Industries and Citizens’ Groups Networks in EU Food Policy: The Emergence of ‘Unholy Alliances’ in Multilevel Governance?

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Abstract

Food policy is one the most regulated policy fields at the EU level. ‘Unholy alliances’ are collaborative patterns that temporarily bring together antagonistic stakeholders behind a common cause. This paper deals with such ‘transversal’ co-operations between citizens’ groups (NGOs, consumers associations…) and economic stakeholders (food industries, retailers…), focusing on their ambitions and consequences. This paper builds on two case studies that enable a more nuanced view on the perspectives for the development of transversal networks at the EU level.

The main findings are that (i) the rationale behind the adoption of collaborative partnerships actually comes from a case-by-case cost/benefit analysis leading to hopes of improved access to institutions; (ii) membership of a collaborative network leads to a learning process closely linked to the network’s performance; and (iii) coalitions can have a better reception — rather than an automatic better access — depending on several factors independent of the stakeholders themselves.
Introduction

“For the majority of the world’s population, food is not just an item of consumption, it is actually a way of life. It has deep material and symbolic power [...] because it embodies the links between nature, human survival and health, culture and livelihood”. ¹

This cultural sensitivity is translated into a high political and economic sensitivity when it comes to questions of food policy and governance: “one might venture to suggest that food is as much a force to be reckoned with as money”.² Food policy is defined as “the collective efforts of governments to influence the decision-making environment of food producers, food consumers, and food marketing agents in order to further social objectives”.³ This broad definition displays the all-encompassing nature of food politics, from fishery and agriculture to nutrition, food safety and animal welfare. Food trade having become “one of the more heavily regulated segments of the [...] economy”,⁴ decision-making arenas are logically targeted by civil society actors to make their voices heard.

In food policy the most vocal civil society actors are economic stakeholders and citizens’ groups. While the former category includes a wide range of interests from producers to processors, advertisers and retailers, the latter category can be defined as “associations [seeking] to secure political objectives [...] based around an idea and sometimes a single issue, with no occupational basis of membership”.⁵ The often antagonistic relationship between these two groups can be simplified as follows: “industry was considered the ‘bad guy’ by the [citizens’] movement, while business had regularly

² Ibid., p.21.
condemned the utopianism, radicalism and amateurism of [citizens’] organisations”. To achieve their ends, these different civil society actors resort to lobbying.

A ‘coalition’ can be described as a “purposive group of organisations united behind a symbiotic set of legislative or regulatory goals” within which “coalition membership allows groups leaders to combine their resources and divide the workload”. Despite a tendency to “round up the usual suspects”, coalition-forming can also “make strange bedfellows” by bringing together “not only like-minded organisations, but also actors representing ‘the other side’” in ‘transversal’ coalitions. The unholy alliances temporarily bring together antagonistic groups (especially when one is broadly perceived by the public as innocent and the other as more strategically-minded) behind a common cause. ‘Unholy alliances’ are by nature ad hoc, and therefore bound to end when the common cause is achieved and former allies resume their feud. Applied to the field of EU food policy, the concept of ‘unholy alliance’ raises questions about the collaborative relationships formed between economic actors and citizens’ groups. Why do these two apparently antagonistic groups network and form coalitions? How do these actors work together? What is the added value of this creative form of governance for each involved actor?

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11 B. de Angelis, ‘Food Labelling & Stakeholder Network(s) — A David vs. Goliath Fight Between NGO and Business Interests?’, thesis under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Hrbek, R., College of Europe, Bruges, 2011, p.56.
The starting point of the present work consists of three hypotheses:

(i) the success of transversal coalitions in other policy fields can link positive expectations to the replication of these collaborative structures in food policy;

(ii) these transversal collaboration patterns generate a learning process between the involved actors;

(iii) as a result of their joint efforts, the partner groups have more influence on EU institutions than within ‘traditional’ alliances or on an individual basis.

This paper will be divided into three parts. Part 1 will present the two case studies used as empirical basis for the thesis: the European Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, and the ‘Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Reform Alliance’. Part 2 will bring forward an analysis of these networks’ contributions to governance in the EU in terms of increased access to decision-makers, legitimacy and added value. Part 3 will draw conclusions from the case studies concerning the future developments of collaborative relationships between seemingly antagonistic groups in food policy.

1. Fora of stakeholder interaction

The European Commission published its White Paper on Governance in 2001 explicitly encouraging alliances between segments of civil society. The EU’s civil society reacted with “the birth of complex multilevel and institutional advocacy coalitions, ad hoc interest groupings, and EU institutionally-led forums”. In food policy, what illustrations of such behaviour can be highlighted?

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Permanent structures: the ‘Diet Platform’ case

Institutionalised policy platforms are one of the solutions at the EU’s disposal to institutionalise civil society’s input to its decision-making processes. In Brussels, concretely, what are the ambitions and features of such platforms? Policy-specific platform building became more and more popular in the late 1990s, when the institutions as well as the private stakeholders realised the potential gains of such solutions. A policy platform can be defined as “a multi-stakeholder forum where members from the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors come together to share knowledge and ideas, and discuss their concrete efforts [towards the completion of their common objectives]”. A major factor in the creation of a policy platform by authorities is the occurrence of a convergence of interests between decision-makers and private organisations that can pool their complementary resources and create synergies. EU policy platforms, by gradually enabling a more constructive dialogue, aim at overcoming antagonistic relationships as well as “facilitating a cross-sectoral approach to the issue”. Platforms can nevertheless be criticised to the extent that their activities tend to focus on information-dissemination rather than decision taking: the only outputs of such platforms are voluntary initiatives such as pledges or codes of conducts that have been harshly criticised as insufficient.

In the field of EU food policy, the concrete example of the European Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health (hereafter ‘Diet Platform’) is a perfect illustration of those ambitions, connections and tensions. The Diet Platform was established

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15 Ibid., p.199.  
18 Ibid.  
in March 2005, both as a forum for dialogue and best practice exchange and as a springboard for co-operation on non-regulatory initiatives on nutrition- and health-related issues.\textsuperscript{22} In short, “the Platform aims to pool expertise and catalyse Europe-wide action across a range of sectors”.\textsuperscript{23} While all members agree on the need for action against obesity, for instance, more disagreements arise when studying the concrete steps that need to be taken.\textsuperscript{24}

The Diet Platform is financed and chaired by the Directorate-General for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) of the Commission\textsuperscript{25} and four times a year gathers actors from consumer organisations, health NGOs, health professionals, academics, researchers, the food industry, retailers and advertisers.\textsuperscript{26} The size of a delegation depends on the importance of the Platform’s activities for the member’s core activity, as well as the member’s contribution in terms of voluntary commitments to the Platform.\textsuperscript{27} DG SANCO’s role is to steer stakeholders towards more cooperative approaches, encourage action-oriented commitments and communicate the Platform’s activities to the Council of the EU and the Parliament.\textsuperscript{28}

The Commission has full discretion over the selection criteria applied to Diet Platform candidates.\textsuperscript{29} Once they are accepted, members are obliged to make regular commitments to the Platform or risk being excluded.\textsuperscript{30} Some stakeholders, mainly not-for-profit organisations, are not overly enthusiastic about the Diet Platform’s activities and the resulting workload for resource-limited actors, but they retain their membership in order to be included in the dialogue\textsuperscript{31} and fulfil a ‘watchdog’ function\textsuperscript{32}. The European Organisation

