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The structure of coordination: transatlantic policy networks and the mobilization of business and civil society

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External policy networks resolve two collective action problems in EU external relations: engaging nonstate actors from the EU and its partner countries in transnational policymaking and converting this engagement to feedback for policymakers. We use formal network analysis to understand the relationship between network structure and collective action by transnational nonstate actors. Our empirical focus is on the Transatlantic Business Council and the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue networks, which engage business and consumer advocacy organizations in transatlantic economic policymaking. We find that both are highly centralized around EU and US government institutions, with relatively low, but rising, levels of interaction among nonstate organizations. This structure helps increase engagement by giving organizations opportunities to interact with government institutions, learn from their peers, and, for some, to exercise power. It also helps EU and US institutions harness policy feedback, especially from nonstate actors that have frequent interactions with their peers.

Keywords: transatlantic relations, policy networks, business, civil society, collective action

Introduction

The governance architecture of the European Union (EU) gives nonstate actors ample opportunities to participate in policymaking alongside supranational institutions and national government agencies. Policy networks are a significant and well documented part of this architecture (Börzel and Heard-Lauréote, 2009; Kingah, et al., 2016; Kohler-Koch and Eising, 1999; Peterson, 2004). In this article, we explore the role of *external* policy networks. Their main feature, which distinguishes them from policy networks inside the EU, is connecting governmental and nonstate actors from both the EU and its partner countries. We are interested in answering two questions: What motivates nonstate actors

to participate in these networks? And under what conditions are the networks effective at shaping policy in transnational fora? These questions help us explore how two distinct collective action problems are resolved. The first is getting diverse actors with dissimilar or conflicting interests from different governmental jurisdictions to *engage* with transnational policymaking. This reflects the need for more participatory democratic governance, which could lend input legitimacy to policy decisions. And the second collective action problem is getting nonstate actors to provide policy *feedback* to EU institutions and their partner governments, which could improve the policy's output legitimacy.

In order to provide answers, we use the tools of social network analysis, which help us define the structure of relations among network participants (Borgatti and Lopez-Kidwell, 2011; Borgatti, et al., 2009; Knoke, 1990; Marin and Wellman, 2011). Hence, we are providing a structural explanation of actor behaviour. Networks, we argue, function as mechanisms that intervene between actor preferences, which they help mould through social interactions, and their observed behaviour, so understanding their functioning is critical. Our empirical focus is on transatlantic policy networks, which are created jointly by the European Commission and the US federal government. They connect nonstate actors from the EU and the US with each other and with relevant governmental institutions. More specifically, we analyse networked relations in the Transatlantic Business Council (TABC) and in the Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue (TACD). The first network seeks to engage businesses, while the second non-profit consumer advocacy organizations. The prominence of the transatlantic relationship in EU external relations, and in world politics more generally, makes this exploration interesting in itself, but we also maintain that

analysing EU-US relations through the lens of network theory can help us draw broader conclusions about the role of external policy networks in EU relations with third countries, a topic that has received limited attention in the literature. Moreover, the involvement of these two networks in the same policy field (EU-US bilateral economic relations), allows us to control for policy and governmental actors involved, and hence to concentrate on the behaviour of nonstate actors.

This joint network governance effort needs to be seen against the backdrop of broader geo-economic competition in the global economy where the EU and the US compete with each other for access to new attractive markets (Sbragia, 2010). Furthermore, given the stalled progress on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), an agreement designed to increase and streamline regulatory coordination between the EU and the US, after the election of Donald Trump, the two networks still remain some of the most potent mechanisms for regulatory coordination between the world's two biggest market powers, provided the governmental actors involved are willing to utilize them.

We find that network structure alters the behaviour of nonstate actors by giving them incentives to act collectively, as opposed to egoistically. EU and US institutions have a dominant position in both networks across time, while the interaction among nonstate organizations is relatively low but rising. This structure of relations resolves the first collective action problem (engaging nonstate actors) by creating opportunities for businesses and consumer organizations to gain access to EU and US institutions, acquire information from their peers, and, for some, to exercise power over peer organizations. It resolves the second collective action problem (problem solving by giving governments

policy feedback) by letting EU and US institutions harness information from nonstate actors, especially from those that have frequent interactions with their peers.

