with a network as opposed to single actors, along with the perception that networks provide more professional input and information. However, according to Wolfram Kaizer (2009: 228), fostering and maintain policy networks in the EU can furthermore be considered as "in the Commission's institutional self-interest", because interacting and cooperating with networks maximises its influence vis-à-vis the member states and the other institutions due to the claim of legitimacy. However, when viewed from a regional perspective a network's effect on an actor's reputation is apparently more ambivalent. This is due to the fact that the dynamic, complex competitive policy environment in Brussels favours the pursuit of promiscuous branding strategies for small actors, in order to safeguard opportunities of successful advocacy. Hence, making balancing the use of networks and individual branding the rational strategy of small actors when they seek a good reputation in Brussels. Building oneself a good reputations, however, is, as stated by Østhagen, a process that requires constant work over time, thus making the reputation variable strongly linked to the topic of the next analysis: continuity.

6. Creating Continuity

According to the Commission official in DG Regio: "To have influence on policy and regulations [in the EU] is not something that happens over night, it is a long process that happens over years". In other words, it requires some form of continuity. However, Brussels is a city with a very high degree of employee turnover. Most people working in the EU capital are only stationed there on fixed terms of everything from six months to three years. Few people stay longer. Furthermore, continuity is considered a necessary prerequisite for being able to build a good reputation of being credible and trustworthy among EU officials. Consequently, and as stated by both the Mid Sweden and the North Norway office, continuity is considered to be one of the main criteria for successful advocacy work (Guéguen, 2008). This might explain why the Commission official was so reluctant in giving specific and definite answers on networks' ability to influence EU policy, since he/she had only been employed in the Commission for just over two years, and therefore had, according to him-/herself, "not sufficient knowledge of how the policy decided on and implemented today had been negotiated over the years". However, two years could be considered the double in 'Brussels-years', because of the high replacement rate and very steep learning curve among the people working there (Huysseune & Jans, 2008; Moore, 2008).

According to the Official Norwegian Report on Norway's relations with the EU, all Norwegian non-governmental actors in Brussels, regional representations included, reported that continuity and long-term perspective was one of the most important prerequisites for pursuing advocacy activities successfully in Brussels (NOU 2012:2). However, the majority of Norwegian regional representations have less than three permanent employees, and replace the majority of their workforce every six to twelve months (see Table 2.1 for an overview over the number of employees at the various Norwegian regional offices) (Eliassen & Peneva, 2012). This speaks of low continuity and limited abilities to build a valuable reputation in the EU capital, and thus also of restricted possibilities of influencing EU policy. This analysis dig deeper into the following hypothesis: 2 (d) Networks are favourable in that they provide a sense of continuity in a policy environment with a high degree of political uncertainty and employee turnover.

Based on the logic representing the policy network approach, one can argue that due to the *human dimension* of networks, they function as socialisation instruments furthering continuity in the work activities of small actors in Brussels. Data collected through the interviews support this line of reasoning. Furthermore, networks can become reliable partners for the EU institutions, in that they inhabit certain values, expertise and knowledge which they transfer to new members and the new employees of their participants, thus creating a *knowledge transfer* furthering continuity in interaction between the network and the institutions. This also creates some form of stability and may create path dependencies, which further improves continuity and stability.

6.1 Human Dimension

Networks have an important *human dimension*, in that they function as socialisation instruments for new members of the network (Börzel & Heard-Lauréote, 2009). Upon entering into a network, participants most commonly have little experience with participating in the EU policy processes, and they may also have diverging value systems and conflicting interests and views of the policy issue at hand. In other words, they arrive with what Schön and Rein (1994) call competing "policy frames", creating a process of "frame reflection" (quoted in Richardson, 2006: 13-14). This is a three step process: (1) recognition of each other as legitimate stakeholders within the policy area; (2) recognising that collaborations may be the best means of achieving policy gains; (3) a desire to achieve negotiated and stable policy environments in preference of instability and uncertainty (Richardson, 2006). Upon realising stable cooperation, such as in a network, they will learn, by working together, what kind of change is feasible and what change that would be unproductive. Then, according to Richardson (2006: 10), the participants in the network "will begin to debate in the same language (if not with the same values), and arguments will be treated seriously only if discussed in these common criteria". And, according to both the Commission official in DG Regio, and Jan Edøy at the Norwegian Mission to the EU, one has to speak the 'EU-language' in order to get heard and be taken seriously. This *human dimension* and socialisation effect derived from participating networks thus becomes an important tool in the EU policy process, both to efficiently create functioning policy actors, and to create some degree of stable and continuous dialogue between the Commission and the stakeholders.