\textsuperscript{22} M. Hallsworth and Tom Ling, \textit{The EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health — Second Monitoring Progress Report}, Santa Monica, RAND Europe, 2007, p.iii.
\textsuperscript{23} ‘The EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health - An Insider’s Perspective’, EPHA (European Public Health Alliance) website, September 2006.
\textsuperscript{24} European Commission (2010), \textit{op. cit.}, p.25.
\textsuperscript{25} Guéguen, \textit{op. cit.}, p.132.
\textsuperscript{26} EPHA, \textit{loc. cit.}
\textsuperscript{27} Interview with M. Xipsiti, Food Drink Europe (Manager of Consumer Information, Diet and Health), 28 February 2013, Brussels.
\textsuperscript{29} EPHA, \textit{loc. cit.}
\textsuperscript{30} Intervention of L. Durack (DG SANCO), at the February 2013 Diet Platform Meeting.
\textsuperscript{31} Phone interview with J. Murray (former BEUC director), 26 February 2013.
of Craftsmen and Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (UEAPME) has, for instance, been “kicked out” from the Platform because of a lack of activity with regards to their commitments. This focus on action is “one of the key characteristics that differentiates the Platform from other multi-stakeholder forums”, which has been described even by critical stakeholders as “a refreshing change to the rhetoric often found on similar projects”. A corollary of this focus on action is the importance of evaluation and monitoring on the Diet Platform’s agenda. With the commitments representing for each actor a considerable workload, “it is a struggle for everybody to find a system to evaluate their efficiency, action and impact”. The not-for-profit members of the Diet Platform are the most critical towards its activities:

“[the Diet Platform] is not going far enough or fast enough [...] policy makers need to identify clearly the objectives to be achieved with clear timelines and targets. It also needs to be made clear that if the aims are not achieved, they will explore the Regulatory route”.

Certain NGO voices are even more vocal:

“we joined the Platform out of worry about what its outputs would be. There is too much voluntary action going on, and by joining the Platform we get drawn into this spirit that voluntary action is not so bad in the end. I am shocked when the Platform is described as a “partnership”, because what it actually is is a time-consuming exercise of exchanging ideas. [...] NGOs need to keep criticising everything that is said to show there is no consensus”.

These disagreements stem from a fundamental difference of what is entailed by the term ‘commitment’; while many commitments are not entirely new but rather upgraded
versions of existing projects,\textsuperscript{41} it should be noted that the Platform has added value and ambitions to projects that would maybe not have happened otherwise.\textsuperscript{42} Some debates can be very confrontational, but it is an inherent difficulty for any multi-stakeholder platform.\textsuperscript{43} Stakeholders also emphasise some constructive dialogue, exchanges and instances of socialisation\textsuperscript{44} without going as far, however, as describing the Diet Platform membership in terms of a ‘learning process’.\textsuperscript{45}

As an alternative to public regulation and to self-regulation, the Diet Platform exemplifies the model of permanent multi-stakeholder dialogue with some form of self-government under public supervision.\textsuperscript{46} DG SANCO’s initiative, chairmanship and monitoring are essential in understanding the Diet Platform’s raison d’être. The antagonistic groups within the Diet Platform often disagree, for instance on the evaluation of current activities. They are, however strongly encouraged to co-ordinate their actions and at least engage in a constructive dialogue on issues of common interest. These debates can take place within or even outside the Platform’s core focus, such as the issue of food safety during the February 2013 meeting. Lastly, through regular Platform meetings, private actors can interact on a personal level, not only amongst stakeholders but also with representatives of the Commission from different DG and hierarchical levels.

To conclude, the model of policy platforms is now more commonly used by the Commission in order to institutionalise civil society debate on areas of common concern, such as better nutrition and health. The Diet Platform, instigated and supervised by DG SANCO, gathers stakeholders from various backgrounds in a process of dialogue and action commitments whose efficiency is questioned by many non-business members of the

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p.44.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p.3.
\textsuperscript{43} Interview with Murray.
\textsuperscript{44} Interview with Xipsiti.
\textsuperscript{45} Interview with Murray.
\textsuperscript{46} K. van Kersbergen and F. van Waarden, ‘Governance’ as a bridge between disciplines: Cross-disciplinary inspiration regarding shifts in governance and problems of governability, accountability and legitimacy’, European Journal or Political Research, Vol.43, 2004, p.149.
Platform. The Diet Platform is an example of a stable, permanent and institutional framework of exchange between stakeholders. However, more innovative models can present interesting alternatives of collaborative relationships.

**Ad hoc coalitions: the ‘CFP Reform Alliance’ case**

While traditional confrontational techniques may remain relevant for some particular issues, the latest trend in EU lobbying is ‘transversal lobbying’, meaning more ‘creative’ coalitions gathering traditional antagonists that together propose a consensual solution to decision-makers. Unusual coalitions catch public attention and have consequently become popular phenomena. Such strategies are widespread in environmental policy, telecom and health, but less so in food policy. ‘Green alliances’ in particular — “collaborative partnerships between environmental NGOs and businesses that pursue mutually beneficial goals” — have attracted much attention. Those partnerships can take philanthropic, strategic, commercial or political forms, hence a variety of illustrations in recent years. To launch a successful partnership, however, stakeholders must overcome tensions between the for-profit and not-for-profit actors. The majority of businesses mistrust NGOs and their communication style, while simultaneously being aware of their importance in policy-making. Indeed, if NGOs used to lack technical credibility, most of them are nowadays treated as reliable partners by the EU institutions.
often lack the financial and human resources to campaign on every EU negotiation, hence their need to open a constructive dialogue with business interests.

One can observe similar mistrust towards industry. Those fears are based on the concept of ‘astroturf lobbying’ that can be defined as a situation in which corporations manufacture an artificial public mobilisation, while letting it appear as a genuine grassroots movement. NGOs are thus afraid that businesses will take advantage of their vulnerability to trick them into an alliance only aimed at enhancing their own public image. Without going as far, it is common knowledge that while there may be sincere commitment from all sides, there is an indisputable dose of ‘window-dressing’ and image-building in all coalitions, of course to be examined on a case-by-case basis and from a historical perspective.

NGOs also have different principles in relation to collaborating with businesses, to the extent that some speak about a “schism” between “pragmatism and purity”, meaning the consensus-oriented and confrontation-oriented NGOs are respectively described as “bright greens” and “dark greens”. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is a perfect illustration of the first category: while criticised by activists for their links with businesses, one of their representatives answered: “we’re not selling out, we’re buying in!” In Brussels, Greenpeace can serve as a ‘dark green’ NGO example because of its “emotional

56 ‘European NGO Futures: A study of Europe’s leading NGOs and their contribution to policymaking in Brussels - Executive Summary’, SIGWatch, 2008.
57 Ibid.
58 de Fouloy, op. cit., p.31.
59 Phone interview with T. Koltai (Association of European Coeliac Societies), 5 February 2013.
60 Interview with R. Patten, Grayling (Director), 12 April 2013, Bruges.
61 Hoffman and Bertels, op. cit., p.16.
63 Biliouri, op. cit., p.179.
intensity and resistance to compromise”. 64 This distinction is also relevant, to a lesser extent, for businesses. 65 In any situation, ‘bright greens’ and pragmatic businesses interests do not just join their forces out of good faith, but because they have common interests: “interest-based negotiations are a more efficient and effective way to manage differences than right debates or power struggles”. 66 Through these initiatives they strive to show that “we can do good and do well at the same time”. 67 Given that the aggregated complementary resources of several partners will increase their chances to reach an optimal outcome, 68 the decision to join such a coalition is a question of pragmatism and opportunities. 69 Ad hoc transversal coalitions are focused on communication and “tend to engage in a more aggressive, single-issue type of lobbying oriented almost exclusively on communication campaigns”. 70 On the topic of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) (a partnership between WWF and the multinational corporation Unilever) a WWF representative declared in 1996:

“the history of fisheries management is one of spectacular failure. By working together with progressive seafood firms, we can harness consumer power in support of conservation and make it easier for governments to act”. 71

When the Commission launched its public consultation on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in early 2009, 72 WWF logically saw the need for further advocacy of its stance towards sustainable fisheries. To maximise its chances of success, WWF then took the initiative to bring together all key and like-minded actors in European fisheries to form the ‘CFP Reform Alliance’. 73 It should be noted that some members are themselves networks that were invited by their own national members to join the Alliance. 74 The Alliance’s first

65 Hoffman and Bertels, op. cit., pp.21-22.
66 Covey and Brown, op. cit., p.5.
68 Leech et. al., op. cit., p.25.
69 Interview with Murray.
71 Constance and Bonanno, loc. cit.
73 Interview with N. Courcy, WWF (Fisheries policy consultant), 27 February 2013, Brussels.
74 Phone interview with M. Valverde Lopez, Eurocommerce (Food and Nutrition Adviser), 5 April 2013.
statement was published on 28 April 2010 at the European Seafood Exhibition in Brussels\textsuperscript{75} (see \textit{Annex I}). The first members were WWF, the European Fish Processors Association (AIPCE), the European Retailers Association (Eurocommerce) and the European Community of Consumer Cooperatives (Euro Coop), with the European Chefs Association (Euro-Toques) who joined at a later stage.\textsuperscript{76}

The aim of such a large coalition is to show the unity of several segments of the production chain behind the same message:

“industry and conservation groups have in the past not always been on the same side of the debate with regard to fisheries [...] but WWF and a sizeable portion of the industry have found that they actually agree about the need for an ambitious reform”.\textsuperscript{77}

As seen in the case of the MSC, WWF is recognised by its peers as a pragmatic NGO: “forming alliances with industries is a typical WWF thing to do”.\textsuperscript{78} Euro Coop, due to its hybrid nature of consumers and retailers representative, is also prone to dialogue and compromise rather than open confrontation.\textsuperscript{79} AIPCE and Eurocommerce both represent many national members at the EU-level, and had the difficult task of balancing their interests and rivalries. A common solution was to let each individual member able to increase their personal involvement as far as they wanted: the German Eurocommerce member ‘Edeka’ for instance, taking advantage of its “first-class fisheries expertise”, in some instances represented Eurocommerce directly with decision-makers.\textsuperscript{80}

What makes this Alliance unique is that for the first time, members concentrated on policy reform rather than on individual actions.\textsuperscript{81} Initial negotiations focused on the formulation of a common basis of consensus, since it was clear that a strong message was

\textsuperscript{75} Interview with Courcy.
\textsuperscript{76} Phone interview with A. Vicente, AIPCE (Secretary General), 26 March 2013.
\textsuperscript{77} Interview with Courcy.
\textsuperscript{78} Phone interview with E. Reußner, parliamentary assistant to MEP Ulrike Rodust (rapporteur on the CFP Reform), 4 April 2013.
\textsuperscript{79} Young, \emph{op. cit.}, pp.170-171.
\textsuperscript{80} Interview with Valverde Lopez.
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Ibid.}
needed to be credible as an Alliance. Each member set their respective red lines and began negotiating with the others before obtaining the final five-axis manifesto that has been present on every Alliance document since then (see Annex II). These five points have been described as rather general, but this generality is a necessary compromise to reach consensus among different actors that each need to be accountable to their own constituents: “this compromise is of course broader than the smallest common denominator, which was a fundamental issue for WWF in terms of public image and credibility”. On this point there is no agreement amongst members, since other stakeholders said that “the position is exactly the smallest common denominator, because when going into details the coalition was more limited so we had to stick to the main principles”. Furthermore, the points where no consensus was reached do not necessarily signal a conflict, but potentially “matters outside our sphere of competence as a sector, hence the absence of stance as an Alliance”.

Once the message was clearly structured around the five axes, the Alliance had to be set into motion to influence policy-makers. A monthly coalition meeting was organised between all stakeholders following the institutional schedule to discuss actions to be taken. After the publication of its initial statement, the Alliance met Commission and Parliament representatives to present its common strategy before organising several events between January and July 2011: individual meetings with Members of the Parliament (MEPs); a roundtable with Maritime Affairs Commissioner Maria Damanaki at the 2011 European Seafood Expo; a high-level seminar in Poland focused on Baltic Member States during the Polish Presidency; and several networking fish dinners in Brussels. Some Alliance events were even hosted by the CFP reform rapporteur in the fisheries committee, Ulrike Rodust, including a breakfast meeting specifically targeting the key group of German conservative

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82 Interview with Courcy.
83 Interview with Valverde Lopez.
84 Interview with Courcy.
85 Interview with Vicente.
86 Interview with Valverde Lopez.
87 Interview with Courcy.
MEPs. The Alliance furthermore organised, at key moments, mass letter campaigns. In contrast to most transversal coalitions, the focus of the CFP Reform Alliance is not on the general public but on key decision-makers. The Alliance members have not appeared in the media, nor have they created a website or signed up to any logo licensing. This unusual lack of publicity can find its roots in the diversity of members.

Without going as far as speaking of ‘mistrust’, one could speak of a certain degree of mutual control between Alliance members, for instance in the lengthy procedures of unanimous approval for every written production in the name of the Alliance. The partners being of unequal resources and backgrounds, this situation could easily have given rise to “confrontational power games”, but Alliance partners succeeded in avoiding any replication of the NGO/business divide. The importance of the CFP Reform Alliance is however put into perspective by the parliamentary assistant to MEP Rodust:

“everyone was not aware of its existence, also because there was a lot of individual lobbying from each member of the coalition. The lobbying efforts from the two NGO coalitions [...] were more important and visible, and therefore attracted a lot more opposition from [...] fishermen’s lobbies, and regional associations such as the Bretagne region”.

The CFP Reform was adopted by the Fisheries Committee of the EP on 18 June 2013, but has yet to be adopted by the EP plenary and the Council of the EU at the time of this writing. Since its proposal, it has been a fertile subject for the study of ad hoc lobbying coalitions, as shown in Figure 1.
The CFP Reform Alliance gathers consensus-oriented members from different backgrounds with the aim of accomplishing an objective deemed optimal for all of them: guarantee the sustainability of fisheries in the EU. It is in their common interest not to see the fish population of Europe depleted and eventually disappear. The Alliance has neither a hierarchy nor an official chair—the WWF played the part of the facilitator by drafting position papers, but all decisions went through a process of horizontal bargaining. The Alliance is also quite remarkable insofar as it became, in its interaction with decision-makers, part of the policy solution rather than independently creating a “sustainable fisheries” label to put on certain products.

In a nutshell, while the Diet Platform is a stable and permanent model steered by the Commission, the CFP Reform Alliance is a unique self-governed coalition purely aimed at influencing EU institutions. The Diet Platform and the CFP Reform Alliance, however, have in common their diverse membership, bringing both for-profit and not-for-profit members to
the same table. Through this socialisation process, one can hypothesise on the potential integrative effect of these collaborative patterns.

2. Why choose collaboration over confrontation?

The main question of this section is to assess whether the gains obtained by joining a transversal partnership such as the Diet Platform or the CFP Reform Alliance are worth the sacrifices and loss of autonomy. How do EU institutions take into account the inputs produced by multi-stakeholder networks in its governance, and what differences does the adoption of transversal collaborative behaviours make?