Beyond Diffusion

Our research contributes to the existing literature on external network governance (Lavenex, 2004; Lavenex and Schimmelfennig, 2009) and is embedded in the larger literature on external EU governance mechanisms (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004). The focus of this literature has been on *transgovernmental* networks, which connect governmental actors from the EU (including EU institutions) and from non-EU countries, including national regulators (Lavenex, 2015), government ministry officials (Freyburg, 2011; 2015) or law enforcement and security agencies (Lavenex and Wichmann, 2009). This interest in transgovernmentalism in external EU governance reflects a similar concern in the literature on policy-making inside the EU (Coen and Thatcher, 2008; Eberlein and Newman, 2008; Hobolth and Martinsen, 2013; Maggetti, 2014; Maggetti and Gilardi, 2014; Thurner and Binder, 2009) and in the broader international relations literature (Bach and Newman, 2010; Raustiala, 2002; Slaughter, 2000).

In this literature, networks serve primarily as mechanisms of diffusion. They help spread institutions, policies and norms, which flow primarily in one direction: from the EU to its international partners. This rationale rests on an underlying power asymmetry between the EU and its partner states, which favours the EU. As Lavenex (2014) explains, the EU exercises the power of *functionalist extension*, which is a combination of its normative (Manners, 2002) and market (Damro, 2012) power dimensions and consists primarily (but not exclusively) of exporting the *acquis communautaire* to its international partners. Most empirical cases examined by scholars focus on networks connecting the EU

with other countries through the European Neighbourhood Policy. Research that looks at different parts of the world, for example Mugyenzi's (2015) application of Lavenex's transgovernmental network model to EU relations with five sub-Saharan African countries, and Heiduk's (2014) analysis of the externalization of EU anti-terrorism practices to ASEAN countries through transgovernmental cooperation, also finds such power asymmetry.

Because of their focus on governmental actors and on relations with the neighbourhood, extant studies of EU external network governance are bound to reinforce the conclusion that diffusion is the main role of external networks. Yet, we know from the broader network theory literature that while some networks primarily diffuse information, others emerge mainly to coordinate their participants' actions (Borgatti and Lopez-Kidwell, 2011). Furthermore, the policy studies literature has long understood policy networks as collective action mechanisms that help resolve coordination problems in certain policy environments (Carlsson, 2000). Van Bueren, et al. (2003) single out "wicked" policy questions, which involve high levels of cognitive, strategic and institutional uncertainty, and Scholz, et al. (2008) identify fragmented jurisdictions, as the features of policy environments, in which policy networks emerge. Interestingly, EU external policy networks appear within these contexts. Thus, we can gain valuable insights by examining them through the lens of coordination. The literature on internal EU policy networks, which operate in a similar (albeit less challenging) political environment already includes many studies that examine policy networks as coordinating mechanisms (Christopoulos and Quaglia, 2009; Henning, 2009; Knill and Tosun, 2009; Kriesi, 2006; Pappi and Henning, 1999; Paraskevopoulos, 2001).

Much like transgovernmental networks, external policy networks can also function as mechanisms of diffusion, when there is power asymmetry between the EU and its international partners (Oehri, 2014; Turkina and Kourtikakis, 2015; Turkina and Postnikov, 2012; 2014). Hence, examining networks that are part of a symmetrical relationship between the EU and a third country would be a critical test for coordination. The transatlantic relationship, especially its economic component, is a crucial case for this exploration. Literature on EU external economic relations shows that the impact of the EU on shaping international regulation, which we understand as a type of policy diffusion, is limited in countries beyond the EU's immediate geographic vicinity (Newman and Posner, 2015; Quaglia, 2014; Young, 2015), a claim Lavenex (2014) also confirms in her own analysis of external network governance. This is especially true for the transatlantic economic relationship because of the comparable market size of the EU and the US. Hence, we also contribute to the literature on transatlantic relations, utilizing insights from the external network governance literature, which are two bodies of work that seldom interact.[1]

Furthermore, we also make a methodological contribution. With a few exceptions (Mérand, et al., 2011; Paár-Jákli, 2014), almost all of the literature on external network governance is qualitative in nature and relies on case studies. While this literature has produced valuable insights into external governance, it nevertheless lacks the rigor of systematic social network analysis, which allows to measure the effects of network properties on actor behaviour with more precision.

[1] Paár-Jákli's (2014) book on transatlantic scientific networks is a rare exception.

Engagement and Feedback

In our effort to understand the role of external policy networks as collective action mechanisms, we find Kahler's (2009) distinction between networks as structures and networks as actors to be particularly useful. Conceptualizing networks as social structures helps us examine the relationship between patterns of networked relations in the TABC and the TACD and the engagement of businesses and civil society in the policy process, and hence address our first research question. Conceptualizing networks as actors helps us address our second research question, by letting us focus on the TABC and the TACD as instruments deployed by EU and US institutions for gaining policy feedback.