In a complex and crowded political system, such as in the EU, cooperation in networks is a sound strategy, because actors are operating under immense degrees of uncertainty in what is, as mentioned, very long-running games. In this sense, and in accordance with the policy network approach, one can argue that networks provide continuity to their participants operations by socialising new members into the policy process by relaying shared meanings, values and practices. These meanings, values and practices are developed through the continued interaction between the network participants creating and furthering the use of a common language and common policy culture. In this sense, efficiency is also improved because new members are taught how to behave in the European policy environment, and they become functioning policy actors quicker. According to Börzel and Heard-Lauréote (2009: 142), this is valuable to the EU institutions, because it "is an important mechanism for deepening the European integration process", and can also help explain why networks are given access more easily than single actors in the policy process.

The argument that networks adds to a participant's continuity through this socialisation process finds support in the interview data. According to the director of the Mid Sweden office, Brandelius-Johansson, there is a weakness in being a small actor in Brussels, because you risk loosing so much of the office's knowledge and competence when an employee leaves or is replaced. However, participating in a network can compensate for some of this weakness, because regardless of the coming and going of participants in the network and their employees, the work within the network will have a continuous flow; it will, as Richard Tuffs said, "keep on working, keep on moving". Brandelius-Johansson describes the effect in these words:

> It is a strength to be part of a network, built on trust and competence, especially in terms of continuity; because it means that every one of us does not need to inhabit all the knowledge, and all the contacts on our own. Participating in a network means sharing your knowledge and contacts with other, and vice versa. Thus, being in a network strengthen our office's continuity, because even if we replace an employee, the work in the network will always pick up again.

In other words, because the knowledge is shared, it is never lost. However, the North Norway European Office and the Mid Sweden European Office both stress the fact that participation in a network can never replace, or entirely compensate for lack of continuity

in the office's work and activities. It is important to ensure that you have both, for instance by logging the office's activities and writing down important information for archiving. Nevertheless, networks can somewhat lax the tension of an office's continuity, and also make it easier to train and educate new employees on policy work in the EU. As Østhagen at the North Norway office stated, "participation in a network, such as the NSPA, will ultimately affect our continuity in terms of knowledge transfer to new employees".

The *human dimension* of policy network, it seems, foster continuity by the development of a certain dynamic and knowledge culture within the network, along with internal norms and values. These will inevitably transfer to new members and new employees, creating continuity in the policy work of all participants. This dynamic and internal culture is reciprocal. According to Østhagen, the existing knowledge culture and norms within the network will affect the new participants, but the new participants and employees will also affect the network's internal dynamic:

> By being in constant interaction and exchange with the other participants in a network, our office will continue to focus on the policy issues that is important within the network. For instance, if we were to leave the NSPA network, regional policy would probably no longer be such an important focus for our office. In this sense, participation in a network can strengthen our office's continuity in terms of our work on regional policy. Furthermore, the continuity that networks can provide is to some extent dependent on persons. Meaning, that although new participants will be taught and absorbed into the basic activities, interests, objectives and functions of the network, they will also be able to influence and affect the network itself.

6.2 Path Dependency

The human dimension-argument is endogenous, meaning it describes the effect a network has on its participants. However, the effect a network can have on continuity can also have an endogenous character; namely the institutionalisation of transnational advocacy. According to Richardson (2006), the political environment in Brussels is characterised by high levels of uncertainty when it comes to predicting policy outcomes. This is the result of power and

influence being dispersed across multiple levels of decision-making, implementation being delegated to multiple institutions across different societal levels, and how incredible open and permeable the EU institutions are to policy advocates. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to identify where a policy 'started' in the EU, and also to some extent, where what was decided, and when; hence the common response that "policies seem to come from nowhere" (Richardson, 2006: 21). The open bureaucracy of the Commission encourages advocacy, while the political opacity of the decision-making process allows a variety of actors to take credit for the outcomes (Keating & Hooghe, 2006). Add to this Commission's dependency on input, and it is not really hard to understand why organised interests, in the form of networks, are much-preferred partners in the policy process.