Access to institutions

The objective of interest groups is to have their voices heard by EU institutions; to this end, they first and foremost need access to said institutions. What are the factors that help transversal coalitions and platforms improve their access to EU institutions?

Stakeholders being rational actors, their decisions are based on cost/benefit analyses: the rationale behind collaborative behaviours is that an optimal outcome will follow.\(^95\) By coming together, stakeholders pool their strengths in order to transform businesses’ expertise and consumer groups’ credibility into improved access to EU institutions so as to give their common message more leverage.\(^96\) The mere fact of being part of a transversal coalition or platform confers an image of trustworthiness, as the actor is perceived as consensus- and dialogue-oriented, in accordance with the EU negotiation culture.\(^97\) Moreover, such coalitions introduce ready-made consensuses: instead of being part of the problem they


\(^97\) Phone interview with a senior consultant in food policy, 13 February 2013.
establish themselves as part of the solution. Logically, transversal coalitions should therefore benefit from an improved access to institutions. In the case of the CFP Reform Alliance, “decisions-makers like the Commission are clearly impressed by this level of policy co-operation between stakeholders across seafood sectors, countries and interest groups, which they have not seen to date”. It also helps to defend the same policy goal as the institution, which in the case of the CFP reform is sustainable fisheries. In short, “getting access to [institutions] can be quite difficult, and a coalition makes this easier”. Some nuances should, however, be brought to this overly simplistic picture. Representatives of the CFP Reform Alliance members were asked to assess their common access to institutions as compared to their individual access, and more complex results emerged. It transpired that all the Alliance members were already respected organisations in Brussels; it is therefore not a question of ‘improved access’, but undoubtedly of ‘improved reception’. The notion of ‘access’ is therefore not as relevant as that of ‘reception’ in the case of the CFP Reform Alliance: having a strong message ensures better listening from partners and institutions. The WWF representative introduced a surprising caveat: “the alliance is undoubtedly efficient, but in some particular situations we had a worse access than if we had lobbied alone, due to decision-makers’ cautiousness when speaking to such a wide range of interests”. Even so, the simple study of a coalition’s features is not sufficient when dealing with access to EU institutions insofar as they each have their own cultures, needs and tensions influencing their receptiveness to external input.

Each EU institution, and within them sub-groups such as DGs or parliamentary groups or committees, is subject to its own unique dynamics. The first variable

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98 Interview with Patten and with Reußner.
99 Interview with Courcy.
100 Leech et. al., op. cit., p.7.
102 Email interview with K. Stack, parliamentary assistant to MEP Struan Stevenson (rapporteur on the Common Market Organisation regulation), 16 April 2013.
103 Interview with Valverde Lopez and with Veale.
104 Interview with Courcy.
differentiating the institutions is their degree of accountability: the less electorally accountable a policy-maker is, the less responsive it will be to stakeholders’ pressure.105

The second variable is the specific need of an institution: some institutions favour groups that can provide them with the technical expertise they need, while some others may prefer groups able to mobilise masses, or to influence macro-economic dynamics.106 From this perspective, the main advantage in terms of access of a transversal coalition is the possibility of ‘institution-shopping’, meaning pooling together each member’s traditional channels of influence in order to build a larger institutional support base.107 In more practical terms, one could, for instance, expect within the Commission to see DGs focused on the environment or consumers closer to NGOs, and DGs dealing with the Single Market, industry or competition being friendlier with industrial groups.108 The role of policy fora such as the Diet Platform in guaranteeing institutional access to its members is relatively subtle, as they are not linked to a particular issue but a general policy field. However,

“[forum politics] raised the influence of business in the power politics of inter-Director General rivalry, and has given them quasi-policymaking and agenda-setting status in certain strategic areas […] Competition between DGs encouraged the creation of forums and networks [given that] it provided the individual Commissioners with their own political and economic constituencies within Brussels”.109

While DG SANCO is responsible for the Diet Platform, calls for the involvement of other departments and DG Research in particular have emerged.110 The choice of a leading DG for any platform has important consequences. The CFP Reform Alliance, formed during the Commission’s public consultation phase, had limited contact with the Commission given

109 Ibid., p.204.
that they basically agreed on the same policy goals. A more complex set of actors challenged the Alliance members in the Parliament; this institution is structurally the most receptive to environmental groups, and part of the Alliance’s opposition is composed of environmental NGOs. The Alliance’s objective, quite uniquely, is not to advertise its position with the media or the broader public, but to focus on decision-makers to have its voice heard. This low public profile was also helpful in the Alliance’s effort not to antagonise any of its members’ traditional interlocutors with discourses that are too iconoclastic. In short, stakeholders tried to establish dialogue with all MEPs, not sharing them between different Alliance partners. However, when concretely lobbying MEPs, WWF mainly succeeded in establishing dialogue with the left-wing parties, and its economic partners with the liberals and conservatives. It was nevertheless not too strict a separation, as other factors such as the MEP’s position within the fisheries committee and their nationality also played a significant role alongside their political sympathies.

The parallel between the Diet Platform and the CFP Reform Alliance on the issue of access to institutions is challenging, as the former is by definition permanent and therefore not linked with specific legislation. However, one can try to compare their strengths and weaknesses in order to achieve a more balanced picture of the situation.

On the one hand, an ad hoc coalition offers inherent advantages over any other type of policy platform: focused on a single issue, it is therefore a lot easier to identify the stakeholders’ common interests and concentrate political resources on them. Coalitions are also more flexible, more autonomous, more reactive and more creative: they are better adapted to the unpredictable style of EU politics and the issue-bound character of

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111 Interview with Courcy.
112 Biliouri, op. cit., p.177.
113 Interview with Courcy and with Valverde Lopez.
114 Interview with Valverde Lopez.
115 Interview with Reußner.
116 Interview with Stack.
negotiations.\(^\text{118}\) Finally, as far as a group’s internal dynamics are concerned, coalitions are less likely to contain free riders since every single member is needed and therefore visible.\(^\text{119}\)

On the other hand, policy platforms also have strengths that issue networks do not possess. First of all, they are permanent fora, which means that when an issue of interest arises members of the platform can begin lobbying straightaway while *ad hoc* coalitions are only created after the issues become clearer, and they are also time-consuming to create and manage.\(^\text{120}\) Parallel to their higher free-rider rate, platforms also have a lower ‘opting-out threshold’ than coalitions, as the latter is an unstable, fragile and opportunistic model with no long-term commitment or guarantees, higher transaction costs and high dependency on immediate rewards to survive.\(^\text{121}\) In this perspective, Figures 2 and 3 apply this comparative framework to the concrete examples of the CFP Reform Alliance and the Diet Platform.

![SWOT Analysis of the CFP Reform Alliance](image)

**Figure 1 - SWOT Analysis of the CFP Reform Alliance**

\(^{118}\) Ibid., p.116.  
\(^{119}\) Ibid., p.115.  
\(^{120}\) Interview with Patten.  
\(^{121}\) Pijnenburg, *op. cit.*, p.117.
In conclusion, the hypothesis of a transversal coalition or platform automatically receiving better access to EU institutions has to be nuanced. At best, stakeholders receive not better access but a better reception, given that decision-makers would have listened to them even if they had formed traditional coalitions or had opted for individual lobbying. Factors external to coalitions and internal to institutions also have to be taken into account, such as each institution’s culture, needs, particularities and traditional dialogue partners. Institutions are also keen on taking civil society’s input into consideration in order to improve their own democratic credentials and deliver better governance to European citizens.