Providing feedback to governments is, of course, a potential source of influence for businesses and civil society alike. The consensus in the literature on transatlantic relations is that the TABC is more influential than transatlantic civil society dialogues, including the TACD. Bignami and Charnovitz (2001), Levidow, et al. (2007), and Murphy and Yanacopoulos (2005) found a limited effect of the consumer network on policy, even though it has fared a lot better than other transatlantic civil society networks. The evaluation of the TABC is strikingly different. Green Cowles (2001), Egan (2001), Steffenson (2005), and Murphy and Yanacopoulos (2005) found it has been pivotal for setting common standards on a variety of issues of transatlantic concern, and is, therefore, perceived as successful. The TABC's most prominent achievement has been the conclusion of several mutual recognition agreements between the EU and the US (Egan, 2001; Steffenson, 2005). The recent success of the TABC can be seen in the negotiation of the TTIP, currently on hold. The TABC was influential in shaping the agreement's agenda and

directly engaging with the American and European negotiators in the face of the US Trade Representative and the European Commission's DG Trade.

The literature on the TABC and the TACD explains this difference in performance as the result of nonstate actor attributes, which are associated with business or civil society status. For example, Murphy and Yanacopoulos (2005) find that businesses have more resources available for transatlantic network meetings than consumer groups, and Bignami and Charnovitz (2001) make a similar observation. These two studies also find that businesses participate in the TABC enthusiastically, expecting direct and high payoffs (Bignami and Charnovitz, 2001), while consumer groups often view TACD meetings with suspicion (Murphy and Yanacopoulos, 2005). These explanations reflect broader assessments of interest group participation in policymaking in US politics (Truman, 1951; Woll, 2007), national European politics (Binderkrantz, et al., 2017; Grant, 1978), EU politics (Bouwen, 2002; Greenwood, 2017; Thiel, 2017; Woll, 2007), and international politics (Tallberg, et al., 2018; Woll, 2008). The consensus in this literature is that interest group influence depends on access to governments, and access is contingent upon interest group attributes, especially those that allow them to identify, generate and provide governments the type of feedback they need, which often gives businesses an advantage over civil society.

Hence, by focusing on actor attributes, the literature links the answers to our two questions in a causal chain: policy feedback depends on actor engagement, which depends on access, which depends on actor attributes. Yet, we argue, the relationship between actor attributes and feedback is not as clear cut in a policy network environment, where actors are obliged to access policymakers *through the network*. The network, in other words, "gets

in the way," in what could be understood as a transnational variation of neo-corporatism. Specifically, the TABC and the TACD equalize access to EU and US policymakers, thus reversing a decades long practice of engaging business in transatlantic regulation (Schaufelbuehl, 2016) and leaving civil society groups out (Murphy and Yanacopoulos, 2005). However, equal access does not guarantee equal engagement if the actors are not enticed to engage equally, and equal engagement does not always translate to policy feedback if there are coordination problems among peers. Therefore, while differences between businesses and civil society do matter, we cannot have the full picture of nonstate actor involvement in transnational policymaking, unless we also examine the effects of networks on engagement separately from feedback.

Network Theory and Hypotheses

We aim to understand the effect of network structure on actor engagement and on policy feedback by linking certain network properties with two types of outcomes: the first is outcomes for nonstate actors, namely, what these organizations expect to get out of their network participation, and the second is outcomes for government institutions, that is, how effective networks are at giving feedback to government institutions.

We begin with the discussion of outcomes for nonstate actors. Gaining access to information and accumulated knowledge is an important reason why organizations join networks. This is the case for a variety of network types, such advocacy coalition networks (Keck and Sikkink, 1998), transgovernmental networks (Slaughter, 2000) and business networks (Ritter, et al., 2004). We expect to find a similar logic in external policy networks. More specifically, we anticipate that over time, the number of connections among

organizations, and hence the sharing of information and knowledge among them, will increase.

Hypothesis 1: The sharing of information and cooperation in external policy networks increases over time.

To test Hypothesis 1, we use network density as a measure of information sharing and cooperation. Density is a network property that shows the general level of connectedness among nodes. It measures the ratio of the number of existing links in the network to the number of possible links (Scott, 2000). We measure network density at two different points in time, and we expect to find that over time its values will increase. This is not a statistical test.