In these uncertain policy circumstances, the Commission has recognised that the institutionalisation of interests, and the interaction with such, is a good form of 'risk reduction' (Mazey & Richardson, 2006), and also a good way to establish some stability and continuity in the Brussels-cacophony of interests. According to Mazey and Richardson (2006: 249), the Commission can, "by seating the appropriate stakeholders at the appropriate seats", reduce anticipated resistance to their policy initiatives in other arenas, and subsequently avoid the sole blame for possible policy failures or fiascos. According to Jan Edøy, because the system in the EU is structured the way it is, "networks have a certain status to the Commission" and is also why "it favours aggregated interests". If a transnational policy network gains a good reputation for being competent and credible, and manages to establish some form of partnership with the Commission, this network can have long-lasting effects on the perceptions and behaviours of other actors, by being 'meaningful objects of identification' (Mazey & Richardson, 2006: 252). Consequently, other actors will seek to emulate the behaviour of the network and its participants, because their actions appear to bear fruit. Thus, a network can create some kind of path dependency in the EU, fostering stability, predictability and continuity in the policy-making process.

7. Informative Interaction in Representations of Scale

The purpose of this thesis was to answer the research question; *to what extent, and how, can Norwegian regional offices in Brussels act as gateways for influence in the EU through participation in transnational networks?* It sought to do so by measuring the effects participation in transnational networks had on three distinct characteristics considered to be crucial for having success in advocacy in the EU, namely *access*, *reputation*, and *continuity*.

Regarding the effect of network participation on a regional actor's possibilities of gaining access to decision-makers in the EU, the analyses has shown that network participation enhances the possibilities of gaining access in general. The main findings showed that by participating in transnational networks, Norwegian regional actors become part of *'representations of scale'*, representing lager geographic areas and aggregated European interests, which is considered to enhance both the *efficiency* and the *legitimacy* in the policy process, which as perceived as favourable in the Commission. The result being that they are consulted more included and consulted in the policy process more easily than small-scale single actors. Regarding legitimacy, it was argued that transnational networks, by mobilising societal actors at the subnational level and enabling them to participate actively in the EU decision-making process, they can be seen as a possible way of reducing the EUs democratic deficit. However, because

In terms of *legitimacy*, the assumptions was that transnational networks, by mobilising societal actors at the subnational level and enabling them to participate in the EU policy process, could be seen as a way of reducing the democratic deficit, and thus being of essential importance to EU decision-makers. However, the results of the analysis showed that this was not as clear-cut as it might have sounded. Networks, due to their potentially exclusive, opaque and elitist structure, and not being directly accountably to citizens, are not legitimate *in se*. Nevertheless, throughout the analyses, the data from the interviews emphasised legitimacy as an added value derived from network participation, both in terms of justifying access to decision-makers, in terms of justifying decision-makers preferring interaction and cooperation with giving networks above single actors. Another interesting finding was that regional representations used participation in networks to justify their presence in Brussels to their end-users, because such participation was considered to improve possibilities of influencing EU policy.

Regarding efficiency, it was assumed that transnational networks enhanced efficiency in the policy process by being aggregated European interests representing larger geographic areas, and in this way enhancing efficiency in the policy process by simplifying and streamlining the information exchange. Furthermore, it was argued, from a regional perspective, that network participation was resource efficient, thus enabling small-scale regional offices to pursue advocacy despite having limited resources. The findings in the analysis of the empirical data support the first argument, and none of the interviewees' responses were contradictory. In terms of the argument of resource efficiency, the analysis found that participation in networks could be resource efficient, in terms of splitting the high costs of pursuing advocacy with other actors within the network. However, it could also be resource intensive, due to the fact that most networks are operating on consensus, leading to challenges with overcoming the lowest common denominator through time-consuming negotiations to arrive at a common position.