What added legitimacy?

To understand what legitimacy civil society fora can bring to the EU through their participation, it is necessary to question their own internal legitimacy. The Diet Platform is
frequently divided by debates among members about its organisation and the efficiency of voluntary approaches.\textsuperscript{122} On the one hand, part of academia and of the NGO members of the Platform believe that public regulation is the only efficient model to manage commodity industries,\textsuperscript{123} and given that the Diet Platform heavily relies on self-regulation, “there is no evidence to support their effectiveness or safety”.\textsuperscript{124} On the other hand, the business part of the Diet Platform membership is, logically, more optimistic about the Platform’s achievements.\textsuperscript{125} From a more general perspective, policy platforms also enable the production of counter-expertise, best practice studies and informed debate over policies in the making; they “become part of the system of checks and balances [...] networks may be producing their own system of mutual control”.\textsuperscript{126} In short, network governance such as the Diet Platform can also involve more actors in civil society consultation in a context of waning citizen participation;\textsuperscript{127} however it does not represent an alternative to traditional democratic accountability.\textsuperscript{128} For the Commission, resorting to network governance is only a tool among many alternative collaborative approaches such as high-level groups or online consultations.\textsuperscript{129}

In an \textit{ad hoc} coalition such as the CFP Reform Alliance, members take political stances that go further than the commitments of the Diet Platform; stakeholders therefore need to engage in a difficult exercise of balancing their commitments within the Alliance with their members’ expectations. Legitimacy in this context consists of a ‘social contract’ between an association and its members, the ‘social contract’ being defined by expectations

\textsuperscript{122} Intervention of J. Ryan (DG SANCO) at the February 2013 Diet Platform Meeting.
\textsuperscript{123} Moodie et. al., \textit{op. cit.}, p.678.
\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Ibid.}, p.670.
\textsuperscript{125} Intervention of D. Jacobs (Food Drinks Europe) at the February 2013 Diet Platform Meeting.
\textsuperscript{126} van Kersbergen and van Waarden, \textit{op. cit.}, p.162.
\textsuperscript{128} van Kersbergen and van Waarden, \textit{op. cit.}, p.159.
\textsuperscript{129} Intervention of P. Roux (DG SANCO) at the February 2013 Diet Platform Meeting.
about the association’s operations. Consequently, failure to respect the ‘social contract’ will result in sanctions such as loss of legitimacy and representation rights. Compromises are, however, necessary to reach second-best scenarios when an optimal outcome is not foreseeable. This applies first at the policy drafting stage, but even more during the subsequent legislative procedure. This difference of weight given to an organisation’s radicalism or pragmatism depends on each organisation’s internal culture and needs, as mentioned in the previous part.

In summary, the sphere of action of platforms being limited to policy commitments and public debate, the different actors mainly respect traditional cleavages. In doing so, they act according with their members’ expectations, thereby not endangering their internal legitimacy. Belonging to a coalition, in contrast, demands compromises and negotiation with external partners, hence there are risks of exceeding the ‘social contract’. The trademark of ‘transversal collaborative behaviours’ is the occurrence of iterative socialisation with representatives of traditionally antagonistic groups. Does this socialisation lead to transformative processes?

*Added value of collaboration*

All too often, commentators of EU politics use the ‘David vs. Goliath’ analogy when describing the poor situation citizens’ groups find themselves in. Citizens’ groups have indeed been known to frustrate EU policy-makers by failing to deliver mobilisation, by following individual goals, by often being unwilling to compromise, and by lacking the necessary expertise for highly technical issues. Further, the influence of citizens’ groups is

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131 Ibid.

132 de Angelis, *op. cit.*, p.61.

133 Warleigh, *loc. cit.*
dependent on “the vicissitudes of the ‘issue attention cycle’ and public popular support”\textsuperscript{134}. In this context, business groups indeed seem to be the feared ‘Goliath’ advantaged by nature to win the struggle for political influence.\textsuperscript{135} However, an actor’s weakness can also become its strength: EU institutions are aware of the resource limitation of citizens’ groups, and as a consequence “when they do lobby they are more likely to be considered as an important actor”.\textsuperscript{136} Furthermore, citizens’ groups’ role may be given increased visibility by journalists covering the story as they can provide a sober political negotiation with some underdog perspective and controversy.\textsuperscript{137} Instances of co-operation between citizens’ groups and business representations therefore have the potential to bring out the best in both partners and consequently deliver more than under a traditional confrontational scenario.\textsuperscript{138} Partnerships between for-profits and not-for-profits are also valued by citizens who favour both strong economic results and the protection of their values.\textsuperscript{139} Likewise, EU institutions will favour coalitions as they considerably facilitate their work of building a support base.\textsuperscript{140}

Along those objective gains from network membership, some subjective evolutions also take place among partners. For instance, the success of a transversal lobbying campaign with organisations that traditionally were antagonistic will modify a stakeholder’s knowledge, hence “alterations of thought or behavioral intentions”.\textsuperscript{141} Successful partnership experience increases an actor’s integrative skills\textsuperscript{142} through a long learning process. Those coalitions also enable involved stakeholders to adopt a more pro-active style of lobbying and to propose solutions.\textsuperscript{143} Evolving towards such a consensus-oriented stance can be

\begin{thebibliography}{143}
\bibitem{Coen} Coen, ‘Environmental and Business Lobbying Alliances’, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.208-209.
\bibitem{Leech} Leech et. al., \textit{op. cit.}, p.24.
\bibitem{Ibid1} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.17-18.
\bibitem{Ibid2} \textit{Ibid.}
\bibitem{Arts} Arts, ‘Green Alliances’, \textit{op. cit.}, p.3.
\bibitem{Stafford} Stafford, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.6-7.
\bibitem{Interview} Interview with Vicente and with Stack.
\bibitem{IE-Lobbying} IE-Lobbying consultancy, \textit{loc. cit.}
\end{thebibliography}
interpreted as a step in establishing a ‘European identity’ and obtain a greater weight with institutions by adopting the EU style of negotiation. In concrete cases, the efficiency of such a learning process depends on the success of the partnership. In the case of a failure, the learning process can effectively deter stakeholders from further alliances with other actors.

The efficiency of the Diet Platform is contested, with a clear divide between the generally satisfied business population and the highly critical not-for-profit members. Belonging to the Diet Platform in itself does not encourage members to pursue more intensive bilateral relationship with former antagonistic stakeholders, nor do members lobby for the creation of other multi-stakeholders policy platforms on other topics in the future. In this understanding, the ‘learning process’ of the Diet Platform is limited. The case of the CFP Reform Alliance is quite different, in the sense that no explicit or implicit pressure was imposed on stakeholders that freely chose to commit themselves to the coalition. The lack of institutional involvement let stakeholders have more choice in the features of their coalition, its activities and development perspectives. As a consequence, the representatives of Eurocommerce and of AIPCE both describe their experience in the CFP Reform Alliance as a ‘learning experience’ or ‘learning process’ despite intense negotiations, even going as far as declaring “our organisation is very open to other similar alliances in the future, of course depending on the issue at stake”.

This point of view depicting strategically-minded coalition partners — industries as well as NGOs — goes not only against the ‘David vs. Goliath’ popular conception, but also against the somewhat naïve idea of former antagonists suddenly trusting each other for the greater public interest of sustainable fisheries. One should therefore not draw too optimistic a conclusion about a bright future of consensus-based civil society dialogue, but on the other

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146 Interview with Vicente.
147 Interview with Valverde Lopez.
148 Interview with Vicente.
hand one cannot ignore the genuine learning process born out of integration and reinforced by cybernetics.