A second desirable outcome for nonstate actors is access to the government institutions that create and sponsor the two networks. As we discussed in the previous section, access to policy makers is a well-documented reward for nonstate actors because it can translate to policy influence (Binderkrantz, et al., 2017; Dür and De Bièvre, 2007). Therefore, we expect to find that business and civil society organizations are motivated to engage with the TABC and the TACD because they gain direct access, and hence influence, to the US government and EU institutions. Thus, government institutions should have a disproportionate number of links with the other network members. We articulate this expectation in our second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Government institutions maintain a significant role in external policy networks over time.

In order to assess the significance of government institutions, we estimate each network's centralization at two different points in time, which is not meant to be a statistical test. Centralization measures the extent to which "the cohesion of a network is organized around a specific point or set of connected points" (Scott, 2012: 44). It is a measure of how central its most central node is in relation to how central all the other nodes are (Scott, 2000). It helps us assess whether certain nodes (if any) constitute the centre of communication and activity in the *entire* network.

Defined formally (Freeman, 1978), if $C_x(p_i)$ is a centrality score of node i, if $C_x(p_*)$ is the largest centrality measure in the network, and if max $\sum_{i=1}^{N} C_x(p_*) - C_x(p_i)$ is the largest sum of differences in point centrality C_x for any graph with the same number of nodes, then network centralization is: $C_x = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N} C_x(p_*) - C_x(p_i)}{\max \sum_{i=1}^{N} C_x(p_*) - C_x(p_i)}$.

High degrees of centralization are typical of policy networks designed by policy entrepreneurs who want to establish ties with as many partners as possible, in order to collect information and shape it to their advantage (Scholz, et al., 2008). In the context of EU external relations more specifically, Kourtikakis and Turkina (2015) and Turkina and Postnikov (2012) have found that external policy networks sponsored by the EU are highly coordinated by EU institutions. Therefore, we expect to find that EU and US institutions will play a dominant role the in the TABC and the TACD.

Actors often participate in networks in order to exercise power over their peers (Borgatti, et al., 2009). Power, in this case, is the amount of connectedness: the better

connected (or "popular") a network node is, the more power it can have over other nodes, because it exercises control over resources, such as information. There are two ways in which nodes can accumulate connections. They can actively pursue links to as many other nodes as possible. Or, more passively, they can be the beneficiaries of positive externalities: Barabási and Albert (1999) argue in a widely cited study that new network relations are not formed randomly; new members tend to get attached to existing members considered influential. Transnational networks are not exempt from this rule, as Lake and Wong (2009) have demonstrated in their study of a transnational human rights network.

We further expect to find that a nonstate organization's level of connectedness, and hence, its capacity to exercise power, is related to its size and past experience with international collaborations. That's because larger organizations have more resources to devote to building connections than smaller ones. Additionally, organizations with more experience of international collaboration have skills and accumulated knowledge allowing them to form links with organizations based in other parts of the world more easily than organizations that do not possess such capacity.

In order to assess the power that individual organizations have in each network we postulate that:

Hypothesis 3: The relationship between a nonstate actor's size and its central position in an external policy network is positive.

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between a nonstate actor's experience with international collaborations and its central position in an external policy network is positive.

To test these hypotheses, we measure the local centrality of all nonstate organizations in both networks, which we treat as a proxy of their central position. Local centrality measures the number of links a member of the network has with other members and therefore how well connected it is with other actors in its immediate "neighbourhood" (Scott, 2000). Then, we explore how this centrality is related to the organization's size and previous international experience.

We now turn to the discussion of outcomes for government institutions. In the TABC and the TACD, the desirable outcome for EU and US institutions is feedback from businesses and consumer organizations, which could improve the policy's quality and output legitimacy. In his review of the literature on transnational actors, Risse (2013) has remarked that the relationship between centralization and density of networks formed by those actors, on the one hand, and outcomes, on the other, is not entirely clear. Some studies demonstrate that higher levels of density lead to better policy outcomes, because dense networks are more decentralized and therefore more flexible to adapt to challenges. But other studies show the opposite: that a higher degree of centralization leads to better outcomes because central nodes, which play a leadership role, coordinate network activity better.

Here, we remain agnostic as to which logic is at play and explore how both apply to external policy networks. Therefore, we postulate that:

Hypothesis 5: Denser external policy networks improve the ability of government institutions to receive policy feedback from nonstate actors.

Hypothesis 6: More centralized external policy networks improve the ability of government institutions to receive policy feedback from nonstate actors.

In order to measure policy feedback, we collect information about the policy initiatives made by focus groups inside the two networks and we examine the relationship between the number of initiatives and density/centralization values at the network and the focus group levels.