When the effect participation in a network had on an actor's reputation was analysed, the assumption that network participation improved an actor's reputation as being a credible and competent policy actor, was put to the test. First of all, the findings revealed a perception division between the regional and the supranational division: All interviewees representing the supranational level confirmed the assumption put forward, and concurred to it; whereas interviewees representing the regional level, all presented the effect to be ambivalent. Whether the effect was positive or negative was described as being dependent upon the regional actors inherent characteristics and what qualifications they had within different policy areas. Hence, the conclusion was drawn that the rational choice for an actor was to safeguard itself against potential advocacy failures (and a consequent impaired reputation), by pursuing promiscuous branding strategies using both participation in networks, *and*, individual profiling activities to build a reputation as a competent and credible policy actor.

In terms of continuity, the assumption was put forward that participation in transnational networks could improve an actor's continuity within a policy environment of high political uncertainty and employee turnover, due to their human dimension and socialisation function. The analyses found that networks indeed did improve continuity: By relying shared meanings, values, and practices, it was shown that networks could create a knowledge transfer fostering continuity. Furthermore, the analyses found that successful networks could foster stability and

continuity by creating path dependencies and becoming 'meaningful objects of identification', leading other networks and actors to emulate their behaviour.

All things considered, the three analyses have shown that participation in transnational networks improves an actor's possibilities of gaining *access* to decision-makers; that they in certain situations can be used to improve an actor's *reputation* as in the policy process, and that networks are perceived positively in, and as adding value to, the supranational level; and, finally, that network participation improves an actor's continuity. In other words, all necessary prerequisites for being able to successfully influence EU policy could be provided by a network. However, this does not automatically translate to Norwegian regional representation becoming 'gateways of influence in the EU' by participating in such. As emphasised in chapter five, in order to influence EU policy Norwegian regions need a mandate from their end-users, a political foundation on which to justify their policy advocacy, and a political position to advocate. However, because Norwegian regions are subordinate the category *administrative* regions, few Norwegian regions have the political foundation at home, needed for pursuing advocacy in Brussels; hence, they will not be fully able to exploit the possibilities and opening created by participating in transnational policy networks. Furthermore, it would be naïve to state that Norwegian regions can become gateways for influence, in general, for two reasons: 1) Regional actors are only decisive policy actors within the areas concerning regional policy. And 2) Regional actors will advocate regional interests and preferences, as opposed to general Norwegian interests and preferences. Accordingly, it would be more correct to draw the conclusion that Norwegian regional representations *could* become gateways for Norwegian *regional* influence when participating in transnational policy networks, *if* they have the necessary political foundation at home.

Bibliography

Bomberg, E., & Peterson, J. (1998). European Union Decision Making: the Role of Sub-national Authorities. *Political Studies*, *46*(2), 219–235. Retrieved from http://tinyurl.com/d2w29vd

Börzel, T. a., & Heard-Lauréote, K. (2009). Networks in EU Multi-level Governance: Concepts and Contributions. *Journal of Public Policy*, *29*(02), 135–152. doi:10.1017/S0143814X09001044

Commission, E. (2012). Financial Programming and Budget. Retrieved February 15, 2013, from http://ec.europa.eu/budget/figures/2011/2011_en.cfm

Donas, T., & Beyers, J. (2012). How Regions Assemble in Brussels: The Organizational Form of Territorial Representation in the European Union. *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, 1–24. doi:10.1093/publius/pjs042

Eliassen, K. A., & Peneva, P. (n.d.). Norwegian Non-Governmental Actors in Brussels 1980 – 2010 Interest Representation and Lobbying. In U. for utredning av N. avtaler med EU (Ed.), *Europautredningen*. Aurskog: Fagbokforlaget. Retrieved from http://www.europautredningen.no/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Rap5-lobby1.pdf

Esterling, K. M. (2005). *The Political Economy of Expertise: Information and efficiency in American national politics*. Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press.