By way of conclusion, one can only draw a more nuanced picture of the original idea that transversal partnerships would automatically guarantee stakeholders more leverage on institutions. While this is not _per se_ wrong — decision-makers appreciate the pro-active behaviour of consensus-builders — other independent factors have to be taken into account. The more integrated a network becomes, the more diplomatic skills are required to juggle each stakeholder’s leeway within the coalition, and its obligations to its national members. Stakeholders in less integrated fora take fewer risks in terms of national members’ trust and expectations, but their legitimacy can just as easily be questioned in case of insufficient results. Finally, successful results can also trigger a self-fuelling circle of integration favouring future collaborative behaviour.

3. A promising future?

It appears obvious that transversal coalition-forming “is not a model to be replicated blindly, but rather one that is worth exploring of a case-by-case basis”.¹⁴⁹ In these conditions, how could one describe the optimal conditions for them to emerge?

The first set of conditions relies on the features of the coalition’s membership. A coalition has to balance two factors: (i) the more representative it is, the more leverage it will have on decision-makers, but (ii) the larger it is, the more difficult it will be to operate. The optimum would therefore be “to privilege quality and not the quantity of members, as soon as a certain threshold of credibility is reached”.¹⁵⁰ A limited number of members with whom a trust link can be created provides a better basis for integration and effective common action. Previous experience and the perception of influence both play a significant role in the

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¹⁴⁹ Interview with Valverde Lopez.
¹⁵⁰ Phone interview with S. Feret (‘PAC 2013’ Platform Co-ordinator), 29 January 2013.
decision to join a coalition.\textsuperscript{151} It can. However, be difficult to establish trust links strong enough to overcome previously antagonistic relationships in the case of a transversal coalition, as “the relationships are much more sensitive, the views of the membership are much less predictable, and the compatibility of the interests are much more fragile”.\textsuperscript{152} The privileged solution for these trust issues is to encourage intensive socialisation and daily contacts between partners in order to establish mutual trust and guarantees of loyalty.\textsuperscript{153} By focusing on immediate goals, partners can therefore develop trust links while postponing second-level trust issues.\textsuperscript{154}

A synergy of interests is the \textit{sine qua non} condition for coalition building: “if there is no existing common basis, stakeholders will not begin negotiating just to build it”.\textsuperscript{155} The pragmatism of stakeholders allows a multiplicity of surprising coalitions, including transversal advocacy networks. In order to build larger — even though less integrated — coalitions, stakeholders can also choose to settle not for \textit{commonality} of interests, but for \textit{compatibility} of interests, the latter being less exclusive to potential partners.\textsuperscript{156} In this line of thought, issues on which traditional coalitions are divided provide fertile ground for new transversal coalitions.\textsuperscript{157} For instance, on some issues the main divide is not between citizens’ groups and businesses, but between multinational corporations and small enterprises, in which case, the more pragmatic citizens’ groups are free to form a coalition with either one of the business groups that has similar policy goals.\textsuperscript{158} The key to coalition building is to take advantage of the diversity of represented interests.\textsuperscript{159}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{151}] M. Hojnacki, ‘Interest groups’ decisions to join alliances or work alone’, \textit{American Journal of Political Science}, Vol.41, No.1, 1997, pp.84-85.
\item[\textsuperscript{152}] Hula, ‘Dolly Goes to Washington’, \textit{op. cit.}, p.240.
\item[\textsuperscript{153}] Interview with Valverde Lopez.
\item[\textsuperscript{154}] Hula, ‘Dolly Goes to Washington’, \textit{op. cit.}, p.244.
\item[\textsuperscript{155}] Interview with V. Patelou, Hill + Knowlton (senior food policy consultant), 13 December 2012, Brussels.
\item[\textsuperscript{156}] Hula, ‘Dolly Goes to Washington’, \textit{op. cit.}, p.234.
\item[\textsuperscript{157}] Pijnenburg, \textit{op. cit.}, p.114.
\item[\textsuperscript{158}] Interview with Murray.
\item[\textsuperscript{159}] Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The EU institutions’ position is instrumental in determining the success of a coalition. According to the notion of ‘institutional stickiness’, an advocacy campaign will be smoother, less divisive and more successful if it defends the status quo.\textsuperscript{160} Furthermore, some characteristics relating to the issue at stake are important variables that raise the probability of coalitions emerging. First of all is the saliency of an issue: in order to obtain satisfying outcomes stakeholders will have to attract the media’s attention with creative solutions.\textsuperscript{161} The scope of an issue plays an important role too, given that the larger the scope, the more citizens are concerned and as a consequence the stronger advocates have to appear to win the EU institutions’ support.\textsuperscript{162} Finally, the life cycle of an issue also has to be considered: coalitions are more likely to be created on short and decisive debates rather than extended and in-depth discussions that could put at risk the unity of the coalition.\textsuperscript{163}

Opposite sides struggle for institutional influence on nearly all EU-level debates. Stakeholders have to adapt to their opposition in order to win this power struggle. The stronger and more organised the opposition is perceived, the more likely it is that threatened stakeholders are going to form a strategic coalition.\textsuperscript{164} This is all the more relevant when the opposition itself has opted for a coalition on the same policy issues.\textsuperscript{165} To reinforce their chances, stakeholders will then try to outbid their opposition by joining forces. However if the opposition were perceived as divided, stakeholders would not have the same incentive to compromise their maximal individual outcome for a common preferred outcome.

Once the coalition is formed, it has to survive in a very competitive environment. From a logistics perspective, the potential for explosion of a transversal coalition will be

\textsuperscript{160} Mahoney, ‘Lobbying Success’, op. cit., p.52.
\textsuperscript{162} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{163} Pijnenburg, \textit{loc. cit.}
\textsuperscript{164} Hoijacker, \textit{loc. cit.}
greatly reduced if the chosen ‘coalition pilot’ is autonomous and independent from the coalition’s members, as this ‘pilot’ will become the trusted honest broker charged of diffusing internal tensions.\textsuperscript{166} In the case of the CFP Reform Alliance for instance, WWF took the initiative and consequently assumed the ‘pilot’ role, but always in constant communication with its partners in order to build mutual trust and loyalty.\textsuperscript{167} From a more general point of view, to be successful a coalition needs to establish a clear strategy and long-term relations with the institutions in order to anticipate change and new proposals.\textsuperscript{168}

\textit{In abstracto}, the optimal conditions for a transversal coalition to appear and be successful would be coalition-seasoned partners with a common interest in a policy outcome that would come together along trust-building carefully studied logistics, preferably on a highly salient, all-encompassing and momentous policy with an uncertain outcome due to powerful and organised opposition. However, many limits impede a generalisation of such collaborative partnerships, or the long-term survival of the existing \textit{ad hoc} coalitions.