Methodology and Empirical Analysis

In this section, we test our hypotheses by conducting formal social network analysis, which is the widely preferred method for assessing the evolution and effectiveness of cooperative partnerships (Provan and Milward, 1995; Tanjasiri, et al., 2007; Valente and Davis, 1999). We use the web resources of both networks to collect information about their nodes (TABC, 2018; TACD, 2018). There are 46 members in the TABC network and 77 members in the TACD network. We also include a network node for EU institutions (European Commission[2]; EU Delegation to US) and a node for US institutions (US Department of Commerce, US Department of State, US Mission to EU).

The relationship between two network nodes was measured by the number of interactions between them. The information on interactions was collected through the published resources of both networks, such as focus groups, reports, etc., and also from all available information online obtained through search engines. For example, if two

[2] Mostly officials from DG Trade

organizations participated in a forum, focus group, or another event, it was regarded as an interaction. Since the interactions were quite dense (which is not surprising, given that all the nodes are TABC or TACD members and have a specific framework for interaction), we imposed a threshold of 5 interactions: a network linkage was modelled only when over 5 interactions exist between two network actors. This approach to measuring network ties is common in the analysis of inter-organizational networks (Dyer and Singh, 1998; Soh, 2003). We then constructed the networks for two time periods consisting of two years each: 2013-2014 and 2015-2016. We chose these two periods because key factors that could affect our results remained constant between them: 2013 is the year the TABC acquired its current form after a merger between two pre-existing networks (the Transatlantic Business Dialogue and the European-American Business Council). Also, TTIP negotiations, a major focus of the two networks, took place between 2013 and 2016, which means that network activity falls dramatically before and after this period. Lastly, individual members add or subtract themselves from the networks over time, and the chronological proximity of the two periods ensures that the network participants are not very different.

The relational matrixes were analysed with UCINET and NETDRAW tools and techniques. For brevity, we provide network diagrams for both organizations for the latest time-period 2015-2016. However, the information on the relevant network data for all the networks is summarized in Table 1.

[Figure 1 about here]

[Figure 2 about here]

Centralization and Density

Our analysis reveals that density levels increase over time in both networks (Table 1), which provides support for hypothesis 1. Moreover, overall levels of density in the two networks are low (below 0.5). It also shows that TABC's density is higher than TACD's in both periods. Because comparing densities between networks of different sizes can be problematic (Friedkin, 1981), and TACD has more members than TABC, we conducted a Monte Carlo simulation (Kroese, et al., 2014) as robustness check: we reduced the size of each network to 40 nodes, by choosing nodes randomly with the matlab software, and calculated its density. We repeated the procedure 100 times and calculated the average density for each network. The EU and US institutions were included in every iteration. TABC's average density is higher both in the first (TABC 15%, TACD 9%) and in the second periods (TABC 29%, TADC 16%). We also repeated the same procedure on a fully random network, and we see similar trends, even though the general average density for both networks is lower (TABC 11%, TACD 4% in the first period; TABC 19%, TACD 9% in the second period). Hence, we are confident about the results of our comparative density analysis.

[Table 1 about here]

We also find that centralization remains high in both networks during both periods, even though it decreases between the first and the second period (Table 1). This decrease is expected, as it mirrors the density increase we discussed above: as peer connections multiply, the network becomes less focused on its most central node. Visual diagrams (Figures 1 and 2) indicate that the most central network nodes are EU and US institutions. In order to verify this further in a statistically significant manner, we calculate Bonacich

centrality indexes (Bonacich, 1987) for all network nodes. This measure evaluates the power of a given node as an increasing function of the sum of all the centralities of all the nodes with whom that node is connected. Therefore, nodes connected to many other well-connected nodes are more influential than those connected to an identical number of badly connected nodes. Bonacich power is formally defined as the principal eigenvector of the adjacency matrix defining the network. The defining equation of an eigenvector is $Av=\lambda$ where A is the adjacency matrix of the graph, lambda is a constant (the eigenvalue) and V is the (Borgatti, 2005). The equation is usually interpreted in a way that a node with a high eigenvector score is one connected to nodes that have high eigenvector scores. Bonacich scores confirm that the influence of government institutions in both networks is much higher than that of any other actor (the difference in scores with the third most influential actor is 0.17 points). In the TABC, the EU institutions have a score of 0.40 in the first period and 0.36 in the second period. The US institutions have a score of 0.45 in the first period and 0.39 in the second period. As far as the TACD is concerned, EU institutions have a score of 0.48 in the first period and 0.43 in the second period. The US institutions have a score of 0.42 in the first time-period and 0.37 in the second period.