Eurostat. (2012). NUTS. Retrieved March 16, 2013, from http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/nuts_nomenclature/introduction

George. (2004). Multilevel governance and the European Union. In I. Bache & M. Flinders (Eds.), *Multilevel Gorvernance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Greenwood, J. (2011). *Interest Representation in the European Union* (Third.). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Grindheim, J. E. (2009). *Stat, Region, Union*. University of Bergen.

Guéguen, D. (2008). *European Lobbying* (Third.). London: John Harper Publishing.

Hanssen, C. W. (2012). Safety and strength in numbers. Regional cooperation and advocacy in the EU, based on the cases of NSPA and ERRIN. Report prepared for the Annual General Meeting to the Mid Norway European Office

Heinelt, H., & Niederhafner, S. (2008). Cities and Organized Interest Intermediation in the EU Multi-Level System. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, *15*(2), 173–187. doi:10.1177/0969776408090023

Hillion, C. (2011). *Integrating an Outsider: An EU Perspective on Relations with Norway* (pp. 1–27). Oslo. Retrieved from

http://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&btnG=Search&q=intitle:Integrating+an+outsider+An+EU+perspective+on+relations+with+Norway#0

Huysseune, M., & Jans, M. T. (2008). Brussels as the capital of a Europe of the regions? *Brussels Studies*, *32*(16), 1–11. Retrieved from http://www.brusselsstudies.be/medias/publications/EN_57_BruS16EN.pdf

Kaiser, W. (2009). Bringing History Back In To the Study of Transnational Networks in European Integration. *Journal of Public Policy*, *29*(02), 223. doi:10.1017/S0143814X09001032

Keating, M., & Hooghe, L. (2006). Bypassing the nation-state? Regions and the EU policy process. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *European Union: Power and Policy-Making* (Third., pp. 269–286). Oxon: Routledge.

Klepp, Å., & Lutnæs, O. (n.d.). *EUs regionalpolitikk–i samsvar med norsk distrikts-og regionalpolitisk tenkning? Oslo: Central Research Office for ...* (Vol. 4, pp. 1–87). Oslo. Retrieved from http://www.utredningskontoret.no/FLIB/1622-Rapport nr 4 2004.pdf

Mahoney, C. (2008). *Brussels Versus the Beltway Advocacy in the United States and the European Union*. Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press.

Marks, G., Haesly, R., & Mbaye, H. A. D. (2002). What Do Subnational Offices Think They Are Doing in Brussels? *Regional & Federal Studies*, *12*(3), 1–23. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/714004755

Marks, G., Hooghe, L., & Blank, K. (1996). European Integration from the 1980s: State-Centric v. Multi-level Governance. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, *34*(3), 341–378.

Mazey, S., & Richardson, J. (2006). Interest groups and EU policy-making: organisational logic and venue shopping. In Richardson (Ed.), *European Union: Power and Policy-Making* (Third., pp. 247–268). Oxon: Routledge.

Moore, C. (2008). A Europe of the Regions vs . the Regions in Europe : Reflections on Regional Engagement in Brussels. *Regional & Federal Studies*, *18*(5), 517–535. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13597560802351564

Official Norwegian Reports, NOU 2012: 2. *Inside and Outside - Norway's agreements with the European Union*. Oslo: EEA Review Committee

Peterson, J. (2003). Policy Networks. Vienna. Working paper: Institute for Advanced Studies

Piattoni, S. (2009). Multi-level Governance in the EU. Does it Work ? Trento.

Putnam, R. (1988). Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games. *International Organization*, *42*(3), 427–460. Retrieved from http://journals.cambridge.org/production/action/cjoGetFulltext?fulltextid=4308848

Regions, C. of the. (2011). No Title. *List of Regional Offices Based in Brussels*. Retrieved May 1, 2012, from http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/nationaldelegations/Pages/national-delegations.aspx

Reid, E. J. (2000). *Nonprofit Advocacy and the Policy process: Structuring the Inquiry into Advocacy. 2000* (Volume 1., Vol. 1). The Urban Institute. Retrieved from http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/structuring.pdf

Rhodes, R. a. W. (1990). Policy Networks: A British Perspective. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, *2*(3), 293–317. doi:10.1177/0951692890002003003

Richardson, J. (2006). Policy-making in the EU: interests, ideas and garbage cans of primeval soup. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *European Union: Power and Policy-Making* (Third., pp. 3–30). Oxon: Routledge.