\textit{Limits to the model}

Observers of the EU advocacy environment must not take an analytical shortcut when studying transversal coalitions and treat them as an end in themselves instead of a means to an end.\textsuperscript{169} Collaborative partnerships are nothing but the result of each stakeholder’s cost/gain analysis in order to reach an optimal policy outcome. They do not represent a panacea for all advocacy challenges, as they can be divisive, unstable, incoherent and inefficient depending on the policy area and the members involved. Firstly, as mentioned previously on the topic of astroturfing, window-dressing and entrenched distrust, some ‘dark green’ citizens’ groups and some ‘dark blue’ business groups are hostile on principle to bridging the for-profit/not-for-profit gap. Second is the instability of transversal

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{166} Interview with Feret.
\item \textsuperscript{167} Phone interview with a senior consultant in food policy.
\item \textsuperscript{169} Prakash Sethi, \textit{op. cit.}, p.4.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
coalitions because of dormant internal divides and consequent “confrontational power games”.\textsuperscript{170} Such coalitions not only involve the partner stakeholders, but also their own national members, thereby creating a wide and complex set of involved parties.\textsuperscript{171} Such instability is accompanied by a risk of incoherence: the capacity of going into detail is limited in transversal coalitions,\textsuperscript{172} especially on polemic issues.\textsuperscript{173} Coalition members have to preserve at all costs their coherence and avoid internal contradictions, as the potential losses are as important as the potential gains.\textsuperscript{174} Finally, the efficiency of transversal coalitions as advocacy instruments can be questioned by the heavy transaction cost involved. Indeed, while an already operative coalition can be very reactive and dynamic, the building of a coalition is very time-consuming when in interest representation timing is everything.\textsuperscript{175} Furthermore, transversal coalitions do not systematically contribute in proposing innovative solutions: while the advocacy form they adopt is quite pioneering, their policy positions tend on the contrary to defend the \textit{status quo}.\textsuperscript{176}

From this comparison of the optimal conditions and parallel caveats of transversal coalition-building, it appears that only a case-by-case analysis can be useful in determining if a collaborative partnership is the right advocacy choice for an interest group. It appears that the model of coalition building can only occur on specific issues and for limited amounts of time.\textsuperscript{177} The policy field of fisheries, in the case study of the CFP Reform Alliance, is quite specific as the interests of citizens’ groups and businesses matched on some points.\textsuperscript{178} Such commonality of interests is often the case with process values such as ‘sustainability’ as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{170} Arts, ‘New arrangements beyond the state’, \textit{op. cit.}, p.8.
\item \textsuperscript{171} Covey and Brown, \textit{op. cit.}, p.14.
\item \textsuperscript{172} Interview with Vicente.
\item \textsuperscript{173} Interview with Patten.
\item \textsuperscript{174} Interview with Courcy.
\item \textsuperscript{177} Interview with Veale.
\item \textsuperscript{178} Interview with Reußner.
\end{itemize}
opposed to content values that demand quantified goals or results, and are in consequence much more difficult to agree upon.\textsuperscript{179} The idea of co-operation between antagonist groups has been ‘oversold’ with a lot of “hype and enthusiasm”\textsuperscript{180}, which may give the idea that such coalitions are rife, but in reality they are more the exception than the rule.\textsuperscript{181} In short, while there is no denial that some successful transversal coalitions exist and that the concept has a lot of potential, in Brussels they remain for now “isolated pioneers”.\textsuperscript{182}

\textit{Parallel solutions}

By definition, stakeholders united in an \textit{ad hoc} coalition defend a common basis of interests together; their own individual interests nevertheless overflow from this common basis. On the case of the CFP Reform Alliance, each member pursued parallel individual lobbying on the topics where no consensus could be found\textsuperscript{183} and WWF for instance belonged to two different coalitions on the CFP reform.\textsuperscript{184} The Alliance only defends some general points on the CFP Reform, while regulation tackles the core business of some Alliance members that in consequence had to engage into individual lobbying in order to have their specific interests heard.\textsuperscript{185} In the case of such a special interest, the representatives of an individual stakeholder would directly interact with decision-makers,\textsuperscript{186} and never go against the Alliance’s common stance.\textsuperscript{187} This precaution is essential in order to safeguard the coherence of the Alliance and each of its components. WWF for instance needed to be extremely clear in its interactions with decision-makers because of its double coalition

\textsuperscript{179} Gunnarsson-Östling and Larsen, \textit{op. cit.}, p.1.
\textsuperscript{180} Prakash Sethi, \textit{op. cit.}, p.3.
\textsuperscript{181} Hula, ‘Dolly Goes to Washington’, \textit{op. cit.}, p.233.
\textsuperscript{182} Arts, ‘New arrangements beyond the state’, \textit{op. cit.}, p.3.
\textsuperscript{183} Phone interview with a senior consultant in food policy.
\textsuperscript{184} Interview with Reußner.
\textsuperscript{185} Interview with Vicente.
\textsuperscript{186} Interview with Valverde Lopez.
\textsuperscript{187} Interview with Courcy.
membership as well as optional individual lobbying, but seemingly it succeeded in doing so without creating too much confusion or additional problems.\textsuperscript{188}

When stakeholders do not want to compromise even an inch of their independence, they are free to resort to other collaborative behaviours that do not necessitate formalisation and leaves them more room for manoeuvre. While these informal solutions do not have the same advantages in terms of public image, their flexibility makes them more widespread at EU-level. Contrary to some misconceptions, co-operation between stakeholders is not an “all-or-none process”\textsuperscript{189} but on the contrary it “involves a fairly broad zone of transition”.\textsuperscript{190} Without creating a real coalition, alternatives include the publication of joint press releases, or even the organisation of joint events, according to the stakeholders’ specific needs.\textsuperscript{191} More informal options include the co-ordination of events, or finally exchanges of intelligence: “BEUC got more documents and data from industries than from the EU institutions”.\textsuperscript{192}

In conclusion, building transversal coalitions is only one of the many options interest groups can choose to advocate their point of view to decision-makers. Under a specific set of circumstances, it appears to be the most effective strategy, but as every strategy it has weaknesses. It is therefore impossible to elaborate ground rules about the generalisation of transversal coalitions, the only relevant assessment being a case-by-case analysis.

\textsuperscript{188} Interview with Reußner.
\textsuperscript{189} Deutsch, \textit{op. cit.}, p.13.
\textsuperscript{190} \textit{Ibid.}, p.14.
\textsuperscript{192} Interview with Murray.
Conclusion

The objective of this paper has been to assess the rationale behind the creation of transversal partnerships, and how stakeholders could concretely put their antagonism to the side while working together. It was hypothesised in the introduction that (i) transversal coalitions were formed based on their success in other policy fields; (ii) that they generated a learning process and that (iii) they resulted in an improved influence on EU institutions.

On hypothesis (i), while the success of such initiatives in other policy fields may have accustomed certain actors to the idea of transversal coalitions, the particularities of food policy make the blind replication of such models impossible. It appears from the two case studies in particular that the rationale behind the adoption of collaborative partnerships comes instead from a case-by-case cost/gain analysis leading to hopes of improved access to institutions and of a more positive image towards external actors such as the media and the general public. On hypothesis (ii), membership of a collaborative network indeed leads to a learning process, but one should add that this learning process is closely linked to the network’s performance and is thus not automatically positive. Finally, on hypothesis (iii), coalitions can have a better reception — rather than an automatic better access — depending on external and internal factors that are completely independent from the stakeholders themselves.

A final caveat, both for the Diet Platform and for the CFP Reform Alliance, is that observers should not adopt too naïve a posture and consider that stakeholders unite out of idealism: for stakeholders, collaboration is nothing but a means that has been pragmatically calculated as the most beneficial to reach a certain political end. One therefore should not expect a sudden generalisation of such collaborative behaviours, but look out for situations in which the optimal conditions are met. One of these ideal conditions being previous collaborative behaviour, subsequent to this work it would be interesting to follow in the near
future the lobbying strategies chosen by stakeholders involved in the case studies. This transformative process, less revolutionary than originally expected, could lead to a very gradual increase of collaboration, still far away from any generalisation at the EU-level.
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ANNEX I – Founding statement of the CFP Reform Alliance

Press Release For immediate release: Wednesday 28 April 2010, 11:00 CET

WWF and Industry Leaders join forces to save European fisheries

Brussels, Belgium: Global environment organisation WWF and the leading associations for European seafood processors and retailers today announced they will work together to push for solutions to the crisis of European seas and fisheries.