Hence, our hypothesis 2 is supported. Interestingly, we also find that EU institutions are more eigenvector-central in the TACD, while US institutions are more eigenvector-central in the TABC. This suggests a larger role of organized consumer interests in the EU vis-à-vis the US. The visual diagrams (Figures 1 and 2) reveal that the TABC is divided into two parts, with each government node playing a coordinative role in their respective cluster, while in the TACD the institutions are clearly in the centre and the sub-clusters revolve around institutions. And the cooperative effort in the TACD is more segmented

into specific clusters, while in TABC interactions are more dispersed. Lastly, there are some actors in each network that have high local centrality (in their respective sub-clusters; marked as triangles in the diagrams). And, in addition to the EU and US institutions, there are also some organizations (bold black squares in the diagrams) that perform the brokerage function by connecting network clusters. These are organizations that participate in multiple focus groups and fora. An example is the German company Siemens in the TABC.

Local Centralities

To test our Hypotheses 3 and 4, we collected data on network members and conducted multiple regression analysis using individual organization centralities calculated in UCINET as a dependent variable and organization size and the overall number of international collaborations as independent variables while controlling for organization's age. The centralities of nonstate actors range from 0.07 to 0.19, with no critical outliers. Even though nonstate actors are less central than EU and US institutions in both networks, they show a good degree of connectedness, and there are no highly peripheral actors. We obtained the information on organization size, age, and the number of international collaborations from the organizations' websites and other resources such as the Orbis Database of Corporations (Bureau Van Dijk, 2018). We managed to obtain detailed information for most organizations, excluding those for which data were missing. We also controlled for any differences between US and EU actors by using continent-level dummies (assigning 1 to EU organizations and 0 to US organizations). Our final sample consists of 108 observations for the first time-period (2013-14) and 117 observations for the second time-period (2015-16). Table 2 presents the results of the analysis. The results show strong support for both Hypotheses 3 and 4.

Outcomes for Government Institutions

As we discussed earlier, a general conclusion in the literature is that the TABC has been more successful than the TACD at producing policy results. Hypotheses 5 and 6 help us explore if there is a structural explanation for this difference in performance. Specifically, we seek to understand if the amount of feedback from nonstate actors to EU and US institutions is affected by centralization and density values. We measure policy feedback by accounting for the inputs to the policy debate by issue-specific focus groups from each network. We identified 6 relevant groupings in the TACD (intellectual property, financial services, information society, product safety, food, and TTIP), and 7 for the TABC (capital markets, emerging technologies, ICT, IPR, energy, research and innovation, and TTIP negotiations) (AAPPAEU, 2018). For each focus group we calculated the number of expert policy recommendations, treating the number of policy-related initiatives, normalized by the total number of initiatives, as a proxy for policy feedback.

In order to explore the relationship between policy feedback and belonging to a network, we constructed a dummy variable, which takes the value of 1 for initiatives by TABC focus groups and 0 for initiatives by TACD focus groups. This variable is significant (Table 3), implying that the TABC is a more productive network in terms of the number of policy proposals generated than the TACD. Since the TABC is a denser network than the TABC, we can infer that higher levels of density are associated with more policy feedback. These results confirm our Hypothesis 5 and indicate that we cannot support Hypothesis 6. Per Risse's (2013) analysis, this suggests that more direct ties among TABC members means more flexibility to collaborate, which results to more proposals than the TACD.

[Table 3 about here]

We wanted to explore this issue further by examining the structure of relations inside each focus group. We matched the focus groups with our network data to extract each group's centralization index (how centralized a group is around certain group members), as well as group density (the percentage of existing connections out of all possible connections). It is important to note that focus group membership varies, as organizations join or leave at different points in time. Table 3 presents the results of our regression analysis. We find that the relationship between the number of policy proposals and group density is positive and statistically significant, while the relationship with group centralization is not. Hence, we can conclude that more policy feedback is associated with higher densities not only at the network level but also at the level of focus groups.

Conclusion

External policy networks perform a significant coordinative role in EU external relations, helping resolve two collective action problems. The first is engaging nonstate actors with diverse preferences from different government jurisdictions in transnational policymaking. This can help increase policy input legitimacy. The second is converting this engagement to policy influence, by serving as channels of feedback to policymakers. This can improve output legitimacy.