Rosamond, B. (2000). *Theories of European Integration*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rosamond, B. (2007). New Theories of European Integration. In M. Cini (Ed.), *European Union Politics* (2nd ed., pp. 117–136). New York: Oxford University Press.

Rowe, C. (2011). *Regional Representations in the EU: Between Diplomacy and Interest Representation* (p. 215). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Schultze, C. J. (2003). Cities and EU Governance : Policy-takers or Policy-makers ? *Regional & Federal Studies*, *13*(1), 121–147.

Stone, D. (2002). Introduction: global knowledge and advocacy networks. *Global Networks*, *2*(1), 1–12. doi:10.1111/1471-0374.00023

Stone, D. (2008). Global public policy, transnational policy communities, and their networks. *The Policy Jtudies journal*, *36*(1), 19–38. Retrieved from http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2007.00251.x/full

Støre, J. G. (2012). *Redegjørelse av utenriksministeren om viktige EU- og EØS-saker*. Oslo: www.regjeringen.no. Retrieved from http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/ud/aktuelt/taler_artikler/jgs_taler_artikler/2012/redegjorelse_stortinget.html?id=681151

Sverdrup, U. (2008). EØS som modell? *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift*, *4*, 348–357.

Appendixes

Appendix 1

Interview Guide – External Actors

Tema: Norske regioners deltakelse i europeiske nettverk.

Forskningsspørsmål: I hvilken grad, hvis overhodet, kan norske regioner og deres deltakelse i europeiske nettverksorganisasjoner, formelle og uformelle, virke som kanaler for økt innflytelse i EU?

Praktisk informasjon:

- Ønsker å bruke lydopptaker under intervjuet
- Lydopptakene vil transkriberes
- Hvis det er ønskelig kan kopi av transkripsjon sendes for sitatsjekk og eventuelle korreksjoner 2 uker etter intervjuet
- Lydopptakene vil bli slettet ved fullført oppgave – senest 15. mai 2013
- Hvis ønskelig kan informanten anonymiseres

Gjennom intervjuer ønsker jeg å kartlegge hvorfor norske regioner deltar i europeiske nettverksorganisasjoner og hvilken merverdi de føler slik deltakelse har for deres arbeid.

Videre ønsker jeg å få mer informasjon om hvordan slike nettverk blir oppfattet av representanter i EUs institusjoner, hovedsakelig kommisjonen og parlamentet, samt hvilken merverdi slike nettverk har for disse institusjonene.

Målet er å finne ut om regionene får økt innflytelse i EU gjennom deltakelse i nettverk.

Konteksten for oppgaven er Europautredingen (NOU 2012:2).

Intervjuene vil være halvstrukturerte hvor spørsmålene vil være formulert på forhånd, men hvor utdypningsspørsmål og nye spørsmål vil komme til underveis i samtalen.

Overordnede tema:
- ❖ Erfaringer
- ❖ Omdømme og holdninger
- ❖ Merverdi og utbytte for institusjonene
- ❖ Samarbeid og struktur
- ❖ Innflytelse og resultater

Generell informasjon:
- • Navn:

- Stilling / representerer:
- Nasjonalitet:

Erfaringer:

1. Hvordan vil du karakterisere EUs styringsform?

2. Hvordan vil du karakterisere EUs beslutningsprosess?

3. Hvordan vil du karakterisere regioners rolle i EU?

4. Hvordan vil du karakterisere nettverks rolle i EU?

5. Har nettverk i dine øyne en funksjon i EUs beslutningsprosess?

6. I så fall, hvilken funksjon?

7. Hvor mye kontakt har du hatt med nettverk i ditt arbeid?

8. Hva er dine erfaringer fra denne kontakten / dette samarbeidet?

   a. Har nettverk vært til hjelp i ditt arbeid?
   b. Har nettverk vært distraherende i ditt arbeid?
   c. Har nettverk vært tidkrevende?
   d. Har nettverk vært tidsbesparende?