The EU Fish Processors’ and Traders’ Association, AIPCE-CEP, and Eurocommerce, which represents retail, wholesale and international trade interests to the EU, and WWF will be jointly seeking reforms to the troubled European Common Fisheries Policy to lay the basis for sustainable fisheries and a sustainable fishing industry.

The current EU Common Fisheries Policy has failed to secure the health of EU fisheries, and has put most of them under severe strain, compromising the ability to offer the EU population the sustainably harvested fish they are demanding.

"In the last decade conservationists and the seafood industry have definitely changed. Where once we might have been adversaries, today we are allies and all agree that without these key reforms we will not be able to bring European fisheries back to wide scale health and prosperity," said Tony Long, Director of the WWF European Policy Office.

"Today’s alliance already represents a very significant portion of the supply chain from the processing and trading sector and the retail sector, and from the North Sea to the Mediterranean. Sustainability is a conservation necessity and a business necessity today.”

AIPCE President Guus Pastoor said "For the sake of an improved CFP, EU Fish processors and traders are convinced that it is necessary to join forces to achieve sustainable and profitable fisheries for the future of all EU citizens. Therefore we feel committed to support an alliance of partners seeking for a reform which meets the needs of the sector."

Xavier Durieu, Secretary General of EuroCommerce, said "The commerce sector is committed to play an active role in helping to achieve a sustainable and well managed supply of fish, which in turn should enable retailers to meet the growing consumer demand for healthy and environmentally friendlier fish and aquaculture products."

The alliance is seeking the replacement of “political quotas” for fish with mandatory long term management plans firmly based on science for all EU fisheries by 2015.

The alliance is also seeking to have all regional stakeholders play effective roles in developing fisheries plans and a culture of compliance for fisheries.

Strong EU standards should also apply wherever the EU fishes and this should be reflected in EU fishery and trade polices and fishing agreements and partnerships.

This press release and associated material can be found on www.panda.org/eu

WWF—World Wide Fund For Nature (also known as World Wildlife Fund)
EUROCOMMERCE représente le commerce de détail, de gros et international en Europe. EuroCommerce compte parmi ses membres des fédérations du commerce dans 31 pays, des associations européennes et nationales représentant des branches spécifiques du commerce ainsi que des entreprises à titre individuel.

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EURO COOP ou la Communauté européenne des coopératives de consommateurs représente les intérêts des coopératives de consommateurs de l'UE, représentant 300.000 salariés, 30.000 points de vente et 29 millions de consommateurs-membres à travers 17 pays.

www.eurocoop.coop

EURO-TOQUES INTERNATIONAL, la Communauté européenne des cuisiniers, est une organisation paneuropéenne créée en 1986 qui représente plus de 2000 Chefs cuisiniers, avec des branches nationales dans 17 pays européens.

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WWF est l'un des organismes de conservation indépendants les plus importants et les plus respectés du monde, avec près de 5 millions de sympathisants et un réseau mondial actif dans plus de 100 pays.

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ANNEX II – CFP Reform Alliance’s position paper

ALLIANCE POUR LA REFORME DE LA POLITIQUE COMMUNE DE LA PECHE

Recommandations sur les amendements prioritaires dans la commission de la pêche sur :

Règlement sur la Politique Commune de la Pêche (PCP)

Rapporteur : Ulrike Rodust

AIPCE-CEP, EUROCOMMERCE, EURO COOP, Euro-Toques International et WWF ont une vision commune pour une pêche européenne durable et travaillent ensemble pour une réforme ambitieuse de la Politique Commune de la Pêche (PCP) au sein de l'Alliance pour la réforme de la Politique Commune de la Pêche.

Nos associations européennes des secteurs de la transformation, du commerce, des coopératives de consommateurs et du détail, ainsi que les Chefs cuisiniers et WWF se réjouissent de cette opportunité unique de transformer la manière dont les pêcheries européennes sont gérées. Cependant, nous pensons que la proposition de la Commission ne va pas assez loin en fixant des objectifs et des échéances clairs pour les actions prioritaires afin de mettre fin à la surpêche et pour protéger les stocks de poissons et leurs habitats marins.

En prévision de l'examen des amendements et du vote en commission parlementaire de la pêche, nos organisations recommandent donc que les membres de la commission PECH soutiennent les priorités suivantes pour un avenir sain pour les poissons, les mers et les pêcheurs européens et pour un approvisionnement à long terme de produits de la pêche durable en Europe.

RECOMMANDATIONS PRIORITAIRES :

L'Alliance pour la réforme de la Politique Commune de la Pêche invite les députés à soutenir les amendements qui garantissent ce qui suit dans les domaines prioritaires suivants :

1. Soutenir un Rendement maximal durable pour 2015

- L'engagement de rétablir les populations de poissons en veillant à ce que les populations des espèces récoltées soient au-dessus des niveaux de biomasse qui peut produire le rendement maximal durable (RMD) d'ici 2015 ;
- Des objectifs clairs et une priorisation des stocks de poissons en bonne santé comme une condition préalable pour le développement économique et social durable dans le secteur de la pêche ;

1 L’Alliance pour une réforme de la PCP est composée des secteurs de la transformation, du commerce, des coopératives de consommateurs et du détail, ainsi que les Chefs cuisiniers et WWF
• L'engagement d'améliorer les normes environnementales de pêche pour une bonne santé des mers d'ici 2020.

2. Gestion régionale et plans pluriannuels
• La mise en œuvre régionalisée de la gestion des pêches à travers des plans pluriannuels ;
• Un champ d'application élargi pour les plans pluriannuels et la fixation d'un délai pour leur adoption.

3. Participation des parties prenantes dans les conseils consultatifs
• Une composition plus équilibrée des conseils consultatifs avec un secteur de la pêche représenté dans toute sa diversité, en fonction du rôle des conseils consultatifs ;
• La création d'un Conseil général consultatif de la pêche et des marchés pour discuter des questions horizontales.

4. Une politique durable pour la flotte externe
• La promotion de la participation active de l'UE dans les instances internationales de gestion des pêches en conformité avec la législation communautaire environnementale, sociale et de développement.

5. Dépenser intelligemment
• Principe de l'octroi de subventions européennes pour la pêche uniquement si les bénéficiaires se conforment aux règles de la PCP et qu’en cas de non-respect, les paiements soient suspendus ou interrompus.

Nous pensons que ces priorités sont indispensables afin d'améliorer la santé de nos mers et de reconstruire un secteur de la pêche économiquement et socialement viable de l'UE qui offre une grande variété de poissons et des emplois fondés sur une répartition équitable et durable des ressources marines. Contrairement à certains autres domaines politiques, la gestion des pêches est celui où de véritables solutions sont disponibles. Notre vision commune pour une pêche durable est réalisable - si les bonnes décisions politiques sont prises au cours de cette réforme essentielle.

Les membres de l'Alliance pour la réforme de la Politique Commune de la Pêche sont les suivants :

AIPCE-CEP est l'Association des transformateurs et commerçants de poisson de l'UE et représente 130.000 salariés, 4.000 entreprises et une valeur de production d'environ 23 milliards €.
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