Our analysis shows that the TABC and the TACD are able to resolve these two problems to some extent. Both networks increased business and consumer organizations' engagement over time and converted their engagement to feedback. Hence, the two networks performed the tasks for which they were established. However, when we consider how well the two networks performed these tasks, there is an interesting similarity and an

interesting difference between them. The two networks are similar in terms of the engagement they stimulate, but they differ with regard to the feedback they yield.

We argue that a structural similarity and a structural difference explain the performance resemblance and divergence. The structural similarity is the overall pattern of networked relations: both are highly centralized around government institutions, and they have relatively low (albeit increasing) levels of overall density, which represents peer interactions. This particular structure, we find, has similar effects for both networks. It is conducive to engaging both business and consumer organizations with policymaking, because it allows them to share information and knowledge with their peers, and, for some, to exercise power over similar organizations, while maintaining a high level of contacts with government institutions. In fact, the TACD was able to outpace the TABC in terms of engagement, with a 100% increase of density values between the two time periods, thus overcoming the traditional reluctance of civil society organizations to engage as insiders in the policy process.

The difference in the amount of feedback the two networks provide to policymakers can be explained by the structural difference between the two networks, which is different levels of density. In the TABC, which provides more feedback, overall network density is higher than in the TACD. We cannot argue that this difference in performance is caused exclusively by this structural difference, and that is a limitation of our research. As the literature we reviewed has documented, businesses are more enthusiastic and have more resources to spare than consumer organizations, and that plays a role for network performance. But our findings add an additional layer to this explanation. They suggest that when provided access to government institutions through highly centralized networks,

nonstate actors will provide more feedback (and hence be more influential) if they collaborate with their peers, regardless of their for-profit/non-profit status.

Our findings confirm insights from the broader literature on policy networks as collective action mechanisms, according to which high centralization and relatively low-density values, like those we observed in the TABC and the TACD, are typical of networks built by policy entrepreneurs, such as the EU and US institutions in our study, that need to coordinate their partners (Scholz, et al., 2008). Hence, our study lends further support to the argument that the type of collective action problem a network tries to solve and how a network is organized are linked (Carlsson, 2000). More broadly, we can argue that structures, such as networks, shape actor behaviour by providing them with incentives to act collectively and be less egoistical.

We would like to end with one more caveat. The above logic presupposes the willingness of governments, the policy entrepreneurs, to engage with societal actors and openness to their input. This could differ greatly depending on the ideological orientation of government in office. Some could be more open to transnational societal input as a way to realize absolute gains. Others that view transnational coordination as an impediment to geo-strategic goals would be less willing to engage with external networks and pursue a hands-off approach. Empowering transatlantic civil society could interfere with neo-mercantilist ideology even if that means greater efficiency gains in the form of regulatory coordination (Young, 2017). The current fate of the TTIP, which has become a casualty of Donald Trump's "principled realist" aspirations (Anton, 2019), illustrates this point.

Tables and Figures

Table 1: Network density and centralization

	Overall network density	Overall network centralization
TABC first period (2013-14)	0.19	0.57
TACD first period (2013-14)	0.12	0.73
TABC second period (2015-16)	0.36	0.41
TACD second period (2015-16)	0.24	0.62