Omdømme og holdninger:

9. Hvordan vil du karakterisere omdømmet til NSPA og ERRIN i Brussel /EU ?

10. Hvordan vil du karakterisere omdømmet til nettverk generelt?

11. Hvordan ser du på regioners deltakelse i nettverk med tanke på omdømmet til regionen?

12. Har du noen erfaringer med å jobbe med nettverk versus enkeltaktører?

Merverdi og utbytte:

13. Har du / din institusjon hatt utbytte av å samarbeide med nettverk?
14. I så fall, kan du gi noen konkrete eksempler på slikt utbytte?

15. Er det noen utfordringer knyttet til å samarbeide med nettverk?

   a. Hvis ja, hvilke? Hvordan er det utfordrende? Og er det noe som kan gjøres noe med?
   b. Hvis nei, hva er det som har gjort at det ikke er utfordrende?

16. Har samarbeidet / kontakten med nettverk vært strukturert på noen måte?

     a. Hvis ja, hvordan?

     b. Hvis nei, burde det være strukturert, og i så fall hvordan?

13.

Innflytelse og resultater:

17. Hvordan vil du definere innflytelse?

18. Hvordan vil du definere påvirkning?

19. Etter din oppfatning, hva er kriteriene for suksessfullt påvirkningsarbeid?

20. Kan du si noe om forholdet mellom region, stat, EU?

     a. Hvordan spiller nettverk inn her?

21. Har du noen konkrete eksempler på samarbeid du har hatt med nettverk?

22. Har du noen konkrete resultater av samarbeid med nettverk?

23. Hvordan vil du karakterisere arbeidet nettverk som NSPA og ERRIN gjør?

24. Er det riktig å si at slike nettverk blir hørt i beslutningsprosessen?

     a. Hvis ja, hvordan og hvorfor?
     b. Hvis nei, hvorfor ikke?

25. Er det riktig å si at nettverk har innflytelse i beslutningsprosessen?
     a. Hvis ja, har du noen konkrete eksempler på dette?
     b. Hvis nei, burde nettverk bli inkludert eller ikke – hvorfor?

26. Sett i lys av dine erfaringer, hvilken merverdi kan slike nettverk ha for beslutningsprosessen i EU?

27. Er det noe mer du ønsker å tilføye?

Appendix 2

Interview Guide – Regional Actors

Tema: Norske regioners deltakelse i europeiske nettverk.

Forskningsspørsmål: I hvilken grad, hvis overhodet, kan norske regioner og deres deltakelse i europeiske nettverksorganisasjoner, formelle og uformelle, virke som kanaler for økt innflytelse i EU?

Praktisk informasjon:

- Ønsker å bruke lydopptaker under intervjuet
- Lydopptakene vil transkriberes
- Hvis det er ønskelig kan kopi av transkripsjon sendes for sitatsjekk og eventuelle korreksjoner 2 uker etter intervjuet
- Lydopptakene vil bli slettet ved fullført oppgave – senest 15. mai 2013
- Hvis ønskelig kan informanten anonymiseres

Gjennom intervjuer ønsker jeg å kartlegge hvorfor norske regioner deltar i europeiske nettverksorganisasjoner og hvilken merverdi de føler slik deltakelse har for deres arbeid.

Videre ønsker jeg å få mer informasjon om hvordan slike nettverk blir oppfattet av representanter i EUs institusjoner, hovedsakelig kommisjonen og parlamentet, samt hvilken merverdi slike nettverk har for disse institusjonene.

Målet er å finne ut om regionene får økt innflytelse i EU gjennom deltakelse i nettverk.

Konteksten for oppgaven er Europautredingen (NOU 2012:2).

Intervjuene vil være halvstrukturerte hvor spørsmålene vil være formulert på forhånd, men hvor utdypningsspørsmål og nye spørsmål vil komme til underveis i samtalen.

Overordnede tema for intervjuet:
- ❖ Hvorfor nettverk?
- ❖ Form og funksjon
- ❖ Utbytte og merverdi
- ❖ Omdømme til nettverk
- ❖ Innflytelse og resultater

Generell informasjon:
- Hvilken region?
- Antall ansatte?
- Struktur / eierforhold?
- Hovedoppgaver og funksjon?