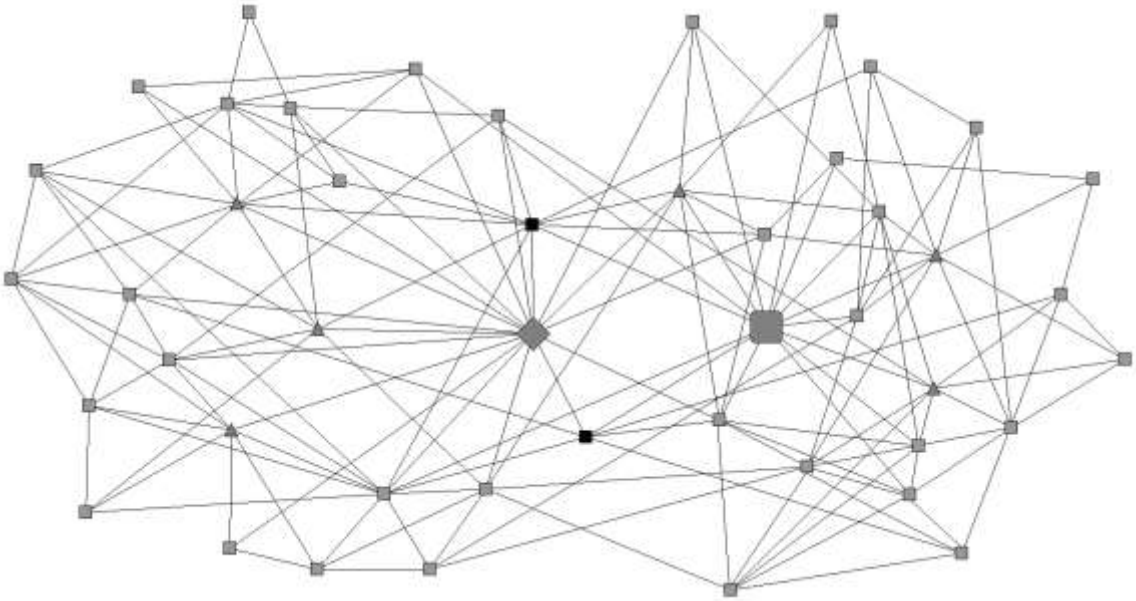
Table 2: Centrality analysis

Variables	Org Centrality	Variables	Org Centrality
First period		**Second period**	
Org size	0.43*** (0.008)	Org size	0.31*** (0.009)
International collaborations	0.62*** (0.003)	International collaborations	0.58*** (0.005)
Control: actor age	0.008* (0.008)	Org age	0.004 (0.006)
Control: continent –level dummies	0.011***(0.001)	Control: continent –level dummies	0.015*** (0.001)
N= 108; R-squared=0.20 *p <0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001 (two-tailed)		N= 117; R-squared=0.22 *p <0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001 (two-tailed)	

Table 3: Regression analysis of policy feedback

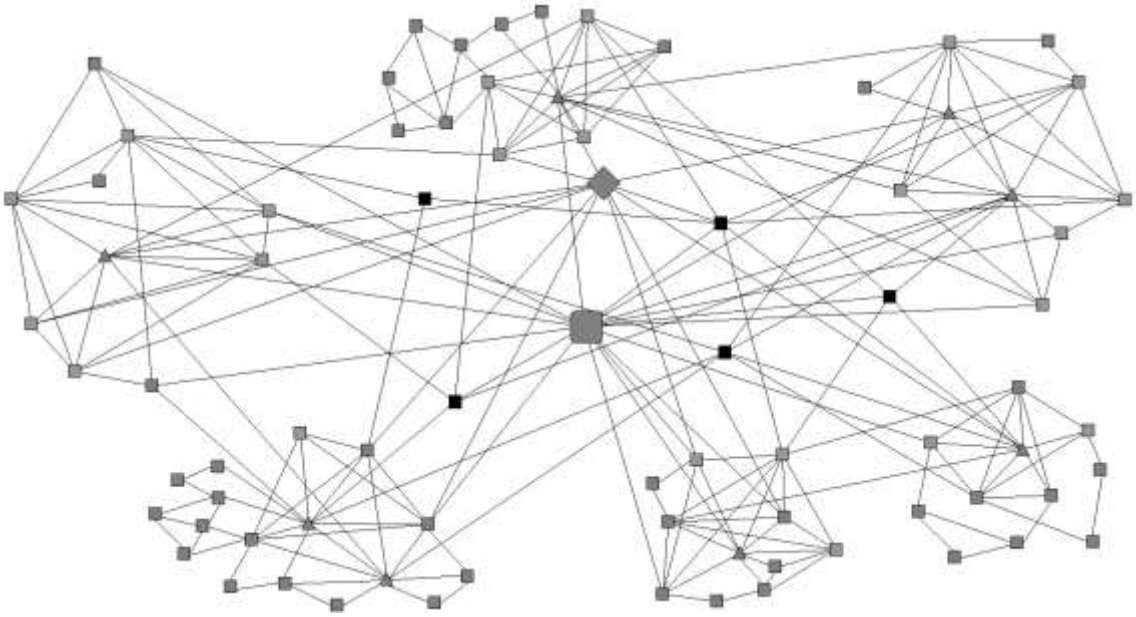
	Number of initiatives
Focus group density	0.37** (0.11)
Focus group centralization	-0.17 (0.12)
TABC/TACD dummy	7.62** (2.19)
N	26
Prob > F	0.0000
Adjusted R-squared	0.82

Figure 1: TABC Network (2015-16)



Diamond: US institutions; Rounded square: EU institutions; Up-triangles: organizations having high local centrality; Bold black squares: organizations that have high brokerage centrality.

Figure 2: TACD Network (2015-16)



Diamond: US institutions; Rounded square: EU institutions; Up-triangles: organizations having high local centrality; Bold black squares: organizations that have high brokerage centrality.

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