1. Hvordan vil du karakterisere regioners rolle i EU?

2. Hvordan vil du karakterisere nettverks rolle i EU?

Hvorfor nettverk:

3. Hva var kontorets motivasjon for å bli med i et nettverk?

4. Hvilke nettverk er kontoret medlem i?

5. Hvorfor nettopp disse nettverkene?

6. Hvor lenge har kontoret vært medlem?

7. Hvorfor valgte kontoret å delta i nettverk?

Form og funksjon:

8. Hvordan er arbeidet i nettverkene strukturert?

9. Hvordan brukes nettverk i forhold til kontorets arbeidsoppgaver og funksjon?

    a. Informasjon
    b. Overvåkning
    c. Innflytelse

10. Kan du si noe om kontinuitet i kontorets arbeid?

11. Har deltakelse i nettverk noen effekt på kontorets kontinuitet?

12. Hvor ofte har kontoret kontakt med de forskjellige institusjonene?

    a. Kommisjonen
    b. EP
    c. Rådet

13. Hvor ofte er denne kontakten en konsekvens av deltakelse i nettverk?

14. Kan du si noe om innholdet og formen på denne kontakten?

    a. Er den formell?
    b. Er den uformell?
    c. Er den relatert til kontorets arbeid?
    d. Er den viktig for kontorets arbeid – i så fall på hvilken måte?

Utbytte og merverdi:

15. Har kontoret noe utbytte av å delta i nettverk?

    a. Hvis ja, hvordan vil du beskrive dette utbyttet?

    b. Hvis nei, hvorfor ikke?

   c. Hvis nei, hvorfor deltar kontoret i dette/disse nettverkene da?

16. Er det noen utfordringer knyttet til å delta i nettverk?

   a. Hvis ja, hvordan vil du beskrive utfordringer knyttet til å delta i nettverk?
   b. Hvis nei, hva er det som gjør at det ikke er det?
      i. Homogenitet vs. Heterogenitet?
      ii. Like forutsetninger; geografisk, økonomisk, størrelse, mål, visjon…

Omdømme:

17. Hvordan ønsker du at din region skal oppfattes i Brussel?

18. Hvordan ønsker du at regionskontoret skal oppfattes hjemme i regionen?

19. Hvilket inntrykk har du av hvordan nettverket/-ene oppfattes utad?
   a. Av kommisjonen
   b. Av parlamentet
   c. Av andre nettverk
   d. Av andre aktører i Brussel
   e. Hjemme i regionen

Innflytelse og resultater:

20. Hvordan vil du definere innflytelse?

21. Hvordan vil du definere påvirkning?

22. Etter din oppfatning, hva er kriteriene for suksessfullt påvirkningsarbeid?

23. Er det viktig for ditt kontor å påvirke?

   a. Hvis ja, hvorfor og hvordan?
   b. Hvis nei, hvorfor ikke?

24. Hvilken rolle spiller lokale/regionale forhold for kontorets virke i Brussel?

25. Hvilken betydning har kontorets forankring hjemme?

26. Hvordan er ditt kontors forankring?

   a. Hvis god, hva er det som gjør den god?
   b. Hvis dårlig, hva er dårlig og hvordan kan det forbedres?

27. Er det viktig for ditt kontor å ha innflytelse og å kunne påvirke?

28. Er det for deg en sammenheng mellom nettverk og påvirkningsarbeid?

29. Har kontorets arbeid og rutiner endret seg etter deltakelse i nettverk?
   a. Hvis ja, hvordan?

      b.   Hvis nei, hva er det som gjør at dette ikke har endret seg?

30. Har kontorets mål, strategi og funksjon endret seg etter deltakelse i nettverk?
      a.   Hvis ja, hvordan?
      b.   Hvis nei, hva er det som gjør at dette ikke har endret seg?

31. Kan du fortelle om noen konkrete eksempler og resultat av arbeid i nettverk?

32. Er det noe mer du vil tilføye?